

*Educating
the Girl Child –
Transforming
Lives*

10th Anniversary of IIMPACT
– Making a Difference



FOREWORD

Ten years is a milestone for any organization – a time to reflect, review and reset strategies for the coming years. For IIMPACT as well, this tenth anniversary of our establishment is an opportunity to join our stakeholders to assess our performance, reflect on our learning and refine our education model and capabilities to better achieve our mission. It is also a time to celebrate the success of our efforts with those who have made it possible.

With this report “*Educating the Girl Child – Transforming Lives*”, we wish to share with the readers, our ten years of experiences working with the most marginalized communities. These experiences have been drawn from our direct work as well as the studies, observations and experiences of our partners, donors and associates in the common mission of educating the girl child in some of the neediest rural areas of India.

The report critically analyses the strategies and processes that we have implemented in reaching the most neglected girl children. We have attempted through this report to document how these 30,000 girls were identified and brought into the fold of quality primary education and evaluate what has been the outcome of this process. If the report is helpful in spreading these strategies on a wider scale it would have achieved its purpose.

In December 2002, the alumni batch of 1978 from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad met for their 25th reunion at Ahmedabad. One of the things that emerged from the reunion was a common and deep desire to do something socially meaningful. Thus was born the idea of IIMPACT – reflecting the desire of the founding members to make a genuine difference, with the determination that the thought “giving back to society” did not remain a mere cliché or platitude.

In 2004, IIMPACT opened its first 12 Learning Centres in the remote villages of Alwar District in Rajasthan, providing free primary education to 396 girls – thereby making its dream to bring quality education to the doorstep of girls not-in-school a reality.

After an exhilarating ten-year journey, IIMPACT has provided education to 30,000 girls across nine states. The girls, who have graduated from IIMPACT's learning programme, are a source of great pride for their families and communities, as well as for IIMPACT, with many choosing to continue with their education.

Today, we ask you to join us in our mission and support the girls who inspire and energise us by their own journey of transformation.

Anil Tandon
President, IIMPACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The preparation of this report *“Educating the Girl Child – Transforming Lives”* would not have been possible without the valuable contribution of all the Team Members of IIMPACT, the Board Members of IIMPACT and the associated grassroots NGOs.

IIMPACT would like this publication to form a base that can be updated and replicated, with time and in new areas where the need is immense. We hope that this will be a valuable resource for all agencies and individuals working in the field of primary education.

Anil Tandon
President, IIMPACT

CASE STUDY

Bhuteri passed her Class 12 with a first division in 2011. Her father, sometimes a farm labour, sometimes a driver, has five other daughters and a son to look after. Before she joined IIMPACT in 2004, Bhuteri's time mainly went into helping her mother in household chores and taking care of the buffalo owned by the family. She used to watch other girls going to school and silently wished that someday she could also go. Once she went to a small gurukul in the neighborhood, but that too soon came to an end due to her father's financial problems.

One day an IIMPACT teacher visited her home. Bhuteri could not believe it when the teacher informed them that a free girls' school was going to open next to her house! Her dreams were about to come true. She was the first one to join the Learning Centre in Bandipura, Alwar, Rajasthan. Bhuteri turned into a very hard working, sincere and a well-mannered girl. Her teacher recounts that she was very helpful too. She helped her teacher in the Learning Centre and was always ready to run errands if any girl was absent. She always topped her group after every quarterly evaluation. From grazing the cattle and watching girls going to school, Bhuteri has covered much ground as now she is a student of BA 1st Year at Alwar Degree College, Rajasthan. She travels 25 kilometres every day to reach her college and is always on time. She never misses her lectures and her teachers are full of appreciation for her.

Though her father is still going through financial problems, nothing is able to deter Bhuteri from her path. She studies on her own as she cannot afford tuition. Her fee is sponsored, her books are rented, and even her dresses are gifted. A young woman now, she is thankful for this support, but she wants to change this situation. She wants to pay back to the society and help others. She wants to work and earn so that she can support her family. She wants to become a Police Officer. Just as it had surprised Bhuteri, sometimes we are also surprised at what great joy a small learning place near a girl's house can bring to her life.

CASE STUDY

Mariyam is 13 years old today. When she was five, she had met with a terrible accident and lost her right leg. She was left with one leg for the rest of her life. In Mahua Bas village of Rajasthan, where she lives, the school was at a distance. When Mariyam turned seven, she told her parents that she also wanted to go to school like some of the girls in her village. But her parents were helpless as they couldn't carry her to school daily. Also, they feared she may get hurt in the school. Mariyam was very dejected due to her situation.

The opening of a Girls Learning Centre by IIMPACT near Mariyam's house in Mahua Bas village changed her life forever. It was so near that even her younger brother could leave her at the Centre. Every morning, Mariyam reached the Centre even before it opened. And she was the last to leave. A few years at the Learning Centre completely transformed her into a chirpy, jolly girl who knew hundreds of poems by heart and read stories from her book.

But there was one thing in her life that always made her sad. She missed games and extra-curricular activities. She also wanted to run and play, like the other kids. During a team visit by IIMPACT members, Mariyam shared her desire. Her wish came true so quickly that even Mariyam could not believe it. Within a few days, a benevolent member had arranged for an artificial limb replacement for her at a major hospital in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Mariyam was given a date for the operation and finally that day came in 2009, when Mariyam walked again with the help of an artificial leg.

By 2011, she not only walked, but started running faster than many other children in her 8th class at the upper primary school where she was enrolled by IIMPACT in 2010.

Mariyam came all the way from her village to participate in IIMPACT's 10 years celebrations at Gurgaon where she was awarded for her courage and achievements.

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1. HIDDEN SHADOWS OF INDIAN SOCIETY

1.1 Current Situation with Female Literacy in India

Even as India strives to progress into the community of developed nations, large parts of its society continue to be in the shadows. There are many dimensions to these shadows, but the sustained neglect of the girl child is one that has remained unchanged. This is in spite of economic development in many of the sub-regions within India and is particularly striking within several specific communities. There is also a direct link between the economic poverty of specific groups and regions and the educational status of the girl child.

Starting in 1938, when the Zakir Hussain Committee on Education released its first report strongly recommending primary schools in each village, to 2008, when the Government of India passed the Right to Education Act, girls' education has always been a priority for policy makers.

Yet it is estimated (UNESCO Institute of Statistics – 2011) that 3.8 million girls in the age group of 6-14 years are out-of-school in India – the actual numbers are much higher as enrolments often do not account for dropouts.

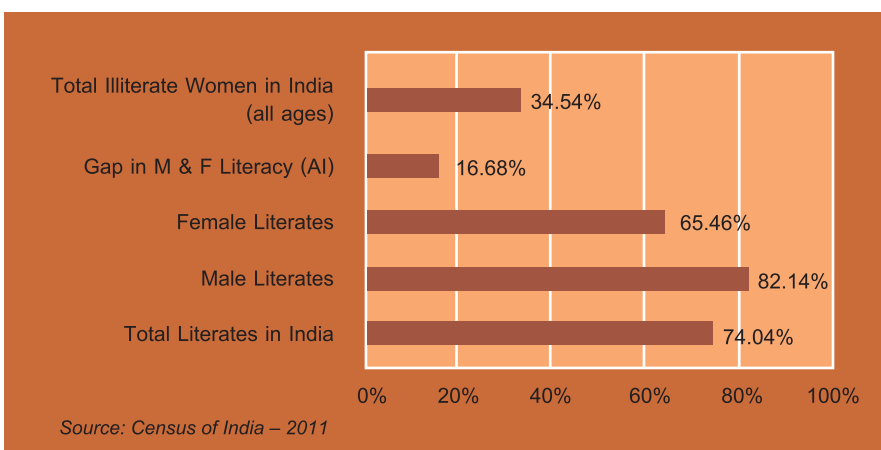
Figure 1: 10 COUNTRIES WITH MOST FEMALE OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN (2007-10)

SN	COUNTRY	NO OF O-O-S CHILDREN
1	Nigeria	4,626,218
2	Pakistan	4,191,384
3	India	3,781,495
4	Ethiopia	1,255,217
5	United States	808,525
6	Ivory Coast	774,419
7	Yemen, Republic	641,425
8	Niger	605,210
9	Bangladesh	591,325
10	Kenya	510,750

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics in EdStats, July 2011

According to the Indian Census 2011, there are approximately 334.25 million literate women in India. This leaves another 176.36 million women (34%) of all ages as illiterates. (Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: LITERACY RATES AND GAPS IN MALE AND FEMALE LITERACY IN INDIA



The problem of female illiteracy is widespread in India. Out of the 657 districts of India, 22 of them have female literacy below 42%. There are wide disparities among different States, with 92% female literacy in Kerala but only 52% in Jharkhand (Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: TEN INDIAN STATES WITH LOW FEMALE LITERACY RATES



Source: Census of India – 2011

State	Female Literacy %	Male Literacy %	Gap in F & M Literacy %
Rajasthan	52.66	80.51	27.85
Jharkhand	56.21	78.45	22.24
Chattisgarh	60.59	81.45	20.86
Madhya Pradesh	60.02	80.53	20.51
Bihar	53.33	73.39	20.06
Odisha	64.36	82.40	18.04
Uttar Pradesh	59.26	79.24	19.98
Haryana	66.77	85.38	18.61
Uttarakhand	70.70	88.33	17.63
Gujarat	70.73	87.23	16.50





Is this because policies in our country do not get translated into reality through proper implementation? Or is it because a large number of poor people cannot afford to send their children to school? Or is it because in many sections of our society educating the girl child is not given any priority within their families, communities, and localities, be it villages or urban neighbourhoods? Or is it because there are not enough schools being opened to accommodate the

girl children who enter school going age? Or is it that the remote regions within our country, such as the tribal districts, do not have schools that children can access easily?

All these are true in the multiple realities that characterize India at the grassroots of our society. Yet every child wants to learn and has a right to education.

1.2 Challenges in Educating the Out-of-School Girl Child

There are four major challenges when it comes to the education of girls:

- Offering an adequate number of schools where the girl child can attend and learn in a safe and friendly environment;
- Getting girls to enroll in schools;
- Providing good quality of education to ensure retention and improve girls' learning achievements; and
- Enlisting girls' participation in higher-level education (upper primary and above).

1.2.1 The Problem of Supply – Number and Access

This may be called the supply side challenge of girls' education. First, in remote rural areas, especially in the whole tribal belt that covers central India, there are just not enough schools, even at the primary level. In the villages of Jharkhand and Odisha where IIMPACT is working, there are no schools at all within reach, making irrelevant the distinction between schools for the girl child and schools for all.

Secondly, we have the more complex problem of whether a particular school is suitable for girls to attend. A major concern uniformly expressed by parents in all areas where IIMPACT is working, is for the physical safety of their daughters, implying that more accessible community schools are better able to attract and retain girls in the early years. Accessibility here refers to a host of barriers that range from physical distance (with a lack of transport for girls), infrastructure (absence of girls' toilets) to social

barriers (lower caste girls are often given menial work in school). All these factors act as major barriers to the girl child enrolling in existing schools. The challenge can therefore be addressed only by opening more 'girl-friendly' schools.

Figure 4 below shows the results of a study conducted by IIMPACT in 30 villages to estimate the distance of primary schools from the place where children lived. Incidentally, under the Right to Education Act, the Central Government is committed to providing schools within one kilometre of the residence of the child, yet it was found that in many of the villages the school was located farther away.

Figure 4: DISTANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS FROM VILLAGE

S.N.	STATE & DISTRICT	NO. OF VILLAGES SURVEYED	PRIMARY SCHOOL WITHIN 1 KM.	PRIMARY SCHOOL 1 KM. TO 3 KM.	PRIMARY SCHOOL BEYOND 3 KM.
1	Odisha – Gajapati	10	5	2	3
2	UP – Sitapur	10	1	5	4
3	Rajasthan – Alwar	10	3	4	3
	Total	30	9	9	10

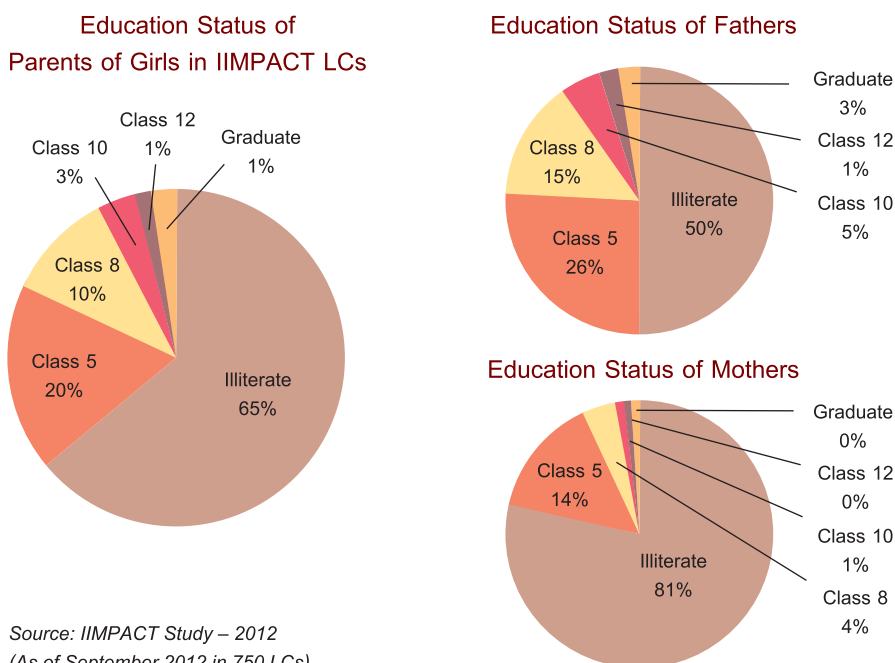
Source: IIMPACT Survey – 2012

1.2.2 The Problem of Demand – Getting the Girl Child to Enroll in School

While the demand for education has universally increased over the last few decades, gender disparities remain. However, the issue of demand for education for girls can no longer be treated as universal and needs to be disaggregated. As IIMPACT's experience has shown, there are specific communities where the issue of girls' education needs to be given a higher priority. These include the communities in the Mewat regions of Haryana and Rajasthan, several sub-regions of UP, Bihar and West Bengal and smaller pockets in a majority of other States. Just opening a school in such locations is inadequate and interventions have to work systematically with the parents and communities to ensure that girls from these specific groups enroll into school. In the course of IIMPACT's work, we have noticed that most out-of-school girls have parents who themselves are not literate. Therefore, the interventions will have to identify such indicators to reach the target groups.



Figure 5: THE EDUCATION LEVEL OF PARENTS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS



Source: IIMPACT Study – 2012
(As of September 2012 in 750 LCs)

1.2.3 The Problem of Retention – Getting the Girls to Stay in School

While it is difficult to bring the girls into school, it is even more difficult to retain them after the initial enrollment. The biggest challenge in the formal education system is to reduce the dropout rate and increase retention. A recent District Information System for Education (DISE) survey of the Ministry of HRD, Government of India, has pointed to an increase in dropout rates at the primary level. The average dropout rate for 2008-9 was recorded as 8.9% at primary level. At this rate about 50% of the girls dropout before completing Class V.

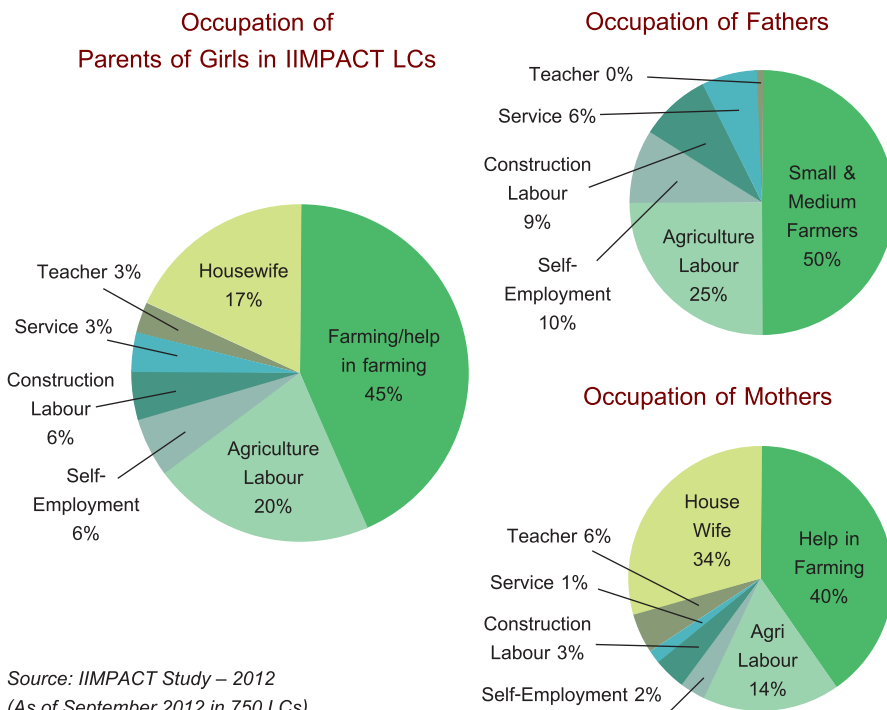
Many of the reasons for low enrollment of girls in school, such as working at home, taking care of younger siblings, no felt need for girls' education beyond basic literacy, are also the causes for a high dropout rate. However, the poor quality of education provided is emerging as critical to low retention and improving quality is an important driver that can reverse this trend.

School quality, pedagogy and classroom practices are critical elements in attracting and retaining children from excluded groups in school. Upgrading schools, ensuring basic standards of teaching that are child friendly, allowing the girls to learn at their own pace, outside and inside classroom practices that develop the self-confidence of the child, availability of effective learning materials, trained teachers who show up for

class, more female teachers and tolerance toward minorities and girls represent some key elements that go towards building quality. From IIMPACT's own experience, these elements motivate the children to remain in school and the parents to send them to school.

Another critical aspect is transforming the situation of the girls within their family and community. In the course of IIMPACT's work we have observed that most out-of-school girls belong to economically poor backgrounds. Their families own no land and largely depend on earnings from labour, which keeps them marginalized and the girls on the brink of neglect. Girls often don't turn up at school because they have to work alongside the family or take care of the siblings, as both mother and father go to work. Changing this situation will require a complete change in the attitude of parents towards education of their girls.

Figure 6: COMMON OCCUPATIONS OF PARENTS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS

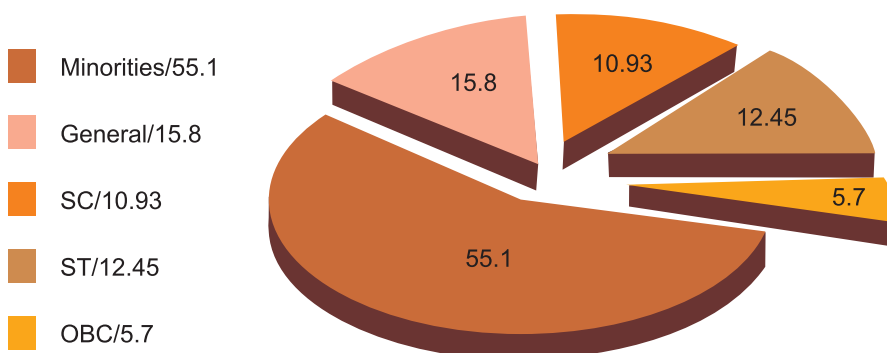


Source: IIMPACT Study – 2012
(As of September 2012 in 750 LCs)

Caste based discrimination is also recognised as a factor that has dissuaded children from attending school. News reports are replete with how Dalit girls are brutalised in schools, asked to sweep the entire school and generally dissuaded from coming to school.



Figure 7: CASTE COMPOSITION OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS ENROLLED AT IIMPACT



Source: IIMPACT Data (As of September 2012 in 750 LCs)

1.2.4 The Problem of Continuing Education – Getting Girls to Continue Education

The story of girl child education does not end with Primary Education. The challenge therefore becomes not only of providing initial literacy or basic education to the girl child but also ensuring that she continues to get educated beyond the primary level. This throws up a variety of new challenges both on the supply side and demand side. On the supply side the obvious one is to have an adequate number of accessible middle and high schools for girls. On the demand side the issues are even more complex as the girls and their immediate family need to be motivated to continue with higher education. IIMPACT's experience has shown that to ensure this motivation it is necessary to work from the initial primary level itself and work continuously on the critical factors for retention in school.

2 IMPACT – EVOLUTION, APPROACH AND LEARNING

2.1 Evolution

Like any organization, business or social, the origins of IIMPACT were small and experimental. IIMPACT was established as a Charitable Trust and Society in 2003 by the members of the 1978 graduating batch of the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad (IIM-A). As many of its founders were new to the social sector, the idea was to start small, learn quickly and then scale up. All participants gave freely of their time as committed volunteers.

Over time, IIMPACT has evolved an effective format structure both for its operations management and governance. IIMPACT has a Pan-India operations network. The Head Office is managed by professionals drawn from social service organizations. The National Resource Centre set up by IIMPACT is committed to the cause of girls' education. The Resource Centre is guided by IIMPACT's commitment to quality in education delivery, learning materials and training. It is continuously evolving and gearing up to meet the growing demands of the project, currently operational in nine States of the country.

2.2 Approach

A few core and fundamental strategy elements were selected at IIMPACT's inception that have guided its work throughout its life of ten years. These include the following:

2.2.1 Focus on the Girl Child and Specifically her Education

From its inception in 2003, IIMPACT has carried forward its single-minded mission of focusing on girls' education. IIMPACT identified and started work in areas with high concentration of out-of-school girls in the age group of 6-14 years, with a special focus on vulnerable communities in rural areas where access to basic education was extremely limited. IIMPACT continues to focus on this issue as it remains significant in India.

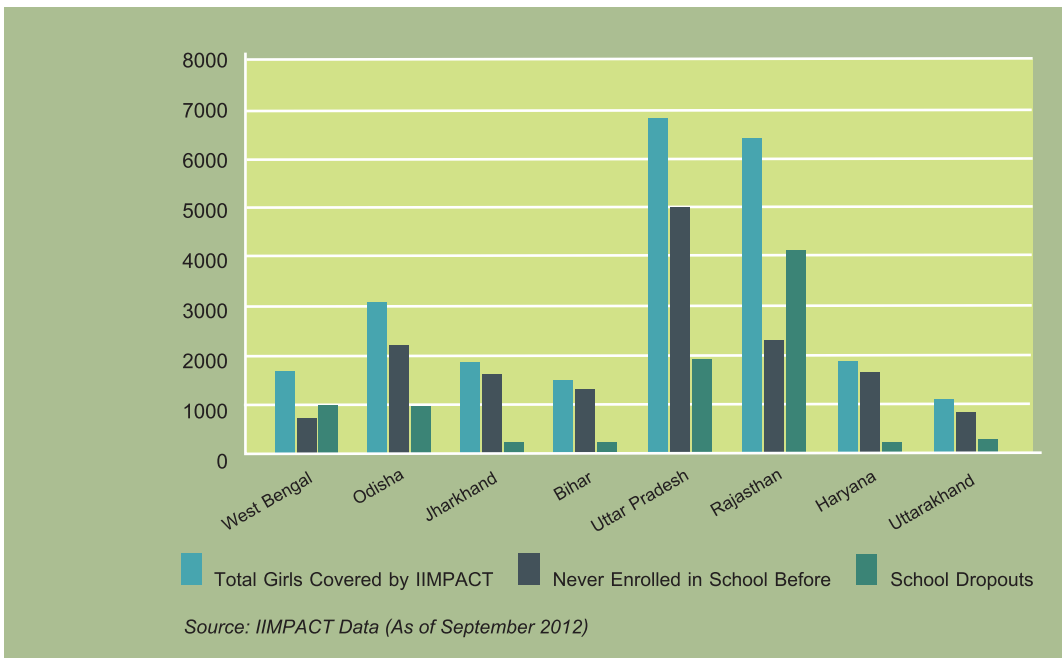
Nanhi is from a very poor family. Her mother passed away when she was 6 years old. Nanhi took care of her two younger brothers. She had learned cooking and other household work at a very young age. Her world was far removed from education. The IIMPACT Centre was started in Nanhi's village, Bilaspur, in District Sitapur on 17th April 2007. One day when Nanhi came to the Centre and saw girls of her age reciting poems, she liked it and she also wanted to learn poems. Initially, her father did not allow this but her constant efforts yielded results. She started coming to the Centre to learn poems, but soon became a regular student at the Centre. Today, Nanhi is studying in Class V and she comes to the Learning Centre after finishing all her work at home. Her father says, "I will educate my daughter at least till 10th class".

2.2.2 Focus on the Primary Level for Out-of-School Girls with the Learning Centre Model

As a beginning, IIMPACT started 20 single teacher schools (called IIMPACT Learning Centres) in Rajasthan within the villages where these girls lived. Each school was designed to educate 30 girls. Each school was managed by a single teacher, identified and employed from the local area and trained in IIMPACT's primary education model. Within a short span of time these Learning Centres have changed the life of young girls in the villages. IIMPACT has established over 760 Learning Centres in as many villages in the last ten years and has educated over 30,000 girls. Hundreds of girls who had never got a chance to go to school have completed their primary education through these Learning Centres and are now going to formal schools.



Figure 8: NEVER BEEN TO SCHOOL AND DROPOUT GIRLS COVERED BY IIMPACT



2.2.3 Focus on Regions and Districts that have the Greatest Need

The outstanding success of the model encouraged IIMPACT to replicate this model in many other parts of the country. Low female literacy rate is the benchmark for identifying areas for IIMPACT's intervention. Between 2004 and 2012 IIMPACT replicated this model in about 760 villages of 16 Districts of nine States where girls were not in schools. IIMPACT has selected areas with the lowest female literacy rates which hence have highest numbers of out-of-school girls. Priority is given to villages where other educational facilities are either non-existing or in poor condition.



Figure 9: DISTRICTS AND VILLAGES WHERE IIMPACT HAS WORKED

No.	State	District	Villages Covered
1	Rajasthan	Alwar	143
		Jaipur	40
		Kota	20
2	Uttar Pradesh	Sitapur	130
		Jaunpur	20
		Shahjahanpur	20
		Shravasti	40
3	Haryana	Mewat	61
4	Jharkhand	Ranchi	25
		West Singhbhum	30
5	Uttarakhand	Dehradun	31
6	Bihar	Kishanganj	50
7	West Bengal	South 24 Parganas	50
8	Odisha	Gajapati	50
		Mayurbhanj	30
9	Karnataka	Raichur	20
Total			760

2.2.4 Focus on Quality of Education and not just Literacy

IIMPACT has developed a schooling model that can be implemented in the close vicinity of the girls' homes. The basic primary school curriculum is taught in the Learning Centres. In addition, IIMPACT has implemented a high quality, child-friendly and multi-grade pedagogy that ensures high learning achievements. IIMPACT focuses on key subjects. Girls can learn at their individual pace. It brings increased confidence in the girls and support by the families.

KEY STRATEGIES

Equal Learning Space: *Each girl child will be given an opportunity to participate with equal space in the Learning Centre. Girls will be encouraged to speak and express their talents; this will help them gain confidence and become vocal.*

Innovative Education Techniques (Pedagogy): *Teachers will be trained in Multi-Level teaching methods, as there are children in the Learning Centres with different learning abilities, skills and ages. Children will be divided in groups based on their learning levels. Supportive Teaching and Learning Materials include various kinds of picture cards, games, charts and models that have been developed by teachers and resource persons over many years. These materials are tested for specific and time-bound qualitative learning among children.*

Enrollment in Formal Schooling (Mainstream Education): *After 4-5 years of quality primary education till Class V, girls join formal schools from Class VI. IIMPACT works closely with the neighborhood schools and the government system to achieve this. Classes are held inside the schools to familiarize children with the formal school environment, teachers are oriented and parents are asked to visit the schools more often. Children are closely associated with formal schooling from Class IV onwards, as they can take Class V exams only in formal schools.*

School Follow-up Support for Higher Education (Continuing Education): *Tracking of each girl joining formal school from Class VI is another aspect of IIMPACT's follow-up support.*

The average distance a child has to walk to reach the Learning Centre is 120 metres in the areas where IIMPACT runs Centres. They would earlier need to walk an average of 1.8 kilometres to reach the nearest government primary school. Ten percent of government primary schools are at a distance of 2 kilometres or more – IIMPACT Study.

2.2.5 Focus on Implementation through a Rigorous Selection of Quality Grassroot Partners

The value of grassroots knowledge and trust built over the years with village communities cannot be underestimated in such an endeavour. Hence, right from the beginning, IIMPACT has resisted the temptation to be critical of the work of other agencies and avoided plunging into directly implemented projects. This strategy has paid rich dividends. Today, IIMPACT has a nucleus of 18 quality partners, who are field-based NGOs that implement the programme of girl child education with close monitoring by IIMPACT. This approach allows for capitalising and leveraging on the community trust built earlier by the partners, adaptations to the local context in approach and language, and rapid coverage of many regions, which in turn provides opportunities for scaling up. At the same time, it allows IIMPACT to concentrate time and resources on its own strengths – proper identification of target groups, evaluation and identification of appropriate partners, monitoring the quality of delivery of these partners, development of a suitable and practical pedagogy and teaching materials, training of teachers, ensuring high quality of education and retention, and finally ensuring that donors' funds are spent towards the objective in a most appropriate and transparent manner.

2.2.6 Focus on Monitoring and Learning

A geographically extensive programme also needs a strong monitoring system and this is something that IIMPACT decided to invest in right from its inception. It ensures prudent funds management, tracks progress systematically, identifies problem areas early and enables consistency in standards. A well developed Management Information System is therefore applied in all programme locations, collecting detailed data from each village and Learning Centre via both partners' reports and field representatives employed by IIMPACT. While currently this information is collected manually, a mobile enabled system is proposed that will allow for realtime data monitoring and decision making.

The above strategic elements continue to guide IIMPACT's work and have enabled it to clearly define its Mission Statement as:

"IIMPACT will mobilize and motivate non-school going girls, aged 6-14, from economically and socially backward families in the rural areas of India, and put them firmly on the track for formal education through quality primary education."

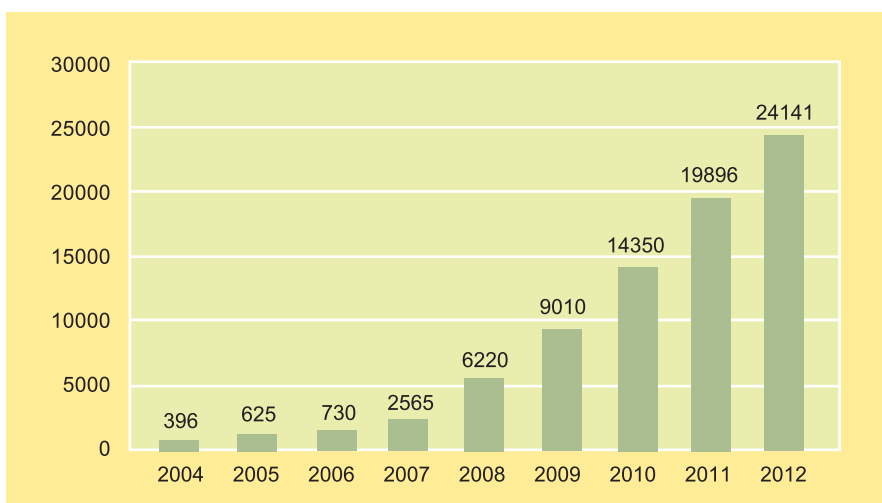




2.3 Scaling Up

The IIMPACT girl child education programme started in 2004 with 396 out-of-school girls as beneficiaries in the Alwar District of Rajasthan. As a beginning, IIMPACT started 12 single teacher schools (called IIMPACT Learning Centres) within the villages where these girls lived. To date, IIMPACT has educated over 30,000 girls. These girls, in the age group of 6-14 years, are for the first time brought into the fold of quality primary education. They are linked to upper primary and higher education once they complete their primary education from an IIMPACT Learning Centre or IIMPACT supported single teacher primary school.

Figure 10: IIMPACT'S COVERAGE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS OVER THE YEARS





2.4 Learnings

There are several learnings that IIMPACT's team has internalized and then put into practice and a decade may be the appropriate time for reflecting on these in a more systematic manner. The learnings cover a very wide range of themes and have been clustered around the following:

- Organization, Management and Governance;
- Stakeholder and Partnership Relations;
- Rural Exposure and Outreach;
- Pedagogy and Process of Teaching and Learning.

2.4.1 Organization, Management and Governance

- While initially IIMPACT's operations were run fully on a voluntary basis and professionals were hired only at the central head office level, it was soon realized that a formal structure with paid, field-based staff was necessary to rigorously monitor the programme and provide capacity building support to the partners.
- A rotational office bearer governance structure with a strong steering committee is essential to developing a sustainable corporate institution that is different from the individualized leadership style typical of most civil society organizations.
- Systematic documentation and a strong MIS that records the progress of every girl child throughout her spell at a Learning Centre, and also beyond it into formal schooling, was recognized as essential for the programme's benefits reaching the girl child during and beyond the classroom or the Learning Centre.

2.4.2 Stakeholder and Partnership Relationships

- Taking all stakeholders into confidence through a transparent reporting system and field visits by donors and other stakeholders is essential for building a strong institution in the social sector. The biggest and most important stakeholders are obviously the parents and the local communities. IIMPACT has always believed in developing strong relationships with parents, Gram Panchayats and local leaders with one crucial objective in mind – ownership of the programme by these stakeholders, without which it would be impossible to succeed.
- The implementation of the IIMPACT model and its effectiveness also depends on ground level partners who are also committed to the cause. Hence a transparent, rigorous partner selection process is first required. As each of these partnerships is seen to be a long term relationship, substantial investment in capacity building through co-management of the girls' education programme at the field level is required for making such partnerships productive.
- A regular review of the programme and the partnership in all dimensions is an essential operational dimension for ensuring high quality of education, fund use and other aspects of programme management.

2.4.3 Rural Exposure and Outreach

- Rural society operates in a very different environment from urban society. It is important to invest time in order to win people's trust and make inroads for change.
- Long-term sustenance is important to bring any meaningful change in rural attitudes, practices and limitations.



- Rural India is suffering from the problem of exclusion. It is of utmost importance that everyone is included in the process of development, not just at the level of political mass mobilization but through a programmatic approach that leads to their ownership of the initiatives.

2.4.4 Pedagogy and Process of Teaching and Learning

- IIMPACT had learned very early in the programme that it would have to adopt innovative pedagogical methods if it wished to bring any substantial change in the girls' education scenario in the country. With limited resources at the disposal of IIMPACT at the village level, IIMPACT developed a "single teacher – multiple ability" approach to manage the Learning Centres.
- Preference was given to female teachers as they could win the confidence of girls quickly and use their experience of bringing up their own children as in a setting where IIMPACT operates. It was important to make teaching interesting and liked by children.
- IIMPACT adopted various innovative methods to energize classroom interactions, such as Multi-Grade teaching by a single teacher, grouping children of different ages but the same academic level.
- IIMPACT relied on investing in teacher training and continuous capacity building. Over the years, IIMPACT has developed a National-Level Resource Centre for teachers' training.
- Classroom activities were designed to enable meaningful as well as enjoyable transactions for learners. A large number and variety of Teaching and Learning Aids, such as games, models, poems, stories and extra-curricular activities make the Learning Centres a happy and engaging place for children. Special focus is placed on Science and Mathematics to bring girls on par with children in any other good school.



3 FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY FOR EVALUATION OF IIMPACT

What the evaluation has attempted to capture is the nature of impact that the quality education provided at the Learning Centre to the girl child, has had at different levels. This is what IIMPACT calls the MULTIPLIER EFFECT OF GIRL CHILD EDUCATION.

What this implies is that with a specific, highly focused intervention, strategically implemented at the village, there are many levels of change that can be brought about – analogous to the concentric circles of a ripple in a pond. In the case of IIMPACT it involves:

- Change through the Learning Centre directly – by providing quality education to the girl child:
- Change in a girl's life – through motivating and ensuring that she continues her education to higher levels;
- Impact on the family – through changing their attitude to the girl child and women in general, and;
- Impact on the community through a change in the belief systems of the community.

For each of these levels a wide set of impacts are possible theoretically. These have been captured through the survey and focused group discussions to test the hypothesis or assumption that these changes are actually taking place at the four levels mentioned above.

The evaluation of the outcomes and impact of the IIMPACT programme on girls' education has attempted to be comprehensive, both methodologically as well as covering as many variables of change as can be tracked. The methodology essentially involved interviews with a wide variety of stakeholders (through both focus group discussions and a quick survey of villages where the Learning Centres are present and other neighbouring villages where they are not), specifically to include:

- Girls attending the Learning Centres
- Girls who have completed primary education from IIMPACT
- Families of children who have attended Centres and those not attending any school
- Immediate village community – both where Centres are running and no Centres exist
- Neighbouring government primary schooling system
- NGO partners implementing the programme.

The variables studied are summarized in Figure 11 below:

Figure 11: VARIABLES FOR EVALUATION OF IIMPACT

S. N.	FOR GIRL CHILD	FOR FAMILY	FOR COMMUNITY
1	Basic literacy for the attending girls	Siblings also going to school	Community believes in girls education (felt need exists) but does not get quality from existing private/ government system for different reasons – identify reason
2	Subject matter knowledge – language, math, environment	Continuing education for IIMPACT girls	Community is ready to pay fees for girls education (demand exists) but does not have any good quality school where they can send the girls
3	Science	Changed attitude of father/mother about importance of educating girls – now siblings can also go to learn	Community does not think girls education beyond a point is necessary
4	Helps in critical thinking	Changed attitude of family to continuing educating of girls beyond just literacy	Community has changed its views about what girls education can do and now will actively support it in whichever way they can – space/ financial contribution
5	Extra-curricular activities	Changed attitude of family towards early marriage vs education – raised age of marriage	Women of the community feel the need for girls education more acutely and are ready to fight for their girls being educated
6	Adequate knowledge to continue secondary and higher education	Changed attitude of family towards women's health/ nutrition – now get the same food as brothers	Women feel they need to be organized before they can introduce girls education within their immediate community
7	Self-confidence to deal with the world around them	Siblings can attend simultaneously	Women feel that the men need to be educated about the importance of girls education
8	Self-confidence to further her dreams	Changed attitude of family towards girls employment – now many new professions beyond housewife considered/looked upon as economic provider	
9	Providing new role models beyond house work to be aspired to	Changed attitude of family towards girls travelling/working outside village/in cities	

4. AT THE LEARNING CENTRE – THE NUCLEUS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The key intervention that IIMPACT focuses on is the village level Learning Centre where all out-of-school girl children in a village can study up to the primary level (Class I to V). The Learning Centres are started in villages with substantial number of out-of-school girls not in school. These villages are identified through secondary and baseline surveys and Learning Centres are managed by teachers well trained in IIMPACT's pedagogy and community work. Girls are provided quality education in the Learning Centres. Their parents are mobilized and motivated through community meetings. And, slowly, the entire education and socio-cultural system, prevailing in the villages, gets impacted. After a few years of work, the Learning Centres emerge as the nucleus for social change. The following points explain how it is done:

4.1 Groundwork for Opening an IIMPACT Learning Centre

Before such a Learning Centre is opened, there are a series of steps undertaken that ensure that the most vulnerable are included and a solid foundation is laid for the Centre to run effectively. These include the following steps:

Step 1: Identification of Partner Grassroots NGOs and Selection of District

A systematic process of partner selection has been put in place through a proactive search for partners working in backward districts combined with evaluation of NGOs soliciting partnership with IIMPACT. Essentially, IIMPACT has identified regions and districts where girls' education is a great need. The initial identification is followed by an extended process of dialogue with the partner candidate and if mutually agreed, an MOU is signed. Currently, IIMPACT works through 18 partners. A strong commitment to the girl child is the minimum common ground for such a partnership.

Harijan Bas is a village in Rajasthan. Its entire population of 40 households and near 450 individuals is SC/ST. This type of village is uncommon in these areas because the Meo Muslim population is dominant (over 50%). Earlier, there was no education facility for children in this village. Boys went to the government schools of nearby villages. But girls were not sent to these schools because people were fearful of sending their daughters to another village. For the past 10 years, an IIMPACT Learning Centre has been operational in this village. The local community's efforts and support have made this possible. Several hundred girls of this village have completed their primary education from this Centre and many have joined higher education.

Step 2: Selection of Block and Survey of Villages

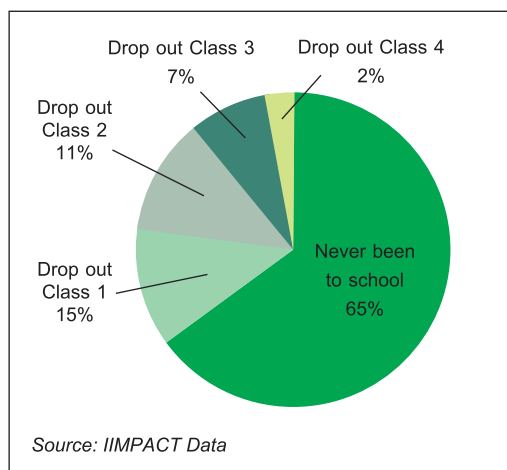
The choice of the specific Block is largely left to the partner. However, once a few Blocks are shortlisted an intensive village-wise survey is undertaken for clusters of villages. Door-to-door data collection is conducted to identify each out-of-school girl in the village. The data is then collated and analysed. The data analysis and mapping report gives a clear snapshot of out-of-school girls in the project area and helps identify the specific villages where there is a need for opening Learning Centres.

The door-to-door surveys are validated and then re-validated and revisited by the teachers to finally reach the priority beneficiary groups. The first priority is given to girls who have never been to school and then to those who have been to school for a few years but dropped out. The entire approach of IIMPACT depends on whether the potential partner can secure the priority beneficiary girls in the village or not. A Learning Centre will be established only in villages where they are able to get a minimum specified number of never-been-to-school and dropout girls.

Figure 12: PREVIOUS EDUCATION OF GIRLS JOINING IIMPACT LEARNING CENTRES

Step 3: Dialogue – Understanding and Involving Village Community

An extended process of dialogue with different village community members is undertaken. A group for consultation is formed in each village. Core staff members enlist volunteers in each selected village. Their attention is drawn towards the issue of lack of girl child education in their village and they are motivated to participate in reversing the situation. Their assistance in identifying a location to house the proposed Centre is requested – initially that is the minimum contribution required of the community. This single factor has had a tremendous impact on the enrollment and retention of girls in the Learning Centres.



Step 4: Organising Village Education Committees

A Village Education Committee (VEC) is organised informally, primarily with the parents and other influential community members. Once the Learning Centre opens, IIMPACT organizes committee meetings to openly discuss the effectiveness of the programme on a quarterly basis. IIMPACT engages the community members in the monitoring and

support of the day-to-day functioning of the Learning Centres. In 2012, IIMPACT organized over 2,000 VEC meetings to empower the community members in maintaining all the Learning Centres for the girls in the villages. The meetings focused on overall girl child education, attendance of the girls, retention, and teacher assessment.

During community meetings, members review the attendance of the children in the Learning Centres and make visits to the parents who are not regularly sending the girls to the Centres. This practice has helped boost punctuality and regularity of children and increases involvement and support of parents. In a survey conducted in 30 villages where IIMPACT works, the majority of parents mentioned that the community meetings have helped them become involved in the girls' education. The community meetings have also been helpful in tackling other issues pertaining to the girl child in the village. For example, the issue of seasonal migration impacting the girls in Jharkhand was addressed during the community meetings through solutions such as foster care. Therefore, mobilizing and institutionalizing community groups before the start of the project is a critical aspect of the project.

The IIMPACT Learning Centre at Manikapur village of Sitapur has been operational since 2007. The Village Education Committee of this village is very active and helpful. During a meeting the committee members felt that every child needed school bags to carry their books. They asked the parents to cut unnecessary expenses such as on cigarettes and pan masala and get bags for the girls. Soon, the 32 children of the Centre had not only bags but also uniforms that their parents had arranged for them. Some poor parents, who could not afford to purchase bags, stitched the bags at home.

Step 5: Selection of Learning Centre Teachers

This is the most critical step before launching of the programme. The effectiveness of the whole programme in many ways hinges on the quality of the teachers chosen. High School graduation is the minimum qualification required. A systematic process of teacher selection has been put in place that looks at motivation, community interaction and some basic subject knowledge.

Since there is always a shortage of educated teachers wherever IIMPACT works, over the years IIMPACT has tried to set up an effective strategy for the ongoing development of teachers among the local educated youth. This strategy is implemented in four steps: Awareness, Aptitude Assessment, Instruction and Appraisal. Every possible local media is used to spread the word to attract educated youth: word of mouth, wall posters, local cable TV advertisements, newspaper

insertions, school and college visits at the block levels, etc. Once awareness is created, resumes are collected and shortlisted candidates called for assessment of their aptitude. Finally, selected candidates are taken through a process of instruction to develop their abilities on the IIMPACT model of girl child education.

Candidates who missed out narrowly on selection criteria are identified for future reference. A periodic appraisal system takes care of teacher reshuffles and transfers as per the educational progress made by children and helps in meeting the increasing demand for teachers.

Step 6: Basic Module of Teacher Training

Before the Learning Centre is opened, all the selected teachers are given basic orientation training. This initial training focuses on the methodology of education (pedagogy) to be imparted in the Learning Centre rather than the content or subject matter. There are two cornerstones to this training.

The first is how to create a child friendly learning environment in the Centre in which the girl child can learn. Cognizance is taken of the fact that the child has never gone to school or she has dropped out because the school experience had not been enjoyable. The teachers are exposed to child-friendly teaching methodologies. The second focus of the basic training is on multi-grade teaching. The Centre caters to children of varying ages and different learning abilities. To teach such different children individually and in a group through a single teacher is a challenge by itself.

4.2 Model for Education

It is only after the above intensive groundwork is done that an IIMPACT Learning Centre is formally opened. The community provides a place near the neighbourhood that is safe and accessible. And so the school is brought to the home. The average distance of an IIMPACT Learning Centre is 120 metres from home, while the average distance of a government or other primary school is nearly 2 kilometres. This single fact of safety and parental watch has ensured high levels of retention. This solves many other problems faced in the formal education of girls due to the single factor of distance. A girl can now go home whenever she wishes to or whenever a need arises. She can even look after her younger siblings if her mother has gone to work.

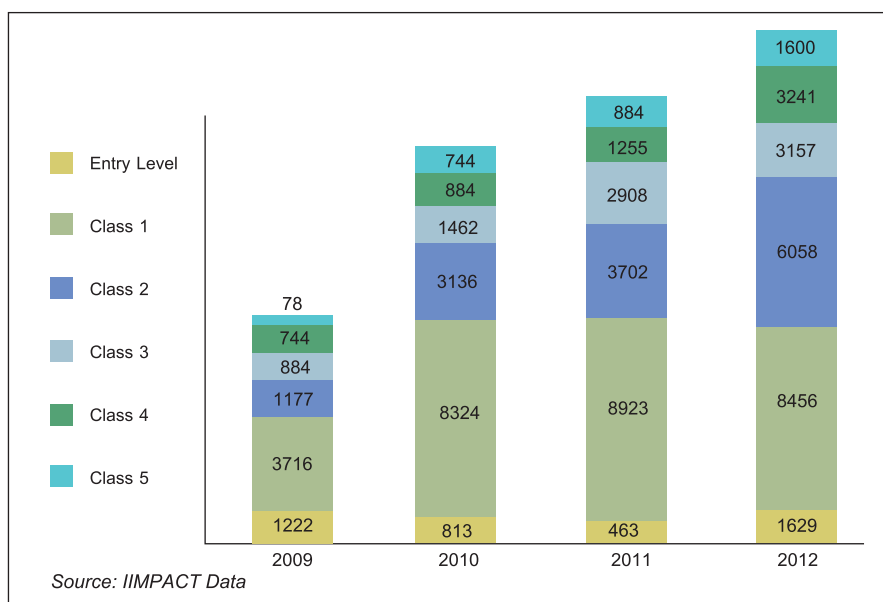
The journey of the girl child to transform her life begins. It is not possible to describe all the details of the transformative process that the girl goes through in the time she spends in the Learning Centre in the limited space we have here. Given below are some of the key inputs that go into this process and the data on the impact that the Centre directly has on the girls along different dimensions.

Till now over 30,000 girls have been enrolled by IIMPACT since its inception in 2003 and about 10% of them have completed their Class V education. Many of them have joined the formal mainstream of education. About 65% of these girls have never been to school and the rest are all dropouts from Class I to Class IV from primary schools. IIMPACT starts with the girls from this baseline. Under the multi-grade system of teaching, their learning level evaluation is first conducted and then they are taken through education from the level that they currently are at. In a majority of cases, girls start from zero level with IIMPACT as even the dropouts have either forgotten the previous learning or they had never learned.

IIMPACT girls progress academically every year in a multi-grade classroom where the ages are different, abilities are different, but they continue to learn at an easy and steady pace. One of the most important features of the multi-level teaching approach is that it brings both never-been-to-school girls and dropouts to the same level of learning within a short span of time. This is possible because the entire academic progress operates through a peer group system and here the role of students with some previous knowledge is critical in helping others.

Under the IIMPACT model, every girl's learning level rises at intervals of three months and therefore by the end of a year, she essentially progresses through one primary standard class. The entire primary school academic process of IIMPACT is divided into several steps for the next 4-5 years till the time each girl in the Learning Centre/village completes Class V. Figure 13 gives data on girls' learning levels from 2009 onwards.

Figure 13: GIRLS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN IIMPACT



Step 1: Foundation Phase

As mentioned earlier, each girl enrolled is evaluated at the entry level. Using various educational techniques, the teacher assesses the educational knowledge of each girl at the time of enrollment. This evaluation gives us an idea of the learning levels (mostly zero levels) of the enrolled girls and helps in formation of learning groups by ability.

Step 2: Entry-Level Course Delivery

The classes usually start with an entry-level course. This course is designed to equip girls with basic knowledge and competencies in language. The course is dedicated to techniques and teaching through poems, songs and physical and mental exercises. The girls learn to read and write alphabets and form words and learn the numbers from 1 to 100. This usually lasts from three to six months depending on the aptitude of the teacher, learning pace and the group's composition (the presence of dropouts in the group tends to speed up the process). The entry course mainly equips girls to join the higher level of education, i.e. Class I of primary school.

Step 3: The Primary School Curriculum Course

This course starts after each girl successfully completes the entry-level course. Girls not able to complete the entry-level course undergo the same course in a different group. With variations, the course focuses on four subjects: Local Language, Mathematics, Environment, and a second language. The teachers have to make an effort to ensure that children learn at a uniform pace. Despite all the efforts, there are always one or two girls who are not able to attain the desired competencies in all subjects.

This leads to Multi-Group Teaching, which means that teachers manage children in groups of different learning levels. For example, a girl may be in Class I Level II group in Mathematics, but in Class I Level I group in Hindi if she has not attained the desired standard in that subject. Each class course is divided into four levels and evaluations are done on the completion of each level. Each level generally covers three months of the school year.

Step 4: Periodic Pupil Evaluation

Academic evaluation of every child attending the Learning Centre is an essential part of ensuring that the high quality of education is maintained. A systematic individual child based pupil evaluation system that does not undermine the confidence of the child, yet assesses the learning achievement of the child, is an integral part of the Learning Centre management. There are no traditional examinations or tests. The pupil evaluation system is used to determine which group within the multi-grade system should each child join for each of the subjects. The evaluation is based on the

Comprehensive Continuous Evaluation system advocated by the Right to Education Act and the Central Advisory Board on Education. Learning from the spirit of this system, IIMPACT has devised a way that tests the teacher along with the child. The system ensures that the teachers cover each topic/concept during the course of teaching. The system also rejects the rote method of learning and promotes conceptual clarity. Children are able to understand the concepts rather than just pass an examination.

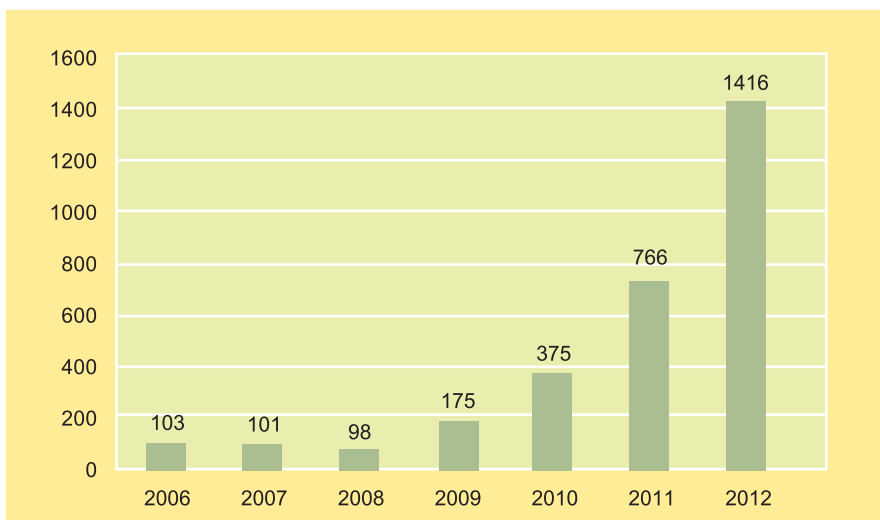
Step 5: Mainstreaming and Continuing Education

As and when children develop Class V competencies, they are guided to take the government school examination and enrolled into the local middle school. Initially this percentage was low even for girls from the IIMPACT Centres. Dropout by girls is the single factor undermining the performance of the formal education system at the primary level today. In the entire country, less than 50% of all children enrolled in Class I pass out from Class V and get into Class 6.

IIMPACT Learning Centres have achieved a very high percentage of continuity in education. Each child enrolled at IIMPACT has a potential to reach Class V and get enrolled in Class VI in formal schools, as there are very few dropouts. Under a systemic progression of children through one learning level every three months, even the slowest child has potential to reach Class V within five years of first enrollment. Due to this strength of IIMPACT, over 3,000 girls have passed Class V, completing an entire primary school cycle at the Learning Centres.

Figure 14 illustrates how this key performance indicator is improving year after year. At this rate it is expected that Class V graduates will treble in the next two years.

Figure 14: GIRLS PASSING CLASS V FROM IIMPACT LEARNING CENTRES EACH YEAR





4.3 Transition into Formal Schooling and Higher Education

As the graduating class begins to prepare for their Class V examinations, the girls need to spend a lot of time studying to gain the confidence to complete these successfully. Making performance in the formal examination of Class V an explicit performance indicator for the Learning Centres and an explicit task for the teachers has helped in the mainstreaming of the girls. When it is time for the girls to prepare for their Class V exams, the teachers take a great amount of ownership in providing opportunities outside of their everyday classes to ensure success. They offer extra classes and arrange parent meetings to create a fruitful learning environment outside the normal classroom timings and even at the homes of their students.

If the foundation is strong the future will also be good. Girls passing out from IIMPACT Learning Centres have great potential to continue in higher education. Currently, about 76% of girls completing Class V from IIMPACT are continuing their education into higher classes. Sixteen girls are now studying in college. We should be mindful that these girls belong to the most marginalized communities in the villages. Most are from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and minority communities. Most of them are children of landless farmers, marginalized farmers and construction labourers. Most of them are first generation learners in their families. Most of them are from groups vulnerable to social evils such as early child marriage and forced migration, as in Jharkhand and Kishanganj in Bihar and vulnerable to human trafficking as in South 24 Parganas of West Bengal.

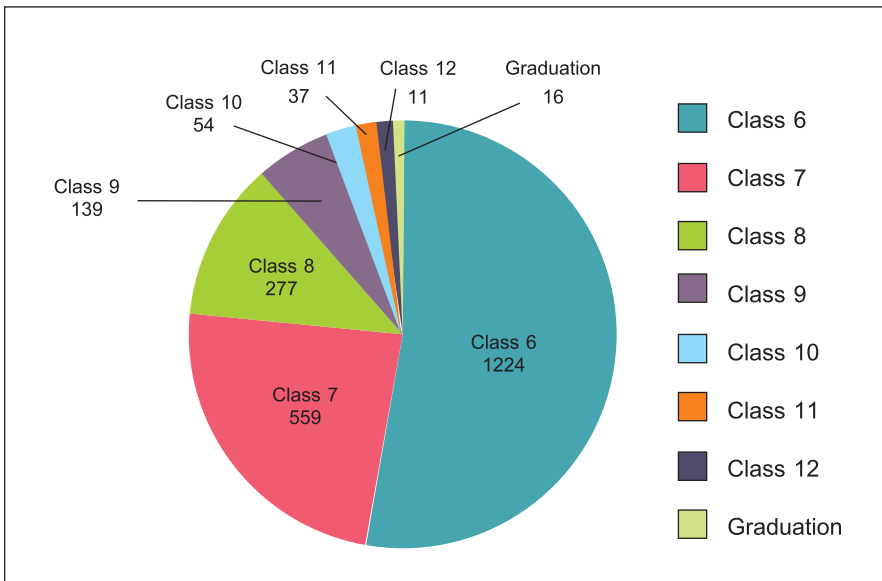


These girls have been through all manner of difficulties but now are showing what they are capable of achieving. As proposed, if supported, every child has the potential for good results. These girls are a living example of this, as year after year they overcome all hurdles.

Also what is remarkable is the fact that each of these girls has achieved great clarity in the subjects and concepts and this is no mean feat. An examination-less education

system is a challenging concept for many people to grasp. But IIMPACT has truly understood and implemented this system to actually augment children's quality of learning, so that they perform well not just at primary level but also at every level in their life. The system's success is borne out by the performance of girls who enter Class VI in the formal schooling system, as illustrated by Figure 15.

Figure 15: GIRLS CONTINUING THEIR EDUCATION AFTER PASSING FROM IIMPACT



A journey that begins at an IIMPACT Learning Centre, in the midst of a cluster of their mud houses, is progressing beyond the boundaries of their homes, their villages and even their cities as the girls join college and aim for jobs one day.

5 CHANGING SITUATION OF THE GIRL CHILD

5.1 Outcomes for the Girl Child after the IIMPACT Experience

Learning at an IIMPACT Centre has brought positive news for girls from all locations.

- She has more respect now as an individual as she can read and write well
- Her parents are more caring towards her as they are more sensitized now to her needs
- She is more aware of her health and hygiene and takes care of herself as well as her family
- Her confidence level is high as she knows many poems and can read the newspaper to her Grandfather
- The Panchayat elders and other people in the village ask her to read a letter or fill in an application form
- She has made the entire village proud by winning an admission into college
- She still sometimes works alongside the family, but now she counts the money that her father earns and points out if there is a rupee less than expected
- She travels to school along with many other girls of her village who study with her so she is not afraid now
- She rides her bicycle to school (which she got as an award from the school)
- Though her sister was married by her age, her parents are not thinking about her marriage before she completes college



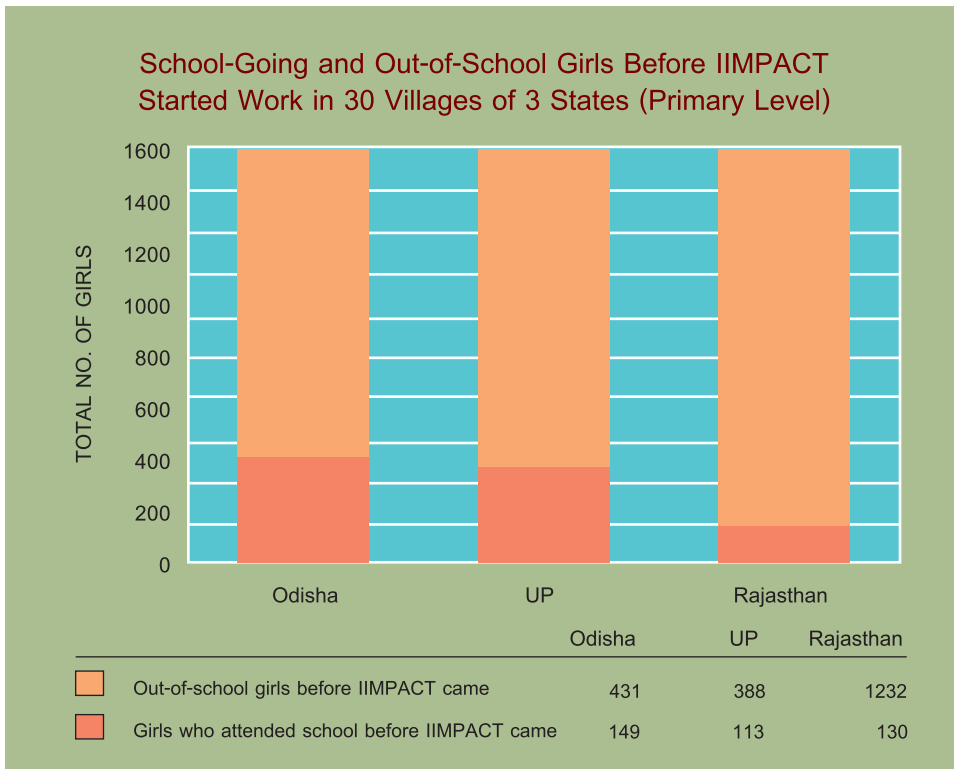
The list of 'anecdotes' is long, but in a nutshell IIMPACT has impacted her and her family's entire life. In fact, starting a Learning Centre impacts the very core of perennial problems of girls' education in the village.

This conclusion is supported by data from a recent study conducted to judge the impact of girls' education in 30 villages of UP, Rajasthan and Odisha.



As seen in Figure 16 below, approximately 84% of the girls were out-of-school before IIMPACT started Learning Centres in these villages.

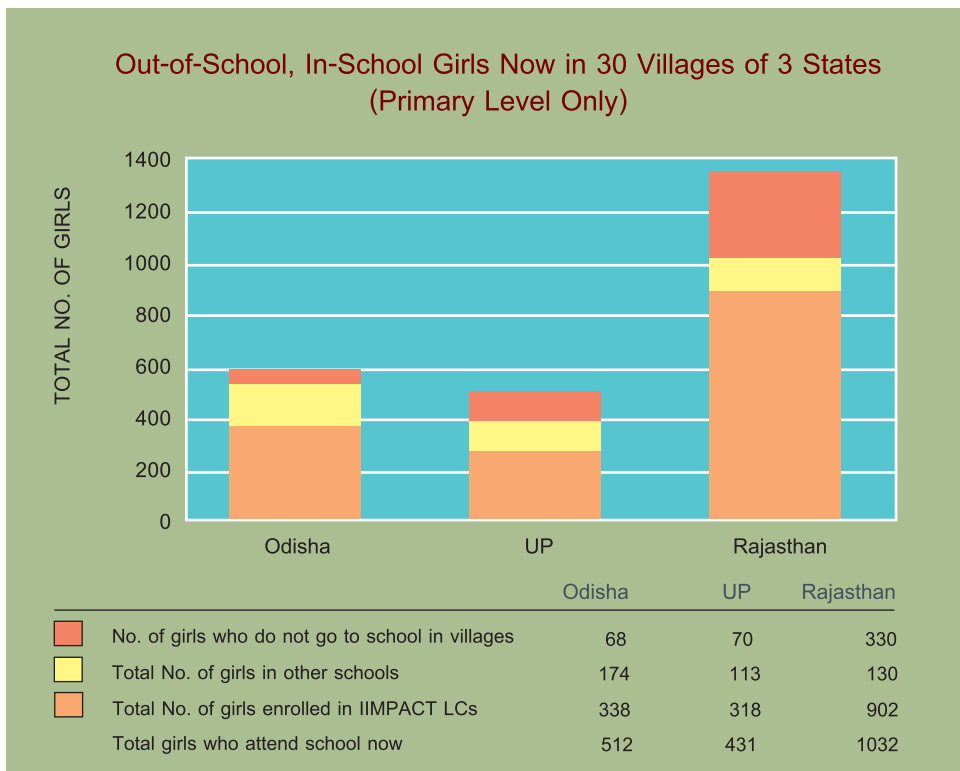
Figure 16: OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS BEFORE IIMPACT STEPPED IN





The study revealed that there has been a significant decline in the number of out-of-school girls and a simultaneous increase in the number of girls who are enrolled in schools or IIMPACT Learning Centres. A majority of girls (79% approximately) have enrolled in IIMPACT Learning Centres and the number of children in other neighbourhood schools has also increased, as shown in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS AFTER IIMPACT WORKED FOR 3-5 YEARS

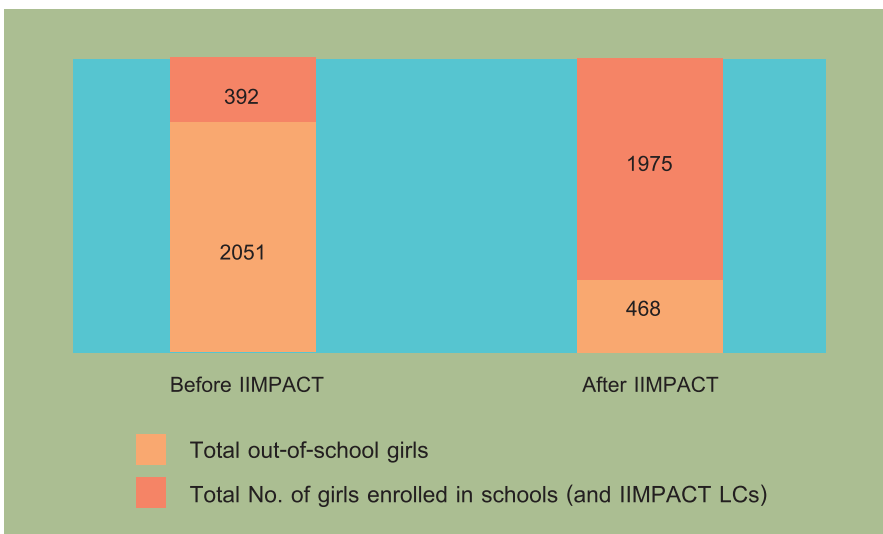


5.2 Broader IIMPACT on Out-of-School Girls

Figure 18 gives a clearer picture that the overall number of out-of-school girls has significantly declined after IIMPACT has started its Learning Centres in the villages. This data is collected from 30 Villages, ten each in three States of India – Odisha, UP and Rajasthan – where IIMPACT works and is representative of over 750 villages in nine States of India where IIMPACT has implemented the same programme in the last ten years. Girls' participation in schooling has increased from 16% to 80% – we believe this is a direct outcome of the IIMPACT programme.



Figure 18: IMPACT OF IIMPACT ON THE PROBLEM OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS

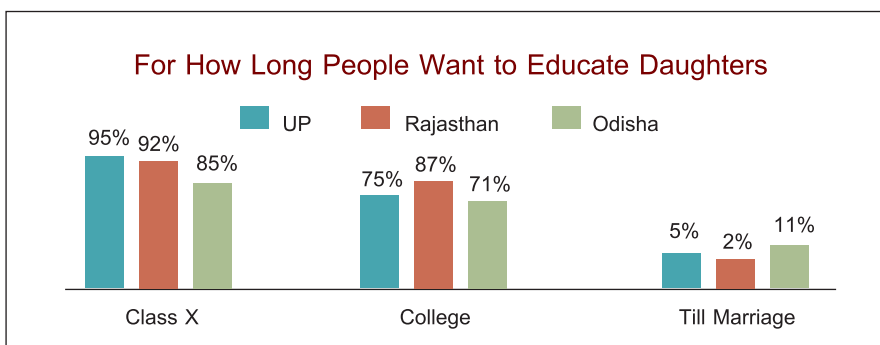


6 CHANGING FAMILY ATTITUDES

The villages where IIMPACT has worked have witnessed significant change in attitudes towards girls' education.

6.1 Parent's Attitude to Duration of Education for Daughters

Of the women interviewed in UP whose daughters were studying at IIMPACT Centre, 95% responded by saying, 'Class X at least'; with 75% ready to educate daughters up to college. 87% in Odisha and 71% in Rajasthan wish college education for their daughters. Only five percent in UP, 11% in Rajasthan and two percent in Odisha said that they would educate their daughters only until marriage.



6.2 Attitudes to Age of Marriage of Girls

We have noticed a very big change on the issue of early marriage of girls, especially in villages of UP and Rajasthan. While most people in UP believed that they will get their daughter married only when she completes 21 years of age, most in Rajasthan have not planned their daughters' marriage before she completes 18 years.

6.3. Attitudes on Treatment of Girls versus Boys

Few parents will ever accept the fact of differential treatment of boys and girls. Only ten percent of Odisha's respondents and 35% of Rajasthan's agreed there was some discrimination against the girls in their family. Generally girls in the villages are put to work (domestic, agriculture, livelihood, sibling care) from a very early stage in their lives, while boys enjoy a superior status as heroes of the house and village. IIMPACT has demonstrated that meaningful education has the potential to change this attitude, making girls heroes in the eyes of parents.

The positive sign is that all respondents in all areas basically believed that a girl could do better if supported properly. This increasing belief may be a critical factor that has helped IIMPACT achieve its objectives in educating their girls.

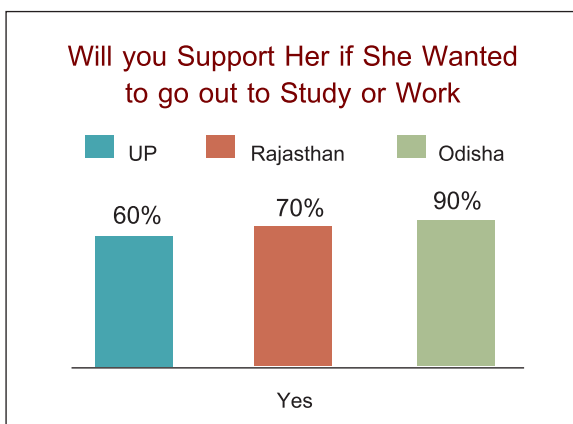
Rubina Khatoon is a bright girl studying at an IIMPACT Learning Centre. One day her mother came to meet the teacher and said that she wanted to talk to IIMPACT regarding their daughter. She got this opportunity on 18th February, 2009 during an IIMPACT team visit.

She said: "My husband died 10 years back and I have no source of income. How will I educate three children when I barely have anything to eat? I do not send my daughter to my mother's place also because I feel she will miss her classes. She has learnt so much and she teaches her younger brothers at home too. I am illiterate, do not know how to read and write, but Rubina does all the calculation work. She keeps the account of the money I earn when I work in the fields. I thank 'Allah' every day for setting up an IIMPACT Learning Centre near my house. My present is dark but my future looks bright. I will not get my daughter married until she is a Graduate (BA)".

Her words brought tears to our eyes and strengthened our belief in this work. Rubina's higher studies are sponsored by ING-Vysya Foundation now.

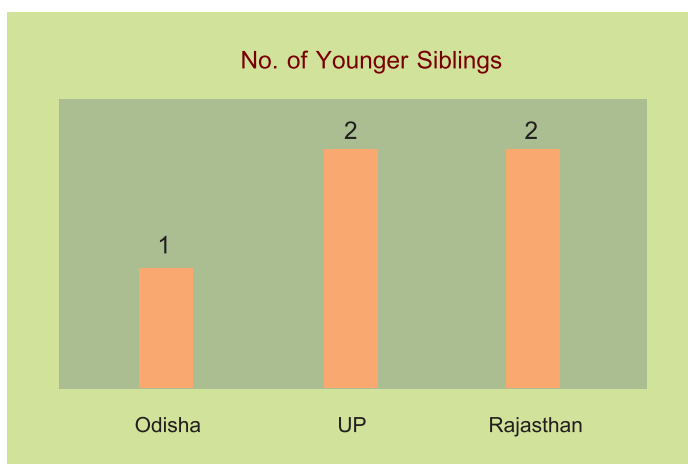
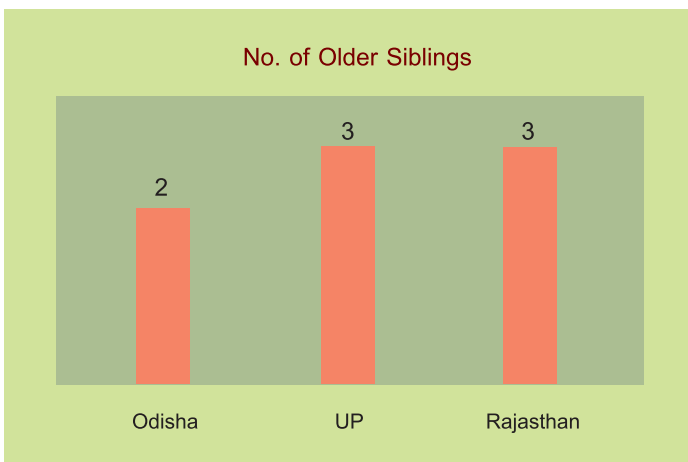
6.4 Support for Daughters if they Desired to go out of the Village to Study or to do a Job

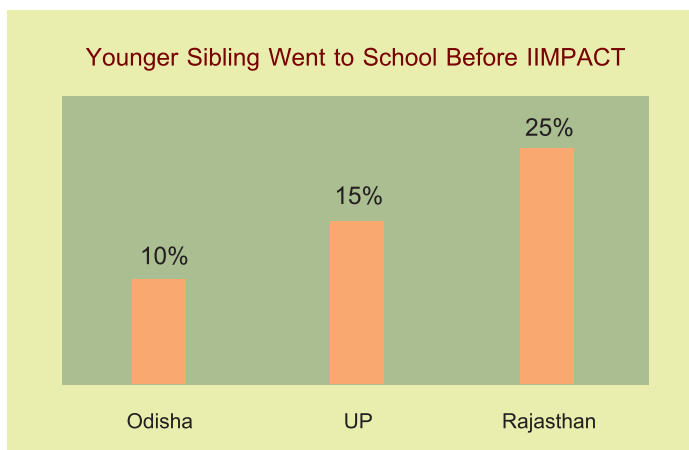
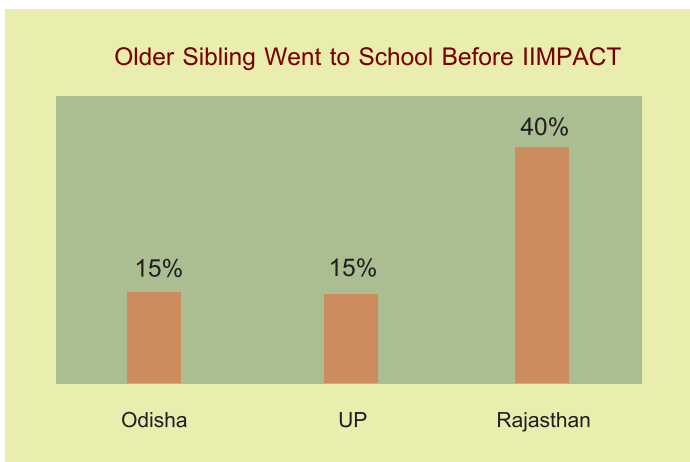
90% respondents in villages where IIMPACT works in Odisha agreed that they would send their daughters out of the village (even to a large city) if she wanted to study further or took up a job. Many of the respondents mentioned that earlier they used to fear traffickers when any daughter was taken out of the village for work. But with the way girls are educated at IIMPACT, their fear has vanished and they are confident that the girls will always be safe. To the same query, in UP 60%, and in Rajasthan 70% of respondents gave affirmative answers.



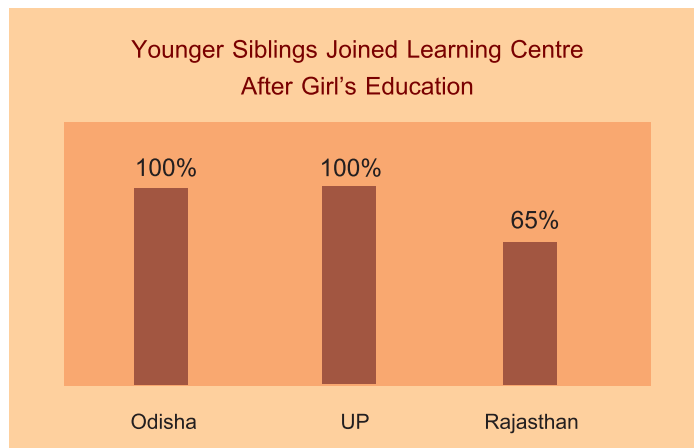
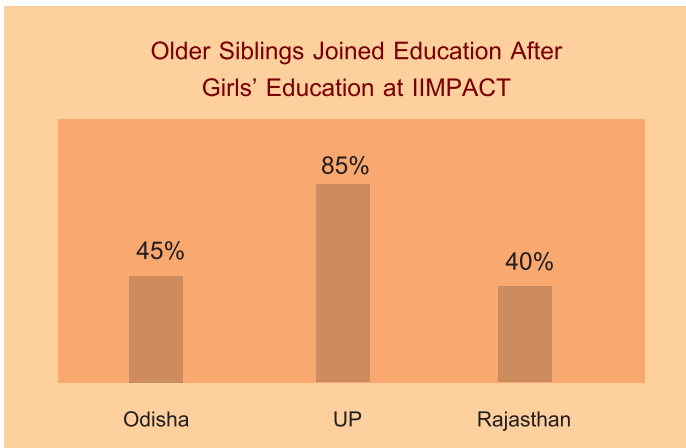
6.5 Impact on Siblings of Girls at Learning Centres

To further assess the change that has been brought about in the attitude of the families towards the girl child, data from the same study shows how the girls' attending the Learning Centre have changed parental attitude not only towards them but towards all their siblings. The practice of not sending the older girls to school is widely prevalent in Indian rural society. The older the girl, lower the chances that she will be sent to school. On an average, each of the 600 IIMPACT girls covered under the study had 2-3 older siblings, both boys and girls, and before the Learning Centres started their rate of going to school was very low (15% each in Odisha and UP and 40% in Rajasthan). Similarly they each had 1-2 younger siblings as well and a large percentage of them were also not in school or any child care centre. In Odisha just 10% younger siblings of the girls interviewed went to school, while in UP it was 15% and Rajasthan 25%.





We found that about 56% of older siblings and 83% of younger siblings joined education after one of the daughters of the family started attending the IIMPACT Learning Centre. While many of the older siblings, mostly males, joined primary schools, younger siblings joined IIMPACT as well as the primary schools. Many older girls also joined IIMPACT Learning Centres, though many of the older girls took a longer time to join their younger sisters in the Learning Centre. This happened mainly in cases where parents took a longer time to decide, after a lot of cajoling by the teacher. But parents were convinced everywhere, sooner or later.



6.6 Reasons for Parents Deciding to Send all their Children to Study

We received multiple answers to this question:

- Good quality of education
- Realization of the importance of education after sensitization by the IIMPACT teacher
- Emphasis on girls education by the Education Committee formed by IIMPACT at the village level
- Regularity of the classes
- Demonstration of outcomes of education
- Development of the girls beyond education: care, health, hygiene and etiquette.

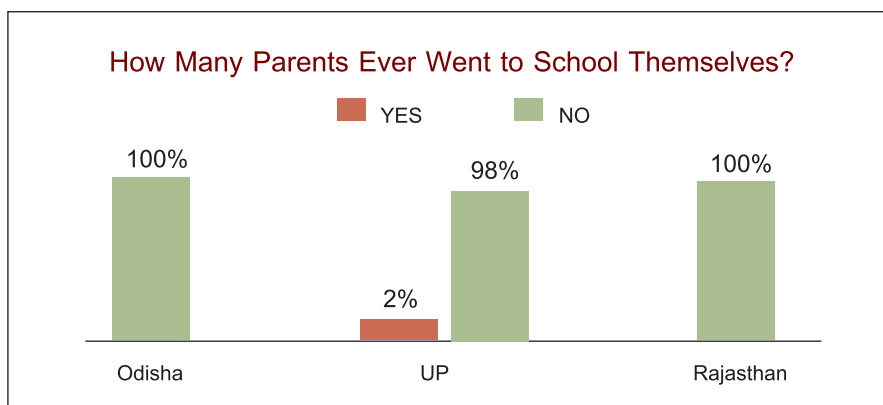
7 TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

7.1 Engaging the Community

Transforming communities represents how forces at the local level can create and strengthen positive change. IIMPACT, from the very beginning, not only realized this potential of village communities but also created a valued space for them to engage meaningfully and take things forward. In the early days of IIMPACT it used to be tough even getting community members to sit together to discuss education, let alone sanctioning an all-girls school. Now, in village after village, community members are helping establish and taking responsibility for the Learning Centre for girls. We have come a long way. What has really made them change so much? We believe it was the realization of the very basic need that was unfulfilled: Education.

Whilst IIMPACT's experiences come from many diverse regions, communities and geographies, there was one common, underlying initial belief – girls were not seen as having the potential for higher education. In several villages of UP the Madrasa education was preferred as a mode to keep girls engaged if they were not helping in domestic chores. In Rajasthan, they were taking care of cattle and fetching water if they still had time from care of younger siblings. In Odisha, they were roaming the forests the whole day in search of anything that had fallen from trees – the so-called non-timber forest produce that forest dwelling tribals survive on.

All that has changed now in the 750 villages where IIMPACT has been working. Now when we sit with the communities in these villages to review progress, we are surprised at how far they have come from the time they made fun of people promising them education. They gather to go to the District Collector's office to demand more teachers for their local primary school. They decide upon the design they want for their Learning Centre being newly constructed from the money they have collected. And the calls for a higher education centre in their village are becoming louder.



In May 2007 there was a dispute between the Meo and Prajapat communities regarding a community hand pump, in one of the villages where IIMPACT worked. The Learning Centre was near the Meo community area. The Prajapat community members lifted the rooftop of the Centre and placed it in their community area. They declared that the Learning Centre would go ahead only on their own land otherwise not. A representative from IIMPACT went to the village and tried to bring the two communities together in a meeting. But it was not easy as both the communities were at loggerheads. Finally, through persistent effort, the two sides came to the meeting. Our teacher made an impressive speech requesting them to keep the Learning Centre out of these disputes as it was affecting the children's education. After listening to the teacher, the warring members of both the communities realized their mistake and felt very sorry. Soon after, the roof was placed back and the Centre is still running in the village. There has been no dispute between the two communities ever since.



7.2 What Makes a Community Join Hands in a Girl's Education Initiative?

A number of things appealed to the village community. Most realized the value of education, and became supportive when they saw regularity, punctuality and quality in teaching. Some were convinced by the visits of the teachers, while the rest felt that it was a good idea to have a school for girls in the neighborhood so that the girls will have some place to spend time.

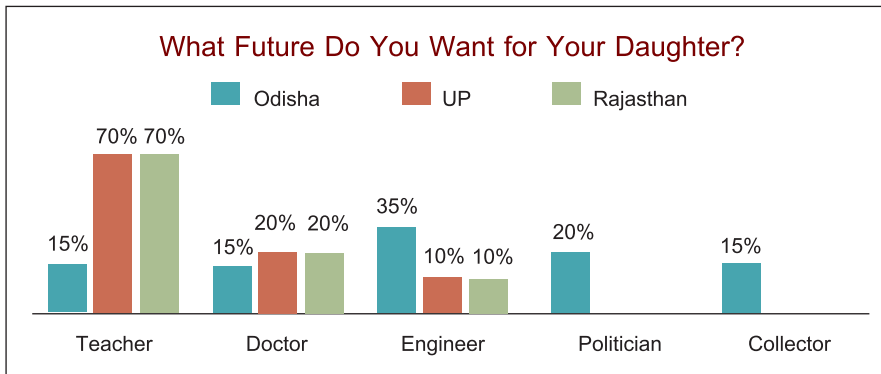
It was just a matter of time before their casual involvement gave way to serious engagement in the management of Learning Centres. A majority of people in IIMPACT villages are connected with this work in some way or the other. They take care of the maintenance of the Centres or help in upkeep and construction. Many of them supply construction materials and other items from time to time. Almost all whose daughters are enrolled, buy stationery, school bags and other educational materials that they had never known before. If any one child is missing from the Centre, the entire support group becomes anxious as they love the regularity and punctuality of this Centre.

The 700+ Village Education Committees formed by IIMPACT are now a formal body in these villages to look after not just the Learning Centre but the entire issue of education in their village under the Right to Education Act.

The IIMPACT Learning Centre at Ramdwari village in UP had more than the specified number of girls and was always crowded. There was lack of space in the village and no such place in the village where children could study. In February 2009 an opportunity arose and one big shed was set up with a paved floor by the village community members in an open ground in the middle of the village. The village community collectively contributed to the shed's construction as they wanted their daughters to study in a comfortable place.

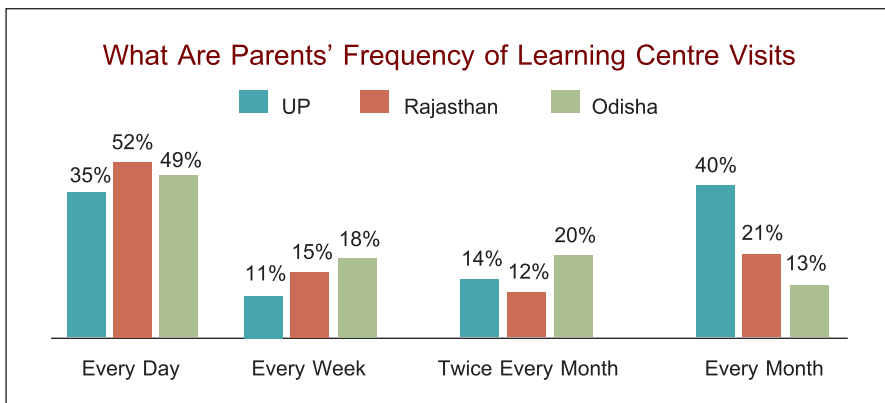
7.3 What Future do Parents want for their Daughters?

Most parents say they want their daughter to become a good person. They are unified in saying that education has definitely changed their daughters. Now they see their daughters as more punctual and confident in whatever they do. Their dreams are now taking shape. If given only one option they mostly opt for the job of a teacher if their daughters have to take up a career, but a good percentage of people feel that their daughter could become an engineer, a doctor or even a politician, someday.



Especially appreciative are the women of the family, the mothers of the enrolled girls. Being mothers they were always anxious about their daughters' future. With the IIMPACT Learning Centre so near they can always go and see what she is doing at the Centre. We conducted a study to know how many visits women make to the Learning Centres. We were happy to see their involvement. Our survey shows 45% of the mothers visit the Centre daily, 15% visit the Centre once a week; 15% visit fortnightly and the balance 25% visit at least once a month. This shows their high level of involvement in Learning Centres and the level of their awareness now.

To some indirect questions, more than 80% of the women replied that they had never visited a government school before. Many have now started visiting government schools also to monitor the progress made by their children there.





CONCLUSION



The detailed account of the journey of IIMPACT over the last ten years throws up many interesting learnings as well as questions for the future. It is self-evident from all the sources of information gathered during the review study that a focused intervention that provides quality primary level education for the rural girl child, very near her home, has an impact that goes far beyond just literacy. Further, a multiplier impact is visible across all contexts, irrespective of what community, which location, and

what kind of agency is implementing the programme. The model of basic education provided through the IIMPACT Learning Centres, that includes a methodology of systematic multi-grade teaching-learning allows the girl child to continue education beyond the primary stage by not only motivating her, but also transforming how the family and immediate community value education of women. The scalability of the model, combined with the fact that the formal schooling system is not going to reach or be accessed by every girl child in the country in the medium term, offers further potential for growth of alternative models within given resources and emergence of grassroots action groups.

However, questions remain for the immediate future that IIMPACT will need to address internally and in consultation with its partners, donors and well-wishers. What happens when a Learning Centre eventually closes down? The question of gradually transferring the full costs and running of the Learning Centres to the community is being experimented with and should evolve into a locally adaptable model. How do we improve the Learning Centre model to ensure that 100% of the girls who join complete their education up to Class V and beyond? For this what are the kinds of value added services that IIMPACT as an organization should provide across Centres and locations to strengthen the programme? IIMPACT has identified Teacher Training as a key to consistency in quality education and hence we are investing in setting up a Resource Centre for training teachers from the Learning Centres. Whether IIMPACT should provide continuing educational and financial assistance to those girls who are going on to secondary education is still an open question.

For now, this review report gives us confidence that over the last ten years both the destination and the direction of IIMPACT's work has been fruitful.

