

**Education for the Empowerment of
Girls with Special Focus on
Adolescent Girls**

Final Progress Report

UNDP Project – Supported by IKEA

Implementing NGO
Centre for Rural Education and Development Action

CREDA

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Executive Summary

1. CREDA implemented a project titled 'Education for the Empowerment of Girls with Special Focus on Adolescent Girls' with support from UPDP-IKEA from October 2000 for two year. While the main phase of the project ended in September 2002, a follow-up phase continued till December 2002.
2. The overall objective of the project was to get the children out of work and successfully integrate them into school as a strategy for poverty alleviation through a process of social mobilisation. The main immediate objective was: "To ensure that 500 adolescent girls withdrawn from all types of work including potential child labour, in 25 villages in Halia and Lalganj blocks of Mirzapur district get their basic right to education through 10 community schools".
3. A number of activities were planned and carried out for attaining these activities. They were:
 - Selection of villages
 - Contacts and orientation
 - Intensive meetings in the villages
 - Formation of child labour vigilance committees
 - Formation of groups for social mobilisation like mothers' groups, mothers-in-law groups, women's literacy groups and parents' groups
 - Selection and training of instructors
 - Girls survey and enrolment
 - Provision of mid-day meals
 - Conduct of final examination by the government's authorities
 - Mainstreaming of girls
 - Running of education centres for adult women
4. Almost all the girls enrolled in the educational centres were first generation learners, that is, no one in their families had ever been to a school. Moreover, these girls were from almost similar socio-economic-cultural setting. Many of them were engaged in economic activities or supporting their families by sharing household work and thus facilitating their mothers to earn something for their families.
5. Despite this background not only all the girls passed examination conducted by the government authorities, but also most of them passed these examination in first or second divisions.
6. Almost 80 per cent of the girls took admission in the nearest junior high schools. Those who discontinued studies did so because of parents' reluctance in sending the girls to schools having co-education, distance of the school, safety and security of adolescent girls, *pardah* system and social taboos and unwillingness of parents for continuing education

7. The authorities of the schools in which the girls are studying did not find much of difference between girls from CREDA schools and students coming from mainstream of education except that students from CREDA schools were academically not at par with the mainstreamed students, who had completed five years of education.
8. Despite its scale the project has furthered a number of government policies and programmes. It has contributed to the Government of India's policy on Universalisation of Education. By taking out child labour and educating them, it has furthered Prohibition of Child Labour, which is one of the government's policies and those of United Nations Conventions. Some of the other policies furthered by the project were Right of Child Policy, Reaching Out to Vulnerable Groups and Communities through Education and Targeting Worst Forms of Child Labour in Hazardous Conditions. It has removed 113 girls from hazardous industry of carpet weaving and *beedi*-making. These girls form almost 23 per cent of the total girls who were weaned away from different kind of labour.
9. The implementation of the project has led to the following critical learning:
 - People's participation is key to the success of any project involving mass mobilisation. Taking out such a large number of girls engaged in various works, admitting them to schools and then mainstreaming them was possible only because of people's participation, more particularly their parents. No matter how meagre their contribution was, the fact is that these girls were contributing to the economy of their families and if not contributing directly then indirectly by taking off burden from the shoulders of their mothers so they could earn something for the family.
 - Involvement of a large number of stakeholders like panchayat representatives, government officials, etc., adds to success of the project and its follow-up. Girls in such a large number could be admitted to regular junior high schools only because of strong rapport built with the education department officials and school authorities. Otherwise authorities of overburdened schools would have simply refused to add to their burden by enrolling the girls in such a large number.
 - Constitution of different group for social mobilisation goes a long way in ensuring people's participation in the project activities. Various groups formed in this project were parents' groups, mothers' groups, girls' groups, mothers-in-law groups, women literacy groups and adolescent groups. Mere formation of the groups is not sufficient – their regular meetings are also a must and this has been done in the project.
 - Appropriate training of the selected human resource leads to better implementation of the project. Repeated trainings refresh skills of the selected human resource.
 - In any educational effort, more time must be given to teaching. For the children it may be better to add one more year to the existing two so as to build their solid foundation.
 - Any educational effort with adults, more particularly with women, should be followed by appropriate follow-up. If this is not done, literacy skills so laboriously acquired are fast de-learned.

1. About the Project

CREDA implemented a project entitled 'Education for the Empowerment of Girls with Special Focus on Adolescent Girls' with support from UNDP-IKEA from October 2000 for two years. While main phase of the project ended in September 2002, a follow-up phase continued till December 2002. The project was oriented towards getting children out of work and into school through the process of social mobilisation. It was focused on adolescent girls, the category of children of the poor who are the most disadvantaged in terms of access to education. The present report details out major activities and processes that took place during the implementation of the project and draws upon critical learning for use in further projects.

1.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the project was to get the children out of work and successfully integrate them into schools as a strategy for poverty alleviation through a process of social mobilisation. The immediate objectives were:

1. To undertake the process of identification with community participation in 25 villages in Halia and Lalganj blocks of Mirzapur district, in order to get the children who are neither in the government primary schools nor in CREDA supported Community Cottage Schools, into the school system
2. To ensure that 500 adolescent girls withdrawn from all type of work including potential child labour in 25 villages in Halia and Lalganj blocks of Mirzapur district get their basic right to education through 10 community schools

1.2. Activities

For the immediate objective 1, the following activities were planned:

1. Strengthen linkages with other ongoing projects and continuously educate various stakeholders in elimination of child labour, child right and education
2. Undertake the process of children and adolescent girls for their education
3. Sensitise the community against recruitment and supply of child labour
4. Organise discussion meetings with different stakeholders
5. Ensure people's participation and involvement in respect of implementation of the project activities
6. Establish close contacts with women especially mothers and mothers-in-law of adolescent girls and working children and hold discussions on various issues and prevailing situations and help them to analyse the state of deprivation of adolescent girls/working children

7. Build perspective of women and child labour in the area on issue such as human rights, child rights, working and living conditions, exploitation of children, health and nutritional status, educational entitlements and the behavioural patterns within the family and community
8. Inculcate knowledge about motherhood, childcare, reproductive health, nutrition, personal hygiene and sensitivity of the relationship between mother and daughters
9. Set up 10 child labour vigilance committees to pursue the parents to withdraw from all types of work, build pressure against migration of the children from bordering villages and mobilise village community against child labour and for enrolment of the children in various governmental and non-governmental schools
10. Organise discussion group meetings between mothers and daughters in various project villages

For the immediate objective 2, the following two sets of activities were planned:

Set 1

1. Identification and recruitment of para-teachers for 10 community schools
2. Orientation and training of newly recruited teachers
3. Campaign among the community, especially mothers and adolescent girls to persuade them to admit the girls in the schools
4. Enrolment of identified children into community schools
5. Procurement of educational material for the enrolled children
6. Drawing up of curriculum based on the local conditions and specific areas, critical to the overall development of the enrolled children
7. Procurement of nutrition material
8. Provision of supplementary nutrition facilities to enrolled children
9. Encouragement to the education of children and to develop the habit of social respect, personal hygiene, discipline and regularity in schools, among the children
10. Impart family life education to enrolled children, especially adolescent girls
11. Organise periodic parent teacher meetings to discuss the progress of the enrolled children and suitability of the syllabus and teaching methodologies
12. Establishment of rapport with government officials and ensuring their involvement in the project

Set 2

1. Identification of 500 adult women in selected villages and organising them into 20 groups
2. Identification of teachers to undertake evening classes
3. Encouragement to High School children to teach mothers
4. Provision of teaching/learning material and setting up of libraries for them

1.3. Outputs

For the immediate objective 1, the following outputs were earmarked:

- Community leaders, panchayats, parents, employers of child labour, school teachers, local NGOs, CBOs, government officials, child labour, potential child labour and children mobilised on the issue of getting children out of work and into school and gender specific focus on the problems of adolescent girls

For the immediate objective 2, the following outputs were decided for set 1 of activities:

- 500 working/out of school adolescent girls including underage daughter-in-law, and potential child labour educated

For set 2 of activities the following outputs were decided:

- At least 500 adult women received adult education

1.4. Project Strategy

The project had three-pronged strategy. Firstly, 10 community cottage schools were set up exclusively for girls of 12 to 15 years age group. This target group was difficult to get out of work and considerable mobilisation efforts were made, particularly with the mothers. Secondly, efforts were made to empower the enrolled children socially and educationally. For this, additional inputs were provided in terms of education and awareness building. Thirdly, in view of the demand from mothers' groups for getting literacy competency, high school children were encouraged to provide educational inputs to the women in their villages.

2. Progress and Processes

CREDA was already working in the two blocks where the project was proposed to be implemented. Community and other stakeholders were already aware of the organisation's work. This proved to be an advantage from the very beginning for partnership with the stakeholders and ensure their participation in the project activities. The activities commenced with selection of the villages for implementation of the project.

2.1. Adolescent and Young Girls

2.1.1. Selection of Villages

For this, the following selection criteria was adopted:

- Young and adolescent girls engaged in different types of works including wage work
- Area where girls are engaged in hazardous work such as carpet weaving and *beedi*-making
- Willingness of community to participate and support the project
- Readiness of parents to make adjustments after their children are withdrawn from all types of work and put into schools
- Willingness of the parents to relieve the girl child from all types of work and ready to send them to the schools, named as Kishori Balika Vidyalayas (KBVs)

Based on the above criteria, 25 villages were selected for implementation of the project in two blocks viz. Lalganj and Halia. These villages were then clustered and education centres were opened in 10 of them.

2.1.2. Contacts and Orientation

After the selection of the villages, the project staff made extensive visits to the project villages to hold meetings with different stakeholders and also to contact the community/panchayat leaders to ensure their support and cooperation. During the field visits many concerned people in the community offered their support in the form of shed and land to open KBVs. All the gram pradhans of the selected villages committed their full support to the programme in their respective panchayats.

A number of meetings (for details of all the meetings held during the project period see Table 1) were organised in the selected villages to mobilise, sensitise and encourage the people, especially women, to support the programme by providing space, voluntary labour and construction of temporary thatched or mud structures for running KBVs. Parents of adolescent girls, women, panchayat representatives, school teachers, employers of girl child, etc., participated in these meetings. They promised their full support for the cause of education of adolescent girls. The names of gram pradhans who pledged their support are given in Table 2 whereas locations of the schools are presented in Table 3.

Table 1: Details of meetings held

Sl. No.	Name of committee	No. of meetings held
1.	School management committee	100
2.	Village child labour vigilance committee	86
3.	Volunteer groups	63
4.	Women groups	63
5.	Parents groups	214

Table 2: Gram pradhans extending support to the programme

Sl. No.	Location of school	Name of panchayat	Name of gram pradhan
1.	Bami I	Bami	Mr Vishwanath
2.	Tulsi	Tulsi	Mrs Phulwanti Devi
3.	Tendua Kalan	Tendua Kalan	Mrs Mahiba Devi
4.	Islampur	Tendua Khurd	Mr Ramgarib
5.	Rampur Vasit Ali	Rampur Vasit Ali	Mr Reyaz Ahmad
6.	Bami II	Bami	Mr Vishwanath
7.	Dhasra	Dhasra	Mrs Prabhawati
8.	Kothra Banjari Kalan	Halia	Mrs Amarawati Devi
9.	Babura Khurd	Babura Khurd	Mr Radheyshyam Patel
10.	Jogiabari	Mahugarh	Mr Nachal Kol

Table 3: Location of schools

Sl. No.	Location	Owners' names	Type of school premises
1.	Bami I	Mr Hafiz Khan	Hut
2.	Tulsi	Mr Nanhaku Ram Jaiswal	Hut
3.	Tendua Kalan	Mr Shyama Prasad	Hut
4.	Islampur	Mr Shamimullah	Building with local tiles
5.	Rampur Vasit Ali	Mr Wasim Khan	Pucca building
6.	Bami II	Mr Hori Lal	Hut
7.	Dhasra	Mr Taulan Vishwakarma	Hut
8.	Kothra Banjari Kalan	Mr Indrapati Vishwakarma	Hut
9.	Babura Khurd	Mr Abdul Majid	Building with local tiles
10.	Jogiabari	Mr Ishaque Khan	Mud wall home

2.1.3. Meetings

A number of meetings were organised with mothers, women's groups and mothers-in-law to discuss various issues related to girls, more particularly, adolescent girls. The issues discussed included:

- Rights of girl child and women
- Importance of education
- Ills of child labour
- Situation of women, girls and adolescent girls in the family
- Enrolment of girls in KBVs
- Progress of enrolled girls
- Management of KBVs
- Construction of schools sheds
- Special focus on girls education and regularity of the girls in schools

- Problem of wages inequality
- Child marriage
- Tree plantation, kitchen gardening, safe drinking water and personal hygiene
- Sensitivity of the relationship between mother and daughter

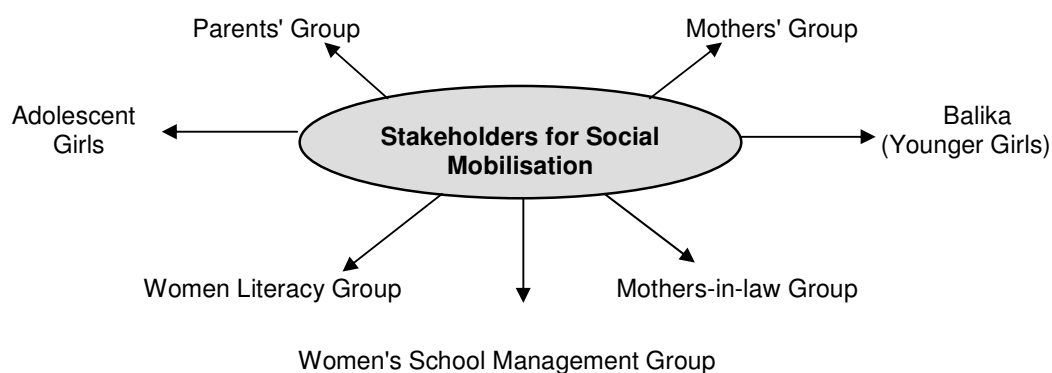
2.1.4. Child Labour Vigilance Committees

Ten Child Labour Vigilance Committees were formed in the project villages. Each vigilance committee had informal structure. Their main roles were as under:

- Close involvement in monitoring, supervision and running of KBVs
- Direct involvement in construction of school buildings
- Organising regular meetings in project villages
- Ensuring school enrolment and regular attendance of the enrolled children
- Checking for the dropouts and retention of the children in project villages
- Checking for the replacement of children at workplace
- Sensitising and pressurising the employer of children to relieve them from work and not to replace them by other children
- Close contact with loom holders and landlords
- Sensitising the family, community and mothers' groups on enrolment of the non-school-going children
- Close involvement with panchayat members on the objectives of the project

2.1.5. Groups for Social Mobilisation

A number of groups were formed for social mobilisation on various issues affecting the women in the project villages. They are diagrammatically presented below:



2.1.6. Survey and Enrolment

A survey was conducted in all the 10 identified villages to get critical background information about the girls. For this a survey format was developed and field-tested twice before use. The survey led to identification of a large number of potential adolescent and younger girls who had never been to schools. Discussions were held with their parents, more particularly, with mothers, to free these girls from all kinds of work so that they can study for their future. Having done so, they were enrolled in the schools in September, 2000. Caste wise and age wise break-ups of the data related to enrolled girls are given in Charts 1 and 2. Occupation of the families of the girls and their engagement in different activities are given in Tables 4 and 5.

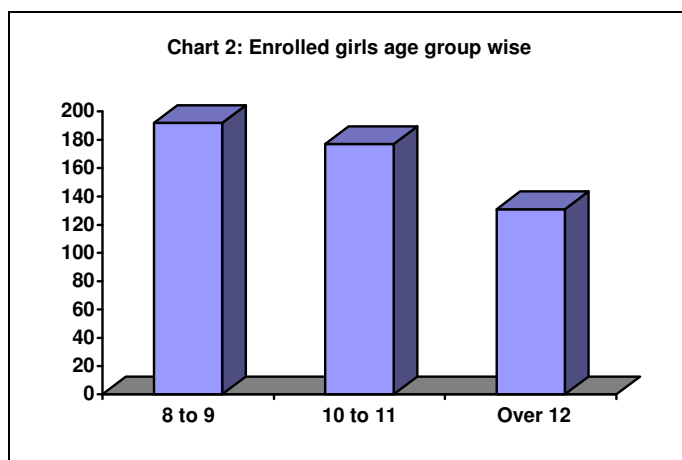
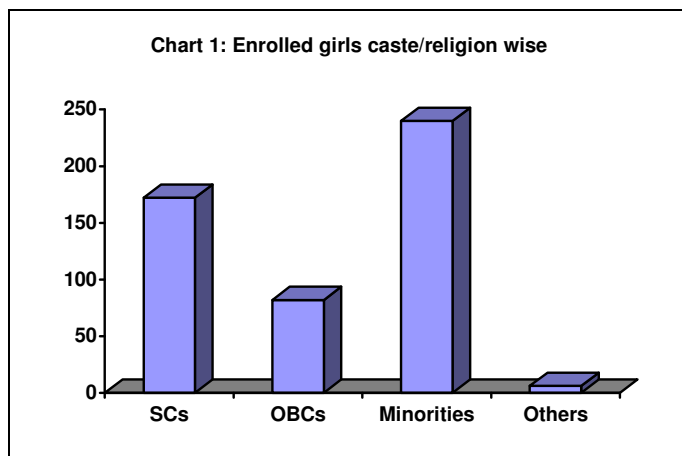


Table 4: Occupation of the families of girls

Sl. No.	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1.	Agriculture	107	21.4
2.	Agriculture labour	185	37.0
3.	Construction labour	96	19.2
4.	Carpet weaving	41	8.2
5.	Others/multiple activities	71	14.2
	Total	500	100.0

Table 5: Engagement of girls in different activities

Sl. No.	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1.	Cattle grazing	98	19.6
2.	Agriculture related	112	22.4
3.	Household work	54	10.8
4.	Carpet related	18	3.6
5.	Goat grazing	29	5.8
6.	Looking after younger siblings	12	2.4
7.	Fuelwood collection	15	3.0
8.	<i>Beedi</i> -making	95	19.0
9.	Others	67	13.4
	Total	500	100.0

2.1.7. Selection and Training of Instructors

The following points were born in mind while selecting the instructors:

- As far as possible, the instructors should be from the same village
- Instructors must be a woman
- Instructors should be minimum eighth standard pass
- Instructors must be accepted by the community
- Instructors must have ability to interact and motivate the parents for education of children
- Instructors must be ready to visit homes of enrolled girls
- Instructors must be ready to spare time for social mobilisation
- Instructors must be capable of interacting freely in classroom

Before selection, written test and interviews of the prospective instructors were taken. The list of instructors finally selected is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Details of selected instructors

Sl. No.	School location	Name of instructors	Qualification
1.	Bami I	Mrs Shabnam	Intermediate
2.	Tulsi	Mrs Sandhya Singh	Intermediate
3.	Tendua Kalan	Mrs Vijai Kumari	Graduate
4.	Islampur	Mrs Shahnaz Bano	Intermediate
5.	Rampur Vasit Ali	Mrs Nazma Begum	Junior High School
6.	Bami II	Mrs Geeta	Junior High School
7.	Dhasra	Mrs Sumitra Devi	High School
8.	Kothra Banjari Kalan	Mrs Urvashi Devi	High School
9.	Babura Khurd	Mrs Nirmala Chaurasia	Intermediate
10.	Jogiabari	Mrs Wahida Bano	Intermediate

The selected teachers were provided training for a week to develop pedagogical skills among them. The topics included methods of teaching, teacher-pupil relations, classroom behaviour, health and hygiene and audio-visual teaching methods. Refresher training was also provided, to the instructors.

2.1.8. Other Preparations

As per requirement, educational material was prepared, procured and distributed among the enrolled girls. Food material was also procured for giving cooked mid-day meal to the girls. For this purpose, necessary cooking utensils were purchased and services of cooks were hired in all the centres. The children brought their own utensils for eating mid-day meal.

2.1.9. More on Schools

The timing for KBVs was decided in consultation with the community. It was fixed as 6.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. in summers and 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. in winters. Syllabus of non-formal education prescribed by the UP government was followed uniformly in all the schools. Under this, Gyandeeep Part I and II were used in both years.

Several activities were carried out at the KBVs:

- General family life education to the enrolled adolescent girls, in addition to the routine teaching
- Development of the habit of social respect
- Grouping of the girls on the basis of age and mental ability
- Provision of open and free atmosphere to enrolled girls for their social development through group interaction
- Provision of knowledge about local resources like area's geography, crops, fruits, animals, etc.
- Provision of special education through role plays and songs
- Provision of knowledge about personal health and hygiene
- Provision of knowledge about child rights, child education, fundamental rights of women
- Physical training/exercise
- Provision of education through non-formal education system in Hindi, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Science, Moral Education, Drawing and Physical Training
- Organising regular parent teacher meetings, especially with mothers' groups, in KBV premises

2.1.10. Passing Out and Mainstreaming

At the end of the session, the adolescent and younger girls appeared in the examination conducted by the office of the District Basic Shiksha Adhikari (Basic Education Officer). The girls passed the examination with flying colours, with most of them making it to the next class in first division (The details are presented in Table 7). After the examinations, nearly 80 per cent girls were mainstreamed in regular VI Standard in nearest schools/colleges (Their details are presented in Table 8). The rest could not go in for further education because of the following reasons, as told by the community:

- Reluctance in sending the girls to schools, having co-education system
- Distance of the school
- Safety and security of adolescent girls
- *Purdah* system and social taboos
- Unwillingness of parents for continuing education

Table 7: Results of final examination

Sl. No.	Location of school	No. of girls appearing	Passed in 1st Division	Passed in 2nd Division
1.	Bami I	50	50	-
2.	Tulsi	50	18	32
3.	Tendua Kalan	50	50	-
4.	Islampur	50	32	18
5.	Rampur Vasit Ali	50	25	25
6.	Bami II	50	9	41
7.	Dhasra	48	11	37
8.	Kothra Banjari Kalan	50	49	1
9.	Babura Khurd	50	46	4
10.	Jogiabari	50	40	10
	Total	498	331	136

Table 8: Educational institutions of mainstreaming

Sl. No.	Name and location of school	No. of girls mainstreamed
1.	Junior High School, Lahangpur	158
2.	Nursery Vidyalaya, Islampur	42
3.	Jan Shakti Intermediate College, Lalganj	28
4.	Junior High School, Rampur Vasit Ali	20
5.	Adarsh Sri Deo Bahadur Singh Shiksha Sansthan, Rateh	33
6.	Junior High School, Babura Kalan	17
7.	Junior High School, Halia	50
8.	Junior High School, Majhgawan	50
	Total	398

2.2. Adult Women

2.2.1. Identification of Women and Instructors for Women's Literacy

In all 500 adult women were identified for being given adult education in the 10 project villages. These project villages were the same in which adolescent girls were identified. To impart education to these women, 10 suitable and devoted women instructors were also identified.

2.2.2. Opening of Education Centres

As against the target of opening of 10 centres, only two could be started in the first year. Three more centres were added in the second year taking the total to five. In each of the centres 50 adult women were enrolled. The details of education centres for adult women are given in Table 9.

Table 9: Details of adult education centres

Sl. No.	Location of centre	Name of the instructor	Number of adult women
1.	Islampur	Mrs Haseena	50
2.	Tendua Kalan	Mrs Malti	50
3.	Bami	Mrs Salma	50
4.	Dhasra	Mrs Mansha	50
5.	Rampur Vasit Ali	Mrs Akhtari Begum	50

2.2.3. Contents of education

Women attending the education centres were provided functional literacy and basic numerical skills. Apart from these attempts were made aware of their rights and their role in society and panchayats. They were also made aware of to build their skills impart them social knowledge, general awareness on women's rights, women's role in society and panchayats, health related issues and other relevant issues concerning women and girls.

2.2.4. Other Activities

Literacy House, which is the state resource centre for adult literacy and is based in the state capital Lucknow, was contacted to get adult literacy material and other inputs for the project. One generator set and one television set were procured for awareness generation activities. Handbills were procured and distributed in the project villages. For proper monitoring of the project component, one programme supervisor was appointed.

3. Stakeholders' Perception

The project under reporting is a continuation of CREDA's work being done through a process of social mobilisation with an ultimate aim of poverty alleviation and overall empowerment of the community. Its educational interventions cover nearly 39,000 children, who till a few years ago, were engaged in some kind of labour in their family or outside the family, for wages. A very large fraction of these children were first generation learners, that is, no one in their families ever went to a school. Across the stratum, these children were imparted education equivalent to Standard V of the Uttar Pradesh government's education system, in two years and then mainstreamed in junior high schools. This was possible only with support from a wide spectrum of people and institutions – government, non-government and local.

Soliciting support from all these was not an easy task. The task became even more difficult when the target was a special kind of child – in this case adolescent girl. Adolescence is the period beginning from puberty and continuing till adulthood, roughly from 11/12 years till 18 years of age. While a girl of 11/12 years is biologically and emotionally a child, socially and culturally she is treated as an adult. This dichotomy is reflected not only by attitudes and actions of her family and community, but in public policy also. The majority of adolescent girls are left out of interventions meant for children, because children are defined as the primary school age group. Since she is not going to school, she is clubbed with adult women as a suitable candidate for vocational training. On the other hand, even after training, she cannot claim wages of an adult because her employment is usually not legal.

The above ground reality made the task complicated in the sense that it was quite difficult to get the target group out of work and into schools. Intensive efforts had to be made among the community members, more particularly among mothers because it was they who had to be affected most as their 'helping hand' was being taken away. Before the girls formally started attending the KBVs, intensive mobilisation activities were taken up in the project villages. Since the area is endemic to child labour, more notoriously in carpet industry, 10 vigilance committees exclusively consisting of local village people were formed to ensure that children withdrawn from work were not replaced by other children.

3.1. Adolescent Girls

The background of the adolescent girls who were admitted to KBVs has already been given in section 2.1.6. Most of these girls were from Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Minorities and very few were from other category, that is, General category. The common denominator was that these girls were from almost similar socio-economic-cultural setting. Since the parents of these girls had very little means to sustain the family (which was very big) education of their children was the last thing which they could think of. A case in hand is from Tendua Kalan village where two girls Savita Kumari, aged 10, and Raj Kumari, aged 9 (both Scheduled Castes) used to collect firewood from the forest

and travel on foot with head load of wood (about 15 kg), for 10 km to sell the wood in Mirzapur city. Out of Rs 20 which these girls used to get by sale they used to purchase rice and flour and go back to the village to cook food for the family. Even when they were enrolled in the KBV, their mothers used to ask them to leave the centre to get back into wood 'business'. One of them, Savita became so scared of her mother that she left her home to stay with her *mausi* (mother's sister) and attended the school from there by covering a distance over 10 km every day. Often, the mid-day meal they got at the school was the only meal they got in the entire day! Their deprivation can be judged from this very sordid fact.

Savita and Raj Kumari are not an exception: they are representative of the girls who were admitted to the schools. Name could change. It might be Sita, Bakridan, Pramila, Raisa, Sheela, Afsana, Rita, Shahjahan, Annu, Banno, Manju, Shakila, Kusum... What was unchangeable was extreme deprivation, exploitation, dejection and poverty. But once in schools, dejection gave way to hope and exploitation ended (at least for the time being), though there were many instances in which the girls completed household chores like cleaning utensils and sweeping home before reaching class. But with every passing day, their determination to get education became progressively firm. This is reflected in the high percentage of girls (85 per cent) mainstreamed into junior high schools.

This effort of educating the adolescent girls has had desired effect on the community. The community members now appear to be concerned over education. They are not only supporting the girls in quest of education, but are also demanding from CREDA to open KBVs in their respective villages. They are mounting pressure on the local institutions (panchayats) to approach CREDA with request letters in this context. Though it is a beginning from the education sector, it shows the shape of things to come up as far as people's participation in local governance is concerned. May be in future, people's participation solves many of the ills plaguing the panchayati raj system.

3.2. Parents of Girls

Generally parents of the girls have taken education of their wards in fairly good spirit. This is quite significant because in almost all the families these girls are first generation learners. Yet many parents are not sure whether they will send all their children in school going age to regular schools. Apart from poverty, deprivation and subjugation prevailing in the area, there are other factors too:

- Parents are not sure what difference education can really bring into the lives of their children
- The usual concern is how are they going to meet costs of books and stationery items given their very weak economic base
- Still there are a few parents who are aggrieved over the loss of income (no matter how meagre it is, but it is a great contribution to the family's kitty) as their wards attend schools
- Conditions in primary schools and junior high schools are pathetic, to say the least (more about this in section 3.4.)

Thus, Ghaseeta was happy that his daughter Kala was getting educated. But he was not sure how long she would study. The first thing in his mind was to get his daughter married off to a suitable boy because if she got aged it would be difficult to marry her off. Early marriage, he avers, was also necessary to save the girl from preying eyes of the boys and affluent. He is probably not wrong. Alauddin and Surayia and their seven children had to flee their original village Parampur in Chhanbe block of Mirzapur district when the landlord on whose land he had built a hut started 'eyeing' the growing girls. Now he was 'settled' in a hut on government land.

3.3. Mainstreamed Girls

To begin with the parents were weary of sending their girls to these schools because they were invariably situated at a distance from their respective villages. But the motivation from CREDA and will of the girls made them to see point and almost 95 per cent of the girls passing out from KBVs were admitted to the nearest junior high school. Every morning, chirping girls in hordes left their homes for the schools.

Atmosphere in the new schools was totally different from what it was in KBVs. The girls were studying along with boys. They were competing with the students who had done five years of regular schooling and were considerably better placed in race to education. A vocal girl Pramila at Junior High School, Lahangpur, which is about 1.5 km from Bami village, said that there was a visible difference between girls like her and other students. But she was determined to continue despite this initial disadvantage. She and her fellow students (from KBVs) were, however, not very sure how long will they study – may be till VIII, or till their parents wished them to study, was the common refrain.

Her fellow students (from KBVs) were facing all odds to study. Generally these girls were in the school because of their sheer determination and grit and motivation from CREDA. Many of them did household chores like cleaning utensils and sweeping homes before rushing to the schools. After they were back home, they again were involved in household chores including cooking food. They said they get two hours to study at home from 8 to 10 in the evenings.

3.4. School Authorities

The schools in which these girls were admitted found it difficult to cope up with the deluge of students for which they were never prepared. The schools are ill equipped, both in terms of infrastructure and human resource. A case in point is Junior High School, Lahangpur. The four rooms with a veranda and principal's office are hardly sufficient for more than 200 students. But by virtue of its strategic location, it has over 1,300 students on its rolls. Naturally there is absolute space crisis in the school.

And for this teeming number of students there are just six teachers and two volunteer teachers provided by CREDA, and a principal. In this school 200 girls from KBVs were admitted, putting severe burden on the already strained school. Severe space and human resource crisis are taking their toll and the first casualty in such circumstances is teaching. Any disturbance in weather conditions is sufficient enough for the school authorities to declare a holiday.

The principal and teachers did not find much of difference between girls from KBVs and students coming from mainstream of education except that KBV students were academically not at par with the mainstream students, who had completed five years of education. To bridge this gap they felt that CREDA should give more years to the students before they are mainstreamed into regular schools. On the other hand, they said that students from KBVs were better as compared to other students as far as overall conduct was concerned. The same sentiments were echoed at other schools where girls from KBVs had been admitted.

3.5. Instructors

The instructors at KBVs as well as Women's Centres opined that the centres were demand driven and had an environment which attracted and retained the students and learners. Cooked mid-day meal for girls is a case in point. There had been instances in which on several days, cooked meal provided in the KBVs was the only meal some girls got. The girls were better placed as compared to their counterparts in primary schools because apart from regular education they also got moral and manners education. But these girls also had disadvantaged as compared to mainstream primary school students in the sense that entire syllabus of five years was packed in two years. As far as adult women were concerned, they could not go beyond acquiring skills to read and write simple words and getting introduced to numerals.

3.6. Adult Women

Almost half the number among all mothers whose girls went to attend KBVs, got interested in acquiring reading and writing skills. After finishing their household works they attended the education centres meant for them. Generally younger women with less familial liabilities attended the centres more than those who were older and had more liabilities. A case in point was Rizwana Khatoon, who had two little children and a husband. She came to the centre because she did not have much to do after finishing her household work. As compared to her was Munni who has seven children, husband and in-laws. Her daughter aged around 13 years used to attend the KBV. Partly seeing her and partly because of motivation from CREDA team she decided to attend the education centre for adult women.

Many women have acquired the knowledge to read and write simple words printed in boldface and can count too. But they complained about too little time to develop their skills. They also feared that they would soon forget whatever they had learnt for the lack of practice.

4. Furthering Government Policies

Though the project 'Education for the Empowerment of Girls with Special Focus on Adolescent Girls' was designed and implemented in a rather small area and covered equally smaller number of girls and adult women, it has furthered a number of government policies and programmes. To begin with, it was a contribution to the Government of India's policy on Universalisation of Education. By taking out child labour and educating them, it has furthered Prohibition of Child Labour, which is one of the government's policies and those of United Nations Conventions. Some of the other policies furthered by the project were, Right of Child Policy, Reaching Out to Vulnerable Groups and Communities Through Education and Targeting Worst Forms of Child Labour in Hazardous Conditions. It has removed 113 girls from hazardous industry of carpet weaving and *beedi*-making. These girls form almost 23 per cent of the total girls who were weaned away from different kind of labour.

Of late, Central as well as State Governments are laying considerable emphasis on education of girls. Somehow, the girls are still not able to access mainstream education at par with the boys. As a relaxation, the State Government has come out with the policy to let the girls join mainstream education at any level, no matter what their background is. By pumping nearly 400 girls into the mainstream of education, the Organisation has contributed to implementation of this girl child friendly policy.

An underlying factor behind the remarkable success of the project was people's participation in all the stages of the project. It not only ensured smooth implementation of the project, but also made the people aware of their rights. The rural folks have now become vocal in demanding their due in various government schemes targeted at the poor, like Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana, Public Distribution System, Indira Awas, Forest Produce like tendu leaves, etc. Moreover, the people have started participating in the proceedings of gram panchayats.

5. Analysis of Achievements

The project has a number of achievements to its credit and it is time to review them. Many of them are directly related to it and they are presented under the heading "Project Achievements". There are several spin-off achievements and they are presented under the appropriate headings.

5.1. Project Achievements

The following are the achievements of the project:

1. **Education of girls:** As many as 500 adolescent and younger girls completed two years of non-formal education in 10 KBVs. Nearly 80 per cent of girls were successfully enrolled in mainstream education in nearby junior high schools. Girls' enrolment in formal schools has increased.
2. **Regular village level meetings:** These have strengthened linkages with ongoing projects of CREDA. Community contribution was ensured in terms of land, voluntary labour, construction material, fuelwood and vegetables. Total monetary value of these contributions has been estimated at over Rs 2.50 lakh. Health volunteers and schoolteachers were identified. Close contact and interaction with community was ensured.
3. **Formation and activation of social mobilisation groups:** Village child labour vigilance committees were activated to ensure regular attendance of enrolled children. Awareness was built on health, education, reproductive health, mother child relations through regular interaction among various groups.
4. **Women's participation:** In all the meetings taken together, women's participation was as much as 39 per cent. This is quite significant in a backward area like the two blocks selected for the project.
5. **Adult education** for 250 adult women through five literacy centres was arranged

5.2. Spin-off Achievements

As a spin-off of the planned activities, the following more achievements were noticed:

1. **Health check-up for enrolled girl children:** The process of school health check-ups has begun as an additional activity.
2. **Improvement in teachers' attendance in government primary schools:** After observing punctuality in community schools run by CREDA, the villagers have started questioning about absenteeism of government teachers in primary schools. As a result, there is significant improvement in teachers' attendance in government primary schools.

3. ***Check on replacement:*** As a result of community mobilisation and involvement of village volunteers, panchayats and staff of CREDA in the project areas, the replacement of children on workplace has almost stopped. This process and action has significantly reduced the number of child labour in the area. Because of stopping of replacement of child labour, adult employment is increasing in cottage industry and farm sector.
4. ***Panchayats' involvement:*** The members of the panchayats are taking much interest in keeping a vigil on the employment of children in different sectors.
5. ***Check on migration of children to border villages:*** Children have stopped for going on work to a great extent. This is the result of mass mobilisation and active role of vigilance committee members in the project villages.
6. ***Children spared from health hazards:*** Children previously working on carpet looms and *beedi*-making have been withdrawn from work and thus spared from health hazards.
7. ***Immunisation of children:*** Hundreds of children from the project areas have been helped by volunteers for Pulse Polio Immunisation.

6. Critical Learning

The following are critical learning from the project:

1. People's participation is the key to success of any project involving mass mobilisation. Taking out such a large number of girls engaged in various works, admitting them to schools and then mainstreaming them was possible only because of people's participation, more particularly, their parents. No matter how meagre their contribution was, the fact is that these girls were contributing to the economy of their families and if not contributing directly then indirectly by taking off burden from the shoulders of their mothers so that they could earn something for the family.
2. Involvement of a large number of stakeholders like panchayat representatives, government officials, etc., adds to success of the project and its follow-up. Girls in such a large number could be admitted to regular junior high schools only because of strong rapport built with the education department officials and school authorities. Otherwise, authorities of overburdened schools would have simply refused to add to their burden by enrolling the girls in such a large number.
3. Constitution of different groups for social mobilisation goes a long way in ensuring people's participation in the project activities. Various groups formed in this project were parents' groups, mothers' groups, girls' groups, mothers-in-law groups, women literacy groups and adolescent groups. Mere formation of the groups is not sufficient – their regular meetings are also a must and this has been done in the project.
4. Appropriate training of the selected human resource leads to better implementation of the project. Repeated training refresh skills of the selected human resource.
5. In any educational effort, more time must be given to teaching. For the children it may be better to add one more year to the existing two so as to build their solid foundation.
6. Any educational effort with adults, more particularly with women, should be followed by appropriate follow-up. If this is not done, literacy skills so laboriously acquired are fast de-learned.

Annexure: Case Studies

Bakridan

Age: 11 year

Village: Islampur, Lalganj

Caste: Muslim (Minority)

Among the seven children of Allauddin and Suraiya, Bakridan is at number fifth. She has two elder brothers Shaukat Ali and Pappu. Shaukat Ali is married, having 4 children and stays separately from his parents. He is a carpet weaver and does not show any interest in his parents.

Pappu, younger to Shaukat is a school dropout and does all the household work right from taking care of cattle to fetch water for household use.

Such is the plight of the family that Bakridan has two uneducated elder sisters Sakina and Madina who are of marriageable age but due to poor condition of the family, they are unable to get the girls married. Bakridan's mother, Suraiya used to help her husband in sustaining the family by working on fields, looms etc. but now due to the asthma, she is unable to help the family – even unable to do the household work.

The family of Allauddin originally belonged to the landless farm labourers of Parmanpur village of Chhanbe block of Mirzapur district until the last year when the landlord on whose land they had their small hut and on whose land the family had been working, started 'eyeing' the growing girls getting steadily into womanhood. The family panicked and shifted to the present place (near Islampur) where some relatives who had already migrated to this village, helped the family to build a thatched two room accommodation on the government land. Illegal occupation of land as it is, the family and for that matter the entire locality, is afraid of being forcibly evacuated from the land any time.

Allauddin now finds it difficult to get job nearby. He along with few others, leaves for Mirzapur early in the morning and stays in queue, waiting for some employer (contractor) to take him for the day's work. At times, particularly during winter, it is extremely difficult for him to get some work.

Bakridan has all reasons to be happy at CREDA's school as she feels happy in the company of other girl students and also gets full meal at mid-day in the school. On asking what she wants to be in future, her reply is "I want to be able to help my parents so that they can get my sisters married and have sufficient money so that my mother is cured."



Bakridan

Raisa Bano

Age: 13 years

Village: Islampur, Lalganj

Caste: Muslim (Minority)

Eldest among 6 siblings, 13-year old Raisa is a handicapped girl. One of her younger sisters, Nafisa Bano is also fellow student at CREDA's school in the village. Her father, Asghar Ali is a casual labour and mother Nagma is a carpet weaver. They don't possess any land and the small piece of land on which they have built their hut, belongs to the forest department, which may be evacuated any time. The average monthly income of the family is less than Rs. 800, which is too less to sustain the family of eight.

Raisa's immediate younger brother Shaukat Ali is also a school-going child. He studies in third standard at Chitaang Primary School, about 4 Kms. away from their village. Her mother Nagma is a casual carpet weaver. She used to get sufficient work on looms as long as the condition of carpet industry was sound but now due to slump in the industry, Nagma also has difficulty in getting jobs on looms.

Four years back, the family had been 'happily' living at Jigna, a small hamlet in Bijapur block of Mirzapur, on the land provided by the local landlord. The entire family worked on the landlord's land presumably as bonded labour. Suddenly, the henchmen of landlord, started intimidating the family. The poor parents have no option but to flew from the village and migrate to their present place. They decided to live a life free from bondage and deprivation.

Asghar Ali, father of Raisa Bano does all sorts of menial labour – on whatever is available to him right from the work on field to road construction or house construction. The nature of employment is so precarious that at times it takes weeks before Asghar Ali gets some work. Rainy season in particular is the worst period for the family even to earn sustenance wages.

Despite all these odds, the eyes of Raisa Bano as well as those of her mother shine with 'some' hope for the future. Nagma is happy to see her kids in school and highly appreciates and praises for the opportunity of schooling. Raisa is a bright student and wants to become a teacher after her schooling is over. She is a good singer and confidence springs out in her speech.



Raisa Bano with her mother and younger sister Nafisa Bano

Savita Kumari

Age: 10 Years

Village: Tendua Kalan, Lalganj

Caste: S.C.

Savita is the eldest issue of 45-year old Sukuroo and 38-year old Kalawati. Savita has two younger brothers – 8-year old Jaginder and 5-year old Jagvir. The combined monthly income of her parents is not sufficient to sustain the family so Savita Kumari was forced to collect fuel-wood from the forest and sell that in Mirzapur. In order to reach Mirzapur (about 10 Kms. away from her village) early in the morning to sell her fuel-wood, she used to start at 3 AM along with a friend, Raj Kumari, who is also a fellow student at CREDA's school for girls. As per Savita's version, she used to sell 15 Kgs. of wood in Rs. 20 only at Ganeshganj locality of Mirzapur. With those 20 rupees, she used to buy rice and flour and then come back home to cook meal for the family. While on her long and arduous journey through forest, she did not find water anywhere; was always afraid of wild animals and the forest guards used to tease her. Whenever she felt tired, her father used to scold her for being lazy. She used to get restless, when she saw other children of her age going to school. It was during that period only that CREDA came to know about her pitiable condition. They persuaded Savita's father to send her to CREDA's school for girls. And thus, she joined CREDA's school. However, her mother still haunts her and ask her to leave the school and collect firewood to add into the family income but Savita was so determined that one day she ran away from her house to live with her mother's sister, who lived 10 Kms. away from her school. There, she used to get up at 5 AM, get ready and leave to reach the school by 7 AM.

She frankly admits that on some day, she has only the mid-day meal (given by CREDA's school) to eat and that is all for the rest of the day.

Savita's story is the story of extreme deprivation, poverty, dejection, hope, determination and mobility.



Raj Kumari (left) and Savita Kumari (right)



Afsana and Shahjahan

Age: 11 years each

Village: Islampur, Lalganj

Contrary to the Government's claim that there is no child labour employed in the carpet industry now, the stories of these two friends belie all governmental claims. These two friends belong to the same village (Islampur); come from the same community; were working on the carpet looms of the same employer and now studying together at CREDA's school for girls.

Afsana is the daughter of Mohammad Islam, whereas Shahjahan's father is Abdul Khalid. Both of these girls were working on the loom of Mohammad Asim of the same village and earn a meagre sum of approximately Rs. 125 each for a work of 15 days on loom. They both are very good carpet weavers as seen from their expertise on the loom. 6 hours of daily labour and the wages of Rs. 8 for days work is all but sufficient to highlight the exploitation of children in the carpet industry.

Afsana has 4 brothers and two sisters. Her two elder brothers, Sahibuddin and Qutubuddin are married and live separately with their wives and children. Afsana's two younger brothers Nasiruddin and Azaharuddin are the students of 8th and 9th classes respectively at Government High School, Lahalpur, about 4 Kms. away from their village, Islampur. The two sisters, who are elder to her, are married. Afsana is ready to study as long as her parents don't get her married.

Shahjahan's father Abdul Khalid is the weaver of blankets and 'dhurries'. He faces the similar future due to slump in the industry. Shahjahan has seven sisters and two brothers. The two elder brothers are married and live separately from the family. One of her elder sisters is also married. It is interesting to note that her two younger sisters Noorjahan and Rukhsana are also studying with her, at CREDA's school. Rukhsana also is a casual carpet weaver whereas Nurjahan helps the family in household chores. The family possesses some cultivable land, which is monocropped and depends on monsoon.



Afsana and Shahjahan

Banno, Shakila and Bakridan

Ages: 8 years, 11 years and 9 years respectively

Village: Islampur, Lalganj

These three schoolmates at CREDA's school for girls were the 'apprentices' at the local loom of Bakar. The girls were putting a daily labour of 4-5 hours with no remuneration as the loom owner obliges them with the teaching of some 'hunar' (skill). As the practice is rampant in the carpet belt that for about 5-6 months nothing is given to the children in lieu of the labour that they put into carpet weaving, under the pretext of teaching skills to the children, and this period is called 'chela'.

Banno is the daughter of Saudagar, who is a carpet weaver. She has 7 sisters and 3 brothers. Two elder sisters are married and immediate elder brother is a student of 9th class at Lahanpur Government School. Mother is an agric labour and earns 3-4 Kgs. of grain daily during the farming season. Banno's younger sister Shanno is also her classmate. Both the sisters are happy to be at CREDA's school.

The other friend Shakila is the daughter of Shazir Ahmad who like, Saudagar, is a carpet weaver. Shakila has 5 brothers and 2 sisters. She is the second eldest in the family. Her elder brother, Shakil is educated upto 8th class but could not pursue education due to poverty and now is a carpet weaver, working on his father's loom and also working for others whenever he gets work. Shakila's two younger brothers study in Government Primary School at Tendua Khurd, 4 Kms. away from their village. Shakila wants to become a police inspector after getting her education.



Banno, Shakila and Bakridan (left to right)

The third friend is Bakridan, who is the daughter of Lal Mohamamd, who works as a casual labourer. Bakridan has 4 brothers and 7 sisters. Out of these 7 sisters, only one is married. One of her younger sisters, Zubaida, is studying with her at CREDA's school. Two of her brothers are also studying at Government Primary School. Rest of the siblings are either too small to go to school or simply don't study. One of Bakridan's elder sisters Iddan also works as carpet weaver and earns about Rs.250 per month.

All the three friends Banno, Shakila and Bakridan are happy at the school and enjoy the 5-6 hours together with the other friends.

Raj Kumari

Age: 9 years

Village: Tendua Khurd

Caste: Kole (SC)

Daughter of Lala (45 years) and Parvanti Devi (40 years), Raj Kumari is a horrid picture of the 'burden on childhood'. Lala is a poor rickshaw-puller at Mirzapur while Parvanti Devi is a casual labourer. They have only one Bigha of non-irrigated land whereas the number of children in the family is eight (four sons and four daughters, including Raj Kumari). Raj Kumari's eldest brother Lakshman is a farmer who works on others' land, while Ramji, younger to Lakshman is a student at the Government Primary School. Unable to sustain the family well, Lala and Parvanti are forced to extract work from their children. Raj Kumari was forced to collect the firewood from the jungle and sell that at Mirzapur. She used to go to jungle at night lest she should be caught by the ferocious forest guards, who used to torture the firewood collectors. After collecting the firewood, Raj Kumari was back home before the day-break and immediately left to take the bundle of firewood on her head for selling it at Mirzapur. For 15 Kgs. of firewood, she was getting a sum of Rs. 20 only. During all that endeavour, Raj Kumari used to walk at least 20 Kms. daily, seems to be unbelievable but true (for a girl of only 9 years of age)!

Raj Kumari's bad days passed when some volunteers from CREDA came to her village and persuaded her father to get her enrolled at CREDA's school for girls.

Raj Kumari is now a happy girl, enjoying the bliss of childhood at least for the time being. In the same school studies her friend Savita Kumari, who shared all the misfortunes with her right from going to the jungle to collect firewood, sell that in Mirzapur city and buy rice and flour for the family's consumption.

Both friends are now sharing the stint of good luck together. For how long? – It is to be seen.



Raj Kumari