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Gender and School Participation

Evidences from Empirical Research in
Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

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Madhumita Bandyopadhyay*

Abstract

This paper analyses the gender gap in educational access, participation and learning outcome of children in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in India. The main objective of the paper is to explore whether gender is a determining factor in children's meaningful access to school education. Using empirical evidences, primarily from community and school survey conducted for a research project, this paper examines whether and how gender determines access of children to schools of different nature at the primary and upper primary levels and also the primary stage completion rates. It also explores whether gender becomes a determining factor for regular attendance and participation of children in school and to what extent the learning achievement of girls and boys differs from each other. Gender-wise data from secondary and primary sources have been used in the analysis. The paper has focused on school and family related factors that determine access of children to school, their regular and meaningful participation and learning outcome. An attempt has been made to facilitate a wide debate on educational access and participation covering enrolment, attendance, repetition and performance of children in competency tests to investigate how gender is intrinsically linked to the meaningful access to school in target locations such as remote rural and tribal areas. The final section of the paper leads to some conclusions and recommends some future actions to promote gender equity in school participation.

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Introduction

"The case for gender equality in education is important in its own right" (UNESCO, 2005:7).

Commitments to gender equality[1] in education can be seen internationally, as three (goal 2, goal 4 and goal 5) out of six EFA goals are concerned with gender equality in education. All these goals focus on girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) re-affirmed the concerns of gender equality in goal 2 and goal 3. Both, the EFA goals and the MDGs, have stressed at the provision of equal opportunity for quality education to boys and girls. Based on these international commitments, bridging the gender gap in basic education has been a major concern for most developing countries. Drawing upon experiences of different Asia Pacific countries, a UNICEF technical paper (2009, 40) states, "it should be recognised that bringing all girl children to school is not merely an educational action. It transforms attitudes and behavioural dynamics of society, so that gender equality is seen as a value in itself worth pursuing". It has been recognised by extensive researches that gender plays an important role in access and participation of children in schools in many of these countries (King *et al*., 1999; UNESCO, 2004; Dewan, 2008; Glick, 2008; Govinda, 2008. Lazo, 2008; UNICEF, 2009). Making educational provision for girls has been a challenging task for the countries located in South Asian region (Herz and Gene, 2004; Herz, 2006; Huxley, 2007; Heijnen-Maaltuis, 2008) including India due to various factors (Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2011).

Achieving gender equity in and through education has been a long standing goal of the education policy in India (GoI, NPE, 1986). Indian Constitution has envisaged an egalitarian society and made provisions for protecting the interests of disadvantaged groups including women. Following the spirit of the Constitution, the

[1] This paper has been developed under Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) (www.create-rpc.org). Gender inequality is a special focus area in CREATE. The thematic papers (Smita, 2008; Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2008; Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Sedwal and Kamath, 2008) prepared under CREATE showed how more girls than boys in general and from disadvantaged groups in particular were excluded from school. While discussing the issues regarding social exclusion from school and 'zones of exclusion', (Lewin, 2007) all these papers have already identified the reasons for persistence of gender inequality in education in several parts of the country describing the context in which it is most pervasive. Based on the gaps identified in these papers, this paper attempts to provide a broader perspective for addressing the challenges for achieving gender equity in education at elementary level in the context of states like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh where the community and school survey has been conducted under CREATE in 2008.

National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and its Plan of Action, 1992 explicitly recognised the positive role of education in reducing gender gap and promoting the rights of disadvantaged groups and minorities.

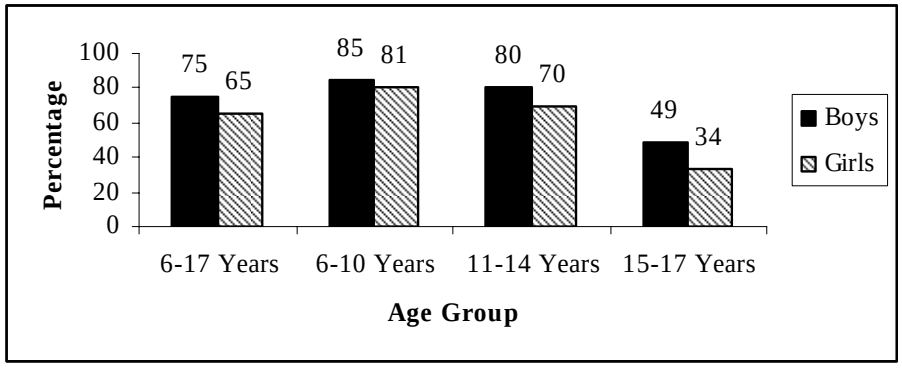
The Government, in accordance with its constitutional mandate and policy recommendations of NPE, has taken several initiatives to provide educational facilities to all sections of society. The gender concerns have been brought at the centre stage of policymaking prompting adoption of special measures for girls' education in India (UNICEF, 2009).In addition to this, elementary education has recently become a fundamental right for all children in the age-group 6-14 necessitating that all children must attend full time formal school. The Eleventh Plan (2007-2012), has envisaged that achieving gender equality is intrinsically important in pursuit of the goal of inclusive growth and achieving Universalisation of Elementary Education. All these have resulted in an improvement in financial investment on elementary education. The demand for elementary education and schooling has considerably increased with an increase in female literacy, which was much lower in earlier decades, leading to an upsurge in enrolment of boys as well as girls (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011a). To address this demand, government is not only providing schools and teachers but also extending incentives that can help poor children particularly girls to continue their education. These efforts may put an end to the vicious circle of illiteracy of parents and non-enrolment of children and the intergenerational transmission of illiteracy and poverty (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011a). Recruitment of female teachers[2] as envisaged by NPE, 1986 is another strategy that can enhance access and participation of girls in schools.

[2] It is widely acknowledged that the availability of qualified, trained and motivated female teachers positively impacts children particularly girls' performance in schools (Wu *et al*., 2006). Parents feel more comfortable to send their daughters to schools having female teachers who act as role models for girls. However, the proportion of female teachers in many schools of India is much less than males because of non-availability of educated women mainly in remote tribal areas where female literacy rate is excessively low. In addition teachers' absenteeism and low status are significant problems in government schools. A study on teachers' absenteeism by Kremer *et al* (2005) has shown that the incidence of absenteeism was higher among men and senior teachers than female and junior teachers in Bihar.

Despite having enabling policies and considerable push made during the last decade, girls in India suffer from widespread prejudices[3]. In majority of the Indian households, preference is given for the well being and educational needs of boys in contrast to girls because of the "patriarchal social structure with a strong male preference" Wu *et al*.(2006, 119). Under a situation of abject poverty in large number of households, chances are more for parents to decide in favour of boys' education, leaving girls out of school (Colclough et. al.2000, Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2011). The daughter of a poor and illiterate mother is more likely to be out of school as compared to children of educated mother (Nayar, 1999, Ramachandran, 2004). Many studies (Ramachandran, 2004; Wazir, 2002) have already established close linkage between gender and school participation.

The recent most National and Family Health Survey (3rd Round) (GoI, 2007) has shown that although gender gap has reduced in case of education of 6-10 years old, this gap is still quite significant for children who are 11-14 years old. The proportion of both boys and girls attending educational institutions declines substantially in the case of those between 15-17 years old, but it is still much higher for boys (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of Boys and Girls who attended School in 2005-06



Source: NFHS 3rd round, 2007

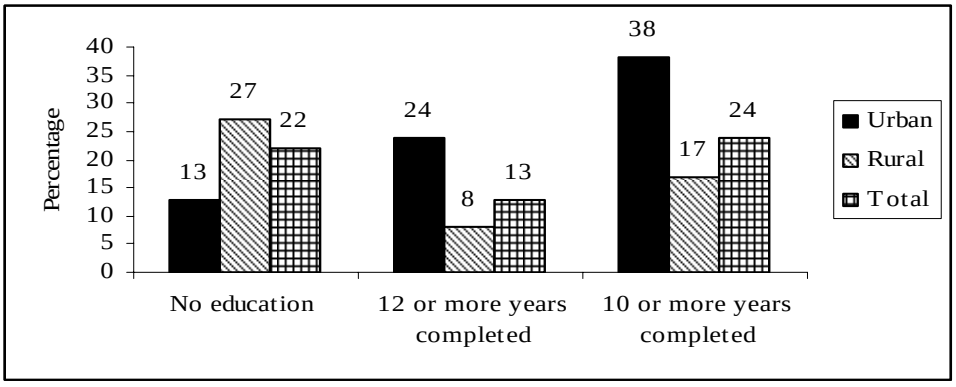
Gender difference in school attendance was much higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas as shown by national level as well as the state level data. In

[3] Boys get preference over girls in many other aspects and even at the time of birth. Data released by Union Health Ministry's National Health Profile 2010 – a document yet to be made public – says "that the State of Madhya Pradesh had the highest number of recorded cases of both female foeticide and infanticide in 2009. While the figures for Madhya Pradesh said that there were 23 female foeticide cases in the State, it also recorded 51 cases of female infanticide – the highest in the country. Chhattisgarh also recorded 12 such cases." accessed on 14th August, 2011 through the internet: http://www.winentrance.com/general_knowledge/india-census.html

the case of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh where this study has been conducted, more boys than girls attended schools.

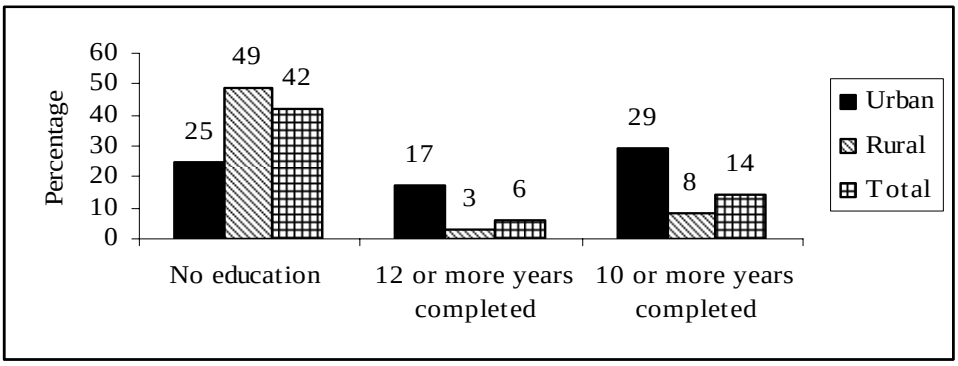
According to the 3rd round NFHS data, less than half of the women of 15-49 years of age are literate in six Indian states. Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are among these six states. A large proportion of the population had never enrolled for education and only 32 per cent of males and 28 per cent of females had completed 10 years of schooling in India. Figures 2 and 3 indicate the prevalence and scale of the gender gap in educational attainment which increases in rural areas.

Figure 2: Educational attainment of male population of age 6 and over



Source: NFHS 3, 2005-06

Figure 3 Educational attainment of female population of age 6 and over



Source: NFHS 3, 2005-06

Along with demand factors with respect to poverty and uneducated parents which are commonly cited barriers to access, the supply factors also affect access to school, particularly for girls and disadvantaged groups (Gertler and Glewwe 1992; King and Hill 1993; Lavy 1996; Alderman and Gertler 1997; Ravallion and Wodon 1999; Lloyd 2005). Notwithstanding several legislations specifically calling for gender equality, gender friendly schools within easily reachable distance of

communities are scarce that jeopardizes girls' enrolment and continuation in schools. There exists a perception that it is unsafe for girls to walk too far from home. Most villages in India have primary schools within one kilometre but upper primary schools are yet to be made available in accessible range for all villages. Because of this, the gender parity index is much lower at the upper primary stage than the primary in many states (GOI, SES, 2010; Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2011; Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011a).A study conducted by Jalan and Glinskaya (2005) examined the impact of DPEP in Phase 1 districts. The small improvements in educational indicators were mainly achieved through improvement of boy's figures. Contrary to the programme's goals, there has been virtually no impact on girl's primary school education or on children belonging to scheduled tribes. A study by Sivanandan (2005) revealed that there was wider disparity in school enrolment among these disadvantaged groups than among others. She found that the proportion of scheduled caste girls to all scheduled caste children in schools was 36 per cent whereas the corresponding figure for forward caste was 48 per cent. It is widely acknowledged that the availability of qualified, trained and motivated female teachers (Wu *et al*., 2006)[4] was one of the determining factors for promoting gender equity in schools. Toilets, female teachers, teachers with gender sensitive attitude, inclusion of women in school management committees, and a gender friendly curriculum positively impacts children particularly girls' performance in schools. However, it does not exist in many places (Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2011). Despite increased public investment on education, private schools (Juneja, 2011; Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011) are increasing in number and popularity in many areas. Although it has improved the access situation, it has adversely affected gender and

[4] In a study conducted by Wu *et al*. it was found that "at the secondary level, girls scored an average of 3.7 percentage points below boys, accounting for other factors in Rajasthan. However, the gender gap varies significantly across schools. Girls attending classes taught by female teachers scored about 1.1 points higher than their male classmates indicating that presence of female teachers had a positive impact on girls' performance. This seems to be an important factor in the case of primary schools also particularly if teaching strategy changed. "In another study in Mumbai and Vadodara, low performing primary school students in government schools were removed from class for half a day and given individualised, non-threatening remedial education in literacy and mathematics by community women. To reinforce their mathematics skills, they played games using a computer-assisted learning programme. This resulted in increase in literacy scores by 0.14 standard deviation in the first year and 0.28 in the second year. Simultaneously mathematics scores increased by 0.36 standard deviation in the first year and 0.54 in the second year (Banerjee and others 2004, 129)" as cited in Wu, K.B., Goldschmidt, P. Boscardin, C. M. and Azam, M. (2006). Girls in India: Poverty, location, and social disparities in M. Lewis and M. Lockheed (eds.), *Exclusion, Gender and Education: Case Studies from the Developing World*, Center for Global Development, Washington, DC. Accessed through http://www.cgdev.org/doc/books/lewis-lockheed-eduCaseStudies/lewis-lockheed-chapter5.pdf on 27th July, 2011.

social equity, because primarily, most economically well off families send their children to such schools and secondly, many parents prefer to send their sons to these schools and their daughters to government schools for 'free' education (Kingdon, 2005; Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2011). Provision of incentives in government schools, like free text books, uniforms and scholarships for girls is another motivating factor for parents in sending girls to government schools. It is also worth mentioning that involvement of active school management committee[5] at the local level also helped in promoting meaningful access and participation of children particularly girls.

From the above discussions it was evident that girls in India are disproportionately represented among the never enrolled and drop out children. Many of them have access to poor quality education and consequently become learning disadvantaged, repeat their grades and eventually drop out before completing basic education (King *et al*., 1999). It is therefore important to analyse the availability and accessibility of educational facilities as well as learning achievement in a gender disaggregated manner to examine whether gender matters for ensuring meaningful access for all to basic school education. The final section of the paper draws together some conclusions and makes some policy recommendations. The primary data that the paper draws upon was collected through the community and schools survey (Bandyopadhyay, 2009) conducted in three selected clusters of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Gender inequality is pervasive across the country but particularly bad in states located in the northern, western and central part of the country. Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh[6] are part of these regions (Dreze and Sen, 1995). The following section briefly discusses the state specific context with respect to gender equality in education.

[5] However, the CoMSS data based policy brief reveals that in the study area, many such committees remain indifferent towards problems of drop out and never enrolment of children and some of these committees were unaware of this problem (Bandyopadhyay and Dey, 2011).

[6] Four high-population States accounting for about 44% of the country's population—UP, Bihar, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh—have not even managed 70% literacy and Madhya Pradesh had just touched 71%. While the percentage growth in overall literacy during this period was 39%, for men it was 32%, for women it was 49% which was high. Between 2001 and 2011, of the 312 million literates, women accounted for 171 million outnumbering the men (141 million). In fact, the gap in literacy between men and women has been reduced to an all-time low of just 16.7 percentage points. In 2011, male literacy was 82% and female literacy about 65.5%. In 2001, this gap was 21.6 percentage points. Out of almost 218 million literates added during the decade, 110 million were women compared to just 108 million men. The States with the largest gap in male and female literacy was Rajasthan, with an almost 28 percentage point difference. The other States with a large gap mostly in the region of 20 percentage points are Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar." accessed on 14th August, 2011 in the internet: http://www.winentrance.com/general_knowledge/india-census.html

Gender Equality in Education in the Context of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

Gender inequality has been a major concern in developmental policy and planning in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh since the last few decades. Girls themselves are now willing to be educated as observed by the HDR, Chhattisgarh. Discussions with girls in high school reveal that, "girls like coming to school because of the exposure they get to the outside world and school gives them a chance to move out of the village." On the basis of perception of the people revealed by *Jan Rapot* (Peoples' Report), the HDR of Chhattisgarh (Govt of Chhattisgarh, 2005, 107), has observed that "education for girls is being encouraged and there is greater awareness and interest in their education." It has been found that parents are now keen to provide better educational opportunities to their daughters in the areas endowed with better provision of educational facilities, including computer education (GoCH, 2005, 109).

In recent years many initiatives have been taken by governments for promoting girls' education. MP and Chhattisgarh have been covered under some of these programmes like District Primary Education Programme and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan. The recent HDR of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP, 2007, 126) has noted that, "the State has placed a lot of emphasis on girls' education in recent years. The efforts started by the *Mahila Padhna Badhna Movement* by previous government for increasing female literacy has been further strengthened by placing emphasis on girls' education and incentives given for girls."

Despite these efforts, the gender gap remains a concern for policy makers and planners. Though there has been considerable improvement in female literacy level, 20% gender gap still persists in the literacy rate in MP and Chhattisgarh (GoI, 2001). According to the 3rd round NFHS data, less than half of the women of 15-49 years of age are literate in Chhattisgarh and MP. A large proportion of girls and women in these two states are found lagging behind their male counterparts in many respects like literacy, health, work participation rate and occupy lower social status (GoMP, 2007; GoI, 2001, GoMP, 2010). The recent estimates (GoI, 2008) of Gender Parity Index (GPI) also indicate that there is a wide gap in GPI between primary and upper primary enrolment. While in Madhya Pradesh the GPI at the primary level was 0.96, at the upper primary stage it declined to 0.87. Situation was more alarming in Chhattisgarh where GPI declined from 0.95 to 0.79 for primary and upper primary

stage respectively in 2007. In addition, rapid growth of private schools has also jeopardised gender equity. Early marriage of girls and unwillingness of parents to spend money on girl's education are important reasons among many, for not sending girls to schools in Chhattisgarh. The HDR of Chhattisgarh (Govt of Chhattisgarh, 2005, 109) mentions financial constraint as the major factor preventing girls from going to school. Though all children face threat of not being sent to school when their parents are not economically well off, girls find it even more difficult because of their prescribed gender roles in society. Besides social issues, another reason for poor attendance of girls in schools is the concern for safety. Girls belonging to disadvantaged groups face more difficulties in accessing school (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011a and 2001b). Both states have large number of scheduled castes which accounts for around 15 per cent in Madhya Pradesh and around 12 per cent in Chhattisgarh. It was also noticeable that Chhattisgarh has a higher proportion (32 per cent) of tribal population than Madhya Pradesh where Scheduled Tribes (ST) accounts for around 20 per cent (GoI, Census of India, 2001).

Both the states are facing threat of increase in number of out of school children due to high drop outs and low transition rate. The official data indicates that despite having continuous decline in drop out, the states are still showing alarmingly low retention rates. While drop out rates for boys at the primary stage was 31 per cent, it was 33 per cent for girls. It increased to 46 per cent at the upper primary stage for both, boys and girls **(**GOI, SES, 2010). Drop out rate was higher in the case of SC and ST children and among them girls were more disadvantaged than boys.

In addition to the problem of drop out and gender disparity, learning level of children was far from satisfactory. NCERT 2004 survey had raised concern about abysmally low learning level of children in Madhya Pradesh compared to the national level. It was heartening to know that ASER report (2006) showed some improvement in learning level of children (GoMP, 2007, 122). The report states that, "while in 2005, the proportion of children studying in classes III to V, who could read level I text or more, was 57.74 per cent, it increased to 78.91 per cent in 2006. Similarly increase was reported in the proportion of children studying in classes III to V, who could do subtraction or more. The proportion of such children increased from 56.09 per cent to 81.56 per cent.

The above analysis thus revealed that gender was clearly one of the major factors that determined the access and participation of children in school. The following sections examine how 'gender' works as a determining factor in ensuring meaningful access to education, using empirical data.

Data Source

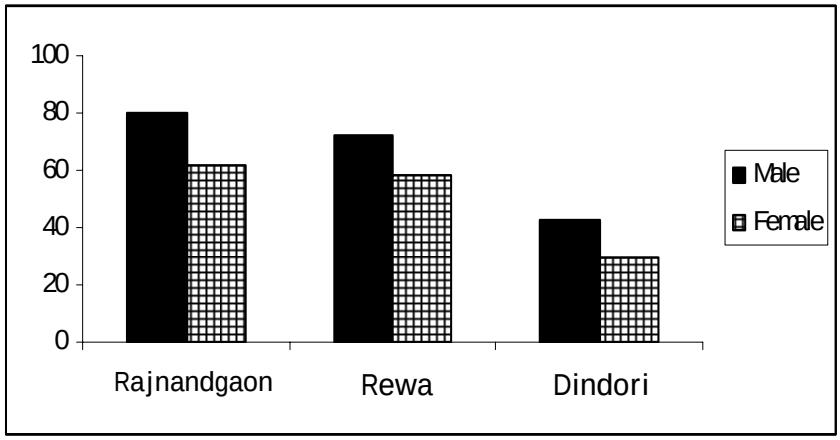
Data have been collected through three rounds of school survey in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and one round of household survey in 2008. Information on school baseline data, school profile and teachers' profile were collected through structured questionnaires and views of Head teacher through interviews covering 88 schools distributed over 36 villages. Some basic information about each enrolled child in school was collected by using "school roster data format". The school survey also included competency test for class IV and V children in Hindi and Mathematics. In addition, a detailed household questionnaire was used for capturing many aspects of socio-economic and home background of around 10,000 children of 3-15 years age along with the necessary information about their school participation.

Study Area

The selection of the study area has been based on an earlier research (Govinda and Varghese, 1993) conducted covering the same area. Three different clusters from three different districts namely, Rajnandgaon of Chhattisgarh and Rewa and Dindori of Madhya Pradesh have been covered for this study. Clusters of 11 villages from the districts of Rajnandgaon and Rewa each and a cluster of 14 villages from Dindori district have been selected. While the Rajnandgaon cluster was a comparatively better developed rural area, the Rewa cluster was an underdeveloped rural area. Dindori cluster was a tribal dominated area and was the poorest area in terms of development indicators. It has been found that half of the households depend on manual labour as main source of income in all these three clusters and in addition, a large proportion are engaged mainly in farm activities. It can also be seen from the data on income that a large proportion of these households belong to low income group and many of them also fall below the poverty line (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011b). The male and female literacy rates (Figure 4) vary significantly between the three areas according to the 2001 census. The data collected from the field shows a similar trend as well. The Dindori district has the lowest female literacy rate and Rajnandgaon has the highest

gender gap in literacy. The gender gap varies from 14-16 percentage points among these three clusters.

Figure 4: Male and Female Literacy Rate



Source: Household survey data, 2008

In addition to gender gap in literacy rate a large number of children and young people are found out of school as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Per 1000 distribution of persons of age (5-29) who were currently not attending any educational institution by broad reason for non-attendance for each group in MP and Chhattisgarh

	State	School too far	Has to supplement household income	Education not considered necessary	Has to help in domestic chores	Others	All
Male	Chhattisgarh	20	475	232	31	242	1000
	Madhya Pradesh	39	562	135	43	221	1000
Female	Chhattisgarh	19	181	282	220	299	1000
	Madhya Pradesh	63	136	265	296	239	1000
Person	Chhattisgarh	19	315	259	134	273	1000
	Madhya Pradesh	52	343	202	173	230	1000

Source: 61st round NSS (GOI, 2006)

A substantial gender gap in literacy rate was recorded (Census of India, 2001) in Madhya Pradesh in 2001. The literacy rates of the SC and ST population were excessively low as indicated in Table 2. The following section briefly discusses the present state of the educational situation in the area under study.

Table 2: Literacy Rates of all Categories, SCs and STs in Madhya Pradesh 2001

(in percentage)

	All categories	All SCs	All STs
Persons	64.11	58.6	41.2
Male	76.80	72.3	53.5
Female	50.28	43.3	28.4

Source: Census of India, 2001

This gender disparity in literacy rate becomes more pronounced at the village level. Many of the villages of the study area have very low female literacy (Table 3). In some villages the gender gap increases to more than 30.

Table 3: Gender Gap in Village Level Literacy Rate (2001)

Range in Gender Gap	Rajnandgaon	Rewa	Dindori
Below 10	Amlideh (6.43), Shukhri (8.95), Mokhli (7.34)	Raura (9.91), Dihiya (8.75), Jitauhin (3.94)	Ladradadar (8.8) Thadpathra (-9.1)
10-20	Rampur (11.59), Kotrasarar (14.25), Sonesarar (14.41), Arjuni (15.82), Rudgaon (17.21), Ghorda (11)	Hardi (18.5), Dhowkhari (19.39), Pipara (13.76), Bamhangawan (13.68)	Silpidi (13.7), Kendra Bahar (19.6), Piparpani (18.7), Pandripani (13)
20-30	Jangalpur (21.9), Ari (23.5)	Khirama (29.4), Sahijana (23.7), Amiliki (25.32), Kolhuwaru (25.51)	Tarach (27.3), Boyarha (21)
30-50			Tantar (32.3), Chakrar (36.7), Neemtola (31), Kandatola (33), Uddhor (32)

Source: Census of India 2001

Educational Levels of Parents and Schooling of Children

From the above analysis one can understand that a large section of the population are still illiterate in most of the villages studied. The educational level of parents has considerable impact on children's education. It was heartening to see that, barring a section, majority of illiterate parents are now sending their children to school in all the three clusters leading to increase in number of first generation learners. These children need adequate attention in schools as they lack proper home support and special measures needed to address their educational needs. It is

noticeable from Table 4 that though a high proportion of children whose parents are illiterate are attending school but most of the out of school children (never enrolled or drop out) are also the children of illiterate parents.

Table 4: Educational Level of Parents and Educational Status of Children

(in percentage)

	Boys' Schooling Status				Girls' Schooling Status			
	School going	**Drop out**	**Never enrolled**	**Total**	**School going**	**Drop out**	**Never enrolled**	**Total**
Father's Education								
Illiterate	624 (21)	71 (48)	73 (55)	**768**	611 (21)	70 (51)	88 (55)	**769**
I-V	593 (19)	30 (20)	18 (14)	**641**	563 (20)	29 (21)	14 (9)	**606**
VI-VIII	549 (18)	12 (8)	13 (10)	**574**	542 (19)	16 (12)	16 (10)	**574**
IX-XII	855 (28)	15 (10)	8 (6)	**878**	752 (6)	11 (8)	19 (12)	**782**
Above Class XII	247 (8)	2 (1)	0	**249**	243 (8)	2 (1)	2 (1)	**247**
No response	174 (6)	18 (12)	20 (15)	**212**	174 (6)	9 (7)	20 (13)	**203**
Total (N =100)	**3042**	**148**	**132**	**3322**	**2885**	**137**	**159**	**3181**
Mothers' Education								
Illiterate	1354 (45)	102 (69)	95 (72)	**1551**	47	80	72	**1575**
I-V	649 (21)	17 (11)	8 (10)	**676**	599 (21)	11 (8)	8 (5)	**618**
VI-VIII	508 (17)	7 (5)	6 (5)	**521**	441 (15)	4 (3)	10 (6)	**455**
IX-XII	308 (10)	5 (3)	2 (2)	**315**	283 (10)	3 (2)	8 (5)	**294**
Above Class XII	39 (1)	0	0	**39**	30 (1)	0	0	**30**
No response	184 (6)	17 (11)	19 (14)	**220**	180 (6)	10 (7)	19 (12)	**209**
Total (N =100)	**3042**	**148**	**132**	**3322**	**2885**	**137**	**159**	**3181**

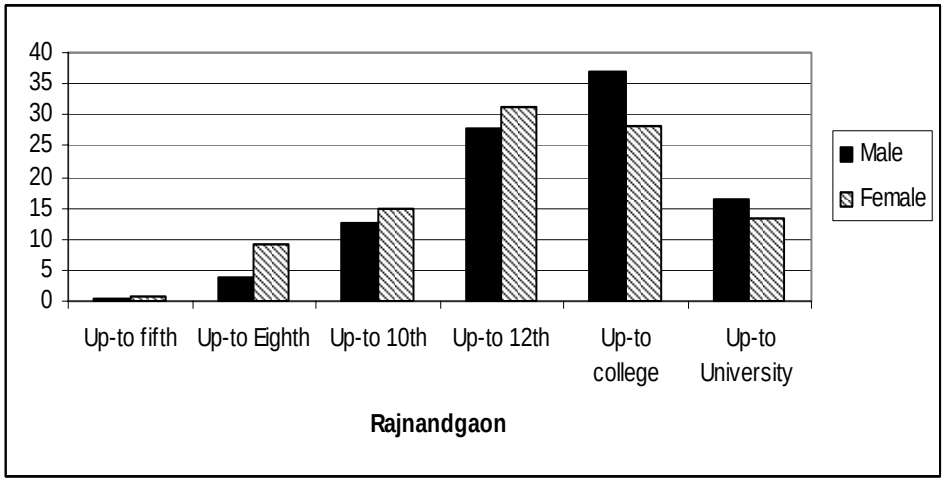
Source: Household Survey Data, 2008

Mother's education was a stronger determinant of educational access for children, particularly girls. The above Table indicates that out of 148 drop out boys, 48 per cent have illiterate fathers and 69 per cent have illiterate mothers. These percentages have shown considerable increase in the case of drop out girls. More than half (51%) of the drop out girls have illiterate fathers and around 80% drop out girls have illiterate mothers. Similarly, the proportion of never enrolled children with illiterate mothers was also very high and it was 72% in the case of never enrolled girls. Barring a few, most children with educated parents were attending school. Again children of illiterate parents remained frequently absent from schools and also repeated their grades (Bandyopadhyay, Das and Zeitlyn, 2011).

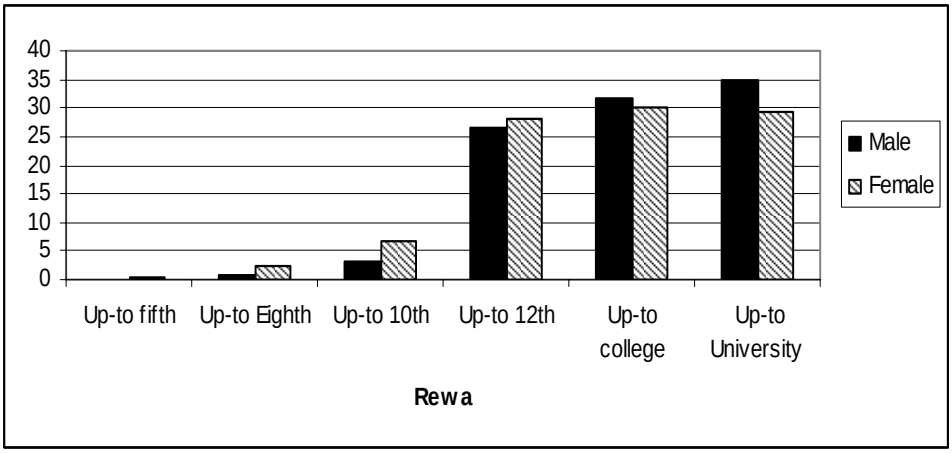
It is understandable that, with increase in parents' educational level, demand for education increases, raising the level of parental aspiration as well. Many parents now want to educate their children beyond school level albeit there is considerable variation among the clusters (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The Highest Grade Parents want to Educate their Children

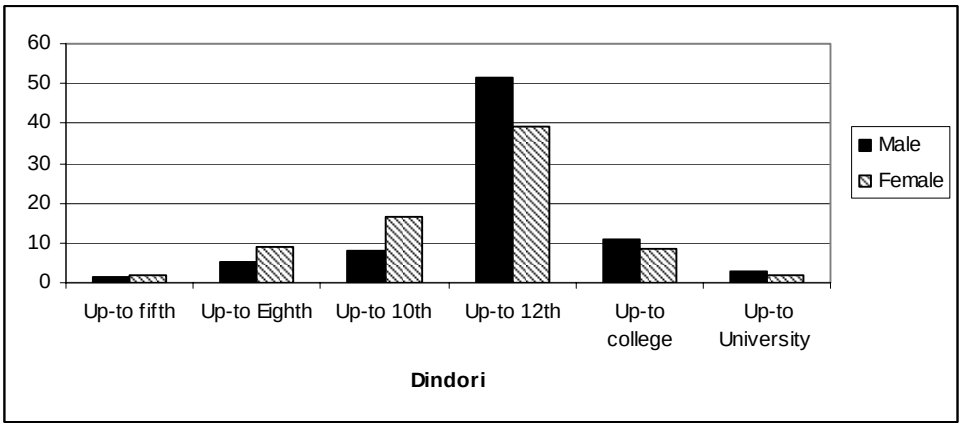
Rajnandgaon



Rewa



Dindori



Source: Household Survey

The available data indicated that majority of parents in Rewa (65%) and about half of the parents in Dindori (48%) have expressed their willingness to continue their children's education beyond school level, though there was considerable difference between boys and girls, particularly in Dindori. In Rajnandgaon, parents of 63% boys and around 40% girls wanted their children to continue education beyond school level. With increase in parents' aspiration level there was an increase in investment on private tuitions among other things.

The above Table shows that there was significant difference in parents' aspiration for boys and girls with respect to the educational level their children should attend indicating gender biased attitude of parents. Girls mostly were not expected to be highly educated whereas parents aspire for higher education beyond school for their sons particularly in Rajnandgaon but in Dindori, most parents wanted both, their sons and daughters to complete at least primary education. It may be because of limited opportunities available for education after primary education in this cluster. This skewed pattern of expectation of parents may have an impact on the schooling status of the children which needs further investigation. The parental aspiration and education may also impact their decision regarding household investment on children's education which is discussed subsequently. In addition to education and high aspiration level, parental economic status and occupation also have an impact on their decision regarding access of children to education as well as investment for this purpose.

Parental Occupation and Economic Status and Access to Education

Like education, parental occupation and economic status also have immense impact on children's education. Majority of the parents in the study area are engaged in agriculture. Around 25 per cent of children in Rewa and Rajnandgaon clusters and half of the children in Dindoriare children of people engaged in farming. This section will attempt to see to what extent economic background of parents and families helps children in accessing and continuing their education.

The data collected from households provide an understanding about linkage with economic status and access to school. It has been mentioned in the Country Analytical Review (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011a) that children from poorer households are deprived of education because of two main reasons, primarily, because

their parents cannot afford to educate them because of direct and opportunity cost and secondly, many of them start working in household farms or as wage earners. Girls become more disadvantaged than boys in case of poverty. Despite this, many children from households of below poverty level are found participating in schools.

Table 5: Schooling Status of Children from below Poverty level Families in Rajnandgaon, Rewa and Dindori

Status	Rajnandgaon				Rewa				Dindori			
	BPL		Total N=100		BPL		Total N=100		BPL		Total N=100	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
School going	673	632	1492	1393	283	262	1078	997	297	314	431	452
Percentage	**45**	**45**			**26**	**26**			**69**	**69**		
Drop outs from school	34	37	49	50	12	8	49	36	38	39	49	52
Percentage	**69**	**74**			**24**	**22**			**73**	**75**		
Never admitted to school	18	20	23	31	10	9	41	37	55	69	66	91
Percentage	**78**	**65**			**24**	**24**			**83**	**76**		
Total	725	689	1564	1474	305	279	1168	1070	390	422	546	595
Percentage	46	47			26	26			65	71		

Source: Household Survey Data

According to Table 5 Rajnandagaon though being a more advanced area, has 725 boys and 689 girls belonging to BPL household. Most of the children from BPL families of this cluster were found attending school. However, out of a total of 49 boys and 50 girls who were reported as drop outs from school, 69 per cent boys and 74 per cent girls were from BPL families. In Dindori also majority of the drop out children were from BPL families. In Rewa, surprisingly only around one fifth drop out children were from BPL families. It may be because many people despite coming from low income groups, do not hold BPL cards. Similarly, majority of never enrolled children are from BPL families in Rajnandgaon and Dindori clusters. It is also noticeable that poverty has affected more in access in Dindori as more children from BPL families remained never enrolled and majority of them were girls.

Thus, the above analysis indicates close association between poverty and educational deprivation atleast in two clusters under study making children from

below poverty level families in the zone of exclusion. Such close association between poverty and educational exclusion continued in 2009 and 2010 with large number of children from BPL families having to leave their study early particularly in Rajnandgaon and Dindori clusters (Table 6).

Table 6: Incidence of Drop out from BPL Families

	Boys				Girls			
	2009		2010		2009		2010	
	Total drop out	BPL families	Total drop out	BPL families	Total drop out	BPL families	Total drop out	BPL families
Rajnandgaon	19	12	33	16	15	10	36	20
Rewa	3	2	8	2	4	0	12	4
Dindori	19	12	22	18	11	9	14	10

Source: Household Survey and Roster merged Data 2009, 2010

Family Occupation and Schooling

It has also been found that family occupation (main sources of household income) has an impact on schooling. Although majority of the children from labour class (agriculture as well as others) were enrolled in schools, some children could not continue their education. From Table 7, it is clear that almost all parents irrespective of their occupational background are now willing to educate their children. However, it is noticeable that, majority of drop outs and never enrolled belong mostly to three occupations: farming, agriculture labour and other labour, while in Rewa, proportion of drop outs and never enrolment was higher for the category of other labour. In the other two clusters, children from agricultural labour had to remain out of school. In Dindori, a substantial proportion of children from farming category also were denied access to schools. On the contrary, almost all children from households with income from service and business profession were found continuing their schooling. Girls from labour class were found most disadvantaged in Dindori.

Table 7: Household Occupation and Schooling Status of Children

	Status of the Child	Farming	Agricultural Labour	Other labour	Salary paid	Small scale business	Others	Total (N=100)
Rajnandgaon								
Boys	School going	467 (31)	425 (28)	341 (23)	106 (7)	104 (7)	48 (3)	1492
	Drop outs from school	4 (8)	15 (31)	22 (45)	3 (6)	4 (8)	1	49
	Never admitted to school	3 (13)	9 (39)	8 (35)	0	2 (9)	1 (1)	23
	Total	474 (30)	449 (29)	371 (24)	109 (7)	110 (7)	51 (3)	1564
Girls	School going	383 (27)	422 (30)	323 (23)	118 (8)	103 (7)	44 (3)	1393
	Drop outs from school	5 (10)	14 (28)	21 (42)	1 (2)	5 (10)	4 (6)	50
	Never admitted to school	4 (13)	9 (29)	7 (23)	1 (3)	6 (19)	4 (10)	31
	Total	392 (27)	445 (30)	351 (24)	120 (8)	114 (8)	52 (3)	1474
Rewa								
Boys	School going	288 (27)	177 (16)	455 (42)	82 (8)	42 (4)	34 (3)	1078
	Drop outs from school	4 (8)	9 (18)	33 (67)	1 (2)	1 (2)	1	49
	Never admitted to school	6 (15)	8 (20)	25 (61)	0	2 (5)	0	41
	Total	298	194	513	83	45	35	1168
Girls	School going	266 (27)	145 (15)	424 (43)	80 (8)	49 (5)	33 (3)	997
	Drop outs from school	6 (17)	4 (11)	25 (69)	1 (3)	0	0	36
	Never admitted to school	2 (5)	7 (19)	23 (62)	1 (3)	3(8)	1	37
	Total	274	156	472	82	52	13	1070
Dindori								
Boys	School going	222 (52)	130 (31)	38 (9)	28 (7)	2 (0.5)	4 (0.7)	424
	Drop out from school	26 (55)	16 (34)	5 (11)	0	0	0	47
	Never admitted to school	35 (52)	26 (39)	6 (9)	0	0	0	67
	Total	283 (53)	172 (32)	49 (9)	28 (5)	2 (0.4)	4 (0.6)	538
Girls	School going	232 (52)	145 (32)	42 (9)	27	3 (1)	1 (0.2)	450
	Drop out from school	37 (67)	10 (18)	8 (15)	0	0	0	55
	Never admitted to school	47 (51)	36 (39)	9 (10)	1	0	0	93
	Total	316	191	59	28	3	1	598

Source: Household survey data

It is noticeable that most children from poorer households of agricultural and wage labours are now availing schools. In addition to occupation status, household income also impacts on schooling. Table 8 indicates that majority of the children even from poorer households are enrolled in schools. However, most of the drop outs and

never enrolled children typically belonged to lower income groups (with household income of below Rs. 3000/-). It is worth mentioning here that even 19 children (6 boys and 13 girls) from higher income groups (households with income of Rs. 3000/- and above) have remained out of school, 13 (5 boys and 8 girls) of these children are drop outs. It is also noteworthy that more girls than boys from these households remained out of school. This indicates that girls irrespective of their economic status can become more disadvantaged than boys.

Table 8: Household Income and Schooling Status

Rajnandgaon										
	Boys					**Girls**				
	Below Rs. 1000	**Rs. 1000-3000**	**Rs.3000-5000**	**Rs. 5000 and above**	**Total (N= 100)**	**Below Rs. 1000**	**Rs. 1000-3000**	**Rs. 3000-5000**	**Rs. 5000 and above**	**Total (N= 100)**
School going	33 (2)	1219 (81)	144 (10)	95 (7)	1492	39 (3)	1112 (80)	154 (11)	88 (6)	1393
Drop outs from school	1	45 (92)	2	1	49	1	44 (88)	4	1	50
Never admitted to school	2	21 (93)	0	0	23	0	29 (93)	0	2	31
Total	36	1285	146	96	1564	40	1185	158	91	1474
Rewa										
School going	308 (28)	611 (57)	102 (9)	55 (5)	1078	279 (28)	559 (56)	96 (10)	61 (6)	997
Drop outs from school	12 (24)	35 (71)	2	0	49	12 (33)	21 (58)	2	1	36
Never admitted to school	17 (41)	23 (56)	1	0	41	11 (30)	23 (62)	2	1	37
Total	337	669	105	55	1168	302	603	100	63	1070
Dindori										
School going	208 (50)	191 (45)	19 (4)	6 (1)	424	234 (47)	188 (42)	21 (5)	7 (2)	450
Drop outs from school	22 (46)	25 (53)	0	0	47	17 (31)	38 (69)	0	0	55
Never admitted to school	38 (57)	29 (62)	0	0	67	61 (66)	32 (34)	0	0	93
Total	268	245	19	6	538	312	258	21	7	598

Source: Household survey data, 2008

Investment in Education

This section attempts to provide some understanding about the investment made by their family or parents in children's education in terms of school fees, private tuitions and purchasing books and meeting other school costs. Majority of the children in all the three clusters, and the highest proportion from Dindori are attending government schools which are expected not to charge any fees till upper primary level. However, some of the parents in Rewa and Rajnandgaon were found paying

fees to send their children to fee paying private schools. The proportion of these children was higher in Rewa than Rajnandgaon (Table 9). In Rajnandgaon hardly any difference is found in the amount of investment in school development fees for boys and girls but in Rewa, the proportion of girls was much higher in the lowest payment category and more boys than girls were found in the highest category of payment (401 and above). This may be because more boys than girls were attending private schools and girls may be attending low fee paid private schools (63% girls are attending low paid private schools as compared to 57% boys in Rewa).

Table 9: Investment on School Development Fees by Parents

(in percentage)

Fees (in Rs)	Rajnandgaon			Rewa		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1-50	20	25	22	57	63	61
51-100	27	25	26	19	17	18
101-200	33	29	31	8	7	8
201-400	17	20	18	8	9	8
401 and above	4	2	3	8	4	6
Total (N=100)	173	174	347	569	566	1135

Source: Household survey data

In addition to school fees, some of the parents could afford to spend money for private tuitions and purchasing books as well. The investment pattern has been highlighted in the following Table.

Table 10: Amount spent on books and private tuition (in percentage)

Amount in rupees	Percentage spent on books						Percentage Spent on private tuition					
	Rajnandgaon			Rewa			Rajnandgaon			Rewa		
	Sex		Total	Sex		Total	Sex		Total	Sex		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
1-50	26	27	27	8	13	10	18	11	15	3	2	2
51-100	31	27	29	16	11	14	21	14	18	4	7	5
101-200	27	24	26	30	36	32	23	19	21	16	10	13
201-400	13	19	15	29	28	28	19	30	23	0	3	2
Above 400	4	3	4	17	13	15	20	27	22	78	79	78
Total N = 100	330	274	604	427	237	664	57	37	94	76	61	137

Source: Household survey data, 2008

The number of children engaged in private tuitions was higher in Rewa than Rajnandgaon. It was interesting to note that the proportion of children receiving private tuition paying tuition fees of more than Rs.400 per month was quite high in Rewa. In addition to school and tuition fees, parents also spent on books (Table 10). A

clear gender difference in investment on education was also visible, particularly in Rewa. For example, more boys than girls were found availing private tuitions. Typically, a higher proportion of boys than girls were availing private tuitions and paying higher tuition fees, indicating parental preference for education of sons. In both clusters, Rewa and Rajnandgaon some parents have also spent money in purchasing books but the proportion of boys was higher than girls in this respect. The difference was quite visible in the case of Rewa cluster and higher amounts were spent in purchasing books for boys than girls. However, not too many parents were found in Dindori who could spend on development fees, private tuitions or purchase books. In fact, due to lack of data, discussion on investment of parents in children's education remained confined to Rewa and Rajnandgaon. Thus, it is necessary for government to provide supplementary reading materials to all these children in order to help them in improving their reading and writing capabilities.

Gender and Access to School

Enrolment and retention

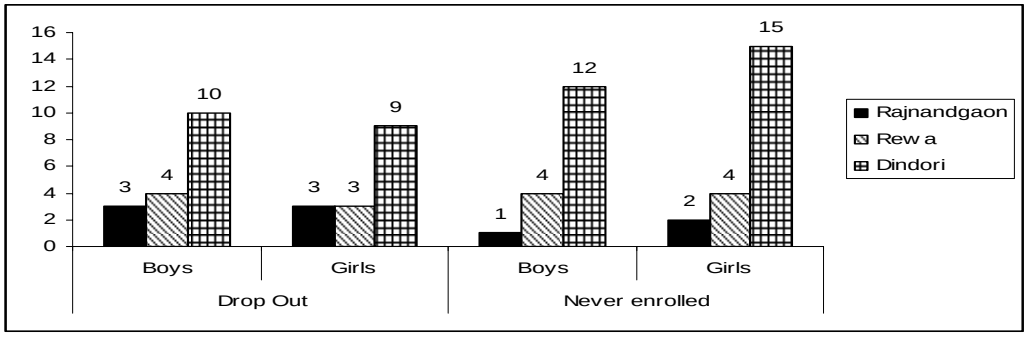
The analysis presented in this section gives a quantitative picture of the process of exclusion in terms of enrolment, never enrolment and drop out (showing retention) from schools in all three areas. The distribution of children according to the status of their school participation in the selected clusters (Table 11) highlights that the majority of children of the 6-15 years age group were enrolled in schools. The highest proportion of never enrolled and drop out children was in tribal cluster of Dindori clearly indicating location as a social disadvantage (Figure 6). Among the other two districts, Rajnandgaon has a larger number of drop outs, whereas Rewa has higher proportion of never enrolled children. Out of the 265 never enrolled children, more than half (147, 54.5%) are from Dindori cluster while for Rewa and Rajnandgaon these figures are 76 (16%) and 42 (18%) respectively. Though in aggregate terms gender difference was very marginal in the case of never enrolment, more girls than boys were recorded as never enrolled in Dindori. In addition, drop out was also continuing in all these three clusters. Most apparently, the incidence of drop out increased, in 2009 when altogether 446 children dropped out. The number of total drop outs further increased to 602 (Figure 7) in 2010.

Table 11: Sex wise Enrolment Status in the three Clusters

Clusters	Enrolled			Drop out			Never enrolled			Total		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
Rajnandgaon	1503	1394	2897	49	49	98	23	30	53	1575	1473	3048
Percent	95	95	95	3	3	3	1	2	2			
Rewa	1080	1008	2088	49	33	82	41	37	78	1170	1078	2248
Percent	92	93	93	4	3	4	3.5	4	3			
Dindori	431	451	882	49	52	101	66	91	157	546	594	1140
Percent	**79**	**76**	**77**	**10**	**9**	**9**	**12**	**15**	**14**			

Source: Household survey data

Figure 6: Proportion of never Enrolled and Drop outs (Out of School Children)



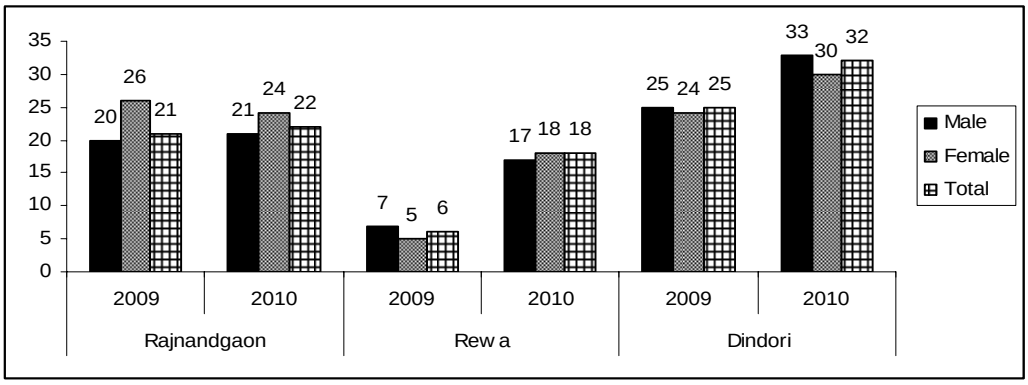
Source: Household survey data, 2008

The highest proportions of drop-outs were in Dindori during both years, followed by Rajnandgaon, which had better schooling facilities than Dindori or Rewa. More girls than boys dropped out in Rajnandgaon but the case was reversed in Dindori. In Rewa while girls' retention was better than boys in 2009, this trend got reversed in 2010.

It is evident from Table 12 that many children in these clusters have remained out of school because of school related reasons like, distance of school and education offered being deficient in quality (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011). Lack of interest of children and parents, parent's inability to bear the cost of schooling have also been other important reasons for non enrolment and drop out which again to a great extent are results of lack of sensitivity of school system towards the needs of poor children and parents, lack of inclusivity in schools and its poor functioning. It was the school which could not encourage children and parents to grow their interest in school (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011b) and also could not provide any support to poor children who were providing financial support to their family to

pursue their education resulting in their exclusion from schools.The children's lack of interest in study which has been mentioned as a major reason for non-enrolment indirectly points to poor quality of education (Tilak, 2000). It is noticeable that a higher proportion of respondents cited poor quality of school as a reason for never enrolment which indicates that without even availing schooling facilities parents felt the ineffectiveness of schools and expressed their dissatisfaction about the functioning of schools. May be because of this, they opted out from enrolling their children in school.

Figure 7: Percentage of Drop out Children in 2009 and 2010



Source: Household survey and school roster merged data

Table 12: Reasons for Drop out and never Enrolment

(in percentage)

Main Reasons	Drop out			Never enrolled		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Distance of school/education centre	3	3	3	11	10	10
Quality of education in school is poor	1	1	1	8	9	8
Contribution to household income	25	22	23	11	11	11
Help in household activity/sibling care	9	18	13	18	22	20
Child is not interested in school	53	42	48	29	32	31
Unable to bear expense of education	3	7	5	4	6	5
Parents do not give importance to school	2	4	3	12	9	10
Child disability	4	3	3	5	2	3
Security of child	0	0	0	2	1	1
Does not have learning material	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total (N = 100)	**156**	**138**	**294**	**123**	**152**	**275**

Source: Household survey, 2008

In totality, one could find that while 34% of the children were never enrolled because of household related reasons, particularly their family's economic condition and their engagement in household chores, rest of the children remained never-enrolled because of school related reasons**.** Substantial gender gap was found in

proportion of children who have become unschooled due to household related reasons. While 34%of the boys dropped out and 29% remained never enrolled due to these reasons, proportion of girls who left school (40%) and remained never enrolled (33%) (due to these same reasons) was much higher indicating discriminating attitude of parents and families towards girls' education and continuation of gender stereotyping. The above analysis suggests that mere provision of schooling facilities in villages does not ensure access and retention of all children and some of them may require special strategic intervention.

Child Work and Schooling

It is interesting to note that most school going children including girls were reportedly neither engaged in any household work nor employed elsewhere. However, some children attending school were helping in household chores and some were engaged in work outside their homes as well, indicating that their working status had not affected their schooling. Gender stereotyping can be observed in types of work children were engaged in. More girls than boys were found working in all three areas and most of them were engaged in household chores while most boys were engaged in farming or other occupation. Incidence of child labour had close association with children's schooling status as most of the drop out children particularly boys were found presently employed in all three districts. This linkage between working status and schooling status has been highlighted in Table 13. One more noticeable aspect was that, a large number of never enrolled children were reported as unemployed and they were presently not engaged in any work in house/ farm or economic activities.

Table 13: Schooling and Working Status of Boys and Girls

(in percentage)

Status of the child	**Main activity of the boys**					**Main activity of the girls**				
	Help in house-hold work	Engaged in farming or any other occupation	Em-ployed	Does not work	**Total**	Help in house-hold work	Engaged in farming or any other occupation	Em-ployed	Does not work	**Total**
School going	85	60	4	96	**3042**	82	61	13	96	**2885**
Drop out from school	7	28	87	2	**148**	10	26	58	1	**137**
Never admitted to school	8	13	9	2	**132**	9	13	29	3	**159**
Total (N =100)	660	87	45	2530	**3322**	948	46	24	2163	**3181**

Source: Household survey, 2008

From the above Table it has been revealed that although access of girls to education has improved, patterns of access are gendered. More than half of the parents of girls who never attended school were of the opinion that they do not need to send their girl child to school. The reality of girls' exclusion was further complicated by caste, religion, ethnicity and age. Rajnandgaon and Rewa have fewer girls than boys enrolled – about 48%, but girls make up 51% of those enrolled in Dindori. Further, percentage of girls amongst those never enrolled in the three clusters varies from 57% in Rajnandgaon, 47% in Rewa and 54% in Dindori. Girls from poor, SC, ST and Other Backward castes tend to be more disadvantaged than their male counterparts, and a larger proportion of girls than boys from these groups were denied access to schooling. It has also been revealed by the data that 88% of Scheduled Caste, 79% of Scheduled Tribe and 95% of Other Backward Class children are going to school in the case study areas. However, educational access and retention remains unsatisfactory as out of total drop outs around 48% were recorded as ST and 39% were from OBC categories. Proportion of never enrolled was higher among tribal girls (13%) than boys (10%) but there has been no difference between boys and girls in case of drop outs as 9% of boys and same proportion of girls belonging to ST category dropped out from schools. Among the Scheduled Castes too, there was hardly any difference between the proportion of boys and girls in the case of never enrolment and drop outs in all the three clusters. On an average, around 8% of boys and 7% of girls among SC children remained never enrolled, around 5% boys and 4% girls dropped out from schools.

Table 14: Caste and Gender wise Distribution of School going and Out of School Children

Caste/Category	Sex of the Child							
	Male				Female			
	Status of the child			Total	Status of the child			Total
	School going	Drop out from school	Never admitted to school		School going	Drop out from school	Never admitted to school	
Scheduled Caste	266	16	25	307	286	12	21	319
%	87	5	8	100	90	4	7	100
Scheduled Tribe	607	67	76	750	627	73	104	804
%	81	9	10	100	78	9	13	100
Other Backward Class	1879	64	30	1973	1748	51	34	1833
%	95	3	2	100	95	3	2	100
General	299	7	3	309	290	3	3	296
%	97	2	1	100	98	1	1	100
Total	**3051**	**154**	**134**	**3339**	**2951**	**139**	**162**	**3252**

Location of Schools and Physical Infrastructure: Are these Gender Friendly?

Access and participation of children have close association with the location of schools and the quality of education provided by the schools. Parents in rural areas do not feel comfortable to send girls to schools, if they are not in close vicinity. (Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2009). It becomes difficult for girls to attend schools regularly if the schools does not have basic facilities like drinking water and toilets and also if the school do not have female teachers. Female teachers work as role models for girls and their presence in school provides a feeling of security for girls and their parents.

Though, all villages under study have primary schools, 10 out of 36 villages are without middle (upper primary) schools and only five villages have secondary and higher secondary schools. This unequal distribution of schooling facilities has bearing on access and participation of girls in middle and high schools. Absence of schools beyond primary levels negatively impacts on continuation after primary level, often accentuating drop out of children mostly girls. It can be an added disadvantage to the already existing situation the girls face inside their homes and the discriminating treatment they receive from their parents and other family members.

The data available in 'School Baseline' and 'School Profile' suggest that barring five, all 25 schools in Rajnandgaon have drinking water facilities. Besides, eight schools did not have basic facilities like toilet. In Rewa, only four schools were without drinking water facility but 21 schools were without any toilet. It is observed that only 4 out of 24 schools in Dindori cluster had drinking water facility and not a single school had toilet. One can visualise the problem children would be facing, particularly girls due to absence of these basic facilities in schools. Often girls are asked to fetch water for the school if school is without water facility resulting in loss of their valuable time which could be utilised for study. There are many schools which do not have any toilet and fewer have separate toilets for girls. Out of 88 schools, 22 (25%) are having separate toilets for girls. As many as 13 such schools are of level 2 schools. While three out of seven level 3 schools are found with girls' toilet, only five out of 58 level 1 schools could be found with separate toilet for girls.

Due to non-availability of Upper primary and Secondary schools in the vicinity, girls face problem in transition after grade V. Boys travel to access high schools located in other villages and even to the district headquarter, if road

connectivity and transport facilities exist. In Rajnandgaon, 20 out of 29 schools of the villages are located along the national highway. Remaining 10 schools are located in interior areas, away from the highway but these villages are also connected through linkroads. The schools are not located in isolated areas, rather most of them are located within villages and are accessible to most of the children. In Rewa, out of 35, only 12 schools are connected through the main tar road while accessibility to other schools are difficult. The children of Dindori face maximum difficulties because of very poor connectivity and physical barriers like undulating terrain and forested tracts.

Many schools have inadequate physical and academic resources and the children who are availing these schools are more likely to be at the risk of low learning outcome and falling into the zone of silent exclusion.[7] "Based on 16 necessary items, an attempt has been made to empirically determine the level of facilities by arranging them in four hierarchical groups providing a basis for classifying schools according to the level of infrastructural facilities available. Out of the four extremely essential items like, school building, blackboard, chair for the teacher and drinking water facility if a school has at least any three, it is considered to have basic facilities or at 'level 1' in terms of infrastructure (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011). The overall framework developed is as follows:

Level 1: Schools have atleast three of the following items - school building, blackboard, chair for the teacher and drinking water facility in the school

Level 2: School has a least three of the following in addition to level 1 items - separate classrooms, toilet, pupil desk and playground

Level 3: Library, staff room, kitchen, electricity

Level 4: Computer, gate, store room, ramp

The level wise classification of schools as per infrastructural facilities, shows extremely poor conditions of schools in the tribal cluster of Dindori with one out of every four schools not meeting even the basic requirements. Only one school out of the 88 was found in level four which was in Rajnandgaon. Rewa also had very few schools in level 3. It is also conspicuous that the proportion of single teacher school was very high among the level 1 and 2 schools which cover most children (Table 15).

[7] The zone of silent exclusion **(**Lewin, 2007**)** refers to children nominally enrolled but learning little and at risk of drop out (www.create-rpc.og).

The proportion of girls in level 2 schools was much higher than boys. Out of 22 such schools, 18% are single teacher schools and 13 (around 40%) such schools do not have girls' toilet.

Table 15: Level of School-wise distribution of Teachers and Students

Level	No of schools	Total no. of teachers	% of single teacher schools	Total students	Boys	% of boys	Girls	% of girls
1	58	139	35	5761	2993	52	2768	48
2	22	78	18	2511	1149	46	1362	54
3	7	25	14	978	540	55	438	45
4	1	9	0	329	188	57	141	43
Total	88	251	32	9579	4870	51	4709	49

Source: Calculated based on school profile, teachers' profile and school roster data, 2008.

Availability of Female Teachers in Schools

As mentioned earlier, presence of female teachers provide a sense of security among the girls and their parents. Appointing female teachers has been an important policy recommendation and the RTE Act has reemphasized it. However, the data collected from schools suggest that availability of female teachers is very low and considerable variation exists in distribution of female teachers among schools. Table 16 indicates that 39 out of 88 schools did not have a single female teacher. Cluster wise distribution of schools without a single female teacher reflects that Dindori has the highest share of such schools, 18 out of 24 schools, followed by Rewa, 15 out of 35 and Rajnandgaon, five out of 29. While in Dindori, around 62 per cent of total girls are enrolled in schools without female teacher, in Rewa and Rajnandgaon around one fifth of the total girls are enrolled in such schools. However, a considerable proportion of girls particularly in Rewa (39%) and Rajnandgaon (34%) are also enrolled in those schools where atleast one female teacher is available.

Table 16: Availability of Female Teachers and Enrolment of Girls

(in percentage)

Clusters	**Schools without female teacher**	**% of girls enrol-ment**	**Schools with 1 female teacher**	**% of girls enrol-ment**	**Schools with 2 female teachers**	**% of girls enrol-ment**	**Schools with 3 or more female teachers**	**% of girls enrol-ment**	**Total schools**	**Total girls' enrol-ment**
Rajnandgaon	6	18	11	34	7	19	5	24	29	2399
Rewa	15	26	12	39	4	9	4	25	35	1528
Dindori	18	62	4	28	2	10	0	0	24	790

Source: School profile and teachers' profile data, school roster data 2008.

Academic profiles of female teacher's shows that around 35% are post graduates, 28% graduates and the rest 33% senior secondary do not conform to the general view that qualified female teachers are not available.

Gender wise Enrolment in different Types of Schools

Gender difference in enrolment is noted in schools of different management types (Table 17). Less than 10% of the total 9069 children are enrolled in ten private schools, 12% are enrolled in 19 EGS schools and the rest 77% are enrolled in 55 government formal schools. It is also evident that the proportion of girls (39%) is much lower than boys (61%) in private schools. Only 8% of the total school going girls compared to 13% boys are enrolled in private schools.

Table 17: Gender wise distribution of Enrolment in Schools of different Management Types

Cluster	Management	Boys	%	Girls	%	Total
Rajnandgaon	**Private**	318	14	250	12	568
	Government	1,873	86	1,884	88	3,757
	Total (N=100)	2,191	100	2,134	100	4,325
Rewa	**Private**	230	15	101	6	331
	Government	814	53	936	61	1,750
	EGS	482	32	487	36	969
	Total (N=100)	1,526	100	1,524	100	3,050
Dindori	**Private**	0		0	0	0
	Government	804	90	719	90	1,523
	EGS	90	10	81	10	171
	Total (N=100)	894	100	800	100	1694

Source: School roster data, 2008

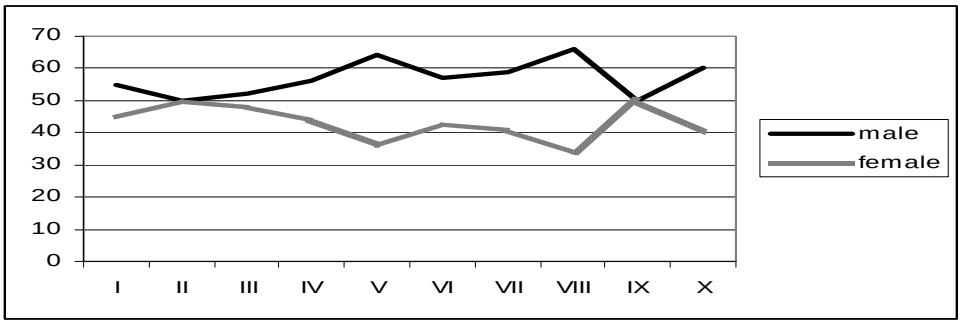
As the above Table shows, the proportion of boys and girls in total enrolment are 56% and 44% respectively in private schools in Rajnandgaon cluster. In Rewa cluster this proportion is quite adverse: around 70% for boys and around 30% for girls. On the contrary, higher proportion of girls (54%) than boys (46%) are enrolled in government schools and the share of girls is slightly higher than boys in poorly equipped EGS in this cluster.

Grade and Sex wise Enrolment in Schools of Different Management Types

It is also observed from grade wise distribution of children that enrolment of girls has shown a declining trend in private schools in Rajnandgaon and Rewa though there is a kind of continuity in the case of government schools (Figures 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13). The difference is more in the case of upper primary stage where girls

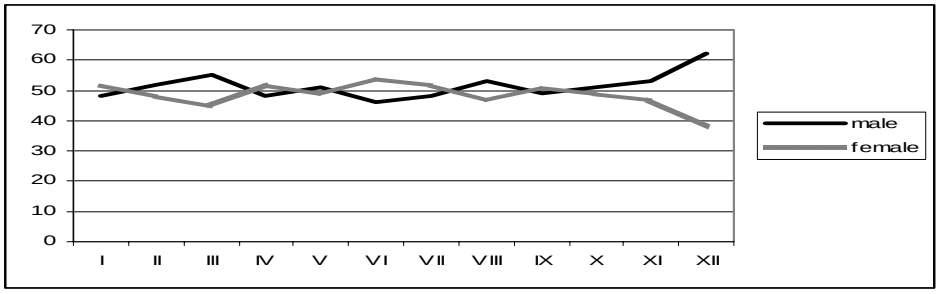
enrolment has declined considerably particularly in Rewa, In Rajnandgaon this difference was quite significant at the secondary stage in government schools when proportion of girls declined considerably despite the fact that most girls get enrolled in government schools mainly because of lower cost and provision of incentives for girls. Parents who show partial treatment for sons take advantage of these incentives by sending their daughters to government schools and sons to private schools where these incentives facilitate girls from poor families in attending school (Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2011). Realising this fact, Government of India and State Governments have introduced a large number of incentive schemes including scholarship and stipend (AKF, 2010) for girls and for socially deprived groups.

Figure 8: Gender and Grade wise Enrolment in Private Schools in Rajnandgaon



Source: School roster data

Figure 9: Gender and Grade wise Enrolment in Government Schools in Rajnandgaon

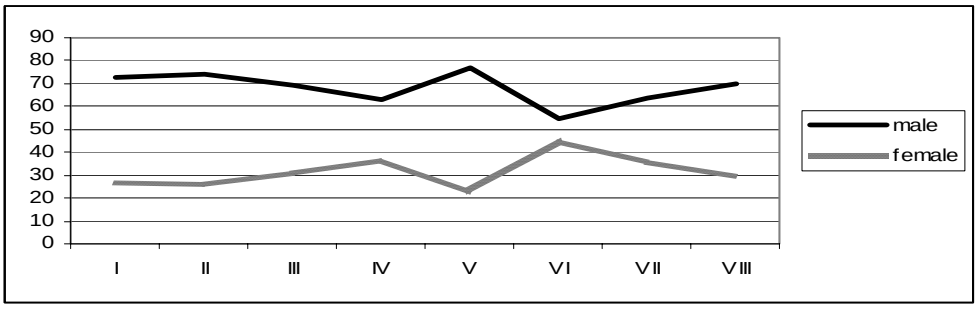


Source: School roster data

In Rewa, the Figures 10, 11 and 12 shows that girls account for higher percentage than boys in all the grades till class VIII in government formal schools and particularly in higher grades of lower primary level (Grade IV and V) in Government run EGS schools whereas the opposite trend is prevailing in private schools. Proportion of girls is extremely low in the early grades of private schools in this

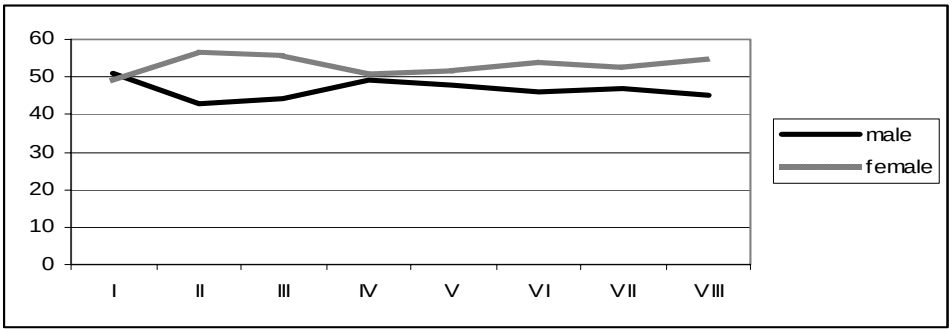
cluster showing less number of girls than boys get an opportunity to be enrolled in private schools in the beginning. Although the enrolment gradually has shown an improvment in the later grades, the gender gap still remains very high in all grades till Grade VIII indicating considerable gender disparity in private schools.

Figure 10: Gender and Grade wise Enrolment in Private Schools of Rewa



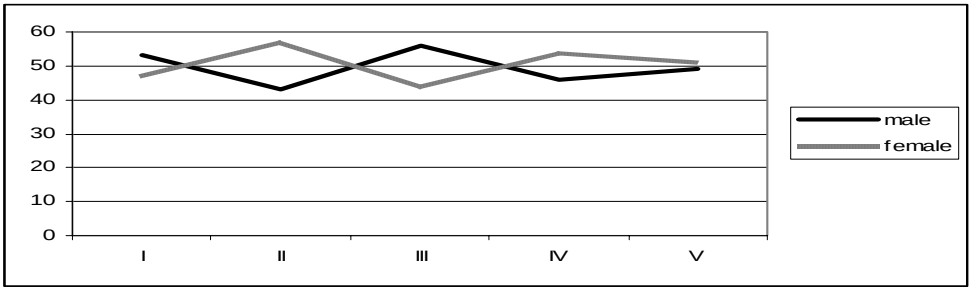
Source: School roster data

Figure 11: Gender and Grade wise Enrolment in Government Schools in Rewa



Source: School roster data

Figure 12: Gender and Grade wise Enrolment in EGS Schools in Rewa



Source: School roster data, 2008

In Dindori, the proportion of girls even in government formal schools mostly remain lower than boys and it has shown a declining trend from the beginning (Grade I). The gender gap in enrolment continued in other grades except grades IV and VII when the proportion of girls increased slightly (Figures 13 and 14). Thus, in Dindori, educational disadvantage starts much earlier for girls than boys. Enrolment of girls in

this cluster showed a sharp decline after grade IV and continuously remained lower thereafter. It seems, most girls even if they get enrolled at the lower primary level, do not transit to upper primary and discontinue their study. In Dindori after grade III, proportion of boys remains lower than girls despite showing little increase in grade V. This gives an understanding that though schools in all three clusters do not have very high gender difference in enrolment of students, they do not get equal opportunities. Gender stereotyping in access and enrolment is evident as majority of girls are typically attending government schools and their proportion declines even in government schools once they reach the higher grades in Rajnandgaon (the enrolment data for secondary grades is not available for Rewa).

On the whole, one can say that, Rajnandgaon and Rewa are at a better situation as compared to Dindori in terms of maintaining gender parity in enrolment in each grade. It has also been discussed that proportions of never enrolment and drop outs both are higher as compared to boys in this cluster though all villages in this cluster have a primary school within it.

Figure 13: Gender and Grade wise Enrolment in Government Schools in Dindori

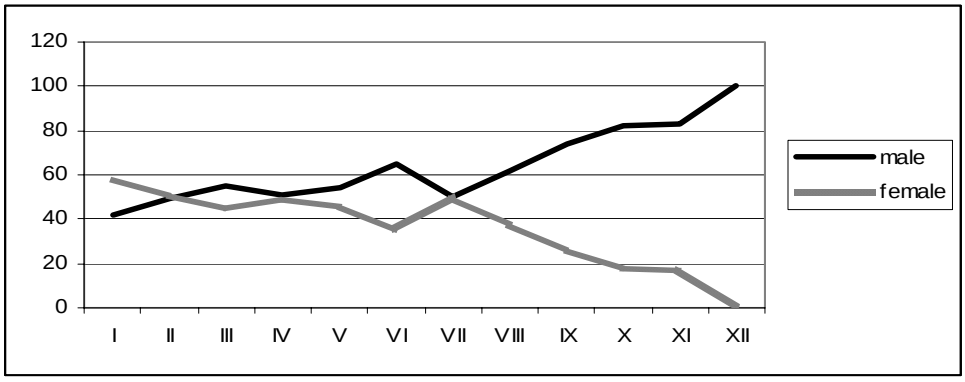
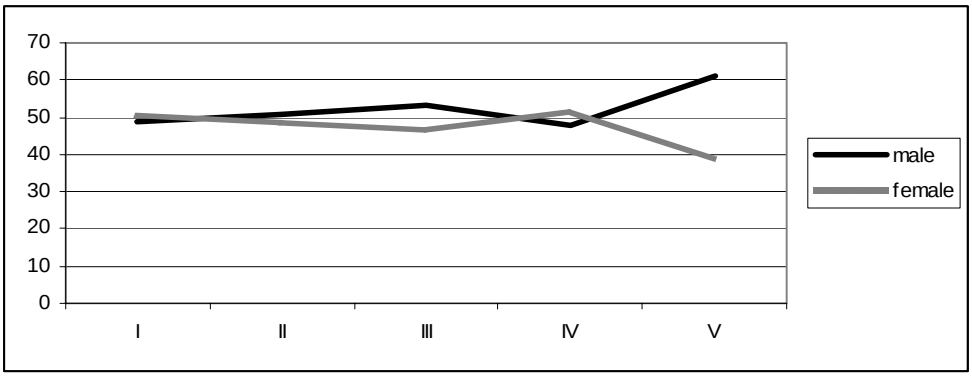


Figure 14: Gender and Grade wise Enrolment in EGS Schools in Dindori



While there is evidence of gender differentiation in pattern of access and enrolment in all three clusters, as mentioned above, it is now imperative to examine how gender impacts attendance pattern of children. Following section focuses on this aspect considering the fact that in rural areas many children do not attend school because they help their parents in farming activities. It is also found that more girls than boys face difficulty in attending school regularly as they are engaged in household chores and sibling care (Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian, 2011). This may also impact their performance and learning outcome.

Gender and Silent Exclusion

The concept of 'meaningful access' is not only confined to enrolment of children, it also includes other aspects like active participation and learning outcomes. Girls face more difficulty than boys in attending school regularly as they are engaged in household chores and sibling care. This may also impact their performance and learning outcome. Eventually many of these children with poor learning achievement drop out of schools and therefore, these children are considered as silently excluded children. In this section silent exclusion has been examined analysing the pattern of attendance, repetition rate and competency level of children. The attendance pattern has been measured through every child's recorded presence in the school register for the previous month collected during the field work. This has been discussed in the following section.

Absenteeism

Incidence of student absenteeism is rampant in these three clusters (Table 18). A very substantial proportion (22%) of children were absent for more than 7 days in a month.

Contrary to the common perception, more boys than girls were found absent for more than seven days in total in the study area. Their proportion was also higher than girls in the case of absenteeism for more than 15 days in all three clusters. The proportion of children who remained absent for more than 15 days was highest in Dindori where 11 per cent boys and 8 per cent girls remained absent for more than 15 days in a month. This indicates that absenteeism was quite high among the poor, especially tribal children.

Table 18: Absenteeism of Girls and Boys in previous months in different Areas
(in percentage)

	0 - 3 days	4 - 6 days	7-15 days	.>15 days	Total N = 100
Rajnandgaon					
Boys	54	25	17	4	2312
Girl	63	22	13	3	2230
Total	59	23	15	4	4542
Rewa					
Boys	48	22	24	6	1527
Girl	52	20	24	4	1523
Total	50	21	24	6	3050
Dindori					
Boys	50	20	20	11	894
Girl	61	15	16	8	800
Total	55	18	18	9	1694
Total Area					
Boys	51	23	19	7	4733
Girls	59	20	17	4	4553
Total	54	22	18	6	9286

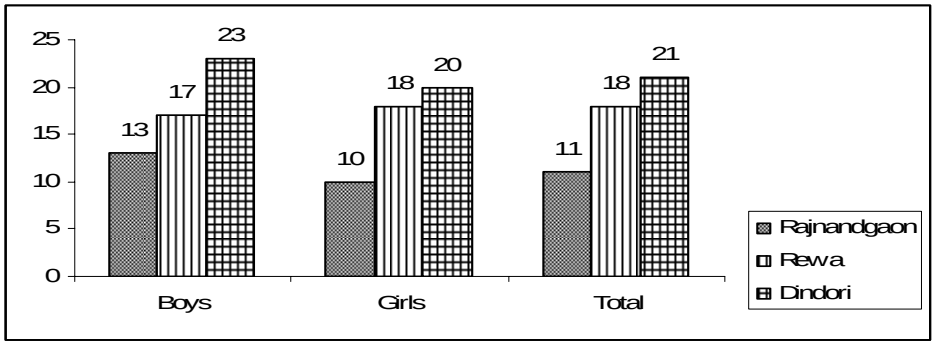
Source: Roster data, 2008

Considerable difference was also observed in attendance of boys and girls in different types of schools. Proportion of children who remained absent for more than 7 days was quite high particularly in EGS schools with marginal gender gap. For example, the proportion of boys was slightly higher than girls who remained absent for more than seven days but less than 15 days in EGS run schools of Rewa (20% of boys and 21% girls) as well as Dindori (35% boys and 37% girls). High absenteeism could be observed in government run formal schools across the clusters. While in Rajnandgaon 22% boys and 16% girls remained absent for more than seven days, in Rewa these proportions were 34% and 30% respectively and in Dindori 30% and 22% respectively. The attendance in private schools also differs considerably among boys and girls. It is worth mentioning that in Rewa though higher proportion of boys than girls remained absent for more than seven days, they could compensate their loss of schooling hours by attending private tuitions.

Trend in Repetition

Despite states having no detention policy, altogether, 1408 (15%) out of the total of 9286 children were found repeating their grades. While repetition rate was little higher for girls in Rewa, boys showed higher repetition in the other two clusters (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Gender difference in Rate of Repetition in all three Clusters



Source: Roster data, 2008

The overall repetition rate (Table 19) shows a declining trend over the last five years but around 10 per cent of the boys and 8 per cent of the girls were still found repeating their grades in Rajnandgaon in the year 2007-08. It is found that there had been a gradual increase in repetition of both boys and girls in Rewa cluster till 2006-07. In 2007-08 although the number of repeaters declined, still more number of girls (294) than boys (275) had to repeat their grades. Maximum number of repeaters was recorded in the year 2006-07 when the proportion of repeaters was 34 per cent among boys and 33 per cent among girls. In Dindori, the repetition rate has also shown an increasing trend and around one fifth of the boys and around one fourth of the girls were found repeating their grades in 2007-08. Among the three clusters, Dindori has shown the highest proportion of repetition in 2007-08, but in 2005-06 and 2006-07, repetition rate was much higher in Rewa for girls.

Table 19: Trend in Repetition in all three Clusters

		2003-04	**2004-05**	**2005-06**	**2006-07**	**2007-08**
Rajnandgaon	Boys	17.93	15.65	14.25	12.92	9.66
	Girls	15.69	14.17	12.45	12.95	8.36
	Total	**16.86**	**14.94**	**13.37**	**12.93**	**8.92**
Rewa	Boys	17.66	16.78	24.97	33.91	17.77
	Girls	14.79	15.64	25	32.83	18.9
	Total	**16.23**	**16.23**	**24.87**	**33.37**	**18.34**
Dindori	Boys	20.96	16.45	21.42	19.79	24.97
	Girls	25.19	16.2	21.52	18.79	21.26
	Total	**22.73**	**16.35**	**21.47**	**19.32**	**23.76**

Source: School baseline data, 2008

It is understandable that children experiencing repetition become vulnerable to exclusion as they tend to leave school early, as many studies have mentioned. As

mentioned in Country Summary Report (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011, 14), "High levels of repetition should be a serious cause of concern since they lead to over age enrolment and increased risk of drop out. So also does late entry into Grade 1. As noted above in Grade 1 between 30 to 40% of the children are 7 years old or more. By Grade 5 in Rewa and Dindori more than 60% are one or more years over age and by Grade 8 over 70%. In Rewa over 25% of those in Grade 8 of primary school are 16 years or older and in Dindori over 33%. Older children are more likely to drop out, especially if they are girls"

Performance in Competency Test

In addition to absenteeism and repetition, the level of competency can also be used to measure the phenomenon of 'silent exclusion' and this section deals with the aspect of exclusion. Table 20 highlights that higher proportion of girls than boys performed very poorly as they secured below 30% marks in both Hindi and Mathematics. Proportion of poor performers was higher in the case of Hindi. Gender disparity in learning outcome both in Hindi and Mathematics was higher in Rewa as the proportion of poor performers (below 30%) was much higher (41%) in the case of girls as compared to boys (26%) in this cluster. It is noteworthy that around half of the children who appeared for the test obtained below 30% both in Hindi and Mathematics in Dindori cluster where most schools are devoid of basic facilities and adequate teachers.

Table 20: Cluster wise distribution of Percentage of Marks obtained by Boys and Girls

(in percentage)

	Boys						Girls					
	below 30	**30-40**	**40-50**	**50-70**	**Above 70**	**Total N=100**	**below 30**	**30-40**	**40-50**	**50-70**	**Above 70**	**Total**
Rajnandgaon												
Hindi	30	16	20	25	8	352	37	20	16	20	8	351
Math	19	19	12	26	24	321	27	16	12	25	20	315
Rewa												
Hindi	26	23	29	30	18	224	41	13	11	28	7	186
Math	19	10	12	32	26	259	39	11	11	22	16	166
Dindori												
Hindi	54	13	17	17	0	54	52	9	17	22	0	64
Math	57	9	7	2	24	54	49	19	0	9	22	63

Source: Calculated from the competency test, 2008

However, despite this poor learning environment around one fourth of the girls and boys could secure above 70 % in Mathematics in this cluster. Higher proportion

of girls (19%) than boys (9%) could secure more than 40% marks in Mathematics. It is heartening to see that although not a single girl or boy could obtain more than 70% marks in Hindi, on average more girls than boys could perform better in this subject. It is also heartening to see that as compared to the other two clusters, a higher proportion of girls in this cluster secured more than 70% in Mathematics.

Table 21 shows the mean and standard deviation of marks obtained by children in the competency test of Mathematics as well as Hindi. Broadly speaking, considerable gender gap in the mean scores of Mathematics is persisting in all three areas. The competency test results of children in Dindori indicate an alarming situation as far as children's competency in Mathematics is concerned. The mean scores of boys and girls are almost equal i.e 34 and 36 respectively in this cluster which are the lowest among the mean scores of the three areas under study. It is noticeable that the standard deviation has crossed 20 in all the three clusters and in Dindori it has reached 28 for girls and 30 for boys. Since there is a high degree of variation in the scores of girls as well as boys, it indicates that a large section of children, both boys and girls could not learn adequately and face the threat of silent exclusion as mentioned earlier.

Table 21: Mean and Standard Deviation in Mathematics and Hindi Competency Test

	Mathematics			Hindi		
	Total children who appeared in the test (N)	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Total children who appeared in the test (N)**	**Mean**	**S.D.**
Rajnandgaon						
Boys	181	51.29	23.374	208	41.86	18.357
Girls	195	44.37	22.894	228	35.13	18.069
Total	376	47.70	23.354	436	38.34	18.494
Rewa						
Boys	159	55.83	23.163	183	45.92	19.881
Girls	166	41.80	24.165	186	38.69	21.232
Total	325	48.67	24.666	369	42.27	20.861
Dindori						
Boys	54	33.74	30.633	54	29.66	20.456
Girls	63	35.79	28.388	64	30.49	20.016
Total	117	34.84	29.335	118	30.11	20.136

Source: Competency test results, 2008

Similar variations were also visible in the case of Hindi test scores among the three clusters. The mean scores in Hindi are abysmally low in all the three clusters

and it was much lower than the Mathematics mean scores. It was also noticed that there was considerable difference in the mean scores obtained by boys and girls. The mean was much lower in the case of girls than boys in Rewa as well as in Rajnandgaon putting girls in a more disadvantaged situation. The mean scores in Dindori, both for boys and girls are abysmally low indicating that absolutely no learning was taking place in the schools of Dindori. Though it was slightly higher for girls in the case of both subjects (Mathematics and Hindi), the overall performance was extremely low as the mean did not even reach 40%. Thus, broadly speaking, the analysis of competency test marks showed that learning levels of both, boys as well as girls was far from satisfactory in all the three clusters especially in Dindori. There was considerable gender gap in the performance of boys and girls in competency test particularly in Rajnandgaon and Rewa where girls were in a more disadvantaged position as far as learning was concerned. One can see that a higher proportion of children performed poorly in Hindi than Mathematics in all the three clusters. It may be because the mother tongue of these children was not Hindi. Majority of the children in all these clusters speak the local dialects at home. This might have caused a great disadvantage in learning Hindi. This aspect needs immediate attention of teachers and other service providers.

Concluding Remarks

The above discussion reveals that there has been considerable improvement in access situation resulting in an increase in enrolment of boys and girls. Distance of primary schools from home was not the prominent reason for not attending school. However, due to absence of middle and secondary schools in many of these villages under study, transition of girls to middle and secondary schools was getting affected. Incidence of drop outs was common for both girls and boys under these circumstances. Although more girls than boys remained never enrolled, number of boys was slightly higher among drop outs as compared to girls. Gender inequality was closely associated with the kind of educational provisions that was available in the study area. The private schools providing educational opportunities mainly to boys from higher castes was located in well developed areas attracting more affluent parents. This inequality in access has further accentuated gender and social inequity in terms of attendance and learning levels of children as discussed above.

It is evident that a variety of educational provisions exist in the areas under study. Large variations exist in distribution of physical and academic facilities in schools. Most schools lack adequate academic infrastructure but in many schools even basic minimum infrastructure was missing. The impact of this variation seems to be more on access and participation of girls as compared to boys. Although all villages have been provided with government primary schools, the schools are yet to ensure gender friendly environment. Many schools do not have female teachers and also girls' toilet which are considered essential facilities encouraging girls to attend schools. It has been mentioned that only 9 per cent schools are provided with girls' toilet even in Rajnandgaon which is in a better situation as far as schooling infrastructure is concerned. In addition to availability of gender friendly environment in schools, parents' education and aspiration level are positively associated with schooling of children. Most of the children particularly girls of illiterate parents are out of school. Mothers' educational level has a positive impact on girls' education. In view of this, it is necessary to pay more attention to adult education, awareness generation and appointment of female teachers which can build a gender friendly environment in schools and outside.

Furthermore, during school survey it has been noticed that girls received unequal treatment in school as gender stereotyping continue to determine assigning of work such as cleaning school premises, distributing mid-day meal, fetching water, cleaning utensils etc. Many girls have expressed their dissatisfaction regarding this unequal division of labour putting them in a disadvantaged situation as they waste precious time in such work instead of academic work. In addition, as discussed, gender inequality was getting accentuated in private schools, as parents prefer to send their sons to private schools which require more financial investment. Gender difference in accessing private tuitions was also evident indicating lower investment on girls' education. However, the situation is changing gradually as substantial number of girls like boys are now attending private schools and private tuitions too.

Interplay of location and gender was quite visible in attendance, repetition and learning achievement. Gender inequality and gender stereotyping negatively influenced access and attendance and this was more pronounced in Dindori cluster as compared to the other two clusters. In Rajnandgaon and Rewa children remaining absent for more than seven days was more pronounced in the case of boys but in

Dindori, it was more pronounced among girls. However, more boys than girls remained absent for more than seven days in government schools in all the three clusters. This was not the case as far as repetition rate was concerned as it was slightly higher in the case of girls in Rewa. This indicates that though girls were attending school more regularly than boys, they were not learning as much as the boys were learning.

As per the competency test results, majority of the children, particularly girls have shown very poor performance. The extremely low mean scores among boys and girls in Dindori is a serious cause for concern. Despite being covered under various schemes like, Operation blackboard, District Primary Education Programme and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, schools in Dindori are in a dismal situation even in terms of ensuring very basic infrastructure. In view of the fact that most children, particularly girls are attending government schools across the clusters, it is required to pay adequate attention towards improvement of infrastructure and academic facilities that can facilitate access, retention and participation of girls. Provisioning of female teachers and girls' toilet are most essential for this purpose. It is necessary to improve quality of education and teaching learning process in all the schools to ensure meaningful access for all children and their full participation.

One of the pertinent issues, this study brings forth is that children living in remote rural areas need the most attention and care, as they are at the receiving end and a substantial section of these students are girls. The findings are in coherence with other earlier studies conducted in the area of inclusive education. Improvement in functioning of these schools needs adequate and immediate attention of concerned authority and multi-pronged strategies are needed to facilitate these schools to achieve the desired results. For example, in view of a strong association between parental education, particularly mother’s education and children’s access and participation in school, it may be worthwhile to expand and strengthen adult education programme. Already, most parents irrespective of their educational levels have shown interest in education of their children and many of them even expressed their aspiration for higher education for their children. The demand may become stronger over a period of time in the coming years but supply of quality education needs to be addressed for this demand. Simultaneously, recruitment and deployment of female teachers has to be taken up with a sense of urgency. Training and other academic supports must be

provided to these teachers along with equipping schools with better facilities and better work environment. Efforts for all these need to be initiated without any further delay. It is necessary to reduce the existing gender gap by gender specific interventions and ensuring gender friendly environment in schools.

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