Formative study to enhance the understanding about reasons for smooth transition among boys and girls to secondary schools

National Synthesis report – Vol. 1
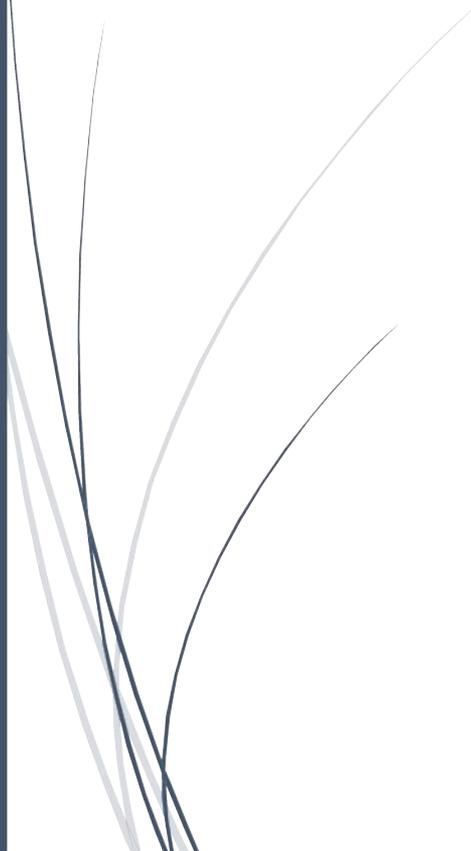
Study commissioned by UNICEF India

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New Delhi
February 2017

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Acknowledgement

We would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the children and parents who participated enthusiastically in group discussions and PRA exercises. This study would not have been possible without their contribution. We would like to thank the teachers, head teachers and officials who were generous with their time and their valuable insights.

The research team was large and we would like to thank each and every one of them for the hard work. In particular, we would like to thank Pratichi (India) Trust, Mahila Samakhya of Jharkhand and Assam, Bhumika Women's Collective of Andhra Pradesh and Vox Populi of Gujarat. This research was greatly enriched by their participation.

We thank the UNICEF officers in ICO and the five states for reposing their confidence in us and extending support.

The members of the advisory committee and Institutional Ethics Committee were generous with their expertise and time. Thank you one and all.

Vimala Ramachandran and Niti Saxena   15th February 2017
Principle Investigators

Glossary

BEO	Block Education Officer
BC	Backward Caste
CCA	Comprehensive Continuous Assessment
CWSN	Children with Special Needs
DEO	District Education Officer
DISE	District Information System for Education
DSE	Director Secondary Education
FGD	Focussed group discussion
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GUPS	Government Upper Primary School
HM	Head Master
HS	High School
IDI	In-depth interview
IE	Inclusive Education
ITDA	Integrated Tribal Development Agency
KGBV	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya
KI	Key informant
MDM	Mid-day meal
MEO	Mandal Education Officer
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MPUPS	Mandal Parishad Upper Primary School
NER	Net Enrollment Ratio
NRC	National Register of Citizens
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organization
OC	Other caste
OBC	Other backward caste
OoSC	Out of school children
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PS	Primary School
PSU	Primary Sample Unit
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
PVTG	Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group
QLI	Quality learning initiative
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RTE	Right to Education
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDMC	School Development Management committee
SMC	School Management Committee
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TET	Teacher Eligibility Test
TLM	Teaching Learning Material
U DISE	Unified District Information System for Education
UPS	Upper Primary School
VTG	Vulnerable Tribal Groups
ZPHS	Zilla Parishad High School

Executive Summary

This qualitative formative study aims to explore factors that facilitate or impede successful transition from elementary to secondary level with specific emphasis on (a) reasons for dropout or transition among boys and girls to secondary schools, with special focus on socially marginalised groups, notably SC, ST and Muslim communities and (b) factors that have enabled children to continue till class 8, in particular explore barriers to completion of primary and transition to upper primary (lower secondary). Even though sample size is small, this qualitative research helps us understand ground realities in specific situations and contexts. One of the objectives is also to develop an appropriate and effective communication strategy as well as inform policies and programmes of the government and other key actors.

Study sample and methodology

The study was conducted in five states namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Jharkhand and West Bengal, and within each state - in 2 districts and 2 blocks per district. In each district, six primary sample units/schools were selected. In accordance with the guidelines for ethical research, all guidelines pertaining to participants' right to participation and protection were adhered to.

The methodology was qualitative and interpretive in nature and included review of secondary literature and data; In-depth Interviews (IDIs) of key stakeholders such as education officials at district and block levels, Head Teachers/teachers, SMC representatives; and FGDs with both students who are in school and out of school and parents of children who are in school and out of school. The key qualitative research tool was the participatory exercises with boys and girls in classes 6/7, 8 and 9 to explore and capture tangible and intangible factors in order of priority affecting their transitions**.**

Learning from secondary literature review

Secondary literature review highlighted the criticality of both demand and supply issues that impacts dropout or transition to secondary schools. These issues range from perceived value of secondary education, social practices and norms that affect education (esp. girls education), economics of education, family's financial status to infrastructural issues, availability of teachers, hostels and other facilities, and issues related to learning quality such as language and medium of instruction, teaching method, pedagogy and curriculum and its perceived relevance. Poverty emerged as a crucial common factor as it exerts a great influence on school

participation especially at secondary level because of the additional expenditure parents have to bear.

Key findings

At the outset, it is important to place on record that the voices of children, parents and school functionaries resonated with the findings from secondary literature review and data from NSSO 71st Round (2014). What children, parents, teachers and head teachers had to share and say about the reasons for children continuing through elementary level, transiting into and completing secondary school was not very different or exclusive. However, some factors and reasons stemmed from respondents (children, parents, teachers) lived experiences and local contexts, which made these factors exclusive to that area/school. Nonetheless, there were similarities and commonalities in the responses assimilated from various FGDs across states, which underscore the criticality of the factors and domains in defining educational trajectory of children studying in government schools.

DOMAIN	THE POSITIVE DRIVERS
FAMILY	**Awareness of Parents And Community about:** • The school; • Package of incentives provided to children in government schools; • Potential avenues for future education and development of children **Parental Support and Encouragement** • Adequate family income that would not require/compel children to work • Having a champion in the family, most often mothers, especially for girls • Willing and able to bear the extra costs of secondary education; e.g. note books, tuitions, clothes – for boys and girls (tuitions especially for girls) • Recognise that children need time to study at home; • Balancing household chores burden of girls with the demands of education • Decision of the family to advance the age of marriage • Parental aspirations for their children – for secure employment as well as a "better life". **Role Models** • Positive role models in the community and / or extended family. • Opportunity to interact with such role models
SCHOOL	**Access** • Upper primary school and secondary schools in proximity • Availability of hostels/ residential schools • HMs/Teachers are caring; have good communication with children and parents; • HMs/Teachers are interested and motivated; taking the lead in school, regular to school, competent in their subjects; • Library and Labs available and accessible to children • Remedial teaching available for children who are lagging behind • Required number of teachers – especially subject teachers available **Infrastructure/Incentives/ MDM** • Adequate number of classrooms, functional toilets, and drinking water • Well stocked library and laboratory • Sports materials available **School Governance** • Active and involved SMCs and PTA **Image of the school** • Public perception that the school offers good teaching, classes are held regularly,

		good results in Class X, and has good infrastructure
CHILD		**Goals/Aspirations/Self Image** • Create an identity • Improve social status • Pursue education for better future and secure employment • Make parents proud • Able to support the family economically • Become a role model for others

Increased awareness of parents about the value of education, educational returns and also about entitlements being provided to the students, definitely lays the first steps towards transition. The family context (encompassing support from parents, their attitude towards education, basic financial security and secure home environment) remains a key driver. Absence of any of these factors becomes an important deciding factor for dropping out.

When aspirations for quality education are not met due to poor access, poor infrastructure, teacher vacancies, poor quality classroom and teaching learning processes, the burden on poor parents increases as they have to bear additional costs of transport, tuition and guidebooks. This additional burden could result in children, especially girls, dropping out.

The vulnerabilities of children are further exacerbated by prevalent social practices and norms that tacitly or openly allow child labour and early marriage. One worrisome finding is the extent of seasonal absenteeism that we saw across the research sample. It is one factor that can have major implications for learning. Within school children are exposed to bullying, sexual harassment and corporal punishment. Our study showed that Head Teachers could make a big difference in terms of the school environment. Similarly, the school head could also ensure regular functioning of the school.
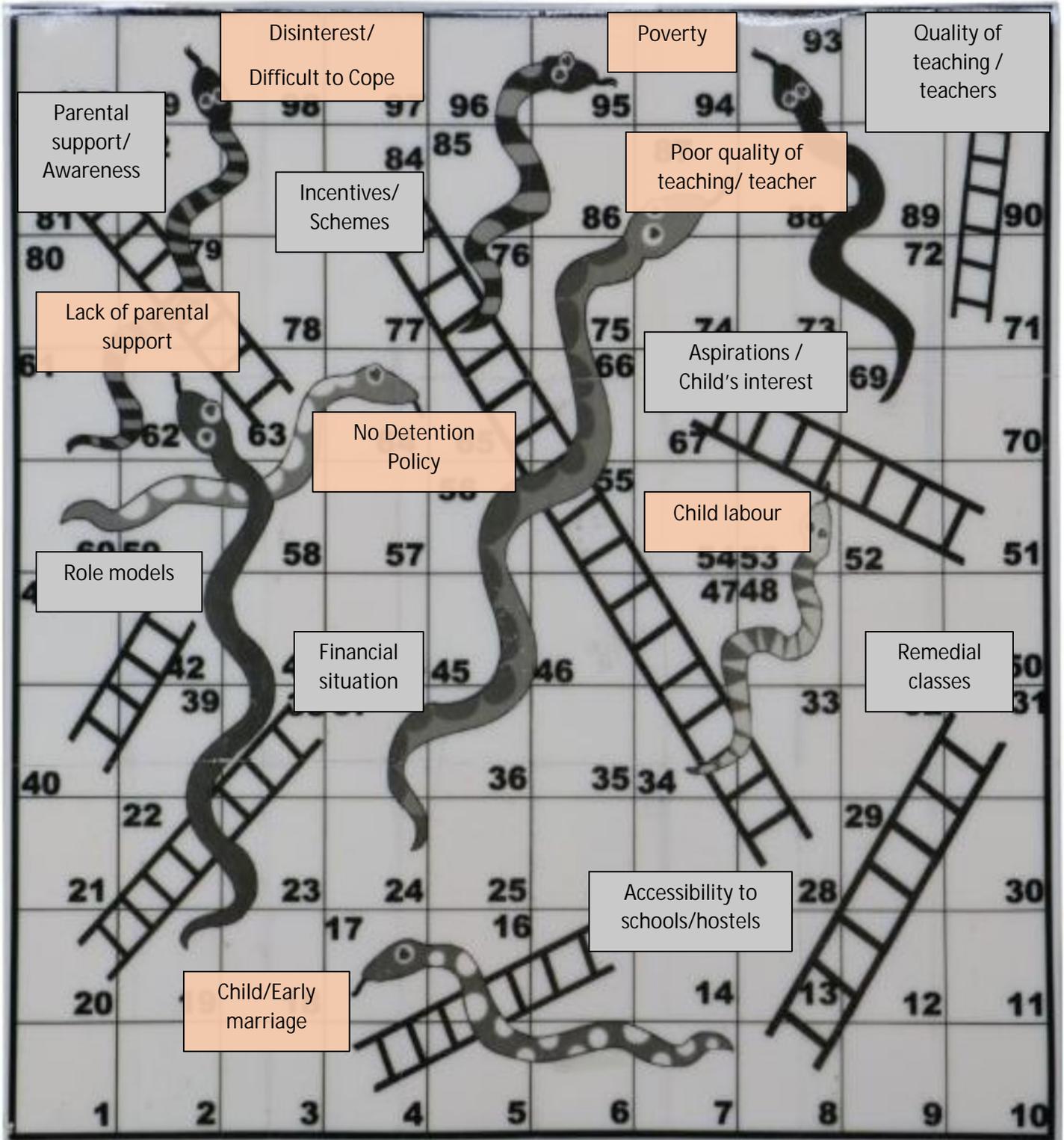
Legends:

| Positive Factor | | Negative Factor |

Summing up

This qualitative study, in consonance with other surveys/reports on drop out and transitions, points to engaging with four domains that matter:

1. Children, their experiences, their role models, their problems and their aspirations;
2. The parents, their aspirations, their concerns and their economic situation;
3. The school, how it functions, availability of teachers who are caring and teach regularly, availability of teachers for all subjects and their own training and other needs;
4. The administration, their attitude, support that they provide to teachers, incentives that they provide to children and their effectiveness in monitoring.

In summation, some important domain specific positive triggers and deterrents to transition are parental support, financial situation at home, socio-cultural norms and practices, children's self interest and role of influencers, access to quality education in a good government school and a safe, secure and enabling environment for children in school, at home and at societal level.

Some suggestions to take forward

In order to addresses the concern areas that impede and factors that support transition, _one blanket communication strategy may not work for all states_. There is a need to tailor the communication strategy to the specific needs of the situation. We need to develop a set of diversified, multipronged strategies involving (a) public policy advocacy, (b) in school / in system communication and (c) multimedia interventions. Following thematic areas could be explored / considered:

1. Address quality of teaching and learning at both primary and upper primary levels. When children do not learn in primary, they carry the cumulative burden of non-learning to higher levels, which leads to inability to cope and eventually dropping out.
2. Reach out to adolescent boys and girls who set the trend in their community/at school level and devise strategies to project and promote them as local role models.
3. Early marriage (particularly for girls) and children' engagement with economic and non-economic activities remain major impediments. An intensive, targeted (community, area specific) strategy focusing on their right to education and development could be considered. In particular, there is an urgent need to communicate the benefits of delaying age of marriage, especially for girls in diverse poverty situations.
4. The benefits of education up to the secondary level needs to be foregrounded not only as a means to get jobs, but also for children to become better farmers, manage their work / business and most importantly, to negotiate the world from a position of strength.

5. Public level advocacy to showcases the positive impact of good government school. This would involve highlighting the role that effective head teachers, teachers and administrators play in turning the school around and making it a vibrant hub for children's overall development.

6. A non-judgmental communication strategy could be developed to reach out to teachers as the catalyst of change. One of the most powerful messages that came through this study was that a good school, a good HM and an engaged school community could help children overcome many barriers.

7. Align the communication strategy to the recently enacted Rights of Persons with Disability Act (2016) and mount a national as well as state-specific campaign to highlight the importance of education for children with special needs.

8. Notwithstanding provisions made under RTE, corporal punishment seems to be prevalent across all five states. A nation-wide campaign is essential to enable the teaching community to move away from corporal punishment and mental harassment.

9. It is important to address teacher deployment policies and practices in all states though the advocacy strategy would differ from state-to-state. Equally, the upgrading of primary to UPS and from upper-primary to secondary without addressing teacher and infrastructure requirements could end up becoming a self-defeating process. Similarly, it is also important to discuss the implementation of no-detention policy in order to ensure that it is not interpreted as no teaching and no assessment.

Given the wide range of issues that have been generated from this research, it would be of great value to discuss the implications for a communication as well as policy advocacy strategy before firm conclusions are drawn. The above suggestions are tentative and preliminary. A more detailed strategy development would need the active participation of Central/State Governments and UNICEF.

Chapter 1: Objectives, methodology and sample selection

This study aims to understand the positive enabling factors and negative deterring factors that affect children's transition to secondary education. The study is qualitative in nature and aims to capture the textures and nuances of positive and negative factors. The study was conducted across 5 states: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Jharkhand and West Bengal. At a time, when universalisation of secondary education is one of the sustainable goals that the country has committed to, it is hoped that the findings of this study could point out the subtexts of problems and therefore, inform the design of effective communication strategies and concrete interventions.

Objectives of the research study

The main objective of this study was to explore factors that facilitate or impede successful transition from elementary to secondary level in five states with specific emphasis on the following three sub-objectives:

1. Explore reasons for dropout or transition among boys and girls to secondary schools, with special focus on socially marginalised groups, notably SC, ST and Muslim communities.
2. Explore factors that have enabled children to continue till class 8, in particular explore barriers to completion of primary and transition to upper primary (lower secondary).
3. Enhance our understanding of the above factors, with a view to develop an effective communication strategy as well as inform policies and programmes of the government and other key actors.

To this end, the study was expected to (a) prioritise motivations and barriers that students and parents face; in school as well as within the community and (b) map key influencers and norms of social, cultural, political and economic factors that influence transition of children to upper primary and then onward to secondary education. The objective of this study was to enable key stakeholders to reflect on factors that positively influence transition by using PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) techniques to facilitate this reflection.

Methodology

The methodology adopted was qualitative and interpretive in nature and attempted to capture the factors that facilitate or impede successful transition up to upper primary and importantly, from upper primary to secondary. The qualitative study was done in stages. We first conducted an extensive literature review and listed the research questions arising out of the review. Based on that, we developed research tools for direct observation, open-ended interviews and focus-

group discussions to capture local dynamics of retention and transition. Given that the primary foci of the study were children, teachers, parents and the community, we designed PRA techniques to capture tangible and intangible factors that enable them to stay in school or drop out. ERU has, over the last 20 years, fine-tuned a technique whereby students are brought together in groups and a game is played to enable them to list out factors that a) positively enable them to remain in school and transition to secondary schools; and b) compel them to drop out. Students were encouraged to categorise the push out factors as well as community / family based situations that influence their decision to remain in school or to drop out. The PRA technique involved a snakes and ladders game, whereby a group of children were first encouraged to list out factors that positively influence their ability to move from primary to upper primary and from upper primary to secondary school. The factors listed by children are written on cards using key words (depending on the ability of children to write it out on their own, students of classes 8 and 9 were encouraged to write on the cards themselves). Children are then facilitated to arrange the cards according to its importance. This was in the form of a game to prioritise the issues listed. This process was then repeated for the factors that lead to children dropping out / discontinuing at different stages i.e. at the end of primary, upper primary and then after enrolling in secondary school.

Steps followed in the research study were as follows:

1. Review of secondary literature (at least from year 2000 onwards) and review of recent data - UDISE (various years), Census 2011 and NSSO (71st Round 2014, 66th Round 2010, 64th Round 2008, 61st Round 2005).

2. Formulate research questions and research tools, drawn from the literature review.

3. Field test research tools and finalisation of tools based on comments emerging from the field test.

4. Orient and train five state research teams on the methodology and approach of the study.

5. Conduct qualitative research in 4 PSU (Primary Sample Unit) schools each in 2 Blocks of 2 sample districts in 5 states. Main research tools were:

   5.1. Focus group discussions (FGD) with students, out of school children and parents;

   5.2. In-depth interviews (IDI) with teachers and school heads;

   5.3. Observe school functioning using an observation guideline/tool.

6. Use structured participatory activities with children / students who are in school and out of school. During this whole process, ERU maintained strict confidentiality (names / identities of students were not asked or noted). We also made ensured that no pointed questions were asked from any student. Needless to add, separate FGDs were held for boys and girls.

Table 1.1: List of FGDs and IDIs

	In each Block	In each District	In each State	In Five States
FGDs				
Parents of children attending school – 7th and 8th	1	2	4	20
Parents of children attending school – 9th and 10th	1	2	4	20
Parents of out-of-school children (all ages)	1	2	4	20
Girls (12-14) going to school in class 7th and 8th	1	2	4	20
Girls (above 14) going to school in class 9th and 10th	1	2	4	20
Boys (12-14) going to school in class 7th and 8th	1	2	4	20
Boys (above 14) going to school in class 9th and 10th	1	2	4	20
Girls not going to school above 14 years	1	2	4	20
Boys not going to school above 14 years	1	2	4	20
Girls in classes 5 or 6	1	2	4	20
Boys in class 5 or 6	1	2	4	20
Total	11	22	44	220
IDIs				
School teachers	3	6	12	60
HMs	3	6	12	60
Block Education Officer	1	2	4	20
District Education Officer	0	1	2	10
SDMC representative (preferably chairperson)	1	2	4	20
Key informant person from the village / urban ward	1	2	4	20
Total	9	19	38	190

Criteria used for sample selection

Indicators used for district ranking

UNICEF selected the first district in each state and the second district was selected jointly using the indicators given below:

- Proportion of children aged 11-14 and 15-19 years enrolled in schools (Census 2011);

- Dropout rates (from classes 1 to 8 and from elementary to secondary);

- Gender differences in dropout rates (keeping in mind that in some states the drop out rates of boys may be higher);

- Share of SCs, STs and Muslims (each) enrolled in secondary as compared to their share in population;

- Ratio of secondary sections to upper primary sections;

- Number of high schools per 100,000 population;

- Mixed social groups; presence of SC, ST and Muslim communities.

Equal weightage were assigned to all the above indicators, then districts were ranked and district in the middle rank was identified - one that is representative of the state. However, the state capital and the district with high urbanization were not selected.

Districts selected in five states

1. ANDHRA PRADESH:

    1.1. Visakhapatnam, Rank 6, High ST Population (14.4% concentrated in Paderu Block), total SC, ST and Muslim is 24.1%.

    1.2. Prakasam, Rank 11, High SC Population (23.2%) and total SC, ST and Muslim is 34.1%

2. ASSAM:

    2.1. Sivasagar, Rank 3, total SC, ST and Muslim Population is 25.9%.

    2.2. Naogaon, Rank 20, High Muslim Population 55.4% and total SC, ST and Muslim is 68.9%.

3. GUJARAT:

    3.1. Banaskantha, Rank 23, total SC, ST and Muslim total is 26.4 %;

    3.2. Sabarkantha, Rank 2, high ST Population (22.3%) and total of SC, ST and Muslim is 36.2%

4. JHARKHAND:

    4.1. Purbhi Singhbhum, Rank 1, total SC, ST and Muslim Population is 42.3 %;

    4.2. Godda, Rank 20, Significant SC and Muslim Population and total of all three (SC, ST and Muslim) is 52.1%.

5. WEST BENGAL:

    5.1. Puruliya, Rank 14, significant SC and ST population and all three (SC, ST and Muslim) is 45.6%.

    5.2. North Twenty Four Parghanas, Rank 5, high SC and Muslim Population, all three (SC, ST and Muslim) is 50.1%.

Criteria for selection of sample Blocks

1. Criteria:

    1.1. Ratio of SCs, STs and Muslims (each) compared to their share in population by 2011 Census

    1.2. Share of private and private aided schools at secondary level

    1.3. Ratio of secondary schools / sections to upper primary schools / sections

    1.4. Percentage of schools by PTR (Pupil Teacher Ratio) above the norm

    1.5. Percentage of schools with at least 5 teachers

2. Equal weightage were assigned for all the above variables and then ranks were assigned to each indictor. These ranks were added and the blocks were selected. We then did a purposive sampling to ensure we have a combination of rural and urban blocks. We tried to balance the selection by identifying at least one peri-urban block and one block with significant SC, ST and/or Muslim population.

3. The tentative block selection was shared and final decision was taken in consultation with UNICEF.

Table 1.2: Details of district and blocks selected in each state

State	District	Block 1	Block 2
Assam	Naogaon	Kapili	Batadrava
	Sibsagar	Demow	Sonari
Andhra Pradesh	Vishakhapatnam	Bheemunipatnam	Peddabayalu
	Prakasam	Tanguturu	Paruchuru
Gujarat	Banaskantha	Vadgam	Danta
	Sabarkantha	Vadali	Khedbrahma
Jharkhand	Godda	Sunderpahari	Meharma
	Purbhi singhbum	Musabani	Chakulia
West Bengal	North 24 Parganas	Bagdah	Deganga
	Puruliya	Arsha	Balampur

Criteria for selection of schools

1. One stand alone Upper Primary School, 1 stand alone Secondary, and 1 UPS plus secondary / composite (class 1 to 10) school;

2. Location: medium to long distance from the block headquarters / or accessibility related indicator – preferably one peri-urban (Block HQ) and one remote location.

3. A school that has a significant enrolment as well as good representation of different social groups in the community.

4. Final selection of schools was done after discussions with the Block Education Officer and the District Education Officer.

In accordance with the guidelines for ethical research identities of sample schools are not revealed in this report. Each sample school has been given a code. Similarly, identities of head teachers/head masters, teachers and officials are also not revealed in this report. We also did not note down the names of teachers and children with whom we interacted.

Table 1.3: List of research tools with explanation

Tool No	Title	Description	Remarks
1	Basic information from records and observation	School records for basic information and through observation of infrastructure and facilities.	Perusal of records and observation by research team
2	IDI with Head Teacher / Head Master	To record basic information related to students, teachers, incentives etc.	Head Teacher, Head Master of teacher-in-charge
3 a and b	FGD: Class 6 & 8 in school	FGD for students enrolled in classes 6 & 8 to record their collective views on factors that facilitate or impede transition to secondary school	Separate FGD for boys and girls
4 a and b	FGD: Class 9 in school	FGD for students enrolled in classes 9 to record their collective views on factors that facilitate or impede transition to	Separate FGD for boys and girls

		secondary school	
5 a and b	FGD of Out of School Children of 14+ years	FGD with 14 years and above boys and girls who are not attending any formal educational institution (school)	Separate FGD for boys and girls
6	FGD with parents of school going children – 14 years and above	FGD with parents – mothers and fathers, of children who are enrolled in elementary or in secondary school	At least 50% mothers; parents of children from SC, ST & Muslim communities
7	FGD with parents of out-of-school children – 14 years and above	FGD with parents – mothers and fathers of children who dropped out after elementary or after enrolling in secondary	At least 50% mothers; parents of children from SC, ST & Muslim communities
8	IDI with one teacher in each PSU / sample school	IDI with teacher teaching classes 7, 8, 9 or 10 (as the case may be)	If a group of teachers would like to do joint interviews, this could be allowed.
9	IDI with Block Education Officer	IDI with Education Officer at the Block or Mandal Level	To be done before finalising the sample school
10	IDI with District Education Officer	IDI with District Education Officer handling elementary and secondary schools	To be done before commencing field work in the district
11	IDI with Key Informant in PSU	IDI with one Key Informant – preferably from the most disadvantaged community in the PSU	One in each Block
12	IDI with one SDMC / SMC member	IDI with SDMC chairperson or any active member	One in each Block
13	FGD with most deprived social group in the Block	FGD on reasons for participation or non-participation in secondary school	One in each Block

All the research tools, along with the ethical guidelines are given in Annexure 1 of this report.

List of Annexure to Chapter 1:

- Research tools
- District and Block selection tables

Chapter 2: Literature Review[1]

Introduction and background

In the last two decades, significant progress has been made towards achieving Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in India. After the launch of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001 and subsequent implementation of the Right to Education Act (RTE Act) in 2009, there has been increased focus on elementary education by both central and state governments. As a result, both enrolment and completion rates have significantly improved at elementary level and we are very close to achieving Goal 2 of Millennium Development Goals as set by UNDP. According to latest DISE figures, Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) at primary school is at 100.08% and Net Enrolment Rate (NER) stands at 87.41% (Elementary Flash Statistics, 2014-15). Additionally, the average drop out rate has decreased from 10% in 2005-06 to 4.1% in 2015-16, while the retention rate is steady at 84.2% (U-DISE, 2015-16).

There are close to 15 lac elementary schools in India and the ratio of primary to upper primary school is 2:02. Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) at elementary level is 25 percent, with only 25.9 percent school with PTR>30 in primary and 13.5 percent school with PTR>35 in upper primary (U-DISE, 2015-16). Furthermore, there has been remarkable improvement in infrastructure and school facilities, with more and more schools providing separate toilets for boys and girls, drinking water facilities, ramps, electricity etc. Also, several government and state sponsored schemes and incentives have been introduced to retain students in schools. Budgetary allocations have increased and for the financial year 2016-17, Government of India has allocated more than Rs 22,000 Crore towards SSA, an increase of 2% from previous year (Budget Brief, Accountability Initiative, 2016).

However, unlike elementary school system, the secondary and higher secondary education is not as robust because far less focus has been given to secondary and higher secondary education with regards to access, infrastructure and quality. An important reason for this has been public under investment in secondary education despite growing labour market need. As opposed to allocations in elementary education, GOI had allocated only about Rs 9000 Crore towards secondary education in 2015-16 (Budget Brief, Accountability Initiative, 2016).

India accounts for nearly 243 million adolescents (i.e. aged between 10-19 years, as defined by the UN), which is close to 20 percent of the population (UNICEF, 2011). With rapid economic growth and increasing employability (according to India Skills Report, 2017, 40 percent people

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[1] The complete bibliography is given in the Annexure.

are currently employable), it is important for the government to create opportunities wherein these children not only have access to quality education but to also give them skills in order to boost employability, make them financial independent and to close the gap between demand and supply side.

In India, the focus on secondary education gained prominence in 2009 with the launch of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) by the Government of India. The main objective of this scheme is to achieve universalization of secondary education and improve access, quality and equity related issues. Some specific aims of RMSA include[2]:

a) Universal access of secondary education by 2017 (GER of 100%), and Universal retention by 2020;

b) Provide a secondary school within 5 km of any habitation;

c) Improve quality of education at secondary level; and

d) Remove gender, socio-economic and disability barriers by providing universal access to secondary education.

Secondary education has also received a major thrust in the Eleventh and Twelfth Plan, with special focus on access, equity and providing quality education. The main objective of the Twelfth Plan with regards to secondary education is to "make quality education available, accessible and affordable to the target population in the age group of 14-18 years" (Twelfth Five-Year Plan, Social Sectors, Vol. III, p. 72).

Simultaneously, the government has also introduced other initiatives to ensure education for all. Both National Programme for Girls' Education at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya (KGBV) were launched with the aim to help girl students to continue their education after primary school. Similarly, National Institute of Open School (NIOS) was established in 1989, with the aim to provide secondary, vocational and life skills program through open and distance learning. Additionally, many other schemes have been introduced in order to increase access to secondary education, including (but not limited to):

a) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocationalisation of Secondary Education (operational since 1992-93), to enhance individual employability, reduce the mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and provides an alternative for those pursuing higher education;

b) National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education (2008), to promote enrolment of girl child in the age group of 14-18 years;

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[2] http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/Framework_Final_RMSA_3.pdf

c) The Model School scheme (2012-13), to provide quality education to talented rural children by setting up of 6,000 model schools;

d) The Adolescence Education Programme (AEP), which is guided by National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, aims to empower young people with accurate, age appropriate and culturally relevant information, promote healthy attitudes and develop skills to enable them to respond to real life situations in positive and responsible ways; and

e) The National Skills Development Initiative was launched in 2009 to provide vocational skills to adolescents, drop out students and women.

To further bolster the adult education sector, the Government of India launched the Saakshar Bharat Scheme and Scheme for Support to Voluntary Agencies for Adult Education and Skill Development in 2009, under the umbrella of National Literacy Mission.

Yet, quality secondary education continues to remain a distant dream for many young adolescents. Studies have shown that there is a steep dip in enrolment rates when students move from elementary to secondary schools, with almost 50 percent students dropping out by grade 8, due to weak secondary education system (GOI, 2007; World Bank, 2009). In their study of adolescents living in resettlement and squatter colonies in Delhi, Samson, De and Noronha (2005) found that only one-sixth of the students ever-enrolled in schools complete class 10th education. Likewise, in a two rural block study in Hardoi district (Uttar Pradesh) and Sambhalpur district (Odisha), it was found that almost one third students drop out of school between upper primary and secondary school (ASER, 2016). These disparities are greater in rural areas as compared to urban and again, more among poorer sections as compared to wealthier households.

Similarly, a large proportion of children from disadvantaged groups exit the schooling system by the time they reach secondary school and among religious groups, Muslim children, especially girls, are worst off. In a study done in Rajasthan, it was found that cultural beliefs such as early marriage play a major role in determining whether girls should be educated beyond elementary education (Jandhyala et al., 2014).

Intermeshing of poverty, social inequalities, gender relations and institutional environment not only determines access to and successful completion of the elementary level but also influences successful transition to secondary education. By and large, there is an agreement amongst researchers that the likelihood of transition from upper primary to secondary is far lower than from primary to upper primary. Transition rates, especially to secondary and higher secondary, are also influenced by gender, socio-economic status of the family and religion. In their paper,

Bhaumik and Chakrabarty (2013) have concurred that, "The odds of making the transition to higher education, especially tertiary education, are systematically lower for women than for men, for individuals in rural areas than those in urban areas, and for Muslims than for Hindus" (p.111). Similarly, the odds are more worrisome for Dalit and Tribal communities as compared to forward caste Hindus.

Keeping these issues in the forefront, the focus of this literature review is to examine factors that facilitate or impede transition to secondary education including issue of accessibility, family characteristics (education level of parents and especially mother, socio-economic status of the family), gender, caste and religion, location (rural/urban), school environment, attitude and beliefs surrounding higher education and policy related factors. It also deliberates on the factors that contribute towards students' retention and learning outcomes.

Accessibility

Access is one of the main critical determinants that influences transition to secondary and higher secondary education. In this section, aspects such as enrolment, mobility, especially with respect to distance and safety, number of secondary schools (or lack of), and cost of schooling has been discussed with focus on girls and children from disadvantaged groups.

Universal access can be successful when availability of school is coupled with high enrolment and attendance rates and there is focus on learning outcomes. The GER at secondary level currently stands at 80 percent for all India (almost same for both boys and girls), 85.32 percent for SC students and 74.53 percent for ST students. However, NER is only 51.26 percent for both boys and girls at secondary level (U-DISE, 2015-16). Similarly, data from both government and independent sources highlight that the dropout rate is quite high after elementary education. The national dropout rates for secondary school is close to 17 percent (19.36 percent for SC and 24.68 percent for ST) and only about 81 percent students enrolled in class 9th appeared for class 10th examination in 2012-13 (U-DISE, 2015-16; 6th RMSA JRM, 2015). Similar observations were made in another study in which it was found that more that 50 percent children drop out of the school system even before they complete elementary education (Siddhu, 2011)

The situation is grimmer for girls and children from disadvantaged background and there is enough evidence to support that the problem of transition and retention is more acute in rural areas, and more importantly for girls and children from lower socio-economic groups (Dreze and Kingdon, 1999; PROBE, 2006; Siddhu, 2011, Jandhyala et al, 2014). Even though

remarkable progress has been made to increase girls' enrolment at primary level, the number of girls transitioning and completing secondary and higher secondary education continues to be dismally low. According to the Global Campaign for Education and RESULTS Education Fund (2011), out of 88 percent girls who enrol in Grade 1 in India, only 70 percent reach Grade 5 and out of which only close to 80 percent are able to transition to secondary school. In fact, the percentage of girls in India who are able to transition from primary to secondary is significantly low compared to other countries including Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Ghana, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Bangladesh.

Further, girls are at a greater disadvantage than boys and are less likely to attend secondary education due to issues of distance (coupled with safety concerns), opportunity cost to schooling and cultural perceptions and norms surrounding puberty and marriage. Equally, socio-economic and caste disparities continues to be a cause of concern with respect to accessing secondary education. Percentage of SC/ST and Muslim children (among them especially girls) completing secondary education is way less than their counterparts from the general categories (Youth IIPS and Population Council, 2010; UNICEF, 2012). One of the main reasons, often cited in many studies, is limited access to schools, especially government secondary schools.

RMSA goals lay emphasis on the importance of access to secondary schools in order to achieve universalization of secondary education. However, in terms of absolute numbers, while majority of elementary schools are either government or aided schools, their numbers decline for both secondary and higher secondary schools. According to U-DISE data (2014-15, 2015-16), there are only 2.4 lac secondary schools for students transitioning from 14.5 lac elementary schools. To illustrate, students in Hardoi district in Uttar Pradesh and Sambhalpur district in Odisha have access to only 58 and 32 schools with secondary sections in comparison to 517 and 239 schools with primary sections, respectively (ASER, 2016).

Problem of lack of adequate number of secondary schools is more widespread in rural areas than in urban. More than 12 percent rural households do not have access to secondary school within 5 km (71st Round of NSS, 2014). Furthermore, only about 85 percent areas have access to a secondary school within the 5 km distance in India (6th RMSA report). This percentage is higher in states including Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (Bhog, Ghosh, Mullick, 2011). In relation to area, there are 0.73 secondary schools per 10 sq. km. and in most states the density of secondary schools is less than the national average (U-DISE, 2015-16). The issue of non-availability of secondary schools worsens in areas that are difficult to reach. For example, it was found that in Rajasthan, most secondary schools are located in urban and peri-urban areas, which means that students

staying in remote locations either have to travel great distance to access secondary schools or have to relocate to districts that have hostel facilities (Jandhyala et al, 2014).

Number of secondary schools not only varies among states but even within states, the density of schools differs based on the location. Distance is another reason that is commonly cited as a reason for drop out. In many villages and districts, a large number of students have to travel huge distances in order to go a secondary school in India. In Uttar Pradesh, it was found that there are less than 2 secondary schools within 100 sq. km and the average distance to the nearest aided school is more than 6 kilometres (Siddhu, 2011). In ASER study (2016), although 37 percent students were reported travelling the distance of 3-5 km, students going to government secondary schools were reported travelling greater distances than those going to privately managed schools. In areas that are harder to reach such as Baran and Barmer in Rajasthan, the nearest distance to a secondary school could be as much as 10-15 km (Jandhyala et al., 2014).

Greater distances to secondary schools act as a huge deterrent for students, notably for girls. Studies have reported that increase distance is a serious barrier on girls' enrolment. According to the UN Report on Women (2012), an increase of 0.5 km can reduced the girls' enrolment rate by 20 percent. Similar results have been recorded in Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia (UNESCO, 2012) and in Pakistan (Zaidi et al., 2012). In all these studies, parents have cited safety concerns as a main reason for taking their girls out of school. Often parents and adolescent girls fear sexual harassment and violence on way to school and when longer distances are coupled with non-availability of safe public transportation system, it further pushes more girls to drop out of school (Ramachandran and Jandhyala, 2010; Jandhyala et al, 2014). Distance also becomes a barrier, especially for girls and students from marginalized communities, because along with safety issues arising due to distance, there are added concerns of increased transportation costs. While distance and cost is not an issue for those who can afford to pay, however, it almost always affects the educational attainment of girls and children from disadvantaged groups.

Along with concerns for safety, strong cultural and traditional values also play a significant role in girls' mobility, especially after they enter puberty. In his study, Siddhu (2011) reports that in Uttar Pradesh it is socially unacceptable for girls to travel alone after a certain age. Likewise, it was found in Ajmer that Muslim girls would drop out if the secondary school was situated outside Muslim neighbourhood (Jandhyala, et al., 2014). Similar findings have been reported for other countries in Global Partnership for Education report (2013).

Lack of easy access to government secondary school also means an increased financial burden on the family. Public under-investment in secondary education has resulted in mushrooming of private schools and close to 60 percent secondary schools are either private aided or private un-aided and only about 40 percent are government secondary schools (U-DISE, 2015-16). Unlike elementary school where the cost of going to school is negligible, there are direct and indirect costs attached with secondary and higher secondary education. While aided schools are subsidized, unaided private schools have full autonomy to decide school fees (including admission fee, tuition fees, exam fee, books, stationary, lab fee, dress etc.), which constitutes a significant portion of the family income, especially in rural areas. Then there are added costs of private tuitions.

An analysis of data emerging from 64th round of NSSO reveals that in comparison to annual cost of Rs 2700 in government schools, parent spend Rs 9000 in private unaided school (Bhog, Ghosh, Mullick, 2011). Likewise, in his study, Siddhu (2011) found that the additional cost of attending nearest secondary school can be as high as 2.5 times, which poses an increased financial burden, especially for poor and marginalized families. Lack of government secondary schools has serious gender and equity implications because girls and children from disadvantage groups are more likely to attend government secondary schools, while attending private schools continues to be a privilege reserved for boys and children from wealthier upper caste families (Majumdar, 2005; World Bank, 2009; Siddhu, 2011; ASER, 2016).

Lastly, another important aspect with regards to access that needs to be considered is the non-availability of girls only and boys' only schools. Parents of adolescent girls in several areas of the country and from some communities are reluctant to send their girls to co-educational schools because of safety concerns. Often girls have to negotiate harassment, sexual innuendoes and derisive talks both in and outside the classroom, especially in co-educational schools and due to lack of girls' only schools, many end up dropping out of school. This was a common issue that was reported by the girl students in Rajasthan (Jandhyala et al, 2014). Only 6.27 percent secondary schools in India are girls' only school and in some states, the percentage of girls' secondary school is lower than the national average. Although, globally, co-education is accepted as a more favourable form of schooling, in the given social and cultural context, in some areas lack of girls' only school further adds to the already existing barriers faced by them.

Access is also a critical issue for marginalized groups, in particular for children from SC/ST and Muslim category, children from migrant families and those living in remote or conflict areas. Recent data suggests that the participation of SC/ST children in secondary school education has increased. While the number of SC students have increased from 5.44 million in 2009-10 to

7.15 million in 2014-15, for the same period, the number of ST students enrolment increased from 2.06 million to 3.25 million (6th RMSA JRM Report, 2015). Some studies have also posited that although caste has no or very little bearing on transition, but when it is disaggregated by gender, percentage of SC girls enrolling to secondary school is less than SC boys (Dostie and Jayaraman, 2006; Siddhu, 2011).

In comparison to 53.7 percent general category students, only 35 percent SC and 27.3 percent ST students complete 10 years of schooling. The percentage is further lower for girls in all categories (IIPS and Population Council, 2010). One reason, as discussed by Visaria in her paper (2014), is that there is a disparity in the number of secondary schools between villages where the number of SC/ST community forms the minority and villages with predominantly SC/ST communities. She found that while more than 80 percent villages with less than 25 percent SC/ST population had more access to secondary schools, in comparison, only 4 to 6 percent villages with more than 50 percent SC/ST population had access to secondary school. Similar findings are reflected in a desk review of RMSA by Bhog, Ghosh and Mullick (2011).

Likewise, evidence suggests that Muslim students continue to remain at the fringe. The overall percentage enrolment of Muslim students in secondary and higher secondary level is 9.39 percent and only 22 percent Muslim girls are likely to complete secondary education in comparison to 31 percent Hindu girls (U-DISE, 2015-16; IIPS and Population Council, 2010). In some studies, a declining trend in education has also been noticed among Muslim students, especially girls (Ramachandran and Jandhyala, 2010). Gender, caste and religion almost always influence the choice of school and as mentioned earlier, boys and children from wealthy, upper caste families are more likely to attend private schools, while girls and children from disadvantaged groups are more likely to attend government secondary schools.

While data on enrolment status of children from migrant families and children living in remote and conflict ridden areas is patchy, some studies have mentioned that migration has an impact on schooling as most children, especially older ones, are drawn into work in order to supplement family income (UNICEF, 2013).

Socio-economic and household factors

Parents' educational level, their socio-economic status, their personal attitude towards education, early marriage and opportunity cost associated with it are often the main factors that influence the education of their children.

Demographic factors such as the education level of parents and socio-economic status are two main factors that influence the transition rate of children at each level. Many studies have hypothesised that the enrolment rates are higher for children if their parents are educated, with mother' education level positively linked with higher girls' enrolment and fathers' with sons (Dreze and Kingdon, 1999; Sengupta & Guha, 2002; Jayachandran, 2002; Dostie and Jayaraman, 2006; Siddhu, 2011; ASER, 2016). The likelihood of retention is also higher in household where parents are educated because they are in a better position to support their children with studies.

Similarly, family income has been correlated with school enrolment. In a study in Honduras, it was found that a one percent increase in the household income resulted in 25% increase in enrolment (LaFleur and Lopez, 2013). Likewise, land ownership and father's income has been linked with the enrolment status for both boys and girls. More children drop out of school if the father is unemployed or is an unskilled labor (UNICEF, 2013; Chugh, 2004; Siddhu, 2011). Though financial difficulties affects both boys' and girls' education as evident from a two-block study in Hardoi (Uttar Pradesh) and Sambhalpur (Odisha) it impacts girls more than boys (ASER, 2016). While boys drop out in order to supplement family income, girls mostly drop out in order to help out with household chores.

For most parents, education is a cost benefit decision. Successive studies have reported that there are incremental social and economic benefits of education girls. Female education not only increases their prospects in the job market, it also reduces infant mortality rates, improves nutrition level, has a positive influence on their daughters' education and to an extent, reduces the chances of early marriage (Schultz, 1993; World Bank, 2001; GPE, 2013). It has also been noticed that higher education of girls leads to an overall increase in the per capita income of a country. Yet, in many organizations, gender ratios are skewed at 71:29 (India Skills Report, 2017) and women continue to face barriers with respect to pay disparities and discrimination at work. Consequently, as mentioned in Kingdon's study (1998), there are fewer incentives attached to spending money on higher education for girls since the economic returns are lower for women than for men.

The cost of sending a child to school not only includes the direct cost of schooling (tuition fee, transportation cost, books, stationary etc.) but it also includes the opportunity cost. In simple definition, "An opportunity cost is defined as the value of a forgone activity or alternative when another item or activity is chosen"[3]. For example, income that could be earned in the time spent

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[3] http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Ob-Or/Opportunity-Cost.html

in a classroom. In the context of this study, opportunity cost for boys could be time away from farming and other income generating activities and for girls it could be household chores. As the cost of sending a child to school increases from primary to secondary school, who gets to go to school becomes a big economic decision, especially in poor families. Since boys are more likely to work outside the house to supplement the family income and girls are more likely to be absorbed in non-paid activities such as taking care of siblings or domestic chores, parents are less likely to invest in their daughters' education (Sengupta and Guha, 2002; PROBE, 2006; GPE, 2013).

Another aspect that affects girls more than boys is the practice of early marriage. India has the highest percentage of child marriage in the world with nearly 47 percent girls getting married before they turn 18 and in some states like Bihar and Rajasthan, more than 65 percent of girls get married before 18 years[4]. Cultural norms, patriarchal values, religion and socio-economic factors are main driving force behind early marriage and hence, higher education for girls is not considered relevant by parents. In fact, many studies have established a link between girl' marriage and parents' attitude towards investing in higher education for girls. Since girls are mostly involved in household chores and move to their husband' place after marriage, parents find no economic returns in investing in their daughter's education (Sengupta and Guha, 2002; Siddhu, 2011; ASER, 2016). Parents have also expressed concerns about girls being less likely to find a suitable groom, if they are more educated than boys and therefore, discourage them from pursuing higher education (Chowdhury, 1994; GPE, 2013).

Another factor that has been discussed as a factor influencing the rate of transition to secondary school is the birth order of a child. Several studies have established that older siblings are more likely to drop out of school than younger siblings. While older boys are likely drop out in order to supplement the family income, older girls drop out to take care out household chores and younger siblings (Jayachandran, 2002; Chugh, 2004). On the other hand, no correlation was found between birth order and its impact on transition to secondary school for both genders in Sidhhu's study (2011). However, in the same study, it was reported that children from smaller families are more likely to transition to secondary schools as compared to children from larger families because in larger families, cost of education dictates who gets to go to school and who gets left behind.

Similarly, the age of the child also influences the transition rate. In Uttar Pradesh, it was found that overage students are more likely to drop out of school than other students when

[4] http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/india/

transitioning from upper primary to secondary due to embarrassment and feelings of isolation (Siddhu, 2011).

Finally, health of a child has also been reported as a predictor of enrolment and retention status as health influences the motivation level and attention span and children with health issues are likely to drop out due to under performance (Rosso & Marek, 1996; Grantham-McGregor & Walker, 1998). Death and sickness in the family also has a bearing on the enrolment rates, as children will drop out of school to take care of the sick person in the family (Case and Ardington, 2004; Evans and Edward, 2004). Additionally, orphaned children, especially older ones, are less likely to attend school in order to supplement family income (Bennell, Hyde and Swainson, 2002; Hunt, 2008).

In some countries, teenage pregnancies have also been associated with dropping out of the school system (UNICEF, 2011; GPE, 2013). However, this issue has not been discussed in this review, as it doesn't fall under the scope of the study.

School related issues

Along with household characteristics, school related factors such as school infrastructure, availability of resources and teaching learning material, availability of teachers (including female and subject specialist teachers), teaching quality and inclusion are often discussed as critical aspect that has a huge bearing on drop out and retention rates.

Although there are not many studies that have directly linked school infrastructure with enrolment and dropout rates at secondary level, lack of functioning toilets is cited as one variable that act as a deterrent for girls to attend schools (Samson, De and Noronha, 2007; Bandyopadhyay, and Subrahmanian, 2008; GPE, 2013). In a study undertaken in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan, it was found that often, adolescent girls stay away from school (and in some instances, drop out of school) due to lack of toilet facilities because it not only affects hygiene and privacy issues, it also results in embarrassment for girls who are menstruating (UNICEF, 2011). Even in schools where separate toilets have been provided for girls, they are either in deplorable state or are not functioning. In a Middle School Study (ASER, 2016) conducted in two districts, namely Nalanda (Bihar) and Satara (Maharashtra), it was found that though 64.4 percent and 94.2 percent (respectively) schools (out of 60 schools surveyed in each district) had separate toilets for girls, only 35.6 percent and 55.8 percent respectively were unlocked and were in usable condition. In some instances, toilets are used as makeshift

storerooms (Samson, De and Noronha, 2007). While lack of usable toilets may not necessarily result in dropouts among adolescent girls, it definitely impacts attendance rates.

Apart from infrastructure, the quality of education largely depends on quality of teachers and whether a school has adequate number of teachers, including female and subject specialist teachers. According to 6th RMSA JRM report (2015), although the overall vacancy of teachers has been reduced, only 64 percent posts have been filled out of the total approved teacher posts under RMSA. The situation is worse in states like Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh and particularly in rural and tribal areas. Consequently, while the overall PTR remains steady at 27 for secondary schools, it is quite low in states like Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, with an average PTR of 66, 62 and 56 respectively (U-DISE, 2015-16).

Add to this, number of female and SC/ST teachers at secondary level are very low, which presents a huge challenge, especially for girls and children from SC/ST group. U-DISE (2015) shows that the percentage of female teachers is 40.57 percent at secondary level. However, this data has not been further disaggregated on the basis of type of school by management and location (rural/urban and remote/tribal/hilly/border regions). There are state wide variations as well. While in some states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab, number of female teachers has outnumbered male teachers, in some other states such as West Bengal, Assam, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Odisha, there are less than 30 female teachers for every 100 male teachers (Bhog, Ghosh and Mullick, 2011). The number of female teachers is worst in Bihar (18) and Uttar Pradesh (23).

Lack of female teachers has an important bearing on girls' participation, especially at secondary and higher secondary level. In many studies, it has been discussed that adolescent girls are more comfortable around female teachers than male teachers (Bandyopadhyay, and Subrahmanian, 2008; Jandhyala et al, 2014). In fact, presence of female teachers not only aids enrolment but also helps in retention. In addition to providing emotional and moral support to girls, they also have a positive influence on girl's education. Parents also feel safe sending their daughter to school if there are female teachers as there is less danger of them getting harassed by male teachers/students.

In addition to lack of female teachers, there is also a shortage of subject specific teachers. Nearly 40 percent schools do not have Mathematics, Social Studies and/or a Language teacher and about one third do not have access to a Science teacher (6th RMSA JRM, 2015). Shortage of subject specialist teachers also remains quite high in states like Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand,

Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (see Table 2.1) and is more common in rural and remote areas and in small and stand-alone schools.

Table 2.1: Percentage of government schools with core subject teachers

State	Percentage of school without			
	Math	Science	Social Studies	Language
Andhra Pradesh	30.62	25.7	39.36	23.32
Assam	17.89	18.93	24.9	36.28
Bengal	36.08	25.44	33.36	13.72
Gujarat	52.73	54.46	67.27	46.2
Jharkhand	65.68	66.11	66.3	57.94
Uttar Pradesh	71.23	63.04	67.45	62.1
All India	37.89	33.17	41.62	41.04

Source: MHRD data provided to the JRM, 6th RMSA JRM (2015, p. 69)

In a recent study conducted in Rajasthan, it was found that compared to boys, fewer girls, especially from SC, ST and Muslim communities opt for Science stream due to lack of Mathematics and Science teachers in girls' higher secondary school. Since parents are reluctant to send their daughters to co-educational schools, they end up choosing either Arts or Commerce (Jandhyala et al., 2014). Even if there is an option to opt for Science, there are supplementary costs attached with it such as lab fees, which adds to the financial cost of schooling. Lack of subject specialist teachers, especially Mathematics and Science can also possibly limit employability options for women, as their access to specialize in these areas gets reduced. Data shows that while the percentage of women in retail and e-commerce segment is high, their participation continues to be less than 25 percent in manufacturing and engineering sector and this discrepancy is higher in Tier 2 and 3 cities as compared to Tier 1 cities (India Skills Report, 2017).

A big factor that directly influences learning levels is quality of teaching and pedagogy used in the classroom. Although almost 87 percent teachers are professionally qualified at secondary level, in 15 states this percentage is lower than the national average (U-DISE, 2015-16). The situation is worse at higher secondary level. A World Bank (2009) study shows that the quality of pre-service training remains poor. While not many studies have been able to correlate a direct linkage between quality of teachers and dropout rates in secondary schools, harassment (mental, physical and sexual) by teachers and/or members of staff has been identified as an important factor for dropping out of schools, especially for girls (Boyle et al, 2002; Bandyopadhyay, and Subrahmanian, 2008). A recent case of rape of a minor tribal girl in a residential school in Buldhana district (Maharashtra) is one such incident of sexual harassment that has been reported. Growing violence against women coupled with safety issues and shortage of female

teachers creates an inhospitable environment and therefore, often girls drop out of the school system.

An important part of learning is the overall schooling experience. In a study conducted in Kenya, it was reported that many students drop out after primary school due to lack of supportive environment in secondary school (Lloyd et al., 2000). Although, RTE Act prohibits any form of physical and mental abuse, instances of punishments still get reported. In some cases, punishment includes cleaning school and toilets, humiliating children in front of the class and in extreme cases, even beating them with sticks (Samson, De and Noronha, 2007).

Poor learning outcomes at elementary level is another issue that affects the retention rate at secondary level. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Programme for International Student Assessment, Indian eight grade students were ranked at 74th in writing and mathematics skills out of 75 countries that were surveyed. Similarly, in an analysis of PISA 2009+ results (The Programme for International Student Assessment), Pritchett (2012) points that out of 74 regions that participated, India[5] ranked 73rd in reading, 72nd and 73rd in Maths and 72nd and 74th in Science. Over the last 10 years, ASER surveys, which focus on learning achievements, have repeatedly demonstrated that the learning levels are steadily dropping, both in government and private schools. Yet, students continue to transition to age appropriate grade without achieving basic reading and mathematical skills (ASER reports). As a result, when they enter secondary school system, it is quite possible that most of these students drop out due to their inability to cope with the pressure of curriculum and fear of failure.

Additionally, since repeating a grade is not permitted in secondary and higher secondary levels, underperformance coupled with humiliation of repeating the grade can further isolate the student and could lead to disinterest in studies. An important aspect of student performance is academic motivation and future aspirations of both parents and students. In case of parents, gender, education level of parents and socio-economic status defines aspirations they hold for their children. As discussed in previous section, in cultures where early marriage is still practiced, parents of girls are less likely to send their daughters for higher education. Educational aspiration is also linked with the economic status of the family, labour market returns and education level of parents. Likewise, academic performance at elementary level and teacher attitude is a strong predictor of student motivation at higher levels of schooling (Sewell and Hauser, 1993; Trusty, 2002). In fact, in their study done in Indonesia, Suryadarma and

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[5] Only two states participated – Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh

Suryahadi (2010) posited that the level of skills acquired at primary level directly impacts the retention and completion of secondary and higher secondary level of education. Intrinsic motivation is also connected with interest in studies. While girls have demonstrably shown keenness to study further, boys tend to drop out due to lack of interest in studies (Samson, De, Noronha; Siddhu, 2011; ASER 2016). It would be a worthwhile exercise to delve deeper in this subject and link with career aspirations of students.

Children with Special Needs

There is hardly any literature on the status of children with special needs (CWSN) in secondary education. According to latest U-DISE data (2015-16), there are only 1.09 percent secondary 1.29 percent higher secondary schools that are exclusive for children with special needs and the percentage of CWSN to total enrolment is 0.56 in secondary schools. As per Twelfth Plan (2012), there are only 55.23 percent barrier free secondary schools and only 17 percent have disabled friendly toilets. Even more worrisome is the number of special needs teachers at secondary level. There are roughly 3437 special needs teachers for approximately 2.37 lakh students with special needs (i.e. 1 teacher for almost 70 students). Not only these figures are worrisome, there is nearly no data on accessibility of toilets for CWSN and little or no evidence on the enrolment and drop our status of CWSN in secondary school. Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary State (IEDSS) was launched under RMSA in 2009-10. The main objective of this scheme is to provide educational opportunities to children with disability and to facilitate their retention by providing inclusive and enabling environment, by making all government and government aided schools barrier free. However, there is hardly any literature on the impact of the scheme on the education of CWSN.

Factors enabling transition and completion of secondary school education

Although there are many factors that limit the smooth transitioning of students from upper primary to secondary schools, some studies have shown that opportunities do exist that help students to transition to the next grade. Apart from the schemes that have been mentioned in the beginning, many states have introduced schemes, such as scholarship and giving bicycles to students (especially girls), in order to attract students to secondary education. Centrally sponsored scheme of providing 100 bedded girls' hostel in all 3479 Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBS) was launched in 2009-10 with the aim to retain girls in schools (50 percent will be admitted from SC, ST, OBC and minority communities). Till date 2225 girls' hostels have been approved and 2009 have been sanctioned. Out of total sanctioned hostels, 660 hostels are functional in which 45383 girls are enrolled (RMSA at a glance[6]).

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[6] http://rmsaindia.gov.in/en/8-rmsa/126-rmsa-at-glance.html

Apart from government-sponsored schemes, many independent projects have been implemented, especially to promote girls' education by various NGOs. One such program has been Project Sankalp, which was initiated by the Population Council in partnership with CHETNA. The aim of the project was to assess the acceptability and feasibility of engaging parents and communities to promote girls' secondary education, and measure its effectiveness in improving adolescent girls' transition to secondary education, their attendance at school and learning outcomes in Mathematics, English and Gujarati. Although the project intervention didn't demonstrate any conclusive effect on girls' transition to secondary school, it was successful in raising girls' educational aspirations and improving parents attitude and support towards girls' education (Santhya et al, 2016).

The Second Chance Program by Pratham Open School of Education (POSE) is an important initiative taken by Pratham in recent years. Through these schools, the aim is to assist drop out students (mainly girls) in rural areas to complete their secondary school examinations (10th Board) while simultaneously providing them with soft skills that will support them in the future. In 2013-14, over 3300 students had enrolled for the course and out of 83 percent who appeared for 10th board examination, 72 percent students successfully cleared it[7]. Currently, the program is operational in 31 centres across 9 states (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana).

Conclusion

While some of the factors listed above are not sufficient to understand the reasons behind greater participation of boys / girls, this study is important in order to understand the factors that facilitate or impede transition to secondary education. The above literature also raises some important questions, answers to which are currently missing in this study:

1. What are the aspirations parents have from their children and how it influences their attitude towards secondary and higher secondary education?

2. What aspirations do students have from themselves and how do they view the role of education towards achieving their aspirations?

3. One of the tenets of the RTE Act is non-detention policy. Is there a connection between non-detention policy and consistent drop in the learning levels? How does it manifest when a student moves from elementary to secondary school?

4. The status of CWSN remains unclear. Except for some figures, there is not much information on who these children are, what provisions have been made for them with

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[7] http://www.wise-qatar.org/edhub/second-chance

regards to infrastructure and curriculum, and what are the challenges faced by them, both inside and outside the classroom.

5. Who are the role models of adolescent children and what part, if any, do these role models play in influencing their decision to study?

To sum up, household conditions and accessibility are two important factors that can impede or facilitate smooth transition at each successive level of education. Transition of girls from upper primary to secondary and subsequent retention is influenced majorly by distance to school, opportunity cost, education level of parents especially mothers and cultural beliefs and practices such as early marriage.

Another important finding has been that higher skills acquired at elementary level, to an extent, can assuage the negative impact of poverty at secondary level. However, there is very little information on students who are out of school and kind of activities they are engaged in. Lastly, in this rapidly changing economy, apart from schemes to promote enrolment to secondary level, more impetus needs to be given to vocational and skill building training. Both World Bank study (2003) and Majumdar (2005) have pointed out that the vocational education stream is still under-developed. According to India Skills Report (2017), out of a total of 5.6 lac final year college students, only about 40.44 percent were found employable. Therefore, there needs to be renewed focus on vocational training, both at state and central level.

Chapter 3: The State Context

It is well known that the participation of children and young people is influenced by both demand and supply. Families take decisions based on not only what they can afford, but also what is available on the ground. Therefore, for several decades since Independence, it was commonly believed that the first step towards enhancing access is to increase the number of schools. However, towards the middle of 1980s government policy focus shifted towards "generating" a demand for formal education through a number of strategies that focused on educating people about the value of education. Programmes like the National Literacy Mission, Jan Shala, District Primary Education Programme and now Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Madhamaik Shiksha Abhiyan have devoted considerable resources to community mobilisation.

In the last ten years most researchers and educational workers have argued that there is a huge latent demand for education across all social groups. The bottleneck today is not related to demand but is intricately linked to the availability of educational facilities, good quality education and poverty related issues that inhibit effective participation. Even the poorest of the poor in India not only value education but are also keenly aware of what their children learn or do not learn in schools. It is also believed that the cost to the family or opportunity cost is not the only inhibiting factor. The real cost of education today includes expenditure on private tuitions (from upper primary onwards to higher secondary education), guide books and other hidden costs that may be very specific to the school or subjects that children have to study at secondary level.

Available secondary data reveal state-level differences. In this chapter, we have tried to summarise some key issues that are important when we look at the state level situation with respect to transition of children through the elementary cycle and onward to secondary education. Some of the macro-data are counterintuitive because what they reveal was at variance with the field level experiences during the course of this qualitative study.

According to Census 2011, the proportion of children/youth accessing any educational institution is fairly good and that while the state-wise variations exists, it is within a reasonable range. The counterintuitive data pertains to the participation of students in 15-19 year age group in Jharkhand on one hand and Gujarat on the other. It is indeed intriguing that given the perceived economic development of Gujarat the school participation rate of 15-19 year old boys

and girls is among the lowest in the country. It is in fact lower that Jharkhand, which is perceived as an economically and educationally backward state.

Table 3.1: Percent children in 11-14 and 15-19 years attending any educational institution

	11-14 Years			15-19 Years		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
All						
Andhra Pradesh	89.0	90.2	87.8	62.5	66.7	58.0
Assam	81.0	80.1	82.0	52.6	52.3	52.9
Gujarat	84.0	87.3	80.2	51.1	56.4	45.0
Jharkhand	86.9	87.9	85.7	60.5	64.4	56.2
West Bengal	85.3	83.9	86.7	52.8	53.0	52.7
All India	86.2	87.4	85.0	59.8	62.4	56.9
SC						
Andhra Pradesh	89.6	90.7	88.4	59.6	62.5	56.4
Assam	85.1	84.9	85.2	51.0	50.5	51.5
Gujarat	87.1	90.1	83.8	51.9	58.1	45.0
Jharkhand	82.0	83.8	80.1	51.6	56.7	45.5
West Bengal	85.2	85.0	85.4	49.9	51.1	48.6
All India	86.4	87.0	85.6	53.2	55.6	50.6
ST						
Andhra Pradesh	80.2	82.9	77.2	51.4	57.1	45.4
Assam	87.2	87.7	86.6	65.2	67.1	63.3
Gujarat	77.9	79.7	75.9	44.0	47.2	40.6
Jharkhand	82.1	83.9	80.3	52.5	56.3	48.6
West Bengal	79.2	80.0	78.3	45.5	48.1	42.7
All India	80.8	82.4	79.0	50.5	54.0	46.8

Source: Census 2011

We then looked at the 71st NSSO Round data (2014), which gives us information on Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR), Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) and Age Specific Attendance Ratio (ASAR). The three taken together give, perhaps, a more realistic picture of school participation of children. The divergence between Gross and Net figures points to under-age and over-age enrolment in different levels / classes.

Table 3.2: Gross Attendance Ratio[8] for different levels of education

	AP	Assam	Jharkhand	Gujarat	W Bengal	India
Primary and upper primary (male)	104	107	99	96	101	98
Primary and upper primary (female)	98	108	98	96	102	96
Secondary (male)	88	86	88	87	89	86
Secondary (female)	86	91	101	61	103	84
Primary and upper primary (male)	98	114	106	97	102	99
Primary and upper primary (female)	96	101	104	102	108	97

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[8] Gross attendance ratio (GAR): For each class-group, this is the ratio of the number of persons in the class-group to the number persons in the corresponding official age group. For example, for Class group I-V the ratio (in %), corresponding to normative age group of 6-10, is = Number of persons attending Classes I-V x 100 / (divided by) Estimated population in the age-group 6-10 years. For the remaining class-groups of school education, i.e. VI-VIII, IX-X and XI-XII, the corresponding official age-groups were taken as 11-13, 14-15 and 16-17 respectively

Secondary (male)	84	88	99	101	106	90
Secondary (female)	98	134	99	80	95	94

Source: NSSO 71st Round 2014

Table 3.3: Net Attendance Ratio[9] for different levels of education

	AP	Assam	Jharkhand	Gujarat	W Bengal	India
Primary and upper primary (male)	91	93	85	89	90	88
Primary and upper primary (female)	91	94	85	90	90	85
Secondary (male)	55	50	43	59	49	51
Secondary (female)	44	61	43	40	55	49
Primary and upper primary (male)	89	93	91	90	90	88
Primary and upper primary (female)	89	90	85	89	94	87
Secondary (male)	55	72	35	70	60	56
Secondary (female)	68	61	48	50	66	59

Source: NSSO 71st Round 2014

Table 3.4: Age Specific Attendance Ratio[10]

	AP	Assam	Jharkhand	Gujarat	W Bengal	India
6-13 Years Male	95	96	88	92	92	90
6-13 Years Female	97	97	87	92	93	88
14-17 Years Male	81	76	79	73	62	75
14-17 Years Female	68	78	72	52	80	72
6-13 Years Male	95	93	94	92	94	82
6-13 Years Female	95	98	89	91	97	91
14-17 Years Male	82	89	65	85	76	81
14-17 Years Female	84	97	79	82	87	83

Source: NSSO 71st Round 2014

It becomes obvious that when we look at census data by age group we know who is attending which level of education. When we juxtapose the Gross and Net attendance ratios, it becomes fairly clear that in states like Jharkhand, the number of over-age children who are studying at all levels of schooling is fairly high and only 35% (boys) and 48% (girls) in the appropriate age group are attending secondary schools. It is important to recognise that one has to look at data from different vantage points in order to understand the real picture. We could perhaps assume that in states like Gujarat, the proportion of over-age and under-age children in secondary schools is perhaps much less.

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[9] Net attendance ratio: For each education class-group, this is the ratio of the number of persons in the official age group attending a particular class-group to the total number persons in the age-group. For example, for Class group I-V the ratio (in %) is = Number of persons of age 6-10 years currently attending Classes I-V x 100 / (divided by) Estimated population in the age-group 6-10 years. Similarly it can be obtained for the remaining class-groups of school education, i.e. VI-VIII, IXX and XI-XII, with the corresponding official age-groups as 11-13, 14-15 and 16-17 years respectively.

[10] Age-specific attendance ratio: For each age-group this measure gives an idea of proportion of persons of a particular age-group currently attending educational institutions, irrespective of the level or class in which they are studying. For example, for age group 6-10, this attendance ratio is = Number of persons in age-group 6-10 currently attending educational institutions x100 / (divided by) Estimated population in the age-group 6-10 years.

The next set of data that captures the state context is to do with density of secondary schools. This, along with data on population that have access to a school with secondary section and per 1000 households that have a secondary school within 5 kilometre or more reveals another dimension of the state level situation.

Table 3.5: Density of school per 10 kilometres and ratio of UPS to Secondary Schools,

STATES	Density of secondary schools / sections per 10 kilometres	Density of higher secondary schools / sections per 10 kilometres	Ratio of upper primary to secondary schools	Ratio of secondary to higher secondary schools
	2014-15	2014-15	2014-15	2014-15
All India	0.71	0.33	2.56	2.14
Andhra Pradesh	0.70	0.16	1.90	4.33
Assam	0.98	0.22	2.18	4.43
Gujarat	0.51	0.33	3.18	1.57
Jharkhand	0.54	0.15	4.39	3.58
West Bengal	1.13	0.75	1.85	1.50

Source: UDISE 2014-15

The differences between five states become more apparent when we look at density of secondary schools and also the ratio of primary to upper primary schools. In terms of physical availability of secondary schools, the situation in Gujarat is perhaps worst, followed by Jharkhand. While the physical availability of schools is perhaps the best in West Bengal this information needs to be read with caution. As we will see later in this report, the density of population in West Bengal is high and the schools have high enrolment and high pupil-teacher ratios.

Chart 3.1: Population (15-16 years) served with school with secondary section
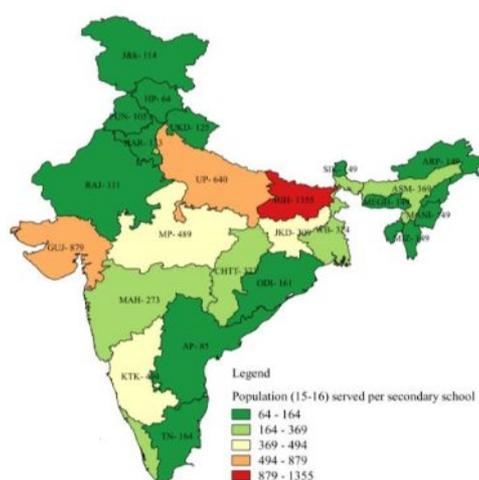
ERU Consultants Private Limited   40

Chart 3.2: School Readiness: Distance-wise (Per 1000 households having secondary school at a distance of 5 km or more (NSSO 71ˢᵗ Round)

Source: NSSO, 71st Round, 2015
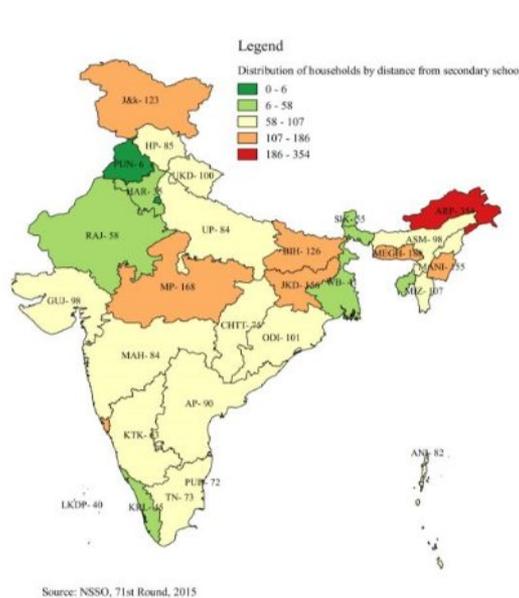
The interesting difference between five states has to do with the distribution of government, government-aided private and unaided private secondary schools, which also explain the situation in Gujarat and West Bengal. Gujarat has the lowest percentage and West Bengal has the highest percentage of government secondary and higher secondary schools. Although the percentage of government-aided private school is fairly high is Gujarat, however, it is not clear if aided schools provide free education at secondary and higher secondary levels. Interactions with officials, students and parents in Gujarat reveal that aided schools charge some kind of fee (library, laboratory, examination - internal and board) and other school-specific fee or charges. This point is highlighted at this stage because in this study we primarily interacted with children, who access government schools, their parents and the community in which they live. Given that the very poor primarily depend on government schools, the real cost of education emerges as a serious issue. The real cost not only includes fees and school charges, but also include cost of purchasing school supplies (note books, uniforms, bags etc.), tuition fees and purchase of guidebooks.

Table 3.6: Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools by Management

State	Govt.	Local Bodies	Private Aided	Private Unaided	Others	Total Schools
Secondary						
Andhra Pradesh	12.05	40.91	4.07	42.17	0.81	11,583
Assam	53.38	0.01	11.26	25.64	9.37	8,241
Gujarat	10.45	1.13	50.88	37.48	0.05	10,200
Jharkhand	59.33	-	3.80	24.79	11.72	4,340
West Bengal	85.90	0.09	0.71	7.05	6.26	10,182

India	37.67	4.37	16.58	39.48	1.68	2,39,148
Higher Secondary						
Andhra Pradesh	31.78	-	5.95	62.22	0.04	2,589
Assam	55.75	-	13.30	22.41	8.34	2,075
Gujarat	6.30	0.65	47.04	45.96	0.05	6,592
Jharkhand	53.05	-	5.04	37.02	4.88	1,229
West Bengal	87.69	0.09	0.75	5.90	5.57	6,898
India	40.22	0.38	16.68	41.43	1.29	1,12,637

Source: UDISE 2015-16

State-specific contexts that frame education

Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated into 2 states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in 2014. After bifurcation, the state has 13 districts with a high rural population. Urbanisation in the state is around 24.6 percent. The new state, besides having to cope with developmental challenges, has also several issues that are challenging and problematic. The recent DLHS-4 Report highlights that Andhra Pradesh continues to have low female literacy rates especially in rural areas. Equally, early marriages, poor female health indicators, and alcoholism especially in rural areas remain serious issues.

The state has made some rapid strides in tackling the issue of child labour. In the early 90's, remarkable efforts were made under UEE to reach out to child labour and bring them within the ambit of education. As per Census data, Andhra Pradesh witnessed a sharp decline in child labour in the age group of 5-14 years from 10.14 percent in 1991, 9.85 percent in 2001 to 5.10 percent in 2011. The real problem, however, lies in the age group of 15-19 years. As per Census 2011, child labour in 15-19 age group ranges from 51.26 percent in Kurnool to 34.66 percent in Krishna district. Percentage of child labour in two sample districts, Visakhapatnam with 43.20 percent and Prakasam with 42.71 percent are higher than the state average of 41.07 percent. When these figures are examined in conjunction with education participation rates the problem stands out even more sharply.

Andhra Pradesh provides free textbooks to all children of SC, ST and BC communities right up to class 10. Social welfare hostels and residential schools have been a key affirmative action measure both in undivided Andhra Pradesh as well as after bifurcation in 2014. There is a wide network of gender segregated social welfare hostels for SC, ST BC children. When the Central Scheme of KGBVs (focused on upper primary level) was introduced, the state upgraded the KGBVs up to class X at its own cost. The Government of Andhra Pradesh established A.P. Residential Educational Institutions Society in the year 1972 to establish and maintain Residential Educational Institutions for poor and talented rural children. After state re-

organization, AP Residential Educational Institutions Society manages (52) Residential schools, (10) Residential Junior Colleges and (01) Degree College and (105) KGBVs have been extended to Class X in the residuary State of Andhra Pradesh. The principle strategy in tribal areas is to create gender segregated residential schools. One of the important highlights of Andhra Pradesh' policy is to extend the mid-day meal right up to class 10 and provide children with two eggs per week. This is significant because there has been a lot of evidence from NFHS, NSSO and DLS studies of high incidence of child malnutrition in the state.

Assam

The social fabric of Assam is indeed interesting and challenging because difference communities have different beliefs, family structure, social hierarchy and institutions. Apart from the Ahoms (Hindus like Brahmins, Kayasthas and Kalitas), main tribes in the state are Bodo, Rabha, Tiwa, Mising, Deori, Dimasa, Sonowal Kachari, Tai-phake, Singpho etc. There are some other tribes, who came to Assam from other areas of North Eastern Region (NER) in the historic past, viz. Zeme Naga, Hmar, Hrangkhol, Garo, Jayantia, Kuki, Betei, Vhepei, etc. The significant population of Scheduled Castes is composed of groups like Hira, Jalkeot, Kaibarta, Bania, Patni, Namsudra, Sutradhar, etc. A significant population are Bengalis, Biharis, Marwaris, Sikhs and others. Muslims are a dominant group in the state. All these different tribes, castes, religious and ethnic groups are a part of the larger Assamese society that weave the social fabric of the state.

The British colonial planters brought the tea garden workers as indentured labourers. These workers are predominantly Tribal and Backward Caste from Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Telangana and Chhattisgarh. They were brought in Assam during 1860-90s in different phases[11]. They are found mainly in the districts of Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sivsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and in scattered way, in almost all other districts of Assam. The total population of the tea garden community is estimated about 20% (5.5 to 6.00 million) of total population of Assam. The different groups of tea garden workers' community speak different languages/ dialects based on the area of their origin.

They are one of the most backward and exploited communities in Assam due to decades of continuous exploitation by tea garden managements and have been neglected even by the Government. Though recent generations are comparatively educated and are professionals in various fields but their percentage is low in comparison to the size of the community. The literacy rate of the community is one of the lowest in Assam, particularly among girls and

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[11] Wikipedia

women. Due to this, girls are extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation and early marriages are prevalent among them.

The Government of Assam has made some commitments towards elementary and secondary education in 2016. At elementary level it plans to continue to provide school level incentives of uniforms, textbooks and MDM. They also plan to try out centralised mid day mean (MDM) in some Blocks in Kamrup district by involving "Akshay Patra" at the block level. There is a serious debate regarding reintroduction of board exams for class 8 in the interest of quality at upper primary school (UPS) level. There is a possibility of remedial support at UPS level to help weak children improve their learning levels.

At secondary level, to ensure retention and to prevent dropouts, government incentives have been announced from 2017-18, in the form of exemption of admission and other fees in class 9 and 10 for poor students who come from families where parental income is below 1 lakh[12]. There is also a provision to provide free textbooks[13] for all secondary level students irrespective of their parents' income and the scheme covers all government/provincialised[14] high schools and higher secondary schools, all tea garden schools, local body schools and all model schools of RMSA and all non-provincialised schools receiving financial incentives at any point of time. The students will get free textbooks from January 2017 when the academic year commences (allocation Rs 20 crore).

The government is committed to strengthen schools through amalgamation of primary, upper primary and secondary school, and to develop composite school campuses wherever possible.

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[12] Govt. of Assam Notification of 13th June 2016

[13] Govt. Of Assam Notification of 19th November 2016

[14] The "Assam Venture Educational Institutions (Provincialisation of Services) Act. 2011, as amended in 2012" seeks to provincialise the state's venture educational institutions that got recognition on or before January 1, 2006. The prime objective of the Act was to provincialise the services of different categories of employees, both teaching and non-teaching who are serving in non-provincialised (popularly known as venture) educational institutions in the state, in a phased manner. The state government aids provincialised educational institutions and their staffs are government employees. In the first phase, a total of 18,504 teaching posts and 6,055 institutions have been provincialised. This process was to continue till 2015. According to the Act, the eligible Institutions for provincialisation are - 2 Class High Schools/High Madrasas, 5 Class High Schools/High Madrasas, including Mixed Medium Schools/ Higher Secondary Schools and Junior Colleges under Secondary Education, in pursuance to the Government Notification no. ASE.612/2011/70 –A dated 18.2.2013. It also entails the issue of services of employees of such schools after verification of particulars of institutions received from the concerning District Level Screening Committee constituted as per the Act. The Directorate has verified school particulars such as DISE Code, documents of land prior to 2006, permission / recognition, date of appointment of and of entry and qualification of employees. Provincialisation involves three stages with documents being screened at the district, state and government levels. Several factors such as land documents, qualification, appointment after the enactment of the act as on January 1, 2011, completion of 10 years of service, names of the schools, inclusion in government lists have been taken under consideration. Those who fulfilled all the criteria were listed for provincialisation. *Source Govt. Notification of March 2013.*

They also plan to rationalise teacher deployment at UPS level and to bring secondary and elementary schools under one umbrella. Quality monitoring is being attempted at secondary level through formation of Academic Core Groups (ACG) to monitor secondary schools on a pilot basis under RMSA. Counselling for students at secondary level for career guidance and personal development has been initiated in some schools, as an initiative under RMSA.

Another programme termed as "Shaala Siddhi" is being considered so that schools conduct a self-assessment for improvement in their performance. Taking Digital India as an inspiration, "Computer Aided Learning" will be extended to 297 Upper Primary schools. Another agenda that is being considered is to provide secondary schools an option to move to CBSE curriculum. This is being offered to 50 secondary schools under Secondary Education Board Assam (SEBA). It is also planned to convert girls' only schools to co-ed schools.

Jharkhand

Jharkhand state came into existence in 2000 after being bifurcated from the State of Bihar. In Jharkhand, 21 out of 24 districts are Left Wing Extremist (LWE) districts and are a part of the 'red corridor'. This creates a major challenge for sustainability of education inputs in these areas. There are eight Special Focus Districts with a high concentration of tribal population and 75.95 per cent of Jharkhand's population lives in rural areas. Likewise, the geographical profile of the state is also very varied. While 30 percent is covered with forests, large parts comprise of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau with hills and then there are vast stretches of rocky areas. This is important because the districts that were included in this study are characterised by hills, forests and rocky open spaces.

The state has seen an improvement in literacy levels, which as per Census 2011 is 67.70 per cent, with male literacy at 78.50 per cent and female literacy at 52.04 per cent. It is important to note the persistent gender gap, which is around 24 percentage points (Census 2011). A matter of concern is the low rural female literacy at 46.62 per cent and among tribal women at 43.9 per cent. The literacy rates vary across tribal groups. For instance the Oraon, Kharia and Munda tribes have higher literacy rates than the Santhal, Ho and Lohra groups. Pahariya is one of the 9 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of the state. The others PVTGs of the state are Asur, Birjia, Birhor, Korwa, Mal Pahariya, Sauriya Pahariya, Savar and Hill Kharia. Though concentrated in Latehar and Palamau districts, a sizeable population also resides in Godda and Hazaribagh districts of Jharkhand. The education of their children poses a challenge. Therefore, language/medium of instruction has remained a big challenge for a long time. Another significant issue is the high percentage of contract teachers, which is 51 percent at elementary

level and though it is only 4 percent at secondary level, there are significant teacher shortages at both elementary and secondary levels.

Gujarat

Of the total population of 60 million in Gujarat, 20 percent are adolescents aged between 10-19 years (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner India 2014a). About 22 percent of the households fall in the category of socially excluded groups, mainly scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner India 2013). Literacy rate in Gujarat is 78 percent, which is higher than the national rate of 73 percent (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner India 2013). However, gender differences were clearly visible with just 70 percent women literate compared to 86 percent men (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner India 2013).

Gujarat, an economically developed state, is not so developed in the field of education. The focus of the government has been on primary schooling and little attention has been paid to secondary or higher secondary education. For example, participation of girls and boys aged 15-19 years is among the lowest in the country (56 percent males and 45 percent females). If we look at scheduled caste, it is much lower with just 58 percent males and 45 percent females (Census 2011). Non-availability of government schools in reasonable distance from place of residence remains an important concern in Gujarat. Compared to all India, Gujarat has fewer secondary schools per 10 kilometres (.71 and .51 respectively India and Gujarat, UDISE 2015).

The state also has many more private aided schools as compared to government schools both at secondary and higher secondary levels. For example, the state has just 10 percent government secondary schools compared to 38 percent at all India level. In contrast, there are many more private aided secondary schools (51 percent) compared to all India level (17 percent, UDISE 2015). The story is similar for higher secondary schools as well. Gujarat has only 6 percent government higher secondary schools and as many as 47 percent private aided schools (UDISE 2015). The poor and the marginalised communities that cannot afford private schooling for their children have no option but to rely on government schools. It is also commonly believed that the RTE Act's provision of promoting all students till class 8 has resulted in poor levels of learning. Equally, non-availability of teachers also remains a big concern in the state. Not surprising, therefore, that they drop out at secondary or higher secondary levels, often citing inability to cope as a reason.

Schools in Gujarat have basic amenities like clean toilets with running water and clean drinkable water available in almost 100 percent schools (U-DISE, 2014-15). For higher

secondary schools, availability of laboratories is yet another positive factor facilitating a good learning environment. However, for Gujarat, data on laboratories is rather discouraging. For example, just 32 percent schools at all India level and 23 percent in Gujarat have a physics or chemistry laboratory (UDISE, 2015). Non-availability of regular teachers and those with subject specialization is yet another challenge in Gujarat. At higher secondary level, just 24 percent teachers are graduates and 59 percent teachers are postgraduates.

The Government of Gujarat has put in place schemes to encourage girls' education. Vidyalakshmi Bond was introduced in 2002. The goal of this scheme is to achieve universalization of education and encourage the education of girls. The villages with literacy rate below 35% are eligible under this scheme. In the scheme, the Narmada Nidhi's bond of Rupee 2000 is provided to girls enrolled in class 1 and paid with interest after they complete class 8. Scholarships and incentives are also available for children from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. However, there is limited evidence about appropriate utilization of these incentives. Provisions of waiving off examination fees for poor, marginalised students including SC, ST population has helped in reducing financial burden on parents. However, these are, by and large, decided by individual school authority and are not universal in nature.

What is clear is that despite economic development, education, especially for the poor and the marginalized, continues to pose a challenge for the state.

West Bengal

The school education system in West Bengal is primarily anchored on government or government-aided schools, which is in sharp contrast to general trend that is prevailing in the country. Consequently, the share of enrolment in government schools at upper primary, secondary and higher secondary levels are high. The structure of school system in West Bengal is dominated by schools with only primary section and stands true for both government and private schools. The concept of composite schooling is almost absent in the State, especially among the government schools.

From the late 1990s, when the government acknowledged that the available primary schools at that time was inadequate to accommodate all children of primary school age, it also opined that "it was almost impossible to open primary schools at every nook and corner of the State wherever there were some children not having access to the school…therefore decided to introduce an alternative elementary education system in West Bengal"[15]. This programme was

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[15] Official website of Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal,

called Sishu Siksha Karmasuchi and the alternative schools were called Sishu Siksha Kendras. By the year 2003-04, the number of such schools rose to 16,850[16], constituting one third of all primary schools in the state. Most of such schools were established in socio-economically backward areas spreading across all districts and were not considered as regular schools till the year 2008-09. This makeshift arrangement of primary schooling tilted the ratio of primary to upper primary school hugely. These facts were reflected in the 7th All India School Education Survey 2005 (NCERT), which found the number of upper primary schools in the state to be very low and declining in number[17].

In an attempt to correct the situation, the state took another temporary measure in similar fashion by filling the gap by first upgrading the government primary schools to upper primary. 16,024 of schools with upper primary section (or 84% of such schools) were upgraded during the period between 2009 and 2015[18]. The government also created Madhyamik Siksha Kendra under the department of the Panchayat and rural development and Madrasa Siksha Kendra under the department of Minority Affair. Unfortunately, U-DISE data does not mention these departments. This is because the schools under these departments are clubbed with the department of education. The figures available in U-DISE (2012-13) suggests that the share of schools under the department of Panchayat and rural development is pretty high at 19% (18,025 out of 94,584), of which 16,105 (89.3%) schools had only primary section and the rest had only upper primary section. Though these two efforts ensured smooth access to elementary education in the state and at the same time slightly improved the ratio of primary to upper primary schools during the period, it was not further embellished by establishment of new secondary schools in the required proportion, which led to deteriorating ratio of number of upper primary to secondary schools. Furthermore, this arrangement aggravated the fragmented nature of the school system in the state and as a result, most students aiming to complete secondary education have to pass through at least three different schools in the course of their school life.

This discussion is important because despite such makeshift arrangements, the gross enrolment rate as well as net enrolment rate in primary and upper primary level in the state has continuously improved. More and more children are knocking at the doors of secondary education for which the system is not yet prepared. Secondly, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that children from underprivileged groups who graduate from this makeshift arrangement, schools do so without acquiring sufficient educational ability to cope with

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link: http://www.wbprd.gov.in/HtmlPage/ssk.aspx, accessed on January 28, 2017.
[16] West Bengal Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India, 2010
[17] ibid
[18] Calculated using U-DISE 2015-16 data

curriculum at the secondary level. As a result, they drop out soon after enrolment. It is a common practice in the state that the teachers at higher levels of the school system routinely blame the inefficiency and callous attitude of the schools and teachers at lower levels.

In a study done by Pratichi (India) Trust it was observed that the loss of enrolment in West Bengal occurs mainly at two different stages. First during transition from class 5 to class 6 and secondly from class 9 to class 10 with almost equal magnitude of around 18 per cent[19]. These are not the stage when students transit from one school to another, rather these are the phases when students complete first year in the new school and perhaps find the curriculum too difficult to follow or the new school atmosphere too unfriendly to cope with. In short, transition appears to be as much an artefact of internal workings of a particular stage as an inter-stage affair.

Another very interesting aspect of West Bengal is that the rate of discontinuation among girls is much lower compared to that of boys. On the other hand, the gap in this respect among rural and urban boys is much wider compared to the gap between rural and urban girls. This implies that the chances of discontinuation by rural boys are much higher compared to those for other groups. To put it differently, young boys in rural Bengal are at a serious risk of falling through the net of school education prematurely without having minimum educational credentials that are now necessary to get a decent job or to move to the next level of education.

NSSO 71st round shows that discontinuation of children of a specific age group has much more to do with their economic condition than with their social identity. While there is cause for cheer that no overt social barriers to schooling seem to be starkly present in Bengal, the effect of economic disparity on educational participation is a major trouble spot in the state. This indicates that the escalating expenditure through higher levels of school education in the state makes school education prohibitive to the economically backward section and somehow compels children to drop out early.

Poverty and school completion

This observation of the overwhelming impact of poverty on school completion is true for the country as a whole. As we move from the top economic quartile to the bottom, the age / level at which children discontinue or drop out from school goes down. According to NSSO 71st Round, "*The level of participation at various stages of school education varies significantly across different quintile classes of usual monthly per capita consumer expenditure i.e. UMPCE after*

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[19] Secondary Education in West Bengal: Prospects and Challenges, Pratichi Institute, 2013

primary level. In both rural and urban India, while only 67% people in the lowest UMPCE quintile class participated in secondary education, it increased to 105% and 111% respectively in rural and urban India for the highest UMPCE quintile class. This disparity was increased further at higher secondary level in both areas. At above higher secondary levels, GARs were only 4% and 6% in the bottom quintile class respectively for rural and urban areas, whereas these were respectively 21% and 33% in rural and urban India for the top quintile class of UMPCE" (NSSO, Report No. 575, page 52). Analysis of Census 2011 and various NSSO Rounds of reports reveal that while there are no major rural-urban differences with respect to participation in elementary education, "secondary and above levels, rural-urban gap was more prominent among females compared to males" (NSSO, Report 575, Page 55).

Poverty exerts such a great influence on school participation because of the expenditure involved in education. While elementary and secondary education is supposed to be free in government schools, parents still incur expenditure on their children. This has been captured in the 71st Round of NSSO (2014). What is noteworthy is that the cost difference between government, private aided and private unaided is significant. In states like Gujarat where government secondary schools are few, the sheer cost of sending children to secondary schools could be one of the major impediments to transition (as evident in the table given below). Therefore, the absence of government schools remains a huge barrier to ensuring transition of all up to secondary education.

Table 3.7: Average Expenditure (Rs.) per student pursuing during current academic session for levels of education

		AP	Assam	Jharkhand	Gujarat	W Bengal	India
Primary	Government	573	951	1,059	1,270	1,850	1,111
	Private aided	10,898	8,021	8,633	11,043	10,559	9,355
	Private Unaided	11,240	14,741	9,462	16,861	16,116	10,623
Upper Primary	Government	1,188	1,620	1,761	1,650	4,058	1,689
	Private aided	8,998	12,123	5,752	11,232	11,964	8,899
	Private Unaided	15,005	17,403	12,737	18,799	37,150	13,808
Secondary	Government	1,917	3,517	2,912	3,585	6,995	3,724
	Private aided	12,080	10,582	8,228	11,980	13,839	9,298
	Private Unaided	18,500	19,250	13,762	20,204	36,413	15,785

Source: NSSO 71st Round 2014

Why do children drop out?

The last issue that is relevant with respect to state-level context is the reasons cited by children and / or their families for withdrawing children from school. NSSO 71st Round has been a

valuable source of this information. As this qualitative study also explores similar questions, findings of the latest NSSO survey provide an interesting background to this study. For the country as a whole, engagement in economic activities (31 percent men) was the most common reason for dropping out, whereas for women the dominant reason was engagement in domestic activities (30 percent). The report also noted that in urban areas the second major reason for leaving education was marriage (17.1 percent women). Financial constraints were another prevalent ground for all categories to leave school before completing desired level of education. While the proportion of never enrolled has steadily fallen over the decades, among those who did not enrol their children, a major reason came out as 'not interested in education' (33 percent of male and 27 percent of females). In urban areas, it was seen that 33% of males and 30 percent of females never enrolled because of 'financial constraints'.

Table 3.8: Percentage distribution of persons (age 5- 29 years) dropping-out/discontinuing study by reason for drop

	Assam			West Bengal			Jharkhand			Guj	
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Fer
Not interested in education	14.36	17.43	15.88	23.38	15.44	19.43	25.23	16.39	20.77	18.33	20
Financial constraints	27.27	17.87	22.62	41.47	32.76	37.14	17.55	7.02	12.23	17.57	12
Engaged in domestic activities	9.46	33.34	21.26	1.35	14.99	8.13	9.76	41.87	25.98	1.37	32
Engaged in economic activities	36.09	3.93	20.2	18.28	2.67	10.52	32.27	1.82	16.89	29.78	3
School is far off	0.03	0.79	0.41	0.04	0.77	0.4	0.23	3.7	1.98	0.16	3.
Language/medium of instruction used	0.15	0	0.07	0	0.03	0.01	na	na	na	na	r
Quality of teachers / teaching	na	Na	na	0.02	0.02	0.02	na	na	na	0.18	(
No tradition in the community	0.13	0.23	0.18	0.02	0.42	0.22	0	4.23	2.14	2.08	3.
Unable to cope up with studies/ failure	4.77	7.92	6.33	4.77	3.7	4.24	2.98	2.03	2.5	11.5	5.
Unfriendly atmosphere	na	Na	na	0.21	0.02	0.12	0	0.05	0.03	0	0.
Completed desired level/class	2.16	3.27	2.7	3.6	3.75	3.67	2.77	3.95	3.36	13.6	9.
Preparation for competitive examination	0.27	0.81	0.54	0.87	1.12	0.99	2.92	0.29	1.59	0.49	0.
Marriage	0	8.97	4.43	0	18.79	9.34	0	11.42	5.77	0	4.
Other	5.31	5.45	5.38	6.01	5.51	5.76	6.29	7.22	6.76	4.94	4.

Source: NSSO 71st Round, Report No 575

Chapter 4: Drivers for transition at elementary and secondary levels of education

The essence of this qualitative study is to explore reasons behind transition or dropout of students within elementary cycle and onward to secondary school. At the outset, it is important to place on record that the voices of children, parents and school functionaries resonated with the findings from secondary literature review and data from NSSO 71st Round (2014).

We interacted with children through a structured PRA exercise, with parents through FGDs and with other stakeholders through in-depth interviews. It is interesting that while factors (positive and negative) flagged by teachers focussed primarily on the role of parents and family / societal factors; parents highlighted supply side factors that impact transition of children through the elementary cycle and onward to secondary school.

Overarching findings

Positive / facilitating factors

- The **first** overarching positive factor identified by all stakeholders – children, parents and teachers / officials – was parental support and motivation. Both factors were very high on the list of positive triggers that facilitates smooth transition across all levels of education. Providing a conducive environment for studies was ranked among the top facilitating factors in three states namely Assam, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh; the second most important factor in West Bengal and fourth most important factor in Gujarat.
- The **second** overarching factor that finds mention in all five states is accessibility to government incentives and schemes. It was the top factor in West Bengal and Gujarat; second most in Andhra Pradesh and the third most in Assam and Jharkhand.
- **Third**, quality of teachers and teaching finds mention in three of the five states, namely Jharkhand, Assam and Gujarat.
- **Fourth**, job opportunity and the interest of students are mentioned in Gujarat/West Bengal and Gujarat/Andhra Pradesh respectively and availability of hostel facility and accessibility to secondary school was mentioned as positive factors in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal respectively.
- **Fifth** factor worth mentioning here is related to aspirations in the form of job opportunities or dream of an empowered life; involvement and participation of parents/guardians in school

level process through SMCs / meetings; and their awareness about the value of education.

- **Sixth**, was remedial classes and though it appeared only once within parents' category, it was discussed across all stakeholders as an important step to extend support to poor performing children and to help them cope with studies at secondary level.

Impeding factors

- **First**, economic constraints along with poverty emerged as the leading negative factor (across states), which is directly linked to the cost of education at secondary level (including hidden costs for texts books, guidebooks, tuition, transportation etc.).

- **Second**, parents and children highlighted the issue of child labour, which could be seasonal migration to support supplement family income leading to disruption in regular studies. This further accentuates children's inability to cope, fear of failure/inability to comprehend or understand which creates disinterest in children.

- **Third**, child marriage / early marriage also emerges as an impeding factor but is more dependent on regional / social and community context.

- **Fourth**, the set of school related factors flagged as critical to transition or impede transition are absence of teachers, distance between secondary school and UPS and poor infrastructure. We must hasten to add that they are ranked relatively low on negative priority list.

- **Fifth**, an important negative factor is the implementation of non-detention policy up to class 8, which, according to respondents, allows children to move up to secondary level without acquiring necessary knowledge and skills. Sudden increase in the standard of education (related to syllabus and levels of concepts in different subjects) adds to the challenge for students who find it extremely difficult to grasp and cope with studies at secondary level. Weak academic foundation also calls for additional support in the form of tuition, which adds to the financial cost.

- **Sixth**, the age at which transition from elementary and secondary takes place is also the age at which boys start earning. The opportunity to earn money encourages boys to venture out so as to make money to support personal expenses (such as mobiles etc.) and a changed lifestyle, which adds to dropouts at secondary level.

- **Seventh,** distance to school, especially in absence of easily affordable and safe public transportation also emerged as a factor (particularly in Jharkhand) adversely impacting transition. However, since other factors were given more/higher weightage, distance to school was positioned low in the priority list of negative factors. In West Bengal, out of school children and parents talked about overcrowding of public transportation (buses). Due to fear

of harassment, parents/guardians often do no allow girls to take public transport. It was also interesting that students from higher grades raised the issue with public transport, while students from class 6 did not mentioned this as an issue.

During the entire exercise of identifying factors, children (both in and out of school) did a balancing act between the two domains viz. school and family, while identifying the positive and negative factors.

Voices of Children in-school: Positive Triggers

Boys and girls studying in class 6th, 8th and 9th participated in the FGDs and PRA exercises. Their level of participation and articulation varied based on their age, classes they were enrolled in and gender. Though, in most schools children participated actively in the PRA, in certain schools/groups, extra probing was needed to engage them in the discussion.

According to children, boys and girls from all classes (6th, 8th and 9th), *aspirations* for better future and **better job avenues**, emerges as the key factor that promotes transition. This is followed by parents' support and aspiration for better life. Children also mentioned the presence of role models within the community in the priority list. Good teachers and quality teaching were cited as the next most important factor. Children also ranked high the role of teachers/HM in encouraging and keeping children's interest. *Aspirational, supportive and motivational factor were given priority over economic support / scholarships / incentives / infrastructure facilities etc*. Returns of education, ranging from improved financial status to ability to help others were also identified as drivers that promote transition. Overall ranking also shows that the value given to education by family/society impacts transition affirmatively.

Figure 4.1: Positive triggers identified by children in Assam

As depicted in the graphs (Figures 4.1 and 4.2), children in each state ranked the factors that were very specific to their positioning and experiences. For instance, students' aspiration for job avenues/career prospects is ranked the highest in Jharkhand and Bengal but is ranked at second position in Gujarat after parental support and it does not find any place in Assam. In Assam, the quality of teaching is ranked as the topmost factor that promotes transition to secondary, but it has not been mentioned in any other state.

Figure 4.2: Positive triggers identified by children in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Gujarat
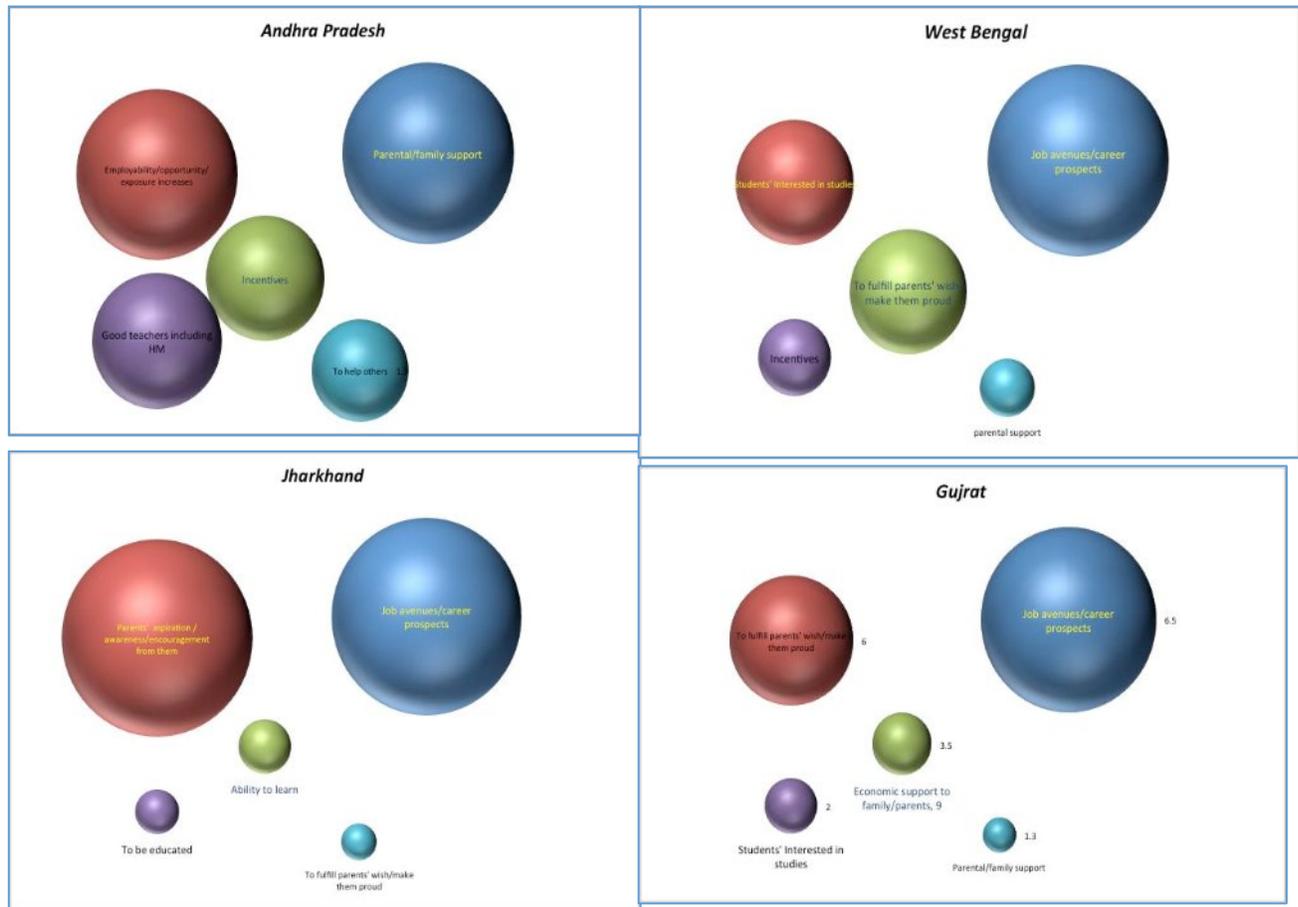
Children's aspiration and self motivation to study

Interest in and love for studies motivate children to study further. According to some children, those who are goal oriented have better chances to move up to secondary level. Similarly, desire to acquire knowledge was an important goal for some, for others helping their family was important. Children said that the idea of studying further helps them to achieve the above goals. Boys identified having a role model (who could be a senior in school or in the family / community) as a factor that motivates them. Interestingly for girls, it was more peer support than seniors' influence that encourages them. For girls from class 6th to 9th having a goal and interest in studies were important factors, but for boys it was to make their country proud (Gujarat) and equalisation of social status (Jharkhand).

Role of parents and family

"My father studied up to 7. My mother is illiterate. My father feels that girls should not go out and said we need not study. But my mother convinced him and I go to school now" – Class 9 girl, AP

Support, motivation, aspiration of parents was important for children, especially for boys of class 6, while class 9 boys and girls talked about 'making parents proud'. When expanded further, parental support included parents' willingness to send children to school and encouraging them to do well in studies. Positive impact of mother' attention on child's study got a special mention in West Bengal. Parental support, however, did not include financial support; rather it was motivational support, which is important to children. Students perceived this as an important driver in transiting to secondary school. The support, in turn, is translated into

Parents aware and motivated to send children to school. Parental aspirations include desire to see their children escape hard wage labour and agricultural work (Jharkhand)

children's desire to make them proud, which drives them to continue with their studies.

The returns to education

Educational returns in terms of better employability and job avenues was influenced by a desire to improve the economic situation of the family. This was ranked high amongst all states though more by boys (than girls) in all three classes participating in the PRA. For class 8th boys, in particular, returns of education in terms of differentiating between right and wrong or them becoming clever (so that no one would be able to cheat them)

Good UPS: "All our classes are held regularly. We enjoy and love to do the classroom projects which were given on subject wise in the vacations and holidays." "If we have any problem with our studies, we can ask our teachers after the class or in the break time in the staffroom"   (Assam)

were critical to continuing school from one level to the other. Boys also mentioned increased awareness as a trigger to continue education in order to become a good citizen.

Gender differences were apparent in the way girl see returns of education. Similar to boys, they also spoke about 'getting a job, getting established' as a driver for their transition. However, they did not talk about job to support/take care of their parents or the country. Also, while they identified knowing about women's health as one of the return, for boys educational returns were much broader viz. generally increasing their overall exposure.

Quality of school, teaching and teachers

Children identified quality of school, teaching and teachers as a critical factor for ensuring transition. While in AP and Assam, having good teachers who taught well was flagged as critical; in Jharkhand availability of teachers itself was seen as a driver for transition. This is probably due to high teacher vacancies. Students also articulated importance of having good teachers, those who could guide them and motivate them to study. Quality of school i.e. reputation of school, quality of teaching within the school are also identified as positive factors. Interestingly, girls also ranked 'good' communication between teachers and students as a factor contributing to their transition.

> Good quality of teaching, facilities available in school, government incentives like bicycles, fee waivers and scholarships cited as important enablers (Gujarat)

Table 4.1: Good and bad UPS: what children said in Assam

Good UPS	Bad UPS
• All our classes are held regularly. We enjoy & love to do the classroom projects, which were given on subject wise in the vacations and holidays. • If we have any problem with our studies, we can ask our teachers after the class or in the break time in the staffroom • Well-maintained clean, non-smelly toilets with running water for boys and girls. Dustbins also placed in several places, including toilets	• No remedial classes. 8 of the girls of the FGD (n=10) took tuitions in Maths, English and Science. 5 girls out of 8 took tuitions from their class teacher, after school. As also the boys. • Difficulty in understanding concepts in mathematics, science, English. "Teachers do not explain properly." • Don't like it when the teacher beats. Teachers beat to control the class

School, infrastructure and incentives

Many students across all five states mentioned accessibility to incentives (such as books, uniform, mid-day meal, conditional cash transfers to girls up to age 18) under positive factors. Boys in Andhra Pradesh articulated the need for sports/sports equipment/participation in sports competitions and also availability of facilities like toilets, water, library, and Science lab as driver for transition. According to them, mid day meal that addresses problem of hunger also contributes to ensuring transition of students. Interestingly girls from Andhra Pradesh did not mention availability of sports equipment or other facilities while talking about positive drivers. Class 9 boys of Assam also highlighted that if UPS and secondary school were in the same campus, it would facilitate smooth transition.

Economic situation at home

Secure financial position of parents/family was also
placed in the top priority factor, though not very
high and that too only by students of 6th and 8th
from West Bengal, Jharkhand and Gujarat.

> Parents incur expenditure on private tuition and
> guidebooks at upper primary and secondary
> levels in most states – with West Bengal leading
> with high numbers.

Table 4.2: Positive Triggers from Andhra Pradesh

Family and community	Parents willing to support education Resource contributions to schools for infrastructure / endowments for scholarships
School and other supportive structures	Access to hostels, residential schools Proactive and committed HMs and teachers Efforts to improve quality Incentives, Mid-day-meal Improved infrastructure
Child	Enthused to come to school: child interested in learning Aspirations of the child Awareness that education is important for employment A sense of identity and wanting to play a positive role for family etc.

- Girls: Ability to challenge menstruation related practices, availability of sports equipment and facilities, enjoy education, if education can help family and community, can challenge discrimination based on caste and religion
- Boys: Books, uniforms and incentives are good, facilities in school like laboratories and libraries, hostel facilities – food, clothing, sports equipment and study hours; creativity increases, enjoy education and financial stability in the family

Voices of children in school: Negative Factors

The combined ranking of children in school (boys and girls) shows economic constraint/poverty as the biggest hurdle in transition of children. It is followed by their inability to learn and cope with studies while balancing their time between household chores (primarily girls)/work to support family income (boys) and attending school. Poor quality of teaching and unavailability of teachers comes third in negative priority list. Support from parents is crucial as children bear the brunt of all above-mentioned factors. Those unable to cope lose interest and drop out. Early/child marriage is also flagged as an impediment for girls' transition. Distance of school/poor accessibility of school comes in the lower strata of the negative priorities (of top 5 factors). Disinterest in studies, although is a recurring factor in all states, is actually a combined result of the other factors put together.

Figure 4.3: Negative triggers identified by school-going children in Jharkhand
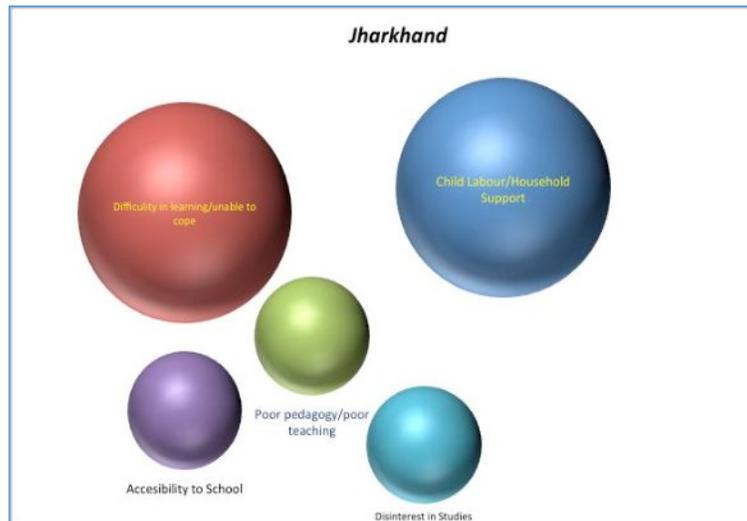
As reflected in Figures 4.3 and 4.4, similar to positive factors, each state has specific listing for negative factors. Poverty/economic constraint is a high negative priority in all states except Jharkhand. Similarly, child labour is another main reason, which was cited in all states except Assam. Difficulty in learning, inability to cope and disinterest in studies has been identified as key impediment across all states.

Figure 4.4: Negative triggers identified by school-going children in West Bengal, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Assam
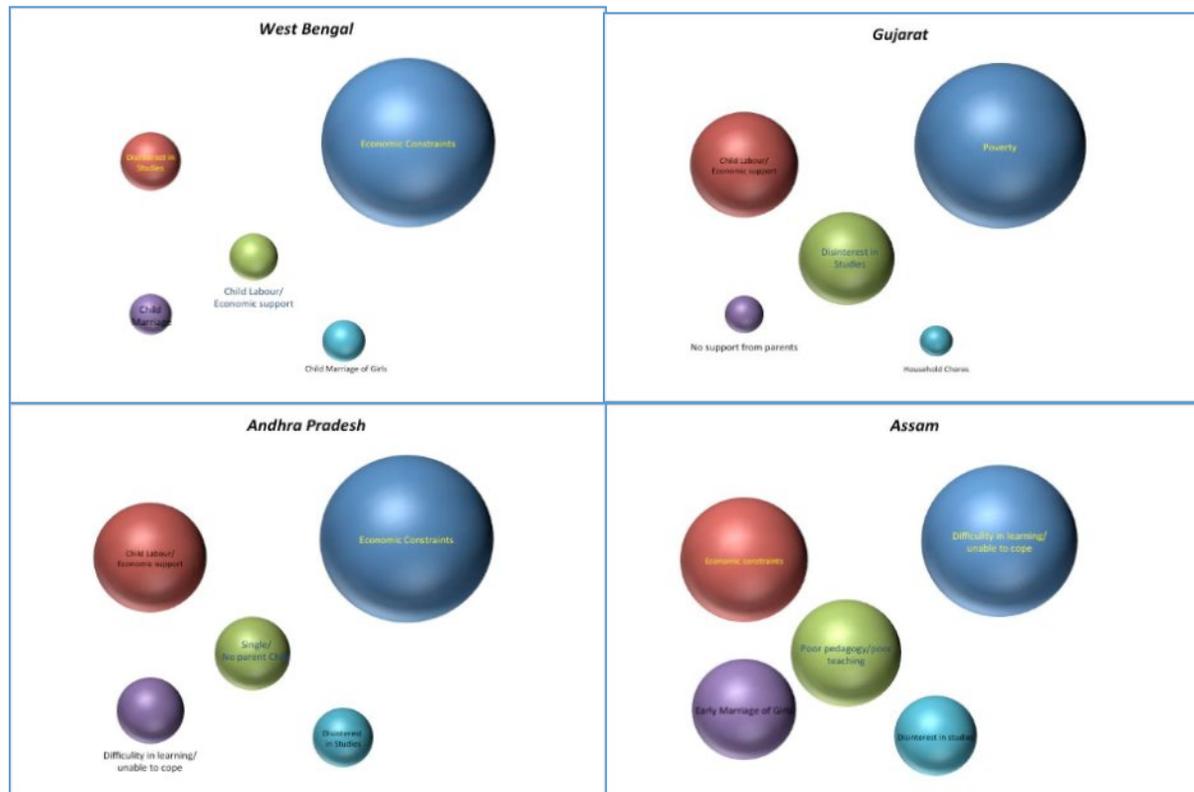
Economic constraints

Economic stress and financial insolvency of families was ranked very high as a negative factor in the priority list (along with child work and disinterest in studies). Children in Andhra Pradesh said that financial instability in the family gets accentuated if there is debt. In Assam, children mentioned that since no textbooks are given at secondary level and due to financial constraints, many of them are not able to buy books for class 9th. This not only impacts their learning but also their ability to continue in school. Equally significant across all states is the practice of using guidebooks at upper primary and secondary levels. This implies additional cost, which children mentioned as being high.

Child work

FGD and PRA with children reveal that they have to bear the burden of work, seasonal or otherwise through out the year. Children are engaged in both economic and non-economic activities for substantial amount of time. Given the constant economic distress within families, children (especially boys) contribute to household income/livelihood. Children in Andhra Pradesh

and West Bengal said that they are forced by their parents to work and even migrate temporarily (seasonal) to work. At times when adults migrate, children are left behind to look after the household and cattle, which also leads to long absenteeism, disinterest and dropping out from elementary and secondary school. Both boys and girls clearly articulated the gender dimension of workload wherein boys are engaged with income generating activities outside homes and girls are held back to do the household chores (including sibling care).

> *Since this was the time for dhaan katai (harvesting rice), many schools reported 50% seasonal irregularity as children were providing supportive work on farm or off farm at home. Field notes Jharkhand*
>
> *There are no dropouts at elementary but irregular attendance and long absenteeism results in poor learning and 'learning backlogs'. Mandal Education Officer, Jharkhand*

Disinterest of children in studies

The entire gamut of issues that fall under 'disinterest in studies' was ranked high as an important issue that affects continuation of children's studies. Disinterest encompasses range of issues from lack of interest to inability to understand or cope with studies and tangential connections with bad vices (smoking, chewing *khaini* /tobacco, bad company and peer pressure). Apparently inability to cope with pressure, burden and syllabus of secondary level/higher education is the crux for lack of interest in studies. Inability to cope also leads to fear of failure or actually failing to clear class 9th and 10th, which forces children to drop out without completing secondary schooling. Disinterest also stems from lack of financial resources within families of children studying in government schools. Given the economic hardships and the cost tuition fees, not all children are able to afford it. Children said that private coaching / tuitions are the norm and the only way through which they can mitigate poor learning in school. Burden of work pertaining to both economic and non-economic activities also lead to irregularity, poor learning and disinterest in studies.

Social Environment (norms and practices)

Child marriage/ early marriage of girls was identified (by both boys and girls) in all states, though it was not ranked high. Child marriage was discussed as key negative social factor, which creates hurdle in girls' continuation in school. Girls, much more than boys, identified the negative drivers at societal and community level including gender based discrimination where parents do not value girls'

> *"When girls and boys are attracted to each other and parents learn about, we are pulled out of school"- Class 9 Girls, AP*

education and prefer to educate boys over girls. Girls in Assam said that parents get over

protective about girls, which also impedes their way to secondary school. Similarly, concern about safety and security of girls, when they have to travel long distance to attend school, was also marked negative by girls particularly of class 9 (across all states). Boys also identified that society in general does not value girls' education. Social norms and practices, which are regressive and discriminatory impact children adversely and as mentioned by boys of class 8 "harass" them and affect their studies.

Parental Attitude and Family Environment

Negative parental attitude, including unwillingness of parents to send their wards to school, were mentioned. While boys talked about parents' "unwillingness", girls said that lack of parental support hampers their chances. Children also highlighted how emotionally troubled households, disturbed family environment, parental disputes, and alcoholism negatively affect their regularity in school and educational prospects. Children who are orphaned or come from single parent households are at greater risk of dropping out. Health issues, not only that of children but prolonged and serious illness within families also impedes transition. As shared by children in Gujarat, due to health problems no money was left for schooling and in Andhra Pradesh, health issues of boys, compounded by lack of nutritious food, became a negative driver towards education.

Quality of school, teaching and teachers

Poor teaching practices/ pedagogy was seen as a key factor within the school domain, affecting successful transition of children from elementary to secondary level. For children in classes 8th and 9th, the inability to cope or to understand lessons in class was flagged as a key issue. Impact of teacher shortage in Jharkhand also reflects in what children go through. Children see shortage of teacher as an impediment. Similarly, children in Bengal cited lack of language teachers and

Subject specific teachers were rare to find. Most often PS teachers teach secondary classes. One teacher lamented 'hum language teacher hain, par hamein maths de diya hai. Ab hamein padh kar padhana parta hai.Sahi mein hum utni justice nahin kar sakte jitni ek maths teacher kar sakta hai…Hamarey liye yeh bahut mushkil hai, lekin karna padta hai' (We are language teachers, and have been now given maths. Fact is that we ourselves have to learn to be able to teach maths. We are unable to do justice to students in the way a maths teacher can. It is very difficult for us to do this….but we have no alternative...we have to do this)

-Jharkhand

irregularity among teachers who are appointed to the school. Lack of remedial classes and lack of academic support in local languages were also listed as negative drivers within school domain.

School, infrastructure and incentives

While students of class 6th (boys and girls) did not say much on infrastructure and incentives, children in classes 8 and 9 mentioned absence of facilities like drinking water, library, electricity, fans, as factors adversely affecting continuation of studies. Far off location of secondary school (from residence and UPS) and limited incentives are also seen as negative factor.

Corporal punishment

Across the states, corporal punishment and bullying were mentioned as important sources of discouragement. Students mentioned it as an issue in almost all FGDs even though it was not high up in the order of issues. Corporal punishment had a more severe impact on boys than girls, especially at the UPS and secondary levels. Verbal abuses by teachers were reported and it included shouting, calling pejorative names (caste or community specific, or parental occupation related) and names related to "lack of innate ability".

In the secondary school in Nagaon district (Assam) the class teacher of class 9 informed of a very sad incident in 2013. A boy was caught cheating in the exams. He was warned by the teacher thrice, but he ignored the warning repeatedly. This infuriated the teacher who severely thrashed the student. The boy was very embarrassed by this incident.

After the examination the boy went home and committed suicide by hanging himself. The relatives and the villagers came searching for the teacher to take revenge. He had to flee. They also filed a criminal case against him. The police kept coming to his home to arrest him. Some electronic and print media also highlighted the incident. After a few days the teacher surrendered at the police station.   (Field notes, Assam – Nov, 2016)

Voices of Out of School Children (OOSC)

At the outset it would be important to share the ambiguity around who is out of school, whether a child who is never enrolled or those who are enrolled in school but are not attending and does it include those who have been absent from school (seasonal/long-term). This ambiguity was reflected in the field at the time of locating and reaching out to OoSC. In Jharkhand, names of children who are absent for a "long time" were struck off the list, but list was not made available to research team. One is hastens to add that there is no official government order to strike off names of absentees. Parents cited re-enrolment as a major issue. In Gujarat, no names are deleted up to class 8 and the HM has names of those not attending school (class 9). Similarly in Bengal

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no names are struck of the list and no list of OOSC is available. We could not find any OOSC in the sample villages of Andhra Pradesh. In Assam, in the sample villages, the HMs had the names of children who had dropped out after enrolling in class 9.

Factors impacting transition positively

According to OOSC across states, financial security and parental support were mentioned as the two drivers that would have enabled them to continue in school. The children talked about the increasing cost of education as an important factor. For out-of-school children, parents' support and motivation was important. Interestingly, they also talked about the importance of aspiration, interest in studies and to have a goal in life. Children from Assam, Jharkhand and West Bengal highlighted the importance of incentives and its availability on time. They also emphasized returns of education as positive drivers. For example, in Jharkhand, they talked about how education enhances knowledge and learning skill in children, which provides more opportunities for work; and also, with education one can differentiate between right and wrong. However, for out-of-school girls from Jharkhand, education is an added advantage to find better grooms. In Bengal, boys stated, "*If you are educated, you are less likely to be cheated*." For them education also helps children to keep up with the changing world and also guides way for the next generation. Children in Assam also flagged importance of good teaching and teacher while prioritising positive factors. In addition to the above, many OOSC children ranked accessibility to feeder school as an important factor, particularly for girls.

Table 4.3: Positive Factors that could have enabled OOSC to remain in school

		Assam	Jharkhand	West Bengal	Gujarat
Boys		Govt. incentives	Family financially secure or can afford schooling	If you are educated, you are less likely to be cheated.	Parental support
		Teaching is good and teachers are regular	School is located in the same village	Government Incentives	Job opportunities
		Students Interest	Parental support	Favourable economic condition	To have a goal
		Parental aspiration	Education enhances learning skill leading to opportunities for better work	To be able to teach the next generation	Financial Security
		Feeder school.	Enhance knowledge. One can differentiate between right and wrong	To keep up with the changing world.	To have a goal (to study)
Girls		Government incentives	Distance (near)	Incentives like bicycle	Parental support

Teaching is good.	Parental support	Desire to learn.	Interest in studies
Parental aspiration	Incentives and facilities	Enjoy going to school	To have a goal/dream
Feeder school.	Gender equity	Self interest of girls	Job
Peer pressure		If educated will find Better grooms	Good financial contd.

Factors that led to children dropping out of school

Financial constraints and poor economic background of families were ranked as the most important factor that led to children dropping out from elementary school. This was followed by difficulty to cope with studies. It is noteworthy that children said that their disinterest in studies stemmed from poor learning in primary classes. Some children said there was "no teaching in classes". In addition, out-of-school boys in West Bengal listed no-detention policy up to 8th as one of the factors that negatively impacts learning. Children in Gujarat and Jharkhand identified fear of failure as a negative driver that pulls children out from secondary schools.

Table 4.4: Factors that led to children dropping out of school

	Assam	Jharkhand	West Bengal	Gujarat
Boys	Poor economic background	Financial constraints	Economic constraints	Weak financial condition
	Labour	No incentives and facilities	Bad foundation in primary school	Not interested in studies
	Lack Parents aspiration/ no support from parents	Disinterest	No detention policy up to class 8	Failure
	No consciousness about education.	Poor learning level of children	Death of parent or parents	Labour
	Difficult to understand subject like Maths, Science, English etc.	Fear of failure	Lack of interest of children	Distance
Girls	Economic constraints	Need to help with household work	Economic constraints	Poverty
	No consciousness about education.	Financial constraints	Communal Tensions/ Security Reasons	Failure
	Burden of domestic work.	No teaching in class	Distance to the school	Not interested in studies
	Labour	Need to work	Lack of self interest	Teachers attitude
	Sickness of parents	Illness of self/ mother	Love marriage	Distance

Death of parent or parents and illness of self/mother came up in West Bengal as a reason leading to irregularity and later on dropping out from school. In Assam, both boys and girls talked about lack of parental support. Wage labour for boys and engagement with household chores for girls was also identified as negative factors along with lack of incentives at secondary level. Girls in West Bengal and Gujarat also flagged distance of school. *Children's views were very much*

grounded in local context and experiences. For instance, girls from West Bengal listed communal tensions and concern about their security (after effect of communal tensions 3 years back) which led to girls becoming irregular and dropping out from schools. Parental concern that girls might get into relationships of their choice or have 'love' marriages also creates hurdles in girls' educational journey. In Andhra Pradesh, during FGD, one out-of-school boy said that corporal punishment was a major deterrent, *"We did not want to go to school as the teachers punished without giving us a chance. We lost interest in studies because of the punishment...*"

Parents' views on drivers for transitions

A striking feature of the discussion with parents during the study has been the clear vertical growth in parental awareness regarding education and their efforts to send their children to school. Though there was little difference in what parents had to say in elementary and secondary schools, most parents aspire and dream that their children (girls and boys) complete Class 10. Parental support, their motivation and active engagement in their child' education was identified as one of the most critical driver. Parents endorsed the proactive positive role of parents mentioned by children. Parental support is also closely linked with the ability of parents to shoulder the 'real' cost of education i.e. paying for tuition, books etc. In West Bengal, parents were ready to incur high expenditure for the education of their children, which includes providing private tuition and guidebooks. Rising parental aspirations was evident across social groups in all the five states.
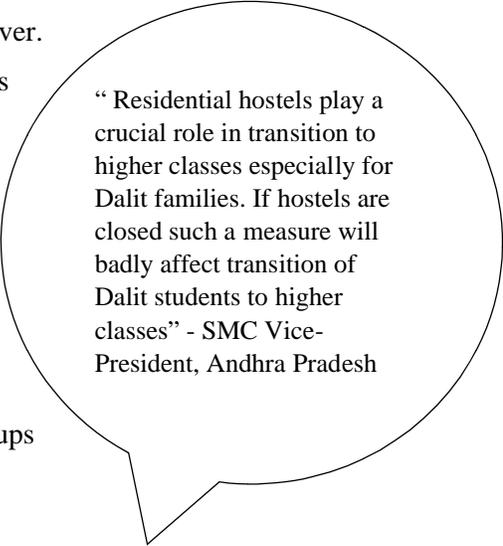
" Residential hostels play a crucial role in transition to higher classes especially for Dalit families. If hostels are closed such a measure will badly affect transition of Dalit students to higher classes" - SMC Vice-President, Andhra Pradesh

Parents highlighted that school level factors play a significant role in transition of students through education continuum. Besides good teachers who are supportive to students, parents also see incentives as key facilitators in ensuring children's regularity and their moving up from one level of education to other. These incentives include timely availability of books, uniforms, cycles (for girls) and SC/ST scholarships. Parents also appreciate steps taken to mitigate difficulties in accessing schools, for instance, availability of residential facilities like KGBV hostels in Andhra Pradesh and cycles in West Bengal. In Assam, parents focused on the functioning of school, attitude of teachers, need for extra coaching (remedial) and parental disappointment with the

school system. One parent said, "*No detention policy should be rethought, children should give exams at the end of the school year*". Parents said that tuitions have become essential.

Another interesting insight that we gained was the helplessness expressed by parents when boys take the decision to drop out of school and start working due to peer pressure. One father said, '*I am willing to sell my blood to send my son to school*'. Traditional attitudes dominate as evident in the voice of one parent, '*Education is necessary to get a job specially for boys, to get a good groom especially for girls*'. Similarly in Gujarat, parents are eager that their children get a "job" or steady "employment".

> A parent in West Bengal said eloquently 'Can the roof be built without any foundation (Vit nai chhat korbek bolchhe, chhat ki roibek)?

Parents are keen to educate their children, as they believe that with education children would gain knowledge and learn something. In case of girls, education is seen as an enhancer of their marriage prospects. A few parents were clear that education would ensure employment. In all FGDs, parents (mothers in particular) said they were not educated and hence, they want to educate their children by using all facilities available to them. Once of them said, *"Our children should not lead the lives we lead*". Interestingly in West Bengal parents spoke of children becoming better farmers while in Jharkhand we heard parents apprehensive about effect of education as it drives children away from agricultural work. In Jharkhand, a group of parents shared their concerns that educated boys will not get into farming/agricultural work and worry that daughters will get more educated.

> '*Pad likh kar bhi yahee kaam karna hai. To abhi se kyun nahin. Socha tha dasveen pass kar lega to shehar mein kuch kaam mil jayega, par sifaarish aur paise ke bina kuch nahin hota (Even after being educated you have to do the same work so why not from now. Though that 10th pass will lead to employment in the city but nothing is possible without money or contacts).*

Table 4.5: The positive triggers identified by parents

Assam	Jharkhand	West Bengal	Gujarat	Andhra Pradesh
Incentives	Good teacher	Favourable economic condition	Jobs, government job	Awareness among parents about the importance of education
Qualified teachers	Child able to learn something	Incentives	Improved standard of living	Self-interest of children

Parents' awareness towards children' education	Child's behaviour becomes good and civilised	Employment opportunity	Good teachers	Availability of KGBVs and other hostels
Parents aspiration	Incentives	Parental aspiration and support	Child's interest/goal	Ambitious parents
Active SMC		School nearby/easily accessible	Aware parents	School and teachers are supportive

Parents said that children's own aspirations and interest in education also increases the probability of educational transition. Equally, remedial support/classes help children to cope with difficult subjects/concepts in senior classes. Some parents also see engagement of parents in school, through regular meeting with teachers and guardians and active SMC as important for educational achievement and transition.

Parents did not talk about engagement of children in full-time / part-time or seasonal work or about child marriage. Although children flagged these issues during FGDs, perhaps parents were aware about the illegality of child labour and child marriage and therefore, refrained from discussing about it.

Positive and Negative Factors: Teacher and Head Masters

Views of teachers and head teachers on factors that encourage / facilitate successful completion of elementary cycle and transition to secondary education, covered the entire spectrum though their focus was family domain. They were also asked to enumerate factors that leads to inability of children to complete the elementary cycle and move on to secondary and factors that lead to dropping out after enrolling in secondary school. It is interesting that in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand and West Bengal, parental awareness and attitude scored high on both positive and negative factors, followed by other issues like teaching quality, child marriage, financial situation and incentives provided by the government.

According to teachers and HMs, the attitude and motivation of parents are critical for children to complete elementary and secondary levels of schooling. Teachers also shared their concern that often this support is limited to sending children to school and not actually engaging with their schooling/teaching and learning experiences. They emphasised that incentives (scholarships, books, uniforms, MDM) promotes transition and it was ranked high on their priority. Some teachers and officials said that encouragement from teachers and their supportive attitude towards

students could also help them to not only cope with studies but it also prevents them from leaving school. They pointed out that students' own aspiration, motivation and interest propel them further. Some students also attend secondary school with a lot of expectation, hoping that higher level of education would ensure some employment. Availability of hostels, easy accessibility to secondary schools and financial securities are other factors that were marked important by teachers. Interestingly, teachers teaching secondary level pointed out the importance of "quality teaching at the primary and upper primary levels" and many of them blamed poor teaching at earlier levels as an important reason for children dropping out after enrolling in secondary.

Table 4.6: Positive triggers mentioned by teachers and head teachers

Assam	West Bengal	Jharkhand	Gujarat	Andhra Pradesh
Parental attitude/value of education/ motivation	Incentives/ financial support	Parents awareness and support	Incentives	Parental awareness & family support/motivation
Availability of secondary school nearby	Parental awareness/inspir ation	Teachers' quality	Financial security	Government incentives
Incentives - scholarships, text books, uniforms, MDM	Job opportunity	Incentives/ financial support	Quality teaching	Availability of hostels
Good quality teaching at PS and UPS	Students interest	Students' interest	Parental support/ motivation	Students' interest
Good quality teaching in Secondary Schools	Support/ encouragement from teachers	Family environment/ support	Job opportunities/ Career	Peer group influence

Poverty and economic constraints were ranked as the most important driver for impeding transition by all states. This was followed by factors related to poor teaching processes. In both Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, teachers emphasized the impact of weak primary education on academic achievements at UPS and secondary levels. Disinterest and failure in examinations were also cited as factors that force children drop out. However, only in Assam, no-detention policy was marked as a priority issue for dropping out after elementary. In Jharkhand teachers and HMs flagged the issue of shortage of teachers. Teachers and HMs in Assam, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Gujarat ranked lack of parental awareness about education. Sibling care, household chores (for girls) and labour (for boys) were also identified as high-ranking factors that adversely affects transition. In Gujarat teachers also prioritized migration and child marriage was listed in the priority list of Andhra Pradesh.
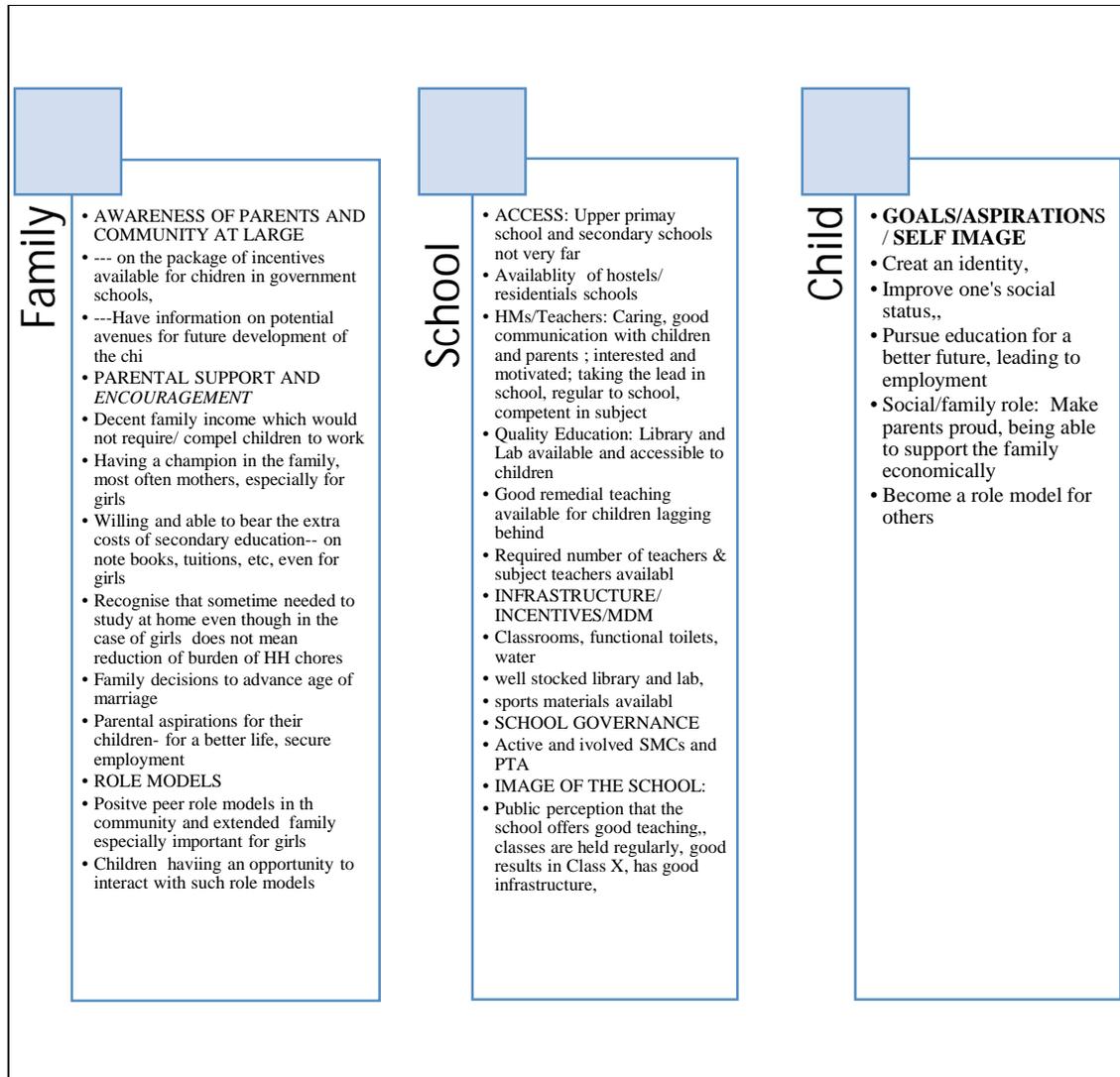
Table 4.7: Why children dropping out according to teachers and head teachers

Assam	West Bengal	Jharkhand	Gujarat	Andhra Pradesh
Poor teaching / not engaging with children /children not able to cope	Early marriage	Early marriage	Poverty/ economic constraints	Child labour/child work including Seasonal
Poor awareness/ motivation of parents and families	Poverty	Poverty/ economic reasons	Disinterest in studies/ difficult syllabus/failure	Household chores/sibling care
Poverty - need children to work to support the family	Child labour	Child work farm/off farm	Migration	Economic constraints
No detention in UPS level impacts learning levels of children in class 9.	Disinterest in studies	Parents not aware/no value of education	Lack of awareness about education	Child/early marriages
Poor teaching/not engaging with children	Lack of parental/family awareness	Shortage of teachers	Weak primary education	Weak foundations during primary education

Concluding observations

On the whole, what children, parents, teachers and head teachers had to share and say about the reasons for children continuing through elementary level, transiting into and completing secondary school, was not very different or exclusive. Discussions with children were different at two levels (a) we found them the hardest to open up for discussion and (b) when they spoke, they tried to cover both school and family related issues and factors. It is important to understand the worldview of children because the two factors are intertwined in their perception.

Secondly, it is also important to acknowledge that the triggers and reasons cited by children, their parents and teachers stemmed from their lived experiences and local contexts. Therefore, it is critical that we realise that some of the factors may be exclusive to their school or to their area. There were many similarities and commonalities across the five states and this underscore the critical importance of factors and domains. Above all, this study defines educational trajectory of children who are studying in government schools.

Family
- AWARENESS OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY AT LARGE
- --- on the package of incentives available for chidren in government schools,
- ---Have information on potential avenues for future development of the chi
- PARENTAL SUPPORT AND *ENCOURAGEMENT*
- Decent family income which would not require/ compel children to work
- Having a champion in the family, most often mothers, especially for girls
- Willing and able to bear the extra costs of secondary education-- on note books, tuitions, etc, even for girls
- Recognise that sometime needed to study at home even though in the case of girls does not mean reduction of burden of HH chores
- Family decisions to advance age of marriage
- Parental aspirations for their children- for a better life, secure employment
- ROLE MODELS
- Positve peer role models in th community and extended family especially important for girls
- Children haviing an opportunity to interact with such role models

School
- ACCESS: Upper primay school and secondary schools not very far
- Availablity of hostels/ residentials schools
- HMs/Teachers: Caring, good communication with children and parents ; interested and motivated; taking the lead in school, regular to school, competent in subject
- Quality Education: Library and Lab available and accessible to children
- Good remedial teaching available for children lagging behind
- Required number of teachers & subject teachers availabl
- INFRASTRUCTURE/ INCENTIVES/MDM
- Classrooms, functional toilets, water
- well stocked library and lab,
- sports materials availabl
- SCHOOL GOVERNANCE
- Active and ivolved SMCs and PTA
- IMAGE OF THE SCHOOL:
- Public perception that the school offers good teaching,, classes are held regularly, good results in Class X, has good infrastructure,

Child
- **GOALS/ASPIRATIONS / SELF IMAGE**
- Creat an identity,
- Improve one's social status,,
- Pursue education for a better future, leading to employment
- Social/family role: Make parents proud, being able to support the family economically
- Become a role model for others

Increased awareness of parents about value of education, educational returns and also the entitlements being provided to enrolled students is definitely the first factor that positively influences transition. Situation within family (encompassing support from parents, their attitude towards education, basic financial security and secure home environment) remains a key driver. Presence or absence of any of these factors becomes, if not the key, a deciding factor for in-school children who are living on the edge of dropping out of the educational stream.

Parents and children have aspiration for quality education (children learning, gaining knowledge), good school (with classrooms, supportive teachers, regular teaching) and safe and secure environment. However, in reality when system fails to deliver i.e. with schools that are far off, poor infrastructure, inadequate number of teachers who are not teaching well, parents and

students step up to shoulder the responsibilities to mitigate the gaps within the demand side. Additional costs of transport, tuition, textbooks, guides are added to already burdened families and at times, this creates economical crisis for the family, as a result of which children drop out of school. Social environment that allows and perpetuates practices such as child labour and early marriages add to the vulnerabilities of these children. Within school children are exposed to adverse situations including bullying, harassment, and corporal punishment. Teachers, burdened with systemic challenges, are grappling to strike the right balance amongst system, syllabus and students. Nonetheless, even in such challenging situations, children who have the interest and will to study, with support from their parents, teachers and school, step up the ladder of education from one level to another and further on.

Chapter 5: Towards a Successful Transition – The Way Forward

At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that many of the negative and positive factors across different domains are similar and therefore, they are repetitive. We have retained a lot of it in order to keep the domain-specific points of view. On one hand, educational landscapes across the states are uniquely different and on the other, there are inherent similarities across states. These states have their own systemic, geographical and socio-cultural concerns and demand and supply sides issues that influences transition. But at a larger level, they are part of a complex yet common operational and procedural framework that defines and determine reasons for children to continue through elementary level, transiting into and completing secondary schooling.

Figure 5.1: The interlinked triggers for successful transition from primary to secondary
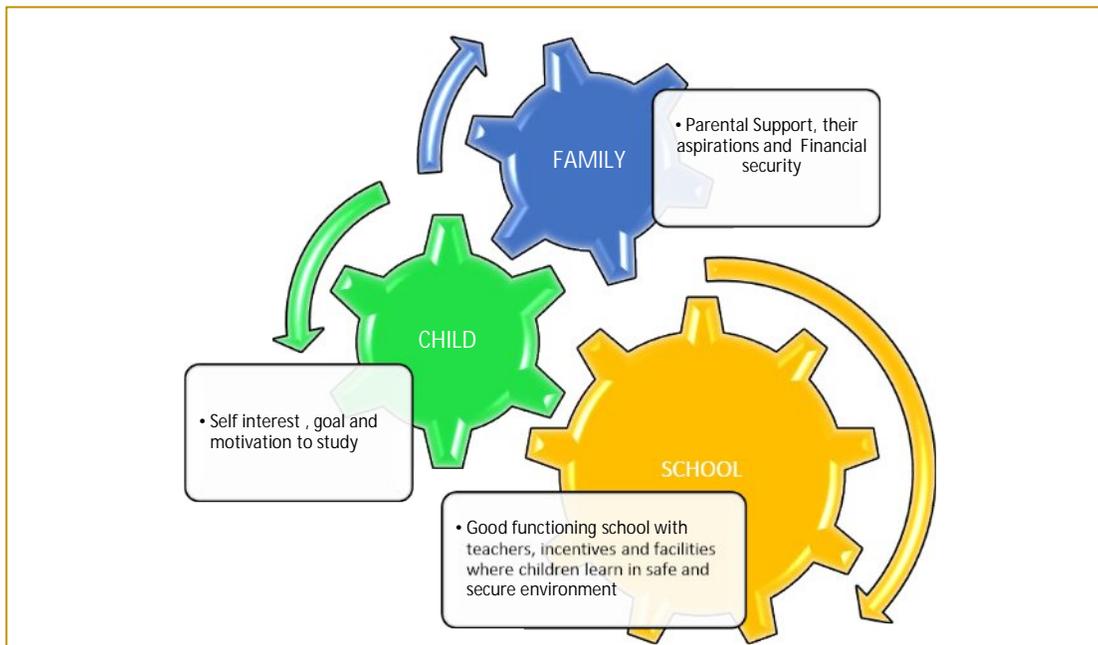
In summation, some important domain specific positive triggers and deterrents to transition across states are being presented here:

Parental support

As discussed in earlier chapters, parental awareness and aspirations for their children for a better life, secure employment has significant increased. Parental support has emerged as one of the drivers that positively influences children's schooling. When it is not forthcoming it creates major hindrance in their educational trajectory. It is particularly significant in the case of girls. Parental support to continue schooling and to learn involves different kinds and levels of support.

- First, children see parental support as creating an opportunity to be in school, attend regularly and learn. Supportive parents recognise that children in UPS and secondary levels need time for study and thus make that time available to them i.e. time to study at home and do school work. This entails relief from household chores as well as from income generating activities.

- Second, girls said that if they are allowed to study at least up to matric, then the parents should be <u>willing to spend money on notebooks, books and other necessary requirements</u>. They also need to shoulder additional financial burden for supplementary private coaching or provide additional study materials etc.

- Third, according to children, parents are the 'decision makers' who decide whether they attend school or not, study further or not. If parents 'support' education, they permit children to attend school regularly. Equally, they also refrain from deploying children in on farm/off farm work.

- Fourth, when parents' value education their positive attitude leads to increased involvement of children in their studies. The young adolescents with whom we spoke said that they appreciate the hard work parents do in order to educate them. They feel duty bound to study and fulfil parental aspirations and make them proud. As parents internalize the idea that their children should be educated, they communicate their ambition to children and the mobility that comes with education. This positive outlook on the part of parents constitutes a prime support base for children to build up their own educational outlook.

- Fifth and finally, support, motivation and aspirations from parents' stems from the value parents have for education. When enriched and fostered, this value for education strengthens their ideological stand against contentious and regressive social norms and practices including child labour and child marriage.

Financial situation at home

The financial situation of the family remains crucial influencers in child's schooling. Basic family income complemented with parent's positive attitude towards education sustains children in educational stream and also indirectly fuels their interest in school. The study has attempted to

capture lateral and direct connection between finances, children's interest and their performance in school. Children coming to government school come from diverse poverty households. Many of them are in a precarious economic situation that makes it difficult for most of them to afford guidebooks and private tuition. It is believed that children will not be able to cope with secondary schooling without the additional embellishments that private tuitions provide. Another important dimension is the impact of poverty on health and long-term illnesses. This further impedes their ability to perform well academically. Children are thus effectively pushed out of school. This cycle is sometimes camouflaged as inability to cope with studies.

Socio-cultural norms and practices

Social and cultural norms and practices perpetuate social, economical and gender based discrimination and inequalities. This is manifested as preference for son over daughter, low value for girls and child marriage. There is also an unspoken sanction for child labour. All these adversely affect children' ability to continue up to secondary school.

Children self interest and role of influencers

Children's self interest, innate and/or inculcated underpins their education attainment. Those who aspire to study, whether to have better career avenues or to improve their socio-economic status or just to gain knowledge, have higher potential to successfully transit from elementary to secondary. Across all five states children talked about the internal drive and passion that drive some children. Looking up to a role model, a champion from peer groups or from the community were cited as being effective in kindling the interest of children. Conversely, negative peer pressure, exposure to gambling / substance abuse could lead to children dropping out of school – even when their parents are supportive.

Access to quality education in good government school

Parents and children from poor households aspire for government schools that offer good education. A good school for them is one where classes are held regularly, there are adequate teachers and the school is known to produce good results in the board examinations. Quality for parents also includes a good school infrastructure, libraries and laboratories and an environment that is welcoming and child friendly. Other positive demand side factors mentioned by parents and children are:

- Easy access to UPS and secondary schools and availability of hostels/residential schools;

- Teachers and head teachers who are caring and supportive and those who have good communication with children and parents;

- Adequate number of teachers, including teachers for all subjects and female teachers;

- Regularity and competence of teachers appointed to the school;

- Sustained (regular and of good quality) remedial teaching for children who are lagging behind;

- Timely distribution of incentives;

- Playground and sports equipment available and given to children; and

- Good linkages with local community through SMCs and PTAs.

Several state governments have made monumental efforts to provide all of the above, at least through budgetary allocations made in SSA and now in RMSA. However, given the challenges ranging from policy level gaps to school level implementation issues, the supply side in schooling system has failed to ensure that it is accessible to all children in all schools. These factors contribute to children dropping out of school. Importantly, we found that the measures taken by the government are not aligned with the increased demand for secondary schooling. This has to do both with the quality of upgraded schools and its ability to meet the challenges of teacher availability and competence of teachers to handle higher classes. This has also to do with the state government policy regarding private schools. In states where an overwhelming number of secondary schools are private aided or unaided, it has been observed that very poor and economically weaker sections of society opt out of the school system.

Safe, secure and enabling environment for children

Children, particularly those from marginalized community and attending government schools often live in an environment that is not child-friendly. They need a safe and secure environment in school, at home or in the community. The practice of corporal punishment (especially of boys in high school and secondary school) was mentioned by both in and out-of-school children. Children and parents also talked about abusive language used by some teachers, which acts as a deterrent for children to remain in school.

At family level, parental disputes, violence within the family, alcoholism, and death of a parent puts emotional and mental stress on children and adversely impact their education and overall development.

Safety and security of girls emerged as a big issue especially where the school is far and girls have to travel some distance. Teasing / sexual harassment and fear of assault leads to extreme restrictions that are placed on girls. Parents curb their mobility in the name of security and protection. Girls are married off at an early age or their social and physical mobility is put under restriction to protect the notion of "honour" of family and community. Driven by fear that adolescent boys and girls would get into relationship and will 'fall in love and elope', families withdraw girls from school at secondary level.

Invisibility of children with special needs

Last but not the least, during the entire study children with special needs were invisible, not only in terms of physical presence but issues and challenges faced by them were not brought up by peers, families and teachers. This was perhaps the most glaring issue that the team confronted. While the government does encourage integration of CWSN in primary schools, this was conspicuous by its absence at the secondary level

Some suggestions to take forward

This qualitative study along side other similar surveys/reports on drop out and transitions, points to engaging with four domains that matter:

- Children, their experiences, their role models, their problems and their aspirations;
- The parents, their aspirations, their concerns and their economic situation;
- The school, how it functions, availability of teachers who are caring and teach regularly, availability of teachers for all subjects and their own training and other needs;
- The administration, their attitude, the support they provide to teachers, the incentives they provide to children and their effectiveness in monitoring.

In order to addresses the concern areas that impede and promote factors that support transition, *one blanket communication strategy may not work for all states*, *all communities and most importantly all school-systems*. There is a need to develop diversified, multipronged strategies involving public, policy advocacy and multimedia interventions focusing on the following thematic areas:

Quality of teaching learning

It is important to address quality of teaching and learning at both primary and upper primary levels because when children do not learn in primary school, they carry forward the cumulative

burden of non-learning and are not able to cope with education at higher levels. Quality is the heart of equity and children carrying a cumulative burden of non-learning are the ones who drop out. The ones who suffer the most are the very poor who cannot afford private tuitions or private schools.

Role Models

It is important to reach out to adolescent boys and girls who actually set the trend in their community/at school level, to project and promote them as local role models in the community, in schools, in textbooks and other educational material. Children need to hear and read about "people like them" who were able to surmount odds and carve a niche for themselves in their community / society.

Child Protection Issues

Early marriage (particularly for girls) and children engaging with economic and non-economic activities remain major impediments. An intensive, targeted (community, area specific) strategy focusing on their right to education and development could be considered. In particular, there is an urgent need to communicate the benefits of delaying the age of marriage, especially for girls in diverse poverty situations.

Benefits of secondary education

The benefits of education up to secondary level needs to come to the forefront not only to get jobs, but also for children to become better farmers, manage their work / business and most importantly, to negotiate the world from a position of strength.

Showcasing effective and good government schools

Public level advocacy showcasing the difference a good government school can make could be considered. This would involve highlighting the role an effective head teachers, teachers and administrators play in turning the school around and make it a vibrant hub for children's overall development.

The value of teachers

What we need in India is a non-judgmental and a positive communication strategy to reach out to teachers as the catalyst of change. One of the most powerful messages that came through was that a good school, a good HM and an engaged school community could help children overcome

many barriers. We came across children from extremely poor and disadvantaged families who persisted because teachers and the HM made sure that the child did not drop out.

In order to do that, it is important to stop criticising teachers constantly and to try and reach out to communities of teachers from primary schools, support them, encourage them and most importantly, create accountability systems that judges them by the progress of their students.

Special attention to CWSN

Given the almost total invisibility of children with special needs we need a renewed focus on CWSN. This is critical because CWSN from socio-economically marginalised communities remain doubly disadvantaged. To this end, we need to align a communication strategy to the recently enacted Rights of Persons with Disability Act (2016) and mount a national as well as state-specific communication strategy to highlight the importance of education for children with special needs.

Campaign to address corporal punishment and harassment

Notwithstanding provisions made under RTE, corporal punishment seems to be prevalent across all five states. Boys in particular are traumatised by physical violence and abuse, while girls by verbal abuse and sexual innuendos. A nation-wide campaign is essential to enable the teaching community to move away from corporal punishment and mental harassment. They will do that only when they are educated on other modes of positive discipline. NCPCR had done some work on this after the notification of RTE in 2009. It is time we revisited it and mounted a national campaign on corporal punishment, mental harassment, sexual abuse, gendered teasing and so on.

State specific policy advocacy

It is important to address teacher deployment policies and practices in all states though state-specific advocacy strategies. Equally, upgrading of primary school to UPS and from upper-primary to secondary school without addressing teacher and infrastructure requirements could end up becoming a self-defeating process. This is particularly important in light of shortage of subject teachers and equitable deployment across schools in rural and urban areas. Similarly, it is also important to discuss the implementation of no-detention policy in order to ensure that it is not interpreted as no teaching and no assessment.

Concluding observation

Given the wide range of issues that have been generated from this research, it would be of great value to discuss the implications for a communication as well as policy advocacy strategy before firm conclusions are drawn. The above suggestions are tentative and preliminary. A more detailed strategy development would need the active participation of UNICEF and Government officers.