

Role of NGO's in Promoting Educational Access for Girls in India

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Abstract:

Girls' education is most important for the overall development of a girl and also for women's empowerment. Although there is significant progress being made, still a lot of gender inequality in terms of equal access to education in rural areas. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in overcoming these challenges by collaborating with government initiatives and community-based learning programs. The present study discusses the importance of girls' education in India, examines the enrolment status of girls and analyses the role of NGOs in promoting educational access for girls. The study used a qualitative research approach. The data was collected from numerous secondary sources, such as government reports, research articles, and official websites of NGOs. Document analysis technique was used to interpret the collected data. The findings indicated that although girls' enrolment has increased at the primary level, it has not yet fully reached the higher levels of education. Various NGOs contribute to girls' education, such as Room to Read India, Nanhi Kali, Educate Girls, Deepalaya, and CRY, etc., through conducting awareness initiatives, identifying out-of-school girl children, life-skills training, remedial learning, and community engagement programs. These have helped greatly in increasing the enrolment rate of girls in education. The study concludes that stronger joint initiatives between NGOs, government agencies, and communities are required to ensure equitable educational access for girls in India.

Keywords: NGO, women empowerment, girls' education, educational access, India

Introduction:

Girls' Education in India:

Education is a very important way for the development of society, which creates awareness, knowledge and attitude among people. It is very necessary for men as well as women in society (Kumar, 2013). Education for girls is crucial to India's social and economic development. As a result, girls are working for the development of society along with their homes (Sahoo, 2016). But in our society, girls are still lagging behind in all fields including education, politics, economics, health etc. Discrimination between boys and girls is seen especially in rural areas. To fight against this disparity, girls need to be empowered which will come from education (Ahmad & Narayana, 2015).

Meaning of NGO:

A Non-Governmental Organisation is a group, not affiliated with any government and works independently. The purpose of this is to improve society and remove various problems of the society

(Folger, 2024). It is a non-profit organization, working for the welfare of society without any profit. Various social problems that NGOs work on, those are women empowerment, protection of the environment, disaster relief, human rights etc (Karns, 2024).

The emergence of NGOs:

The term NGO or Non-Governmental Organization was coined in the mid-1940s. These NGOs work at local, national and international levels. Most organizations work independently but some work with the help of the government. Many NGOs are economically supported by private contributions or Several funds (Irwin, 2015).

Initiation of NGO in India:

In the seventh decade of the 19th century, NGOs were formally started in India which have continued following various orientations, state policies, five-year plans etc. Since the initiation of these NGOs in India, the Government of India has been working with these organizations for the development of various backward areas of India (Bishnoi, 2023).

Role of NGOs in social development:

Non-Governmental Organizations are mainly formed for the development of society. These organizations work to bring socially and economically backward people back to the mainstream of society. As a community group, they do various things to bring positive change in society (Luke, 2021). The contribution of NGOs to social progress is undeniable. Through their various innovative strategies and methods, NGOs have succeeded in transforming the lives of many people in society. NGOs have made an impact on ground-level needs, resource mobilization, promotion of education, health care, solving various environmental problems and protection of girl children etc. With the government's help, they will be able to build a beautiful, healthy world (Nagora, 2023). We know that education is an essential instrument for social change. NGOs play a huge role in imparting this education to all. These NGOs adopt different strategies to promote girls' education (Ngonyani & Kamando, 2023).

Objective of the study:

- To discuss the importance of Girls' Education in India.
- To explore the enrolment status of girls' education in India from 2018 to 2022.
- To find out the role of NGOs in Promoting Educational Access for Girls in India.

Methodology of the study:

This study followed mainly a qualitative approach. Data were collected through numerous secondary sources and various NGO websites. Document analysis techniques were used for data analysis.

Analysis & Discussion:

Importance of girl's education in India:

There are still many people in Indian society who differentiate between boys and girls. Particularly in rural areas, people have a stereotypical mentality that education is important only for boys, so boys are given more priority than girls in all fields. Therefore, educating girls is very crucial to remove this type of

thinking (Shah & Mittal, 2019). Various studies have shown that boys have always benefited more than girls. There is no exception in the field of education, whether it is various educational opportunities or equipment (Singh, 2021). One of the tools to live with the dignity, power, and rights of women is the education of girls which will help them in overall progress. An educated woman will help build a healthier society than an uneducated girl, such as preventing child marriage, reducing female fertility, reducing maternal mortality, preventing HIV and other related infections, etc. A girl can be educated and help in the development of family, society and country (Joshi & Sharma, 2021).

A literate girl can be an inspiration for other girls, thereby motivating all girls to move forward in life and take up education, helping society's progress. Also, women education is very important for India to become a developed country. It is necessary to educate girls to change the old attitudes towards women, to remove the discrimination between boys and girls and to make society right (Meena & Hazarika, 2024).

Moreover, nowadays it is seen that many women are victims of domestic violence, many families consider them as their personal property and do various physical and mental tortures on them. If women are educated, then the chances of such situations will be much less. If girls are educated, the rate of child marriage will also decrease to a great extent (Bano & Dahiya, 2022). According to UN sustainable development goals, promoting girls' education is a national and global importance for the upliftment of our nation and the world.

Enrolment Status of Girls' Education in India:

Table No. 1: Net Enrolment Rate of Girls' Education in India from 2018 to 2022

Years (class)	Primary (1-8)	Upper Primary (6-8)	Secondary (9-10)	Higher Secondary (11-12)
2018-2019	89.8%	69.9%	49.0%	31.7%
2019-2020	92.4%	71.9%	50.3%	33.3%
2020-2021	93.8%	74.5%	52.4%	35.6
2021-2022	90%	71.7%	48%	35%

Source: UDISE+

Table no 1 shows that the enrolment status of girls at primary, upper primary and secondary levels has increased from 2018 to 2021 but it has decreased in 2022 and at the Higher Secondary level, the status has increased from 2018 to 2022.

Role of NGOs in promoting educational access for girl children in India:

- **NGO for Girls Education:** NGOs in various developing countries offer various services for the development of the country. India is no exception. India's limited per capita resources make it difficult for every person in the country to maintain a normal life. These NGOs help low-income people to overcome various problems. These organizations have taken Various initiatives to improve the education rate of girls (Reza, 2022).

Some types of NGOs to promote Girls Education in India:

- **Room to Read India:** Room to Read India is a non-governmental organization, which was formally established in 2003, Currently restricted to 10 states of India, namely Delhi, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan,

Karnataka, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. Its objective is to focus on Girls' Education by providing educational opportunities for children from low-income communities.

This organization launched the Girls Education Program, especially for the education of girls. Through this program they want to empower girls to be self-confident and capable. By this, life skills education, various resources, and mentorship support are provided to girls. Different strategies are adopted here, such as In-person and remote mentoring support, Online and Offline Life Skills, Family, School, Community Engagement and home visits, Need-based online and offline material support etc (Room to Read India).

- **Educate Girls:** 'Educate Girls' is a non-profit organization, founded in 2007 that provides education to girls in rural backward areas of India. Currently, this organization has successfully worked in more than 24000 villages in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They help out-of-school girls (7-14 years of age) back in school and ensure they continue their education without any interruption. 'Educate Girls' employs community volunteers called Team Balika to help with this initiative. They conduct door-to-door surveys and identify those students, and also hold various village meetings to sensitize the villagers about the need for girls' education. Team members work with community members in their villages to promote girls' education. 1.4 million out-of-school girls have been enrolled by Educate Girls with the help of the government, community and more than 18000 volunteers (Educate Girls).
- **Camp Vidya (Community-based learning):** When schools were closed during COVID, children's education was stopped, Educate Girls NGO started the Camp Vidya project with the help of Govt. Through this camp, the members of Team Balika taught the children through various activities. Math, language and social skills were taught in this camp. All COVID guidelines were maintained during learning (Educate Girls, 2021).
- **Provide Remedial kit, name Gyan ka Pitara:** With the government's help, 'Educate Girls' has designed a remedial kit, called Gyan Ka Pitara. This Pitara contains various tools through which students are taught, learning is made interesting through various games and children enjoy learning very much. Through this, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students are learned. Math, English, and Hindi are taught by these activities (Educate Girls, 2019).

How the NGO 'Educate Girls' Works:

Activities of the 'Educate Girls' NGO:

This NGO works by following steps. These are mentioned below:

- **Create a local volunteer group in village-based:** At first, the Educate Girls NGO selects some village women and men as volunteers those who will be aware about girls' education and also have good communication, problem-solving skills and they must be educated. They should be trusted by everyone in the village. They will be much more familiar to all the villagers as Team Balika. After selecting the team girls, they are given training. Their role will be to help Educate Girls NGO to promote girls' education (Educate Girls, 2022).
- **Identify out-of-school girls:** Then this organization conducts a door-to-door survey to identify out-of-school girls. Through this survey, Team Balika finds out the girls in their villages those who have dropped out of their studies for any reason (Educate Girls, 2023).
- **Conduct village meetings:** After identifying the girls, a meeting is arranged with the local members of the village, school staff and administrators, where the village members are made aware of the need

for girls' education. They are given a message to encourage themselves to educate their daughters (Educate Girls, 2023).

- **Change the mindset of parents:** In order to change the traditional mindset of the parents, the team goes to the girls' houses and informs them about various benefits they will get after the girls receive education, as well as the success stories of different girls shown to them (Educate Girls, 2018).
- **Support School Governance and Infrastructure Development:** Educate Girls organization helps those rural schools that have various infrastructure problems. Such as the availability of drinking water, toilets, Digital classrooms etc. It also supports school governance. (Educate Girls, 2024, May 25).
- **Provide Various Skills Training:** This NGO provides various types of skill training. Such as life skills training, soft skills, digital skills etc., which make students capable in all aspects, it will help them in a better future.

- **Nanhi Kali:**

In 1996, the Mahindra Education Trust and the Nandi Foundation launched the Nanhi Kali project, which aims to help girls from Economically disadvantaged families in India get a school education. This scheme is mainly to prevent social problems like child marriage, child labour, etc. It especially deals with rural areas.

This project supports government school girls from class I to class X. They provide girls remedial classes after school every day, tuition and various teaching software for access through digital tablets. Every year Nanhi Kali girls get a Nanhi Kali kit which contains essential items such as a bag, t-shirt, shoes, socks and hygiene items for girls. Also, Nanhi Kali NGO provides various pieces of training like leadership skills, 21st-century skill training, financial literacy training etc. By imparting numerous life skills like critical thinking, communication skills, etc., this organization prepares girls for further higher education (Nanhi Kali).

States: The project Nanhi Kali works in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujrat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal (Nanhi Kali, where we are).

Corporate Supporters of Nanhi Kali: Nanhi Kali has many corporate partners who help the organization in various ways, some of them are Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd, Care Ratings Ltd, Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd, Indus Valley Partners (India) Pvt Ltd etc. (Nanhi Kali, Corporate Supporters).

Impact of Nanhi Kali in the year 2023-2024: From 1996 to 2024, Nanhi Kali has supported a large number of girls, in the year 2023-2024, 231692 girls have received help, among them 171162 girls empowered by after-school programs, 60530 girls have received help from life skills program and digital skills program. Nanhi Kali currently has 5448 community associates and 6743 academic support centers (Nanhi Kali, Outcomes).

- **Deepalaya:**

The organization 'Deepalaya' was inaugurated in 1979 to educate marginalized children. It provides various vocational training to make children self-reliant. This organization functions within the states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. It has helped 378145 children with education, over 1616 self-help groups and 24870 adults with vocational training (Deepalaya).

NGO called Deepalaya has launched various projects covering various areas such as education, vocational training, women empowerment, environmental sustainability etc. which plays an effective role across India.

- **Women Empowerment Project (Nari Shakti):** This NGO has launched various projects for the empowerment of women, one of which is the Nari Shakti Project. Where the backward women of the society are helped in various ways to become self-reliant. They are made skilled in many subjects. Through this project, fashion designing and beauty culture programs are organized, so that women can open their own businesses and become self-dependent. (Deepalaya, Project Nari Shakti). <https://deepalaya.org/project-nari-shakti/>
- **Earn to Empower Project:** Another project of Deepalaya for women empowerment is the 'Earn to Empower' project. Where women are supported to live well and start their own businesses. This project has been talked about three models, TRAIN, FUND and ENGAGE. TRAIN, through this model, women are trained in the skills necessary to run their business, the second model is FUND, with the help of various funding partners, funds are given to women to start their business. Another model is ENGAGE, Deepalaya uses WhatsApp as a tool for communication with women so that through it she can guide and motivate women to take their business forward well. <https://deepalaya.org/livelihood/> Deepalaya has introduced various educational projects, one of which is computer learning, which falls under vocational training. Where students are informed about the various functions of computers. They also organize community libraries where different types of workshops, story-telling sessions, painting etc. are organized for the necessary skill development of the students (**Community Library, 2023-2024**). <https://deepalaya.org/community-library/>

CRY (Child Rights and You): Every child, whether a boy or a girl, has the right to live a good life. But they face many problems. Therefore, the non-governmental organizations called CRY were formed in 1979 with the dream of ensuring that every child has a good childhood.

Mission:

Taking Responsibility for children: Encouraging everyone to take responsibility, so that every child can move forward in life with their potential.

Enhancing Potentiality: Helping children to express their latent potential

Inspiring Community Engagement: To inspire the community to work together to keep Indian children safe. <https://www.cry.org/about-cry/>

'CRY' works on girls' education:

CRY NGO has emphasized on empowering girls from the very beginning. According to them, girls need to be empowered for the development of the country, which requires education. Therefore, they talk about doing various things to promote girls' education. This NGO has thought about women's education by eliminating multiple forms of societal discrimination. CRY NGO supports girls' education mainly through 5 focus areas. These are:

- **Education Awareness Drives:** It makes society and parents aware of the need to educate all children so that they can encourage girls' education.
- **Inform about government schemes and benefits:** We know that many parents are still not aware of the various government schemes for girls' education. They are not aware of the various financial assistance provided by the government; due to they face various financial constraints. Therefore, providing appropriate information about this is a focus area of this NGO.

- **Fight against child marriage and labour:** This NGO works to raise awareness against child marriage because they believe that child marriage is the biggest obstacle to women's empowerment in society.
- **Empower Girls Through Collectives:** CRY takes the help of various support groups to create a proper environment for the development of girls. Everyone works together to ensure that girls gain confidence in all aspects.
- **Help end period shame:** Another goal of this NGO is to give people a positive message about girls' periods, so that girls are not ashamed of these issues, and to help create a healthy environment for them. <https://www.cry.org/our-work/girls-education/>
- **CARE India:** There are many NGOs in India, one of which is CARE India Foundation. Which works for various underprivileged children, including women empowerment. It does various works for women's education (Care India Foundation).

India is geographically vast; hence the population of India is relatively high. Due to this the Government of India is sometimes unable to address the problems of all regions of the country. One such social problem is the backwardness of girls in terms of education. This problem has not yet been completely addressed in India. Still, society's old thinking about girls' education has not ended. Non-Government Organizations are formed to solve such social problems. These organizations work privately, get support from various funding agencies, support the community, private donations and various business groups etc. These organizations play a key role in promoting Girls' Education. They first find the cause of the problem and solve it. Conducting various types of research, field visits, collecting data from various schools and working on the reasons why girls are not able to study or drop out of school. They target a state, choose districts and identify backward areas where education rates are very low and child marriage rates are high. They work as a team. Some agencies work with the support of the government. Many of the NGOs in India that work on girls' education and solve various problems of women like Room to Read India, Nanhi Kali, Educate Girls, CARE India, CRY NGO and Deepalaya etc. Room to Read India, this organization's Girls Education Program is a medium through which girls are not only educated but also empowered. Through the Volunteer group Educate Girls NGO identifies unenrolled school girls and imparts education through community involvement, providing the Camp Vidya program and Remedial Kit for good learning outcomes. The NGO, Nanhi Kali offers after-school tutoring and extra help programs for girls' academic improvement.

Conclusion:

The contribution of NGOs to the expansion of girls' education in India is well-seen. As a result, the attendance of girls in schools has increased significantly. Presently the child marriage rate has also substantially reduced and girls are no longer afraid to reach the upper echelons of society, they are fulfilling their dreams with confidence. Girls are improving more by getting skill training. NGOs have achieved a lot of success in popularizing girls' education but not completely. Ending discrimination among girls and bringing about equality in education in India requires a concerted effort by the government, community members and citizens of the country. So every person in society should be aware and fight for the education of girls.

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