



M.V. Foundation



CHAMPIONS VOICES OF GIRLS

A Study of First Generation Girl Students
in Senior Secondary Schools of Telangana

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Preface

Poor Indian families face many problems in accessing facilities and amenities normally considered essential for civilized life. That is why they are usually described as under-privileged. Girls in such families face further difficulties due to gender discrimination both within the family and in society. In fact, in many such families, their very arrival is unwelcome and their struggle starts from birth. In spite of all these hurdles and challenges many adolescent girls from poor families have reached and completed their higher secondary – Class-XI and XII or Intermediate – successfully. For this reason we describe them in this report as champions. A study has been undertaken based on a wide ranging survey of hundreds of adolescent girls – both poor and not so poor – to understand the difficulties faced by the poor girls in reaching and completing higher secondary course. An elaborate structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the girls; in addition, they also narrated their life story in their own words. It is a tribute to our volunteers that they were able to persuade and coax many of the girls to open up and reply to many questions which they would normally consider very private information. Voluminous data has been collected. The present report is a brief preliminary analysis of the data and some conclusions and generalizations have been reported. The value of this study is not so much that we have discovered any new problems faced by the girls but that we have been able to identify the relative importance and intensity of the various difficulties faced by them. This should enable both policy makers and social workers to prioritise their strategy to smoothen the road to higher education for poor adolescent girls, tackle the major and more universal problems first and the minor and more specific problems later.

It should be emphasised that while we have generalized the conclusions, it is observed that no two stories of the girls are identical in every respect and a more detailed study has to be undertaken in due course. Finally I would like to associate myself with appreciation and gratitude with the sentiments expressed by my colleague Sri.M.R.Vikram in his acknowledgements.

Dr. M. Krishnamurthi

Chairman and Managing Trustee
M.Venkatarangaiya Foundation

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We thank the Government of Telangana and especially the Commissioner of Collegiate Education, Board of Intermediate Studies and Ms.Shailaja Ramaiyer, I.A.S who extended all cooperation for conducting the study. They were with the M V Foundation from the very beginning of the Research Project and enabled the cooperation of the Principals and staff of the respective Junior Colleges. Indeed it is with their support that we could reach out to all the 1000 girls who were respondents in the study, conduct Focus Group Discussions with girls and the teachers as well. Our thanks are to each one of them who participated in the study sharing very personal details, their triumphs and tribulations. We express our deep sense of gratitude for all of them.

Similar studies on first generation learners, designated as 'Champions' have been conducted by the Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune and the Institute of Development Studies in Rajasthan. The current study draws from the research conducted by them and we thank them for sharing their research tools and major findings.

This study could not have been conducted without the guidance of Prof.Jacqueline Bhabha, Director of Research, François-Xavier Bagnoud Center (FXB Center) for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University and technical support of Ms.Orla Kelly, Research Associate of FXB Center.

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This study could not have been conducted without the Research Staff of M V Foundation, who traveled to distant colleges in some of the remote areas of the State of Telangana, won over the girl students to confide in them and collected the data meticulously under the able guidance of Mr.Y.Rajendra Prasad, Chief Coordinator, M V Foundation. Our sincere gratitude to all of them.

Finally we owe it to Prof.Shantha Sinha for her valuable time to see through the study until its completion and giving confidence to M V Foundation to take on the challenges of conducting similar studies.

M.R.Vikram

Secretary Trustee

M V Foundation

Education Challenges of First Generation Girl Students (Champions) in Senior Secondary Schools of Telangana

1. Introduction

For most girls, an invisible battle for education and dignity begins with their first entry into the local school. If they are born into a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, backward class or minority family, especially of Muslims, the odds are greater. Further, if born to non-literates or those with low levels of literacy they face immense challenges, as the schools are just not ready to respond to the needs of the first generation learner. Yet, some of them have not given up even as they face insults, humiliation and discrimination at the school. They fight their way, day after day, and complete school up to class 10 and beyond. They cope with state deficit in provisioning of physical infrastructure such as classrooms and toilets, and human resources such as schoolteachers. They learn to accommodate threats from boys and men who invariably stalk and harass them with impunity. They come to grips with impoverishment, gender discrimination, domestic violence and abuse, fractured families and social exclusion. They work hard, earn wages, and support their family through periods of deprivation, lack of livelihood, and ill health as they claim their entitlement to education, which is so precious and essential to live a life of dignity.

This study is about the ‘Champions’¹, and millions like them in contemporary India, who grapple with multiple challenges and yet have survived pressures and are fighting to fulfill their aspiration for education. They are referred to as ‘Champions’ to exemplify the participation of such girls who have won their battles for education. The study attempts to identify their experiences of participation in school, challenges they have overcome, the support they received both from the government as well as non-institutional structures from primary school onwards to reach the final year of secondary school.

1. This study is supported by Stitching Charity Fund Rijsholt, Netherlands. Similar studies on first generation learners, designated as ‘Champions’ have been conducted by the Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women’s Studies Centre, University of Pune and the Institute of Development Studies in Rajasthan. The current study draws from the research conducted by them under the guidance of Prof. Jacqueline Bhabha, Director of Research, François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University.

To capture their triumphs and tribulations in their journey for education and their search for dignity, many a question needed to be answered. Would they open up to strangers and share information? Would they feel free to respond to questions that were personal and at times might invade their privacy? How would girls react to the unfamiliar research team? As the researchers themselves came from similar backgrounds as that of the students, there was a resonance. The research team's transparency, and confidence and trust that they reposed in the students, endeared them to all girls in the college studying in 2nd year Intermediate. The girls wanted to take part in the study, and their consent was taken before starting the exercise.

Many girls wanted to be heard, understood and treated as persons having a voice and a mind of their own. And so they cried with pain and joy, as it was a unique opportunity for them to express their views on their childhoods, schools, teachers, friends, education, and families - brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents. They recalled the challenges they faced to overcome the barriers at different stages in their life, and also those who supported them, with fondness and respect. At the end of 3 hours of filling up the form, some girls who were on the brink of giving up the fight for education found renewed hope to study further come what may. In the end, they were convinced that it is education and education alone that can extricate them from the ignominy and insults of the past, and give them a jump-start to the future. There has to be a stop to this discrimination, and so the girls reiterated that they would go ahead without looking back. This is what their parents, especially their mothers, had made sacrifices for, and hoped to see happen.

Mothers, who were children of modern, independent India, barely in their mid-30's and who had missed out on education themselves, definitely knew what was best for their daughters and sons. They bore violence, abuse and even threats to their lives in families that came with norms of patriarchy. They lived in a war zone with a husband, in-laws, neighbours and society at large amid the pervasive values of male domination, with perpetual fear and uncertainty, trying to find solutions on all fronts. This they did maintaining dignity and yet at the cost of loss of selfhood. They worked relentlessly and at times without any support from male counterparts to maintain the family and support the education of their children. They felt that the cycle of lack of dignity and freedom could not be repeated unendingly.

It is hoped that this study will throw insights into the lives of the older girls, and their aspirations and dreams, and build a critical mass to empathize with their battles on the ground with full compassion. It is also hoped that sufficient evidence will be built through this study to make the voices of the girls heard, loud and clear, just so that the system is awakened to fulfill its obligation towards children, their education, entitlements and rights.

2. Adolescent Children and Education at National level

Of the approximate 100 million children in the 14 to 18 year's age group, there are 44.8 million children in secondary education in India with overall Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Classes IX–XII at 45.1 per cent. The higher secondary GER for classes 11 and 12 is 33.48 per cent.² In other words, more than 50% of children are not enrolled in schools in the 14–18 years age group.³ There is a shortage of 2,00,000 teachers at the secondary level and only 53% of teachers required are available.⁴

More than half of the students in secondary education study in privately managed schools which are: (a) private-aided schools, which receive recurrent funding from state governments, usually through paying teachers' salaries and some other costs, but where the school management is responsible for capital costs and investments; and (b) Unaided schools, which receive no public funds and so charge heavy fees.

In Classes IX and X in 2007–08, 45.6 per cent of children were enrolled in government schools, 28.6 per cent in aided schools and the remaining 25.8 per cent in private unaided schools. In addition there is a small number of 510788 students studying lower or higher secondary education in National Institute of Open Schooling in the year 2012–13, 29.7% being girls⁵

Boys	168216	190486	358702	70.22
Girls	70947	81139	152086	29.77
Total	239163	271625	510788	

Overall, on average, total household expenditure was Rs. 2,158 for a student attending secondary education in a government school compared to Rs. 3,874 in an aided school and Rs. 7,542 in a private unaided school in a year.⁶ Contrary to the international evidence that shows, as countries get richer they tend to have more students in government schools, in the case of India the opposite is true.⁷

It is significant that between 2004–05 and 2011–12 there is a major jump in the percentage of girls who completed class 8 almost doubled from 37% to 63%. Likewise while nearly

2. Tony Linden, 'Secondary Education', Chapter 12, India Infrastructure Report 2012 http://www.idfc.com/pdf/report/2012/Chapter_12.pdf last seen on 20th December 2014

3. NFHS-3, 2005-06

4. USAID, Kiawah Trust, Piramal Trust & Dasra, Up Grade-Keeping Girls in Secondary Schools –For them and For Us'.p.6 Dasra, 2015 <http://www.nios.ac.in/stastical-report/academic-enrolment-report-year-2012-13.aspx#a1>

5. Tony Linden quotes from World Bank (2012) 'India-Secondary Education Project' Project Appraisal Document, Education Unit, Human Development Department, South Asia Region, World Bank.

7. Tony Linden: 'For example, in lower secondary education, the average for OECD countries as a whole is 85.8 per cent of pupils studying in government schools, 10.7 per cent studying in government-dependent private schools and the remaining 3.5 per cent in independent private schools.

27% completed class 10 in 2004-05 in the year 2011-12 it was 43%. Thus between 2004-05 and 2011-12 NSSO rounds, there has been a substantial increase in the number of girls who aimed to complete education up to class 10.

On the other hand there has been an increase in the overall dropouts after class 10 up to 12th class with 63 percent dropouts in 2011-12 whereas the dropout was 44% in 2004-05. In comparison performance of girls is slightly better wherein with 41% dropouts in 2004-05 the increase in dropouts in 2011-12 is 56%.

3. Profile of Children and Education (15-18 years) in the State of Telangana

This section gives an education profile of girls in the 15-18 years age group in the State of Telangana. According to Census 2011, there were 2.83 million children in the age group of 15 to 18 years of who 1.45 million are boys and 1.37 million are girls in the State of Telangana.

Since the data for the newly formed State of Telangana is not available in a disaggregated manner by the NSSO, the educational status of adolescents in the state of Andhra Pradesh (AP) is discussed below. Andhra Pradesh was one of the lowest performing states with regard to the overall literacy rate of adolescents in 2004-05, but it has made remarkable improvement in 2011-12 as it has moved up from 25th position out of 29 states in 2004-05 to 18th position in 2011-12.

There are some striking factors as the absolute number and percentage of adolescents who were not literate and below primary level has come down drastically over the NSSO rounds. In 2004-05, the condition of education of girl child was very poor as nearly 50% of them were basic literates. It is seen that in the year 2011-12, there is a reversal and nearly 60% were in secondary or higher secondary classes – a major shift. The number of adolescents who are in higher secondary or completed higher secondary has doubled within six years, which indicates the subsequent amount of investment that is to be planned to accomplish their academic as well job market entry. Further, it is remarkable that at the higher secondary level, girls outnumber boys. Unlike many states that report near cent percent literacy, the education level of adolescents is centered around primary and in some cases middle school education. However it is evident from the NSSO data that there has been a focus on secondary and higher secondary levels in AP.

At the same time the participation of female main workers is higher than the National average in the State of Telangana. Thus while female main workers in the age group 15-18 years, in the State of Telangana the female main work force participation is 18.1 percent.

3.1. Private and Government Junior Colleges in Telangana

At the level of Intermediate (classes 11 & 12 or Senior Secondary School Education or Junior Colleges-these nomenclatures used interchangeably in this study) there are 2141 colleges of which there are 1,468 private colleges and 673 government colleges with 713,573 students. 78.3% of children study in private colleges with 37.9% of them being girls and 40.4% of them boys when compared to only 21.7% studying in government colleges with 11.2% of them being girls and 10.5% boys. There is a growing trend of increase in students studying in private colleges with marginal difference in access to private colleges between male and female students at 50.9% for male students and 49.1% for female students. This indicates the absence of government provisioning of senior secondary school education.

It is found that privatization of Intermediate colleges at such a large scale is contrary to the national level data as observed earlier wherein over 45% were enrolled in government schools. The growth in private sector is also indicative of the huge demand there is for higher education and the limitation in the policy framework of the secondary schools, which have become tuition and coaching centers to prepare candidates for entrance tests to get admission into professional courses. On the whole this trend in increasing privatization is convenient for the government as it is seen as the benefactor that gives away scholarships to poor students and sees no cause to expand and invest in secondary school education⁸.

4. The Study

4.1 Purpose

When a poor child is admitted into class one there is no guarantee that she will continue in school until completion of senior secondary school, let alone class 10. Some win the battle for schools but most lose. For the purpose of this study girl children of non-literates or when either of their parents is non-literate and the other has not gone beyond upper primary school or when both have completed only primary school who have reached up to the final year of Secondary education are those who win and are the 'Champions'. Some of them would have dropped out of school and after a gap of 1 to 5 years may have re-joined school to pursue education and reach up to senior secondary school education. Such girls too are 'Champions'. 'Champions' are those children who survive all odds and even more for continuing in education.

8. *Junior colleges or Senior Secondary School Education are captured completely by private and commercial enterprises lobbying to undermine government provisioning. They also take advantage of the cash transfers (scholarships) made out to SC, BC and economically backward candidates. This is another story. 1.1*

This study is about ‘Champions’ who defied patriarchy and gender discrimination, violence and abuse, impoverishment and hunger to reach up to the second year of secondary school education. The study also compares the Champions with such girls whose parents have completed at least upper primary school and beyond. This is to understand whether there are similarities and differences in the experiences and the challenges the girls face through their journey of education.

Of those who enroll in Standard I barely 60% make it to the senior Secondary school (classes 11 and 12). There has been significant percentage of drop out cutting across SC, ST, BC and minority communities. However, several girls have managed to successfully complete secondary education. In order to understand how such girls achieved education up to this stage, this study aims to: i) Focus on the positive aspects that have supported girls to reach up to the final year of secondary school (12th class); ii) Analyse the individual, social and infrastructural factors that can contribute to advancement of such girls at the secondary level of education; iii.) Examine the support systems both formal and informal systems such girls had availed to reach up to this level. On the whole the study covers the family, public institutions and public policies that contributed to their success in order to inform strategies for increased transition, attendance and retention of disadvantaged girls at secondary level. This study focuses on both institutional and non-institutional factors that enabled adolescent girls meet the challenges to complete secondary school education including those of gender discrimination, patriarchy and child marriage.

This is contrary to most studies conducted on adolescent girls and education which have highlighted a plethora of obstacles impacting girl’s education. There have been Randomized Control Trials (RCT’s) which have attempted to understand the impact of particular interventions such as the provision of bicycles⁹, female leadership¹⁰ on educational participation and achievement, particularly at the primary level. Some studies on adolescent girls have been on the complexities of reproductive health care and nutrition. For example the Population Council has conducted several significant research studies on adolescent girls with focus on health, nutrition, sexual abuse, disabilities, trafficking, and masculinity and so on¹¹.

9. Karthik Muralidharan, Nishith Prakash, *Cycling to School: Increasing Secondary School Enrollment for Girls in India*, NBER Working Paper No. 19305, August 2013, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19305>

10. Lori Beaman, Esther Duflo, Robini Pande, Petia Topalova *Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India* <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/335/6068/582.short>

11. <http://www.svri.org/popcouncil.htm>

4.2 Methodology for Sampling

The Study was conducted in 20 colleges which included 14 government day scholar colleges, 2 government residential colleges and 4 private colleges from 5th August to mid-September 2014 selected from a total of 2141 colleges in the state of Telangana. For the sample of this study, 6 government colleges and 111 Private Colleges in the city of Hyderabad and urban Ranga Reddy district were not included as they are totally urbanized and have a concentration of private Junior Colleges as commercial coaching centers that are not representative of the rest of the Telangana state and could distort the findings.

A combination of stratified random sampling and simple random sampling were utilised to identify the colleges to be surveyed. All the colleges were first categorised on the basis of female literacy rate in each of the mandals of Telangana and the data was divided into four stratum based on the quartiles as follows:

Strata table

Quartile Range	Literacy Range	Strata	Govt.	Private
Min - Q1	23.54 - 43.48	Strata1	133	127
Q1 - Q2	43.48 - 49.27	Strata2	106	176
Q2 - Q3	49.27 - 58.08	Strata3	73	227
Q3 - Max	58.08 - 73.96	Strata4	39	260

Using simple random sampling, four government colleges and one private college from each stratum was selected. Given the above data, it is significant that there are more number of government colleges offering free education in areas which have low literacy levels. It is well founded that low literacy is an indication of poverty and backwardness. Likewise, there are more number of private colleges in areas that have relatively higher levels of literacy indicating a greater demand for education at the secondary school level thus increasing the pressure on poor students to pay fees since the number of government colleges are relatively less in these areas.

In order to screen the Champions for the study, all the girls in the senior intermediate colleges that were chosen were given a brief about the study and were asked to fill in a small questionnaire. On the next day almost every girl who attended the exercise the day before, even if she was not a Champion wanted to be part of the study. Thus they were included as Champion Classmates (CC). The criteria for selection of Champions (CH) from the sample of 1017 was on the basis –

- Both parents no education (327)

- Father Primary School (PS) and mother no education (140)
- Mother PS and father no education (40)
- Father Upper Primary School (UPS) and mother no education (74)
- Mother UPS and father no education (12)
- Father PS and mother PS (43)

Out of the 1017 respondents, 636 were designated as Champions (CH). The rest are Champions Classmates (CC). It must be noted that both the CH and CC are from a poor background with 90% of their annual income not exceeding Rs.75000.

4.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire had 336 questions and it took approximately 3 hours to complete. The information sought was on the following:

Students' Profile which included information on:

- a.) factors that enabled them to choose a college and discipline;
- b.) the girls' views on the decisions she could take regarding academic as well as other personal matters independently;
- c.) Girls' background regarding her participation in college and exposure to public services and the communication systems such as TV, internet etc.

Education: In this section information was sought on:

- a.) Girls' experience in schools from Primary to senior Secondary level;
- b.) The teacher and classroom experience;
- c.) Life outside of school.

Family and Friends: In this section information was sought on:

- a.) Family support for education;
- b.) Family profile;
- c.) Marriage and health.

Girls were also given space to write and express their views as testimonials at the end of the questionnaire. This was followed by Focus Group Discussion with 80 respondents selected on a random basis along with 20 female teachers who accompanied them. There were many activities such as music and songs, art work, team building work, group discussions which enabled them open up.

5. Findings

5.1 Profile of the Champions (CH) and the Champion Classmates (CC)

5.1.1 Demographic Profile

As seen in **Table 1** there is a negligible difference in the average age of the respondents with CH being 17 years and CC being 16.5 years. The percentage of girls among Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) community is greater among Champions at 32.3% and the SCs among CCs are 22.8%. This is due to the fact that most respondents are from government colleges that offer education at a lower cost. According to Census 2011, SC constitutes 15.6% of the population in the Telangana state. The Backward Classes (BCs) are many more among Champion Classmates at 65.8% when compared to the BCs in CH which is only 3.6%. This reflects the reality that there are more number of girls among the first generation learners among SCs. The STs among CH is 12.2% and CC is 3.4%. Their population is 9.5% of total population. There are a significant proportion of girls who are Muslims among CC at 23.8% as compared to Muslim girls among CH at 7.7%. This indicates the aspiration among them for education, contrary to existing perception that Muslims are conservative about girls' education.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of CH and CC

	Number	Ave. Age	Religion %		Caste %		Marital Status %	
CH	636	17	Hindu	79.0	SC	32.3	Single	95.5
			Muslim	7.7	BC	3.6	Engaged	1.7
			Christian	11.4	ST	12.2	Married	1.4
			Other	1.7	OC	50	NA	1.2
					Other	1.7		
CC	381	16.5	Hindu	64.8	SC	22.8	Single	89.7
			Muslim	23.8	BC	65.8	Engaged	1.0
			Christian	9.7	ST	3.4	Married	1.5
			Other	1.5	OC	7.0	NA*	7.6
					Other	0.7		

NA – Not Available

5.1.2 Parental Profile:

As seen in **Table 2** there is only a slight difference in the profile of CH and CC who have both, single or no parent alive. Yet, there are several narratives that show how in

spite of both the parents being alive, alcoholism has taken a toll and fathers are totally dependent on the wives' earnings for their survival. Families have been torn and fractured with violence and abandonment of the woman leaving her with the burden of bringing up the entire family. The single mother who is divorced, abandoned or widowed has given support to her children and has been a role model in many instances. She is the person who did everything to see that her children move from one class to the next.

Mothers' Profile

*"My father passed away when I was in class 1. Since then, my mother has been rolling beedis and getting me to school. Sometimes, I see her rolling beedis even at midnight, and then I feel very bad. But that is how I have reached 2nd year intermediate. When I was young, I used to be ill quite often. My mother would then take me to the hospital early in the morning, and by the time we returned, it would be 7.30 in the evening. She worked so hard, and that's why I feel I must study well. I remember the days when my mother went hungry in order to be able to pay my school fees. I want to take the EAMCET exam or the TTC¹² and get a job just so that I will be able to take care of my mother. If I am grateful to anyone, it is my mother."*¹³

Profile 2

*"My mother was married at the age of 13. She had a tough life in my father's house. They always sent her to work even at that young age. She worked at home and outside. My father abandoned her when mother was pregnant with me. She was helpless. She decided to take care of me and not remarry. She never let me feel the absence of my father. She's more a friend than a mother. She never spoke of my father. For her I am her universe."*¹⁴

Table-2 Parental Profile of CH and CC

	Parents (%)			
	Both Parents Alive	Only Mother Alive	Only Father Alive	Both Not Alive
Champions	85.5	11.0	1.8	1.4
Champions Classmates	88.7	8.3	1.5	0.5

12. EAMCET is an entrance examination to get into professional courses such as medicine, engineering and so on. TTC is a Teachers Training Course.

13. Narrative of 13255013

14. Narrative of FGD 4

5.1.3 Agency, Autonomy and Aspiration levels

It is significant that 91.8% of CH and 97.1% of CC have shown interest for pursuing their education beyond senior secondary education. The aspiration levels of CH and NC are quite similar as they want to be teachers and at least graduates. 57% of both CH and CC feel that they can adapt to changes showing confidence in them felt that they could deal with whatever came in their way.

Yet conforming to existing social norms of patriarchy 75.3% of CCs and 84% of CH feel that they need to take permission before going to the market or even buying a personal item; only 4.6% of CH and 3.2% of CC stated that they have control over what to wear; and only 33% of CH and 25% of CCs can express their opinions in the family. 75% of CH and 80.8% of CCs have no say in choosing their spouse. It is to be noted that 1.4 % of CH and 1.6 % of CC are married.

Further it is found that while CH chose to pursue Arts, CC chose Science and then Commerce. **(Table 3)**. Courses in Science are more expensive and also unfamiliar paths which CHs being the first generation learners have perhaps not ventured to take. Commerce too requires exposure to be chosen as a subject which CCs have a slight edge over the CH.

Table 3: Choice of Course

Course	CH%	CC%
Arts	47.0	27.3
Science	22.0	44.6
Commerce	30.7	28.1

While the CH have largely depended on their family i.e. parents and siblings for information about college and the process of application, the CCs have depended on school teachers, siblings and seniors. **(Table 4)**

Table: 4 Source of Information about College

	Information About College (%)			
	HS Teacher	Friends & Seniors	Siblings	Parents
CH	18.1	74.0	26.8	35.4
CC	28.1	81.0	38.4	23.0

* TV, Newspaper, Website, Other Communication very Insignificant

5.1.4 Current Living Arrangement

Both CH and CC lived with their parents to pursue higher education as seen in Table 5 (**Table 5**). More numbers of CH stayed in a hostel as seen in **Table 6** at all levels when compared to CCs. 22.5% of CH studied from hostels at a senior secondary school level when compared to 12.1% of CC. Since a residential school was included in the study, the numbers of CH studying in a hostel has increased. This is indicative of there being a more congenial atmosphere to study in the homes of CH and also the household of CCs being less poor.

Table 5: Current Living Arrangement – College Level

Category	With Parents	With Relatives	Govt. Hostel	Private Hostel	Husband & In-Laws
CH	73.4	2.5	22.5	0.2	0.9
CC	82.7	3.7	12.1	0.3	1.3

Table 6: Hostel Facility

Category	Primary School	Upper Primary School	High School	Senior Secondary School
CH	8.5	17.0	17.5	20.9
CC	3.9	9.2	11.0	12.6

5.2 Champions and Family

5.2.1 Education Profile of Parents

As mentioned the selection of Champions is based on the level of literacy and education of the parents, both the father and mother. As seen in **Table 7** only 28.4% of the CH's fathers can read a newspaper when compared to 88.1% of CCs. Further only 5.03% of mothers of CH can read a newspaper when compared to 49.6 % of mothers of CC. This in itself is an indicator of the exposure that the parents have to the world outside, their levels of dependence and vulnerability, hidden fears and lack of self-esteem, ability to deal with authority and power structures, systems and institutions.

It is further seen in **Table 8** how the education attainment of both the father and mother of CH is very low with 85% of mothers and 59.5% of fathers' never having been to school. On the other hand 75.2% of CC fathers' and 25.4% of mothers' have completed secondary school and pursued education beyond. This has an impact on the confidence levels and performance as well as a greater positive journey through education of the CCs.

Table 7: Parental Ability to Read Newspaper

	Father (%)	Mother (%)
	Can Read Newspaper	Can Read Newspaper
CH	28.4	5.03
CC	88.1	49.6

Table 8: Educational Attainment of Parents

Education Level	Mother		Father	
	CC%	CH%	CC%	CH%
Never went to School	21.5	85.0	2.62	59.5
Primary	23.8	13.0	5.24	28.7
Upper Primary	29.1	1.8	15.2	11.6
Secondary	20.7	0	46.4	0
Sr. Secondary & Above	4.7	0	28.8	0

5.2.2 Household Income

Many a girl has narrated that there is never any money and how they have had to work all the time. In **Table 9** it is seen that income of 89.3% of CH parents was below Rs.50,000 per year. Among the CCs it is found that 79.2% of them had parents who earned Rs. 50,000 per year.

Table 9: Household Average Income

Income Bracket	CH%	CC%
Less than Rs. 50000	89.3	79.2
Rs. 51000-75000	7.3	11.8
Rs. 76000-100000	1.5	4.9
Rs. 100000-200000	1.5	2.3

5.2.3 Mothers' Occupation

In **Table 10** it is found that 72.8% CH mothers' work as casual laborers in agricultural farms whereas 39.6% of CC mothers work as agricultural laborers and 30.0% of CH

mothers stated that they were self-employed. It is reported that all the CC mothers are self-employed. The involvement in various occupations is not mutually exclusive and thus mothers are engaged in multiple activities. It is found that in consonance with the oppression of patriarchy, she is abused, faces violence with fortitude arranges for the wellbeing of her children, for their marriage and education. Being non-literates themselves they have great desire for their daughters' education and in more than one narrative there is a mention that a mother felt that it was with education alone that girls could get freedom from violence and abuse.

Work and Mother

*"I have a younger sister and a brother. I have faced a lot of difficulties from childhood but still worked hard and went to school. We didn't have enough to eat, clothes to wear, and when I reached high school, my father passed away and we were even more impoverished. My mother worked twice as hard to let us study. There was pressure on her to get me married off and she was even scolded by society. She had no money to put us to study, how could she get us married? I insisted on studying further, and I work alternate days to buy my notebooks and also pay for my brother and sister's education."*¹⁵

The students in this study have embarked on a journey for education embedded in patriarchal values and gender discrimination under such vicious background. They take the side of the mother, empathize with her. They are determined to pursue education in realization that it is the only way to be extricated from this quagmire of violence and oppression.

Table 10: Mothers' Occupation

Occupation	CH (%)	CC (%)
Self-Employed	30.0	100
Regular Wage/Salaried Employee	4.1	8.7
Casual/Agricultural Laborer	72.8	39.6
Home Maid	7.7	2.4
No employment	1.6	0.8
Other	3.6	6.6

15. Narrative of 20023016

5.2.4 Father's Occupation

In **Table 11** it is shown how 66.2% of fathers of CH work as agricultural labourers or are engaged as casual labour while 35.5% are involved in self-cultivation. They are vulnerable due to lack of stable employment and income. This results in reinforcing masculinity, peer association and pressure driving them to become alcoholics. The existing patriarchal values are reinforced resulting in abuse and domestic violence. It is under this atmosphere that girls of CH pursue their education. This is also true of the 32.8% of fathers of CC as agricultural/casual labourers. The profound impact of education on employment can be seen with 30.2% of CC's fathers in salaried employment as against only 8% of CH.

Table 11: Fathers' Occupation

Occupation	CH (%)	CC (%)
Self-Employed (incl. owning farmland)	35.5	22.8
Regular Wage/Salaried Employee	8.2	30.2
Casual/Agricultural Laborer	66.2	32.8
Unemployed	7.4	4.5
Unable to Work	3.5	2.9
Other	6.3	9.4

5.2.5 Support Structures

When compared to CH, the CC have received uniformly more support from the parents, siblings; friends and teachers. Many girls, both CH and CC in their narratives mentioned that they received support from their father and male siblings. Apparently this support is expected but under the circumstances which the girls live in many felt the need to acknowledge this support. The brothers who for some reason or the other discontinued their education would also extend support to see that their sisters studied well and became self-reliant. It is so crucial that the male members in the family encourage girls to study as it is one less obstacle to overcome. All Muslim girls (who were 7.7% of CH and 23.8% of CC) made a specific mention of the support they received from their father and their brothers¹⁶. In fact even in the narratives the Muslim girls clearly stated about the support they got from their fathers and even brothers. It was 11.1% of all CH as against 1.1% of CC who stated that there was no support from their fathers.

16. The fact that brothers extended support needs further exploration.

Father's Support for Education

*"Despite many difficulties, my father has been investing in our education. He's taken huge loans and the money lenders prowl around our house. At the moment, he has no money to take care of us. Yet, he insists on my 2 younger sisters, my brother and me studying. And so we have not dropped out of school at any time. We never had money for food, rent, education material, etc. and have still reached this far. This could be true of so many families, but I'm sure that nobody would have encouraged studies as much as my father."*¹⁷

*"My parents support my education, but find it difficult because we're 3 of us. My father works very hard to educate us and bring us up to the forefront. My mother's health is very bad. My father even goes hungry to help us study. He says no matter what, you must study. One day when we didn't do our homework, my father beat my mother. To get us to study, my mother also has to overcome many challenges. When we have vacations, my mother takes us to the fields to work. We return late in the evening, and then do our homework. There's never peace at home with my parents fighting all the time. I studied up to class 7 in a govt school and shifted to private school up to class 10. I'm in a govt intermediate college now. I have a great urge to study but due to the atmosphere at home, I'm unable to focus on my studies. My father puts in a lot of work to get 3 of his daughters educated and treats us with a lot of respect"*¹⁸.

46.8% of candidates stated that grandparents were very supportive, and 40.6% of them stated that they did not support them at all.

In some instances, children have been living with maternal grandparents especially when the mother is subject to severe violence and abuse or if they have been orphaned. Many of the grandparents eke out their livelihood as daily wage earners and so stretch themselves to give shelter to the grandchildren.

Grandparents and Support for Education

*"I live with my maternal grandparents. My grandfather is educating me with great care and difficulty. My mother's slightly mentally imbalanced, and my father is an alcoholic. My father was so violent that he threw my mother out of the house. I want to study and take care of my mother. But I think this can happen only as long as my grandfather's alive. After that, I don't know if I'll be able to study, or may have to go out to work. My mother and I go hungry most of the time. I can't say when she'll get better, and when my hopes will become a reality. I only pray that my grandfather lives long enough to enable me to look after my mother."*¹⁹

17. Narrative of 14064036

18. Narrative of 18311017

19. Narrative of 20023056

Table 12: Educational Support from Social Networks

	Father		Mother		Brother		Sister		Grandparents		Friends		Teachers	
	CH%	CC%	CH%	CC%	CH%	CC%	CH %	CC%	CH%	CC%	CH%	CC%	CH%	CC%
Extremely Supportive	68.8	84.2	72.4	83.2	56.2	67.9	49.5	63.2	36.0	54.8	51.4	62.7	63.2	70.8
Very Supportive	10.6	5.2	13.6	8.9	11.1	8.3	13.8	9.4	10.8	9.1	14.4	10.2	11.3	9.4
Moderately Supportive	5.9	3.4	5.5	4.7	8.1	5.2	6.91	4.1	9.5	7.8	13.8	9.4	10.8	6.2
Not Very Supportive	2.6	0.7	2.2	1.0	2.2	1.3	2.6	1.8	4.2	4.1	3.7	1.5	1.5	0.2
Not Supportive at all	11.1	3.1	5.9	0.7	20.9	7.8	25.3	6.2	37.4	14.1	15.5	9.7	12.2	8.1

On the whole the CCs have depended much more on both their parents as seen in **Table 13** to take decisions regarding education when compared to CH and their education status must have had an impact on decision making.

Table 13: Decision Making Regarding Education

Family Relative	CH (%)	CC (%)
Mother	54.6	61.2
Father	44.8	63.8
Siblings	19.5	10.8
Spouse	0.2	0.3
Self	1.7	0.8

5.2.6 Financial Sacrifices

It is clear that the aspiration of the poor for educating their daughters is immense. They see it as the only path for a life with dignity. Parents of CH have made enormous sacrifices to see their daughters receive education. More than 70% of CH and CC parents have made economic sacrifices. Indeed 62.8% of CH took loans to support their child's education while 50% of CC took loans. The difference could be due to the CC parents being able to afford education.

5.2.7 Parental Involvement in Education

The process of a child going to school is one of changing culture and practices of non-literate parents in relation to their children. Even as children become students' parents also get transformed. They are confronted with an unfamiliar routine of preparing a

child to school, enquiring about child's learning, trying to help her find time to do her homework amidst domestic chores, and also talking to the school teacher about their child's participation in school. They slowly learn to perceive their children differently and graduate to face new challenges when the girl grows up to think differently. It is under this circumstance that the girls find themselves constantly defying existing modes and ways of thinking. She has friends, develops her views on her predicament. The very act of going to school from one level to the next is indeed dramatic and parents are to be prepared for such a transformation. This culture of going to school is a new practice that involves confronting multiple challenges not just for the girl but also the entire family. It is an unusual situation for families of CH and so some of the inane questions of parental involvement in the child's education have been posed.

It has been seen that on all aspects such as checking of attendance of children, homework, their performance in school providing them with quiet space to study without hindrance during examination and relieving them of their duties the parents of CC pupils have shown greater involvement than that of the CH. (See **Table 14**). However, when it came to interacting with school there was a marginal difference between parents of CC and CH and they may not be able to do it due to the fact that it is time-consuming and, feeling intimidated by the school system, and loss of wage for that day.

5.2.8 Relationship with Parents

The students were asked about how frequently they spoke about their education and personal issues with their mother and father. Although the norms of patriarchy cut across classes it is felt that they manifest in different forms. To draw a comparison between CH and CC in this, some intimate questions were asked in the study.

Most of the girls as seen in **Table 15** stated that they found it easier to talk to their mother rather than their father about their problems in school and about their friends although greater percentage - 43.8% of CC when compared to 34.1% of CH- shared their issues with their parents. Interestingly this shows how education can impact relationships within the family. However, most stated that they did not confide with either their mother or father about eve teasing, stalking or their relationship with boys. This reflects the overall silence in the society on these matters and how maintaining discretion on romantic and reproductive matters is a deep rooted personal issue embedded in a culture of silence.

Table 14: Parental Involvement in Children's Education

		CH	CC
Check Attendance	Always	43.1	50.9
	Very Often	7.1	6.8
	Sometimes	19.5	16.0
	Rarely	5.8	5.2
	Never	24.5	20.5
Check Homework	Always	28.9	44.9
	Very Often	14.3	10.2
	Sometimes	30.3	28.3
	Rarely	5.5	7.9
	Never	20.9	8.4
Check Performance	Always	21.4	23.6
	Very Often	12.1	12.6
	Sometimes	42.5	47.8
	Rarely	9.3	9.4
	Never	14.8	5.2
Attend School Programmes	Always	14.0	17.3
	Very Often	6.4	9.7
	Sometimes	42.3	50.1
	Rarely	12.1	10.2
	Never	25.2	11.5
Participate in SMC	Always	11.5	15.2
	Very Often	5.7	5.5
	Sometimes	29.4	42.3
	Rarely	8.2	8.4
	Never	45.3	27.0
Ensure quiet space during exams	Always	63.1	75.6
	Very Often	11.6	11.3
	Sometimes	15.4	8.1
	Rarely	3.9	1.0
	Never	6.0	3.4
Relieve households duties at exam time	Always	45.4	67.2
	Very Often	10.7	10.5
	Sometimes	21.2	11.0
	Rarely	7.5	3.7
	Never	14.9	7.3

Table 15- Communication with Parents

Would very often discuss	Mother		Father	
	CH%	CC%	CH%	CC%
School Performance	34.1	43.8	29.8	33.5
Friendships	41.9	46.1	28.1	26.5
Being Teased/Bullied	10.6	16.5	6.1	6.8
Romantic Relationship	6.9	3.9	4.0	2.6
Reproductive Issues	3.3	2.8	0.9	1.8

5.2.9 Household Chores and Wage Work

It is found that while both CH and CC girls do participate in household work the contribution of CH to household work is more. As seen in **Table 16**, 57.7% of CH have to balance their education with household chores with at least 1-2 hours work each day and for some even 3-4 hours a day. Girls have no option but to work from a very young age. The percentage of CCs involved in household work at PS level 47% and the number of hours they spend in domestic chores is less comparatively. However at the SHS 56.8% of CCs contribute to at least 3-4 hours of household work while for the CH it is 26.7%. On the whole as they grow old the participation of both CC and CH in household work is more.

Table 16: Time spent on Household Work

Time Spent	PS		UPS		HS		SHS	
	CH%	CC%	CH%	CC%	CH%	CC%	CH%	CC%
None	42.3	54.1	25.5	30.4	13.6	15.5	16.4	5.3
1-2 Hours	41.5	39.3	50.4	56.7	53.7	64.7	45.8	24.4
3-4 Hours	11.3	5.2	18.5	10.5	23.9	15.8	26.7	56.8
5 or More	4.9	1.4	5.4	2.4	8.6	3.9	10.9	13.5

Considering that the CH are first generation learners and that they are poor the pressure of wage work is more on them. While among the CH 44.3% percentage participate in agriculture work and 18.6% among CCs. This indicates CHs are exposed to hard manual labour and 3.9% have also accessed NREGA. It is significant that 66.1% CC did not work at all while 31.2% of CH stated that they did not work at all. (**Table 17**)

Table 17: Nature of Work

Nature of Work	CH%	CC%
NREGA	3.9	2.8
Agricultural Labour	44.3	18.6
Housemaid	5.1	3.4
Self-Employed-Piece Work-Small In.	8.8	5.5
Construction Labour	1.2	0.2
Others	4.4	2.0
Did not Work	31.2	66.1

Many are forced to take up paid work to pay for their own health expenses or one of their family members and narrated how difficult and expensive it has been to study when there is an illness in the family.

Health-An Impediment to Education

“We’re very poor, and my mother is very ill and my younger brother also has health problems, so we incur a lot of expenses on health care. We all depend on my father’s earnings. I spend Rs.20 a day to travel by auto to my college, and on days when there’s no money, I perforce miss college. But my financial problems continue, making it difficult for me to concentrate on studies.”²⁰

The ill health of the student can be equally risky but there have been exceptional cases of sacrifice of entire family to enable her recover and pursue education. ‘I fell very ill when I was in classes 8 -10 and my parents spent a lot on me. They took a loan to treat my kidney problems and spent about Rs.5,000 on the hospital. I owe my parents a lot, so I want to study and take up at least a small job, but my health doesn’t permit it’²¹. In addition to the adverse effect on education it is well documented how expenditures on health and marriage have devastated families driving them below poverty line.

Along with ill health a poor family faces multiple challenges such as poverty and indebtedness, lack of transportation, ill health, hunger one aggravating the other resulting in many a sacrifice. It is also seen that only 43.9% of CH eat every day before going to college when compared to 50.7% of CCs. 30% of them go hungry to college due to

20. Narrative of 20023018

21. Narrative of 18403047; similar views have been expressed by 13038001 and 13038007. For example No. 13255003 narrates, ‘My health got spoiled when I was in class 5. Until then, I was very good at studies. After that, I never scored good marks. Yet, my parents encouraged me and spent a lot of money on my health. Therefore, I’m now a good student and I’m studying well’.

lack of time and 23% carry tiffin boxes, 7% of CH do not eat because they cannot afford while 2.1% of CC do not eat because they cannot afford.

Overcoming Multiple Challenges

We are five in our family, including us 3 siblings and our parents. We all studied in government schools, and are studying in college now. I have to travel at least 35 km from Gopanapally to Warangal, and similarly my sisters, so every month our family has to spend Rs.390 on bus passes alone. My father is a daily wage earner and he fractured his leg, falling down from a toddy tree. He was operated upon and incurred a lot of debts. My mother works as a labourer, and her earnings are just not enough. My brother discontinued his college education, and is now working in a shop and pays for our fees. We're still waiting for our scholarship of Rs.3500.²²

5.3 Champions and Schooling Experience

It is to be noted that, being first generation learners, the Champions invariably attended government schools at all levels of education. **Table 18** indicates how at the PS level itself 75.2% of CH stated they went to government schools; while it was 39.4% of CC that went to private schools. Further in the same Table, it is seen that 81.6% of CH continued at government schools at a higher secondary level. It is also significant that more percentage of Muslim girls among Champions progressively attended Minority educational institutions as they moved up the levels of education and preferred Minority educational institutions when compared to the CCs. It is found that among the Muslims more number of CH pupils were sent to minority schools when compared to CC Muslims.

Table 18-Type of School Attended

Category	Level	CH	CC
Govt. School	PS	75.2	39.4
	UPS	78.1	54.1
	HS	81.6	71.4
	HSS	72.2	63.8
Private School	PS	23.6	59.6
	UPS	15.1	40.9
	HS	10.5	23.4
	HSS	14.2	26.8
Minority School	PS	1.3	0.5
	UPS	6.8	4.5
	HS	7.7	4.7
	HSS	13.5	8.7

5.3.1 Regularity to School

Considering the pressures at home as well as the lack of cultural capital to force a child to school being children of first generation learners it is found that less percentage of CH were regular to school at all stages. They were absent for 10-20 days more at the primary stage but by the time they reached secondary and senior secondary school their regularity of attendance has somewhat stabilized. (Table 19). Likewise the CHs looked forward to go to school as they progressed from one level to the next level when compared to CCs.

Table 19 Regularity to School

Absenteeism	Primary		Upper Primary		Secondary		Senior Secondary	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
At least 10-20 days a year	67.8	79.3	73.3	86.1	81.0	89.5	78.6	85.8
30-40 days a year	20.1	14.2	17.5	10.0	11.0	6.8	12.3	9.7
40 days and above	10.7	5.2	7.5	3.1	6.4	2.6	6.9	3.1

5.3.2 Location of School

More percentage of CC studied in schools close to the dwelling from primary school onwards to Senior Secondary School as seen in Table 20. This is curious but it seems that the location of school has determined the place of dwelling as far as the CCs are concerned. Being first generation learners, the primacy of the school in a household routine of the CH is yet to be established and it shows that it takes only a generation for such a shift to occur.

Table 20: Attended school closest to the house

	CH	CC
PS	82.1	86.1
UPS	67.1	74.0
HS	58.0	68.0
SHS	37.7	51.7

5.3.3 Travel to School

All through their education from Primary to Senior Secondary School, going by foot is the maximum by both CH and CC. There is variance up to Upper Primary level where more CH travelled by foot and at the Secondary School level more CC travelled by foot. The next preferred mode of transport up to Secondary School level is the cycle. It is interesting that 10% of CH used to cycle as they reached secondary school level and the shift to public transport occurs at the Senior Secondary School level. Since the availability of Senior Secondary School is scarce per force it is the public transport that is used by both the CH and CC. **(Table 21)**

There were several narratives of CH and CC that mentioned sexual harassment, eve teasing and stalking while travelling to school even at the Primary level which made them vulnerable to child marriage. **(Table 22)**

Table 21: Travel to School

Mode	Primary		Upper Primary		Secondary		Senior Secondary	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
On foot	93.4	89.0	83.2	83.5	68.6	78.0	33.0	48.8
Cycle	0.6	0.8	3.9	3.1	10.4	7.3	6.4	5.0
Public Transport	1.9	1.0	3.6	2.1	7.4	3.9	25.5	13.4
School Bus/Auto	2.5	7.3	4.9	8.1	8.6	7.3	22.8	26.0
Others	0.6	1.3	2.7	2.4	3.3	2.4	10.1	5.5

Table 22- Experience of Sexual Harassment While Going to School

	Primary School		Upper Primary School		High School		Senior Secondary School	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
Derogatory Gestures	1.6	0.3	1.6	0.3	2.5	1.8	2.5	2.1
Verbal Harassment	2.0	1.0	5.3	2.1	6.4	3.4	4.6	4.2
Stalking	0.5	1.6	1.1	0.8	4.2	5.8	5.5	6.6
Unwelcome Touching	1.9	1.3	2.4	0.0	4.1	0.3	4.7	1.8
Actual/Attempted Sexual Assault	3.8	2.4	3.6	2.1	3.6	2.1	4.9	5.5

5.3.4 Fees

In spite of education being free in government schools, 60% of CH had to pay annual school fees of approximately Rs.700 up to elementary school level and about Rs.845 at High School level and Rs.1500 at senior secondary school level. This is due to systemic faults and lack of adequate financial support forcing schools to charge fees for procuring basic stationery, school maintenance, conducting of events such as sports, competitions, annual day and so on. Considering the fact that CCs' sent their children to private schools the average fees they paid annually is higher as seen in **Table 23**.

Table 23 School fees by Level and Champion Status

	CH		CC	
	% paid fees	INR	% paid fees	INR
PS	66.8	675	81.1	1651
UPS	63.1	761	66.4	2120
HS	66.4	845	57.2	3411
SHS	74.7	1454	63.3	2566

5.3.5 Girls' Toilet

It is well founded that more girls attend school if there are toilets. In most schools even if they are built most are non-usable. Thus, everyday girls suffer the indignity of having no toilets to use. It was only at the PS level (25.7% CC; 18.7% CH) and the Senior Secondary School level (40.9% CC; 36.3% CH) that toilets were usable. But at all other levels CH had better toilet facilities than CC. It is also noted that due to no toilet facility that during menstrual period girls from UPS to Senior Secondary School level could not attend school.

5.3.6 Menstrual Period and Absenteeism

Yet another disadvantage specific to girls is menstruation. It is noted that feeling unwell during menstruation is the main reason for most of them being absent from school. While having no toilet facility has been stated as a second reason for absenteeism. (Table 24)

Table 24: Reasons for Absenteeism during Menstruation

	Upper Primary		Secondary		Senior Secondary	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
Feeling Unwell	31.0	24.7	47.0	48.8	50.0	50.1
No toilet facility	16.5	23.1	22.6	28.6	17.8	26.5
Family didn't allow	9.1	5.0	14.3	9.7	14.6	10.0
Other	4.7	2.9	6.1	5.0	7.2	5.0

5.4 Champions and Teachers

5.4.1 Teachers' Praise of Pupils

There is a difference as seen in Table 26 on how Champions and CCs perceived their teachers. More importantly children's perception of teachers is linked to the attitude of the teacher towards the first generation learner and their sensitivity to where such children came from. Thus, while less than 30% of CH thought they were praised by teachers, in contrast more than 45% of CC felt they were praised by teachers. (Table 25)

Table 25-Teachers' Praise to Pupils

	Primary School		Upper Primary School		High School		Senior Secondary School	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
Very Much So	28.3	45.7	28.1	47.5	31.4	50.9	27.6	49.1
Most of the Time	29.5	22.8	30.1	24.1	31.1	23.4	30.9	22.0
Sometimes	34.5	22.8	35.8	24.1	33.6	23.4	34.4	22.0
Not Really	6.0	5.5	4.7	3.7	3.1	1.6	5.5	3.1
Not at all	1.4	2.1	0.8	1.6	0.3	1.0	0.9	0.8

5.4.2 Corporal Punishment

Even regarding punishment the experience of CH of punishment has been more than that of CC at all levels. Up to UPS level 50% of CH and CC have faced corporal punishment in school. As they go to the higher levels punishment is reduced. Although it is alarming that 8.2% of CH have reported being subject to corporal punishment even at the senior secondary school level. (Table 26)

Table 26-Punishment by Teachers

	Primary School		Upper Primary School		High School		Senior Secondary School	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
At least once a week	26.1	17.6	20.1	10.5	17.7	9.7	8.2	3.4
1-2 a month	17.1	12.1	17.6	16.5	12.4	10.0	4.9	2.9
5-10 times a year	6.6	6.6	7.2	5.0	5.3	3.4	2.5	1.3
Very rarely	40.8	56.2	43.3	54.9	38.3	36.0	16.2	16.0
Never	9.3	7.6	11.5	12.9	25.9	40.9	66.6	76.4

5.4.3 Caste discrimination

Over 98% of both CH and CC have unanimously stated that they were teased or mocked by teachers on caste basis. The practice of caste discrimination is pervasive in schools making it difficult for the students to survive humiliation and insult. Many drop out being unable to cope with this discrimination. Further study is necessary to understand what the perception of students is on the forms and practices of discrimination on caste basis. The CH and CC continue in the belief that education alone would break the barriers of social exclusion and foster equality. **(Table 27)**

Table 27-Teachers Tease/Mock on Basis of Caste/Ethnicity

	Primary School		Upper Primary School		High School		Senior Secondary School	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
At least once a week	0.8	0.5	0.8	0.5	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.5
1-2 a month	98.1	99.2	98.3	98.4	98.1	97.9	98.3	99.5
5-10 times a year	0.9	0.3	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.3	0.5	0.0
Very rarely	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Never	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

5.4.4 Gender Discrimination and Abuse

The practice of gender discrimination was not perceived as being very frequent by both CC and CH although greater percentage of CC felt that teachers preferred boys sometimes. Further, issue of sexual abuse by teachers was also negligible at all levels. **(Table 28)** However, girls have reported sexual harassment on way to school as was seen earlier.

Table 28 -Teacher – Sexual Abuse

	Primary School		Upper Primary School		High School		Senior Secondary School	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
Derogatory Gestures	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.5	1	0.3	0.6	1.0
Stalking	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.6	1.6	1.3	0.3
Unwelcome Touching	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.8	0.6	0.0	1.1	0.8
Actual/Attempted Sexual Assault	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.0
Nothing as such	95.4	99.5	95.4	98.4	94.1	98.4	92.9	97.8

5.5 Benefit from Government Programs and Schemes

The government programme for mid-day meal has been accessed by most Champions at all levels when compared to Champions Classmates. This could also be true because more percentage of Champions Classmates went to Private schools where there is no mid-day meal program.

The scholarships have been accessed by 51% of Champions and 54.1% of Champions Classmates. The amount is only Rs.900 per year and very insufficient. Further, the narratives indicate that they are disbursed only after the academic year. This does not relieve the students of the burden and can be an added anxiety.

The hostels have been accessed progressively from the Primary stage to the Senior Secondary School by CH from 5.3% at PS level to 14.8% at UPS level and 15.9% at Secondary School level. It must be noted that at the sample included 2-Residential Schools wherein the study was administered. Therefore, the numbers of the Champions in Residential Schools have shown a greater percentage. **(See Table 29)**

79.4% of Junior Colleges where CH attended and 87.4% where CC attends provide tables and desks. Considering they are higher classes this is a minimum requirement. Even labs facilities are available in only 54% of the colleges where CHs attend. They do not have access to computers and libraries which are essential for any educational institution. Some of the narratives mention that there is inadequate faculty in government colleges. **(See Table 30)**

Table 29: Government Programs and Schemes

	Primary		Upper Primary		Secondary		Senior Secondary	
	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC	CH	CC
Mid Day Meal	76.9	40.4	81.6	47.5	82.9	55.9	22.2	12.3
Scholarship/Stipend	6.9	21.0	11.8	28.3	24.5	39.9	51.1	54.1
Govt. Hostel	5.3	1.6	14.8	6.3	15.9	7.9	17.6	9.4
Text Books	65.1	54.1	70.9	60.9	72.3	68.0	56.1	49.1
Uniform	26.4	12.6	35.7	18.1	38.7	26.2	18.7	9.7

Table 30: Infrastructure in Junior Colleges

Physical Infrastructure	CH	CC
Tables/Desks	79.4	87.4
Science Lab	54.2	56.7
Drinking Water	84.3	92.4
Playground	70.8	69.3
School Canteen	16.0	13.1
Computers	27.0	25.7
Blackboard	89.6	94.5
Library	36.3	30.4
Boundary wall	51.4	63.8

96.2% of families of CH received BPL card and 89.6% of them benefitted from some government assistance or the other. Yet, only 57.5% of CH accessed subsidized food when compared to 53.8% of CC. It is significant that 40.8% accessed governments' employment program (40.8%) when compared to only 20% of CCs. CH have also benefitted from education through government schools while 26.1% accessed government's provisioning of health services. (Table 31)

Table 31 Government Assistance

Government Assistance	CH (636)	CC (381)
BPL Card	96.2	89.5
Govt Assistance	89.6	82.7
Food	57.5	53.8
Pension	27.7	22.8
Housing	17.3	9.2
Employment	40.7	19.9
Health	26.1	23.6
Education	72.3	58.3

6. Conclusion

6.1 Non-institutional Support

1. The profile of parents of CH is marked by illiteracy with 85% of mothers and 60% of fathers who never went to school and only 28.7% of fathers and 13.0% completing Primary School. It is a well-known fact that the standard of education at class 5 in government schools is not particularly good and most of them cannot even read and write. Thus it can be stated that both parents of the CH are non-literates. As seen this has an impact over their livelihoods with the income earned annually is not more than Rs.50,000. Thus the Champions in the study invariably contribute to household work even when they are in Primary school. They also do paid work to be able to earn for their education especially at higher levels. Some of the champions classmates too contribute to household work and earn wages. This is clearly indicative of State deficit in provisioning of free education.
2. It is also found ill health of either the pupil or any of the members of the family is a cause for expenditure and a risk for the child to survive. In spite of this the Champions have shown determination to pursue education. This indicates a weak public health system and State deficit in health having an impact on child and her education.
3. Champions drew maximum support from their parents especially the mother and siblings, while the champions classmates too depended on parents they also drew support from friends more than the CH did, indicating that the social network broadens with education.
4. In spite of illiteracy parents have involved themselves in monitoring regularity of attendance, homework, performance of the child in school indicating their aspiration for their child's education. Being through the process of schooling greater percentage of CC parents were involved with their children's education.
5. Sending a child to school brings about a change in the relationship between parent and child. It is more so in the case of a girl child who is being sent to school against the prevalent norms of patriarchy. The study shows how the CCs have an advantage over the CH in getting the support of fathers and brothers support for girls' education. This is indicative of a gradual process of role definition of male members' vis-à-vis the girl and her education. This subtle transformation that schools and colleges bring about in the life of a girl has to be appreciated to combat gender discrimination and violence against girl-child.

6. One cannot conceive of how much sacrifice the poor parents face to provide basic education with an imagination and a dream that education would transform their lives in terms of self-esteem and dignity. To achieve their goals which are so minimal and can be easily met, they subject themselves to untold insult and humiliation.

6.2 Institutional Support

1. School teachers played a crucial role in giving students support to decide on the courses that they could opt for. This was more so in an individual capacity than as an institutional mechanism to counsel students on options for further education.
2. However, both CC and CH felt that 98% teachers practiced discrimination on the basis of caste. This is an alarming fact that needs to be addressed in all seriousness.
3. When provisioning of services is universal and available to all children there is a greater reach. Thus for example the mid-day meal program at the Primary to the Secondary school level has been utilized by 80% of CH. The CCs attending government school also benefitted from the scheme. Likewise, the program of Text book distribution to SC, ST and BCs have also had a greater reach among those attending government schools of both CH and CC. Other programs especially the cash transfers such as scholarships and stipends that are targeted have depended on a process of selection and exclusion making access to the schemes cumbersome. Inadequate amounts as scholarships and delays in disbursement cause untold anxiety to the student.
4. Hostels have been preferred by most CHs as they are spaces that give them friends to gain strength from peers; to get an atmosphere to study away from the tensions at home; to be informed by a sense of fairness and justice and pursue education.
5. Of the total number of 2141 colleges only 31.4% are government colleges with 28% of students. Even in this small percentage of colleges there has been minimal infrastructure in relation to staff, classrooms, furniture, toilets and drinking water. The colleges children attend are never a match to provide the family's very simple aspirations.
6. The government needs to recognize that students in their colleges have reached there after winning many battles. It ought to be giving support and encouragement to the students, and not send a message of indifference regarding their education.

7. Poor parents and children have faith in the system whereas the government does not have any pride in its institutions. Therefore, it is the poor who give legitimacy to the system by sending their children to those same institutions. Without them it is quite likely that the system will not be able to continue even at this pathetic level of efficiency.

6.3 Girls 'Agency-Changing lives

1. From the FGD and the testimonies it is starkly evident that every girl is conscious about the injustice and unfair predicament of her family and the violence meted out to her mother. She is also fully aware of the struggles and tribulations they have had to endure. This gives her the determination to study and not to let down the parents especially the mother.
2. At every level of education there are tangible goals to be achieved for a girl student to reach to the next level. In this journey for education there is a discovery of self at every stage, even as she withstands social as well as familial pressures to conform to patriarchal norms. Being in an education institution gives her the strength to defy existing power structures. In exercising agency step by step as she goes up the ladder of education, she discovers herself even as the roles and attitudes of her family members towards her gets defined. In a way there is a subtle change that occurs in the girl who pursues education and it is this that gives her the confidence to aspire for more.

What must the Government Do?

“I work hard to earn for my college education and my mother too works without respite and makes enormous sacrifices as she says, ‘I do not want my children to live a life like me’. Yet, unmindful of our conditions of living and our endeavor to study, the government has not even given our college a building of its own; we have no library, science lab, toilets, water or desks. We pay all kinds of fees- admission fees, annual fees, and examination fees - and have to spend on textbooks, notebooks, stationery, and decent clothes. How I wish we had uniforms. Once or twice, we were given sanitary napkins, but then it stopped. I travel a long distance, about 30 kms, every day to college and cannot afford a bus pass. I feel that if girls are to feel secure and have a good atmosphere to study, boys will have to be punished for teasing girls.”(Ravali)

7. Recommendations for Girls Education in Junior Colleges /Senior Secondary School Education

1. Greater investments in government colleges and their physical infrastructure such as classrooms, furniture, libraries, labs, drinking water and toilets, as well as faculty
2. Provision of free education and education material, waiver of school/college and examination fees, free bus passes and transportation facilities.
3. Provision of hostel facilities and scholarships for girls from SC, ST, minorities and EWS categories.
4. Educating boys about the fatal consequences of their actions on girls and their lives due to their eve teasing, stalking and other forms of sexual abuse; sensitizing them to look at girls as equals.
5. Building awareness on Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) to all government functionaries and gram panchayats.
6. Inclusion of issues relating to gender equality in the school curriculum from primary school onwards in all classes.
7. Girls are to be given information and knowledge on reproductive and sexual healthcare
8. Provision of shelter and counselling for those girls under risk of violence.
9. Sustained campaign in all colleges, hostels and educational institutions on girls' education. Build systems for providing safety to girls who defy child marriage and seek to pursue education.
10. Amend the child marriage act to make all child marriages totally voidable.

It is universal knowledge that most girls enter into a hostile environment from the time of their conception. In the face of this the girls in this study through their everyday acts of defiance showed determination to extricate themselves from the quagmire of all forms of discrimination. With their firm conviction that education alone would help them break away from injustice, they have exercised agency to reconstruct their lives. Their voices must be heard. What is needed is an enabling societal environment and wholehearted governmental support for their education, against patriarchy and gender discrimination to end violence against them and give them dignity.

Annexure 1

Letters to Friend on Mother and her Childhood

Introduction

A group of 80 girls from the Champions study participated in a Focus Group Discussion. Before they opened up to speak about their experiences of studying and the challenges they faced there were several exercises. They did a skit on themes regarding gender discrimination, eve teasing and leadership. They also wrote letters to a friend on mother and her childhood. Summaries of some of the letters are presented below.

1. Mother was married off when she was 14 years old as her in-laws promised that they would let her continue with her studies. This never happened. Mother was very sheltered and inexperienced. Her in-laws used to lock up everything in a room and go away to work. Thus, she was even denied food to eat, but she never told father about it.

One day, he came home in the afternoon and realized what was happening and separated from his parents. We were very small then. Father realized that she was interested in studying, so he supported and encouraged her. Mother then studied in a school 5 km away till the 10th standard. Eventually, she took the exams and qualified for a government job.

Mother supported our education and encouraged us to learn dance, music, sports all other co-curricular activities. She even borrowed money for our education.

2. My mother is the youngest of 3 daughters and 1 son. She went to school in her childhood. When the teacher caned her sister, my grandfather went to school and hit the teacher with the cane. He asked the teacher that when he, as a father, never raised his hand against the children, how could he, being a teacher, hit her? Consequently, the teacher dismissed the children from school. As a result all of them stopped studying and went to work.

Mother worked hard in the house, and there was no time to play. She was not even allowed to watch TV in the neighbor's house. When she turned 15, Mother was married off, but her in-laws used to ill-treat her after their son left for work. They never gave her an opportunity to tell her husband or parents about this.

Finally, the neighbors informed my mother's parents about the harassment for dowry and violence against their daughter. Grandfather immediately came and took her home. She broke off all relations with her 1st husband.

She was remarried to a quack doctor, and this time around the in-laws took good care of her and treated her with a lot of affection. But her sister-in-law used to trouble her a lot. Usually, Father supported mother against his sister, but there were times when he used to scold her and hit her.

There are 2 of us in the family, my brother and I. Mother works as agricultural labor, and encourages us to study so that our lives will be better than hers. She has sacrificed food and comfort for us, and even borrowed money to pay our school and college fees over the years.

3. Mother studied till 10th standard in a school near her house that was run for half a day. She would cook in the morning before going to school. In the afternoon after school, she would finish the work at home and then go to work in beedi rolling.

After 10th standard, she was married off. Father worked in the mandal office, while Mother rolled beedis. We are 2 children - 1 boy and 1 girl. After my brother was born, tensions began in the family as father gave up on his responsibilities. One day, after a major difference with his sister, my mother was forced to leave home, and was never called back to the house.

She then studied up to class 12 privately, paying her own fees, and found a small job. She even got father a job in her office. She also continued to work on rolling beedis. Father could not hold the job, so he started a business, but failed even at that. He began to drink and beat mother for questioning him about this. So Mother took both of us children and went to my maternal grandmother's house. My grandparents tried to counsel my father, but he refused to change.

Finally, he abandoned us and returned to his parents' house. His health was badly affected by his drinking, and he died when I was in the 9th standard.

My mother works hard to support us and pay for our education, but now she is suffering from ill health. Nobody else supports our education, apart from my mother

4. Mother was born in Reddlawadagramam. They were 3 children: 2 daughters and one son. Her parents ill-treated her. Grandfather was a drunkard. Mother's parents used to take loans and not repay them. Creditors always hounded them. One of the creditors wanted mother's younger sister to be married to him as repayment of

the loan. Grandparents immediately gave her away. The sister hanged herself next morning. Mother's brother was sent to school as he was a boy, but she was sent to graze the goats as she was a girl.

My mother was married twice to men much older than her.

Her first husband was her maternal cousin, 30 years old when my mother was only fifteen. My grandparents promised to give him a dowry of Rs. 20,000 the day after the marriage, but they failed to keep their promise, so she was sent back home.

The 2nd marriage was also broken because again they couldn't pay the dowry. Mother was dejected and attempted suicide, but was stopped by her brother. He was very affectionate towards my mother and got her married to a man who he felt was a good person. But my father turned out to be a drunkard. My paternal grandmother treated mother very badly. With great effort, mother managed to change my father, but soon after he started to drink again. Father is an auto driver and drives in a drunken state. Mother does some tailoring. I have one brother.

Father didn't want to educate me as he felt it would be difficult to find an equally educated husband, so I was admitted to a government school whereas my brother was admitted to a hostel.

My mother fell very ill and had to be hospitalized. She had a major surgery and I attended on her for 15 days, worked at home and carried food for her, taking care of her needs. After I returned home, I also completed mother's tailoring commitments. I collected the payments and maintained the business and was also able to pay for the treatment. She was advised 15 days rest at home. In the process, I missed college for a whole month.

My mother thought I would fail because I shifted to English medium. She was so happy when I made it.

My mother had to take care of her brother's family too as he abandoned them. He didn't get along with his mother and left home.

Mother supported my education against great opposition. She feels that it is education that is going to make my life different and provide stability and security. As he is a boy, my brother was admitted in a hostel from 4th class onwards. My parents sold their land and spent Rs.60,000 on coaching for a job in defense, which he never succeeded in getting. They gave further Rs. 50,000 by mortgaging their house to coach him for a constable's job. I don't know if he will succeed in this either.

Once, I was eve teased by a boy. I told my mother about it, and she questioned him. He brought his friends and made false allegations against me, saying that it was I who was chasing him. Now, we are apprehensive about my future and my mother is planning to get me married next year. I can understand the agony of my mother, who faced the wrath of my father and was a victim of his violence - all to educate me - and now to have to get me married before I can complete my studies is so painful for her.

We are now reduced to living in an illegal thatched hut with no pattas, and life here is difficult. The neighborhood looks at me with suspicion. I want to study well and prove to all that I have done nothing wrong.

5. Mother died in childhood. Father married mother's younger sister. Neither of my mothers were educated. The younger sister was suspected to have stolen some clothes and a panchayati was held to resolve the issue. Soon after this the parents decided to get her married to my father. She lamented that therefore she could not go to school and missed out on having an education.

My stepmother took care of me. She would take me to school and treated me quite well, scolding me only a few times. She encourages me to study and tells me that I should get a good job and then she will stay with me and take good care of me.

From the time I was in the 6th standard, there was pressure on me to get married and a match was even found, but Father resisted and said that for 5 years, the issue of marriage was not to be raised. Mother's in a dilemma – she wants to see me married and fulfill her responsibility, but at the same time she would like to see me study well and get a good job for security and stability.

She also knows that I will not be able to withstand the hardship of agricultural labor, which is what she does. My parents support me and even take loans to put me through school.

6. My mother carried her younger sister and went to daily wage labor. She got no education.

Mother was married early and works as agricultural labor. Immediately she had the 1st daughter. Father started drinking and beating her. Then the 2nd daughter was born. When we were a little older, mother started to work. As father was beating mother badly, I was sent to my maternal grandmother's house to study. One day, father got drunk and tried to assault mother with a crowbar. He chased her all over the village and it was the neighbors who saved my mother from being killed. After

this incident, we were admitted into hostels. Father drank himself to death. Mother was living with her parents then. After the death of my father, we came back home. Mother struggles to put us through school.

She did not want us to live a life of drudgery like her, so she is encouraging us to get an education and working hard to see that we complete our studies and get good jobs. She trusts us and buys us all that we ask. When some relatives put pressure on my mother to get me married to their son, my mother refused, saying that till we complete our studies and get good jobs she will not think of getting us married.

7. Mother cared for her siblings as well as her cousins, and in return was given cold food to eat. She also tended to goats and ate only once in a day. She got no education.

My mother's marriage was a love marriage against the wishes of her family, but father is a drunkard who's always getting into debts and not working. Mother works hard to run the house, and provide education for her children. Father is forever demanding money from her. Father's harassment drove her to attempt suicide. My maternal grandmother, who lives with us, stopped her.

Father goes away to his mother's house whenever there is a fight at home. He's earned so much disrepute that we had to shift to another place where he worked as a lorry cleaner.

The 1st seven years, my mother didn't work. Now she works in the fields and as domestic help, and earns twice as much my father.

We are 1 brother and 2 sisters. I am in a hostel. My younger sister studies at home and helps mother with the housework. Despite my mother's experiences and sacrifices, my brother wants to get us married after junior college; it is very disheartening.

8. My mother had a good childhood. After her sister's marriage, my grandparents died within a short time of each other. Mother worked hard, saved money and got the rest of her sisters married. They are 6 daughters in all.

My mother was married in 1997 with a dowry. We are 2 sisters.

My mother works as a daily wage toddy tapper. She not only had to pay for her sisters' weddings but also had to pay for my paternal grandmother's hospitalization, which cost nearly 1 lakh rupees.

Later, I also had to undergo an operation, which cost my mother Rs.60,000.

Even before mother could completely repay these loans, father had a liver problem and had to be hospitalized. Again mother had to raise Rs.40,000 for the expenses. Till today, she is repaying these loans.

Father is a toddy tapper and used to earn Rs.100-150 after tapping 13 trees. Now that that source of income has dried up, out of dejection, he has started to drink and does not earn a single paisa. Father abuses my mother physically, too.

My sister and I are both studying. There is pressure on mother to get us married, but she is determined to educate us so that we can get good jobs and not be in the same position as her.

9. My mother was a railway employee's daughter. Her father always gave her whatever she asked for. She had a happy childhood. Grandfather's brother brought her a match from a man working in Singareni Collieries, and she was married at the age of 13 years. However, they were cheated, as he was actually unemployed, a drunkard and a gambler.

Mother delivered quadruplets who died soon after birth.

Father used to get drunk, beat her and send her away to her mother's house. One night, provoked by his mother, father cruelly abused my mother, and threw her out of the house at 10 in the night.

She was full term pregnant at that time, and she was forced to leave the house. She had no money and so, late at night, she took an auto to reach her mother's house, passing through the forest and 3 villages.

I was born a few years after this incidence. This violence continued even after I was born and many a time, I was also a victim of his violence. After one such incident, the neighbors hid us, but father found out where we were hiding and beat us up. My brother was just an infant. My mother fled with one of us in each arm and escaped into a bus. When she was asked to purchase a ticket, she gave her gold ring, as she had no money to pay for it.

This time, my grandfather took charge and admitted me to a local school, but when my father came and apologized and assured my grandparents that he would take good care of mother, she went back to him.

Then my grandfather passed away.

There were no longer any restraints on my father, so he moved into our house and beat up my mother every day after drinking. He used to take away all her earnings to drink.

Despite all this, my mother provides for the education of my brother and me.

10. Mother is the eldest in her family, and has 3 brothers and one younger sister. All of them studied in a government hostel. There were neither buses nor streetlights, so they had walk to the hostel. When mother came home for the vacations, she would work in the fields. Then, she failed class 10, and as they couldn't afford to continue with her studies, she was married off.

We are 3 sisters. Mother had her 2nd child eight years after the 1st. Father was very angry that it was a girl and refused to even see her for a week. A year later, when he was returning from a wedding, he died in an accident. I was born the next month.

Everybody wanted a boy, and mother was advised to undergo an abortion. When I was born, the doctor offered to adopt me, but mother insisted that, whatever the difficulties, she would bring up all 3 of us. She took very good care of us. She cooks in a small school and earns Rs.1,000 per month.

Though people looked down on us as we didn't have a father, we are very proud to have a mother who is more than a father to us. Mother educates all 3 of us. She wants us all to study well and be able to support ourselves.

Annexure 2

Testimonies Written by the Respondents

Introduction:

At the end of each questionnaire the respondents were asked to write a few lines about themselves. They sketched whatever was uppermost in their mind regarding good and bad aspects of their journey to education. There were more than 500 such responses. The following gives a representation of their thoughts:

1. My parents support my education, but find it difficult because we're 3 of us. My father works very hard to educate us. My mother's health is very bad. My father even goes hungry to help us study. He says no matter what, you must study. When we have vacations, my mother takes us to the fields to work. We return late in the evening, and then do our homework. There's never peace at home with my parents fighting all the time. I studied up to class 7 in a government school and shifted to private school up to class 10. I'm in a government intermediate college now. I have a great urge to study but due to the atmosphere at home, I'm unable to focus on my studies.
2. I studied in my village from class 1-2. Then I did class 3 to 10 in a government hostel. After a lot of trouble, I got to intermediate. Despite having lots of problems, I didn't stop studying. My parents didn't force me to either. When I was in hostel, there were a lot of problems at home. The worst was when I was class 8. Nobody in the family could find any work, but my brother and parents decided not to tell me about their problems.
3. My parents are illiterate. My father's an agricultural laborer. I've been struggling and studying since childhood. I was put into a government hostel when I was 5 years old. I fell very ill when I was in class 8-10, and my parents spent a lot on me. They took a loan to treat my kidney problems, and spent about Rs. 5000 on the hospital. I owe my parents a lot, so I want to study and take up at least a small job, but my health doesn't permit.
4. In my house, my father doesn't work as he's very weak, and my mother takes care of the entire family, which includes my sister, me and my father. We're very poor, and our house is very small. I went to the local school up to class 10. I'm staying in a hostel for intermediate and my mother, although she's the sole bread-winner, has

never let us feel deprived. Every time I eat, I pray for her health. My mother has taken a lot of loans to educate me and that's why, in my eyes, she's the equal of God.

5. If I've studied up to this stage, it's all because of my mother. She's very good. My father passed away while we were very young. We are 3 sisters, and I have 2 elder brothers. Both my sisters and one brother are married. I, my younger sister and elder brother are studying. I am inter 2nd year, my brother's doing post grad, and my sister's in class 7. My elder brother wanted me to get married, but I convinced him that I have to study more. He says there is a lot of pressure on him from the neighbors to see me married off. It's my mother who resists such pressures and is supporting all of us and our education.
6. I am studying in the hostel since class 6 and faced a lot of difficulties even to travel to the hostel and home. At the moment, my father is unwell as he drinks and smokes heavily and has stopped working. My house depends on my mother's labor. She's also burdened with a loan that we took to get my brother and sister married. In order to repay the loan, my father's taken up a job, but since now it's the monsoons, there's no work. And my father also needs medicines, so my parents want me to discontinue after I finish my inter 2nd year. Although I am studying in the government hostel which gives us soaps, oil, Rs. 82, I'd still have to spend at least Rs. 500 a month and my parents can ill afford it. I wish the government gave us more than Rs. 82 as a stipend. I feel bad to ask my parents for at least 1 dress a year.
7. I'm studying 2 year inter MPC. My father died before my birth. I have 2 sisters. My mother works very hard and helps in our studies. She's just a cook in a school. My elder sister got married, and another sister is studying with me. Up to class 7, I studied in an orphanage, and from class 8 onwards in a zilla parishad school in Thungathurthy in Nalgonda till class 10. I used to walk 3 ½ km every day to go to school, and secured 85%.
8. My parents worked hard and in spite of financial difficulties, educated me and 2 of my younger brothers. They took loans for our education and are even now working hard to repay the loans. They want us to be independent and find good jobs. Although we get full support from our parents, we understand how much they can actually do for us, and so adjust accordingly. We don't make any demands on them. Until class 10, I studied in a private school, and they paid the fees with great difficulty. Now, due to financial problems, I'm in a government hostel. My father's a driver and my mother's a tailor. They work all day and night and also do all the domestic work. Because we had to study, they went hungry, eating only 1 meal a day, but they never let us go hungry.

9. When I was young, I went to a government school. I liked education, but never got good marks. I felt I should work hard and study well because my parents are both illiterates. I found it difficult to study in a private college, so they shifted me to a government college. I am now studying in English medium, and sometimes feel that I am betraying my parents, because I find it very difficult to do English. Everybody speaks in English, writes in English, and I feel very inferior and sometimes want to die.

When I was in classes 6-10, we were 32 girls, but by the time I reached class 10, we were only 12 girls, and the rest got married, mostly because parents don't have money. Even those who're literate get their daughters married off at an early age. Now, many of us are being sent to English medium schools, but since we understand nothing, we're not able to study well, and so drop out of schools and get married. Some of them who got married have also gotten separated. I see them working as salesgirls working in clothes stores when I go home for summer vacations and other holidays. They've left their husbands and are living alone, going through a lot of difficulties.

10. The presence of boys in buses is a constant problem. Whenever anything untoward happens to a girl, our parents fear for our safety, and threaten to stop our studies.
11. When I said I wanted to study and asked my father many times for pens, books, etc. he would buy them for me. He'd buy me anything I needed for my education, even if it took a little time. I know my father will give me full support for my future. My parents are illiterate, but they've supported all of us to study. My older sister has completed intermediate, my younger brother is in class 9, one younger sister is in class 6, the other in class 8. I want to do my graduation. My father is a construction worker, and my mother's a homemaker.
12. I lost my mother when I was in class 1. My father remarried and my stepmother took good care of us, but she always scolded me. I was scared to share this with my friends because it might become worse. I then went to stay with my sister for 2 years. She took good care of me, but now she has also begun scolding me. I sometimes feel like committing suicide. My sister was only 3 months old when my mother passed away, and grew up with my grandmother. I was sent to my mother's sister's house and she admitted me into a hostel. I didn't like my aunt's house, either. I completed class 10 in a hostel. I like my father very much. He has a daughter from his second marriage. While my younger sister is docile, I sometimes answer back and quarrel with my stepmother and stepsister. My father is indifferent to these quarrels. My aunt has stopped talking to us and my sister and I have shifted to my grandmother's place. Sometimes, even my sister, when she faces

humiliation, suggests that we end our lives. It's too much to bear, and we cry a lot. Whether my father helps us or not, we love him, but our real support is our grandmother. I like studying, but I have no friends.

13. I'm in inter 2nd year. While I was studying in class 10, I had a friend who was in class 8. She had a younger sister, and her mother was mentally ill. Her father repeatedly raped my friend and on one occasion it continued for a week continuously. She couldn't bear it and shared it with her friends, and her friends complained to the anganwadi center. They conducted an enquiry discreetly, and admitted her in a hospital, where the doctors examined her and found that she had been raped. Her father was sent to jail, but the case hasn't been resolved, and he's out on bail. Now, her condition is very bad and she wonders how she can go home, with her father around like that. She's been stigmatized for a crime committed by her father. Even now, he continues to threaten her mother and younger sister to be on his side.
14. My parents did nothing for my education. It's my maternal uncle who insisted I should study. Every time my parents met my uncle, they insisted I should be married, but my uncle resisted. Being illiterate himself, he really struggled and worked hard to educate me. He's so happy when a girl is born to any family, but my own parents left me with my grandmother when I was born, since they didn't want a girl. As luck would have it, that's how my uncle entered my life. I feel bad when I hear how my mother abandoned me, and have been with my uncle ever since.



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