

2021

Government Financing of Secondary Education for Girls: A Case Study of Rajasthan



Discussion Paper



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Cover Photo

Shutterstock.com

Designed by

Common Sans, 1729, Sector 31, Gurgaon, Haryana

Published by

Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA)

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Financial support for the study

This study has been carried out with financial support from CRY.

Views expressed in this discussion paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions of CBGA and CRY.



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List of Acronyms

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
EE	Elementary Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
KGBV	<i>Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya</i>
MBAV	<i>Mewat Balika Awasiya Vidyalayas</i>
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NEP	National Education Policy
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
OBC	Other Backward classes
PAB	Project Approval Board
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
RMSA	<i>Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan</i>
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SE	Secondary Education
SmSA	<i>Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan</i>
ST	Scheduled Tribe
STDR	Special Term Deposit Receipt
TE	Teacher Education



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Introduction

Education of girls is critical to economic development. Research has established that educating girls is one of the most cost-effective ways of spurring development (Tembon and Fort, 2008). Despite all the demonstrated benefits, girls face challenges in education that boys do not. Hence, a large number of girls across the globe are still out of school.

It is evident from literature that parents from poor, disadvantaged and marginalised households in developing countries consider schooling for girls more costly in terms of both the real financial cost and the opportunity cost. Moreover, when faced with a choice as to which of their children to enrol at school, preference is given to boys. Thus, abolishing school fees and reducing the direct costs of educating girls are critical to ensuring universal girls' education (Sperling and Winthrop, 2015).

In India, evidence shows that girls are more dependent on public provisioning of education as the cost of education is lower in government schools. Thus, the government has a huge role to play in ensuring quality education for all girls. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has acknowledged the numerous benefits associated with girls' education in the society. It also emphasises the need for universal access to quality school education as well as higher education for all girls. Therefore, it is important for state governments to ensure quality secondary education accessible to all girls.

Rajasthan is one of the states that has prioritised school education as a key area of governance. The state has announced as well as adopted a number of measures to promote girls' education. One of the important interventions is free education for all girls at the secondary as well as the higher education levels in state-run institutions. It was also announced that girls studying in government colleges will be provided free education as well as sanitary napkins from the session commencing from July 2019 (TNN, 2019). This has been a stepping stone for creating a strong and supportive policy environment for universalisation of girls' secondary education in the state.

However, there is no detailed analysis in the public domain about the nature of government initiatives for prioritising girls' education and the quantum of fiscal support associated with such policy measures. This policy brief aims to discuss how the government of Rajasthan has financed and incentivised girls' education at secondary level. It also aims to illustrate some of the good practices that can be replicated in other states and Union Territories.

The basic research questions answered through this case study are:

1. What is the status of girls' education at secondary level in Rajasthan?
2. How does the government of Rajasthan finance secondary education? How gender-responsive is its education budget?
3. How is *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan* (SmSA) designed and financed to promote girls' education at secondary level?

The study comprises five sections. After a brief introduction in Section I, Section II describes the status of secondary education in Rajasthan, particularly that of girls' education. Section III maps the existing interventions of the state government for girls' education at secondary level. The policy responses in the



wake of the COVID-19 pandemic are also discussed. Section IV provides a macro picture of government financing pattern at secondary level and also examines the gender responsiveness of education budget. Section V focuses on planning and budgeting aspects of SmSA at secondary level and gender-inclusivity of the scheme. Section VI concludes the discussion with some policy recommendations.

Status of Secondary Education in Rajasthan

An education indicator aids in evaluating the performance of an education system. Efficient policy measures always strike the right balance among different types of input, output and outcome indicators to establish the link between means and ends (Kundu, Singh, Rout, & Ur Rehman, 2016). This section examines the performance of Rajasthan across different educational indicators at secondary level. The selected indicators represent various dimensions of education such as access, infrastructure, quality and learning enhancement. Before exploring these dimensions, it is important to know the profile of the school-going children in the state.

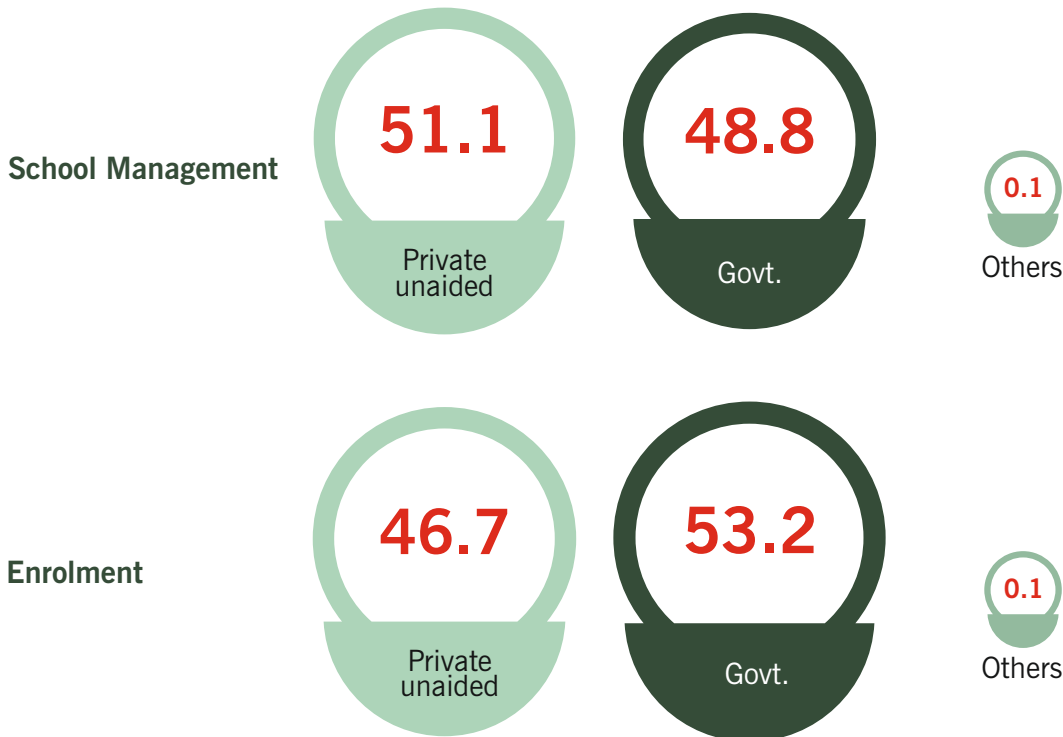
As per the Indian education system, 14-17 is the age group for attending secondary and higher secondary education in school. According to Ministry of Education (MoE) estimates, the total population in Rajasthan in this age group shall be nearly 61.7 lakhs in 2021. Of these, girls comprise over 29.4 lakhs while boys constitute nearly 32.3 lakhs. The actual enrolment in 2019-20 was nearly 44.6 lakhs including nearly 19.8 lakh girls and 24.8 lakh boys. Thus, it can be said that over 17 lakh adolescents in the said age group are either not in an age-appropriate grade or out of school. Of these, over 9.6 lakh are girls while almost 7.4 lakh are boys (UDISE+ 2019-20).

A social group wise distribution shows a population of almost 8.2 lakh Scheduled Caste (SC) and 5.9 lakh Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in the secondary and higher secondary sections in Rajasthan. These constitute about 18.5% and 13.8% of the total enrolment at the same levels of education, respectively. Almost half (49.6%) of all students enrolled belong to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category.

Access

According to UDISE+ data for 2019-20, there are over 1 lakh schools in Rajasthan for classes 1-12. About 63.7% of these are government schools. Around 1.8 crore students are enrolled in these schools where more than 7.7 lakh teachers are employed. Of all schools, nearly 14.8 thousand are government secondary and higher secondary schools (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2021). The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is 1:12 and 1:16 for secondary and higher secondary sections, respectively, which is better compared to the corresponding national averages of 1:19 and 1:27.

Figure 2.1: Enrolment in and distribution of secondary and higher secondary schools by management – Rajasthan (2019-20) (in %)



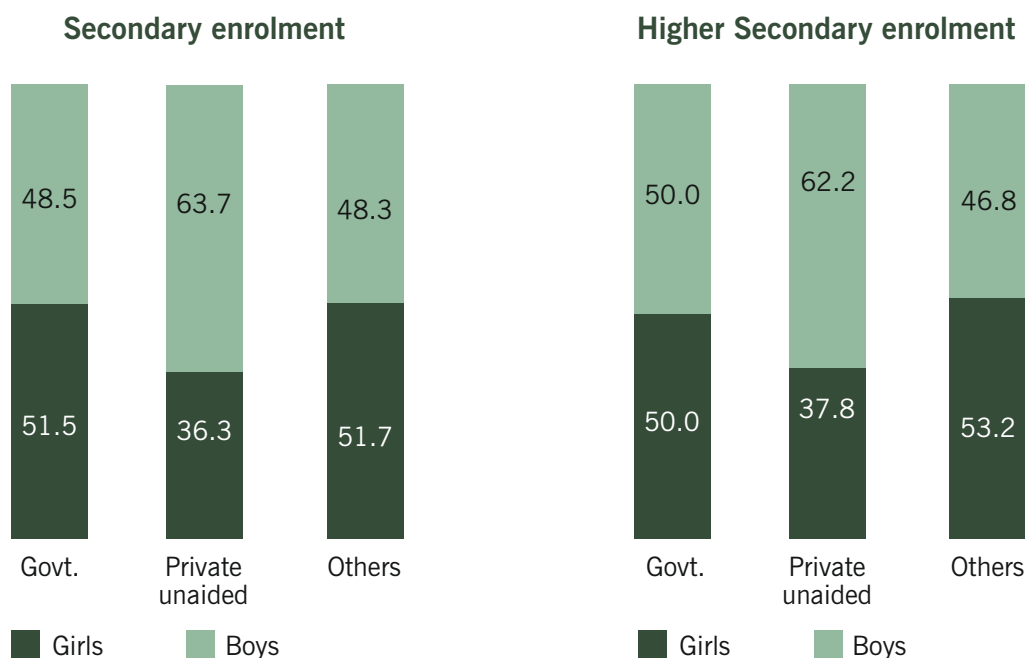
Note: Government schools include those run by the Department of Education, Social Welfare and Tribal Welfare Departments, Railway Schools, Sainik Schools, Kendriya Vidyalayas/Central Schools, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, and other Central Government schools. Others include Madrasa recognised and other unrecognised schools.

Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

Government schools constitute 48.8% of all secondary and higher secondary schools. A higher proportion of schools are private unaided (51.1%), but the enrolment remains higher at government schools (53.2%). Low Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at secondary (48.6%) and higher secondary levels (33.6%) is an area of concern. While the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is around 99.7% at the elementary level, it declines to about 84.2% at the secondary level and nearly 58.4% at the higher secondary level. Thus, more girls are pushed out of school with increasing levels of education. Inferences related to age-appropriate enrolment drawn from NER also show a grim picture. These also have a bearing on transition and dropout rates discussed later in this section.

Despite a rising number of private schools entering the education sector, these are barely affordable for lower income groups and marginalised sections of the population. Enrolment in government schools has increased by around 10 lakhs in the past two academic years (Rajpurohit, 2021), reflecting massive reverse migration from private schools in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. From a policy perspective, a rise in demand for government schools is an opportunity to prioritise and revive public education.

Figure 2.2: Secondary and higher secondary enrolment by gender and school management – Rajasthan (in %)



Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

The gendered nature of educational preferences by families/guardians is apparent from the higher enrolment of girls at government schools whereas that of boys at private ones at the secondary level. The gender gap in Gross Enrolment Ratio is above 10% in 14 districts. This necessitates targeted interventions for promoting education of girls, discussed in section III.

A wide gender gap of over 25% in enrolment is also prevalent at private unaided schools. This is indicative of son preference and resultant discrimination meted out to the girl child. Families are less willing to spend for the education of daughters, and hence not keen to send them to private schools where fees are high.

In Rajasthan, most of the co-educational higher secondary schools are known as 'boys' schools, because girls are admitted in co-educational schools only if a girls-only higher secondary school is not accessible or to study science subjects which are largely offered in these schools (Ramachandran et.al, 2020). Of 20,185 higher secondary schools in the state, only 345 schools offer science subjects (UDISE+, 2019-20).

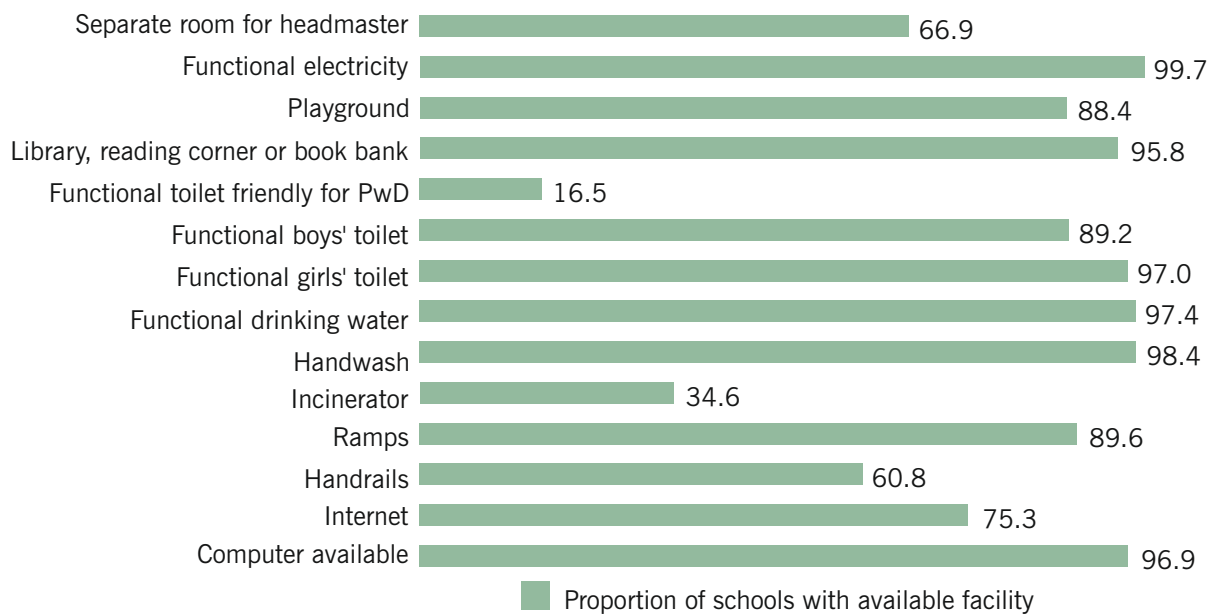
The retention rate of girls at the secondary level is about 52.4% while it is much lower at the higher secondary level at around 36.8%. The state ranked at the bottom of the gender parity index at the higher secondary level (Mukherjee, 2021). At the secondary level, Gender Parity Index of Gross Enrolment Ratio has declined from 0.94 in 2018-19 to 0.89 in 2019-20. This is much below the national average of 1. The gender gap in GER at secondary level is over 10% in 14 districts including Jaisalmer (24%), Sirohi (22%), and Jator (23%). This is alarming and calls for immediate efforts towards ensuring that girls can continue their studies without disruption.

Besides, comparison of Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) (rural) data for the state for 2018 and 2020 reveals that enrolment of girls aged 15-16 in government schools increased from 59.3% to 68.5%, while it fell by 1.4 percentage points to 19% in private schools during the same period (ASER Centre, 2019; 2021). A positive development is the sharp reduction in the proportion of out of school girls from 20.1% in 2018 to 12.5% in 2020. This trend must continue for achieving gender parity in enrolment.

Availability of infrastructure

Availability of basic infrastructure such as functional toilets, drinking water and wash basins (WASH facilities), libraries, and playgrounds goes a long way in making school a better experience for students. For instance, the presence of functional separate washrooms and sanitary napkin dispensers for girls can deter period absenteeism among them.

Figure 2.3: Availability of infrastructure in government secondary and higher secondary schools – Rajasthan (in %)



Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

As per SmSA norms, new/upgraded secondary and senior secondary schools shall be provided infrastructure support for classrooms with furniture, library and laboratory, toilet blocks, safe drinking water, separate functional toilets for girls, boys and students with disability, to name a few (Department of School Education and Literacy, n.d.).

A majority of government secondary and higher secondary schools have functional toilets for girls and boys alongside drinking water and handwash facilities. However, concerns of quality remain which necessitate regular audits. It must be noted that private schools outperform their government counterparts in terms of infrastructure availability.

Among government schools, nearly 30% are without electricity connection. While most have at least one computer, internet facilities are available in about three out of four schools. The pandemic has

necessitated digital learning, for which it is imperative for all schools to have computer and internet facilities for students as well as staff.

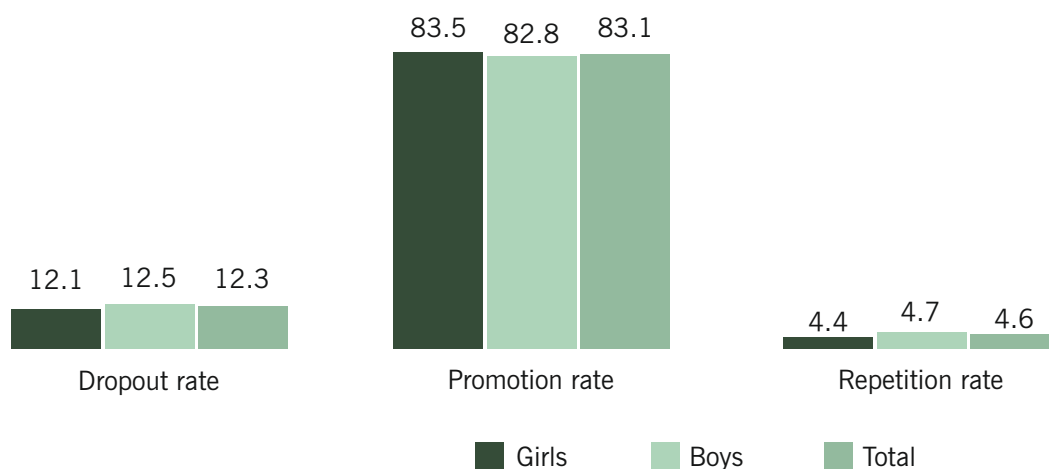
Besides, the inclusion component must be emphasised. As per Census 2011, there were over 2 lakh children and adolescents with disability in the 10-19 age group. Over 20 thousand students with disability of which 42% are girls are enrolled in secondary and higher secondary sections across the state in 2019-20. It can be assumed that a substantial proportion of adolescents with disability continue to be out of school.

Although many schools have ramps for students with disability, about 40% of these lack handrails. The proportion of schools with accessible toilets for such students is also abysmally low. Similarly, a little above one-third of all schools have incinerators on premises. Lack of basic facilities also pushes many girls and children with disability out of school. Immediate attention must be paid towards accommodating their needs for their greater inclusion and participation in schooling.

Quality and learning

Following this discussion on access and availability of infrastructure, we take a look at indicators related to quality and learning for secondary and higher secondary sections.

Figure 2.4: Dropout, promotion and repetition rate at secondary level by gender – Rajasthan (in %)

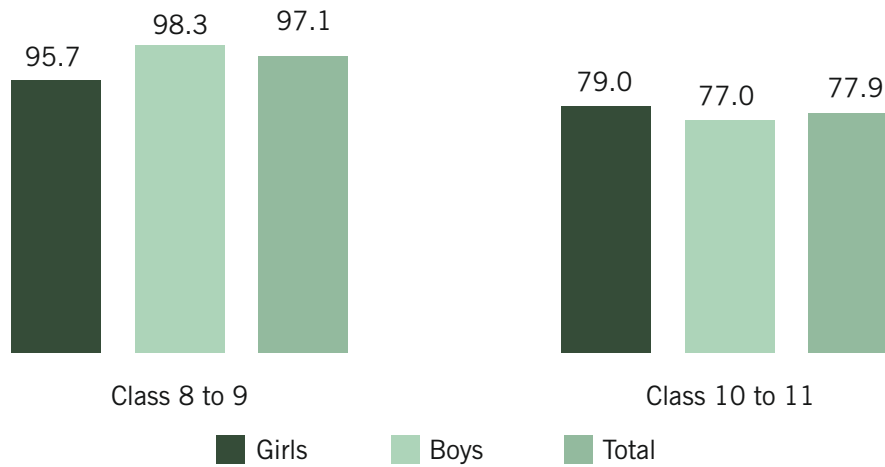


Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

The dropout rates at the primary level (2.85%) and the upper primary level (1.53%) are low, but shoot up to 12.3% at the secondary level. This sharp jump only reinforces the need for greater policy attention towards tackling the crisis of increasing instances of dropout with higher levels of education. A positive step in this direction is the promise of free education for girls at all state-run educational institutions as per the 2018 election manifesto of Indian National Congress. Once the party came to power, it was announced that this would be implemented at all levels of education from the session beginning July 2019 (PTI, 2019).

Girls are observed to have higher promotion rates and lower dropout and repetition rates than boys. When provided opportunities and resources to study, females can perform at par as well as outshine their male counterparts. Initiatives aimed at retention can strongly encourage girls to study further and complete their education.

Figure 2.5: Transition rate by gender – Rajasthan (2019-20) (in %)



Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

Transition rates for boys as well as girls are greater at the secondary than at the higher secondary level. The decline at the higher secondary level can be attributed to dropouts after class 10. Girls have marginally lower transition rates at the secondary level, but higher at the higher secondary level. It can thus be argued that they are not only willing to study but also perform well if granted adequate academic support and incentives.

It was also found that over 86% secondary and higher secondary teachers hold a B.Ed. or equivalent qualification. The presence of qualified teachers has a positive impact on the quality of learning. Data from the second cycle of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) National Achievement Survey for class 10 (2017-18) illustrate that the academic performance of students from Rajasthan was above the national average in all subjects (NCERT, n.d.). However, there is much scope for improvement at the primary level, as the state fared among the bottom five and below the national average in terms of key learning outcomes as per ASER (rural) 2018.

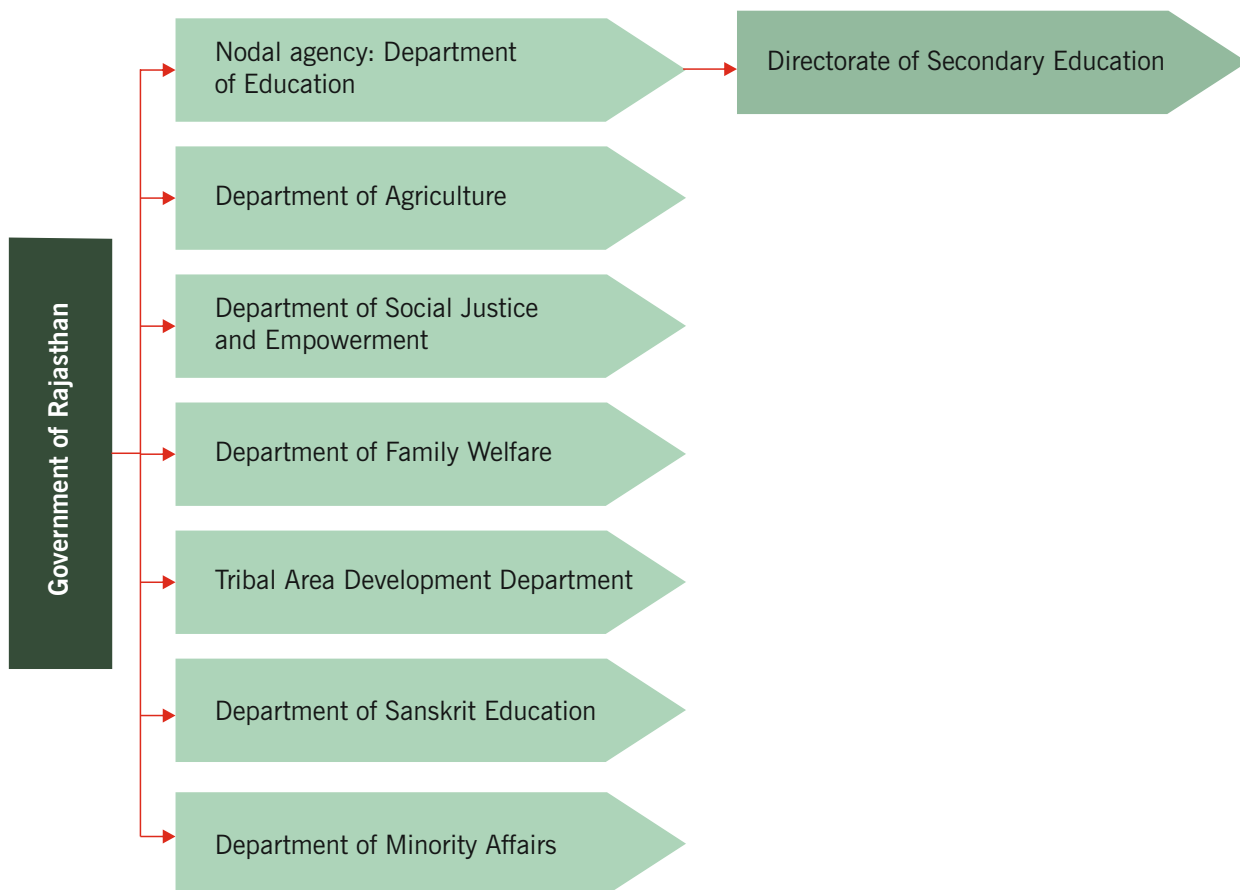
With this glimpse of the state of secondary education in Rajasthan, the next section maps the girls-centric policy interventions at the secondary level.

Section III

Mapping the Interventions of Rajasthan Government for Girls' Education at Secondary Level

Rajasthan does not have any specific Secondary Education Policy as it is broadly governed by the policies of Government of India. Several departments of the state government are undertaking a range of measures for strengthening gender and equity and bridging gender gaps in secondary education as follows.

Figure 3.1: Mapping of state government departments spending on girls' secondary education in Rajasthan



Source: Rajasthan State budget documents 2021-22

The Directorate of Secondary Education under the Department of School Education is the nodal agency responsible for managing secondary education. It is supported by other departments which carry out interventions such as building and running residential hostels, providing scholarships and incentives for girls from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and minority communities, and language development (Government of Rajasthan, 2021a). For instance, the Department of Family Welfare runs health and hygiene programmes for adolescent girls, while the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment also builds and maintains hostels for girls.

Schemes and programmes to promote secondary education for girls

The Rajasthan Council of School Education under the Department of School Education is responsible for managing interventions under SmSA. The Gender and Equity component has found much deserved attention under the *Samagra Shiksha* framework. Residential schools, self-defence, and empowerment are the three cornerstones of the gender and equity component in Rajasthan. Provision of incinerators and sanitary pad dispensers is also included in the special project for equity. However, the scope of these projects can be expanded to include enrolment drives in catchment areas, menstrual health and management, skill development programmes, and SC/ST-oriented activities.

Various other schemes/programmes can be categorised as residential hostels, scholarships, incentives, social awareness and other support.

Figure 3.2: Schemes for promoting secondary education among girls – Rajasthan

Schemes and programmes for girls in secondary education									
Residential hostels		Scholarships		Incentives			Social awareness and other support		
KGBV	MBAV	CM Rajshree Yojana	Assistance to Saharia students of Baran district	Free education	Distributing textbooks, laptops, sanitary pads, bicycles/transport vouchers	Indira Priya-darshini Puraskar	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme	Rajiv Gandhi career guidance portal	Gargi Manch and Adhyapika Manch

Source: Rajasthan state budget speech 2021-22

Positive outcomes were observed in 2019-20 such as a sharp decline in overall secondary dropout rates and a rise in retention rates of girls by almost 5% as compared to 2018-19. These indicate the effectiveness of female-centric interventions. Trends of narrowing gender gaps, increase in enrolment and retention rates, and decline in dropout rates must continue for the state to eventually achieve gender equality in secondary education. A range of interventions oriented towards this goal are discussed below.

Residential hostels

In accordance with the norms of SmSA, *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas* (KGBVs) are established by the state Directorate of Secondary Education. As per Economic Review 2020-21 of the Rajasthan state budget, 319 KGBVs are functional in the state (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2021). Of these, 187 residential KGBVs of types 3 and 4 are being run for girls in classes 9-12 in which a total of 18,440 girls are enrolled. Dropout and never enrolled girls are prioritised for enrolment. Bridge courses are also conducted in order that they can achieve the basic competencies required at the start of class 6.

Similarly, *Mewat Balika Awasiya Vidyalayas* (MBAVs) are residential schools established for girls in the educationally backward Mewat region of Alwar district. These schools have been constructed under the aegis of Mewat Area Development Scheme. These are run with the support of Rajasthan Council of School Education, Department of Rural Development, Cabinet Secretariat, and the state government (Rajasthan Council of School Education, 2019). Nine out of 10 MBAVs are functional. Around 105 seats were vacant against a capacity of 500 up to December 2020.

Monetary incentives

Scholarships

Pre-matric scholarships are being provided to students studying in classes 9 and 10 from SC, ST, OBC, Special Backward Classes, besides Denotified Tribes and Nomadic Tribes in marginal areas. Moreover, students belonging to SC, ST, OBC, Economically Backward Classes, and Most Backward Classes studying in classes 11 and 12 receive post-matric scholarships through the state Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Similarly, students from minority communities receive post-matric scholarships through the state Department of Minority Affairs. These scholarships cover basic expenses such as maintenance allowance and fees. In addition, Chief Minister *Rajshree Yojana* run by the state Directorate of Women Empowerment has a provision of up to Rs. 50,000 for the education and healthcare of girls released in phases from birth until completion of class 12 (Department of Women and Child Development, n.d.).

Moreover, initiatives by the Department of Tribal Area Development for *Sahariya* students of Baran district include monthly stipend for students in classes 6-12, financial assistance to girls of class 11 and 12, annual cash grant for students passing class 10/12 with first class, and distribution of scooties for girls passing with 65% or above in class 10/12 (*Aayukt, Janjati Kendriya Vikas Vibhag*, 2021).

Other monetary Incentives

1. Free education for classes 9-12

All girls studying in classes 9-12 at government secondary and higher secondary schools are fully exempted from payment of tuition fee from 2020-21 (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2021). Moreover, female students with disability are provided a monthly stipend of Rs. 200 for 10 months per year in accordance with the norms of SmSA.

2. KGBV Special Term Deposit Receipt (STDR) scheme

Starting A.Y. 2020-2021, term deposits are provided to girls to encourage them to pursue higher

education. Girls who pass class 10 with minimum 50% marks and enrol for class 11 shall be provided an STDR of Rs. 2,000 for 5 years. In addition, girls who pass class 12 with minimum 50% marks and enrol for first year of a bachelor course shall be provided an STDR of Rs. 2,000 for 3 years. The deposit can be claimed only upon completing bachelor degree.

3. Incentives by Department of Agriculture

Girls pursuing agriculture at the higher secondary level are provided annual assistance of Rs. 5,000 (Department of Agriculture, 2021).

4. Indira Priyadarshini Puraskar

Girls from government schools who are district and state-level toppers at the Board exams for classes 8, 10, and 12 (separately for Arts, Commerce, and Science each), and at the *Praveshika* and *Varistha Upadhyay* examinations of Department of Sanskrit Education are awarded Rs. 40,000 for class 8, Rs. 75,000 for class 10, and a scooty and Rs. 1,00,000 for class 12.

Non-monetary incentives by the Directorate of Secondary Education

1. Textbook distribution

Free textbooks are provided to all the students studying at government schools from classes 1-8, all girls and SC/ST boys in classes 9-12, students in classes 9-12 whose parents'/guardians' income is under the taxable limit, and students of *Swami Vivekananda* Model Schools in classes 6-12.

2. Bicycle distribution

Girls from rural areas, living at a distance of more than 2 kilometres from school are provided bicycles to be able to come to school. Those who do not opt for bicycles and live at a distance of more than 5 kilometres are provided transport vouchers.

3. Laptop distribution

Laptops are provided to poor students of government schools scoring 75% and above in exams of classes 8, 10, and 12.

4. Sanitary napkins distribution

Free sanitary napkins are distributed to all school-going girls of classes 6 to 12 in rural areas as well as non-school going girls in the age group of 10-19 (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2021). Each girl is provided 12 sanitary napkins per month.

Social awareness and support

1. *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* scheme

The Directorate of Women Empowerment, Government of Rajasthan runs campaigns to encourage secondary education and impart life-skills training to girls under this scheme. Dropout girls are provided access to open schooling as well as imparted self-defence training.

2. Rajiv Gandhi Career Guidance Portal

This online portal has been launched by the state government with the support of UNICEF for students of classes 9-12.

3. *Gargi Manch* and *Adhyapika Manch*

These platforms have been initiated by the state Department of Education. Constituted by involving girls studying in classes 8-12, *Gargi Manch* is a platform to raise awareness on social issues such as child marriage and dowry system. It also motivated the parents of irregular, dropout, and never enrolled girls to send their daughters to school. Under *Adhyapika Manch*, 301 groups of maximum 100 teachers have been established at the block level. The objective is to enhance the academic performance of girls and provide them a friendly environment.

Recently, Rajasthan government provided four one-time scholarships at the school level to help the economically weaker sections and students with disability. In addition, a scholarship scheme named 'Reader Allowance' has been provided to students with visual disability in classes 1-12 (Aggarwal, 2021). They are given a monthly allowance of Rs. 250 for 10 months. Students with disability studying in classes 1-12 have been provided a monthly travel allowance of Rs. 400 for 6 months. Girl students with disability were also provided a monthly stipend of Rs. 200 between July 2020 to April 2021. Besides students with disability, teachers helping such students have also been provided a monthly allowance of Rs. 400 for 6 months beginning January, 2021.

For schools to run smoothly upon resumption, necessary measures include arranging for adequate physical distancing, availability of essential facilities in schools, continuing midday meals, teachers' training and recruitment, and enrolment drives targeted at out of school children who have missed out or dropped out due to indefinite school closures.

Policy measures for girls' education during COVID-19

The prolonged closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic has increased likelihood of dropouts among socially disadvantaged students, particularly girls. The digital divide owing to lack of devices and internet connection can exclude a vast majority of underprivileged students and deprive them of their right to education. To counter this, *Shikshadarshan*, *Shikshavaani*, and Project SMILE are some of the television-based, radio-based, and WhatsApp-based digital learning initiatives launched during the pandemic, respectively.

Under Project SMILE, e-content has been delivered to nearly 13 lakh households of students in classes 1-12, and to 3.4 lakh teachers through WhatsApp. *Shikshavaani* was broadcast every day for students in classes 1-12 for one hour. During this hour, stories/study material were delivered daily through radio. Under *Shikshadarshan*, 195 minutes of content was telecast across Monday to Friday for primary, upper primary, secondary, and senior secondary classes. However, specific measures aimed at preventing dropout for girls and ensuring that they can continue learning online are lacking. Providing smartphones and allowance for internet data packs can be useful for students from low-income groups.

Mukhya Mantri Corona Bal Kalyan Yojana was announced in June 2021 to support students orphaned due to COVID-19. Under this scheme, they will be provided free education up to class 12 through residential schools or hostels. They will be paid Rs. 1 lakh as immediate assistance and will receive a sum of Rs. 5 lakhs upon attaining 18 years of age. They will also be eligible for a monthly sustenance amount of Rs. 2,500 until they turn 18 years old ("Rajasthan Government Announced CM Welfare Scheme," n.d.). Children who have lost one parent to COVID-19 will also get an immediate assistance of Rs. 1 lakh.

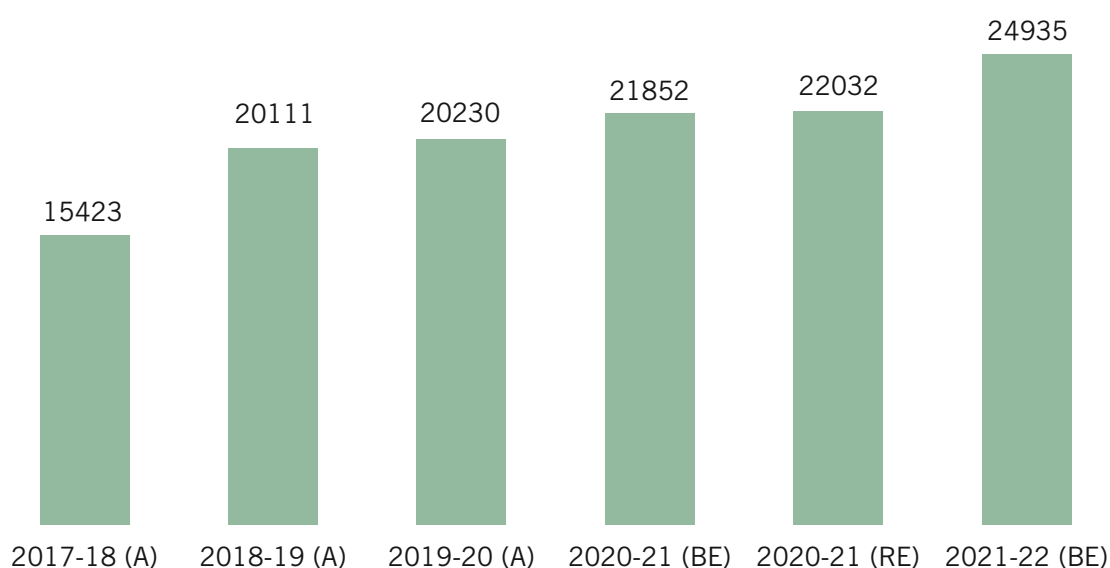
Section IV

Government Financing of Secondary Education: How Gender-Inclusive?

While the mapping of interventions at secondary level reflects government efforts towards improving girls' enrolment, access and learning, it is also important to assess how sustainable these interventions are. Alongside many other factors, adequate allocation of financial resources is key to effective implementation of schemes on the ground. This section will examine how Rajasthan government has been financing secondary education over time and whether it has adopted gender-responsiveness in budgeting process.

As per 2021-22 state budget document, seven departments (refer Figure 3.1) are spending on secondary education. Figure 4.1 shows that the budgetary allocation for secondary education in Rajasthan has increased from Rs. 15,423 crores to Rs. 24,935 crores in the last five years. Calculated as a proportion of the total expenditure, the increase is from 8.6% in 2017-18 to 9.9% in 2021-22.

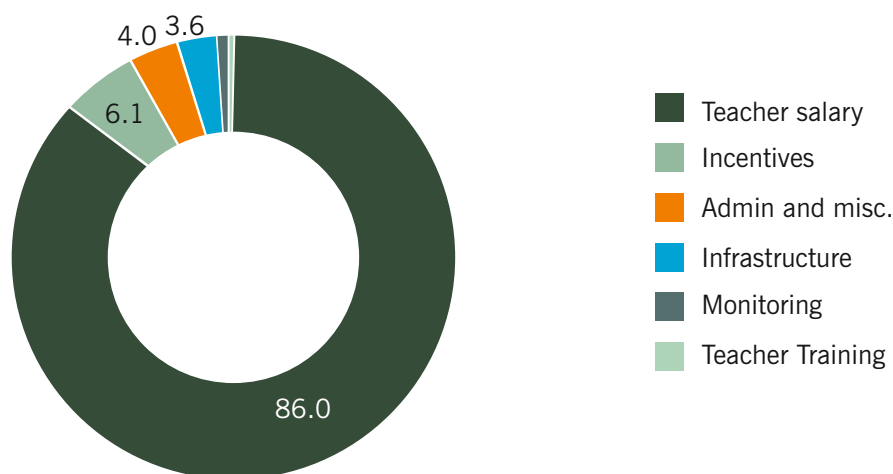
Figure 4.1: Government spending on secondary education – Rajasthan (Rs. crore)



Source: State budget documents, various years

As per UDISE+ 2019-20, Rajasthan has around 1.7 lakh government school teachers teaching at secondary and higher secondary level. In 2018-19, around 87% secondary schools had less than four subject teachers. Last year, the state recruited 9,982 subject teachers through Rajasthan Public Service Commission; yet 42% schools are without subject teachers.

Figure 4.2: Distribution of budgetary resources across components of secondary education – 2021-22 (BE) (in %)



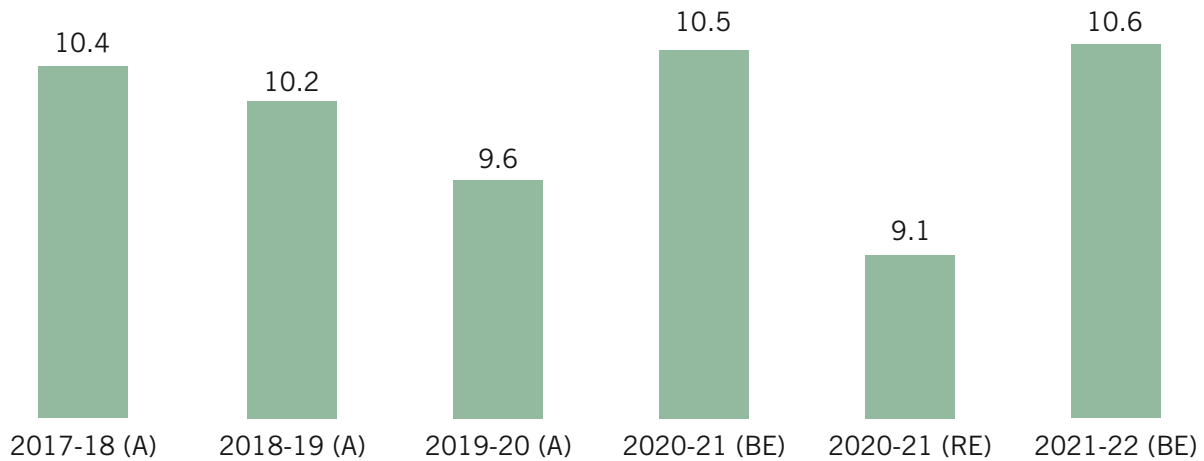
Source: State budget, 2021-22

It is obvious that the largest share of the education budget is allocated towards salary, pension and various incentives to teachers. In 2021-22, around 86% of total secondary education budget has been allocated for this component. However, given the huge shortage of teachers, there is a need for higher allocation towards this component as well.

The monetary and the non-monetary incentives for students together constitute around 6.1% of the total budget. While there is substantial improvement in school infrastructure in the last decade, a large number of schools continue to lack inclusive infrastructure. More than 60% schools do not have handrails, toilets accessible for students with disability, and incinerators (refer Figure 2.3). However, only 3.6% of the education budget has been allocated for infrastructure component.

Teachers' training, monitoring & evaluation are crucial components for improved learning but remain resource-starved. Out of the total secondary education budget for the state, a meagre 0.2% is allocated towards monitoring and 0.1% for teachers' training (Figure 4.2). From 2018-19 onwards, with the launch of SmSA, both the pre-service and in-service teachers' education became part of the scheme. The allocation mentioned above is in addition to what is being allocated under SmSA.

On average, a girl in India receives less than four years of education in her lifetime (UNESCO, 2014, as cited in Agapitova and Moreno, 2017). In the last two decades, several policy measures were adopted in India to promote girls' education. Yet, gender disparities in education are persistent especially at secondary and higher secondary levels. Girls face numerous barriers in their pursuit of formal education. Therefore, constant support and specific program strategies are required not only to bring them into schools, but also to retain them therein.

Figure 4.3: Expenditure specific to girls' education as % of total expenditure on secondary education

Source: Detailed demand for grants, state budget documents, various years

Undoubtedly, interventions carried out by the government to promote access, enrolment and retention also benefit girls. However, evidence reveals that such general interventions are not sufficient to address the issue of gender inequality. Additional and specific interventions targeted towards girls are necessary. This makes it important to analyse the nature of interventions involved in designing the secondary education budget.

The policy discourse shows that girls' education is now a state priority in Rajasthan. As discussed in section III, the government has undertaken a range of programmes and schemes to promote girls' education. While school education for girls is free, the state government has recently announced free education for all girls in state-run institutions to facilitate their smooth transition from schools to college.

Figure 4.3 shows that the government of Rajasthan is consistently spending around 10% of the total secondary education budget exclusively for schemes/programmes designed for girl students for the last five years. Some interventions that are being allocated a relatively higher proportion of resources include functioning of girls' schools, girls' hostels (especially for SC and ST girls), distribution of bicycles and scooties, and *Gargi Awards* for girls scoring 75% or higher marks in class 10 board examinations.

The state reported a vacancy of 186 seats against 11,900 targeted girls' enrolment in 119 Type-IV KGBVs (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021). Moreover, in 2021-22, only 2.1% of the total girls' specific allocation has been provisioned for KGBVs. This reflects a need for greater emphasis on improving enrolment therein.

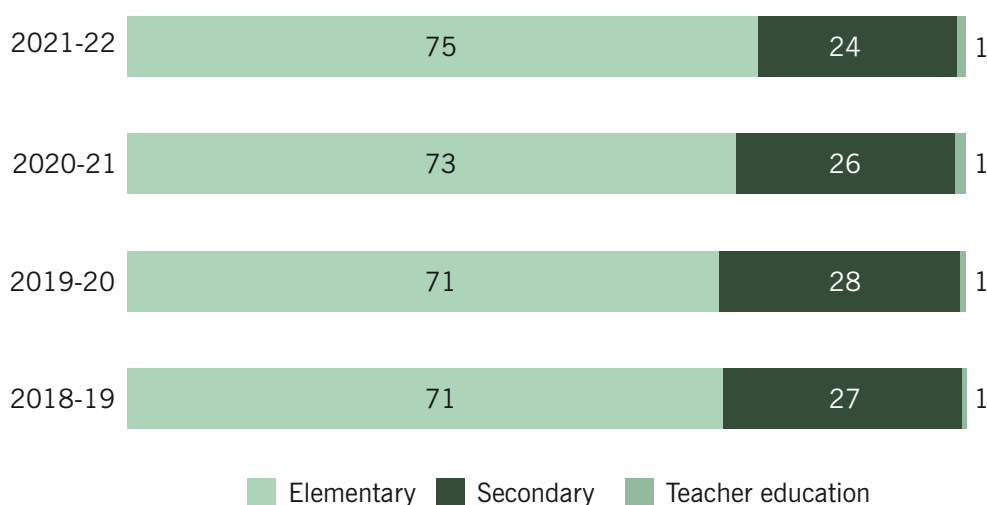
Section V

Planning and Budgeting for Girls' Secondary Education: A Special Focus on *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan*

SmSA is an overarching program for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12. It has been envisioned as a holistic approach towards school education. The SmSA framework recognises gender as a critical cross-cutting equity issue. Bridging gender and social category gaps at all levels of school education is one of the major objectives of the scheme. The equity agenda spelt out in the scheme is a move from an incentive and provision-based approach to an outcome-based approach (Kundu, 2019).

In 2020-21, Rajasthan had a total approved budget of Rs. 5,794 crores including a 17% spillover from the previous year. Of this total budget, Rs. 4,364 crores were approved for elementary education (EE), Rs. 1,382 crores for secondary education (SE), and Rs. 48 crores for teacher education (TE).

Figure 5.1: Distribution of approved outlay under SmSA for EE, SE and TE (%)



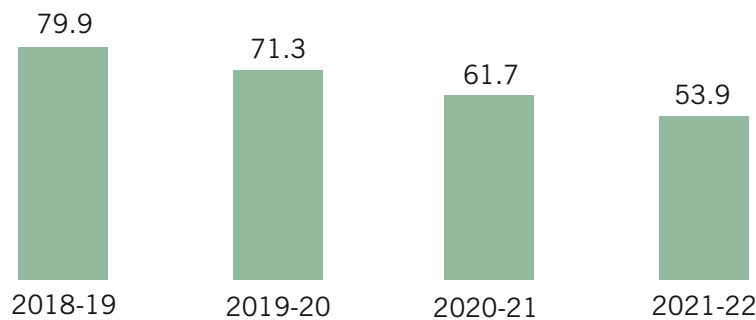
Source: Minutes of PAB meeting, SmSA, various years

The integration of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA), and Teacher Education was aimed at providing holistic education. Its objectives can be achieved only if the new scheme is able to identify where the gaps were, where more interventions are needed; and allocate resources accordingly (Kundu and Rastogi, 2020).

The pattern of allocation across these three components for the last four years shows a declining priority for secondary education. Almost 3/4th of the approved budget is allocated towards elementary education leaving only about 1/4th for secondary education. Unfortunately, bringing pre-service teacher education and in-service teachers' training under the purview of SmSA has not changed the scenario for teacher education. The approved budget for teacher education for the last four years remains a minuscule 1% of the total SmSA approval (Figure 5.1). As per Project Approval Board (PAB)

meeting minutes, 56% of academic positions are vacant in State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and 61% of these posts are vacant in 33 functional District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs) (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021). This clearly indicates the need for higher resource allocation towards teacher education.

Figure 5.2: Spillover in secondary education component as % of total spillover in the scheme

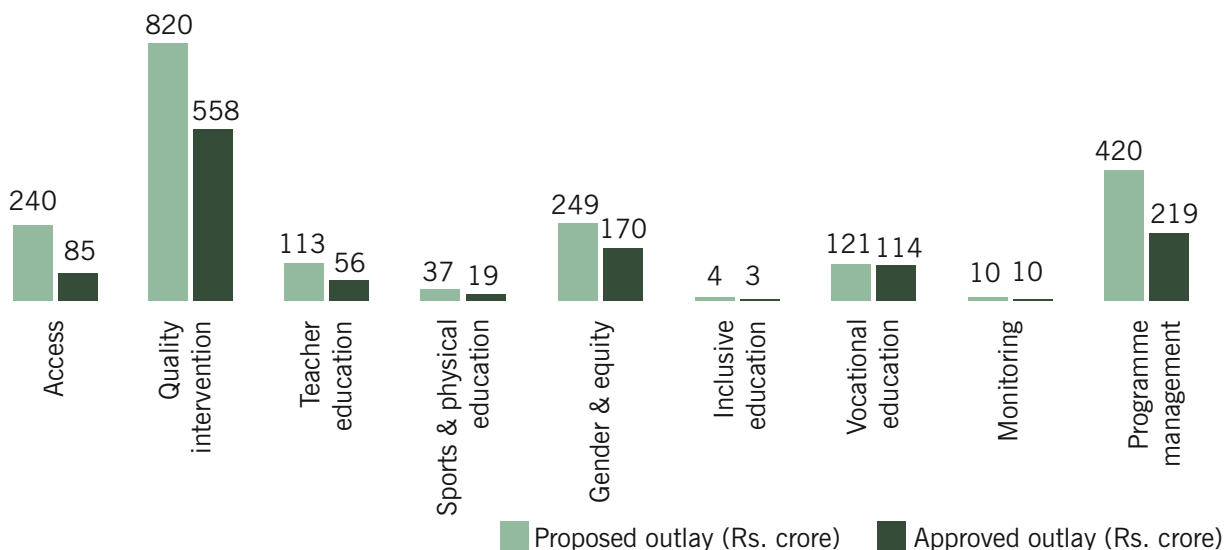


Source: Minutes of PAB meeting, SmSA, various years

The secondary education budget has been constantly shrinking in absolute terms. To make things worse, the approved allocation is also not being fully utilised. In 2018-19, almost 80% of the total spillover amount came from secondary education. This has certainly reduced over the years. Nevertheless, more than 50% of the amount approved under secondary education in 2020-21 remained unutilised. That is one of the reasons why the state has been receiving lower allocation from the Union government in the past consecutive years.

The distribution of the approved budget for SmSA reflects lower priority towards improving secondary education. This makes it all the more important to analyse how this money is getting distributed across different components. To understand this, the study compared the approved budget for all interventions reported in PAB minutes under secondary education with what was originally demanded by the states.

Figure 5.3: Comparison of proposed and approved outlay for various interventions under the secondary education component of SmSA (Rs. crore) – 2020-21



Source: Minutes of PAB meeting, SMSA, 2020-21

It is evident from Figure 5.3 that the amount approved was much lesser than what was originally proposed by the state for a majority of the interventions. This coupled with the under-utilisation of allocated funds hampers the effective implementation of interventions.

Table 5.1: Proposed v/s approved outlay under Gender & Equity component in secondary education – Rajasthan (2020-21)

	Proposed (Rs. crore)	Approved (Rs. crore)
KGBV-Type III (VI-XII)-(Non-Recurring)	14.2	14.1
KGBV- Type III-Recurring	104.0	85.0
KGBV - Type IV (Classes 9-12) (Non-Recurring) (New)	0.6	0.6
KGBV - Type IV (Recurring)	43.8	29.4
KGBV (Total)	163	129
Self-defence Training (up to Highest Class 10-12)	12.0	13.3
Special Projects for Equity - (NR) (Secondary) (Sanitary pad vending machine & incinerator)	55.0	13.0
Project- Girls Empowerment (Secondary)	19.6	14.2
Total	249	170

Source: Minutes of PAB meeting, SmSA, 2020-21

The gender-responsive component of SmSA, i.e., 'Gender & Equity', is the third largest intervention in terms of resource allocation. Its sub-components include KGBVs, self-defence training, provision of sanitary pad vending machines and incinerators, and girls' empowerment project. Projects for girls' empowerment are designed through interventions like adolescent programme, attendance and gender sensitisation, career guidance programme, online safety and digital learning skills.

Despite girls' education being one of the key priorities, only 68% of the total fund demanded under the Gender & Equity component has been approved. While the highest share of this component is allocated for KGBVs, other important components such as menstrual health of adolescent girls is largely neglected (Table 5.1). In order to avail more funds, the government of Rajasthan has converged self-defence training for girls with Nirbhaya fund. Hence, the approved budget is higher than the proposed budget for this particular component.

As per UDISE+ 2019-20, the state has 8,667 girls with disability studying at secondary and higher secondary level of education. However, the PAB minutes for 2020-21 show an approved allocation of Rs. 0.34 crore as stipend for 1,744 girls. This implies only 20% of the enrolled girls with disability are receiving the monetary support as stipulated in the guidelines, while 80% of the girls are not part of this benefit net. A total of Rs. 2.8 crore has been approved under SmSA for children with disability studying at secondary level. Given that these children are more vulnerable and a large number of children in the 15-19 age group are still out of school, there is a need for adequate resource support to make the scheme inclusive.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

There are no aided educational institutions in Rajasthan. Hence, the government remains a significant provider of secondary and higher secondary education. Over time, there has been substantial progress in the expansion of secondary education in the state. This is manifested in the increased access, coverage and quality of learning.

In terms of public investment in the sector, the spending on secondary education has increased by more than Rs. 10,000 crores in absolute numbers in the last five years. Compared with the total budget of the state, the rise is to the tune of 1.6 percentage points. This is definitely indicative of policy attention towards secondary education also reflected in gender-responsiveness in financing. From 2020-21, the state has exempted tuition fees for all girls studying in classes 9-12.

About 10% of secondary education budget is spent on provisions exclusively designed for girl students, largely in the form of monetary and non-monetary incentives, and girls' hostels. In the last few years, the state has witnessed a decline in dropout rates; and an improvement in retention and transition rates both from elementary to secondary and secondary to higher secondary levels. Probably, this outcome has a direct link with the improved public provisioning. It can also be inferred that with opportunities and adequate support, female students are performing at par with as well as outshining their male counterparts.

While the share of the state in secondary education is increasing, that of the Union government towards states through grants-in-aid is declining. This is observed in the case of SmSA. In the last four years (since its inception in 2018-19), there has been a decline in not only the amount of the approved outlay but also the share of secondary education within the total outlay.

Every year, there is a huge gap in the resource demanded by the state and those approved by Project Approval Board for each intervention under secondary education. The sub-components under the budget head of Gender & Equity largely cater to the construction of KGBVs, although this intervention also remains under-funded. The state government must demand resources for other crucial components such as menstrual health, and gender sensitisation of teachers. Unfortunately, in the last three years, the funds allocated under secondary component of SmSA have been under-utilised. More than 50% of the spillover in the SmSA scheme results from under-spending in secondary education.

Despite improvements in the overall status of girls' education in Rajasthan, these are most pronounced at the secondary level. At the higher secondary level, the state ranked at the bottom of the gender parity index. Many districts have persistent gender gaps as wide as 20%. Besides, an NER of less than 33.6% for girls at higher secondary level implies that in the absolute sense, a large number of girls in the 15-19 age group are still not part of the mainstream education in Rajasthan. Hence, the state has a long way to go to materialise the recommendation of universal access to school education as envisaged in the NEP 2020.

It has been established that completion of school education for girls is the most powerful and consistent factor contributing towards increase in earnings, labour force participation, social integration, political participation, improved personal and family's health, participation in household decision making, besides reduction in instances of child marriage and teenage pregnancy (Dollar & Gatti, 1999; CRY,



2020). Therefore, ensuring school education for all girls will also lead to larger benefits for the society.

In light of the findings from the analysis, this study suggests a range of viable policy measures that Rajasthan can implement to ensure quality secondary education for all girls.

Policy recommendations

Need for higher investment to universalise free secondary education to girls

Rajasthan has over 34 lakh girls in the age group of 15-19 years, who constitute 5% of its population. As per the 75th round of the National Statistical Office survey (2017-18), 24% of them dropped out before completing secondary education (NSO, 2019). The state is providing free secondary education, but additional financial resources are required to integrate the already dropped out children.

A national level cost estimate by CBGA-CRY shows that to provide free secondary education to a girl who has dropped out after completing elementary education, the government needs to spend an amount ranging from Rs. 35,650 to Rs. 49,182 per girl annually. As per this per capita estimate, the government would need at least Rs. 2,870 crores (approximate) in addition to the current expenditure. Besides, after COVID-19, there has been reverse migration of students from private schools to government schools. This would need additional resources to strengthen the existing public school system.

A sectoral analysis of the status of secondary education for girls is need of the hour

While Rajasthan has succeeded considerably in reducing gender disparity, gender inequality in secondary education persists as serious challenge, especially at the district level. Girls face various kinds of barriers including socio-economic, cultural, and institutional ones. Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors impacting their schooling decision in order to address their challenges. Development of a context-specific intervention requires a rigorous analysis of the gender situation across different regions, as well as social and economic groups. Unfortunately, non-availability of disaggregated data is a pressing challenge in policy domain. Effective policy implementation demands a thorough sectoral analysis and availability of data at disaggregated level.

Need for immediate recruitment of subject teachers and priorities for appointment of women teachers

Acute shortage of women teachers in secondary schools acts as a barrier to girls' enrolment, especially in educationally backward and sparsely populated districts. In Rajasthan, the percentage of women teachers is far below the national average and it varies from district to district. At the secondary level, the percentage of women teachers across the state is 29% against a national average of 44% as per data from UDISE+ 2019-20. While 42% schools are without minimum four subject teachers, the shortage of women in maths and science teachers is more acute across the districts (Jandhyala and Ramachandran, 2015). Further, as a large number of government girls' schools do not offer these subjects, girls, especially those from marginalised communities have limited access to science and math education. The government should fill the vacant posts immediately and preference should be given to women teachers. In accordance with the RMSA norm, incentives should be provided to women teachers to encourage them to take up rural posting.

Prioritising construction and upgradation of KGBV-Type IV schools with provision of hostels

With the launch of SmSA, the erstwhile Girls Hostel component of RMSA has been subsumed under KGBV-Type IV. The objective is to provide access and quality education to girls from disadvantaged groups. For this, residential schools up to senior secondary level are set up to reduce gender gaps at all levels of school education in the Educationally Backward Blocks. Due to the abysmally low unit cost of civil works, a substantial amount of non-recurring budget for construction of KGBVs under SmSA remains unutilised.

The state government should prioritise establishing Type-IV KGBVs in critical locations where there are no secondary schools. In this regard, there is also a need for upward revision of unit cost for civil works. Above all, a cooperative and convergent approach among the departments of secondary school education, higher education, and social welfare is necessary to ensure access to schools for girls from marginalised communities.

Need for expanding the coverage of as well as upward revision of scholarship amount for girls

Literature have shown that monetary incentives, especially stipends and scholarships are strong enablers for girls' enrolment and retention in school. However, barring pre-matric and post-matric scholarships for girls from reserved categories, and an annual assistance by the agriculture department to girls studying agriculture-related subjects at the senior secondary level, there are no other monetary incentives for girl students in Rajasthan. There is a need to incentivise girl students in accordance with their demands. An expansion of coverage of scholarships could help in retaining more girls in the system.

Creating gender sensitivity and awareness among community members

Notwithstanding several interventions, Rajasthan lags far behind in girls' education in comparison to other states. One of the factors responsible for this outcome is the patriarchal mindset of people. The patriarchal structure of the society deprives girls from availing their basic human rights. As a conscious policy decision, the state government must promote gender-responsive policies across all sectors. A substantial share of SmSA budget should be spent on gender-sensitisation training of teachers, school management committee members, as well as community members.

Enhance investment in creating and institutionalising child protection policies

NEP 2020 acknowledges the importance of ensuring girls' safety as an enabler to complete their education. There is also growing evidence on children's increased presence online which has only been accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This points towards an urgent need to prioritise investment in creating robust child protection policies to ensure safety en-route and within schools, alongside components on cyber safety. In addition, investments need to be made for capacity-building of teachers, children, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure a safe learning environment for girls.

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Annexure

Table 1: Projected population in 15-19 age group and gender-wise distribution in 2021 – Rajasthan

Population			Proportion of total population (in %)		
Female	Male	Persons	Female	Male	Persons
37,06,000	40,70,000	77,76,000	9.6	10.0	9.8

Source: National Commission on Population (2020, p. 190-191)

Table 2: Population in 15-19 age group by gender and social categories – Rajasthan

	Female	Male	Persons
Total	34,24,143	38,89,874	73,14,017
SC	6,17,902	7,30,559	13,48,461
ST	4,73,592	4,99,318	9,72,910

Source: Census 2011

Table 3: Enrolment in secondary and higher secondary sections by gender and social category – Rajasthan

	Enrolment			Proportion of total enrolment in %		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
General	3,57,786	4,52,568	8,10,354	18.1	18.2	18.2
OBC	9,81,407	12,61,684	22,43,091	49.6	50.9	50.3
SC	3,66,927	4,51,686	8,18,613	18.5	18.2	18.4
ST	2,73,548	3,14,014	5,87,562	13.8	12.7	13.2
Total	19,79,668	24,79,952	44,59,620	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: UDISE+ 2019-20

Table 4: Estimates of out of school children in the age group 14-17 – Rajasthan

	Female	Male	Total
Projected population - 2021	29,42,000	32,26,000	61,68,000
Enrolment - 2019-20	19,79,668	24,79,952	44,59,620
Out of school children (Projection - enrolment)	9,62,332	7,46,048	17,08,380

Source: Authors' computations based on UDISE+ 2019-20

Table 5: Population with disability in 10-19 age group – Rajasthan

Female	Male	Persons
87,385	1,30,234	2,17,619

Source: Census 2011

Table 6: Number of students with disability in secondary and higher secondary section – Rajasthan

Female	Male	Total
8,667	12,148	20,815

Source: UDISE+ 2019-20



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