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



Discussion Paper



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List of Acronyms

| | |
|--------|--|
| BC | Backward Classes |
| BPL | Below Poverty Line |
| DIET | District Institute of Education and Training |
| EBC | Economically Backward Classes |
| EE | Elementary Education |
| GER | Gross Enrolment Ratio |
| ICDS | Integrated Child Development Scheme |
| IIT | Indian Institute of Technology |
| KGBV | <i>Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya</i> |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| NCERT | National Council of Educational Research and Training |
| NEET | National Eligibility cum Entrance Test |
| NEP | National Education Policy |
| NER | Net Enrolment Ratio |
| NSO | National Statistical Office |
| PAB | Project Approval Board |
| PTR | Pupil-Teacher Ratio |
| RMSA | <i>Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan</i> |
| RTE | Right to Education |
| SC | Scheduled Caste |
| SCERT | State Council of Educational Research and Training |
| SE | Secondary Education |
| SmSA | <i>Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan</i> |
| ST | Scheduled Tribe |
| TE | Teacher Education |
| TEI | Teacher Education Institutions |
| UDISE+ | Unified District Information System for Education Plus |
| WDCW | Women Development and Child Welfare |



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Section I

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, both in terms of real financial cost and 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, government has a huge role to play in ensuring quality education for all girls. 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 the states to ensure quality secondary education accessible to all girls.

Telangana is one of the states that has prioritised school education as a key areas of governance. The state has announced as well as adopted a number of measures to promote girls' education in recent past. One of the important interventions is free education for all girls from pre-primary till post-graduation level (Mondal, 2017). 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 initiatives taken by government for prioritising girls' education and the quantum of fiscal support associated with those policy measures. This policy brief aims to discuss how Telangana government has financed and incentivised girls' education at secondary level. It also aims to illustrate good practices by the state 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 Telangana?
2. How does the Telangana government 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. Following a brief introduction in Section I, Section II describes the status of secondary education in Telangana, particularly the status of girls. Section III maps the existing interventions of Telangana 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 patterns at secondary level alongside examining the gender responsiveness of the 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.



Section II

Status of Secondary Education in Telangana

This section provides a bird's eye view of the performance of Telangana across various educational indicators at secondary level. The indicators selected represent various dimensions of education such as access, infrastructure, quality and learning enhancement. Before looking at 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 Telangana in this age group shall be over 24.2 lakhs in 2021. Of these, girls comprise over 11.7 lakhs while boys constitute around 12.5 lakhs. The actual enrolment in 2019-20 was over 18.3 lakhs with an almost equal gender distribution. In fact, the number of girls was slightly higher than that of boys. Thus, it can be said that over 5.9 lakh adolescents in the said age group are either not in an age-appropriate grade or out of school. Of these, over 2.5 lakh are girls while almost 3.4 lakh are boys (UDISE+ 2019-20).

A social group-wise distribution shows a population of over 3.2 lakh Scheduled Caste (SC) and over 1.9 lakh Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in the secondary and higher secondary sections in Telangana. These comprise 18.1% and 10.3% of the total enrolment at the same levels of education, respectively. In addition, around 52.3% of all students enrolled belong to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category.

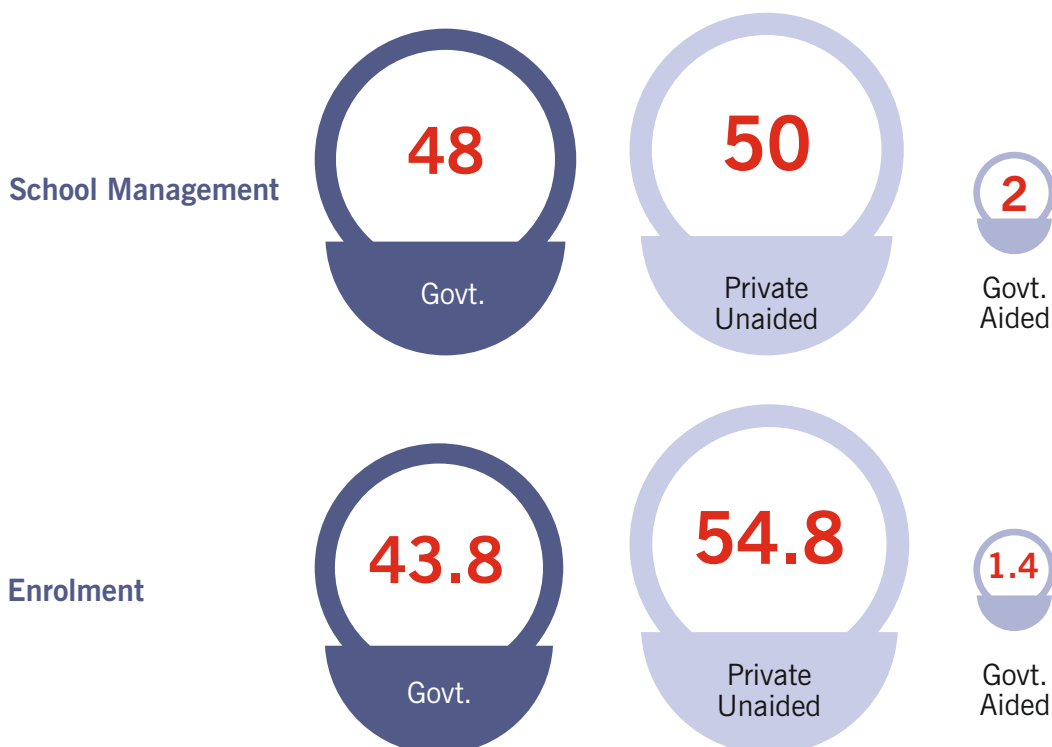
Around 12.2% of the 3.52 crore population of the state has some form of disability, compared to the all-India average of only 2.2%. Prevalence of disability is around 4% among the 0-17 age group in Telangana (CBM & PHFI, 2014).

Access

According to data from Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+ 2019-20), Telangana has about 42.5 thousand schools for classes 1-12. More than 3 lakh teachers teach in these schools where over 69.3 lakh students are enrolled. Government schools constitute an overwhelming 70.5% of these schools. More than 7.1 thousand schools (around 16.8%) out of the total are government and government-aided secondary and higher secondary schools. The Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTR) are 1:10 (secondary) and 1:22 (higher secondary), better than 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 – Telangana (2019-20)



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

Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

As per UDISE+ data for 2019-20, nearly 45.2% students are enrolled in government and aided schools. The latter also comprise about half of all schools. Low Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at secondary (57%) and higher secondary levels (30.9%) is an area of concern. While the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is above 100% at the elementary level, it declines to about 88% at the secondary level and nearly 57.2% 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 show a grimmer picture. These also have a bearing on transition and dropout rates discussed later in this section.

Telangana has an equal proportion of private unaided as well as government and aided schools. However, the enrolment is 9.6% higher at the former than the latter. Few reasons for the popularity of private schools are a preference for English medium of instruction, and perceptions about inferior quality of government schools (Central Square Foundation, 2021). The tides seem to have turned after the COVID-19 pandemic as government schools have reported a rise by 1.14 lakh students in enrolment for 2021-2022 (Pisharody, 2021). A major contributor to this shift is the financial crunches induced by the pandemic, which make private school fees unaffordable for a large number of families. 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 – Telangana (2019-20)



Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

Gender discrimination within families results from the devaluation of girls' education. This is manifested in the higher proportion of female enrolment in government institutions, the gap being wider at the higher secondary level. Gender gaps persist in private aided and unaided schools and are appallingly wider in the former. At the secondary level, the gender gap in private unaided school enrolment is over 10%. Given the son preference of families, boys are more likely to be enrolled in private institutions which are expensive and said to offer quality education. Moreover, the proportion of SC and ST students enrolled in government institutions is about 50% and 65%, respectively (Jeyaranjan, 2017). Given the predominance of socially disadvantaged students in government schools, it can also be assumed that marginalised girls are most likely to be enrolled therein.

The gender parity index of gross enrolment ratio for the state is 1.02, marginally above the national average of 1.00 at the secondary level. The corresponding figure is 1.16 against an all-India average of 1.04 at the higher secondary level. However, the ASER survey 2018 revealed that around 6.2% girls aged 15-16 years are not in school in rural Telangana (ASER Centre, 2019). Dropout rates after completing class 8 are as high as 30% and 49% in Nalgonda and Khammam districts, respectively (Jeyaranjan, 2017). Efforts must thus be directed towards preventing dropouts and integrating out of school girls within the secondary education system.

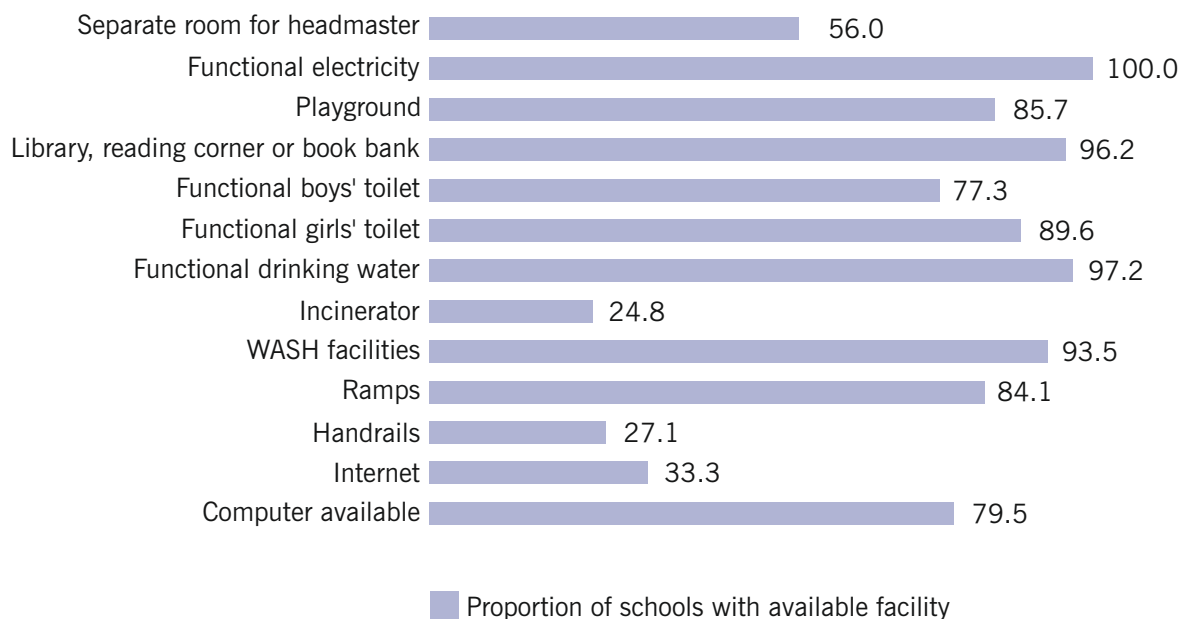
Availability of infrastructure

Adequate infrastructure facilities can improve schooling experience and encourage attendance. SmSA norms mandate classrooms with furniture, laboratories, libraries, playgrounds, and functional separate



toilet blocks for girls and boys, and WASH facilities in new as well as upgraded schools. Gender & Equity is an important component under the SmSA framework. Addressing concerns of equity and inclusion necessitates provision of operational infrastructural facilities which are accessible to all students.

Figure 2.3: Status of infrastructure in government secondary and higher secondary schools – Telangana (2019-20)



Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

Government schools fare worse than private unaided schools in terms of availability of infrastructural facilities. While it is commendable that all government schools have functional electricity, over 10% of these lack functional girls' toilets and over 20% do not have functional toilets for boys. Less than one in four schools has an incinerator on premises. It is well-known that period absenteeism hinders the participation of girls in schools, and lack of sanitation facilities can result in dropouts for girls once they start menstruating. This can only be addressed by the provision of functional toilet blocks for girls with sanitary pad dispensers, incinerators, handwash and running water facilities on school premises.

School closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have shifted classrooms online. It is not possible to ensure access to online education for all unless young students have access to digital technology (Kundu and Ambast, 2021). About 20% schools do not have access to computers, whereas internet facility is available in only one out of three schools. Online learning during the pandemic has made it imperative for schools to have internet facilities for teaching and learning that students, teachers, as well as staff can make use of.

Further, ensuring inclusion entails creating enabling infrastructure for students with disability such as ramps, handrails, equipment, furniture, and toilets with adaptations. More than 9 thousand students with disability are enrolled across all types of school managements in secondary and higher secondary



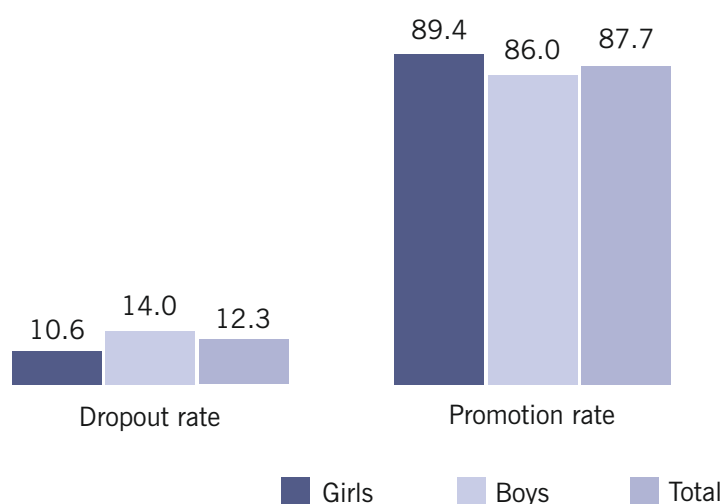
sections, of which 49% are girls. It can be assumed that a substantial proportion of adolescents with disability are out of school.

Ramps are available in about 84% government schools, but handrails are missing in over 72% of these. With over 97.5% of schools across all levels of management and education lacking toilets friendly for students with disability, the state lies among the bottom three in terms of proportion of schools with access to this facility. Without suitable arrangements, students with disability are less likely to enrol and more likely to dropout from school. Immediate attention must be paid towards accommodating their needs for their greater inclusion and participation in all schools.

Quality and learning

Following a brief glimpse of access to education and availability of infrastructure, select indicators of quality and learning are examined below.

Figure 2.4: Secondary dropout and promotion rates by gender – Telangana (2019-20) (in %)

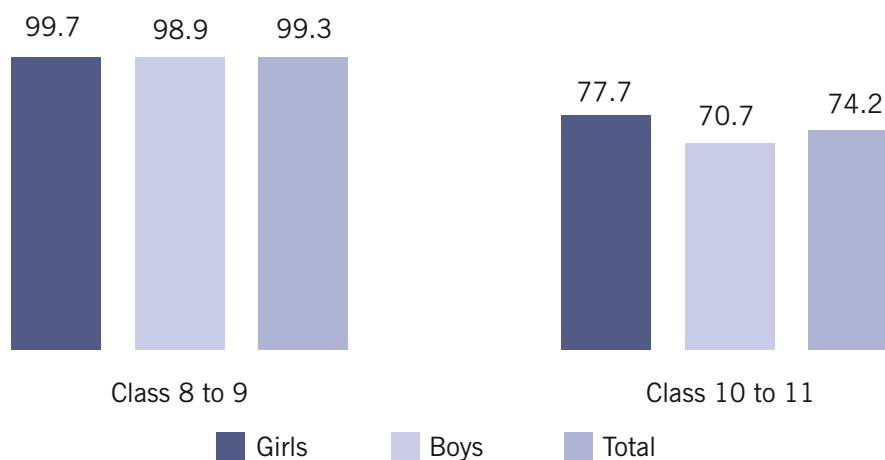


Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

It is remarkable that no repeaters were recorded at the higher secondary and secondary levels. Similarly, virtually no dropouts are recorded at the primary and upper primary levels in the state (UDISE+, 2019-20). However, the dropout rates hover around 12% at the secondary level. In all the three aspirational districts of the state – Jayashakar Bhupalpally, Khammam, and Asifabad, the dropout rate at secondary level is higher than 15%.

The incidence of dropout across state is higher for boys than for girls. This sharp jump only reinforces the need for greater policy attention towards tackling the crisis of high secondary dropouts in the state. These instances of dropout must be minimised through outreach initiatives aimed at students from socially vulnerable backgrounds, all the more necessary during the pandemic. Schools have opened from September 1, 2021, but the challenges of following COVID-appropriate behaviour and preventing mass outbreaks of cases in schools cannot be neglected.



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

Source: UDISE+ data 2019-20

Transition rates are high at the secondary level but decline at the higher secondary level due to dropouts after finishing class 10. It is worth noting that girls outshine boys with respect to both promotion and transition rates. This only reinforces the importance of supporting girls' education, as they perform better than boys if provided opportunities, resources and facilities.

Moreover, teachers with professional qualifications can help enhance learning outcomes. Over 83% of the secondary and higher secondary teachers in government schools hold a B.Ed., M.Ed., or equivalent qualification. However, learning outcomes can be improved. As per the National Achievement Survey 2017-18 for class 10 (cycle 2), the performance of students from Telangana was at par with the national average for Mathematics and Social Sciences, better at Science and English, but worse at Modern Indian Languages (NCERT, n.d.).

As the government of Telangana gears up for implementing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, challenges abound ("Telangana ready to implement," n.d.). The state has performed poorly on the Performance Grading Index 2019-20 out of 33 states and union territories, securing the 19th rank in access to education, 21st in infrastructure and facilities for school education, 26th in governance processes as well as equity (including access to girls' toilets), and 12th in learning outcomes ("Telangana fares poorly," 2021). The road ahead is thus long, with many hurdles to cross and targets to be achieved.



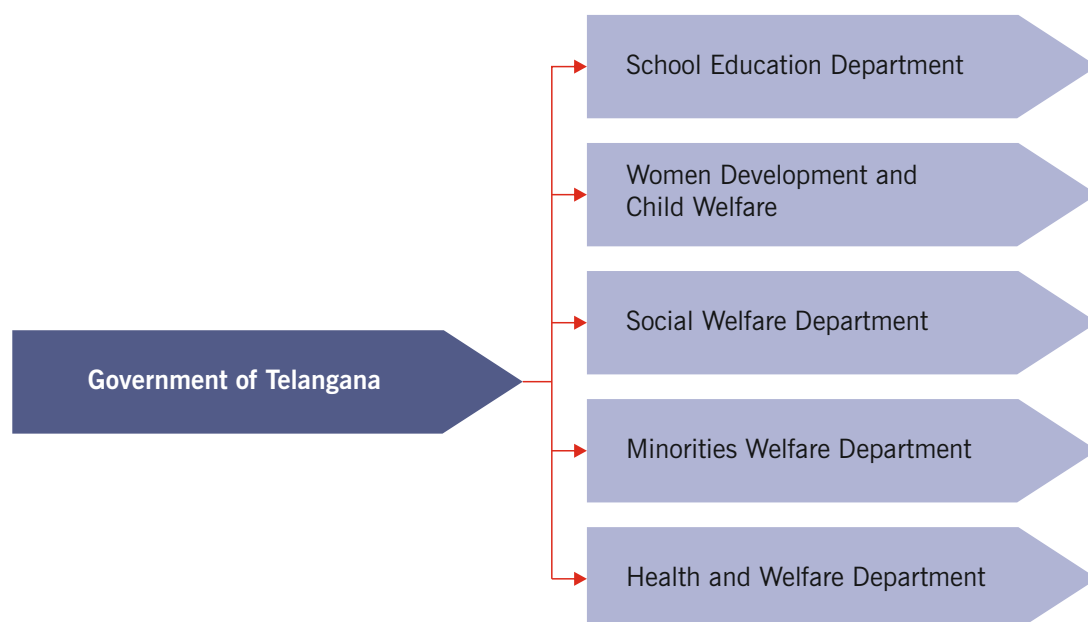
Section III

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

It would be interesting to explore the female-centric interventions of the government of Telangana following a brief glimpse of the state of secondary education in the state. As per UDISE+ data for 2019-20, the retention rate for girls at the secondary and higher secondary level are 70.3% and 48.6%, respectively. These are higher than that of boys in the state as well as above the national average. However, there is potential for improvement at the higher secondary level.

The government of Telangana proposed to provide free education for girls up to postgraduation level in 2018 ("Telangana govt to provide free education," 2018). Alongside other interventions to promote girls' education, this has had a positive impact in terms of increase in higher secondary enrolment of girls in 2019-20 over that in 2018-19. The most encouraging outcomes can be observed in a decline of over 10.5% in secondary dropout rates of girls across all social categories. The plunge has been most pronounced for ST girls by over 14%. Various schemes and incentives run by various departments of the state government which have helped in advancing girls' secondary education are elaborated in later parts of this section.

Figure 3.1: Telangana state government departments spending on secondary education



Source: Telangana Socio Economic Outlook 2021



The Department of School Education is the nodal agency managing secondary education. It is supported by various other departments which provide scholarships and incentives, establish and maintain residential hostels, and implement health and empowerment schemes for adolescent girls. Under the Gender & Equity component of SmSA, Telangana focuses on residential schools (KGBVs), self-defence training, and special projects. These projects for equity comprise adolescent clubs, SC/ST-oriented activities, measures for girls' empowerment, and provision of incinerators in schools.

Schemes and programmes to promote secondary education for girls

These can be categorised as residential schools, scholarships and incentives, and development initiatives for girls.

Figure 3.2: Telangana government schemes for promoting secondary education for girls

| Schemes/incentives to promote secondary education for girls | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Residential schools | | | Scholarships and incentives | | | | Initiatives for development of girls | |
| Free education and accommodation | KGBVs for girls | Hostels for SCs, STs, BCs, Minorities, and students with disabilities | Free education, textbooks, uniforms | Schemes for ST students | Mid-day meals scheme up to degree college | School readiness programmes for students with disabilities | Telangana <i>Balika Arogya Raksha</i> Kits Scheme | Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for empowerment of adolescent girls (SABLA scheme) |

Source: Telangana FM Budget speech 2021-22, Telangana Socio Economic Outlook 2021

Residential schools

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) are run by *Samagra Shiksha* Telangana State under the Commissioner and Director of School Education. Free textbooks, residential and medical facilities, vocational education, and other support to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds are provided at KGBVs. However, 2,906 seats were vacant against a capacity of 67,440 in KGBV Type-II schools (classes 6-12), while the vacancy was 3,063 against a targeted enrolment of 21,600 in KGBV Type-IV schools (classes 9-12) in May 2020 (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2020). The number of Type-II and Type-IV school buildings under construction were 40 and 30, respectively. These gaps must be addressed immediately for the benefit of more girls.



Table 3.1: Residential educational institutions for socially disadvantaged students in Telangana

| Name of the institution | Parent department | Classes covered | Total number of residential schools sanctioned | Proportion of institutions for girls (2020) |
|--|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society | Ministry of Scheduled Caste Development Department, Government of Telangana | Class 5 to undergraduation | 268 (2019-20) | 65% |
| Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (<i>Gurukulam</i>) | Ministry of Tribal Welfare, Government of Telangana | Class 5 to undergraduation | 133 | N.A. |
| Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Institutions Society | Minorities Welfare Department, Government of Telangana | Class 5 to intermediate (class 12) | 204 (2018-19) | 50% |
| <i>Mahatma Jyotiba Phule</i> Telangana Backward Classes Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society | Backward Classes Welfare Department, Government of Telangana | Class 5 to undergraduation | 281 (2019-20) | 48.6% |

Source: Telangana Socio Economic Outlook 2021

As of 2021, there are 970 residential schools in the state providing free accommodation, textbooks, and uniforms to students. As per the budget speech of 2021-22, the annual expenditure by the state government is Rs. 1 lakh per student. However, admission to most of these schools is done via common entrance tests. This can deprive students from marginalised communities from admission to these schools as they cannot afford tuitions and lack academic support to clear these exams. Besides, it must be noted that all these residential schools remained closed since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Ramu, 2021). It is essential that all residential schools are equipped with COVID-appropriate arrangements and medical facilities for the over 4.2 lakh enrolled students to return and continue studying without disruption.

Scholarships

Pre- and post-matric scholarships or fee reimbursement are provided to SC, ST, Backward Classes (BC), Economically Backward Classes (EBC), minorities, and students with disability. The Departments of Social Welfare, Scheduled Castes Development, Tribal Welfare, Backward Classes Welfare, Minorities Welfare, and Women Development and Child Welfare are responsible for these.



Incentives

Poor and BC students studying in government institutions are eligible for free education. In addition, intermediate students (classes 11 and 12) studying in government junior colleges are also provided free education and textbooks. The Department of Tribal Welfare runs Tribal *Gurukulam* schools where free coaching is provided for IIT/NEET examinations which students appear for after class 12. It is remarkable that the state government has extended the mid-day meals scheme to students of classes 9-10 (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2019). All government schools, local body, aided schools, *Madrasa* schools as well as those run under the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language are implementing this scheme. Besides, over 7,800 students with disability are availing physiotherapy and speech therapy alongside training by special educators as a part of the School Readiness programme in 467 *Bhavitha* Centres. These are Inclusive Education Resource Centres functioning in the state under SmSA.

Initiatives for development of girls

Telangana *Balika Arogya Raksha* Kits scheme is being implemented across KGBVs, Model High Schools, *Zilla Parishad* high schools, government and aided high schools since 2018 (“Promoting personal hygiene,” 2018). The Department of Health, Medical and Family Welfare provides health and hygiene kits to adolescent girls under this scheme. Girls from class 6 onwards are provided kits of 13 essential items such as toothpaste, soap, comb, and sanitary napkins every three months, at an annual unit cost of Rs. 1,600 for the state government.

The Department of Women Development and Child Welfare (WDCW) manages the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA). Health, hygiene, nutrition, adolescent reproductive and sexual health, life skills education, and mainstreaming of out of school girls are the thrust areas. The scheme is centrally sponsored except the nutrition component wherein the state government also contributes half of the total funding. It is aimed at adolescent girls aged 11-18 years in more than 200 aspirational districts across the country including three from Telangana. Girls aged 16-18 are also provided vocational education. Similarly, *Kishori Shakti Yojana* is a centrally sponsored scheme for empowering adolescent girls which is also implemented by the Department of WDCW.

COVID-19 response measures

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in learning losses for children due to indefinite school closures. The Department of WDCW has announced that children who lost their parents to the pandemic shall be provided a monthly financial assistance of Rs. 2,000; ration kits, and smartphones preloaded with emergency contact numbers, and those without guardians shall be accommodated in children's homes (“Telangana: Children who lost,” 2021). Counselling of students and monitoring the implementation of these initiatives is necessary to ensure that their education is not compromised.

Learning via mobile apps, *Doordarshan* and other channels, and WhatsApp is being encouraged. Not all students have access to these, which makes it imperative to bridge the digital divide so that no child is left behind. Measures such as access to smart devices, data packs, mobile libraries, and outreach initiatives for out of school children and students with disability in small groups with COVID-appropriate behaviour are essential to sustain learning and retain students from vulnerable and disadvantaged households.



As a state newly formed in 2014, the challenges before its government are plenty. The pandemic has exacerbated the existing problems, but also reinforced that gender and equity concerns must no longer be overlooked. More incentives such as distribution of bicycles, tablets/smartphones, and creating friendly and safer school environments can boost the participation of girls as schools have reopened.



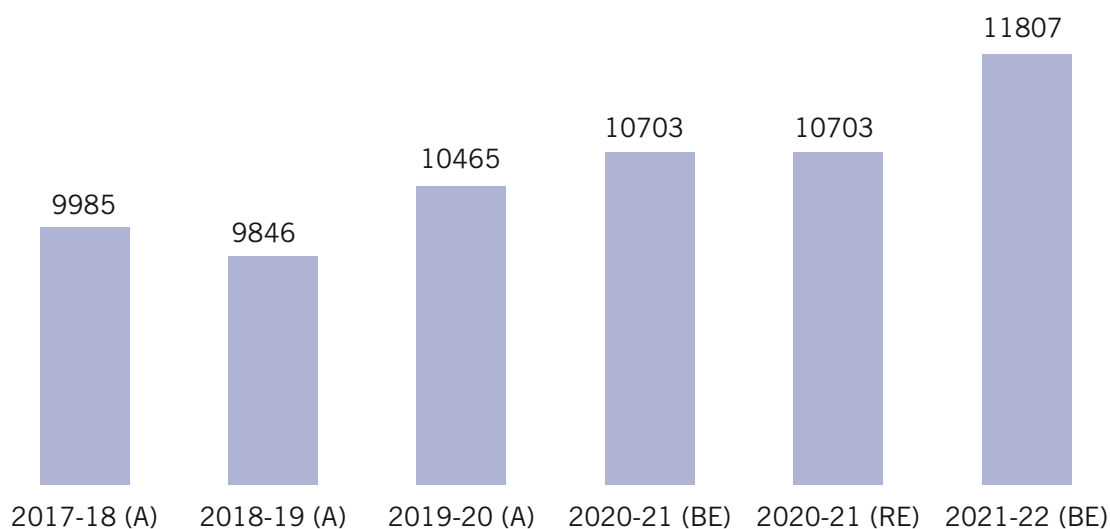
Section IV

Government financing of secondary education in Telangana: How gender-inclusive?

While the mapping of interventions at secondary level indicates government efforts towards improving girls' education, it is also important to see how sustainable and inclusive these interventions are. Alongside many other factors, adequate allocation of financial resources is crucial for effective implementation of schemes on the ground. This section examines how the government of Telangana is financing secondary education over time and whether the government is adopting a gender-responsive approach in its budgeting process.

As per 2021-22 state budget document, five departments (refer Figure 3.1) are largely spending on secondary education. While total spending by all the departments accounts for Rs. 11,807 crores in 2021-22 (BE), a closer look reveals a substantial increase in budgetary allocation this financial year in comparison to the state spending in the last five years on secondary education. However, the share for secondary education in total budget of the state has decreased from 7% in 2017-18 (A) to 5.1% in 2021-22 (BE). This indicates a declining budgetary priority for the overall secondary education sector.

Figure 4.1: Telangana state government spending on secondary education (Rs. crore)

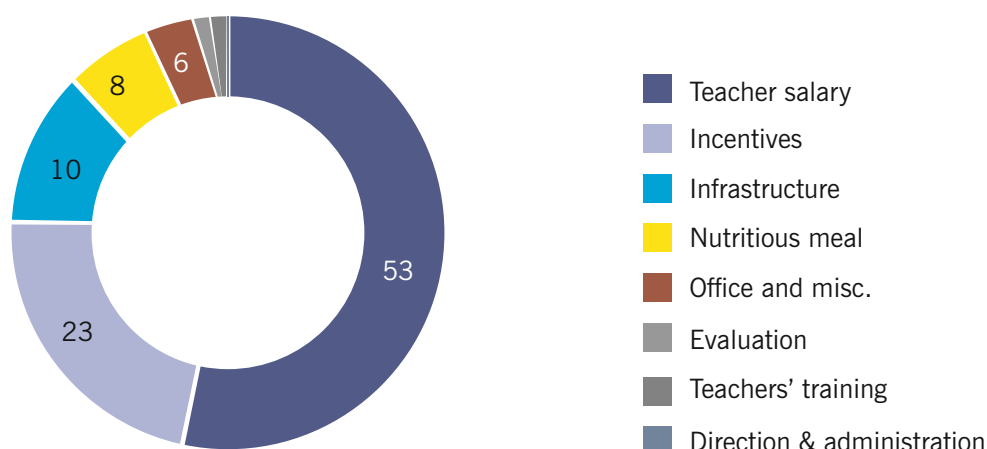


Source: State budget documents, various years

Shortage of teachers is a serious concern in Telangana. The state currently has 81,736 government and government aided school teachers teaching at secondary and higher secondary level, of which 46% are female teachers, as per UDISE+ 2019-20. However, 18% of the posts of teachers and 56% of those of head teachers are vacant in government secondary schools against the total posts sanctioned for classes 9-10. The shortage of subject teachers is not too acute in Telangana. Almost 84% secondary schools have teachers for all core subjects, which reflects in relatively better PTR in the state in comparison to most of the southern states. Subject PTR at the secondary level is 41 for language, 37 for science subjects, 54 for mathematics and 73 for Social Studies (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2020).



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



Source: Telangana state budget 2021-22

It is obvious that the largest proportion of the education budget is spent on salary, pension, and various incentives for teachers. In 2021-22, around 53% of total secondary education budget has been allocated for teachers' salary. However, given the shortage of teachers, there is a need for higher allocation for this component as well.

The second largest share of secondary education budget (23%) is expended on various monetary incentives to students. These include scholarships and reimbursement of coaching fees for students. The budget estimate of the state Department of Education reports a grant-in-aid of Rs. 100 crores under the budget head of 'Universalisation of Secondary Education' (ANDARIKIVIDYA).

Studies have shown that the decision of parents to continue with their daughters' education once the latter attain puberty depends upon the availability of schools with proper infrastructure and effective implementation of government programmes and schemes (Kannabiran et al., 2017). Therefore, access to secondary schools and an enabling school environment are important determinants of decisions regarding girls' education.

Around 10% of the secondary education budget has been allocated towards school infrastructure. A large proportion of the secondary education budget has been allocated for residential hostels, special residential schools, and ashram schools for imparting quality education for the development of SC and ST children.

In the last five years, the number of residential schools for SCs has increased from 134 in 2014 to 268 in 2021, whereas that for STs has risen from 96 to 133. Notwithstanding the substantial improvements in school infrastructure in the last five years, a large number of schools lack inclusive infrastructure. To illustrate, around 23% schools do not have functional toilets for boys, 75% schools do not have incinerators, and 73% schools are without handrails (refer Figure 2.3). This emphasises the need for prioritising inclusive infrastructure especially for girls and students with disability.

One of the laudable initiatives of the state is the provision of nutritious meals to children at secondary level. Almost 8% of the total secondary education budget has been allocated this year for implementing

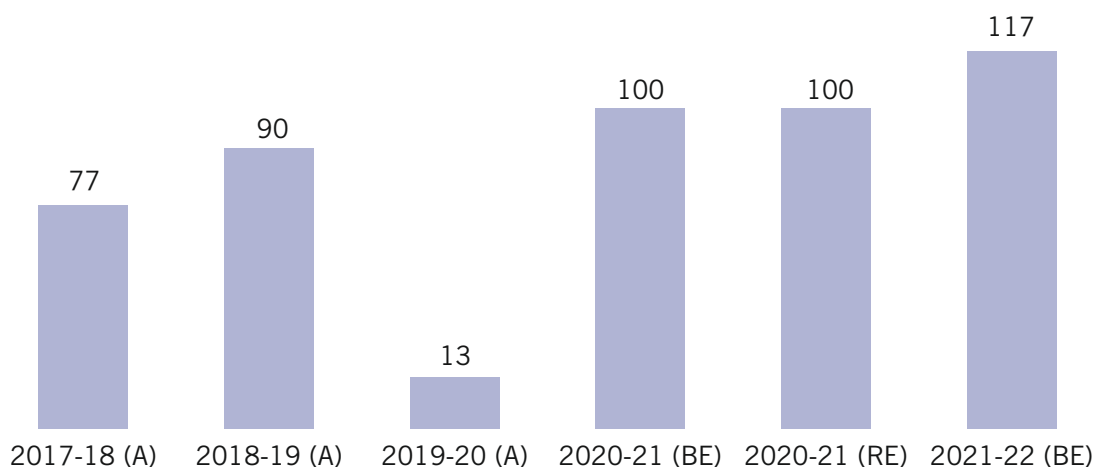


this programme. However, teachers' training, monitoring & evaluation are crucial components for improved learning but remain terribly resource-starved. A meagre 0.1% of total secondary education budget has been allocated for teachers' training and 0.2% for evaluation in 2021-22 (BE) (Figure 4.2).

Following the launch of SmSA, both the pre-service and the in-service teachers' education became part of the scheme 2018-2019 onwards. Teachers' training is being financed almost entirely through SmSA. It is important to note that the Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) are functioning at below optimal level due to shortage of human resources. Beginning 2011-12, every year the state has received the necessary approval to construct two DIET buildings every year, but this has not been done. Thus, there is a need for the state to allocate resources adequately for institution-building (infrastructure as well as human resources) in order to ensure the availability of a cadre of professionally qualified teachers.

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 to promote girls' education in India. 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 the schools but also to retain them therein.

Figure 4.3: Telangana – expenditure specific to girls' education reported in the state budget (Rs. crore)



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 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 being undertaken by the government of Telangana while designing the secondary education budget.

The policy discourse shows that the girls' education is now a state priority in Telangana. As discussed in section III, the government has taken some concrete initiatives to promote girls' education. In 2018-19, the state government proposed a scheme namely 'TS KG to PG Free and Compulsory Education Scheme' to facilitate the smooth transition of girls from school to college. However, studies have also



shown that despite education being free in government schools, 60% of the girls had to pay annual school fees as much as Rs. 700 up to elementary school level, Rs. 845 at high school level, and Rs. 1,500 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 events such as sports competitions, annual day, and so on (M.V. Foundation, 2015).

Figure 4.3 shows the spending of Telangana government on girls' education in the last five years. The budget for schemes exclusively designed for girls have got higher allocation. The interventions are largely through grants-in-aid to programmes for adolescent girls in schools, and construction of school buildings for girls in Naxal-affected areas. The only exception is 2018-19 (A), where the expenditure was Rs. 13 crores due to under-utilisation of funds in civil works.



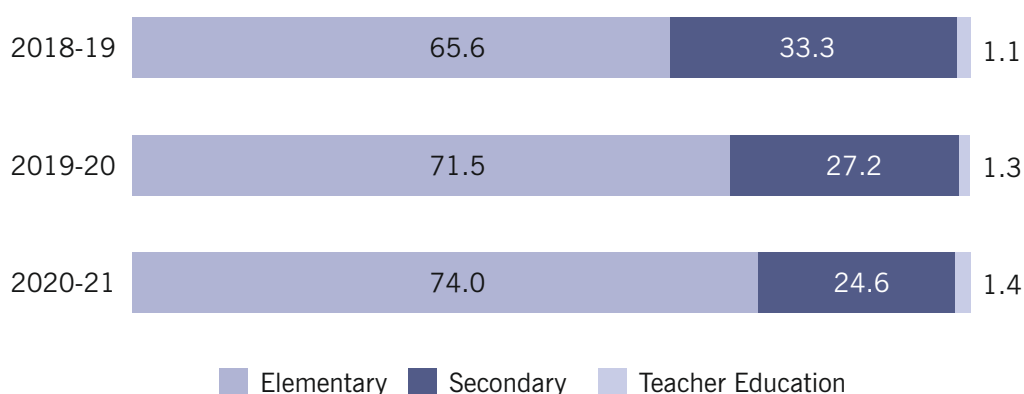
Section V

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, Telangana had a total approved budget of Rs. 2,286 crores including a 30% spillover from the previous year. Out of this total budget, Rs. 1,691 crores have been approved for elementary education (EE), Rs. 563 crores for secondary education (SE), and Rs. 32 crores for teacher education (TE).

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



Source: Minutes of PAB meeting, SmSA, various years

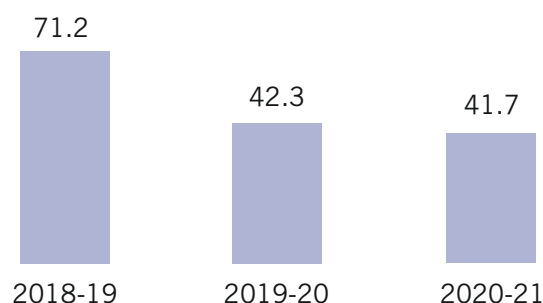
The integration of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA), and Teacher Education was aimed at providing holistic education. The objectives for which the three schemes were integrated can be achieved only if the new scheme is able to identify where the gaps were, and where more interventions are needed; and allocate resources accordingly (Kundu & Rastogi, 2020). The pattern of allocation across these three components for the last three years shows a continuous decline in the share of secondary education in SmSA budget. It has dropped by 8 percentage points between 2018-19 and 2020-21. In fact, the approved outlay for SmSA in the state has declined from Rs. 2,632 crore in 2019-20 to Rs. 2,286 crore in 2020-21. However, the larger fact remains that in 2020-21, almost 3/4th of the approved budget has been allocated for elementary education, and only 1/4th for secondary education.

Unfortunately, bringing both pre-service teacher education and in-service teachers' training under the purview of SmSA has not changed the scenario for teacher education which was not accorded priority in



terms of resource allocation. The approved budget for teacher education is hovering around 1.1% to 1.4% in the last three years (Figure 5.1). As per PAB minutes, Telangana has 10 functional DIETs. However, 137 posts (55% of the total sanctioned posts) were lying vacant against 250 total sanctioned academic posts (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2020). This clearly indicates the need for higher resource allocation for the Teacher Education component.

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

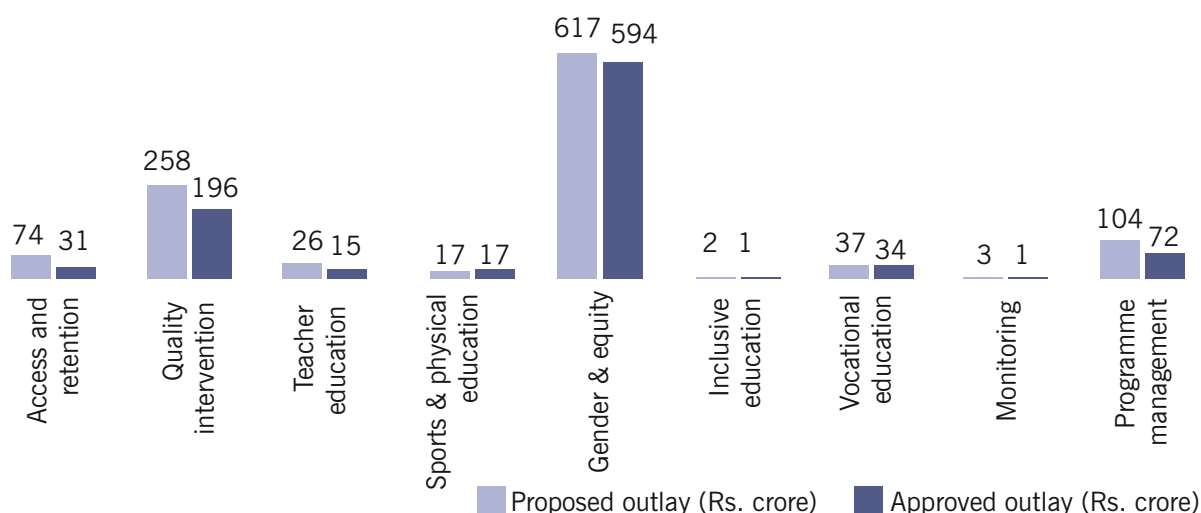


Source: Minutes of PAB meeting, SmSA, various years

The secondary education budget has shrunk from Rs. 761 crores in 2018-19 to Rs. 563 crores in 2020-21 while the approved allocation is also not getting utilised fully. In 2018-19, nearly 71% of the total spillover amount was due to under-utilisation in secondary education. There have been some improvements in the utilisation patterns for the past few consecutive years. It is likely that under-allocation towards secondary education in SmSA is stemming from under-utilisation of the component.

The spending pattern in the secondary component of SmSA reflects that lesser priority is being accorded to improving secondary education by the state government. Hence, it is all the more important to see how this money is getting distributed across different components. To understand this, the study looked at the approved budget for all interventions reported in PAB minutes under secondary education vis-à-vis how much was actually demanded by states.

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



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



It can be observed from Figure 5.3 that for most of the interventions, the amount approved to the state was lesser than what was originally proposed by the state. More often than not, lower allocation than the estimated budget affects effective implementation of the scheme on ground. Of all the interventions, the Gender & Equity component gets highest share of secondary education budget under SmSA. In 2020-21, against a demand of Rs. 617 crores, the PAB has approved Rs. 594 crores for the component. A disaggregation of interventions under this particular component shows the budget heads under which the state has demanded resources (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Proposed v/s approved outlay in 'Gender & Equity' component in secondary education - 2020-21 – Telangana

| | Proposed (Rs. crore) | Approved (Rs. crore) |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| KGBV-Type II (VI-X)-Non-recurring | 120 | 120 |
| KGBV-Type II (VI-X)-Recurring | 274 | 263 |
| KGBV-Type III (VI-XII)-Non-recurring | 16 | 16 |
| KGBV-Type III (VI-XII)-Recurring | 133 | 127 |
| KGBV -Type IV (IX-XII) | 61 | 58 |
| KGBV | 604 | 584 |
| Self-defence training for girls up to highest class X or XII) | 5.2 | 5.2 |
| Adolescent club | 0.09 | 0.05 |
| SC/ST-oriented activities | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| Incinerators | 2 | 2 |
| Special Projects for Equity | 2.7 | 2.6 |
| Adolescent programmes | 3 | 2 |
| Career guidance programme | 3 | 2 |
| Project - Girls Empowerment (Secondary) | 6 | 4 |

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

As per the SmSA framework, the state reports all the 100% girls-specific interventions under the Gender & Equity component. The components under this intervention for which the state has demanded resources in 2020-21 are KGBVs, self-defence training, and girls' empowerment project. Girls' empowerment is designed through interventions such as adolescent programme and career guidance programme.

As girls' education is one of the state priorities, 97% of the total fund demanded under the Gender & Equity component has been approved by the PAB. The highest share of this component goes towards KGBVs, but the institutions are not functioning at their fullest capacity. As per government reporting for Telangana, around 2,906 seats were lying vacant in 354 operational Type-II KGBVs and 3,063 seats



were vacant in 216 Type-IV KGBVs in 2020-21. The state should ensure filling up of these vacancies in KGBVs for which substantial resources would be required.

Besides KGBVs, important components for girls' education such as menstrual health of adolescent girls, gender sensitisation programmes, and digital skill trainings are getting neglected (Table 5.2). Lower budgetary approval is definitely a serious challenge; however, for many of these interventions, there is no demand for resources from the Telangana government to the PAB. This implies a lack of plan or vision on the part of the state government for implementing such interventions under SmSA.

A study on prevalence of disability in Telangana shows that children with disability were over 10 times more likely not to be enrolled than non-disabled children. Amongst those enrolled, children with disability were almost six times more likely to be in a lower grade than other children of their age (CBM & PHFI, 2014). As per UDISE+ 2019-20, the state has 4,443 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. 0.8 crore as stipend for 3,836 girls. This implies that 14% of the enrolled girls with disability are not getting the monetary support as stipulated in the guidelines. A total of Rs. 1.4 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

The state of Telangana was officially formed in June, 2014. During the first full budget presentation, the new government promised to revamp the whole education system right from schools to higher education institutions to create a skilled workforce. However, in the school education sector, especially at the secondary level, the presence of private players is as prominent as that of the government.

At secondary and higher secondary level, there are 50% government and government-aided schools and 50% privately-run schools. However, the government schools are catering only to about 45% of the students as 55% of the students are enrolled in private schools. A gender-wise distribution of enrolment shows that girls are largely enrolled at government and government-aided schools, whereas private schools are the preferred option for boys.

Over time, the government of Telangana has taken a number of policy measures to incentivise and increase access of secondary education for girls. For instance, the government has made secondary education free for all girls from class 1 up to post-graduation. This has improved the access, enrolment, retention, and quality of learning among girls. However, the incidence of dropout in the state is as high as 12% at secondary level. Although it is higher among boys, about 11% girls dropped out before completing secondary education by 2019-20 as per data from UDISE+ 2019-20.

One of the crucial factors influencing the performance of the state in secondary education is public investment in the sector. In the last five years, state spending on secondary education has increased not only in absolute terms, but also in proportion to the total expenditure by the state. This definitely reflects policy priority towards secondary education. Telangana has few programmes exclusively designed for girls, but there are a number of interventions acting as enablers to girls' education. These include providing free textbooks, uniforms, and nutritious meals besides establishing various residential schools and hostels. Given that a majority of the population in Telangana belongs to Backward Classes, inclusivity in education is a priority for the present government.

While the share of the state government in secondary education is increasing, the contribution of the central government towards the same through grants-in-aid is declining. This is observed in the case of SmSA. In the last three years (since its inception in 2018-19), there has been a decline in the amount of approved outlay. The share of secondary education in the total SmSA outlay has also been falling. Unfortunately, in the last three years, the funds allocated under secondary component of SmSA have not been fully utilised. In 2020-21, more than 40% of the spillover under SmSA is because of under-spending in secondary education. However, the state has substantially improved its fund utilisation patterns in the last two years.

Every year, there is a gap in the resource demanded by the state and those sanctioned under the Project Approval Board for each intervention related to secondary education. The interventions reported under the budget head of 'Gender & Equity' largely constitute construction of KGBVs and projects for empowerment of girls. The state government must demand resources for other crucial components of girls' education such as menstrual health and hygiene, girls' safety en route and within schools, besides gender sensitisation of teachers.

While the overall status of girls' education in Telangana has improved, it is most apparent at the higher secondary level wherein the gender parity index in enrolment of the state is 1.16. This suggests higher



enrolment of girls in classes 11 and 12 as compared to that of boys. This also implies that if girls are provided opportunities and support, their probability of attaining and completing secondary education is higher than that of the latter.

However, an NER of only about 36% 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 Telangana. Hence, the state needs to prioritise secondary education to materialise the goal of universal access to school education as envisaged in the NEP 2020. The state government has decided to implement NEP 2020 in Telangana and is in the process of formulating its implementation policy based on the NEP recommendations.

It has already been established that completion of school education for girls is the most powerful and consistent factor in light of increase in earnings, labour force participation, social integration, political participation, improved personal and family's health, participation in household decision making, and 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, the study suggests a range of viable policy measures that Telangana could implement to ensure quality secondary education for all girls.

Policy recommendations

Need for higher investment to universalise free secondary education for girls

Telangana has 1.7 million 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 (NSO) survey, 18% of girls in this age in the state have completed elementary education but dropped out before completing class 12 (NSO, 2019). The state is providing free secondary education to those enrolled, but additional financial resources are required to integrate the already dropped out children.

A cost estimation at all-India level by CBGA-CRY shows that the government needs to spend around Rs. 35,650 to Rs. 49,182 per girl per annum to provide free secondary education to a girl who has dropped out after completing elementary education. As per this per capita estimate, the government would need at least Rs. 1,300 crore (approximate) in addition to the current expenditure to bring all eligible girls within the ambit of secondary school education system. After COVID-19, there is increased reverse migration of students from private schools to government schools. For this, additional resources will be required to strengthen the existing school system.

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

Telangana has succeeded considerably in reducing gender disparity, but its prevalence in secondary education remains a serious challenge, especially at district level. Girls faces various kinds of barriers including socio-economic, cultural, and institutional ones. Therefore, it is important to first understand the factors impacting their schooling decisions to address such challenges. Development of context-specific interventions is possible only after a rigorous analysis of the gender situation in different regions and across social and economic groups. Unfortunately, lack of availability of disaggregated data at the implementation level is a challenge in the policy domain. Effective policy implementation demands a thorough sectoral analysis and availability of data at disaggregated levels.



Need for immediate recruitment of subject teachers and prioritising the 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 Telangana, the percentage of women teachers is relatively higher than the national average, and varies greatly across districts. According to UDISE+ 2019-20, at the secondary level, the percentage of women teachers across the state is 46% against a national average of 44%. While the PTR for subject teachers is relatively better in the state, around 16% schools have less than four subject teachers. The shortage of head teachers is more acute. As a large number of government girls' schools do not offer STEM 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 line 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 Type-IV KGBVs. Its objective was to provide access and quality education to girls from disadvantaged groups by setting up residential schools up to senior secondary level to reduce gender gaps at all levels of school education in the Educationally Backward Blocks.

A substantial amount of non-recurring budget for construction of KGBVs under SmSA remains unutilised owing to low unit cost of civil works. The government should prioritise opening up of 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 school for girls from marginalised communities.

Upward revision of scholarship amount for girls and timely disbursement

Household decisions regarding send girls to school at the secondary level largely depend on the direct cost of education. Therefore, provision of scholarships is a strong enabler for girls' education. In Telangana, more than 50% girls avail scholarships. However, studies have shown that the amount of scholarship is not only insufficient but also irregular. It is usually disbursed only after the academic year, which does not relieve the students of the burden and anxiety (M.V. Foundation, 2015). Therefore, the state government should increase the amount of the scholarship and make it inflation-indexed as well. In addition, there should be more transparency in the process right from application to disbursement.

Creating gender sensitivity and awareness among community members

Despite several interventions, the status of girls' education in Telangana is not up to the mark. One of the factors responsible for this outcome is the patriarchal mindset of people. Social practices of early marriage of girls are quite prevalent in Telangana. The patriarchal structure of the society deprives girls from exercising their basic human rights. As a conscious policy decision, the government needs to promote gender-responsive policies across all sectors. There is a need for community-level campaigns to change community gender norms which are socially constructed. For this purpose, 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 girls' safety as an enabler to complete their education. There is also growing evidence on children's increased presence online which has 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, besides including 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 - Telangana

| Population | | | Proportion of total population (in %) | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------------|------|---------|
| Female | Male | Persons | Female | Male | Persons |
| 15,14,000 | 16,10,000 | 31,24,000 | 8.1 | 8.5 | 8.3 |

Source: National Commission on Population (2020, pp. 250-251)

Table 2: Enrolment in secondary and higher secondary sections by gender and social category - Telangana

| | Enrolment | | | Proportion of total enrolment in % | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| General | 1,77,809 | 1,83,854 | 3,61,663 | 19.3 | 20.2 | 19.7 |
| OBC | 4,81,102 | 4,76,115 | 9,57,217 | 52.3 | 52.3 | 52.3 |
| SC | 1,66,715 | 1,54,287 | 3,21,002 | 18.1 | 16.9 | 17.5 |
| ST | 94,699 | 96,680 | 1,91,379 | 10.3 | 10.6 | 10.5 |
| Total | 9,20,325 | 9,10,936 | 18,31,261 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: UDISE+ 2019-20

Table 3: Estimates of out of school children in the age group 14-17 – Telangana

| | Female | Male | Total |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Projected population - 2021 | 11,77,000 | 12,50,000 | 24,27,000 |
| Secondary and higher secondary enrolment - 2019-20 | 9,20,325 | 9,10,936 | 18,31,261 |
| Out of school children (Projection - enrolment) | 2,56,675 | 3,39,064 | 5,95,739 |

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

Table 4: Number of students with disability in secondary and higher secondary section – Telangana

| Female | Male | Persons |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 1,06,612 | 1,30,720 | 2,37,332 |

Source: UDISE+ 2019-20





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