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**Youthspeak: Case Studies of Development in Practice**

## **Educating 'Out-of-School Girls': An Assessment of the *Pehchan* Project in Rajasthan**

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# Acronyms

<b>DPEP</b>	District Primary Education Programme
<b>KCCI</b>	Knowledge Community on Children in India
<b>NPE</b>	National Policy of Education
<b>SC</b>	Scheduled Caste
<b>ST</b>	Scheduled Tribe
<b>SK</b>	<i>Shiksha Karmi</i>
<b>SM</b>	<i>Shiksha Mitra</i>
<b>SJP</b>	<i>Swaran Jayanti Pathshala</i>
<b>SSA</b>	<i>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</i>
<b>UEE</b>	Universal Elementary Education

# Foreword

Youthspeak: Case Studies of Development in Practice is a recent UNICEF India initiative under the umbrella of the Knowledge Community on Children in India (KCCI). A partnership between UNICEF and the Government of India, the Knowledge Community on Children in India aims to fill knowledge gaps and promote information sharing on policies and programmes related to children in India. Under the aegis of this project, 105 young interns from 14 countries visited UNICEF and other projects focused on child rights and development. Their fresh perspectives, commitment and hard work are reflected in the case studies published by UNICEF under the Youthspeak series.

UNICEF recognises the potential and power of young people as drivers of change and future leadership across the globe. The KCCI Summer Internship Programme aims to develop a cadre of young research and development professionals with interest, commitment and skills relating to children's development in India. This series represents the first set of case studies undertaken by the pioneer batch of interns in 2005.

The case studies cover key sectors linked to children and development and address important policy issues for children in India. These include: primary education, reproductive and child health, HIV/AIDS, water and sanitation and child development and nutrition and child labour. Based on desk research and field work, these case studies tell the story of innovations in service delivery, what works, why, and under what conditions and put a human face to the successes and challenges of development in India.

UNICEF endeavours to continue this collaboration with young researchers so as to bring fresh perspectives and energy to development research and our ongoing efforts towards the upliftment of women and children in India.



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# Executive Summary

The present case study explores the impact of the *Pehchan shalas* on educational access, attendance, retention, and quality of 'out-of-school' girls in Chaksu and Phagi blocks of Jaipur District, Rajasthan. In addition, the research team assessed both the extent to which students, parents, teachers, community members, NGOs, UNICEF staff, and government officials supported the implementation of the *Pehchan* intervention and the extent to which they would continue to provide support to the *Pehchan* programme in future. Finally, the present case study also assessed the impact of the *Pehchan* intervention on the following: attitudes and behavior of girl students within the classroom, empowerment of participating girl students, project impacts on marriage, child labour, knowledge and practices relating to health and caste relations.

The research team spent eight days visiting *Pehchan shalas* and girls' forums in the Chaksu and Phagi blocks of Jaipur district in the state of Rajasthan. The *Pehchan shala* villages visited were six in the Chaksu block and five in the Phagi block. Focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and surveys were conducted involving students, parents, teachers, community members, government officials, NGOs and UNICEF staff. In addition, the research team interviewed the *Gram Panchayat* and the Village Education Committee (VEC) members..

The *Pehchan* programme had a positive impact on educational access for 'out-of-school' girls in both Chaksu and Phagi. Sixty-five *Pehchan shalas* have been opened in both blocks since the inception of the programme. Overall, the *Pehchan* programme has served 1,010 'out-of-school' girls in the Chaksu block and 944 in the Phagi block. Attendance and retention of girl students in the *Pehchan shalas* was dependent upon several attributes of both the classroom and the teachers recruited to the programme. These include *Pehchan shala* teachers being female, their motivation and commitment, the single-sex environment of the *Pehchan shala* classroom, and the flexibility of *Pehchan shala* timings. Several aspects of the *Pehchan shala* curriculum also had a positive impact on the quality of education provided to *Pehchan* students, including the pace at which content is covered, flexibility and development of relevant teaching-learning materials (TLMs) by project personnel. In addition, the classroom ideology of the *Pehchan shala* has had a positive impact on educational quality. For example, low teacher-student ratios, individualised attention and removal of fear and punishment from the classroom have all contributed to quality education for *Pehchan* girl students. However, despite extensive training in learning theory and teaching methodologies



for multilevel and multi-grade classrooms, the research team found many *Pehchan shala* teachers continued to use rote methods of teaching while introducing other interactive methods.

The *Pehchan* programme also impacted upon the attitudes and behavior of girl students within the classroom in several different ways. For many girl students, participating in *Pehchan* led to increases in self-discipline, respectful behavior, freedom to question and discuss and sharing of learning outcomes. For some, participation in *Pehchan* also led to a changed style of dress. In addition, *Pehchan shala* students experienced an improvement in personal hygiene, hygienic handling of food and water and knowledge of feminine health and motherhood. Participation in the *Pehchan* project also led to changes in the intra-household distribution of labour and time management skills, such that students were able to balance both classes and household work. Positive impacts were also observed on inter-caste relations within the classroom.

Finally, the research team found that the *Pehchan* programme indirectly had broader impacts on the participating girls and their families, than originally envisaged. For example, participating in the *Pehchan* programme delayed the age of “ghona” (the third stage of marriage when girls move to their husband’s home). Surprisingly, education even increased the attractiveness of the girl in the marriage market. A six day workshop on HIV/AIDS was conducted for *Pehchan* teachers in Chaksu Block, though our observations and interactions suggest that minimal HIV/AIDS awareness was observable in the *Pehchan shala* villages. This suggests that a more intensive programme on HIV AIDS prevention is required in *Pehchan Shala* villages.

The research team also assessed the sustainability of both the *Pehchan* programme and the observed impacts. Three factors in particular—an increase in appreciation for educating females in some villages, an increase in pride within *Pehchan shala* communities, and the provision of training to village women—are likely to strengthen the sustainability of the programme. While the *Pehchan* project enjoys support from students, community members, teachers, NGO staff and government personnel, the sustainability of the programme once NGO support is discontinued is an issue of concern, and will require strong financial commitment from community and Government.

The research team has developed the following recommendations for replication and expansion of *Pehchan*:

- Improve teaching methodology emphasising interactive methods of teaching.



- Improve curricula related to nutrition, hygiene, gender relations, HIV/AIDS, and English.
- Increase community ownership of the programme.
- Enhance sustainability of the girls' forums.
- Increase duration of teacher training such that teachers are able to sustain the *Pehchan shalas* without NGO-level intervention.
- Assess parental willingness to pay for education.
- Increase cost-effectiveness through development of residential camps; and arrange more leadership camps and exposure trips.
- In addition, the research team strongly recommends continuation of the *Balika manch* as a group for girls, but only if co-educational environments are instituted within *Pehchan shalas*.

# Introduction

As part of a broader initiative to build a Knowledge Community for Children in India (KCCI), UNICEF has undertaken a series of case studies throughout the country in partnership with academic, research, and development institutions. The case studies were chosen from UNICEF-sponsored intervention programmes in India. Case study teams were comprised of both Indian and International students and topics were assigned according to student interest. The *Pehchan* project was selected as one of the case studies. The *Pehchan* project is an educational intervention that aims to improve educational access and quality for 'out-of-school' girls in remote regions of Rajasthan. Specifically, the *Pehchan* intervention seeks to create primary education opportunities for 'out-of-school' girls aged 9-14 years by creating alternative bridge courses for them called "*Pehchan shalas*". The primary purpose of these bridge courses varies for younger and older 'out-of-school' girls. The primary objective for girls aged 9-11 years is to mainstream them into local government schools. For girls aged 12-14 years, the *Pehchan* project seeks to provide them with life skills training and basic literacy and mathematics skills. In addition, the *Pehchan* project seeks to increase the empowerment and leadership abilities of all 'out-of-school' girls through the development of all-girl forums called "*Balika Manches*" or "*Pehchan Mandels*". The present case study is an assessment of the *Pehchan* programme, which will conclude in December, 2005.

## 1. Precursors to *Pehchan*

(see Figure 11.1 in Annexures)

In 1986, the National Policy of Education (NPE) was enacted by the Government of India in partnership with State-level Governments. The NPE outlined how the State and Central Governments of India were to organise, implement, and finance the objectives proposed in the policy. This policy is rooted in the belief that basic education positively affects the lives of both children and adults. For example, research has shown that education is positively associated with both child and adult life expectancies and child nutritional status and negatively associated with infant mortality (Government of India, 2001). Indeed, recent literature has also pointed to the association between economic progress at the country level and "the development of human capital through universal basic education" (Government of India, 2001, p. 1).

In 2000, the Government of India launched the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), a programme dedicated to achieving the goal of Universal Elementary Education (UEE)



for all children. In this programme, all children are guaranteed access to primary schools within one kilometre and upper primary schools (or their alternatives) within three kilometres of their homes. In addition, all children are to be enrolled and retained in primary school. In 2002, the Government of India also enacted the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, which guarantees free and compulsory education to all children through age 14. Such legislative advances reveal the Indian Government's determination to make significant improvements in the planning and delivery of educational services to children.

A key lesson, however, from an analysis of the Government's efforts to provide universal education for children is that "female literacy...still remains considerably lower than male literacy rates" and that "generalised expansion of education, while necessary, is not sufficient to achieve universal elementary education for girls" (Ramachandran, 2004, p. 7). Many studies have pointed to a significant association between maternal illiteracy and negative outcomes, such as higher infant mortality rates and birth rates, and lower utilisation of maternal and child health care services (e.g. Caldwell, 1990; Gokhale, Rao and Garole, 2002). Recent estimates suggest that there are approximately 35 million 'out-of-school' girl children between the ages of 6-14 (Ramachandran, 2004). In addition, while overall estimates of female drop out rates have decreased recently, approximately 40 per cent of female students continue to drop out at the primary level, while almost 60 per cent of female students drop out at the upper primary level (Government of India, 2001; Ramachandran, 2004). Disaggregation of these numbers suggest that "school non-attendance is extremely concentrated in relatively few villages in the country. A mere 10 per cent of villages in the country account for nearly one-half of all 'out-of-school' children aged 6-11, while 20 per cent of villages account for three-quarters of all 'out-of-school' children" (Deolalikar, 2005, p. 74). In sum, the preponderance of 'out-of-school' children in India today live in remote areas that "do not have a primary school of their own and are not within easy walking reach of a primary school" (Deolalikar, 2005, p. 75). Indeed, many of these villages are likely to be socio-economically backward, Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) habitations, "where the opportunity cost of child labour (in terms of agricultural labour) is high (Deolalikar, 2005, p. 75).

A number of intervention programmes aimed at educating 'out-of-school' girls have preceded the *Pehchan* programme. Immediately prior to the SSA, the Central Government in collaboration with several International Agencies, launched a nationwide programme called the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) an ambitious venture aimed at universalising primary education through joyful learning methods, attractive schools and classrooms, intensive teaching training, use of local languages and bridge courses in local dialects and a special focus on girls. In 1989,



the Central Government had also created the *Mahila Shikshan Kendra* programme as part of *Mahila Samakhya* ("Education for Women's Equality") in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat. Rooted in the "condensed courses" developed and implemented by the Central Social Welfare Board several decades earlier, the *Mahila Shikshan Kendra* programme created residential education centres, which provided adolescent girls and women with opportunities for learning in secure and stimulating atmospheres (Ramachandran, 2005, p. 13). Similarly, the *Lok Jumbish*, or "People's Movement" Project was implemented in Rajasthan in 2000. The goals of this programme were to increase community awareness and support for education, provide educational opportunities for itinerant children and improve the quality of teacher training. Both projects have been lauded for their innovative use of participatory planning techniques to enact social change within remote, economically deprived communities. Such projects also emphasised gender equity and empowerment for women.

## 2. Genesis of *Pehchan*

In 2001, a Government survey was conducted under the *Prashasan Gaon Ke Sang* programme, which suggested that approximately 20,000 girls aged 9-14 years were out of school in the Jaipur district of Rajasthan. District-level officials then approached UNICEF Rajasthan to create alternative educational opportunities for these girls. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Government of Rajasthan and two block-level NGOs created the *Pehchan* intervention. As the overarching goal of the *Pehchan* project is the universalisation of quality primary education in Jaipur district, the *Pehchan* project staff have also formed an active collaboration with the District-level administration to ensure that programme objectives are aligned with the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and SSA (*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*), two Government-sponsored educational initiatives in the state of Rajasthan. Pilot testing of the *Pehchan* programme began in 2002. As of May, 2005, 51 *Pehchan shalas* were still operating.

The objectives of the *Pehchan* programme are to:

1. Work with local communities to increase awareness of the importance of education,
2. Run bridge courses (*Pehchan shalas*) to mainstream girls aged 9-11 years,
3. Provide support to Government schools to ensure improvement in educational quality for mainstreamed girls,
4. Create residential education camps for older girls focusing on life skills training, and



5. Form girls forums ("*Pehchan Mandels*" or "*Balika Manches*") to facilitate self-empowerment through an understanding of social and identity-related issues.

In fulfillment of the third objective, "Academic Supporters" collaborated with Government schoolteachers to improve the environment and quality of teaching in the classroom. In addition, "Community Mobilisers" were made responsible for creating awareness and acceptance of the *Pehchan* intervention within the *Pehchan shala* villages<sup>1</sup>.

While funded by the Italian Committee for UNICEF, the *Pehchan* project is implemented in collaboration with two non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Center for Unfolding Learning Potentials (CULP) in the Chaksu block and Diganter in the Phagi block. Please see Figure 11.2 for a schematic representation of the *Pehchan* programme contained in the Annexures.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to budgetary constraints, residential education camps were not implemented during the project period.

# The Research Questions

- 1) What impact have the *Pehchan shalas* had on educational access, attendance, retention, and quality of 'out-of-school girls' in Chaksu and Phagi?
- 2) To what extent have students, parents, teachers, community members, NGOs, UNICEF staff, and government officials supported the implementation of the *Pehchan* intervention?
- 3) To what extent would they support the continuation of the *Pehchan* programme?
- 4) What impact has the *Pehchan* intervention had on the attitudes and behavior within the classroom, empowerment of girls, marriage, child labour, health-related knowledge and practices and caste relations?<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Methodology

The research team spent eight days visiting *Pehchan shalas* and girls' forums in the Chaksu and Phagi blocks of Jaipur district in the state of Rajasthan. The *Pehchan shala* villages included six in the Chaksu block (Thali, Jaisinghpura, Kohaliya, Maheshpura, Kalyanpura, and Kankaria) and five in the Phagi block (Bhimpura, Narayanpura, Rawantpura, Dhualia, and Pahairia). Village selection was determined by the NGOs according to participant availability, i.e. the maximum number of 'out of school' girls...

Prior to conducting focus group discussions and individual interviews, research team members conducted classroom observations and participated in classroom activities. In this way, the research team was able to develop a quick rapport with *Pehchan shala* students and teachers.

Focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and surveys were conducted with students, parents, teachers, community members, government officials, NGO staff and UNICEF staff. In addition, the research team interviewed the *Gram Panchayat* and Village Education Committee (VEC) members.

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<sup>2</sup> It is understood that lasting social change is brought about by a number of inputs over a long period of time. The purpose of this research question is to better understand how *Pehchan* may have facilitated changes in these domains. It is not to suggest that the *Pehchan* intervention was the sole agent of change in these domains.



**Table 3.1 : Number of Respondents**

<b>Students</b>	40	<b>Village Education Committee</b>	2
<b>Parents</b>	45	<b>NGO Staff</b>	10
<b>Teachers</b>	13	<b>UNICEF Staff</b>	2
<b>Community</b>	10	<b>Government Officials</b>	2
<b>Gram Panchayat</b>	2		

Focus group discussions in particular provided the research team with several different perspectives on discussion topics. Individual interviews and surveys allowed the research team to explore key issues in-depth. In particular, the research team sought to explore changes that occurred as a result of the *Pehchan* intervention. Sample protocols for focus group discussions and surveys are contained in Annexures 11.3 and 11.4 respectively.

In each village, while part of the research team observed the *Pehchan shala* class, other team members spoke with community members to discuss issues pertaining to *Pehchan*. Interestingly, such community groups often gathered separately, divided by gender. Additional community members and 'out-of-school' girls were randomly selected for interviews by the research team. It must be emphasised that the research methodology is qualitative, hence can highlight issues and trends, but not provide conclusive results.

## **2. Study Limitations**

Due to budgetary constraints, the research team was able to spend only eight days in the field. Generalisations from the findings of the present study must be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size. While random selection at the village level was not possible, the research team was able to randomly select participants for focus group discussions and individual interviews. In addition, the field visit was conducted in June 2005, when the Government schools were in recess. As such, the research team was unable to observe Government school classrooms for comparative purposes. The team was also unable to interview Government school students and mainstreamed *Pehchan shala* students. Finally, the language and culture of the investigators also served as a barrier to effective communication with study participants.

# The Study Site

## 1. Jaipur District

Jaipur is one of 32 districts in the state of Rajasthan, which is located in Northern India, approximately 250 km away from Delhi. Poor health, child survival and literacy indicators suggest that Rajasthan is one of the least advanced states in India (UNICEF India, 2005). Jaipur is one of the largest districts in Rajasthan, covering 10,674 square kilometres (Sharma, Singh and Kumar, 2004). It is located on the edge of the Thar Desert, with high temperatures averaging 40 degrees Celsius in the summer season and low temperatures averaging 8 degrees Celsius in winter... According to the Census of 2001, the population of Jaipur district is 5,252,000 (2,769,000 male, 2,483,000 female). The rural population of Jaipur is 2,659,000 (1,385,000 male, 1,270,000 female). The 2001 Census also revealed that the total literacy rate of Jaipur is 70.6 per cent. The male literacy rate is 83.6 per cent, whereas the female literacy rate is 56.2 per cent. There are 4,737 habitations in Jaipur district, out of which 554 have no educational facility within 1 kilometre distance (Sharma, Singh and Kumar, 2004).

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 depict the educational scenario in Jaipur district during the 2000-2001 school year. Important to note is the smaller number of upper primary and secondary schools in Jaipur district. In addition, the number of girl students and female teachers in all schools is consistently lower than the number of boy students and male teachers across school types.

**Table 4.1: Jaipur District Schools Disaggregated by Teacher Gender and Type (2001)**

Type of School	Teacher Gender		No. of Schools
	Male	Female	
Pre-Primary and Primary	4,489	2,220	2,695
Upper Primary	9,219	5,473	1,869
Secondary/Senior Secondary	6,256	4,176	638
<b>Total</b>	19,964 (62.7 %)	11, 869 (37.3%)	5,202

Source: Sharma, Singh and Kumar. (2004). *Rapid Assessment of Primary Education of Chaksu block in Jaipur District (Rajasthan)*.



**Table 4.2: Enrolment of Children in Jaipur District by Gender (2001)**

Child Gender	Number of Children (% of Total)
Boys	607, 864 (59.0%)
Girls	421,828 (41.0%)
Total	1,029,692

Source: Sharma, Singh and Kumar. (2004). *Rapid Assessment of Primary Education of Chaksu block in Jaipur District (Rajasthan)*.

## 2. Chaksu and Phagi Blocks

The study area comprises of 11 remote villages in the Chaksu and Phagi blocks of Jaipur district, Rajasthan. The sample size is reflective of approximately 22 per cent of the villages in which the *Pehchan* programme has been implemented. Chaksu and Phagi are located approximately 40 kilometres south of Jaipur. Observed villages were about 15 – 30 minutes (driving time) from the towns of Chaksu and Phagi. Some villages had no roads due to desert-like conditions, such as sand dunes. Other villages were accessible only by mud road. The sampled villages had populations ranging from 345-2,800 people. Occupations of the villagers ranged from animal husbandry and agricultural labour to daily wage labour in carpet making and road construction. Many community members were migrant or seasonal workers and many participated in Government-sponsored food-for-work schemes. In some cases, these villages are situated on fertile, irrigated land, while in others, villagers are dependent upon monsoon rainfall to cultivate crops. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 present descriptive information on the sampled villages for the Chaksu and Phagi blocks, respectively.

**Table 4.3: Village-Level Information: Chaksu**

Village Name	Distance from Chaksu (km)	Total Population	Social Composition	Primary Occupation
Kankaria	20	500	Bairwa (SC) Meena (ST)	Wage labor Cattle rearing/agricultural
Jaisinghpura	6	1150	Raigur (SC) Lodha (OBC)	Wage labor Cattle rearing/agricultural
Kohaliya	15	1100	Dhankiya, Khatik, and Raigar (SC) Meena (ST) and Brahmin (General)	Wage labour  Cattle rearing/agricultural



Village Name	Distance from Chaksu (km)	Total Population	Social Composition	Primary Occupation
Maheshpura	20	500	Bairwa (SC) Meena (ST) Brahmin (General)	Wage labor Cattle rearing/agricultural
Kalyanpura	9	795	NA	Cattle rearing/agricultural
Thali	12	2800	Gurjar	Cattle rearing/agricultural

Source: Field observations and personal communication with Dr. Om Prakash Kulhari (CULP).

Table 4.4: Village-Level Information: Phagi

Village Name	Distance from Sub-division	Total Population (Number of Head Office, Phagi (km))	Social Composition boys and girls aged 9-14 years)	Primary Occupation
Paharia	25	1088 (Boys=178; Girls=113)	Bairwa (SC), Rager, Khatir, Nayer, Harijan, Yogi, Nai, Brahmin, Rajput, Daroga, and Prajapat	Wage labor Agricultural
Narayanpura	32	924 (Boys=75; Girls=59)	Bairwa (SC)	Agricultural Wage Labour Trade
Bhimpura	34	593 (Boys=126; Girls=107)	Gujri Brahmins	Agricultural Animal Husbandry
Rawantpura	20	561 (Boys=135; Girls=121)	Nomadic	Animal trade Wage labour Agricultural/farming
Dhualia	16	345 (NA)	Bairwa (SC), Bali, Rajput, Brahmins, Khatir, and Jat	Agricultural Brick-making

Source: Field observations and personal communication with Mr. Ashok Sharma (Diganter).

### 3. Educational Scenario in Chaksu

According to data gathered from block-level education officers in the Chaksu block of Rajasthan, there were 229 primary schools and 107 upper primary schools in operation



in 2004. Several different types of schools are incorporated within this calculation<sup>3</sup> accounting for at least 2,133 enrolled children. Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 present further information on the enrolment trends in Chaksu schools. Enrolment trends within the Chaksu block parallel those observed within Jaipur district. That is, fewer girls than boys are enrolled in Government and private schools. Interestingly, the number of girls enrolled in alternative schools far exceeds the number of boys enrolled.

**Table 4.5: Elementary Educational Scenario in Chaksu Block (as of April, 2004)**

Schools	Numbers				
	Government	ShikshaKarmi	Rajiv Gandhi SJPs	Private	Total
Primary	143	15	62	9	229
Upper Primary	61	1	0	45	107
Total	204	16	62	54	336

Source: Sharma, Singh and Kumar (July, 2004). *Rapid Assessment of Primary Education of Chaksu Block in Jaipur District (Rajasthan) under the Pehchan Project.*

**Table 4.6: Enrolment of Children in Chaksu Block(as of April, 2004)**

Children	Type of Schools Government, Shiksha Karmis, and Rajiv Gandhi SJPs	Private	Total
<b>Primary</b>			
Boys	9,019	113	9,132
Girls	8,457	47	8,504
Total (A)	17,476	160	17,636
<b>Upper Primary</b>			
Boys	6,242	5,697	11,939
Girls	963	2,740	3,703
Total (B)	7,205	8,437	15,642
<b>Total</b>			
Boys	14,255	5,810	20,065
Girls	8,612	2,787	11,398
<b>Grand Total (A+B)</b>	22,867	8,597	31,464

Source: Sharma, Singh and Kumar (July, 2004). *Rapid Assessment of Primary Education of Chaksu Block in Jaipur District (Rajasthan) under the Pehchan Project.*

<sup>3</sup> Shiksha Karmi schools (SKs), Rajiv Gandhi Swaran Jayanti Pathshalas (RGSJPs), and private schools. In addition to these schools, Shiksha Mitra centres and alternative schools were also operational in 2004.



**Table 4.7: Children (Aged 6-14 Years) Enrolled in Alternative Schools and *Shiksha Mitra* Centres Running under Government Schemes**

Category	Children (6-14 Years) Enrolled		
	Boys	Girls	Total
<i>Shiksha Mitra</i> centres	231	1,592	1,823
Alternative schools	147	163	310
<b>Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>1,755</b>	<b>2,133</b>

Source: Sharma, Singh and Kumar (July, 2004). *Rapid Assessment of Primary Education of Chaksu Block in Jaipur District (Rajasthan) under the Pehchan Project.*

#### 4. Educational Scenario in Phagi

Tables 4.8 and 4.9 present information on enrolment trends for Phagi schools. Enrollment trends in the Phagi block are comparable to those observed within Jaipur district and Chaksu block. Note that the number of upper primary schools available to children in the Phagi area are quite low. Also, while the number of boys and girls enrolled in classes VI – VIII decrease from reported enrollments in classes I-V, the number of boys enrolled consistently exceeds the number of girls enrolled.

**Table 4.8: Elementary Educational Scenario in Phagi Block (2005)**

	Government	<i>ShikshaKarmi</i>	Rajiv Gandhi SJPs	Private	Total
Primary	135	5	59	NA	199
Upper Primary	53	2	0	NA	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>254</b>

Source: District SSA Plan, 2005-2006.

**Table 4.8: Children (Aged 6-14 Years) Enrolled in Government Schools**

Category	Number Enrolled		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Class I-V	13,678	11,726	25,404
Class VI-VIII	6,218	3,405	9,623
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,896</b>	<b>15,131</b>	<b>35,037</b>

Note. Numbers of Boys and Girls Aged 6-14 years enrolled in *Shiksha Mitra* Centers or Alternative Schools running under the government scheme = Nil (scheme closed ).

Source: District SSA Plan, 2005-2006.



# Impacts of the Pehchan Programme

## 1. Educational Access

### 1.1 Educational Access in Chaksu

#### Significant positive impact on educational access for 'out-of-school' girls in Chaksu

According to a 2003 survey of rural Chaksu (consisting of 279 villages), 5,096 girls aged 9-14 years were out of school. Twenty-five villages were selected as project sites. The total number of 'out-of-school' girls in these villages totaled 1,135. During the project period, the *Pehchan* programme has increased educational access for 89 per cent of these girls. Thirty-two *Pehchan shalas* were opened between January 2003 and May 2005. As of May 31, 2005, 25 of these *Pehchan shalas* were still operating (seven were closed down during the project period). Cumulative enrollment in these *Pehchan shalas* totals over 1000 ( $N=1010$ ) 'out-of-school' girls in the Chaksu block since the pilot programme began in 2002. Of these girls, 145 (14 per cent) dropped out of the *Pehchan* programme. Table 5.1 presents descriptive information by year for the total number of *Pehchan shalas* running.

Table 5.1: Year-wise Enrolment position in *Pehchan shalas*

Year (Month)	Number of <i>Pehchan shalas</i>	Number of Girl Students		
		Out-of-school	Enrolled (%)	Attendance rate (%)
2003 (April)	11	325	285 (88%)	83
2004 (December)	26	942	669 (71%)	76
2005 (June)	25	920	653 (71%)	80

Source: CULP, Jaipur.

Increased access leads to mainstreaming of *Pehchan* students in Chaksu. The duration of a *Pehchan shala* is two and a half years. At the end of this bridge course, girl students are mainstreamed to local government schools. Project documentation suggests that educational access of these students was also improved through mainstreaming of the *Pehchan* girl students into local government schools. As of June 30, 2005, 463 girls were mainstreamed from over 13 *Pehchan shalas*. Table 5.2 presents the class-wise distribution of the mainstreamed girls.



**Table 5.2: Class-wise Distribution of Mainstreamed *Pehchan Shala* Students**

<i>Class</i>	<i>Number of Girl Students</i>
I and II	174
III	60
IV	38
V	56
VI	86
VII	48
VIII	1
Total	463

*Source:* CULP, Jaipur.

### **1.2 Educational Access in Phagi**

#### **Significant positive impact on educational access for 'out-of-school' girls in Phagi.**

*Pehchan* project staff conducted two baseline surveys to assess the total number of 'out-of-school' girls in the Phagi block. The first baseline assessment surveyed 20 *Gram Panchayats* (100 villages) and the second (rapid) assessment surveyed 10 *Gram Panchayats* (79 villages). In total, 30 *Gram Panchayats* (179 villages) were covered. Results revealed 2,499 girls were out of school. Of these, 808 had dropped out of Government or private schools, while 1,691 had never enrolled into any school.

According to project documentation, 33 *Pehchan shalas* have been created since the inception of the programme in the Phagi block in 2003. While 13 of these schools were fully operational in 2003, 21 *Pehchan shalas* were operational in 2004, and 26 were operational in 25 villages in 2005. In total, seven *Pehchan shalas* have closed down since the programme began. These schools closed for a variety of reasons, both negative and positive. The former included teacher drop out and loss of physical infrastructure, while the latter, it is heartening to note, may be attributed to the successful mainstreaming of enrolled *Pehchan* students. In 2003, 78 per cent of the total population of 'out-of-school' girls in the Phagi block enrolled in the *Pehchan shala* programme ( $N=736$ ). In 2005, enrolment dropped to 63.3 per cent ( $N=598$ ). During the most recent project period, 50 girls have dropped out of the programme. This may, perhaps, be attributable to the severe drought sweeping across the state during this period. Drought conditions in an arid region have severe repercussions on the population in terms of time spent in the search for water, fodder, fuel and even food and may eventually lead to enforced migration. Other reasons for reduced attendance and enrolment include marriage, seasonal migration, employment in local cottage industries (e.g. carpet weaving), and familial changes (e.g. death of parent, in which case the daughter must seek employment or undertake the housework and care of siblings). Cumulatively, the *Pehchan* programme has served 944 'out-of-school' girls in the Phagi block.



**Increased access leads to acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills for Pehchan students in Phagi.** Increased access to education has led to higher achievement levels for *Pehchan shala* girl students in Phagi. Baseline achievement data of *Pehchan shala* girl students is presented in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Baseline Achievement in the Phagi Block (July, 2003)**

Reading Skills	Number of Girls at this Level
Initial level	31
Learning to read and write	240
Able to read and write under teacher's guidance	30
Able to read and write independently	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>
Mathematics Skills	Number of Girls at this Level
Learning the number system (1-40) and addition/subtraction operations	285
Learning the number system (50-100) and four operations (including multiplication and division)	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>

Source: *Diganter. (July, 2003). Pehchan Activity Report.*

In 2005, four *Pehchan shalas* were evaluated by the Government of Rajasthan. Interviews with *Pehchan* project staff in the Phagi block revealed that 87 per cent of girls in these *Pehchan shalas* acquired primary-level reading, writing and critical thinking skills. Specifically, 74 per cent of girls could speak and write simple sentences. In addition, 76 per cent of the girls acquired primary-level mathematics skills after attending the *Pehchan shala*. Finally, 76 per cent of the girls obtained grades of A (greater than 60 per cent), B (between 41 and 60 per cent), or C (40 per cent).

## **2. Attendance and Retention**

Interviews with *Pehchan shala* students, parents, community members and teachers across villages pointed to lower attendance and retention rates in Government schools. In an interview with a Government schoolteacher in the Phagi block, student registration information suggested a consistent reduction in retention rates of girl students as the grades increase. In Level 8, for example, the ratio of boys to girls was 28:1. The results are presented in Table 5.4.



**Table 5.4: Student Enrolment in Sample Government School by Class Level**

Level	Number of Students	
	Boys	Girls
1	29	20
4	10	7
5	8	6
8	28	1

Source: Interview with government schoolteacher (Phagi block).

However, project documentation from Diganter suggests that attendance rates for *Pehchan shala* girl students have also decreased steadily each year. For example, in 2003, the attendance rate was 63.2 per cent. In 2004, 57.8 per cent of enrolled girl students attended the *Pehchan shala*, while in 2005, attendance decreased again to 55.6 per cent<sup>4</sup>. Of importance to note is that, as of June 2005, 102 girls have been successfully mainstreamed into local Government schools since the inception of the *Pehchan* programme.

**Box 1: Positive Impacts of *Pehchan***

- Over 460 girls mainstreamed into formal schools.
- 87 per cent acquire basic reading, writing and numeracy skills.
- Improved social skills and self-discipline.
- Higher levels of personal hygiene.
- Knowledge of feminine health and motherhood.

Several important attributes of both the *Pehchan shala* classroom and the teachers recruited to the *Pehchan shala* programme have had a positive impact on attendance and retention rates of girl students. Most importantly, *Pehchan shala* teachers were female (with one exception). Interviews with several Government schoolteachers suggest that parents hesitate to send their adolescent daughters to classes taught by male teachers. Parents across villages reported an unwillingness to send daughters to classes conducted by male teachers or to co-educational environments when their daughters reach adolescence. Instituting female teachers within the *Pehchan shalas* ensured the support of community members – for example, a former *Pehchan shala* teacher interviewed in the Phagi block stated that community members were more comfortable with the programme and open to their daughters attending the *Pehchan shala* because *she* was the teacher. Reasons for the use of female teachers were further clarified in an interview with Dr. Rohit Dhanker, Director of the Academic Resources Unit at Diganter, who stated, “Adolescence is a mixed time. Student crushes or any incidents of a similar nature could have irreparable consequences for the programme.”

<sup>4</sup> As mentioned above, a probable explanation may lie in the widespread drought conditions in the state.



The single-sex environment of the *Pehchan shala* classroom also contributed to higher attendance and retention of girl students. For example, in an interview with students at the Jaisinghpura *Pehchan shala*, the research team discovered that girls preferred the *Pehchan shala* to the Government school because of the single-sex environment. These students stated that boys were often a distraction in the Government school classroom. An interview with a Government school headmaster in the Phagi block confirmed that parents do not hold co-educational environments in high regard when considering opportunities for their adolescent daughters. Accordingly, the high number of male teachers and students in Government schools may contribute to the low attendance and retention of girl students in these schools.

While *Pehchan shala* teachers and community members acknowledged the importance of teachers living within the communities in which they teach, it is equally important that teachers do not belong to the communities in which they teach. An interview with two married *Pehchan shala* teachers illustrates why this is important. While a critical part of the *Pehchan shala* curriculum is to teach the girls how to empower themselves within their communities, the female teacher, who belonged to the village, was required to abide by social customs mandated by Kankaria community members (e.g. not speaking in front of her mother-in-law, sitting separately from her husband) when outside of the classroom.

Finally, the *Pehchan shala* “has more convenient timings as they are adjusted to the needs and work schedules of the girls” according to a Government schoolteacher, who collaborates with the *Pehchan* programme. The inflexibility of school timings was another reason for both low attendance and retention of girl students in Government schools according to interviews with students, parents, community members, and *Pehchan shala* teachers across villages. While most *Pehchan shalas* run for five and half hours per day, “the timings are decided in discussion with the community and the students. But it is usual for the timings to be changed according to the needs of the season” (UNICEF India, 2005, p. 8). For example, during the agricultural season, older girls are usually needed to harvest crops during the daytime; as such, class timings may be shifted to the evening. This sort of flexibility characterises many of the *Pehchan shala* classrooms we visited—for example, in Rawantpura, the *Pehchan shala* teacher had organised both morning and afternoon sessions to accommodate the work schedules of the older girl students. She personally tutored those students who could not attend either of these sessions.

### **3. Educational Quality**

**The *Pehchan shala* curriculum has had a positive impact on the quality of education provided to girl students, with some exceptions. *Pehchan shala* students**



study a range of topics comparable to those taught in Government schools, including Hindi, English, Mathematics, Arts and Crafts, Environmental Studies, and Health. Of these subjects, English instruction is weakest according to students and teachers at *Pehchan shalas* in both the Phagi and Chaksu blocks. For example, in the Kalyanpura village, several girls mentioned that peers who were mainstreamed into Government schools performed poorly in English examinations. In several villages, teachers stated they were not competent or comfortable enough to teach their students the basic principles of the English language. These teachers reported taking a long time to master introductory components of the language.

An important characteristic of the *Pehchan shala* curriculum is its flexibility. According to a headmaster of a Government school in the Phagi block, the pace and content covered in the Government school curricula is quite rigid and fixed. As described by an upper primary Government schoolteacher from the same block, the syllabus utilised in Government schools prescribes a certain amount of time per subject each day. If a student misses one day of class, that student falls significantly behind the other students. However, in the *Pehchan shala* classroom, missing one day of class does not result in a significant lag in a student's educational achievement. Individualised attention from the *Pehchan shala* teacher ensures that students do not fall behind. The flexibility of the *Pehchan shala* curriculum allows students to resume their studies from where they left off. However, the rigidity of the Government school curriculum prevents Government school students from doing the same.

Project personnel in both the Chaksu and Phagi blocks worked to develop teaching learning materials (TLMs) throughout the project period at monthly two-day research and planning meetings. The materials were designed to be relevant for girl students of bridge courses and were field tested to ensure their relevance for multi-level and multi-grade teaching practices. These materials were used in both *Pehchan shala* classrooms and in Government school classrooms that were collaborating with academic supporters. According to the project documentation provided by project personnel in the Chaksu block, materials were developed in conjunction with *Pehchan shala* teachers. These materials include worksheets to practice concepts taught in the Government school textbook, language flash cards that associate pictures with words, as well as children's folk songs in the local dialect, Hindi, and English. In addition, several instructional texts were developed in the local language (e.g. *Bhasha Setu Pothi*, bridge course in language), mathematics (e.g. *Ganit Setu Pothi*, bridge course in mathematics), and environmental studies (*Chaan Been*, EVS TLM; *Vigyan Kaya Pustika*, science workbook).

***Pehchan shala* classroom ideology has had a positive impact on educational quality.**

The classroom environment in the *Pehchan shala* is considered an extension of the



community/family relationship and is the critical difference between *Pehchan shala* classrooms and Government school classrooms. Teachers are considered friends or elder sisters to the girl students at *Pehchan*, rather than disciplinarians. The elimination of punishment within the *Pehchan shala* classroom is one of the reasons for the retention of girls who have dropped out of Government schools. Indeed, interviews with *Pehchan shala* students (e.g. Rawantpura) who had previously attended Government schools suggest that these students prefer *Pehchan shala* teachers to Government schoolteachers, as the former play with the girls and interact with them regularly even outside of school. Interviews with community members, mothers, and girls attending *Pehchan shalas* revealed that the use of physical discipline was one of the key contributors to the high drop out rate of girls from Government schools. For example, during a focus group interview, girls enrolled in the Narayanpura *Pehchan shala* vividly described the disciplinary measures taken by their Government teacher—examples include crushing girls' fingers, pushing them roughly and hitting boys with sticks.

In an interview with Dr. Dhanker (Diganter), the research team found that the pedagogy Diganter utilises to train its teachers is qualitatively different from that used in Government schools. Dr. Dhanker believes that "any classroom situation should be as democratic as possible—if we want to ensure substantive learning is occurring we remove [three things:] fear, punishment, and material incentives." Inherent within this pedagogy is the belief that students should have the freedom to learn at their own pace, study topics relevant to their own lives and interests and to come and go from the classroom as needed. Such freedom is not found within Government schools and appears to contribute significantly to the drop out rate of girls in such schools.

Low student-teacher ratios and individualised attention provided by the *Pehchan shala* teachers have also had a positive impact on educational quality of *Pehchan shala* students. An upper primary Government schoolteacher in the Phagi block stated that staff shortages often force teachers to combine several classes at one time. In one example cited, three levels of students were taught in one class, with the teacher being responsible for about 150 students. An interview with another Government schoolteacher in the Phagi block revealed that in some schools, teachers are responsible for all levels due to staff shortages; in one instance, a teacher was responsible for 350 students! According to Dr. Om Prakash Kulhari (Executive Secretary of CULP), baseline surveys conducted prior to the implementation of the *Pehchan* programme revealed that 90 per cent of Government schools in the Chaksu block were either single- or double-teacher schools, suggesting that staff shortages and high student-teacher ratios were problems of tremendous proportions. Because the *Pehchan shala* enrolment did not exceed 30 students, these students were able to receive individualised attention in a multi-grade situation.



Finally, a key component of the *Pehchan* project is ensuring the quality of education provided to mainstreamed girl students. While the research team was not able to visit existing Government schools or interview any mainstreamed *Pehchan shala* students, interviews with Government schoolteachers were conducted and shed some light on the success of the project in mainstreaming girl students. According to a Government school headmaster in the Chaksu block, the collaboration between *Pehchan* academic supporters and Government schoolteachers had led to higher retention rates of girl students in Government school classrooms. In addition, the learning pace of these students had also increased, as had their level of interest in education. For example, a 14-year old *Pehchan* student was mainstreamed into Class 6 after having attended the *Pehchan shala*. She successfully passed her examinations in the first division, and is now in class 7.

**Improvement is required in teaching methodology.** According to documentation and interviews with project personnel in both the Chaksu and Phagi blocks, teachers completed a 40-day induction-training module prior to teaching at *Pehchan shalas*. The objectives of this training were to provide teachers with a better understanding of the rights of marginalised groups in society, child psychology, teaching methodologies and learning theories. In addition, *Pehchan shala* teachers attended six-day mid-session workshops concerning language instruction (*Bhasha Shikshan*), mathematics instruction, and life skill education (*Jeevan Kaushal Karyashala*). Teachers were also sent to workshops on the appropriate methodology for multi-grade teaching (*Bahukaksha Shikshan*).

Despite extensive training in learning theory and teaching methodologies for multilevel and multi-grade classrooms, many *Pehchan shala* teachers rely upon rote methods of teaching, rather than interactive methods. This occurred across subjects such as art, English, and mathematics. For example, in an art class observed at the Jaisinghpura *Pehchan shala*, the teacher simply asked the girl students to follow the steps she outlined without deviation, rather than allowing the girls to be creative. During a Hindi class at the Thali *Pehchan shala*, students were only required to repeat aloud the exact phrases the teacher had recited. When asked to read lessons independently, they were unable to do so with ease.

However, some exceptions did exist. For example, in the Narayanpura and Dhualia villages, teachers often had children sit in circles in the classroom and worked with them individually. Teachers allowed girl students to work together in small groups and to set a comfortable pace for themselves. Teachers utilised play-way instruction in many of the *Pehchan shala* classrooms we visited, in which students were taught concepts through singing, playing, drawing, dancing, crafts and skits.



In sum, participatory methods of teaching, individualised student attention, and a fundamental re-conceptualization of the student-teacher relationship were key tools employed in the *Pehchan shalas* and played an important role in improving the educational environment for girl students in the *Pehchan* programme, however, some teachers still employ rote learning.

**Different characteristics of *Pehchan shala* teachers have also had a positive impact on the quality of education *Pehchan shala* students receive.** Another important characteristic of *Pehchan shala* teachers is that they live in the communities in which they teach, allowing them to interact with students during and after class hours. Teachers are required to spend a minimum of 1.5 hours working with the community outside of their teaching responsibilities. In this way, they develop rapport and build relationships with community members. Interviews with local Government schoolteachers and community members across villages revealed that the lack of trust between Government teachers and the communities in which they taught was due to teachers not residing in these communities.

In addition, *Pehchan shala* teachers did not report any fears related to their physical safety; most reported community members treating them as “daughters.” In the Narayanpura village, for example, the research team discovered that villagers had taken the teacher to a health facility several kilometres away when she fell ill. There was one exception, however, in which a teacher reported being sexually harassed by some community members in the village at which she taught. In this case, community-wide meetings were held to discuss her safety concerns and repercussions for the harassers.

The dedication and motivation of *Pehchan shala* teachers provided higher quality of education for girl students in the *Pehchan* programme. While Government schoolteachers earn significantly more and have job security, interviews with students, parents and community members suggest that, these teachers lack the motivation necessary to create stimulating educational environments for the girls. For example, students at the Kalyanpura *Pehchan shala* reported that the local Government schoolteacher was often “not in the mood to teach” and that successfully passing the examinations was difficult because the subject matter was not adequately covered. The commitment and motivation of the *Pehchan shala* teachers may also have contributed to the lower rates of teacher absenteeism reported in *Pehchan shalas*. In turn, these factors may have had a positive impact on the quality of education

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<sup>5</sup> Teacher interviews suggest that Government schoolteachers earn approximately 80 per cent. more than *Pehchan shala* teachers, with monthly salaries averaging Rs. 12,000 and Rs. 2,500, respectively.



provided in *Pehchan shalas*. The role of the implementing NGOs in providing teacher support has also been invaluable in creating an enabling and motivating working environment for teachers.

Finally, interviews with teachers at both *Pehchan shalas* and Government schools suggest that the quality of teaching decreases as the number of responsibilities teachers have increases. *Pehchan shala* teachers do not have the large number of responsibilities that Government schoolteachers have: as such, *Pehchan* teachers can devote more time to teaching and interacting with their students. In contrast, government teachers must facilitate the following: administration and facilitation of the Midday Meal Scheme, the Drought Relief programme (*Akaal Raahat Karya*), *Arthik Garna*, health care programmes, election duties and collection of Livestock and Standard Census data.

#### 4. Classroom Attitudes and Behaviour

**Increased self-discipline within the classroom.** An observer in a *Pehchan shala* class would find students happy, engaged, and eager to please their teacher. An example of the motivation of the students is the Jaisinghpura *Pehchan shala*, in which the students are disciplined enough to run the school by themselves three to four times a month when the teacher attends meetings or is absent. As observed during classes in *Pehchan shalas*, students worked quietly on their own or with partners or groups while the teachers were engaged in assisting other students or teaching another level. This learning environment contrasts greatly with that of Government schools in the villages. In a focus group from Blimpura, girls explained, "There is less noise and more discipline within *Pehchan* as compared to Government schools." They also said, "The boys in Government schools are quite noisy and are a distraction from learning." Finally, as mentioned earlier, while the use of punishment, both physical and verbal, prevails in Government schools, it is not permitted, used or needed in *Pehchan shalas*.

**Improved Social Skills.** Teacher interviews revealed a change in the manners of the *Pehchan shala* girls. For example, in a teacher interview in Kankaria, the teacher said, "Initially the girls had no manners. They used slang and bad words and were not able to sit properly in the classroom or treat elders with respect." Other teacher interviews supported this view. *Pehchan shala* teachers from Thali and Narayanpura villages also mentioned that the girls were politer and used less offensive language.

**Increased freedom to question and discuss.** Teacher interviews suggest that students have become increasingly vocal and comfortable enough with their peers and teachers to think critically within the classroom. The *Pehchan shala* teacher in Dhualia described how students want to know why it is important to greet someone with "Namaste." She



further explained that the students have freely asked questions pertaining to social issues such as child marriage and the “purda” (veiling) system during discussions. Other teachers described the students’ ability to understand the morals and themes of stories. However, the extent to which true analytical and critical thinking is occurring within the classroom is questionable. While an increase in freedom to ask questions and discuss problems is apparent, rote learning clearly prevails in many *Pehchan shala* classrooms. Students are often spoonfed answers while working with the teacher and when left to work on their own, are unable to solve problems or give correct answers. Furthermore, student interviews suggest that most girls are still unable to think independently about their future and are ready to accept their future as decided by their families.

**Sharing of learning outputs.** In addition, information taught in *Pehchan* is disseminated to the community through the students. Some students who have developed the ability to impart their learning and skills to others, teach and help others within the classroom. For example, *Pehchan* students in Narayanpura village compare what they have learned with their siblings attending Government schools and at times, even assist them with their homework. The NGO in the Phagi block also taught some girls to ride bicycles. These girls, in turn, passed on their newly acquired skills to their friends and even to their teachers.

**Change in style of dress.** *Pehchan shala* girl students in two Chaksu villages exhibited a modernised style of dress due to their participation in the *Pehchan shala* programme. Instead of the traditional tribal dress, these girls now frequently wear *salwar kameez*.

## 5. Empowerment of Girls

**Increased self-expression and confidence.** Interviews with several parents and community members revealed that some girls were now able to speak to the elders, even males, in their communities, as well as to strangers, with greater confidence. Before their participation in the *Pehchan* programme, many girls were not able to speak confidently to older men or strangers. Observations of *Pehchan shala* classrooms also revealed that many girls were now able to perform skits, dance and sing in public, since participating in the *Pehchan* programme. Such an increase in self-confidence and expression is also due in part to the scripted interactions that take place between *Pehchan shala* students and other community members. For example, in Thali village, *Pehchan shala* students interacted with students attending local Government schools—observing Government school students present poems and short stories that they had written gave the *Pehchan* students added confidence in their own abilities to write and present their ideas at the *Pehchan shala*.



**Improved ability to express opinions and desires to parents.** *Balika manch* members in several villages (e.g. Kankaria, Jaisinghpura) also reported an improvement in their abilities to express their opinions and desires to their parents. *Balika Manches have been formed* to enable Pehchan shala girls to remain in contact with each other and with reading and writing, even after they graduate from the *Pehchan Shalas*. The *Balika Manches* provide them with opportunities to share experiences and discuss issues related to their own development, family and society. According to female community members in Jaisinghpura, one *Pehchan shala* student even admonished her father for excessive drinking. A former *Pehchan shala* teacher from the Phagi block suggested that participation in the *Pehchan* programme and subsequent improvement in girl students' communication skills has led parents to listen to their daughters and to hold them in high regard.

**Box 2: Broader Impacts on Pehchan Girls**

- Self confidence and mobility.
- Freedom to question and discuss.
- Ability to apply learning to real life situations.
- Reduction in dowry demands.
- Workloads on girls reduced.
- Improved time management skills.
- Breaking down of caste barriers.

**Improved freedom to make choices.** Interestingly, an interview with a *Pehchan shala* teacher from the Chaksu block suggests that participation in the Pehchan programme has also helped the girls acquire the ability to make decisions. These girls have been able to tell their parents that they oppose the idea of getting married or moving to a particular village. While, girls in the Rawantpura *Pehchan shala* said that they did not have the courage to oppose their parents' regarding their marriage, they were able to voice their desire to continue their education until they married. Indeed, education appears to be positively associated with girls' abilities to make life decisions on their own. With the support of her parents and community members, a Government school girl student from the Kankaria village has achieved a class10 level education. She stated that the decision to continue with her education was now hers to make. At this stage, girl students achieve a level of empowerment that enables them to make such decisions, independent of parental or community support.

**Improved persuasive abilities.** Several of the girls interviewed by the research team reported being able to persuade their parents to let them go to the market alone to purchase household goods. For many parents and community members, however, the physical safety of their daughters is still a serious concern. While some parents would allow trips to local markets, most parents would not allow their daughters to travel beyond a few



kilometres. For example, mothers in Thali village would not send their daughters to the large marketplace in the town of Chaksu because of the distance, safety concerns, and their youth, although they willingly sent them to the local market to run errands and purchase vegetables. Students also reported being able to persuade their parents to allow them to continue to attend classes at the *Pehchan shala*. They convinced their parents of the importance of education and that household chores could as easily be completed after classes.

**Increased independence.** As mentioned earlier, some girls reported going to the market by themselves to purchase household goods. Others mentioned traveling alone to the health centre when their siblings were in need of care. Parents who permitted their daughters to travel to the market or health centre alone, reported increased confidence in the girls' abilities to effectively handle such activities. Finally, improvements in basic literacy were also associated with increases in independence for girls, who reported the ability to read bus numbers and routes. In fact, members of the Kankaria *Balika manch* successfully convinced their parents to allow them to attend a five-day *mela* (celebration) in Bikaner, several kilometres from their village. In preparation for this celebration, the girls planned and rehearsed routines incorporating both songs and dances, which they performed in front of hundreds of other *Balika manch* members from surrounding villages.

**Increased freedom of movement in Phagi block.** The *Pehchan shala* girls in the block learned to ride bicycles and some of them picked up these skills rapidly and now ride from one village to another. Girls in the Narayanpura village even reported instructing their teacher on bicycle riding! In many cases though, the girls were unable to travel long distances on their bicycles because of the desert conditions in which they live and the safety concerns that their families had.

**Increased knowledge of democratic processes.** Participation in the *Balikamanch/ Pehchan mandel* also functioned as a learning exercise in democratic processes for *Pehchan shala* girls. For example, teachers and students in the Kalyanpura village invited members of the *Gram Panchayat* to increase their awareness of political issues and to learn about the responsibilities associated with elected positions. These girls also held elections to select the *Sarpanch* (President), *Up Sarpanch* (Vice-President), and Treasurer of the *Balika manch*.

**Improved ability to manage simple accounts.** Several parents mentioned that their daughters were able to apply the basic literacy and mathematics skills that they learned at the *Pehchan shala* to practical situations occurring in daily life. For example, a 13-year old grade-four *Pehchan shala* student from Thali village was initially criticised for going to the *Pehchan shala* by her aunt, who felt that education was unimportant.



However, when she was able to use the skills she had learned at *Pehchan* to manage the marriage-related expenditures of a relative, her aunt changed her mind and praised this student. It is the practical application of these skills, rather than merely acquiring knowledge, that garners the support of the community members. In addition, community members and students in several villages (e.g. Kankaria and Thali) reported that participation in the *Pehchan shala* programme has provided their daughters with the knowledge necessary to bargain effectively at the marketplace. For example, in Thali village, one 13-year-old girl student reported that she is able to bargain for and purchase her own jewelry since participating in the *Pehchan* programme.

## 6. Marriage

**Impact on age of marriage.** Interviews with parents and community members suggest that the *Pehchan* programme may have had some impact on delaying the age at which girls are married. For example, in Dhualia village, community members explained that they did not realise that they would have the opportunity to educate their daughters through the *Pehchan shalas*, so they married them off quite young. Now that they have the programme in the community, they do not arrange marriages for girls who are pursuing their studies. They are also aware of the legal age of marriage for girls (18 years) and boys (21 years) - some community members were not aware of this law before the *Pehchan* intervention.

However, the impact on the age of marriage was not observed in all communities. For example, in an interview with older female community members in Jaisinghpura, the women explained that it is a common practice to marry the younger daughters at the same time as their older siblings as it is cost-effective (many of these villages are economically backward). These women thought that the *Pehchan* programme had not changed this practice very much. They explained that after marriage most girls were allowed to study if they wished, until the time of "ghona," when they moved to their in-laws' home. In most cases, this occurred when the girls were 17-18 years old.

In sum, the *Pehchan* programme has had an appreciable impact in increasing parental awareness against the practice of child marriage and has somewhat contributed in facilitating social change in society regarding delay in marriage.

**Increased appeal for marriage.** Delays in marriage of *Pehchan shala* students may be due in part to education increasing the girls' attractiveness for marriage. Interestingly, when asked who would be more attractive—a girl with a 5<sup>th</sup> class education or a girl with an 8<sup>th</sup> class education—several mothers we interviewed chose the girl with an 8<sup>th</sup> class education, stating that educated girls could contribute more to their household.



For example, the parents of a 14-year-old, class 4 student in Thali's *Pehchan shala*, were asked if their daughter was educated while finalising a marriage proposal with a prospective groom and his family. Initially, they stated that their daughter was uneducated. The groom's side immediately withdrew the marriage proposal, as they were not interested in the prospect of an uneducated daughter-in-law. Three months later, the *Pehchan* student became engaged to another boy. Her teacher stated that her parents' acknowledgment of her education at the *Pehchan shala* helped solidify this marriage proposal, as the groom's family preferred an educated girl.

**Possible reductions in dowry demands for *Pehchan shala* girl students.** In an interview in Thali village, mothers explained that dowry demands vary across individuals. However, if a girl is educated, there is a chance that dowry demands are reduced, because the groom's perception of the girl's worth increases. In the Jaisinghpura village, interviews indicated that although dowry demands have not changed in the village since the *Pehchan* intervention, education increases a woman's status and the status of the family that she marries into because she can work more efficiently, she won't be cheated, and she can sign her name rather than use her thumbprint. Interviews suggest that having educated girls in families is desirable, useful and a source of pride for their own families and that of their in-laws.

## 7. Child Labour

**Change in intra-household distribution of labour.** Girls work fewer hours since the *Pehchan* intervention. Prior to going to the *Pehchan shala*, most of the girls were engaged full-time in household work, agricultural work and cattle herding. Mothers in their interviews commented that since their daughters were at home, they took it for granted that they should work the whole day. However, since the *Pehchan shalas* have opened, girls spend a significant amount of time in these schools. Mothers have taken up some of the burden of the household chores to enable their children to attend school. Mothers did not appear upset by these additional responsibilities. Rather, they happily took on extra chores knowing that their children were studying. Working for survival was the permanent and predominant aspect of these villagers' lives, which the *Pehchan shalas* have partially altered. However, girls continue to be pulled out of school, seasonally and attend classes irregularly so as to participate in "food for work" programmes, harvest crops, weave carpets, and care for siblings. Attendance is most sporadic during peak agricultural seasons. In Thali village for example, five girls were withdrawn from *Pehchan* because one of their parents had passed away and they were sent to work in carpet-weaving factories to support their families. In Rawantpura, many girls had to miss school as they were engaged in the "*Mitti Dalna*" (Food for Work) programme, which takes place only during summer. These girls complained that they did not enjoy the work as it



involved physical labour and they had to endure the dust, hot sun, etc. In return for their labour, the girls and their families received Rs. 15 (USD 0.33) per hour and 4 kilogrammes of wheat. After the programme ended, the girls returned to school.

**Improvement in time management skills.** While the absolute number of working hours decreased for the students, most girls are still expected to work after school or before school hours. For example, before the *Pehchan shala* was opened, some students from Bhimpura grazed cattle from 9:00 in the morning to 3:00 in the afternoon. Now that they attend *Pehchan*, they only have to graze cattle for a few hours after school. However, their other household responsibilities such as washing and cooking and cleaning remain unchanged. In order to balance work, school and studies, girls do their chores and other work more efficiently.

## 8. Caste

**Positive impact on inter-caste relations within the *Pehchan shala* classroom<sup>6</sup>.** There is no caste discrimination or practice of “untouchability”<sup>7</sup> within the *Pehchan shala* classrooms. Interviews with older girl students of Jaisinghpura indicated that changes in inter-caste relations have come about within the *Pehchan shala*. Many younger children who were not yet students of *Pehchan shalas* followed caste norms; however, students of *Pehchan shalas* broke these norms by playing and sharing food and water with girls of different castes. Some children were scolded for breaking these norms. The *Pehchan shala* girls said that they continue to share their food and play with girls of other castes despite being scolded by their parents.

**Impact on inter-caste relations between community members less discernable.** Although inter-caste relations have improved, village-level caste discrimination in *Pehchan shala* communities is still practiced. For example, while some mothers stated that villagers in Jaisinghpura can now sit together and eat, different castes may still not share food with each other. In addition, a person from a higher caste will not accept food from someone from a lower caste. One woman stated that in Jaisinghpura, members of higher castes (e.g. Loda) would not enter the homes of lower caste members (e.g. Raigur, SC)). However, community members believed that improvements in inter-caste relations at the village level could not be attributed to the *Pehchan* intervention, but instead were the results of gradual changes in Indian society.

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<sup>6</sup> It is recognised that substantive changes in social relations require time and inputs from multiple sectors. The *Pehchan* project is not by itself, capable of bringing lasting changes in social behavior.

<sup>7</sup> Upper castes often do not allow members of other castes to enter their homes, share their food or water or even touch them. This is known as the practice on “untouchability”.



**Changes in village-level attitudes towards the inter-caste relationships of *Pehchan shala* girls.** Although there has been no impact on inter-caste relationships between community members, the community has gradually accepted the inter-caste relations between the *Pehchan shala* girls. During the interview with a teacher in the Chaksu block, the research team discovered that parents initially opposed children sharing water from the same pot during class. The teacher said that she convinced the parents in the community that their children could share water by telling them that there are no real differences between people of different castes. She stated, "We all have the same eyes, the same noses, and eat the same food." She also said that she, herself, tried to set an example by visiting every home and accepting water and food from families of different castes.

In another example in the Dosara village, the only place available for the *Pehchan shala* meetings was a village temple. Members of a higher caste (Jat) asked the *Pehchan* project staff at Digantar to disallow the students of the lower (Bairwa) caste from entering the temple. Digantar refused to encourage such discrimination. However, after observing the positive influences of the *Pehchan shala* on these girls, members of the Jat community allowed the girls to attend classes in the temple with the condition that girls from the Bairwa caste not touch the idols. Eventually the fears of the higher caste community members dissipated. They allowed their daughters in *Pehchan shalas* to play with girls of the lower castes and did not even mind if the girls touched the idols.

## **9. Health**

**Improved personal hygiene of *Pehchan shala* girls and their mothers.** Instruction in personal hygiene, exposure to teachers who were well dressed on a daily basis, and peer pressure have contributed to the improvement in personal hygiene apparent in the *Pehchan shala* girls. For example, a 15-year-old girl from Jaisinghpura now understood how poor hygiene could affect her health and could explain why it was important to care for her self and stay clean. In Thali village, a mother of a *Pehchan shala* girl said that she observed improvements in health practices of *Pehchan* girls. She said that some girls were brushing their teeth and bathing two to three times per day since participating in the *Pehchan* programme. Student interviews suggest that the girls were fearful of being ostracised by other *Pehchan* students if they did not maintain a basic level of hygiene. In fact, daughters even brought these habits home with them, such that mothers reported replicating their daughters' behavior. One mother said jokingly that she "gets a headache from the back and forth motion of brushing her teeth."

**Change in food and water handling.** Through the *Pehchan shala*, the students have learned the importance of sanitation and nutrition in the kitchen. Students know that



they should eat fresh and healthy food, wash the fruits and vegetables before eating them, clean the kitchen regularly, cover food to avoid flies, filter or boil water, and wash their hands with soap after going to the toilet. Parents observed these changes in their daughters and willingly practice these habits as they realise their positive effects.

**More Information should be provided on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention in *Pehchan shala* villages.** HIV/AIDS prevention has not been a priority of the intervention. Although there was a six-day workshop on HIV/AIDS for *Pehchan shala* teachers in the Chaksu block, there was still little to no awareness of the disease in most community members, students and teachers in the *Pehchan shalas* visited there. A few community members who were aware of HIV/AIDS said, "HIV/AIDS is not a problem here," and that the "Girls were too young to need to know about HIV/AIDS." Such statements are apparent contradictions to the common practice of child marriage, which increases the chances of girls becoming sexually active at young ages. In some cases, teachers disseminated factually incorrect and discriminatory information about HIV/AIDS. In an interview with a teacher in the Chaksu block, she stated that she taught her students not to wear the clothes of HIV/AIDS infected persons and not to sit beside infected persons.

**Increased knowledge of feminine health and motherhood in *Pehchan shala* villages.** The *Pehchan shalas* are an important venue for discussion about feminine hygiene, puberty, birth control, pregnancy, birthing, childrearing and child immunisation because many of these topics are taboo within the household. In an interview with a male teacher in Kankaria, he explained that he taught the importance of rest and nutrition during pregnancy and using a clean blade to cut the umbilical cord during delivery. The girls are also now aware of the need to use sterilised or disposable needles during immunisations.

In addition, participation in the *Balika manch* and *Pehchan mandel* groups also provided *Pehchan shala* girl students with the opportunity to express themselves and discuss personal, health-related issues considered taboo within the greater community. For example, in Kalyanpura, members of the *Balika manch* stated they were able to discuss questions and concerns related to feminine hygiene that they could not share openly with their parents. Although the *Pehchan* intervention has increased awareness about many feminine health issues and provided a forum to discuss openly students' health questions and concerns, both teachers and students would like even more information and discussion about feminine health and motherhood.



# Factors that Contributed to the Success of Pehchan

As noted earlier, several key factors contributed to the success of the *Pehchan* programme, including the presence of female teachers, residence of these teachers within the *Pehchan shala* communities (as well as the stipulation that teachers not belong to these communities), *Pehchan's* classroom ideology (most notably the removal of fear and punishment from the classroom environment), the flexible timings of the *Pehchan* schools (which vary according to the needs and schedules of girl students), the inclusion of scripted interactions and communication skills in the curriculum. Other factors impacting the success of *Pehchan* are listed below.

### Box 3: Ingredients of the Success of *Pehchan shalas*

- ♦ Single-sex environment.
- ♦ Flexible timings.
- ♦ Flexibility in pace and content.
- ♦ No corporal punishment.
- ♦ Warmer teacher-student relationship.
- ♦ Teachers living in the community.

**Provision of training to village women.** Although the main objective of the *Pehchan* programme was to reduce the drop out rate of girls aged 9-14, the programme has also had significant positive effects on the women who have been employed as *Pehchan* teachers. Most of these female teachers belong to nearby villages. Through the *Pehchan* intervention, they had an opportunity to utilise their educational qualifications and gain experience in the field of teaching. The 40-day training provided by the NGOs for these teachers helped to enhance their skills and prepare them in such manner that many were able to transfer to higher paying positions as Government schoolteachers. As such, the *Pehchan* programme also provided project personnel with the opportunity to train and educate village women such that they could work both for *Pehchan* and for other educational programmes. According to Dr. Shushmita Dutt, Education Project Officer at UNICEF Rajasthan, this is “the core magic of the programme.”

**Dedication and enthusiasm of project personnel.** It is also important to note that the success of the *Pehchan* programme would not have been possible without the dedication and enthusiasm of project personnel. NGO staff members worked tirelessly to facilitate the implementation of the *Pehchan* programme at the village level. In addition, project personnel collaborated with Government officials at the block and district levels to ensure that the *Pehchan* programme worked within the Government's educational framework.



## Factors that Reduced the Success of *Pehchan*

**Low teacher retention.** One of the primary barriers to successful implementation of the *Pehchan* programme was the drop out rate of teachers. According to interviews with project staff in both the Chaksu and Phagi blocks, the majority of teachers who left the programme did so shortly after completing the 40-day training course. It was at this time that teachers were first exposed to the villages in which they would teach. According to the 2005 UNICEF Progress and Utilisation Report on Education Activities in Rajasthan (submitted to the Italian Committee for UNICEF), teacher drop out “either during the course of the training or after completion...has led to a great deal of wastage of resources, efforts and time” (p. 8). To reduce such wastage, project personnel have begun introducing teachers to the villages and conditions in which they will live and work prior to the 40-day training. Other factors reducing the rate of teacher retention include lower salaries compared to Government schools, health, marriage, and maternity (which often resulted in only a temporary leave of absence).

**Complexities of mainstreaming *Pehchan* girl students into Government schools** may have an impact on project objectives. While the intervention of *Pehchan* academic supporters has helped in minimising the dropout rates of *Pehchan* students from Government schools and increased the learning pace of these students, in reality successful mainstreaming of the students appears to depend upon a complex array of factors. These include student and community perceptions of local Government schools, Government teachers, co-educational environments, sex of the Government teacher, distance of Government schools, marriage of the girl, parental support, and demands put upon the girls by work schedules and families. Interestingly, interviews with *Pehchan* students, community members, and project personnel suggest that even after participating in the *Pehchan* programme, some girls did not believe that staying in school was important and they were not aware of the benefits of a higher level of education.

**Cultural and economic constraints.** Parent and student interviews suggested that some *Pehchan shala* students still had to work to support their families and were withdrawn from school when they were needed. Outside of the *Pehchan shala* classroom, some girls were not able to exhibit the self-confidence, independence, and freedom of expression that they displayed within the classroom, because of the cultural restraints that still exist within these communities. Finally, as the *Pehchan* programme had a minimal impact on the age at which girls were married, the attendance and drop out rates of girl students in several communities remains unchanged. Seasonal migration and a lack of appreciation of the value of education also had a negative impact on the attendance and drop out rates of these girls.



**Rote learning strategies.** Such strategies were commonly used in *Pehchan shala* classrooms and had a negative impact on the academic achievement of girl students, as evidenced by their ability to retain the knowledge acquired within the classroom and their performance in Government school examinations. For example, one student in the Jaisinghpura village reported that she visited the home of her in-laws for a month and had already forgotten many of the concepts that she had learned in the *Pehchan shala*. Utilisation of interactive teaching strategies within *Pehchan shala* classrooms could potentially circumvent such problems.

**Lack of initial community support.** Garnering the support of the community was also a constraint to effective implementation of the *Pehchan* programme according to project staff in both blocks. For example, some communities were unwilling to provide teachers with free accommodation for the duration of the project period, as they believed that the *Pehchan* programme was a Government-sponsored programme. In addition, some communities were unable to provide project staff with the physical infrastructure necessary to set up *Pehchan shalas* in these villages.

**Weak ties with the Government school system.** Project personnel in both the Chaksu and Phagi blocks stated that the relationship between *Pehchan shalas* and Government schools was tenuous at best. Dr. Dhanker (Diganter) supported this view when he stated that a weakness of the *Pehchan* programme was that “We still do not know how to collaborate [effectively] at the district and state levels.” Dr. Lalit Kishore, Pedagogical Advisor to CULP, also believes that this had a negative impact on the efficacy of the *Pehchan* programme.

**Project constraints.** Limitations of funding prevented project personnel from fulfilling one of the programme objectives, i.e. the organising of residential camps for girls. In addition, there was some delay in authorising Project Cooperation Agreements (PCAs), which affected the smooth functioning of the project.



# Sustainability of *Pehchan*

## 1. Student support

Through observation and interviews, it is apparent that students enjoy participating in the *Pehchan* programme. In Thali village, girls often laughed and smiled as they rotated role-playing activities concerning the benefits of education. Classroom observations in every village sampled revealed that *Pehchan* girl students loved to dance and sing songs about women and their lives in the villages. Students' faces would brighten when they were asked questions about their teachers and about attending the *Pehchan shala*. However, when asked what they would change about *Pehchan*, students mentioned that they would like better English lessons, and the teaching of practical skills such as sewing.

When students were asked what they would do if the *Pehchan* programme closed or what they would do after completing the *Pehchan* bridge course, most girls immediately demanded the extension of the *Pehchan shala* through class 8 and stated that they only wanted to study at *Pehchan*. When probed further, some girls stated that they would consider going to Government schools, while other girls stated that they would discontinue their studies. When the students in the girl's forums were asked, what they would do if there were no NGO support, they could not respond and were quite disheartened with the idea. The girls do not believe that they can continue the 'girl's forums' without the material and technical support provided by the NGO. It was evident from the girls' responses that they still needed guidance to increase their confidence and ability to think independently.

## 2. Community-level support

Overall, most villagers have been supportive of the *Pehchan* intervention. Having *Pehchan shalas* in their community is a source of pride for the community. Where no physical structure was available, some communities built or provided infrastructure for the *Pehchan shalas*. Students and parents from Dhualia, for example, provided resources to build a thatched shelter for *Balika manch* meetings. In Rawantpura, a family provided space in their home for the *Pehchan shala* classroom meetings. Such support was critical to the successful functioning of the *Pehchan* programme at the broader and localised levels. Furthermore, most of the community members participated during the *Balika Manch* elections.



**Increased appreciation for educating females.** Interviews with community members suggested that the presence of the *Pehchan* programme spurred an appreciation for education for some that did not exist prior to the intervention. For example, a female community member in Rawantpura who did not attend school as a child, says that she is willing to educate her daughter when she grows older. Both she and her family believe that had she been educated, she would have been able to develop her own business (such as selling local crafts). Because she did not want her daughter to work for the *Mitti Dalna* programme (Food for Work, road construction), this community member planned to send her daughter to school.

However, a lack of awareness of the benefits of education for girl students was apparent in some community members. For example, when asked about the sporadic attendance of girl students at the *Pehchan shala* in Rawantpura, a male community member stated that these children and their parents still lack the awareness of the need for education. He also stated that education means that his daughters will not have to depend upon agricultural labour or Government programmes such as Food for Work, nor will they have to work under harsh conditions; rather, education would provide them with the opportunity to utilise their skills and talents more effectively. Educated girls are also more skilful and efficient at the tasks they take on compared to uneducated girls. Interviews with male community members in Kankaria also suggested that some parents still did not understand the value of educating their daughters. One community member stated that, as a girl's first guardians are her parents, she must respect their wishes and remain uneducated, if they so desire.

**Increased pride within *Pehchan shala* communities.** Both parents and community members reported a feeling of pride in the accomplishments of the *Pehchan shala* students since their participation in the programme. Many parents were pleased with their daughters' newly acquired abilities to manage simple accounts, read bus signs (which made travelling beyond the village feasible), understand doctors' prescriptions, and sign documents (rather than using their thumbprints). Learning how to sign one's name was associated with elevated status within these communities.

Interviews with community members in Narayanpura revealed that these *Pehchan* students "learned more in three months at the *Pehchan shala* than in several years of Government schooling." As such, students reported an increased sense of belonging and pride in their identity as *Pehchan shala* students. Additional interviews with girl students in Kankaria revealed that they were initially taunted by community members because of the teaching methods utilised in the *Pehchan shala* classroom (e.g. singing songs). After the villagers witnessed the improvement in self-expression and self-confidence of these girls, their sense of pride in the girls' achievements



grew. According to Dr. Dhanker (Diganter), the *Pehchan shala* programme has provided participating girls with a unique identity, or "special self-image. These girls were invisible in their villages" prior to the *Pehchan* programme and now have the courage to do a variety of things such as talk with elders and male community members, ride bicycles, and attend Government schools. In the villages, they are now recognised by community members as *Pehchan shala* students. This recognition, in conjunction with their evolving self-image has contributed to the increase in pride experienced by these students.

When presented with questions about what would happen if the NGOs and UNICEF discontinued funding the programme, community members varied in their responses. Continuing their daughter's education was dependent upon both the quality and distance of the Government school, as well as the financial status of the villager. Some *Gram Panchayat* members in Dhualia village wanted to raise funds to continue the *Pehchan shalas* and approach the appropriate authorities asking for support. Community members in Narayanpura also expressed similar notions of supporting the *Pehchan shalas*. However, other community members in Dhualia village said that villagers could not afford to spend any extra money on education, since most of them were daily wage labourers. In Jaisinghpura, a village woman, was of the same view that the villagers were not capable of sustaining the *Pehchan shalas* on their own. In Kankaria, the *Pehchan shala* teacher said that given their financial status, the community would be able to contribute at most 50 per cent of the cost of running the *Pehchan shala*. However, the villagers believed that they would first have to organise a community-wide meeting to decide what would happen to the *Pehchan shala* after support is withdrawn.

In interviews with community members in Dhualia, they stated that if the *Pehchan shala* programme ends, "Girls will return to tasks like goat-herding and making dung cakes and will eventually get married with only an education level of class 5." Community members in Dhualia refused to send their daughters to the Government school because it was too far (distance of 5 kilometers), had a Government schoolteacher, whom they "detested", also, older boys were studying there. These community members were supportive of the *Pehchan shala* and wanted their daughters to study there through class 8. The demand to continue *Pehchan shalas* through level 8 was voiced throughout interviews with students, parents, and community members. However, some mothers in the villages stated that they would prefer to keep their children in the *Pehchan shala*, but they would send them to Government schools, if the *Pehchan* programme ended.



### **3. Teacher support**

Overall, *Pehchan* teachers are highly motivated and dedicated to their students and the community in which they live. As mentioned earlier, the Rawantpura *Pehchan shala* teacher personally tutors children who cannot attend classes during either the morning or the evening *Pehchan shala* sessions. She also took the initiative to teach the girls sewing skills by providing them with her personal sewing machine. During the monthly teachers' meetings, the teachers are able to share their own talents and knowledge, which they pass on to the girls in their respective *Pehchan shalas*.

Teacher interviews indicated that teachers were satisfied and took pride in their jobs. A teacher in Thali village stated that she felt that teaching girls in these remote villages was a "noble profession." However, several *Pehchan shala* teachers did not feel that they were sufficiently compensated, especially in view of the effort and energy they invested in running the *Pehchan shalas* and ensuring community support and mobilisation. Their salary in hand was around Rs. 2464 (USD 54.75) per month excluding the travel allowance. This salary has increased by only 10 per cent since 2002. As such, some *Pehchan shala* teachers work for just one term and then transfer to positions in Government schools, where the pay is higher.

### **4. NGO support**

The NGO staff members are highly enthusiastic and motivated. Staff interviews indicated that they are quite satisfied with their work and are proud of the *Pehchan* programme. Both NGOs are currently seeking additional funding for the *Pehchan* programme from different sources. If they are unable to find funding, they will continue to support the 'girls' forums' with their own resources.

### **5. Government support**

In an interview with Dr. S.P. Singh, Subdivision Magistrate, Chaksu, he declared his strong support for the *Pehchan* intervention and stated that such alternative educational interventions were important. Furthermore, he believed that such programmes should operate in tandem with existing Government programmes, which would increase their potential for success. However, he could not respond to queries as to whether *Pehchan* would be replicated or expanded throughout the state. According to him, an impact assessment of the *Pehchan shala* intervention would be conducted in July 2005 to ascertain the impact on these communities, as well as the gaps in the programme. A solution-oriented report, including ratings of key indicators such as social mobilisation, girl student participation in decision making,



utilisation of skills learned at the *Pehchan shala*, knowledge of domestic processes and knowledge of girls' own rights, will be generated for district-level officials and the Government of Rajasthan.

## **6. UNICEF support**

UNICEF has funded the *Pehchan* project personnel in both the Chaksu and Phagi blocks since the inception of the programme. UNICEF will introduce funding to a "convergent district" called Tonk in Rajasthan in 2006 for a similar programme. A residential educational programme for 'out-of-school' girls, health, nutrition and sanitation services will be offered; and day time *Pehchan shalas* for out of school girls will be continued.



# Recommendations for Replication and Expansion

**Improve teaching methodology** through a continued emphasis on interactive methods of teaching and learning rather than rote learning strategies. Such strategies discourage student participation and creativity.

**Improve *Pehchan shala* curricula.** Interviews with both teachers and students suggested the need for curricular improvements in several areas, such as nutrition and hygiene, gender relations, HIV/AIDS and English.

**Include practical skills** such as sewing, in the curriculum. Additionally, teach students how to use the skills that they learn through skits (e.g. how to purchase fabric, go to the market, use public transportation) and field trips.

**Set up more leadership camps and exposure trips** in order to create the mindset in parents that letting their daughters leave for educational opportunities is acceptable. This will also increase the independence and self-confidence of girl students.

**Increase teacher training** such that *Pehchan shala* teachers are able to sustain the *Pehchan shalas* without constant NGO supervision. Project personnel could provide minimal support through monthly or semi-annual meetings with teachers to address the challenges and concerns that they have.

**Increase community ownership and sustainability of the programme** through withdrawal of some academic and community supporters, while still retaining the teacher. This should occur only after the *Pehchan shala* is firmly established within the community. This will reduce the financial burden on NGOs.

**Enhance sustainability of the *Balika manches*.** Participation in the girls' forums was quite successful. For example, 686 girls joined the *Balika manches* in the Chaksu block since the inception of the programme (as of March 2005). Interviews with community members in several villages (e.g. Narayanpura) brought out the belief that the *Pehchan* programme could be sustainable if maternal education is incorporated into the programme objectives. As mentioned earlier, changes noted in some *Pehchan* girl students were not observed outside of the classroom due to cultural constraints. Educating mothers could potentially circumvent this problem. Interviews with mothers in most villages suggested that they would welcome this opportunity to participate in the education of their daughters.



**If co-educational learning environments are implemented, maintain girls' forums.**

To complement the work that has been done with girls, project personnel could create co-educational environments in *Pehchan shalas*, as working with both genders may be more effective in creating gender equality. Interviews with project personnel suggest that future financial support may be contingent upon instituting co-educational, rather than single-sex, environments within the *Pehchan shala* classrooms. According to Dr. Dhanker, Diganter did not initially want to take up a programme that only educated girls and only used female teachers. Personally, he would prefer to have a co-educational programme in place and also employ male teachers. However, the single-sex environment of the *Pehchan shala* classroom was a significant determinant of higher attendance and retention of girl students. It is imperative that adolescent girls targeted by the original programme are still provided opportunities for learning and discussion in a single-sex environment. As parents are hesitant to send their daughters to co-educational Government schools, project staff should also assess the willingness of parents to allow their daughters to attend co-educational *Pehchan shalas*. In addition, the research team strongly recommends continuation of the *Balika manch* as a group for girls, in case co-educational environments are instituted.

**Assess parental willingness to pay for education.** Communities may be more willing to pay for educational opportunities if boys are also permitted to attend *Pehchan shalas*. Project personnel could charge a small tuition for high quality educational services and provide sliding scale fees for poorer communities or families.

**Increase cost effectiveness of *Pehchan shalas* through the development of residential camps.** The monthly cost of operating each *Pehchan shala* ranges between Rs. 5,000 (USD 111.11) and Rs. 6,000 (USD 133.33). The minimum criterion to set up a *Pehchan shala* is 25 'out-of-school' girls. According to Dr. Kulhari (CULP), setting up these schools in villages with a lesser number of girls is not cost effective. To improve cost-effectiveness and to ensure that all 'out-of-school' children are guaranteed educational access, Dr. Kulhari suggested creating residential camps to ensure access for any remaining 'out-of-school' girls.



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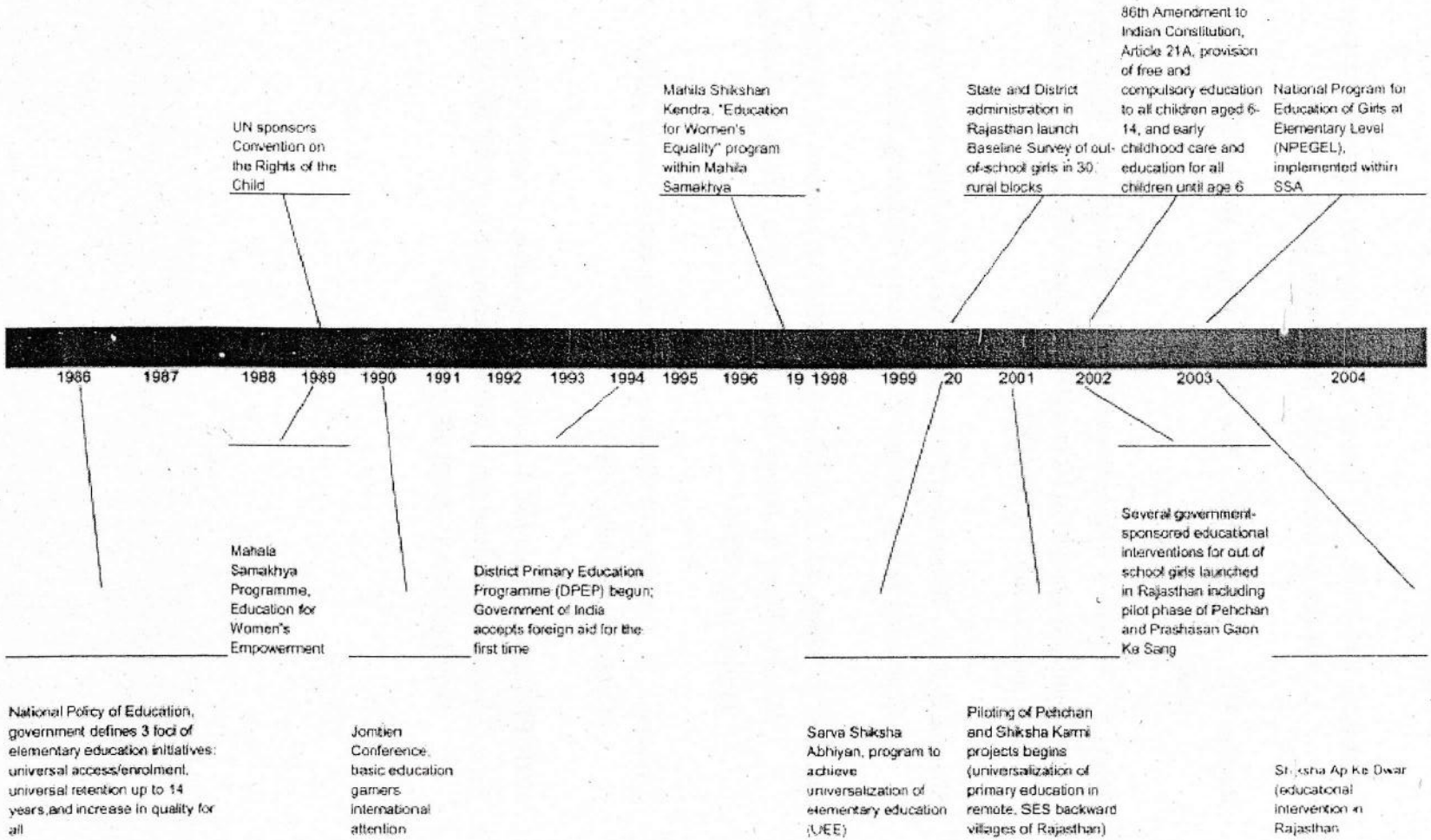


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# Annex I

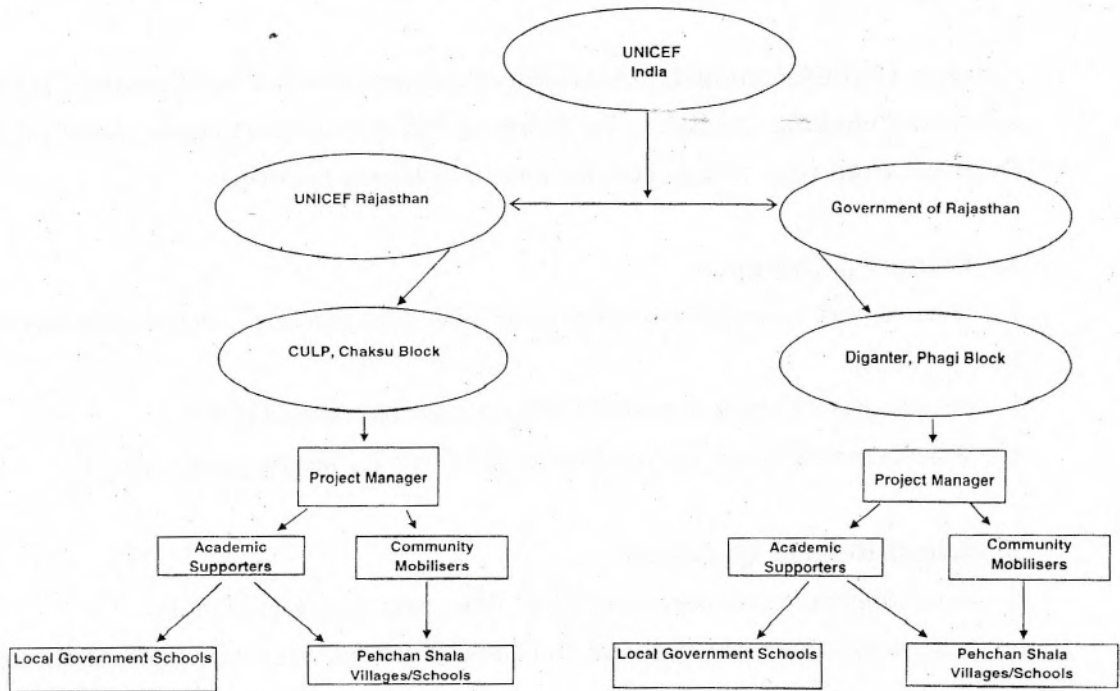
## Timeline of Educational Interventions





# Annex II

## Schematic Representation of the Pehchan Project





# Annex III

## Focus Group Protocols

### Student Focus Group Questions

Groups: 1) Mainstreamed, 2) Attending Pehchan (also in Girls Forums), 3) Dropped out from Pehchan, 4) Eligible for Pehchan but did not participate, and 5) Excluded from Pehchan (e.g. village did not meet minimum criteria)

#### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is your name? How old are you? Where do you live? Do you have any brothers or sisters?
2. Do you have friends at school? Who is your best friend here?
3. What types of things do you like to do? (Probe: Playing games, etc.?)

#### B. School-Related Questions

4. How long have you been in school? When did you start school?
5. Last week, how many days did you come to school? Is that normal? (If no, then why not?)
6. What is your least favorite thing about going to school? (Probe: What don't you like about going to school?)
7. What types of things do you study in school? Which do you like the most? Which do you like the least?

#### C. Teaching Quality (e.g. caring, patient, caters to all abilities, effective classroom management)

8. (If not interviewing students in the presence of the teacher) – Do you like your teacher? Why do you like her?
9. \*\*Teacher absenteeism\*\*
10. Are there some students who understand the things you are taught better than others?
11. What happens when a student makes a mistake or says the incorrect answer? What does your teacher do?
12. What happens when a student does not understand something? What does your teacher do?

#### D. Relevance of Curriculum/Basic Skills & Empowerment

13. What did you learn in school this week?



14. What is the most interesting thing you have learned in school so far?
15. Do you like to participate in class? Do you have fun at school?
16. Before you came to school, did you know how to read? How well can you read now? Do you have problems reading? Do you need help reading?
17. Does your teacher give you work to do at home? How much time do you spend on homework or studying?
18. (If relevant) Do you participate in the Balika Manches/Girls Forums? What types of things do you do in these groups? What is the best thing about being in this group? What is your least favorite thing about being in this group? How do your parents feel about your participation in this group?

#### **E. Family-Related Questions**

17. How do your parents feel about you attending school? (Probe: Do your parents want you to come to school?)
18. Do you have brothers or sisters in school? Are they older or younger? (Probe: Seeking to understand any gender bias that exists in the home, e.g. sisters who stay at home but brothers attend school)
19. What kinds of things/work do you do at home?
20. What kinds of things/work do you do outside of the home?

#### **D. Key Impacts**

21. How have lives of Pehchan students changed for the better? The worse? What are the impacts on parents and siblings of Pehchan students?
22. What can girls do with the math and reading skills they learn at Pehchan?
23. (If a mixed community) How has Pehchan helped bridge tensions between castes in this community?
24. What are girls who have studied at Pehchan able to do now that they could not do before participating in Pehchan? For example, can they go to the market by themselves? If a sibling is sick and she is home by herself can she go to the local health clinic? Can she speak with elders or men or strangers?
25. (If reporting significant changes) Have these new identities conflicted with traditional norms/values of the community?
26. Has awareness of health issues increased since the girls have participated in Pehchan? Areas include feminine/sexual health, maternity, puberty, HIV/AIDS? How much do these girls know? Examples?
27. Are there disciplinary differences between Pehchan shalas and government schools?
28. What is your opinion on the sustainability of the Balika manch, or girls' forums? Are there any parents or community members interested in facilitating this group once CULP/Diganter pulls out?

29. Do you have any suggestions for the next educational program for out of school girls? What are ways to improve Pehchan? What things would you suggest project staff focus on?

**FOR GIRLS WHO ATTENDED PEHCHAN IN PAST:**

30. Have you heard about the Pehchan schools?
31. Have you ever attended Pehchan schools? Tell us about your experiences with the Pehchan school. What was the best part of the Pehchan school? Why? What was the worst part? Why?
32. Why aren't you in the Pehchan program anymore? What happened?

**FOR MAINSTREAMED GIRLS ONLY:**

33. How is your school now different from the Pehchan school? What kinds of things do you learn?
34. Are the things you learn now easier or harder than at the Pehchan school?
35. What happens when you do not understand something?
36. How far would you like to go in school? What would you like to become as an adult?

**FOR GIRL STUDENTS WHO NEVER ENROLLED IN SCHOOL:**

37. Have you ever attended formal school, or any non-formal educational program? If yes, when and for how long? Why did you stop attending this program?
38. Why don't you attend school now?
39. What do you do on a typical day?
40. Do your parents work?
41. Would you like to go to school? Why or why not?
42. Do your parents want you to go to school?
43. Do you have any brothers? Do they attend school? Why did your parents allow them to attend school?



# Annexure IV

## Survey Protocols

### The Pehchan Project: Community Member Survey

#### Background Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

#### Marital Status:

\_\_\_\_\_ Married

\_\_\_\_\_ Single/unmarried

\_\_\_\_\_ Widowed/Divorced

#### Number of children:

\_\_\_\_\_ Sons

\_\_\_\_\_ Daughters

\_\_\_\_\_ Total

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Familiarity with Pehchan

1. Have you heard of the Pehchan program?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

#### Access

2. Do you agree or disagree that the Pehchan schools have improved access to education for out of school girls in this community?

(A) Strongly Agree

(B) Neutral

(C) Strongly Disagree

(D) N/A or I don't know

3. How many girls in this community are still out of school?

\_\_\_\_\_ Some girls

\_\_\_\_\_ Many girls

\_\_\_\_\_ No girls

\_\_\_\_\_ N/A or I don't know

4. What are the reasons that girls drop out from Pehchan schools? How about government schools? (Probe: Examples include taking care of siblings/elders/family members, housework or field work, uninteresting/irrelevant material presented at school. Also, are these reasons different/similar?)

5. (ONLY IF NONRESPONSIVE TO #2) Below is a list of possible factors that may prevent girls from attending school/cause them to drop out of school, please rate them as follows: Most Important, Somewhat Important, and Not Important.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Marriage
- \_\_\_\_\_ Maternity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Housework
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fieldwork
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of interest
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of money
- \_\_\_\_\_ Health Related Problems
- \_\_\_\_\_ Overcrowded classrooms
- \_\_\_\_\_ No benefit to school/education
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (SPECIFY:\_\_\_\_\_)

6. In Pehchan schools, do you believe that the girl student attendance rate is high:

- (A) Strongly Agree
- (B) Neutral
- (C) Strongly Disagree
- (D) N/A or I don't know

7. In Government schools, do you believe that the girl student attendance rate is high:

- (A) Strongly Agree
- (B) Neutral
- (C) Strongly Disagree
- (D) N/A or I don't know

8. Rate the girl attendance rate of the following schools, where 1 means the highest and 3 means the lowest attendance rate:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Pehchan schools
- \_\_\_\_\_ Government schools
- \_\_\_\_\_ Private schools

9. Below is a list of possible factors that may prevent girls from attending class in Pehchan schools. Please rate each of them as follows: Most Important, Somewhat Important, and Not Important.



- Taking care of siblings/elders/family members
- Working in the fields
- Teachers present uninteresting material
- Some other reason (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

10. What are the reasons for girls not going to class in government schools?

- Taking care of siblings/elders/family members
- Working in the fields
- Teachers present uninteresting material
- Some other reason (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

11. In Pehchan schools, do you think that the drop out rate of girls is (LESS THAN/THE SAME AS/MORE THAN) the drop out rate of girls in Government schools?

12. What are the most appealing incentives/programs that would promote attendance for out of school girls? (Probe: possible examples include provision of Midday Meals, regular health checkups, etc.)

**Overall Quality**

13. How would you rate the overall quality of girl's education in Pehchan schools?

- (A)  Satisfactory
- (B)  Average
- (C)  Poor

14. Regarding the enrollment of students in Pehchan classrooms, do you feel that there are (TOO FEW/TOO MANY/JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF) students enrolled?

15. How would you rate the overall quality of girl's education in government schools?

- (A)  Satisfactory
- (B)  Average
- (C)  Poor

16. Regarding the enrollment of students in government classrooms, do you feel that there are (TOO FEW/TOO MANY/JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF) students enrolled?

**Curriculum Ratings (ONLY FOR VILLAGE EDUC. COMM. MEMBERS)**

17. Rank how interesting the curriculum (or material taught to girls) is in Pehchan schools.

- (A)  Very Interesting
- (B)  Average

(C) \_\_\_ Very Boring

18. Rank the relevance of the curriculum to the daily life of girls in Pehchan schools.

(A) \_\_\_ Very Relevant/Useful

(B) \_\_\_ Average

(C) \_\_\_ Very Irrelevant

19. How much of the curriculum satisfies immediate needs of girls students in Pehchan schools?

(A) A little of the curriculum

(B) Some of the curriculum

(C) Most of the curriculum

20. How much of the curriculum is dedicated to reading?

(A) A little of the curriculum

(B) Some of the curriculum

(C) Most of the curriculum

21. How much of the curriculum is dedicated to writing?

(A) A little of the curriculum

(B) Some of the curriculum

(C) Most of the curriculum

22. How much of the curriculum is dedicated to mathematics?

(A) A little of the curriculum

(B) Some of the curriculum

(C) Most of the curriculum

23. How much of the curriculum is dedicated to something else we have not mentioned

(Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)?

(A) A little of the curriculum

(B) Some of the curriculum

(C) Most of the curriculum

24. How much of the material taught in Pehchan schools is about women/for women?

(A) A little of the curriculum

(B) Some of the curriculum

(C) Most of the curriculum



### School Facilities

25. How attractive are the Pehchan classrooms?

- (A) \_\_\_ Very Attractive
- (B) \_\_\_ Average
- (C) \_\_\_ Very Unattractive

26. (If Pehchan program is located within government school or other co-ed facility):

Do girls have access to separate toilets at Pehchan schools?

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

27. How attractive are the government school classrooms?

- (A) \_\_\_ Very Attractive
- (B) \_\_\_ Average
- (C) \_\_\_ Very Unattractive

28. Do girls have access to separate toilets at government schools?

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

### Teaching Quality

29. In your opinion, how likeable or disagreeable are the Pehchan teachers?

- (A) \_\_\_ Very Likeable
- (B) \_\_\_ Average
- (C) \_\_\_ Very Disagreeable

30. In your opinion, how qualified are the Pehchan teachers?

- (A) \_\_\_ Very Qualified
- (B) \_\_\_ Average
- (C) \_\_\_ Very Unqualified

31. In your opinion, how enthusiastic are the Pehchan teachers towards their students?

- (A) \_\_\_ Very Enthusiastic
- (B) \_\_\_ Average
- (C) \_\_\_ Very Unenthusiastic/bored

32. In your opinion, please rate the following statements:

The Pehchan teachers are compensated well for their positions and responsibilities.

TRUE    FALSE    OR    AGREE    DISAGREE

The Pehchan teachers have no reason to be concerned for their personal safety in this community.

TRUE FALSE OR AGREE DISAGREE

The Pehchan teachers are concerned with their personal safety in this community.

TRUE FALSE OR AGREE DISAGREE

The Pehchan teachers are satisfied with their positions and responsibilities.

TRUE FALSE OR AGREE DISAGREE

The local Pehchan teacher is not from this community.

TRUE FALSE OR AGREE DISAGREE

The local Pehchan teacher is committed to teach in this school and remain in this community for a long period of time.

TRUE FALSE OR AGREE DISAGREE

33. In your opinion, rank the interest of the local Pehchan teacher in teaching the subjects covered in school.

- (A) \_\_\_ Very Interested
- (B) \_\_\_ Average
- (C) \_\_\_ Very Disinterested

34. What percentage of time is spent on activities dictated by the government and/or Pehchan program? Examples include election duties and family planning counseling. These do not include teaching, or lecture preparation.

- (A) Some of the time
- (B) A little of the time
- (C) A lot of the time

35. Rank the effectiveness of these "non-teaching" programs.

- a. Very effective
- b. Neutral
- c. Very ineffective

36. Does the teacher enjoy participating in these programs/this component of her job?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

37. In the last month of school how many days has the Pehchan teacher not attended class.

- a. 0-2
- b. 2-5



- c. 5-10
- d. 10-15
- e. 15-30

**Program Support**

- 38. How supportive are you of teaching literacy to women?
  - (A) Very supportive
  - (B) Neutral
  - (C) Very unsupportive
  
- 39. How supportive are you of teaching literacy to men?
  - (A) Very supportive
  - (B) Neutral
  - (C) Very unsupportive
  
- 40. How supportive are you of teaching life skills/healthy behaviors to women?
  - (A) Very supportive
  - (B) Neutral
  - (C) Very unsupportive
  
- 41. How supportive are you of teaching life skills/healthy behaviors to men?
  - (A) Very supportive
  - (B) Neutral
  - (C) Very unsupportive
  
- 42. How supportive are you of women's education?
  - (A) Very supportive
  - (B) Neutral
  - (C) Very unsupportive
  
- 43. How supportive are you of Pehchan schools?
  - (A) Very supportive
  - (B) Neutral
  - (C) Very unsupportive
  
- 44. Do you think the Pehchan schools fulfill their goal of educating out of school girls?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

45. Do you think the Pehchan school program should be expanded throughout Rajasthan?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes          \_\_\_\_\_ No

Why?

46. Do you think the Pehchan school program should be expanded throughout India?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes          \_\_\_\_\_ No

Why?

47. Can you think of any alternative to improve the state of girl's education in India today?

### **Mainstreaming and Retention**

48. How many Pehchan girl students are mainstreamed into government schools?

\_\_\_\_\_ Some girls

\_\_\_\_\_ Many girls

\_\_\_\_\_ No girls

49. Please rate the amount of difficulty, if any, Pehchan girls have when they transfer into government schools?

(A) Very easy

(B) Neutral

(C) Very difficult

50. Compared to girls who have been educated in government schools, are girls educated at Pehchan schools and then mainstreamed (LESS PREPARED/EQUALLY PREPARED/MORE PREPARED) for coursework at government schools?

51. Compared to girls who have been educated in government schools, is the material taught in government schools (MORE INTERESTING/LESS INTERESTING/SIMILARLY INTERESTING) for girls educated in Pehchan schools and then mainstreamed?

52. How has participating in the Pehchan program affected girl students lives? Their families' lives? Were there



# Background Note on the Internship Programme

UNICEF India's Knowledge Community on Children in India (KCCI) initiative aims to enhance knowledge management and sharing on policies and programmes related to children in India. Conceived as part of the Knowledge Community on Children in India, the objectives of the 2005 Summer Internship Programme were to give young graduate students from across the world the opportunity to gain field level experience and exposure to the challenges and issues facing development work in India today.

UNICEF India hosted 100 young interns from India, Germany, Turkey, Japan, Korea, U.S., U.K., Australia, Canada, Taiwan, Israel, Netherlands, Sweden and Lebanon to participate in the 2005 Summer Internship Programme. Interns were grouped into teams of 4-5 and placed in 16 different research institutions across 12 states (Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Karnataka, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Kerala) studying field level interventions for children from 22 May-28 June 2005.

Under the supervision of partner research institutes, the interns conducted a combination of desk research and fieldwork, the end result of which were 26 case studies of UNICEF-assisted Government programmes and other interventions aimed at promoting the rights of children and their development. 20 of these are supplemented by short films capturing the reality of children and their families. The case studies cover key sectors linked to children and development in India, and address important policy issues for children in India. These include: primary education, child survival, incidence of malnutrition, elimination of child labour and water and sanitation.

Another unique feature of this programme was the composition of the research teams comprising interns with multi-disciplinary academic skills and multi-cultural backgrounds. Teams were encouraged to pool their skills and knowledge prior to the fieldwork period and to devise a work plan that allowed each team member an equal role in developing the case study. Group work and cooperation were key elements in the production of outputs, and all this is evident in the interesting and multi-faceted narratives that these case studies are on development in India.

The 2005 Summer Internship Programme culminated in a final workshop at which all teams of interns presented their case studies and films to discuss the broader issues relating to improvements in service delivery, elimination of child labour, promoting child rights and decentralization and village planning. The 'Youthspeak: Case Studies of Development in Practice' series aims to disseminate these case studies to a wider audience and provide valuable contributions to KCCI's overall knowledge base.