



EGG Report on 500 Schools in Rajasthan January, 2011 Barbara Herz

SUMMARY

Since 2007 a small, California-based NGO, Educate Girls Globally (EGG), and more recently its Indian partner, now called Educate Girls (EG), have made strong progress helping communities to mobilize and work with Government schools to educate girls in Pali District of Rajasthan, a low-income state in India where women remain severely disadvantaged. Their approach offers potential even in the toughest circumstances.

As noted in EGG's website, EGG designed and started the program in Rajasthan, hiring Safeena Husain to develop it. EGG partnered with a new Indian NGO, the Foundation to Educate Girls Globally (FEGG) headed by Safeena Husain, to grow the program. FEGG's capacity expanded. It now operates independently as Education Girls (www.educategirls.ngo), still headed by Safeena Husain. EGG often refers in this paper to EGG/EG.

EGG started with a 50-school pilot in 2007, and half the out-of-school girls then enrolled in school. With Government encouragement, the program expanded to 500 schools in April 2008. In a year and a half, by December 2009, almost all girls had enrolled, compared with 90 percent before the program. Girls' attendance rose from 67 to 82 percent. This rapid shift reflected the program's effort to help communities strengthen, to engage girls, to empower and train teachers, and to foster practical plans to help schools reach and teach even the poorest girls. The percentage of schools with clean water rose from 46 to 82 percent. The percentage with a separate girls' toilet climbed from 44 to 71 percent. Some 6,500 girls were trained as leaders and in life skills through Bal Sabhas (girls' parliaments). It is reasonable to infer that the program itself accounts for these changes; no other major program or economic change occurred to complicate the picture.

In 2009 the program introduced teacher training – Creative Learning Techniques – for three months to replace traditional rote teaching. CLT has evidently also made an impact. By December 2009 the percentage of children able to read a paragraph in Hindi rose from 42 to 59 percent. The percentage able to read a paragraph in English almost tripled, from 15 to 43 percent. The percentage able to do two-digit addition and subtraction doubled, from 26 to 57 percent. This performance far exceeded that in similar schools without the program. The program costs about \$150,000 annually or about \$4 per girl (\$2 per child counting boys, now at parity with girls).

At Government request, in 2010 the program expanded to *all* primary and upper primary schools in Pali District – 2342 schools in 1067 villages across 10 Blocks. It was set to run for two years, ending in 2012. The program started in all schools; and monitoring and evaluation are underway.

Managers believe the cost per child can be cut still further as scale expands. The Government of Rajasthan then asked the program to start in Jalore District. The national Government has discussed starting in 20 of India's most challenging Districts. The program's donor base is growing. As the program expands, the challenge will be to maintain program effectiveness and secure the donor base. But the potential for enormous impact is now real.

INTRODUCTION

The desert state of Rajasthan, including Pali District, is a tough environment for girls seeking education. Pali District has roughly 2 million people (1.82 million in the 2001 Census). The latest available data (now several years old) suggest about 55 percent of adults are literate, up from 40 percent in 1991 after a vigorous literacy campaign. But while three-fourths of men can read, just over a third of women can. Available data suggest the boy/girl ratio in primary school (grades 1-5) is roughly 1.3 to 1 and 3.3/2.4 in upper primary school (through grades 6-8).

Rajasthan as a whole has about 58 million people, 90 percent Hindu and 8 percent Muslim, and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes constitute 70 percent and 12 percent respectively of the population – high proportions. Its economy is based on agriculture and related fields. Like all of India, it has rich history dating back thousands of years and has made huge strides in economic development. Initiatives ranging from governance to agricultural reform to IT are underway. Yet poverty is pervasive – Rajasthan's annual per capita income is far below India's average of \$950. Life expectancy is about 60 years compared to India's average of 65.

The Government of India emphasizes that the situation of women in Rajasthan is especially difficult. Society is strongly patrilinear; girls "marry out" early. Two-thirds of girls marry before the legal age of 18, compared to about half for India as a whole. "This results in the preference for the male child and discrimination against the girl child whether it is in matters of food and nutrition, healthcare, freedom, rights and justice" (*Rajasthan Development Report*, Government of India, Planning Commission, 2010, p. 257). Female mortality rates exceed male rates throughout childhood, including the teenage years when childbearing typically begins, with consequent high maternal mortality. The female/male gender ratio is .992, indicating, in Amartya Sen's words, "missing women".

With low education levels, most women work in farming or in the informal sector; only four percent are in the formal workforce. Women's income is meager and their influence over family resources limited. Women also bear responsibility for domestic work. This, the Government notes, means that "especially the girl child is often made to take up these chores, like fetching water, collecting fuelwood and fodder, tending to livestock, etc. In the process, children's education suffers and this becomes the cause of continued poverty and large families" (*idat* p. 259). The total fertility rate in Rajasthan is 3.78 compared to India's at 2.85, the infant mortality rate is 80 compared to India's at 68, and the under-five mortality rate is about 115, compared to India's at 95 (*idat* page 258). The population is "young" and growing fast, making it that much harder to reach all children with education and health care.

In these circumstances, the EGG/EG program's track record is stunning.

EGG'S MODEL

The program works by helping communities *mobilize* to educate girls and *provide practical help to schools*. At a cost of about 2 percent of a local government school's budget, the program helps those schools work better – to bring girls into school, keep them there, and sharply improve learning. Many NGOs build some schools, reach certain poor children, and pioneer path-breaking approaches. But no country has ever developed without some reasonable public education system. Making that system work is essential. The EGG/EG program's approach has the potential to transform the system. The crux of the approach is multiple efforts to empower communities to do the job. The secret seems to be leadership, care in working with Government, and the depth of community efforts. This program actually succeeds, on a shoestring budget and at rapidly increasing scale. Its experience deserves attention.

EGG (through EG) is a partner of the Rajasthan Education Initiative (REI). It aims to enroll all girls aged 6-14 years in school, keep them in school, and improve the quality of education. It works to mobilize communities, teachers, and girls themselves in ways that show how much girls want to go to school and how communities can come together to make that happen.

EGG/EG first obtains approval from local authorities and finds a teacher to lead the way. It conducts a baseline survey of all households to identify out-of-school girls – and that itself becomes a way of encouraging girls' education. It helps organize a meeting where girls explain to parents why they want to go to school. At that meeting the community also sets up a school development and management committee (SDMC) to form action plans for schools, for instance to provide water and sanitation. Village meetings or Gram Shiksha Sabhas (GSS) are organized in cooperation with the SDMC to marshal community support. (Schools have done some plans before; EGG/EG helps more schools do them and do them more effectively.) It also helps communities organize enrollment drives and establish girls' "parliaments", or Bal Sabhas, in schools for training in leadership and "life skills". It provides training for Meena Manch with UNICEF. It offers teachers three months' training in Creative Learning Technique (CLT) and finds community volunteers (CV) to help.

SCALING UP: 50 TO 2342 SCHOOLS IN FOUR YEARS

The 50-School Pilot 2005-2007. EGG began in Pali with a pilot project in 50 schools. In November 2005 EGG and the Government identified two blocks in Pali and Jalore Districts to try the EGG model: Sumerpore block in Pali District and Aahore block in Jalore District. EG worked in 50 schools – 25 in each block. The pilot ended in 2007. More than half the girls who had been out of school had enrolled, and almost half the schools had effectively adopted the model. No CLT training was then offered. But the results were promising enough that the Government of Rajasthan asked that the program be tried right away in 500 schools.

The 500-School Program 2008-2010. With increasing donor support, in April 2008 EGG/EG expanded to 500 schools in Pali District. After the household baseline survey, field visits were made to each school monthly to organize the GSS, action plans, Bal Sabhas (Girls' Parliaments for younger children), and teacher training. The program cost about \$150,000 annually – or

about \$300 per school, \$2 per child, or \$4 per girl. Its results, detailed below, were so encouraging that the Government asked that the program be expanded to all of Pali District's 2342 schools.

The 2342-School Program 2010-2012. In Feb. 2010 the program expanded to cover all of Pali District's 2342 schools serving about 126,000 girls age 6-14, including the original 500. The 2342 schools comprise 920 primary schools (PS) (grades 1-5) and 1422 upper primary schools (UPS) (grades 1-7). Some 11,243 girls are out of school: 4,866 dropouts, 4657 who have never enrolled, and 1,720 "suspected" dropouts. The program for all 2342 schools began in Feb.2010 and is also set to run two years, until Feb. 2012. (It includes the original 500 schools.)

MEASURING IMPACT

EGG aims to measure:

- Girls' enrollment
- Girls' actual attendance
- Teachers' actual attendance
- "Girl-friendliness" of schools
- Community mobilization
- Learning gains after teacher training in "creative learning" (CLT).

RESULTS IN THE 500 SCHOOLS AFTER TWO YEARS

EGG/EG worked since March 2008 with the State Government of Rajasthan in 500 primary schools in three rural blocs of the Pali District: Bali, Ran i, and Sumerpur. The 500 schools served roughly 37,000 girls. They included all the primary schools in Bali and Sumerpur and about half of those in Rani. The program helped communities and teachers come together to:

- bring all children, including girls, into school;
- improve attendance of girls and of teachers;
- make schools more "girl-friendly" (for example, by hiring women teachers and providing water and lavatories);
- increase children's actual learning by shifting to more creative, interactive teaching and by helping the girls form local groups where they gain confidence and experience.

Results by the end of 2009 – less than two years later – are striking. EGG has made serious efforts to evaluate its programs and, though practical problems have arisen, its evaluations permit real confidence that the program is working. Its sustainability has to be established, but the results thus far are truly promising.

Enrollment

The number of girls out of school dropped by over 90 percent.

In 2008 EGG/EG conducted a household survey in the neighborhoods of all 500 schools. It found 3,839 girls not enrolled – either because they had dropped out or because they had never gone to school. By December, 2009 some 3,560 more girls had enrolled, and only 279 girls

remained out of school – less than one per school and a drop of over 90 percent. In sum, it appears that 99 percent of girls are now enrolled. This was confirmed by visiting the households of the girls who had been out of school. (These are not all the same girls as in March 2008 – some older girls move on and younger ones grow into the right age group. The results take this normal flow of students into account.)

Underlying Changes

In the 500 schools, more teachers came on board and, with much community help, school infrastructure was considerably improved.

- The number of teachers in the 500 schools increased from 1,771 in March, 2008 to 1,845 in December, 2009.
- The number of school development plans completed grew almost 700 percent from 331 in March 2008 to 2,268 in December 2009.
- The community contribution increased 800 percent by December 2009.
- The number of creative programs for girls almost tripled from 3,406 in March 2008 to 9,124 in December 2009.
- The number of schools with clean drinking water climbed 76 percent to 412.
- The number of separate toilets for girls grew by 60% to 356.
- The number of computers grew from 10 to 33).
- The number of schools with electricity grew by 23 percent to 145.
- Only one school had a library at the start; by the end, 500 were established.

Comparing Program and “Control” Schools

An evaluation designed as close as practical to a controlled experiment comparing 30 Program and 30 non-Program Schools. It also shows strong program impact.

The results presented thus far are “before and after.” EGG’s program was the only new major change in the year and a half the program ran in the 500 schools. It therefore seems reasonable to infer that the program helped bring about these changes.

It would strengthen that conclusion to compare results in the 500 Program Schools to those in an identical set of 500 non-Program schools. That was not possible for practical reasons. It have also been possible to choose a set of schools among the 500 to start in and compare to others that waited. But the program started almost simultaneously in all 500 schools.

Nonetheless, recognizing the power of a controlled experiment to demonstrate impact conclusively, program managers tried to come as close as they could, given severe resource constraints, by comparing 30 Program Schools from the 500 school area to 30 non-Program schools from a similar area nearby. The choice of the 30-30 schools was, however, not random. Instead, EGG/EG asked the Government of Rajasthan to select 30 “Program Schools” that were “representative” in the 500 school area (Pali, Rani, and Sumerpur blocks of Pali District) and 30 “similar” schools (in rural/urban and tribal characteristics) outside the 500 school area (in Sadri, Rani, and Pali blocks) of Pali District. This enabled reporting before-and-after changes in the 30

Program Schools (March 2008 to September 2009) and comparing those in September 2009 to the 30 non-program or control schools. The results strongly reinforce the evidence for program impact.

Attendance of Teachers and Children

- The number of teachers increased in the 30 Program Schools from 114 to 123 (8%) and from 106 to 111 (5%) in the 30 non-Program Schools.
- The number of female teachers started higher in the Program Schools (42 versus 15) and rose only by only one in the program schools.
- Teacher attendance generally exceeded 85 percent and improved a little faster in the Program Schools compared to the non-Program schools.
- Attendance of both boys and girls in Program and non-Program Schools is quite high: roughly 91 percent and 87 percent respectively in December 2009. Girls' attendance was 92 percent in Program Schools versus 82 percent in non-Program Schools. Attendance varies seasonally.

Community Participation and School Improvement

- Some 347 community meetings (GSS's) were held July-December 2009 in Program Schools compared to 114 in non-Program Schools.
- About 5600 people from communities attended school meetings in Program Schools compared to about 1200 in non-Program Schools.
- 457 School Development Plans were made and 280 completed in Program Schools versus 175 made and 83 completed in non-Program Schools.
- About half the Program Schools are now considered "girl-friendly" compared to about 20 percent of the non-Program Schools.
- Four times as many children in Program Schools as in non-Program Schools reported bathing, washing hands before eating, and positive answers to "why I go to school" and "what I want to be when I grow up".

Learning Gains

After three months of "Creative Learning Teaching" plus EGG's basic program, far more children can read in Hindi or English and do basic math. These results are among EGG's strongest and deserve highlighting.

After the basic program began, Creative Learning Teaching (CLT) was offered for three months; in some cases, it was bolstered by volunteers to help teachers in the classrooms.

Working with another Indian NGO (SERVE-- based in Kolkata) and UNICEF, EGG/EG trained 384 teachers for three months in CLT (one teacher per school, all from the 500 with the basic program). CLT moves away from traditional rote learning and concentrates on interactive learning, including learning games. CLT gave more intensive "hand-holding" to 53 of those teachers, roughly 10 percent of the 500 schools. These 53 teachers include 25 from the 30 Program Schools in the 30-30 sample. Data were collected from the 30 Program Schools before

and after a learning test. Those results were compared to results in the 30 non-Program schools from the 30-30 sample. (There was no pre-test baseline in the non-Program schools.) The results thus compare the impact of the basic program plus CLT in the 30 Program Schools to 30 non-Program schools outside the 500-school area (with no basic program and no CLT).

For the 30 Program Schools: the percentage of children in grades III-VII reading a paragraph in Hindi jumped from 42 percent before CLT to 59 percent after. Those reading a paragraph in English nearly tripled, from 15 to 43 percent. Those able to add and subtract two digits doubled from 26 to 57 percent. By contrast, in 25 non-Program Schools 27 percent of children could read a paragraph in Hindi, 4 percent could read a paragraph in English, and 19 percent could add and subtract two digits.

For all 53 schools (by block): The percentage of children reading a paragraph in Hindi in Bali rose from 23 to 55 percent, in Rani from 40 to 59 percent, and in Sumerpur from 48 to 61 percent. For English, the percentage rose in Bali from 5 to 20 percent, in Rani from 1 to 31 percent, and in Sumerpur, from 19 to 41 percent. The percentage able to add and subtract two digits in Bali rose from 7 to 48 percent, in Rani from 18 to 64 percent, and in Sumerpur from 30 to 55 percent.

Thus adding CLT to the basic program evidently made a difference: in these three months, CLT is the only significant change in these school. Moreover, the gains are so large that even if the test scores were slightly inaccurate as measures of learning, it's plain that change is occurring.