
Educating for Empowerment: Kasturba Balika Yojna's Impact on Girls' Lives

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ABSTRACT

The Kasturba Balika Yojna is a ray of hope in rural education, especially for underprivileged girls in India. This abstract explores how the system has changed the lives of those who benefit from it. The abstract investigates how the Kasturba Balika Yojna catalyzes empowerment by thoroughly examining its programs beyond the simple education supply. The program has effectively removed the obstacles preventing girls from accessing higher education by offering free instruction, boarding, and housing at residential schools that are thoughtfully situated in educationally underdeveloped neighborhoods. In addition, the Kasturba Balika Yojna's comprehensive methodology incorporates classroom instruction and life skills training, career education, and empowerment initiatives, supporting students' holistic growth. Utilizing qualitative and quantitative data, the abstract emphasizes how the program has improved the academic performance, enrollment, and retention of girls from underprivileged families. Furthermore, the study looks at the program's spillover impacts, including raised beneficiary awareness, confidence, and ambitions, all of which contribute to greater socioeconomic empowerment. The Kasturba Balika Yojna gives girls the skills and self-assurance they need to overcome social barriers and follow their aspirations by creating a supportive learning environment and a feeling of agency. By

encouraging girls to reach their full potential and advancing gender equality in school, the Kasturba Balika Yojna is helping to create a more inclusive and fair society. This abstract highlights the vital role that the organization plays in achieving these goals.

Introduction

Education is "a right which enables individuals and communities to act on reflection," according to Rabindranath Tagore. Among the critical foundations of progress is education. A person's life is enhanced, and their general growth is greatly aided by education. [1] Over the last twenty years, several governmental and non-governmental schemes and programs have been implemented, including the Vidya Laxmi Yojna (2003), the National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), the District Primary Education Programmes (DPEP,1994), the Shiksha Karmi Project (1987), Operation Black Board (1987), the Bihar Education Project (1991), Lok Jumbish (1992), the Minimum Level of Learning (1992), and the Shiksha Karmi Project (1987), Operation Black Board (1987), the Bihar Education Project (1991), the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (1995), the Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Programme (1995), Janshala (1998). [2] The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) are now included in SSA. According to the data, most backward states have seen significant improvements in their education index; from 1999–2000 to 2011–2012, the nation saw a change of 62 percentage points in its education index. This change also suggested converging marginalized groups' literacy rates with the national average. Additionally, there is now less of a gender gap in basic education and better access to primary school for girls from SC communities. Now is the time to close the gender gap in middle school education. [3]

Through the various obstacles individuals face worldwide, gender equality is emphasized in the UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 of the 2015 2030 Agenda, focusing on developing a more empowered global population. Numerous programs and incentives have been put in place by the Indian government to help achieve this objective. To accomplish gender equality and empower women and girls, the Indian government has launched programs such as Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Janani Suraksha Yojana, Sukanya Sammrudhhi Yojana, and Support to Training and Employment for Women.

Given the centrality of the Sustainable Development Goals, as stated by the United Nations, this document attempts to list these programs and incentives. A concerted and expedited effort is urgently needed, even if some of these programs have effectively gained traction. [4] Women's and girls' empowerment must go hand in hand with India's Sustainable Development Goals for gender equality. Along with goals related to climate change, water, food, land, health and reproduction, and other challenges, it is also necessary to integrate sustainability's environmental, social, and economic components. [5]

The Government of India started this program in August 2004 to establish primary residential schools for girls from underprivileged groups, including SCs, STs, and minorities. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya program is being introduced in educationally underdeveloped regions where the gender gap is more than the national norm, and the area's literacy rate is lower than the state and federal averages. Under this proposal, girls from underprivileged neighborhoods will have 75% of the seats reserved for them, while girls from low-income households will have 25%. During the XIth Five Year Plan, the program was combined with the Sarv Siksha Abhiyan. Initially, it was implemented independently with assistance from the National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level, Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan, and Mahila Samakhya. Through establishing residential schools for upper primary students, the scheme's principal goal is to guarantee girls from underprivileged backgrounds a high-quality education. [6]

Overcoming the gaps in social class and gender at all educational levels is one of Samagra Shiksha's main objectives. KGBVs and Girls Hostels up to Class XII are now being expanded upon and combined as part of the Girls Empowerment Scheme to boost the number of girls enrolled in school and support their academic success. Combining the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya projects began with the XIth Plan. The primary beneficiaries of the KGBV are girls from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and Minority Communities (MMC). [7] In these educationally deficient regions, women's literacy rates among rural populations are lower than the national average, and the gender gap in literacy is more pronounced. At least 75% of the spots are reserved for girls from SC, ST, OBC, or minority communities; low-income girls get priority for the remaining 25% of spots. By building residential elementary schools with boarding facilities, KGBV aims to ensure that girls from disadvantaged families have access to and get a high-quality education. Each of the 100 female KGBVs will receive Rs. 20 lakhs. This program/scheme's main

objectives are to include underprivileged girls in the educational system, raise the standard of instruction for girls, and foster a more accepting environment for girls in classrooms. KGBV students get academic and practical training, enabling them to live independently after graduation. At KGBV, teachers and students must have the resources necessary for success. Faculties from various academic fields assist in providing staff personnel with capacity-building training. [8]

The availability of several resources, including food, housing, school supplies, and personal hygiene items, to girls from disadvantaged homes has increased over time. The education and training students get at KGBV centers will enable them to be independent and capable of making their own life decisions after graduation. They receive instruction that develops character for the rest of their life. The well-trained and highly skilled staff at KGBVs is helping them fulfill their purpose of providing free education and vocational training to girls from marginalized and poor parts of society. Closing the social and cultural gap between men and women is the goal of the RTE Act. Cooperation between the Human Resources Development, Labour, Women and Child Development, Panchayati Raj, and Rural Development Ministries is required to execute the RTE Act effectively. There needs to be a single umbrella agency that oversees all these entities. To become self-sufficient, the government must adequately implement the RTE Act using the education cess and other taxes. Specific barriers were eliminated by the RTE Act, including the requirement that children who are not in school and those who are migrants have access to special residential and non-residential education centers (OoSCs), the provision of restrooms for girls and individuals with disabilities, the availability of computers, and other things. Once these problems are resolved, RTE implementation will be successful. People's perceptions of the legislation will improve. All social and economic injustices must be eradicated for this law's effectiveness. [9]

In line with the previous Girls Hostel Scheme, SSA has been merged into the recently introduced Integrated Scheme of School Education Samagra Shiksha, which will take effect in 2018–19. Additionally, as part of this development, KGBVs at the upper primary and senior secondary levels will be upgraded to accommodate 150–250 girls, building on their previous status. By allocating Rs. 4385.60 crores in 2018–19 and Rs. 4553.10 crores in 2019–20, the Hon'ble Minister for HRD has tweets that Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) would increase from Class 6–8 to Class 6–12. 3703 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) were sanctioned as of August 2018, 3697 of which are now functioning and enrolling 3.78 lakh females. Students hail from SC and ST, respectively, making

up around 30.5% of the total. Roughly 31% are from the OBC group, 8% are Muslims, and 6% are BPL. Model 1: Schools with a hostel for 100 girls; Model 2: Schools with a hostel for 50 girls; and Model 3: Hostels in existing schools for 50 girls are the three basic categories into which the schools constructed under the system generally fall. Highlights of the plan: - Infrastructure must be provided for these schools to (a) support academic support, (b) prepare and acquire teaching aids and materials, (c) set up systems for monitoring and evaluation, and (d) encourage and prepare the girls and their families for sending them to residential school. The somewhat older females who are not enrolled in school or cannot finish primary school (10+) will be the focus of attention at the elementary level. However, younger females may also be targeted in challenging regions (such as migrating populations or dispersed habitations ineligible for primary or upper primary schools). [10]

One hundred and fifteen staff members are allocated to each KGBV; all staff members are employed on contracts. Four teachers work there: a warden, three cooks, and a night watchman. Three employees and one accountant are assigned as day workers. [11] A recent push has been to raise the educational bar from intermediate to high school. KGBV institutions are opened in certain blocks. The success of KGBV's program depends on the teachers' appropriate performance, and all of these pupils must remain at the school. At the same time, the three instructors depart after finishing their teaching duties. [12]

In addition to academic instruction, the inhabitants of KGBV get vocational training to enable them to be self-sufficient after their schooling is finished. Staff and students' capacity must be increased for KGBV to run smoothly. Staff members receive capacity development training from faculty members with varying specializations. The iconic cartoon character "Meena" is utilized to promote education for girls. In several areas, it has successfully raised the enrollment of females. It raises girls' awareness of societal concerns and potential obstacles in their future. Girls participate in arts and crafts projects in KGBVs, such as weaving, basketry, ceramics, crocheting, and embroidery. Their proficiency increases due to their acquisition of all these fascinating things. Girls interested in archery, tennis, etc., are also provided coaching and training. In addition, they participate in other leisure pursuits, including traditional games, athletics, the composition of essays and stories, crafting puppets, Mehandi arts, painting, collage creation, dance, theatre, and so on. Parents are informed about school resources, school events, and their ward's development during the monthly parent-teacher conferences. It also asks them to provide their opinions and recommendations. All rights, including books, clothing, luggage, and cosmetics for a monthly cost of Rs. 50, are promptly granted to KGBV convicts. Chefs, wardens, and

guards are there to maintain the KGBV center. Classrooms, well-ventilated dorms, a library, a recreation area, a kitchen, a Headmistress room, and other facilities are usually well-maintained at KGBV. It keeps up its cleanliness and hygiene. Additionally, playground amenities are available. Girls assist in tending to a kitchen garden. The KGBV uses the products farmed there in its cuisine. For females to become better human beings, they are also taught moral principles and positive ideals. [13]

Major national and international holidays, such as Girl's Children's Day, Teachers' Day, Independence Day, and World Environment Day, are marked with various contests, including essays, dances, quizzes, and art. Students are evaluated quarterly by the official school system for four evaluations per year. The regular government school curriculum is followed at KGBV. All KGBV children received necessary supplies such as a dress code, uniform, inner clothes, shoes, socks, chappal, sports attire, martial arts dress, toiletries, sanitary pads, notebook, and other learning tools like pencil, pen, geometry box, eraser, color pencil, sharpener, etc. SSA employees monitor every KGBV at the State, District, and Block levels in addition to the KGBV level regularly. Monthly parent-teacher conferences are held, and activities and observations are planned for each KGBV. [14]

The process of making vermin compost was taught to KGBV females. Worm casting is produced by vermin composting organic waste. The worm castings increase the soil's fertility. This instruction allowed the girls to make vermin compost manure on the school grounds using vegetable waste and dry leaves. The kitchen garden makes use of the produced vermin compost. Organic farming is a modest start. The females in KGBV are also taught spiral binding and laminating, a practical skill. Their proficiency with spiral binding enables students to bind their books, project works, calendars, and other materials using a lamination machine. Girls laminate their ID cards and significant certificates; make coverings for popcorn, and name products. To provide the KGBV kids with access to modern technology, including the ability to use the internet and purchase tickets online, computer instruction on "online booking" for bus and train tickets was provided. They have received training on purchasing tickets for both buses and trains. All KGBV girls receive guidance training to help them mature emotionally and physically. It also seeks to instill a global and societal perspective. They learn about the history of the Scouts and Guides, flags, mottos, emblems, songs, troop organization, specifics of awards, and camps in their impressionable brains. The girls' preparedness, leadership abilities, self-assurance, and sense of patriotism were all strengthened by this training. To improve and reinforce traits like leadership, personality, positive attitude, self-confidence, self-esteem, timeliness, sincerity, problem-

solving, decision-making, goal setting, behavioral change, accepting responsibility, showing respect for elders, overcoming shyness and fear, and maintaining personal hygiene, KGBV girl children received life skill training. The training uses a module called "Peenkan Thattil Parakkalame," which was created specifically for life skill instruction. "Society and ME" is an interactive training program designed to inspire and help KGBV girls reach their inspirational objectives in life. The older KGBV females who have attained good positions have been invited and used to share their life stories and successes. Participants in the workshop were asked to be members of a well-functioning self-help group close to KGBV School, where they shared their experiences to empower women in the community. The females had more self-confidence as a result. To educate youngsters about historical events and cultural customs, grandparents would tell them fascinating stories. [15]

In all KGBV residential schools, the following safety precautions are taken: - Every KGBV building entry will have a CC TV camera installed. In every KGBV, a watchman is assigned to guard both day and night security. Every KGBV has appointed well-trained wardens. Two instructors alternate shifts in the schools at night to assist the girls in case of emergency, in addition to the Warden. The girls are only sent out with their parents or the person their parents have accepted. When parents and guardians visit their wards, they must provide their identity card, which they are issued. The only men permitted in the KGBV dormitories are the parents and staff. In the KGBVs, the fire safety system is maintained. Bets loaded with sand and fire extinguishers are positioned where necessary, and routine maintenance is carried out. The building's way to the terrace entrance should be permanently closed. Repairs to switch boxes and non-insulated electrical lines are done regularly. All KGBVs have circuit breakers installed to prevent short-circuit fires. Regular updates are made to the first aid equipment. Weeds and shrubs are pulled to keep the campus tidy. The girls are covered by group insurance, appropriate and spotless restrooms. There is an incinerator accessible because it is a residential school for females. Regular patrols by police officers are conducted. We've taught the girls how to defend themselves and regular health examinations. Teacher training and first aid training have been provided for girls. Listed on the notice board is the Child Helpline number 1098. [16]

Conclusion

Ultimately, girls from underprivileged backgrounds in India are given essential educational opportunities through the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) program, a shining example of empowerment. As a result of its all-inclusive strategy, this includes extracurricular activities, vocational

training, and residential schooling; KGBVs serve as both caring settings and learning centers that promote holistic development. Underprivileged girls now have better access to high-quality education and life skills because of the work of KGBVs, which aim to close the gap between gender and socioeconomic class. The plan guarantees a suitable learning atmosphere, further demonstrated by its emphasis on safety precautions. The advancement of women's equality and empowerment in India's educational system would depend heavily on the continued support and growth of KGBVs.

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