

Fostering Opportunities to Learn At An Accelerated Pace Why Do Girls Benefit Enormously?*

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A major challenge in achieving universal education lies in ensuring that girls who have missed the school bus or simply got off the bus too early, can realise their right to quality, basic education. This paper reviews several key initiatives in the last decade to reach out to out-of-school girls and young women in particularly difficult circumstances through condensed or short-term residential education programmes — also referred to as ‘accelerated learning’ (AL) programmes. The review indicates that the impact of the interventions is rather mixed and fragmented. AL programmes have provided such girls with the much-needed opportunity to learn in a congenial environment characterised by child-centred learning and a multi-dimensional teacher-pupil relationship. Discussions with young women and girls who have participated in condensed programmes across the country reveal that they found the experience valuable and that they see these programmes as their only window into the world of education. However, the programmes are often unable to sustain their achievements as they fail to forge effective, multiple linkages with the formal education system to ensure continuous learning. Given the increasing demand for such interventions, a critical engagement with the limitations as well as potential of the AL strategy is essential if we are to succeed in our quest to achieve universal elementary education.

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Although the 1990s were closely identified with the expansion of children’s access to, and participation in, basic education across India, they also highlighted the challenges of achieving gender and social equity in and assuring quality of education. Though female literacy may have exhibited the largest decadal increase ever, it still remains considerably lower than male literacy rates. The improvements in access and enrolment figures diminish in significance when the focus is on retention rates and quality of education. What further confounds the picture is the considerable disparity between educational achievements between and within states, between rural and urban areas, between social groups (Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and the poor among others). Girls, yet again, emerge as an extremely vulnerable category cutting across social groups as well as geographical location.

A key lesson from the last decade has been that a generalised expansion of education, while necessary, is not sufficient to achieve universal elementary education for girls. A scrutiny of the profile of out-of-school girls indicates that a significant proportion of them are between the ages of 11 and 18 years: too old to enter Class I but too young to participate in adult education programmes (see Tables 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix). Most of them are also from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (including migrant groups), often from remote/scattered habitations and tribal areas, as well as urban slums. They are also the ones who share an unfair burden of work at home and in home-based farm and non-farm work. One of the challenges that we currently face in achieving universal education lies in ensuring that girls who have missed the school bus, or simply got off the bus too early, can still realise their right to quality, basic education.

This paper reviews several key education initiatives implemented in the last decade to reach out-of-school children and young women in particularly difficult circumstances through condensed or short-term, residential education programmes — also known as ‘accelerated learning’ (AL) programmes. It then goes on to provide an

overview of the concept of AL and its evolving methodology, scope and content within the Indian context.

Reviewing a range of AL initiatives makes it evident that implicit in the AL approach is the belief that while, at its core, learning is individual, the epistemology of learning is social, i.e., that what we can know and our ways of knowing are situated in the contexts of our social lives. Thus, AL is not merely about classroom transaction techniques or an accelerated curriculum; it is also embedded in the social dynamics of the family, school, and community of the learners and teachers. This holistic process is critical for building learning communities and creating an enabling environment to understand and address the context specific barriers that keep children, especially girls, from attending school.

The objective of the paper is to collate and critique existing evidence (accessible to the author) and initiate a debate regarding the relevance of AL for the education of children at risk in general and girls in particular. The analysis indicates that evidence regarding the impact of the interventions is rather mixed and fragmented. While AL programmes provide a much-needed opportunity to learn, they are often unable to sustain the effort because of their failure to forge effective, multiple linkages with the formal education system to ensure continuous learning. But despite the persistent inadequacies in AL efforts across the country, they remain relevant and there is still a need to continue with them while simultaneously coming up with innovative ways to improve and strengthen them. The demand for such interventions is increasing and the limitations as well as the potential of AL as a strategy need to be critically engaged with in our quest for achieving universal elementary education.

Social Exclusion in Basic Education

India is a country of paradoxes. On the one hand, it is hailed as a staggering pool of technical manpower; on the other, it is home to the largest number of non-literates. In 2001, close to 296 million people were classified as non-literate, of which about 190 million were women and girls. The official estimate for out-of-school children between the ages of 6 and 14 in 2000 was 35 million, the majority of which were girls [GOI 2003]. Periodic surveys like the NFHS-II reveal that nearly 40 per cent of the girls in the 11+ group in rural India were not attending any educational programme in 1998-99. Further, even if they did attend school, a vast majority of them dropped out before completing the requisite eight years of education. Although the gross dropout rates have been decreasing over the years, it is still 31.4 per cent at the primary level for girls; and this increases to 52.3 per cent at the upper primary level [GOI 2006]. Further, evidence also shows that even if children do complete elementary school, a majority of them do so without learning much.

The larger development community is familiar with the litany of poor statistics; they do not need to be repeated at length in this paper (see Appendix, Tables 1 to 5 for key indicators). What is significant is the debate that invariably follows the presentation of these statistics. Yes, we all know that the issues of non-enrolment, non-participation and poor quality have been with us for several decades now. Yet most policy debates on girls' education tend to revolve around the school system, *a system which, more often than not, correlates age with grade*. A scrutiny of the profile of girls who are not in school makes it quite apparent that a significant proportion of them are too old to enter

Grade I in primary schools and are from the more disadvantaged communities and locations.

The situation gets more complex as we delve deeper. It is now widely acknowledged that there is a steady growth in social demand for education and skills, including in those very regions/communities that were considered resistant to girls' education. Schooling has emerged as a social norm in many parts of this diverse country. A bewildering variety of schools coexist in the country — government schools, private, full-time schools (aided and unaided), and the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) schools (MP model), Rajeev Gandhi Pathashala (EGS, Rajasthan model) and EGS (GOI model), which focus on non-formal and alternative education — each offering a different package and catering to different strata of the population. It is therefore ironical that despite the desire and demand for education and the mushrooming of schools (private, aided, government and alternative), good-quality education that is relevant remains elusive. A large number of children go through school learning little.

While part of the reason for low learning achievements may be attributed to poor-quality teaching and inadequate teaching time, irregular attendance, inability to revise lessons at home and lack of access to written materials — storybooks, magazines, etc. — the work-burden of girls at home also contributes to poor learning. When girls from very poor families do get a chance to attend school, the burden of work before and after school and the sheer drudgery of supporting their parents who eke out a living from daily wage work or hard agricultural labour or through the collection and sale of minor forest produce are strong deterrents. The situation is particularly severe for girls in the 9+ age group (which is when they are suddenly catapulted into adult responsibilities) and has important implications on their learning achievements and educational outcomes. This has been captured in a recent qualitative study of factors facilitating and impeding completion of primary school among children in diverse poverty situations in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Among girls the situation of the first-born is particularly worrisome [Ramachandran et al. 2004b, Snakes and Ladders; see Box 1].

The same study also reveals that while the average age of marriage in the three states is 19 (Uttar Pradesh), 20 (Karnataka) and 18 (Andhra Pradesh) respectively, the mean age of marriage in the profiled households is much lower at 13, 15 and 15. Clearly, very poor households in all three states record a much lower age of marriage than the state average (*ibid.*). Further, the long-term educational and health consequences are quite alarming. Poorly nourished and overworked young girls are generally the ones who are married off early and have babies quickly — thereby perpetuating the intergenerational spiral of ill-health, low self-esteem and low awareness.

A great deal has been written about the problems, bottlenecks and rigidities of existing education schemes/programmes and the inability of planners and practitioners to customise services to better serve a more differentiated market. Recent research and documentation of alternative approaches emphasise the need to strengthen both the backward (in the form of crèches, *balwadis*, early childhood nutrition) and forward (upper primary/middle schools, skill-providing institutions linked to the employment market) linkages if the relevance of and interest in even basic education is to be retained. A rich body of research convincingly argues that quality and relevance are crucial and that one can turn the system around if we can ensure that every child who enters school has an opportunity to learn and grow without want, fear or prejudice.

Recent History of AL Programme

Way back in the 1950s Durgabai Deshmukh and Soundaram Ramachandran (two eminent social reformers and freedom fighters) and various units of the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust introduced the idea of a 'condensed course'. The original concept was to provide young women/adolescent school dropouts a means to complete their primary education and prepare them to enter the world of work with greater awareness and skills. Though this scheme continues to be implemented by the Central Social Welfare Board, it did not attract much attention when it was initiated. In 1988 this concept was rediscovered by the education department, not as a welfare programme but as a means to enhance the pool of educated and articulate women in rural areas (see Box 1 for an illustrative list of AL programmes).

The Mahila Samakhya programme, which started in 1988, tried to redefine the concept of condensed courses. Their planning document states:

In recognition of the extreme dearth of innovative women-centred educational facilities in rural areas, Mahila Samakhya will try and set up Mahila Shikshan Kendra (MSK - Women's Education Centres) in each district. These are residential education programmes and their main objectives are:

- Provide adolescent girls and women opportunities for learning in the shortest period.
- Create a pool of trained women who can work both within this project and other education and development programmes.
- Provide a facility where women who have been marginalized by society (single women, widows, deserted, divorcees) can pursue education in a secure and stimulating atmosphere. [Mahila Samakhya – Education for Women's Equality, MHRD, GOI, Project Document. 1989]

In the first three years of the project, ground-level response to the concept of MSK was at best lukewarm. The general feeling was that such an institution would be of relevance only if it grew out of the articulated needs of women. The enormous investment in curriculum development and teacher training was also acknowledged. By 1992-93, women in Mahila Samakhya districts started demanding MSK. Mahila Samakhya's policy of waiting for the right time rather than forcing the pace paid off. It was almost as if the floodgates had opened. The main bottleneck was the non-availability of sensitive and skilled educational resource support for planning, designing, curriculum development, training and so on. Notwithstanding the challenges, there are now over 70 MSK operating in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. The MSK are particularly vibrant in Bihar, where they are linked to adolescent girls' forums and alternative learning centres in villages (known as Jag Jagi Kendras). There is an insatiable demand for MSK across the state, especially among tribal girls.

Similarly, in early 1990 MV Foundation (MVF) started working with child workers and bonded children with the objective of pulling them out of employment and bondage and enabling them to get back into schools. They were confronted with a problem — slightly older children were not happy joining Class I. Given their background, their educational and counselling needs were not being met by the formal school system. As a result, MVF hit upon the idea of organising camps to help these children catch up with their peers in formal schools. The camps were also helpful in

enabling children make the transition from work to schooling and in motivating the parents to acknowledge the right of every child to basic education. The first camp was organised in 1991. Using textbooks of the existing formal school curriculum, the first time-bound camp plunged into engaging the children in an intensive teaching programme. They were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and learning pace of the children — most of them in the 9-15 age group. Many of the children were determined to catch up with their peers in formal schools and acquired Class V or Class VII competencies in a record time of six to ten months. There was no turning back. The Government of Andhra Pradesh subsequently adopted the idea of education camps as a viable bridging strategy to enable working children to get back into the formal education stream.

This successful experience soon became a part of the ongoing primary education programmes. The Karnataka government adopted the bridge-course strategy to get out-of-school children back into the formal system. The National Child Labour Elimination Programme officially acknowledged it as a viable strategy to eliminate child labour. As a result a number of NGOs across Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh started residential and non-residential, time-bound camps to help child workers catch up.

The trajectory in Rajasthan has been slightly different. The Lok Jumbish (LJ) Project started Mahila Shikshan Vihar in Jalore to cater to the educational needs of young women and adolescent girls. Gradually, there was a realisation that young girls between 9 and 11 were not in school and the only option available to them was the night schools known as Sahaj Shiksha Kendras. As the second phase of the project was coming to a close, UNICEF supported LJ to start 14 residential bridge camps for out-of-school girls that have now come to be known as Balika Shikshan Shivirs. These seven-month camps are especially meant for girls between 9 and 11 years, and are run with the specific objective of enabling out-of-school girls to get into formal schools.

During the 1990s the government came to accept bridge courses as a viable intermediate strategy to get children back into school. Today, a wide range of such courses are being run across the country — from programmes confined to a few months (in the summer) to those stretching from 7 to 12 months. People who manage/run these programmes tell us that older children tend to learn quickly and are able to cover almost four to five grades of education within a short duration of 7 to 12 months! While this might raise some eyebrows, visitors to these centres confirm that not only do the children learn quickly, they also gain in confidence and social skills. They all emphasise that bridge courses are particularly effective for girls and that the value addition is in terms of overall self-esteem and self confidence, social and health-related awareness and, most important, a chance for girls to reclaim the joys of childhood. Recent qualitative studies confirm this impression.

Box 1: Select AL Programmes for Girls

Name	Programme	Scope	Scale
Balika Shikshan Shivar	Lok Jumbish Programme in Rajasthan (project concluded in June 2004)	7-month residential programme for out-of-school girls in the 9-14 age group – geared to enable girls to reach age-appropriate grades in order to transit into formal schools – primary/ upper primary	Introduced in 2000 on a pilot basis and up-scaled in 2002. Approximately 141 BSS were organised in 2002-03 and 2003-04. Approximately 50 per cent of the girls made a smooth transition to formal schools
Mahila Shikshan Kendra	Mahila Samakhya Programme, Government of India	Residential condensed educational programme for out-of-school adolescents to complete either primary or upper primary level of schooling and/or a 12- to 18- month programme for overall education and development of adolescent girls and young women.	Introduced in 1989 as an integral part of Mahila Samakhya – there are approximately 70 MSKs operational in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat
Mahila Shikshan Vihar	Lok Jumbish Programme in Rajasthan (project concluded in June 2004)	Residential 7-month programme to enable girls in the 9-11 age group to reach the age-specific grade in order to facilitate transition into formal primary or upper primary schools.	Introduced in 1999 and taken to scale in 2001, Lok Jumbish was running 141 such camps in the last phase of the project – which came to a close in June 2004.
Muktangan	Lok Jumbish Programme in Rajasthan (project concluded June 2004)	Open school located in a tribal area open to girls to come as and when they are free. This is not a residential programme for students but a group of teachers live in the school campus and are available to students during three time slots decided in consultation with the community.	Introduced in 1998 to specifically address the educational needs of girls from primitive tribes (Sahariya) and enable them to acquire a basic education. There were 17 Muktangan schools running in the Baran and Udaipur districts of Rajasthan before the project ended in June 2004.
Namma Bhoomi – residential education cum vocational training	The Concerned for Working Children, Karnataka	An 18-month course for girls and boys that combines formal full-time education with life skills – in the form of intensive vocational training and internship programme.	1 centre catering to around 100 girls and boys in the 14+ age group being run in Kundapur, Karnataka.
Residential Bridge Courses (bridge to freedom)	Integral part of UEE strategy in DPEP and now SSA	Conceived as a short-term residential programme to enable child workers to make the transition to formal primary schools. Apart from enabling children in the 6-14 age group to reach age-appropriate grades, the bridge courses train and support children to become agents for eliminating child labour in rural areas.	Pioneered by MV Foundation in Andhra Pradesh, this model was adopted by the governments of AP and Karnataka on a wide scale and is also considered as part of SSA in many other states.
Residential Schools for erstwhile child workers	National Child Labour Programme	Residential schools that cater to children who have been rescued from specific industries – carpet, match, glass, copper works, etc.	20 districts spread over the states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh – targeted specifically for rehabilitation of child workers.
Residential Schools for Girls	The Kasturba Gandhi Shiksha Yojana, GOI (2002-03)	Positioned as a residential school programme for girls in educationally backward areas – no further details available at the time of writing.	New programme announced by the government to establish residential schools for girls in districts characterised by a particularly low female literacy rate.
Residential camps for adolescents	Doosra Dashak	3-4 months integrated education, literacy and numeracy skills combined with issues of relevance to a person's life, such as health/reproductive health, democratic and civic education and life skills. Includes rigorous follow-up activities/training based on participant-wise assessment of progress called micro-planning	Introduced in the year 2002 for the integrated education and development of the rural, largely illiterate boys and girls in the age group of 11-20. Currently being implemented in four blocks of Rajasthan. Uses residential training as a strategy for the education and empowerment of adolescents.

There is thus an urgent need to explore alternative approaches and their potential in enabling girls to acquire good-quality, meaningful education and catch up with their peers in the formal school system. And, in so doing, break the intergenerational spiral of illiteracy and powerlessness.

What is Accelerated Learning?

What is accelerated learning? In lay language it essentially means that a child is enabled to learn at a fast pace, covering several grades in a short period of 7 to 18 months. This method, which has evolved over the years in different educational contexts, starts by acknowledging the experiential and cognitive development of older children and creates an environment where they can pick up reading/writing and numerical skills. The grade-wise curriculum that is used in the formal system is set aside and basic competency levels are identified for each level. Most AL programmes use selected lessons from formal textbooks for each class and prepare children to take formal examinations. Starting with basic skills, children are brought together in homogeneous groups and gently introduced to the world of numbers and alphabets — and then propelled into self-learning. The teacher works as a guide, facilitator and friend, as someone who keeps up the momentum and, depending on their ability, helps children learn as quickly as they possibly can.

The key to the success of the condensed residential programme lies in the holistic methodology used by AL. A common thread that runs across the wide variety of AL programmes is the unique role that teachers play: they are not so much disciplinarians as care-givers who nurture and help children grow at their own pace (see Box 2 on what teachers say). Another significant factor is the strong motivation of children who always wanted to go to school but were denied the opportunity. Now, having got a chance, almost all children but especially girls want to turn their world upside down — packing in almost 16 hours of activities in one day. Another important element of this approach is the freedom given to children to set their own pace. Most programmes recognise the agency of children in the learning process and it is the proactive involvement of children in their own learning that makes these residential programmes different from conventional schooling. Approaches that strengthen students' learning by building on the students' own strengths form the basic premise of AL.

Box 2: How Children Learn? What Teachers Say...

Why children in BSS learn faster than their peers in formal schools:

- Children who come to the camp are more serious about their studies
- Older children have 'better catching power' than younger children
- This is the only opportunity for receiving formal education
- Teachers communicate with the children in their language
- We teach them 24 hours . . . they are constantly studying
- When children come to the camps they already have been to schools, even though it is for a short period . . . we just have to push and motivate the children . . . our role is like a facilitator's
- Peer learning takes place especially in the night; children help each other with their homework
- Teachers live in the camps and are always available all 24 hours to the children . . . we are like a friend, a mother and elder sister to the girls
- In camps teachers also focus on developing self-confidence and articulation.
- Children are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities
- Teachers pay a lot of attention to grounding the girls with basic knowledge; 'If the foundation is weak' then children lag behind in subjects. Lot of attention is paid to slow learners
- Government schoolteachers are irregular; they do not come to school on time and the actual teaching time is very brief
- It is not right to compare camps with government schools as we try to cover a five-year course in seven months.

Excerpts from group discussions, Madhumita Pal, 2003

Source: Ramachandran et al. Balika Shikshan Shivir – An external review. 2004c.

What Enables Children to Learn at an Accelerated Pace?¹

1. *Intensive social mobilisation to prepare the ground:* Most AL programmes listed in Box 1 start with intensive social mobilisation activities in the community. Parents and children are engaged in dialogue on the value of education in the lives of children, the fundamental right of every child to get basic education, the problem of child labour and the rights of children. This process also helps generate confidence among parents that their children, especially girls, will be well looked after.
2. *Motivation level of the learner:* What distinguishes the AL programmes from formal schools (even residential schools) is the high level of motivation among the learners. Before enrolment in the AL programme, it is likely that many of these children have suffered long periods of deprivation and denial. This is particularly true of child labourers, girls who are kept at home to look after siblings and do domestic chores, children in particularly difficult circumstances such as children of commercial sex workers, bonded labourers, young widows, girls who were subject to abuse and so on.
 - a. For example, children in the MVF camps come to the bridge course after a prolonged struggle at home. Some of them come against the wishes of their parents. Given the larger social mobilisation activities of MV Foundation, children who attend bridge courses have already participated in some form of cultural activity — music, theatre, role-play and impromptu folk dances — centred on the right of every child to education. They are thus well aware of their rights.
3. *Acknowledging the agency of the learner:* Most participants in AL programmes are older — in the 11+ age group. They come with a wealth of experience and knowledge. There is a common misconception that the illiterate are ignorant. Most of the young women participants have a wealth of knowledge and information — they can recognise plants, trees, animals, seasons and are very much in tune with nature. They can manage themselves

and are highly responsible. Like other young people, they have a curious mind that is constantly questioning. Coming from the school of life where they battle daily for survival, many of the young women have experienced the harshness of poverty and social discrimination. A significant proportion of adolescent girls in the residential programmes are married, some even have children of their own. Others have been widowed or deserted and abandoned. They never imagined that they would some day get a chance to go to school and join the ranks of the educated.

- a. For example, most of the young women studying in Mahila Shikshan Vihar, Jalore, had to struggle hard and convince their families to let them enrol. Given the prevailing status of women in rural Rajasthan, permitting adolescent girls/young women to leave the confines of home and community in order to study is not an option. Therefore, when such girls are afforded such an opportunity, they bring tremendous energy and resolve to prove that families' investment (in letting them go and taking on the girls' share of the work burden) is well worth it.
4. *Teacher-pupil ratio*: The fundamental difference between formal schools and residential condensed educational programmes is the teacher-pupil ratio. Given the intensity of the programme, teachers need to work with small groups.
 - a. For example, in BSS Lok Jumbish the ratio was 1:15 and it was around 1:20 in most of the MSK of Mahila Samakhya. Teachers explain that continuous assessment of the girls' learning levels by formal and informal methods was a common practice in the BSS. Given the small class size and excellent teacher-pupil ratios, the teachers were able to regularly monitor the learning levels of the girls through weekly tests.
5. *Teacher-pupil relationship*: Teacher-pupil interaction is non-didactic, with the teacher playing multiple roles ranging from being a friend to one who nurtures the child through the learning process. The teacher has to have faith and confidence in the ability and the native intelligence of children. This confidence has a positive impact on learners, enhancing their self-esteem — they begin to believe in themselves. This is particularly important for girls and children from socially marginalised communities. They experience a new sense of self and a new feeling of agency: 'I can do it if I want to.'
 - a. The teacher is a mother, a sister, a sounding board and a confidant. This multifaceted relationship removes fear from the learning process. Most of the students in Balika Shikshan Shivir (BSS) of Rajasthan saw their teachers as role models, someone they could reach out to and someone who believes in them. Equally, the teachers in BSS were sensitised to the social and economic situation of the students. As a result they did not exhibit caste/community prejudices or push girls into stereotypes. For example, in Jalore (Rajasthan) the teachers encourage girls to learn cycling, play any game they like and not be afraid of dreaming. In BSS of Jalore, Jaisalmer and Ajmer the teachers had a lot of empathy with the students as they came from similar backgrounds. Many of them were from poor families and were supporting their parents/husbands.
6. *Training and academic support to teachers*: Intensive induction training — for almost 30-40 days, followed by continuous academic support from a resource agency — was introduced in BSS. The MSK teachers in some districts of Uttar Pradesh were given an intensive induction training of 30 days followed by monthly academic meetings organised by Nirantar, an

educational resource agency. Similarly, a recent evaluation of Balika Shikshan Shivir revealed that learning levels of children in the BSS camps of Jaiselmer was noticeably better because the teachers were supported by a block-level resource group who visited the camp regularly and held intensive workshops with teachers.

7. **Curriculum:** Most of the bridge courses in Andhra Pradesh and the BSS in Rajasthan follow a shortened and adapted version of the formal school curriculum. People who design the programme and train the teachers select a set of lessons from the formal textbooks and put together a package. Discussions with some of the programme managers revealed that this was done consciously with a view to enable the children to make a smooth transition into the formal system. However, AL programmes run under Mahila Samakhya collaborate with research institutions to create a curriculum and textbooks that are relevant to adolescent girls.
 - a. For example Nirantar, an educational resource group based in Delhi, developed the curriculum and teaching-learning material that broadly adhered to grade-specific competency levels in language, mathematics and environmental sciences — but the material was prepared keeping in mind the specific learning needs of adolescent girls. They tried to integrate life skills, health and hygiene and gender issues into the curriculum.
 - b. The experience of BSS is somewhat different. A teachers' handbook provides a weekly syllabus that consists of *select chapters* from formal textbooks, with time allocated for completion of each level. A major concern expressed by the teachers and some of the programme managers was the short duration of the BSS programme: seven months was considered insufficient to cover the course content up to Class V. Most teachers felt that the concepts and subject content of Classes IV and V were not allotted adequate time and could not be covered satisfactorily.
8. **Textbooks, workbooks and other TLM:** Another important dimension of AL learning is the availability of textbooks, workbooks and a range of teaching-learning material. Most of the MSK run under Mahila Samakhya have adequate learning materials. In Namma Bhoomi (The Concerned for Working Children, Kundapur, Karnataka) considerable attention is given to generating good-quality TLM and children are provided access to books and charts. Unfortunately, this is not the case with bridge courses and other similar programmes. While every child is given textbooks, other TLM are in short supply in almost all the condensed programmes visited. Teachers make do with what they have and create TLM as they go along.
9. **The teaching and learning process:** While there is considerable variation across different models, some generic processes were observed, namely:
 - a. The first two weeks are devoted to enabling children to settle down, get used to living in a community of learners, learning the rules of community living with respect to use of common facilities, personal hygiene, keeping the place clean, getting to know each other and getting used to the schedule. This is also the period when children are grouped according to their learning level — for example children who have dropped out of school have some familiarity with the written word and some are even able to recognise alphabets and numbers. Children working in match factories/hotels/shops or street children are good at counting and can do simple arithmetic. The knowledge and experience levels of children who work outside their home are different from those who work within the

house. Grouping children into different learning levels without making any group feel disheartened is important, especially because motivation is the key to accelerated learning.

- b. In the next two weeks the focus is on imparting basic knowledge of and familiarity with alphabets/numbers, simple mathematical concepts and enabling children to read small words. Essentially, the first month is devoted to getting children into the rhythm of the accelerated learning.
 - c. Subsequent weeks/months are devoted to enabling children to attain grade-specific competencies, moving gradually from one level to the next. Most of the condensed educational programmes that have been documented in the last five years use textbooks from the formal system and keep their sights on the minimum levels stipulated by the government for each grade. Children work in small groups with the support of a teacher and also by helping each other hone their skills.
 - d. Each teacher organises regular tests for the group she is handling and ascertains the competency level of the children as they move along. Continuous assessment is the key to keeping track of what and how much children are learning. In general, most residential programmes seem to focus on mastering the textbook and, with the exception of some Mahila Shikshan Kendras, use the traditional rote learning method, particularly in the concluding weeks of the programme.
 - e. As they near the end of the programme, children are introduced to the world of examinations. The focus is therefore on building up their ability and confidence to take a public examination. Certification through public examinations enables children to join the upper primary or middle school in the formal system. For example, the last four weeks in the Balika Shikshan Shivir is devoted to intense preparation for the Class V examination that is organised by the District Education Office.
 - f. Morning exercises (including yoga, judo and karate), games, regular health check-ups, health education (know your body), balanced diet and proper nutrition and working and playing together — all contribute to the creation of a learning environment. Almost all MSK enable girls to learn cycling and some of them even learn how to drive a tractor or auto-rickshaw! For most girls this is perhaps their first chance to experience the joy of childhood and adolescence.
10. *Child to child learning:* While teachers do play a significant role in the teaching-learning process, children also learn a lot from each other.
- a. In a recent research study of the BSS in Rajasthan researchers noted that the girls were teaching each other both before and after formal classes. The learning process was thus continuous. Girls would repeat multiplication tables while washing clothes or playing hopscotch; recite poems or write short notes to each other; and scribble on the walls or in the sand. They practised their newly acquired skills with each other, using almost any and every activity, including improvising games, to hone them. And the brighter students would help out those who had trouble coping.
11. *Actual time spent in teaching and learning:* A number of studies and process documentation of residential programmes reveal that the actual teaching time in AL programmes is six to eight hours a day! In addition, students read, revise lessons, help each other for another four to six hours. Thus, the actual time spent on teaching and learning could be as long as 10-12 hours a day! This is indeed a far cry from formal schools where teaching time is just about

three hours. The high duration of teaching-learning time is an important factor in enabling an accelerated pace of learning.

a. For example, in both BSS and several MSKs children used holidays and other off-days to catch up with their lessons. It is not uncommon to come across teachers working with small groups to help slow learners catch up with their peers. Apart from festival days, when children are allowed to go home, there is really no holiday in the residential camps.

12. *Cultural and extracurricular activities:* Respecting the culture/practices of children and also enabling them to learn about other cultures, introducing them to the concept of rights – right to education, right against exploitation, legal rights and so on — are all part of cultural and extracurricular activities. The most striking aspect of the MVF camps was the accent on theatre, songs, role plays and other modes of creative expression used to depict the problem of child labour, reinforce knowledge of child rights and engender an awareness of the fundamental right of every child to education.
13. *Enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence:* Most residential programmes lay special emphasis on enhancing the self-esteem and confidence of participants. For example, Mahila Samakhya's MSK encourage girls to talk about social and gender discrimination and use folk music, theatre, role plays and other means of creative expression to develop critical thinking abilities to help them move from a state of passive acceptance to one where they take greater control over their lives. Children are also encouraged to learn to ride bicycles, tractors or scooter rickshaws, perform street plays, write poems and songs and explore the world outside their immediate environment through books, multi-media and excursions.
14. *Overall environment, health, hygiene and nutrition:* The correlation between health and education is important. It is now widely acknowledged that poor health and nutrition can be a barrier to attendance and educational attainment and achievement. This issue assumes a degree of urgency in a camp where most girls have attained puberty. Teaching them about menstrual hygiene and helping them manage themselves is important.
 - a. The loudest message from an in-depth evaluation of Rajasthan's BSS (2004c, Balika Shikshan Shivir – An external review) was that infrastructure, cleanliness, hygiene and nutrition exert a significant influence on cognitive as well as non-cognitive outcomes. Creating a congenial learning environment is as important as the actual teaching-learning process. We found that the learning levels and overall development of children was very poor in BSS that were run in unhygienic surroundings with poor-quality food, poor sanitation and scant attention to the health and nutrition of children. The difference between the two sets of BSS was striking: In Jalore, Jaisalmer and Ajmer, the overall environment was good and great care was taken to ensure good hygiene and nutrition. In Udaipur district, on the other hand, the BSS camps were dirty, the food inedible and the overall environment utterly uninspiring. Way back in the mid-1990s we found similar differences in outcomes between different MSK, between those that took special care to ensure health, hygiene and nutrition and those that neglected it.
15. *Continuous and connected learning in an environment of freedom:* Learning has a lot to do with the kind of environment in which the children learn. A sense of freedom and togetherness and opportunities to explore hidden potential make an enormous impact on the way a girl is able to grasp new

concepts. Uninterrupted learning — even for a few months — makes a big difference. Children are able to learn and practise basic reading and writing skills. Discussions with people working with Doosra Dashak of Rajasthan revealed that:

- a. There is no break in the learning process. Children are not pulled away to do household chores or farm/non-farm work. It is well known that regular and prolonged absenteeism leads to low learning levels and children who cannot catch up eventually drop out.
- b. The quality of the socio-cultural milieu is important. An environment where girls are expected to conform to strict behaviour codes can be stifling.
- c. Constant fear of ridicule (‘so now the daughter of a sweeper will become a district magistrate’) and being judged at every step can be disheartening. Gender stereotypes, when coupled with caste and community prejudices, can be a formidable barrier to learning.

16. *Rewards, recognition and appreciation as a source of motivation:* Young women who went to AL programmes recollect instances when the teachers appreciated their work, gave them small rewards (maybe a colour pencil), praised them to their parents and recognised their leadership qualities. As female children, most young girls are invariably neglected, treated with indifference by adults and often made to feel unwanted and burdensome. When teachers in the AL camps praise them and appreciate and reward their work, the girls respond enthusiastically. Their self-esteem gradually improves and they become more confident every day. They sing and dance with abandon, participate in role-plays, learn new games, ride the cycle and experience the joys of childhood. They start dreaming of becoming a teacher, a panchayat leader, a nurse, a doctor and even a policewoman! It is this change in self-perception that makes a difference — they begin to learn faster. Every minute is precious and not to be wasted. The sheer energy level of an AL programme can leave a visitor speechless.

While each of these points provide some insights into how and why children are able to learn at such break-neck speed, it is possible to distil some generic principles that frame successful innovations (see Box 4).

Box 3: Jayshree of Doosra Dashak

Fourteen-year-old Jayshree came in the first residential programme organised by Doosra Dashak with a stamp of a 'mentally disabled' girl. Her parents sent her to study, as they were unable to find ways to deal with her. In her early days she was difficult to handle. She was barely able to speak a sentence in any lucid manner. She would leave the group whenever she wanted and suddenly reappear without any notice and would be a nuisance in the class. It was hard to make her sit still for even a few moments. She would not attend to any assignment the teacher gave her in class. It seemed she might have to be sent back in order to avoid any mishap in the camp. However, Rajani (her group teacher) was determined to work with Jayshree. She would sit with her for long hours helping her hold a pencil and write and her comments would be filled with appreciation. Jayshree was fond of dancing and Rajni made a point to make her perform whenever there was any occasion. Gradually the whole group turned out as a facilitator-helping Jayshree to complete her work, to keep her place tidy and strangely impart words of appreciation as she spoke. At times even if in a moment of irritation any of the teachers tried to censure Jayshree on her expression, the other girls would say: 'Didi, first let her finish. She has just started speaking.'

Their attempts were rewarded. Everybody present at the closing ceremony of the three-and-a-half-month long camp witnessed Jayshree spontaneously raising her hands to speak in front of the huge gathering, holding a mike and describing her 'experiences' during the camp — though brief, it was a fairly comprehensible voice with confident gestures. She could just complete Class I but was successful in removing the stamp of a mentally disabled girl from her personality.

Source: Shubhangi Sharma, Doosra Dashak, April 2004 (personal communication).

Box 4: Generic Principles that Frame Successful Initiatives

- ❑ The process is decentralised, and planned and executed in partnership with the community, Panchayat, government authorities and NGOs
- ❑ The programme is learner-centred and in exceptional cases learner-controlled
- ❑ The role of the teacher is that of a facilitator one who understands the economic, political, social and cultural context of the learners.
- ❑ The programme is evaluated in a holistic manner and not dependent on whether graduates have cleared the examination or have been mainstreamed into formal school
- ❑ The framework is normative but without overloading the education aspect. The central theme of the intervention is empowerment: everything else flows from it.
- ❑ The intervention is a balance between ideal and realistic, between educational needs as articulated by the participants and those articulated by planners/implementers; between academics and non-academics; between the 3 'R's and the development of self-confidence and esteem. The inputs are aimed at enabling the participants to face the challenges in their daily lives from a position of strength and make informed choices.
- ❑ The culture and language of the learners is respected and taken as the point of departure — within the framework of universal values of human rights and dignity and the fundamental tenets of the Constitution of India of equality and non-discrimination based on caste, community, religion and gender.

Sustaining the Benefits of Accelerated Learning

Almost all the girls we interacted with over the last eight years emphatically stated that the 7 to 12 months' learning experience was extremely valuable. Discussions with young women and girls who participated in condensed programmes across the country were

revealing. All of them said that the experience was valuable and was their only window into the world of education. Parents queue up at BSS in remote districts of Rajasthan to enrol their daughters, while MSK have a tough time limiting their batch to 100 students. The hunger for education is so immense that even a badly run programme is flooded with eager aspirants.

There is another dimension too. Critics of short-term residential camps argue that these programmes perpetuate inequality because it is more cost effective for parents to send their daughters to a camp for 7 to 12 months rather than send them to formal school for five to seven years! Further, the accelerated nature of the programme also reduces the social risk associated with sending girls to school every day without changing their social attitudes. For example during an evaluation of BSS in Rajasthan parents said that it is safer to send girls to a short-term residential school rather than to a regular formal school — especially if the school is far off. Since most schools are co-educational, parents are fearful of the effect that sustained contact with boys and male teachers would have on their daughters. They are also wary of the ‘impact’ such schooling might have on the girls’ attitudes, making it difficult for them to adjust to the demands of the traditional society in which they live. There is an element of truth in this argument — group discussions with parents in Jaiselmer and Jalore revealed that they were happy with seven-month camps where ‘everything is really free’ and their girls will get a primary school completion certificate in seven months instead of five years. The hard reality is that there is really no other option for older girls who have missed the bus. The challenge is to ensure that parents do not pull them out from formal schools in order to send them to a residential camp.

Field visits to the BSS (Balika Shikshan Shivir) run by Lok Jumbish in 2003 and 2004 and interactions with former students revealed that approximately 45 to 50 per cent of the girls move on to formal schools. The others get enrolled but drop out because the middle schools are far from their village. Many admitted that they lost interest in formal schools where very little learning happens. High student-teacher ratios, teacher absenteeism and little teaching time — all these factors are known to lead to very low learning outcomes among children in government schools. Compounding the problem is the issue of girls’ safety in an environment where there are very few female teachers. Recent qualitative studies reveal that in the absence of teachers, parents are afraid for the security of their girls — especially at the upper primary/middle school and higher levels. A similar fear was expressed by girls who had graduated from programmes in other parts of the country — albeit to a lesser extent in areas where upper primary and high schools are easily accessible and the transport system is good enough for the girls to commute in safety.

Another important dimension that emerged through discussions with former students of such condensed programmes was the question of relevance of education in their lives. Ambiguity about the value of education was reflected in almost all interactions. Most people agreed that education is important, that it is valuable in itself and that it enhances self-worth and dignity. Yet, when they saw young girls/boys who had dropped out midway, or those whose lives had not changed despite formal education, they wondered whether education really is a stepping stone to a brighter future — meaningful employment, improved status, etc. While acknowledging that education does improve self-worth and dignity, they pointed out that many children who attended school beyond the primary level are not comfortable with traditional occupations like farming and home-based work.² Worse, those who attend formal government primary schools are

neither more competent nor have more skills than those who drop out after primary school.

There is no doubt that AL programmes are innovative interventions attempting to condense five years of schooling into 7 to 18 months. They also enable children from diverse backgrounds to live together and provide space for children who would otherwise be kept out of school. Notwithstanding these obvious benefits, some questions remain:

- Are we perpetuating discrimination by giving parents an opportunity to choose between regular schooling and a condensed education programme for their daughters — especially in an environment where older girls are not allowed to study beyond the primary or elementary level?
- Is the accelerated programme only acceptable because it allows older girls to catch up without the accompanying social risk or necessary social change?
- What is the impact of the interventions on school attendance among younger girls — will it encourage parents to keep their younger daughters at home till they are old enough to go to an AL programme?
- What are the cost implications of these initiatives?
- What are the management implications of mainstreaming these initiatives __i.e., are they a transitional model to mop up older out-of-school children or a ‘permanent alternative’ in areas where formal elementary schools are dysfunctional?

These issues need to be addressed and key elements of AL strengthened in order to ensure a continuous and connected impact in the lives of girls. While acknowledging the tremendous potential of AL strategies, one cannot but recognise that the weakest link in the chain is the absence of systematic efforts to re-create the formal curriculum and adapt it to the needs of a condensed education programme. As discussed earlier, most AL programmes pick and choose from the formal textbook. This is particularly true for programmes that look at AL strategies as a bridge connecting out-of-school children to the formal system.

Box 5: What Adolescent Girls Want and What They Get

What girls want to learn/know	Situation in existing programmes
Language and mathematical skills	In most cases up to Class V or VII level
English	Very rudimentary
Certification of Education	Class V or Class VII pass certificate
Ride a bicycle, moped, scooter, and tractor	Mahila Shikshan Kendra and the Jalore Mahila Shikshan Vihar made a conscious attempt to enable girls to learn cycling and in a few places to ply scooter rickshaws
Skills for economic self-reliance and livelihood opportunities (How can I start my own business, where can I get a loan, can I start a preschool? Can I start a weaving unit?)	Only in some programmes – Namma Bhoomi, Karnataka
Functioning of government systems/PRI/s/ knowledge about schemes for women	Covered in Mahila Shikshan Kendra and Mahila Shikshan Vihar
Understanding their bodies – menstrual cycle, childbirth, diseases, being healthy	Covered in Mahila Shikshan Kendra and Mahila Shikshan Vihar, Doosra Dashak, Rajasthan, and in SEARCH (Gadchiroli, Maharashtra)
Responsible sexual behaviour — especially among boys	Covered in SEARCH (Gadchiroli, Maharashtra) adolescent boys and girls camps and Doosra Dashak, Rajasthan
Knowledge about HIV and AIDS	Mahila Shikshan Kendra in Andhra Pradesh has done exciting work in this area.
Knowledge about addictions (drugs, cannabis, tobacco, liquor)	Covered only in SEARCH (Gadchiroli, Maharashtra) adolescent boys and girls camps
Folk theatre/music, dance, role play, theatre etc.	Covered in M V Foundation bridge courses, Mahila Shikshan Kendra, Mahila Shikshan Vihar and Doosra Dashak, Rajasthan
Exposure to the outside world – excursions and other forms of media (Want to see Delhi, Mumbai, Taj Mahal...)	To a very limited extent in most of the residential programmes – opportunities limited by paucity of financial resources

Way Forward: Moving Beyond the Lowest Common Denominator

The basic goal of current short-term residential accelerated learning programmes is to provide out-of-school girls in the 11+ group a chance to acquire elementary education, move on (if possible) to formal schools and give them a chance to experience the joys of childhood. Most programmes that are supported by the government limit their scope to enabling girls complete Class V and help them enter formal school in Class VI. Unfortunately, they do not have structures or processes in place to monitor the ‘mainstreaming’ process and find out whether children remain in school.

Further, the strategies that make ‘accelerated learning’ happen — i.e., active involvement of learners, making use of learner’s life and experience, child-centred learning and a multidimensional teacher-pupil relationship — are also relevant for the formal system. While administrators and teachers admit that the texture of the AL programme is qualitatively better than that of formal schools, it has not influenced the formal system.

Box 6: The Dilemma Facing Education of Adolescent Girls

Whether in school or out of it, adolescents have age-specific learning needs, a commonality that cuts across all groups of adolescents. Certain learning needs — such as age-related physical and emotional changes and concerns about earning a livelihood — are shared by all adolescents. However, the absence of language and mathematical skills, etc. — become a specific concern for out-of-school adolescents.

With respect to girls, the matter is far more complex. Our social construct of gender views girls as women-in-the-making whose role would be basically that of an ‘assistant’ who is supportive of what the family does or needs. This brings in an element of conflict. Such an expectation is often inconsistent with the girls’ articulated desire to know more about the world around them, to be independently mobile and be treated as an equal in society.

It is therefore a matter of some urgency that we assess whether our existing education systems — formal and non-formal — are in a position to provide access, relevance and quality education to adolescents who have now begun to talk about their needs.

Source: Sharada Jain and Sandhan Team, 2003.

Another limitation of this approach (with the exception of MSK run under the Mahila Samakhya programme) is that most AL programmes under SSA do not cater to older girls (14+) who cannot go back to formal school in Class VI. The educational needs of this group have unfortunately fallen between elementary education and adult education — with both programmes looking to the other to do the needful. Being out of school, they are not only thrust into the world of work but also into early matrimony and motherhood. In the process they have little opportunity to grow into self-confident, aware and articulate adults.

The school system is geared to the needs of the urban middle class and the special educational needs of dropouts and out-of-school children between the ages of 10 and 18 have been ignored by the formal system. Industrial Training Institutions (ITI) and polytechnics also cater to the needs of urban youth. Vocational training for girls is often limited to home science, tailoring, food processing and related skills — which push girls into gender stereotypical vocations. The Open School system is also geared to formal education and examination. Even non-formal programmes cater to the elementary education stage. Interventions designed under the aegis of the Reproductive Health projects of the government and international agencies focus on fertility, sexual behaviour, family planning and HIV and AIDS. They essentially look at adolescent girls as future mothers. Most post-middle school or post-secondary education and training programmes do not pay adequate attention to *real-life* education needs, i.e. understanding and critically reflecting on their life, their situation, exploring opportunities for employment or self-employment, skill training (linked to emerging economic opportunities), building self-confidence and self-esteem and other related issues. As a result, existing systems do not respond to the educational needs of adolescent girls — leaving them with no avenues for continuing education.

Creating continuing education opportunities which link literacy and education to self-development and skills training, leading to greater bargaining power and self-esteem, is the crying need of the hour. Such a programme will act as a bridge between children and adults, create a positive environment for education and also serve as an instrument for social change. This is very necessary for adolescents belonging to disadvantaged social groups and communities. While affirmative action by way of reservations and special provisions has a role to play, it is more than evident that in the last 50 years people from socially deprived communities (except for a small minority) have remained

at the bottom rung of the economic ladder.

Introducing short-term, residential programmes for out-of-school adolescents that are designed with these needs in mind could perhaps infuse new energy into society. Education for survival, education for empowerment and education for social transformation are beautiful concepts that have defied operationalisation. The accelerated learning programmes could perhaps help us grapple with real-life education. Allocating adequate resources to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for such short-term, residential AL learning programmes should become a priority — this alone may enable us to break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy and non-participation in basic education by a significant section of young people living in rural and remote areas, particularly girls from the most disadvantaged sections of society.

Box 7: Sarvar from Pugal, Rajasthan

She was a 13-year-old girl, the youngest in a family of five brothers and three sisters from a SC Muslim family. Two sisters and one brother were married. Her family owned 40 bighas of land. Her village had a female Muslim *sarpanch*. Her mother was also a ward-*panch*. Her father or brother accompanied her mother when she went to a Panchayat meeting. Her mother had helped in improving the civic services and food distribution by the PDS in her village. She had also helped in getting monetary compensation for some families whose houses had been damaged by a cloudburst.

The girl said that she didn't go to the village school because she was afraid of being beaten up by the schoolteacher. Before joining the BSS she used to help her mother and sisters with the household work. When she heard about the positive learning experiences described by four girls from her village who had attended the previous BSS, she asked her mother to send her to this BSS. She enjoyed her stay at the BSS, where she was very social and had formed a close friendship with two girls from another village. She was very keen to complete Class V from this BSS. She said: 'I'll take Class V exams from this BSS and then I'll attend another BSS and then another one. I'll be able to complete Class X.' Or she would like to study up to Class X in Bikaner city, where she could stay with her maternal cousin who was also a para-teacher in an alternate school. Her mother has assured her that she would bear the expenses of her studies in Bikaner. She wants to become a teacher and wants to make many more children literate.

She was married three years ago. She now wishes to continue with her higher schooling. She said that her mother-in-law was keen that she study further so that she could get a job as a teacher or a para-teacher. She believed that all girls should study and not be married off at an early age. She had gone home twice for festivals and meeting her family members. Her brothers are happy that she has been able to study.

Field notes of Vandana Mahajan, 2003

Source: Ramachandran et al. Balika Shikshan Shivir – An external review. 2004c.

Box 8: One Step Forward, Many Steps Back

It was 5 pm in the evening. We were sitting in Bhagirath's house in a small village in Shahbad. His two daughters had attended the *shivir*. Despite opposition from his *Sheriya* community and his own people at home, he had sent them to the *shivir*. He was very agitated when we met him. He found the experience of sending his girls to the formal school a harrowing experience. He felt that at the *shivir* his daughters had been well looked after. The *shivir* used to give them food and clothes. The children had learnt to read and write. They were clean and not shy of meeting strangers.

However, life after the *shivir* was not easy. The girls stayed in the hostel for 15 days, but after '*raksha bandhan*' they were sent back home. The school headmaster told him not to send his children back to school as they did not have any textbooks. He had raised money for paying the girls' fees (Rs 115 for each of them) by selling his farm produce and doing drought relief work. However, he did not have the money to buy books for them. He had approached the local Social Welfare Departments and had even gone up to Ganeshpura and Gadora, but all his efforts had been in vain.

'My girls, can sign their names now because of the efforts of the camp, but cannot move any further in life. They are forced to go back to their old ways . . .'

Excerpts from interview with parents, Madhumita Pal, 2003

Source: Ramachandran et al. Balika Shikshan Shivir – an external review 2004c.

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate that the *AL programme is a transitional strategy and should be treated as such*. The holistic method of AL has a lot to contribute towards enriching formal schooling; it cannot, *however, become a substitute for formal schooling* up to the elementary level, which is the fundamental right of every single child. Educationists and social activists across the country have highlighted the danger of such transitional strategies becoming 'permanent' — thereby denying children from very poor families, those living in remote rural (tribal) areas and migrant communities — the right to eight of elementary education of acceptable quality.

AL should not become a convenient way of denying girls access to formal schooling, making it possible for parents to put the girl to work till she is 11 years old and then send her to an AL centre for 7 to 12 months to get a primary school completion certificate. We cannot afford to ignore this warning. While AL strategies are indeed valuable for older out-of-school girls and the AL programme can enable us to break out of an intergenerational cycle of illiteracy, they should not become permanent fixtures in areas where the formal system continues to be dysfunctional. But in the immediate term, i.e., in the next five years, the AL programme can certainly make a big difference to older out-of-school girls.

APPENDIX

Table 1: All India Percentage of Out-of-School Girls in the Age Group of 5–14, 1997

Social group	Dropped out			Never attended		
	5–9	10–14	5–14	5–9	10–14	5–14
<i>Rural Female</i>						
SC	48.4	51.6	49.9	4.3	4.1	4.2
ST	55.9	55.8	55.9	4.0	3.2	3.7
Others	35.6	36.4	36.0	3.9	3.4	3.7
All	40.5	41.3	40.8	4.0	3.5	3.8
<i>Urban Female</i>						
SC	29.0	28.0	28.5	3.1	3.2	3.2
ST	30.8	21.1	25.9	5.2	4.6	4.9
Others	15.1	14.7	14.9	2.9	2.8	2.8
All	17.6	16.6	17.1	3.0	2.9	3.0

Source: NSSO 1997

Table 2: Dropout Rates by Gender and Social Group

Year	PRIMARY (I-V)						
	All Boys	SC Boys	ST Boys	All Girls	SC Girls	ST Girls	Total
1990-91	40.1	46.3	60.3	46.0	54.0	66.1	42.6
1995-96	41.4	43.7	55.0	43.0	48.5	58.9	42.0
2001-02	38.4	43.7	51.0	39.9	47.1	54.1	39.0
2002-03	35.85	41.1	50.8	33.72	41.9	52.1	34.89
2003-04	33.74	36.8	49.1	28.57	36.2	48.7	31.47
Year	ELEMENTARY (I-VIII)						
	All Boys	SC Boys	ST Boys	All Girls	SC Girls	ST Girls	Total
1990-91	59.1	64.3	75.7	65.1	73.2	82.2	60.9
1995-96	56.6	64.7	62.3	61.7	70.5	71.2	58.8
2001-02	50.3	58.6	67.3	57.7	63.6	72.7	53.7
2002-03	52.2	58.2	66.9	53.5	62.2	71.2	52.8
2003-04	51.8	57.3	69.0	52.9	62.2	71.4	52.3
Year	SECONDARY (I-X)						
	All Boys	SC Boys	ST Boys	All Girls	SC Girls	ST Girls	Total
1990-91	67.5	74.3	83.3	76.9	83.4	87.7	71.3
1996-97*	67.3	75.5	82.5	73.7	81.0	86.8	70.0
2001-02	64.2	71.1	79.9	68.6	74.9	82.9	66.0
2002-03	60.72	69.7	78.4	64.97	74.9	83.0	62.58
2003-04	60.98	71.4	77.9	64.92	75.5	81.2	62.69

Source: 2006. *Select Education Statistics, GOI, 2006*

Table 3: Per 1000 Distribution of Adolescents by Level of Education, Separately for Each Age Group and Sex, NSS 55th Round, 1999-2000

Age Group	Not Literate	Literate Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Graduate & Above	All
Rural India								
10-14 M	152	351	347	139	10	0	0	1000
10-14 F	267	296	305	123	9	0	0	1000
10-14 T	206	325	328	132	9	0	0	1000
15-19 M	185	101	161	320	176	55	3	1000
15-19 F	343	101	144	237	133	40	1	1000
15-19 T	257	101	153	282	157	48	2	1000
Urban India								
10-14 M	77	268	401	234	20	0	0	1000
10-14 F	108	249	382	239	22	0	0	1000
10-14 T	92	259	392	237	21	0	0	1000
15-19 M	89	68	122	303	262	145	12	1000
15-19 F	114	67	114	277	254	160	14	1000
15-19 T	100	67	118	291	259	152	13	1000

Source: *National Sample Survey Organisation 2001*, pp. 218-20.

Table 4: Girls Age 6-14 Years Attending School by Sex, Residence and State

State	NFHS 1992-93				NFHS 1998-99			
	6-10		11-14		6-10		11-14	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Girls								
All India	81.8	55.0	75.7	47.9	89.1	75.1	82.8	61.6
M Pradesh	81.7	47.3	81.4	44.5	87.8	73.9	80.0	54.9
Karnataka	85.4	64.8	72.5	46.4	93.0	81.9	82.9	60.7
Orissa	78.8	63.0	78.2	52.5	82.7	81.0	77.0	64.8
T Nadu	94.7	83.6	75.7	62.8	98.0	94.5	87.1	76.3
A Pradesh	82.0	51.9	67.7	37.1	93.8	79.3	79.1	47.0
U Pradesh	70.3	45.4	68.4	38.2	83.3	71.4	80.0	57.1
Bihar	69.3	34.0	65.6	33.0	72.1	53.0	78.2	48.7
Rajasthan	72.4	36.4	71.2	28.6	82.7	66.0	75.5	44.9
Haryana	89.9	71.9	87.3	65.8	92.0	89.3	86.8	77.3
Gujarat	84.4	64.0	78.4	57.9	90.0	74.9	76.5	54.8

Source: NFHS I and II, state and all-India reports; compiled by Shomo Srivastava, cited in *Ramachandran 2003a*.

**Table 5: Reasons for Children not attending School
(Percentage of children of 6-17 years who have dropped out of school)**

Main reason for not currently attending school (dropped out-of-school)	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
School too far away	0.2	1.0	1.0	5.9	0.8	4.8
Transport not available	0.1	0.2	0.4	1.6	0.3	1.3
Further education not considered necessary	2.4	5.4	2.3	4.3	2.4	4.5
Required for household work	5.7	14.7	8.7	17.3	8.0	16.7
Required for work on farm/ family business	4.7	1.6	9.2	2.9	8.0	2.6
Required for outside work for payment in cash or kind	11.3	3.0	9.9	3.7	10.3	3.5
Costs too much	15.2	17.0	13.3	11.4	13.8	12.6
No proper school facilities for girls	0.0	1.2	0.0	3.5	0.0	3.0
Required for care of siblings	0.2	1.5	0.6	2.3	0.5	2.2
Not interested in studies	42.5	30.2	40.0	24.8	40.6	26.0
Repeated failures	6.0	6.1	5.3	3.7	5.5	4.2
Got married	0.1	4.9	0.2	8.5	0.2	7.7
Other	5.8	8.2	5.3	6.2	5.5	6.6
Don't know	5.7	5.1	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.2

Notes

* Originally published as a working paper by UNICEF India Country Office in September 2004. This is a revised and shorter version of the same and has incorporated the feedback received.

¹ All the examples are drawn from documentation/evaluation/research of the Educational Resource Unit research team – notably the following: Jandhyala 2004; Ramachandran et al. 2004c; Ramachandran 2003; and the ongoing project of Educational Resource Unit titled ‘Mahila Samakhya – Tracing the Journey’.

² Improving the quality and relevance of education acquires an entirely new sense of urgency when we move from primary to middle and high school education. Children do not learn about agriculture or about animals. The curriculum is clearly designed for urban children, who wish to move on from school to college and then seek employment. Compounding this problem is the non-availability of vocational/technical education for children who opt out of the formal stream after Class VII or X. Most of the training institutions are urban-based and not designed to cater to rural boys or girls. This kind of education does not prepare rural girls to apply their knowledge in their immediate work environment — whether in agriculture, animal husbandry, home-based work or other related occupations.

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