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Shaping Futures

Planning Ahead for Girls' Empowerment and Employability

An evaluation study of a school-based girls' gender integrated skills program in Delhi, India

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Overview

Education and school completion are crucial for girls' long-term health and socio-economic development. School completion data in India shows that attrition is high for low-income girls and boys as they transition from middle to secondary school, however, it is much higher for girls than boys. The factors that trigger attrition among girls include early marriage, parents' fear for their safety and a perception among girls and their parents that secondary education is a poor investment due to a lack of concrete employment possibilities.

India loses USD56 billion a year in potential earnings because of early marriage, adolescent pregnancy, high secondary school dropout rates and joblessness among young women.[1] Discriminatory social norms, limited access to educational and training programs and lack of formal sector job opportunities imply that the majority of young women who work are engaged in home-based work or work in the informal sector.[2,3]

ICRW hypothesized that providing girls with the life skills needed to prepare them for formal employment and fostering their ambitions for a career can help keep them in school and catalyze their path toward formal jobs. The Ford Foundation funded ICRW (Nanda et al) to conduct a scoping study to assess the availability of livelihood programs for adolescent girls in India.[4] The study found little evidence of school-based programs that provide marginalized adolescent girls with the life skills required to prepare them for formal employment. To address this critical gap, ICRW partnered with the Magic Bus India Foundation to design, pilot test and evaluate an initiative in Delhi, titled Planning Ahead for Girls' Empowerment and Employability or (PAGE). In this report, we encapsulate the findings from the evaluation study of the PAGE program implemented in Delhi between 2014 and 2016.

1. World Economic Forum. (2009). India's Next Generation of Growth. India Economic Summit. New Delhi. Retrieved from: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_IN09_Report.pdf
2. Population Council & International Center for Research on Women. (2000). Adolescent Girls' Livelihoods. New Delhi.
3. Unni, J. & Rani, U. (2003). Social Protection for Informal Workers in India: Insecurities, Instruments and Institutional Mechanisms. *Development and Change,* Vol 34(1): 127-61.
4. Nanda, P.; Das, P.; Sing, A. & Negi,R. (2013). Addressing Comprehensive Needs of Adolescent Girls in India: A Potential for Creating Livelihoods. International Center for Research on Women: New Delhi.

Program Description

PAGE was an intervention research project, funded by MacArthur Foundation, which aimed at building empowerment and employability skills in school settings for girls from low-income communities. PAGE aimed to build girls' self-efficacy and ability to identify, plan and realize their future personal and professional goals. PAGE was implemented in select government schools in New Delhi and aimed at engaging adolescent girls (aged 15-17 years) from low-income communities.

The girls participated in a curriculum that focused on two components: **Empowerment** and **Employability**. The **Empowerment** component focused on building girls' understanding of gender and power and developed their self-efficacy skills. Under the **Employability** component, the girls were given concrete pathways to envision career possibilities. The **Employability** component included skill-building as well as interaction with employment partners through school-based career events, during which information was provided to advance the girls' understanding of and interest in various career possibilities.

The program sessions began in schools during October 2014, with 4,100 girls enrolled in four schools across East and South Delhi. The Magic Bus team comprised 14 Youth Mentors (YMs) and two Training and Monitoring Officers (TMOs) to execute the program. The program concluded its last session in schools in the third week of December 2015.

The program had three main objectives:

To successfully design and implement a school-based model for facilitating the school-to-work transition through skill-building and engagement with diverse employers

To create demand among girls and their families for further education and learning in order to keep adolescent girls in school at and beyond the secondary level

To spur interest among educators and donors to continue and scale-up the program

Conceptual Framework

PAGE sought to create a model for education and skill development for adolescent girls aged 15-17 years from low-income communities in grades 9 to 12. The model, as illustrated in the diagram below, engages them in developing aspirations for future employment, including developing goals and action plans for accomplishing these goals.

The **PAGE curriculum** employs a participatory pedagogy built on the idea of 'safe spaces' for girls. The four modules on self, efficacy, resourcefulness and employability (identified in the center as the curriculum) were transacted within school settings. The PAGE curriculum was divided into two components. The first component focused on **Empowerment** and comprised two modules on 'Self' and 'Efficacy' while the second component was on **Employability** and comprised a module on 'Resourcefulness' and an action practicum module on 'Employability.'

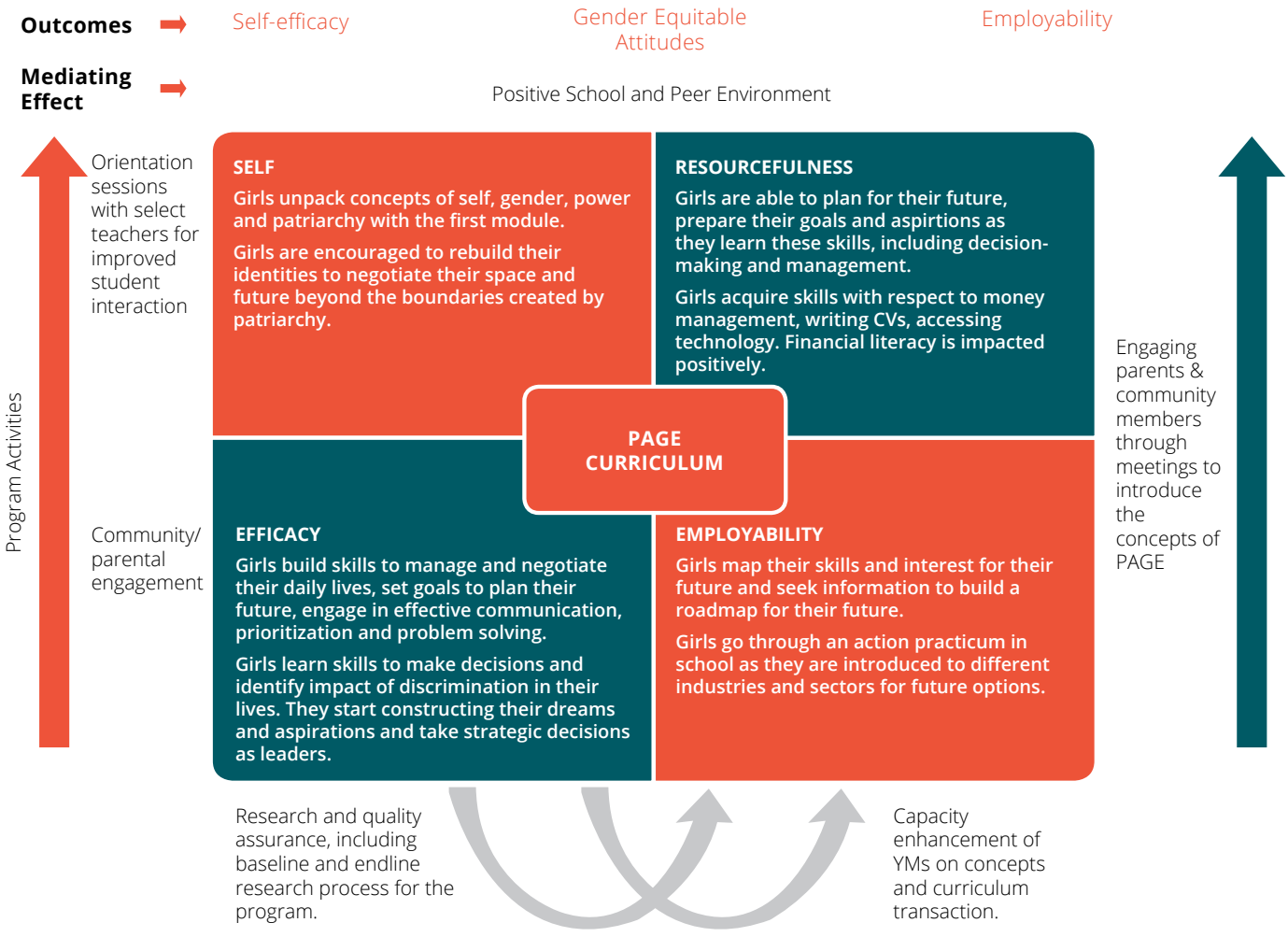
The first module on 'Self' introduced the girls to concepts of self-identity, gender, power, patriarchy and body image. In this module, girls learned and thought about who they were as people, how their world (their family and community) perceives them, how they see themselves and how this identity can be fluid and ever-evolving. In this module, we emphasized on how gender is a social construct and how concepts of power, patriarchy and gender norms have a significant bearing on girls' daily lives. While it is important for girls to be able to deconstruct their identity by understanding the factors that influence and impact their lives, it is equally crucial that they are able to reflect and develop a clear and strong sense of 'self' that is confident and self-assured.

In the second module on 'Efficacy', girls underwent sessions on communication, problem-solving, goal-setting and developing leadership traits in order to build confidence and assurance with respect to their identities.

The **Employability** component was not about getting girls employment or jobs, but about helping them acquire the skills and confidence to be able to take concrete step towards their future.

The third module on 'Resourcefulness' introduced girls to the world of work. Girls learned how to overcome gender stereotypes while choosing jobs, how to apply for jobs, financial literacy and how to manage and negotiate a work environment. In the fourth module, 'Employability Action Practicum,' girls underwent a skill-mapping exercise to identify the areas of work that they might be interested in pursuing. Subsequent to this, career events were organized in all four schools, wherein the girls were introduced to prospective industry partners and got the opportunity to learn about different industry sectors as well as job requirements for particular sectors. Besides the school-based program, there was a systematic engagement with parents/community and school teachers to create an enabling environment for girls so that they could apply their newly developed life skills.

We hypothesized that the key mediator linking the program activities to girls' improved self-confidence was a supportive and enabling school and peer environment. Together, the skills the girls learned as well as the support of their schools enabled a positive impact on their self-efficacy, gender positive attitudes and desire to plan for the future (employability).



Focus Areas	Modules	Sessions
Empowerment	Self	• Self-identity and awareness • Social Construction of Gender • Power and Patriarchy • Body Image
	Efficacy	• Effective Communication • Prioritizing and Goal Setting • Decision-making • Problem-solving • Leadership
Employability	Resourcefulness	• Gender and work • Interest and skill mapping • Market research and job preparedness • Work ethics • Financial literacy • Work management and financial responsibility
	Employability	• Idea and enterprise • Action Practicum: Internships, Mentorships and Site Visits

Evaluation

PAGE was an intervention research project, which aimed at developing and pilot-testing an innovative model program to enable young girls to make an effective transition from education to employment. The objective of the research was to understand the preliminary effects of the program on key outcomes and to explore what particular strategies influenced the results.

The evaluation protocol was reviewed and approved by the ICRW Institutional Review Board in the US and Mamta's Institutional Review Board in India.

Key Evaluation Questions

- Does integrating life and employability skills as well as employment exposure within the school setting encourage the retention and completion of higher secondary education?
- Does providing life skills and employability skills as well as employment exposure across two age cohort of girls in grades 9 to 12 enhance girls' aspirations to be employed in the future?
- Does a school-based intervention to enhance empowerment and employability skills improve girls' self-esteem and also their desire to learn?
- Does providing life-skills training, which includes awareness of violence in their environment, shift their attitude towards being more gender equitable?

Study Design and Methods

We measured the preliminary effectiveness of the PAGE program using a mixed method, quasi-experimental evaluation design. Seven purposively sampled government schools in New Delhi participated in the study, of which there were four intervention schools and three control schools. We used pre-post quantitative surveys in intervention and control schools to measure the impact of the intervention program. Initially, we had proposed to follow a cohort of girls from baseline to endline, however, we had to change our approach. Due to a high (nearly 40 percent) dropout rate among girls receiving the intervention, we had to use serial cross sectional samples instead of going forward as planned. At baseline, we conducted a quantitative survey with a random cross-sectional sample of girls who were enrolled in grades 9 and 11. At the end of the intervention period, nearly two years later, we conducted an endline survey in the same schools with another randomly selected cross-sectional sample of girls who had now advanced to grades 10 and 12 respectively.

The endline quantitative survey tool was essentially the same tool used in the baseline survey; however, some specific questions measuring exposure to and learnings from the curriculum were added to the survey at deadline. Several questions that proved to be difficult for participants to understand during baseline were removed from the endline survey. The surveys assessed the following domains: socio-economic background; current level of education; school and learning environment; social support and networks; interpersonal communication between girls and their parents, teachers and peers; self-efficacy; gender attitudes and understanding of gender as a social construct; marriage status; desire and decision-making around marriage, employment aspirations and other life plans; financial literacy and resource planning.

We also collected qualitative data via in-depth interviews and focused group discussions with purposively selected girls from both the intervention and control schools. This qualitative data provided a comparative perspective on girls' lives and explored factors that may have affected the pathways of change for key outcomes. The qualitative data looked at individual experiences as well as group-based perceptions and attitudes. We also spoke with parents and teachers (from intervention schools only) in order to explore another perspective on the girls' lives, their daily constraints and how the program may have affected them and what might be the pathways of change.

Selection of Schools

During the preparatory phase of the program, our implementing partners, Magic Bus India Foundation, undertook a mapping exercise to identify schools that would participate. The schools were chosen purposively based on the need of the project in terms of target number of girls to reach and Magic Bus' relationship with the schools as well as the schools' interest toward the project. To begin with, a total of 13 schools were identified: three for formative research (of which, one was a backup school), and five schools each for the intervention group and the control group. We had proposed to implement PAGE with a total of 4,000 girls and anticipated needing five intervention schools to attain this target. However, the number of girls enrolled in grades 9 and 11 in the five schools selected was much higher than 4,000, hence we decided to conduct the study with four intervention schools.

On finalizing the selection, Magic Bus initiated the process of acquiring permission from the office of *Rashtria Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA) which is a centrally-sponsored scheme implemented by various state government educational bodies. After much delay and several follow-ups, the permission from RMSA was received in June 2014. The selected intervention schools were in East and South Delhi in the areas of Badarpur, Tughlakabad Extension, Yamuna Vihar and Trilokpuri.

The selection of control schools went through two more iterations. On closer examination, we found that the communities of two control schools and two intervention schools were overlapping. Due to the overlap, the possibility of control schools being influenced by the intervention group would have been high, which could adversely affect the evaluation as there could be contamination between the groups. Hence, we excluded one of the previously selected control schools, leaving us with three. This allowed us to meet the sample for the baseline survey and ensured intervention and control schools were located in non-contiguous communities. Intervention and control schools were similar in size and characteristics (populations covered, occupation and socio-economic status of parents and under the Delhi government administration). The three control schools selected were in Holambi Kalan, Bawana and in Libaspur (Swaroop Nagar).

Sample

In the four intervention schools, all girls in grades 9 and 11 were invited to participate in the intervention program. Both parental consent and assent from the girl were required before a girl was enrolled in the program. Since it was almost a two-year intervention, the girls who began the program in grade 9 completed the program when they finished grade 10 and those in grade 11 completed the program when they finished grade 12. At the onset of the program, there were 4,100 girls across four intervention schools (all girls who were in the grade 9 and 11 of the intervention schools participated in the program). While all girls in these grades were invited to participate in the intervention, only 647 randomly selected girls (based on sample size calculations) from the intervention schools were surveyed at baseline. Further, 662 randomly selected girls were surveyed from the three control schools for the baseline to form the control group. In each grade cohort, we needed a sample of 256 girls from each of the intervention and the control schools. However, we invited 320 in each grade cohort from the intervention and control schools to accommodate refusals and projected school dropout rate of 30 percent. This sample size was calculated using self-efficacy as a key outcome indicator. In actual fact, there was high attrition of 40% in all these schools between grades 9 and 10 as well as grades 11 and 12. This attrition rate was observed in most Delhi Government schools due to the fact that girls' promotions are based on their exam grades starting from grade 9 across government schools in New Delhi. In grade 11, the girls take their pre-board examinations for subjects selected by them and most of the dropouts are due to poor performance. Hence, there is high attrition due to failure to secure the minimum grades to pass.

In 2015 (the program began in 2014), the number of girls enrolled in the intervention program in grade 10, one year after the program, decreased from 4,100 girls to 2,318 girls. This was due to girls dropping out of school between the two grades. We had planned to conduct our endline survey with the same girls who participated at baseline (a cohort); however, this became impossible due to the fact that 40 percent of the girls in grades 9 and 11 did not continue to grades 10 and 12. As a result, we decided to conduct the cross-sectional endline survey with a new random cross-sectional sample of 1,400 girls (700 from intervention and 700 from control) distributed equally in the two grades.

Achieved baseline sample and endline cross-sectional samples:

Sample Size Comparison of Baseline and Endline Survey (by grade)				
	Achieved Baseline Sample		Achieved Endline Sample	
	Grade 9	Grade 11	Grade 10	Grade 12
Intervention Schools	323	324	379	360
Control Schools	341	321	343	325

Program Implementation

The program implementation had three main components: curriculum implementation in schools with adolescent girls; community engagement with parents; and engagement with teachers.

The preparatory stage of the program spanned a period of 10 months. In this time period, we recruited a pool of 17 trainers to implement the girls' curriculum in schools. The trainers were selected from the YMs team of Magic Bus. The team comprised five male youth facilitators and 11 female facilitators between the ages of 22 and 28 years and an average experience of working with Magic Bus for two years. The facilitators were trained in participatory facilitation, and used activities and games to engage girls in what otherwise is complex content around gender, power, skills for resourcefulness and employability. They regularly underwent trainings on facilitation of curriculum modules during the preparatory stage and through the course of the program along with refresher trainings that would comprise conducting mock sessions to prepare them for class transaction. The facilitators were also taken through special trainings to build their understanding and perspective on concepts around gender, gender norms and sexuality.

The PAGE sessions began in schools during October 2014 and were concluded in December 2015. During this period of almost two academic years, the girls were taken through four modules. In the 'Employability' module, 1,845 girls completed interest-mapping exercises, and about 1,745 girls participated in the career events or *melas*. A career *mela* is a festive event to orient the girls about different career avenues. Overall, there were 13 employment partners who engaged in the career events. The key information shared during the career events included: nature of work in the specific sector; kind of competencies required for the specific sector; and career and growth prospects in the specific sector. Industry exposure visits under the 'employability' module could not take place due to school exams and the inability to take girls outside the schools during the same.

In the implementation phase of the program, 27 sessions of 45 minutes each were conducted from October 2014-March 2015 and July-December 2015, with a summer break in the months of April-June 2015. Before the start of the sessions, schools were prepared for the initiation of the implementation process.

For each module, girls were given a pre-test with three-four questions capturing the key points of each module. The same test was given to girls after their participation in the module to see whether their knowledge increased, stayed the same, or even decreased. In the first academic year of implementation, 4,100 girls were enrolled in the program in all four implementation schools. As mentioned earlier, due to high attrition levels in schools, in the second academic year (2015), the enrolment level dropped to 2,318 girls. This extremely high school dropout rate underscores the importance of gender transformative learning curriculum for girls at ages even younger than when the decisions to drop-out are taken. The dropout that

occurred between the first and second years of the program was higher than the anticipated 25 percent. Once we began the work, we learned that this expected dropout rate could be higher as the selected schools were in the most vulnerable communities and high dropout did occur in the transition from grades 9 to 10, as this is the first time girls begin to be promoted based on examination results in government schools in Delhi. Prior to this, till grade 9, the girls are promoted regardless of their scores.

For engaging parents with the program, we conducted bi-monthly community outreach sessions during the summer of 2015 with mothers, fathers and other community members related to the girls who participated in the program. These sessions acted as a platform for parents to learn about the program, ask questions and give feedback. Across all four implementation schools, the team of YMs conducted 36 parent engagement sessions (reaching out to around 300 parents) across four communities.

Besides classroom intervention with girls, PAGE also engaged with various stakeholders. The implementation team engaged with the school teachers, as they would have a bearing on the uptake of the program in schools, and with the girls' parents and community members, as they could ensure that the girls have an enabling environment at home to pursue their aspirations.

For teacher engagement, we partnered with STiR Education[5] in order to create a network of teachers who would be interested in bolstering the program uptake in schools for the long run. The networks included teachers who taught grades 9 and 11 in the PAGE schools and were enthusiastic about improving learning outcomes in their classrooms. In total, 48 teachers participated in three STIR trainings across four schools. A group of 15 selected teachers from each school was motivated to develop a micro-innovation based on the discussion and their reflections of the change they would want to bring in the students in the classrooms. Each school had the Magic Bus YMs who assisted the teachers in developing their ideas and preparing their micro-innovation. The teachers developed innovations around concepts of gender, increasing girls' school attendance, enhancing girls' interest in school, introducing leadership-based activities in the classroom and encouraging girls to plan for their futures. For example, one grade 11 teacher and one grade 12 teacher implemented innovations around developing 'Personal Leadership' by dividing their class into groups and giving them responsibilities to ensure that all children were dressed tidily as per the school's rules on uniform, the classroom was kept clean and that everyone adhered to discipline guidelines.

[5] STIR Education works to improve the quality of education in developing countries by empowering both primary and secondary level teachers and principals to lead improvement in their classrooms and schools. It follows a model that empowers teachers to fundamentally re-imagine their role in leading change in their classrooms, schools and the wider education system. STIR starts with 'bright spots' – identifying teachers who have even a small, initial spark of commitment and innovation – and use recognition, peer pressure, soft incentives, certification, (offline) social networking and cross-sector partnerships to bring about a teacher-led movement for change within the existing system. Their vision is to improve a child's learning by building a movement of teacher change makers who develop innovative micro-solutions ('micro-innovations'), implement effective practices, and influence peers and policy makers. They gather support to sustain this movement of change makers through a surrounding ecosystem of partners, from NGOs, government to the private sector.

Outcomes

We measured several key outcomes to understand the impact of the program. As the program had dual objectives of building girls' agency and self-efficacy as well as providing them skills to plan their future (from here on referred to as 'employability'), we had outcomes to assess both the empowerment and the employability outcomes. The main premise of the curriculum was that girls need to negotiate gender and power inequalities in order to advance in their lives and therefore we also measured their attitudes toward gender equality as a program outcome.

The empowerment indicators included measures of girls' self-efficacy (their ability to have a say in critical decisions in their lives, around their marriages for instance), attitudes toward gender norms or gender equitable attitudes (using the Gender Equitable Men Scale or GEMS)[6] and recognition of discrimination in their lives. These together measured their confidence, negotiation and skills, which are critical to advancing empowerment, including thinking about their future somewhat independent of societal influences and positive attitudes toward gender equality and lack of tolerance for discrimination.

The employability indicators included measures of aspiration for higher studies and for a career, enrollment in learning opportunities outside school, seeking information for future goals and preparing a curriculum vitae (CV) or a résumé. These indicators are concrete and tangible and can be a result of the process of self-reflection and empowerment that the curriculum enables. Positive change from baseline to endline on these sets of measures would be indicative of success in achieving the dual objectives of empowerment and employability that we hypothesized to be mutual reinforcing.

[6] The Gender Equitable Men Scale has been widely used and validated globally. This scale has been adapted and tested previously in research with adolescent girls in Haryana, India, by an ICRW study in 2015. (Retrieved from: https://www.c-changeprogram.org/content/gender-scales-compendium/gem.html?)

Measures

The four main outcomes for the intervention are measured using indices (comprising of weighted sums of responses on a series of statements) and scales.

Self-Efficacy index[7]

Self-efficacy is a summative score of 11 statements, each measured on a three-point Likert scale that included perceptions of the extent to which one is capable of making choices, communicating one's wishes, enlisting parental support or social resources, asserting one's aspirations, efficacy for influencing decision-making, etc. The responses across the statements were summed to produce a score. Examples of statements are: "I can express choice in discussions around the timing of my marriage"; "I can play strong role in resolving family conflicts." Any negative statement was reverse coded before using for the summative score.

GEM scale

The Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale score is a summative score of seven statements that personify one's beliefs to support gender equality. The responses across the statements were summed to produce a score. Any negative statement was reverse coded before using for the summative score. Examples of statements are "Only men should work outside home"; "Since girls have to get married, they should not be sent for higher education"; "Girls should have a right over their parent's property or be entitled to inheritance."

Discrimination & violence index[8]

Discrimination and violence score is a summative score of 10 statements that measure experiences of violence and discrimination at home. The responses across the statements were summed to produce a score. Any negative statement was reverse coded before using for the summative score. Examples of statements are "I was beaten so hard that it left a mark or a bruise"; "I was told that daughters are a liability to the family"; "I saw or heard my mother being beaten by my father or another male member of my family"; "I was humiliated or insulted by someone in my family in front of others." If this indicator went up at endline, we expected that girls were more aware of the kinds of discrimination they had faced and were also more able to express it.

Employability index

Employability is a summative score of six criteria that measure if the girl has taken any steps toward preparation for any possible future employment. The criteria included whether the girl had participated in any course for acquiring a job; if she had learned or was planning to learn any skills for the same; and if she had sought information about a career, prepared a résumé or a curriculum vitae.

[7] We adapted the self-efficacy scale from a previous research with adolescent girls in Haryana India by an ICRW study in 2015.
[8] The discrimination and violence index is also adapted from a previously tested index in a ICRW study on Masculinity, Intimate Partner Violence and Son Preference in India, 2014.

Results

Background characteristics

The background characteristics of the girls in both intervention and control schools were quite similar. The average age of girls was 15.3 years at baseline and 16.3 years at endline. Most girls came from families where fathers and mothers were educated less than grade 10; about half of the mothers in both groups had no education. With regard to parents' education, a higher proportion of girls in control schools as compared to intervention schools had parents who were not literate. A high proportion of mothers in both arms of the study did not work outside the home for an income; this was higher in intervention schools (83 percent at endline) than control schools (74 percent at endline). The family size was similar across both groups.

We looked at two domains of empowerment and employability for measuring program impact as the curriculum was based on both these mutually-reinforcing domains. The key measures are shown in Table 2. We found that between baseline and endline, there was a statistically-significant increase in the intervention group in the proportion of girls who said they have a say in decisions when to marry. It increased by 12 percentage points (from 82.5 percent to 94.9 percent) in the intervention group and 6 percentage points (from 87.2 to 93.4 percent) in the control group.

Between the baseline and endline surveys, the intention to continue schooling increased modestly in both groups and was not statistically significant. The proportion increased by 1 percentage point in the control group versus 3 percentage points amongst the intervention girls. The proportion of girls dropping out of school (measured from school and program data records) and absenteeism, which is the percentage of girls missing school for more than five days, decreased from baseline to endline in both the intervention and control groups. There is no significant difference across the two arms. In the intervention group, the proportion of girls who dropped out of school decreased from 4.9 percent to 2.8 percent and from 8.3 to 6 percent in control site schools. Similarly, the proportion of girls who missed school for more than five days decreased from baseline to endline by 5 percentage points to 7 percentage points in both the intervention and the control groups.

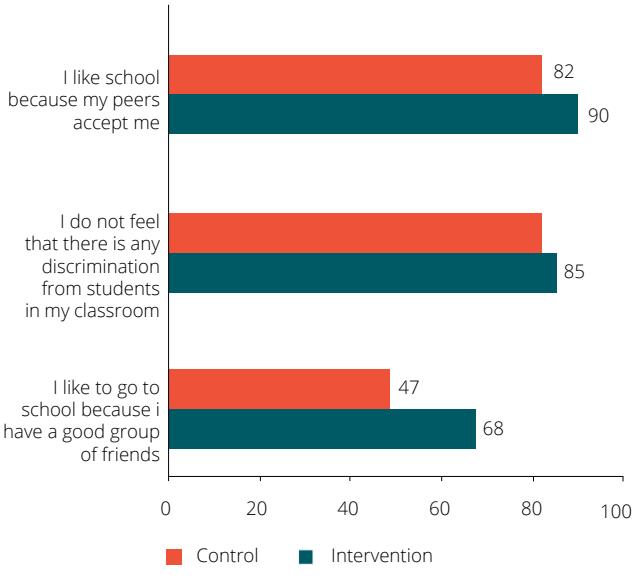
However, there was a statistically-significant increase in the proportion of girls who sought information about their future goals in both intervention and control schools, but the **increase was higher in the intervention schools.** Likewise, there was a large increase in girls who took skill courses outside of school; the increase was similar on both intervention and control groups.

Notably, for all four outcome measures of self-efficacy, attitudes toward gender equality, and discrimination, and employability, we found that there was an improvement in the intervention schools and the change was positive and significant.

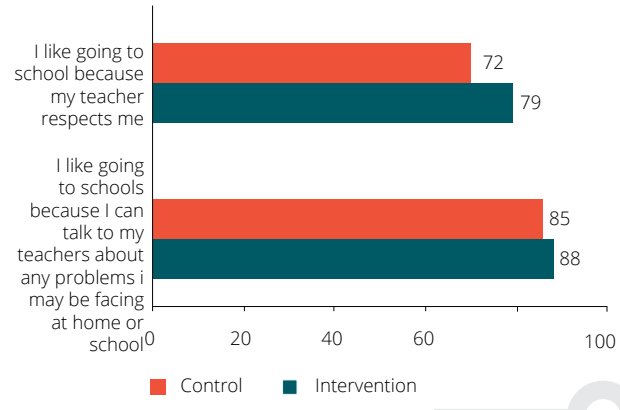
Key Mediating Effect

We also measured some of the school-level contextual factors that might affect girls' desire to stay in school and continue their education, and their self-efficacy. One important area is how the girls perceive their teachers and peers and whether it is a positive influencer. We call this 'interest in schooling' and it was gauged by statements around peer and teacher engagement in schools, measured by a set of statements identified in the graphs below. We observed, for example, that there was an improvement in peer interactions for girls in intervention schools as compared to control schools. We also see a positive effect on girls' perception around schools as a learning environment through teacher interaction. In both these cases, we observed that at endline a higher proportion of girls in intervention schools had positive attitudes as compared to control schools. Using a difference in difference (DiD) approach we find a statistically significant difference between the two groups for the statements such as *"I like to go to school because my peers accept me"* or *"I like to go to school because my teachers accept me."* We also find a positive and significant effect of the intervention itself on interest in schooling (peer and teacher engagement) using a DiD multivariate analysis. This enabling effect of peer and teacher interaction, often referred as safe spaces,[9] has been documented in much of adolescent girls' studies and is now well-accepted to be a key mediating factor for girls' empowerment. We also hypothesized that if peers and schools are supportive, this would help girls to achieve a higher degree of confidence in themselves and their abilities. We find this to be positive and significant in the main model with self-efficacy as an outcome (next section).

Peer Interaction in school, Endline



Teacher interaction in school, Endline



[9] The notion of safe spaces involves social contact among girls with peers and with mentors to help foster positive social networks facilitating higher level of self-confidence and efficacy.

Impact of Program

DiD Multivariate Analysis

A DiD multivariate analysis to assess the change in core outcome indicators is shown in Table 3 below. We used DiD to compare the scores for the selected outcome indicators for the PAGE program at baseline and endline across intervention and control schools. In the multivariate models we adjusted for several variables: father's education, mother's education, father working, mother working, total siblings and wealth assets score.

Self-Efficacy

This indicator included statements to test girls' belief and confidence in their own abilities. **We found a significant increase in self-efficacy among girls exposed to the intervention. The impact was greater for older girls. The findings also show a significant change among the older girls after controlling for other variables/ covariates.** However, we did not observe a significant impact on the younger girls. Drawing from the qualitative analysis, we found that the older girls were able to articulate their concerns and relate gender challenges to their everyday realities in a concrete manner. A girl reported having difficulty talking to her father, but found it easier to express her opinion as she grew older. This inability to communicate with family can also get articulated as a lack of confidence in self, as was the case with one respondent. Throughout the interview, she spoke about the need to stand up for one's rights, but added that she was unable to share these with her father even though she understood its importance. She noted that she learned to speak up after the program:

[one can] either keep following what your parents ask you to do. Don't think much and don't argue, just listen to them. Or fight for your own rights. Tell them what you want whether they feel good or bad about it. (16 years old, Grade 12)

GEM Scale

This score was created based on a range of attitudinal statements around gender equality. **We found a positive change in the attitudes toward gender equality among the older girls due to the intervention.** The GEM scale score is a composite index of various statements that personify one's beliefs to support gender equal norms. We found a significant change in the GEMS score among the older girls due to the intervention. The findings show significant change among the older girls after controlling for other variables/ covariates. However, we did not observe a significant impact on the younger girls.

According to our qualitative data, girls going to school and getting educated like boys is leading to a change in the way role division is perceived. This shift in perception was more perceptible in girls who went through the intervention, presumably because they learned about gender roles and discrimination and how to challenge gender inequality. In a few families, the parents felt that boys should also work in the house, and they asked their sons to do their share of chores. A girl noted a change in her father due to her influence:

My father does tell him that if you can go and give service to someone else for 12 hours in a day, then why are you ashamed to do your own work? My father tells him that he should wash his own clothes and learn how to cook. He has a habit that when he comes home, he asks me to get him a glass of water or other things. But my father tells him, don't you have legs? (16 years old, Grade 10)

Discrimination

This indicator measured girls' experience of discrimination and violence. **We found a change in the attitudes toward discrimination among the**

A few girls found that their ability to be articulate and confident in their decision-making stemmed from having access to information. In some instances, girls found that their access to information was greater than their parents', especially their mothers. As one respondent put it, "I come to know from my tuition friends or school friends then, I get the complete knowledge about it and inform my parents accordingly."

older girls due to the intervention. The findings show significant change among the older girls after controlling for other variables/covariates. However, we do not observe significant effect among the younger girls. For the older girls, the PAGE program helped them understand that the role differences based on gender are socially constructed. Speaking about such discrimination, one of the respondents mentioned:

Whatever work women do, men also do, but they do it outside the house. For example, women and men can both cook, but the woman cooks at home and gets no 'salary', whereas when a man cooks and pursues that as a profession, he gets paid for it.

Employability

This indicator is based on a summative score of responses to statement around actions taken by a girl toward planning for her future (including writing her CV). **We found a positive and highly significant effect of the program on this index of employability as well.**

Speaking about the impact of PAGE, one respondent said that she gained the "ability to identify goals and take decisions." (16 years old, Grade 10)

I could never understand. But now I understand. It is better to think about oneself on our own, rather than being dependent on someone else. I have learned to take my own decisions, about what I should or should not do. I have learned what is good for me. What is not. I understand these things now. (16 years old, Grade 10)

Several girls spoke about their leadership skills, primarily in school, in their tuition classes and among friends. Statements such as "I like to be a group leader" (16 years old, Grade 10) and "I have been a monitor in class" (16 years old, Grade 12) reiterated this. Some of the girls connected this back to their ability to be articulate and confident in expressing their opinions.

A few girls found that their ability to be articulate and confident in their decision-making stemmed from having access to information. In some instances, girls found that their access to information was greater than their parents', especially their mothers. As one respondent put it, "I come to know from my tuition friends or school friends then, I get the complete knowledge about it and inform my parents accordingly." (16 years old, Grade 10)

While the respondents were from low-income households, there was a widespread desire among the girls to 'go ahead' and have a better life for themselves and their siblings in the future. They wanted to do well and make their parents proud. Studying well and then getting a good job were seen as the pathways to realizing these aspirations. Many parents also wanted their daughters to study further and make a better life for themselves.

More than courses of study, however, the girls spoke about the type of jobs that they would like to do in the future. The desire to study in college was often linked to a desire to get a job and earn an income. In addition to being a source of income, doing a job was considered as a way to gain information and knowledge. It was also seen as a way of reducing gender inequality. In a few cases, the type of job the girls desired suggested they had a desire to achieve a certain lifestyle, such as being independent, wearing stylish clothes and sitting at an office desk.

While studying after school and doing a job seemed a common desire, there was great variation in the specific aspirations. Most girls spoke specifically about the jobs they would like to do. Among the range of job aspirations, the one of a teacher was the most common. Other choices ranged from wanting to become a doctor, a lawyer, a civil servant, a news anchor, to becoming a sales person in a mall or running a beauty parlor. Some of the girls also spoke of wanting to do part-time work to begin earning some money, both for themselves and for contributing to their higher studies, which they

desired to complete. A 19-year old young woman from an intervention school who had finished grade 12 said, *If we go out to work, the thinking will definitely change. If we go to an office, girls and boys are together…so they will be considered as equal. They will not be considered different. So from here also it changes.*

Several girls from intervention schools credited the PAGE sessions on goal-setting for helping them recognize the need for clarity about future choices. A respondent who had completed class 12 said that most teenagers are confused about their future academic or career choices, after class. She herself has kept three or four options as a choice of career/stream, "teacher, lawyer and journalist" but was confused about the choice she should make or what would benefit her in the future. After attending the "Goal Setting" she had learned that a confused mind does not help, and that she should have an aim and focus on that one thing that she wants. The Career Fair conducted as part of the PAGE program was seen as useful by many of the respondents from the intervention schools. They said that they learned about different options for their future, and some of them came home and shared their learnings with their families.

Teachers in the intervention schools too shared that that many times girls in Grade 12 were not sure what they should do after they finish school. The PAGE sessions had helped them understand the importance of being clear about the goal they wanted to pursue.

Discussion

The PAGE program aimed to build girls' confidence, skills and capabilities to identify, plan and realize their future personal and professional goals. The **Empowerment** component of PAGE focused on building girls' understanding of gender and power and developing their self- efficacy, negotiation and thinking skills. The **Employability** aspect of the program provided concrete ideas around future work, seeking skills toward the purpose and preparing their CVs.

The program created a space in the classrooms through the medium of an innovative curriculum and participatory facilitation and mentoring. The curriculum and the pedagogy together allowed girls to break the denial of existence of violence and discrimination within and around their lives. Existing attitudes were replaced by more gender equitable ones. Girls exposed to the program had higher self-efficacy, which along with a belief in gender equality, would allow girls to challenge and negotiate their realities toward better outcomes for the future.

The facilitators and the way they were trained on the curriculum had a critical role in the change we observed. The examples and experiences drawn by the YMs from their personal lives helped build a strong rapport with girls. The girls had never had this level of personal engagement and skill building in their lives and through well-thought content and facilitation, they opened up and began sharing their personal stories with us. We used these in the facilitation of the program to make it more impactful and meaningful. A female facilitator of PAGE noted: *Once I asked the girls to tell who do they seek permission from to visit their friends, father or mother? Many girls denied that there is no difference. But when I said that it happens in my house that I only get permission from my brother to go out any where I want, then they also started reflecting and sharing. I then asked them a series of questions. Who takes the decision whether they could go out at night? Who decides if they could go alone? When I said for me it's my father, they immediately related and started sharing their personal stories.*

The qualitative evidence collected post-intervention, with respect to the perception and understanding of the girls in both the intervention and control schools, suggests the girls who participated in the intervention are more likely to recognize gender discrimination in their lives. Girls in the intervention schools had greater awareness about gender discrimination and were able to articulate this and a desire to change this reality by negotiating small things in their daily lives. Girls from control schools were less able to perceive and discuss these differences. A 19-year old PAGE graduate shared in her interview that she learned about "the position of girls in the society and how they are not respected and how that should not be the case; there should be equal respect for both girls and boys". These are small changes that mark a pathway which enables an individual to perceive new possibilities in their life. If this recognition does not exist, girls are less likely to break the mold that had been set for them by society and their communities/families.

Girls from intervention schools are able to link gender discrimination to the concepts of patriarchy in society and the fact that men have 'power'. There were several things 'small-small things' as they noted, which they did not think

about so clearly earlier. PAGE introduced these girls to concepts that help them look beyond the discrimination in their homes to something that is prevalent in society. With respect to enhanced capabilities in terms of decision-making and goal setting, one respondent said that she gathered the "ability to identify goals and take decisions." Enhanced communications skills are another capability that the program nurtured in the girls. This has been captured in the measure of self-efficacy in the key results of the impact of the program. As the girls embarked on their self-reflective journey, skills around problem-solving and decision-making increased their self-confidence and agency to negotiate with their families and share their aspirations.

Implementation Challenges

As a pilot program, the impact evaluation assessment on the girls was critical to map intended as well as unintended changes, which could be attributed to the program. We also wanted to learn from the pilot to strengthen the program for its more mature execution in a higher number of schools. The program was implemented in schools in New Delhi and faced a lot of execution challenges with respect to the school time-tables and permissions, parental support and engagement, and the girls' own lack of personal efficacy to be aspirational for the future. For instance, a typical classroom session was for 45 minutes. While the sessions were designed keeping in mind the timings, some of the sessions, particularly those which involved technical knowledge and practice, sometimes required more time. Therefore, it was a challenge to consolidate such sessions in one class. The lack of adequate infrastructure within the school also sometimes affected the quality of the session. The high enrollment in each class led to an increase in the need for adequate space for creating an effective and engaging learning environment. For some schools, the numbers of classrooms available for conducting the session were not available or adequate. The uncertainties in the school calendar, the changing schedules of holidays and the zealous commitment to exams, and the resultant expectations imposed on the girls was often in conflict with the desired time needed to execute this program. Amidst constraints, we executed the program and sought direct feedback on a daily basis of classroom execution of the curriculum and adapted our approach and content through the two-year pilot.

The curriculum transaction phase faced constraints that need to be better negotiated with school authorities. We have learned that the in-class room transaction should be ideally completed by mid-January of a school year as after that, fervor for exams takes over. In addition, in the month of October, the Indian calendar has several holidays that need to be accounted for in the calculation of number of hours available. We also learned that getting buy-ins from the Department of Education and being able to have concrete results to share with them would build a more compelling case to mandate the program to be implemented in selected schools.

Despite these challenges, we saw a positive effect of the program on the key indicators of self-efficacy, attitudes toward gender equality and concrete aspiration toward future work. These were our expectations from the pilot. The learnings of the program included intervention design and content. It also made the team reflect on the ecosystem available for girls to enable them to reach their goals.

Parental support in changing gender stereotypes is critical. For most adolescent girls, parents and peers are their confidants and guides with respective to critical decision-making. Over the course of the program, we learned that the engagement of the community, particularly parents of the younger girls, was important to break the gendered notions around work and workspace. We had already envisioned this in the program, but because it was a pilot, we began this process late and did not spend enough resources and time on the same. Parent engagement is the first step toward encouraging

Despite these challenges, we saw a positive effect of the program on the key indicators. These were our expectations from the pilot. It also made the team reflect on the ecosystem available for girls to enable them to reach their goals.

different realities for girls, particularly to break gender stereotypes and establishing positive communication for girls to fulfill their future aspirations. Parents too have aspirations for their daughters and want to positively influence their daughters. Parental support for their daughters' higher education was often contingent on their daughters' own interests in studying well. Parents wanted to support the girls' education if they were 'good' at their studies and showed an interest in higher studies. If they are not inclined to study after school, then they would get them married as there would be no reason for delaying marriage. The program needs to engage with parents at an early stage to create positive expectations for their daughters and making them understand all the possibilities of technical skills and jobs. We also want to help them understand that girls face unequal pressure to be 'good' in order to be deserving of good education, while these benefits are provided unconditionally to sons.

Parental permission, particularly that of the father, was seen as necessary for further studies, in part because the financial support was provided by the father. In some cases, mothers were keen on their girls continuing their studies and earning an income, but the fathers did not share the same aspirations. Engagement with fathers through parent-teacher meetings and in community forums would also be a key part of the program going forward.

Teachers also play a strong role in motivating girls toward studying after school, by talking to both the parents and the girls about the importance of studying and working. Girls view teachers as key agents to seek encouragement and relevant information. However, at times the presence of teachers did not allow the girls to articulate their feelings honestly. While there could be several reasons for this barrier in communication, we felt that the need to positively engage the teachers is very high to create a safe and friendly classroom environment. In the journey of the program, some of the teachers' networks we managed to create exemplified regular and greater support to the girls; a few teachers were honest about learning some of the skills themselves. This co-learning space created, as a result of the curriculum, can be seen as the first step toward bridging the gap in classrooms.

Limitations of the Evaluation

Our evaluation was rigorous but had limitations. First, we did not follow a cohort of girls from baseline to endline. The high rate of attrition girls experience as they tried and failed to pass exams resulted in many girls discontinuing school during the period of the intervention. Recognizing that the very high loss-to-follow-up rates in a cohort would threaten the validity of the study results, we shifted to using serial cross sectional samples of students. A cohort study design would have strengthened our inferences about how the intervention influenced individuals over time. In addition, we were unable to randomize schools to intervention and control groups. We assigned schools to intervention- or control-based categories as per their location in order to minimize the possibility of contamination between study arms. Because of this, it is possible that our results are confounded by unknown attributes of the schools. We also did not have time in the project to follow-up on the girls post one-year of completion of school to see if there was resultant impact on employment or their pursuit of higher technical studies for specific jobs. Despite these limitations, we saw positive results of this pilot program implemented in four very difficult communities of Delhi.

Parent engagement is the first step toward encouraging different realities for girls, particularly to break gender stereotypes and establishing positive communication for girls to fulfill their future aspirations. Parents too have aspirations for their daughters and want to positively influence their daughters.

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Implications

In the last decade, a structural response to increasing girls' enrollment in schools and overall access to education has increased globally. There are cash incentives programs promoted by governments that have been tested in several countries (Bangladesh, Malawi, Pakistan) that show that conditional cash transfer for a girl's schooling helps their retention in schools, especially beyond primary school where drop outs are higher.

While commitment to girls' education is growing across the world, there is yet much to be attained. Globally, 600 million adolescent girls struggle with widespread poverty, limited access to education and health services and exposure to early marriage and different forms of gender based violence. An interplay of structural and gender inequities due to early marriage, unwanted pregnancies, limited mobility, lack of education and access to resources as well as employment, presents challenges for their social and economic advancement and rights of girls.

Even while girls' primary and secondary enrollment rates have risen rapidly over the past decade, the quality of education and the studies on actual benefits of secondary school completion on girls' future aspirations have been lacking. There is a disconnect between schooling (partial or complete) and pathways to productive work: more than a third—34 percent—of young women in developing countries are out of the labor force and not in school. There are few programs that integrate employability skills in girls through their schooling and few programs offering a connect to formal sector job opportunities through schooling.

It is clear that while the gender gap in school enrollment has been closing, the gender gap in labor force participation is on the rise. Reaching girls during adolescence is critical—decisions made and behaviors established during this period affect their horizons later in life.

The purpose of the PAGE program was to examine the factors that disadvantage adolescent girls from low-income or impoverished neighborhoods in the fields of education and employment and further, to develop learning skills necessary to prepare girls for life and labor markets, and incorporate this skill building into schooling. At the core of the intervention program was to facilitate a smooth school to work transition through mentorship, career guidance and counseling. We found incremental and impactful changes on the girls' lives.

With the lessons learned in implementation and content, we are poised to execute a stronger program that will be implemented within an ecosystem of engaging with parents, male peers and teachers. A future program called Plan-It Girls, based on the PAGE curriculum and learning, has been developed that hopes to have a more ambitious scope and impact. We are initiating this program in Jharkhand and Delhi in 2017.

Appendix

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Table 1: Percentage distribution of girls at baseline and endline across intervention and control sites

	Baseline		Endline	
	Intervention	**Control**	**Intervention**	**Control**
Class				
Class 9/10	49.9	51.5	51.3	51.4
Class 11/12	50.1	48.5	48.7	48.6
Age				
Mean	15.2	15.4	16.3	16.3
Father's Education				
None/DK	14.8	32.3	12.2	32.0
1-10th class	58.7	55.9	49.7	53.1
11-12th class/ Graduate/PG/Diploma	26.4	11.8	38.2	14.8
Mother's Education				
None/DK	43.1	65.1	33.8	61.2
1-10th class	46.8	33.1	52.1	35.5
11-12th class/ Graduate/PG/Diploma	10.1	1.8	14.1	3.3
Father's Occupation				
Not working	8.7	10.4	9.3	11.2
Working	91.3	89.6	90.7	88.8
Mother's Occupation				
Not working	82.5	69.5	83.2	74.1
Working	17.5	30.5	16.8	25.9
Household Member Size				
Mean	6.1	6.5	5.9	6.5
Number of Siblings				
Mean	2.9	3.4	2.7	3.3
Sibling Composition				
None	0.9	2.1	1.1	1.2
One male only	10.8	3.3	11.0	5.2
One female only	2.2	1.5	4.2	1.5
One male and one female only	15.3	14.1	18.1	13.6
Two males only	10.1	8.9	11.5	8.5
Two females only	1.9	1.2	2.6	1.8
More than two siblings any composition	58.9	68.9	51.6	68.1
Standard of Living / Wealth Tertile				
Low	38.6	60.7	30.0	49.7
Medium	40.7	30.5	42.6	38.0
High	20.7	8.8	27.3	12.3

Table 2: Distribution of girls at baseline and endline across intervention and control sites by domains of empowerment and employability (pooled for both age groups)

	Baseline		Endline	
	Intervention	**Control**	**Intervention**	**Control**
Empowerment				
Preferred age at marriage (mean in years)	22.5	21.9	23.4	22.4
Percentage (%) married	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.6
Say- Decision when to marry*	82.5	87.2	94.9	93.4
Self-Efficacy* (DID)	24.6	24.9	26.3	26.2
GEMS* (DID)	21.4	22.6	22.8	21.9
Discrimination & Violence* (DID)	12.6	12.8	13.4	12.7
Schooling				
Dropped out of School	4.9	8.3	2.8	5.9
Missed School for 5 or more days (Average)	9.1	9.5	3.9	2.1
Scholarship_ Support from School	96.2	96.8	98.6	99.9
Learn any skills/activity outside school	19.5	34.3	30.6	39.7
Like to continue after 10th/12th class	95.9	95.9	99.1	97.6
Face opposition from family for higher studies	13.2	18.6	17.6	14.9
Employability				
Want to work in future	95.1	96.9	98.6	98.5
Skill courses taken	33.5	56.8	43.7	63.6
Take skill courses in future	93.4	96.1	96.9	96.1
Sought information about future goals	36.2	35.5	77.3	67.1
Ever prepared CV	23.3	55.7	17.9	8.9
Hours spent for studies at home				
No time/<1hr	3.1	6.2	2.4	3.7
1-2 hr	49.2	60.1	55.1	60.5
More than 2 hr	47.8	33.7	42.5	35.8
Hours spent on leisure activities				
No time/<1hr	8.0	9.9	9.9	9.9
1-2 hr	48.8	50.8	44.4	47.3
More than 2 hr	43.1	39.3	45.7	42.8

Table 3: Difference-in-difference results for selected key outcome indicators

	Self-Efficacy	GEMS	Discrimination & Violence	Employability
Baseline				
Intervention	24.6	21.4	12.6	20.38
Control	24.9	22.6	12.8	3.1
Difference	-0.37	-1.18	-0.10	-0.79
p-value	0.046	0.000	0.415	0.000
Endline				
Intervention	26.3	22.8	13.4	2.9
Control	26.2	21.9	12.7	3.09
Difference	0.16	0.85	0.67	-0.108
p-value	0.354	0.000	0.000	0.000
Difference-in-difference (DID)	0.540	2.03	0.778	
p-value	0.038	0.000	0.000	0.000

Table 4: Adjusted difference-in-difference results for selected key outcome indicators

Adjusted	Self-Efficacy	GEMS	Discrimination & Violence
Baseline			
Intervention	23.3	20.5	13.5
Control	23.9	21.9	13.4
Difference	-0.68	-1.37	0.08
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.539
Endline			
Intervention	24.9	21.8	14.3
Control	25.1	21.2	13.5
Difference	-0.21	0.62	0.88
p-value	0.268	0.000	0.000
Difference-in-difference (DID)	0.48	1.99	0.80
p-value	0.063	0.000	0.000

Adjusted for father's education, mother's education, father's occupation, mother's occupation, total siblings, asset score.

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