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The Empowerment of Women from the Excluded Communities in Bihar: *A Documentation of the Nari Gunjan Model*

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Acronyms

BEP	Bihar Education Project
BPL	Below Poverty Line
B.Sc.	Bachelor of Science
DRDA	Department of Rural Development Agency
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
MSC	Mission, Support, Capacity
NG	<i>Nari Gunjan</i>
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRI	<i>Panchayati Raj</i> Institution
SC	Scheduled Castes
SD	Standard Deviation
SHG	Self Help Group
SSA	<i>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</i>
ST	Scheduled Tribes
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Foreword

The KCCI internship case studies are a UNICEF India initiative under the umbrella of the Knowledge Community on Children in India (KCCI). A partnership between UNICEF and the Government of India, the Knowledge Community on Children in India aims to fill knowledge gaps and promote information sharing on policies and programmes related to children in India. Under the aegis of this project, 101 interns from across the world visit and document UNICEF assisted and other projects focused on child rights and development. Their fresh perspectives, commitment and hard work are reflected in the case studies produced by them, which are published by UNICEF.

UNICEF recognises the potential and power of young people as drivers of change and future leadership across the globe. The KCCI Summer Internship Programme aims to develop a cadre of young research and development professionals with interest, commitment and skills relating to children's development in India.

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

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



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Executive Summary

The *Musahars*, who are indigenous to the northern states of India, mainly Bihar, are one of the most educationally deprived social groups among the Scheduled Castes (SC). The literacy levels of the *Musahars*, particularly women, are dismal, as literacy rates on record show figures of around 1.3 per cent. This report is a case study on the *Nari Gunjan* (NG) programme, which has been working for the empowerment of girls and women from the *Musahar* community through elementary education and vocational training in Patna¹, Bihar.

This case study begins with a brief look at the situation of education in Bihar. The deplorable state of education in Bihar stems mainly from issues of caste, gender and poverty. The same factors are also root causes of the *Musahars* being left behind. A formalised school environment is not suited to the needs of the SC girl child, particularly those from the *Musahar* community. Need-specific interventions such as the non-formal schools run by NG have helped uplift girls from these communities from their deplorable condition.

The main objective of this study is to document the NG model that is successfully operating learning centres at 50 different villages in Patna district. Thus the case study aims to answer a few key research questions and examine NG's programmes, strategies and outcomes.

The methodologies used in order to answer these questions are primarily based on focus group discussions and semi structured interviews. Some other PRA techniques were also used. In addition to the students, other stakeholders such as teachers, parents and villagers were also interviewed for the study. However, the study is limited by a small sample size and the use of non-randomised convenience samples. Thus one must be cautious in drawing any generalisations from this study.

Before setting out to answer the research questions, a careful look is taken at NG as an organisation. This section identifies NG's primary programmes including activities at the learning centres, the residential hostel and self help groups and its main strategies in empowering girls and women from the *Musahar* community. NG's activities are driven by the strategy of using a holistic approach for education, i.e., not just teaching literacy based education, but also focusing on building life skills and empowering girls socially,

¹The capital of the state of Bihar.

economically and politically. By catering to the specific needs of the target community and integrating different stakeholders, NG is found to be imparting quality education for these otherwise deprived girl children. The implementation of the NG model is further evaluated by looking at the linkages between key actors in the programme and the alignment of its mission, capacity and support.

In the next section, the findings from the field research are explained in detail. The immediate outcomes of the NG programme for participants are examined first. It was observed that students were acquiring literacy skills focused on Hindi and arithmetic. They were also learning tailoring skills, and understanding gender equity through their training at NG. Girls also completely altered their health and hygiene habits after attending the NG centres. Additionally, it was found that not only were the girls acquiring better practices, but they were serving as active disseminators of the knowledge they gained at NG within their communities. The broader impacts of the programme for the SC community were also examined. The increase in community awareness of the importance of girls' education and other issues leading to their well being and the girls' self perception of their well being were some of the major impacts of the programme. Graduating NG students have been serving as teachers, educated mothers, and literate members within their communities and positively impacting future generations as well.

As a successful programme, it's important that NG have impact and operational sustainability. Through the hostel programme, Musahar girls have been integrated to the formal school and pursued their education up to class 7th. Operationally, NG's has stable grants from the government but could face some difficulty in cash flow. In our recommendation, we suggest that NG should emphasize locally sustained empowerment by developing local leadership through SHGs and engaging fathers or the local government in its operation. NG strive to provide strengthened curriculum for students at the advanced level. Finally, in order to ensure its financial sustainability with the increase of its organizational size, NG should strive to diversify its sources of funding and build staff expertise.

Some policy recommendations based on the findings are also made. The Team believes that the lack of regular teaching and poor quality of government schools is largely responsible for the poor state of public education in India and the disproportionate drop out rates. Hence it is felt that a policy that increases retention rates and quality should receive more attention. Additionally, employment policies that foster the integration of educated and qualified girls from the *Musahar* community into the mainstream should be revisited and monitored.

Introduction

For girls from the *Musahar* community in the villages surrounding Patna, getting an education would have seemed like a distant dream only a few years ago. But today, many of these girls from one of the most marginalised and destitute groups in Bihar, are beginning to see a ray of hope. They can now be seen going to *Nari Gunjan* (NG) *Kishori Kendras* (centres for adolescent girls) in over fifty different villages outside of Patna.

NG, a grassroots organisation striving for the empowerment of women and girls, has been working tirelessly for the education of girls from the *Musahar* community, where literacy rates were as low as 4.6 per cent for the general population and a dismal 1.3 per cent for females.² Much of these efforts are a result of the hard work and vision of Sister Sudha Varghese, who founded the organisation and has been working for the uplift of *Musahars* for over 20 years. With more than 1500 girls enrolled in over 50 centres, NG is creating invaluable opportunities for the girls and women from this community, and contributing to their literacy levels and overall empowerment.

This case study intends to document the model employed by NG to socially, economically and politically empower women and girls from the *Musahar* community. It is hoped that this model can be replicated in other such needy communities. The case study also intends to inform the elementary education policy in India, particularly with reference to the education of girls from Scheduled Caste (SC) communities such as the *Musahars*, where educational deprivation is the highest.

² As cited in Kumar (2004). Based on Census Data for children above 7 years of age.

Background

Bihar is one of the poorest and least developed states in India. It lags behind other states in almost all the important indicators of development. One of the root causes of the situation in Bihar is the predominantly illiterate population and low levels of educational achievement in the state. Even to this day, over half the population of the state is illiterate and only about a third of the females can read and write. Bihar thus has been, and still remains one of the most educationally deprived states in India.³

As elsewhere in India, much of the gaps in education can be attributed to caste status, gender and poverty. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), who are excluded even from the four tier hierarchical caste system⁴ that is still prevalent in India, are at the bottom rung of the caste system, and have been historically, socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged. While the general population of Bihar has lagged behind in educational indicators such as general literacy rates, female literacy rates and enrolment and retention rates, the SCs lagged behind further, not only in the aforementioned aspects of education, but in all-round development indicators. These groups are physically and socially isolated from majority communities and have lower enrolment and achievement rates, and higher dropout rates than the general population.⁵ In Bihar, the rural literacy rates among the SC are as low as 12 per cent, compared to 47 per cent in the general category.

Table 1: Rural Literacy Rates by Social Group and Gender in Bihar and India (1981-1991)⁶

		Bihar		India	
		1981	1991	1981	1991
General	Male	34.4	38.1	40.8	47.1
	Female	10.2	14.1	18	24.8
	All	22.5	26.6	29.6	36.3
SC	Male	16.3	22.1	27.9	36.9
	Female	1.8	4.2	8.4	15.5
	All	9.1	13.2	18.5	26.6
ST	Male	24.6	29.1	22.9	30.7
	Female	6.5	10.2	6.8	12.7
	All	15.6	19.6	14.9	23.8

³ Karan and Pushpendra (2006)

⁴ The four main castes are Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Below them, outside of the caste system, are the Scheduled castes or Dalits.

⁵ Jabbi and Rajyalakshmi (2001)

⁶ Ibid

The other important gap in education can be attributed to gender. In India, gender gaps are evident in all indicators of education as female literacy is lower than male literacy among all groups.⁷ The gender gap in education among the SCs is significantly larger than for the population as a whole and is higher in rural than in urban areas.⁸ In a number of states, including Bihar, the gender gap in attendance at school was as much as 25 per cent and the rural gap was greater by as much as 10 to 25 percentage points than in urban areas.

Table 2. Literacy Rate of *Musahars* (1961-1991)⁹

	1961	1971	1981	1991
Male	3.6	2.4	4.0	7.7
Female	0.6	0.1	0.3	1.3
Overall	2.1	1.3	2.2	4.6

There is also a large intragroup variation in literacy within the SCs. In particular, the *Musahars*, the main focus of this study, have negligible literacy rates. This group, who is **at the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy**, has traditionally faced major hurdles to improve its literacy rates and records dismal rates of literacy, enrolment and retention; particularly for girls.¹⁰ The *Musahars* are among the poorest and most marginalised groups among the SCs.¹¹ While disaggregated data is typically not easily available for sub groups among the SCs, available evidence suggests that the *Musahars* in Bihar are perhaps among the most educationally backward social groups in all of India (See Table 2). Their literacy rates have been among the lowest of all SCs in India. In 1991, their literacy rate was as low as 4.6 per cent. Among males, the literacy rate was 7.7 per cent and a dismal 1.3 per cent among females. There are no indications that these conditions have changed substantially since then.

Being the most educationally deprived state in India and one with a large SC/ST population, Bihar is of special interest for any kind of study of education among excluded communities in India.¹² **The plight of the *Musahar* community and their women and the deplorable situation of their education are clearly rooted in the interrelated effects of caste, gender, a predominantly rural population and poverty in Bihar.** The government's

⁷ Nanda (1992) as cited in Jabbi and Rajyalakshmi (2001)

⁸ World Bank (1997)

⁹ As cited in Kumar (2004). Based on Census Data for children above 7 years of age.

¹⁰ Karan and Pushpendra (2006)

¹¹ Narayan (2002) cited in Kumar (2004). Based on Census Data for children above 7 years of age.

¹² Jabbi and Rajyalaxmi (2001)

efforts that have been carried out through the decentralised initiatives of the Bihar Education Project (BEP) for universal education, and later the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA)¹³, have largely remained unsuccessful in changing the scenario for these groups. Without innovative and need-specific interventions in education that address issues of caste, gender and poverty specifically, it will be difficult for these marginalised communities to emerge from their current conditions. The approach that *Nari Gunjan* has adopted in tackling these issues directly has hence met with great success and received tremendous support in these communities. NG's efforts have thus made invaluable contribution to educating girls and women from this most destitute of communities.

¹³ In 2001, India launched the National Programme of Universal Elementary Education, known in Hindi as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). SSA is an effort to universalise elementary education through the provision of community-owned quality education.

The Organisation

Mission

Nari Gunjan is an NGO working for social, political, economic and physical empowerment of SC girls and women in Bihar through the medium of elementary education.

Target population

NG's target beneficiaries are females between the ages of 8 and 20 years from the SC community, specifically the *Musahars* in Patna, Bihar.

Programmes

For socio economic and political empowerment of SC girls, NG provides them with elementary education, vocational training and life skills at 50 alternative educational centres (*Kishori Kendras*). They also run a residential hostel for girls to help their transition to the formal government schools. In addition, NG works with women in these communities by establishing self help groups (SHGs), discussing social/gender issues and encouraging their political participation.

Staff composition

NG's staff is composed of 1 coordinator (secretary), 2 co-coordinators, 1 accountant, 10 supervisors, and 50 teachers in 50 centres. The coordinator oversees NG's overall operation and deals with funding and external relationships. Co-coordinators assist the coordinator in day-to-day management, and oversee supervisors. Supervisors liaison between the NG office and the learning centres (*Kishori Kendras*). They deliver learning materials from the NG office to the centres, teach classes in the absence of instructors, and report back to the NG office regarding the progress of their centres and the performance of teachers. The supervisors/teachers additionally take note of any existing tension-caste-related or other, violation of human rights, outbreak of disease, etc. in the families/community and report back to the Headquarters for action.

Box 1. Sister Sudha, the founder of *Nari Gunjan*

A nun from the South Indian state of Kerala, Sister Sudha Varghese, 61, has been working with most marginalised communities for the past 30 years. Her desire to serve the neediest drove her to come to the least developed state in the country, Bihar, and live with one of the most backward castes in all of India, the *Musahars*. Traveling 30 km a day by bicycle, Sister Sudha's daily routine is full of different activities. Serving as a coordinator of NG, she visits centres, gives lectures to girls and runs the *Nari Gunjan* office. She lives in the hostel at Danapur, which is run especially for girls from the *Musahar community*. As a lawyer, she also advocates for the legal rights of the *Dalit* community. Almost all girls in the NG centres are "girl stars" in their own way, says Sister Sudha. These girls had to overcome numerous hurdles to just read and write their names. In the same way, Sister Sudha herself is a star. She is making a big difference to the lives of thousands of girls who have been deprived of elementary education and would have remained illiterate their entire lives.

Objectives

With these issues in mind, this case study intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify programmes and strategies which have been employed by *Nari Gunjan* for the education of girls and women of excluded communities, particularly the *Musahars*.
2. To evaluate the effects and the impact of these aforementioned strategies on women's social, political and economic empowerment.
3. To document successful aspects of the programme and suggest areas of improvement in order to replicate the programme in comparable communities.
4. To inform inclusive government policy promoting universal elementary education to better suit the needs of socially excluded groups.

Research Questions

The study also seeks to assess the impact of *Nari Gunjan* through answers to specific research questions listed below:

Did *Nari Gunjan*:

- Enhance the girls' social empowerment?
- Improve the literacy levels of girls in the *Musahar* community?
- Augment the girls' vocational skills and help empower them economically?
- Increase the girls' knowledge of health and hygiene issues and change attitudes and practices relating to them?
- Enhance the girls' political awareness?
- Self help groups increase the self-sufficiency of women?

Methodology

The research team spent ten days in July 2006 in the Danapur and Phulwarisharif blocks of Patna district to conduct the fieldwork. The sites visited included five *Nari Gunjan* centres (*Kishori Kendras*) in five different villages, a residential hostel run by NG in Danapur, the NG office, and the Block Education Offices in each of the blocks. The sample of villages were chosen using stratified random sampling, with two centres from Danapur and three from Phulwarisharif being identified based on their location and the predominance of the Musahar community in the centre. The villages finally selected were Bata and Deegha Halt (in the Danapur Block) and Neejampur, Nagwan and Kurkuri (in the Phulwarisharif Block).

The fieldwork was conducted using techniques from the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodology. The primary tools used were focus group discussions (FGD), semi-structured interviews and observations. A general demographic profile was administered to every student in each of the centres. A total of 108 students from the 6 sites are included in this profile (See Annexures A and B) among which 12 students (2 from each site) were selected for in-depth interviews. Approximately, an additional 50 in-depth interviews were carried out with other stakeholders, including teachers at the centres, parents of students, villagers, local *Panchayati Raj* Institution (PRI) members, Block Education Officers, NG staff and Sister Sudha Varghese, the founder of the NG programme. Focus group discussions were conducted with an additional 75 respondents, including students at the centres, mothers of students and members of self-help groups. Classes and other centre related activities were observed at each site that was visited. In addition to these techniques, other PRA methods such as daily routine charts and institutional rankings¹⁴ were carried out with students during the focus group discussions. Additional data about the functioning of the centres, training of the NG staff, their programmes and their teaching learning materials (TLMs) were obtained from the NG Office.

Because of the limited time available to the team, only five centres of about fifty (existing by July 2006) were visited, which only represents 10 per cent of all sites. It is, therefore, uncertain how representative this sample is. Because of the small number of centres, the number of in-depth interviews conducted was also limited. Another limitation of the study is that due to constraints of time, it was not possible to measure long term impacts

¹⁴Please refer to Box 2 for an example of an institutional ranking used in this case study.

of the programmes as the subjects of the research could not be followed over time. In addition, teachers invariably suggested students for the in-depth interviews. Similarly, the villagers interviewed were selected using snowball sampling. Both of these factors could lead to the possibility of a selection bias. With these limitations in mind, this case study should only be taken as suggestive of the impact of NG in other villages and attempts at extrapolation can only be made with caution.

Description of the sample of girls from the NG centres

The sample consisted of 108 girls from the five different centres (Please see Annexure A: Table 1 for the distribution of the girls in the sample), 64 per cent of whom were *Musahars*. The average age of girls in the sample was 11.82 years (S.D of 3.17 years). The youngest girl in the sample was 7 years old, whereas the oldest was 23 years of age. Among these girls, on an average 0.88 years were spent (S.D. of 1.44 years) at a government school and 1.19 years at a NG centre (S.D. of 1.01 years). Looking at students' families, more than half of the fathers were labourers (63 per cent) while half their mothers were housewives (53 per cent). Fathers' and mothers' literacy rate averages at 35.2 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively ¹⁵ (Please see Annexure A: Table 2 for other details). Analysing the sample by caste (*Musahar* and other castes) clearly shows the *Musahar's* lower socioeconomic status. *Musahar* girls have lower average years of schooling (0.57 years versus 1.4 years for other castes), lower parents' literacy rate (*Musahar* father: 11 per cent, non *Musahar* father: 27 per cent; *Musahar* mother: 4.4 per cent non *Musahar* mother: 25.6 per cent), and a smaller proportion had bank accounts (*Musahar*: 5.8 per cent, non *Musahar*: 12.85 per cent), and owned land (*Musahar* 13 per cent, non *Musahar* 25.6 per cent). On the other hand, the *Musahar* group has a higher rate in terms of certain occupations: 1) as a labourer (*Musahar* mother 40.6 per cent, non *Musahar* mother 17.9 per cent; *Musahar* father 75.4 per cent, non *Musahar* father 52.8 per cent), 2) as an alcohol maker (*Musahar* father 10 per cent, non *Musahar* father 1 per cent) and years of NG schooling (*Musahar* 1.40 years, non *Musahar* 0.82 years). Tables of variables measured in the demographic profile of girls and parents can be found in Annexure B.

¹⁵ Mothers literacy rate is important because this could be related to what the daughters' literacy rates could have been if they had not joined NG programmes.

Nari Gunjan: A Closer Look

Activities

Table 3: Different Activities of Nari Gunjan

Girls' Education	Activities
1. <i>Kishori Kendra</i> (Education Centre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Literacy skills · Vocational skills- sewing, embroidery · Awareness about rights related to education, health, political participation, employment, etc · Morning exercises- Karate, Yoga · Games, songs, slogans, skits, poems
2. Residential Hostel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Remedial training · Integration to formal schools
3. <i>Balika Shivar</i> (3 day residential camp for adolescent girls)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Discussions on several social issues such as child marriage, women's rights, importance of girls' education, HIV/AIDS, etc. · Sports competitions · Recreational exercises
4. <i>Kishori Manch</i> (Girls' Forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Platform to encourage public speaking skills amongst girls · Raises political awareness · Enables building of high self esteem and confidence
5. Health <i>Mela</i> (Health Camp)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Information on various health issues disseminated · Polio campaigns
Women's Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Organising parents' meetings · Supporting women's self help groups · Sensitisation of women on gender issues and division of labour · Identifying PRI candidates and training them
Capacity Building Of Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Social briefing about the locale of work · Training on effective and innovative teaching methodologies · Designing of interesting teacher learning material (TLM) · Sensitising teachers towards the <i>Musahar</i> community

Strategies

The problem of education on the one hand is deeply rooted in poverty, ignorance and the “untouchability” of lower castes, while on the other, the inability of government schools to prevent dropout of girls increases the probability of poor girls remaining illiterate. In addition to the factors stated above, the apathy and resistance of parents, unfavourable attitudes toward the education of girls and early marriage are the main factors aggravating the issue in excluded communities. Parents with limited resources invest in educating their sons, as it is typically assumed that girls will ultimately be married and live with their in laws. Hence the problem of girls’ education is multidimensional. In order to tackle this very complex issue, NG has employed some key strategies to achieve its mission in the *Musahar* community.

Holistic approach

- The curriculum was designed with a holistic approach focusing not only on literacy skills, but emphasising self sufficiency, health, social, psychological, and political empowerment. Hence the centres are not just schools where reading and writing are taught, but truly learning centres. NG teaches vocational skills such as sewing, embroidery and financial literacy by encouraging savings. Health/hygiene practices, regular health checkups, health education (know your body), and balanced diet and nutrition are other important dimensions of the NG curriculum. Unlike formal schools, NG also focuses on social and life skills and confidence building among the girls. Activities and curriculum which sensitizes them on gender issues and the rights of women are also notable. All of the aforementioned complements contribute to empowering impoverished girls from the SC community.

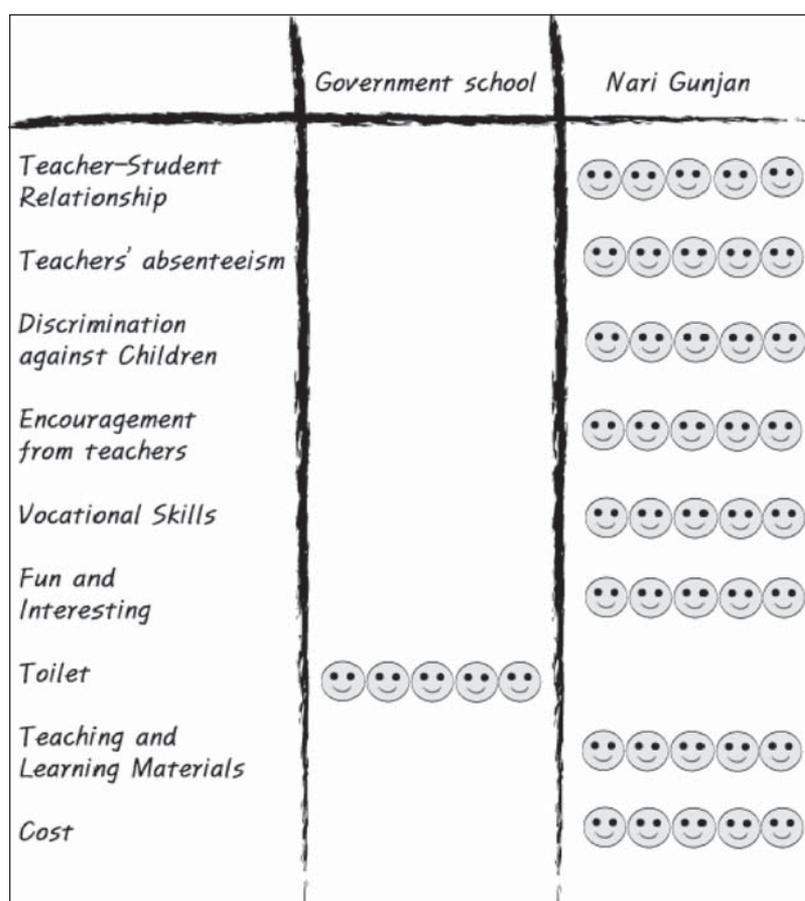
Quality education

- **Teaching and learning process:** Maintaining good quality of education is necessary not only to attract girls to school, but also to keep them there. NG provides a facilitating environment where girls learn reading/writing and numerical skills not through didactic means such as lectures but through highly interactive learning such as discussions and question and answer (Q & A) sessions. NG provides an environment that also fosters a close teacher-pupil relationship.
- **Teachers:** The teachers in these centres have an interactive and compassionate approach towards the learners, and they build confidence in the innate ability of the girls. Teacher absenteeism is nonexistent, unlike at government schools. The teachers’ salary is cut if they are absent for more than 3 days without previous notice, and this works as a preventive mechanism to increase their attendance rate. In addition, teachers personally attend to every child’s needs. They are aware that in a classroom

with students from different strata among the lower castes, *Musahars* might feel isolated and lack the confidence to perform to their full potential. The teachers thus do not allow any kind of discrimination in the classroom. They are proactive and even visit the homes of the children, when they are absent.

- **Use of rewards:** PRA techniques (Figure 1) used in this case study illustrate that regular rewards, recognition and appreciation for their work are seen as a source of motivation for these children from backward communities. For children who have typically faced discrimination at government or private schools, these rewards serve as important incentives and boost their self-esteem.

Figure 1: PRA Exercise Comparing *Nari Gunjan* and Government Schools



Legend: Each smiley face represents the collective response from students about their preference for either NG or a government school at one centre.

- **Innovative curriculum:** The new curriculum¹⁶ and TLM is designed innovatively as well, and is sensitive to the cultural needs and values of the *Musahars*. NG also lays special emphasis on the re-organisation of traditional curriculum to match local needs.

¹⁶ Jagjagi from Narisamakhya, another NGO under Bihar Education Project

For instance, NG does not teach the alphabet in the traditional order from A to Z because students have difficulties in memorising the alphabet in this way. Instead, they adopt “whole word pedagogy”

- **Monitoring:** The monitoring process at NG is also quite effective. One supervisor is responsible for monitoring five centres; feedback is given to the coordinators. In the case of the teacher’s absence, the supervisors even substitute for them at the centres. In addition, NG has a monthly evaluation and planning meeting where supervisors and teachers meet together to discuss various issues. This kind of consistent monitoring ensures the quality of education at the centres under their supervision and prevents problems such as teacher absenteeism.

Need based education

- **Physical accessibility:** Acknowledging the needs of *Dalit* girls, NG follows the strategy of building centres locally to boost the enrollment of girls. This is mainly because of the realization that distance to schools is an issue for all children particularly from the standpoint of the time it takes to get to school and safety concerns.¹⁷ Since NG schools are within the communities, girls are better able to manage their housework, typically early in the morning and attend classes on time. It is also easy for parents to send their daughters to school because they are assured of their safety and have easy access to them.
- **Flexible class timings:** Consulting with parents in setting up class dates and timings also increases girls’ attendance. For example, during the busy harvesting season, school timings are shorter and children have more time to help their parents in the fields.
- **Free education:** While the government schools costs the SC girls some money to buy books, notebooks and pencils, NG provides most of the school-related materials.
- **Relevance of the curriculum to the lives of SC girls:** Rather than following a curriculum which is totally unrelated to the girls’ lives and jobs, incorporating vocational skills, life skills, gender issues and information on adolescence prove an added advantage in generating enthusiasm amongst the girls to attend classes regularly. The TLM covers issues which are important to their daily lives and generate awareness among girls about their rights by using aids such as flipbooks, flashcards, slogans, *Prabhat Pheri*, *Meena*¹⁸ stories, etc.

¹⁷Herz & Sperling (2004)

¹⁸UNICEF’s girl icon

- **Interesting learning environment:** *Musahar* children are not accustomed to mentally taxing school work since their exposure to school is minimal and they grow up doing physical labour (Narayan, 2002). Considering *Musahar* children's short attention span, NG adopted innovative teaching environments using games, skits, poems, and morning exercises (yoga, karate) to capture the interest of girls.
- **Use of local language:** NG's strategy to teach in the local language worked well as the girls felt comfortable with learning through a medium they were familiar with. As Bernard and Anne (2002) suggest, when the language of instruction is different from the mother tongue, it is often found disabling for girls, who tend to be less exposed to social environments beyond their immediate families.

Rapport and trust building with communities

- Another important strategy of NG is to actively build trust in the community and establish rapport with key stakeholders. According to Peterson¹⁹, trust should be developed between outside initiatives and local clients, as projects often bring innovation that is not only costly but also threatens the status quo. Although *Nari Gunjan* is not a foreign organisation, it is not indigenous to the *Musahar* group either; therefore it is key to build accountability with the *Musahars* who have long been exploited by outsiders. This has been made easier because of Sister Sudha's 30 years of work with this community. The teachers and supervisors are very carefully selected through a competitive process²⁰; keeping in mind the sensitivity required towards the *Musahars*. Most teachers are chosen from the lower castes, if possible from the *Musahar* community itself. Thus, they are able to understand the issues and concerns and are more empathetic towards the students. Also, all NG teachers are female, and most of the girls see their teachers as role models. They see the teacher as someone they can identify with themselves, someone they can reach out to, and someone who believes in them. Hence female teachers are playing a critical role in molding the self-esteem and confidence of these girls. The dedication of the teachers helps build the community's trust in NG and has enabled the parents to send their daughters to the NG hostel for further studies. This is a big achievement for these girls who have never been exposed to the outside world.

Integration of various stakeholders

- NG involves different stakeholders in girl-child education such as the family, mothers' committee, the school, *Gram Panchayats* and village level committees. Involving

¹⁹ Steven Peterson (1999) asserts that development projects need to address the four factors for selling change: trust, need, help and urgency.

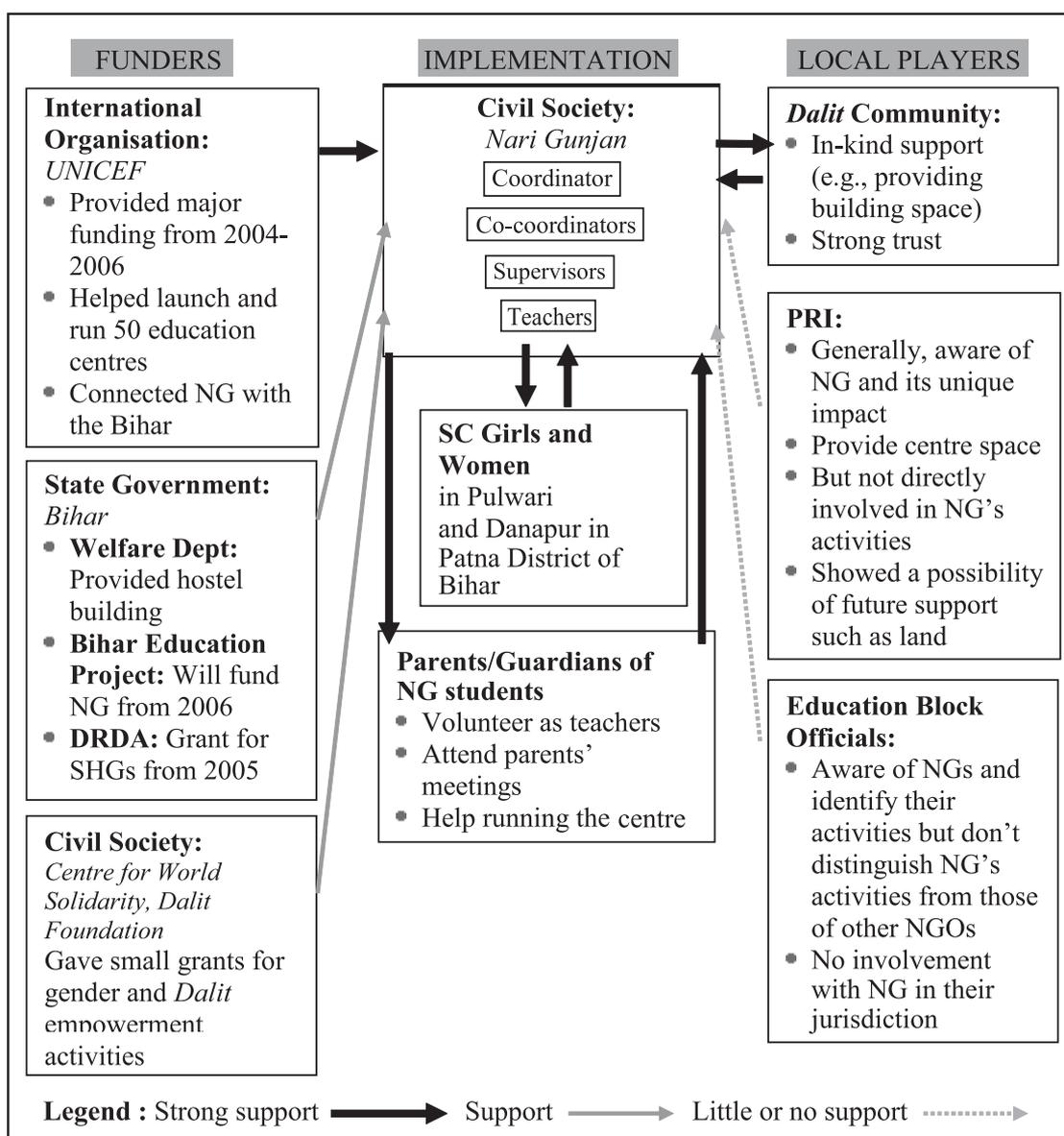
²⁰ Usually, NG has 20 applications for 1 teacher's position due to the high salary offered. The salary paid is Rs. 1,250 /month, which is higher than in some local private schools. The educational eligibility for Dalit teachers is Matric (10th class) and eligibility for non-Dalits is Intermediate (12th class).

various stakeholders works as an effective strategy in enabling the centre and the community to work as a cohesive body. This has enabled these stakeholders to take joint decisions and establish trust in one another. The parents' involvement in managing centres, such as identifying suitable teachers and space, fixing class timings and volunteering to teach a vocational skill has played a key role in encouraging their participation and has mobilised them to continue with the education of their girls.

Strategic partners

Figure 2 describes the role of key players in the *Nari Gunjan* model. NG programmes are implemented in partnership with international organisations, the government, civil society, and the beneficiaries, who are critical actors in development. In this model, however, local government or private sectors do not play a significant role.

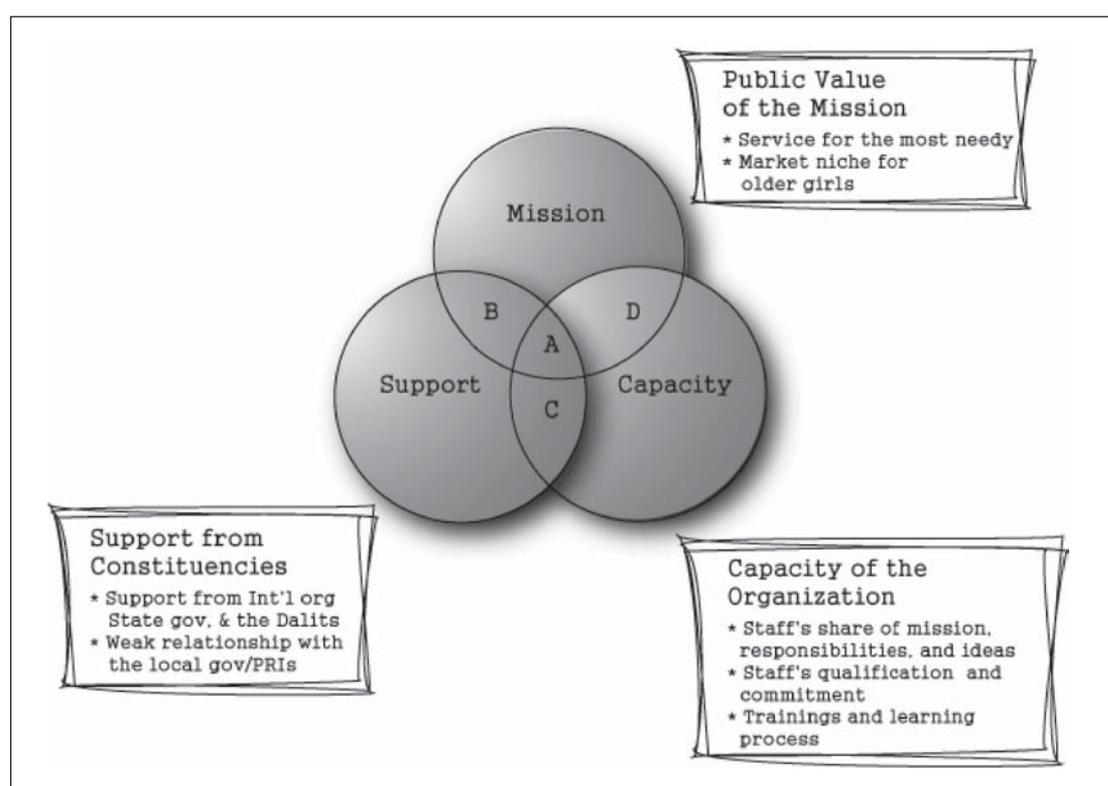
Figure 2: Actors and Strategic Partners



Implementation and organisational analysis²¹

This section analyses the effectiveness of *Nari Gunjan's* programme implementation through the Mission, Support, Capacity (MSC) framework (Kaplan and Leonard, 2005). According to the MSC framework, an organisation can successfully carry out its goal when it pursues an alignment within its mission, capacity and support. The mission of non-profit organisations should generate considerable public goods. To carry out its valuable mission, the organisation should also have sufficient support from its constituencies. Finally, the organisation has to have the abilities and skills to properly use resources from public support toward its mission. In this study, an analysis of this alignment is attempted.

Figure 3: Mission-Support-Capacity Venn Diagram of *Nari Gunjan*



Older girls from the most deprived caste have been left out from the benefit of formal and non formal education (Ramachandran, 2004). Service for this most vulnerable population group produces a substantial social value. NG Staff share the mission of NG and have strong commitment to their work. As a small NGO operating a large number of centres and camps, all staff shares their roles and respond to various duties. Through trainings and monitoring processes for coordinators, supervisors and teachers, NG has delivered a quality service for the SC communities. NG's relationship with local actors

²¹ For detailed analysis of *Nari Gunjan's* mission, support, capacity, please see the appendix.

such as PRI members and block education officials has not been strong, because the *Dalit* issue is very sensitive and the entire process of gaining support at Block and *Panchayat* level is slow. On the other hand, NG has received considerable support from international organisations, the state government and the *Dalit* community.

Based on the assessment through the MSC framework, it is found that NG's mission has considerable social value and is backed up by their allies. Until 2006, NG had sufficient grants to carry out and expand their programmes. Therefore, NG can be considered to fall in region A in the MSC Venn Diagram (Figure 3.)

Findings

Outcomes

Did *Nari Gunjan* enhance the girls' social empowerment?

YES. The most important and unique aspect of the *Nari Gunjan* model of education is that the centres are designed not only as schools where girls learn to read and write but as learning centres where girls learn to build life skills. Thus the education at the NG centres lays heavy emphasis on socially empowering girls from the *Musahar* and other excluded communities. This objective is achieved through a series of active and innovative teaching methods that are interesting to children, such as songs, plays and audiovisual means, including *Meena* cartoons.

- Students learn about caste based discrimination through formal and informal means at NG. Students universally noted that they would raise their voices against discriminatory practices in their communities including violence towards women, eve-teasing, etc.
- Most students had learned about issues of gender equity and empowerment at NG, mostly with the help of the aforementioned teaching methods. Most of the children asserted that they now speak out to both parents, if they felt that they were being discriminated against in their homes. Typically, girls (about 50 per cent of those interviewed in depth) noted the preference of their parents for educating boys and also gender disparity in terms of domestic chores. There, however, seemed to be no gender bias in punishment.
- The self-confidence of the girls was boosted through their experiences at NG. Many of the respondents noted their ability to speak to other people, including strangers without hesitation, after coming to NG.
- Girls were also empowered to think about their leadership roles in society. There were a large number of respondents who indicated their interest in becoming teachers and leaders in their communities, so that they could educate their children, their neighbours and other villagers and lift them out of their poverty. For example, one of the respondents in the Danapur hostel, who noted that she wanted to become a doctor, clarified that before she does so, she would like to go back to her village and educate the children there.

This is a wonderful example of the effectiveness of the teaching material used at *Nari Gunjan* in generating awareness about issues that are crucial to the empowerment of girls. Their ability to relate to *Meena* at a very personal level brings these stories to life and makes it them more meaningful to them. They not only enjoy these stories, but they end up walking away with valuable life lessons. “We are just like *Meena*!” They all claim. “We will raise our voices, if this happens in our homes!” This is a prime example of a crucial lesson taught most effectively using *Meena* cartoons, a tool developed by UNICEF through which millions of girls in the Indian subcontinent learn a lot about themselves and the world that they live in.

Box 2: The Effective Use of *Meena* Cartoons in Educating Girls on Gender Issues

Most of the inquisitive girls at the Bata center in Danapur remained silent when we asked them if their parents sometimes give their brothers more food than them. But then one girl broke the silence. “Yes! Just like what happened to *Meena* !” she exclaimed. “Once, *Meena*’s parents bought a mango and *Meena*’s brother was given the whole mango, and *Meena* got nothing” she continued. “Then *Meena*’s friend *Mitthu* (the parrot) split the mango in half and gave equal portions to both *Meena* and her brother”. “Boys and girls are equal, so they should get equal portions to eat too. It’s not right that *Meena* got nothing!” She claimed defiantly.

- Girls had learned about the ills of child marriage from NG. The discussions about child marriage revealed not only their understanding of the issue from a social standpoint, but from the standpoint of maternal reproductive health, as well. All 100 per cent of the interview respondents noted that they had changed their views regarding child marriage.

NG’s programme raises a significant amount of awareness among girls about issues such as caste and gender based discrimination, their rights and their perceived and actual abilities. These provide a significant boost to their self-confidence. However, there are some areas where cultural constraints and inertia presented barriers for these girls. For example, it was seen that most of the girls at NG enjoyed little or no decision making power in their households. These ranged from simple decisions such as purchasing goods for the household to critical life decisions such as those pertaining to marriage. While all girls noted that they were opposed to child marriage, there seemed to be little change in the attitudes of their families, as a majority of the girls claimed that this practice was still prevalent in their communities. It is conceivable that the complex socio-cultural issues of poverty, ignorance and orthodox customs that are at the root of the problem of

child marriage are so ingrained in these communities that overcoming this problem will be a long and gradual process.²²

Box 3: Child Marriage: A Crippling Cause of Poor Enrolment in Girls' Education

Manorma, 15 year old lives in Deegha Halt, a village in Patna district. Her father a *Manjhi* works as a rickshaw puller. She has 5 brothers and 4 sisters. Manorma attended government school till primary level, but she had to quit her education as her parents were reluctant to send her for further studies, not because of their own choice, but because of the fear of societal views on sending a grown up girl out of the community to study. Manorma shared that she was really glad when a *Nari Gunjan* (NG) centre opened in her village. "It was only when the NG centre opened, that I had some hope of pursuing my studies, and I was successful in convincing my parents to let me attend the classes. Also the learning of a vocational skill, worked as an incentive for my parents to send me to the centre." Her passion for education motivates her to wake up early in the morning and complete the household chores in order to reach the centre on time. She feels that NG is a blessing in disguise, by helping her realise her dreams of becoming an educated person and getting employed. But at the same time she fears that her parents are already planning to get her married to a boy in a nearby village. Even after sharing her plans to study and asking her parents to delay her wedding, they are adamant to get her married soon, as they may not find a suitable boy when she is older. Her parents are also worried about her dowry because the more she is educated, the more dowry her in-laws will demand. She shared her dilemma and said "*I wish my parents understood my dreams*" Like Manorma, many other girls sacrifice their dream to study and get trapped in the crippling practice of child marriage, which prevails widely. It is crucial to uproot this practice for a better future by educating the masses and bringing behavioural change in society. *Nari Gunjan* is also working towards disseminating information on the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (under which child marriage is a punishable offence under the Indian law) to the girls in the centres, during discussions in Girls' Forums and to parents in PTA and SHG meetings. But this is a deep rooted problem and change in society will only take place gradually.

Did *Nari Gunjan* improve the literacy of girls in the *Musahar* community?

YES. In addition to socially empowering girls from the *Musahar* community, NG focuses on enabling these girls to learn to read and write. This also serves as a means for empowering girls not only socially, but politically and economically as well. As a direct result of NG centres, the literacy levels of girls from the *Musahar* and other lower caste communities have sharply increased. NG now runs 50 centres in rural and semi-urban

²² Money bride's family has to give to groom's family

areas of Patna district and has plans to expand to 100. These centres have contributed significantly in raising the literacy rates of girls from these communities, who have not been able to integrate into the formal education system and for whom literacy rates have historically been dismal (see Table 2.)

- An overwhelming majority of the respondents performed exceptionally well in reading and writing in Hindi and generally had good mathematical skills. Respondents were able to clearly read and write in Hindi. The respondents, however, only had limited ability in English.²³
- In terms of their mathematical skills, the respondents performed satisfactorily as well. While some respondents faced difficulty in multiplication and division, a majority of them were able to perform addition and subtraction functions with ease.
- The level of these skills among the girls who resided at the hostel at Danapur was markedly superior. It is likely that these differences exist because these girls have been integrated into the formal school system after their NG experience.

The students emphatically reported that being literate has helped them in different aspects of their daily lives. Most students took pride in their ability to sign their names on crucial documents. They were also using the skills acquired for activities like reading letters and newspapers, counting money on trips to the market or in household financial matters, and in other common activities in their daily lives. Students also reported using their skills to measure the cloth they used in their sewing classes.

Did *Nari Gunjan* enhance the girls' vocational skills and help empower them economically?

YES. NG has actively incorporated training on skills such as sewing and embroidery at their centres. In addition, NG has also invested in purchasing sewing machines for each centre to facilitate this training. Girls were thus provided with an opportunity to learn a vocational trade that is viable and one that can help empower them economically in the future while attending school at the NG centre.

- A majority of the centres that were visited had functioning machines that the girls were using to sew a range of items including blouses, suits, undergarments, etc. The girls were also learning to embroider various items such as handkerchiefs by hand.

²³ Most of the girls interviewed were able to recite and write the alphabet in English. However, other than spelling some simple words in English, the girls were not able to read or write English. The girls, however, were aware of the importance of learning English, particularly for their integration into the formal schooling system. Hence, girls at the centres routinely noted their interest in having more English classes at the centres.

- The added dimension of the vocational training and its immense practicality complemented the literacy-based education at the centre. This served as an initial attraction not only to the girls, but also to their parents who desire to see their children learning tangible skills. This aspect of NG also has been able to attract the interest of other members from these communities to educate their children at the *Kishori Kendras*. Almost all of the respondents in the focus groups and about 83.33 per cent of the respondents in the in depth interviews noted that the vocational training was a significant motivation for them to come to the centre and a major factor in convincing their parents.
- Thus in addition to providing girls with a real-life skills, the vocational training provided at NG also helped empower girls to envision their self-sufficiency and work towards it.
- A majority of the girls at the NG centres were learning about economic empowerment through the starting of savings accounts with small sums of money. However, only a small minority of the girls in the sample actually had bank accounts (16.67 per cent of the in-depth interview respondents and only 8.3 per cent of the full sample) primarily because they do not have money to save. While NG is providing the necessary education to enhance the economic empowerment of these girls, the actual implementation is likely to be a gradual process.

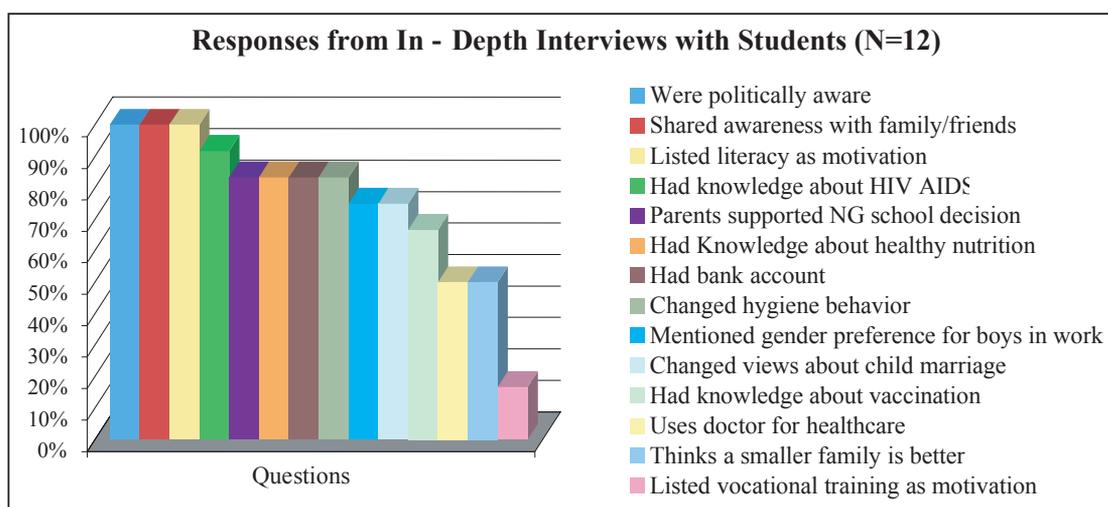
A majority of girls reported that this vocational skill could become a medium for self-sufficiency when they were older and even after marriage. They also plan to use their savings when they are sick or get married. There were several instances, where girls who had received training at the NG centres, now owned small tailoring businesses. For example, in the village of Bata in Danapur, a woman noted that her daughter had learned sewing at the NG centre while she was a student there. At the time of her marriage, the mother spent Rs. 3000 to buy her daughter a sewing machine as a gift for her wedding. The mother noted that her daughter now owns a small tailoring business at her husband's house and that she is not dependent on her husband for an income.

Did *Nari Gunjan* increase the girls' knowledge of health and hygiene issues and change attitudes and practices relating to them?

YES. There was a significant increase in the knowledge and awareness about issues of health and hygiene as a direct result of the education and different programmes provided by NG. A significant majority of the girls in the focus group discussions and 100 percent of the respondents in the in-depth interviews noted that they had made significant changes in their habits regarding health and hygiene and were not aware of many of these issues before learning about them at NG.

- Children at the centres were highly aware of the importance of keeping their homes, neighbourhoods and themselves, clean. They noted that after learning about cleanliness practices at NG, they have significantly altered their habits and are now bathing daily²⁴, cutting their nails, keeping their food covered and utensils clean, and cleaning their homes and surroundings.
- Most students also showed a general understanding of healthy nutrition as well. A full 100 per cent of the students in the interviews noted that they had learned about a balanced diet at NG and means permitting, tried to maintain a healthy diet consisting of rice, lentils, green vegetables, milk, eggs, etc.
- A majority of students, including 91.67 per cent of the respondents of the in-depth interviews opposed superstitious practices of medicine in their villages and noted that they always visit doctors in case of illness. In a notable example, one of the respondents at the centre at Deegha Halt in Danapur noted that there has been a significant change in attitudes towards such practices in their community since the arrival of NG.
- There was also increased awareness of the importance of vaccinations for young children among the girls at the centre. About 83.33 per cent of the interview respondents indicated that they were aware of vaccinations and immunisations. Most girls were aware of the Polio campaign that was underway during the time that the study was conducted. There were even some instances, where girls noted that they had volunteered for some of these campaigns.

Figure 4: Figure of “Yes” Responses from Student In-Depth Interviews



²⁴ Some girls reported that they used to bathe only once a month before coming to *Nari Gunjan*.

Did *Nari Gunjan* enhance the girls' political awareness?

TO SOME EXTENT. NG has made significant efforts to educate and raise awareness among girls at their centres about political rights, political processes and the right to vote. The outcomes in this area were only satisfactory. Only 66.67 per cent of the respondents of the in depth interviews indicated that they were aware of political issues and processes.

- Most of the respondents were aware of their right to vote and understood the importance of elections; most were not able to elaborate further. The majority of the girls noted that they had learned about their rights and about elections at either the NG centre or at one of the camps that were held periodically. Some girls also expressed the desire to become leaders, mainly resulting from wanting to bring change in their communities.
- Among girls who were knowledgeable about the political process, most of them had either a member of their immediate family or a distant relative in an office of some capacity within the political system. For example, the father of one of the respondents in the village of Kurkuri was the *Mukhiya* (Chief) of the village and she was hence, much more knowledgeable about these issues.
- The political awareness about rights and the political process was much higher among girls in the Danapur Hostel. Respondents there were able to not only articulate their rights, but had the knowledge of various issues such as the structure of the *Panchayat* system and the actors, reservation policies for women and SCs, etc.

Because of a limited understanding of these issues, which could have resulted from the young age of the respondents in general (mean=12 years), discussions about political awareness and its outcomes through NG remained limited. But, as one of the most marginalised communities, perhaps, in all of India, the knowledge and the understanding of their rights and the political processes that dictate their lives is crucial. It is imperative for girls and women from these communities to empower themselves politically, so that they can occupy offices of influence through which they can better serve their own people, making political awareness a critical requirement.

Box 4: The Challenges for Political Empowerment of *Musahar* Women

Sister Sudha feels that it is very important for women from the *Musahar* community to be politically empowered. For communities whose very existence is characterised by oppression and powerlessness, reaching a position of influence, such as being elected to the local bodies and PRIs could provide the critical momentum for transformation.

Nari Gunjan has thus helped *Musahar* women to take the initiative to contest elections for becoming leaders in their communities. *Nari Gunjan* has been working with 10 *Panchayats*, where at least 50 seats for representatives are open and could be contested by these women. It helps choose candidates, trains them on effective campaigning and helps to expand their social networks. NG also helps in making campaign materials and assists the SC community to vote for the right candidate. But the road to political office for *Musahar* women hasn't been an easy one. Women still face many challenges in attaining these positions. In one election in Jamsaut village in 2005, a *Musahar* woman supported by NG, received a majority of votes. However, she was not declared the winner, as a majority of the votes cast for her were declared invalid as they were cast with a defective stamp. It turns out that the rubber stamp tip with the *Swastik* sign had fallen off. While the government took action against the makers of the stamp, nothing was done to help the woman gain the position that she rightfully won.

Did *Nari Gunjan* Self Help Groups increase the self-sufficiency of women?

TO SOME EXTENT. One of NG's major activities for the wider community is to help form and run Self Help Groups for SC and BPL women²⁵. In the sample, SHG groups in 4 out of 5 centres were not functioning. The three major reasons for the non-functioning of SHGs are: 1) the lack of leadership in the community, 2) lack of trust and cooperation among members and 3) the slow process of acquiring government subsidies. In most cases, the groups were dissolved after NG teachers who were in charge of the SHG left their jobs. To revive sick SHGs, *Nari Gunjan* conducts meetings with groups and their families to find ways to resolve the problems²⁶.

At one of the sites visited, Neejampur, there were two SHG's, at one of which a focus group was conducted. The NG teacher in Neejampur had been facilitating the SHGs and had also been educating the groups about political rights. The members of the one-year old group in Neejampur were mostly unresponsive about their perceptions of the SHG's benefits and overall impact on them. The delay in government processes to sanction a loan had discouraged the group, according to their supervisor²⁷.

²⁵ SC and BPL is one of the criteria to select the women for SHG's.

²⁶ Groups become sick when all the members are not co-operative and do not repay loans. In the meetings with groups and families, NG meets their families and explains how important it is for groups to remain active. The group members also put pressure on non-functioning members.

²⁷ The supervisor in Neejampur shared the fact that even after this group deposited their savings for 6 months, the government process had not been completed and the group has not received the Rs. 25,000 loan applied for. Thus, these women feel pessimistic about the whole situation and said that they dare not dream of becoming entrepreneurs, before they have the loan in their hand.

However, the supervisors cited the success stories of three SHGs, which were functioning well even without the provision of loans. With Rs. 3,000 in savings, these groups started *Bindi* making, selling vegetables and cloth. All of these businesses flourished. Women in these groups often say “*Aaj nahi to kal jamana hamara hoga*” (If not today, then tomorrow, we will win the world).

Beyond our sample, we observed a well-functioning SHG at Asopur block. A comparison between the Neejampur and Asopur groups is made in Table 4. One of the most interesting differences is that the group leader of the Neejampur group is an NG teacher, while the group leader of Asopur is a woman from the community. In their meetings, the Neejampur group members talked about tracking down money or about festivals in the village. On the contrary, the group at Asopur discussed issues such as the eradication of illiteracy and the development plan of their villages.

Table 4. Comparison between SHG groups

Block	Neejampur	Asopur
Castes	SC	OBC (Yadav)
History	1 year old	10 years old
Initiation	By NG	By NG
Group leader	Teacher	A elected person who is literate
Number of members	20	10
Frequency of meeting	Twice a month	Once a week
Discussion in the meeting	Financial investment, money tracking, festivals	Literacy, social issues, development plan
Gov. subsidies	No	Yes (50 per cent)
Meaning of SHG	Don't know	Organisation, self sufficiency
Savings	Rs. 50 /month, Expect Rs. 25,000 loan from the government	Rs.10 /month, Rs.200,000 with 50 per cent government subsidy
Socio economic empowerment through SHG	Not aware	- Seek development funds from <i>Mukhiya</i> - Have money to learn tailoring - Don't take loan at high interest rates - Group members' families and community listen to them
Use of money	Education, children's weddings	Education, wedding, loan for farming Emergency, disaster, illness, Travel (mobility), Set up business
Group funds for a common purpose	No	Yes The interest group members pay to the group becomes a group fund and they use the fund for a common purpose

Impacts

As a relatively new programme, *Nari Gunjan's* impact on the larger community still remains in its infancy. However, as we have seen throughout the study, the changes and outcomes that have been observed are profound. Many of these outcomes have produced immediate and visible results for women and girls in the *Musahar* community. While it will take time for these changes to truly have an impact on the larger community, the wheels of change are already in motion. Some of the impacts that can already be seen are as follows:

Increased awareness of the importance of girls' education

One of the most important impacts of the NG programme on the *Musahar* community is the increased awareness of the importance of educating girls. The community's realisation, through NG programmes, that increased female education is one of the most powerful tools to empower women within the family and society has resulted in a major change in attitude. The change in attitude towards gender equity has been impressive. Parents are now more willing to send their girls to school and even to the NG hostel. Only a few girls noted that there was any opposition from the greater community. As Sen (2000) notes, as these changes occur, women not only improve their own welfare, but through their "agency" act to improve the well being of their children and help transform society itself. These changes are desperately needed in the *Musahar* community in order for them to emerge from their deprived state.

Perception of increased self well being

Girls and women in the *Musahar* community have been socially, politically and economically empowered through the programme. They have learned many valuable life skills and have noted a significant boost in their confidence levels and interpersonal skills. Another important impact is that the women and girls from this community, who lived on the margins even among their own people, now have a renewed sense of self worth. They are empowered to dream of a better future for themselves and their families and are finding themselves living with more dignity.

Transformation in knowledge, attitude and practice related to health and hygiene

One of the other profound impacts of the NG programme has been the change that it has brought in the *Musahar* community in terms of their health and hygiene practices. As many as 83.33 per cent of the respondents noted that they share hygiene related good practices with their families, friends and neighbours. In a special instance, the girls at the center at Neejampur in Phulwarisharif, described a large-scale village clean up programme that they conducted to raise awareness in their community. Some girls mentioned that they were seeing notable changes in the habits of their families and

communities. Villagers and parents interviewed were aware about the importance of proper healthcare and vaccinations and about diseases such as HIV/AIDS. These changes, particularly for the *Musahars*, are revolutionary. As a community that has often been characterised as synonymous with dirty surroundings, lack of hygiene, and superstitious health practices, these transformations are providing a tremendous stimulus for change in their community.

Ripple effect of education

Education and awareness have been spreading over to the larger SC community through NG students. In many cases, teachers reported that NG graduates go back their communities, launch their own centres, and teach children. Current students also bring their “out-of-school” friends to NG centres. Students also share their learning with their siblings, families and neighbours. Through this ripple effect of education, the impact of NG’s programme to empower women and the *Dalit* community has been sustained. In the same way, this ripple effect has also mobilised the community as evidenced by the sustaining of NG centres in communities through their own contributions and increased participation of women in political office.

Sustainability

Impact sustainability

Nari Gunjan's impact sustainability can be discussed in terms of its bridging effect for girls into the formal school system and its long-lasting impact for the larger SC communities and future generations.

- ***Integration into formal schooling:*** NG has initiated the integration of NG students into formal education by starting the hostel in Danapur. Around 75 students from different villages who are residing at the NG hostel are now attending the government school at different grade levels. However, no survey was conducted for students who have completed their education at NG centres and moved into government schools elsewhere, without going through the hostel. NG also does not have a tracking system to monitor their graduates' integration into the formal school system or other alternative schools.

Box 5: Integration of *Nari Gunjan* Girls at Danapur Hostel into the Formal School System

The closest that girls from the *Musahar* community can get to the mainstream is through *Nari Gunjan's* residential programme at Danapur. Over 75 girls from many of the 50 centres come to live and study here after completing a few years at a *Nari Gunjan* centre. The girls live at the hostel and attend the government school in the premises; they sit in the same classrooms and learn side by side with boys and girls from higher castes. In most cases, this is their first taste of a real mainstream school experience. Almost all the girls consider the hostel their ticket out of poverty and oppression. All of the girls find the hostel's atmosphere extremely conducive to learning. "We don't have to worry about having to do chores and housework here; all we have to do is study!" One girl expresses joyfully. They love the discipline, the camaraderie and the supportive atmosphere of the hostel. Many of the girls who come from the villages find themselves performing very well, sometimes better than children of higher castes. Despite going to a government school in their own hostel premises, their integration into the mainstream and formal education isn't always easy. While teachers at the school find that some of the girls from the hostel are exceptional in their abilities and have unlimited potential, they also find that most girls are struggling mainly because their preparation is inadequate. Many of these girls have never been to a real school before. Even at a school that operates in the

same premises as a *Nari Gunjan* hostel, the vestiges of the traditional caste system still sometimes rear their ugly heads and caste based tensions occasionally occur. But these incidents are rare. The teachers note that some of these girls are the most disciplined and hardworking students that they have ever had. “It’s a pleasure to teach them” one teacher claimed. These girls are making the way for others to integrate into the formal school system just like they did. They are now more confident and empowered to dream. “Once I finish my studies, I want to educate my villagers.” One girl claims. She wants to become a doctor, but she exclaims, “First, it’s most important for me to look out for my village!” Just by going to the hostel, these girls have essentially become role models for hundreds of girls at the NG centres in the villages. Most of them said, “We want to go to the hostel when we finish studying at NG!”

- ***Sustaining impact for the next generation:*** Through interviews and focus groups, the team found that educated girls are highly aware of the importance of educating their own children and the necessity of providing equal educational opportunities for daughters as well as sons. They are also aware of the hazards of child marriage and having large families. Therefore, by delaying marriage and spending more years on education, they will be more educated and mature mothers, both psychologically and physically.
- ***Cohesive programmes for long term effects:*** NG not only teaches literacy and vocational skills for adolescent girls at the centres, but also facilitates self help groups for married women in the community. The cohesiveness of elementary education and SHG formation are critical to achieve long term self-sufficiency. To ensure the sustainability of SHG’s, women, especially group leaders, should be literate. They should be able to read bank statements, sign their names, and calculate savings. This partially explains why many SHGs were broken up when NG teachers left; simply, it was hard to find literate leaders amongst community members.

Operational sustainability

Operational sustainability can be discussed with reference to NG’s financial sustainability, local ownership and organisational structure.

- ***Resource sustainability:*** NG has a unique four-tier dimension of funding. It has been supported jointly by UNICEF, Government, NGOs, Foundations, and the community. In particular, large stable grants from the state government distinguish NG from typical NGOs dependent on private funding agencies. One concern was that after UNICEF funding is withdrawn; the long-term financial solvency of NG can become relatively weak, if the government funds do not flow into the organisation

on time. In the case of rainy days, NG does not have a stable and controllable endowment or unrestricted assets. Their revenue is mostly project-based grants (95 per cent); they hold a very small portion of free-of-use donation (5 per cent)²⁸. Resource dispersion rate, which shows that an organisation has diverse sources of funding, is also low at 90.3 per cent²⁹. In detail, UNICEF’s funding constitutes about 80 per cent of the total funding. The rest are government (11 per cent), donation (5 per cent), and foundation (4 per cent) (Table 5). Therefore, without UNICEF grants, NG would face financial challenges to manage its educational projects for SC girls. When UNICEF’s funding commitment expired in the first quarter of year 2006, the Bihar Education Project from the Bihar State government made a decision to support the NG programme. However, NG has not yet received the pledged grants for 6 years and it is currently operating programmes by taking out loans. Nor does NG have specific income generating activities and its revenue is fully consumed as expenses³⁰. This can also weaken its financial viability.

Table 5: Expenditure and Revenue Concentration Ratio

Expenditure	Percentage	Revenue	Percentage
Education of <i>Dalit</i> girls	74.23%	UNICEF (Education)	76.07%
Self help groups	9.89%	UNICEF (Health camp)	2.66%
<i>Dalit</i> foundation project	5.19%	DRDA	11.46%
Health camp	3.69%	<i>Dalit</i> Foundation	4.09%
World social forum	2.80%	Donation and Subscription	5.08%
General administrative cost ³¹	2.72%	Interest on savings account	0.64%
Mushroom cultivation project	1.48%		
Total	100%	Total	100%

²⁸ As we see in Table 4, all funding has a specific usage except for money from donation and interests. For example, *Kishori Kendra* was solely funded by the UNICEF education grant. Likewise, *Dalit* foundation grants were restricted for use to the *Dalit* foundation project.

²⁹ Revenue concentration rate can be calculated by the formula: $\frac{(\text{Revenue 1: Grants}) + (\text{Revenue 2: donations and subscriptions})}{(\text{Total Revenue})}$ This is based on NG income statement in 2005.

³⁰ NG’s profit margin is 0 based on NG’s financial statement 2005. Profit margin = annual surplus/total expenditures.

³¹ Administrative cost is very low compared to other organisations, but it does not include staff salaries.

- **Local ownership of the programme:** In order to make the programme operationally sustainable, each community should take the responsibility of running its own centre. NG has identified local leaders, social workers and skilled parents during the meetings, and used them as volunteers. Sometimes NG girls volunteer for various programmes such as polio days. Except in Bata, communities or the *panchayat* also provide a space for centres.

At present, the community members are too poor and lack the capacity to run a centre. Teachers also expressed doubts about the possibility of running NG centres, if NG winds up.

- **Organisational structure wise:** Sister Sudha has been taking a strong leadership role with three key positions, as founder, secretary and coordinator. To ensure the organisation's sustainability even in her absence, her role should be shared by other core members in the organisation. For this purpose, Sister Sudha has been training her successors and takes them to the meeting she attends. However, it is found that the staff members are not very knowledgeable about external relationships and financial situations and depend on Sister Sudha to deal with these matters. Organisational sustainability will evolve only when the personal, charismatic leadership is converted to structural and systematic culture so that the organisation can exist even without the strong presence of its founder.
- **Programme wise:** One question that arises is: Has NG perpetuated social exclusion of the *Musahars* by providing alternative education and keeping them out of formal schooling? If so, should NG be sustained? At present, the NG programme is a practical alternative for the dysfunctional government school that is not suited to the specific needs of SC girls. Mainstreaming will be more effective after *Musahar* girls reach a certain level of confidence and capacity through programmes specifically targeted to them. In the future, when the education at the government school is standardised, NG's role as an alternative non-formal school may become redundant and may need to change to help children integrate into the formal school system.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study may have implications for policy makers and development professionals who want to promote elementary education for SC girls. However, it is important to note that these implications should be interpreted with caution, since the findings are not based on robust statistical evidence.

Policies that increase retention rate and quality are critical

The *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) has prioritised the education of girls, especially those belonging to the SC community. Since its 2001 launch, the SSA has focused its efforts—with initial signs of success—on enrolling children who have never been enrolled and bringing dropouts back to school. Incentives such as free mid day meals and free text books have proved successful to some degree. In an interview with government officials, their responses to the strategies to promote elementary education³².

For most of the children who came to NG, however, much of the efforts of the SSA such as midday meals and free books did not prove an incentive to attend government schools. Not only did a very few SC children ever receive free books and meals, but these provisions were not adequate³³ to increase the retention rate of already enrolled children. In this sample, the average duration of schooling was 9.6 months and half of children (42.6 per cent) had been to school, but dropped out mostly within 3 years. Both for children who had never been to school and children who had dropped out of school, the main reasons for being out of school were that there was no teaching at school or that the teachers largely remained absent. It was also found that parents are willing to bear some cost for educating their children despite their limited means³⁴. Therefore, poverty is not the major cause of the extremely low enrollment and retention rate of SC children at government schools.

If these findings are typical for the population of rural Bihar or even rural India, they can have important policy implications for promoting a policy that emphasises retention and quality education to prevent high dropout rates that are typical of low caste groups

³² To all girls/SC/ST children at primary level within an upper ceiling of Rs.150/child

³³ Girl children in 2 centres reported that free mid-day meals are not of good quality and often inedible.

³⁴ From the fathers' interview, it was found that fathers did not find their daughters' attending school at the NG centre costly except for the fact that during the school hours, daughters could not help with household work (43 per cent). In the mothers' focus group, they were of the opinion that the meagre sum of foregone income was affordable, if their children were educated.

such as the *Musahars*. *More government resources and focus should be given to monitor and evaluate teachers' presence in class, quality of teaching and unbiased treatment of SC children, especially girls.*

Beyond self sufficiency

Through the help of NG, SC adolescent girls currently have a realizable dream of achieving self reliance through self-employment. However, these children are somewhat pessimistic of obtaining decent employment through education. The highest achievable dream for them is to become a teacher or social worker.

The social discrimination that the *Musahars* have traditionally faced has generally prevented even well qualified individuals from these communities, albeit a small number, from getting decent jobs. As Narayan (2002) cites in his study of the socio economic condition of the *Musahars*, these practices are still prevalent despite the existence of reservation policies for the SCs. *The government should thus take proactive steps to ensure reservation and check and prevent the dominant classes among the SCs from reaping all the benefits of these reservation policies.*

Suggestions

Emphasise locally sustained empowerment by building capacities of SHGs

Inclusion of awareness activities specifically targeted towards excluded communities and the concurrent involvement of the general population would help to mobilise the community towards sustainable education and empowerment. As NG is still a young programme that is targeting illiterate girls 8 years of age or older, it is difficult to find empowered women to serve as role models. Given the current circumstances, empowering local women from the excluded community to produce role models is bound to be a slow process.

For the purpose of developing local role models and a locally sustainable programme, intensive capacity building of SHG members is vital. This can be achieved by employing an expert who will be exclusively in charge of SHGs. NG needs to give SHG groups systematic training and continuous consultation until they mature as a group. *Nari Gunjan* can facilitate SHGs by providing them literacy and vocational training based on the choice of the group. Also, building of adequate leadership is important so that the group can sustain itself even in the absence of a teacher.

In future, SHGs could start taking the ownership of the NG centres and programmes. In particular, self help groups could create a group fund as in the case of the Asopur group (Table 4), specially reserved for educational purposes, and utilise the fund to run NG education centres in their villages. In addition, SHG women can also utilise their group management skills to mobilise parents and the wider community.

Increase involvement of fathers of students

NG conducts parents' meetings on a monthly basis providing an opportunity for parents to discuss various aspects of their child's schooling, including the performance of the child, different issues pertaining to girl children at the school and in the home, and to involve them in the functioning of the centre. But it was found that fathers were less likely to attend parents' meetings because they go to work during the day and many of them are drunk at night. Hence NG generally missed the opportunity to mobilise fathers who take most of the important decisions in the family. These opportunities could serve as the impetus for increased awareness of fathers to educate their daughters and to make reasoned decisions about issues such as their daughter's marriage.

More effort is thus needed to actively involve the fathers of students in parents' meetings³⁵. For example, teachers can visit fathers or arrange fathers' meetings early in the morning before they leave for work. Encouraging active involvement would have a positive effect on father's attitudes towards their daughter's pursuit of an education and a better life.

Explore different sources of funding

All of the activities of the NG programme are provided to the girls at their centres and the hostel free of cost. The lack of income generating activities and a high dependence on external funding of a short-term nature makes NG vulnerable to running out of funds.

The organisation needs to identify different sources of funds such as governments, foundations, international organisations, corporate sector, religious groups, and individuals³⁶. Since, the government contract could cause a liquidity problem³⁷, NG should diversify its funding sources by increasing the rate of unrestricted donations, service fees and financial investment. For example, NG can collect rent for centre space from parents as in the Bata and Deegha centres. Also, NG needs to start self-sustaining activities to generate funds for their programmes. The activities can be linked with better marketing strategy for products from SHGs' vocational courses.

Build administrative efficiency and staff members' expertise

Nari Gunjan has already developed a workable programme model that fits the needs of its beneficiaries. Based on Korten's three stages of learning process framework (Appendix D), its major concern now should shift from programme effectiveness to efficiency and expansion of the programme. The rate of expansion will be governed primarily by organisation capacities. NG plans to double its size from 50 to 100 centres; however, it lacks the technology and professional staff necessary for scaling up. Getting skilled manpower is a big challenge for NG, especially when it seeks staff to organize local people, most of whom are poorly educated. To surmount its managerial challenges, NG

³⁵ Parents meetings can be held separately for mothers and fathers, if mothers do not speak out in front of fathers.

³⁶ Based on this recommendation, *Nari Gunjan* has been pursuing various funding opportunities from 2006 to the present, particularly in Delhi and U.S. Registered as a Non profit organisation in the State in July 2007 by its supporters, *Nari Gunjan* International has been fundraising through individual donations, special events and catholic /protestant churches. In addition, a comprehensive fundraising plan containing the entire spectrum of potential funding has been prepared by the School for International Training Team.

³⁷ The agency has a liquidity problem when it cannot meet its obligations (e.g. teachers' salary, NG office rent) on time. Contract with the government is typically on reimbursement basis. In order to run the programme, an organisation has to increase its liabilities until the government reimburses the expenditure. Before the actual payment is made by the government, the organisation has large grant receivables and low cash in hand, which causes a liquidity problem.

needs to develop specialised skills among current or new staff and train them to fill urgently needed positions such as SHG trainers and treasurers. NG should also take the initiative to hire a grant writer to spearhead their fundraising initiatives. In terms of resource distribution, like many small non-profit organisations, most of NG's resources have been allocated for programme delivery, not administrative efficiency. Currently, only 2.72 per cent is used for administrative costs³⁸. Since the administrative cost is very low, NG could have invested more in fundraising efforts and public relations to move a step higher on the organisational scale.

Provide better infrastructure for centres

The community typically contributes the space for the school. Generally the space is within a semi-pucca structure, often with a thatched roof. Since community members themselves lack basic amenities like toilets and drinking water, these are not available to the students of these schools either. NG also lacks the funds to build such facilities and cannot afford to provide the amenities that are more likely to be available in higher caste/economic status areas. Active involvement of PRIs, networking with different government and non-government development agencies can make this better infrastructure available to the NG centres. For example, NG can link their government funded sanitation campaign project with school toilet constructions³⁹.

Strengthen curriculum for the students

In order for the girls to integrate into formal education after the NG centre, it is important to strengthen more contemporary skills such as English at NG centres. Tailoring trainings are practical, but can be out-dated soon in the fast growing and industrialising Indian economy. Also, focusing on tailoring can reinforce gender stereotype in vocation. Learning new skills can provide children with tools to adapt not only to formal education, but also to contemporary society. Provision for advanced training such as computer skills and English to students residing at the hostel would also build more confidence, prepare them for higher education and increase employment opportunities. Their success stories can make them role models for the excluded community.

³⁸ However, this should be interpreted with caution. General administrative cost here does not include the salary of the NG staff, which is a large chunk of the overhead cost.

³⁹ NG is conducting sanitation campaigns with the government. The government provides land and matching funds for latrine construction in the SC communities.

Conclusions

Nari Gunjan's work with the *Musahars* of Bihar has been an exemplary case of a women's empowerment programme that has targeted an extremely needy group. As the case study has revealed, the significant increases in literacy rate among girls at the NG centres and awareness of their well being is a testament to the important contributions NG has made to the *Musahar* community. For a group that is considered to be among the lowest even within the SCs, and where literacy rates for women are among the lowest anywhere in the world, these contributions are laudable.

NG's holistic approach and quality education for the *Musahars* can serve as smart practice for programmes that work for the elementary education of girls from excluded communities. The strategies of NG that cater to the specific needs of the community it serves and the way in which it sustains its programmes through active participation and partnerships with the girls, their families, local bodies and community members, and international organisations are exemplary features of any programme that seeks success in working in these areas.

The team believes that this documentation of the NG model can serve as an important roadmap for successfully running women's empowerment programmes. The discussions of sustainability and the recommendations made, both for NG as an organisation and for furthering SC girls' education can be taken in conjunction and used as a tool kit for uplifting socially excluded communities in other parts of the country and perhaps, the world.

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Appendix I

Descriptive statistics for the full sample (from demographic profile)⁴⁰

Table A-1: Table of means

	Age	Years of Schooling	Years of NG Schooling	Number of Brothers	Number of Sisters	Valid (listwise)
N	107	108	108	108	108	106
Mean	11.82	.8822	1.1887	2.02	2.67	
Std. Deviation	3.17	1.4363	1.0130	1.35	1.55	
Minimum	7	.00	.01	0	0	
Maximum	23	5.00	4.00	9	6	

Table A-2: Comparisons of means

Caste Group		Age	Years of Schooling	Years of NG Schooling	Number of Brother	Number of Sister
Other castes	N	39	39	39	39	39
	Mean	12.03	1.4303	.8205	2.08	3.08
	Std. Deviation	3.06	1.5676	.7999	1.16	1.64
	Minimum	19	.00	.01	0	0
	Maximum	12.03	5.00	3.00	5	6
Musahar	N	68	69	69	69	69
	Mean	11.71	.5725	1.3968	1.99	2.43
	Std. Deviation	3.26	1.2661	1.0656	1.46	1.45
	Minimum	7	.00	.08	0	0
	Maximum	23	5.00	4.00	9	6

⁴⁰Please refer to the Methodology Section for details about sample selection.

Appendix II

Frequency tables for each of the variables

Table B-1: Comparison of girls occupation between groups

Caste		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Other castes	Student	33	84.6	84.6	84.6
	Field labour	6	15.4	15.4	100.0
	Total	39	100.0	100.0	
Musahar	Student	62	89.9	89.9	89.9
	Field labour	7	10.1	10.1	100.0
	Total	69	100.0	100.0	

Table B-2: Frequency table of caste of girls at the centres

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Other castes	39	36.1	36.1	36.1
<i>Musahar</i>	69	63.9	63.9	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table B-3: Comparison of fathers' occupations between groups

Group			Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Other castes	Valid	0	1	2.6	2.8	2.8
		Labour	19	48.7	52.8	55.6
		Business	13	33.3	36.1	91.7
		Brewing alcohol	1	2.6	2.8	94.4
		Service	2	5.1	5.6	100.0
		Total	36	92.3	100.0	
	Missing	99	3	7.7		
Total			39	100.0		
<i>Musahar</i>	Valid	Labour	49	71.0	75.4	75.4
		Business	4	5.8	6.2	81.5
		Brewing alcohol	10	14.5	15.4	96.9
		Service	2	2.9	3.1	100.0
		Total	65	94.2	100.0	
	Missing	99	4	5.8		
	Total			69	100.0	

Table B-4: Comparison of mothers' occupations between groups

<i>Musahar</i>			Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Other castes	Valid	Housewife	27	69.2	69.2	69.2
		Labour	7	17.9	17.9	87.2
		Business	4	10.3	10.3	97.4
		Service	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
		Total	39	100.0	100.0	
<i>Musahar</i>	Valid	Housewife	31	44.9	44.9	44.9
		Labour	28	40.6	40.6	85.5
		Business	1	1.4	1.4	87.0
		Brewing alcohol	9	13.0	13.0	100.0
		Total	69	100.0	100.0	

Table B-5: Comparison of father's literacy between groups

<i>Musahar</i>			Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Other castes	Valid	Illiterate	12	30.8	30.8	30.8
		literate	27	69.2	69.2	100.0
		Total	39	100.0	100.0	
<i>Musahar</i>	Valid	Illiterate	57	82.6	83.8	83.8
		literate	11	15.9	16.2	100.0
		Total	68	98.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	1	1.4		
	Total		69	100.0		

Table B-6: Comparison of mother's literacy between groups

<i>Musahar</i>			Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Other castes	Valid	Illiterate	29	74.4	74.4	74.4
		literate	10	25.6	25.6	100.0
		Total	39	100.0	100.0	
<i>Musahar</i>	Valid	Illiterate	65	94.2	95.6	95.6
		literate	3	4.3	4.4	100.0
		Total	68	98.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	1	1.4		
	Total		69	100.0		

Table B-7: Frequency table of bank account

No	99	91.7	91.7	91.7
Yes	9	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table B-8: Comparison of bank account between groups

<i>Musahar</i>			Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Other castes	Valid	No	34	87.2	87.2	87.2
		Yes	5	12.8	12.8	100.0
		Total	39	100.0	100.0	
<i>Musahar</i>	Valid	No	65	94.2	94.2	94.2
		Yes	4	5.8	5.8	100.0
		Total	69	100.0	100.0	

Appendix III

Mission, support, capacity framework

Mission

- **Service for the most vulnerable** SC girls, particularly for the *Musahars*. Targeting services to this most disadvantaged population can be considered public goods. Although we found that there are other SCs at four of the centres, except for Deegha⁴¹, *Musahars* still form the majority of the sample (63.9 per cent), especially in the hostel and at Deegha (100 per cent). The eligibility of hostel entrance is also limited to *Musahar* girls. The logic behind this is the specific situation of the *Musahars*. The *Musahars* have lower self confidence, so having a mixed class with other SCs has a negative influence on them. *Musahar* children seem to shut down in classes where girls from other castes were present. We observed that in the exclusively *Musahar* centre, Deegha, students were much more vocal, despite the worst classroom infrastructure. Caring for the very special needs of the most marginalised group, NG stays its focus on the *Musahars*.
- **Market niche for older girls:** The average age of the sample is 12 years (Median: 11 years). NG is targeted to older ‘out-of-school’ girls who have never been to school or have dropped out or who are too old to enter class 1 and too young to participate in adult education (Ramachandran, 2004). Considering that a generalised expansion of education is not sufficient to achieve elementary education for these populations (Ramachandran, 2004), NG has a specific market niche for older girls. We found no other NGOs working for older SC girls in the communities where NG centres are located, except for the Kurkuri North centre. In Kurkuri, however, the other NGO provides programmes only for young children (both boys and girls) under the age of 8.

Capacity

- **Awareness of the mission:** The awareness of the mission is higher in the upper positions. The co-coordinator interviewed has a life-long aspiration to be involved with NG. Coming from the upper caste, he is keenly aware of interrelated factors of gender, caste and poverty that prevent the *Musahars* from emerging out of their situation. Teachers also share the mission of NG, but had some difficulties in articulating it.

⁴¹ The Deegha centre is located in the exclusive *Musahar* area, while other centres are located in communities where various castes live together.

- **Commitment:** Generally, the staff has devoted themselves to the improvement of SC communities. Students describe teachers as very friendly and non-discriminative. Low turn over rate of staff also implies their commitment to the work. Teachers' turnover rate was 15 out of 65 upto the present.
- **Qualifications:** The educational quality of coordinators and supervisors is B.Sc. Educational eligibility for Dalit teachers is Matriculation (10th class) and eligibility for non-Dalits is Intermediate (12th class). NG has a competitive selection process for its instructor positions.⁴²
- **Sharing of responsibilities:** As a small NGO operating a large number of centres and camps, the staff has various duties. Although there are role divisions among the staff, they have no power equations, and share their responsibilities as well as ideas. For instance, all staff regardless of their position travel for a considerable amount of time to supervise centres and take up the teacher's role in their absence.
- **Organisational learning process:** Teachers go through a 50-60 day training⁴³ to ensure the quality of teaching specifically for the Dalit girls. NG invests significant amounts in teachers' training. In 2005, the cost for teachers training was Rs.980,041, 5 per cent of the total programme costs for the learning centres.

Support

- **Support from its constituency:** As Box 2 shows, NG has enjoyed support from their students, target communities, UNICEF, Bihar State Government, other NGOs and foundations.
- **Relatively weak relationships with local actors:** NG, however, does not have strong relationship with PRI members and block education officials.
- **Major donor:** Major contributions for NG's education project came from UNICEF until the beginning of 2006. From 2006 onwards, it is expected that the Bihar Education Project (BEP) will finance NG's education projects.
- **Visibility:** NG is well known in the local area but not at the national level. It does not have a brochure, publication, or website. Recently, the Padmashree awarded to Sister Sudha⁴⁴ has brought recognition to NG through local network broadcastings.

⁴² Usually, they have 20 applications for 1 position due to the high salary. Their salary is Rs.1,250 / month, which is higher than local private schools.

⁴³ There are 30 days of initial training, another 15 days of regular training, and 10-15 days of refresher training.

⁴⁴ One of the highest civilian awards from the Indian Government.

Appendix IV

Korten's three stages of the learning process

Nari Gunjan is in between stage 2 and stage 3.

Time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Learning process	Learning to be effective	Learning to be efficient	Learning to expand
Major concern	Developing a working programme model in the setting of village level	Reducing the input per unit of output	An ordinary phased expansion of the programme
Major Fit	Fit with beneficiary's needs	Fit between programme requirements and realistically attainable org capacity	Expansion of organisational capacity through continued refinements to respond to the demands of larger scale operation
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Intensive • Intellectual input • Freedom from administrative constraints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some loss of effectiveness • Recognize the org. constrains • Modest programme expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inevitable sacrifice in effectiveness and efficiency • The rate of expansion depends on org. capabilities
Transition	When achieves acceptable level of a fit b/w beneficiaries, model and the capabilities of action research	Acceptable level of effectiveness and efficiency obtained.	Stable large scale operation turn to the solution of new problems.

Background Note on the Internship Programme

UNICEF India's Knowledge Community on Children in India (KCCI) initiative aims to enhance knowledge management and sharing on policies and programmes related to children in India. Conceived as part of the Knowledge Community on Children in India, the objectives of the 2006 Summer Internship Programme were to give young graduate students from across the world the opportunity to gain field level experience and exposure to the challenges and issues facing development work in India today.

UNICEF India hosted over 100 interns from India, Germany, Mexico, Japan, Korea, U.S., U.K., Australia, Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Chile, Jordan, Italy and France to participate in the 2006 Summer Internship Programme. Interns were grouped into teams of 4-5 and placed in 16 different research institutions across 13 states (Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Kerala) studying field level interventions for children from 12 June-23 August 2006.

Under the supervision of partner research institutes, the interns conducted a combination of desk research and fieldwork, the end result of which were 29 case studies of UNICEF-assisted Government programmes and other interventions aimed at promoting the rights of children and their development. Eight of these are supplemented by short films capturing the reality of children and their families. The case studies cover key sectors linked to children and development in India, and address important policy issues for children in India. These include: primary education, child survival, incidence of malnutrition, elimination of child labour, dimensions of social exclusion and water and sanitation.

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

The 2006 Summer Internship Programme culminated in a final workshop at which all teams of interns presented their case studies and films to discuss the broader issues relating to improvements in service delivery, elimination of child labour, promoting child rights and decentralisation and village planning. The KCCI internship case studies series aims to disseminate this research to a wider audience and provide valuable contributions to KCCI's overall knowledge base.