

Girls Education, Capabilities, Aspirations:

Nurturing Choices for A Brighter Future



A study of Vimukti Girls School

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1. Background

India is a country where girls' education has been a subject of complex debates. It covers a wide range of issues such as gender equality, access to education, poverty, and economic development. There are several arguments around the educational attainment of a girl that is required to overcome social subjugation. One of the arguments to make education compulsory for girls claims that the social return of education for girls is higher than other interventions (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018)¹. In a country like India, where gender inequality in education has been quite extreme, the diverse social and cultural realities further embellish the gender gap in access to education (UNESCO, 2019)².

Looking at the largely accepted fact that inequality in education cripples the lives of millions of girls in rural areas, the fate of urban poor girls who are ensnared by the dynamic forces of urban cities is still unexplored. The increasing trend of rural-to-urban migration has made the urban sphere a place of anarchic lives for millions of children in India (UNICEF, 2020). The evidence shows that children constitute more than 32% of the total urban population, with a large portion living in urban slums. There are 22.72 million children aged 5-18 years in slum areas who are out of school. These children have lost an opportunity for age-appropriate education largely due to enslavement to contribute to the family income. For women and girls, the urban slum poses a unique kind of entwined challenges in terms of early marriage, gender discrimination, domestic violence, and poverty. While urban areas are often portrayed as spaces of more freedom and liberation for girls than the conventional patriarchal rural setting, the challenges experienced by urban adolescent girls, especially those living in slums, are no lesser than their rural counterparts.

Slums in India are often called 'spatial poverty traps'³ (Mitra, 2022; UN, 2020; World Bank, 2011) where multiple deprivations condemn women and girls to gender inequality and disadvantage that are intergenerationally transferred and are extremely difficult to overcome. These perilously organized settlements expose women and girls to domestic and sexual violence. Such hindering factors play a major role in the lives of girls who lack access to education. In the past few years, the gender gap in school enrollment has tended to be narrower

¹ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2018). Returns to investment in education: a decennial review of the global literature. *Education Economics*, 26(5), 445-458.

² Vuong, Q. H., & Trung, T. (Eds.). (2021). *Academic Contributions to the UNESCO 2019 Forum on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship*. MDPI.

³ Mitra, D. (2022). Understanding the Role of Slums as 'Poverty Traps' or 'Springboards': A Case Comparison of India and Latin America. In *Urban and Transit Planning* (pp. 109-123). Springer, Cham.

in urban areas; gender disparity can prominently be seen in the realm of access to secondary and tertiary education, learning outcomes, decision-making in education, and career choices. Jaipur is the capital city of Rajasthan state of India. The population of the city is around 3.07 million. The city has witnessed dramatic population growth in the last two decades (Times of India, 2011; World Population Review, 2022)⁴.

The increasing population density in the city is commensurate with the slum areas, which are geographically blended with the elite-class colonies of the city. There are 211 slums listed under the Jaipur Municipal Corporation (Jaipur Municipal Corporation, 2011)⁵ which share a unique trajectory that shows that families living in these slums are permanent residents for years and represent grim prospects of upward mobility. However, economic instability, traditional patriarchal norms, early marriage, and violence often result in poor health, nutrition, and education status of women and girls (Kulkarni et al., 2017; Chakravarthy et al., 2019;)⁶. The underlying social and cultural practices bind girls to their traditional reproductive roles by navigating the changing socio-economic landscape of urban cities. Many women and adolescent girls in these slums are either homemakers, working as a maid, or in some other informal sector to contribute to family income. Tremendous work has been done in these slum areas to improve infrastructure and services, including water, sanitation, menstrual hygiene, and health yet not enough attention has been paid to the school education of girls living in the urban slums of Jaipur. Schooling education plays a significant role in offering various choices to the girls such as pursuing higher education, economic activities, and changing gender norms by combating early marriage and childbearing.

The study revolves around a school, functional in Jaipur city, that is working towards its mission of liberating girls through education. Vimukti Sanstha, a registered not-for-profit society, was established in the year 2004 providing free quality education and career development opportunities to the vulnerable and poor girls living in the slums of Jaipur.

⁴ worldpopulationreview. (2022). *worldpopulationreview*. Retrieved from worldpopulationreview: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/jaipur-population>

⁵ corporation, j. m. (2011). *jaipur municipal corporation* . Retrieved from <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/city/77-jaipur.html#:~:text=As%20per%20provisional%20reports%20of,are%201%2C603%2C125%20and%201%2C443%2C038%20respectively.>

⁶ Kulkarni, V.S. and Barnes, D.F., 2017. Education in rural Peru: Exploring the role of household electrification in school enrollment. *Journal of Research in Rural Education (Online)*, 32(10), pp.1-19.

2. Vimukti Girls School

Vimukti girls' school (VGS) as an institution differentiates itself from the other urban schools and education initiatives by defining its unique role as a school going beyond conventional boundaries to make ceaseless efforts for inclusion of poor and marginalized girls living in slums. At VGS, the process of education is about creating productive citizens with educational values and skills required for the practical world. It started as a society in 2004 and developed as an educational institution with the support of funds released by donors. The institution is unique in terms of the huge impact it has created without having its school building. It runs in a rented/borrowed building of another school's premises by maintaining flexible school timings. The vision of the school demonstrates its perspicacity to empower poor and marginalized girls who belong to urban slums through value education.

Major Milestones

800+

Girls attained Vimukti Education

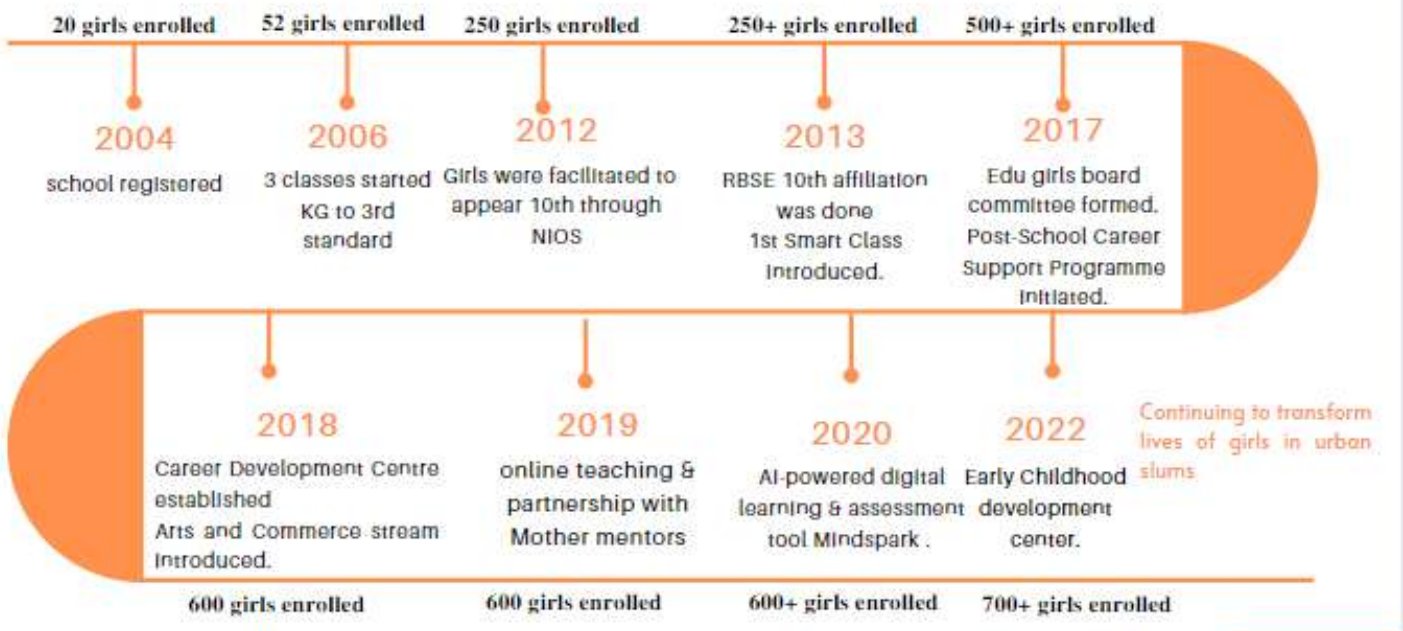
100+

Girls getting post school support for higher education and vocational training.

As per the activity conducted with the teacher's group in Vimukti school, the mapping of information regarding the major achievements of the school over the years was done. The outcome of the activity suggested an increase in the enrolment of girls in school. In the below graph, insights into Vimukti's journey over years are presented. Vimukti girls' school has been continuously progressing towards achieving high-quality education opportunities by adding more milestones to its journey.

Vimukti Girls School

2004 to 2021



The school has shown a trend of increasing enrollment of girls each year which itself shows its wider outreach to the community. Initially, in the year 2004, the Vimukti girls school started as a small Education Center for less privileged girls with just twenty students and four teachers. To further support and motivate girls for higher education and professional career choices the school established a dedicated Career Development Center in the year 2018

2.1. The Vimukti Phenomenon



The Vimukti school and the community of urban slums from which girls come to study together constitute what we call the “Vimukti phenomenon”. This phenomenon has over the years initiated and sustained life transformative processes by enabling girls from marginalized urban spaces to achieve good quality education. Over the years the school and community have developed inseparable ties in a manner that perhaps both would be incomplete without reference to the other. Vimukti school, its motivated teachers, and the caring learning ecosystem has become an enduring symbol of quality education for girls. The community has overcome its initial bouts of cynicism and indifference and has actively participated in the making of the school education, be it through selection of deserving girls, proactive engagement of parents, and by being brand ambassadors for Vimukti school in a context of increasing claims by newly entered private schools or civil society initiatives.

3. Methodology

This study draws on narratives from an ethnography of Vimukti Girls School in Jaipur. Owing to its distinct focus on school values, emic perspectives of girls and the narrative outputs, girls-led ethnography of schooling was employed to understand the school culture and phenomenon concerning the girls' experience of school education. The research aimed at collaborative relations with the children and young girls enrolled in and passed out of the school rather than a unidirectional process of data collection from them as respondents.

3.1. Evolution of Method

There are certain pillars who altogether constitute or contribute to Vimukti's overall foundation and progress of the school over the years. Representative participants from these pillars were selected to make them as the participants of the research on Vimukti school. Teachers, students, community, parents, school staff all were considered as the major research participants in the study from the initial phase only. The first step in the study was to take onboard a team of community researchers who were the passed-out alumni students from the Vimukti school.

The methodology adopted in the study comprises participatory research methods. Involving community girls passed out from Vimukti school helped in understanding the shared experiences of Vimukti girls from the wider lenses of community researchers. Owing to its distinct focus on school values and emic perspectives of girls, the method of girls led ethnography was employed to draw the narrative outputs concerning the benefits of school education in the girls lives and also to their surroundings and family respectively.

The research collaboration with the young girls and the children enrolled in and passed out of the school helped evade a unidirectional data collection process from them as respondents. since the focus was to understand the life transformative aspects of girls' education, this study deliberately avoids subject specific assessments and focuses on a comprehensive set of values, skills and competences imparted by the school.

The ethnography as a method has its significance in defining role of school in engaging children as participants of the education process and their interactions with teachers and peer groups.

Applying ethnography helps researchers understand everyday life of children in education and gain deeper insights into their cultural and social aspects (Thapan,2015). Ethnographic research has better facilitate researchers and educationalist to explain the concept of girls' empowerment through schooling and the role of neoliberal privatization in reshaping the schooling experiences (Marie & Chidsey, 2017). The institutional ethnography has widely used to discuss school as an agency to promote peace and justice through its processes, pedagogy, and the role of school in promoting peace for education in the larger perspective of building values, skills, and competencies among pupils (Kaur, 2022).

3.1.1. Inventory of Methods

The study followed an inventory of methods involving desk review on specific issues concerning study area, ethnography of schooling with a team of 5 girl researchers, in- depth interviews with alumni and in-school girls from Vimukti, formal and informal interactions with school girls, teachers, community members, Participatory Visioning exercise with girls from different classes: VII to XII, Quantitative analysis of the school enrollment and educational attainment trends: 2004 to 2021 were some of the specifics of the method. A conference involving stakeholders from academics and practitioners was organized to share emerging findings and deliberate on agenda for future.

3.1.2. Girl Researchers

The methodology in the study evolved with continuous meetings with the alumni girls from Vimukti school, parents in urban slum settings, teachers at Vimukti, and the school staff respectively. The participatory ethnography of schooling employed to study Vimukti school was a method that led to gleaning the girls' experiences, especially their life at school, education values, and the landscape of educational and economic choices of girls after schooling. The method served as a window to girls' lived experiences and acted as a lens that magnified the community or parents' perspective toward girls' education. In particular the girl researchers were to reflect on the following:



Girl Researchers

- Girls' self-reflection on their experiences.
- Education values instilled over the years.
- Educational and economic opportunities girls have after schooling.
- Emphasized parents' perspectives and attitudes toward educating girls.

Five alumni girls were selected as community researchers in the study Nisha, Pooja, Kismat, Aarti, and Shalu although were not trained researchers at the start of the study it was significant to engage them in the study as community researchers because they belong to and represented the interests of the people who are the major focus of the research i.e., the adolescent girls living in urban slum areas. Girls' participation in education research and their experiences of being associated with school are rarely discussed in the study, which was a central feature of the study. The research invited and engaged Vimukti girls to participate and play an active role in the research.

Highlights of the research process from girl researcher's diary:

<p>Pooja Jangid Meetings</p>	<p><i>At first, we had our meeting with IIMR university at our school's satellite entrance, where all the girls from our batches were called. In the beginning we did not know who are coming to meet all of us, we thought there are some visitors as always who are coming to discuss about our studies future career.</i></p> <p><i>But after the meeting we came to know that they are doing some research or study at our school.</i></p> <p><i>In the beginning we did not know what research is. What are they going to do with our school?</i></p> <p><i>After some meetings we realized that this research would help us realize our learnings and experiences that we get from Vimukti over the years. After 4 to 5 meetings at our home we went to university where we learned what research is, how are we important in this research and what and how we will be doing the research.</i></p> <p><i>Together in meeting we prepared our field plans, how to talk to other girls and to understand their experiences and changes after getting education from vimukti.</i></p>
<p>Nisha Bairwa Diaries</p>	<p><i>During the starting period of the research, we got researcher's diaries in which we wrote our individual experiences with Vimukti school. We also write about the changes that we experienced in our life after getting education from Vimukti. This was important for us as it helped us to reflect on our own journey and what we would ask other girls. We all sat together and discussed which all girls from vimukti needs to be contacted.</i></p>
<p>Kismat Nayak Process</p>	<p><i>It was not easy to talk to other girls. Talking to alumni girls and taking their time to understand their experiences and journey with Vimukti was difficult in starting. Timing was the major challenge for us as girls were busy with their daily household work, some in jobs, some in their college studies and exams. But we somehow managed to talk to them as it was easy for us to meet them in person as they were living near us. But the girls who got married and were not available to talk in person, were very difficult to meet. So, we planned to talk with them on the phone. In this way we formed some ideas on how difficult it is to talk to other individuals. Most of the girls we met twice and some more than two times. we kept on continuing and reached out to more than 50 girls in the study</i></p>
<p>Arti Learning</p>	<p><i>In this study, we talked to many girls who got education from Vimukti, and after listening to their experiences and changes they had in their life with Vimukti, we understood that education is not only important for getting a job. But education has helped the girls and motivated the girls in many ways. In the research we saw that the horizons of aspirations among girls were widening across the years.</i></p> <p><i>With education the mind sharpens, and vision also develops. In Girls, I saw the desire to study further and if they got opportunities and correct vision forward then they can surely further go for higher education and professional degrees. It will help us in getting better job opportunities which will be beneficial for our family and country.</i></p>

3.1.3. Visioning Exercise with Girls in Classrooms



A visual research method was utilized for conducting a school activity for understanding the new generation's thoughts on future life and career aspirations. The activity was conducted with girls from different classes: VII to XII. The study revisited the lived experiences and perspectives of quality school education at Vimukti.

3.1.4. Informal and Formal Meetings

The fieldwork for the study was conducted in two different settings, including (a) a school as a site for students' interaction and learning relationships with peers and teachers and (b) a Slum community as a social landscape for girls, which affects varied aspects of girls' lives. Both settings are closely intertwined and share a strong influencing relationship. The study team spent three months with girls, schoolteachers, and community/ parents as a process of familiarization before actual immersion in the field. This phase was explicitly committed to developing relationships with them, understanding the basic socio-cultural environment of the slum setting, and sharing with them about the research.



During this phase, conducted over time, the researchers elicited young girls' responses to the research. Because most of them were engaged in jobs or higher studies, the initial rejoinder was passive. This was a time when several questions and feelings of confusion, a sense of uncertainty, and difficulties in decision-making to engage girls as a researcher evolved in the mind. With the passage of this initial phase and with more reflections on activities carried out with girls, it became

more nuanced to stay with the logic of making this research participatory and girls led.

3.1.5. Open Ended and In-Depth Interviews with Girls

The open ended and the in-depth interview technique was used in the study to understand the overall experiences of girls coming from urban slum areas and gaining education from Vimukti school. The data for the study was collected from the parents, schoolteachers, staff, students enrolled in the school and also passed out from Vimukti. There were overall 100 girls were involved in the in-depth interviews and interactions for the study: 50 alumni girls and 50 in-school girls. Since it was important for the research to understand insiders' perspectives and experiences about education, intense discussions and meeting were held with sub-groups and sometimes with individual girls around the advantage of participatory research as an opportunity to share their experiences by themselves and their contribution to research. This made them compassionate to be part of the core research team.

Following this we carried out field activities, starting with a workshop with the researchers. In



the workshop, the core team of young researchers were facilitated to think further and design strategies to engage with more girls from the community to capture their stories and experiences. This was the first workshop held with girls outside the community and purposefully organized at the IIHMR University Jaipur campus to facilitate learning and interaction. The workshop was planned to think that this may require

more facilitation from 'outsider researchers' because girls were being engaged for the first time in research requiring technical skills. However, when the workshop progressed, this notion of 'outside researchers' imparting technical skills to 'insider researchers' got diluted, specifically when the girls evolved a strategy to begin the field activities by writing their own stories around the value of education in a diary which they called 'Unshackled Words'.

The idea of girls writing their own stories will trigger curiosity in their minds to explore how their experiences are similar or different from the other girls who have passed out from the same school. The researchers decided not to use a pre-determined questionnaire for collecting information which might result in an 'Ideologically Strait Jacket'. Instead, the girls preferred to go by their instinct and use their own stories as a foundation to generate narratives from the other girls.

All the girls involved as a researcher were encouraged to write auto-ethnographies to reflect upon their own aesthetic school life experiences and the life-long learnings derived from the school. The ethnographies highlighted emotions and illuminated how the relationship between the school and her unfolded over the period. Thus, the study seeks to understand the subjective experiences of girls by putting intrinsic education values at the center.

3.1.6. Desk review:

So far, there is a lack of adequate evidence focusing on the educational experiences of girls living in slums since research studies conducted in such settings tend to cover issues of health, poor sanitation, violence, drug abuse, and other adverse deviances. However, there is emerging literature rooted in women empowerment, capability approach, and the central importance of educating girls, notably the works of Nayla Kabeer, Martha Nussbaum, Santosh Mehrotra. As stated by author Nayla Kabeer, **“Education improves women’s ability to resist subjugation and capacity to deal with outside world by overcoming barriers towards materializing their economic potential⁷.”**

⁷ Kabeer Naila, Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal, Gender and Development Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2005, OXFAM

4. Quality School Education for underprivileged girls

The key attributes of the quality education were mapped with girl researchers’ team for enlarging the lens for assessing the impact Vimukti school education had on the girls lives and status in the community at the individual, social and economic level. This exercise helped in understanding the perceived values which were rooted in concrete experiences of everyday life of school and to explore the education values reflected in the girls’ personalities.

4.1. Lens Of Quality Education:

These attributes provided a guiding framework for the study to take a comprehensive holistic view of education being a life transformative process of imbibing values and competence for the self and common greater good of society.

At individual, family, and community level:	At family level:	At community level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater self-esteem • Self-confidence • Ability to communicate effectively. • Decision making • Relationship building • Sensitive to people, nature, or to ideas. • Self-recognition • Increased level of awareness • Self-sufficiency • Resistance to gender discrimination, abuse, and exploitation • More productivity • Greater Sense of Discipline • Freedom of decision making • Holistic way of looking at things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living standard • Family behavior • Parent’s perception towards educating girls. • Decrease in domestic violence. • Positive impact on health • Contribution to family income • Change in beliefs and notions concerning early marriages and girl education of parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social benefits • Societal value of girl education • Decreasing child labor • Decreasing rate of early marriages • Promotion of equality and empowerment • Good Citizenship and Civic Involvement • Reduced crime • Reduced Gender-Based Violence

(Thapan, M., 2006)⁸

⁸ Meenakshi Thapan’s book “Life at school: An ethnographic study” was very helpful in providing the initial idea of what comprehensive values of school learning are required in the study.

4.2. Teachers at Vimukti



(Agents of Values Transmission):

The role of teachers in the socio-economic transformation of the urban poor female section and the overall progress of Vimukti is observed to be very significant. It is believed that school education should equip students with values that guide appropriate moral decisions and behavior. Teacher-student relations play a crucial role in shaping such behavior. Several group interactions and one on one interviews with Vimukti school's old and new teachers were conducted to understand their motivation, experiences, and relation with students and school. What was evident in these meetings with them was the self-effacing, altruistic orientation of these women who came from simple middle-class backgrounds.

The joy and pride with which they narrated several anecdotes relating to the school and children made it obvious that during their school careers they had devoted quality time often at the cost of their own children and families for the betterment of lives of girls from the disadvantageous sections of society.

Initially, the interactions with the schoolteachers began with a notion that they might feel 'to be investigated and might not be interested in interacting with the researcher, yet they regulated the access to school and series of conversations with them which particularly helped understand the unique position of teachers in an overall context of the school. The regular visits to the school and the observations have created a strong line of reasoning which facilitated

understanding teachers' innate vivacity, allowing them to exercise enough autonomy to strengthen the social bond with students. The relational dynamics between teachers and students in the school context were also drawn from the study. The aim was to define the relational ethos and culture of the school created by teachers. In this context, it examined teachers' role concerning the social context of the girls living under multiple vulnerabilities in the slum community. The study attempted to make sense of how teachers visualized themselves in their social role, how their sagacity developed and experienced, and how their role impinged on girls' education experiences and aspirations.

In many ways, the role of schoolteachers in the public system, teachers' performativity, accountability, and autonomy have been defined, debated, and discussed in education policies and practices (Sarangapani et al., 2018⁹).

Besides the limited role a teacher can perform in the classroom, the teachers redefined their roles by stating that,

"Course curriculum has limited contribution in the lives of these girls who have been living in an urban slum with varied challenges. More essential for us is encouraging them to continue their education after school." *-Prabhjeet Kaur*

"I provide them with information and inspiring stories to make them self-confident in dealing with challenges of their lives and make the right decision." *-Mohini Chouhan*

"The girls living in urban slums do not need a teacher; they need a mentor who can support them in dealing with biased social norms and cultural practices. I always like to support them by being their mentor." *-Sukriti Jain*

"Teachers can generate the feeling of togetherness among girls against all odds." *-Ruchi Kochar*
"I feel fulfilled when girls approach me with trust and share their problems to seek my support." *-Rakhi Lakhwani*

In general, the role of a teacher is positioned as an agent of the traditional education system, having less autonomy to intensify social relations with the students. The contemporary dialogue on teachers in schools is comprised of teachers' performance on students' learning outcomes, and the extent of varied administrative duties teachers should perform other than teaching. Several studies reaffirmed such an image of teachers concerning the school and students. The study observations revealed the inept notion of tagging teachers as mere classroom performers or administrative duty bearers.

⁹ Sarangapani, P.M., Mukhopadhyay, R. and Jain, M., 2018. Recovering the practice and profession of teaching. In *School Education in India* (pp. 123-138). Routledge India.

4.3. Community School Relationship

The school and community share a meaningful relationship which is a major contributor to the school's progress and parents' decision of enrolling girls in the Vimukti school. The consistent rise in the enrollment of girls at school is a robust pointer to this shared trust between the school and the community.

Rapport building: The school in its initial years only understood the significance of the bond that they have to build with the community in order to ensure a positive response for their intervention in the area. The school has maintained its continuous interaction and link with community members through various procedures. The admission process was introduced as an appropriate selection mechanism for the girls that is an inclusive and participatory process adopted by Vimukti Girls school. It involves the physical survey of households by the community volunteers to identify the eligible girls prioritizing girls having social and economic barriers to accessing school education.

Changing worldview of parents: Education of girls over the years has positively impacted the worldview and set perception of the parents in community.

Sense of security and belonging: To ensure a safe and facilitating environment for the girls in the community as well as in the school. The community people have been involved as school staff such as helpers, bus drivers, guards, and teachers.

Sustaining relation and education during COVID times: To ensure zero, dropout and continuing education of girls, the school provided mobile tablets comprising various education apps such as Unacademy, Zoom, e-Pathshala, Diksha, etc. to facilitate online learning for girls. The community-based approach helped educate girls in covid crisis. The mother mentors were identified and facilitated by the school to reduce the exclusion of girls by directly supporting them to attend regular online classes. VGS identified mothers who had some basic literacy and were willing to work as volunteers to generate digital awareness among the other parents and girls in their community. The campaign called "Mother Mentorship Program" was introduced where mother volunteers were provided training to operate various educational apps, their functions, and usability. The trained mother volunteers worked as mentors' others can train

other groups of mothers and girls in the community facing issues in accessing online classes. This leads to the achievement of creating a chain of well-trained mothers in the slum community. These mother mentors have also played a key role in providing necessary counseling to the parents and girls who were likely to drop out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

4.4. Robust Curricula and Innovative Assessment

Vimukti school adopts an effective and good curriculum that is progressive. There is an evolving teaching curriculum in the school as per the concerning requirements of student learning. The school also revisits its curricula regularly which assists them in reviewing the overall growth and progress of its students as well as teachers. how things are going, but also make room for new topics that are relevant today. The school adopts a Child-Centric strategy for its curriculum that focuses on experimental learning for students. The school also prioritizes and assists its students to learn at their own pace. The educational program at Vimukti is designed to pique young girls' interest in subjects like science and mathematics and persuade them that women are as capable of building careers in engineering, scientific research, IT, and other fields that are in demand with potential employers.

The school offers various **Professional Orientation and guidance opportunities** to girls throughout their years of higher schooling. The in-service professionals from different fields such as medicine, teaching, interior designing, IITs, Law, police force, etc. invited to the school to directly interact with the girls in the school and orient them about the roles and potential opportunities in the sector. Regular visits from professionals help girls to explore different career opportunities and make choices for their career paths as per their interests. Exposure to various professional fields helps girls to aspire to their future by setting realistic goals in their life. Vimukti initiated a program of post-school support in October 2015 for deserving girls to pursue vocational training directed at obtaining gainful employment or coaching to prepare them for entrance exams for higher studies, after completing class XII.

With the in-depth interviews with the schoolteachers and staff, it was observed that school on a regular basis, the school generates annual assessment reports with the help of an assessment tool "ASSET" to see the students' progress and to revisit the performance of the students who are unable to catch up with other students. The assessment helps plan its target to achieve

improved learning outcomes and attainments of girls for the coming year based on its "Asset Insight Report".

Subject	Category	Sep-21	Mar-22	Oct-22	National	Difference (Sep 21-March 22)	Difference (Mar-22 to October 22)	Difference (September 21 to October 22)
English	Top 25%	434	445	506	500	2.5%	13.7%	16.6%
	Middle 50%	387	396	426	500	2.3%	7.6%	10.1%
	Bottom 25%	324	347	369	500	7.1%	6.3%	13.9%
Maths	Top 25%	474	486	525	500	2.5%	8.0%	10.8%
	Middle 50%	403	420	449	500	4.2%	6.9%	11.4%
	Bottom 25%	337	356	380	500	5.6%	6.7%	12.8%
Science	Top 25%	454	460	516	500	1.3%	12.2%	13.7%
	Middle 50%	389	397	426	500	2.1%	7.3%	9.5%
	Bottom 25%	311	341	366	500	9.6%	7.3%	17.7%
Overall	Top 25%	454	463.67	515.67	500	2.1%	11.2%	13.6%
	Middle 50%	393	404.33	433.67	500	2.9%	7.3%	10.3%
	Bottom 25%	324	348	371.67	500	7.4%	6.8%	14.7%

Source: Vimukti school's official record

Table 1: ASSET INSIGHT REPORT of Vimukti Girls School (2021-22)

The assessment is performed class-wise for different academic subjects. The assessment tool is widely used by 350,000 children in 1000 private English medium schools. As per the latest assessment scores, the performance of girls studying in Vimukti has significantly improved in all three subjects from September 21 to October 22. The top 25% of the students are performing above the national average in all subjects. The difference calculated over the period shows a trend of high academic achievements by Vimukti girls.

4.5. Facilitating post-school education for realizing productive potential

Beneficiaries	Number of girls	Support	Fund Utilised (in Rs.)
Non-VGS Vocational	42	Beauty parlor courses, sewing and designing courses, cooking, fashion designing, and so forth.	824000
VGS Vocational	9	Nursery Teachers Training	277000
		Fashion Designing Diploma	
VGS In College	46	Graduation Courses	575965
Total No. Of Girl Getting Funds for Post-School Support	97		1676965

(Source: School official record)

The above data suggest that Vimukti initiated a program of post-school support in October 2015 for deserving girls to pursue vocational training directed at obtaining gainful employment or coaching to prepare them for entrance exams for higher studies, after completing class XII. seeing the success of the girls passing from Vimukti had a strong motivation needed to for good counselling and crafting professional careers. The post-school support by Vimukti also benefitted girls from marginal communities who were not able to gain education from Vimukti but belong to similar slum communities and are not getting any access to further education after completing their schooling. The school has benefitted almost 97 girls by providing them with financial support for paying their tuition fees, books, other necessities such as laptops and so forth.

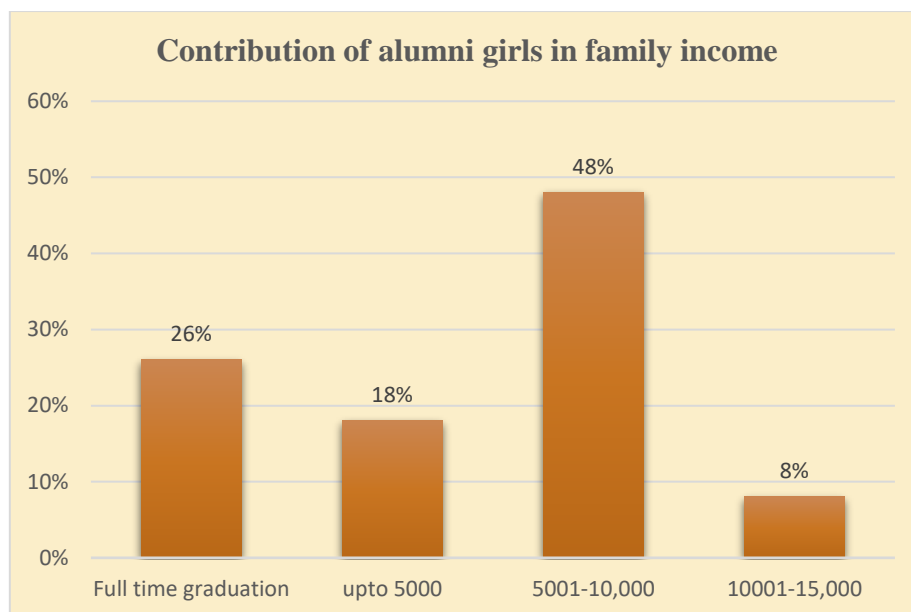
5. Low-cost economics of Vimukti education and higher productive potential

India's growth may increase by 1.5 percentage points to 9% annually if 50% of women could enter the workforce, (World bank, 2018).¹⁰ Investing in the education of girls is a wise move for the economic growth of the country. Women who are educated and more equipped for the workforce give countries access to a larger labour pool, which supports economic growth. High-quality employment opportunities can also significantly influence labour force participation, productivity, and, ultimately, economic performance. Achieving strong, sustainable, and balanced growth requires creating more jobs, but the quality of jobs is even more crucial. Educating girls has proven to be one of the most essential strategies to break poverty cycles and is likely to have considerable impacts on access to formal jobs in the long term (International Labour Organisation, 2018)¹¹.

Despite of several challenges such as marriage pressure from family and society, financial constraints of family, lack of proper guidance on career choices, and their expected role as caregivers in society, girls passed out from Vimukti school are observed in the study to cope up with these obstacles and break the stereotypical status of women in their community.

¹⁰ Dixon, A. (2020). *The World Bank*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2018/03/17/women-indias-economic-growth>: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2018/03/17/women-indias-economic-growth>

¹¹ International Labour Organisation (ILO) United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2018. Girl Force: skills, education, and training for girls now [worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2018/03/17/women-indias-economic-growth](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2018/03/17/women-indias-economic-growth)



Most of the alumni girls who passed out from Vimukti are either pursuing their graduation with some part-time employment to fulfill their basic education necessities and to also contribute financially to their family or are engaged in employment after completing their graduation, some are enrolled in higher studies also. More than 18% of the girls belonging to low-income families are contributing to their family income up to Rs 5000 per month by doing some part-time jobs such as parlor, cooking, receptionist, call center, and so forth to support their education and also their family financially. Almost 48% of the study participants are contributing up to 10,000 monthly. This section of girls has completed their graduation and has also attained vocational training supported by the school to increase their employability skills. This large number is also suggestive of the weak financial status of the families that consequently acts as a pressure for girls into some kind of jobs as early as possible.

There are also 8% of girls who are also earning up to 15,000 monthly. These girls have better employment opportunities because of their higher educational qualifications and professional attainment with the support of Vimukti. This perhaps makes a case for increasing access to higher education to get into formal sector employment. 26% of girls who passed out from Vimukti and are not engaged in any financial activity but only pursuing a full-time graduation course of three years after completing their secondary education from school. These girls are from the recently passed-out batches of the school, and are more determined to complete their graduation, and enhance capabilities to attain respectable jobs. Having access to occupations gives women the tools to end their intergenerational poverty, boost their consumption, and

maintain a high standard of living in society. From the discussion above, it can be surmised that girls getting educated at Vimukti are able to perceive a clear relation between their educational attainments and productive potential.

In the study, it has been observed that adolescent girls gaining education from Vimukti are productive and capable enough to work at their full potential in high paying and respectable jobs. girls after gaining education from Vimukti school are engaged in various kinds of jobs such as in parlours, taking home tuitions, in private companies and program coordinator in an NGO, teaching in a school, some are working in software companies, 108 centres, and so forth to fulfil their financial requirements for higher studies and for family income also to some extent. This suggests that there has been a positive shift in the girl's career choices and life aspirations towards completing their education at highest level for attaining jobs in respectable and organised sector irrespective of certain challenges that adolescent girls often face after completing their school education. There has been an increase in the overall economic outcome of the education intervention made by Vimukti Sansthan in the urban slum area of Jaipur, a higher productivity threshold in the participation of women in the workforce is being observed in the community.

The stereotypical perceptions of the society and girl's family have also been transforming positively when the girls in the community are successfully securing good paying and respectable jobs that have been helping them and also their family to come out of their intergenerational poverty. Expanding the girls' productive capacity has been the significant area of concern for Vimukti in order to increase their contribution to the nation's overall economic development.

The girls not involved in any kind of employment because they are enrolled in full-time courses after completing their schooling from Vimukti. Their parents are also supporting them and making them free from household and financial responsibilities so that they can focus completely on their studies and secure good positions in their future career endeavours. This percentage though small does suggest a positive shift away from making immediate connection between completion of school education topped up with vocational training for getting low income paying jobs to full focus on higher education and is reflective of the changing world view of both girls as well as their parents who are able to make a choice for education leading to better realization of productive potential.

As one of the girl researchers have also shared in her researcher's diary that,

I am Kismat Nayak and I passed out from Vimukti two years back in the year 2020 from class XII. After completing my schooling with the constant support from the vimukti school and teachers I got enrolled in B.com full time course in Maharani college, University of Rajasthan. I performed well in my XIIth boards, so I easily got admission in the reputed government college of Jaipur. Although I got admission in a good college but paying its fees was not easy for my family so, I talked to my teachers from Vimukti regarding this as we shared a good bond since school and after passing out also the hand holding support from school and teachers never ended. Vimukti school helped me in paying my fees also and they also provided me with laptop for my studies.

While writing my own school experiences and future life and career aspirations, I wrote in my researcher's diary that,

“My family has been supporting me since my admission to vimukti school till date in y graduation years. They don't allow me to work after college as they feel it will distract me from my studies. All my friends in the neighborhood either go to parlor, restaurant and so on for part time earnings but my mother strictly restricts me and says that you should only concentrate on your studies and one day must become successful and financially independent in your life and career.”

-Kismat Nayak (Girl Researcher)

Here girls like Kismat who passed out Vimukti Girls school are not only getting support for school education only, but they are also getting guidance, support, and motivation from Vimukti to further carry forward their education. In Kismat's case, the parents are also observed to be supporting her in pursuing her graduation and focusing on her studies. With each passing year, not only the girls' aspirations are widening but the perceptions and thought processes of their parents are also evolving.

5.1. Low-cost model of Vimukti Education

The role of education played by Vimukti girls' schools in facilitating social and economic progress of the marginalized female section from the urban slums of Jaipur is well recognized. It has successfully opened opportunities leading to the enhancement of both individual and group potentials. Education, in its broadest sense, is the most crucial input for empowering people with skills and knowledge, giving them access to productive employment opportunities. Improvements in quality education are not only expected to enhance the efficiency of girls in the community but also to augment the overall quality of life. Sustainable development goal SDG-4 aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, including technical and vocational training by providing lifelong learning opportunities. It also aims to build and upgrade education facilities to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

Annual expense per Girl	Cost (INR)
Transport	3400
Books & Stationary	700
Education	4300
Refreshments (250 p.m. per student)	3000
Uniform	600
TOTAL	INR 12000 (\$145.09) *

**The cost indicates annual expense per year for the period of 2011 – 2019 i.e., the schooling years of the girls who passed out from Vimukti. Last year, this has been revised to INR 32000*

Annual Expense Per Girl in Vimukti

The annual investment for a girl studied at vimukti school is \$145.09 (Rs.12,000). It is observed that the mean annual income of the girls who passed out from Vimukti is 10,2000 INR i.e., clearly more than \$145.09 (Rs.12,000) i.e., the annual investment in education per girl by Vimukti.¹²

¹² Bordoloi, M. (2020). *State Education Finances: A Deep Dive Into School Education Finances In Eight States*. Center For Policy Research.

Note: The state estimates per student expenditure by calculating the total public expenditure in school education divided by total number of students enrolled in school. This study calculates the investment on girls education as indicated in table number 2 which takes into account total expenses on girl in a one year. Vimukti is a non-state private philanthropic initiative. Hence, it would not be prudent to compare these.

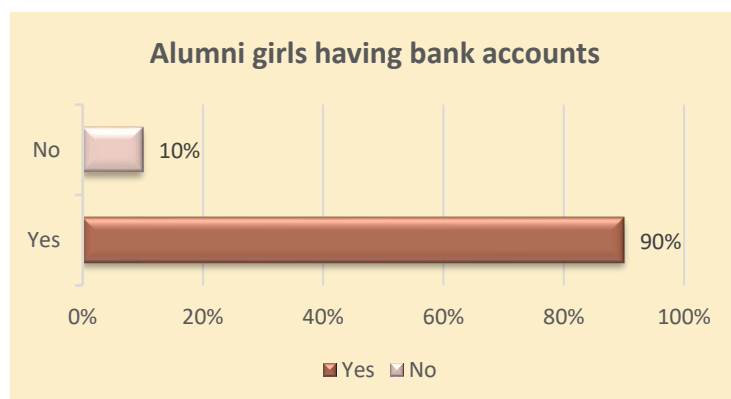
The investment in education through Vimukti girls' school is observed in the study as the most required and fruitful for the marginalized girls coming from Urban slum settlements. According to the Human Capital Theory, education is an investment that gives both private returns in the form of higher earnings in the future as well as social returns in the form of high economic growth and poverty eradication.

It has been observed in the study that the findings of Vimukti girls' schools support the Human Capital Theory. Through educational investment for girls for 12 years of their schooling in the urban slum areas of Jaipur, Vimukti School was successful in achieving Higher earnings for the girls in the present scenario. Moreover, this led to the financial independence of the girls and thus contributed to the overall economic growth and poverty eradication at their family, community, and national level respectively. To optimally leverage education for achieving the desired results, policymakers need to assess ways in which it can give the highest returns for the largest number of people.

A quality education coupled with changes in gender norms in society with through Vimukti has created possibilities for improvement in the ability of young adolescent girls in urban slum areas to find decent work, start a business, or access further training to be employable in today's workforce. Empowerment, in the context of adolescent girls, includes the expansion of choices for them and additionally, increases their ability to exercise choice. Vimukti has contributed to the empowerment of girls at the family level which has been observed in the study so that they can take their lives into their own hands and make decisions for themselves and their families.

Financial information has also been considered in the study for identifying the decision-making capabilities and financial decisions, investments, and independence of girls in the community.

The findings suggest that 90% of girls have bank accounts. This suggests that they are capable



enough of taking financial decisions for their generated income. The study also reveals that girls passing out from school is capable enough to handle their finances and take wise decisions on their living expenses and future saving. It has been observed in the

study area that girls are majorly using their generated income in their educational requirements and have been re-investing their earnings for their benefits such as health, education, nutrition, and so forth. When it comes to weighing options and making decisions for their financial situations, such as choosing how and when to save and spend, comparing prices before making a large purchase, and making plans for retirement or other long-term savings, educated girls have the strong financial knowledge and decision-making skills.

5.2. Cost-Benefit Analysis

Expenditure and income on 12 schooling years						
Schooling years	Number of girls	Total Expenditure per year	Per head Expenditure	Annual salary after completion	IRR	NPV (₹)
12	54	144000	12000	60000	13%	2,55,256.70
Expenditure and income on graduate level courses for three years						
Courses done after graduation	Number of girls	Total Expenditure per year	Per head Expenditure	Annual salary after graduation	IRR	NPV (₹)
Graduation	46	575965	12520.97826	102000	16%	4,61,715.74

Data analysis for IRR and NPV done with the support of Dr. Monika Choudhary, Associate Professor, IIMMRU

Table 3: Internal Rate of Return and Net Present Value

The investment Vimukti school on a girl for completing all twelve schooling years has an internal rate of return (IRR) of 13 %, and for those completing graduation has an IRR of 16%, assuming a 3%-time value of money and 5% as discounting rate used for discounting the inflows and outflows. Investing in post-school education through graduation leads to a perceptible increase in productive potential and contribution to the family income. In relation to the study findings, this reiterates the fact that postschool engagement of girls by Vimukti school has paid well and should be continued.

However, some crucial observations regarding post school engagement suggest that the increase in the rate of return, which is seen after the investment in graduation, still contributes to what would be identified as low-quality basement economy skills. These skills while contributing to minimum employability of girls is a compromise of opportunities given the capability set of girls and their widening aspirations. The frontier for dignity of work and higher productive potential lies beyond these skills based vocational jobs. And indeed, the testimonies

of girls articulate quite strongly the desire to attain post graduate professional education. Investing in post-graduation professional education would also be a compassionate response to the articulation of widening aspirations of girls across generations. Investing in post-graduate education has emerged as the next frontier that makes sense in conventional cost-benefit analysis and is a career pathway for the realization of productive potential and quality women workforce that Vimukti girls are capable of.

6. Widening Aspirations of Girls in Urban Slums

Future employment and life aspirations for a better world were apparent among the adolescent girls receiving education from Vimukti, and their enthusiasm and dedication to school were related to these goals.



A visual research method was utilized for conducting a school activity for understanding the new generation's thoughts on future life and career aspirations. When their life and career aspirations were explored through different activities, their hidden desires for higher education and respectable jobs were observed but due to several challenges such as financial constraints, marriage pressure, and so forth, these aspirations were somehow adjusted according to the life circumstances of girls and their families. Aspirations can be defined as a student's ability to identify and set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals. This construct of aspirations has two major underpinnings: inspiration and ambition. Inspiration reflects that an activity is exciting and enjoyable to the individual and the awareness of being fully and richly involved in that activity. However, Ambitions represent the perception that an activity is important to future goals. It reflects individuals' perceptions that it is both possible and desirable to think in future terms and to plan.

In the school activity, the girls were asked to draw their future life and career aspirations after five years. They were also given sheets to write about their future life aspirations and also how they are planning to achieve these aspirations and life goals. Below mentioned are some of the visual representations made by schoolgirls that represent their future aspirations. It clearly states that the younger generation in the community is interestingly enthusiastic and determined enough in their life aspirations and they are also aware of how they will achieve these goals.



Government official

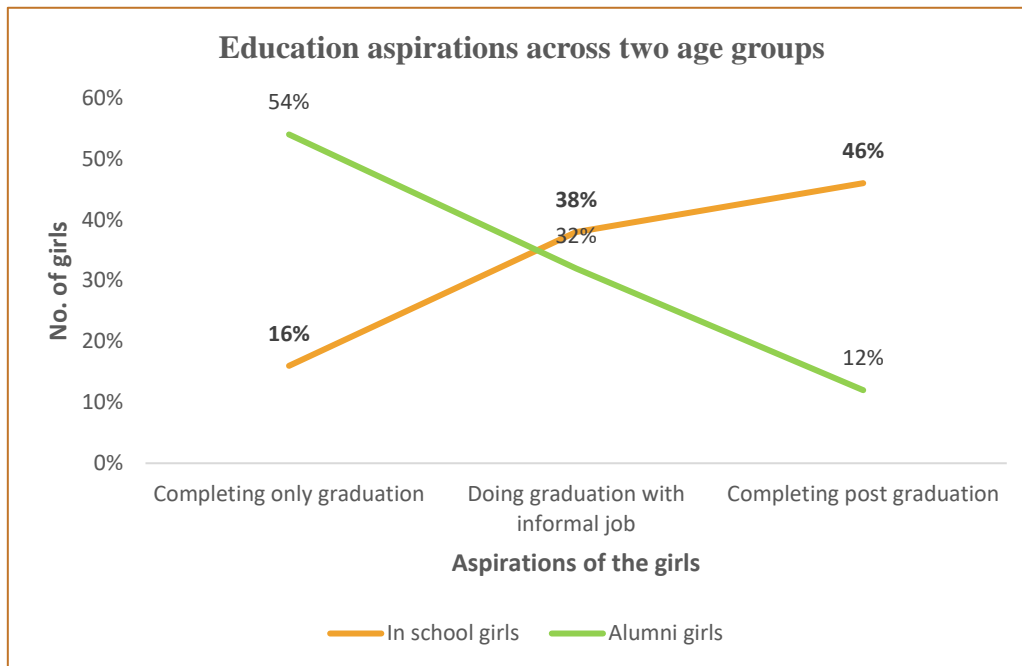
Lawyer

Doctor

Government officials, lawyers, and doctors are the positions that have been emerging as career options for young girls in the urban slum area of Jaipur. The sense of aspiration of current batches is completely different from the earlier batches. This change is attributed to the changing world around them, exposure to other girls performing better, and positive perception of their parents.

6.1. Trend of emerging aspirations towards higher education in girls

Two subgroups of girls expressed their educational aspirations and capacities of fulfilling these aspirations in real life. The responses of the girls regarding their aspirations observed an emerging trend of aspiring toward higher education.



As can be observed from the findings from the alumni girl's group that their majority of girls who are aspiring of completing their graduation at least and there is a certain segment of alumni girls who are pursuing their graduation with part-time employment that will assist them while coping with their financial barriers from gaining an education. However, there have been a few alumni girls also who aspire to gain higher education and are wanting to complete their post-graduation to increase their overall productivity and accomplish respectable jobs in society.

However, the trend of in-school girls is inclined more toward the majority of girls aspiring to complete their higher education. The findings also state that few in-school girls want to complete their graduation due to several barriers such as marriage pressure, financial

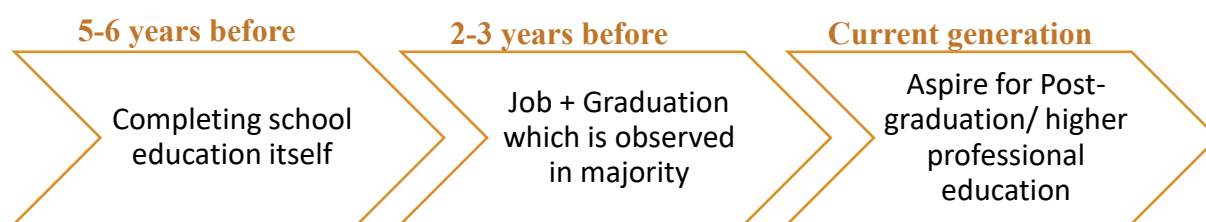
constraints, and so forth they face at home, and community. To cope with these barriers the in-school girls are planning to do part-time jobs to support their educational and financial needs. The aspirations of girls are evolving, according to data gathered from two subgroups of girls from urban slums: girls who have graduated from school and girls who are presently enrolled in school. Alumni girls solely replied to their aspirations of graduating and finding work, whereas, girls who are currently studying in the school wish to pursue further education in a variety of professional and formal disciplines to explore the scope and landscape of their existing productive capabilities. The community and the families of the girls are also observed to be widening their perception due to school exposure to girls through visits with significant professionals. They are trying to cope with the new generation's thoughts and are aware of the fact that graduation is merely a steppingstone or a connecting door for girls but not the highest attainment. Parents of the girls also expressed in the community meetings that they feel if their daughters are capable enough, then why their educational attainment must be confined till graduation only? The girls who are presently enrolled in Vimukti have more advanced aspirations and realization of their capabilities to contribute more productively to their families, communities, and society as a whole. Therefore, the patterns indicate that the VGS educational model has contributed towards transforming the future career and life aspirations of adolescent females living in the urban slum environment of Jaipur.

The school serves the role of an institution where two different kinds of aspirations intersect. On the one hand, the slum community has particular aspirations and social demands from girls. On the other hand, the teachers and schools who belong to different classes/communities have different hopes and demands from the girls at school. The interaction between the diverse aspirations is significant and shapes the girls' experiences outside the school as well as their confidence to negotiate with others in everyday life. However, the Vimukti school created an institutional space of such interaction where girls could critically construct their life aspirations and vision. The girls in the in-depth interviews narrated incidents that generated inimitable life aspirations.

"I feel the school should never end; even when I am at home, I remember the daily learning I gained from school. The intense discussion and inspiration I generated during my school hours are more important than classroom learning. I can imagine my future life as a head of a school like Vimukti, where girls like me become more confident, visionary, and brilliant leaders. This is how I want people in the community to look at me in the future".

-Mamta

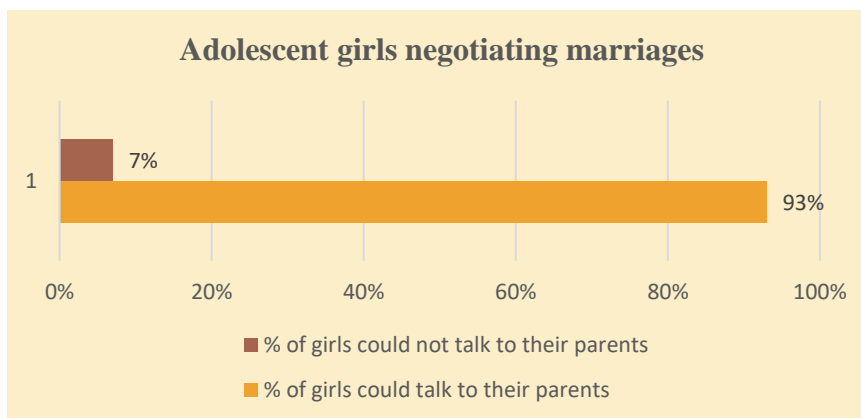
6.2. Life Aspirations of Girls: widening across generations



The study reveals the positive trend between the aspirations of three subgroups above of the study's participants comprising the alumni girls of Vimukti school and the school-going girls from class VIIth standard to XIIth standard. This positive trend shows that the aspirations and capacity to aspire in girls have evolved over the years. These changes in aspirations observed in the marginalized girls coming from the urban slum areas of the city have fostered the creation of new needs. The capacity to aspire is dependent on the existing capabilities and practices of girls and it is influenced in an individual through several factors such as set traditions in the community, modes of group interactions, and development. Aspirations of the girls gaining education from Vimukti over the years are observed to be modified and evolved through positive interventions in the shape of education, communication, and great exposure to the wider world. Vimukti girls school thus created a strong foundation of good quality education for girls coming from urban\ slum communities to the extent that has contributed to the widening of their aspirations with each proceeding year and batches of girls. Vimukti's school education and evolving mindsets of urban poor girls for better life choices does beckon us to explore possibilities for connecting pathways of girls with higher education opportunities.

7. Enhanced Social Consciousness and Impact

Social norms, the often-unspoken rules that influence the expected behavior of girls in the community, are increasingly understood to contribute to girls, early and forced marriage practices. These behavioral expectations of society and family girls create difficulties for them in completing their education before marriage.



It has been observed from the study findings that the girls who passed out and who are currently studying in Vimukti positively respond while they talk to their parents regarding marriage. Therefore, to successfully deal with the challenges, they face while gaining education girls must talk to their parents regarding their marriage decisions. This significantly contributes to shaping their decision-making abilities. 93% of girls in the study were observed to be able to talk to their parents regarding marriage. Vimukti has contributed to the empowerment of girls at the family level so that they can take their lives into their own hands and make decisions for themselves and their families.

Shalu Atkan, one of the girls who passed out from Vimukti shares that,

“After completing my secondary education, my family started forcing me for getting married and to not continue my studies further, but with the immense guidance and support from my teachers and with my courage I strategically convinced my parents to wait for 3 years and let me finish my graduation before getting married and assured them that after completing my graduation I will get married. I remember one of my teachers asked me what I want to become in the future, and this question shocked me. I realized that I just don’t want to be someone’s wife. I want to build my personality in the future. The decision that I took to not get married before completing my studies proved right and now, I have completed my graduation and preparing for government services. Now my parents are also supporting me in further studies even after completing my graduation. They want me to first become financially independent in my life before getting married”.

-Shalu Atkan

Empowerment, in the context of adolescent girls, should include the expansion of choices for them and additionally, increase their ability to exercise choice. Similarly, in the case of Shalu, Vimukti contributed to her overall self-confidence and decision-making at the family level so that she was able to take her life decisions into her own hands and make decisions for herself and also for her family. Education from Vimukti has become a tool and an agent of social change in the urban slum settings of Jawahar Nagar by promoting new knowledge, new values, and new ways of improving human conditions. Education, no doubt widens the mental horizons and releases from ignorance and superstitions, it makes a person aware of rights and improves decision-making to make strategic life choices for themselves.

7.1. Level of awareness among girls toward gender equality

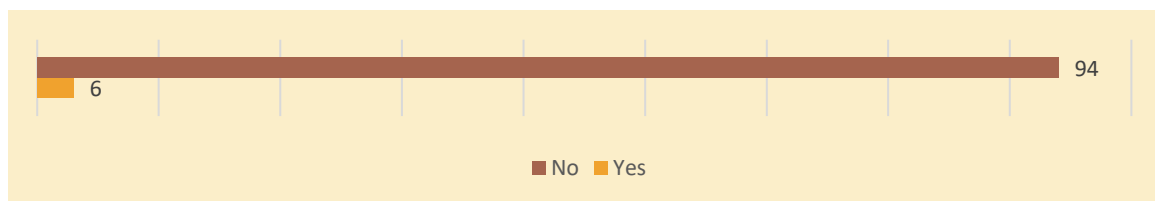
Education from Vimukti has become a tool and an agent of social change in the urban slum settings of Jawahar Nagar by promoting new knowledge, new values, and new ways of improving human conditions. Quality education and inclusive community participation have widened the mental horizons of adolescent girls and released them from the ignorance and superstitions of society. It has contributed positively to making them aware of their rights and improved their decision-making abilities to make strategic life choices for themselves.

Gender roles are duties, behaviors, activities, and qualities that are socially designed to be more appropriate for males and boys than for women and girls in a given society. It outlines what is expected of people according to the sex they were born with. Although nothing precludes women and girls from carrying out the tasks that gender norms designate for men and boys, and vice versa, this division of labor is arbitrary. It is necessary to promote and encourage a general understanding of gender-related challenges, for instance, violence against women and the gender pay gap. It is required to inform and make women aware of gender equality in the community, the benefits of a more gender-equal society, and the consequences of gender inequality. For instance, raising awareness about the proven economic benefits of advancing gender equality, such as the strong, positive impact on gross domestic product (GDP) and higher levels of employment, and about the profound negative impact of gender inequalities, for instance, the fact that women are at a higher risk of poverty because of lower employment prospects. Although a gender norm may seem like a harmless idea because it is held by the majority of society it leads to the expectation for all members of society to adhere to this norm. Societal expectations are then enforced lawfully or otherwise—in ways that can be violent and harmful, and which violate the rights of the affected individual or group. The degree of

awareness among girls towards gender equality has been assessed in the study to understand the change emerging in the status of gender equality in the urban slum settlements due to educational interventions.

To understand the level of awareness among girls in the community after gaining education from Vimukti, a set of questions were asked to the girls on gender knowledge. The results of the questions are mentioned below:

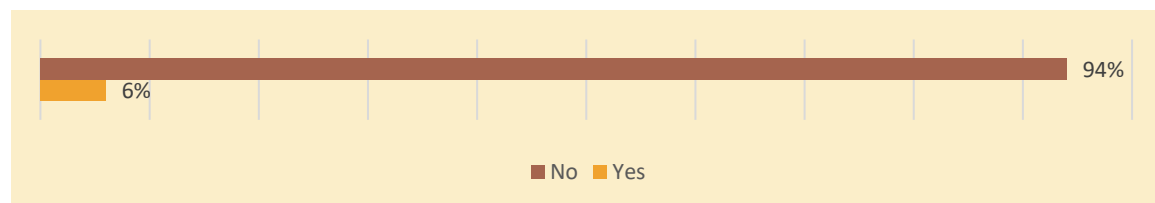
1. Is it important for girls to complete their higher education:



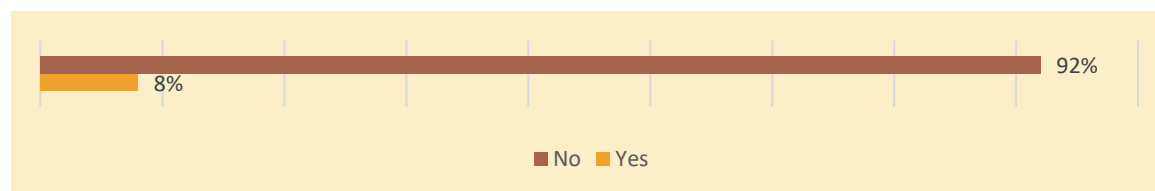
2. All the decisions in the household should be taken by male members only:



3. Is it right for girls to get married without completing their education:



4. Is it right to force a girl to get married to her family:



The above gender knowledge assessment findings support the study in analyzing the level of awareness among girls toward gender equality. The study findings suggest that the majority of girls gaining education from Vimukti are highly aware of gender equality which helps them productively contribute to the socio-economic growth of the nation. They are aware of their rights and confident enough to exercise them without falling victim to society's preconceived notions of gender.

7.2. Decision-Making Abilities in Girls

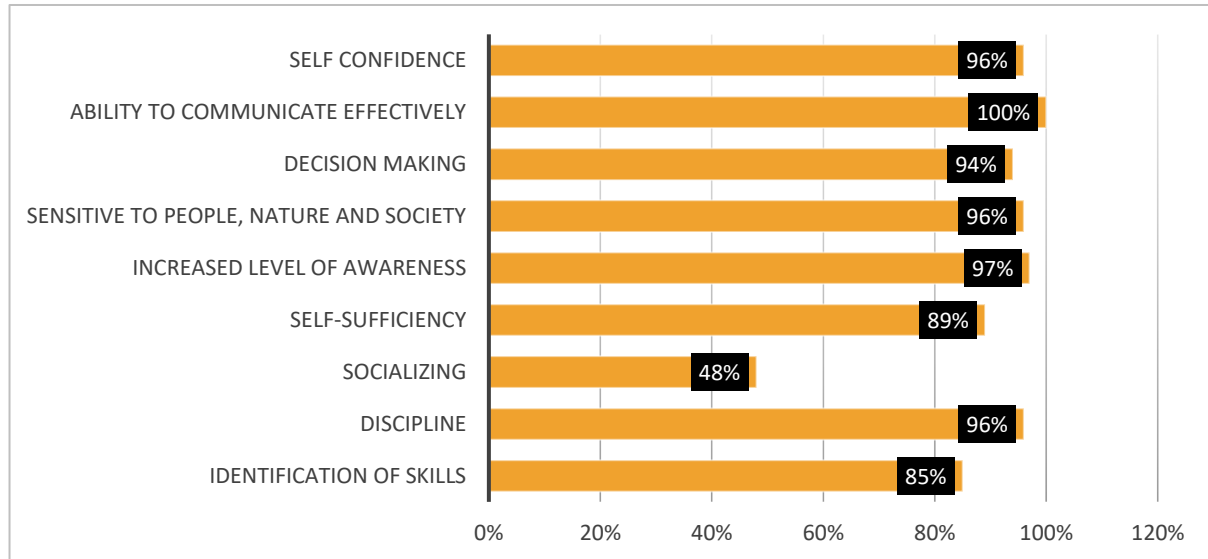
The girls at Vimukti school are a marginalized group who have not had the persistent or regular opportunity to express themselves independently and decisions for their education, marriage, and so forth. Due to several sociocultural norms involving the anticipated servitude and silence of the young and female, these girls were not accustomed to engaging in any kind of decision-making for themselves or in family in which they were asked to communicate their perceptions, feelings, and/or wishes. The study findings reveal that 90% of the girls gaining education from Vimukti have decision-making abilities. Education is considered a significant tool for bringing basic change in the status of women in society. Decision-making influence is intimately tied to women's empowerment in society and the home. Women have been hindered in their ability to participate in decision-making by traditional gender roles that represent men's participation in commercial spheres and women's participation in domestic spheres.

Decision-making has been evaluated in the study in terms of how much girls are participating in decision-making regarding their marriages, education, and household responsibilities. The girls gaining education from Vimukti expressed that Vimukti school's every corner, every teacher, and every staff and every activity held at school has contributed to their overall empowerment. In the detailed interviews with girls, it was interestingly observed that there were several perceived values from a good and quality education that they received from the Vimukti school experience. Decision-making ability was one of the major educational attributes that were highly observed in the Vimukti girls living in urban slum areas of Jaipur. Access to education is considered an important determinant of women's decision-making. Therefore, educational investment in the urban slum areas of Jaipur by Vimukthi has been beneficial in increasing girls' access to education that is positively associated with the autonomy of decision-making in different activities.

There were certain experiences shared by the girls in interviews that portrayed the decision-making abilities of girls in the community such as girls were observed to be taking decisions of staying more in school after school hours also as they feel disturbed and distracted at home and becomes difficult for them to study and focus on their subjects. It has also been observed during the school visits for study, that girls were also participating in extracurricular activities in their school despite their parent's denial at first, they are convincing them and strict decisions for their life.

The household burden is often considered the major obstruction or a challenge for the girls living in Urban slum areas for continuing and managing their studies. Thus, girls who passed out from Vimukti have also been sharing that their household chore burden is also being reduced by them at home so that they can concentrate on their studies.

Attributes of education observed in adolescent girls:



Educational attributes

With reference to the lens of quality education elaborated in the opening section, above-mentioned attributes were listed with the girl researchers’ team only. This was done to get a clear understanding of their perspective on the attributes of good quality education and how they have been reflected in their personalities over the years while gaining education from Vimukti. In their researcher’s diary also, they explained each one of the attributes in their context and also the scenarios in which they realized the existence of these attributes in their personalities.

The girls at Vimukti school are a marginalized group who have not had the persistent or regular opportunity to express themselves independently and communicate their views effectively. Due to several sociocultural norms involving the anticipated servitude and silence of the young and female, these girls were not accustomed to engaging in conversations in which they were asked to communicate their ideas, feelings, and/or wishes.

Arti Dabla one of the girls who were among the seven girls who were initially enrolled in Vimukti School says that,

“Every corner of the school has contributed to my personal development as an individual, whether its classroom, principal’s office, playground, or the stage. These places have a very special place in my heart as here we were free to express anything, this made me feel confident and empowered. I feel in vimukti there were no boundaries between classmates, juniors, teachers, and principal mam also. We were free to communicate with anyone without hesitating. At home the situation was very different, my father was the only one who had the right to take decisions in our family. In my family we were three sisters, mother, and father. Me and my sisters were used to be very scared to talk to our father regarding anything but when he started forcing me to get married after completing my 10th, it was the point where I first raised my voice against his decision. I fought with my father regarding my higher education and in this my sisters and mother also supported me. My father also agreed after some time, and I completed my graduation before getting married. I believe if I would have never taken courage and confidence to change my father’s decision, I would have never changed mine and my sister’s life.”

-Arti Dabla

It was observed during the in-depth interviews with the alumni girls also that education has helped them in attaining many good qualities and attributes in their personality. One such experience shared by Kavita also supports the above findings as she shared that,

“I was enrolled in Vimukti school from my initial years of education in UKG, further I passed out from the school after class 10 as that time school was till 10th standard only. After passing out from the school, the teachers helped me in taking admission to government school and i completed my 12th from government school only. After my schooling, school was constantly connected with me, and teachers were totally concerned for my future career choices. With the help of teachers, I started my graduation in arts with regular college in Vaidik kanya mahavidhyalaya.

*Talking to my parents on anything was so difficult for me that I often choose to be silent on the things that were not right. Raising my voice against certain gender discriminations was impossible for me. I remember during my second year of college; I was forced to get married as my elder sister was also getting married and my parents wanted to marry their both daughters together. I tried very hard to convince my parents to not marry me so early without completing my studies, I also took help of my teachers to convince them, but they didn't agree and married me after my second year of graduation. However, I managed to convince my parents to not send me to my in-laws for a year and let me complete my graduation first. During the initial years of my marriage everything was good but after some time I came to know that my husband used to drink daily and after drinking he use to misbehave with me. I was extremely disappointed with my husband and my marriage. I tried to talk with my parents regarding this issue. My parents also tried to talk with my husband many times, but he was not ready to understand, and his behavior was getting worse day by day. One day I left my in-laws house and came to my parents. They asked me to go back as they believed that everything will be alright someday, but I made my decision final to divorce my husband and to never return to my in-laws irrespective several taunts and misbehavior of my relatives. Slowly, my parents also supported me by seeing my affirm decision. I also started working in a company after the divorce and was not financially dependent on my parents. I also completed my higher studies along with earning for myself and after some time I also started supporting my family. If I was not motivated and supported then by my teachers, I would have been still living with my in-laws in that miserable condition only and would also be never able to become financially independent to live my life respectfully and to complete my higher education. This incidence was so impactful in my life that it improved my **self-confidence and decision-making** capabilities, made me mobile and gave me access to social networks”.*

-Kavita Bairwa

7.3. Awareness among girls of social issues prevailing in the community

Analysis was carried out to find the level of awareness regarding social issues in the community among girls. It is worth mentioning that girls gaining education from Vimukti were considered for the analysis. The findings of the study suggest that the majority of the girls are highly aware of the social issues in their locality. Slums in India are often called 'spatial poverty traps' (Mitra, 2022; UN, 2020; World Bank, 2011)¹³, where multiple deprivations condemn women and girls to gender inequality and disadvantage that are intergenerationally transferred and are extremely difficult to overcome. These perilously organized settlements expose women and girls to domestic and sexual violence. Such hindering factors play a major role in the lives of girls who lack access to education.

In the past few years, the gender gap in school enrolment has tended to be narrower in urban areas; gender disparity can prominently be seen in the realm of access to secondary and tertiary education, learning outcomes, decision-making in education, and career choices. There are 211 slums listed under the Jaipur Municipal Corporation (Jaipur Municipal Corporation, 2011), which are geographically blended with the elite-class colonies of the city. These slums share a unique trajectory that shows that families living in these slums are permanent residents for years and represent grim prospects of upward mobility. However, economic instability, traditional patriarchal norms, early marriage, and violence often result in poor health, nutrition, and education status of women and girls (Kulkarni et al., 2017; Chakravarthy et al., 2019;). The underlying social and cultural practices bind girls to their traditional reproductive roles by navigating the changing socio-economic landscape of urban cities. Many women and adolescent girls in these slums are homemakers or work as a maid or in some other informal sector to contribute to family income yet, have fewer opportunities to get basic literacy and education. Vimukti girls' school intervenes in these urban slum areas intending to provide the female section of these communities with the quality education that they can use as a tool for transforming their lives and status in society.

¹³ World Bank. (2011). Perspectives on Poverty in India.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/103691468041447795/pdf/574280PUB0Pers1351B0Extop0ID0186890.pdf>

Mitra, D. (2022). Understanding the Role of Slums as 'Poverty Traps' or 'Springboards': A Case Comparison of India and Latin America. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-97046-8_9

UN. (2020). Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/02/World-Social-Report-2020-Chapter-4.pdf>

One of the girls who passed out from Vimukti China shared that she and her family have been engaged with an organization that solely works on removing the existing social issues of their community. She shares that,

“I remember, when I first joined vimukti I was not even able to speak in my class and my class teacher noticed this, so she started giving me opportunities to read the chapters in class every day. In starting I use feel very bad when I was not able to read properly in class my classmates also use to laugh at me but after some years, I understood that those chapter reading exercises in class only boosted my confidence to speak in front of others without hesitating. We were free to talk about anything to anyone. That confidence only has helped me today in raising my voice against any kind of discrimination based on gender that was common at my house. Slowly I realized that it is not enough to bring change in my parent’s perception as it is also necessary to together work on such issues prevailing in our community and making it a better place where girls are equally treated as a responsible and a respected citizen of the society. From then onwards me and my family are working for this.”

-China

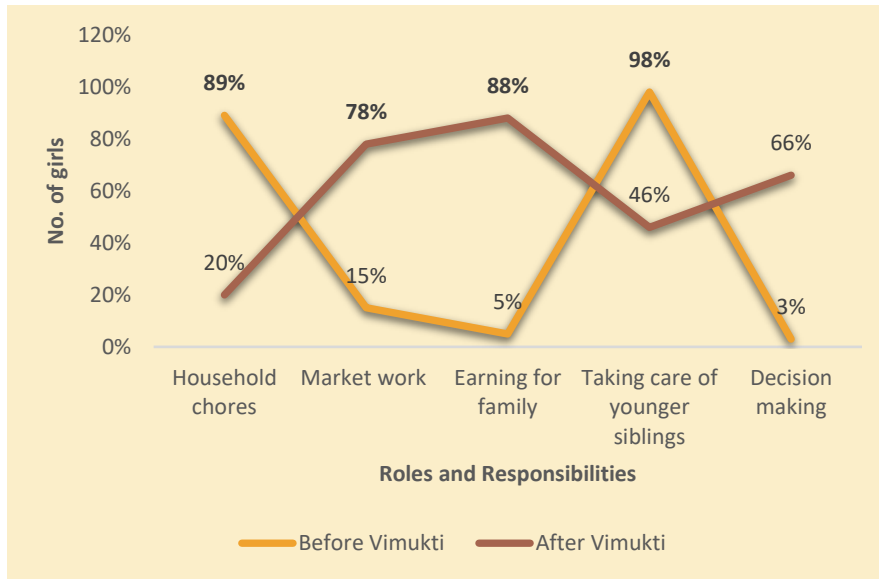
The Vimukti school education has not only contributed to the lives of girls and their families but also has led to instilling a sense of awareness and realization among girls gaining education from Vimukti for social issues prevailing in the community. The female section of society plays a significant role in addressing the prevailing social issues in their community. Thus, Vimukti education has developed a sense of awareness among the girls of the urban slum segment of Jaipur that will significantly contribute to the upliftment of the community and society as a whole. This signifies that educational investment in these communities can induce the social development of the nation.

7.4. Changes In Stereotypes: Roles and Responsibilities of girls in Community

Gender roles are formed in early childhood and continue to influence behavior through adolescence and adulthood, including the choice of academic majors and careers. Traditionally, women were full-time homemakers in the community. Their responsibilities were to take care of their children and family. They didn’t have any role in household earnings. However, with immense investment in the upliftment of the female section of society over the years, changes have been observed.

The study assesses the changes in the roles and responsibilities of adolescent girls before and after gaining quality education from Vimukti. Prior, to intervention for quality education by Vimukti with inclusive participation of community and parents, the roles and responsibilities for the girls were limited to the household chores, caregiver roles to younger siblings, and some

extent financial responsibilities were also there but only limited to work with their mothers as house helps, and cooks, and so forth. After the intervention, there has been observed a positive shift in societal expectations from the girls, and parents' expectations, and also the behavior of girls towards gender equality has also been improved. The girls in the community currently are observed to be more determined toward their career and life aspirations. Thus, a positive trend of changing roles and responsibilities of girls in society has been observed from the study's findings.

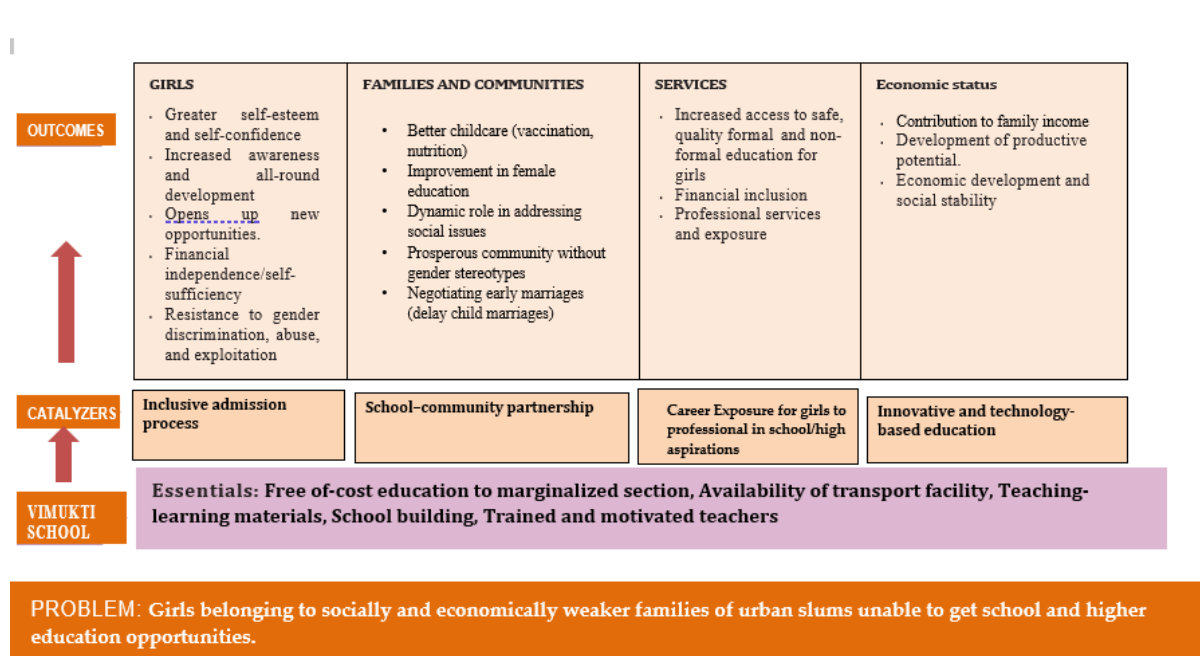


The findings suggest that before joining Vimukti the majority of the girls responded to household chores and taking care of younger siblings as their major roles and responsibilities in the family with 89% and 98% respectively.

However, changes in these responsibilities have been observed after joining Vimukti girls. Market work, earning for family, and taking decisions in the family has been observed as the added roles and responsibilities for girls coming from the marginalised community of Jaipur's urban slum area.

8. Theory of change

Based on the discussion above we have tried to articulate the change in the lives of girls due to the Vimukti phenomenon as a ‘Theory of Change’ explained below:



We analyzed the theory of change which is grounded in the Vimukti phenomenon. When the girl entered the school with her own social and economic challenges, the problems of the girls are with her. At first level, the challenges addressed by school with essentials or non-negotiable such as free-of-cost education, quality education at school, availability of subsidized transport facility, teaching, learning material that more child-friendly approach to the teaching, school building, and motivated teachers. These are certain attributes that Vimukti school has essentially developed for ensuring access to education for the girls. The catalyzers play a very important role in further ensuring that girls get quality education, complete their education, and also aspire for higher education and decent jobs after getting an education. These catalyzers are inclusive admission process, school-community partnerships, and career exposure for girls to professional in-school/ high aspirations, which strengthened the Vimukti school education model over the years.

The outcomes observed in the girls include their level of confidence, better communication skills, critical thinking, ability to take decision, and openness to the new opportunities available for them with the changing landscape of opportunities, of economic opportunities for them. The girls are able to cope with and address the gender discrimination and the kind of inequality they have been facing in the families in this community.

Further outcomes observed at the community and family level included improved girls' education, dynamic role in addressing social issues, prosperous community without gender stereotypes, girls negotiating early marriages (delay child marriages) respectively.

Vimukti Girls School has contributed to the lives of girls by empowering them through education within the school and the support they are gaining after school. The economic outcomes of the Vimukti school education in the lives of urban marginalised girls comprised, contribution to family income, development of their productive potential, economic development, and social stability.

Moreover, the career exposure for girls to professional in school/high aspirations supported and facilitated by Vimukti girls' school has been successful in increasing access to safe, quality formal and non-formal education for girls, financial inclusion of girls, and professional services and exposure for girls.

9. Findings sharing and agenda for future






To share the emergent findings of the study, a conference was organised with academicians and practitioners in the school education and the higher education space.


The conference was a major part of the Vimukti study to share its emerging findings with renowned experts from the education field and take their valuable feedback.

The conference innovating for educating urban poor girls in the context of SDG 4 and 5 aimed to:


1. Highlight practices and concrete initiatives to improve urban poor girls' access to quality education leading to lifelong learning and decent work, focusing on child-led initiatives.
2. Share research practices and findings of Vimukti study, oriented towards urban girls' education and inclusivity.
3. Provide spaces for collaboration and collective actions to advance girls' empowerment through education.
4. Exploring possibilities for connecting pathways for girls' aspirations to higher education opportunities.

Session I: Girls' empowerment through education: Child-Centric Practices



	<p>Dr Madhu Mohan, MD, Rockville</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The future of India depends on the girl's education.• The potential contribution of girls to the GDP of country and lifting the country out of poverty is the main motivation and agenda behind foundation of Vimukti girls' school.
	<p>Ms. Kamal Gaur, Deputy Director Programmes- Education, Save the Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catch up Clubs- A solution for once-in-a generation education crisis for girls.• 320,000,000 children as per UNESCO out of school, they were not having any access to education.• Out of this the data says the number of female populations was around 14,10,00,000.• Catchup clubs for children for bridging their knowledge gap.
	<p>Ms. Smita Agarwal, CSR/ Head Education, Tata Steel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of School Education and Progression• Very outdated pedagogies in the learning process leading to learning crisis worldwide and no opportunities for marginalised section to take their learning forward.• Access, Learning and Governance the major components to be focussed on for progression of students after school.• Access basically means every child in school and the learning is a big crisis across the globe.• Initiatives must be taken in the classroom rather than giving training to teachers at state level.• Governance focuses on strengthening school management, management committees and SMCS.• Access, learning and governance, very important kind of strategy, which is possibly the only way in which we can talk about reforms the of the Indian public education system.• There is a need to change the pedagogy in the classroom.



	<p>Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Founder, Deshkal Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive Classrooms and Effective Education • There is huge gap in features of education system in India. • There is a requirement of inclusiveness in the classroom or the Indian education to address the potential gaps. • Identifying social and economic context of the children coming to school is necessary for inclusion. • The relation between the low learning level or the learning outcome, is related with the socioeconomic background of their children.
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Session II: Vimukti Girls Education: Vimukti Phenomenon

	<p>Mrs. Lavalina Sogani, Founder & Secretary, Vimukti Sanstha</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 years ago, started a registered society not-for-profit as a small Education Center for less privileged girls with just twenty students and four teachers. • RBSE affiliated school with 800+ girls. • Free education, uniforms, books, transport and a hand holding support throughout. • girls mainly come from income group under 15,000 INR per month. • The girls from families of laborers, domestic care painters, drivers. • The school is focussing on to empower girls to become self-reliant and financially independent. • The school emphasized on community outreach, health and hygiene, safe transportation, after school education support also. • Have collaboration with other organizations for providing scholarships. • Vimukti envisions to break the cycle of poverty by empowering less privileged girls through education to become financially independent and self-reliant.
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Session III: Round Table: Emerging aspirations of urban poor girls: higher education, human

	<p>Dr. Saumen Chattopadhyay, Professor, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, JSchool of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• While talking about explorations and pathways, we have to identify the challenges and challenges to be identified in our attempt to diagnose.• A choice in education is often constrained.• To ensure through the policymaker's intervention and the family support and the sub community support that the choices should not get interfered with the quality of schooling and the public private divide.• With access to education there must be ensured that it is guaranteeing quality education.• school education is the foundation for higher education and that is why the importance of school education is of paramount signal.• the aspirations are formed based on the attainment in the school education and the opportunities that we provide to the students, particularly the girl students in the future.• Public- private divide is a major constraint in the higher education.• Investment in education for the girls is a better alternative than saving money for the marriages.• For letting our daughters leave a dignified life, a meaningful life and liberating life, this change in the perception of the family and the community is of extreme importance.• The state should also support selective enterprises, the NGOs and the school in the private sector if they are providing very good support, very good education quality to particularly the girls.
	<p>Dr. Neeru Snehi, Professor, Dept. of Higher and Professional Education, NIEPA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a disconnect or it's a contrasting trend between school, education sector and higher education sector.• To increase the access of girls or more girls in the higher education system, the quality of education in the schools, the kind of awareness exposure, requires to be intervened.• aspirations are always embedded in the social, economic and cultural backgrounds.• In mathematics and economics and engineering, in sciences, along and then we have to give them those kinds of opportunities and to

	<p>within the school education system and outside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more exposure orientations will be required for this aspect, especially for the urgent urban marginalized.
	<p>Prof. Nisha Butoliya, Faculty and Resource Person, School of Continuing Education, Azim Premji University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per All India survey on higher education 2019-20, in the programs like BA, BSc there is 52.9% male and 52.3% female, but in courses like B.COM, and B.Tech, there is 71% boys versus 29% girls. Similarly in MBA 57.4% male and 42.6% female. • So, the career choices are highly influenced by the social and economic backgrounds. • There are different social inequalities which are working along with gender divide such as rural urban divide, there are children with special needs, there are class differences and so forth.
	<p>Dr. Arvind Mishra, Assistant Professor, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychology is often seen as a mysterious discipline that deals with the inner workings of the human mind, but there is no universal psychology that is independent of cultural context. • Traditional psychological approaches that assume deficits in marginalized groups, such as girls from poor backgrounds, may not be effective in addressing their needs. • Education is often seen as a positive force, but it may not always be beneficial in its current form. • Marginality can be a source of power, as marginalized groups may have unique perspectives on the world and be able to expose systemic violence. • To effectively address the needs of marginalized groups, including girls from poor backgrounds, it is important to question the assumptions and values of dominant groups and systems002E

10. Conclusion

Good school education and evolving mindsets of urban poor for better life choices does beckon us to explore possibilities for connecting pathways of girls with higher education opportunities.

The study centres on a school that is functioning in Jaipur city and pursuing its goal of emancipating girls from marginalised communities via education. Vimukti, which means 'Liberation' seeks to instill life skills, aspirations, a positive attitude, self-respect, confidence, freedom of mind, and critical thinking. The same reflects vividly in girls' personalities, which has steadily changed the conventional social stereotypes about girls' education in the slum community. Slowly and steadily, Vimukti as an education upgraded itself and expanded its reach to different slum communities, showing the tenacity and perseverance to engage with the changing & dynamic slums.

Girls-led ethnography of schooling was used to study the school phenomenon and girls' lived experience of school education with specific focus on school ideals, perspectives of girls, and the narrative outputs. Teachers, students, local community, parents, and school personnel were observed in the study as the major pillars that are supporting the vimukti phenomenon as a school education over the years. It is noted that teachers played crucial role in the socioeconomic transformation of the urban poor girls coming to Vimukti school. The study suggests that the teachers at Vimukti were humble personalities from ordinary middle-class origins who outlived their roles and with intrinsic motivation participated in the development of Vimukti school and the personalities of girls over the years.

According to the research findings, girls' aspirations for their future endeavors have been evolving with each passing batch from Vimukti. These aspirations are highly influenced by educational exposure, family agreement, and adolescent girls' shared perceptions of higher education for the upliftment of the urban poor female section of society. Vimukti's strong education foundation gives adolescent girls the conviction to attain higher education. If prodded along with the girls, it soon reveals that their desire is much more than graduating. They desire more avenues for higher education that goes beyond polytechnic diplomas or even graduation. It is in this context that the question of the aspiration of girls needs to be expanded and relooked at given the possibilities in the 21st century. This deep diving into the subjectivities of the research has brought a wide spectrum of aspirations that remain partly addressed in the emblematic inventory intervention of career guidance. With the increased

awareness and confidence among girls' opportunities for higher education have emerged as one of the unfulfilled aspirations. The capacity to aspire is deeply related to and embedded in the opportunities for the expansion of capabilities.

The study discovered that Vimukti school used a new phenomenon and a unique approach by employing a low-cost strategy and having a more significant social and economic impact. The low-cost economics of Vimukti education is observed to be paying higher dividend in terms of higher earnings of the girls in future. The emerging theory of change suggests positive impacts at the individual, community, social and economic level.

The ethnography method used in the study of Vimukti is a powerful tool for gaining a deeper understanding of the insider perspectives of the girls studying there. This method involves immersing oneself in the culture and social practices of the community being studied, and using first-hand observations, interviews, and other qualitative data to gain insights into their beliefs, values, and experiences. By doing so, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex social dynamics and cultural factors that shape the lives and experiences of the girls studying at Vimukti. Further the insider perspectives on capabilities have been a good lens to understand the widening aspirations and the resulting better choices and opportunities girls are pointing to. Widening access to higher education is necessary, making it even more crucial to remove all obstacles to enrolment. This will necessitate work on numerous fronts, including legislative change, advocacy, and research. Increasing access to higher education involves more than just allowing more people to enrol; it also involves assisting students in realizing their potential, devising strategies for structuring higher education to accommodate different needs, and providing adequate funding for higher education.

The dedicated involvement and motivation of those who together constitute the Vimukti phenomenon is an apt pointer to the cardinal importance of the personal dimension and is celebratory of the best human agency can contribute to the expansion of choices and capabilities, that is the desired outcome of educational processes of transformation. This is a soulful reminder to what the more educated and privileged human beings can do for those who seek the fruits of education. Perhaps it is in these endeavours lies not only their vimukti, but ours as well.

12. Recommendation

The dedicated involvement and motivation of those who together constitute the Vimukti phenomenon is an apt pointer to the cardinal importance of the personal dimension and is celebratory of the best human agency can contribute to the expansion of choices and capabilities, that is the desired outcome of educational processes of transformation. This is a soulful reminder to what the more educated and privileged human beings can do for those who seek the fruits of education. Perhaps it is in these endeavours that lie not only their Vimukti, but ours as well. The success of Vimukti cogently demonstrates that civil society initiatives and philanthropies have a significant role to play in widening access to higher levels of education opportunities among economically deprived sections of society. The range of interventions could range from assisting students in realizing their potential, devising strategies for structuring higher education to accommodate different needs, and providing adequate funding for higher education of girls.

In keeping with the quality education Vimukti has been imparting, there is a need to expand the horizons of learning in the 21st century. The school could systematically engage with emerging areas in student learning and pedagogy. More specifically, **there is a need to enhance the classroom learning experience by including audio-visual material, digital interface, and inclusion of perspective on the challenges and opportunities of sustainable human societies of the 21st century.**

The good quality school education imparted by Vimukti and the enthusiasm with which many alumni girls are pursuing higher education has demonstrated the necessary link between school education and higher education (including Post graduation). **Widening access to higher education is necessary, making it even more crucial to remove all obstacles to enrolment.** This will necessitate work on numerous fronts, including legislative change, advocacy, and research. It is also consonant with the widening spectrum of aspirations of girls associated with Vimukti. Many of them point towards a desire to attain post-graduate professional education through the support of Vimukti. **Investing in post-graduate education has emerged as the next frontier that makes sense in conventional cost-benefit analysis and is a career pathway for the realization of productive potential and quality women workforce that Vimukti girls are capable of.**

Self-reflective practice such as ethnography can be taken up as a useful tool for teachers and staff members at Vimukti as well. By engaging in reflective practice, they can gain a deeper understanding of their own perspectives and biases, as well as the perspectives and needs of their students. This can lead to more effective teaching strategies, more empathetic and supportive relationships with students, and a more holistic approach to education that takes into account the complex social, cultural, and emotional dimensions of learning. In addition, by engaging in reflective practice, teachers and staff members can ground their work more firmly in the worldview of the girls at Vimukti. This can help to build trust and foster a sense of community and shared purpose, which can be essential for creating a positive and supportive learning environment. By encouraging a participative approach to reflective practice, teachers and staff members can also create opportunities for girls to share their own perspectives and experiences, which can enrich the learning process for everyone involved.

Overall, the use of ethnography and self-reflective practice at Vimukti can be a powerful tool for promoting a more holistic and participatory approach to education. By gaining a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the girls at Vimukti, teachers and staff members can create a more supportive and empowering learning environment, one that is grounded in the worldview of the girls themselves.

Vimukti: Meaning, Metaphor and Action



This excavation into the meaning, and metaphors of *Vimukti* is inspired by the face bust sculpture of Buddha that one saw in one of the rooms at the Vimukti School office. It was lying on the top of a wooden almirah overlooking the front table, as if witnessing the happenings. The piece of sculpture was brought in by founders of Vimukti Sansthan and has been with them ever since the beginning of this initiative.

The name *Vimukti* invokes righteousness and forthrightness of purposeful engagement with the world around for deliverance, liberation from the sorrowful structures of everyday life in a manner that opens pathways of wisdom.

In the Pali literature, Mahayana commentaries of sutras posit it as one of the important gates of liberation.... *freedom through understanding (paññā- vimutti)* often understood together with *freedom through mind (ceto-vimutti)*¹⁴ As both the Sanskrit and Pali texts suggest, it is a special liberation (*mukti*) being possible with the grace of the *paññā* (wisdom) aggregate, the right view and intention leading to the right freedom (*vimutti*)¹⁵

Vimutti was often the last utterance in many sermons of Buddha and following him those who tread the path, the term *Vimutti* liberated from all the mental defilements that lead to pain and frustration in the endless cycles of life and death. It has been also used as a reference point for the ultimate level of reality, of tranquility, and wisdom.

By deep insight into the nature of individual and social suffering, the quest for *Vimutti* (Vimukti), cultivates the qualities of attention, loving-kindness, and inner renewal that sustain a life of service beyond self.

The powerful metaphor of *Vimukti* symbolizes compassion that forms the basis for engagement with life world for co participating in liberating others, through facilitating pathways of freedom, dignity, and full potential.

¹⁴<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803115900396;jsessionid=30E727396BCF57D65353000337D58FF5>; <http://www.buddha-vacana.org/gloss.html#vimutti>

¹⁵ Ariya Atth'āṅgika Magga, The noble eightfold path An introduction by Piya Tan ©2016, 2nd rev 2017, p.38

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