



PROGRAMME BRIEF



# SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME | CREATING PATHWAYS OF LEARNING, EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

Anju Salvi (in the middle), community educator with UN Women's Second Chance Education programme, photographed with women from her community in Rajasthan, India. Photo: UN Women India

*UN Women's Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning Programme enables women to re-enter formal education, access vocational training, learn entrepreneurial skills, and connects them to employment and business opportunities.*

India's female labour force participation, at 21 per cent,<sup>1</sup> is well below the global average of 47 per cent, and declining further. Investment in women's vocational training, education and job placement in India improves lives and the economy. The Second Chance Education programme has impacted more than 15,000 women from some of the poorest and most vulnerable areas since 2018, across 12 districts and 200 villages in the states of Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Odisha. Eight of the programme districts are "aspirational districts" as designated by the Government of India.

## RETURN TO FORMAL EDUCATION

While the number of girls enrolled in schools overall is increasing, 17.3 per cent<sup>2</sup> still drop out of secondary school, because of long distances between school and home, unsafe public transportation, lack of gender-specific toilets, and unequal gender norms that place the burden of domestic work on girls and women.

By connecting women with community educators near their homes and by providing safe, women-friendly spaces, the programme helps women return to formal education. A network of 54 community educators across the 12 programme districts under the Second Chance Education programme have enrolled 3,648 women and girls in formal education. Through a partnership with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and state-level open schooling systems, the programme helps women to prepare for and complete their secondary education.

## SKILLS, MENTORSHIP AND SAFE SPACES

UN Women's Second Chance Education programme is anchored in evidence that shows that investments in formal education and vocational training, combined with job placement and financing

can significantly raise female employment and entrepreneurship in India. Twelve Women Empowerment Hubs, one in each programme district, provide safe and women-friendly spaces to learn and develop vocational skills and small business ventures.

The programme works with 67 skill training institutions connected with various government assistance programmes. Nearly 3,000 women are being trained in nursing, hospitality, retail, tailoring, production of low-cost and sustainable sanitary napkins, packaging of food items and candle-making, and driving auto-rickshaws, which are a popular means of transportation.

## Partners for Change

UN Women's **Second Chance Education programme** in India is funded by the **BHP Foundation**, and implemented by **Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN)** as the lead partner along with other implementing, consortium and state government partners.

With a budget of **USD 3,834,800** for 2018 – 2022, the programme has reached out to more than **50,000** women across four states in India, and impacted more than **15,000** through education, training and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Central and state governments are key allies of the programme. UN Women provides technical support to the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to incorporate gender perspectives in skill development initiatives across the country. The programme has teamed up with state government partners, such as the **Department for Skilling and Entrepreneurship** Development in Maharashtra and the **Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA)**

The programme in India is part of a multi-country effort that is active in low- and middle-income countries with high levels of poverty pockets, crisis and displacement, and marginalized indigenous groups (namely Australia, Cameroon, Chile, India, Jordan and Mexico).

<sup>1</sup>International Labour Organization. 2019. "Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate) - India" ILOSTAT database. Data retrieved on June 15, 2021, accessed through <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=IN>.

<sup>2</sup>Average dropout rate of girls recorded at 17.3% at secondary level in 2018-19: WCD Ministry'. The Hindu. February 5, 2021. Accessed on 25 August at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/average-dropout-rate-of-girls-recorded-at-173-at-secondary-level-in-2018-19-wcd-ministry/article33761098.ece>

## PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Only 13 per cent<sup>3</sup> of rural women in India own land, even though 85 per cent them work in agriculture. The Second Chance Education Programme is working with women farmers to increase their household income by teaching them new and sustainable techniques to improve their crop yield.

Some 8,252 women have learned about using quality seeds, pest management and organic farming techniques. Women farmers have increased their household food security and 60 agri-entrepreneurs in Jalgaon and Rayagada districts have reported a 300-per cent-increase in daily income, using new solar dehydration technology to preserve seasonal food products for year-round consumption.

The programme has also linked women who complete their vocational training to jobs and financial support to start small businesses. As of 2021, 1,863 women have started their own businesses, using micro-financing from self-help groups and personal funds.

## WORKING DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The Second Chance Education Programme is geared to support women and girls when crisis strikes. The Covid-19 lockdowns and mobility restrictions created significant barriers for women's and girls' education and livelihoods. The community educators with Second Chance Education were trained to adapt their lesson plans through WhatsApp video calls and Zoom so women could continue to learn. They also disseminated information on Covid-19 prevention and safety.

In rural India, where the health infrastructure is weak, female health workers were at the front line of the Covid-19 response. The programme trained and certified 10,000 nurses and nurse assistants across 20 states to provide front-line health services safely during the pandemic. Through local partners, the programme delivered 4,800 medical kits for Covid-19 patients, 840 oximeters, and personal protection equipment for local health workers when the crisis peaked with the second wave of infections.



*"Without an education, it is difficult to succeed in life," says Kavita Manjhi, from Gaya, Bihar. Kavita had to leave her education early because her village didn't have a school nearby. She enrolled back into formal education through the Second Chance Education Programme. Recently, she appeared for her senior secondary examinations and is hoping to continue her education further. Photo: UN Women India*

## Results at a glance

To date, the Second Chance Education Programme has:

- Enrolled **3,648** women and girls in formal education, of whom **2,096** have successfully completed their Secondary and Higher Secondary, with the National Institute of Open Schooling or State Open Schooling System.
- Provided skill training to **3,021** women, of whom **2,408** have completed their training and **443** are now employed.
- Taught **8,252** women farmers new techniques to improve their crop yield and **60** per cent of them are set to earn an additional annual income of **INR 25,000**.
- Supported **1,863** women to start small businesses and **45** women entrepreneurs to develop Covid-safe business plans, such as online saree businesses and digital service centres.
- Trained **10,000** nurses and nurse assistants in COVID-19 response and risk management

## SHAPING POLICIES TO EDUCATE AND EMPOWER WOMEN AND GIRLS

While supplying women with tools and opportunities to learn and grow their incomes, the programme influences enabling policies to support women and girls. In July 2020, the Rajasthan State Women's Policy waived school fees for women and girls returning to formal education based on the Second Chance Education Programme recommendations, a big win for women and girls looking for a second chance.

UN Women is working with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to create an enabling vocational training ecosystem for women learners. One of the upcoming initiatives of the programme includes gender-responsive training sessions for 4,500 master trainers who will then go on to deliver vocational training across the country.

## IMPLEMENTING AND CONSORTIUM PARTNERS OF THE SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME ARE:

Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), National HRD Network, Learnet Skills India Limited, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP- I), Chaitanya, Manjari Foundation (MF), Preservation and Proliferation of Rural Resources and Nature (PRAN), Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANAN-DI), Aaina, Shristi, B – Able, Development Alternatives, TRIF, and Pratham Foundation.

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- <https://twitter.com/unwomenindia>
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<sup>3</sup>Oxfam India. "Move over 'Sons of the soil': Why you need to know the female farmers that are revolutionizing agriculture in India". 15 November, 2018. Accessed on 25 August 2021 at <https://www.oxfamindia.org/women-empowerment-india-farmers>