

RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA: A GENDER BASED STATISTICAL PROFILE

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ABSTRACT

The present study provides a gender based statistical profile of rural elementary school education in India. The study concludes that the gender disparity vis-à-vis the gap between boys and girls in the Rural India is reducing for number of estimated rural child population, rural enrolment at elementary stages in different categories of schools, rural gross enrolment ratio (GER) at elementary stages and rural teachers in the elementary schools.

Keywords: Dakar Goals, Gross Enrollment ratio(GER), MDG, UNICEF, Universal Elementary Education(UEE)

1.0 Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for all children, including girls. Yet, as in many other areas of their lives, girls' prospects for education are diminished because of gender discrimination. The UNICEF's long-term goal is for all children to have access to complete education of good quality. The international goals connected to girls' education are as follow:

Dakar Goals (World Education Forum)

- Ensuring that by 2015 all children -- particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities -- have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Millennium Development Goals

- Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015.

A World Fit for Children Goals

- Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

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The last half-century, which was also the first half century of the independent India, had passed through an exciting stage of educational development. The National Policy on Education (*NPE* - 1986) defines goals of the Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in a broad framework, changing the emphasis from enrolment to participation, retention and achievement of satisfactory quality for all children upto the age of fourteen years (*GOI*, 2003: 9). The total eradication of illiteracy from rural area was still elusive; and country had stepped ahead with 40.79 percent or so illiterate rural people in the 21st century. These agreed goals may be achieved by directing resources towards bringing girls into the classroom and keeping them there until they complete their basic education. The Government of India has instituted several schemes and programmes to bridge disparities in education at all levels of education. However, this phenomenon continues to exist and pose a major challenge in contemporary India. One of the main reasons for this unfinished agenda is lack of attitudinal change. There is some indication that achieving equal access to education for boys and girls (gender parity in enrolments) leads towards progress in the education for all targets. As gender equality is a complex issue to measure, it is very difficult to assess the extent to which such increase in girls' enrolments translates into the empowerment of girls and women. In order to understand these complex issue, this paper analyses the rural elementary school education with regard to gender disparity and its direction in recent past decades in India.

2.0 Materials and Methods

The secondary data on key parameters of rural elementary school education in India with regard to gender disparity are collected from the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth All India Educational Survey (AIES) Reports, and Seventh All India School Education Survey (AISES) - Provisional Statistics. The data on estimated rural child population between the age of six and fourteen years, rural enrolment for boys and girls at elementary stages, rural gross enrolment ratio at elementary stages, rural enrolment in class I and terminal classes of primary (class V) and upper primary (class VIII) stages, rural teachers in primary and upper primary schools are collected from the referred survey reports (*NCERT* 1982, 1992, 1998, 2005).

3.0 Results and Discussions

We shall, now, present our major results on the elementary school education with regard to gender disparity to explore its direction in the rural India.

3.1 Estimated Rural Child Population

Table 1 set out the estimated rural child population in India from Fourth to Seventh survey. The primary stage children age group falls between ages 6 to those below 11 years, and upper primary stage children age group falls between ages 11 to those below 14 years, respectively (*GOI*, 2003: 21). Boys and girls for their analytical comparison further segregate the children category.

It is evident from the **Table 1** that between ages 6 to below 11 years, the growth in number of rural boys are nearly 53.66 per cent and this is marginally higher than growth in number of rural girls with respective figure of 52.65 per cent during Fourth to Seventh survey. However, the comparative gap between rural boys and girls between age 6 to below 11 years reflects an increasing trend that is 2470, 2577.99, 3001.14, and 4114.32 thousands in Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh survey, respectively. This increasing gap from Fourth to Sixth survey reveals an alarming growth of 66.57 per cent. Similarly, the gap between rural boys and girls between ages 11 to below 14 years are as follows: 1630, 1510.72, 2573.21, and 2973.49 thousands in the referred surveys at different points of time, which reflects a highly considerable growth (82.42 per cent) from Fourth to Seventh survey.

3.2 Rural Enrolment at Elementary Stage

Enrolment is defined as the number of pupils or students enrolled in a given level (viz., primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stage) of school education, regardless of age. The elementary stage (Class I to VIII) of school education includes primary (Class I to V) and upper primary (Class VI to VIII) stage. **Table 2** presents the rural enrolment by boys and girls at elementary stage in different categories of schools from Fourth to Seventh survey in India.

The seventh survey reveals that nearly 12,31,42,548 children of all ages were enrolled at elementary stage in rural schools, which is an increase of nearly 95.80 percent in comparison to the Fourth survey. Boys and girls further segregate these children across the primary and upper primary stages as presented in **Table 2**.

The gap in rural enrolment between boys and girls at primary stage for classes I to V have reduced during Fourth to Seventh survey. This gap in rural enrolment is nearly 14350184, 13848523, 11652378, 6027882 in the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh survey, respectively. However, the growth in gap from the Fourth to the Seventh survey for primary stage has reduced by 57.99 per cent. Similarly, the gap in rural enrolment for upper primary stage for Class VI to VIII has also reduced numerically from 4860446 to 4525766 during Fourth to Seventh survey, and a negative growth (-6.88 per cent) is observed between Fourth and the Seventh survey.

1.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

The GER represents the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education (*UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2004: 148*). This ratio can often exceed one hundred percent because of late entrance or repetition and is an indication of the theoretical capacity of an education system to accommodate all children of that level of school age.

It is evident from the **Table 3** that the rural GER for boys at primary stage has decreased from 97.44 in the Fourth survey to 94.36 in the Seventh survey, whereas it has increased for girls from 59.57 in the Fourth survey to 89.91 in the Seventh survey. It reveals a negative growth (-3.16 percent) for the boys and a positive growth (50.93 percent) for the girls in rural GER. The gap between boys and girls in rural GER at primary stage from the Fourth survey to the Seventh survey is in decreasing trend and the respective figure for the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh survey, is 37.87, 31.81, 31.42 and 4.45. The most significant reduction in gap between boys and girls in rural GER at primary stage is found during the Seventh survey, which might be attributed to the implementation of the *Education For All* policy in the country.

On the other hand, the rural GER has increased for upper primary stage from 43.08 during the Fourth survey to 56.23 during the Seventh survey for boys, and from 18.23 during the Fourth survey to 46.11 during the Seventh survey for girls, thereby, reflecting a growth of 30.52 percent for boys and 152.93 percent for girls in rural GER, respectively. Besides, the gap between boys and girls in rural GER stands at 24.85, 26.59, 20.09 and 10.12 during the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh surveys, respectively.

3.4 Teachers in Elementary Schools

Teachers are considered the most valuable resource for a school. Teachers are defined as persons whose professional activity involves the transmitting of knowledge, attitudes and skills that are stipulated in a formal curriculum programme to students enrolled in formal educational institutions. **Table 4** presents the rural teachers in elementary schools during the Fifth to the Seventh survey in India. The data on the Fourth survey for rural teachers by sex for primary and upper primary schools were not available.

Quantitatively, around 24,44,748 teachers in the Seventh survey as against 19,00,007 teachers in the Fifth survey were available to teach the children in rural primary and upper primary schools, thereby, registering a growth of 28.67 percent during referred surveys in the country. The reported number of teachers is further distilled by sex. During the Seventh survey, the primary schools have engaged 14,14,975 teachers, whereas, 10,29,773 teachers are teaching in the upper primary schools in rural area in the country.

The participation of female teachers to educate the children in rural primary and upper primary schools has increased during the period 1978-2002. The percentage of female teachers in rural primary schools has an increasing trend that is nearly 20.94, 23.50 and 33.34 percent during the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh survey. Similarly, this percentage in rural upper primary schools is found nearly 23.48, 25.40 and 33.65 percent during the referred surveys. In addition, the strength of female teachers for primary and upper primary schools has gone up in terms of percentage growth during the Fifth to the Seventh survey, which is estimated to be nearly 90.96 and 105.02 percent for primary and upper primary schools in the country.

The gap between male and female teachers in the rural primary and upper primary schools has provided a reducing trend during the referred surveys. It is nearly 685872, 675744 and 471541 for primary schools and 382013, 388875 and 336653 for upper primary schools during the Fifth, Sixth and seventh surveys, respectively. Such reducing trends in gap between male and female teachers have negative growth, thereby, indicating a decrease in gender disparity in elementary schools in the country.

4.0 Conclusion

Based on the data analysis of the four successive educational surveys over a period of twenty-four years on school education, it can be concluded that the gender disparity vis-à-vis the gap between the boys and girls in the rural India is reducing in the estimate for number of rural child population, rural enrolment at elementary stages in different categories of schools, rural gross enrolment ratio (GER) at elementary stages and rural teachers in elementary schools.

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Table 1:
Estimated Rural Child Population in India, 4th to 7th Survey

Educational Survey (Year)	Estimated Rural Child Population (in Thousands)			
	Age: 6 to below 11 Years		Age: 11 to below 14 Years	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
4 th (1978)	34013	31543	18361	16731
5 th (1986)	37505.960	34927.972	22743.697	21232.976
6 th (1993)	45345.873	42344.728	24416.618	21843.408
7 th (2002)	52263.468	48149.155	31177.905	28204.417

Table 2:
Rural Enrolment at Elementary Stages in Different Categories of Schools in India, 4th to 7th Survey

Educational Survey (Year)	Rural Enrolment at Elementary Stages			
	Primary (Classes I to V)		Upper Primary (Classes VI to VIII)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
4 th (1978)	33140942	18790758	7910325	3049879
5 th (1986)	39824661	25976138	12089291	5640427
6 th (1993)	42062680	30410302	13651758	7823354
7 th (2002)	49317841	43289959	17530257	13004491

Table 3:
Rural Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at Elementary Stages in India, 4th to 7th Survey

Educational Survey (Year)	Rural GER for at Elementary Stages			
	GER for Primary Stage (Classes I to V)		GER for Upper Primary Stage (Classes VI to VIII)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
4 th (1978)	97.44	59.57	43.08	18.23
5 th (1986)	106.18	74.37	53.15	26.56
6 th (1993)	92.76	61.34	55.91	35.82
7 th (2002)	94.36	89.91	56.23	46.11

Table 4:
Rural Teachers in Elementary Schools in India, 5th to 7th Survey

Educational Survey (Year)	Rural Teachers in Elementary Schools			
	Primary School		Upper Primary School	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
5 th (1986)	932896	247024	551050	169037
6 th (1993)	975481	299737	589573	200698
7 th (2002)	943258	471717	683213	346560