Process Evaluation

Anandshala intervention under

Dasra Adolescent Collaborative in Jharkhand

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Glossary

AS	Anandshala	Name of the intervention being implemented by Quest Alliance in Jharkhand
CRP	Cluster Resource Person	They are government stakeholders who provide academic monitoring and onsite support to teachers
DAC	Dasra Adolescent Collaborative	An initiative by Dasra that unites social organizations, funders, technical experts and the government to empower and positively impact the lives of millions of adolescents
EP	Enrichment Program	A concept designed to make education joyful and help adolescents engage and learn better
EWS	Early Warning System	System designed to predict children at risk of dropping out of school
FC	Focus Children	Students who have identified to be at risk of dropping out of school
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	Qualitative research technique that involves gathering people from similar backgrounds or experiences together to discuss a specific topic of interest
GC	Girl Champion	Girl selected from the community to lead the Youth Club sessions
HM	Headmaster	School principal
IDI	In-depth interview	Qualitative research technique where intensive individual interviews are conducted
IRB	Institutional Review Board	An administrative body established to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects. It reviews the methods and protocols adopted for research to ensure they are ethical.
IVRS	Integrated Voice Response System	A technology that allows a computer to interact with humans through the use of voice. It allows sending pre-recorded messages to the intended recipients.
MRC	Medical Research Council	Responsible for co-coordinating and funding medical research in the United Kingdom
NPO	Non Participant Observation	A research technique whereby the researcher watches the subjects of his or her study, with their knowledge, but without taking an active part in the situation under scrutiny
QA	Quest Alliance	One of the implementing partners of Dasra Adolescent Collaborative in Jharkhand

RA	Research Assistant	Hired by Sambodhi to undertake the field work in the guidance of Research Managers and Project Coordinator
SF	School Facilitator	Locally hired personnel to implement Anandshala on ground in Jharkhand
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health	A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system. It implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so.
YC	Youth Club	Group of girls from the community with whom girl champion conduct sessions

1 Executive Summary

Adolescents in India remain a vulnerable and marginalized group. Adolescents face vulnerabilities in key aspects of their lives including sexual and reproductive health, education, nutrition, among other aspects facing challenges such as early marriage, early pregnancy, child labor, trafficking, sexual abuse, substance abuse and lack of agency (Population Council & UNICEF 2013)[1]. Dasra has taken an initiative to create a network of adolescent-friendly organization under the '10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative (DAC)' with an aim to transform the lives of adolescents across health, education, employability and agency.

One of the interventions under DAC is Anandshala, which is being implemented by Quest Alliance (QA) in Deoghar district of Jharkhand. Anandshala (AS) aims to bridge the education and skills divide for young girls and women through positive education and employability outcomes by equipping them with necessary skills. The intervention aims to create an enabling system for adolescents to complete secondary education and increase their agency in order to help them make informed life choices that influence their personal and professional lives.

This study is aimed at undertaking an evaluation of processes under Anandshala. Process Evaluation helps in informing the effectiveness of the intervention through detailed analysis of the activities and processes within it. In order to do this, mixed method research design was adopted with major focus on qualitative findings from the field and supplemented by programme data, wherever available. Study was conducted in two of the five working blocks in Deoghar district. Four villages and four schools were visited to conduct in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and non-participant observations with different stakeholders (programme team, headmaster, teacher, cluster resource person, school facilitator, parents, girl champion, and adolescents in and out of school). A total of 33 interviews, 12 FGDs and 18 NPOs were conducted across these stakeholders. Data was collected and analyzed by adopting Framework method. It was interpreted based on MRC Guidance. Major findings that emerged from these discussions and observations are discussed below:

In-school engagement: AS has introduced morning assembly, last class and Bal Sansad for adolescents in school. Many students participated and were also involved in organizing some of these activities in school. Evidence suggests that these activities are leading to enhanced interest among adolescents towards coming to school more often. However, there are issues pertaining to reach of the intervention, primarily because many adolescents fail to participate in AS activities for various reasons. Attendance was low in certain observations. Low participation might be an outcome of distance between home and school, fear of teachers, competing engagements at home and community.

School Facilitators (SF) appeared to be the key mediators for the intervention. Interviews with them suggested that they felt passionate for their work and were self-motivated for their task. In most cases, there was an amicable relationship between SF and all stakeholders. Majority of stakeholders were happy with the way SF were organizing new set of activities and believed they were helping adolescents in many ways. However, it was also reported that the current workplan management was leading to a higher workload on the SF, often resulting in large gaps between their consecutive visits to the same school. As a result, the intensity of engagement with adolescents suffers and the reach gets affected. In their absence, Headmasters (HM) and teachers are crucial to undertake the intervention. However, evidence suggests that activities carried out by HMs and teachers on behalf of the SF, but in SFs absence, did not match the intensity and the desired objective. In other words, there is an intensity lag of activities performed.

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[1] Adolescents in India: A desk review of existing evidence and behaviours, programmes and policies. 2013. New Delhi: Population Council & UNICEF

A subset of student engagement strategy in school is identification, tracking and engagement with focus children (FC), who are at a higher risk of dropping out of school. The process of identification of FC was being followed in the sampled areas. The programme monitoring data suggests that tracking of FC has also been started in the schools by SFs along with teachers. However, it could not be observed and commented upon as the process has only started recently. In majority of cases, FCs and their parents stated that SFs and teachers had begun visiting them. FCs were also being engaged more under AS activities. However, despite visits by SFs and teachers, some parents were still not sending their children to school. This suggests that the strategy to engage parents of FCs is being conducted but with mixed results.

The study found that engagement with parents for adolescents apart from FC is lacking both in terms of fidelity and intensity. In contrast to the program monitoring data, none of the parents interviewed indicated any engagement with AS through the telephonic communication strategies (such as IVRS). Parent-teacher meetings were also not taking place as per schedule. A majority of parents indicated lack of knowledge and awareness of AS activities. Awareness levels were found low, particularly in areas with marginalized population. Socio-economic conditions and socio-cultural norms in the community were also a big deterrent to parents regularly sending their children to school.

Out-of-school initiatives: The study found that delivery of content from the Girl Champions (GC) in the sessions was being done properly. While most girls who participated showed interest and found the sessions informative, a few girls were observed to lose interest as sessions progressed. Only a few girls asked questions and responded to GC's questions. There were issues pertaining to attendance of girls as well. This could be due to competing engagements at home owing to festivals, harvesting cycle of crops, and girls helping their family with household chores. Further, SFs were not able to commit enough time to the Youth Clubs (YC). Interviews with GCs suggested that they perceived their training useful in imparting necessary knowhow to girls in the villages. However, engagement with GCs post-training is challenging.

Since most girls who are out of school were not literate, the intervention has adapted to focus on teaching elementary things. Girls partaking in the sessions responded positively to these interventions, however, they looked forward to receiving more skilling-based education such as stitching and computer operation. Hence, while the program seems to have adapted their curriculum given the demographic characteristics, there are still challenges with respect to acceptance of the content.

Build capacity of stakeholders (government & NGO partners): AS orients Cluster Resource Person (CRP) towards Anandshala so that they can cascade the learning in their cluster level meetings as well as in their meetings with the teachers. However, these CRPs were not abreast with the happening under AS. They indicated a need for further interactions with program team and more training and handholding. On the other hand, with respect to the training of mediators, both the HMs and the NGO partner felt their trainings were conducted well and had helped build their skills for better interacting with stakeholders.

Recommendations

Effective workload planning for SF: It appears that SFs workload is hampering their productivity. The intervention will have to think on providing better support to SFs. This could be done through better workload planning, engaging more facilitators or building local capacities that can function alongside SFs.

Better engagement with in-school adolescents: In order to better engage all adolescents under AS, other supplementary processes can be devised. One such process is the incentivization of adolescents. Publicly praising or rewarding adolescents who have re-enrolled, maintained a certain level of attendance throughout the year or done good work to improve the state of education in the school or community could help and encourage other children to emulate the same. Involving HMs and teachers to take up AS

activities is important to ensure that these are carried out effectively when SFs are not present. It is important to mentor teachers on AS. Identification of nodal teachers from each school and training them on aspects of AS and giving them motivational and leadership trainings would be a useful step towards achieving this. This could make going to school more enjoyable for students and motivate them to stay in school.

Improve parental and community engagement: Parental engagement with adolescents beyond FC needs to be strengthened, especially given the backdrop of marginalization and poor socio-economic conditions. While it would be difficult for the program to change the socio-economic landscape, consistent engagement can bring about changes in behavior and awareness in parents.

AS can leverage the existing network of School Management Committees to engage community members more. It could also make frequent parent-teacher meetings a norm so that those who become aware can spread the message to others. To raise awareness among different communities, it would be prudent to engage community members through community leaders and religious leaders along with the program staff. Program may also think along the lines of targeted extension of the intervention. For instance, it would be useful to enhance extension of education awareness among marginalized communities to achieve better results.

Motivate GCs and redesign out-of-school curriculum: To involve out-of-school girls more, the program should enhance its scope and redesign its training content to incorporate skill building and livelihood enhancement modules in the sessions. The program may think about introducing these modules only for girls beyond a certain age so that it doesn't affect their re-enrolment in schools. Program also need to evolve more motivating activities for GCs so that their attrition can be checked. For instance, the program can think of linking GCs to existing government skill building programs so that they can receive vocational training.

Create awareness among CRPs: There is a need for more engagement with the CRPs, which can be made possible through more trainings. Further, since the schools in which SFs operate coincide with those of the CRPs, it becomes crucial that they speak to each other frequently and synergistically. This will not only increase CRPs awareness on AS but will also enable the program's message to percolate within and through the government system.

Conclusion

AS program in Jharkhand is perceived to be an appropriate and acceptable intervention for adolescents. Adolescents taking part in AS activities showed increased interest in coming to school. However, there is scope to engage more adolescents under AS. Program needs to involve HMs and teachers more in delivering AS activities in school. Their capacity building can help engage more adolescents and consequently help improve school attendance and decrease dropout rate. There is a need to create awareness in the community for which parental engagement needs to be emphasized more. AS strategies also need to factor in socio-economic barriers and socio-cultural norms to yield better results. The programs impetus on increasing agency of out-of-school girls and attempts towards their re-enrolment in schools appears to be in nascent stage and needs to be tailored towards their specific needs and circumstances. Engagement with CRPs also needs to be augmented through capacity building and through intensifying interaction with them.

2 Introduction

Adolescence is a phase of transition towards adulthood and is characterized by rapid growth and development during which physical, physiological, psychological and behavioral changes take place. The demographic transition of the past few decades has created the highest proportion of adolescents aged 10 to 19 years than ever before in human history. Adolescent population across the world is more than 1.2 billion, in other words, nearly every sixth person is an adolescent (UNICEF 2012)[2]. However, the majority of the world's adolescents are growing up in conditions of widespread poverty, rapid urbanization, limited educational opportunities, globalization, and increased access to worldwide information through the internet and social media. These factors may have far ranging implications for the health and wellbeing of youth, affecting the ability of nations to achieve their 'demographic dividend' (United Nations Population Fund and Population Reference Bureau 2012)[3].

India, one of the youngest countries in the world, has a huge demography with adolescents comprising around 21% (about 253 million) of the total population (Census, 2011)[4]. Even though there have been considerable improvements in health, nutrition and education outcomes among adolescents in the last decade, they continue to remain a vulnerable and marginalized group. Adolescents in India face vulnerabilities in key aspects of their lives including sexual and reproductive health, education, nutrition among other aspects facing challenges such as early marriage, early pregnancy, child labor, trafficking, sexual abuse, substance abuse and lack of agency (Population Council & UNICEF 2013)[5]. In addition, these vulnerabilities and challenges are exacerbated particularly for girls, who face gender disparities in education and nutrition, early marriage and discrimination. Especially, those belonging to socially excluded caste and tribes are at a higher risk of such vulnerabilities and poor health and nutritional outcomes[6].

There are encouraging signals from Central and State governments in India to recognize some of the vulnerabilities faced by young people. Policies and programmes that reflect commitment towards promoting adolescent development needs and protecting adolescent rights have been initiated. Under education, the Draft National Education Policy 2019 aims to achieve access and participation in free and compulsory quality school education for all children in the age group of 3-18 years by 2030. It also aims to provide foundational literacy and numeracy for every student in Grade 5 and beyond by 2025 (Ministry of Human Resource Development 2018)[7]. Under health, Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) envisions enabling all adolescents in India to take informed and responsible decisions related to their health and well-being and by accessing the services and support they need to do so. It aims to improve nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, prevent injuries and violence, prevent substance misuse and address non-communicable diseases (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare 2018)[8]. However,

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[2] http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress_for_Children_-_No._10_EN_04232012.pdf

[3] United Nation Population Fund and Population Reference Bureau. 2012. "Status Report on Adolescents and Young People in Sub-Saharan Africa: Opportunities and Challenges " In.: UNFPA.

[4] Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

[5] Adolescents in India: A desk review of existing evidence and behaviours, programmes and policies. 2013. New Delhi: Population Council & UNICEF

[6] https://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/India.pdf

[7] Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. 2018. Draft National Education Policy 2019.

[8] Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. 2018. Implementation Guidelines Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK)

efforts by the government are fraught with issues such as limitation in resources, difficulty in reaching the target population, and insufficiently trained personnel, among others.

Non-governmental organizations, in tandem with the Central and State Governments in India, are trying to address the above issues by working closely with the affected population. In one such effort, Dasra has taken an initiative of creating a network of adolescent-friendly organization under '10to19 : Dasra Adolescents Collaborative' (DAC) with an aim to transform the lives of adolescents across health, education, employability and agency, to help India achieve its Sustainable Development Goals. For this, Dasra has set four priority outcomes, viz. completion of secondary education, delaying age at marriage, increasing agency and delaying age of first pregnancy/ birth. Some of Dasra's efforts have synergies with existing government programs such as Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK). Their efforts would help achieve the broad mandate of government in improving health and education outcomes for adolescents. Dasra is trying to achieve its objective of improving the state of adolescents in Jharkhand with its partners - the Aangan Trust, Centre for Catalysing Change (C3), Child in Need Institute (CINI) and Quest Alliance - implementing DAC as a three-year intervention.

Although, a number of adolescent development programmes have been implemented to address education, health, skill development and employment generation in different states within India, only a select few have been soundly evaluated. There is scant literature and documentation around promising practices, evidence on what works and what does not work around interventions aimed at adolescent development. In order to fill this gap, DASRA has commissioned a process evaluation study to gain insights on key processes and distill what works and what doesn't with respect to delivery of such processes under the four interventions in DAC. Process evaluations of the interventions within DAC would be useful in informing the effectiveness of an intervention by investigating how it was implemented, the mechanisms by which it achieved its effect, how the intervention interacted with the context in which it was implemented and whether the process and outcomes of the interventions can be sustained over time (Haynes, et al., 2014)[9]. The Process evaluation study would help Dasra take learning back into program delivery and take steps towards course correction, if required.

The primary objectives of this process evaluation exercise are listed below:

- Document key processes and activities within it;

- Assess the quality of implementation of identified processes;

- Develop an understanding of interaction between the intervention and its key beneficiaries.

The next sections in this report delves into the details of Anandshala (AS) intervention being implemented by Quest Alliance in Deoghar district of Jharkhand and detailed findings from the process evaluation with respect to core activities envisioned under it.

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[9] Haynes, A., S. Brennan, S. Carter, D. O'Connor, C. H. Schneider, T. Turner, G. Gallego and C. Team (2014). "Protocol for the process evaluation of a complex intervention designed to increase the use of research in health policy and program organisations (the SPIRIT study)." Implementation science: IS 9: 113-113

3 About Anandshala

Anandshala (AS) aims to bridge the education and skills divide for young girls and women through positive education and employability outcomes, by equipping them with necessary skills. The intervention aims to create an enabling system for adolescents to complete secondary education and increase their agency to help them make more informed life choices that influence their personal and professional lives.

Quest Alliance (QA) is currently working in Deoghar district in Jharkhand. Deoghar has low literacy levels (64.8%) and child marriage is prevalent (more than 41% girls married before 18 years as on March 2011[10]). The district also has a sizeable tribal population. QA is working in 5 blocks in Deoghar, namely, Madhupur, Sonaraithari, Palajori, Devipur and Deoghar. QA is operating through two implementing partners, viz. NEEDS and Chetna Vikas, in these blocks. They are engaging with adolescents both in schools and out-of-school. In-school activities are targeted at both boys and girls while out-of-school activities are primarily targeted at girls who are not enrolled or have dropped out of schools. To meet its outcomes, QA is engaged in six core activities **(Figure 1)**.

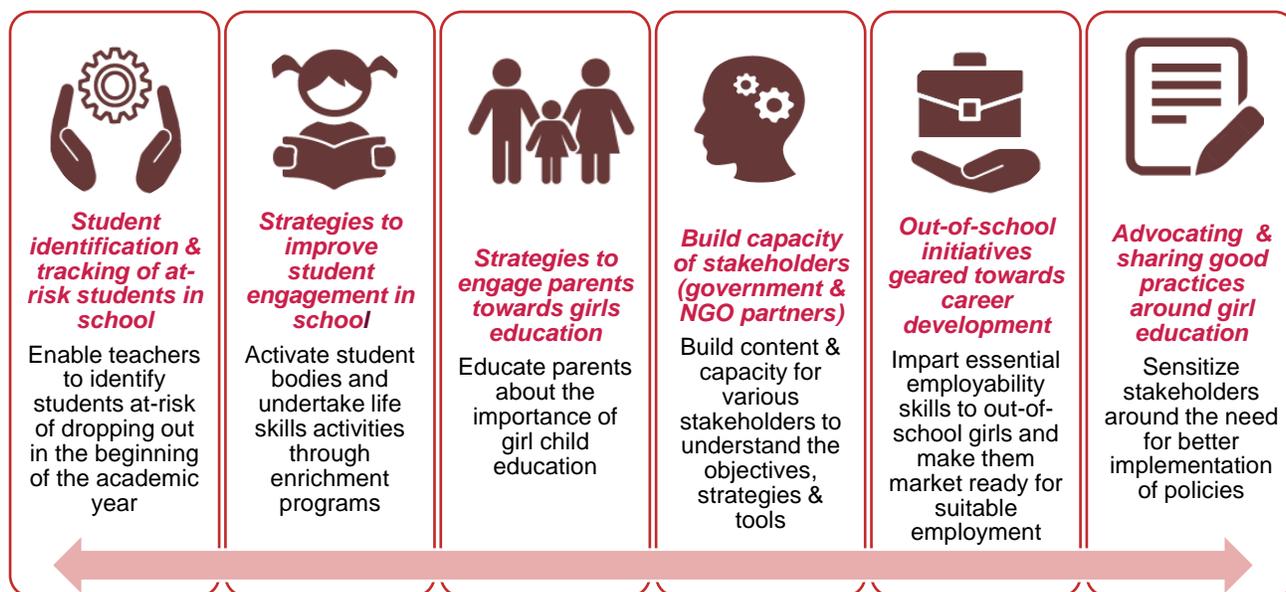| *Student identification & tracking of at-risk students in school*	*Strategies to improve student engagement in school*	*Strategies to engage parents towards girls education*	*Build capacity of stakeholders (government & NGO partners)*	*Out-of-school initiatives geared towards career development*	*Advocating & sharing good practices around girl education*
Enable teachers to identify students at-risk of dropping out in the beginning of the academic year	Activate student bodies and undertake life skills activities through enrichment programs	Educate parents about the importance of girl child education	Build content & capacity for various stakeholders to understand the objectives, strategies & tools	Impart essential employability skills to out-of-school girls and make them market ready for suitable employment	Sensitize stakeholders around the need for better implementation of policies

Figure 1: Core activities under Anandshala

1. **Student identification & tracking of at-risk students in school**: QA team has evolved a system of identifying at-risk adolescents (or Focus Child {FC}), who are at risk of dropping out from the school. These students are tracked for their attendance, academic performance and engagement in the class. Teachers and NGO partners identify such students and focus the interventions primarily on them.

2. **Strategies to improve student engagement in school**: To improve students' engagement in school, AS has tried to make school activities fun for the students. They have tried to engage students through focus on various activities in the schools. More activities have been introduced in the morning assembly with students taking the centerstage. Bal Sansad bodies have been strengthened with the requisite number of student ministers appointed and tasked. Life skill sessions in the schools are also being imparted.

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[10] Goli, S. (2016). Eliminating Child Marriages in India: Progress and Prospects. Available at: https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/portalfiles/portal/58285434/EliminatingChildMarriageReport_e_Book.pdf

3. **Strategies to engage parents towards girls' education**: AS has attempted to make parents more aware towards their children's education through home visits and Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS).

4. **Build capacity of stakeholders (government & NGO partners)**: To build sustainability of the program, QA is building capacity of its stakeholders including those in the government (particularly the Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs)), school headmasters and the implementing NGO partners. These stakeholders are supposed to take forward the program in future.

5. **Out-of-school initiatives geared towards career development**: While gearing out-of-school girls for career is an objective in sight of QA, organizing out-of-school girls in groups (called Youth Club {YC}) is the short-term plan. These YCs, led by Girl Champions (GC) will be the space to increase agency for out-of-school girls and encourage them to enroll in schools.

6. **Advocating & sharing good practices around girl education**: Sensitization of government stakeholders is key to smooth program implementation. QA intends to raise awareness among government stakeholders towards AS program so that it is adopted at the bottom of the ladder (e.g. by school authorities).

4 Methodology

4.1 Study design

A mixed methods study design was adopted for this process evaluation study. Qualitative approach was primarily adopted for data collection and quantitative programme monitoring data was utilized wherever available.

4.2 Study approach

We adopted a step-wise approach for carrying out the evaluation. The exercise was carried out in the following phases:
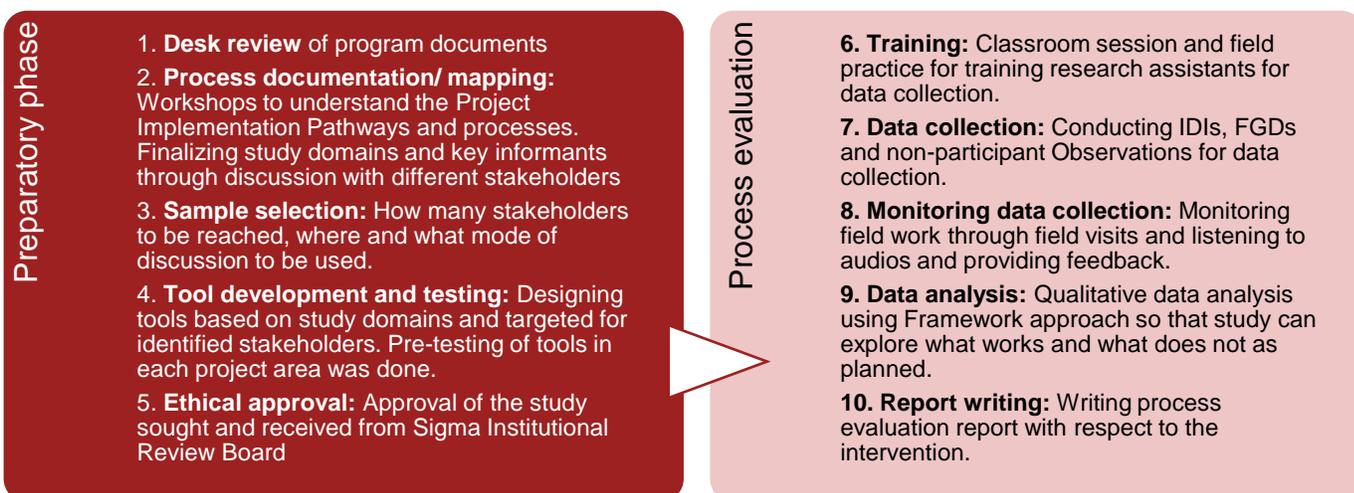
Preparatory phase

1. **Desk review** of program documents
2. **Process documentation/ mapping:** Workshops to understand the Project Implementation Pathways and processes. Finalizing study domains and key informants through discussion with different stakeholders
3. **Sample selection:** How many stakeholders to be reached, where and what mode of discussion to be used.
4. **Tool development and testing:** Designing tools based on study domains and targeted for identified stakeholders. Pre-testing of tools in each project area was done.
5. **Ethical approval:** Approval of the study sought and received from Sigma Institutional Review Board

Process evaluation

6. **Training:** Classroom session and field practice for training research assistants for data collection.
7. **Data collection:** Conducting IDIs, FGDs and non-participant Observations for data collection.
8. **Monitoring data collection:** Monitoring field work through field visits and listening to audios and providing feedback.
9. **Data analysis:** Qualitative data analysis using Framework approach so that study can explore what works and what does not as planned.
10. **Report writing:** Writing process evaluation report with respect to the intervention.

Figure 64: Study approach

These phases are discussed in detail in the next sections.

4.2.1   Desk review and Process documentation

Sambodhi reviewed program documents to get a theoretical understanding of the programme and underlying processes. This gave preliminary understanding of the processes. Discussions were held with the program staff and Dasra team to refine the understanding of the processes. These discussions also helped in identification of relevant stakeholders for the evaluation. Process maps were created following the discussions outlining the implementation pathways. The process map that emerged from the discussions is provided in **Annexure 1**. Some processes were excluded from the evaluation based on mutual discussion. The processes around 'engage with government stakeholders' component in the process map were excluded from the scope of evaluation. Additionally, some processes that were part of the scope could not be studied in detail as they were either one-off processes or did not take place during the data collection phase

4.2.2   Qualitative data collection methods used in the study

A qualitative approach was adopted to collect primary data for the study. Among the different types of In-Depth Interview (IDI) techniques (structured, semi-structured and unstructured), **semi-structured IDI** suited the purpose of the study as they help in getting answers to the issues under lens and still provide enough leeway to secure responses which were not anticipated earlier. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** were chosen as another mode of data collection for their ability to provide a variety of responses at one go. The IDIs and FGDs, are considered appropriate to assess people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and construction of reality and hence were chosen as methods of data collection[11]. FGDs were conducted primarily with adolescents (in addition to IDIs with adolescents), as they are the primary beneficiaries of the intervention and the most important source of information. In addition, **Non-Participant Observations (NPOs)** were also conducted to observe various trainings and adolescent sessions being conducted as part of intervention activities.

4.2.3   Sample selection

We have adopted purposive sampling in this study. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al. 2015)[12]. The variety of participants **(Table 2)** were purposively drawn from different settings to enable us to study contextual variations. This was done to capture maximum essence of the intervention and helped provide better feedback to Dasra on program implementation.

Two blocks were selected (Madhupur and Sonaraithari) from a total of five blocks where the intervention is being implemented after consultation with QA and Dasra. This selection was based on the length of the intervention. This criterion was chosen with the assumption that if the intervention has run greater course at one block, the processes would have matured more and vice versa. This enabled us to understand if any adaptations have taken place already. The intervention has run for more than a year in Madhupur block while it has only recently started in Sonaraithari block.

For selection of villages and schools within the selected blocks, the following criteria were chosen to achieve maximum variation:

   a. Vulnerability of the overall population (presence of marginalized communities)

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[11] *Somekh, B and Lewin, C. 2005. Research Methods in the Social Sciences. London: SAGE.*
[12] *Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. Administration and policy in mental health and mental health services research, 42(5), 533-544.*

b. Any known issues with adolescents (such as high incidences of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, school dropout etc.)

c. Old and new intervention villages

d. Challenging or smooth in terms of the rollout of our programs

e. Geographical differences (distance of village from block HQ and school from the village)

f. Good performing and low performing schools/ villages

Based on the above criteria, QA provided a list of 15 villages & schools in Madhupur and 10 villages & schools in Sonaraithari block. The list was further refined by Sambodhi using the same criteria to arrive at 2 villages and schools in each block for the purpose of data collection. This is tabulated below **(Table 1)**:

Table 1: Sample selection of block, village and school

Block	Village	School
Madhupur	Suggapahari	UMS Suggapahari
Madhupur	Siktiya	UHS Jagdishpur
Sonaraithari	Pipra	UMS Saraskunda
Sonaraithari	Kolhariya	Kolhariya 2

Another level of sampling was done at the level of respondents. They were targeted based on the following selection criteria methodology for each type of respondent:

Under the in-school intervention, a school was visited, and its HM was interviewed. One school teacher, who was more engaged under AS, was selected from each school for an IDI. This information was acquired from the HM. Within the school, FGDs with adolescents were carried out. This included one with females and one with males in each school. The group composed of about 6-10 students from the list of all students representing different secondary classes. Students were selected from classes 6-8 in upper primary school and classes 9-10 or 9-12 in secondary or higher secondary school. The group of students comprised Bal Sansad members, FCs and other adolescents from different classes in order to cover variety of responses. IDIs were conducted separately with students that were FCs and that were members of the Bal Sansad. Maintaining equal proportion of male and female adolescents for IDI was ensured. The SF responsible for the school was also interviewed.

Under the out-of-school component, a visit was made to the YC in the village and an FGD was conducted with the members of the YC. The girls that lived in the vicinity of the YC were selected for the FGD. The GC leading the YC was interviewed separately. In the community, IDIs with parents were also conducted. Three parents were interviewed in each of the two villages visited. This included parent of an in-school FC (identified from the school FGD group), parent of an in-school non-focus child (identified from the school FGD group), and a parent of an out-of-school child (identified from the YC). Those parents were interviewed who were present in their homes at the time when the team visited the village.

The final sample size and data collection methods for stakeholders are provided in the table below **(Table 2)**:

Table 2: Sample selection across stakeholders

Quest Alliance		
Target respondents	**Sample size**	**Data collection method**
Project officials (implementation team)		
State level	1	IDI
Block level	2 (1 per block)	IDI
NGO Partners	2	IDI
Sample distribution among Stakeholders		
School teacher	4 (1 per school)	IDI
Adolescent girl and boy participants (in-school)	8 (2 FGDs per school)	FGD
At-risk adolescents (aka focus child)	4 (1 per school)	IDI
Adolescent	4 (1 per school)	IDI
Parents	6 (3 per school/village)	IDI
Cluster Resource Persons (CRP)	1-4 (1 per school)	IDI
School headmaster	4 (1 per school)	IDI
Girl champion	4 (1 per village)	IDI
Youth club members	4 (1 per village)	FGD
School facilitators	4 (1 per village)	IDI
Non-participant observations		
School assembly	4 (1 per school)	Non-participant observation (NPO)
Last class activity	4 (1 per school)	
Bal Sansad monthly meeting	4 (1 per school)	
Youth club training	2 (1 per block)	
Girl champion training	2 (1 per block)	
Capacity building of headmaster	2 (1 per block)	
Parents Teachers open house	2 (1 per block)	

4.2.4 Tool development and pre-testing

In accordance with the methods identified for data collection, research tools were developed to guide discussions with different stakeholders and observe various activities. Tools focused mainly on understanding the processes implemented on the ground, interaction among various stakeholders and involvement of the program teams. Revisions to the study tools were also made following feedback from Dasra team and program staff. The tools, thus developed, were translated to Hindi as it is commonly understood by the identified stakeholders in Jharkhand. Translation of tools from English to Hindi was done by a professional translation firm. Data collection tools developed for the study were pre-tested in the field to ascertain their suitability to actual field conditions. The research team members carried out the pre-testing exercise in non-sampled project areas. Based on the experiences from pre-testing, the research instruments were further revised and finalized before submitting them for ethical approval.

4.2.5   Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the study was sought from Sigma Institutional Review Board (IRB). Research documents, pre-tested tools along with other required documents were submitted to the IRB. Feedback received from the IRB meeting was incorporated in the research tools. Following this, ethical approval was received for the study.

Following protocols were adhered to, in order to maintain ethical standards in the study:

1. **Informed consent:** Any discussion with a respondent was initiated only after they agreed verbally and in writing for the same. Respondents were informed in advance about the purpose of the study, nature of information required from them, risks & benefits of the study among other aspects.

    In case a respondent interviewed was minor (i.e. below 18 years of age), informed consent was taken from the respondent as well as from his/ her guardian. In case such a respondent belonged to a school, consent forms were sent to his/ her parents at least a day prior to the discussion after explaining all the contents of the consent form to the adolescent. Only those adolescents who came back with a signed consent form from their parent were included in the discussion. In case minor respondents being interviewed were out of school, the field team approached their parents and sought consent.

    In case of non-participant observations, written consent was taken from the person in-charge of the activity. For examples, for observing morning assembly, informed consent was taken from the school principal.

2. **Confidentiality:** All measures have been taken to keep the information provided by respondents during data collection strictly confidential. This information has been used only for research purposes. Personal identifiers of respondents will be kept confidential from anybody other than the project team.

3. **Privacy:** While conducting interviews and focus group discussions, privacy of respondents has been maintained. No external person was present during the discussions beyond the project team and the programme staff.

4.2.6   Data collection

The field team comprised two Research Assistants who were trained on DAC, AS intervention, nuances of conducting IDIs, FGDs and NPOs and the relevant tools to be administered in detail through two trainings. Each training consisted of theoretical classes and field work practice. First training was organized for 4 days with 3-day classroom sessions and 1 day of field practice. Second training (refresher training) was conducted for 3 days followed by data collection and monitoring of data collection. The RAs worked closely with the Research Manager at Sambodhi and the field team of the implementation organization throughout the data collection process.

Field notes were taken during the interviews, and IDIs and FGDs were audio-recorded. During the IDIs and FGDs, questions were asked according to the interview and discussion protocol, thus prompting interviewees to provide further details until each line of inquiry was sufficiently covered. The average length of an interview was about 40 minutes. It is to be noted that all attempts were made that a male respondent is interviewed by a male person while a female adolescent is interviewed by a female person.

Certain challenges were encountered during the discussions. The time of the data collection coincided with harvesting of paddy. This led to lesser number of people available at home. Hence, the interviewers had to make multiple visits to the community to find relevant respondents. Further, festivities and election affected the flow of work. A few discussions could not be carried out as anticipated for reasons such as activities itself not taking place and unavailability of eligible respondents.

4.2.7   Data analysis

Organization and analysis of data has been carried out by adopting Framework method (Gale et al. 2013)[13]. This helped generate a framework of codes and code categories based on pre-decided themes. Major steps involved in developing analytical framework under Framework method included:

- **Transcription and translation**: The audio recordings collected during data collection were transcribed and translated verbatim by the RAs. Random samples from these translations of transcriptions were checked by research managers and feedback was given to RAs at this stage.

- **Familiarization with the interviews:** Members of the research team thoroughly read and re-read each transcript and listened to audio-recorded interviews to become familiar with the dataset. This process of familiarization is essential as the researchers analysing data are not present during the discussions.

- **Developing coding frame:** Data so collected is structured using codes and code categories. Responses from all IDIs and FGDs were coded by the principal researchers using R as a commercial, qualitative data analysis program. The adapted Framework method of Gale et al. directed the list of codes under predetermined themes to specifically assess quality of implementation, context and mechanism of action as directed by the Medical Research Council (MRC) framework. The principal researchers decided upon the most representative quotations to reflect respective themes.

- **Developing framework:** A framework of codes and categories was developed using a few transcripts. Once it was developed, each frame was checked and compared with the rationale behind it. The structuring and generation of the coding frame was done using a combination of two strategies:

    - In a concept driven way, i.e. based on what the researchers already knew from the literature review and field insights.
    - In a data driven way, i.e. by letting the categories/ dimensions emerge from the collected data.

    The combination of these two strategies enabled us to incorporate both deductive and inductive processes. The developed framework of codes and categories was used to code other transcripts.

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[13] Gale, N. K., Heath, G., Cameron, E., Rashid, S., & Redwood, S. (2013). Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research. BMC medical research methodology, 13(1), 117.

- **Interpreting data:** Based on the emerging framework of codes and categories, other transcripts were coded and reviewed. Among many approaches to interpreting data we adopted UK MRC Guidance (Moore et al. 2015)[14]. Evaluation findings are weaved together by adopting MRC Guidance. MRC guiding document helps in planning, designing, conducting, reporting and appraising process evaluations of complex interventions. It breaks the key functions for process evaluation of an intervention under implementation (how is delivery achieved and what is being actually delivered), mechanism of impact (how does the delivery intervention produce change) and context (how does context affect implementation and outcomes).

Findings are first structured strategically and then by themes. They are weaved together as a narrative following the MRC guidance.

4.2.8 Limitations

- The study adopted purposive sampling to get in-depth understanding of perspectives of the stakeholders and situations. However, the findings are not generalizable.

- Purposive sampling was adopted with certain inclusion and exclusion criteria, but this may still have led to creeping in of selection bias.

- Some processes were excluded from the scope of the evaluation based on mutual discussion with Quest Alliance and Dasra. Some of the processes, that were part of the scope, could not be studied in detail as they were either one-off processes or were not scheduled to take place during the data collection phase.

5 Key findings

This section presents the thematic analysis of the IDIs and FGDs with stakeholders as well as findings from the NPOs of the various activities of the intervention that were conducted as part of the study. The themes that emerged have been organized under three main program strategies, viz: student engagement in school, out-of-school initiatives and capacity building of stakeholders. In-school engagement talks about activities at improving student engagement in schools, role of key mediator at school level, focus on at-risk adolescents, and engagement with parents to bring more adolescents to school. Out-of-school section focuses on activities undertaken in the community aimed at increasing agency of out-of-school girls. Capacity building of stakeholders provides analytical findings related to capacity building process of key stakeholders under AS.

5.1 Student engagement in school

Anandshala's in-school component is being implemented with the motto of **'Stay, Engage and Learn'**. It intends to make coming to school and education fun for adolescents. Adolescents are engaged in school through morning assembly, last class activities and Bal Sansads. These activities are aimed at improving school attendance as well as decrease dropout rates in Jharkhand districts where the intervention is being implemented.

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[14] *Moore, G. F., Audrey, S., Barker, M., Bond, L., Bonell, C., Hardeman, W., ... & Baird, J. (2015). Process evaluation of complex interventions: Medical Research Council guidance. bmj, 350.*

Perceived benefits of AS activities:

Morning assembly has been redesigned under AS to include different activities. These activities include prayer, national anthem, pledge, preamble of the Constitution, community news, questions of the day, *chanda-suraj*, and birthday celebration among other. Morning assembly run for more than 30 minutes. Similarly, last class activities introduced under AS aims at engaging adolescents through activities like drawing, playing various games, and counting, among other things, for about an hour. Bal Sansad activities are monthly meetings that are conducted once in a month for 30-60 minutes wherein elected students holding different portfolios (such as cleanliness, environment, education, health, water, sports etc.) deliberate on issues under these themes.

The program monitoring data suggests that morning assembly has been redesigned, last class activities have been initiated and Bal Sansads have been formed in all the middle and higher schools. These activities were observed in all the areas we sampled as well. Three Bal Sansad monthly meetings, four morning assemblies, and four last class activities were observed.

Our NPOs indicate that students participated and a few of them also took leadership roles in organizing these activities in school. The observations conducted during morning assembly show that adolescents were encouraged to lead the morning assembly. A group of students led the assembly while other students were encouraged to speak up through activities such as reading local news, taking a pledge, sharing a thought of the day etc. In a few NPOs during last class activity, we observed that some students were encouraged to organize games while rest of the students followed their lead in participating in those games. Majority of observations suggest that adolescents that took part in the activities showed interest and seemed happy to engage. These sessions appeared well planned in terms of choosing designated time and place for the sessions. The sessions were mostly led by SFs and had adequate resources like charts, paper, pencil, sketches for conducting the planned activities.

The adolescents were assigned important responsibilities as ministers and deputy ministers under Bal Sansads in the school. The NPOs demonstrated that students deliberated in the monthly sessions on various issues such as maintaining hygiene, preparation of first aid kid in school, visiting homes of children who are not attending school or have been irregular, among others. In all Bal Sansad observations, SF guided the discussions, leading to the sessions being structured, engaging, and collaborative. The FGDs and IDIs with adolescents themselves indicate that AS activities were perceived to benefit the participating students by developing leadership qualities, reducing shyness, and building self-confidence.

> *"We learn while playing in Antim Ghanti (Last Class)….now we can talk freely in front of 10 people without hesitation"* – FGD, Adolescent
>
> *"We have learnt to sketch and paint in the last class. These activities help boost our confidence."* – FGD, Adolescent

In addition, the perceived benefits of AS in improving and regularizing school attendance was also articulated by majority of stakeholders in the school.

> *"We enjoy the activities. We have started coming to school regularly due to AS activities."* – FGD, Adolescent
>
> *"AS has led to increase in attendance in schools. First, students used to go to school one day and skip the next day. This has improved drastically."* – IDI, Parent

> *"SF comes to school and teaches adolescents through different activities. This has attracted them and led to some increase in attendance. Children find it more interesting."* – IDI, Teacher

> *"Children are showing increased awareness towards school. Earlier, these activities used to happen, but not as much. Since SF has come along, attendance in school has definitely increased."* – IDI, Headmaster

Issues around participation in AS activities:

While AS activities are being organized as planned and are benefitting participating students, there are issues pertaining to reach of the intervention, primarily because some adolescents fail to be a part of the AS activities for various reasons. This was corroborated through observation checklists in our NPOs that suggest that attendance of the eligible participants was always less than planned. The NPOs of morning assembly indicate that children were coming late to school and joined in while the assembly was going on (and even after it got over). Not all of them were enthusiastic enough to partake in morning assembly. Similarly, not all students took part in the last class activities and a few members also skipped Bal Sansad meetings.

> *"Some of the ministers do not attend the meeting. Prime Minister rarely joins. Last Saturday, only 11 ministers were present."* - FGD, Female Adolescent

> *"Girls would know better what activities are conducted as part of Last Class. We only watch. We don't enjoy these games much."* – FGD, Male Adolescent

Low and irregular participation was often a result of competing engagements at home and community during the time these activities are held or other contextual reasons like distance from the school.

> *"Most kids from class 1-5 are from this village only. Kids in 6-8 class come from other villages also. XXX School has been merged in this school as there were less students there. Although, the school got merged and kids got enrolled, attendance remains low due to longer distance."* – IDI, School teacher

> *"I do not attend Last Class as I have to go to the Mosque to study."* – IDI, Focus Child

> *"I go to Madarsa in the morning to study. I get relieved after 9 am. Hence I get late to school."* – IDI, Bal Sansad adolescent

5.1.1   Role of SFs as a mediator in roll out of AS

The SF can be considered as a key mediator for AS activities. SFs are locally hired person to help extend AS reach in and out of school. They visit 4-6 schools in a week and at least a YC in the community. They facilitate execution of AS activities and maintain interaction with HMs and teachers in school on AS. Interviews with them suggested that they felt motivated for their task. They expressed that their trainings were useful as they received relevant information in their training sessions which helped them improve their knowledge and skills to conduct AS activities and engage with stakeholders, including adolescents, in and out of school.

> *"Training was definitely helpful. It helps us in our work as relevant information is given during trainings."*

- IDI, School facilitator

"We received training on EWS, EP etc. It helped us work in school and in youth clubs. These trainings have been very useful for us. It proves our work useful." – IDI, School facilitator

Interviews with various stakeholders and observation of AS activities facilitated by SF suggest that they have been able to perform their duties in congruence with the expectations. Majority of stakeholders were happy with the way SF were organizing new set of activities and believed they were helping adolescents in many ways.

"We have seen significant changes in the morning assembly since Anandshala was introduced….I used to do these things on my own; now with the SF present, these activities are happening much better. " – IDI, Teacher

"I like him/her (SF) because he/she engages us in games, makes us laugh and teaches us many things." – IDI, Bal Sansad Adolescent

"He (the SF) only pushed us to send our kids to school." – IDI, Parent

"The SF engages adolescents in writing essays, make drawings etc. Adolescents take interest in this. Girls in classes 6-8 do not speak to us about their personal issues. SF tells them about staying clean, bodily changes, staying safe from diseases and keeping health in check to allow for physical and mental development." – IDI, Teacher

Interviews with HMs and teachers indicate that SFs are a vital support in garnering interest of many adolescents towards education through their innovative ways of organizing activities. The FGDs with adolescents also indicated similar findings with majority of adolescents expressing high comfort levels in engaging with the SF. Our NPOs also corroborated findings on the adolescents engagement and participation in the sessions led by SFs. The NPOs reveal that SFs responded to the adolescent queries and came prepared (e.g. with pencil, sketch pens, chart paper etc.) for the activities.

"The SF is helping kids read better. They engage adolescents in sketching" – IDI, NGO Partner

"SF engages kids in painting, tells them about their rights, plantation. They are bringing kids forward…Kids are really happy. Their fear has subsided." – IDI, School teacher

"SF teaches us various games…Morning assembly is happening properly since SF has joined…. SF gives enough time to the school." – IDI, Bal Sansad Adolescent

While the data suggests that in majority of cases, there was an amicable relationship between SF and all stakeholders, we also came across an exception wherein SF was not accepted well in a school.

"Some HM behave differently. If a Muslim SF is going to a school where the HM is of other religion, they don't want SF to perform their duties the whole day." – IDI, NGO Partner

SFs indicated that while it takes time to build relations in such scenarios, they gradually establish a conducive atmosphere and congenial relations with stakeholders.

Need to revisit planning of SFs workload

The programme envisaged that school facilitators visit 4-6 schools in a week (one school on one day of the week) and one youth club in a week. In addition, an SF is also responsible to provide daily and

periodic updates of her work and Anandshala's progress. They collect and provide information through various reports and tools. It was reported by stakeholders including HMs, teachers, NGO partner and the SFs themselves, that this arrangement is leading to a higher workload on the SF, particularly when they had to travel from one village to the other to visit schools. Further, the planning of SFs visits to schools seemed to pose a challenge. On occasions, school visits were missed owing to holidays, festivals, other exigencies etc. and the period between visiting the same school exceeded a week to a fortnight, and sometimes even more. As a result, the intensity of engagement with adolescents suffered and hence the reach was also affected.

> *"SF has high workload. Visiting and engaging continuously with five schools and a youth club in a week is very difficult."* – IDI, NGO Partner
>
> *"SF goes to 4-5 schools and a youth club. It's possible to visit a youth club located within a km of the school but going to a youth club that's far off after 3-4 pm is really difficult. SF is still giving time to school but not been able to give enough time to out of school activities.* – IDI, NGO Partner
>
> *"Earlier we used to work in four schools. Now some have six and some even have nine. We are only able to visit a school once or twice in a month. Further, there is additional burden of reporting. It is all to be done while working. Our efforts go there as well, and we are not able to work as freely as we should."* – IDI, School Facilitator

Issues around sustainability of the AS activities in SF's absence:

Involvement of HMs and teachers in AS activities is crucial for continuous engagement of adolescents. HMs have been trained in AS aspects but there is no formalized component of teacher training built within AS activities. The intervention aims to orient teachers on AS aspects gradually through their interaction with the HMs, SFs and CRPs. Interviews and discussions with adolescents reveal that AS activities were not conducted appropriately, adequately, or as designed in the absence of SF. Lack of engagement of HMs and teachers is evident from the NPOs (particularly last class and Bal Sansad), which show almost negligible presence of HMs and little engagement of teachers.

> *"Previous Last Class activity was conducted a week back. We made a banner that day. Last class activity takes place only when the SF comes."* – Male adolescent FGD
>
> *"When our SFs go to school, all activities take place. When they do not visit the school, most activities are not conducted. Teachers have not adopted these things yet."* – IDI, NGO Partner
>
> *"When the SF is not there, these activities (Last class) are occasionally conducted."* – IDI, Headmaster
>
> *"Teachers do not support us as much. They are currently busy with elections. They themselves have so much work. We are getting support but not as much. When I am not there, AS activities are not conducted as effectively."* – IDI, SF

A few students also indicated the poor attitude and harassment by the teachers in school as reasons for irregular school attendance.

> *"That madam beats us; she scolds so loudly that we get frightened. I will come to school regularly if she is not there."* – IDI, Focus child adolescent

Poor involvement of teachers and HMs in AS activities as well as negative behavior can affect the ongoing strategy of improving and regularizing school attendance through engaging adolescents and may also hinder sustainability of such activities in future when the involvement of SF stops.

Identification and Engagement of FCs in AS activities

A subset of student engagement strategy in school is identification of school children that may be at risk of dropping out and engaging more with them. These at-risk adolescents, referred to as focus children (FC), are identified based on their cumulative score in parameters that include school attendance, academic performance in Hindi, and engagement in the respective class. A 3-Star scoring system is adopted to score students on each of the three parameters. The stars obtained for each parameter are cumulated to get an overall star score for an individual. Students in a class are arranged in the increasing order of stars obtained. Those who obtained fewer stars (from 3 to 5 stars) fall under FC category. Response strategies are undertaken to prevent their dropping out of school. SFs and teachers carry out this activity.

The program monitoring data indicates that the process of identification of FC has been completed in all 328 schools. List of FC has been prepared in all the government schools in the study area. The interviews with teachers and HMs also seem to suggest that the process of identification of FC is being conducted as per the implementation protocol.

"Focus child are identified on the basis of their marks in Hindi, their attendance in last year, their participation in classes. Focus child are made to participate in Last Class. They make paintings. I help them. I make sure that they take part in activities." – IDI, Teacher

"To bring students regularly to school, we conduct one to one meeting with parents of focus children." – IDI, Headmaster

The program monitoring data suggests that tracking of FC on identified parameters has just been started in the schools by SFs along with teachers. This involves tracking of FCs on the same parameters periodically. The process would be very useful to check the progress of the intervention. However, since this process has recently started, we were unable to observe and comment on the same.

With regards to increasing FC's engagement in school activities, it was observed in the NPOs that FC's were being involved in Bal Sansad (BS) monthly meetings as ministers. FC engage in discussions on various issues in the BS monthly meeting as discussed earlier. Two of the three BS monthly meetings that were observed as part of the study involved participation of FCs. While all students participate in morning assembly and last class, the school authorities encourage the FC adolescents to lead these activities to instill a sense of belongingness. Interviews with teachers suggest that FCs are engaged more in morning assembly and in last class in addition to BS meetings. The activities are useful in developing personality and leadership among FCs as well as other adolescents.

"I used to be afraid earlier but now my confidence has gone up. I enjoy the atmosphere of studying, classes are informative, activities are organized. I like coming to school." – IDI, Focus Child

"Since these activities are being conducted, more students are coming to school…their confidence is also building up. They do not hesitate anymore. If a question is now asked, everyone can speak up. There is no fear." – IDI, Bal Sansad Adolescent

"We ask FC to conduct morning assembly as they tend to shy away. We want them to learn as well and hence bring them forward." – IDI, Teacher

5.1.2 Parental engagement strategies need to be ramped up

Parental engagement as a strategy helps to improve school attendance, retain adolescents and decrease dropouts. It is an important component of AS and involves engaging parents of all children through an Integrated Voice Response System (IVRS) (which sends out messages on importance of education for children) parent-teacher open houses, and home visits particularly in the case of FCs.

Engagement with parents of identified FCs is important for preventing them from dropping out of school. One of the ways to do that includes home visits by teachers and school facilitators. With respect to engaging with families of FCs, majority of interviews with FCs and their parents indicated that SFs and teachers are making visits in the community to encourage them so that adolescents go to school more frequently. HMs, teachers and SFs visit homes of such parents to understand the cause of absenteeism among children. They also try to provide solutions to the concerns of parents and encourage them to send their children to school.

> *"She visited my house and asked me to be regular. She also asked my parents to send me regularly to school. Teachers also make phone calls to parents whose kids do not attend school."* – IDI, Focus child
>
> *"School facilitator goes and visit focus children and their parents. She tries and bring them to school."* – IDI, Teacher
>
> *"We also go and check in the village once in two months. We get to know the situation of the families in village and we are able to find out the students on the verge of dropping out."* – IDI, Headmaster

Interviews with HMs and teachers suggest that the strategy to engage parents of FCs is being conducted but with mixed results. While some parents understand the purpose behind sending their children to school, other fail to do so.

> *"Guardians do not take interest in sending their kids to school. Our teachers contacted the parents. They say yes when contacted but do not send their kids afterwards."* – IDI, Headmaster
>
> *"My mother asks me not to go to school when there is work at home. But I ask her to let me go."* – IDI, Focus Child
>
> *"FC missing school is a big issue despite many facilities provided by the government. It is due to the poor economic conditions of the household and kids are often engaged in household chores."* – IDI, Teacher

None of the parents that were interviewed in our sample indicated any engagement with AS through the telephonic communication strategies (such as IVRS). In contrast, program-monitoring data indicates that IVRS is regularly being sent fortnightly. This could mean that these messages are not reaching the intended audience and implementation needs to be strengthened through increased awareness around this strategy.

> "*I do not receive any such (IVRS) messages.*" – IDI, Parent
>
> *"I have not given my mobile number. I do not receive any messages (related to Anandshala)."* – IDI, Parent

Conducting a parent-teacher meeting once in three months at the school-level is a part of the intervention. Two Parent Teacher Open houses were observed. These sessions were organized within

school premises and were attended by about 60 parents and students. The sessions were guided primarily by HM, teachers and SFs, with HM and teachers speaking about the benefits of education and encouraging all parents to get their children enrolled in school. HMs, teachers and the SF also described AS activities and how they contribute to engaging adolescents in school. Students performed roleplays during these sessions to create awareness among parents. Observations indicated that these open houses helped create awareness among parents to send their children regularly to school. However, the program monitoring data and interviews with stakeholders indicate that these open houses could not be organized as per the schedule as other activities consumed more time than expected. Despite the interest open houses were able to create among parents, low intensity and limited reach at present have made them less useful in creating awareness among parents. A majority of parents indicated lack of knowledge and awareness around the AS activities. Even the ones who were aware, confessed to not being engaged enough and wished to be engaged more frequently.

> *"I have heard Anandshala's name but do not know what happens in it. Kids have also not spoken about it."* – IDI, Parent
>
> *"A committee of a few guardians from the village along with members of the NGO should organize a monthly or quarterly meeting among the villagers to raise awareness for education. If mutual trust is established, villagers would listen to external people."* – IDI, Parent

Socioeconomic factors and cultural norms as barriers for improving school attendance

Lack of awareness among parents seemed to be a major stumbling block in improving attendance and decreasing dropouts in schools. In our sampled areas, where marginalized population was predominant, the awareness level of parents towards education was found to be particularly low. Parents were not inclined enough to send their children to school. Evidence from interviews indicates that instead of attending school regularly, children were often engaged in household chores, asked to take care of their younger siblings, and contribute to income generation. The timeframe of the data collection (December and January months) coincided with paddy harvesting season. Many adolescents (both male and female) were found helping their parents in harvesting paddy and hence skipped school in order to save on labor costs.

> *"Not all parents are aware in the community. They don't say anything if their children stop going to school. These children are playing 'Gulli Danda' and 'Kanche' on the streets. Parents who are aware willingly send their kids to school."* – IDI, Parent
>
> *"We call parents and ask them why their kids are not coming to school. Some say that it's paddy harvesting time, some say they are engaged in taking care of their younger sibling…poverty is a big hurdle in this region."* – IDI, School teacher
>
> *"It's season of paddy harvesting. Older adolescents are engaged in harvesting. Attendance reduces to 50% during paddy harvesting."* – IDI, Headmaster

Alcohol consumption, a tradition of the tribal culture, was also highlighted as another factor that led to child maltreatment and truancy of adolescents from schools.

> *"Parents consume alcohol a lot here (in tribal areas). We tell them that even if they spend INR 10 from INR 100 they earn, on their child's education, their child will move ahead in life."* – IDI, Headmaster
>
> *there is a marriage in a household, the adolescent from the whole community skips school. Everyone*

Socioeconomic conditions of parents were also a big deterrent to parents sending their kids to school. Stakeholders including teachers and HM expressed that poverty supersedes parents' willingness to regularly send children to school. Findings suggest that in many cases, whenever an opportunity for work emerged, older adolescents were forced to migrate in order to seek the income.

"This area has high poverty. Children are sent outside to earn income. Many children are engaged in grazing their cows. Small kids are also engaged as labor in construction work. We call them when there are exams. We will have to think about eradicating poverty." – IDI, Headmaster

"Attendance reduces drastically after class 5. Tribal girls are going to Deoghar for work." – IDI, Teacher

"We have financially helped many children and gotten them enrolled in high school. This year too we paid INR 500 and gotten a child enrolled. We financially help many in this village to study." – IDI, Headmaster

Hence, under conditions of poverty, lack of awareness and lesser engagement with parents, older adolescents have a high risk of dropping out of school while others become irregular.

5.2 Out-of-school initiative

AS involves working with out-of-school girls by engaging them in YC in the village to increase their agency, encourage them to enroll in school or gear them towards career opportunities. These YCs are conducted thrice in a week on alternate days and are led by GCs. These GCs have been identified through half-yearly boot camp exercises, wherein the programme team gathers the village community and explains to them about AS and its activities. Therein, space for running YC sessions is sought and GCs are recruited after inviting applications and holding interviews with interested candidates at a later stage. An SF is supposed to visit and handhold YC sessions at least once a week. However, GCs are primarily responsible and trained to engage girls in YC and also motivate them to enroll at schools. GCs are assisted by SFs, who also visit parents that are not sending their kids to school.

Topics that are discussed in YC sessions include sexual and reproductive health, individual rights, economic opportunities in the community, and gender equality among others. Interviews with GCs, FGDs with members of YCs, and observations of YC sessions indicate that there are challenges with respect to reach and acceptability of the process of engaging out-of-school girls.

Challenges in engaging out-of-school girls in the intervention

The NPOs of the YC sessions indicate that delivery of content from the GC in the sessions was conducted properly. GC discussed issues such as early marriage, importance of education, SRH among other line items. GC maintained friendly relationship with girls, took sessions with right pace, and encouraged everyone to participate. Sessions included other activities to engage members such as singing folk songs, learning to introduce oneself and energizers. FGDs with YC girls indicate that the GC had amicable relationships with them. The FGDs also indicated that members found the sessions informative and had the opportunity to learn new things and engage in games.

"We enjoy and understand her (GC's) lectures. She clears our doubts. She teaches us well and engages us in games" – FGD, Youth Club

> *"They (GC) teach us what we don't know. We enjoy these meetings."* – FGD, Youth Club

However, NPOs indicate that while most girls who participated showed interest, a few girls were not interested or motivated to engage and participate in the activities. Only a few girls asked questions and responded to GC's questions. One of the sessions also had interference from external members as it was organized at GC's residence. A few girls registered in the YC remain absent and attendance was never found to be 100% in any of the YC sessions that were observed. This was due to reasons such as competing engagements at home owing to festivals, harvesting cycle of crops, and sometimes girls helping their family with household chores.

> *"We run these sessions thrice in a week. Sometimes most girls turn up, sometimes only 5-6 turn up."* – IDI, Girl Champion
>
> *"Festival is coming up; hence we are seeing less attendance. Earlier, they were not coming due to paddy harvesting. They also get engaged in household chores."* – IDI, Girl Champion

The SFs were also not able to spend enough time with the YCs. They were barely able to make one visit in a week to handhold and monitor progress of YCs, which indicates reach issues.

> *"We need to take two meetings of YC every week. We are not able to do it on occasions. In such cases, GCs take care of the sessions and we follow it up with them."* – IDI, School Facilitator

In addition, QA had planned to engage girls in skilling and career development activities, but such activities were not observed on the field. Since most of the girls that are out of school were not literate, the intervention has adapted itself and is presently focused on teaching them elementary things. The girls are made to speak up, write their names, understand their rights, adopt healthy and hygienic practices, understand numeracy, and enroll themselves in schools. This has, however, caused delays in the out-of-school component of AS. Some of the girls responded positively to these interventions but a few still look forward to receiving skilling education such as stitching and computer operation. Interview with one of the NGO partners also seemed to indicate the need for aligning the content of training to the needs of the adolescents, and hence be centered more on income generating activities.

> *"At present, we are telling them about life skills, their rights, and health; it would be really helpful if we could also engage them in skilling activities that would help them earn income."* – IDI, NGO Partner
>
> *"Many girls enquire if stitching is also taught in the club. They will give time if stitching is taught to them."* - IDI, Girl Champion
>
> *"In the villages that I have visited in Jharkhand under the program, I have found that girls want to learn skills so that they can secure income."* – IDI, NGO Partner

Hence, while the program seems to have adapted its curriculum given the contextual factors, there are challenges with respect to acceptability of the content.

Keeping GCs motivated post training is a concern

Interviews with GC as well as an observation of GC training suggested that the GCs find the training useful in engaging and imparting necessary knowledge to potential YC members in the villages. The NPO of a GC training suggested that GCs seemed motivated to partake in the trainings. Trainers also responded to the questions, encouraged everyone to participate, and maintained right pace of the training. The training session deliberated on the factors that hinder girl education, motivation for studying,

empowerment of girls and group task on engaging with people. While training of GCs seemed to proceed as planned, engagement with GCs after training has been a challenge. It emerged in one of the interviews with the GC that poor financial benefit was perceived as a demotivating factor.

> *"We have to go and call girls from their home when they are occupied. We get engaged in this for 3-4 hours for one session. Only Rs 500 in a month is not enough. People earn that in a day."* – IDI, Girl Champion

Further, the high attrition rate due to marriage or other competing priorities seem to have an impact on regular organization and continuation of YC sessions.

> *"Out of school activities are posing more challenges. Sustainability of GCs is a major challenge. There are no incentives for the GCs to continue as GC, especially after marriage. They want to get linked to livelihood trainings beyond SRH and life skills training. We tried doing that too through convergence with government programmes, but GCs can't travel till the district HQ to get the training."* – IDI, NGO Partner

5.3   Capacity building of stakeholders (government & NGO partners)

QA is engaging with government stakeholders in order to sustain efforts in future. CRPs are government personnel who provide support to schools in Jharkhand. QA is training them on aspects of AS. QA is simultaneously building capacity of the key mediators, SFs, and the NGO partners to take the program forward. At school level, support of HMs and teachers is of utmost importance to engage students in the program. At present, HMs are being trained on AS and a few of them are being given leadership training as well.

Need to increase awareness among CRPs regarding AS

Apart from SFs, CRPs employed by the state government provide academic monitoring and onsite support to schools. AS aims to orient these CRPs towards AS so that they can cascade the learning in their cluster level meetings as well in their meetings with the teachers. First phase of training of all 49 CRPs across 5 blocks has been done. Interviews with CRPs indicated that they were not abreast with the happening under AS. They indicated the need for further interactions with program team to improve their engagements. CRPs also stressed on the need of more training and handholding under AS. Competing priorities with other state government programs aimed at improving school performance and attendance also emerged as a concern for CRPs.

> *"Our engagement (in Anandshala) might enhance if we know what it is about. We should be told more about it."* – IDI, CRP
>
> *"We are busy with other activities and programmes such as Gyansetu. We are not able to put focus on Anandshala. We have only been trained once. Had there been more trainings, we probably would have given more thought to Anandshala."* – IDI, CRP

Delays in roll out of leadership trainings for HMs

Program monitoring data reveals that training sessions for all 328 headmasters in 5 blocks had been organized over two days. We also observed a leadership training for HMs. Two Master Trainers with participation from QA and the NGO partner conducted this training over two days. NPOs reveal that the training was imparted in presentation mode with brainstorming and group discussions among HM

participants. Trainers listened patiently and cleared HMs doubts and queries. Trainer also praised HMs for their efforts and engaged everyone without any favoritism. The training was received well by the HMs and was perceived to be engaging and important, hence saw group participation. HMs stated in the interviews that they found the training useful while organizing different activities under AS in the school. However, forty-nine more leadership workshop for HMs of model schools over 8 days that had been planned have not been completed yet due to lack of go-ahead from government officials.

> *"Training was useful. I am able to use the training while conducting activities."* – IDI, HM
>
> *"Training was conducted well. Group work was conducted, we made projects."* – IDI, HM

NGO partner perceive their training to be helpful

QA also engages in training of its NGO partners who are meant to implement the program and other trainings. NGO partners have received separate trainings on Early Warning System (signs and identification of Focus Child), Enrichment Programme (how to engage adolescents more under AS) and Training of Teachers for out-of-school component under AS. While we could not observe any such training, the IDIs with NGO partners indicate that these training were appropriate, well conducted, and led to improvements in their skills around interactions with stakeholders.

> *"I really like the trainings. They are very practical. I can relate to the trainings very well."* – IDI, NGO Partner
>
> *"I could understand all the concepts in the training. I understood the what, how and why of the intervention…Most of the trainings are activity-based."* – IDI, NGO Partner

6   Discussions & recommendations

Based on the evaluative findings discussed above, following recommendations are made to strengthen the program processes:

Effective workload planning for SF: School facilitators appear to be the key mediators under AS. They have been able to develop amicable relationship with school authorities, adolescents in school, and GCs outside of school. SFs also appreciated the trainings they received. However, most of the stakeholders, including the SFs themselves, reported that their existing workplan (visiting 4-5 schools in a week and handholding at least one YC in a week) is leading to a higher workload on them. As a result, the intensity of engagement with adolescents within and outside school suffers and hence the reach gets affected. The intervention will have to think about providing better support to SFs. This could be done through better workload planning, engaging more facilitators or building local capacities that can function alongside SFs. This needs to be done in consultation with the SFs.

Better engagement with in-school adolescents: Discussions with adolescents in-school who took part in the AS activities showed that their interest in coming to school has improved because of AS activities. On the other hand, findings also indicate that not all adolescents are able to take part in AS activities with same interest. To better engage more adolescents a supplementary process to incentivize adolescents can be devised. Publicly praising or rewarding adolescents who have re-enrolled, maintained a certain level of attendance throughout the year or done good work to improve the state of education in the school or community, could go a long way in encouraging other children to emulate the same.

AS activities were found to be engaging but evidence revealed that in the absence of SF, AS activities do not take place as they would have in their presence and there are lags in intensity. HMs are trained on AS but teachers do not undergo any formalized training with respect to AS. Hence, it is important to mentor teachers as well on AS. Identification of nodal teachers from each school and training them on aspects of AS and giving them motivational and leadership trainings would be a useful step for them to take up AS activities in school. This would make school time more enjoyable for students and motivate them to stay in school.

Improve parental and community engagement: The intervention has adopted a targeted approach and is working more with focus children and their parents. FCs and their parents are being engaged through home visits by SFs and teachers. FCs are also being focused on in AS activities. However, despite visits, some parents were not sending their children to school. This suggests that while the strategy is being implemented with the right intensity and fidelity, the results achieved are mixed. Contextual and behavioral factors possibly stop parent from responding positively (by regularly sending their children to school) to the intervention.

The study indicates that parental engagement with adolescents beyond FC needs to be strengthened for the strategy to increase school attendance, decrease dropout and hence improve adolescent development outcomes, especially given the backdrop of marginalization and poor socio-economic conditions. While it would be difficult for the program to change socioeconomic status, consistent engagement can bring about changes in behavior and awareness in parents regarding the relative advantages of keeping children in schools and the long-term usefulness of doing so.

AS can think of using the existing network of School Management Committees[15] to engage community members more. It should also think about making frequent parent-teacher meetings a norm so that those who become aware can spread the message among others. To raise awareness among different communities, it would be prudent to engage community members through community leaders and religious leaders along with the program staff. Support of these leaders would help in making more people from different caste and religious background aware of the importance of education. Program may also think along the lines of targeted extension of the intervention. For instance, it would be useful to enhance extension of education awareness among marginalized communities to get better results.

Motivate GCs and redesign out-of-school curriculum: The study findings show slow progress of out-of-school component of AS wherein out-of-school girls are engaged through YCs in the village. There are issues with reach and acceptability of this process. The larger issue with YC sessions is regularity of girls in the sessions. Further, engagement of GC has also been a challenge due to attrition and reportedly receiving poor financial benefits, which acts as a demotivating factor.

It has emerged from most of the discussions that girls want to move beyond life skills and get engaged in skill building activities. While program has adapted well to engage girls in building their interpersonal and numeracy skills, it needs to focus on enhancing its scope by redesigning the training content to incorporate skill building modules in YC sessions in order to engage more girls. Program may think of introducing these modules only for girls beyond a certain age so that it doesn't affect the chances of their re-enrolment in schools. Program also needs to evolve more motivating activities for GCs so that their attrition can be checked. For instance, the program can think of linking GCs to government's existing skill building programs so that they get vocational training.

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[15] Formation of School Management Committees has been made mandatory under the Right To Education Act of 2009 in every government funded school. The committee ensures participation of parents, and community in general, in governance of school activities.
https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/Jharkhand.pdf

Create awareness among CRPs: Government stakeholders are engaged in AS in order to sustain the efforts in future. CRPs, as government stakeholders, interact with school personnel frequently. However, they expressed low awareness on AS and were not aware of the AS model and its activities in detail. There is a need for more engagement with the CRPs, which could possibly be done through more trainings. Further, since the schools in which SFs operate coincides with those of the CRPs, it becomes crucial that they speak to each other frequently and synergistically. This will not only increase CRPs awareness on AS but also provide opportunity to percolate the programs message within and through the government system.

7   Conclusion

AS program in Jharkhand is perceived to be an appropriate and acceptable intervention for adolescents. Adolescents taking part in AS activities showed increased interest in coming to school. However, there is scope to engage more adolescents under AS. Program needs to involve HMs and teachers more in delivering AS activities in school. Their capacity building can help engage more adolescents and consequently help improve school attendance and decrease dropout rate. There is a need to create awareness in the community for which parental engagement needs to be emphasized more. AS strategies also need to factor in socio-economic barriers and socio-cultural norms to yield better results. The programs impetus on increasing agency of out-of-school girls and attempts towards their re-enrolment in schools appears to be in nascent stage and needs to be tailored towards their specific needs and circumstances. Engagement with CRPs also needs to be augmented through capacity building and through intensifying interaction with them.

8 Annexure 1: Process Map

Key to the Process Map

	Key documents/materials prepared by Quest Alliance team
	Process carried out by Quest Alliance team
	Process facilitated by Quest Alliance team
	Process carried out by change agent
	Intermediate outcome
	Final goal envisioned by Dasra
^^	Activities to be observed through non-participation observations
Stakeholders	Stakeholders to be interviewed
Stakeholders	Stakeholders with whom Focus Group Discussions will be conducted

In-school intervention

Orienting Headmasters and Cluster Resource Persons for in-school programme

Orient **headmasters (HM)** on in-school program and identification of at-risk adolescents^^

Orient **Cluster Resource Persons (CRP)** on in-school program and identification of at-risk adolescents

Develop vision and action plan for school

Develop vision and action plan for cluster

Review Progress

Best practices integrated in schools

Enhance engagement with in-school and at-risk adolescents

HMs and CRPs orient **school teachers** on in-school program

STs track and identify **at-risk adolescents**

Teachers, **school facilitators** & NGO partners facilitate student-led activities (such as morning assembly, last class, Bal Sansad activities)^^ and life-skills based training

Select **adolescents**

Facilitate strengthening of student bodies

Develop content for student-led activities

Student engagement in school enhanced

Note: School facilitators are hired staff to help in implementing and monitoring the intervention
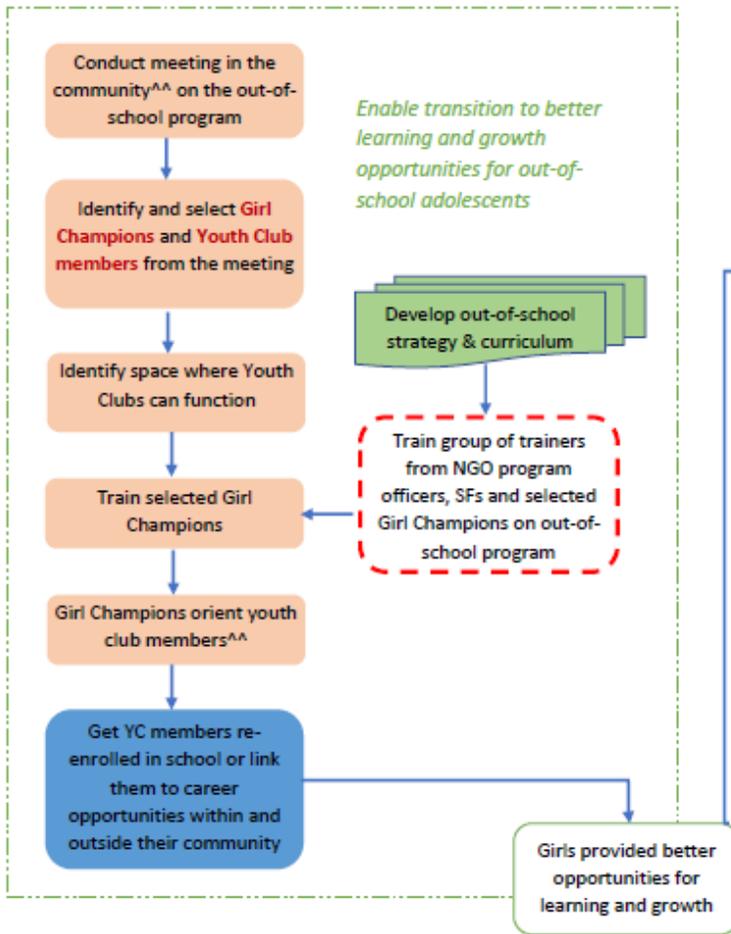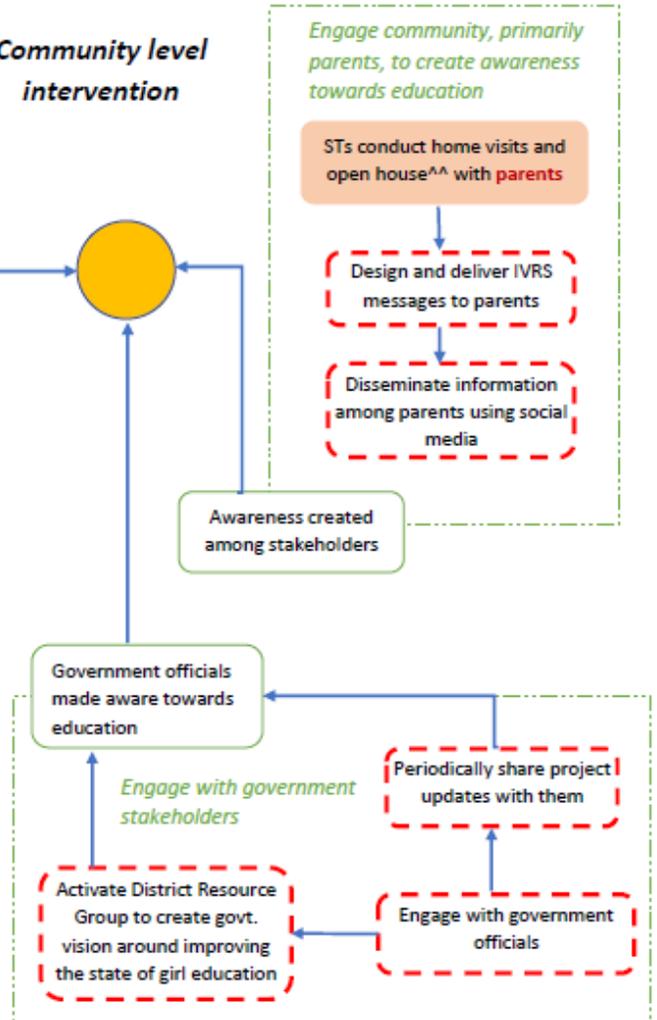
Community level intervention

Conduct meeting in the community^^ on the out-of-school program

↓

Identify and select Girl Champions and Youth Club members from the meeting

↓

Identify space where Youth Clubs can function

↓

Train selected Girl Champions

↓

Girl Champions orient youth club members^^

↓

Get YC members re-enrolled in school or link them to career opportunities within and outside their community

Enable transition to better learning and growth opportunities for out-of-school adolescents

Develop out-of-school strategy & curriculum

↓

Train group of trainers from NGO program officers, SFs and selected Girl Champions on out-of-school program

Girls provided better opportunities for learning and growth

Engage community, primarily parents, to create awareness towards education

STs conduct home visits and open house^^ with parents

↓

Design and deliver IVRS messages to parents

↓

Disseminate information among parents using social media

Awareness created among stakeholders

Government officials made aware towards education

Engage with government stakeholders

Activate District Resource Group to create govt. vision around improving the state of girl education

Periodically share project updates with them

↑

Engage with government officials

SAMBODHI