

Socio-economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women through market-driven skill development and secondary education

Knowledge Note

Adolescent girls and young women are a critical group for India and the state of Jharkhand; a group with unmet aspirations and tremendous potential to contribute to the growth and development of the state. Their stark vulnerabilities point to an urgent need for comprehensive empowering interventions, focused on education and employment. Their access to services and programs remains limited and it is in this context that the Government of Jharkhand with the support from the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice of the World Bank designed the Tejaswini – Socioeconomic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Project. The project serves as a best practice example of how to leverage context-specific diagnostics and global evidence to design a holistic package of services to improve outcomes for girls and young women in a low capacity environment. This note highlights the preparation process, the resulting project design, and the current status. The note will be updated to include results as implementation progresses.

What is the Tejaswini Project?

The Tejaswini project is implemented by the Jharkhand Women Development Society (JWDS), an autonomous body under the Department of Women, Child Development and Social Security (DWCDSS), Government of Jharkhand. The objective of the project is to improve completion of market-driven skills training and secondary education for adolescent girls and young women in select districts of Jharkhand. In the 17 districts covered by the project, there are about 2.1 million adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in the 14–24 age group, of which 13 percent belong to SCs (schedules castes) and 25 percent belong to STs (scheduled tribes). This project consists of three components:

Component 1: Expanding Social, Educational, and Economic Opportunities. This component includes the “basic model” of Tejaswini, which will be implemented in 15 districts. It aims to support adolescent girls and young women to achieve greater social, educational, and economic empowerment.

Component 2: Intensive Service Delivery. This component pertains to the “intensive model” which will be piloted in two districts to provide more intensive support to adolescent girls and young women. In addition to all of the activities of the basic model, the intensive model offers the establishment of cluster centers (or “Kendras”) at the intersection of 8 Tejaswini clubs where both educational and employment-related training can take place; and enhanced outreach to hard-to-reach populations through mobile training and resource units and top-up cash grants to engage in productive activities.

Component 3: State Capacity Building and Implementation Support, aims to support strengthening of institutional capacity and outreach of the DWCDSS and JWDS to enable effective and efficient delivery of services for AGYW in the state.

Organisational Structure. The day-to-day implementation of the project is carried out by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within the JWDS. For implementation and supervision of the project at the district and block levels, the JWDS has set up implementation support units in 17 project districts. In the districts of Dumka and Ramgarh, where the project will undertake intensive service delivery, every block has a Block Resource and Implementation Unit (BRIU) that is part of the JWDS. In the remaining 15 districts, the project works through Community Service Providers (CSPs) that are managed by JWDS staff. These implementation arrangements will contribute key lessons on Government-led implementation of projects for

AGYW, and in particular on the sustainability of publicly-financed community-level infrastructure dedicated to AGYW.

How was the project designed?

The Tejaswini Project emerged from intensive dialogue with the Government of Jharkhand and was informed by a state-wide diagnostic study and a review of the global best practices on adolescent girls' empowerment.

The Diagnosis. Before embarking on the Tejaswini project, the team engaged in a two-year Capacity-building Technical Assistance program with the Government of Jharkhand. During this period, the team conducted a state-wide survey of male and female youth to assess their aspirations and the barriers to their economic and social inclusion. The survey was complemented with in-depth qualitative research with girls, boys, parents, and teachers to understand the socioeconomic environment for girls' empowerment.

An estimated 56 percent of adolescent girls and young women (ages 15–24) were neither engaged in training, education, nor employment (“NEET”), compared to 19 percent of young men from the same households.¹ School attendance drops significantly as girls enter adolescence, when marriage and domestic pressures predominate. Only 68 percent of girls ages 14–15, and 44 percent of those ages 16–17 are enrolled in school. The vast majority (69 percent) of young women (ages 18–24) participating in the labor force are self-employed, largely driven by young women in rural areas (World Bank 2015 survey) and are mostly concentrated in subsistence agriculture and unpaid family work. Finally, the survey and focus groups underscored the importance of other decision makers in AGYW's lives. Indeed, AGYW under the age of 18 named fathers as the main decision maker in matters affecting their lives, and those over 18 named husbands.

The Jharkhand skills gap study undertaken by the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC)² uncovered a number of particular constraints faced by Jharkhand's high share of SC and ST citizens to accessing services. Some of the other specific concerns were gender specific. For instance, most of the women cited lack of vocational training institutes dedicated to women in vicinity of their place of stay as a major reason for not opting for vocational training. Also as most of the districts do not provide job opportunities for women after completion of vocational training, women prefer not to opt for vocational training.

The Global Evidence. The project design also draws extensively on global, regional, and national experiences in socioeconomic empowerment of AGYW. Much of the Bank's own experience on this topic comes from the Adolescent Girls' Initiative, which was implemented from 2008 to 2014.³ Specific lessons include:

- Both the Jharkhand assessment and international evidence overwhelmingly demonstrate the importance of AGYW's educational and economic opportunities for their overall empowerment.⁴

¹ Morton Matthew, Bhattacharya Shrayana and Kumar Pravesh, World Bank (2018), A Window of Opportunity – A Diagnostic of Adolescent Girls and Young Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment in Jharkhand, India.

² District-wise Skill Gap Study for the State of Jharkhand 2012-2017 and 2017-2022.

<https://www.nsdcindia.org/sites/default/files/files/jharkhand-sg-report.pdf>

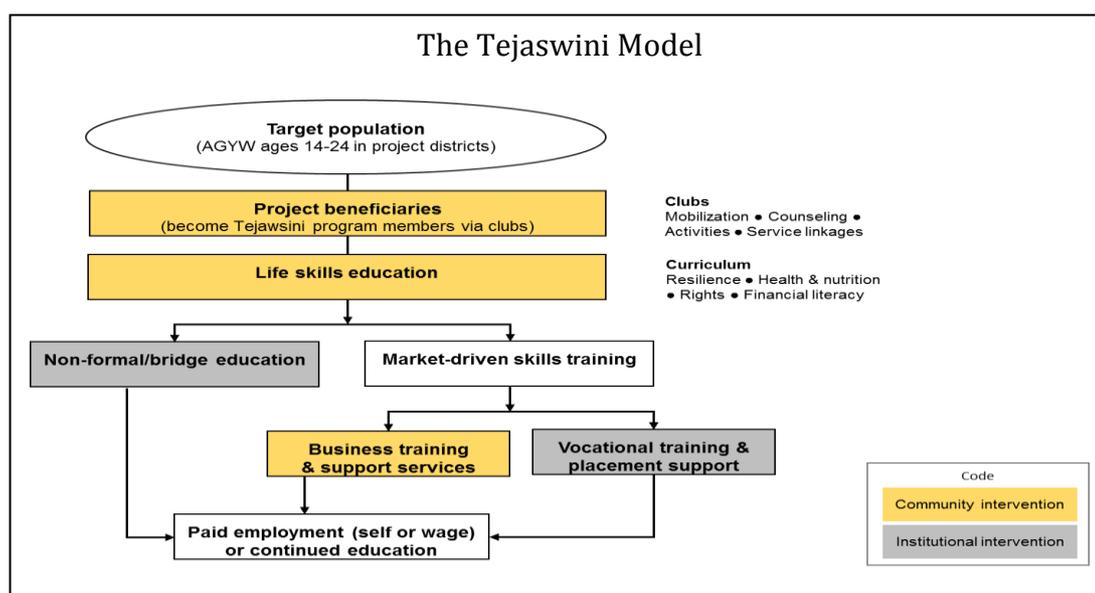
³ World Bank. 2014. Adolescent Girls' Initiative Online Resource Guide. www.s4ye.org/agi

⁴ World Bank. 2012. *World Development Report Gender Equality and Development*. Washington, DC.

- AGYW in developing contexts face multiple constraints, therefore multicomponent interventions are often needed—particularly when the goal is not only to achieve economic outcomes but also to empower women.⁵
- Lack of mobility is a perennial constraint for AGYW, due to a combination of domestic responsibilities tied to the home, safety concerns, and cultural norms.
- Lack of guidance and information also constrain AGYW’s access to opportunities.
- Economic and liquidity constraints could limit AGYW’s ability to take up key interventions and self-employment.
- Childcare can be a constraint for participation in activities, training, and employment among married young women in the project’s target group.

Putting it all together.

The picture that emerged from the intensive state-level analysis and the review of global evidence was that of a comprehensive package of services targeting AGYW in the age range of 14 to 24 to enable social, educational, and economic empowerment. Specific interventions were evolved to address the findings from the state level diagnosis and from global evidence.



Given the finding on restricted mobility of AGYWs, the project envisages services to be offered as close as possible to girls’ homes and allow for a large degree of flexibility and customization to allow each participant to tailor her participation to her individual needs and aspirations.

In response to specific vulnerabilities of AGYW from SC and ST communities, the project takes specific measures to ensure inclusion of AGYW from these communities. For example, given the higher concentration of tribal households in remote areas where training providers are scarce and harder to reach, the project places significant emphasis on delivering business and livelihood skills training at the community level and using performance-based contracts to incentivize more localized delivery of vocational training and NFE. The project also adopts innovative social mobilization practices that have worked for over four years to increase inclusion of tribal, poor, and remote women in Jharkhand. To address another specific finding

⁵ Siddiki, Holmes, Jahan, Chowdhury, and Hagen-Zanker. 2014. *How Do Safety Nets Contribute to Social Inclusion in Bangladesh? Evidence from the Chars Livelihoods Project and the Vulnerable Group Development Program.*

on fathers being key decision makers for the AGYWs, the project includes a concerted Information Education and Communication (IEC) campaign—with a particular focus on men and boys. Group-level interventions will also include community support councils and other forms of outreach to foster trust and ownership among families and community leaders in the program and its cause to help AGYW realize their potential.

Approach to Life Skills. In line with global evidence on the effectiveness of life skills to promote both social and economic empowerment of AGYW, the foundation of the Tejaswini model is an intensive, four-month long life skills course offered to all participants. The life skills package covers four core modules:

- (a) Resilience and soft skills. This module will cover topics such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, goal setting, and techniques to maintain psychological well-being through adversity.
- (b) Rights and protections. This module will cover topics related to early marriage, child labor, safe migration, gender-based violence, and accessing services and entitlements.
- (c) Health and nutrition. This module will deal with topics such as sanitation and hygiene, nutritional habits for self and children, and sexual and reproductive health.
- (d) Financial literacy. This module will cover topics related to basic numeracy, saving, budgeting, and accessing credit and financial institutions.

What's next?

The community level intervention of the Tejaswini Project that focuses on identification, mobilization and imparting soft skills to the adolescent and young women is under implementation in two intensive districts of Dumka and Ramgarh. The project has identified and trained its community level personnel. It has received overwhelming response and support from the AGYW and the community during the mobilization drive undertaken by the project personnel. Registration and enrollment of AGYW into the Youth Clubs and Kendras in these two districts is underway. In some of the Blocks, the induction training of AGYW has already been initiated, which has resulted in enrollment of about 170 girls in the project. The table below shows the progress at a glance.

Indicators	Numbers
Household Survey	1,15,898
AGYW Identified	54656
AGYW registered	923
AGYW enrolled	170
Tejaswini Clubs	573
Tejaswini Kendra	70

While it is early in the implementation cycle, the enrolment of girls and establishment of Youth Clubs and Kendras is likely to impact gender relations at the household and the community level. The willingness of families to support the participation of girls in the program is a promising start.

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