

Acknowledgements

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
ASER	Annual School Education Report
BRC	Block Resource Centre
CCE	Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation
CRC	Cluster Resource Coordinator
CWSN	Children with Special Needs
DISE	District Information on School Education
DEO	District Education Officer
DIET	District Institute for Education and Training
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
EdCIL	Educational Consultants India Limited
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IE	Inclusive Education
MoHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
NPE	National Policy on Education
MNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OBC	Other Backward Caste
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
PTMs	Parent Teacher Meetings
RTE	Right to Education
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCERT	State Council for Educational and Training
SMC	School Management Committee

SRG	State Resource Group
SSA	SarvaShikshaAbhiyan
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TET	Teacher Eligibility Test
TOR	Terms of Reference
U-DISE	Unified District Information on School Education
UEE	Universal Elementary Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Executive Summary

Background

One of the biggest challenges that the education sector faces is the problem of school dropouts. Addressing the issue of dropout is particularly difficult because there is no standard definition of 'dropouts' in an academic year and as a result there is no standard procedure for identifying them and bringing them back to school. As per DISE, in 2011-2012, the estimated number of dropouts in India was 8.9 million.

A closely related issue to dropout is the issue of out of school children, on which more elaborate studies have been conducted. As per a sample survey report by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MoHRD) and EdCIL, in the year 2009 there were approximately 8.1 million out of school children in India. More recently as per a parliamentary update, the number of out of school children in the year 2012 was estimated to be 16 million. The variation is vast.

In Chhattisgarh, as per government records, in the year 2011 approximately 1,78,500 children were out of school. This suggests that roughly 3.5 per cent of primary school going children and 5.5 per cent of upper primary school going children were out of school. Further, the out of school rates were observed to be higher for girls. At the primary level, 3.4 per cent of boys were found to be out of school and the corresponding figure for girls stood at 3.7 per cent. Similarly at the upper primary level, 5.4 per cent of boys were found to be out of school and the corresponding figure for girls stood at 5.8 per cent.

While there is a broad understanding of the reasons for out of school children, there are very few comprehensive studies that showcase specific reasons for dropout and also identify the strategic steps that are required to be taken at a systemic level to address dropout. While dropouts may constitute a subset of out of school children, their circumstances and reasons need to be identified and studied independently. This study is directed toward unearthing these reasons and developing an in-depth qualitative understanding of how various variables combine to lead to a child dropping out of school. The study seeks to understand the interplay between reasons in order to determine which reasons have the potential to combine and increase a child's vulnerability to dropping out of school in the state of Chhattisgarh.

Methodology

The study was conducted in five districts of Chhattisgarh – *Balrampur, Janjgir-Champa, Kanker, Mungeli and Raipur*. These districts were selected by SCERT so that each region of the state was represented, to ensure a representative mix of tribal and non-tribal districts as well as a mix of urban and rural districts. From each district, two blocks were selected in consultation with SCERT. These blocks represented a mix of educationally backward and general blocks, Tribal Welfare Department and Education Department, and rural and urban blocks. In each block, two clusters were chosen in consultation with BRCs/CRCs. Finally, from each cluster four schools were chosen. The schools were selected to ensure a mix of primary and upper primary schools, as well as to ensure that there were at least five dropouts from each school.

The target respondents in the study were the parents of children who had dropped out, head teachers at schools, children both from primary and upper primary schools, SMC members, representatives of local governance bodies, officials at block and district level and representatives of SCERT, SSA and Tribal Welfare Department at the state level. For the study, household surveys were administered to a sample of

373 households, semi-structured interviews were held with head teachers at 79 schools, focused group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with children at 80 schools and semi-structured interviews held administered to School Management Committee (SMC) members at 52 villages.

The study results are based on a combination of analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, and primary and secondary data. In order to ensure that the study did not replicate any of the efforts made by the State towards collecting educational data, secondary data collected by SarvaShikshaAbhyan (SSA) was used to understand conduct a spatial assessment of the dropout rate in the districts covered under the study. Additionally, primary data/information was collected and collated using a combination of three tools – household questionnaires, focused group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The objective of the household questionnaire was to understand parents' perception of dropout and to record the exact reason for dropout while the FGDs were conducted in order to capture children's perspective of the underlying factors for dropout. Interviews with the head teachers at the schools aimed to record their understanding and perspective of the problem dropout, interviews with SMC members provided insights on their understanding of dropout as members of the community, and interviews with district/state level officials provided an understanding of their perception of dropout from the systemic point of view. Thus a combination of all these sources of information has provided a rich understanding of the issue of drop out.

Brief data on each school and household visited was collected for the purpose of compiling a profile of schools and respondents. The study included visits to 16 schools in each district, covering a total of 80 schools in Chhattisgarh. Fifty three of the schools were primary schools while 27 were upper primary schools. Of the schools visited, 57 had a pupil teacher ratio within the specified upper limit of 30. Additionally, the review team identified 373 students who had dropped out of school and visited the households of these students. The average household size in each district ranged from 5 to 7, and the average number of children included in the sample in each district ranged from 3 to 4. A mix of boys and girls who had dropped out were selected randomly from each school (with a total of 213 boys and 160 girls across all five districts), and their parents were interviewed through the household questionnaire. Of the total households visited, 79 per cent were below poverty line, 45 per cent had both the mother and father as daily wage earners and 47 per cent had both parents who were illiterate. Thus, a large section of the sample comprised such households.

School dropout rate in Chhattisgarh: a spatial assessment

As of financial year ending 2012, the country recorded a dropout rate of 5.6 percent at the primary level and a dropout rate of 2.7 percent at the upper primary level. In the state of Chhattisgarh, the dropout rate at the primary level was reported to be 3.1 percent and that at the upper primary level was reported to be 3.7 percent. Clearly the state is doing much better than the National average when it comes to the level of primary schooling; but is performing worse than the National average while comparing at the level of upper primary schooling.

The dropout rate did not vary significantly across the districts covered under the current study. Raipur reported the lowest school dropout rate at the elementary level (2.2 percent) and Kanker reported the highest dropout rate (3.7 percent). The districts of Balrampur, JanjgirChampa and Mungeli reported elementary school dropout rates of 3.3 percent, 2.5 percent and 3.3 percent respectively. Despite such a limited variation in elementary school dropout rates, every district had its own unique reasons for why children were choosing to dropout of schools.

An analysis of the socio-cultural profile of the dropouts in Chhattisgarh further highlighted a host of positive and negative findings that need to be examined while formulating mitigation measures/policies. Chhattisgarh is one of the very few states where the school dropout rate for girls is observed to be lesser than for boys. However, it is also important to note that the aforementioned gender disaggregates trend holds for only two districts of the study: Balrampur and Mungeli. Further, data from financial year ending 2011 highlights variations in the school dropout rates across various community groups. The dropout rate for students from Scheduled Caste families was marginally lower than the overall dropout rate for the State. On the other hand, the dropout rate for students from Scheduled Tribe families was moderately higher. A similar trend was observed in the case of upper primary school dropout rates.

Findings

Through the information obtained from households, school children, and head teachers, eight core factors emerged as important contributors to the decision to drop out:

1. Studies vs Earning money:

In situations where one or both parents are daily wage earners with low wages, no job security, and no social or financial protection systems; children drop out to contribute to household income. Sometimes students contribute to household income by directly contributing to agricultural labour – it was observed that students are absent from school during the labour intensive sowing and harvesting season, to assist their families with field-related work. In districts like Raipur and Kanker, with a relatively higher level of industrial activity, the opportunities for earning income from informal sources (rag picking, collecting scrap, working as waiters in restaurants, etc.) are so many that children themselves seek out these opportunities to contribute to household income as well as to buy personal use items. Such activities are especially attractive to students in and above the 6th grade, who are teenagers, and for whom the idea of earning money is very rewarding.

Additionally, the need to earn income often translates into the family having to migrate to search for employment, leading children to drop out of school. While ideally this should lead to students enrolling at a new school after migrating with their families, lack of information on the RTE rules regarding transfer certificates leads to students dropping out of school. Besides, there is no formal system to track the children of parents who migrate to other districts/states.

2. Domestic responsibility and sibling care

The source of livelihood for families and the seasonal nature of their employment in the agriculture sector render family members overworked/busy during the sowing and harvesting season. Due to parental preoccupation with income generation activities, there is a dependency on children to assist with various household tasks like collecting firewood, grazing cattle, and caring for younger siblings. These tasks lead to absenteeism from the school and, over time, disengagement from academic activities as well.

In Mungeli, 41.9 percent of the households covered under the study reported that their child had dropped out of school in order to support/help with domestic responsibilities and chores and care of siblings. In Raipur, the corresponding figure was 18 percent and in Kanker it was 31 percent. In Balrampur, the survey found that only 31 percent of mothers (24 out of 78) stay at home and in the remaining households, elder siblings shared the burden of household chores and taking care of younger siblings, often reported to be a reason for dropout or prolonged absenteeism.

3. Lack of enabling environment at home

A significant proportion of parents covered under the study were wage labourers. As a result of their job schedules, they do not have time to check their children's homework, pay attention to how the child is studying in school, or take an active interest in their child's school life. Even though parents might have a desire to help their child cope with the pressure of school and engage actively in the child's education, they are unable to contribute because they are not literate themselves, and moreover their demanding job schedules do not permit them to do so. It was observed that often children drop out as their parents go to work in the morning and there is no one at home to check whether they are attending school or to force them to attend. In other cases, the lack of academic support at home led to children not being able to cope at school and therefore contributed to dropout.

It was also observed that there were a few cases where drug addiction and alcoholism amongst parents was creating an unsupportive environment at home. In some such cases students drop out simply because of a lack of involvement and motivation from their parents to attend school, while in other cases it is because of a compulsion to perform other duties (that their parents were not performing) e.g. repeated domestic disputes amongst parents, that children dropout.

4. Non-involvement of teachers

Teachers are sometimes unresponsive to the complaints of students and do not intervene in situations where students are teased, bullied or discriminated against. While there were many cases where students tease each other, call each other names, or make derogatory remarks based on caste, looks and appearance; such behaviour had gone unchecked by teachers in the school. It was observed that in many cases this lack of involvement from the teachers and their inability to take action had led to students staying home to avoid being humiliated by their peers. The non-involvement of teachers in such student-related disputes and their unwillingness to take action against those who are responsible could be a result of caste and class differences between school staff and school beneficiaries.

It was observed that sometimes students were also subject to discrimination based on caste or gender. It seems that teachers in some schools also tend to exhibit tendencies of being biased towards particular groups from the community. It was reported that such discrimination was targeted at SC students, ST students, OBC students or girls. Additionally, the study finds that teachers exhibit some reluctance and inertia in addressing the issue of dropout. One of the reasons for a lack of initiative from teachers for following up with students was found to be a result of their unwillingness to visit households that are located in far-flung or poverty-ridden areas, and their feeling of being uninvolved with the village community because they are not local teachers.

5. Corporal punishment and its impact on children

In Kanker, Mungeli, Raipur and Balrampur children in almost all the schools reported that corporal punishment was regularly being used as a method of instilling discipline amongst children, even though teachers were found to be aware that it was not permitted. In many of the schools visited, the field researchers observed a cane or a stick in the corner of every classroom visited. A number of cases of corporal punishment and the same having a negative impact on a child were found in each of these four districts.

Children clearly voiced their negative opinion about the practice of corporal punishment. Children at primary school usually reported being afraid of teachers who frequently awarded corporal punishment. On the other

hand children enrolled in middle school reported that they characterised instances where they were given corporal punishment in front of the entire class as demotivating and humiliating. It was observed that any child who feels victimised or develops a phobia against attending schools because he is afraid of receiving such punishments; is often left voiceless as he generally does not have access to any individual who will give a hearing to his concerns/fears. Therefore these children become highly susceptible to dropping out of school or playing truant on a frequent basis.

6. Lack of interest towards attending school

The prevailing socio-cultural landscape and the overall environment at school contain a number of anomalies and aberrations that can lead to a child developing a disinterest towards attending school. The study found that children tend to pick up bad habits from their elders and the same can subsequently rub off on their friends, with cases of substance abuse being observed. In such cases, the family's natural reaction was to pull the child out of school and engage him in the household chores and work so as to constantly keep an eye on him. Also, peer pressure was found to induce children to drop out in groups to pursue other sports and recreational activities as they lose interest in attending school.

At the school, teacher absenteeism; practices such as self-study classes, joint classes and simultaneous classes; teacher's disinterest towards delivering against their responsibilities and a non-engaging curriculum were found to contribute to a child developing a disinterest towards attending school. The child's disinterest coupled with the low value attached to education by a number of families land up creating a situation where the parents start believing that the school is not adding any value to the child's future.

On a different note, in some schools it was shared by the teachers that after the introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), students do not take school seriously because the common perception about CCE is 'no examination'. This was cited as another reason by the teachers why children drop out.

7. Non availability of adequate number of teachers

Information from Balrampur, Kanker and JanjgirChampa reveals that these districts are grappling with problems of teacher inadequacy and non-uniform distribution of teachers. It was observed that while the schools are operating under the pupil-teacher ratio as specified by the RTE, the number of teachers does not necessarily align with the number of grades at the school. In such cases the teachers have to necessarily club classes and this directly leads back to the problems linked to 'self-study', 'joint' and 'simultaneous' classes. Further, a number of head teachers at the schools visited face difficulties in teaching the students due to the lack of qualified staff. Their schools lacked the required strength of Maths, Science and English teachers and finding teachers with relevant qualifications is a difficult task.

In this context, with a lack of an adequate number of teachers, and students attending joint classes, children tend to lose interest in academics. Simultaneously, their parents start developing an observation-based negative perception of the quality of teaching, leading to the formation of a negative perception of the quality of education at the schools, which contributed to the decision to dropout.

8. Low aspiration for formal education

The study reveals that the majority of the children who have dropped out of school are first generation learners. In such situations, parents' perception of value of education is largely acquired and observational, rather than a result of their personal first-hand experience. As a result, such families usually find it difficult to

formulate an objective for sending their children to school. Further, while this objective does not directly lead to the child dropping out of school; it has the capacity to act as a trigger point that gets activated once one or more of the other reasons for dropout surface.

The value that parents attached to education can be determined through their reasons for sending children to school. It was revealed that children belonging to families that sent them to school without any vision or aspiration with regards to the outcome that they desire at the end of the child's schooling are most vulnerable to dropping out as their parents don't attach any opportunity cost to them dropping out of school. Children belonging to families that sent them to school to attain basic literacy and numeracy are also vulnerable to dropping out once they have cleared initial grades or primary schooling. Children belonging to families that sent them to school so that they could build a better future for themselves are less vulnerable to dropping out of the formal schooling system. However, if their parents perceive that the schooling system is not helping the children in realizing that better future or that the children are not progressing well against this goal; these children become susceptible to dropping out of school.

Conclusions

The study has led to an understanding of the subtle nuances related to factors that contribute to dropout in Chhattisgarh. The following are the conclusions from the study:

- ▶ The absence of a standard definition of dropout has led to varied understanding among the stakeholders including the Head Teachers. While each school seems to have a specific process in place to deal with and track dropped out students, this process is not standardised across the state, or even within districts.
- ▶ There is need for a more personal touch by the teachers or even community members to follow up with a child who is vulnerable to dropping out of school. The lack of initiative from teachers as well as the fact that SMCs were not found to be active in most schools means that there is no mechanism to effectively follow up with parents of vulnerable children.
- ▶ At present there is no mechanism to track the children who leave school to migrate with their parents except the register or record maintained at the school level. With a little effort these children can not only be tracked but their admission in other government schools can be facilitated using the existing structure at district/block/cluster levels.
- ▶ The blame for the children dropping out is largely being placed on home related factors. However, there are also school-related factors which are inducing children to become disinterested in school and drop out. Unfortunately, these reasons for drop out are not being viewed as problems that are to be collectively addressed by the school along with parents.
- ▶ Parents seem to attach low value to education. This may be attributed to the poor quality of education being imparted at schools, which leads them to develop a perception that the school is not providing children with the quality of education it promises. The children whose parents develop such a perception are vulnerable to dropping out as their parents attach a very low opportunity cost to them dropping out of school.

- ▶ In order to develop schools into institutions which provide appropriate education to students, schools must at least have adequate infrastructure and required number of teachers. The State Government may seek the support of non-state players to extend their support for infrastructure improvement. At the same time there is also a need to understand genuine problems faced by the teachers.
- ▶ Even though RTE mandates inclusive education for children with special needs (CWSN), it was found that schools are still not equipped to accommodate CWSN, especially those children with mental deficiencies and require special care. Furthermore, the team did not find appliances for children with special needs in all schools.
- ▶ Some common reasons for dropout have emerged across all districts of study. These are desire to earn versus studies (which induces children to drop out in all districts because of a compulsion to contribute to household income); domestic responsibility and sibling care, unsupportive environment at home (which is a function of parents being unable to contribute because they are busy as daily wage earners and/or they are uneducated themselves); low value of education; non-involvement of teachers (in making home visits and student redressal); and a lack of interest of students in going to school.

Recommendations

Based on the interactions held during the study and the data/information collected and collated, the Government can explore some of the following measures to curb dropouts from schools in Chhattisgarh:

1. Build a common understanding about drop outs across all schools and collect relevant data for better monitoring. This includes arriving at a common definition as well as a standardised procedure for identifying, tracking, and follow-up of dropouts across the State. This could be done effectively through the use of ICT.
2. Initiate mass mobilization of the community about the benefits of completing school education through an awareness campaign, with extensive use of electronic media, print media, and press. This could be done in conjunction with the use of local platforms to spread awareness, such as the use of local radio stations and *nukkadnataks*.
3. Encourage the schools to develop school based plans to address the issue of drop outs in their respective schools with collective efforts of the school, parents and community. The issue may be discussed in the SMCs and solutions sought from members. This can be done through collaboration between the State government and grassroots organizations that work for proper functioning and management of schools.
4. Ensure that the academic calendar has holidays during the peak agricultural season (sowing/harvesting) because parents tend to pull their children out of school as they are required to help out with the cultivation/harvesting in the field or because they have to manage domestic chores.
5. Enable schools to develop programmes for better engagement with the local communities. There is evidence even within Chhattisgarh that wherever the communities are involved and consider education as a collective responsibility, the state of education improves significantly.

6. Improve the quality of education in schools and reinforce the importance of education through improved and personal communication with parents and children. One step to initiating this could be the interaction between parents, children, and local youth who can act as role models and share their experiences and accomplishments.
7. Examine CCE more closely to find ways to help the teachers use it in the spirit with which it had been introduced. This will ensure that CCE is no longer seen as an excuse for not taking the school education seriously and that it is not cited as a reason for students dropping out by the teachers.
8. Provide incentives to schools which take up innovative steps to improve the quality of education. These incentives may be in the form of providing opportunities to the teachers/head teachers to visit some other states, get a well-equipped school library, use of electronic gadgets such as tablets, or recognition/felicitation for them.

1. Background

1.1 Context for the study

Education is a primary vehicle for empowerment, providing individuals with opportunities of self-development, eventually enabling them to contribute towards the socio-economic development of the country. In India, access to education is a fundamental right declared as such in the Constitution. Universal Elementary Education (UEE) is accepted as critical for strengthening the social fabric of democracy through provision of equal opportunities to all when the nation became a Republic.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken in our country in the last few decades to strengthen elementary education. The National Policy on Education (NPE), initiated schematic programmes to achieve the goal of UEE such as Operation Black Board, Shiksha Karmi Project, Lok Jumbish Programme, Mahila Samakhya, District Primary Education Programme etc. A significant milestone programme was the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), piloted in 1994 in 42 districts across seven states and implemented in 271 districts across all states in country. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) was conceptualized in the wake of the DPEP in 2000 – 01. SSA is a flagship programme of the Indian Government that aims at universalization of education. The programme is currently being implemented in all States across the country. All these initiatives have contributed to bring about a change in terms of access to school.

The country has also witnessed support by way of legislations which has brought in greater urgency to provide quality education to all children. The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 introduced Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards. These norms have been listed in the Act.

Key improvements have also been recorded in indicators such as physical access to schools, enrolment rates, gender parity index etc. However, the country still grapples with a number of issues that act as barriers to the universalisation of education:

- ▶ Gender gap in literacy: There is still a gap between male and female literacy rates and while the literacy rate for men is 81.0 percent, the corresponding figure for women is lower at 65.0 percent.
- ▶ Dropout: Further, while the gross enrolment ratio at the primary education level is 112.6 percent (as of 2011); the gross dropout rate stands at 6.5 percent.
- ▶ Provisions for CWSN: Despite efforts made in the direction to provide inclusive education to all children, a large number of Children with Special Needs do not complete their school education. While access to school has been achieved to a large extent, access to school by CWSN has not made adequate progress.

All States are making efforts in varying degrees to ensure that all children complete their elementary education. As per the SSA report the status of implementation of the RTE is as follows:

- 32 States/UTs notified the RTE rules
- 32 States/UTs issued notifications prohibiting corporal punishment and mental harassment

- 30 States/UTs notified prohibiting screening for admission and capitation fees
- 31 States/UTs issued notifications prohibiting expulsion and detention
- 33 States/UTs issued notification banning Board examinations till completion of elementary education
- 31 states notified academic authority under RTE Act
- 30 States/UTs banned private tuition. Several states have also initiated steps to conduct the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET).

Source: RPE, SSA 2011-12

At another level, the states are making efforts to understand the barriers to completion of school education so that these maybe overcome by formulating appropriate policies. While some challenges concerning education are common across all states in the country, others are state-specific. It is important to understand the nuances and design programmes and interventions to address the issues.

1.2 Rationale for the study

One of the biggest challenges that the education sector faces is the problem of school dropouts, which proves to be an impediment to achieving the mandate of universalisation of education. A few studies have developed an approximation of the number of dropouts on the basis of their own definitions. In 2011-2012, DISE estimated the number of dropouts in India at 8.9 million. However, estimates from other sources differ from these numbers because of a difference in the way they define dropouts. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that the number of dropouts in the country is high and that the problem of dropout warrants attention.

A closely related issue to dropout is the issue of out of school children, on which more elaborate studies have been conducted. As per ASER's Enrolment and Learning Report Card 2013, 3.3 per cent of children in the country were out of school. In Chhattisgarh, as per government records, in the year 2011 approximately 1,78,500 children were out of school. This suggests that roughly 3.5 percent of primary school going children and 5.5 percent of upper primary school going children were out of school. Further, the out of school rates were observed to be higher for girls. At the primary level, 3.4 percent of boys were found to be out of school and the corresponding figure for girls stood at 3.7 percent. Similarly at the upper primary level, 5.4 percent of boys were found to be out of school and the corresponding figure for girls stood at 5.8 percent.

Chhattisgarh has a high tribal population, with Schedules Tribes constituting 31 per cent of the State's total population. In this context, it is important to note that the percentage of out of school children was marginally higher in the case of children from Scheduled Tribes. The out of school percentages for children from Scheduled Tribes at the primary and upper primary level were 4.7 and 8.1 percent respectively. As per SSA a high proportion of students were out of the school, as they contributed to household work. Other significant factors included socio-cultural reasons, lack of interest, migration, and earning compulsion.¹

While there is a broad understanding of the reasons for out of school children, specific reasons for dropout need to be understood to identify strategic steps required to be taken at a systemic level to address the issue of dropout. While dropouts may constitute a subset of out of school children, their circumstances and reasons need to be identified and studied independently.

In this context, the problem of dropouts is an area of major concern for any educational system as it clearly highlights the system's inability to retain the students it has worked hard to enrol. Successfully bringing dropped out students back into the formal schooling system can ensure that the government does not forgo the investment it has already made towards building their capacity.

¹ SSA data 2012

Developing a deeper appreciation for the implicit reasons that lead to children dropping out of school and developing an understanding of the socio-cultural and economic landscape in which these reasons prevail is necessary to develop programmes and measures to address these issues.

This study is directed toward unearthing these reasons and developing an in-depth qualitative understanding of how various variables combine to lead to a child dropping out of school. The study seeks to understand the interplay between reasons in order to determine which reasons have the potential to combine and increase a child's vulnerability to dropping out of school.

1.3 Terms of Reference

In light of the aforementioned rationale, the study seeks to establish a better understanding of the factors that contribute to a child's vulnerability to dropping out of school. In order to cover for geographic disparity in reasons as well capture variations caused by changes in the socio-economic landscape, the study was undertaken in five districts of Chhattisgarh. The specific objectives of this research study were:

- ▶ To compare students dropout rates of across the districts covered under the study and benchmark the same against the state and national aggregates;
- ▶ To compare students dropout rates across type of locality (rural/urban), level of schooling (Primary/Upper Primary), gender (male/female), and community category (SC/ST/OBC/ Minority/Others); and
- ▶ To find out district specific reasons for dropout thereby commenting upon reasons for dropout at the state level.

1.4 Methodology

Given the mandate of the study and the larger goal that it ascribes to; the study was conducted through a mixed-methodology approach that laid emphasis on identifying the right informants to seek the right information in order to develop relevant and meaningful insights.

The study was conducted in five districts of Chhattisgarh –Balrampur, Janjgir-Champa, Kanker, Mungeli and Raipur. These districts were selected by SCERT so that each region of the state was represented, to ensure a representative mix of tribal and non-tribal districts as well as a mix of urban and rural districts. From each district, two blocks were selected in consultation with SCERT. These blocks represented a mix of educationally backward and general blocks, Tribal Welfare Department and Education Department, and rural and urban blocks. In each block, two clusters were chosen in consultation with BRCs/CRCs. Finally, from each cluster four schools were chosen. The schools were selected to ensure a mix of primary and upper primary schools, as well as to ensure that there were at least five dropouts from each school. **For the purpose of study a dropout has been defined as a child who had not attended the school for one month or more due to any reasons except for illness.** This operational definition was derived in consultation with SCERT.

The following section describes in detail different aspects of the methodology.

Study Design

The study results are based on a combination of analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. This data/information has been collected and collated using a combination of three tools – household questionnaires, focused group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The study results have been developed while maintaining statistical significance as household survey were administered to a sample of

373 households, semi-structured interviews were held with head teachers at 79 schools, focused group discussions were conducted with children at 80 schools and semi-structured interviews were administered to School Management Committee (SMC) members at 52 villages.

Target Respondents

The target respondents in the study are the parents of children who have dropped out, head teachers at schools, children both from primary and upper primary schools, SMC members, representatives of local governance bodies, officials at block and district level and representatives of SCERT, SSA and Tribal Welfare Department at the state level.

Study Tools

Review of Secondary Data: The state has in place a number of mechanisms to constantly collect and collate data and information pertaining to the school's infrastructure, staffing, performance and progress. In order to ensure that the study does not replicate any of the efforts made in this direction, this secondary data has been used to understand the current educational profile of the districts covered under the study. This data has also been used to prima facie estimate the dropout rates in the state and subsequently in each of the districts covered under the study; while simultaneously estimating the same on a gender, learning level, caste disaggregated basis.

Household questionnaire: The objective of the household questionnaire was to understand parents' perception of dropout. The questionnaire, while designed to record the exact reason for dropout, also attempted to understand the profile of the household and the socio-economic and psychological reasons that contribute to dropout.

Focus Group Discussions: FGDs were conducted with children at all the schools that were visited as a part of the study. The FGDs were conducted in order to understand children's perspective of the underlying factors for dropout. These also helped to identify the children's opinion about their school and their teachers.

Semi Structured Interviews: Semi structured interviews were administered to the following stakeholders:

- ▶ **Head Teachers:** Discussions were held with the head teachers at the schools covered under the study in order to record their understanding and perspective of the problem dropout. The interviews were used to collect information regarding the head teacher's understanding of the issue, the reasons that lead to the same and the processes followed or to be followed in order to address the issue.
- ▶ **SMC members:** Discussions with SMC members provided insights on their understanding of dropout, their role in curbing dropout rates in their community and their understanding of their larger roles and responsibilities as identified under the RTE.
- ▶ **District/State level officials:** The objective of interviewing district/state level officials was to understand their perception on dropout. These interviews also helped to understand some of the interventions that have been undertaken to control dropout and the results that have been achieved.

The tools used in the study have been placed in Annexure 2.

1.5 Data analysis and reporting

The information from the household surveys was transformed into an electronic spreadsheet which was subsequently cleaned under defined statistical processes. The spreadsheet was then analysed using

suitable statistical packages/software. The qualitative information from the household questionnaires was coded where possible and added to the electronic dataset. Information recording sheets were developed to capture the qualitative information that could not have been coded. This information was analysed and used to develop anecdotal evidence/case studies.

The information collected through the FGDs with students and semi-structured interviews with head teachers and SMC members were also assembled into recording sheets. Where possible similarity in responses was classified and unified to determine trends and absolute number frequencies.

1.6 Limitations

- ▶ This study is largely based on direct interaction with the children, their parents and their teachers. As a result, the study seeks to examine the more normative and direct reasons for dropout. It does not seek to evaluate for the impact of the more indirect reasons such as learning outcomes, curriculum relevance, teacher training/experience etc.
- ▶ As part of the study, the team was required to collect data on dropout for the last five years from the schools that were visited. In the absence of a mandate to keep data on dropout at school level and also a common format to record it, the team has been able to collect only limited data.
- ▶ Given that a few of the districts covered under the study have only recently been defined, the availability of government records is limited leading to limited temporal trends in some of the district reports.

2. Profile of Schools and Respondents visited

This chapter summarises the number and profile of respondents interviewed for the purpose of the study. It includes the number of respondents in each respondent category, the number of schools visited in each district and a brief profile of the households interviewed for the study is presented.

Respondent Categories

For the purpose of the study, the team met with a range of different stakeholders in order to obtain a strong understanding on the issue of drop-out in each of five districts. The study was conducted through household visits, school visits (which involved interviews with head teachers and FGDs with students), interviews with SMCs, and interviews with other relevant stakeholders such as CRCs, BRCs, DIETs, DEOs, and non-sample schools. The table below summarises the stakeholders/respondents met in each district.

Table 1: Number of respondents met in each district

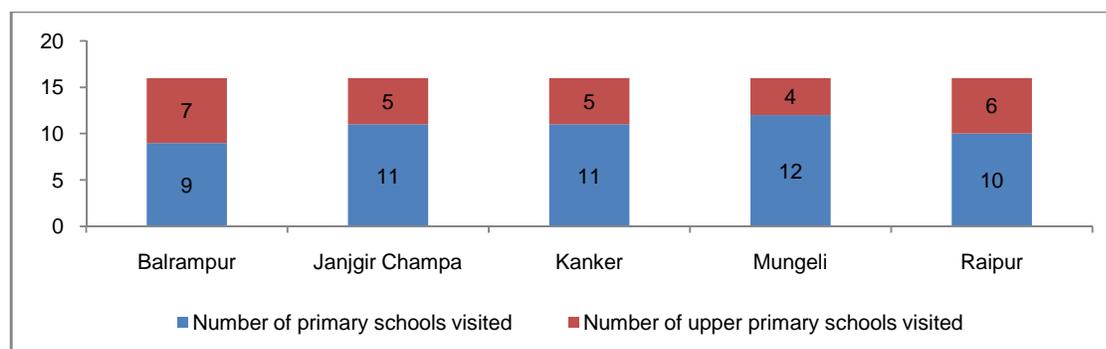
District Name	Number of households visited	Number of Head Masters interviewed	Number of FGDs conducted with students	Number of SMC interviews conducted
Balrampur	78	16	16	3
JanjgirChampa	75	16	16	12
Kanker	63	16	15	12
Mungeli	80	16	16	9
Raipur	77	16	16	15
Total	373	80	79	52

Apart from the stakeholder listed above, the team also met with non-sample schools (government and private); CRCs; BRCs, BRPs and finance officers (at the block level); DEO, DRP, and DIETs (at the district level); and state level officials.

Schools Visited

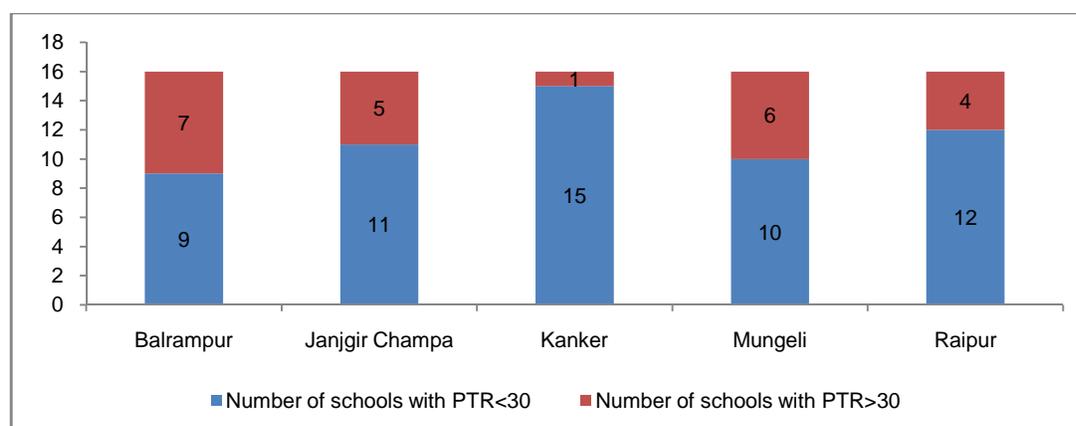
The study included visits to 16 schools in each district, covering a total of 80 schools in Chhattisgarh. In Balrampur, the team visited 9 primary schools and 7 upper primary schools and the corresponding numbers in Mungeli were 12 and 4 respectively. In both JanjgirChampa and Kanker, 11 primary schools and 5 upper primary schools were visited for the study. In Raipur, 10 primary schools and 6 upper primary schools were visited. This data has been summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1 : Number of Schools Visited



In Kanker, only one school had PTR greater than 30. In Raipur, JanjgirChampa, Mungeli and Balrampur the corresponding numbers of schools were 4, 5, 6 and 7. Figure 2 represents this data across all districts of the study.

Figure 2 : Pupil-Teacher Ratio in Schools Visited



Respondent Profile

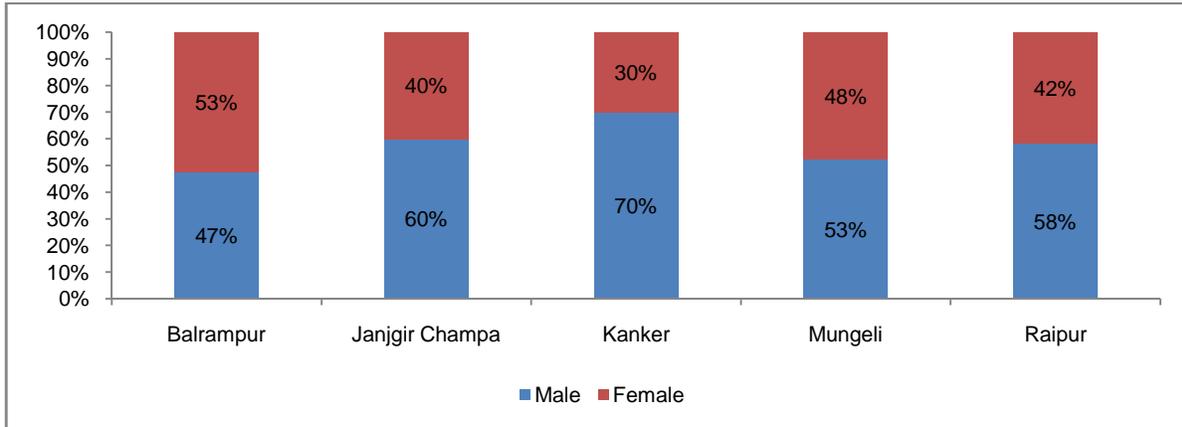
The review team identified students who had dropped out of school and visited the households of these students. The table below summarizes the average family size and the average number of children across the households covered under the study.

Table 2: Average Family Size and Average Number of Children

District	Average family size in the district	Average number of children in household
Balrampur	5	3
JanjgirChampa	5	4
Kanker	6	4
Mungeli	7	4
Raipur	7	4

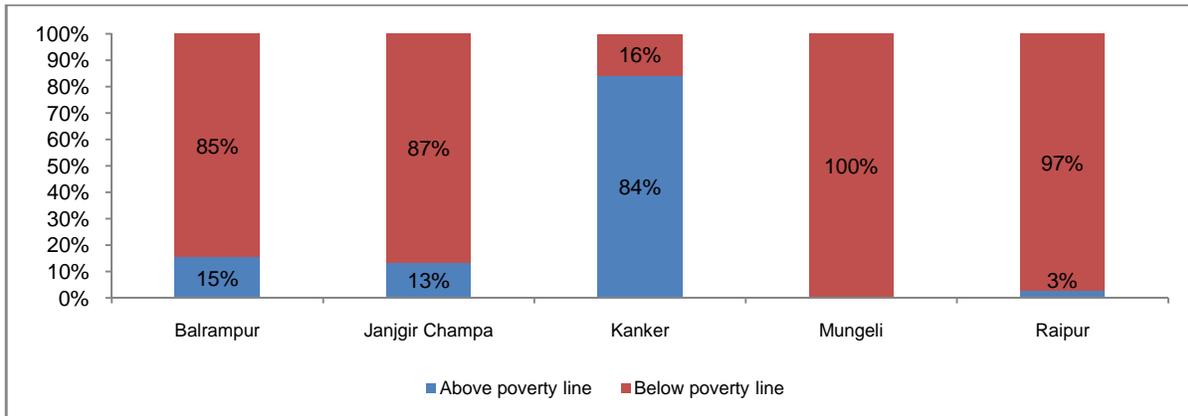
A mix of boys and girls who had dropped out were selected randomly from each school, and their parents were interviewed through the household interview questionnaire. The gender of dropouts whose parents were covered under the study is summarized in the chart below.

Figure 3 : Gender of Dropouts



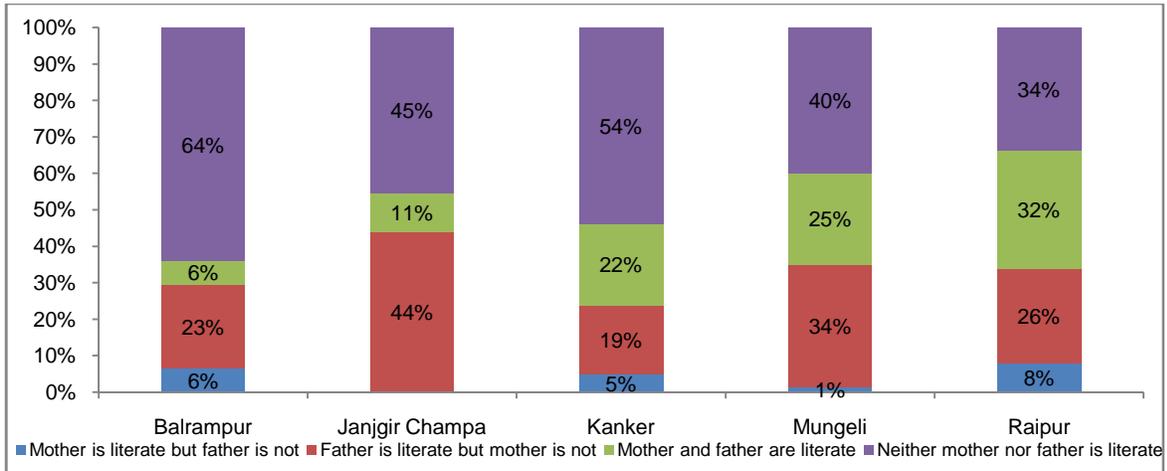
Most of the households covered under the study were below poverty line, with a few being above poverty line as well. In Mungeli, all households covered were below poverty line while in the other districts a mix of Above Poverty Level (APL) and Below Poverty Level (BPL) households were interviewed. The chart below summarizes the poverty status of families covered under the study.

Figure 4: Poverty Level of Households



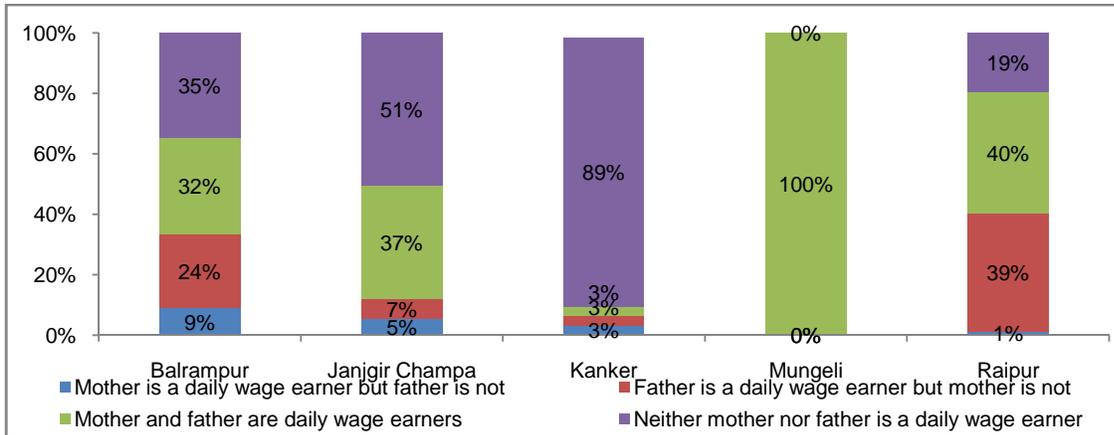
In each district covered it was observed that in maximum households, neither the mother nor the father of the dropouts was literate. However, there were also many households where the father was literate while the mother was illiterate. The literacy level of parents of dropouts interviewed under the study is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5 : Literacy Level of Parents of Dropouts



In a significant number of households covered under the study, both parents of students who had dropped out were daily wage earners. In Mungeli, the entire sample included daily wage earners. In Kanker, though the number of daily wage earners was reported to be relatively low, it is probably an underestimation as most parents were agricultural labourers who have not been classified as daily wage earners, but were likely also working for daily wages. The occupational status of parents of dropouts interviewed under the study is presented in the chart below.

Figure 6 : Occupational Status of Parents of Dropouts



3. State Profile

Chhattisgarh is a young State which came into existence on November 1, 2000. It is surrounded by Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh and has a total area of 135, 191 sq. km. out of which of which 34 per cent is cultivable land area and 44 per cent is forest land area. Chhattisgarh is the ninth-largest state in India and amongst the richest in terms of mineral wealth. The state also has mega industries in sectors including steel, power, mining, aluminum and cement. The State has 18 districts, 146 blocks and 20,126 villages.

The total population of the State as per census 2011 is 25,540,196 out of which the male and female population is 12,827,915 and 12,712,281 respectively. With this population, Chhattisgarh accounts for two per cent of the country's population. Out of the total population, approximately 24 per cent live in urban areas and the remaining in rural areas. The population is primarily concentrated in the central plain region. Chhattisgarh is one of the sparsely populated States of India and has a ranking of 26. With a decadal growth rate of 22.59 per cent, the population of Chhattisgarh is increasing at a higher pace than that of India. The population density of the State is 189 per sq. km. against the national average of 312 per sq. km. Scheduled Tribes constitute close to 31 per cent of the State's total population and their population stands at 7,822,902. For a majority of tribal population, agriculture offers basic sustenance. The tribal population, like in any other State in the country, is known for their ancient traditions and intricate handicrafts. The sex ratio of 991 females for 1000 males in Chhattisgarh is higher than India's sex ratio of 940.

The literacy rate of the State as per census 2011 is 71 per cent, with the male and female literacy rate at 81.45 and 60.59 per cent respectively. While the overall literacy rate has recorded an increase of seven per cent as compared to census 2001, the increase in male and female literacy rate has been 4.07 per cent and 8.74 per cent respectively, thereby indicating that the initiatives taken by the State Government to reduce the gender gap are showing results. The gross enrolment ratio and net enrolment ratio at primary level as per census 2011 is 107.83 per cent and 94.68 per cent respectively.

Table 3: Demographic indicators – A comparison with national figures

Indicator	Chhattisgarh	India
Total population (in crores)	2.55	121.01
Decadal Population Growth (in per cent)	22.59	17.64
Sex Ratio	991	940
Schedule Caste population (in crores)	0.24	16.6
Schedule Tribe population (in crores)	0.66	8.4
Total Literacy Rate (in per cent)	71.04	74.04
Male Literacy Rate (in per cent)	81.45	82.14
Female Literacy Rate (in per cent)	60.59	65.46

According to DISE (2012-13), a higher proportion of students are imparted education in government schools. Government schools form 88.94 percent of the total number of schools in the State. This is higher than the national figures which are 75.9 percent. Among the government schools a higher proportion of schools are

managed by the Tribal Department (52.92 per cent) than the Education Department (35.02 per cent). About 89.86 percent schools are in rural areas.

A look at the school ranking by DISE is quite revealing although surprisingly the outcome does not reflect that there are large gaps to be bridged in terms of access, infrastructure and teachers. Only about one-third primary schools have electricity connections, compared to three-fourths of households across the state. Consequently availability of computers is only about 2.84 percent and 19.01 percent for primary and upper primary schools respectively as against the corresponding national figures of 8.69 percent and 41.96 percent. The average number of classrooms is 2.7 as against the national average of 3.8.

Table4: Rank of schools in Chhattisgarh against the parameters

Parameters	Primary	Upper Primary
Access	19	21
Infrastructure	20	20
Teachers	26	32
Outcome	2	14

As seen in the following Table, the overall student teacher ratio is within the specified RTE norms. However, the state will need to put a lot of emphasis to improve the PTR at the secondary level. With support from RMSA, this situation is likely to show an improvement.

Table 5: Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) -Year 2012-13

S.No.	District Name	Primary School	Upper Primary School	High School & Higher School & Sec
1	Balod	22	27	47
2	Baloda Bazar	29	31	97
3	Balrampur	23	21	65
4	Bastar	19	16	96
5	Bemetra	33	31	50
6	Bijapur	17	10	96
7	Bilaspur	30	26	58
8	Dantewada	22	13	48
9	Damtari	22	22	63
10	Durg	32	31	55
11	Gariyaband	22	24	69
12	Janjgir_Champa	26	24	64
13	Jashpur	16	17	36
14	Kanker	18	17	54
15	Kawardha	31	20	48
16	Kondagaon	21	18	61

17	Korba	19	21	97
18	Korea	24	20	48
19	Mahasamund	29	36	53
20	Mungeli	35	32	84
21	Narayanpur	18	13	43
22	Raigarh	19	22	63
23	Raipur	36	34	70
24	Rajnandgaon	29	39	62
25	Sukma	13	5	80
26	Surajpur	21	19	52
27	Surguja	22	13	36
Chhattisgarh		1:25	1:22	1:59

Source – UDISE 2012-13

On the positive side, the proportion of contractual teachers has reduced from 32.23 percent (2011-12) to 11.63 (2012-13) reflecting the efforts being made by the state government to bring about an improvement.

The current study is to take a closer look at the reasons for drop outs. As per the UNESCO guidelines, there are several aspects that need to be strengthened for the school to provide good quality education. Each school should address the basic requirements of students. During the course of this study, the team has found that some of these areas require a closer look and greater partnership between the school and the community.

- ▶ Healthy, well-nourished, and motivated students
- ▶ Well-motivated, professionally competent teachers
- ▶ Active learning techniques
- ▶ A relevant curriculum
- ▶ Adequate, environmentally friendly and easily accessible facilities
- ▶ Healthy, safe and protective learning environments
 - Water and sanitation facilities
 - Access to health and nutrition services
 - Policies and codes of conduct
- ▶ Adequate evaluation of environments, processes and outcomes
- ▶ Participatory and school-based management
- ▶ Respect for and engagement with local communities and cultures
- ▶ Adequately and equitably financed educational institutions and programmes

Source: UNESCO

A gender wise break-up of drop out children shows that a higher proportion of boys are dropping out of school than girls although the difference is not very pronounced. This is corroborated by data from the current study as well, as a random sample of drop out students yielded 57 percent boys and 43 per cent girls. However, the study did not probe for specific causes for this and a more detailed gender-focused study would be required to identify these reasons.

Table 6: Gender wise break-up of Drop out children

S.No.	District Name	Elementary School Level (%)		
		Boys	Girls	Total
1	Balod	3.23	1.43	2.33
2	Baloda Bazar	3.51	2.71	3.11
3	Balrampur	3.57	2.96	3.27
4	Bastar	4.69	4.62	4.66
5	Bemetra	2.45	2.12	2.29
6	Bijapur	8.09	8.01	8.05
7	Bilaspur	2.80	2.70	2.75
8	Dantewada	5.34	5.89	5.62
9	Dhamtari	2.10	2.31	2.21
10	Durg	2.54	2.97	2.75
11	Gariyaband	2.40	2.89	2.64
12	Janjgir_Champa	2.33	2.66	2.50
13	Jashpur	3.43	3.13	3.28
14	Kanker	3.58	3.89	3.74
15	Kawardha	2.53	2.01	2.27
16	Kondagaon	5.52	5.77	5.64
17	Korba	2.90	2.91	2.91
18	Korea	2.23	2.84	2.54
19	Mahasamund	3.22	2.20	2.71
20	Mungeli	3.37	3.12	3.25
21	Narayanpur	9.34	9.67	9.51
22	Raigarh	2.24	2.22	2.23
23	Raipur	2.23	2.22	2.23
24	Rajnandgaon	3.67	3.78	3.73
25	Sukma	9.34	8.28	8.81
26	Surajpur	3.33	1.89	2.61
27	Surguja	3.78	2.10	2.94
Chhattisgarh		3.81	3.31	3.31
Source -UDISE 2012-13				

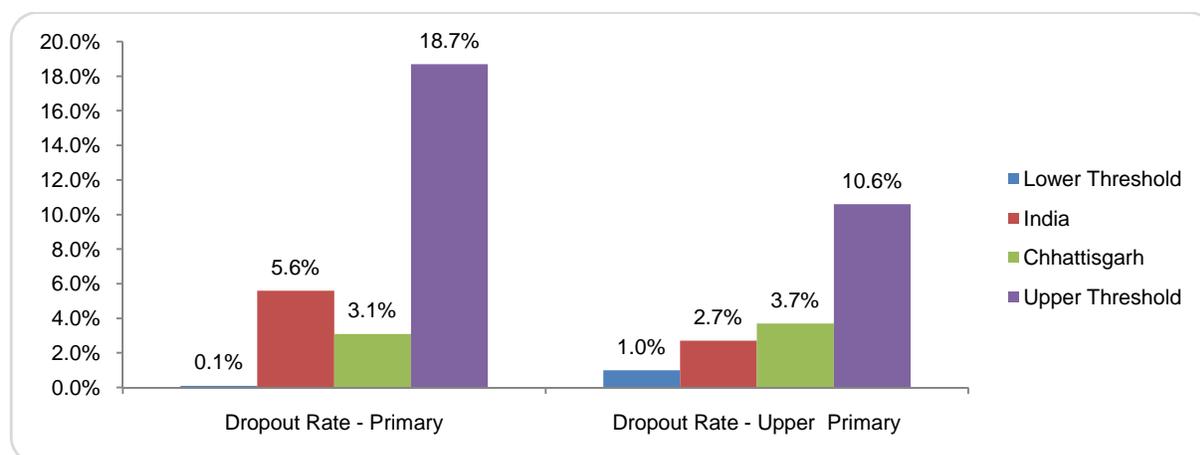
4. School dropout rate in Chhattisgarh – a spatial assessment

As the country moves towards achieving its goal of universalisation of primary and upper primary education; student dropout rates and transitions rates remain a cause of concern. Given the efforts being invested towards enrolling children at school and the investments being made towards improving the quality of education; every dropout raises questions on the completeness/comprehensiveness of the systems and processes in place to retain the students that the systems works hard to enroll.

As per the UDISE Flash Statistics Report Card, 2012-13, as of financial year ending 2012, the country recorded a dropout rate of 5.6 percent at the primary level and a dropout rate of 2.7 percent at the upper primary level. Further, it was observed that there exists a large variance in the state wise disaggregated dropout rates. State level dropout rates at the primary level range from 0.1 percent in Tripura to 18.7 percent in Arunachal Pradesh and the corresponding figures for the upper primary level were 1 percent in Pondicherry & Lakshadweep to 10.6 percent in Bihar.

The state of Chhattisgarh was noted to be a State where the primary level dropout rate falls in the lower quadrants and the upper primary level dropout rate falls in the upper quadrant. The dropout rate at the primary level was reported to be 3.1 percent and that at the upper primary level was reported to be 3.7 percent. Clearly the state is doing better than the National average when it comes to the level of primary schooling; but is performing worse than the National average while comparing at the level of upper primary schooling.

Figure 7: Comparison of school drop-out rates in Chhattisgarh vis-à-vis National aggregates

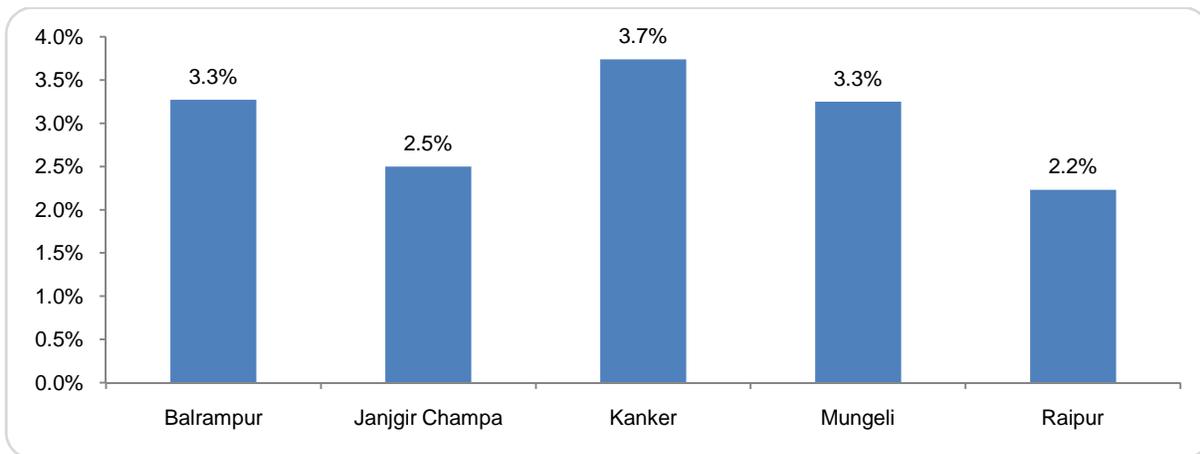


A district wise comparison for the state of Chhattisgarh highlights strong variance in the dropout rate across geography. As per data for financial year ending 2013, the district of Dhamtari has recorded an elementary school dropout rate of 2.2 percent. On the other hand the district of Sukma is observed to be the worst performing as it reported an elementary school dropout rate of 8.8 percent.

The districts covered under the current study reported a more limited variation. Raipur reported the lowest school dropout rate at the elementary level (2.2 percent) and Kanker reported the highest dropout rate (3.7 percent). The districts of Balrampur, JanjgirChampa and Mungeli reported elementary school dropout rates of 3.3 percent, 2.5 percent and 3.3 percent respectively. Despite such a limited variation in elementary school dropout rates, every district had its own unique reasons for why children were choosing to dropout of

schools.

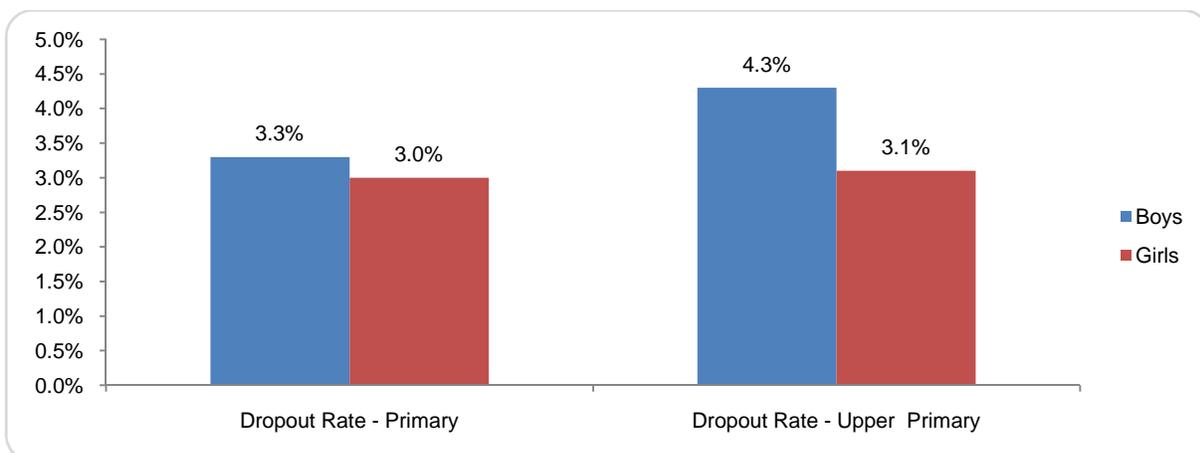
Figure 8 : Comparison of elementary school dropout rates at districts covered under the study



School Dropout Rates in Chhattisgarh – A socio cultural assessment

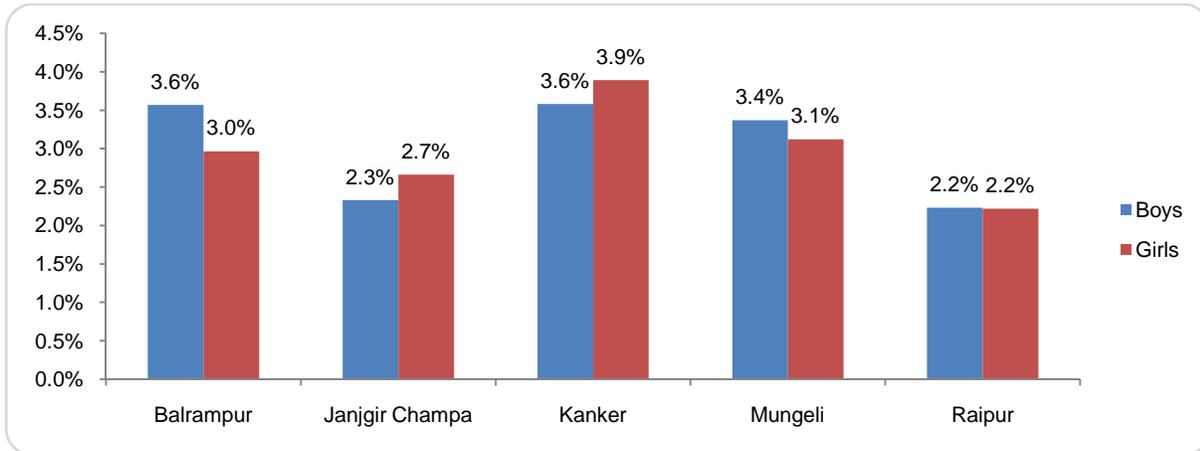
An analysis of the socio-cultural profile of the dropouts in Chhattisgarh further highlights a host of positive and negative findings that need to be taken into account while formulating mitigation measures/policies. Chhattisgarh is one of the very few states where the school dropout rate for girls is observed to be lesser than for boys. As per records for financial year ending 2012, the primary school level dropout rate for girls was 3 percent and the corresponding figure for boys was 3.3 percent. In the same year, the upper primary school level dropout rate for girls was 3.1 percent and the corresponding figure for boys was 4.3 percent. This clearly highlights the need to assess for gender disaggregated reasons for dropout.

Figure 9 : Gender and learning grade disaggregated school dropout rates



However, it is also important to note that the aforementioned gender disaggregates trend does not necessarily hold at the district level. Out of the five districts covered under the study; two (Balrampur and Mungeli) reported that the elementary school dropout rate for boys is higher than that for girls and two (Janjgir Champa & Kanker) reported the situation to be vice versa. In Raipur the gender disaggregated elementary school dropout rates were reported to be more or less equal.

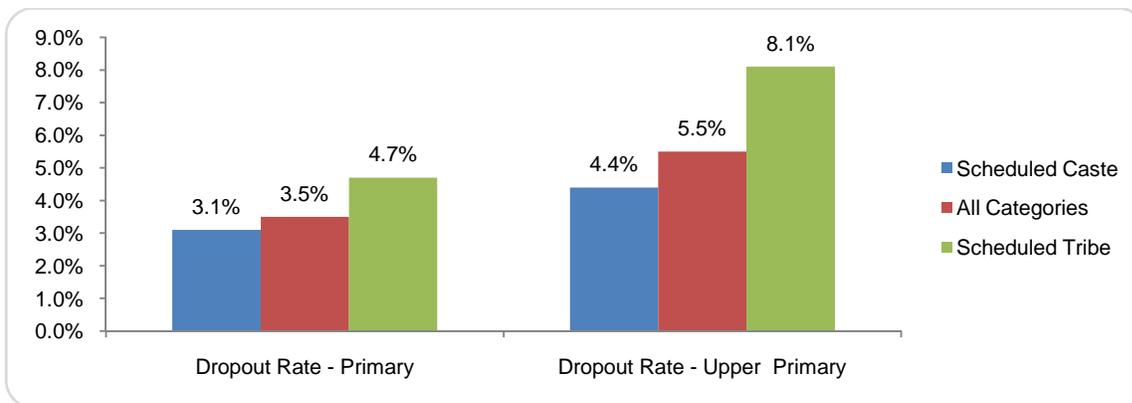
Figure 10: District wise gender disaggregated school dropout rates



Further, data from financial year ending 2011 highlights variations in the school dropout rates across various community groups. It is observed that in that year the primary school level dropout rate was recorded to be 3.5 percent. Against this benchmark, it was noted that the dropout rate for students from Scheduled Caste families was marginally lower and stood at 3.1 percent. On the other hand, the dropout rate for students from Scheduled Tribe families was moderately higher and stood at 4.7 percent.

A similar trend was observed in the case of upper primary school dropout rates. In that year, the overall dropout rate was recorded to be 5.5 percent. Against this benchmark, it was noted that the dropout rate for students from Scheduled Caste families was marginally lower and stood at 4.4 percent. On the other hand, the dropout rate for students from Scheduled Tribe families was moderately higher and stood at 8.1 percent.

Figure11 : Dropout rates for various community groups

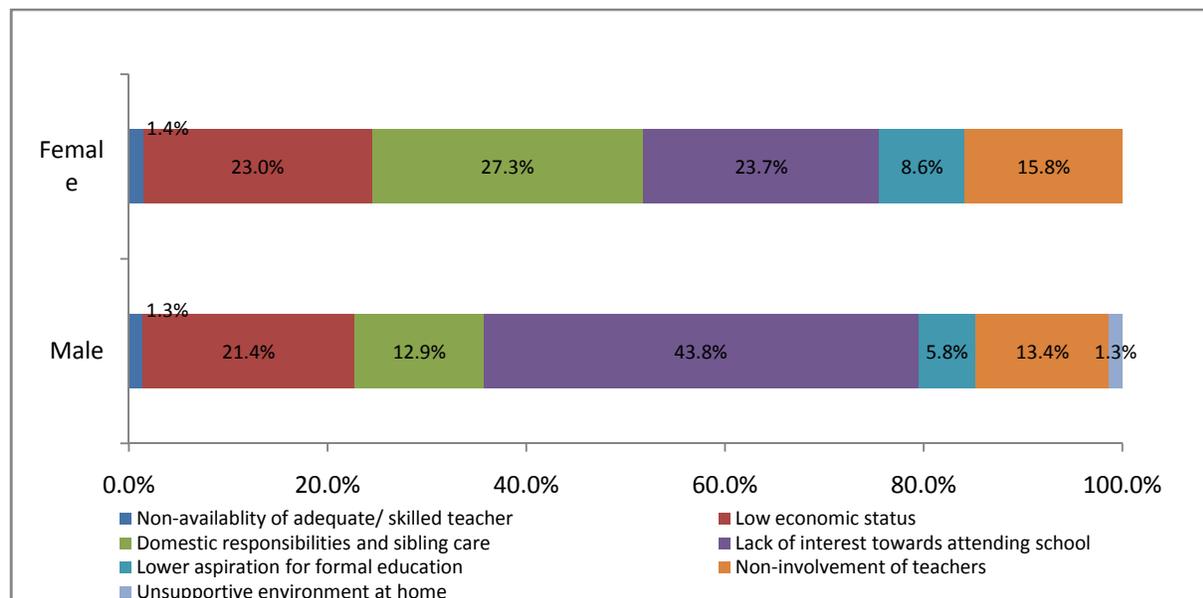


Therefore, it is evident that an evaluation of the reasons for dropout in Chhattisgarh and the associated recommendations towards mitigating the same should be mindful of geographic, gender and community related variances.

5. Mapping the Reasons for School Dropout

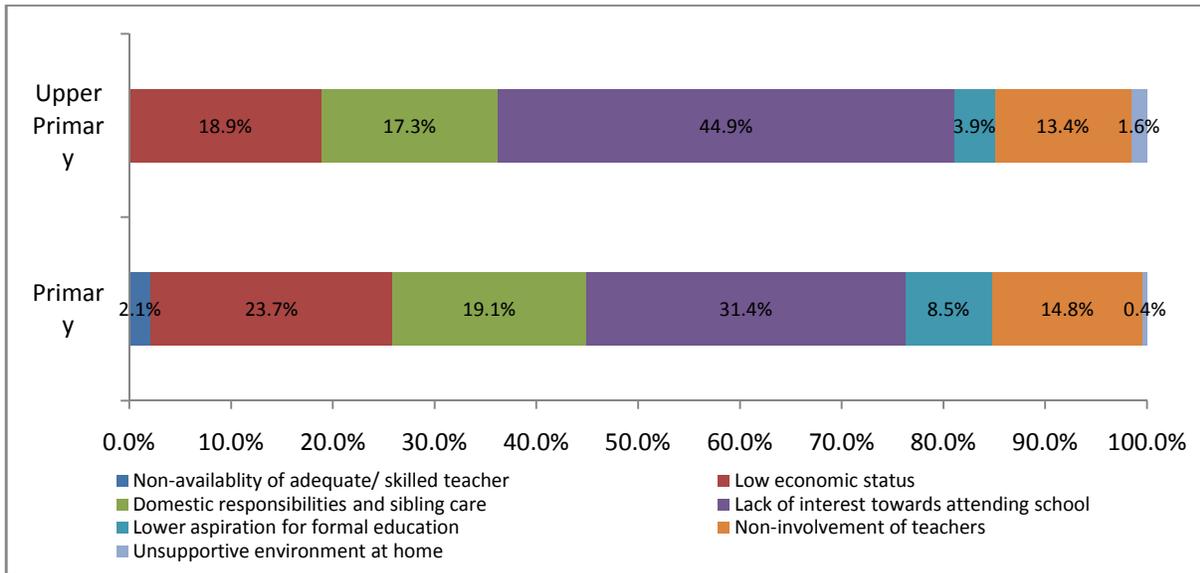
When a child drops out of school, it is largely the decision of the family. This Chapter attempts to analyse the reasons for dropping out from the parents' perspective. The analysis was done on the information obtained from the household questionnaires. The responses have been analysed using different parameters - gender, area (Urban/rural) and class level (primary/upper primary) and district level variations. The subsequent Chapter categorises these into eight areas and analyses the reasons from the perspectives of all stakeholders - school, family, child and the community.

Figure 1: Comparison of reasons of drop out between girls and boys



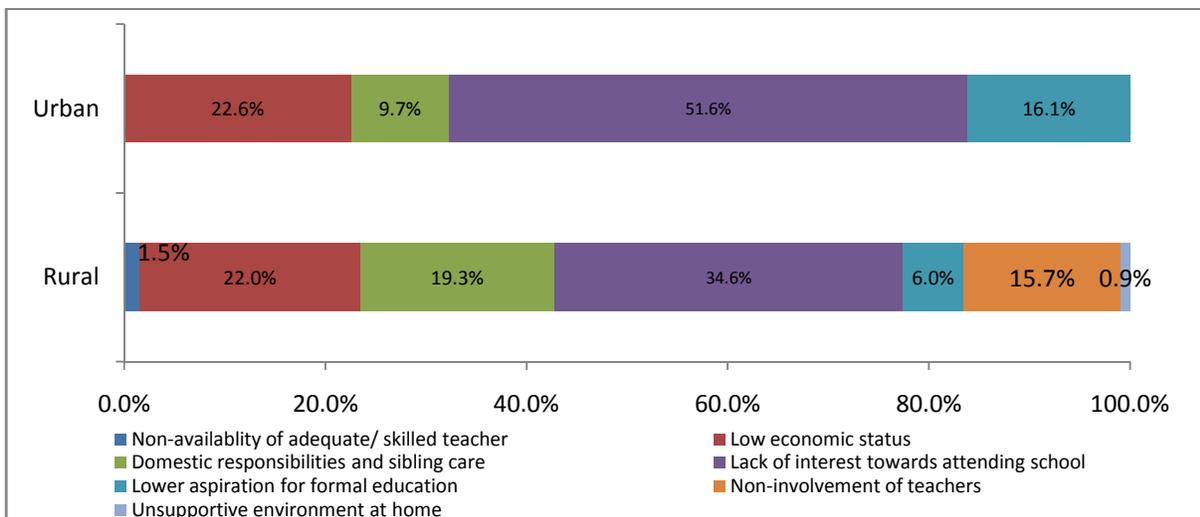
Overall, boys constituted 61 per cent of the total children covered during the study while girls constituted only 39 per cent of the total drop out. While analysing the reasons from the gender lens it was found that there significantly more number of boys dropped out of school due to lack of interest in academics. This constituted 43.8 per cent of the total reasons for boys while this reason was found significantly low among girls (23.7 per cent). Among girls burden of domestic responsibilities and sibling care was found to be larger reason for drop out (27.3 per cent). This fact reiterates the gendered division of responsibilities at household level, wherein the girls are more likely to be engaged in household work and sibling care than the boys. The other reasons such as unavailability of adequate number of teachers, low economic status, low aspiration for formal education, non-involvement of teachers and unsupportive environment at home do not show any glaring difference in their proportions as these reasons hold true and are found same in the case of both boys and girls.

Figure 23 : Comparison of reasons between upper primary and primary levels



While viewing the data from the school level lens, it can be found that there have been more dropouts at upper primary level for the reasons of lack of interest in academics than at primary level, the figures being 44.9 per cent and 31.40 per cent. The other reasons such as non-availability of teachers, low economic status, domestic responsibilities and sibling care and non-involvement of teachers show slightly higher figures for the primary level than the upper primary level. Dropouts due to unsupportive environment at home are found more a reason at 1.6 per cent for upper primary and 0.4 per cent in case of primary level.

Figure 3 Comparison of reasons at urban and rural levels



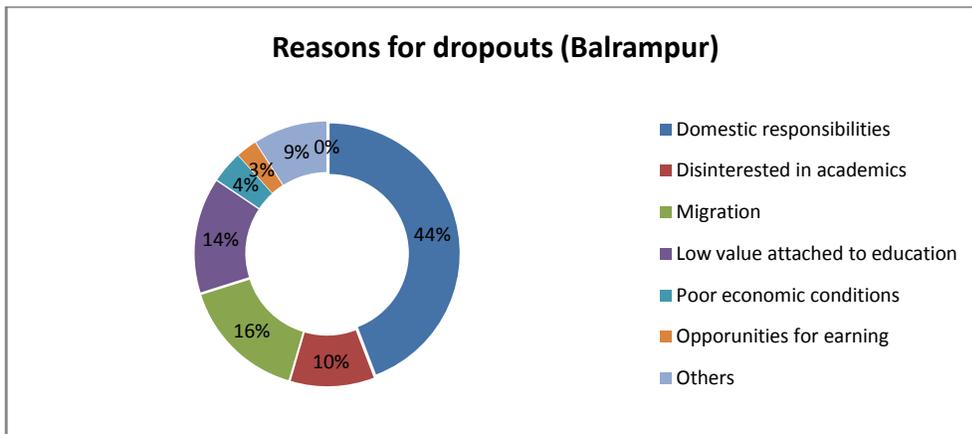
Looking at the reasons from a rural urban side, it is observed non availability of skilled teachers, non-involvement of teachers and non-conducive environment at home was found as reasons limited to rural areas only. Lack of interest in studies accounted for major reason in urban areas with 51.6 per cent

respondent accounting for the same. This was also found to be comparatively higher than that found in rural area. With both the parents working to make ends meet, the burden of domestic responsibilities falls on the shoulders of the children. Such cases have been observed more in the rural area as compared to urban area with 19.3 per cent and 9.7 per cent respectively.

District level Variations

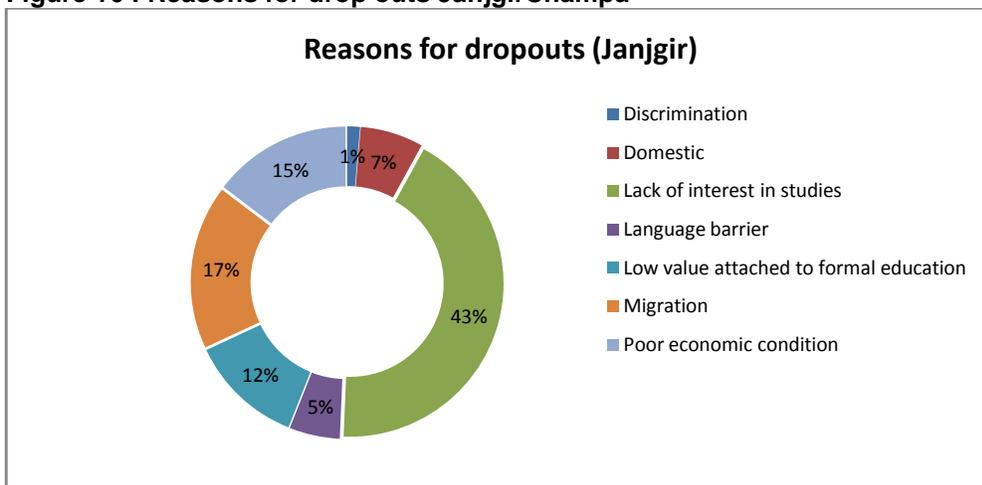
The district analysis has been made on the basis of responses given by the parents – the exact reason as to why their child dropped out of school. The responses given in each district were then categorized into common themes that emerged.

Figure 15 : Reasons for drop outs - Balrampur



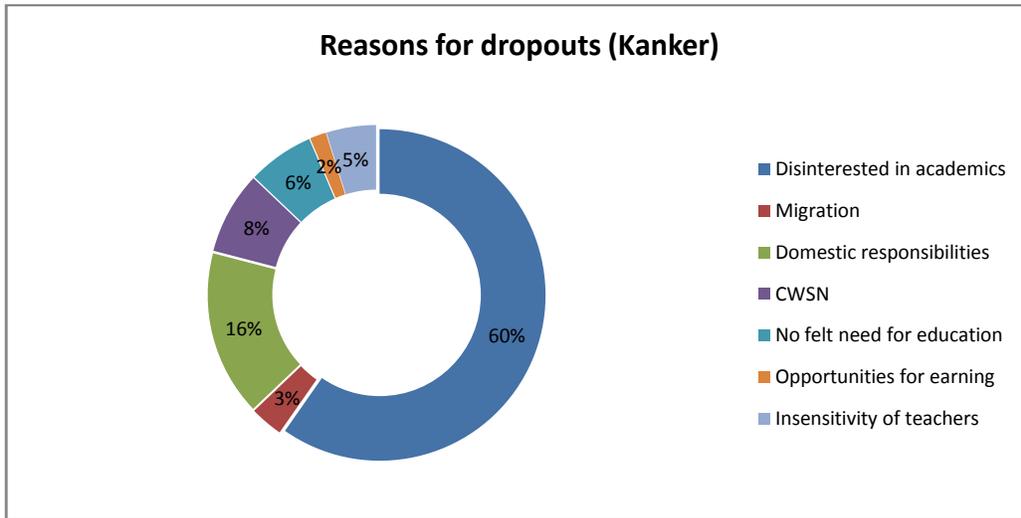
In Balrampur, the burden of domestic responsibilities put on children (44 per cent) was cited as the major reason of dropout by the parents. Need for migration was accounted as significant reason for children not attending schools regularly and eventually dropping out (16 per cent). Low value attached to education was also found to be common among parents of the drop out children. However low, older children were reported to be dropping out of school due to easily available opportunities for earning found in the area or outside.

Figure 16 : Reasons for drop outs JanjgirChampa



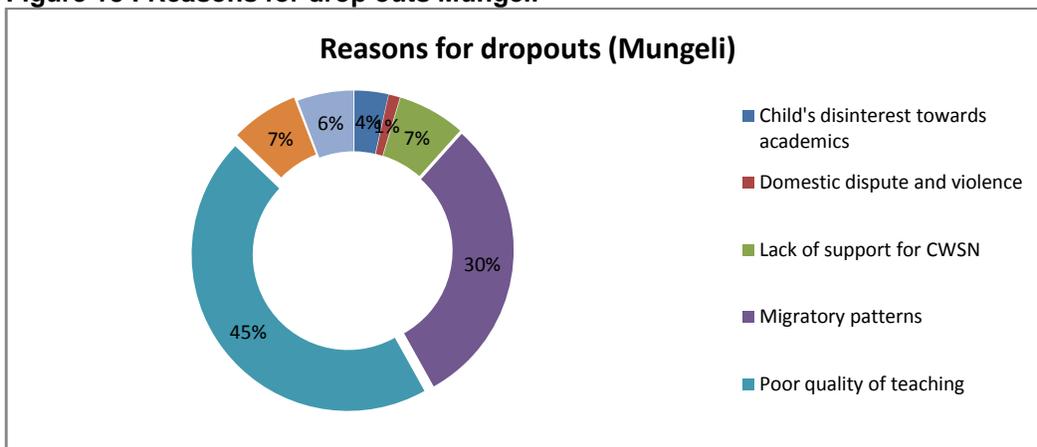
The chart depicts that the major reason of dropout among the children of JanjgirChampa as shared by the parents was lack of interest in studies (43 per cent). Migration in search for work accounted for 17 per cent of the total responses. Poor economic conditions of the family and low value attached to formal education held much weightage for dropouts in the region. Individual cases of language barrier particularly reported among the tribal community were also stated as reason for drop out by the concerned parents.

Figure 17 – Reasons for drop outs Kanker



Disinterest of the students towards academics accounted for 60 per cent of the total response received by the parents and therefore emerged as major reason for drop out among the children. Significant percent of parents (16 per cent) noted domestic responsibilities of children towards household work and sibling care as reason for drop out. Though children with special need were found to constitute a small portion of the total drop out children, it maybe noted that a much lower proportion of CWSN take admission in schools.

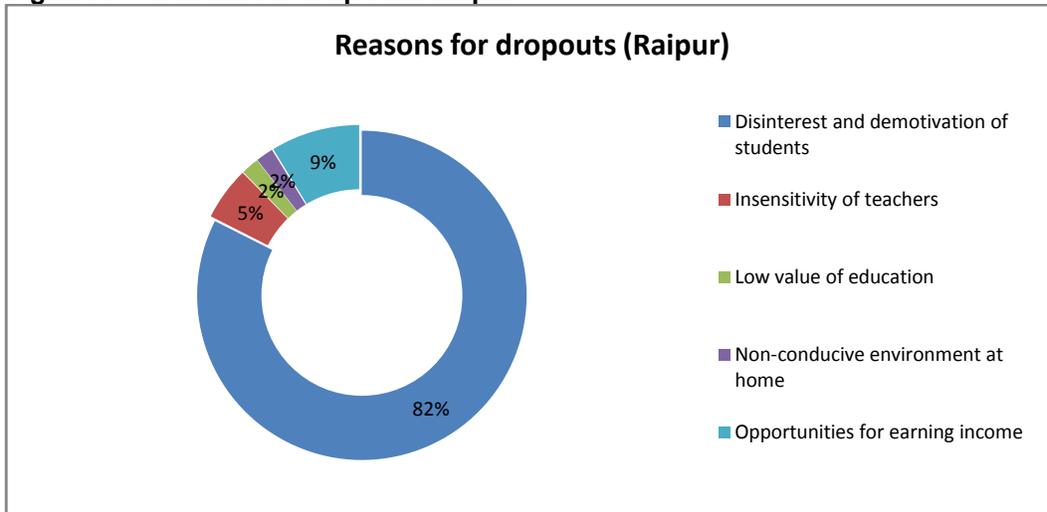
Figure 18 : Reasons for drop outs Mungeli



It is evident from the chart that majority of parents accounted poor quality of teaching (45 per cent) as the major reason of dropout among their children. Migration in search for work due to limited opportunities in their area accounted for 30 per cent of parent's response as reason for drop out. Sibling care especially common for girl child and lack of support for CWSN formed 14 per cent of the total response from the

parents. This highlights the need for more concerted effort towards gender and disability inclusion in the existing school system. Though reported as one of cases, domestic dispute and violence also emerged as a reason for drop out.

Figure19 : Reasons for drop outs Raipur



In case of Raipur, disinterest and demotivation of students towards academics (82 per cent) was stated as major reason for drop out by the parents. Small section of children was also found to be engaged in work due to easily available economic opportunities in the area. School related factors combined with low value of education for parents and non-conducive environment at home have also resulted in drop out among children in the district.

Thus a look at the various reasons for drop outs cited by the parents shows that while it is important to address all the issues that lead to children dropping out of school, some districts may require different strategies. Predominantly disinterest in studies emerged as the strongest reason why children drop out. However, in JanjgirChampa involvement in household chores makes one think that perhaps it would be helpful to introduce or strengthen the existing child care services. Similarly in Mungeli, where migration emerged as a very important reason, it would be important to address the issue with greater vigor by perhaps setting up more residential facilities, tracking families which migrate, create awareness among them that whichever place they migrate to, their child can seek admission in the local school.

6. Understanding the Reasons for Drop Out

The previous section of this report mapped the reasons as to why children drop out of school according to different geographies, gender, level of school, rural urban settings and district wise variations. This section details out the reasons. The reasons were understood from the perspectives of the schools, parents, children as well as the community, thus making it richer in analysis. For instance teachers commonly state disinterest of parents or children being first generation learners as a reason why children drop out. This chapter attempts to understand these reasons from the parents perspective also. The reasons for drop outs were categorised into eight broad areas. Each of these areas are discussed below.

1. Studies vs Earning Money

According to many studies², a lower economic status of the family has a positive correlation with student drop out. This correlation is also evident in all the districts covered under the study. Economic factors such as absence of financial safety nets, migration, working with family members on work site, assisting with field work/agriculture, opportunities for earning income and aspirations to buy items of personal use are leading to children dropping out of school to contribute to household income. While the districts present a unique situation vis-à-vis economic status, one or more of the factors stated above are present in one or all the districts covered under the study. In Raipur and Kanker, the opportunities for earning income are so many that children themselves seek out these opportunities to contribute to household income as well as to buy personal use items. In Mungeli, Balrampur and JanjgirChampa, the need to earn income often translates into the family having to migrate to search for employment, leading children to drop out of school. Helping family members with field work/agriculture has appeared as a reason contributing to dropouts in Mungeli and Kanker. For the ease of understanding, the information under this reason is being presented under two heads – contribution to household income and migration.

Contribution to household income

For families that are already below poverty line and living in hand to mouth situation, the additional supplementary income coming from a child, who engages in economic and labour activity, is a significant addition to the family income.

It was observed that in all districts of the study, a significant proportion of families were dependent on daily wages for livelihood. In Raipur, for example, 44 percent respondents were daily wage earners with an average monthly household income of INR 3,963. This income was lower than the sample of INR 4,369. In Mungeli, 59.3 percent of the families covered under the study reported an average family income below INR 3,000 per month, translating to roughly INR 450 – 500 per head per month. In Balrampur, an overwhelming percentage of sampled dropout children (66 children out of a total of 78 children) were from BPL families. In Kanker, over 84 percent of the household respondents we met were BPL status and earned between INR 1,500- 2,000 per month. Further, over 84 percent of these families worked either as cultivators, farm labourers or as MNREGA workers.

While MNREGA has been instituted to guarantee wage employment and act as a safety net, it should not consider these daily wages their primary source of income. However, in the absence of other alternatives, many parents under the study were observed to be entirely dependent on daily wages as this is a guaranteed source of employment for unskilled labourers. In many households visited for the study, it was

² John H. Tyler & Magnus Lofstrom, *Finishing High School: Alternative Pathways and Dropout Recovery* (2005). Richard Audas and J. Douglas Willms, *Engagement and Dropping Out of School: A Life-Course Perspective* (2001)

observed that even mothers were working as daily wage earners as their efforts and income were required to make ends meet. The fact that these families sustain/manage the household budget on or around the poverty line increases the probability that the family might pull their child out of school to act as an additional hand capable of adding to the family income. In Janjgir, nearly 31 percent of households visited had children who were working instead of going to school. In Mungeli, in 17.4 percent of the households covered under the study, the parents reported that the child had dropped out of school to contribute towards the family income. They said that if the child was above fourteen years of age he/she would be counted as a distinct unit of labor and if he/she was below the age of fourteen then he/she would travel to the work site with the family and pitch in with the work assigned to one of the elders in the family³. In Raipur, data from households revealed that in 12 percent of the households visited, children who had dropped out were working to support or supplement household income.

In Kanker and Mungeli (where the population consists largely of agricultural labourers), it was observed that students contribute to family income by directly contributing to agricultural labour. In Mungeli, for instance, boys actively help on their family's field or small tracks of land by sowing or harvesting the crop. In Kanker as well, students are absent from school during the labour intensive sowing and harvesting season to assist their families with field-related work. After harvesting, some students stay back to assist with winnowing as well. Children assistance was also sought in other allied activities like cattle grazing. In Hafra village of Bhanbeda cluster at Bhanupratappur of Kanker, we met three girls who had dropped out of school as there was no one at home to assist with grazing of cattle.

The agricultural cycle and its impact on children, Mungeli

The time of the field visits coincided with the paddy harvest season and also with the midterm examinations at schools. While seated in the head teacher's room at Primary School, Chattan, the field team observed that a child walked in and turned in his incomplete examination answer sheet in order to go and help his father in the field. The child said that the father had come to pick him up as he needed his help in the field. For his father that was the priority.

When students find easy opportunities to earn money without any requirement of education, it is a temptation which is not easy to ignore. This was also observed in districts of Raipur and Kanker. Raipur being an industrial city replete with iron rolling mills, plastic manufacturing factories and many other similar industries, the multitude of industries in the district provides ample opportunities for students to earn money which gives them the freedom to buy things which they like. It was observed that many students are involved in rag picking, collecting discarded plastic bottles, collecting iron shavings and coal pieces from railway tracks etc. and sell these to dealers as raw material. Group discussions with students in schools revealed that children do not go to school because they prefer to search for small pieces of scrap iron and sell them to dealers or middle men for as much as INR 50 per kg. Alternatively, students work as waiters in restaurants and *dhabas*, as motor mechanics in garages, or as drivers.

³While the Prevention of Child Labour Act prohibits employment of children below the age of 16, it was observed that in Raipur, children were working from the age of 14.

Easy source of income

The Middle school, *Rama Bhata*, Raipur is located in the vicinity of a Transport *Nagar* where commercial vehicles (mostly trucks) stall between towns. Some of these trucks carry vast quantities of scrap material such as plastic, glass, iron, paper, and cardboard to factories. Many children from the Middle School go to Transport Nagar every day to search for left over scrap material that may have fallen from the vehicles in transit. They then sell this material in the market either to dealer shops or factories for an average amount of INR 70-80 per day. This gives them the opportunity to earn some money for themselves, and also contribute to the household income and support their family. As a result, they prefer to earn money rather than spend the day in school, eventually leading to dropouts.

In Kanker also the availability of earning opportunities in the unorganized sector was found to be temptation for children in the adolescence and youth phase. The middle school students who are physically well-built are recruited by contractors to work on bore-well digging machines in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra or Andhra Pradesh. This work, although akin to bonded labour, is attractive on three accounts – the visit to a bigger city, the money and the independence. Many students we met have been on these 'boregaadis' and earned well. They use this money to buy mobiles, motorbikes and TVs. This also influences other students who are still going to school and their parents, who look upon this as a good opportunity to earn money. Some students have started driving tractors on others' fields to earn money for themselves. Some of the other contributing factors to this urge to earn money early are linked to the social and cultural practices as well. For example, in many villages, the consumption of alcohol is high and even very young children start consuming it due to easy availability.

Additionally, in Raipur it was observed that the dropouts due to this reason are higher amongst boys than girls, perhaps because traditional gender roles define boys as earning members of the family. It was observed that to some extent, dropping out to earn money is also a result of the influence of peers, as students have a strong desire to obtain the same personal use items as their friends. This aspiration for money and the things it can buy, the momentary pleasure of consumerism, and the influence of peers together contribute to a child dropping out of school to engage in informal income earning activities. Although students often begin by engaging in these activities while they are still attending school, they tend to drop out later so they can spend all their time to earn even more.

Though in very small numbers but interesting observations were also noted in one of the visited districts namely Balrampur with regards to communities and religions of the dropped out children. Compulsion to contribute to family income due to economic pressure force was observed especially among the Muslim (OBC) families in Balrampur. In MS Idrikala three children had dropped out due to economic reasons. Aman Ansari studying in grade V and Tabarak studying in grade IV have dropped out from the school for economic reasons (P.S Idrikala).

Migration

Most of Chhattisgarh is dependent on agriculture for labour and opportunities for earning daily wages are provided largely in agriculture and allied sectors. Thus, the sowing and harvesting seasons experience peaks in demand for agricultural labour and are therefore also the period which offer the highest daily wages. On the other hand, the interim period experiences a sharp fall in the demand for labor and is also the period which offers the lowest daily wages. Majority of the families do not have any savings and financial savings bank account, personal assets and NREGA savings account that they can rely on during this period. The

decline in earning opportunities and also in the daily wages coupled with absence of a financial safety net force families to look outwards at supplementary sources/avenues of income during the lean season for agriculture labour in Chhattisgarh. Given their lack of formal skills training, the easiest and at times the only alternative available is to migrate to cities and work at construction sites including brick kilns. Construction projects offer a volume of opportunities to unskilled labor and pay comparatively higher daily wages than the agricultural sector (especially in the lean season).

In Mungeli about 73.3 percent of the households covered under the study reported not having any financial safety net and another 18.6 percent reported that they had to rely on an informal sources especially friends and relatives to borrow money in times of need. About 57.0 percent of the households covered under the study in Mungeli reported migrating to cities during the lean season and returning to their villages once the demand picks up in the agricultural sector. In Balrampur, migration to other towns to work in brick kiln/other informal setups has been reported as one of the predominant predictor for dropout in 12 out of the 16 sampled schools which is close to 75 percent of the sampled schools. In JanjgirChampa, it was found that migration was common among families that belonged to very poor socio- economic background. Among the families migrating for work majority belonged to Scheduled Caste community (78 per cent) and nearly 61 per cent were employed as daily wage earners. It was further noted that 61 percent of the families visited by the team in JanjgirChampa, migrated frequently for work to Raipur or states like Jammu, Leh, Delhi and Haryana. In the district, of the families reporting migrating to far off places for work nearly 59 per cent of the parents reported having no form of social and economic protections like land and savings to help them sustain. As a result families are forced to migrate to meet their daily needs.

It was reported that the usual time for migration is after the harvesting season and on an average poor households migrate for 4-5 months. Most families prefer to take their children along with them, especially girls and younger children. Some parents also revealed that taking their children to brick kilns (to make mud moulds and carry soil) earned them additional income of INR 2000-3000 a month.

While migration helps the households in maintaining a steady monthly inflow of funds; it disrupts the lives of the children in the family. In majority of the cases the families take their children along and these children drop out of school with immediate effect. Sometimes the children accompany the parents to their worksite. While many parents reported that they would not mind if their children were to study at the local school near their place of work, they do not try to get them enrolled there as they do not want to go through the process of seeking a transfer certificate for the same. Clearly, there is a lack of awareness about RTE norms regarding transfer certificates, as RTE states that transfer certificates are not required for the child to be enrolled. This was reported particularly in districts of Mungeli, Balrampur and JanjgirChampa.

Upon returning home after a gap of 4-5 months children find it difficult to cope up with classes. During interviews with head masters it was reported that very few schools conducted extra classes for lagging students or any additional activity to put them on track with class room teaching. Such children unable to cope up with academics finally drop out of schools. In JanjgirChampa, some children reported being asked to repeat their classes after their return from other states. They went to class for few days but dropped out because of embarrassment to sit with younger children. The headmasters of the school however denied doing so and asked them to come to school again. It was found that such children were no longer interested in studies and did not want to go back to school. It was also reported that few of them had taken up bad habits and had started playing cards and indulged in gambling. Two of the children met during the study were also found taking addictive like *gutka*.

Seasonal Migration and its implication on children, Mungeli

Phool Singh (name changed) has the responsibility of sustaining a nuclear family of five. He and his wife are daily wage earners and have a small land piece that they used to cultivate rice and lentils. The family has a monthly family income of INR 1,000 to 2,000 and in order to sustain this income, the family migrates on an annual basis to work at construction sites in Delhi.

The family does not want their migration to affect their children's education but says that they have no option but to pull the children out of school when they migrate. The family is unaware that under RTE their child is automatically eligible to gain admission at the local government school near the construction site. They are still under the impression that they need a transfer certificate to migrate the child to this new school and that they would have to repeat the process when they return home.

The family says that they would in fact be happy if the children were to get admitted at the local school as they are always worried about them when they go to work at the site. They believe that the local school would be a safer environment for the children to be in when they go to work.

In the rest of the cases, only the work force participants in the family migrate and leave the school going children in the custody of their relatives or the elders in the family. While this ensures that the children still reside around the school and can continue to attend the same, it does not necessarily translate into the children attending school regularly. The lack of supervision by their parents leads to the children playing truant, and increases their vulnerability to dropout.

2. Domestic responsibility and sibling care

The source of livelihood for families and the seasonal nature of their employment in the agriculture sector render family members overworked/busy during the sowing and harvesting season. At these times, the family depends on their children for support in taking care of siblings and other domestic responsibilities. Financial burden and workload (domestic chore) is greater in large families and children are more likely to drop out or not attend school regularly. Parents of such families were found to be more involved in income generation activities which are a priority for them and children have to assist with household chores and sibling care at the cost of education. Further with both parents working to make ends meet and having younger sibling, the responsibility of taking care of young sibling was found to be automatically transferred to the elder child making them vulnerable to dropping out. Due to parental preoccupation with income generation activities, there is a dependency on children to assist in various household tasks like collecting firewood, grazing cattle, and caring for younger siblings. These tasks lead to absenteeism from the school and, over time, disengagement from academic activities as well.

In Mungeli, 41.9 percent of the households covered under the study reported that their child had dropped out of school in order to support/help with domestic responsibilities and care of siblings. In Raipur, the corresponding figure was 18 percent. In Kanker, over 31 percent of the households in the survey accepted that the child had to stay back to take care of household chores and care for younger siblings. In Balrampur, the survey found that only 31 percent of mothers (24 out of 78) stay at home and in the remaining households, elder siblings shared the burden of household chores and taking care of younger siblings, often reported to be a reason for dropout or prolonged absenteeism. In Raipur, of the students who were staying

home for sibling care and domestic responsibilities, it was observed that 79 per cent had younger siblings.

While in Kanker, and Balrampur the cases of children dropping to care for younger siblings was more pronounced in single parent households, in Raipur, the children who had dropped out for household chores or sibling care were from both nuclear families and joint families. This suggests that even with the presence of grandparents in the house, children were shouldering the responsibility of taking care of their homes and siblings.

Balrampur

An example is Rupa who left the school after her mother died as she had to stay back at home and take care of her siblings (PS Kalikapur). Another example is Mukesh who has dropped out of school for similar reason. Though he was an average student, he was regular in class, due to sudden death of his father, his mother started working and so he stays at home and takes care of his two younger siblings (PS Churunda).

The nature of domestic responsibilities and chores also highlights a gendered division in some districts. In Mungeli, for instance, boys actively help the family in sowing or harvesting the crop (especially on the small land tracts that the family owns) or in taking care of the cattle and livestock. On the other hand, girls usually substitute for their mothers and take care of the washing, cleaning and cooking at home and also take care of their younger siblings. In Kanker and Balrampur it was observed that even though there was no discrimination between boys and girls as far as sending students to school was concerned, girls were a natural choice for household chores and were made to stay home to take care of household chores, younger sibling care or care for old parents in a few cases. Similarly in JanjgirChampa, of the total children who stayed back for sibling care, an overwhelming 71 per cent were girls. In contrast, in Raipur, 50 per cent of those who were staying home for this reason were boys and 50 per cent were girls; suggesting that the decision to drop out in this case was independent of the child's gender.

Kanker

“At Mungwal village in Bhanbeda cluster of Kanker, a girl in grade 7th has written an application to the head master conveying the reasons for her absence from school. The girl student informed us that she wants to come to school but has to stay back to take care of household chores as her parents have to take care of the agriculture work.”

3. Lack of enabling learning environment at home

An unsupportive environment at home is created when parents are unable or unwilling to provide academic and learning support to their child at home. Even though parents might have a desire to help their child cope with the pressure of school and engage actively in the child's education, they are unable to contribute because they are not literate themselves, and moreover their demanding job schedules do not permit them to do so. There is an apparent gender dimension to the problem. Quite often education of children is considered to be the responsibility of mothers. Since a high proportion of mothers were illiterate, they were not able to support their children. In this scenario, monitoring the children's progress, attendance or homework becomes difficult for parents.

As mentioned earlier, in all the districts of study, a significant proportion of parents are wage labourers. As a

result of their job schedules, they do not have time to check their children's homework, pay attention to what is happening in school, or take an active interest in their child's school life.

JanjgirChampa

Kishore (name changed) was one such boy in JanjgirChampa whose parents worked as daily wage earners. During household visit and interaction with his parents it was shared that the parents left for work early morning instructing the children to go to school. They were unaware of the fact that Kishore would hardly go to school and would spend the time playing with his friends. It was only after a long time that the parents came to know about his absence from school and then despite their beating, Kishore refused to go to school.

In addition to the preoccupation with income generation activities, there also seems a lack of understanding of the value of formal education amongst the parents. In Kanker, when we asked the parents about the reason why they began sending their children to school and whether they feel their expectations are being met by the school and their children, 65% of the respondents were not able to articulate as to why they were sending their children to schools, whereas 25% replied 'to study' and only 10% replied with 'so that they do something better in their life'.

According to the household survey in Raipur, for example, as many as 65 per cent of parents reported that they did not provide any support or supervision to their child for his or her education while 27 per cent of households reported that the only supervision they provided was to pick up their child from school and drop their child to school. In Kanker too, an overwhelming number of respondents, about 90 percent, have never assisted their child in their schoolwork in any way. More so, none had paid a surprise visit to the school to find out if their children were regular with their work. In majority of the cases, over 76 percent, there was no evidence of parental involvement in child's education like ensuring child reaches school, awareness about his/her performance at the school or ensuring that homework is completed.

In Janjgir as well, 71 percent of parents reported providing no support to their children in their education and schooling. They rarely enquired from their children about their progress in school, helped them with homework or went to school to meet teachers. Further, 89 percent of parents revealed that they had never attended any parent teacher meeting in school. While this could be due to a lack of awareness about the meetings or a feeling of non-involvement with the school, it is also possible that parents are preoccupied with their jobs as daily wage earners and do not have time to attend such meetings and monitor their child's progress. Alternatively, it could also be the result of a lack of initiative from the school to seek the parents' support. For example, 64 per cent of the respondents in Janjgir reported never having heard of parent teacher meetings being conducted and not being contacted by the school either.

As mentioned, the lack of support at home is exacerbated by the fact that some parents are illiterate, which renders them unable to contribute to and engage in their child's learning. In Balrampur, the study found that in only 18 households the father has studied till primary level and in 7 households the mother has completed her primary education. When children are first generation learners, there is no one to guide them at home as their parents cannot help them with schoolwork or ensure that their interest in academics and learning is sustained. Studies⁴ have indicated that students whose families are involved in their education have a higher likelihood of completing education. Hence, a lack of parental involvement in a child's education or schooling over a period of time makes the child more vulnerable to dropping out of school and not completing

⁴ Richard Audas and J. Douglas Willms, Engagement and Dropping Out of School: A Life-Course Perspective (2001)

elementary education. Often children drop out as their parents go to work in the morning and there is no one at home to check whether they are attending school or to force them to attend. Many children leave their houses wearing school uniforms but eventually do not go to school and play truant, without the knowledge of their parents. This is corroborated by data from the household survey in Raipur, where only 6 per cent of parents reported that they were ensuring that their child attends school every day.

In Balrampur, the team found that many parents were not able to articulate the benefits of sending their children to school. Therefore, after getting their children admitted to school they do not follow up on the progress made by their child in the school. This could also be that even though they understand the importance of getting their child educated they do not know how they can contribute to this process, therefore, play a passive role. For example in PS Idrikala, it was reported by the teachers that children from *Bhumiharjati* are irregular at school as the parents are illiterate and not serious about studies. Similar experience was observed in PS Chando wherein dropouts in this school is majorly among the *CharwaJati*, who are illiterate and the parents work mostly as agriculture labourers and wage earners.

It was also observed that there were a few cases where domestic disputes, drug addiction, and alcoholism at home were creating an unsupportive environment. The negative impact of parents' alcoholism is often borne by the children in the family, as they witness repeated disputes amongst parents and are at the receiving end of abuse or insensitivity, or their parents are unconcerned about their schoolwork and academic endeavors. In some cases students dropped out simply because of a lack of involvement and motivation from their parents to attend school, while in other cases it is because of a compulsion to perform other duties. In Raipur, for instance, a few cases were observed where students had dropped out so they could earn income or stay home and take care of their households, since their parents were alcoholics who were not performing these responsibilities.

Finally, unsupportive environment at home is also created by repeated domestic disputes amongst parents. In Mungeli, 20.9 percent of the households visited during the study reported being aware of incidents where the child had dropped out of school because of domestic discord. In 8.1 percent of the households, members of the family reported that a child in their family had dropped out because of this reason. These families provided an insight into how the domestic discord affects the lives of their children. In such cases, a major fight/dispute can lead to the mother leaving the house to go and live with her parents; often taking the children along as it is her responsibility to take care of them.

4. Non-involvement of teachers

Teachers are sometimes unresponsive to the complaints of students and do not intervene in situations where students are teased, bullied or discriminated against. While there were many cases where students tease each other, call each other names, or make derogatory remarks based on caste, looks and appearance; such behaviour had gone unchecked by teachers in the school. It was observed that in many cases this lack of involvement from the teachers and their inability to take action had led to students staying home to avoid being humiliated by their peers. The non-involvement of teachers in such student-related disputes and their unwillingness to take action against those who are responsible could be a result of caste and class differences between school staff and school beneficiaries. As a result, teachers are not motivated to follow up with students who have dropped out or conduct household visits to these families

Caste and Class Differences Between School Staff & School Beneficiaries

Students in Raipur complained of the use of abusive language, interference in junior classes by senior students, physical and verbal fights, and teasing or bullying. It was reported that students tease or bully each other based on their looks with names such as *chhotu*, *motu*, and *billi*. When those at the receiving end of such remarks complain to teachers, their complaints remain unaddressed. Similarly, in Mungeli, primary school students reported that they were bullied by students from upper primary schools who would often ask them to run personal errands. There had even been instances where such disputes had turned violent. The children reported that while teachers were usually quick to respond in such situations, they would turn a blind eye to repeated incidents thereby leaving it to the children to settle the dispute amongst themselves.

It was observed that sometimes students were sometimes subjected to discrimination based on caste or gender. In Raipur, for example, students reported that those from lower castes were teased using derogatory terms such as *chamar* or *satnami*. In Mungeli, Head Teachers reported that the community is often split on the lines of SC and OBC; and sometimes these disputes tend to creep into the classrooms and lead to the formation of groups and arguments amongst students. It seems that teachers in some schools also tend to exhibit tendencies of being biased towards particular groups from the community. In Mungeli, for example, 16.3 percent of the households covered under the study reported that they have observed or been informed about discriminatory behavior at school. It was reported that such discrimination was targeted at SC students, ST students, OBC students or girls. In JanjgirChampa four of the 16 schools visited reported facing language barriers while communicating with children of a particular tribal community like *Sabariya*. Long absenteeism and dropouts were reported in these schools. Teachers also did not seem very keen in teaching this community and one head teacher shared his experience of spending time in that particular school as '*sajjayekalapani*'. It was evident that there was very little communication taking place between the community and the teachers and teachers did not enjoy teaching these children.

In JanjgirChampa, the team also came across an individual but critical incident of discrimination and bullying against a young boy whose father was a sweeper in the same school that he was studying. Vinod (name changed) had nine brothers and sisters and studied along with his sister in this school where his father worked. He avoided going to school while his father regularly came to the school to do his duty. During discussion, the child shared that he was teased by other students in the class calling him names due to his father's occupation and the teachers did little to stop them. He was asked to clean the floor and sometimes beaten up for no reason. The father however, had no complaint against the school and seemed preoccupied in his work. When the head master was probed on the same he shared that the child was dumb headed and weak and did not understand anything therefore the children teased him.

Though in most of the cases it was found that teachers were local or from the community, their not being particularly from the marginalised community somewhere also reflected their indifference or non-involvement in participation or problems of these marginalised children.

Follow up

The non-involvement of teachers is not limited to their inability to resolve disputes amongst students. It was observed that they also exhibited reluctance and inertia in addressing the issue of dropout. The reasons for this were different in each district.

In Janjgir, it was observed that the teachers had not followed up with students who had been absent for long periods of time because they did not know where the students stayed, or because these students stayed in

poor localities that the teachers did not want to visit. In Mungeli teachers reported that they had not made household visits to the homes of those who had dropped out. Correspondingly, 60.5 percent of the families covered under the study reported that none of the school teachers got in touch with them when their children dropped out of school. The teachers mentioned that since they did not know who to classify as a dropout, they hesitated to follow up on the issue. In fact, the lack of a standard definition of dropout was observed in all the districts of the study, and has proved to be a cause of not only confusion but also inaction in many cases.

Mungeli

When asked for the definition being followed at the school (for an academic year), all the teachers in Mungeli identified dropout identification to be a function of prolonged absenteeism. However, the length of absenteeism required for a child to be classified as a dropout varied from 15 days to a year. Herein, the teachers operating with smaller time frames considered a short phase of absenteeism as vulnerability to dropout and made household visits accordingly. On the other hand, teachers working with longer time frames believe that prolonged absenteeism is more often seasonal and cyclical and that children usually come back to school once the season or cycle gets completed. Therefore, they do not reach out to the families of these children.

In Kanker, 71 percent of households in the study reported that teachers had not made a visit to enquire about why the child had been absent from school. Majority of the teachers did not belong to the same village or nearby areas. Since teachers were not part of the same community or village as the students, they did not seem inclined to visit the households to inquire about dropout and performance in school, or establishing a relationship with the members of the local community. In Balrampur, too it was observed that teachers rarely visit community households. This is even more pronounced in the tribal-dominated belts of the district because most of the teachers do not belong to the villages where they teach. It was reported that teachers often attempt to transfer out of these regions because of a lack of amenities and an inability to form a rapport with the local communities and students. As a result, they are unwilling to follow up with students who have been absent for prolonged periods.

5. Corporal punishment and its impact on children

Corporal punishment at Indian schools is an age old practice of disciplining the children and however traumatizing it may be, it seems to have acceptance in the minds of all the stakeholders i.e. teachers, parents and even children. As a result any child, who feels victimized or develops a phobia against attending schools because he is afraid of receiving such punishments, is often left voiceless as he/she generally doesn't have access to any individual who will give a hearing to his/her concerns/fears. Therefore, these children become highly susceptible to dropping out of school or bunking school on a frequent basis.

The prevalence of this reason for dropout is made clear by the fact that at four of the five districts visited under the study, children clearly voiced their negative opinion about the practice. Children at primary school usually reported being afraid of teachers who frequently awarded corporal punishment. On the other hand, children enrolled in middle school reported that they characterized instances where they were given corporal punishment in front of the entire class were essentially demotivating and humiliating. They said that they felt that they are now mature enough to receive and understand verbal criticism on/evaluation of their actions.

In Raipur, group discussions with students revealed that in many schools, the students were afraid of

teachers. It was not possible to gauge whether this fear was based on the behaviour of the teacher, or whether it was simply an irrational fear that pupils had, but nevertheless it was significant in the decision to stop attending school and eventually drop out. In three schools, students cited the fear of teachers as a reason for dropout, stating that they were afraid of how their teachers would react since they had not done their homework, or stating that they were afraid of the teacher punishing them for misbehaving. In one school students also revealed cases of being so humiliated by teachers that they were forced to stop going to school.

In Mungeli and Raipur, the field researchers observed a cane or a stick in the corner of every classroom visited. A number of cases of corporal punishment and the same having a negative impact on a child were found in each of the two districts. In Kanker, Mungeli and Raipur children at almost all the schools reported that corporal punishment was regularly being used as a method of instilling discipline amongst children.

In Balrampur, children at six of the schools covered under the study (all primary) said that they really wish that their teachers stop giving such harsh punishments. The children, especially boys, reported physical punishment which includes twisting of ears and slapping whereas the girls reported verbal punishment. On days when the children are aware that they will receive such punishments (such as when they are running late for class or haven't done their homework) the natural reaction is to bunk school or turn in sick for the day. The field researchers in Kanker also received similar feedback from the children.

In Mungeli, the teachers were observed to be actively using the cane and the same was recorded at the time of the field visits. However, it was also evident that the teachers generally avoided giving such punishment to girls. This was seconded by the information collected from the families of the children who have dropped out of school. At 62.8 percent of the households visited as a part of the study, the family members said that teachers still give out corporal punishment for errors/mistakes. However, these households also clarified that such punishment was only given to boys.

In Raipur, the students at three of the sixteen schools visited clearly identified corporal punishment as one of the reasons for dropout and said that some of their teachers had serious anger management issues and would award very harsh punishments in case a child was caught to be breaking the classroom discipline. They said that a few of their friends had stopped coming to school as they were usually at the receiving end of such punishment. In fact at one of the schools the children also complained about a teacher who would regularly pass rude or humiliating remarks at children who were academically weak.

However, it seems the practice will continue to exist for some more time as parents and teachers still continue to believe corporal punishment as means of teaching and disciplining children. Parents and teachers accepted it as normal practice and related it to the culture of their time when punishment was considered rightful to monitor a child's progress. However, on probing deeper it was understood that the act of punishment at school or at home is repeated quite often for one reason or the other, thus showing that this issue needs to be addressed at a larger level.

Raipur

A boy was caught talking incessantly during class. His class teacher took him to the headmaster and complained about his behavior in one of the schools in Raipur.

The head teacher told the child that as per his experience only women like to talk so much so as a punishment he should start wearing bangles and a saree in place of his regular school uniform. The remark had such a negative impact on the child that he immediately dropped out of school and since then he hasn't attended any classes. He said that he felt humiliated by the comment as it was passed in front of the entire class.

The gravity of the psychological impact of the incident is further made clear by the fact that despite repeated attempts by the school to re-enrol him, he has out rightly refused and continues to stay out of school.

6. Lack of interest towards attending school

The prevailing socio-cultural landscape and the overall environment at school contain a number of anomalies and aberrations that can lead to a child developing a disinterest towards attending school.

The socio-cultural landscape or the child's social network primarily consists of his/her family and the child's friends (peer group). The behaviour, habits, values and beliefs of the child's family and friends are bound to rub off on his/her own personality. As a result, children tend to pick up bad habits from their elders and the same can subsequently rub off on their friends. Also, peer pressure can many a times lead to children dropping out in groups. At the school, teacher's disinterest towards delivering against their responsibilities, limited understanding of children's background and a non-engaging curriculum can also lead to a child developing a disinterest towards attending school.

The child's disinterest coupled with the low value attached to education by a number of families land up creating a situation where the parents start believing that the school is not adding any value to the child's future. Such children become highly susceptible to dropping out of school. The gravity of this problem is highlighted by the fact that in Mungeli 43 percent of the families reported that the children were disinterested in attending school. The corresponding figure for the districts of Raipur and JanjgirChampa were 68 percent and 56 percent respectively.

In Raipur and Mungeli families of children who had dropped out as well as the head teachers at the schools visited clearly highlighted peer pressure as a reason for dropout. In Raipur, a number of children were observed to have dropped out of school in groups and were reported to be engaged in informal work that would enable them to make money. In turn, the compulsion to make money could be directly linked to their need to fulfil their current needs/aspirations.

Mungeli on the other hand is characterised by a largely agrarian economy where individuals were observed to be content in living within their means. However, Mungeli seems to be grappling with a problem of alcohol addiction. A number of men and even young boys have developed a chronic addiction. In a number of cases, boys who have developed an addiction for alcohol and other abusive substances were reported to have dropped out of school in groups. At 17.5 percent of the households covered under the study, family members said that their children had dropped out of school under the influence of their peer group. All of the children under consideration were reported to be boys and many of them had actually dropped out because they were addicted to abusive substances. In such cases, the family's natural reaction was to pull the child out of school and engage him in the household chores and work so as to constantly keep an eye on him. There were of course a number of cases where a group of friends had simply dropped out in order to pursue other

sports and recreational activities as they had lost interest in attending school.

Mungeli

Dhaneswar (name changed) has five children. He resides in the vicinity of a Middle School, in Mungeli. The community seems to be grappling with a heavy prevalence of alcoholism and this evil seems to have made a grasp on the lives of the children as well.

Dhaneswar reported that his son Abhay (name changed) is one of those unfortunate children who has fallen victim to alcohol addiction and said that he holds himself partially responsible for this problem because till recently he was an addict as well.

He said that while the rest of children regularly attended classes, Abhay and some of his friends tend to bunk school and consume alcohol in the fields. He said that they play cards to while away time and that the problem has escalated to the point where they tend to steal money from home in order to purchase the liquor they consume.

In terms of the school environment, teacher absenteeism and irregular classes were reported to be the most prevalent reasons behind children developing a disinterest towards attending school. During in depth discussion on why teacher absenteeism is a major cause of concern, the students revealed that a number of their teachers were regularly absent from their duties and as a result the school usually operate with inadequate staff. They said that the staff present on any given day responded to this issue by adopting any of the three following approaches:

Self-study classes: The students were asked to study on their own and a child was selected from the class to lead the self-study session by reading out sections from the prescribed text books. On a number of occasions, a child from a senior class was asked to lead the self-study session of a junior class. Herein, the students complained that these classes were largely alienating as it felt that they were confined to a particular classroom and seemingly keeping themselves engaged without any guidance.

Joint classes: The students from a number of classes were merged into a singular set and a teacher would then lead the teaching-learning process for this joint set. Herein, the students complained that depending on the grade specific curriculum that the teacher would use, a certain section of the joint class would either not able to comprehend the curriculum (as it was from a senior grade) or was disinterest in the curriculum (as it was from a junior grade that they had already cleared).

Simultaneous classes: The students continued to sit with their peers and study in their respective classrooms and a teacher would shuttle between classrooms; covering sections of the curriculum and assigning exercises for them to complete while he/she attended to the other classes. The students said that this setup was much better than the previous two setups. However, they reported that the pace of learning was still much slower than usual and they would still have a lot of idle time which they had to spend being confined to the classroom.

In Mungeli, 68.6 percent of families reported that the teachers at the school are not regular and as a result the classes do not happen as per schedule. In Raipur the head teachers at five of the schools said that their teaching staff is frequently assigned to other official duties and as a result the school has to usually operate under the unavailability of sufficient teaching staff. In Janjgir during household survey, 51 per cent

respondents who reported irregular classes, nearly 71 per cent reported teacher absenteeism or teachers' engagement in non-academic tasks as major reasons for irregular classes. Half of the respondents also reported not seeing regular classes being conducted in schools.

Teacher absenteeism is a serious concern as it creates a negative perception in the minds of the children as well as their parents. While the impact on children is quite direct and easy to connect/discern; the impact on parent's perception is slightly more complex. Given that a number of children who dropout are first generation learners, their parents' perception of value of education is directly linked to their children's interest in studying. It is also linked to the parents' observation of how the school functions. Herein, it is obvious that teacher absenteeism creates an impression that the teachers are operating professionally and are shirking their responsibilities and this in turn is expected to have a direct impact on the quality and relevance of education being imparted at the schools.

In this regard, another observation made by the field researchers in Mungeli was that 15.1 percent of the household's with dropouts reported that their children were regularly asked to run errands at school, which they did not like. This is an element of concern as it can have a negative impact that is very similar to the impact of teacher absenteeism.

Efforts to understand the child's concern, parents' apathy or family condition was also found to be limited in most of the teachers. Most teachers visited households once in a year during enrolment drives for children and undertake a household survey process. Identifying and locating houses of drop out children was very difficult for them as most of them did not know the houses and avoided going to poor localities where most of the drop out children lived. In one of the schools in Janjgir, circulars were issued to parents telling them about their children absenteeism and peons were sent to houses to collect their signatures. However, no teacher went to meet parents and interface meeting to understand the problem.

Finally, it is important to note that children at a number of schools in Raipur, Mungeli and Kanker also reported that their disinterest in academics was directly linked to the teaching-learning models being used by their teachers. The teaching learning process was found to be classroom based and this limited students' exposure. No goal setting exercise, based on students' strengths and development areas, was carried out with individual students in Kanker. Monotonous ways of teaching and limited use of activity based learning can also contribute the child's disinterest in studies was noted in Janjgir with 68 per cent of the schools visited text it was reported that book teaching was reported to be the only source of teaching.

It was shared by the teachers in Raipur that after RTE was implemented, students and parents know that the child will be promoted to the next class. This has led to a belief that they need not attend school since they will pass anyways. The children also said that the school time table did not provide any scope for sports, art & craft and other recreational activities. Many of the students said that they love drawing, dancing, singing and engaging in local sports; but the school schedule has no space for such activities. They said that many a times they would rather choose to be at home and pursue these hobbies than attend regular classes which they otherwise termed as mundane. The essence of continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) has not permeated at both the school level and among parents since there are few opportunities given to students to develop their potential.

7. Non-availability of adequate number of Teachers

Teacher absenteeism is not the only teacher related factor leading to the formation of a negative perception of the quality of education at the schools. Information from Balrampur, Kanker and JanjgirChampa also reveals that the districts are grappling with problems of teacher inadequacy and non-uniform distribution. In Janjgir it was alarming to note that 7 out of the 16 schools visited the pupil student ratio was found to be higher than the district average of 20. Insufficient number of teachers due to vacant positions was reported by headmasters. In one of the middle school visited in cluster *Katoud*, it was found that against the seven provisioned teachers only three were in position. The PTR for the school was found to be as high as 70.

It was observed that while in other districts, schools are operating under the pupil-teacher ratio as specified by the RTE, the number of teachers does not necessarily align against the number of classes at the school. In such cases the teachers have to necessarily club classes and this directly leads back to the aforementioned problems linked to 'self-study', 'joint' and 'simultaneous' classes as observed in Mungeli. In Kanker, it was observed that teachers are invariably required to group the classes and undertake group teaching in over 90% of the schools surveyed as the number of teachers is less than the number of grades. Further, if even a single teacher is on a leave, the PTR goes above the state norms. This was observed in over 63% (7 Nos.) schools on the day of visit to the schools. Though the importance of adequate teachers in the school cannot be over emphasized, this should also mean proper attention to students learning and emotional needs, thereby reducing the instances of drop out.

Kanker

At a school visited by the team in Kanker, it was observed that the combined classes were being held at nearby (50 meters apart) Girls Ashram school due to lack of teachers at both the schools. At the Ashram there was only one female teacher and at Primary School there was only male teacher (as head master was under suspension). So both the teachers decided to combine the classes for some days. The two teachers are grouping classes (21 students from Primary School and 48 girls at Ashram) at Ashram to have better classroom transaction than what would otherwise be possible individually.

Further, a number of head teachers at the schools visited reported that they were facing difficulties in teaching the students due to the lack of qualified and relevant staff. They highlighted the fact that their schools lacked the required strength of Mathematics, Science and English teachers and that finding teachers with relevant qualifications was a difficult task. In Kanker, at the upper primary schools, in 4 out of 6 schools there was a lack of Maths, Science, English and Social Studies teachers. In Balrampur, during discussion with the headmasters/teachers, it emerged that in most of the upper primary schools (five out of seven) teachers face difficulty in teaching, especially the Science subjects and English. This was not surprising since a majority of the teachers have studied arts subjects and are from Hindi medium background. The problem of not having adequate number of qualified teachers was also found to be more acute in rural middle schools. The head teachers of schools opined this fact that lack of teachers, especially Science, Mathematics and English teachers act as a major barrier in upper primary schools. Compared to this, in government upper primary schools located in urban pockets there are surplus teachers.

Parents were also found pulling their children out of such schools and enrolling them in private schools. The research team observed the same in Chhotekapsi cluster of Kanker, where parents had pulled their children out of the upper primary government schools due to lack of adequate subject teachers and enrolled their

children in private schools without even taking a Transfer Certificate from the government school.

8. Low aspiration for formal education

The data collected through the course of the field visits clearly highlights the fact that majority of the children who have dropped out of school are first generation learners. In Raipur 75 percent of the households reported that the child's father is illiterate and 49 percent reported that the child's mother is illiterate. The corresponding figures for Balrampur, Kanker and JanjgirChampa were 45 percent & 65 percent, 44 percent & 71 percent and 41 percent & 89 percent respectively. In Mungeli, 37.2 percent of the households covered under the study reported that the child's parents were illiterate.

In such situations, parents' perception of value of education is largely acquired and observational. Their perception is in no way a result of their personal first-hand experience. As a result, such families usually find it difficult to formulate an objective for sending their children to school. Further, while this objective does not directly lead to the child dropping out of school; it has the capacity to act as a trigger point that gets activated once one or more of the other reasons for dropout become applicable.

Children belonging to families that sent them to school without any vision or aspiration with regards to the outcome that they desire at the end of the child's schooling are most vulnerable to dropping out as their parents don't attach any opportunity cost to them dropping out of school. Children belonging to families that sent them to school to attain basic literacy and numeracy are also vulnerable to dropping out once they have cleared initial grades or primary schooling. This is because they are able to achieve the goal of basic literacy and numeracy by the time they complete initial grades or primary schooling and after this stage their parents don't attach any opportunity cost to them dropping out of formal schooling. These children are also vulnerable to dropping out at the initial grade levels/primary schooling level if their parents perceive that they are not progressing well towards attaining this basic literacy and numeracy.

Children belonging to families that sent them to school so that they could build a better future for themselves are least vulnerable to dropping out of the formal schooling system. However, if their parents perceive that the schooling system is not helping the children in realising that better future or that the children are not progressing well against this goal, these children become susceptible to dropping out of school.

It was noted that parents are also not in a good position to formulate realistic expectations and objectives as they are not aware of the career opportunities that will be available to their children post completion of every grade of learning. Herein, it is also important to note that even the students studying at the schools are not aware of these opportunities and how access to education is adding to their future prospects.

In Mungeli, it was noted at all 16 schools that while the students are of the opinion that education is good for their future; they are not really aware of what this future holds. However, when asked as to how is it expected to provide them with any foreseeable benefits, they were unable to connect education with the socio-economic gains associated to the same (awareness, employment, empowerment or enlightenment). Further in case of their parents it was reported that, 32.6 percent of the parents whose children have dropped out of formal schooling in Mungeli had no particular reason, goal or aspiration for sending their child to school. Another 44.2 percent of parents reported that they sent their children to school so that they could attain basic literacy and numeracy. Only 23.3 percent of parents reported that they had sent their children to school so that they could make a better future for themselves. However, 61.6 percent of the families whose children

had dropped out of school reported being dissatisfied with his/her progress against the objective against which he/she had been enrolled at school.

In Raipur as well it was observed that 82 percent of households reported that they started sending their child to school either to gain knowledge or earn more in the future, or to obtain better job opportunities. Further, 59 percent of the families whose children who had dropped out of school reported that they were not satisfied with the child's progress against the objective with which they had gotten him/her enrolled at school. The head teachers at all the sixteen schools covered under the study also felt that the parents of the children who had dropped out did not understand the value of education. In the case of Raipur, it was also observed that limited understanding of career prospects post completion of higher levels of education and ready availability of jobs requiring unskilled labour meant that children would readily dropout to join the workforce. In such cases the child dropping out of school was not a function of his/her parents' limited understanding of the value of education but rather the child's limited understanding of the same.

In Kanker it was observed that there are 510 registered business units providing employment to just 1845 people in the district. People in the district do not see these business units as sources of jobs to their children. If they did, they would be encouraged to ensure that they completed their schooling. Clearly the benefit of education linked with job is not seen in the district. Parents are teachers who are supposed to encourage children to continue education and make them aware of opportunity benefits were also not found to be doing so. The children were found to be moving into contributing towards the cultivation of family land or into providing daily wage labor to the agriculture sector. Further depressing is the fact that significant numbers of children are dropping out of middle school to work as labourers on bore drilling machines in other states, sometimes even as bonded labourers for the lust of quick money that they use to buy motor cycles, televisions and mobiles.

Every dropout represents a significant opportunity cost for the state in terms of both a monetary and non-monetary loss. Herein, the monetary loss refers to the books, uniform, and infrastructural investments that were made towards enrolling and educating the child till the point where he dropped out. The monetary loss also refers to the potential gain in future income that the child could have gained through his/her progression to higher grades of learning/education.

On the other hand the non-monetary loss refers to the loss of the time and efforts that the teaching staff had so far invested towards educating the child. It also refers to the fact that the Nation stands to lose upon the possibility of this child becoming highly productive human capital capable of contributing towards building the state and society.

Therefore, every dropout is a cause of concern simply because the state has been able to enroll the child but not been able to capitalize upon this opportunity and groom and gear him/her towards a better future. An evaluation of the direct/normative reasons for dropout reveals a diverse set of factors which the state must seek to address. The state needs to address challenges related to limited understanding and awareness amongst parents, children and teachers. It also needs to work towards improving upon the execution/implementation of the principles and guidelines it has worked hard to develop. Finally, it needs to look at improving upon it's connect with the community in order to overcome challenges related to the socio-cultural landscape. Integrated and multi-faceted initiatives will be required to overcome interlinked/overlapping challenges.

7. Conclusions

The study has led to an understanding of the subtle nuances related to factors that contribute to dropout in the State. Eight factors leading to dropout have been identified; a majority of them are pull factors.

1. There is ambiguity about the **definition of drop outs in an academic year**. The absence of a standard definition has led to varied understanding among the stakeholders including the Head Teachers. As a result, there are numerous ways of identifying and addressing dropout. While each school seems to have a specific process in place to deal with dropped out students or those who are absent for a long period of time, this process is not standardized across the state, or even within districts. Further, there is no consistency across the state on how to keep a record of dropouts and different schools are using different mechanisms (attendance registers or separate dropout registers) for keeping these records. None of the schools were using ICT to track dropouts.
2. Although there is a process laid out to follow up with a child who is vulnerable to dropping out of school due to his/her irregularity in attending classes; there is **need for a more personal touch** by the teachers or even community members. The number of teachers was found inadequate in most schools visited especially at the upper primary level. With other responsibilities to shoulder, making home visits is not being undertaken in spirit by all teachers. The lack of initiative from teachers for following up with students is a result of their lack of clarity on the definition of drop out, their unwillingness to visit households that are located in far-flung or poverty-ridden areas, and their feeling of being uninvolved with the village community because they are not local teachers. Further, the SMCs were not found to be active in most schools. Therefore, there is no mechanism to effectively follow up with parents of vulnerable children.
3. Migration both intra state and inter-state is a phenomenon that is inevitable. Migration leads to drop out because students relocate with their parents and do not enroll in other schools, because of a lack of clarity on the RTE rules regarding transfer certificates. Alternatively, students do not migrate with their parents and are left behind with relatives or grandparents without the supervision of their parents, which induces them to become disinterested in attending school. At present there is no mechanism to **track the children** who leave school to migrate with their parents except the register or record maintained at the school level. With a little effort these children can not only be tracked but their admission in other government schools, at least within the state, can be facilitated using the existing structure at district/block/cluster levels.
4. The blame for the children dropping out is largely being placed on home related factors. Some of these reasons cited by the stakeholders are low literacy levels of parents; not understanding the value of education; not being able to support children with their education; having other priorities - mostly economic; and involving children for sibling care. However, there are also school-related factors such as corporal punishment, inadequacy of teachers, and non-involvement of teachers which are inducing children to become disinterested in school and drop out. Unfortunately, these reasons for drop out are not being viewed as problems that are to be **collectively addressed by the school along with parents**.
5. One of the predominant reasons cited by the respondents was that parents do not value education, therefore, are not good role models for their wards. However the low value attached to education can also be attributed to poor quality of education being imparted at schools. Teacher inadequacy and a number of days of inactivity at school often lead to the parents developing a perception that the school is not providing children with access to the quality of education it promises. In turn, parents tend to link this with lack of progress against the objectives with which they had sent child to school. While they might

still continue to believe that access to quality education can help the children in gaining access to better employment opportunities in the future; the absence of quality is often linked to the education not being relevant to the child's future. The children whose parents develop such a perception are more vulnerable to dropping out as their parents attach a very low opportunity cost to them dropping out of school. It is therefore, important, that they **see tangible difference in the learning** levels of their children, see them becoming more confident and observe the school using innovative approaches in classroom transactions.

6. In order to develop schools into institutions which provide appropriate education to students to achieve the above, the schools must at least have adequate infrastructure and required number of teachers. Although the State Government is making efforts to improve the infrastructure of schools (the DISE rank for primary schools have improved from 25 (2011-12) to 20 (2012-13) and for upper primary from 31 (2011-12) to 20 (2012-13); there is still a big gap to be filled. The State Government may seek the support of non- state players to extend their support for **infrastructure improvement** so that the students get a conducive environment for learning. Although the average student teacher ratio in the state is as per the SSA norms, the State ranked a low 26 (primary) and 32 (upper primary) according to DISE ranking, thereby indicating that greater accountability is required. At the same time there is also a need to understand genuine problems faced by the teachers. The team was not able to explore whether the capacity building initiatives by the Education Department are in tandem with the initiatives taken by the Tribal Development Department. If there is a gap, then it should be addressed on priority.
7. A few cases of children with special needs (CWSN) were observed in all districts of the study. Most of these students had not enrolled in school at all, while a few had enrolled and dropped out. Very few CWSN were attending school, and it was observed that all such students were physically disabled. Even though RTE mandates inclusive education for CWSN, it was found that while the absence of aids, appliances and infrastructure in schools is not leading to dropouts, schools are still not equipped to **accommodate CWSN**, especially those who are mentally challenged and require special care.

8. Recommendations

An understanding of the profile of the children who dropout of government schools in Chhattisgarh and an analysis of the reasons for dropout clearly highlights a number of areas and gaps that the government can address through simple and spontaneous measures. Basis the interactions held during the study and the data/information collected and collated from the same, following are some measures that the government can explore in order to curb dropouts from its schools in Chhattisgarh:

1. **Build a common understanding about drop outs** across all schools and collect relevant data for better monitoring. This includes arriving at a common definition as well as a standardised procedure for identifying, tracking, and follow-up of dropouts across the State. The government may want to leverage on tamper proof time encrypted technology tools that can provide a real review of the quality of education at all the government schools in the district. The government may want to consider using time, date and location encrypted mobile photography devices to record delivery against all monitoring processes. These records could then be sample checked against physical data collected to identify schools and individuals who are not necessarily following the set guidelines. This technology could help in recording proof of
 - ▶ Teacher attendance,
 - ▶ Student attendance,
 - ▶ BRC, CRC & academic inspections,
 - ▶ Midday meal composition and distribution,
 - ▶ Parent teacher meetings
 - ▶ School management committee meetings
 - ▶ Visits to homes of students of dropped out of the schooling system etc.
2. Initiate **mass mobilization of the community** through an awareness campaign to drive home the message that all children should complete their school education. This maybe done with extensive use of electronic media, print media, and press. This could be done in conjunction with the use of local platforms to spread awareness, such as the use of local radio stations and *nukkadnataks*. These mediums could be used not only to encourage communities to value education, but to clearly elucidate the longterm benefits of education, so that people can understand and relate to these. These activities should therefore be aimed at generating mass public awareness of education in general, and the issue of dropouts in particular.
3. Improve the quality of education in schools and **reinforce the importance of education** through improved and personal communication with parents and children, as this is most important factor for reducing the dropout rate. This can enhance the students' interest in education, their willingness to attend school, and their understanding of the benefits of education. One step to initiating this could be the interaction between parents, children, and local youth who can act as role models and share their experiences and accomplishments.
4. Encourage the schools to develop **school based plans** to address the issue of drop outs in their respective schools with collective efforts of the school, parents and community. The issue maybe discussed in the SMCs and solutions sought from members. This may include collaborating with each other to reach out to vulnerable children, making household visits to enquire about prolonged absenteeism, and following the outlined procedures for monitoring/tracking dropout. The State

government can collaborate with agencies who works closely with the community making it responsible for proper functioning and management of schools. There are many such examples throughout the country which maybe shared and feasibility of replicating these discussed in the respective schools.

5. As mentioned earlier, student absenteeism is at a peak during the sowing and harvesting season. This is primarily because parents tend to pull their children out of school as they are require to help out with the cultivation/harvesting in the field or because they have to manage domestic chores while their mothers are busy in the field. The possibility of **aligning the school calendar to the agriculture cycle** maybe explored. In this direction, the academic calendar should tend to have holidays during the peak season (sowing/harvesting).
6. Enable schools to develop programmes for better engagement with the local communities. There is evidence even within Chhattisgarh that wherever the communities are involved and consider education as a collective responsibility, the state of education improves significantly. In Kanker, through the intervention of an NGO, this strategy has been successfully used to enable the community to value education and take **ownership of schools** and the quality of learning imparted.
7. CCE, which is being seen as an excuse for not taking the school education seriously and cited as a reason for students dropping out by the teachers, should be examined more closely and ways found to help the teachers use it in the spirit with which it had been introduced. CCE has been introduced to help reduce the pressure on students just before final examinations by ensuring that multiple evaluations are conducted throughout the year. This spirit must be retained while arriving at solutions to ensure that the **concept of CCE** is no longer misused or misunderstood by various stakeholders (parents, teachers and students).
8. Provide **incentives to schools** which take up innovative steps to improve the quality of education. These incentives may be in the form of providing opportunities to the teachers/head teachers to visit some other states, get a well-equipped school library, use of electronic gadgets such as tablets, or recognition/felicitation for them. This will motivate them to take innovative steps which will definitely have an impact on the dropout rates.

9. Annexure – List of Respondents

Balrampur

Name	Designation and contact
Sh.N. Kujur	District Education Officer
Sh. Rameshwar Gupta	APC (Training), Ramanunjanj
Sh. RajeshwarKhuswaha	APC (Girls Education), Ramanunjanj
Sh. Naresh Thakur	APC (Finance), Ramanunjanj
Sh. Sunil Thakur	APC (Handicap), Ramanunjanj
Sh. Mikhail Khalko	BRC, Ramanunjanj
Sh.Mahesh Thakur	BRC, Ramanunjanj
Sh. SP Chaturvedi	BEO, Ramanunjanj
Sh. Sanjay Verma	BRP Maths, Ramanunjanj
Sh. Anajay Srivastava	BRP Hindi, Ramanunjanj
Sh. Dwarika Gupta	CAC, Chando Cluster
Sh. Dinanath Ram	CAC, Nawadihkala
Sh. Koleshwar Prasad Jaiswal	CAC, Jawakhar
Sh. Rajkumar Sharma	CAC, Marwah
Sh. MukeshLakra	Accountant, Ramanunjanj

JanjgirChampa

Name	Designation
Sh. Satish Pandey	District Education Officer
Sh.K S Tomar	DIET Principal
Sh. RishikantaRathod	BRC, Janjgir
Sh. Sanjay Sharma	Supporting Teacher, BRC, Janjgir
Sh. Binod Pandey	CAC, Janjgir
Sh. Agar Das Banjare	CRC, Head Master, Sadar Primary School, Janjgir
Sh. P L Kaushik	Block Officer, Pamgarh

Sh. B Akka	Block Officer, Nawagarh
RoshamiNami	Asst. Block Officer, Nawagarh
Sh. Dharma LalTandan	Head Master, ShramikShalaAnushuchitJati , Katoud, Nawagarh
Sh. JeevanLalKumbakar	CRC, Head Master, Katoud, Nawagarh
Sh. S. David	Head master, Mission Primary School, Janjgir
Sh. Ramesh Kumar Sharma	Headmaster, Pre middle school, Bongapar
Sh. Ram Kumar Gond	Chairman, School Management Committee, Pre middle school, Bogapar
Sh. VishambarNath	SMC, Pre middle school, Bongapar
Sh. Dev Narayan Ratnakar	SMC, Pre middle school, Bongapar
Ms.LakmiRathod	SMC, Pre middle school, Bongapar
Ms.Rookshana Begum	SMC, Pre middle school, Bongapar
Sh. SivsinghShidar	Headmaster, Primary School, Khoksa
Ms. Indirani Kumar	Headmaster, Middle School, Koksha
Sh. Moti Ram Kewat	SMC, Middle School, Khoksa, Janjgir
Ms. Padma Dubey	SMC, Middle School, Khoksa, Janjgir
Sh. Chote Ram Kheswar	SMC, Middle School, Khoksa, Janjgir
Ms. JankiBaiKewat	SMC, Middle School, Khoksa, Janjgir
Sh. Rajesh Sahu	Up Sarpanch, Khoksa, Janjgir
Ms. Sunita Singh	Head Master, Pre Middle School, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. Dinesh Singh	Sarpanch, SMC Chairperson, Pre Middle School Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. Ravinder Singh Chandal	Teacher, Pre Middle School, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. Anil Singh	Teacher, Pre Middle School, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. Ragunath Singh	Headmaster, Primary School, SaveriyaDera, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. Bharat Vyas	Teacher, Pre Middle School, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. Ashok Kumar Tiwari	Teacher, Pre Middle School, Mulmula, Pamgarh

Sh. Bhupendra Singh	Teacher, Pre Middle School, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. JhambulalGondh	Teacher, Pre Middle School, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Ms. PramilaBharadwaj	Teacher, Primary School, SaveriyaDera, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. Paras Ram	Local Leader, SaveriyaDera, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. UdayPratap Singh	Headmaster, Primary School, Konark, Pamgarh
Sh. Ramesh Kumar Wadhekar	Sarpanch, Konark, Mulmula, Pamgarh
Sh. PouramTandon	Headmaster, Primary School Pakadiya, Rahod, Pamgarh
Ms. Anupriti	Sarpanch, Chairperson, SMC, Primary School, Rahod, Pamgarh
Sh. Ramesh Kumar Soni	Headmaster, Primary School, Rahod, Pamgarh
DrSatyabhaman Singh	Headmaster, Middle School, Bhaiso
Sh. Sanjay Chatri	Sarpanch, SMC Chairperspon, Middle School, Bhaiso
Sh. ChunniLal	Upsarpanch, Middle School, Bhaiso
Ms. Shanti Devi Sahu	Headmaster, Primary School Dhardai
Sh. SitaRam Patel	Vice Chairperson, SMC, Primary School, Dhardai
Sh. Bodh Ram Kewat	Chairperson, SMC, Primary School, Dhardai
Sh. Harish ChndraSahu	Member, SMC, Primary School, Dhardai
Sh. Phirat Ram	Headmaster, Primary School, Bhaiso
Sh. Ram Kumar Yadav	Chairperson, SMC, Primary School, Bhaiso
Sh. Santosh Srivastava	Vice Chairperson, SMC, Primary School, Bhaiso

Kanker

Name	Designation
Ms.ArtiMandal	HM, PS Badekapsi
ShRamcharan	HM, PS Astra
SmtMayarani Thakur	HM, PS Radwahi

Sh. Khassan Ram Uikey	In charge, PS Kudal
Sh. Tuman Singh Dhruv	In charge PS Hafra
Sh. Swapan Kumar Das	HM, PV 119
Sh. SarjuVikhe	HM, PS DongaripadaMungwal
Sh. HR Kodoki	HM, PS Chindapal
Ms.HamilaBhayar	In charge, PS Sadakpara
Sh. SubhashGoldar	HM, PS Chhotekapsi
Sh. RajaramKunjam	HM, MS Mungwal
ShNayak	HM, MS Chilhati
ShKabildasTandon	HM, MS Chotekapsi
SmtGirijaNetam	HM, MS Chindapal
Sh. DN Koreti	CRC, Bhanbeda
Sh. PC Jain	CRC, Korar
Sh. DV Kothai	CRC, Chhotekapsi
Sh. SK Vishwas	CRC, Chindapal
Sh. PS Samand	Principal, DIET
Sh. DK Sheel	BRC, Koyalibeda

Raipur

Name	Designation
Ms.PratimaAwasthi	Additional Director SSA

Sh. Hareram Sharma	Asst Director, SSA
Sh. B R Sahoo	Asst Director, TWD
Ms. Deepti Banerjee	Deputy commissioner, TWD
Sh. T K Sahoo	Deputy Director, DPI
Sh. N K Pradhan	Asst Director, SCERT
Sh. S K Verma	Asst Prof, SCERT
Ms. Jyoti Chakraborty	Asst Professor, SCERT
Sh. UK Chakraborty	Asst Professor, SCERT
Ms. Anupama Nalgundvar	Asst Professor, SCERT
Sh. Alok Sharma	Asst Professor, SIEMET
Sh. M Sudeesh	Lecturer, SCERET
Ms. Jaya Tawarish	Principal, DIET
Sh. Tara Chand Jaiswal	BRP
Sh. Bodhan Lal Sahu	CRC, Lakhauri
Sh. Lokesh Sharma	CRC, Dharsiwa
Sh. Netra Chand Joshi	CRC, Palod
Sh. Onkar Prasad Verma	CRC, Mandir Hasod
Sh. Shiv Kumar Gayakwad	CRC, Bhansoch
Sh. Paras Ram Chandrekar	BRC, Aarang
Sh. Sireesh Tewari	BRC, Raipur Urban
Sh. Suresh Chand Awasthi	BRC, Dharsiwa
Sh. Ashok Narayan Banjara	DEO, Raipur

Sh. HridayLalJangde	Headmaster, PrathmikShala, Umariya
Sh. Salik Ram Chandrakar	Headmaster, PrathamikShala, Lakhauli
Sh. NilmaniChandrakar	Headmaster, PrathamikShala, Ganod
Sh. Puranik Ram Sahu	Headmaster, Govt. Boys Primary School, MandirHasod
BarkhaKadra	Headmaster, ShaskiyaPrathamikShala, Kukra
Santosh Awasthi	Headmaster, ShaskiyaKanyaPrathamikShala, Palaud
Sh. RamadharGhidhode	Headmaster, ShaskiyaPurvMadhyamikShala, Nara
Sh. Keshav Ram Bande	Headmaster, Middle School, Bhansoch

10. Annexure – Tools

I. Interview Guide for Head Teachers/ Teachers

Section I: School Related

School name:		Functioning since:			
Village:		Grades			
Cluster:		No. of Teachers			
Block:		<i>Male</i>			
District:		<i>Females</i>			
Availability of Drinking water (Y/N):		No. of Students			
Separate Toilets (Y/N):		<i>Boys:</i>			
Water in Toilets (Y/N):		<i>Girls:</i>			
No. of Dropouts	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09
Is infrastructure present for CWSN? (Details)					

Section II: Drop -out Profile

1. When do you consider a student as dropped out?
2. What activities/processes do you generally undertake before considering a student as drop out?
3. At which grade is a student most likely to drop out?
4. Which social groups are most prone to dropping out and why? Is there a difference in dropout rates of girls and boys?
5. Where do the most drop outs happen – rural or urban areas and why do you think it happens?
6. What according to you are the main reasons for children from neighbouring areas to drop out?

Section III: School Infrastructure and Teachers

7. Is there any important infrastructure component that is missing/lacking at your school and do you believe that this might be leading to or adding to the problem of drop-outs?
8. Do you believe that your school has the capacity to cater to and support CWSN (physical disability, speech disorders, intellectually challenged)? Please share a few examples.

9. Does the school have a structured process to help/support students who are lagging behind in studies?
10. Are there any notable processes and systems that the school has developed or uses to ensure that the staff is able to cater to the needs and educational requirements of all students? Please share a few examples.
11. How do you ensure that the staff or any students do not discriminate against a particular child/student?
12. Has the school received any complaints related to a teacher(s) meting out corporal punishment?
13. Apart from mainstream teaching, do the teachers at the school have any additional responsibilities? Do these additional responsibilities come in the way of regular classes/mainstream teaching?

Section IV: Managing Drop-outs

14. What systems and processes do you have in place to prevent/curb drop outs?
15. When a student drops out, does any teacher from the school visit his/her home to find out why the child has dropped out and what can the school do to get the child back at school?
16. Do you maintain any records/registers for students who are absent for more than 15 days?
17. Are there any policies, programs or projects to tackle problem of drop out? What kind of strategies could be initiated to prevent drop-outs?
18. Is the school management committee operational and what is the community's involvement in managing drop-outs?
19. How is the data on drop outs collected and managed?
20. Have any drop –outs returned to the school in the past few years? Provide details.
21. What other challenges do you face in preventing drop out in your school? What support would you require form the Government in curbing drop out?

II. FGD Checklist – Students

Please use games (ice-breakers) provided in separate sheet before starting the FGD with students.

SECTION I: General and School Related

1. Are the school timings convenient?
2. Do you like your school's building?
 - a. Probe for any infrastructure that is lacking and which creates problem
 - b. Check with girls about the girls' toilet
 - c. Availability of playground, boundary wall and chairs/tables in school
3. What are three best things about your school? (Probe on what makes them come to school daily)
4. What are the things that you do not like about your school

SECTION II: Teacher Related

5. Do you understand the teacher's dialect easily? (Ask this from a number of students separately and do not go by voice vote). Check for any language related problem that they might face. Ask what kind of specific problems do they face, if any
6. What kind of activities do the teachers use for teaching? (Probe if the teachers only use text books or other things like TLM, teaching aids and conduct activities to make teaching more interesting, probe if it is interesting for child)
7. What do you like the most about your teachers?
8. What are two things that you would like to change about your teachers?

SECTION III: Drop-Out Related

9. Are there any students who have stopped coming to school recently? Who are they? (Make a list of drop outs and reasons)
10. Why did these students stop coming to school?

SECTION IV: Observation for Gender Discrimination or CWSN discrimination

11. Investigators are to look out for any signs of gender discrimination in group and school; observe for following:
 - a. Very few girls
 - b. Girls not allowed to answer at all
 - c. Girls not mixing up
 - d. You can also probe about students' sisters and where they study
12. Investigators to look for any signs of discrimination against CWSN in school. Try talking to a CWSN to understand the challenges (to be done separately).

III. Interview guideline for School Management Committee (SMC)

1. Since when are you a member of this SMC? What is the role of this SMC?
2. Do you know of a student who has dropped-out from school? Why did he/she drop out?
3. Can you provide details of a few students who have dropped out recently?
4. Why do you think the students drop out from schools? What do they do once they drop out?
5. If a student is absenting for a number of days, is there anything that the teachers/SMC do?
6. How does the SMC get to know about a drop out?
7. Is there a role of SMC in preventing drop out?
8. What do you think can be done to prevent drop outs?

i. Household Questionnaire

SECTION I: HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

Name of household (HH) head _____

Name of student: _____

Phone number: _____

School _____

Distance from home (Km) _____

District: _____

Block: _____

Cluster: _____

Rural/Urban: _____

Economic Status : APL/ BPL _____

Number of children: _____

Siblings older than the subject: _____

Number of family members: _____

Number of boys: _____

Number of Girls: _____

Does child stay in a nuclear family _____

Is child raised by a single parent _____

Education status (Choose from list given below) :

Occupational status (Choose from list given below) :

Mother: _____

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Father: _____

1. Illiterate
2. Primary incomplete
3. Primary completed
4. Upper primary incomplete
5. Upper primary completed
6. Secondary school incomplete
7. Secondary school completed
8. Senior secondary school incomplete
9. Senior secondary school completed
10. Graduation incomplete
11. Graduate and above
12. Vocational Qualification

1. Unemployed (only if looking for work)
2. Stay-at-home
3. Salaried worker (Government or Private job)
4. Daily wage earner
5. NREGA worker
6. Other please specify: _____

Approximate monthly income: INR _____

Which month has the least income? _____

Does the household have any of the following social/financial protection system to cope with income shocks?

1. Savings with formal banking institutions
2. Savings with informal sources
3. Any saleable property or land
4. Any investments held in the form of precious stones and metals
5. In a position to receive interest free financial support from friends & relatives
6. Other please specify: _____
7. No such safety net exists

SC/ST/OBC/General Category Categorization (To be filled in by enumerator and not to be asked from the respondent): _____

Why did the child stop attending school? Write down the reason for drop-out (verbatim as told by the parent)

SECTION II: Child Information Sheet (kindly pen in information of only those children who fall in the age group of 6 – 14

S No	Name	Age (Years)	Gender (F/M)	Is the child a CWSN (Y/N)	Age at which the child enrolled (Years or NA)	Class in which the child had enrolled (Grade or NA)	Was child a scholarship holder? How was the scholarship utilized?	Age at which the child dropped out (Years or NA)	Class from which the child dropped out (Grade or NA)	Reasons for Drop out (Choose from list given below)	What is child doing currently?
1											
2											
3											
4											

Reasons for drop out: 1 if distance related, 2 if cost related, 3 if child related, 4 if school related, 5 if related to domestic matters, 6 if related to social causes (e.g. child marriage and migration) and 7 if psychosocial factors (**Please specify nature of activity if choosing 6 or 7**) (**Please note multiple options permitted per child**). **In case where child dropped out to take admission to a 'private school' please mention the same**

If the child is enrolled in a private school and still studying, this is not a drop-out case, however, we would like to study what factors led to his/her changing the schools.

SECTION III: Socio-Economic Factors [including attributing psychosocial factors]

1. Why did you start sending your child to school?

2. How did the child used to go to school?

- a. On his own – walking / cycle
- b. With friends
- c. Any other paid transport
- d. Parent (s) used to drop and pick child

3. If answer is (c or d) above, did it impact family's income negatively? (Check by how much)

- a. No impact
- b. Very small impact – easily bearable
- c. Moderate impact
- d. High impact

4. How did you support your child's education as a parent?

- a. Ensuring that child attends school
- b. Dropping him/her to school and picking up
- c. Aware of child's performance in school
- d. Ensuring that homework is completed
- e. Others (please specify) _____
- f. No such support/supervision

5. Did you think that the child was able to perform as per your expectations?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If no, please elaborate

6. Did you have to migrate seasonally for work?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, did it impact the child's education _____

7. Did the child have to stay at home to take care of younger siblings and/or to do household chores?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, for how many days in a month/week _____

8. Did you have to spend any money on child's education in form of text books, notebooks, uniform, transport or tuition?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, then how much money did you have to spend? _____

9. Would you say that this cost had any role in child's dropping out of school?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

10. If this cost would not have been present, would the child still have dropped out?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, then due to what reasons _____

11. Is the child currently working to support or supplement household income?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, please specify, the nature of work and how much does he/she earn monthly _____

12. Would you say that the child was interested in schooling?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Please elaborate on the answer with examples _____

13. Were the child's classmates of the same age as child?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If no, tick the one that apply: Younger / Older

14. Were the child's classmates interested in studies?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If no, please specify _____

-
-
15. Were the child's classmates more interested in games or other activities than studies?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, please specify _____

16. Did you ever observe any discrimination in the school between students or did your child complain about any such discrimination? (Give example of discrimination - some children preferred over others by teachers)

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please specify _____

Additional questions if drop-out is a girl child

1. Do you think a girl child should study and till what standard?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Please elaborate _____

2. Did any of your child ever go to a private school?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, please check if it was a boy or a girl _____

Additional questions if drop-out is a CWSN

1. Did you have to spend additional time and/or money to take your child to school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. If yes, please elaborate, how it impacted your work and budget

3. Did the school have infrastructure to support your child needs?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If no, please specify what was the school lacking

4. Were the teachers supportive of your child's needs?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Please specify

5. Were the other students helpful?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Please specify

Section IV: School Related Factors [including attributing psychosocial factors]

1. Were there enough classrooms and seats for everyone to sit? (Was lack of school infrastructure a cause for drop out?)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. What was not present in your school?
 - a. Toilet facility
 - b. Drinking water facility
 - c. Specific infrastructure for CWSN
 - d. Boundary walls
 - e. Classrooms & furniture
 - f. Other please specify:_____

3. Do you know if this school has any ramps or other infrastructure for physically challenged (CWSN)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, details

- 4. Were the school timings unsuitable? (Probe for very early in morning/ very late in afternoon)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, then please specify why the timings were unsuitable: _____

- 5. How many games or extracurricular periods did you have in a day /week?
-

- 6. Were classes held regularly/every day in school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If no, then was it because of any one or more of the reasons listed below

- a. Teacher/s did not come on a regular basis
- b. Teacher/s were busy doing other work
- c. School premises was used for other purposes
- d. Other please specify _____

- 7. Was the child able to complete homework himself/herself?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If no, then probe about amount of homework received daily

- a. Was it too much homework
- b. Was it too difficult
- c. Anything else about homework _____

- 8. Do you think the teachers encouraged and supported the student in school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Please give any instances

- 9. Was the child appreciated for something good that he did in school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If no, please specify _____

10. Did you know if teachers used any activities other than text books to teach in school?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, details _____

11. Was the child frequently punished in school and was fearful of being beaten up or reprimanded in school?

12. Were any derogatory or caste related remarks made by teachers?

13. Did the child complain about being **regularly** asked to carry out tasks other than studying in school? *Probe* about child being made to do some personal work for teachers.

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes - How many times a week? _____
- c. Frequently - How many times a week? _____

For answer b or c above, also check if the child was singled out for such work or was it given to every student with same frequency.

14. Do you think your child was usually very nervous during examination?

15. Were the tests or exams too difficult?

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. Was the child taught in local dialect in school?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. Did the school organise Parent Teacher Meeting on a regular basis and

- a. Yes
- b. No

18. Did you attend the same?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, then anything about irregular attendance or drop outs ever discussed in it? Please provide details

19. When your child stopped going to school, did anyone from school contact you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, what sort of contact was it (enumerator to understand the process post drop out)

- a. Telephonic
- b. Household visit
- c. Other please specify _____

Additional questions if drop-out is a girl child

1. Was there a separate toilet for girls in the school?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. If answer to Q.1 above is no – would you have continued sending your child to school if there was a separate toilet for girls?

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. Did this school have female teachers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. Was your child taught by a lady teacher?

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. If answer to Q.3 above is no, would your child have continued to study if she was being taught by a lady teacher?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. Were there any incidents of quarrel or violence against your child or any other girl children in the school?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, details _____

7. Were you afraid of sending your child to school because of that?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Section V: Community Related and Other Factors

1. Generally till what grade do the girls study in your community/village? _____
2. At what age are the girls married? _____
3. Do you know of any other students who have dropped out in your village? Please provide details and reasons _____

4. Would you attribute instances of domestic quarrel or alcoholism to any drop outs that you know? _____

V. Interview Guideline for District, Block and Cluster officials

1. Can you tell about a few schools and headmasters who have been managing drop-outs really well? Please give example and elaborate on what they are doing.
2. When is a student considered as a drop out from school?
3. What according to you are some important reasons for which children drop out?
4. What groups are most susceptible to dropping out and why?
5. What is the role of DEO/BEO in preventing drop-outs?
6. How do you connect with BRC/CRC, headmasters to take care of drop –out issue?
7. What steps have been taken so far to prevent drop outs?
8. Are the teachers trained on preventing drop-outs? What kind of training is imparted?
9. How is the data collected and/or maintained by the DEO/BEO?
10. What is the process of validating this data?
11. How and with whom is the data on drop-outs shared?
12. Do we have school-wise data for drop-outs?
13. What is the main highlight of this data and what light does it throw on drop out reasons?

VI. Questionnaire for State officials

1. Who does the state define as a drop out?
 2. Is the same definition used in practice as well? What are the reasons for deviation, if any?
 3. Do dropout rates vary as per community, gender and geography? If yes then why?
 4. What communities and what geographic areas are more susceptible to the problem? What are the reasons for it?
 5. What according to you are some of the common reasons for children dropping out from school in the districts to be covered under the proposed study and do you feel that there are any particular reasons why the dropout rate in these districts may be higher or lower than the state average?
 6. Are there any specific policies, programs or projects that have been initiated to curb dropout rates. If yes then please provide details/literature on the same?
 7. Does the state actively track data on school dropout? Please share the data flow and how long after a student has dropped out will it come to the notice of state level offices.
 8. For what time period are the drop-out records available?
 9. If the state does record information on dropouts, then what is the methodology for computation and has the methodology been held consistent over time?
 10. Does the education machinery track dropout rates at the school, block, circle, district and state level. If yes, then does this tracking result in any case/geography specific action?
 11. Are there any specific training programs or workshop modules held for teacher (or at least head teachers) that sensitise them on the issue of school dropout, reasons behind student dropout and ways to check high student dropout in schools. If yes then please provide details/literature on these programs/modules?
 12. What role do CRCs/BRCs play in tracking, reporting and curtailing school dropouts in the schools under their purview/supervision?
 13. What role do head teachers play in tracking, reporting and curtailing school dropouts at their schools?
 14. Even while curbing drop out is high on Government's agenda, the problem continues to persist, what are some challenges that Government face in curtailing the problems
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