



Building Community Buy-In

Educating girls is one of the highest-return investments available to developing countries. Baseline Survey and Information Campaigns

EGG first conducts a baseline survey of individual households and schools to hear parents' views on education and identify girls who are out of school. Depending on the locale, experience suggests from 5 to 25 percent of girls may be dropouts or not attending often. Most are 14-18 years old, and most will soon marry. The survey also collects information on the school's infrastructure, the student-teacher ratio, the percentage of female teachers, and student enrollment, attendance, and performance. **This information is shared with schools and communities through School Information Campaigns.** These help to decide critical needs and strategies to increase enrollment and improve education quality.

Community Meetings

EGG holds monthly meetings to encourage communities to commit to educating girls as well as boys and “own” their schools to make education happen.

With benefits so high, why are meetings needed? Why aren't more girls educated? The communities where EGG works are very poor and follow long-standing traditions that limit girls' and women's voice and choice. Girls often have little say in when or who they marry and rarely stand out or speak up. Moreover, education carries costs -- in money, lost chore time, and possible conflict with tradition -- and the costs hit parents now, while the benefits start as girls grow up. Traditionally, especially where girls “marry out” and boys care for aging parents, communities may feel educating girls is not urgent. Where violence against women and girls is common, parents naturally worry about safety.

Yet many parents are willing to send girls to decent and safe schools. But a quality education for girls, good enough to change their futures, may seem beyond reach. Moreover, poor families often feel disconnected from schools and better-educated teachers.

EGG encourages community leaders, parents, and girls to mobilize for education -- to build commitment to education, improve education quality, and see what the returns to education for girls can be. At a first community meeting, called a Gram Shiksha Sabha (GSS), EGG introduces discussion of girls' education. **GSS's meet monthly until communities feel more committed to educate girls and come to see schools as “theirs”**, capable of improvement if they pitch in. Communities then take responsibility for sending girls to school and for helping schools work. Depending on cultural traditions, sometimes this happens quickly, and sometimes it takes several

months. **But when parents come to believe they can in fact influence their schools so daughters can have different life choices, they nearly always welcome the chance.**

Emerging Leaders. As community meetings proceed, leaders emerge. The next step is to elect committed School Management Committees.