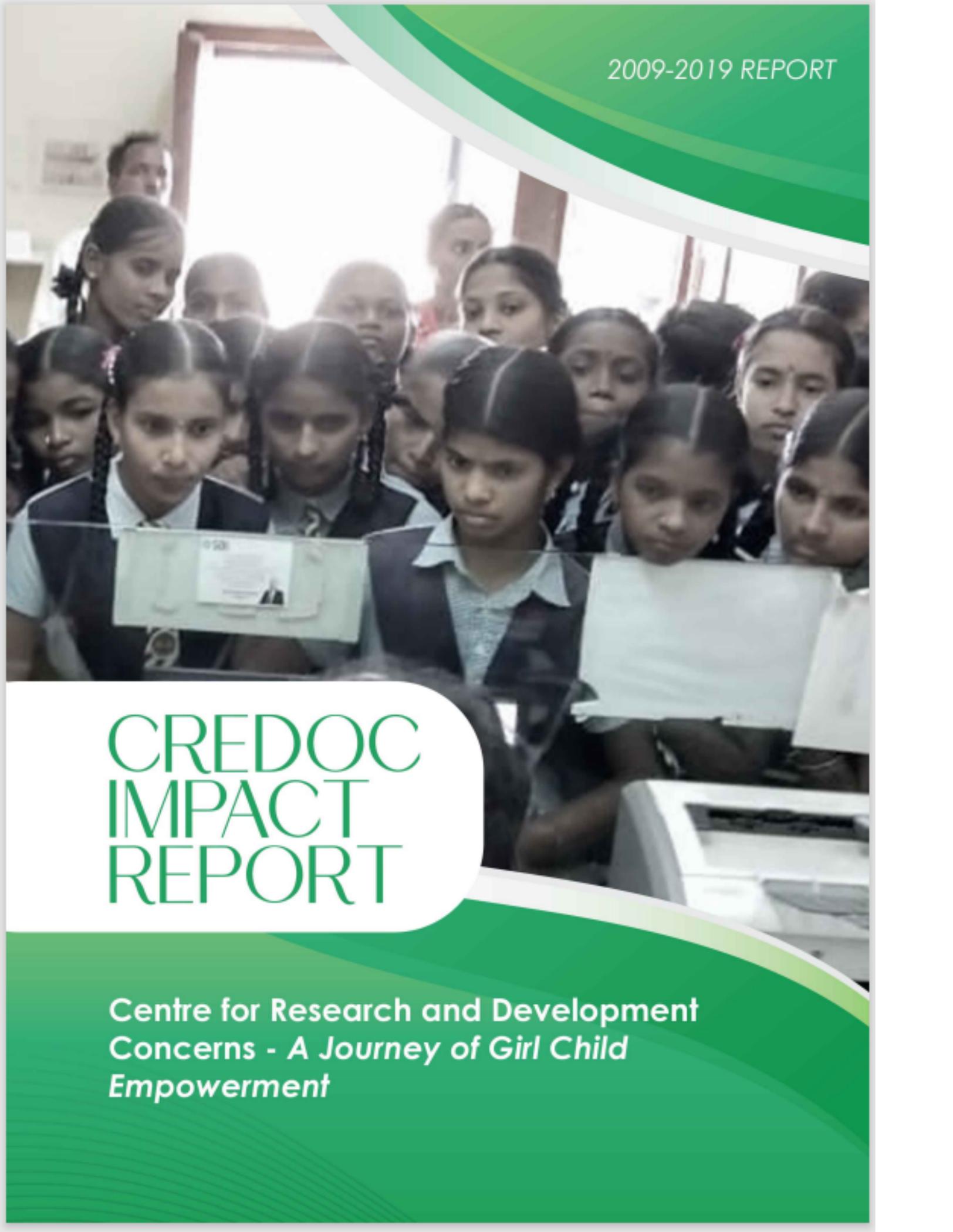


2009-2019 REPORT

A group of schoolgirls in a classroom, looking at papers and a laptop. The girls are wearing school uniforms and are gathered around a table. One girl in the foreground is holding a paper with a logo on it. The background shows a classroom setting with windows and other students.

CREDOC IMPACT REPORT

Centre for Research and Development
Concerns - *A Journey of Girl Child
Empowerment*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Centre for Research and Development Concerns expresses sincere thanks and gratitude to Room to Read India Trust for their consistent support over the years which helped shape the lives of more than 600 Girl Children. Room to Read with their hand holding support mentored ground staff of CREDOC to give their best as well as overcome challenges faced from time to time.

CREDOC also recognizes all the individual donors who have selflessly contributed for the gap funding so that the work could continue for girl children's education and transformation programmes. The Governing Board of CREDOC with its committed members has provided all the policy making and governance so that work on the ground was consistent and continuous. We are thankful for their guidance and support in this immense accomplishment of transforming children's lives.

Congratulations to the Team of CREDOC ground level workers for their sincerity and commitment to the cause of empowerment of girl children and their families, without their hard work, the accomplishments would not have been possible.

The teachers and headmasters who are in responsible positions in the schools have cooperated and supported this programme entirely, without their involvement and understanding the progress could not have been achieved. We place on record our appreciation and sincere thanks to their contribution.

Last but not the least; I take this opportunity to congratulate each of every girl child who has taken upon herself to be the harbinger of change for their family and community. I also want to congratulate all the boys who are part of the children's club who have been sensitized to respect girls and treat them equally. Many thanks to the families especially mothers and grandparents of children, who in spite of their struggles for eking out their daily lives understood the importance of educating their children/ grandchildren and took up additional responsibility and burden. Words cannot express the enthusiasm and the guidance provided by the PRIs/ Village Child Protection Committees (VCPCs) once they were convinced of the benefits of the programme for the girl children. We are grateful for their role in the programme.

FOREWORD

Centre for Research and Development Concerns (CREDOC) was born out of a strong need to support children and communities in turning over a new leaf while leaving behind their poverty, illiteracy, gender based discrimination so as to lay a foundation for their empowerment through their own initiatives and transformation.

The organization was initiated by a team of Professional Social Workers who believed in people's capabilities and trusted them to help themselves. In its quest for transformation of people's lives for better, CREDOC found that erstwhile Mahabubnagar district had very poor indicators for literacy, a majority of the people were migrants shifting seasonally to Bombay and other areas for work leaving behind their children, again who were first generation learners with no adequate support systems.

The school education system was quite distressing, with poor infrastructure, no quality teaching learning systems in place, poor attendance of children and low learning levels. This urged the organization to look into the need for supporting education system of girl children especially to uplift them and help them overcome the gender discrimination.

Room to Read organization who also had similar objectives was identified as the collaborative partner and the journey of a decade started in 2009 and continued to provide benefits for around 600 girl children, their families and communities over a decade journey of intensive work and transformation.

The Governing Board is proud to present the work, achievements, challenges and impact through this experience in this publication. I thank each and every one who has contributed to this journey and made it possible for the transformation of children's lives. Special thanks to Prof. Chandra Sekhar, Chairperson CREDOC and the entire Governing Board for their constant support and motivation through hard times and challenges.

We are grateful to ROOM to READ India Trust for their steadfast trust and partnership with CREDOC and other donors for making these achievements possible.

Dr Anjaiah Pandiri
Founder - CREDOC

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ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

'Centre for Research and Development Concerns (CREDOC)' was established as a registered society in 1994 under the Andhra Pradesh (Telangana areas) Public Societies Registration Act 1350 Fasil (Act 1 of 1350 F) to aid the rural underprivileged and the disadvantaged people.

Vision:

To overcome the social, economic, cultural, and psychological barriers of people through their own efforts and self-managed institutions.

Communities are capable of attaining higher productivity with improved skills, a better asset base, and capabilities to utilize the resources to their full potential and gain access to services.

Mission:

To enable the poor and disadvantaged communities to perceive possibilities for change and bring about desired change by exercising informed choices through collective action.

Major objectives of 'CREDOC' are:

Extend economic and social services to strengthen and enhance the education and empowerment of rural poor.

Build capabilities among the rural poor.

Improve access to services, facilities, and entitlements for rural poor.

Facilitate the building of participatory, self-managed attitudes among rural poor and the disadvantaged as vehicles of their self-reliance, socio-economic progress, and self-respect.

Serve as a resource centre for training, research and study upon the socio-economic conditions of rural poor.

Initiate programs and projects for sustainable development of rural poor and the girl children and women and facilitate the convergence of services and facilities intended for their benefit.

Provide a platform for advocacy upon issues and the concerns of the rural poor.

2. EXISTING SITUATION: PROJECT AREA

Mahabubnagar Literacy Rate 2011

Average literacy rate of Mahaboobnagar in 2011 was 55.04 compared to 44.41 of 2001. Gender wise, male and female literacy were 65.21 and 44.72 respectively. For 2001 census, same figures stood at 56.63 and 31.89 in Mahaboobnagar District. Total literates in Mahaboobnagar District were 1,940,646 of which male and female were 1,158,386 and 782,260 respectively.

Mahaboobnagar Sex Ratio 2011

With regards to the Sex Ratio in Mahaboobnagar, it stood at 977 per 1000 males compared to the 2001 census figure of 972. The average national sex ratio in India is 940 as per the Census 2011. The child sex ratio was 925 girls per 1000 boys compared to the figure of 952 girls per 1000 boys in the 2001 census data.

Mahaboobnagar Child Population 2011

There were total of 527,230 children under the age of 0-6 against 547,506 of the 2001 census. Of a total of 5,27,230 males and females were 273,914 and 253,316 respectively. The child Sex Ratio as per the census 2011 was 925 compared to 952 of census 2001. In 2011, Children under 0-6 formed 13.01 percent of Mahabubnagar District compared to 15.58 percent in 2001. There was a net change of -2.57 percent in this compared to the previous census of India.



Erstwhile Mahabubnagar district in Telangana is one of the drought-prone districts, which is considered extremely backward district. Nearly 90 percent of its population depended upon agriculture for livelihood security and half of them are merely dependents and non-workers. Roughly 65 percent of the cultivators are small and marginal farmers with only 22 percent of operational landholdings. The proportions of female-headed householders are considerable at 20 percent of households. Only one percent of women own land and indebtedness is widespread all over the district. The literacy rate is abysmal, child labor and child marriage rampant! Lack of sanitation and contaminated drinking water leading to gastro intestinal and other diseases adversely affect people and livestock. High fluorides content in drinking water in the district has led to high incidence of dental and skeletal fluorosis. Most of the illnesses stemmed from malnutrition and chronic anemia. The percentage of disabled persons is higher than the national average as revealed by micro studies.

Girl children are highly susceptible to all these and more ills of poverty and also face additional social, cultural, and physical barriers that prevent and restrict girls from participating as equal citizens. Patriarchal practices strengthened the gender discriminative practices which further became detrimental for girl child empowerment.

3. NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The state of Telangana, in southern India, was earlier divided into 10 districts (2014), but earlier to that it was part of the United Andhra Pradesh state. Mahbubnagar is the largest district by area. According to Census 2011, the district is predominantly rural with a total population of 4.05 million. It had 0.7 million Scheduled Caste (17.5 per cent) and 0.36 million Scheduled Tribe (nine per cent) of the total population. The basic indicators of Mahbubnagar district revealed that it is one of the lowest per capita income districts in the state of Telangana. It is also lagging behind in all indicators compared to other districts of the state in all the three indicators of human development i.e. education, health and standard of living; even though the literacy rate improved over the years, it is most backward still with the following parameters:

- Lowest female literacy rate of 45 per cent (Census 2011).
- As per National Sample Survey, 68th Round, the Net Enrolment Rate for rural boys was 75 per cent and rural girls was 76 per cent whereas urban boys was 93 per cent and urban girls was 94 per cent in the district .
- The data for 2013-14 academic year, collected across the districts of Telangana State by the Commissioner and Director of School Education, SSA, presents the highest rate of dropouts in Mahbubnagar District (53.2 per cent).
- According to the handbook of education statistics (2013-14), 38.2 per cent of children in the state who had enrolled in Class I did not reach Class X and were thus, deprived of basic education
- Three in five children in the age group of 15 to 18 years dropped out from the school.
- Maximum proportions of school dropouts were from Schedule Tribes and Schedule Caste.
- Within each age group, proportion of girls dropped out are maximum in 11-14 years, The average age at which a child dropped out from the school is 12 years. (study by Deepak Kumar Dey 2016)
- Majority of the drop out children had illiterate parents. About 94 per cent of mothers and 82 per cent of fathers of dropout children were illiterate.
- Migration is a major factor for drop outs as the parents take the children along with them leading to discontinuation of children's schooling. Whether the household migrated as a whole or partly or individually, children are always affected. At the destination, children drop out due to difference in language or inaccessible educational facilities, and eventually their poor economic situation forces them to work. When children were left behind at source locations, the relatives/caregivers were least concerned about their education.
- Access to the high and higher secondary school was less, transport and roads were not conducive, and this was doubled up with the parent's belief that their child would not be safe, risk of abuse increased when she ventured far.
- On an average, children scored near the pass marks as they had very low learning levels, and managed to move to the next standard with great difficulty.

4. CREDOC 'S FOCUS OF WORK AND PRINCIPLES

The CREDOC as a society is working for the development of girl children and women in the most backward mandals, of Mahabubnagar district of Telangana state. It concentrated mainly on the comprehensive development of girl children and the most vulnerable groups through preventing dropouts from school, building their capacities in education, life skills, and human behaviors like good touch and bad touch, educating them in financial literacy, formation of children groups, parents committees, trains the SMC committees, etc. In this area population of the persons with illiterates are more than that of the other districts of Telangana state. Before the intervention of the CREDOC the girl children are dependent on their guardians, parents, and members of the family. Many of them are child laborers in the villages and nearby towns. Some of the girl children migrated to Tandoor, Bombay, and some other places for livelihood and to earn income for the family. Few members had been giving free labor services to the landlords and village heads. The team of CREDOC organized awareness activities to the girls and women in the project locations. In addition to this team of organization provided several trainings, medical camps, leveraged social entitlements, creating awareness on rights of children and women to them in our state. The organization established a strong linkage with SHGs (women Self-help groups), VOs (Village Organizations), and MMS (Mandal Mahila Samkhyas) in the project locations. All the linkage activities of the organization are being strongly supported by the government line departments. The CREDOC organization has been educating girls and women on their entitlements and sensitizing the line departments to support their development and ensure social protection.

The organization was initiated by a team of professional social workers who believed in people's capabilities and trusted them to help themselves. In its quest for transformation of people's lives for better, CREDOC found that erstwhile Mahabubnagar district had very poor indicators for literacy, a majority of the people were migrants shifting seasonally to Bombay and other areas for work leaving behind their children, again who were first generation learners with no adequate support systems.

The education system was quite distressing, with poor infrastructure, no quality teaching learning systems in place, poor attendance of children and low learning levels. This urged the organization to look into the need for supporting education system of girl children especially to uplift them and help them overcome the gender discrimination.

5. CONTEXT FOR COLLABORATION

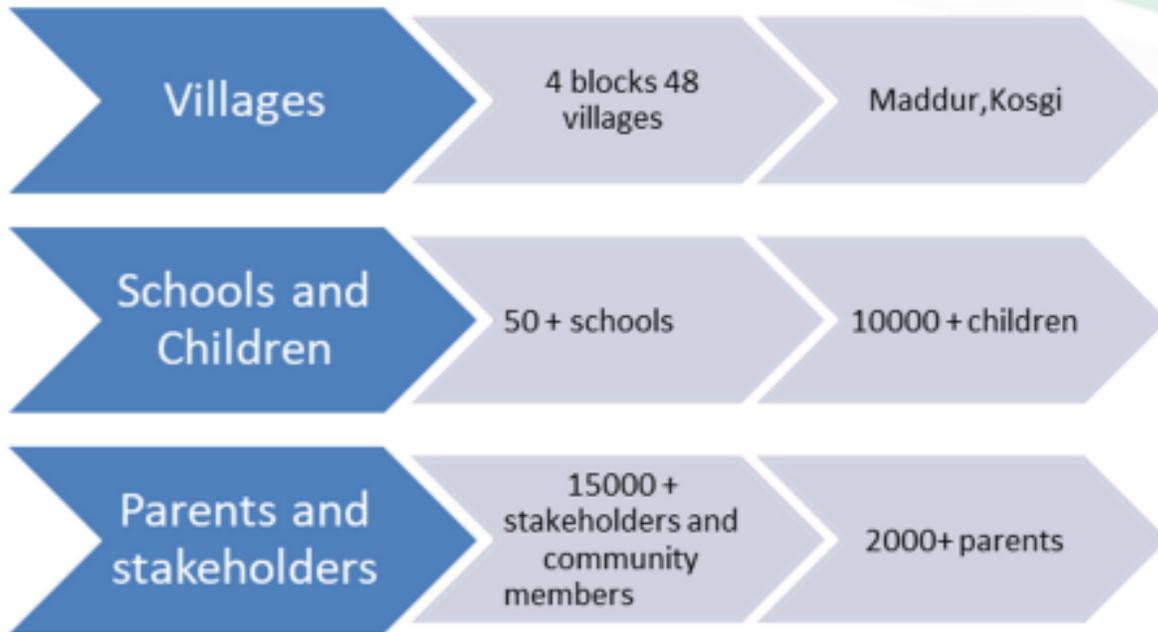
Centre for Research and Development Concerns (CREDOC) project started working in the project area since 2009 for the Girls Education Program in Maddur and Kosgi Mandals of Mahaboobnagar District with the support of ROOM to READ India Trust. CREDOC mainly worked on creating awareness to Parents and Community, while empowering the girl child, and bringing meaningful changes in the eco system to support girl child education and building their life skills for increasing their choices in life for better. CREDOC was supported by Room to Read India Trust, for the cause of girl child Education and Empowerment. The main aim of the "Room to Read" was to encourage Adolescent girls' to continue their education. CREDOC and ROOM to READ found common ground for partnership to collaborate for the cause of the girl child. Therefore, they started supporting girl children from sixth standard with the notion that at this tender and right age, they would learn and inculcate life-skills for their own development.



A girl child whose child marriage was averted (consent taken from child who is an Adult now)

6. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

CREDOC worked in Kosgi and Maddur Mandals of Mahbubnagar district covering a total of 600 children from 6 schools from 48 villages.



7. PROGRAMME INITIATION AND TRUST BUILDING

1. Identification of girls in target areas

2. Formation of child committees

3. Formation of parent committees

4. Built alliances with CBOs of women

5. Identified the problems, needs, and issues faced

6. Organized Community Awareness programs in the villages

7. Assessments are done with the support of stakeholders

8. Developed trust and built aspiration among the girl children

8. CONSOLIDATED WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Activities to Aid and Enhance Learning Process



Educational materials play a crucial role in supporting learning process of children which include note books, geometry box, scale, pen, pencil etc. Needy children were provided with educational kits to bridge the resource gap, where their parents were not in a position to support them. A total 572 educational kits were provided to the girl children to aid and improve their learning process.

Evening Tuition - Regularly Children were engaged through after school program by conducting tuition classes to support them to strengthen their academic learning through their own pace to reach their potential. From 2009 to 2019 a total of 572 children were tutored from grade 6th to 12th to enhance their learning abilities in STEM.

Remedial classes: More than 250 slow learning, children were supported with remedial classes after school hours to reach to help them cope and perform on par with the other children.

Home visits: CREDOC team regularly contacted parents and provided emotional support to overcome their issues related to their children's education, regularly visited homes of children as per the need to ensured the children's continuation in schools and participation in all round programs for their holistic development.



Exposure visit/Science tour: More than 600 hundred children were taken for exposure visits in phased manner to understand their world beyond their home and school. This expanded their horizons and helped them to set their aspirations.



Health Camps: Considering the situation of children from resource poor backgrounds, Health camps were organized to aid and support healthy development of the adolescent girls. AS part of the screening focus was to ensure children were anaemia free, deworming was ensured, malnutrition free and other need based diagnosis and treatment for preventing children from diseases. More than 1200 children were screened by doctors



Bicycle Distribution: 20 children were supported with Bicycles to break the barrier of their transportation and to ensure that they continued their education without dropping out. The problem of eve teasing was also solved by working with the VCPCs. The project introduced the concept of buddy system where girls from far off villages travelled in pairs or as a group helped all of them to provide each other the strength and courage to face adversity if any.

Activities for Behavior Change and Building Supportive Eco-system



Parents Work shop and Quarterly meetings with parents

Quarterly Parents meetings: Girls Education Program in addition to speaking about the importance of Parent's roles and responsibilities especially in promoting girls' literacy and abolition of child marriages. They covered the following topics; Health and nutrition, safety and protection, self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, coping with emotions, stress management, maintain good relationship with family, neighbours and friends were the topics covered in these meetings to improve their awareness.

Parents have understood the importance of the education supported their children regularly to send them to school, which drastically decreased the dropout rate in the schools, minimised child marriages.



Meeting with School Management and Development Committee and Child Protection Committees.

Child Protection Committees: CREDOC has mobilized and facilitated in 6 villages, 135 CPC members along with SDMC to help them understand their children's issues, and make them overcome any gender discrimination /violations of child rights, abuse, and neglect. These meetings helped prevent child marriage re enrolment of dropped out children and improved child protection and child development.

Life Skill Trainings and Workshops

Orientation workshops on Life skills Education to Teachers

CREDOC believed that in the Girls Education Program teachers had an influential role. The aim of these workshops was to orient the teachers on the need for the life skills education for children and how it would benefit the overall personality development of the children in reaching the project goal of empowering them. The teachers were convinced about the need and cooperated. 110 teachers were covered in these workshops

Life Skill Trainings and workshops for children aimed to enhance the abilities of children in Problem solving, critical thinking, self-awareness, thinking abilities, decision making, communication skills and negotiation skills for their development. Life skills workshops and regular life skills class were organized from 2009 to 2019 in a phased manner. 50 girl children were covered in 2009 and by 2019, 572 girl children were covered through life skills program. More than 200 boy children also acquired life skills from 6th standard, where initial foundation was laid for their journey till standard 12th standard to negotiate the tough adolescent years and set their goals and ambitions for life.



Topics covered - Awareness on gender equality, critical thinking, preparation for the exams, overcome bullying, Managing my time, Practice my study skills, Refusing peer pressure at school, Say NO to tobacco, alcohol and drugs , Healthy friendship, Know and Act against unhealthy relationship, safety against abuse and violence, Communication and Management , self-confidence and capability, Goal setting decision making and Future Plan, Learning and showing empathy, Personal safety education, Learning about STI, HIV and AIDS, Nutrition for Health, We are empowered, Setting my goals, overcoming early marriage and early pregnancy, Healthy boundaries, Exploring careers

Activities to Build Agency and Empower Children



Child Clubs: Children's clubs were formed to enhance the children's participation, participate in discussion and learn to make decisions that affected them.

The child club leadership members were elected to lead the members and also facilitate through their discussion and take things forward. They also interacted with parents whose children dropped out and convinced them to rejoin school.

Development camps: 572 children were benefitted through personality development camps. Trained children on diverse skills like Karate, yoga, meditation, child rights, personal hygiene, drawing and personality development in camps. Girls have participated enthusiastically in cultural activities, played skits with lot of zeal.



Science and Math Fairs/Exhibition by children were organised to increase their curiosity and improve their scientific temper, inculcate scientific thinking and provide hands on experience for children. They exhibited their talents and projects to the stakeholders. More than 2000 children have exhibited with 150 innovations or activities during the science and math fair to the key stakeholders of the village and mandal like PRIs, SMC members, MEO, SI, and other key stakeholders who participated and appreciated the children's talents.

National Festivals: Every year organised national festivals and special events with help of stakeholders on the occasion of Independence day, Children's Day, International Womens Day and International literacy day to create awareness on girl child education, child rights and development(More than 10000 children and stakeholders were part in these events.

Newsletter: A Newsletter named "CHITTI Palukulu" was published and circulated among children to share their activities and progress towards development which helped them to think, analyse , build their language skills and their confidence



9. PROJECT INTERVENTIONS AND IMPACT

Life Skill Education to Girl Children: The age-appropriate life skill education was given to Children studying in 10, 11 & 12 standard classes covering all schools- built self identity, better understanding of self and world around them, preparing them for their future!

Child Club Meetings: The Children's Clubs played an important role in the overall development of Children. These children's clubs have discussed matters related to education, health, environment, cultural activities, and social concerns such as Child Marriage, Children Protection, and other concerns pertaining to children and addressed them

Teacher-parent meetings: The interface between children, parents, and teachers helped to facilitate and promote girls' education. Stop child marriages, and corporal punishment, improve functioning of School management committees and resolve issues and concerns related to children's education.

Child Protection Committees at the village level consisting of Parents of children, School Teachers, SMC members, and representatives from Village Organizations and other CBOs in the village, etc., were sensitized to overcome discrimination and extend support to girl children.

Ecosystem sensitization: The organization worked on effective implementation of Right to Education 2010 in Kosgi and Maddur Mandals of Mahabubnagar District. In this process continuous trainings, meetings and programs to children, teachers, PRI members, SMC members, Anganwadi teachers, Asha workers, youth associations, children and other stake holders from the project location on child rights, child protection and education were organised.

Home Visits: The Social Mobilisers regularly made home visits to follow up on girls' education, on absentees, encouraging girls, supporting them, achieve academic excellence.

Mentoring: Regular mentoring sessions have been arranged by the teachers and also external resource person. This has helped to improve academic performance among the girls.

LIFE SKILL CENTRES in schools in which life skill sessions have been conducted, Child club meetings, Parent Meetings, Village level Child Protection Committee and School Management Committee meetings were held.

School Management Committees The committees discussed the importance of girl's education, protection, and other concerns pertaining to children. Their support enabled girls to attend schools without fear and gain a sense of security.

Suggestion boxes and Display boards in all the schools by which children were provided an opportunity to raise their issues affecting them, like Pure Drinking water, Quality of Mid-day meals, maintaining hygiene in schools etc., so that, they were able to get them resolved.

10. IMPACT OF THE PROJECT -BEFORE AND AFTER SITUATION

Before

- District topped for highest drop outs- 53.2 % including the project area
- Children not interested in coming to school, participate in academics or other activities.
- 3 in 5 children dropped out in the ages 15-18 years
- Girls dropped out on average @12 years age.
- Those who were promoted got very low marks
- Migration of parents, children discontinued education.
- Parents concerned about child safety and abuse
- A parent on survival mode not interested in children's continuing education.
- Teachers not motivated
- Community indifferent and discriminative towards girls, violation of their liberty, and rights

After

- Out of 600 Girl children about 95 % were retained until 12th standard, almost 98% were retained till 10th standard.
- Children were active in academics, participated in child clubs, exposure visits, life skills sessions and encouraged other children who were slow learners.
- Their learning levels improved and they secured on average 70% marks.
- Children are confident, can communicate are able to set their goals and mature to take life decisions.
- Girls were adopted into the project at the most vulnerable age of dropping out at 6th standard which helped in retaining and empowering them.
- 20 girls were facilitated to Join KGBV residential schools to overcome the issue of migration of their parents, and continue their education.
- Parents participate in meetings, are aware of the importance of education, supported children to continue their education, even the project provided cycles to overcome the issue of long distance for a few girls.
- School teachers and administration, SDMC cooperated and became accountable, due to the training in techniques for dealing with poor performance, and orientation sessions.
- VCPSs PRI member's local duty bearers overcame their apathy and supported children in their journey of empowerment supported with safety measured as required.

11. BETTER PRACTICES

Child clubs provided space for children to open up, interact, become confident, build agency, bring out their own newsletter!

Suggestion boxes for any issues faced by children helped them to communicate their fears and difficulties

Dropping out of children who lived in remote villages was addressed through pairing of girls who could come and leave together through a Buddy system

Home visits by social mobiliser helped to interact with family and overcome the parents fears, myths and also improved attendance, 3 days of absence of any child warranted a visit by the social mobiliser.

Life skills sessions- Helped build their personality become confident, build their identity, confidence self- worth and self esteem

Learning levels improvement through evening tuitions, remedial classes, providing resource teachers and other techniques provided to teachers to improve teaching and learning is game changing.

Involvement of duty bearers, stakeholders and engaging them periodically and sensitizing them helped the project to overcome Gender discrimination and achieve progress, bring a systemic change

Linkage to Govt schemes, helped in receiving support from the Govt and also overcome certain structural issues of migration of parents through residential schooling through KGBVs

Approach of the project for intensive and prolonged contact with the same child over a long period of time through mentoring, facilitating, supporting and empowering paid off- leading to empowered girl children being able to make their own choices.

The project benefits will not be restricted to the six hundred girl children alone, but will have a ripple effect in the 48 villages where more girl children will see the empowered girls and make them their ICONS to aspire and achieve progress.

The sensitised teachers duty bearers, VCPCs will encourage and facilitate more girl children to overcome gender discrimination.

Many of the first generation learners -girl children will be able to secure jobs, and will start a cycle of educating their own children and children in their neighbourhood, overcoming poverty and gender discrimination.

12. IMPACT OF THE PROJECT- STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Strong aspiration...dedication towards goal... self- determination to never give up” these qualities of girls helped them to play as inspirational role models for many young girls who are striving to achieve great mile stones in their lives. In overcoming challenging circumstances in their journey, the way these girls have navigated their lives to reach their goal is an inspirational lesson for all of us.

1. VCPC ENSURES SAFETY OF GIRL CHILDREN

In a remote village, Buneed in Mahbubnagar district, Telangana, surrounded by rocky hills and fields of millet swaying in the breeze, life followed a simple rhythm. Every morning, a group of girls made their way to the government school, their laughter echoing through the dusty lanes. Education was their gateway to a brighter future, and they carried their hopes as lightly as the breeze that was blowing on them.

But suddenly their walk to school had become shadowed by fear. At the main crossroads of the village, a group of young men had begun to loiter, their behavior growing increasingly inappropriate. It started with casual remarks but quickly escalated to catcalls and mocking laughter. The girls, initially trying to ignore the harassment, found it harder each day to face the ordeal.

Some parents, alarmed by the situation, decided to keep their daughters home. Attendance at the school began to drop, and the girls' dreams seemed to shrink with each passing day.

Breaking the Silence

Fourteen-year-old Rupa, one of the brightest students in her class, decided to speak up. She shared her fears with her teacher, Lakshmi, who was known for her dedication to her students. Determined to take action, Lakshmi brought the issue to the attention of the village child protection committee during one of its meetings. The sarpanch, Venkat Rao, was a man who had been sensitised on gender issues faced by children and was committed to making a difference. After listening carefully, he declared, "This is not just a problem for these girls. This is a threat to the dignity and future of our village. We will not allow this to continue."

The VCPC Gathers

Venkat Rao called for a VCPC meeting in the village. The sarpanch spoke firmly. "Our daughters are our pride. Their education is the light that will guide our future. What has been happening at the crossroads is a betrayal of the values we hold dear. Such behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated."

Ramesh, a farmer, stood up. "I have struggled to send my daughter to school, fighting against poverty and odds. I will not stand by and watch her be denied her right to learn because of this."

The young men, visibly remorseful, apologized. Venkat Rao, while accepting their apologies, made it clear that such behavior had consequences. "We will forgive you this time, but only if you show real change," he said.

Building a Safer Future

The village panchayat devised a plan to ensure the safety of the girls and to foster a culture of respect: Villagers were asked to volunteer and monitor any untoward behaviour towards these girls, parents of these boys were also included in gender sensitization workshops, The girls were made aware of the child helpline number CHILDLINE 1098, young men who were harassing girls were counselled and were made part of village welfare activities.

A Renewed Spirit

Over time, the changes became evident. The girls resumed their walk to school with confidence, their laughter returning to the lanes. The young men, now active participants in community development, changed their behaviour over time.

A Lasting Legacy

At a village celebration months later, Venkat Rao addressed the gathering. "When we protect our girls and respect their dreams, we create not just a safe village but a brighter tomorrow for everyone."

The people of Mahbubnagar district took this lesson to heart, and the small village became a beacon of hope, proving that collective effort could bring about lasting change.

2. THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN: A STORY OF CHANGE

In the village of Mushrifa in Mahbubnagar district, the government school served as a centre for learning. The GEP had helped to build the aspirations of girl children. The students, from poor families of migrants often came to school without even eating breakfast. Their substantial meal was the school mid day meal that they waited for. However —the mid-day meals served at the school cast a shadow on their experience at school.

The meals, meant to nourish their bodies and minds, were often bland, poorly cleaned, uncooked, and sometimes even watery and tasteless. The children hesitated to speak out, fearing they might not be heard. But everything changed when the Child Clubs started to assert their rights.

A Platform for Voices

The Child Club met every Friday after school under the guidance of their teacher, Sunitha. The club encouraged children to voice their concerns, share ideas, and work together to make their school a better place. At one meeting, thirteen-year-old Anitha hesitated but finally spoke up.

"Ma'am, the food we get for lunch isn't cooked hygienically. It's hard to eat, many children are falling sick" she said, her voice barely audible. Other children nodded in agreement, and soon, a chorus of similar complaints filled the room. Some admitted skipping the meal altogether, opting to go hungry instead.

Sunitha listened attentively. "This is a serious issue," she said. "You all have the right to healthy, hygienic, nutritious, and tasty food. Let's work together to address this."

Taking the Problem to the Headmaster

The following Monday, the Child Club representatives, led by Anitha and her classmate Ravi, met with the Headmaster, Mr. Narayana. Nervous but determined, they shared their concerns.

"Sir, the mid-day meals aren't being cooked in hygienic condition," Ravi began. "We want this to be changed and we believe it can be improved if we try." Mr. Narayana, a kind and approachable man, thanked children for bringing this issue to him. He said, "Let's find a solution."

Discussing the Issue

Mr. Narayana organized a meeting with the school cook, and the Child Club members. The cook admitted that the quality of hygiene was sometimes poor, as the kitchen infrastructure is not appropriate and the limited budget made it challenging. The issue was taken to the Govt authorities requesting for improvements, which were taken up.

A Transformation

Within weeks, the change was palpable. The children looked forward to lunch, and their energy levels improved noticeably. The Child Club continued to monitor the meals, conducting hygiene checks and sharing feedback with the Headmaster.

A Lasting Lesson

At the school's annual day function, Mr. Narayana praised the Child Club for their courage and leadership. "You've shown us all the power of speaking up and working together," he said.

Anitha, the child club member now more confident than ever, addressed the audience. "When we work as a team, we can solve any problem," she said, her smile lighting up the room, proving that even young voices could bring about meaningful change when given a platform and support.

3. A JOURNEY FOR CHANGE: THE STORY OF A FREE SHUTTLE

In the villages of Mushrifa and Bolvanpally, located in Kosgi Mandal of Mahbubnagar district, education was a distant dream for many children, especially girls. Though schools in Bolvanpally promised a brighter future, the lack of transportation made attending them an uphill battle.

Each morning, children were forced to walk miles along dusty, uneven paths, braving the scorching sun or sudden downpours with many concerned about the safety of the children. For many families, the hardship of the journey outweighed the benefits of education. Instead, children, particularly girls, were sent to work in nearby cotton fields to supplement family incomes. In some cases, early marriages were seen as a solution to ease financial burdens and secure safety.

But everything began to change when a few determined parents decided to take a stand.

Voices of Concern

The parents of Mushrifa, worried about their children's future, approached the village elders. "Our daughters are determined and hardworking," one mother said during a community meeting. "But without safe transportation, they cannot go to school. How will they ever build better lives?" The community decided to act. A delegation of parents and elders reached out to the APSRTC (Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation) and arranged a meeting with the Kosgi Mandal Depot Manager.

The Meeting at Kosgi

The meeting took place under the leadership of Ravi Naik, the Depot Manager, who listened to their plight intently. "Our children walk miles every day to get to school," said Rajanna, a farmer. "It's unsafe and exhausting, and many families feel they have no choice but to send their daughters to work instead. We are pleading for a solution." Ravi Naik understood the gravity of the issue. "Education is a right, not a privilege," he said. "Transportation should never be a barrier. I will take this up as a formal complaint and ensure action is taken."

A Promise Fulfilled

True to his word, the Depot Manager swiftly acted. Soon, APSRTC approved a free shuttle service to ensure students travel between Mushrifa and Bolvanpally. The shuttle, became a symbol of hope for the community.

A New Beginning

The impact was immediate and transformative. Girls who had once been kept at home or sent to work now boarded the bus daily, their laughter and chatter filling the air. Absenteeism and dropping out became yester-years concerns. Attendance at the Bolvanpally school surged, and families began to see the value of education over child labor. The tradition of early marriages began to wane gradually as parents realized the potential their daughters held. With access to school, the girls started dreaming of careers as teachers, nurses, and even engineers—dreams that had once seemed out of reach.

Small timely support meant lifetime changes to girls

The shuttle service didn't just solve a transportation problem; it brought a sense of purpose to girls in Mushrifa.

4. KAVITHA: A BEACON OF HOPE

Kavitha, a quiet and determined girl, hails from Chanwar village in the Maddur block of Narayanpet district. Born into a family that valued tradition over education for girls, her journey was destined to be challenging. After completing primary school, her dreams of pursuing higher education seemed to be slipping away as her father refused to send her to a distant school, citing the lack of facilities in their village. But Kavitha was not ready to give up.

The First Step

In 2014, Project staff visited Kavitha's family as part of their efforts to encourage girls' education. They sat with her father and patiently explained the transformative power of education. They shared stories of girls who had achieved great things and emphasized how educating a daughter could uplift an entire family. Moved by their words and Kavitha's quiet determination, her father reluctantly agreed to let her join ZPHS Bhuneed for her 6th-grade studies. This marked the beginning of Kavitha's association with the Room to Read's Girls' Education Program (CREDOC).

Blossoming Through Life Skills

When Kavitha joined the program, she was shy, reserved, and unsure of herself. She struggled to make friends and avoided standing out. But through life skills sessions, things began to change. The sessions taught Kavitha vital skills like communication, self-confidence, and resilience. Slowly but surely, her personality began to shine. She participated in stage performances, became actively engaged in classroom discussions, and formed meaningful friendships. Her dedication to academics also paid off. With the unwavering support of CREDOC, she excelled in her studies and secured the first rank in her school in the 10th Board exams. For Kavitha, this was a triumph of perseverance and hard work.

Rising Above Adversity

Just as life seemed to take a positive turn, tragedy struck. Kavitha's father fell gravely ill, leaving the family in financial distress. The pressure on Kavitha to quit her studies and take up work grew stronger. But Kavitha refused to surrender her dreams. With support from CREDOC and her mentor, Mamatha, she convinced her family to let her continue her education. Mamatha, a constant source of encouragement, helped Kavitha navigate this difficult period. Despite the challenges, Kavitha completed her intermediate education and set her sights on bigger goals.

Turning Challenges into Triumphs

Kavitha's indomitable spirit led her to pursue a degree while continuing to dream of a career in service to her community. She decided to apply for the Telangana Police Constable selection. Competing fiercely with thousands of candidates, she secured a place in the force. Today, Kavitha is undergoing departmental training to serve as a Police Constable. Her story has inspired countless girls in her village and beyond.

An Icon of Hope

Kavitha's journey from a shy girl in a small village to a symbol of strength and resilience is a testament to the power of education and determination. She now stands as a beacon of hope for girls around her, proving that with courage, support, and hard work, no dream is too big. Addressing the girls in her village one day, Kavitha said, "I was told I couldn't go to school, but I refused to accept it. You too can achieve anything you set your heart on. Never let anyone tell you otherwise." Kavitha's story continues to inspire, breaking barriers and creating a ripple effect of empowerment across Narayanpet district and beyond.

5. THE TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY OF SHIVA LEELA

Shiva Leela, a young girl from Sarajakhanpet, lived in a modest home with her two siblings and hardworking parents. Her family toiled as daily wage earners in the fields, grappling with poverty and the limitations of illiteracy. Despite their struggles, education was not a priority for the family, especially for girls.

When Shiva Leela completed primary school, her father declared that her education would end there. "She's not doing well in her studies," he said dismissively. "There's no point in wasting time." Shiva Leela, was totally confused and disappointed.

A Ray of Hope

CREDOC staff learned about Shiva Leela's situation and visited her home. They spoke earnestly with her father, assuring him that with the right support, his daughter could improve her academics and achieve better results. Reluctantly, he agreed to give her another chance.

This decision marked a turning point in Shiva Leela's life.

From Struggles to Strength

Balancing school and family responsibilities, Shiva Leela continued her studies while helping in the agricultural fields. However, her challenges went beyond academics—she struggled with low self-esteem, unsure of her abilities and hesitant to speak up. Recognizing her potential, the CREDOC team enrolled her in life skills sessions designed to build confidence, resilience, and self-awareness. She also attended remedial classes and received educational materials, ensuring she had the tools to succeed.

Slowly but surely, the transformation was evident. Shiva Leela began participating actively in classes, gradually discovering her strengths. The shy girl who once avoided eye contact was now standing tall, her voice filled with conviction.

Rising Above

As her academic performance improved, so did her outlook on life. She began to dream big—beyond the fields and beyond the constraints of her circumstances. Shiva Leela set her sights on a goal that seemed unattainable to many around her: becoming an IPS officer to serve her country. "I want to ensure justice and safety for others," she declared one day during a school event. Her words carried the weight of someone who had faced and overcome immense challenges.

A Future Full of Promise

Today, Shiva Leela is in the third year of her graduation, working tirelessly to turn her dream into reality. Her journey from a struggling student to a confident young woman aspiring to join the Indian Police Service is nothing short of inspirational. Her transformation has also changed her family's perspective on education. Her father, once skeptical, now proudly shares her achievements with anyone who will listen. Her journey serves as a powerful reminder that when given the opportunity, every child can rise above their circumstances and shine.

13. VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

Inspiring Words from Mr. Rajashekar, Sarpanch of Nidzintha

"The Girl Child Education Program has been a game-changer for our community. It has opened doors of opportunity, not just for our girls but for their families as well. By empowering girl children through education and raising awareness among parents, the program has brought a wave of positive change.

Life skill education sessions and other activities have equipped our girls to face real-life challenges with courage and wisdom. They now make informed choices and decisions that shape their futures. It's truly inspiring to see how far they've come, and I believe this program is laying the foundation for a brighter tomorrow for everyone in our village."

A Remarkable Milestone for Girls' Education- VCPC member

"When faced with the challenge of no accessible government colleges for higher education, CREDOC stepped up to ensure that no girl's dreams were left behind. Through relentless efforts and collaboration, CREDOC enabled over 30 girls from the Girl Education Program to continue their education after 10th grade.

These girls, brimming with potential, were granted admission to private intermediate colleges in Kosgi Mandal without any fees. This initiative didn't just secure their education; it secured their future. It's heartening to see how determination and the right support at the right time can break barriers and pave the way for brighter opportunities."

The Remarkable Impact of the Girls' Education Program- A teacher

"Thanks to the Girls' Education Program, we've witnessed incredible transformation in our students. With regular attendance, zero dropouts, and no absentees, the girls are not only showing up—they are thriving. What's even more inspiring is the remarkable confidence they display during presentations, communicating with clarity and self-assurance. These visible changes are a true testament to the power of education and the unwavering support they've received through this program."

A Parent's Testimony to the Impact of Girls Education Programme

"I've seen such gradual yet profound changes in my child, thanks to the support she's received. Her communication with others has become more confident and effective. Academically, she's made tremendous progress, and she now knows how to set healthy boundaries, something I never imagined she could do. These transformations have not only shaped her education but also helped build her self-esteem. I'm truly grateful for the opportunities the program has provided."

A PROUD MOMENT FOR CREDOC- MS. MAMATHA, CREDOC STAFF

"During the Alumni meet, I asked a girl student from the Girls' Education Program to document the activities of the event. When I saw the final documentation, I was absolutely thrilled. Her work was not only detailed and thorough but also extremely professional. It was a proud moment for me, seeing the growth and skill development she had achieved through the program."

14. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

CREDOC with this experience of working for the education of girl children through systemic changes and mobilization of communities has gained valuable experience. Have successfully supported adolescent girls to get empowered. Going forward CREDOC is now confident and prepared to take up projects through involvement of communities and effecting systemic changes. The project through its mission in believing in people's abilities and capabilities for change endorses the belief and values espoused by the organisation and makes it more confident to go forward in the coming days so as to reach out to more children and communities to over-



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