

Data analytics and algorithm help NGO predict dropouts and out-of-school girls

A total of 16 districts have been identified in the state of UP to implement this project to identify the dropout girls

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Project Pragati, an initiative of the NGO Educate Girls, is being expanded to support girls dropping out of school in Uttar Pradesh after the success of its pilot phase in Rajasthan. Launched in August 2021, the NGO aims to help the girls in the villages of Bihar and MP too next year. Project Pragati is an initiative aimed to make girls pass class X. Many girls in the rural areas never get to complete their education, due to early marriage, motherhood, migration, lack of access to secondary school, academic setbacks, and poverty. In the pilot phase, as many as 7,000 dropout girls were brought back to the open schooling educational ecosystem in collaboration with the Council of Open School Education, Rajasthan. A 65% pass percentage among girls studying in Rajasthan has been noticed. In all, 16 teams of Project Pragati are working in 16 districts of UP and they are in the process of identifying the dropout girls in the state.

The initiative uses an algorithm which predicts the villages that have greater concentration of out-of-school girls using historical surveys conducted by Educate Girls, Census and UDISE data. Currently, the project is being implemented in UP with the support of the Patrachar department of the UP government which looks after the distance education. The initiative will be implemented in the coming months in Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Prayagraj, Chitrakoot, Banda, Kausambi, Fatehpur, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, Bahraich, Shravasti, Gonda, Balrampur, Kushinagar and Maharajganj districts.

The funds for the Pragati Project are being raised through institutional donors and corporates including Cipla and HBS Foundation. So far, Rs 20 crore have been spent in the last two years. A total of 33 million dropout girls have been identified in the four states



■ Project Pragati is helping girls in UP and Rajasthan get back to schools

The algorithm is prepared to help predict the villages with greater concentration of out-of-school girls by using old surveys conducted by Educate Girls and UDISE data

of Rajasthan, UP, MP, and Bihar who have not passed class X due to several reasons. The project is being implemented by Educate Girls along with the UP Education Department.

On the sidelines of the recently concluded Philanthropy Asia Summit 2023, Maharshi Vaishnav, CEO, Educate Girls spoke to *Education Times* to highlight the initiatives taken to encourage girls towards education. "Efforts are being made to identify more out-of-school girls from the rural parts of the country who have dropped out before passing class X. Currently, dedicated teams are in the process of identifying such dropout girls in Rajasthan and UP, and they are getting them enrolled in state open schools. We are also working with the state governments to bolster the open schooling educational ecosystem. We also want the girls to be skilled in vocational courses for being job-ready. Our teams are working alongside the UP government in Lucknow to ensure that the process of enrolling dropout girls in the open schooling ecosystem is done

smoothly," said Vaishnav.

"Our teams operating in 16 districts of UP have conducted a census to identify the number of dropout girls. Our teams identify the districts that have a higher likelihood of girls dropping out through an algorithm that has been developed in partnership with IDinsight, a data analytics and research organisation that works with NITI Aayog in the Aspirational District Programme. This algorithm predicts which district has a large number of out-of-school girls," said Vaishnav. Vishnu Kant Pandey, assistant state project director, Education Department, UP Government, says, "The Educate Girls NGO has a network in various districts of UP and has become a part of the state project office. The entire cost of getting these dropout girls to study through open schooling of NIOS would be borne by the UP government under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. Educating one girl through open schooling requires Rs 2,000, which is borne by the government."