HUMEIN BADHNA HAI

Promoting career intentionality through counselling among adolescent girls in Jharkhand

AN ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Acknowledgement

PCI India brings this document to present the finding, learnings and recommendations acquired during an assessment study undertaken as a part of 'Humein Badhna Hai' initiative in Jharkhand. The initiative is promoting career intentionality through counselling among students at government residential girls schools in the state. The study was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of Humein Badhna Hai as a model for holistic career counselling, while identifying key areas for improvement to enhance its efficiency and overall impact.

This document has been made possible through the invaluable contributions of all stakeholders involved in the intervention.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC), Government of Jharkhand, for placing their trust in us as a technical partner and for their unwavering support and guidance throughout the implementation period. We are especially thankful to Shri Shashi Ranjan, IAS, State Project Director, JEPC, and the State Program Officer, JEPC, for their mentorship and continuous encouragement during every phase of the assessment study and the overall program.

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We would also like to acknowledge the PCI India team for the conceptualization and implementation of Humein Badhna Hai. Our special thanks to Mr. Indrajit Chaudhuri, CEO & Country Director, PCI India, for his visionary leadership and continued guidance. We sincerely thank the entire Humein Badhna Hai team for their dedication and meaningful contributions—especially in identifying and facilitating stakeholder interviews and curating visual documentation.

This document is a reflection of collective effort, shared purpose, and a shared belief in the power of adolescent empowerment. We are thankful to all other colleagues at PCI India and JEPC who have contributed directly or indirectly in successful completion of the initiative.

We acknowledge our partners including Cummins Foundation for their funding support and RISE UP for their ongoing mentorship and guidance both prior to and throughout the duration of the project.

List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
HBH	Humein Badhna Hai
JBAV	Jharkhand Balika Awasiya Vidyalaya
JEPC	Jharkhand Education Project Council
KGBV	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
PCI	Project Concern International
RIASEC	Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound

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Executive Summary

The 'Humein Badhna Hai' (HBH) initiative is a holistic career counselling program implemented in government residential girls' schools across Jharkhand. The initiative, led by the Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC) in collaboration with Project Concern International (PCI) India, aims to empower adolescent girls by enhancing their career intentionality, goal-setting abilities, and awareness of diverse career pathways. It also seeks to address gendered career constraints, social norms, and financial barriers that limit educational and economic opportunities for girls.

Key Findings

Positive Impact on Career Awareness and Aspirations

- **93.5% of students from both intensive and non-intensive schools reported** discovering new career options, including **male-dominated fields** such as **engineering, piloting, and scientific research**.
- **18% of students** revised their career goals based on the scientific **RIASEC psychometric test**.
- Students in schools where the intervention happened had more clarity about the courses (91% in Intensive group and 77% in Non-Intensive group vs 56% in Control group).

Increased Confidence and Agency

- Based on qualitative interactions with the students and teachers, it was found that students in intensive and non-intensive schools developed **self-confidence, and goal-setting abilities** as a result of this intervention.
- Many students shifted their mindset from **early marriage after Grade 12 to higher education and vocational training before marriage**.

Parental and Social Support

- **96.6% of students in intensive schools** felt confident about **parental support** for their careers.
- However, **early marriage and family pressure** remain major **barriers**, particularly in rural communities.

Challenges in Implementation

- **Financial barriers** at the family level may prevent many girls from pursuing higher education despite the awareness of scholarships.
- **Gender norms and societal pressure** continue to influence career decisions, limiting aspirations.
- **Access issues**, such as limited **higher education institutions in remote areas**, language barriers, and low parental involvement, hinder progress.

Recommendations

To strengthen and scale the *Humein Badhna Hai* (HBH) career counselling model, the following strategic recommendations are proposed:

- **Enhance Parental and Community Engagement:** Integrate career-focused discussions into Parent-Teacher Meetings and promote community dialogue to shift social norms and strengthen family support for girls' aspirations.
- **Institutionalize Career Counselling:** Embed counselling into school systems through dedicated weekly periods and School Management Committees, ensuring regular and structured delivery in residential schools.
- **Build Counsellor Capacity:** Provide continuous professional development for teachers and facilitators, supported by academic and NGO partnerships to equip them with updated knowledge and tools.
- **Update and Localize Career Materials:** Revise the HBH compendium regularly to reflect emerging career fields (e.g., AI, ESG, green jobs), and ensure content is age-appropriate, multilingual, and context-specific.
- **Leverage Technology:** Develop low-bandwidth digital tools and mobile apps for personalised career guidance, accessible to students in remote areas.
- **Improve Access to Financial Aid:** Simplify scholarship processes and create user-friendly materials mapping financial schemes by eligibility and benefits.
- **Monitor and Track Progress:** Establish a centralized data system within JEPC to track student participation, career pathways, and learning outcomes over time.
- **Highlight Role Models:** Engage local female professionals to inspire students and counter gender stereotypes through mentoring and storytelling.
- **Promote Policy and Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with Panchayati Raj Institutions and local leaders to champion girls' education and career development at the grassroots level.

Conclusion

The HBH initiative has demonstrated significant success in increasing career awareness, empowering girls with informed choices, and challenging restrictive social norms. However, financial constraints, gender biases, and accessibility issues remain critical barriers. Strengthening parental involvement, systemic integration, and financial support mechanisms will be key to scaling and sustaining the impact of this intervention.

Introduction

India is progressing towards fulfilling the dream of *Vikasit Bharat 2047* and achieving a five trillion-dollar economy by 2025. To realize this vision, it is imperative to amplify efforts towards increasing meaningful and respectful female workforce participation. Women, who often contribute to the economy through unpaid care and support roles that go unrecognized, must transition into quantifiable income-generating roles. This shift requires a strong focus on investing in adolescents, particularly girls, by building a solid foundation of education and introducing career intentionality from the early years of secondary education.

Nearly one-third of adolescent girls in Jharkhand are married before the age of 18, a stark reality that contributes to high school dropout rates and severely limits their opportunities for career advancement and economic independence. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5, 2019–21), 32.2% of women aged 20–24 in Jharkhand were married before the age of 18, significantly higher than the national average of 23.3%. This early marriage often leads to girls dropping out of school, with the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2022) revealing that 15.6% of girls in Jharkhand aged 15–16 are not enrolled in school, compared to 10.4% of boys in the same age group.

The consequences of these trends are reflected in the abysmally low female workforce participation rates in India and Jharkhand. As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2022–23), India's female labour force participation rate (LFPR) stands at just 37.0%, while in Jharkhand, it is even lower at 24.6%. This is compounded by the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work shouldered by women. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018), women in India spend nearly 297 minutes per day on unpaid care work, compared to just 31 minutes by men. This gendered division of labour perpetuates economic dependency and restricts women's ability to pursue careers or achieve financial autonomy.

Education is a critical tool to combat these challenges, yet the current system often fails to prepare girls for meaningful economic participation. Schools tend to focus narrowly on academic performance, with insufficient emphasis on skills for future careers. This lack of career-oriented education, combined with cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes, further constrains girls' aspirations. For instance, a study by NCERT (2021) found that only 12% of girls in rural India aspire to careers in STEM fields, compared to 26% of boys, highlighting the need for early career guidance and counselling.

To make education truly transformative, it must be reoriented toward career development and economic empowerment from an early age. This includes addressing systemic barriers such as child marriage, unpaid care work, and gender stereotypes, while providing girls with the tools and opportunities to make informed, aspirational career choices. Without such interventions, the cycle of limited opportunities and economic dependency will persist, undermining the potential of millions of girls in Jharkhand and across India.

Adolescence is a critical phase that shapes an individual's future, with grades 6 to 12 being pivotal as students develop their interests, aptitudes, and career aspirations. Key decision points, such as choosing academic streams after Grade 10 and contemplating future professions after Grade 12, have a lasting impact on their career trajectories. Empowering girls during these formative years is essential to increasing female workforce participation in the long run.

However, adolescents' education and career decisions are influenced by a multitude of factors, including family background, parental income and education, peer and community influence, salary expectations, academic achievements, and personal interests.

In Jharkhand, deeply entrenched cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes pose significant barriers to girls' education and career opportunities. Many communities prioritize early marriage, viewing a girl's primary role as that of a wife and mother, which often forces girls to abandon schooling prematurely. Girls are also burdened with domestic responsibilities, reflecting the stereotype that women are solely responsible for household management. Cultural norms frequently limit girls' mobility, especially in rural areas, restricting their access to schools or higher education due to safety concerns and traditional gender roles. Additionally, the perception that educating girls is less valuable than educating boys—rooted in the belief that girls will marry and leave their families—undermines investment in their future. Stigma surrounding co-educational schools and pervasive stereotypes, such as "education is unnecessary for girls" or "women belong at home," further erode girls' self-esteem and aspirations.

Addressing these challenges through targeted holistic career counselling and educational interventions is essential to empower girls, challenge these norms, and pave the way for greater equity and economic participation.

About the Intervention

Humein Badhna Hai (HBH) is an initiative providing holistic counselling, with a focus on career guidance, to girls in Grades 6 to 12 at government residential schools in Jharkhand. These schools, such as Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) and Jharkhand Balika Awasiya Vidyalayas (JBAVs), support girls from rural, disadvantaged backgrounds by covering their education, food, and accommodation. The initiative aims to promote career intentionality, empowering girls to set clear goals and develop the agency to achieve them, transforming them into valuable contributors to their families, communities, and the economy.

Implemented by Project Concern International (PCI) India in partnership with the Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC), HBH delivers psychometric test-based modular counselling sessions, group and individual counselling to all students. It guides students on educational pathways, career options, life skills, and emotional well-being, helping them make informed decisions and build confidence. By enhancing the value of education and fostering independence, *Humein Badhna Hai* equips girls to overcome challenges and realize their potential.

The project is evenly spread across all five divisions of Jharkhand, covering the entire state in intensive and non-intensive modes. Intensive districts have an additional component of supportive supervision, school visits, and counselling by PCI team members, along with the regular components of modular and counselling sessions.

Objectives of the Project

- Enhance the perceived value of education among girls and improve classroom participation
- Provide scientific, aptitude-based career counselling to help students identify suitable career pathways
- Enable girl students to set personal goals and develop agency in achieving them

Methodology of the Assessment

The key goal of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Humein Badhna Hai* (HBH) holistic career counselling model for broader audiences, including government bodies, policymakers, and potential donors, while identifying key areas for improvement to enhance the model's efficiency and overall impact. The findings of the study are intended to inform and strengthen the intervention's design and implementation.

Study Objectives

- To explore the overall effectiveness of the HBH holistic career counselling model in improving students' career intentionality
- To identify challenges and areas for improvement within the career counselling model
- To provide actionable recommendations for optimizing the career counselling model and expanding its reach and impact

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-method research design, suitable for capturing both the effectiveness and influence of the intervention on the career intentionality of girls. Quantitative data were collected through semi-structured surveys with adolescent girls, while qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews (IDIs) with teachers.

Sampling Methodology

The HBH project was implemented in 106 government residential girls' schools across Jharkhand, reaching approximately 30,000 students. The evaluation study sampled 12 schools, comprising six Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) and six Jharkhand Balika Awasiya Vidyalayas (JBAVs), ensuring representation across the intervention's geographical spread.

In each selected school, two girls from each grade (Grades 6 to 12) were chosen using purposive sampling, leading to a sample size of 142 girls. Each class had approximately 50 students, with seven classes per school. All enrolled girls in the selected KGBVs were part of the intervention and eligible for inclusion in the study.

Sample Size Selection

To evaluate the effectiveness of the *Humein Badhna Hai* (HBH) career counselling model, a statistically valid sample was required from the population of students covered by the intervention. The program was implemented across 106 government residential girls' schools in Jharkhand, reaching approximately 30,000 students.

A sample of 12 schools was purposively selected, ensuring representation from intensive, non-intensive, and control groups across the five divisions of Jharkhand. Within each school, two girls were selected per grade from Grades 6 to 12. With approximately 7 grades per school and 2 girls per grade, the total student sample was 142.

To validate the representativeness of this sample, Cochran's formula was used to determine the minimum required sample size for proportions in large populations.

Cochran's Formula for Sample Size Estimation:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n_0 = Required sample size (for an infinite population
- Z = Z-score for the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence)
- p = Estimated proportion of the population (0.5 used for maximum variability)
- e = Desired margin of error (set at 8%, or 0.08)

Calculation:

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1-0.5)}{(0.08)^2} = \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.25}{0.0064} \approx \frac{0.9604}{0.0064} \approx 150$$

Given a finite population and design effect (e.g., clustering within schools), the adjusted sample size was finalized at 142, which aligns with practical field constraints while maintaining statistical validity.

In addition to student participants, 12 teachers (one per selected school) were interviewed. These teachers were purposively selected based on their role in delivering HBH sessions and were central to capturing qualitative insights on the intervention's implementation and outcomes.

Study Geography

The study was conducted in six districts across Jharkhand:
- Intensive districts: Ranchi and Latehar
- Non-intensive districts: Palamu and Bokaro
- Control districts: Deoghar and Koderma

This stratification allowed for comparative analysis across different levels of program intensity.

Data Collection Tools and Process

Quantitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews administered to students. The questionnaire covered exposure to the intervention, career awareness, aspirations, goal setting, knowledge of schemes, and perceived barriers.

Qualitative data were gathered through IDIs conducted by trained PCI field teams. These teams were sensitized on child protection and safeguarding protocols, and followed structured guides developed for this study. Interviews explored teachers' perceptions of student engagement, effectiveness of the counselling tools (including RIASEC), and implementation challenges.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to summarize the responses. Thematic analysis was conducted manually for qualitative data, with recurring themes identified and mapped to the study objectives.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical protocols to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Ethical approval was obtained from a local Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and assent was taken from minors. All interviews were conducted in safe, private spaces, with strict confidentiality maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process.

The mixed-method approach, triangulation of data sources, and ethical rigor ensure the reliability and validity of findings from this study.

Key Findings

The main findings from the study are presented as follows:

Table 1 Distribution of students across Grades and Intervention vs Control

	Intensive Schools	Non-Intensive Schools	Control Schools	Total
Grade 6 to 8	15	16	18	49
Grade 9 & 10	15	16	16	47
Grade 11 & 12	14	16	16	46
Total	**44**	**48**	**50**	**142**

Table 1 shows how participants are divided into three groups: Intensive schools (44 participants), Non-Intensive schools (48 participants), and Control schools (50 participants). It also breaks them down by grade levels: Grade 6 to 8 (49 participants), Grade 9 & 10 (47 participants), and Grade 11 & 12 (46 participants). The distribution is even across both groups and grade levels, though the Control group has a few more participants overall. Each grade level has a similar number of participants in all three groups, making the comparison fair.

Type of sessions attended by students:

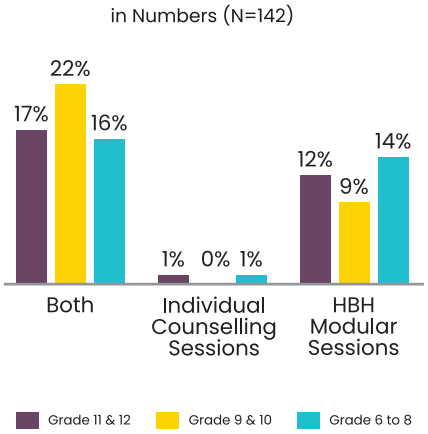

Figure 1: Type of sessions attended by students

As shown in Fig. 1, most students across all Grades attended both HBH Modular Sessions and individual counselling sessions, compared to attending only one of them. This indicates that most students were benefiting from the combined impact of both types of sessions.

What students liked most about the sessions?

	Top 2 Aspects Students Enjoyed in the Sessions
Grade 6 to 8	i. Fun and Interactive Learning: Students most enjoy the sessions conducted in a fun and interactive manner, as this received the highest positive feedback. ii. Learning New Things: Students also appreciate opportunities to learn new concepts and skills, which is a significant factor in their engagement.
Grade 9 to 10	i. Interactive and Activity-Based Learning: Students appreciate counselling sessions involving activity-based learning, self-reflection, and interactive sessions with games as they make these sessions engaging and effective in maintaining their interest. ii. Career and Personal Development Guidance: Students value discussions and sessions focused on career counselling, goal setting, and self-discovery as they find it important for their future planning and personal growth.
Grade 11 & 12	i. Fun, Interactive Delivery: Students enjoy sessions conducted in a fun and interactive manner, as this aspect received the highest positive feedback. ii. Ease of Language: Students appreciate it when complex topics like what are explained in simple, clear language, which makes learning easier and more accessible.

Effectiveness of the intervention in strengthening career intentionality among girls

The 'Humein Badhna Hai' holistic career counselling model appears to be highly effective in strengthening career intentionality among students in government residential girls' schools. Several key findings from the report support this conclusion:

Students who had a career goal in mind before this intervention had happened:

The question was asked to students in Grades 9 to 12, as they are closer to making decisions about their educational pathways, such as selecting relevant streams after grade 10 and choosing colleges after grade 12. Students in grades 6 to 8 were excluded since they are still far from this stage.

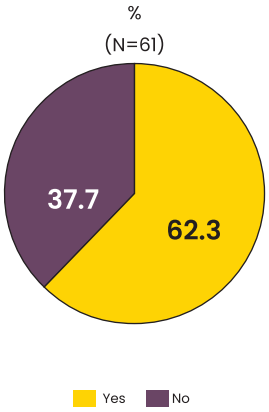

Figure 2: Percentage of students who had a career goal in mind, before the counselling sessions

As shown in Fig. 2, **most students (62.3%) had some idea about their career goals and had thought about what they wanted to become when they grew up. Now, all the students i.e. 100% students covered under this study in intensive and non-intensive schools, have a career goal**.

As shared by these students, most of them aspired to opt for traditional jobs such as teacher, nurse, tailor and so on. Their career choice was influenced more by their immediate environment than any scientific aptitude test or measurement of skills, interest and capacities.

Exposure to new Career Options:

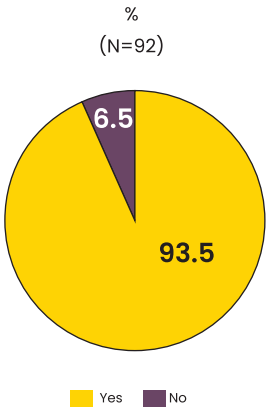

Figure 3: Percentage of students who learned about new career options from the counselling sessions

As shown in Fig. 3, **most students (93.5%) reported learning about new career options through counselling sessions.** These included traditionally male-dominated fields like administrative services, law, engineering, scientific research, piloting, and loco piloting, helping to challenge gender norms.

During interview with teachers, it was also shared how the initiative helps in empowering girls by making them aware of a wide range of career possibilities.

> "Through these career counselling sessions, the girls not only gain knowledge about new careers but also build self-confidence. Previously, many girls were unaware of subjects like engineering, but now, we not only tell them about these options, but we also try to generate their interest in science related subjects through playful learning methods. There is a girl here who aspires to become an aeronautical scientist, and we are proudly supporting her in achieving her aspirations." (excerpt from an IDI with teacher).

Significant Shift in Career Aspirations Following Career Guidance Sessions:

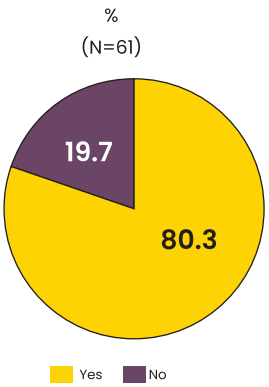

Figure 4: Percentage of students whose career goal has changed now after this intervention

As shown in Fig. 4, there is **an 18-percentage point increase in the proportion of students whose career goals have changed after receiving career counselling sessions under this intervention**. These students have now attuned their career goals based on the results from scientific aptitude testing measures such as RIASEC (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional) test.

For providing students with career guidance through a scientific method that offers options to students according to their proven areas of interest and aptitude, teachers have been trained to conduct RIASEC test. RIASEC is a psychometric test to identify and explore strengths of a student and assess their inclination towards a certain stream. This test helps counsellors in understanding personality types as Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Based on the test results, counsellors suggest students on their choice of subjects and career accordingly.

Based on the RIASEC test results, the students are opting for new career goals now such as engineering, pilot, scientist and so on. Earlier, many teachers were not fully aware of the wide range of career options available, and their suggestions often came from their own limited knowledge or were influenced by gender stereotypes. However, now that career counsellors are available, they provide guidance based on the RIASEC test, which offers a more scientific and personalized approach. This helps break away from traditional gendered career suggestions and ensures that all students, regardless of gender, are encouraged to pursue careers that match their true interests and strengths, such as engineering, piloting, or scientific research.

Impact on Goal Setting and Career Awareness:

- Across all grade levels, goal setting emerged as the most significant takeaway from the sessions. Through group counselling and the RIASEC test, students now have a better understanding of career options, subject choices, and alternative career pathways.
- Early Goal Setting – Students as early as 8th grade are trained to set career goals, while 10th and 12th-grade students receive targeted guidance on subject selection and financial aid.
- Students in Grades 9 & 10 specifically highlighted an increased awareness of career importance in shaping their future.

Increased Confidence and Aspirations :

- **Building Self-confidence:** Students in Grades 11 & 12 noted that the sessions helped them build self-confidence, manage stress, and engage in self-reflection, aligning personal interests with career aspirations.
- **Improving Self-Expression and Confidence:** Initially, students struggled to articulate their aspirations. Over time, they gained confidence in expressing their interests, hobbies, and career goals.
- **Shifting Mindsets on Education and Marriage:** Earlier, many girls assumed they would get married after completing 12th grade. Now, they are exploring vocational training, tuition classes, polytechnic courses, and clerical jobs.
- **Awareness of Government Schemes:** Students have become aware of scholarships like the Savitribai Phule Scholarship and actively utilize financial aid for their education.
- **Development of SMART Goalsetting skills:** Students have learned to set Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals, choosing career paths based on their interests and circumstances.
- **Enhanced Emotional and Social Skills:** Girls have developed skills to manage anger, identify supportive individuals, and navigate societal challenges effectively.
- Students across all grades appreciated interactive and activity-based learning, which helped sustain their interest in career planning.

Clarity on career pathway :

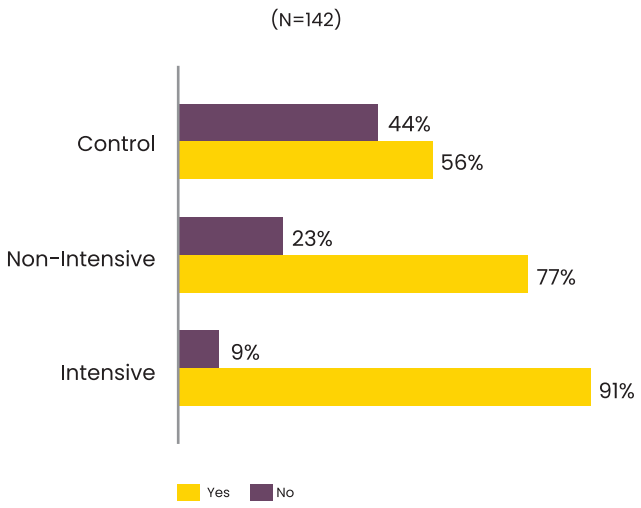

Figure 5: Percentage of students who know which course they need to do for their career goal?

As depicted by Fig. 5, **students in schools where the intervention was focused had more clarity about the courses**, they needed to pursue for their career goals compared to those in non-intensive and control schools. In the Intensive group, 91% of students knew what courses they needed to do for their career goals, while this was 77% in the Non-Intensive group and 56% in the Control group. **This clearly shows that students who got more intensive support have a better understanding of their career goals compared to those with less or no support.**

Awareness about education related schemes or scholarships:

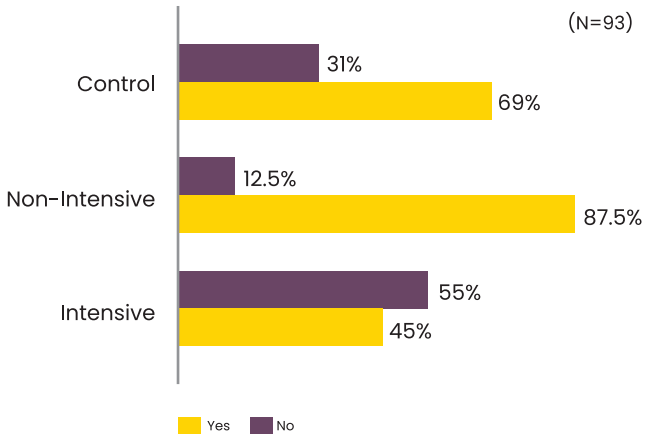

Figure 6: Percentage of students who had awareness about educational schemes or scholarships

As shown in Fig. 6, majority of the students in Grade 9 to 12, across the intervention and control schools are aware of the schemes and scholarships that can help them in studying further.

Around 87.5% of students in the Non-Intensive schools are aware of the educational schemes and scholarships that may help them to study further, as compared to 55% students in Intensive schools and 69% in control schools.

This is surprising because we would expect the Intensive group to have better results. This suggests that the non-intensive intervention might have worked better for this particular outcome, and we need to look deeper into why this difference exists.

Parental support in educational and career aspirations:

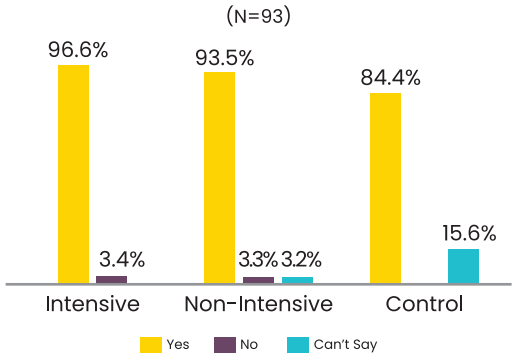

Figure 7: Perventage of students who think their parents would be happy to support their career plans

As depicted by Fig. 7, the students were asked about whether they think their parents will support them in achieving their career and educational aspirations. The Intensive group had the highest percentage of respondents (96.6%) saying "Yes," indicating strong confidence in parental support, followed by the Non-Intensive group (93.5%) and the Control group (84.4%).

This suggests that confidence in parental support decreases and uncertainty increases from the Intensive to the Control group.

Challenges in achieving career goals (as perceived by the students):

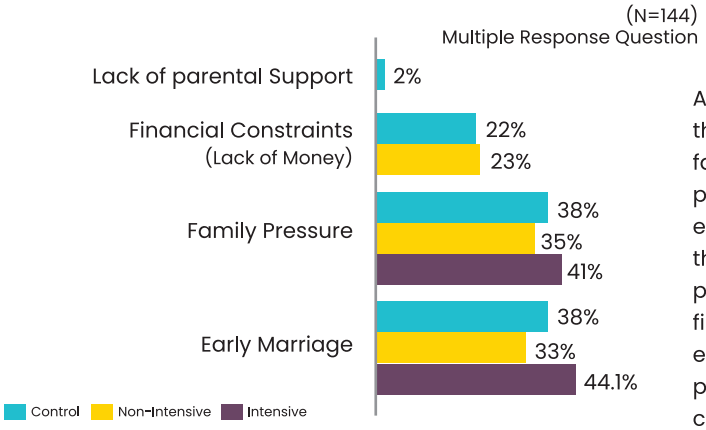

Figure 8: Challenges that may prevent students from achieving their career and educational goals

As shown in Fig. 8, in the Intensive group, early marriage is the most frequently cited challenge (44.1%), followed by family pressure (41%). In the Non-Intensive group, family pressure is the most cited challenge (35%), followed by early marriage (33%) and financial constraints (23%). In the Control group, the most cited challenge was family pressure (38%) and early marriage (38%) followed by financial constraints (22%). These findings suggest that early marriage and family pressure are major obstacles, particularly in the Intensive group, while financial constraints and lack of parental support appear to be less commonly reported barriers.


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Challenges

The implementation of the HBH model surfaced several systemic and contextual challenges that affect its reach, depth, and sustainability. These challenges were identified through teacher interviews, student reflections, and field-level observations.

Financial Constraints

A major barrier to higher education for girls remains financial. Many students belong to families living below the poverty line (BPL). While they are made aware of scholarships and schemes, the complexity of the application process, inconsistent outcomes, and lack of structured financial support often limit access. This gap between awareness and actual financial support deters continuity in education.

Societal Norms and Gender Biases

Entrenched gender norms continue to shape parental expectations and community attitudes. In several cases, parents do not perceive value in educating daughters beyond secondary school, viewing marriage as the default life path. Girls, in turn, internalize these expectations, especially in the absence of strong counter-narratives. Although the intervention has begun shifting this mindset, many students still report pressure to marry after completing Grade 12.

Limited Access to Institutions and Mobility Restrictions

Many girls live in remote areas with limited access to higher educational institutions. The absence of local colleges and vocational training centers means students must travel long distances—an option not always supported by families due to safety, logistical, or cultural reasons. As a result, geographic isolation restricts their ability to act on their career aspirations.

Language Barriers

Some students come from tribal communities where Adivasi dialects are the primary language. This creates a barrier when counselling sessions are conducted in Hindi. Although facilitators try to simplify language, comprehension gaps can hinder the effectiveness of career guidance.

Initial Hesitation and Low Confidence

At the outset, many students were unable to articulate their career interests or goals, largely due to lack of exposure and limited practice in self-expression. While HBH has contributed to improving confidence levels, this remains a constraint, especially for new or younger participants unfamiliar with structured reflection or goal-setting.

Gaps in Counsellor Capacity and Resources

Teachers and facilitators delivering the sessions often encounter limitations in terms of the depth and currency of information available to them. Although trained in administering tools like RIASEC, they frequently rely on internet searches to provide updated career and scholarship information—a process made difficult by limited digital access. There is also a lack of printed, up-to-date resource material.

Lack of Parental Engagement in the Counselling Process

Parents are not actively involved in the counselling sessions. This presents a barrier in changing household-level attitudes towards girls' education and careers. Without structured take-home materials or systematic community engagement, the burden of influence lies entirely on the students.

Technical Limitations

Technology-based components of the counselling model are often constrained by infrastructural gaps. Internet connectivity failures, challenges in submitting online forms, and limited access to functioning mobile devices impede the effective use of digital tools.

Need for Regular Curriculum Updates

Career landscapes are evolving, particularly with the rise of new sectors like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) domains. The absence of regularly updated materials in the HBH curriculum reduces its relevance. There is a need for continuous revision of the career compendium to reflect emerging fields.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings and implementation challenges, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen and scale the HBH holistic career counselling model:

Strengthen Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is essential to reinforcing career aspirations among girls. Career-oriented discussions should be integrated into Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), extending beyond academic performance to include mental health, behavioural changes, and goal setting. Community-based awareness initiatives should also be considered to shift social norms and foster supportive environments.

Integrate Counselling into School Systems

Institutionalize career counselling within the school system by embedding it into the School Management Committees' (SMCs) mandate. Designated career counselling periods in the school timetable, particularly in KGBVs and JBAVs, can ensure regular engagement. This systemic integration will formalize the intervention as part of routine educational delivery.

Build Counsellor Capacity

Enhance the capacity of teachers and facilitators through regular training modules on emerging career trends, updated scholarship opportunities, and counselling techniques. Partnerships with academic institutions, industry experts, and NGOs can support this professional development through certification programs, exposure visits, and learning exchanges.

Improve Career Resource Materials

Update the HBH counselling compendium periodically to include emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), digital media, and green jobs. Ensure that content is locally relevant, age-appropriate, and available in simple Hindi and tribal languages where needed.

Leverage Technology for Wider Access

Develop accessible mobile applications or digital tools integrated with AI features for career guidance. These tools should be designed for low-bandwidth settings and support multilingual features. Audio-visual formats can be used to simplify complex concepts and increase student engagement.

Enhance Financial Aid Access

Simplify and streamline access to government scholarships and financial schemes. Schools can serve as intermediaries in assisting students with application processes. Digital and printed materials that map available schemes by eligibility and benefits should be developed and shared with students and parents.

Establish Monitoring and Tracking Frameworks

Create a centralized data system under the Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC) to track student participation, goal setting, and post-secondary transitions. This framework should include feedback loops and periodic reviews to assess the intervention's impact and effectiveness over time.

Introduce Career Counselling as a Weekly Period

A dedicated weekly period for career guidance should be formalized within the curriculum of government residential schools. This time can be used for interest mapping, soft skills training, scholarship planning, and discussion of career pathways aligned with students' aptitudes and aspirations.

Engage Role Models and Mentors

Introduce local female role models from non-traditional careers to serve as mentors and inspire students. Guest speaker sessions, school events, and community dialogues featuring such women can help challenge stereotypes and expand aspirational boundaries.

Promote Community Engagement

Community-based interventions involving Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), women's groups, and local leaders can further support the cause of girls' education and career development. Messaging through local channels such as radio or village assemblies can broaden impact.

Conclusion

The Humein Badhna Hai initiative demonstrates a promising model for embedding holistic career counselling within government residential schools in Jharkhand. The findings underscore the intervention's success in enhancing students' career awareness, goal-setting skills, and confidence to pursue non-traditional career paths. Exposure to psychometric tools like RIASEC, coupled with interactive counselling sessions, has enabled girls to better align their aspirations with their interests and capabilities.

The intervention has also contributed to challenging prevailing gender norms and shifting student mindsets around early marriage and educational discontinuity. Many girls now envision a future beyond traditional domestic roles, with aspirations of joining the formal workforce or pursuing higher education. Teachers also reported notable improvements in students' articulation of goals, confidence levels, and academic engagement.

However, the study also highlights persistent systemic and socio-cultural barriers—such as limited financial resources, parental resistance, language barriers, and inadequate access to post-secondary institutions—that continue to restrict girls' career choices. Implementation gaps, especially in parental engagement and counsellor preparedness, must be addressed to sustain and scale the impact.

The HBH model has the potential to serve as a replicable framework across similar educational contexts. For this to happen, the model must be institutionalized within the school ecosystem, backed by policy-level commitments, and supported by trained personnel and adequate resources. A collaborative approach involving the education department, community stakeholders, and development partners will be essential to sustain momentum and create an enabling environment for adolescent girls to thrive.

The HBH initiative represents not just a career counselling program but a transformative step toward reshaping how girls in Jharkhand—and potentially across India—perceive their futures. With the right support and systemic integration, it can pave the way for more equitable, informed, and empowered participation of girls in education and the workforce.

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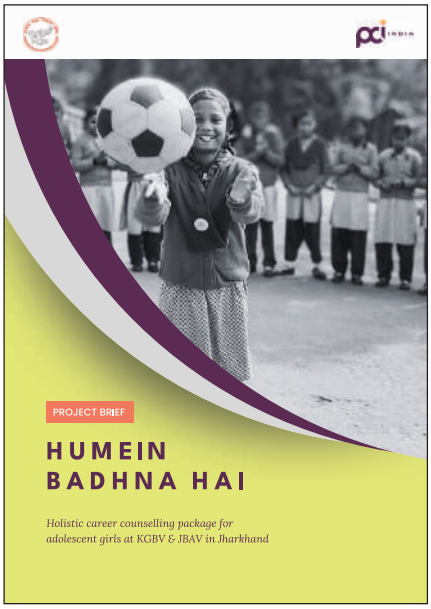
Our Other Documents

Porject Brief: An overview of Humein Badhna Hai initiative including its rationale, need for career intentionality, aim, objective and strategy.



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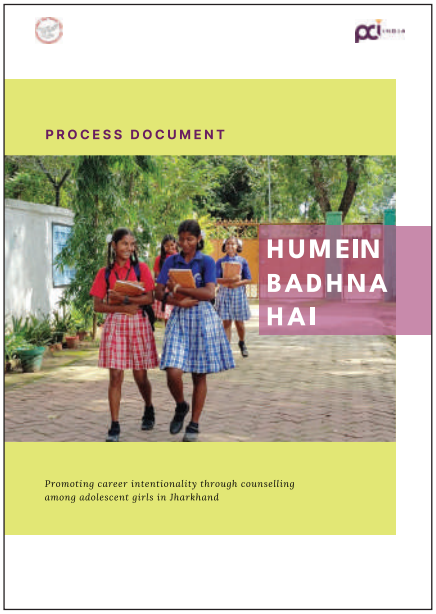
Project Brief

Process Document: A documentation of processes, learnings, best practices and recommendations curated during the implementation of Humein Badhna Hai initiative.



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