

# Girls' Education in Gadchiroli District: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies for Inclusive Development

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**Abstract-** *Girls' education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of social and economic development. In Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, where a large proportion of the population belongs to Scheduled Tribes and resides in remote forest areas, educating girls remains both a challenge and a priority. Government initiatives such as Samagra Shiksha, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), PM POSHAN, RTE Act, 2009, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 have significantly improved girls' enrolment and school participation. Nevertheless, barriers such as poverty, geographical isolation, language differences, early marriage, household responsibilities, safety concerns, and inadequate infrastructure continue to affect girls' educational attainment. This paper examines the current status of girls' education in Gadchiroli district, analyzes the major challenges, reviews government interventions, and proposes policy recommendations for achieving gender-equitable and quality education.*

**Keywords:** *Girls' Education, Tribal Education, Gadchiroli, Gender Equality, Zilla Parishad Schools, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, NEP 2020.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education empowers girls by improving their health, economic opportunities, decision-making ability, and participation in society. In tribal districts such as Gadchiroli, girls' education has a transformative impact on families and communities by reducing poverty, delaying early marriage, and improving maternal and child health.

**Educational Profile of Gadchiroli District**  
Gadchiroli district has 1,673 primary schools serving children in geographically dispersed rural and tribal communities. The district has a literacy rate of 74.04% and is characterized by 75.96% forest cover, making access to education particularly challenging in remote villages. The responsibility for managing government primary education rests primarily with

the Zilla Parishad through its Primary Education Department.

Gadchiroli is characterized by dense forests, scattered settlements, and a predominantly tribal population. Government schools, especially Zilla Parishad primary schools, are the principal providers of education in rural areas. Over the past decade, the district has witnessed considerable progress in girls' enrolment due to targeted educational schemes and residential schooling facilities. The Primary Education Department also operates programmes specifically aimed at achieving 100% enrolment and attendance of girls and supports residential education through Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) for girls from disadvantaged communities.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the status of girls' education in Gadchiroli district.
2. To identify the socio-economic and educational challenges affecting girls' schooling.
3. To evaluate the impact of government initiatives.
4. To recommend strategies for improving girls' educational outcomes.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** Descriptive and analytical.

**Sources of Data**

- Government of Maharashtra reports
- District Education Department, Gadchiroli
- NCERT
- Ministry of Education
- Research journals

- Policy documents
- Secondary literature on tribal education

#### IV. STATUS OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN GADCHIROLI

Girls' education has improved considerably due to:

- Expansion of Zilla Parishad schools
- Free textbooks and uniforms
- PM POSHAN Scheme
- Scholarships
- Residential schools (KGBVs)
- Tribal welfare hostels
- Community awareness programmes

Recent district initiatives continue to prioritize girls' enrolment, attendance, and educational support.

#### V. MAJOR CHALLENGES

##### 5.1 Geographical Isolation

Many tribal villages are located in remote forest areas with poor road connectivity.

This leads to:

- Long travel distances
- Irregular attendance
- Transportation difficulties
- Safety concerns

##### 5.2 Poverty

Many families experience financial hardship.

Girls often assist in:

- Household work
- Caring for younger siblings
- Agricultural labour
- Collection of forest produce

These responsibilities reduce study time and increase absenteeism.

##### 5.3 Language Barrier

Many tribal girls speak:

- Gondi
- Madia
- Halbi

However, classroom instruction is mainly in Marathi, creating learning difficulties in the early grades.

##### 5.4 Infrastructure

Although infrastructure has improved, some schools still require:

- Functional girls' toilets
- Safe drinking water
- Boundary walls
- Electricity
- Digital learning facilities

Adequate sanitation facilities are especially important for adolescent girls' attendance and retention.

##### 5.5 Early Marriage and Social Norms

In certain communities, early marriage and traditional gender expectations continue to affect girls' educational continuity, particularly at the secondary level.

##### 5.6 Teacher Availability

Remote schools frequently face:

- Multi-grade classrooms
- Teacher shortages
- Limited female teachers

The presence of female teachers positively influences girls' attendance and confidence.

#### VI. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Government has implemented several programmes to improve girls' education:

- Right to Education Act, 2009
- Samagra Shiksha
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
- PM POSHAN
- NIPUN Bharat Mission
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020
- Tribal hostels
- Scholarships for Scheduled Tribe girls

The district also recognizes schools and teachers achieving full girls' enrolment and attendance.

## VII. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 district report indicates that girls in Gadchiroli performed slightly better than boys in Language, Mathematics, and Environmental Studies at the preparatory stage, demonstrating encouraging progress in foundational learning.

## VIII. OPPORTUNITIES

The district has significant opportunities to strengthen girls' education through:

- Digital classrooms
- Community participation
- School Management Committees
- Mother tongue-based multilingual education
- STEM education for girls
- Life skills education
- Vocational training
- Artificial Intelligence-assisted learning
- Career guidance and counselling

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following measures are recommended:

1. Strengthen early childhood education for girls.
2. Improve transportation and hostel facilities in remote tribal areas.
3. Recruit more female teachers.
4. Promote multilingual education using tribal languages in early grades.
5. Improve school sanitation and menstrual hygiene management.
6. Expand digital education and internet connectivity.
7. Increase community awareness regarding girls' education.
8. Strengthen scholarship and incentive programmes.
9. Introduce STEM clubs and leadership programmes for girls.
10. Establish regular monitoring of enrolment, attendance, and learning outcomes.

## X. CONCLUSION

Girls' education in Gadchiroli district has shown measurable progress due to sustained government support and community participation. Residential schools, free education schemes, scholarships, and targeted interventions have improved access and participation. Nevertheless, geographical isolation, socio-economic disadvantage, language barriers, and infrastructure gaps continue to limit educational opportunities for many tribal girls.

Achieving universal, equitable, and quality education for girls requires coordinated efforts involving government agencies, schools, teachers, parents, local communities, and civil society organizations. By strengthening inclusive policies, improving infrastructure, enhancing teacher capacity, and empowering communities, Gadchiroli can become a model district for girls' education in tribal regions.

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