



MARDO WALI BAAT PROJECT

Impact Assessment Report



CEQUIN

CENTRE FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION



TRAINING AND LEARNING

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

India has a long history of gender inequality. Discrimination against women and girls has been a pervasive and long-running phenomenon in India's history as a republic nation. The constitutional guarantee of gender equality still remains a distant dream for 48.04% of our citizens more than 70 years after our Constitution came into effect. As per the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020-2021, India has slipped to 140th position among the 156 countries. The Index takes into account and measures gender gaps in health and survival, economic participation and opportunity, education and political empowerment. India ranks among the bottom five countries in in the health and survival parameter. Despite the projected rapid economic growth, the explosion of initiatives to increase women's political participation, increased microcredit programmes and self-help groups, gender disparities have continued to grow unabated and persistently in India. Women suffer disproportionately from intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and discriminatory labour practices.¹ By the government's own estimate, in the latest round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) released in December 2020, one in four women in nine states continues to be subjected to physical, emotional and sexual violence. 52% of the women and 42% of the men surveyed by NFHS-4 believe it is all right for a husband to beat his wife for a variety of transgressions.

India ranks 123rd in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) as per UNDP (2019) report and every day 39000 girls are forced for early. This inequality runs through caste, class, socioeconomic and geographic boundaries, with the more marginalised women - subordinate caste or economically deprived - experiencing it far more acutely. The stereotype and bias around gender roles and rights have existed in Indian society and has been deep-rooted within the cultural institutions and the society behaves as a collective resulting in social practices aimed at subjugating girls and women.



In order to bring parity, other than affirmative action, there is a need to create an attitudinal shift for women and design social interventions focused at facilitating conversations around gender roles, bias and stereotypes and facilitating behavioural shift at the community and household level.

¹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/why-is-gender-equality-still-elusive/>

1.2 'Mardo Wali Baat' Project

Taking cognizance of the above, Centre for Equity and Inclusion's (CEQUIN) 'Mardo Wali Baat' project is an initiative to provide gender sensitisation trainings to adolescent boys through a series of interventions inclusive of themes like gender discrimination, domestic violence, gender roles and norms, leadership traits. CEQUIN believes that a completely different scenario is possible - a reality where boys or young men can be 'partners in change' as they have the potential to challenge the existing norms and can promote a shift in the attitude, perceptions and practices of the society. They have the potential to become advocates for gender equality, breaking stereotypes and raising their voices in solidarity with women. In line with this, the 'Mardo wali baat' project aims of to create a pool of gender sensitised boys who can act as Agents of Change (AOC) in their respective community, spread awareness among their peers and facilitate creation of a gender equitable society.

It is also hoped that in this process these boys are also able to build their own capacities and becoming sensitised and articulate leaders. This two-year Project is supported by Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies. CEQUIN has been actively working with men and boys since its inception in 2009 considering men as an equal partner in achieving gender equality. CEQUIN promotes equal rights of women and girls and currently working towards building their capacities to help them lead a meaningful and dignified life.

1.2.1 Key Project Objectives of the Project

The Project aims to engage with adolescent boys in order to achieve gender equality with the key objectives of:

- a) to create a new generation of gender sensitised boys;
- b) establish a non-violent gender sensitive local environment; and
- c) to build effective leadership skills among adolescent boys.

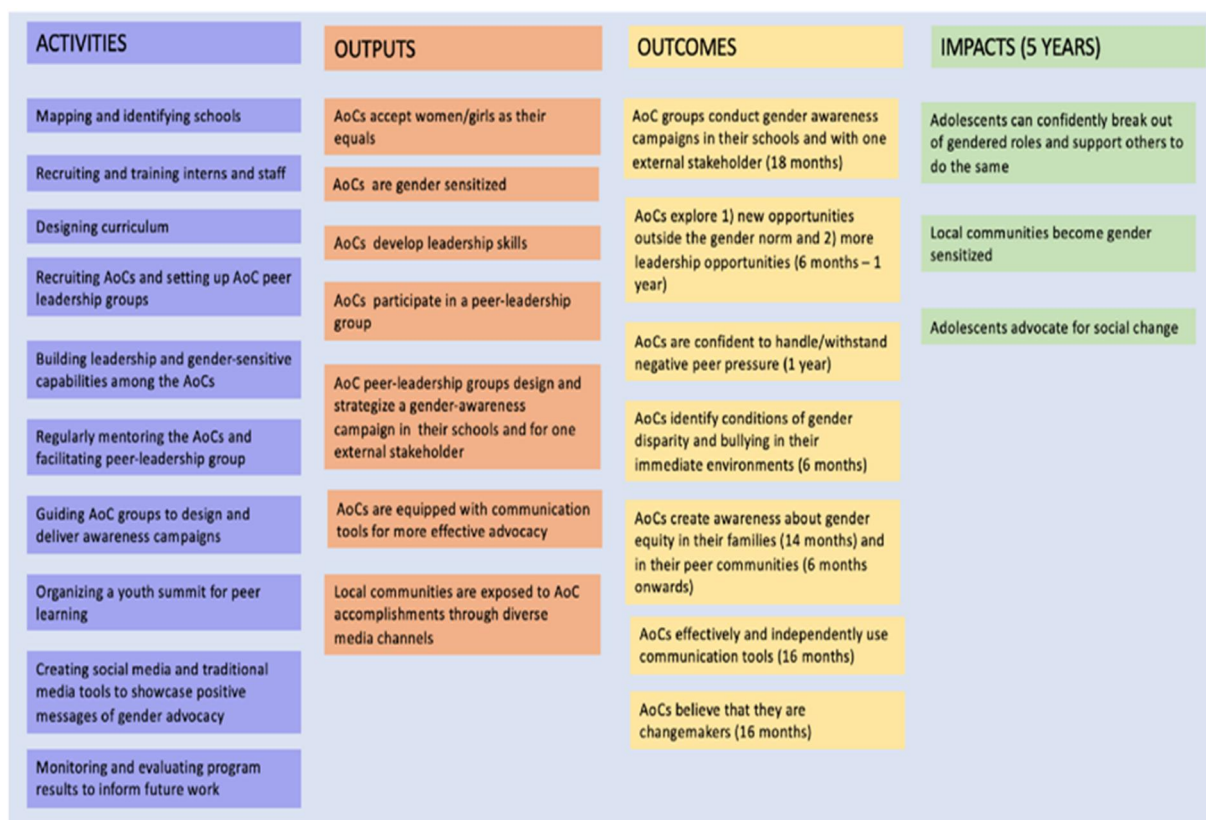
1.2.2 Approach

CEQUIN has adopted the following approach to work with men and boys in the context of gender equality:

- i. Any efforts towards gender equity must include both women and men (primarily capacitating girls and sensitising boys)
- ii. The efforts have to be targeted at three levels - individuals, their immediate communities, as well as supported by the larger narrative (breaking gender stereotypes)
- iii. The men and boys engaged in the Project must have a clear understanding of their own personal growth as 'leaders of change' (without being patronising) through the project, as well as the real benefits of a gender equitable society.

Figure 1 below presents the Theory of Change of the Project.

Figure 1: ‘Theory of Change’ of the Project



1.2.3 Project Locations

The Project was implemented across 16 schools situated in diverse urban, semi-urban and rural settings across 4 States/UT of Haryana (Mewat), New Delhi (Old Delhi, New Delhi and South Delhi), Rajasthan (Alwar) and Uttar Pradesh (Noida).

Table 1: Overview of Project Locations and Schools

S.No.	State/District	Name of School	Total No. of AOCs
1	Haryana (Mewat)	Mewat Public High School	36
2		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Tapkan	38
3		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Kanawashikha	39
Total			113
4	Rajasthan (Alwar)	Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Kahrani	39
5		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Shahdod	38
6		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Bhiwadi	43
7		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Santhalka	38
8		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Jhiwana	39
9		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Churpur	36

10		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Sarekala	35
11		Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Gadwala	32
Total			300
12	Uttar Pradesh (Gautam Buddh Nagar)	Junior High School, Barola Noida	42
13		Junior High School, Sadarpur Noida	29
Total			71
14	Delhi	Garden Public School, Shaheen Bagh	41
15		Fatehpuri Muslim Sr. Sec. School, Old Delhi	39
16		Anglo Arabic Sr. Sec. School, Old Delhi	36
Total			116
Grand Total			600 AOCs

The project locations were different from one another in nature and characteristics yet exhibited certain commonalities in terms gender status and gender based discrimination. A brief overview of the socio-economic profile of each of the four project locations is discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT LOCATIONS

In order to capture the status of existing socio-demographic profile and cultural context of the target locations as well as the attitudes, perception and practices amongst the adolescent boys and girls at the time of Project commencement, a Baseline study was conducted in the month of June 2019. This chapter provides a summary of the key findings derived from the baseline study based on the key parameters of prevalent gender norms, attitudes and practices amongst the adolescents; their perception on VAWG and its implications on different gender/group members; perception on gender equality and leadership roles taken for promoting gender equality.

2.1 Socio-demographic Profile

The Project was implemented across 16 schools situated in diverse urban, semi-urban and rural settings across 4 States/UT of Haryana (Mewat), New Delhi (Old Delhi, New Delhi and South Delhi), Rajasthan (Alwar) and Uttar Pradesh (Noida). A brief profile of each of the project districts is discussed below:

Mewat:

In the state of Haryana, the project was implemented in three schools in Mewat district. Mewat is a socio-economically backward district in the state where patriarchy dominates and there are exist limited opportunities for girls. The district has long been associated with skewed sex ratios, poor health infrastructure, and dismal literacy rates. Only 36 per cent of Mewat's women are literate, according to the 2011 census. The district is demographically dominated by the Meo Muslims, who are engaged chiefly in agriculture. Mewat's women, the National Crime Records Bureau's data indicates, face widespread domestic and sexual violence. As per the Bureau's data one in three women face domestic violence in Mewat.

The accessibility of women and girls to educational and health amenities is constrained due to prevailing social and gender norms and resulting in high incidence of child marriage. The prevailing perception in the region is that if the girl has attained puberty, she poses a threat to family honour and must be married at an early age.² School drop outs was found to be significantly higher among the girls in the region with the key reason being reluctance of parents to send their daughters in adjoining villages due to the fear of abduction and misconduct.³ These social determinants of a patriarchal system prevents girls and women in the region from obtaining an education, earning a livelihood, and becoming productive citizens.

Alwar:

In the state of Rajasthan, the project was implemented in eight schools in the district of Alwar. The district has a population of 36,74,179 - of which 82.19 percent lives in rural and 17.81 percent lives in urban areas. The population comprises of 17.77 percent Schedule Caste (SC) and 7.87 percent Schedule Tribe (ST) population.⁴

Though the literacy rate (71%) of the district was higher than the state average (66%), yet the sex ratio in the district (895 females per thousand males) was significantly lower than the state sex ratio (928 females per thousand males). This declining sex ratio is a major issue of concern in not just the district but also in

² (Social Determinants of Child Marriage in Rural India)

³ (High dropout rate among girls in Mewat)

⁴ ((District Census Handbook (Alwar), 2011)

the state of Rajasthan. The key cause for this alarming sex ratio in the district and state can be attributed to a number of factors including high malnutrition among girls, female foeticide and high maternal mortality.⁵ The social evil of child marriage is deep rooted in the state of Rajasthan with nearly 40% rate of prevalence as per the UNICEF report. The district of Alwar also mirrors the same trend resulting in continued subjugation and exploitation of girls and women exploitation.⁶



Noida:

In the state of Uttar Pradesh, the project was implemented in two schools of Noida in Gautam Buddha Nagar district. According to Census 2011, the literacy rate of the district at 80% was found to be significantly higher than the state average (68%). However, the sex ratio of the district was extremely low with 851 females per thousand males. The district is characterised by a high incidence of crime against women, including rape, dowry deaths, and trafficking.

Delhi:

In the Union Territory of Delhi, three schools in different regions of the city namely in South, Central and Old Delhi were included in the Projects. Unlike the rural context of Mewat and Alwar, the Delhi schools were located in urban locations. Despite both being urban locations, some differences were noted in the composition and context of central and south Delhi. In terms of density, central Delhi (Old Delhi and Ajmeri Gate area) is more densely populated than south Delhi. Similarly, while the overall literacy rate was higher in South Delhi, the female literacy rate was noted to be higher in central Delhi with south Delhi reflecting a higher literacy gap between males and females. Also, the sex ratio of Central Delhi was significantly higher than the state average (892 females per thousand males) as well as that of south Delhi (862 females per thousand males).

Although the national Capital boasts of a high literacy rate, yet the young, educated women and girls in the city encounter widespread gender inequality. Women feel the dual burden of duty of work as well as home.⁷ Gender based violence is an alarming issue in Delhi with an ever increasing number of cognizable crimes against women reported. From 2016 to 2020 the reported crimes increased from 205 to 309 per 100,000 women respectively.⁸

The Project was conducted across diverse regions comprising mixed populations living in the rural, semi-urban and urban areas with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Unlike urban locations such as in case of Delhi and Noida (in U.P), where 'eve teasing' (public sexual harassment or assault)⁹ and gender

⁵ (Assessment of Sex Ratio in Rajasthan)

⁶ (child marriage in rajasthan)

⁷ (Why India's modern women say it's a 'burden' to be female)

⁸ (Gender-based violence in New Delhi, India: forecast based on secondary data analysis)

⁹ Eve teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, for public sexual harassment or sexual assault of women by men.

based discrimination were identified as key issues, in states of Haryana and Rajasthan, where schools were located in semi-urban and rural settings, major challenges comprised of child marriage, early marriage, Violence against women and girls and gender based discrimination. The Project initiative was mindful of the same and designed the workshop content keeping in mind the key issues of the respective states to bring the best possible outcomes.

2.2 Key Findings of the Baseline Study

The following section elaborates the prevailing attitude and perceptions of adolescent boys and girls with respect to gender norms on parameters such as- whether boys and girls are different from each other; whether each one enjoys similar or different kinds of privileges being a boy or girl; what their gender specific roles are; how boys perceive girls to be participating equally in activities such as- sports, etc.

Attitudes and Perception: What do I think about boys and girls being different human beings?

Multiple responses were gathered from the students on their perceptions of the different characteristics which differentiate a boy and a girl where a maximum number i.e. 57% stated that difference was in physical features (difference in the physical or bodily features that a boy or girl possess). The second highest response was where 55% students felt that girls and boys have distinct ways or style of clothing which differentiates them. 54% felt that physical abilities, strength or energy to do or perform a certain task is one of the differences between a boy and girl.

Attitudes and Perception: What do I think are the different privileges enjoyed as a boy and a girl?

The baseline findings brought forward the societal norms and conceptions of masculinity and expectations of men as husbands, leaders, or sons and how it creates demands on men and shape their behaviour. Gender attributes and characteristics, encompassing *inter alia*, the roles that girls/women or boys/men play, the expectations placed upon them, privileges enjoyed by them and how widely it differs in communities was studied.

The boys interviewed expressed 'yes' (high percentage) for all privileges for boys such as –higher education (95%), studying outside the city (95%), travelling alone (93%), socialising with friends after school hours (91%), etc., except for options like showing emotions (crying in front of everyone). Since emotional stoicism (not “acting like girls” or showing vulnerabilities) is one of the masculinity norms where boys/men feel disadvantaged due to the fact that these norms perpetuate gender inequalities. Families, peers and society are central in shaping such attitudes towards these norms. Some other forms of masculinity norms are related to physical toughness (showing high endurance for pain, engaging in fights with boys), autonomy (being financially independent, protecting and supporting one’s family).

On the other hand, in comparison to same privileges enjoyed by a boy, lesser percentages were seen for girls enjoying those same privileges such as- studying in different city (68%), travelling alone (69%), socialising with friends after school hours (63%), being friends with the opposite sex (77%), choosing what type of clothes to wear (77%). This clearly indicates that girls are enjoying less privilege than boys in terms of their mobility and norms set around it. Showing emotions like crying in front of everyone (71%) was recorded higher in comparison to boys enjoying the same privilege (47%).

During the baseline visit and discussions with the students in villages Kanwarsika in Mewat district and in Bhiwadi, Haryana, the students (especially the boys) pointed out that girls from their families are not allowed to socialise with friends after dusk or step out of the house after dusk. The girls are also not allowed to wear western clothes. The boys also felt that western clothes do not look proper on girls.

Attitudes, Perception and Practices on: What do I think about Gender Roles and Stereotypes?

To assess the status of how much adolescents or young adults hold onto the existing gender norms which can either lead to gender equality or inequalities, the baseline study brought forth findings about their perceptions around gender roles and stereotypes. Responses were gathered from 636 AOCs where 91% of boys in the AOC cohort felt that boys can 'protect their family members' in contrast only 70% felt that girls

can 'protect their family/family members'. This reflects the prevalent gender norms on masculinity which commonly endorses autonomy (being financially independent, protecting and supporting one's family).

Similarly, for household chores predominantly linked with girls like- washing utensils at home, cleaning bathrooms, washing clothes, help in cooking, etc., the percentage of boys saying that boys can do these tasks was found lower in comparison to boys saying that girls perform these activities. For instance- for 'help mother in cooking', 48% boys only responded and expressed that boys can help their mothers in kitchen compared to 68% boys who said girls help their mothers in cooking. This reflects the reinforcement of societal and gender norms of mobility where girls should look after the home.

During discussions with the boy's group of the **Government Senior Secondary School, Sarekala (Rajasthan)**, they mentioned that girls in their families do household chores like cleaning, cooking, etc., whereas boys help their parents in agriculture related activities. The boys felt that division of roles is fair as girls cannot go out and work. On the other hand, the girls' group members felt that division of work is unfair, and both boys and girls should be given equal responsibilities. The girls also stated that their mothers insist that they do the household chores and do not request or allow the boys to do it.

Behavioural expectations from girls & boys and stereotyping by others

The baseline survey brought forth responses as to what happens if a girl or a boy goes against the established stereotype or norms. Amongst the AOCs, 44% stated that girl will be laughed at, 47% stated girls will be bullied/teased; 29% stated that she will not have many friends. Similarly, in case of a boy 49% students stated that he will be bullied; 47% stated he will be laughed at, 38% stated he will not be able to have many friends.

During an FGD with boys' group in **GSSS Kaharani (Rajasthan)**, on the topic of gender stereotypes, the boys agreed that the community has set more rules for girls than boys. There is stricter adherence in place for girls. Not only were the girls in the community not allowed to go outside their homes to play, study with friends, use phones; but they were also forbidden from wearing western clothes (especially in Muslim families where girls cannot wear clothes of their choice). The girls and boys were not allowed to talk to each other outside of school. These rules influenced their attitudes, beliefs and practices. A boy or girl accepted the rules which are set out to be followed and behaviours which are expected from them. Non-compliance led to negative sanctions such as - embarrassment, shame, ridicule, sarcasm, criticism, disapproval, social discrimination and exclusion. The boys' reactions showed clearly that they have grown up observing things in their surroundings and subscribing to the norm that girls should not break any rules.

Perception on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The baseline, while covering attitudes and perception on gender norms of adolescent boys and girls and community members, also focused on the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in same schools/communities. As per the study findings, the students identified Girls and women as most vulnerable to violence in their communities. During discussions with boys groups, when asked 'why does VAWG takes place in your community?', the common response was "*Boys will trouble girls with acts of bullying, passing comments, etc. because they are girls*". Such statements reflected how deep-rooted and normalised VAWG was in the community culture leading to inequality and discrimination which, in turn, further led to perpetuation of violence as a part of the patriarchal structure. Adolescent girls met shared that they experienced and witnessed acts of VAWG often in their community and these acts were perpetrated by men and boys. In many schools, adolescent girls shared regular instances of eve teasing¹⁰ (public sexual harassment or assault) .

Participation in sports

The baseline also attempted to understand the participation of girls and boys in sports and if that is influenced by their gender in any way. It was found that girls were participating in sport activities along with the boys at their schools and communities. 59% boys from the Agents of Change (AOC) cohort mentioned that girls in their schools or community play outdoor sports like football, kabaddi, kho-kho,

¹⁰ Eve teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, for public sexual harassment or sexual assault of girls/women by boys/men.

badminton and volleyball. However, there were 43% who mentioned that most girls did not participate in sports or games.

In one of the discussions at Kaharani, Bhiwadi (Rajasthan), boys from class 8 and 9 stated that activities /sports/ games such as football, singing, craft-making, volleyball, painting, etc. can be performed by both boys and girls. However, in families and community, the girls had no freedom to step out of their homes after coming from school or play outside and visit friends in the neighbourhood. The mobility of girls in the community was restricted, thereby reducing their opportunity to lead a full life.

Perception and status of Leadership

The baseline also captured understanding of students on leadership to promote gender equality. The top three traits identified by AOCs as being essential to be a good leader were 'hard work'; 'use of force' and 'ability to speak in large crowds'. Comparatively, the traits of being 'fair and unbiased'; 'sensitivity'; 'honesty' fared much lower in priority for the AOCs, which was indicative of the type of leadership they have seen or been exposed to in their communities.

CEQUIN's Project initiative was mindful of the above findings and designed the project interventions and workshop content keeping in mind the key issues of the project locations to bring the best possible outcomes.

CHAPTER 3: IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Impact Assessment study was initiated in the month of January, 2021 with a meeting between CEQUIN and ASK's Research team to finalise scope and design of the study. The data collection for the study was undertaken in the month of February 2021.

3.1 Key objectives of the Impact Assessment

The key objectives of this Assessment comprised of the following:

- To assess the change in the perception of the AOCs in terms of gender norms, attitude and practices after participating in the Gender Sensitisation Workshop organised by CEQUIN team;
- To evaluate the change in the perception of the AOC with regard to Violence against women and girls (VAWG) and gender equality; and
- To assess the impact of workshops organised by CEQUIN team over the Leadership traits of the AOCs

3.2 Study Methodology

To capture the change in the perception of Agents of Change (AOC), an endline study was conducted using the mixed method research approach. Data collection through Quantitative and Qualitative tools was followed by data analysis and interpretation. The study used a 'participatory' and 'gender-focused' approach by entailing inclusion and participation of all key stakeholders in the data collection processes. In order to ascertain the impact of the Project, the Research team employed the method of comparing the before versus after comparisons demonstrating "progress" or the lack of it in the time trend of specified project indicators at baseline and endline.

In addition, the Project also used a 'control-group method' to assess the impact of an intervention – i.e. the difference in target variables between target /intervention group and non-intervention/control group. Other than the AOCs, a control group comprising of another pool of boys and girls from the same social, economic, and geographical background, not part of the Project, was set up. The responses from the control group have also been used as another benchmark to compare and identify the causal linkages from the intervention to the impact.

Key stakeholders met during the Impact Assessment were:

- Adolescent boys as Agents of Change (AOC) - (Intervention Group)
- Adolescent boys and girls as Non Agents of Change (Non-AOC) – (Control Group)
- School Head Teachers/Teachers

Table 2 below depicts the varied methods adopted to successfully map the existing status of attitudes, perception and practice of adolescent boys and girls around gender norms and leadership.

Table 2: Key Methods adopted during Baseline

S.No.	Method adopted	Target stakeholder
1.	Quantitative: • Self-administered questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adolescent boys – AOCs with sustained engagement (Intervention Group) Adolescent boys and girls– Non- AOCs (Control Group)
2.	Qualitative: • Semi-Structured Interview (SSI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head teacher or teacher
3.	Focus Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agents of Change

3.3 Geographical Coverage

The Impact Assessment was conducted across the four states/UT namely- Haryana, New-Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh. The state-wide distribution of schools covered during the study have been shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Distribution of schools across regions

State/UT	District	Number of Schools
Haryana	Mewat	3
Delhi	Old Delhi, New Delhi, South Delhi	3
Rajasthan	Alwar	8
Uttar Pradesh	Noida	2
	Total	16 schools

Sample Selection and Rationale

- **Selection of Agents of Change (AOC):** The rationale for selection of the AOCs for the study was to reinvestigate the boys who were the direct beneficiaries of the project to assess the impact of the interventions during the course of one year. The AOCs for the study were selected through purposive sampling technique to ensure the coverage of all those AOCs who were regular attendees of the organised workshop.
- **Selection of Non Agents of Change (Non-AOC):** The rationale for selection of Non-AOCs was to collect data for a control group inclusive of adolescent boys and girls who were not direct beneficiaries of the project. The Non-AOCs were selected through systematic random sampling technique in consultation with the head teacher/teacher of the respective schools. An equal representation of both boys and girls from each state was ensured.

Sample of AOC and Non-AOC

The sample size for the Impact Assessment was determined by the ASK team using a 95% confidence interval wherein 5% margin of error was considered. Based on this, a sample of 260 AOC's and 100 Non-AOC's was determined and finalised.

The Impact Assessment study covered 377 students (272 AOC and 105 Non-AOC) across 16 schools in four states/ UT. Sample size of the AOC and Non-AOC based on their respective states is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Distribution of AOC's and Non-AOC's across regions

Region	AOC	Non AOC		
		Boys	Girls	Total
Haryana	54	17	17	34
Delhi	50	7	8	15
Rajasthan	131	21	21	42
UP	37	7	7	14
Total	272	52	53	105

CHAPTER 4: KEY FINDINGS OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This chapter discusses the key findings derived from the Impact Assessment based on the data collected from students across 16 schools in 4 project states and comparison drawn between the baseline and endline status of the Agents of Change on the key parameters of prevalent gender norms, attitudes and practices amongst the adolescents; their perception on Violence against Women and girls (VAWG) and its implications on different gender/group members; perception on gender equality and leadership roles taken for promoting gender equality. In addition, the findings have also been compared to a control group comprising of another pool of boys and girls from the same social, economic, and geographical background (n=105). The responses from the control group were used as another benchmark to compare and identify the causal linkages from the intervention to the impact.

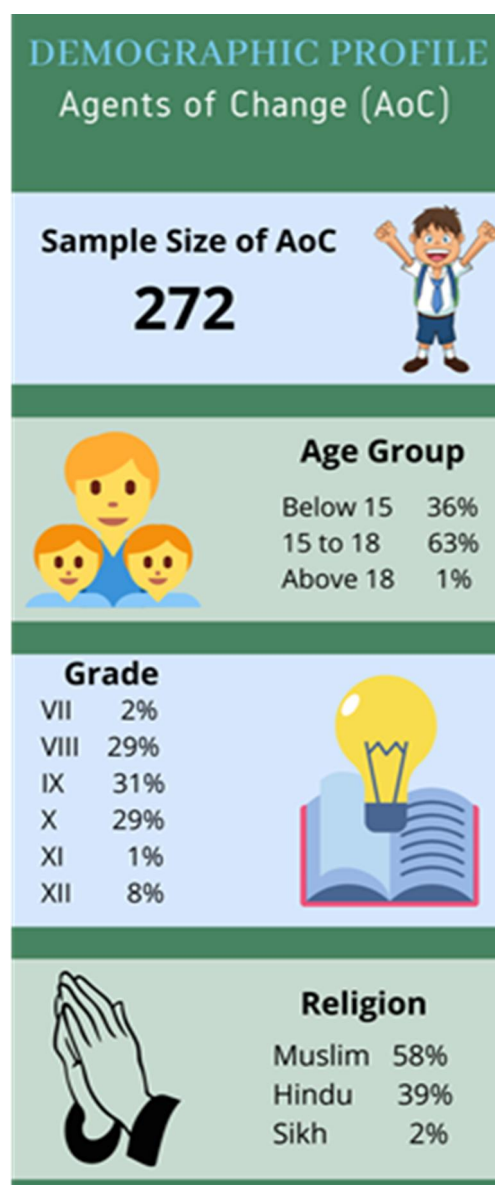
4.1 Socio-demographic profile

A sample of 272 Agents of Change (AOCs hereafter) were covered during the Impact Assessment/endline study. Figure 2 presents the socio-demographic profile of the sample AOCs who participated in the Impact Assessment study.

The majority of the AOCs are aged between 15 to 18 years. The share of AOC's was highest in class 9th followed by class 8th and class 10th. About 63% of the AOC's are between the age group of 15 years to 18 years while 36% of the AOC's were below 15 years of age. The share of AOC's was highest in class 9th followed by class 8th and class 10th. In line with the dominant socio-economic and cultural context of the project areas, the majority of the AOC's comprised of followers of Islam, followed by Hinduism and Sikhism.

During the study, the profiling of AOCs parent's educational and occupational status was also done to get a better understanding of their household status. 50.38% of the AOCs stated that their mothers had never gone to school and were illiterate. 19% of AOCs stated that their mothers had studied till primary class (up to grade 5), 13% up till middle school level and 12% till class X. 3.3% of the AOCs stated that their mothers had passed Grade 12th while only 2% were graduates. On the other hand, 26% stated that their fathers were illiterate; 15% AOCs stated that their fathers had studied till grade

Figure 2: Socio-Demographic Profile of AOCs



5 and 24% uptill middle school. Only 4% stated they fathers were graduates. In 90% of the cases, mothers were homemakers. The fathers were mostly engaged in occupations such as – farmers, business, private service like driving, daily wage labour, etc.

4.2 Impact on Attitudes and Practices related to gender equality

Gender equality is intrinsically linked to the realisation of human rights for all, where women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. The same is established when both sexes are able to equally share in the distribution of power and influence, have equal opportunities and access to education, share responsibilities for home and children and are completely free from coercion, intimidation and gender based violence both at work and home. Gender inequality has long been associated with persistent discriminatory social norms, prescribed social roles and power relations between men and women in society. Social norms held by individuals and their reference groups are values, beliefs, attitudes and practices that assert preferred power dynamics for interactions between individuals and institutions. As broader constructs, norms are operationalised through beliefs, attitudes and practices.¹¹

Hence it is useful to understand the beliefs and attitudes that create biases and prejudices in our society. Social norms cover several aspects of an individual's identity - gender, age, ethnicity, religion, ability and so on - that are heterogeneous and multidimensional. Discriminatory social norms and stereotypes reinforce gendered identities and determine power relations that constrain women's and men's behaviour in ways that lead to inequality. Norms influence expectations for masculine and feminine behaviour considered socially acceptable or looked down on. So, they directly affect individuals' choices, freedom and capabilities. Social norms also reflect regularities among groups of individuals. Rules of behaviour are set according to standards of behaviour or ideals attached to a group's sense of identity.¹²

In this backdrop, the Impact Assessment tracked the effect of the CEQUIN Project on the AOC's knowledge, attitude and practices at baseline and endline and also compares the data with that of non-AOCs. The change in knowledge, attitude and practices of adolescent boys and girls with respect to gender and gender equality was one of the most crucial (and desired) effects of '*Mardo wali Baat*' Project.

4.3 Impact on perception of differences between boys and girls

The AOCs part of the CEQUIN Project reflected a better and improved perception on the differences between boys and girls during the endline study than baseline study as well as that of the control group. Unlike baseline study wherein 91% of the AOCs felt that that boys and girls are different as human beings, at endline, only 55% of the AOCs felt this way. Amongst these, as depicted in Figure 3 below, in 84% of the cases the AOCs perceptions of the key characteristics differentiating a boy and a girl related to the physical

¹¹http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019_chapter4.pdf

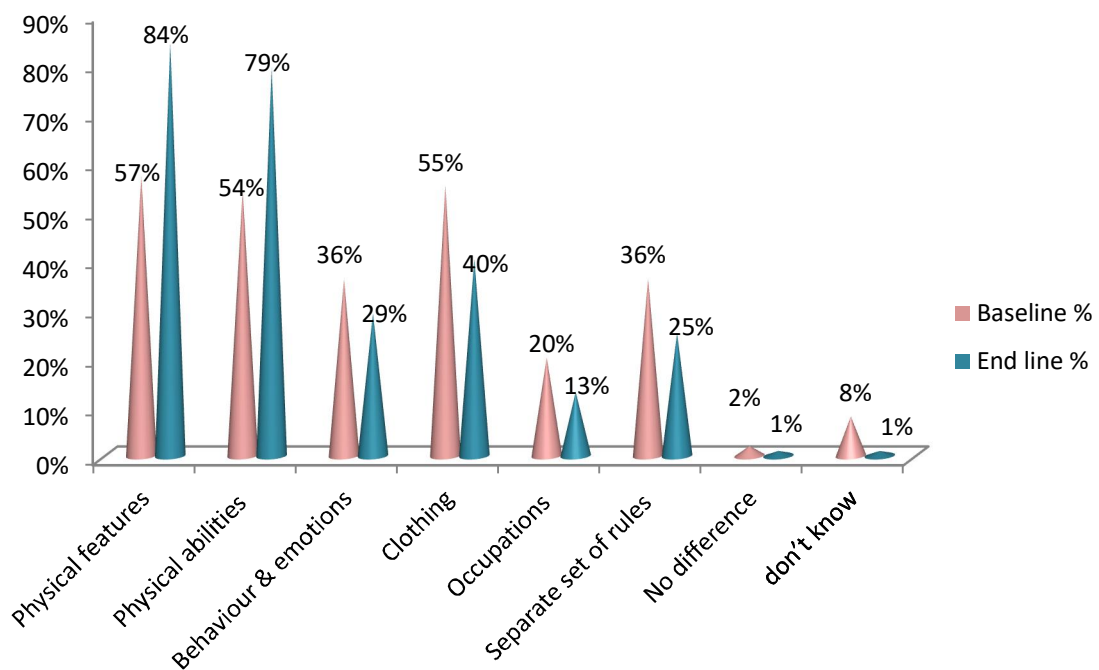
¹²http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019_chapter4.pdf

features (difference in the physical or bodily features that a boy or girl possess) and in 79% cases felt that physical abilities or strength to do or perform a certain task is different between a boy and girl.

Unlike baseline, at endline, a greater acceptance of similarity between girls and boys is noted amongst AOCs. The share of respondents who stated that boys and girls differ from each other in terms of behaviour and emotions dropped from 36% to 29% in the end line study while there was a significant drop of about 15% in terms of the responses for differences in clothing.

The AOC's reported a change in perception in terms of the occupations pursued by men and women as there was a significant drop in the share of the AOC's who believe that both men and women pursue different professions from 20% in the baseline study to 13% in the end line study. In terms of separate set of rules for boys and girls, the AOC's encountered to have great change in the perception as there was a drop of about 11% from baseline to endline among the responses of the AOC's who believed that boys and girls should abide by different set of rules.

Figure 3: Perception of AOC on differences between boys and girls as human beings



In comparison to AOCs, no positive change was noticed in the perception of Non-AOC (control group) at endline stage. 71% of the Non-AOC's continued to believe that boys and girls differ from one another in terms of physical features while 70% believed in terms of physical abilities. Unlike AOCs, higher share of Non-AOCs reported that girls and boys differ in terms of Behaviour and emotions (34%), Clothing (48%), Occupations pursued by men and women (22%), and separate set of rules for men and women (30%). Low share of AOCs responding in favour of the variables like Behaviour and emotions (29%), Clothing (40%),

Occupations pursued by men and women (13%), and separate set of rules for men and women (25%) depicts a better understanding amongst them with regard to differences among girls and boys in the society.

4.4 Impact on Perception of Privileges enjoyed by boys and girls

Gender attributes and characteristics, encompassing *inter alia*, the roles that girls/women or boys/men play, the expectations placed upon them, privileges enjoyed by them and how widely it differs in communities was assessed at both baseline and Impact Assessment/endline stage. Figure 4 presents positive change in perception of AOCs with regard to the privileges that boys and girls enjoy in the community. One of the key changes was witnessed amongst AOCs was with regard to the privilege of boys to express their emotions and feelings (crying in front of everyone). Emotional stoicism (not “acting like girls” or showing vulnerabilities) is one of the masculinity norms which perpetuates gender inequalities alongwith other norms related to physical toughness (showing high endurance for pain, engaging in fights with boys), autonomy (being financially independent, protecting and supporting one’s family). Unlike baseline, where only 47% AOCs believed that a boy also has the privilege to express their emotions and feelings (crying in front of everyone), at endline, 78% AOCs believe the same reflecting a significant change in perception.

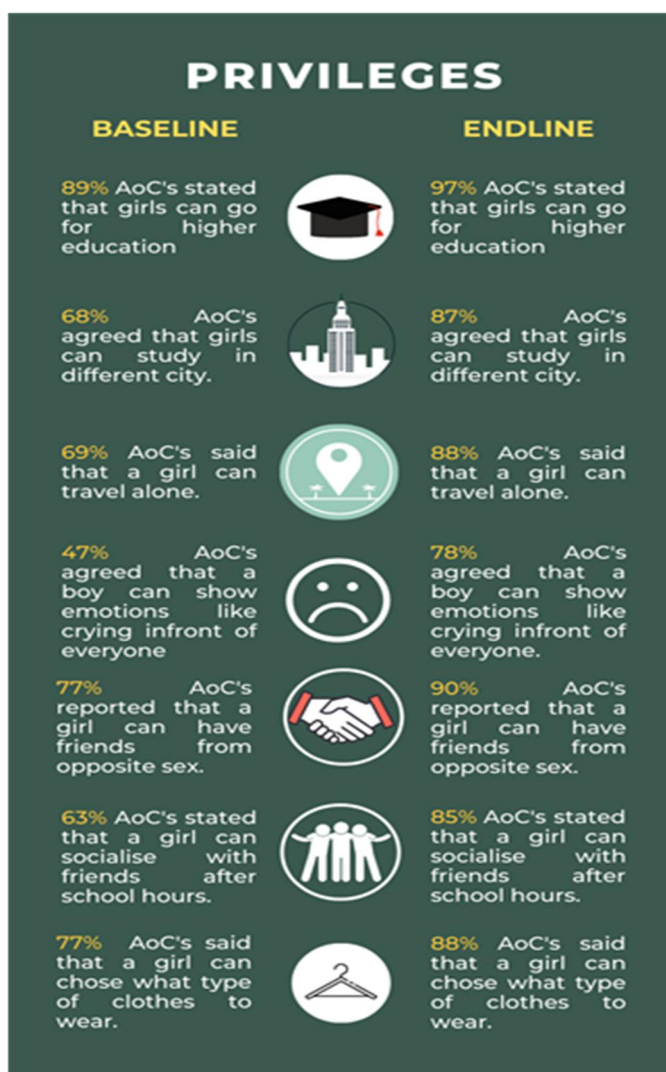


Figure 4: Perception of Boys and Girls

As reflected in Figure 4 there was a significant change in the perception of the AOC's across all variables showing positive change in their perception with regard to privileges of girls. This is largely attributed to the regular inputs provided by CEQUIN Project. As part of the project, CEQUIN team provided both offline and online workshops on gender equality, conception of masculine and feminine and expectations from a boy/man or a girl/woman in local families and community. In addition, the Project also employed creative tools such as theatre, art, public speaking etc were also used to build capacity of AOC. As part of the Project, AOCs were encouraged to undertake community level campaigns and Nukkad Natak and conduct gender audits in their communities. The findings and recommendations of the gender audit were presented and shared with key stakeholders, by youth leaders thereby sensitising them.

The above finding was also reaffirmed by AOCs during the focus group discussion conducted as part of the Impact Assessment. In some of the schools

namely Junior High School, Sadarpur (Uttar Pradesh), Anglo Arabic School (Delhi) and GSSS Kaharani (Rajasthan), AOC's mentioned that as a result of the numerous sessions on gender conducted by CEQUIN with them, they understand that girls and boys are equal and hence their privileges must not be differentiated. They also now believed that both boys and girls must respect the dignity of the opposite gender and attempt to spread similar values among peers.

The AOC's from Anglo Arabic School (Delhi) opined that while society expects men to work outside the house and a woman is expected to maintain the harmony of the house and tend to household work, a house can be effectively run by both men and women and gender defined household chores are a societal construct. The AOCs reiterated the need to provide equal opportunities to both girls and boys in order to establish a more gender-just and equal society.

In comparison to AOCs, no significant change was noted in the perception of control group (Non-AOC's) with regard to girl and boys privileges. Non-AOCs continued to reflect traditional masculinity – marked by stoicism, competitiveness, dominance and aggression.

The share of Non-AOC's (52%) who stated that boys can show emotions like crying were much less than the AOC's (78%). Similarly, the Non-AOCs responses on the privileges that a girl can enjoy showed significant difference in opinion than that of AOCs. The share of Non-AOC's who responded that a girl can “go to different city for studying” and “travel alone” was 7% less respectively in each of the variables as compared to the responses given by AOC's. Similarly the share of Non-AOC's who were agreed to the statements that girls can have friends from opposite sex was (79%), girls can socialise with friends after school hours (74%) and girls can “choose what type of clothes to wear” (77%) was lesser in comparison of the responses shared by AOC's, which reflected a more affirmative and positive view towards girls rights and privileges.

4.5 Impact on Attitude, Perceptions and Practices related to Gender Roles & Stereotypes

Gender roles is a significant determinant of gender equality because it sets the standards of how males and

Gender roles'

are social roles that determine a range of behaviours and attitudes that are considered appropriate, acceptable or desirable for people based on their perceived sex within conceptions of masculinity and femininity. It generally refers to how males and females should think, speak, behave, dress and interact within the context of culture and society.

'Gender stereotype'

is a generalised view or preconception about attributes, or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that are or should be performed by men and women.¹

females should act, think, speak, dress, groom and interact within the context of society. Different cultures hold different views on how men and women behave thereby showing that gender difference and identity is given not only by our biology but also from the views of our society. The key gender stereotypes occur regarding personality traits (boys are aggressive), domestic behaviors (women are to look after the house

and kids), occupations (men are pilots and scientists), physical appearance. In most communities, behaviours are regulated as per these stereotypes and non-compliance to the established norm and acceptable behaviour, results in stigma, criticism, ostracization/isolation, bullying, teasing/ridicule. Research also shows that these stereotypes create dangerous consequences that limit a person’s full potential and wellbeing. Instead there is always a tendency to conform to the cultural notions of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’. These harmful gender stereotypes and wrongful gender stereotyping are one of the root causes for discrimination, abuse and violence in manifold areas and can lead to violations of a wide array of human rights.¹³

3.5.1. Gender roles performed as a boy and a girl

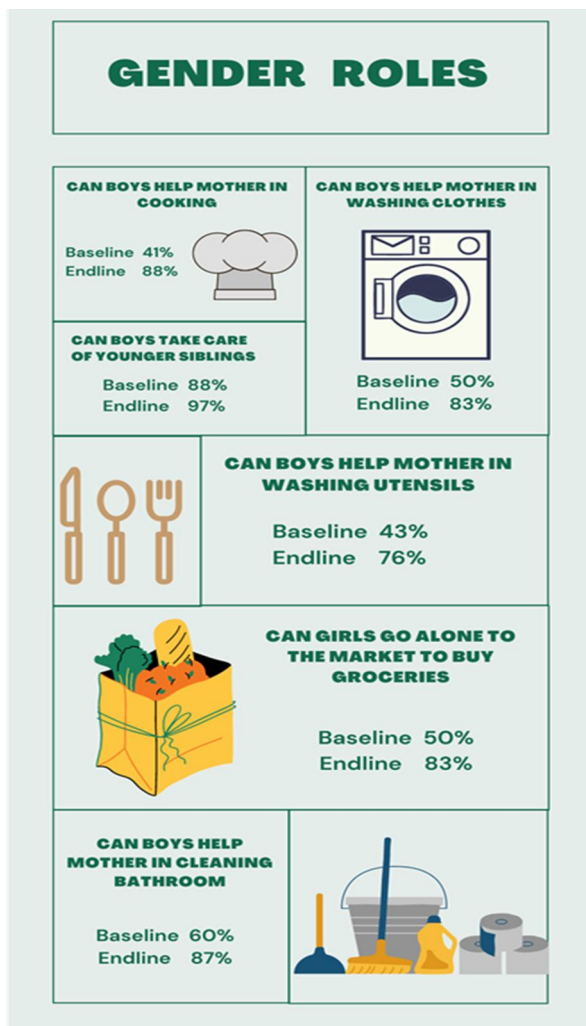
CEQUIN’s ‘Mardo wali baat’ Project was a response to bring about a change in attitudes of young boys about traditional gender roles and harmful gender stereotypes in communities which are hotbed of patriarchy, As part of the Project, a series of Gender and leadership workshops were conducted across the 16 schools to sensitise Agents of Change on gender, discrimination and masculinity. These sessions were customised as per the target group and their context and realities. The workshops used participatory methods such as games, quizzes, Elocution competition, role plays, film screenings. Activities such as like human rights tree activity, photo language were conducted with AOCs to facilitate perspective building on gender, discrimination and masculinity.

To assess how much AOCs and non-AOCs hold onto the existing gender roles, which can lead to gender equality or inequalities, questions were posed to both cohorts on their perceptions around these roles as part of the impact assessment.

The impact assessment recorded a significant improvement and difference in the knowledge and attitude of AOCs with regard to gender roles from baseline to endline. As reflected in Figure 5, there has been a significant change in the knowledge and attitude of gender roles amongst Agents of Change part of the project pertaining to household chores. 88% of the AOC’s affirmed that boys can help mothers in cooking, which accounted for a 41% rise from the baseline study. Variables like ‘helping mother in washing clothes at home” and ‘washing utensils at home” registered 33% increase. Similarly, 83% of AOC’s voted in favour of a girl going alone to the market for buying groceries thereby witnessing a 33% rise since the baseline.

In addition to household chores, the AOC responses in favour of a girls ability to protect her family also witnessed a rise from 70% to 92% at endline stage reflecting a greater awareness and positive attitude regarding gender equity within the family.

Figure 5: Attitude and Perceptions of AOCs on Gender Roles



¹³<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/WrongfulGenderStereotyping.aspx>

During FGDs conducted across schools in all the project states, the AOC shared that as a result of the CEQUIN workshops, they have started participating actively in the household chores as they have realised the daily effort the female members of the family put in. Earlier they felt that cooking, washing clothes and utensils was not their job but now they believe that they must help their mother and sisters members of the house. The key reason for participation in the household work by the AOC's was found to be the sensitisation on gender equality and the realisation in them on the amount of work and effort put in by the female members of the household, which is neither paid nor acknowledged.

A significant change was seen in the perception of AOCs from semi urban and rural government schools especially in Haryana and Rajasthan, where gender based discrimination is rampant and decision making rests with the elder male members in the family. For instance, while at baseline the AOCs from GSSS Kanwarsika (Haryana) did not recognise patriarchy as a challenge and a threat to society, at endline they opined the need for consultative decision making with equal inputs from female members of the family and believed that even women can be the head of the family.

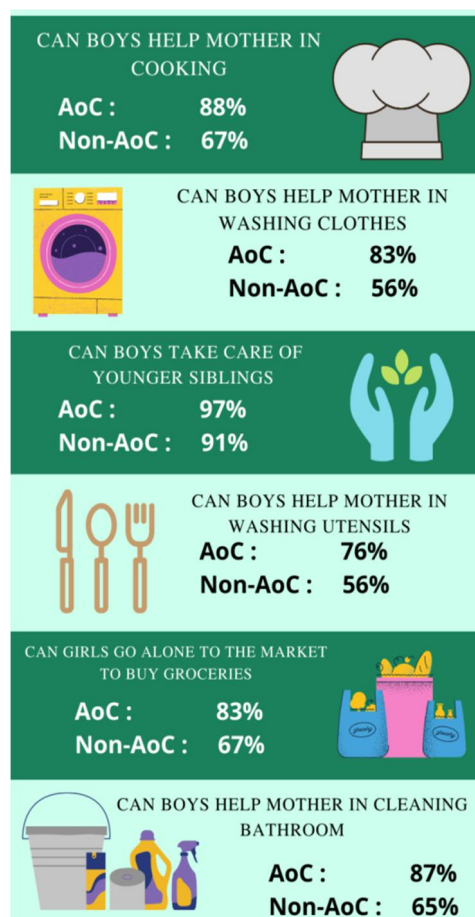
“Now I help in household chores such washing dishes, making the bed, cooking and doing laundry. Earlier I always thought that these are a girl's job but no more. Now I help my mother in chopping vegetables. This way she is able to finish cooking sooner..”

“ In our community, people say that a girl is a temporary guest in her parent's home and belongs to her spouse's family. But it is important that Men (fathers) educate girls so that even if they get married, they can stand on their feet, when needed. If girls remain uneducated, how will they stand up for themselves...who will respect them?”

- Ahtesham, Class VIII, Anglo Arabic School

In comparison to AOCs, the perception of control group (non-AOC's) continued to be based on their societal norms and roles. As reflected in **Figure 6**, for household chores predominantly linked with women and girls like - washing utensils at home, cleaning bathrooms, washing clothes, help in cooking, etc., the percentage of non-AOCs saying that boys can do these tasks was much lower in comparison to AOCs.

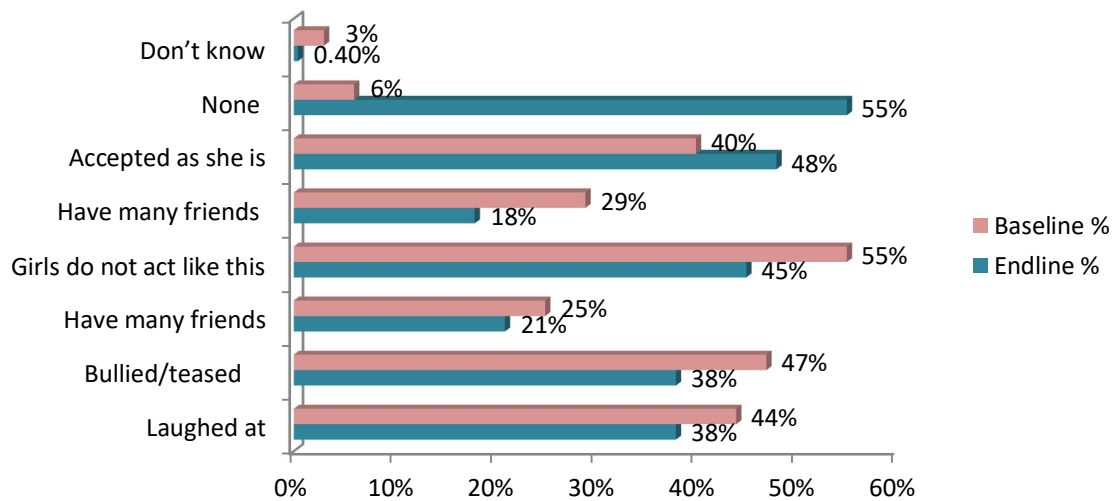
Figure 6: AOC and Non-AOC Attitude and Perceptions on Gender Roles



4.6 Behavioural expectations from girls & boys and stereotyping by others

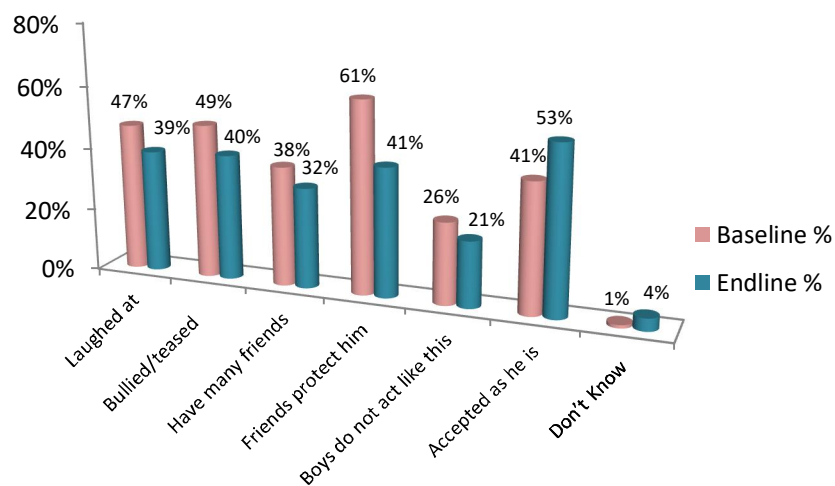
The endline assessed the perception of AOCs on situations and statements wherein girls and boys going against established gender stereotypes. Figures below presents the change in perception of AOCs from baseline to endline on these stereotypes.

Figure 7: Responses of AOC on what happens if a girl dresses like a boy



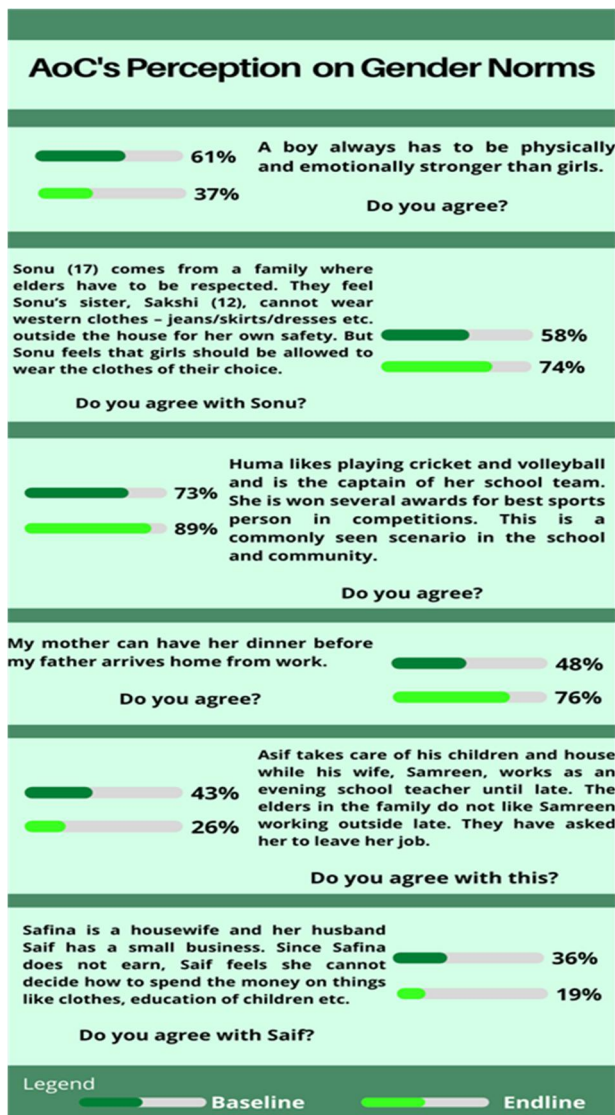
Boys and girls are also expected to dress and groom in ways that are stereotypical to their gender (boys wearing pants and short hairstyles, girls wearing dress, salwar kameez and bangles). Figure 7 represents the comparison of the responses between the baseline and end line survey for what happens if a girl dresses like a boy. A noteworthy change in the perception of the AOC's was witnessed at end line with fall in percentage in the responses like she will be laughed at (6%), bullied/teased (9%), will not have friends (4%) etc. In contrast there was a rise of 8% in the response in favour of the variable that she will be accepted as she is, from 40% in the baseline survey to 48% in the endline survey.

Figure 8: Responses of students upon what happens or community thinks when a boy seems physically delicate, does not engage physical fights or cries when hurt (in %)



Similarly, when asked as to what happens when a boy seems physically delicate, 53% of the AOC's at end line responded that the boy will be accepted as he is (Figure 8). Apart from this the responses for the variables that "he will be bullied" and "he will be laughed at", reported a decline of about 9% and 8% respectively at end line in comparison to baseline.¹⁴

Figure 9: Perception of AOC's on Gender Norms



In addition, 'Agree/Disagree' statement were posed to students to get their perceptions on opinion statements revolving around gender norms such as - typical expectations from a boy or girl who is considered masculine or feminine; typical behaviour expected from a boy or girl; gender and leadership; power and decision-making and gender mobility on the basis of what they see around happening and experiences as shown in Figure 9.

As reflected in Figure 9, a positive change was noted in the perception of AOCs at endline across all five statements with higher proportion of AOCs agreeing with girls right to wearing clothes of their own choice, eating before their husband, right to work and household decision making.

"Man is the head of the household and also the bread earner, woman is not the head of the family. This is the thought of our society. The man has the necessary worldly knowledge about everything and therefore he is capacitated and entitled to take all household decisions."

- Class IX student (Non-AOC) GSSS Kanwarsika

4.7 Impact on Perception of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence directed toward, or disproportionately affecting someone because of their gender or sex. Such violence takes multiple forms, including acts or omissions intended or likely to cause or result in death or physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering, threats of such acts, harassment, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty.¹⁵ The term has become broadly used to

¹⁴ At endline, a reduction was noted in the proportion of AOCs who responded that friends will protect a boy if he seems physically delicate or does not engage in a fight or cries. This can be attributed to the reduction in sample size at endline study stage due to Covid imposed restrictions.

¹⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/Publications/GenderIntegrationintoHRIInvestigations.pdf>

refer to any harm that is perpetrated against a person’s will, and that results from power inequalities that are based on gender roles.

VAWG manifests itself in forms like physical, sexual and psychological abuse and violence. There is much evidence from recent and past research that girls or women are disproportionately affected by acts of GBV, males often being the perpetrators. These acts are rooted in gender discrimination which affects the dignity and integrity of girls and their right to attain gender equality. The endline also focused on the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the schools/communities.

3.7.1. Attitudes and Perception of students on acts of violence and its gender implication

To understand the current status about the attitudes and perception of boys and girls studying in schools towards VAWG, responses were gathered as to which kind of acts they considered as violent acts irrespective of gender. The terms used under violent acts were deliberately kept simple so as to make them easy to understand and perceive for the students.

The comparison of endline findings with baseline reveals that the overall understanding of the AOC’s on what constitutes violence has increased to a great extent over the course of the Project. For instance, at in Delhi schools, at baseline, AOCs perception of violence was limited to physical violence. As a result of the training sessions conducted by the Project, the AOCs were sensitised on various forms of violence like economic, structural violence etc. which existed in their surroundings. At endline, an improvement was noted in the perception of the AOC’s on what constitutes a violent act with an increased number of AOCs identifying instances of ‘eve teasing (public sexual harassment or assault),’¹⁶ bullying, ragging, whistling and hooting also as violence (See Table 5) .

Table 5: Awareness about what constitutes violence amongst AOC (in %)

Which are violent acts?	Baseline %	End line %
Eve teasing¹⁷ (public sexual harassment or assault)	66%	82%
Bullying	59%	82%
Ragging	51%	75%
Humiliating	46%	75%
Whistling and hooting looking at some	49%	77%
Physical assault	48%	78%
Verbal abuse	49%	80%
Touching private parts	39%	67%
Rape	47%	79%
Don’t know	5%	3%

Table 6: Have you witnessed Violence happening around you?

¹⁶ Eve teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, for public sexual harassment or sexual assault of women by men.

¹⁷ Eve teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, for public sexual harassment or sexual assault of women by men.

Have you witnessed Violence happening around you?	Baseline %	End line %
Yes	45%	50%
No	40%	38%
Don't know	13%	13%

In comparison to baseline, the end line study identified a 5% increase in the response of AOCs on witnessing violence around them (Table 6), which can be largely attributed to the improved understanding of AOCs as to what constitutes violence.

In FGDs conducted with AOC's in **GSSS Chuhurpur (Rajasthan)** and **GSSS Kaharani (Rajasthan)** some of the AOC's shared that prior to their engagement in the Project, sometimes they themselves engaged in teasing or bullying their peers when they behaved any different than the prescribed gender norm. They shared several past instances wherein they made fun of girls who wore western clothes, teased boys who played with girls by saying things like *"Isko dekho ladkiyo ke sath khelta hai"* (Look, he is playing along with girls). They shared that as a result of the CEQUIN workshops, they are now more aware on how teasing and bullying is also a form of psychological harassment and violence that adversely impacts individuals. They no longer indulge in such behaviour and have also started educating their friends and peers on this.

AOC's from **GSSS Chuhurpur (Rajasthan)**, **GSSS, Santhakala (Rajasthan)**, **GSSS Kaharani (Rajasthan)**, **GSSS Kanwarsika (Haryana)** reported incidents in and around their schools wherein boys from the school or community passed lewd remarks and comments on girls and harassed them. The AOCs reported intervening in such cases to educate and sensitise the boys on the inappropriateness of their action. As shared by AOCs from GSSS Chuhurpur, while some of boys understand, others do not always listen to them and in such cases they continue to engage and talk to them about these issues. influence and talk to they continue counselling such boys. AOC's from GSSS Kaharani (Rajasthan) added that mocking at girls or boys was not a right conduct. Therefore, they have stopped doing such activities. The AOC's from **GSSS Kanwarsika (Haryana)**, reported women and girls in their community do not wear western dresses as they are often criticised for it with comments like *"Sheher banari hai dehaat ko"* (They were turning village into a city). As per them, despite this girls and women continue to face harassment in the village even when wearing culturally appropriate attire such as salwar kameez. There is hence a need to question and change the thoughts of men and boys to not indulge in such behaviour rather than restricting women and girls.

Amongst other, 58% of the AOCs shared approaching elders for help while 51% shared helping the person being subjected to harassment (See Table 6).

Table 6: What did you do when you witnessed Violence?

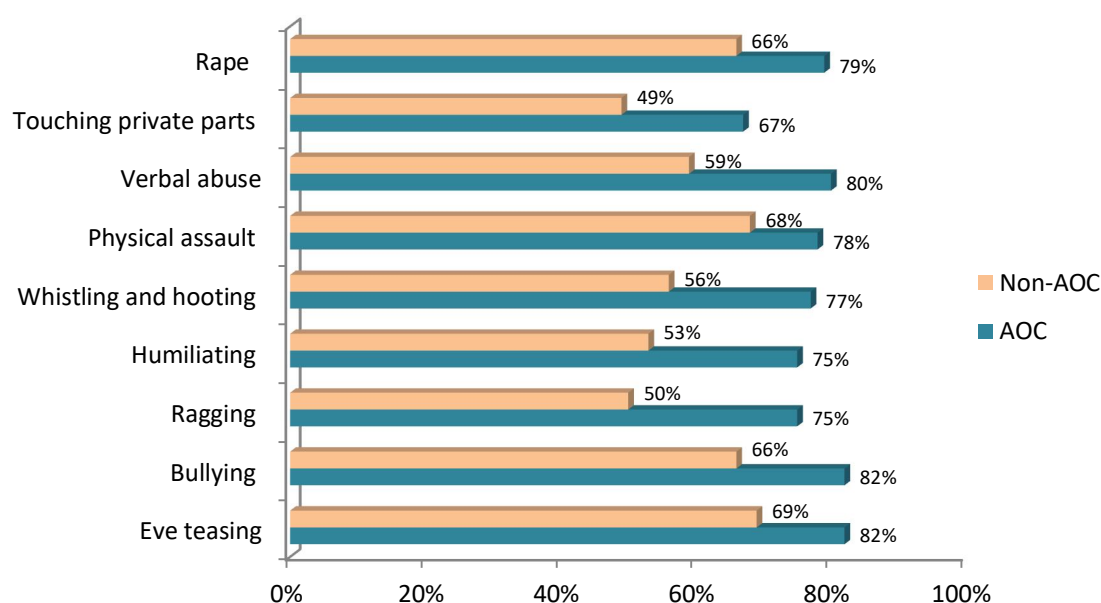
What did you do, when you witnessed Violence?	Baseline %	End line %
I approached elders for help	50%	58%
I went and told the teacher	31%	37%
I shared with my friend	27%	39%

I helped the victim	47%	51%
I did nothing	5%	7% ¹⁸
Don't know	18%	8%
None of the above	8%	5%

As a result of the actions taken by AOCs in their communities across the four states, there has been a reported reduction in instances of 'eve teasing'¹⁹ and bullying in and around the school and their community.

In comparison to AOCs, 69%, 66% and 59% of Non-AOC considered Eve teasing²⁰, Bullying and Verbal abuse respectively as the act of violence. Among the other variables as well the understanding of AOCs were found to be better in comparison of the Non-AOC.

Figure 10: Awareness about what constitutes violence amongst AOC and Non-AOC (in %)



4.8 Attitude and Perception on Participation in sports

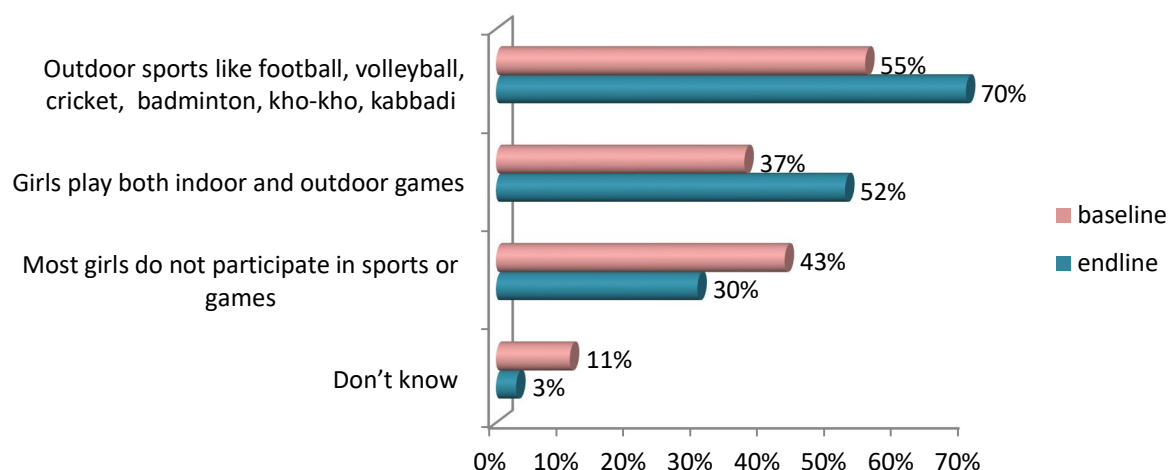
The endline also tried to understand the change in participation of girls and boys in sports at the community and school level. The study noted that the participation of girls in the sports like football, volleyball, cricket, kho-kho, *kabbaddi* and other indoor games increased in comparison of the baseline. 70% of the AOC's reported that the girls in their community participate in the games like football, volleyball, cricket, kho-kho, *kabbadi* (Figure 11).

¹⁸ Due to significant decrease in sample size the prevalence increased

¹⁹ Eve teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, for public sexual harassment or sexual assault of women by men.

²⁰ (Eve teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, for public sexual harassment or sexual assault of women by men)

Figure 11: Participation of girls in sports



On the other hand, the share of AOC's who responded that girls in the community do not participate in sports or games in their community or school declined by 13% as compared to the baseline.

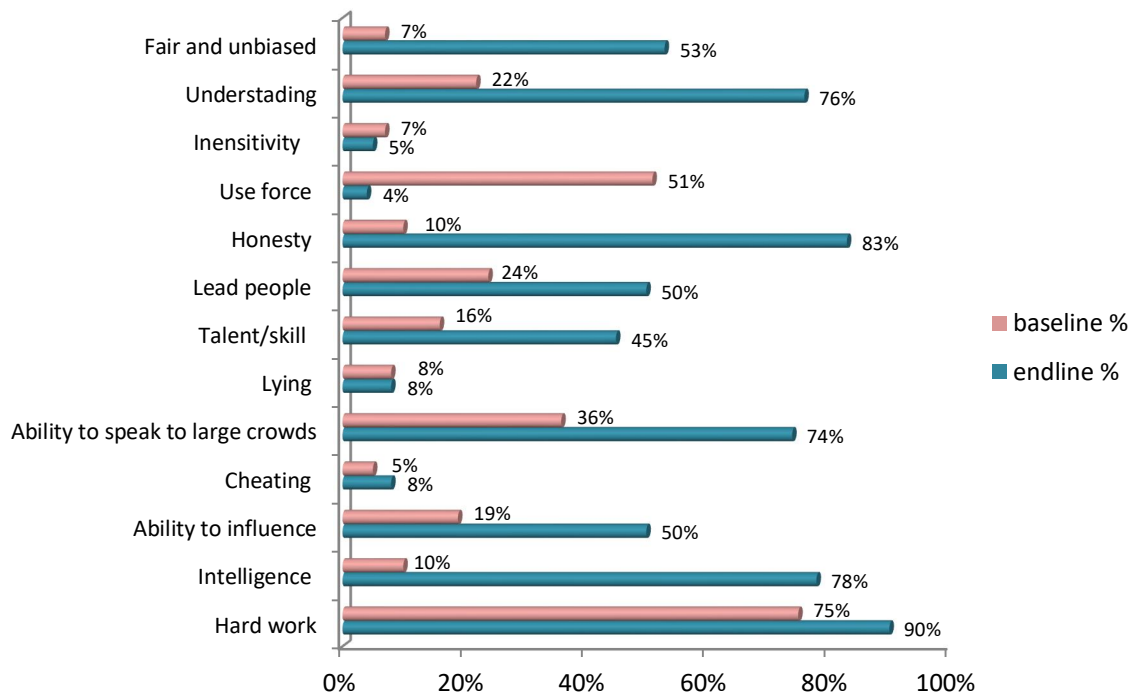
4.9 Perception and status of Leadership

Adolescence is the most appropriate time to promote leadership amongst boys and girls. It is during this period that gender roles become more defined and transit to adulthood. This period also brings forth challenges where one might be torn between social pressures to conform oneself to dominant cultural ideas and gender norms. Hence the need for creating strong 'leaders' becomes crucial in promoting gender equality. Based on the learnings from CEQUIN's past experiences of working with men and boys, as part of the *'Mardo Wali Baat'* Project, two day intensive training module was developed on Gender and Leadership, suitable for boys in the age group of 13-16, enrolled in government schools in the project states of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and U.P.

As part of the module day long sessions on leadership subjects like concept of leadership; differences, values and attitudes of a good leader and bad leader; self-assessment and self-development of leadership were imparted to Agents of Change with the objective to encourage leadership skills amongst them. As a follow up to these two-day training workshops, a process of intensive engagement was continued by the CEQUIN team with the AOCs on a regular basis in schools and online (during the pandemic). The main objective of the continuous engagement by CEQUIN team was to reinforce and sustain learnings, by creating a safe space and interactive sessions so that AOCs feel excited to attend and participate in the sessions. The team developed a weekly plan for the onwards sessions with the AOCs, keeping the same concepts which were already covered in the two-day training workshop. The activities planned enabled the AOCs to gain knowledge and internalize their learning so that they become capable and equipped to play a key leadership role in their schools and communities. The team also provided handholding to AOCs to think beyond gender norms and blur the difference between a girl and a boy and interactive group work and role plays to assess AOC understanding. In case of Haryana and Rajasthan where early marriages and dowry were critical issues, the Project decided to take these topics and have a conversation around it.

The section below discusses the key findings related to AOCs perception on leadership and leaders (**Figure 12**). The top five traits identified by AOCs as being essential to be a good leader included ‘hard work’ (90% of AOCs); ‘honesty’ (83%), intelligence (78%) ‘understanding’ (76%) and ‘ability to speak in large crowds’ (74%) . The variable of ‘honesty’ reported 73% hike in percentage share in comparison of the baseline study followed by ‘intelligence’ which witnessed a 68% hike. On the hand, the variable that a leader can use force reported a decline in response of about 47% in the end line reflecting a better understanding amongst AOCs on concept of leadership and its key traits.

Figure 12: Responses of AOC on leadership traits (in %)



Perceptions of Agents of Change on ‘Who is a leader?’

In a discussion conducted with AOC’s about leadership traits, the AOC’s from **Junior High School, Sadarpur, Anglo Arabic School, Garden Public School, GSSS Kanwarsika, GSSS Bhiwadi, and GSSS Chuhurpur** identified a good leader as someone who is hardworking, honest, educated, polite, understanding, confident and has the potential to deal with different kinds of people with the welfare and well-being of everyone at heart. Non-discriminatory attitude and respect for everyone irrespective of their gender was also identified by them as a key trait that a good leader must possess.

As per the AOC’s met in **Anglo Arabic School**, a leader plays a key role in guiding people. Leadership according to them means effectively conveying to others what you think and believe and inspire everyone to do better together.

Story of Change

The AOC's from **Junior High School, Sadarpur** mentioned that through the CEQUIN workshop they learnt how to talk to their elders and convey their perspective to them. The AOC's from **GSSS Kaharani, Anglo Arabic School** and **GSSS Tapkan** reported that they have become self-dependant and have started spreading awareness about such issues among their community like a good leader. The AOC's from **GSSS Kanwarsika, GSSS Bhiwadi, GSSS Chuhurpur, GSSS, Sare Kale GSSS Kaharani** stated that early marriage has been a key issue in their community. As a result of the input and facilitation provided to them by the Project, the AOC's have now started spreading awareness on the drawbacks of early marriage. The AOC's attributed that the change in their attitude as well as their motivation to work on this issue to the the CEQUIN workshop and sessions as a result of which they now understand the vices of early marriage and are able to share their thoughts actively and effectively in their community.

AOCs perception was also taken at baseline and endline on whether they think women can make good leaders. A positive change was noted in their perception at endline. 97% of them opined that women can be good leaders. On the other hand, the responses that women cannot be good leader reported decline from 14% to 2% in the end line as compared to baseline.

Table 7: AOC perception on girls and women being good leaders

Can girls and women be good leaders	Baseline %	End line %
Yes	82%	97%
No	14%	2%
Don't know	4%	1%

"Earlier I used to believe that only a man is a good leader as I had only seen male political leaders on TV. However, the CEQUIN team and the workshops conducted by them sensitised me on gender and the abilities of both boys and girls. I have realised that even females can be an effective leaders While prior to the joining the Project, I was only familiar with Indira Gandhi, now I know of many more strong female leaders."

- **Monu, Student of Class X, - GSSS Bhiwadi.**

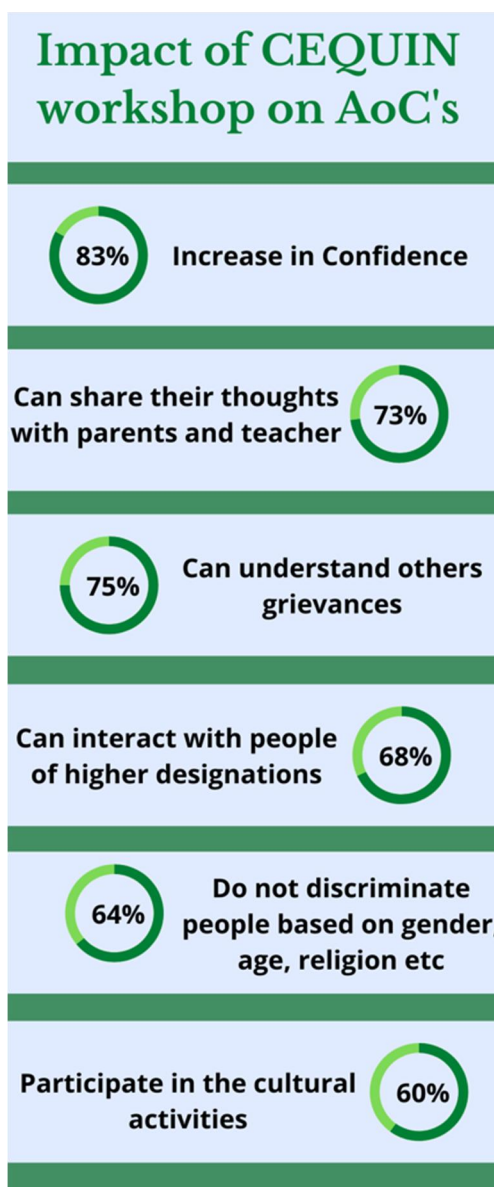
4.10 Impact of Project

The interventions planned and executed under the *"Mardo Wali Baat"* project by CEQUIN has shown a multifold impact on not only sensitizing adolescent boys on gender but also contributed in improving their ability to develop into confident beings and leaders and advocate for change in their schools and communities.

4.10.1 Direct Project Impacts

96% of the AOCs voiced that the project has had a significant positive impact on them. AOCs shared multiple responses on the nature of impact experienced by them as a result of the Project (See **Figure 11**) with 'increase in the confidence level' being rated as the top most impact, followed by 'share their thoughts with parents and teachers'; 'can understand others grievances and issues'; do not discriminate based on gender, age and religion'. 87% of the AOC's reported that they have sensitized their friends and peers about the learning from the workshop. Nearly 88% of the AOC's mentioned that they have shared with their family about gender sensitization.

Figure 11: Impact of CEQUIN Project



During the FGD conducted in schools AOC's across schools opined that they have experienced a significant change in their behaviour especially in terms of household work. The AOC's reported to have become sensitised about the effort their mother have been putting in raising them as well as working for the wellbeing of the household. The workshop taught them that the value of the work being put in by their mothers and female members of the household and that household work is not less than the work undertaken by their fathers and male members outdoors. The AOC's reported to have started respecting the household work more than what they did earlier.

The AOC's from **Junior High School, Barola**, reported that they have experienced change in their perception especially in terms of gender discrimination; they stated that they have started realising how their sisters were being neglected in their own family and how much privileges they have been receiving in comparison of the girls. Some of them shared that they have started questions some of these discriminatory actions within their family so that that girls are treated fairly and given similar opportunities as them.

Story of Change

Haseen, is a 13 year old student of class 9th in Government Senior Secondary School, Kanwarsika. In Haseen's family, unlike men, women are at the receiving end of many cultural norms and restrictions. He shared that every day he has seen his mother and sisters spending most of the time at home tending to household work, while the his father and brothers are responsible for all the outside work. He shared that prior to the becoming a part of the Project, he had a very casual attitude towards girls and regarded them as inferior to boys and men and mainly responsible for tending to the house and raising children. However, under the CEQUIN project, his perception and attitude towards about girls has totally changed. He not only learnt about gender and gender equality but also about equal rights of each and every human beings irrespective of their gender, caste, creed and religion. The workshop sessions on gender and leadership, relevant film screenings and discussions sensitised him and helped him question the prevalent stereotypes. He candidly shared "*Main apne ghar me koi bhi kaam nahi karta tha. Khelne chala jata tha aur ek bhi kaam me hath nahi batata tha.*" (I never helped in any household work earlier...I just used to go out and play). He has now realised that 'Mardo wali Baat' is in sharing the load with women. He now helps in household chores like bathing and feeding the cattle, helping in household cleaning and dishes.

Due to the CEQUIN workshop he realised that in order to bring gender equality in his community, there is a great need to change the thoughts and perception of the boys and men. So he started sharing all the workshop and training learnings on gender with his friends and peers. While initially his friends mocked him, some of them have now understand his perspective and also engage in discussion with him on these issues.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, schools came to an abrupt halt and all teaching was done online. Despite this, in his family, his uncle denied access to mobile phone to his cousin sister - a Class 6 student fearing that access to mobile will corrupt her. responded "*Mujhe darr lagta hai ki ye ladke se bat karegi. Aur karna kya hai ise padh kar..iski to shadi kar denge.*" As a result her education was brought to an abrupt halt. Hassen engaged in several discussions with his Uncle and convinced him "*Saari bachiyon phone par kaam kar rahi hai aapki ladki piche reh rahi hai, aur ye padai me achi hai.*"

As a result of his efforts, his cousin sister has been given a mobile phone joining online school class. Hassen's next mission is to motivate and sensitise his uncle regarding the higher education of her cousin sister.

In **GSSS Chuhurpur**, AOC's reported that prior to being part of the CEQUIN Project, they mocked girls and boys in their community who did not conform to prevalent gender norms. As a result of the workshops, they no longer indulge in such behaviour and now treat both genders with equal respect.

The AOC's from **Junior High School, Barola** and **GSSS Chuhurpur** voiced that as a result of the Project they have learnt that it is alright to apologise for one's mistake instead of indulging in unnecessary arguments and fights. They also learnt the difference between cracking a joke and humiliating or mocking someone and no longer indulge in the latter.

In **GSSS Kaharani (Rajasthan)**, the AOC's opined that earlier, given the prevailing cultural context of their community, they believed that women and girls should not go out for work, must not travel alone, get married early and must only dress up in salwar-kameez. However, the CEQUIN intervention and session has changed their perception for better. They now have started helping in household chores like washing the dishes, cleaning the house; supporting the cause of education of their sisters as well as other girls in their village and intervening in cases wherein they witness instances of 'eve teasing'. A few of the AOC also

shared that they are encouraging their sisters to learn to drive and no longer think that girls who drive a car or a motorbike should be mocked.

During a discussion with AOC's about their new learning through the CEQUIN workshop, the AOC's from **Anglo Arabic School** stated that due to the CEQUIN workshop they got an opportunity to interact with other students and speak on stage in front of a huge audience which greatly boosted their confidence. Irshad from class 8th gave a speech in the youth summit on the importance of girl child education. He concluded his speech "If you educate your daughters, they will grow up to be a leader of your village" (*Aap beti ko padhaoge to vo kal ki mukhiya banegi*). When the AOC's were asked about the best part of the workshop they responded that according to them it was better to first remove the short comings within yourself and then enlighten others.

In **Junior High School, Barola** and **Junior High School, Sadarpur** the AOC's reported that during the course of the workshop they developed a good understanding of the issues like social evils and learnt that a real man should respect females and must not discriminate based on class, caste and gender. Apart from this the AOC's stated that they learnt, early marriage must be stopped because it can lead to the issues like health problems among women, because the women may not be physically ready, women may give birth to a weak child, she may suffer from hormonal imbalances, she may face mental trauma, sometimes the severe consequences may also result into maternal deaths.

In **Garden Public School** AOC's shared that through the CEQUIN workshop they have learnt about gender equality and how to respect girls as well as boys in the society. Also they stated that they have learnt about the good and the bad conduct where they quoted eve teasing as an example of bad conduct and respecting everyone's dignity as a good conduct.

The AOC's from **Junior High School, Barola** shared that as part of the workshop they were shown an episode of Satyamev Jayate which dealt with domestic violence. This session not only clarified the key words like gender and sex, but also provided them with reading material on the same. In addition, they were assigned role plays wherein a situation was given to them and they were asked how they would react on those issues.

Story of Change

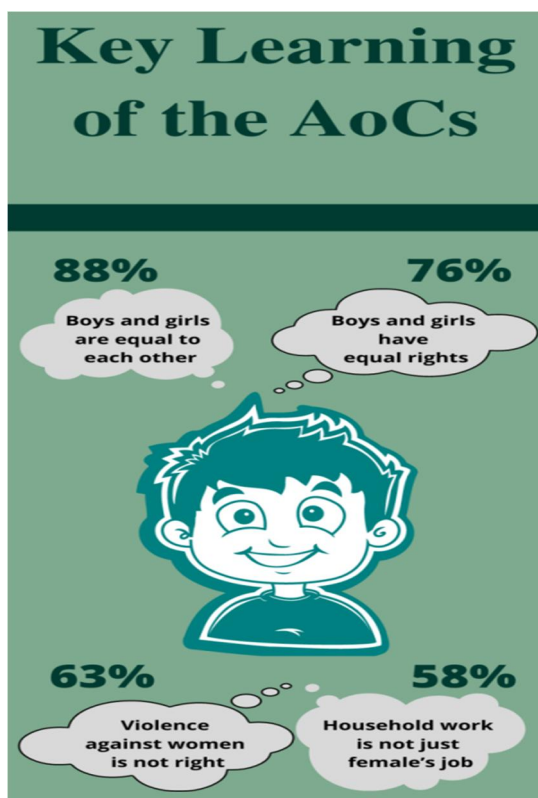
In some of the areas such as Mewat, which are largely semi-urban and rural, child marriage is a prevalent issue. AOC's from **GSSS Tapkan (Haryana)** shared that as a result of the sessions and inputs provided by CEQUIN team, they now understand the adverse impacts of child marriage. They now understand that child marriage is a risk for both boys and girls as it negatively affects their right to education, health and opportunities. Girls who are married early are not only overburdened with household responsibility but are also forced to discontinue their education. The AOCs reported that the instances of child marriage is quite prevalent in their community because it was believed that once a girl becomes sexually mature then she should be married or else she will be carried away by the thoughts spurned by the community. Due to this thought most of the girls in their community were deprived from the privileges that boys enjoyed especially education. The group of AOCs realised that this practice needs to be stopped because it was causing negative impact on the health and welfare of the girls. Hence, they initiated to convince their community members that they should allow their daughters to study and should not marry her at an early age. The AOC's also reported an instance wherein their neighbour were marrying their daughter at a young age, so the group of AOC first discussed the matter among themselves and decided that they have to stop this happening. To practically execute their plan, the AOCs first convinced their own parents about the

negative impacts of child marriage then along with their parents the group of AOCs went to the house of their neighbour and organised a kind of community meeting where they tried to explain their neighbour by quoting that early marriage can push their daughter under the huge burden of responsibility which she might not be prepared off. Also it can harm her biological health if she becomes mother at a young age. At last their neighbours were convinced with the arguments stated by the AOCs and their parents and as a result of their action, the marriage was called off. Hence the intervention of the AOCs to convince their neighbours to not marry their daughter at early ages turned out to be a success. The AOCs mentioned that the role of CEQUIN training was significant in this whole incident because it was the training which developed in them the insight to first understand and then fight with that evil.

Story of Change

Pradeep, an AoC from GSSS Kaharani, shared that eve teasing²¹ is major issue in their village as a result of which several restrictions are imposed on the mobility of girls in his community. While earlier he ignored such instances, after attending CEQUIN workshop he became aware of the adverse impact of this harassment on girls mental health and life. As a result, he has started engaging with and sensitising his peers on how this harassment impacts girls and often leads to restriction of their mobility, discontinuation of education and in some cases make them victim of early marriage. As per him *“I engage with and sensitise my peers on how their behaviour impacts girls and discourage them from engaging in such behaviour. Talking to them again and again on this issue has resulted in some change in their behaviour. Many of them now longer indulge in such activities.”*

Figure 12: Key Learnings from CEQUIN Project



In **GSSS Tapkan**, AOC's shared that initially when they began to share the learnings of CEQUIN workshops with their peers, they were mocked - *“Pehle khud ko sudharo, phir humein bhashan dena”* (First change your own self, then lecture us). The AOC's decided to apply the learnings and practice the same as a result of which their family members noticed and complimented them on the positive change in their behaviour. These learnings motivated them to withstand negative peer pressure and also influence their friends and family. They have now decided to spread awareness by forming an AOC's group which collectively engaged with other school children and community on issues of gender disparity and challenges in their community. Working as a group has been more effective with people listening to them and elders appreciating their views.

²¹ Eve teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, for public sexual harassment or sexual assault of women by men

“Drop by Drop a river is formed. Similarly, if we have a strong will and support of everyone, we can change not just ourselves but also the society.”

- Tauseef , class 8th, Anglo Arabic School

4.10.2 Unintended Project Impacts

Apart from the intended project outcomes as envisaged in the Project theory of change, the impact assessment also identified certain unintended outcomes of the Project. The Project faced two major challenges during the course of implementation. First, the political unrest in Shaheen Bagh in close proximity of CEQUIN office and Jamia Nagar school disrupted the planned activities (Dec 2019 to Feb 2020). Second, the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to nationwide closure of school from March 2020 until January 2021. Since the Project was originally planned as a school based intervention, the closure of school posed a challenge for the Project. However, CEQUIN team’s handling of this challenge led to two key outcomes:

- First, during the lockdown phase (from March to August 2020), the Project team took to the online platform to stay in regular touch with AOCs across the 16 schools and started conducting online sessions for them. In most cases, the AOCs accessed these sessions online on mobile phones, permissions for which were duly sought by CEQUIN from their parents. As a result of these regular online sessions, an unintended outcomes was that the AOCs improved their technology skills and were digitally equipped in managing and mastering digital tools to participate in the project sessions. In some cases, the AOCs were using mobile phones for the first time while others learnt to use online platforms like zoom. Some of the AOCs, positively utilised their new found digitals skills and used social media platforms for disseminating key messages on gender equality (See Box below).

Story of Change

During the pandemic, when mobility was restricted, AOCs from Fatehpuri Muslim Senior Secondary School, started using social media to spread awareness on gender disparity and issues. A class 9 student Arif shared that the CEQUIN workshop educated him on issues like dowry, gender disparity, girl child education and he realised the need sensitise more people on these issues. So, he made a poster on the vices of dowry and posted and shared it via Instagram and Facebook. The same was viewed, appreciated and shared by his peers and followers and he also engaged in worthwhile discussion with many of them on this issue.

Similarly, Umar, another Class 9 student of the school also posted messages on importance of educating girl child on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and also disseminated it via WhatsApp.

- Second, while the original Project was planned as a school based intervention, due to the closure of schools the sessions were conducted initially online and then in small groups within the community. The online and community level sessions provided CEQUIN team got an opportunity to engage with parents of AOC, wherein the parents started taking interest in the project and the key learnings of the session thereby generating a dialogue. During the impact assessment, in some schools the mothers met appreciated the Project intervention and highlighted how it has brought about a change in their son,

who now takes an interest in helping in household chores and has also become more sensitive towards the rights of their sisters. This was an unexpected positive outcome of the project.

Story of Change

Mujahid is a Class IX student of Government Senior Secondary School, Kanawarsika, and became part of the Project as an 'Agents of change'. As an introvert, in the initial days, Mujahid was hesitant in sharing his views during the training sessions but continued to take part in all project activities. The leadership sessions and handholding provided by CEQUIN team helped Mujahid to gain more confidence. He also participated in the gender audit during which he met and interacted with several people in his community. In February 2021, he not only participated in the youth summit but also went on stage to share about his experience in front of a big crowd. His family members were happy and proud that their son was selected to participate in the youth summit and spoke in front of a big crowd and attributed this achievement to the learnings and facilitation provided by CEQUIN Project.

- Third, with the closure of schools, AOCs sensitising their family on gender issues and creating an impact within the household, came forth as another unintended impact which was not part of the original project design.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Girls, and in particular adolescent girls, have been a major focus in the development sector with most multilateral development organizations, as well as international and national non-governmental organizations and the private sector, having girls' programming. Over a period of time, projects and programmes have also begun to examine not only the ways in which individual girls can be supported, but the structural barriers that prevent girls having the same choices in life as their brothers. While there has been interest in how men can be involved in working for gender equality, as they still hold the power in many families, communities and societies, most of the projects around male engagement in gender equality have focused on adult men. The group of adolescent boys have received relatively little attention.

In this backdrop, CEQUIN's 'Mardo Wali Baat' Project recognised that it is inevitable that boys will have a huge influence on girls lives in future and therefore involved them in challenging gender stereotypes and violence. While attitudes and social norms are shaped at an early age, adolescence is a key transition period when boys learn what it means to be a man. It is also a time when negative attitudes towards girls and women are reinforced, and when they may feel pressure to behave in stereotypical 'male' ways; ways that continue into adulthood and may then be passed on to their own male children. CEQUIN's Project has focused on adolescent boys learning new ways of being - learning to respect girls and women and to respect themselves and understanding that there is more than one way of being a man.

The 'Mardo Wali Baat' Project has enabled adolescent boys in patriarchal communities of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to learn about the value of gender equality interactively from an organization that has the capacity and expertise to provide high-quality training to a generation of adolescent boys at the local and national level. The impact assessment study concluded that the interventions planned and executed under this project by CEQUIN have shown a multi-fold impact on not only sensitizing adolescent boys on gender but also contributed in improving their ability to develop into confident beings and leaders and advocate for change in their schools and communities. Some of the key highlights being:

- A significant number of Agents of Change that were covered by this study have accepted girls as their equals and were acutely aware of gender equality. The study has highlighted their ability to look at gender equitably.
- Majority of the Agents of Change are now effectively able to identify conditions of gender disparity and bullying in their immediate environments. The study found that in several instances, AoC intervened at school and community level in situations of 'eve teasing', 'child marriage' and drop out of girl from schools. The AoCs were able to create awareness amongst their peers, friends and in their families and neighbours on gender equity.
- The Agents of Change covered by this study have not only imbibed leadership skills but have also demonstrated leadership amongst their peers and communities by creating dialogue and awareness on gender equality and withstanding negative peer pressure.

- Compared to other adolescent boys and girls from similar background in the community (control group), AoC participating in this project demonstrated more conceptual clarity and awareness on gender and violence.

The Project has successfully demonstrated that adolescent boys and young men are critical allies in the battle for gender equality and must be proactively and positively engaged. They can be educated to challenge gender stereotypes, promote positive constructions of masculinity, and practice attitudes and behaviours based on equality and respect for human rights. The Project has effectively brought about a change that can be scaled up and replicated in a wide variety of settings across cultures. It is an initiative that can readily be adopted, adapted and replicated by other organizations.

Key Recommendations:

- ◆ **Bringing other key stakeholders like parents, community elders and religious leaders under the ambit of gender sensitisation input**

During the interactions held with AOCs and other key project stakeholders, the Impact Assessment also identified some challenges. One of the key challenges voiced by AOCs and other adolescent boys and girls was that given the social and cultural ecosystem of their areas characterised by patriarchal mind-sets and rampant gender disparities, it is not easy to convince their parents, elders and community members on deep-rooted issues such as child marriage, girl child education, sharing the load at the household level. In rural and semi-urban contexts especially in Rajasthan and Haryana, which are hotbeds of patriarchy, the AOCs often encounter statements such as *“You are too young right now. You don’t understand the community Don’t try to teach us!”* There is hence a need to support AOC’s in bringing about the envisaged change by engaging and conducting community level gender sensitisation inputs and workshops for community elders, religious leaders and their parents to create a larger dialogue within the community on these issues.

- ◆ **Promoting Adolescent Boys Groups at community level**

In future phase, the Project can organise and promote adolescent boys groups comprising of AOCs, to work at two levels - on gender sensitisation of their peers (at school as well as community level) and with community to bring about awareness on gender equality, challenging gender stereotypes and leading to behavioural change. This group through various activities like school level community outreach, community based plays, interactions with village leaders etc can work regularly to bring about a change in attitude and behaviour of their peers and community members. This will also help them gain more acceptance within the family and community owing to the solidarity (in perspective and in numbers) provided by the Collective and working in a sustained manner on challenging and changing existing harmful social norms. The group, with appropriate facilitation and mentoring from CEQUIN, can play a key role in bringing more and more children under the aegis of the project and conducting school wide gender sensitization workshops.

◆ **Engagement of teachers to create a gender sensitive school culture**

It is recommended that the Project also engages with school teachers in respective schools, sensitise them to make them more gender aware. This will help in equipping the teachers in engaging in a dialogue about gender and gender equality with students. Teachers especially male teachers can act as role models and mentors to the boys in their charge and present an alternative vision of masculinity by means of modelling gender positive behaviour. Together with the female teachers, they can then play an important role in reshaping gender norms and gender issues at the school and community level.

◆ **Identifying and promoting positive deviance/ trend-setters in the community**

When a social norm is present, the actions of individuals are dependent on each other; since individual choices depend on expectations of what relevant others do and approve of. Hence, changing a norm must involve a collective change of both empirical and normative expectations. Norm change may occur in many ways, but the presence of first movers who are willing to spark it can exert a major influence.²² There is therefore a need to identify trend-setters to change existing social norms. Each community has individuals who are willing to counter tradition, are relatively insensitive to general pressures of social conformity. Such positive deviance or trend-setters will be specific to each community and context and will have to be identified likewise. Going forward, the Project should identify positive deviants/ trendsetters and forge a network of such change makers, who can display positive social norms that nurture gender equality, challenge gender stereotypes and positive constructions of masculinity.

²² Norm Change: Trendsetters and Social Structure by Cristina Bicchieri and Alexander Funcke