PRAGATI PROPOSAL

FY 2025-26

A second-chance program for adolescent girls and young women

Proposal For: Asha for Education
Proposal By: Foundation to Educate Girls Globally

A.   Executive Summary

In India, millions of girls continue to face entrenched socio-economic and cultural barriers that hinder their access to quality education. Patriarchal norms, financial constraints, early marriage, and child labor disproportionately affect girls, limiting their opportunities for economic independence and social mobility. To address these challenges, the Foundation to Educate Girls Globally (FEGG), widely known as Educate Girls, was founded by Safeena Husain in 2007. Our mission is to drive social, behavioral, and economic change by ensuring equitable access to education for all girls in India. Through our flagship programs Vidya and Pragati, we are dedicated to closing gender gaps in education and empowering girls aged 6 to 29 with the tools and opportunities to build brighter futures.

The Vidya (Back to school) program, launched in 2007, focuses on mobilizing local communities to identify, enroll, and retain girls aged 6–14 in government schools. Operating across Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, Vidya fosters community-driven mindset shifts that prioritize girls' education. The program secures school enrollment and retention while strengthening foundational literacy, numeracy, and life skills for students in grades 3 to 8. To date, Vidya has enrolled over 2.05 million out-of-school girls, maintained a 90% year-on-year retention rate, and improved learning outcomes for more than 2.4 million children (including boys and girls).

Building on this success, Educate Girls launched the Pragati (second chance) program in 2021 to provide a second-chance education pathway for adolescent girls and young women aged 15–29. Pragati enables participants to enrol in government open schools to obtain their grade 10 certificate — a critical milestone for further education, vocational training, and employment. The program utilizes village-based learning camps led by local mentors to enroll girls in government-run open schools, providing academic support, life skills, digital literacy, financial awareness, and access to social welfare schemes. What began as a pilot of 300 learners has now reached over 31,500 across more than nine states, starting from just one. As we expand into 12 priority states, we seek support from **Asha for Education** with a grant of INR **22,71,297/-** from FY 2025-26 to bring this life-changing opportunity to thousands more. Your partnership will allow us to enrol more learners in state open schools, support them through intensive, community-led learning camps—unlocking access, agency, and economic mobility at scale.

Together, we can empower underprivileged girls and young women with a second chance at education, forging a transformative path toward economic empowerment.

B.   Organisational Overview

Established by Safeena Husain in 2007, the Foundation to Educate Girls Globally is a non-profit organization registered under Section 8 of the Indian Companies Act, 2013, dedicated to promoting girls' education. Our vision is to catalyze behavioral, social, and economic transformation for all girls, envisioning an India where

every child has equal access to quality education. Educate Girls operates in over 85 administrative districts across Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar—India's four most educationally backward states, aiming to shift mindsets toward girls' education.

Educate Girls has evolved and expanded its reach over the past 18 years, making significant progress in addressing gender disparities in education in India. Below are some of the notable achievements:

● **Expanding Reach**: Over the past 18 years, Educate Girls has expanded its operations from a pilot program in 50 villages in Pali district, Rajasthan, to over 31,000 villages across four Indian states. These areas include some of the most marginalized and hard-to-reach regions in the country, where Educate Girls often serves as the sole development organization addressing the needs of the most underserved communities.

● **Innovative Funding**: Educate Girls pioneered the world's first Development Impact Bond (DIB) in education, in collaboration with the UBS Optimus Foundation and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation. Implemented from 2015 to 2018 in Bhilwara, Rajasthan, the project aimed to impact 7,300 children and serve as a proof of concept. The DIB surpassed its targets, achieving 160% of the final learning target and 116% of the final enrollment target.

● **Data-Driven Approach**: Educate Girls utilizes advanced analytics and predictive modeling developed by IDinsight, employing a machine learning algorithm to identify hotspot villages with high out-of-school girl populations. This data-driven approach enables precise targeting of villages for maximum impact and optimized resource allocation, ensuring effective interventions that reach more marginalized girls in India.

● **Audacious Project**: In 2019, Educate Girls became the first Asian organisation to be selected as The Audacious Project, a highly competitive global funding initiative housed at TED. Through this support, Educate Girls had committed to reaching 1.56 million out-of-school girls across high-priority geographies in 35,000 villages. The initiative leveraged a machine learning algorithm to identify the top 5% of villages in India with the highest concentration of out-of-school girls, that is, 40% of total OOSGs, enabling precision targeting and efficient resource allocation. Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Educate Girls successfully met its Audacious target, mobilising 1.56 million girls for school enrolment by March 2025.

● **Global Recognition**: Educate Girls' efforts to bridge the gender gap in education have earned international recognition, including prestigious awards such as the Hindu Business Line Changemaker for Social Transformation Award 2023, Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship 2015, USAID Millennium Alliance Award 2014, and we were one of the finalists in the MIT Solver Challenge (2020). Additionally, our founder, Safeena Husain, was honored with the WISE Prize for Education in 2023, making her the first Indian woman to receive this recognition for her exceptional contributions to girls' education in rural India. In 2024, she also became the first Indian woman to receive the prestigious honorary doctorate from the London School of Economics for her advocacy of girls' education in India.

● **Financial Innovation**: In 2024, Educate Girls achieved another milestone by becoming one of the first non-profit organizations to be listed on the Social Stock Exchange (SSE) under the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India, the SSE serves as a platform to bridge the gap between social impact organizations and donors through a transparent, accessible, and pre-validated ecosystem. Educate Girls launched its zero-coupon, zero-principal (ZCZP) bond issue, focusing

on enrolling and retaining marginalized out-of-school girls while enhancing foundational literacy and numeracy skills for children in the Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh.

● **Ramon Magasaysay Award:** In the month of Sept 2025, Educate Girls has received the 2025 Ramon Magasaysay Award which is Asia' Premier Prize and Highest Honour making us the first Indian organisation to receive this recognition.

C.   Project Overview

Title Of The Project	Pragati
Objective Of The Project	To enable out-of-school adolescent girls and women (15-29 years old) an opportunity to acquire their 10th-grade credentials through the government-open school system and to build their awareness regarding better career prospects.
Duration Of The Project	April 2025 - March 2026
Geography of Implementation	Rajasthan, Bihar & Chhattisgarh
Budget Of The Project	INR 22.71 Lakhs
Total Beneficiaries	1500

1.   Problem Statement

While the Right to Education Act (2009) has made strides in ensuring enrollment for girls in grades 1–8, significant challenges remain. Many marginalized girls, particularly in hotspot areas with high rates of out-of-school girls (OOSG), are still excluded from primary education due to poverty, gender norms, and limited access to schools. National initiatives like Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have improved enrollment and retention rates at foundational (98.4%) and preparatory (85.7%) stages, but retention sharply declines at the middle school level (78.9%) and plummets to 47.5% at the secondary level. This trend underscores the critical issue of girls being pushed out of education as they advance, hindered by inadequate infrastructure, long travel distances, safety concerns, and financial constraints.

Sunita's story is a poignant illustration of this reality. Dropping out of school at 14 due to financial limitations and the absence of a nearby secondary school, she was married at 16 and abandoned a year later. Now 17, she works long hours unloading vegetables and faces endless household chores. Without a grade 10 certificate, Sunita cannot return to school or apply for entry-level jobs, leaving her dreams unfulfilled, mirroring the plight of millions of girls trapped by poverty and societal expectations.

This transition loss as girls move up the academic levels contributes to the staggering statistic of 91 million young women in India aged 15–29 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), one of the largest excluded populations globally. The lack of alternative learning pathways or functional open school infrastructure means that girls who drop out have limited options to re-enter education or gain life skills. For girls like Sunita, this absence of structured pathways to complete secondary education or access life skills or further opportunities results in loss of empowerment, agency, and social mobility, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

a.   **Limited Secondary Education Infrastructure:** The disparity between primary and secondary education infrastructure is stark. The UDISE+ 2023-24 data indicates that primary schools account for approximately 80% of all schools in India, while secondary and higher secondary schools collectively make up around 20%, with secondary schools constituting about 11–12% and higher secondary schools around 8–9%. This leads to a transition loss as girls move to higher grades. Large distances between secondary schools from communities and a lack of public transportation exacerbate security concerns for girls. Inadequate infrastructure, such as the absence of separate toilets, a shortage of female teachers, etc, further discourages parents from sending their daughters to school.

b.   **Socioeconomic Challenges and Gender Biases:** Poverty and patriarchal norms create formidable barriers, often pushing girls into early marriage, motherhood, and domestic labor. As they transition from primary to secondary education, these pressures intensify. Families struggling to meet basic needs are more likely to prioritize boys' education, viewing girls' schooling as an economic burden rather than an investment.

c.   **Absence of Linkages for Older Girls:** A majority of opportunity youth in rural India lack access to educational or skill development support. Even if girls pass grade 10, they are not aware of pathways to tap into local opportunities for higher education, employment, or skilling. Consequently, they face significant challenges in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge for meaningful employment or further education, perpetuating a cycle of unemployment and socioeconomic stagnation.

d.   **Poor learning levels:** The poor learning levels among children and youth are due to a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure, socioeconomic challenges, limited access to educational resources, and linguistic barriers.

e.   **Low Reach and Accessibility of Open School Systems:** India lacks sufficiently developed alternative pathways for education. One of the existing alternatives, the National Institute of Open School (NIOS) is a distance learning open school system, legitimized by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, that allows learners to pursue education outside traditional settings, accommodating various personal circumstances such as work or geographic constraints. However, several issues persist: most states do not have a functional and efficient open school for grade 10, and in some states, open schools are absent for secondary grade levels.

Without access to quality secondary education, young women face diminished prospects for economic independence and personal fulfillment. Addressing these challenges requires systemic reforms: expanding secondary school infrastructure, strengthening state open schools and providing flexible learning options. By dismantling these barriers, India can unlock the potential of its young women, empowering them to

break free from cycles of poverty and exclusion while contributing meaningfully to their communities and the nation's growth.

2. What if we do nothing / Consequences of Inaction

When girls are denied education, the consequences extend far beyond the individual; they affect families, communities, and entire generations. Education is a fundamental right essential for social equity and justice, yet many girls are deprived of it due to gender and poverty. This denial comes at a high cost, limiting their opportunities, reinforcing cycles of poverty, and weakening society as a whole.

Early Marriage and Vulnerability:

● When a girl drops out of school at a young age, she is more likely to marry early. This leads to higher risks of early childbirth, domestic abuse, and early death.
● Approximately one in every five girls gets married in childhood, eliminating opportunities for education, skill development, and work.
● Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence and less likely to remain in school.

Limited Economic Opportunities and Financial Exclusion:

● Without a 10th-grade passing certificate, adolescent girls cannot get entry-level jobs, apply for loans, or acquire skills, limiting their opportunities to enter formal employment.
● In 2022, India's female workforce participation rate (women aged 15-64) was around 30%, significantly lower than the global average of 47%.
● In India, one in every five women lacks access to a bank account.

Perpetuation of Poverty:

● Girls who remain unskilled and financially dependent on male relatives are trapped in a cycle of poverty and illiteracy that continues to the next generation.
● 29.3% of married Indian women between 18 and 49 have experienced domestic or sexual violence, & 3.1% of pregnant women have suffered physical violence during pregnancy.

Climate Vulnerability:

● The climate crisis disproportionately impacts women and girls, with studies showing they are 14 times more likely to die in climate-related disasters than men, due to factors like gender roles, limited access to resources, and societal norms.

3. Our Solution: Pragati Program

In 2021, Educate Girls launched 'Pragati,' a second-chance program aimed at empowering out-of-school adolescent girls and young women aged 15 to 29 from low-income households. The primary objective is to help them acquire their 10th-grade credentials through the government's open school system and build awareness of career opportunities that are crucial for accessing entry-level jobs, formal loans, vocational training, and various life opportunities in India. Our goal is to reach 10 million learners in 10 years, and our strategy is to optimize the government's open schooling system while catalyzing a network of mission-aligned civil society organizations to deliver Pragati at scale.

We implement Pragati through a two-pronged approach:

1. Camp Delivery Approach: Through this approach, we aim to deliver proximate, in-person, village-based learning camps to help girls prepare for 10th-grade exams.
2. Government Partnerships Approach: This approach focuses on collaborating with state governments to build well-functioning open schools in states that lack them or enhance existing ones.

Supporting both approaches is the Pragati Technology Platform, which enhances access to content and ensures scalability at the population level. The platform features the Pragati Performance App (PPA) for remote visibility into camp performance, a robust tool designed to collect, monitor, and report on all programmatic activities in real time.

A. Camp Delivery Approach: Pragati is delivered through a structured, community-embedded camp-based model that enables adolescent girls and young women (aged 15–29) to complete their secondary education through government open schooling. This 24-month model is designed to be hyperlocal, inclusive, and outcome-oriented, addressing not only academic gaps but also the deep-rooted social barriers that prevent girls from returning to education. The camp delivery approach unfolds in **three core phases**, each with defined objectives and milestones:

1. Mobilisation Phase (Months 1–3): This foundational phase establishes the program in target geographies and builds the ecosystem of local actors essential for successful implementation.

● **Program Coordinator (PC) and Prerak Onboarding & Training:** Based on secondary data, districts with high concentrations of out-of-school girls are identified. Program Coordinators are recruited and trained to oversee implementation across multiple villages. Locally rooted **Preraks** (village-based mentors) are selected through a rigorous process and trained in learner support, peer-led instruction, and community mobilisation.
● **Community Engagement through Pragati Sabhas:** Through structured village gatherings, we build awareness and local ownership. These events bring together local government members, families, frontline workers, and government officials to challenge gender norms, reduce stigma around older girls returning to school, and spark community advocacy for girls' education.

2. Learning & Delivery Phase (Months 4–16): This phase is focused on academic preparation, life skills

development, and logistical support to ensure learners succeed in their Grade 10 open school exams.

Pragati Kit: Before launching the camps, we provide a comprehensive Pragati Kit to Preraks and learners, which includes:

- Prerak Handbook: A step-by-step guide covering camp structure and learner engagement techniques.
- Neev Camp and Prayas Camp Materials: Simplified curriculum modules aligned with Grade 10 requirements.

A)   Neev (Pre-Camp Readiness) Sessions: A six-week preparatory module designed to bridge foundational learning gaps in literacy and numeracy. Learners receive support in subject selection, build aspiration roadmaps, and enhance digital, financial, and social protection literacy. Mock tests and a 'Scheme Mela' are conducted to prepare them for exams and introduce government support options.

B)   Prayaas (Main Camp) Sessions: Over six months, learners attend structured sessions aligned to Grade 10 open school curricula. Preraks guide them through academic content, exam preparation (including mock exams using past papers), and mandatory requirements such as Practical File submissions and Personal Contact Programs. Learners also develop transferable skills in communication, negotiation, and problem-solving. They also get sessions on generating Career awareness and exploration of Future Options.

C)   Exam Readiness & Support: As exams approach, learners are assisted with logistical needs: travel coordination, document verification, admit card downloads, and confidence-building sessions to ensure every learner reaches the exam hall.

3. Post-Exam Transition Phase (Months 17–24): This phase supports learners in clearing pending subjects (if any), celebrates their academic achievements, and facilitates onward pathways to higher education or employment.

- **Results & Subject Yet to Clear (SYC) Support:** Learners receive guidance on result access, re-evaluation processes, and re-registration for any failed subjects, with continued academic support until completion.
- **Graduation Ceremony:** A community-led celebration honours each learner's journey and achievement, reinforcing the value of education and acting as a public endorsement of girls' academic success.

B. Government Partnerships: The lack of secondary education infrastructure in India, with only a few states having functional open schools, restricts access to Grade 10 at a population level. To address this, we are partnering with state governments in 12 priority Indian states to establish or strengthen open school systems, which account for over 75% of India's NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) girls and women. As part of this effort, we embed 4-6-member Technical Assistance Units (TAUs) within state education departments. These units provide technical and strategic support to implement key reforms within the state's open school system, improving their reach and functionality and making them more accessible, affordable, and inclusive.

By creating both demand (through village-based camps) and supply (by strengthening state open schools), Educate Girls is uniquely positioned to deliver a scalable, sustainable solution for secondary education.

4. Key Performance Indicators and Timelines (April 2025 - March 2026)

a) Distribute 20 Pragati learning material kits across 20 camps in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, which will benefit 300 beneficiaries

b) Support exam registration of 1200 beneficiaries by providing them with scholarships in Bihar.

5. Budget for Pragati kits

State Units Beneficiaries Total Budget			
State	**Camps**	**Learnes**	**Cost**
Rajasthan	10	150	1,40,000
Chhattisgarh	10	150	88,816
TOTAL	**20**	**300**	**2,28,816**

6. Budget for Pragati Scholarships

State Beneficiaries Total Budget		
State	Total number of Learners	Cost
Bihar	1200	18,36,000
Total		**18,36,000**

Central Support Cost(@ 10%): 2,06,482

Total Combined Budget: 22,71,297/-

7. Major Milestone - FY 2023-24

8. What sets us apart…

Educate Girls has a strong track record of over 18 years of effectively working with rural communities and state governments with respect to the gender disparity of women in education. In Pali, Rajasthan, our oldest administrative region, where our initiatives have spanned over a decade, seven of the Educate Girls' program districts in Rajasthan performed better than the state averages on many of the micro indicators. (Click here for the details). Building on this momentum, we are now actively working towards addressing the low secondary school credential problem for ages 15 to 29 via Pragati.

Leveraging the institutional experience and knowledge we've gained over the past 18 years, coupled with our success in pioneering the world's first Development Impact Bond in Education, along with successfully achieving our Audacious goals, the impact achieved through our programs for girls aged 6 to 14, and the valuable insights from the Pragati trials, we are uniquely positioned to create a transformative impact on an unprecedented scale, reaching 10 million learners in the next 10 years.

Your support will be instrumental in setting the stage for a life-changing journey for lakhs of girls and young women, who have endured intergenerational patriarchy, poverty, and marginalization. We invite you to join us in our mission to educate, empower, and transform lives, shaping brighter and more promising futures for all.

9. Success Story

A remarkable success unfolded in the small town of Baran, Rajasthan. In rural Rajasthan, roadblocks like early marriage and the distance to the nearest secondary school often lead to early dropout among girls. Once away from education, they are absorbed into a world of struggles, balancing economic hardships and patriarchal constraints. Even though these girls attended school up until the eighth grade, their foundational literacy and numeracy skills have

diminished over the years. Any attempt to re-engage them in education often results in blank stares, as they struggle to remember what they once knew.

Aware of these challenges, Pragati introduces solutions through baseline assessment tools and Pre-Camp Readiness (PCR). Roshni, a 22-year-old girl, was at a crossroads due to personal and family challenges that led to her failure in the 10th-grade board examination seven years ago. Unfamiliar with the opportunities beyond the 10th grade, Roshni's family did not fully appreciate the importance of education. As a result, Roshni spent her days at home, overwhelmed by household chores and reflecting on the opportunities she had lost. A turning point came when Roshni's aunt, Rukmani, introduced her to Pragati. Despite initial hesitation and disinterest from Roshni's family, Rukmani managed to convince Roshni's parents to allow her to join the Pragati camp.

The main hurdle for Roshni was reconnecting with education after such a long absence. Once enrolled, Roshni underwent a baseline assessment conducted by a Prerak from the Educate Girls' team. After assessing Roshni's foundational literacy and numeracy, the Prerak provided tailored guidance to support her learning. Roshni found renewed purpose with the mentor's support and the sense of belonging among her peers. The camp environment encouraged her regular attendance and active participation.

The impact was profound. Roshni passed her 10th-grade exam with first division marks from the Rajasthan State Open School. The journey, though challenging, instilled in her newfound confidence and a hopeful vision for the future. With continued support from Pragati, Roshni plans to pursue her education further by enrolling in the 12th grade, a decision that is now fully supported by her enthusiastic parents. Grateful for the invaluable support, Roshni is thankful to the Pragati program by Educate Girls, knowing that its contribution will resonate throughout her life. In the words of Harigovind, Roshni's father, the journey was marked by doubt and uncertainty, but his daughter's active participation culminated in success, earning over 60% marks. Feeling deeply connected to the camp, Roshni now occasionally visits new learners to inspire them and serve as a living example of success.

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