



An Evaluation of the SABLA-Kanyashree Program in Six Districts of West Bengal, India



Landesa Research, Evaluation and Learning (REL) team

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Cover Photo: Adolescent girls looking near their kitchen garden, Purulia District, West Bengal

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	6
INTRODUCTION.....	8
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY.....	9
FINDINGS	15
GIRLS ATTENDANCE & PROGRAM EXPOSURE	16
DOWRY.....	23
EARLY MARRIAGE	27
EDUCATION	31
INHERITANCE AND WOMEN’S LAND RIGHTS	33
LAND BASED LIVELIHOODS (LBL)	39
GIRLS EMPOWERMENT	45
HARD-TO-REACH OUT-OF-SCHOOL (OOS) GIRLS PILOT IMPLEMENTATION	49
MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE (MSC) CASE STUDIES.....	57
NAIMA BASAK, ALIPURDUAR	57
PRANATI GUPTA, COOCH BEHAR.....	59
REBATI GOND, TEA GARDEN, JALPAIGURI	61
CHAMPA DAS, MALDA.....	63
KUNTALA BURMAN, NADIA	65
NIPUNA SIL, PURULIA	67
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	69
ASSESSMENT OF THE SABLA-KANYASHREE IMPLEMENTATION	72
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	74

ABBREVIATIONS

AWC = Anganwadi Center	Basic unit of service delivery under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). An AWC covers a population of 400-800 beneficiaries where it serves children 0-6 years' old, pregnant mothers, nursing mothers and adolescent girls.
AWW = Anganwadi Workers	Anganwadi Workers provide various health services to children less than six years of age, pre-school education to three-six years old children, ante-natal care of expectant mothers and post-natal care of nursing mothers. In the SABLA-Kanyashree convergence program they take part in the capacity building session for the LGG module.
CDPO = Child Development Project Officer	Works under the Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, which is in charge of implementing the program at the BLOCK level and reports to District Program Officer (DPO).
DPO	Works under the Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare. Responsible for coordination and implementation of the scheme at the district level.
DRP = District Resource Persons	NGO personnel of the intervention districts under the SABLA-Kanyashree Convergence program, who are responsible for looking into the overall implementation of the program coordinating with the Project Coordinators, Landesa, CINI and the Government Department.
FF = Field Facilitators	Responsible for providing support at the field level to the CDPO and Project Coordinator (PC) in planning, implementation and monitoring of the project.
LBL = Land-based livelihoods	A core component and delivery mechanism for the SABLA-Kanyashree curriculum that was added by Landesa and trains adolescent girls in vegetable and mushroom cultivation, planting a kitchen garden, livestock rearing (e.g. goat-rearing), backyard poultry and other agricultural on-farm and off-farm activities.
LGG = Learning Games for Girls	A core component and delivery mechanism for the SABLA-Kanyashree curriculum.

MT = Master Trainers	Formed from ICDS Supervisors and AWWs, who were trained in the LGG modules. The MT assists general AWW or Non-MT in training adolescent girls of the adjacent centers.
PC = Project Coordinators	Responsible for the overall project implementation of the SABLA-Kanyashree convergence program within assigned ICDS project areas. They primarily support the CDPO in planning, implementation and monitoring of the project.
PRI = Panchayati Raj Institutions	Local government bodies in India functioning as a decentralized form of government in which each village would be responsible for its own administration. In this system Gram Panchayat is the basic unit of local administration at the village level and above that at the block level there is Panchayat Samiti and at the district level there is Zila Parishad.
RTE = Ready to Eat	RTE comes under the Supplementary Nutrition Program (SNP) of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). Adolescent girls receive 500 grams packets of RTE in the AWCs. It is a powder (<i>sattu</i> - a flour consisting of a mixture of ground pulses and cereals) that they can mix with warm water or milk and drink.
THR = Take Home Ration	Each adolescent girl is given Supplementary Nutrition (SN) containing 600 calories, 18-20 grams of protein and micro-nutrients, per day for 300 days a year. Out of school adolescent girls in the age group of 11-15 years attending AWCs, and all girls in the age group of 15-18 years, are given SN in the form of a Take Home Ration (THR) from the AWC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report presents findings from a mixed-method evaluation of the scaling phase of the SABLA-Kanyashree program implemented by the West Bengal Government's Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare from 2015 to 2018 with Landesa's as a key technical partner. The intervention aimed at empowering adolescent girls between the ages of 11 to 18 years through training and awareness building on life skills, nutrition, health, sexual rights and land rights as well as sensitizing stakeholders such as boys, Panchayat Raj and community members to create an enabling environment for girls.

The evaluation aimed at assessing: 1) the impacts of the intervention on girls, boys, PRIs and communities, and 2) the implementation of the process to highlight the successes and challenges of the intervention as well as make recommendations for future programming for girls.

Evaluation methods included baseline and endline surveys (conducted in January 2016 and June 2018 respectively) as well as qualitative research conducted in 2016 for a mid-term assessment and 2018 to complement the quantitative research. The qualitative research included focus groups discussions, key informant interviews as well as direct observation of intervention activities conducted by Landesa to monitor implementation of the interventions. Key findings highlight that:

- The SABLA-Kanyashree program has improved girls' awareness of their land and inheritance rights; increased the belief that girls have a right to inherit; increased the belief in the likelihood of receiving inheritance at a much more significant rate after exposure to SABLA programming; and increased the desire by girls to inherit land.
- Girls who participated in the program (treatment) are on average 25.6% more likely to report that they have a family kitchen garden than girls who did not attend meetings (control group); some girls groups have created marketing linkages with Anganwari centers. Out of those girls, who reported receiving LBL-kitchen gardening training, 92% report that they have actively grown vegetables or fruits in their kitchen garden during the past 2.5 years.
- Most girls are aware that dowry is not legal and most do not see it as a desired practice. However, dowry is still a widely accepted practice and seen by parents and girls as a way to ensure their safety and dignity/status in their in-laws homes.
- Most girls are generally aware about the legal age of marriage for girls and early marriage harms. Most communities and other stakeholders are also aware of it. However, early marriage is still prevalent in many areas, especially in poorer households, and linked with dowry.
- Most girls are aware about the benefits of staying in school. There is a link between early marriage and dropping out of school. For example, in communities where early marriage was prevalent, education for girls was not valued. Girls from poor and isolated communities faced the biggest obstacles to education.

- Girls attribute increased self-confidence and awareness to the SABLA-Kanyashree program. Generally, stakeholders report that girls are more confident, less vulnerable and more empowered to speak up, report harassment, move around, and make their own decisions.
- The process of implementation faced several setbacks starting from low buy-in of government officials to delays in funding and withdrawal of support for NGO implementers in the final year of scaling (2017-2018), low capacity of ICDS frontline implementers among other things. This led to uneven implementation with wide variation in quality.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are put forth, including institutionalizing government commitment, creating monitoring and tracking mechanisms, building in ongoing training and capacity building of frontline implementers, all of which would contribute to the programs sustainability and scalability.

INTRODUCTION

Women face barriers to realizing their land rights early on, when they are girls. Landesa's mission is to secure land rights for the world's poorest women and men to bring about social justice and improve livelihood outcomes. Landesa was given the rare privilege of partnering with the West Bengal Government's Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, whose mission is to empower adolescent girls through the SABLA-Kanyashree program. The program targeted several of the vulnerabilities faced by adolescent girls including knowledge of their land rights, health and nutrition, sexual health, early marriage and poor educational opportunities. Landesa collaborated with the government to create an intervention that would increase girls' knowledge of their land rights, train them in land-based livelihoods, and help to create an enabling environment for adolescent girls, to position them to not only realize their land rights in the future but also empower them in their families and communities.

This report details findings from a mixed-methods evaluation of the SABLA-Kanyashree program conducted by Landesa between February and June 2018. After a pilot phase conducted by Landesa in Cooch Behar, the project was scaled to 6 districts of West Bengal between 2015 and 2018 by the West Bengal State Woman & Child Development (WCD) department with the technical support of Landesa and Child in Need Institute (CINI).

The project design was multi-component and multi-level and involved several stakeholders. The main programming activities were focused on adolescent girls between the ages of 11 and 18. The intervention was delivered to the girls through the formation of 26,000 girls groups in Anganwadi centers in the 6 target districts. The most important activities for girls were Learning Games for Girls (LGGs) which covered topics ranging from women's land rights and the related issues of the harms of dowry and early marriage, to health, nutrition and sexuality. Other related activities included land-based livelihood training and exposure visits to government institutions. The project also included sensitization activities, on a smaller scale, targeted at boys, communities (parents) and PRI members. An additional pilot with special curriculum was implemented to target out-of-school girls in hard-to-reach areas in 3 of the 6 SABLA districts.

The evaluation had 2 main objectives: 1) assess the impacts of the intervention on girls, boys, PRIs and communities, and 2) assess the implementation of the process to highlight successes, challenges and gaps and identify recommendations going forward. The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach, and included a quantitative baseline and endline survey complemented by qualitative research using interviews or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with all stakeholders, as well as data collected during monitoring activities over the life of the project. The original evaluation plan that included a baseline, midline and endline survey complemented by qualitative research was revised due to unexpected delays and roadblocks in implementation - from delays in renewal of work orders for frontline implementer NGO, to a sudden cancellation of NGO contracts in the 3rd year of implementation - because of which Landesa decided to scale back and narrow the focus of the evaluation.

This report is structured as follows: In the first section we first describe the evaluation methodology and sampling design for our quantitative survey and qualitative research. In the

next sections we discuss our findings by themes including Attendance and Program Exposure, Dowry, Marriage, Education, Inheritance and Women's Land Rights, Land-Based Livelihoods, Girls Empowerment, Out-of-School Girls Pilot, and Most Significant Change Stories. The themes integrate findings from the quantitative survey and qualitative data where appropriate. After the findings, we conclude by summarizing the findings, discussing key insights on the process of implementation and provide recommendations for future girls programming interventions.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Our evaluation employed a mixed method approach - quantitative baseline and endline survey and complemented by qualitative research.

Quantitative Evaluation

The quantitative evaluation provides a view into the likely effects of SABLA attendance on girl participants, comparing girls who did attend (treatment) against girls who did not attend (control). The evaluation involves data collected from two points of time: baseline conducted in 2016 and an endline conducted in April / May 2018. Details about each follow.

Baseline

Between November 2015 and February 2016, we contracted with a survey company to interview 1500 girls. The survey collected information about their current behaviors and perceptions with regards to school attendance, income generation, marriage, confidence, rights to land, and engagement in land-based livelihoods (LBL). It also collected information to gauge knowledge and perceptions about the SABLA-Kanyashree program.

The survey took place across five districts in West Bengal, in which Landesa was supporting the implementation of the SABLA-Kanyashree program. Importantly the baseline did not include the district of Cooch Behar, due to a five-year previous engagement in that district that likely would have affected knowledge and behaviors of girls and the averages across the sample.

All the girls included within the baseline sample were aged between 13 and 16 and randomly selected from a list of girls belonging to a randomly selected list of AWCs from five districts: Nadia, Purulia, Maldah, Jalpaiguri and Alipuduar.

Endline

A second survey effort took place between April and May 2018, two years after the baseline, to allow us to measure the changes to girls' knowledge and behavior over time. This endline effort covered the same five districts as the baseline but also added Cooch Behar, amounting to a total of six districts. While the initial design involved revisits to all the baseline surveyed girls, changes to the program prevented us from doing so. Specifically, the government withdrew financial support for implementing NGOs whose staff was leading the training efforts across most of the centers. Furthermore two years in a row work orders for NGO staff were renewed

late, leading to a cessation for activities in some districts for 2-3 months at a time, 2 years in a row. All of these impacted the scope the quality of the implementation. Landesa stepped in to take over some of the NGO stakeholders roles but in doing so had to constrict the scope of the project to centers where Landesa staff could directly manage the trainings through local Anganwadi workers.

Because fewer girls had been exposed to the program than intended, as well as time and resource constraints, the number of adolescent included in the final survey was smaller. We needed to limit the centers appropriate to include in a comparative analysis as it was important to ensure that we evaluated girls who at least had the opportunity to attend training sessions.

We limited selection of the endline sample based on staff assessments about quality of program implementation, primarily choosing centers that the staff identified as at least average-performing (e.g. regular meetings held, motivated instructors, etc). This method of selection allowed us to hone in on effects associated with at least basic quality instruction.

We used an attendance monitoring tool to track the attendance of the Baseline girls to select our treatment and control girls. Due to the reduced size as well as the purposive nature of sample selection during the endline, it is important to emphasize that the results are not representative, and should be interpreted as suggestive trends across a restrictive set of girls in the selected districts. These changes also impacted our evaluation strategy which was changed to reflect reduced expectation of impact on a smaller subset of girls. The goal of the evaluation shifted from assessing generalizable impacts to a focus on impacts of the program under a best case scenario.

Ultimately, out of the 1500 girls originally interviewed, only 356 were interviewed in the endline. After adding new girls from Cooch Behar, the total endline survey sample increased to 424. The distribution across the districts is displayed in the below table.

Differences between the size of baseline and endline sample are presented in the table below:

Distribution of Sample across Districts								
		All	Alipurdwar	Cooch Behar	Jalpaiguri	Malda	Nadia	Purulia
Baseline	Number	1506	300	-	300	302	300	304
	Percent of sample	100%	19.92%	-	19.92%	20.05%	19.92%	20.19%
Endline	Number	424	72	68	71	69	72	72
	Percent of sample	100%	17%	16%	17%	16%	17%	17%

One concern with limiting our study to “better-performing” centers is that any effects may be influenced by other confounding factors that may increase the likelihood of knowledge gain or behavior change, such as socio-economic status and education levels. Simply put, if the well-performing centers are also those whose residents are of higher socio-economic status, for example, they may also have better center facilities, higher quality Anganwadi Workers, and other factors which may encourage attendance and learning. To help determine whether such unintended biases affected the restricted sample surveyed during the endline, we compared demographic characteristics of each group in the table below. As can be seen, the two groups share very similar characteristics across most categories. The main difference of significance pertains to the caste categories, which suggests that the restricted sample surveyed at the time of the endline includes a lower percentage of girls who identify as Schedule Caste and a higher that identify as Other (either General or OBC). Demographic characteristics of the baseline and endline girls are presented in the table below:

Comparison between Baseline and Endline				
		Baseline	Endline	Endline (excluding Cooch Behar)
Sample size		1056	424	356
Religion	Hindu	67.2%	67.7 %	62.4%
	Muslim	29.4%	30.7%	35.7%
	Christian	1.7%	1.4%	1.7%
	Buddhist	1.7%	0.2%	0.3%
Caste	Scheduled Caste (SC)	32.5%	26.2%	26.1%
	Scheduled Tribe (ST)	16.3%	11.3%	12.8%
	Minority	18.4%	16.8%	19.1%
	Other	32.8%	45.8%	41.9%
Literacy	% that can read and write	98.2%	98.8%	98.9%

Attribution

To attribute any observed knowledge and behavior changes to the SABLA-Kanyashree program, we not only compared girls over time, but we also compared girls who attended trainings (Treatment) against those who did not (Control) between the baseline and endline survey dates. Specifically, treatment is defined as girls from adequate to well performing centers that had attended at least 2 sessions and had been exposed to at least 1 of 6 Landesa's topics. These include Equal Inheritance, Secure Land Tenure, Land Based Livelihoods, Insecurities of Girls, Asset, Land and Land Use. The control group included girls who had attended less than 2 meetings and had not been exposed to any of Landesa's LGGs. They came either from centers that were not functioning or poorly functioning or from the treatment centers, but had poor meeting attendance.

Importantly, we did not pre-select which girls would be included in the treatment and control. Rather, they were categorized based on their observed activity levels over time. We recognize that this introduces potential bias into our sample, as girls who were more inclined to learn and benefit from the program (either due to intrinsic or extrinsic characteristics) may have also been the ones that attended. Based on the below table displaying demographic comparisons between the treatment and control groups, we do see some evidence of such bias. Specifically, the treatment group on average has achieved higher education and a lower percentage of Muslims. However, they also have a higher percentage of girls who identify with a Scheduled Caste.

Comparison between Treatment and Control					
		Treatment	Treatment (excluding Cooch Behar)	Control	Control (excluding Cooch Behar)
Sample size		338	282	86	74
Religion	Hindu	69.8%	64.9%	59.3%	52.7%
	Muslim	28.9%	33.7%	37.2%	43.2%
	Christian	0.9%	1.1%	3.5%	4.1%
	Buddhist	0.3%	0.4%	0%	0%
Caste	Scheduled Caste (SC)	28.1%	27.7%	18.6%	20.3%
	Scheduled Tribe (ST)	10.1%	11.4%	16.3%	18.9%
	Minority	16.3%	18.4%	18.6%	21.6%
	Other	45.6%	42.6%	46.5%	39.2%
Average Age		16.4	16.4	16.5	16.5

(years)					
Education	Primary school	0%	0%	1.2%	1.4%
	Secondary School	64.8%	66.3%	74.4%	77%
	Completed 11 th Standard	27.2%	25.9%	23.3%	20.3%
	Above	7.4%	7.1%	0%	0%
Literacy	% that can read and write	99.7%	100%	94.7%	94.5%

Qualitative Evaluation

Qualitative data collection was conducted in between February and June of 2016. The aim of the qualitative research was to gain a nuanced understanding of the program implementation and changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of program beneficiaries exposed to the SABLA-Kanyashree intervention.

The qualitative study had 3 components: 1) a small study was conducted on the hard-to-reach out-of-school (OOS) girls to assess their vulnerabilities as well as their receptivity to the special training designed to improve their functional skills and their land rights knowledge, 2) a larger study was conducted to learn from all stakeholders involved in the girls project including the beneficiaries – girls, boys, communities and PRIs – as well as the implementers – AWWs and MTs, Landesa Project Managers, government officials and other technical partners and 3) qualitative observations from monitoring of implementation activities such as Training of Trainers (ToT), girls, boys, community and PRI sessions, and DLCC meetings.

Most of the data collection was conducted by Landesa's Research, Evaluation and Learning team with the help of 3 consultants.

Sample

The sampling strategy qualitative research was purposeful. Most villages selected for the qualitative research were situated in blocks where Baseline centers were located. After the exit of the NGOs, Landesa narrowed its focus to a few Baseline blocks in each district. Our sampling was also impacted by the panchayat elections and exam schedules for schools. For example, many government officials were unable to either participate in or facilitate our research activities once the date for panchayat elections was announced and this limited all our field research activities. School exams and vacation posed additional constraints in conducting FGDs

with boys and teachers. FGDs and Interviews of boys, teachers, communities and PRIs were conducted where Landesa's sensitizations were implemented. Girls, AWWs and Master Trainers (MTs) FGDs were selected from 2-3 Gram Panchayats in a Baseline block with the consultation of the CDPO and supervisors. Interviews with block, district and state government officials were based on accessibility and availability to participate in the study. Landesa district and state level staff involved in the implementation of the program were also interviewed. The table below describes our sampling in more detail.

Qualitative Sample Description								
	Total	Cooch Behar	Alipurduar	Jalpaiguri	Malda	Nadia	Purulia	Basis for selection
FGDs								
Girls	15	3	2	3	3	2	2	Baseline blocks, girls exposed to LGG/ LBL
Boys	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	2 nd round of sensitization done
AWW/MT	12	2	2	2	2	2	2	2-3 GPs from a Baseline block
Community	4	0	1	0	1	1	1	2 nd round of sensitization done
Teachers	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	2 nd round of sensitization done
Most Significant Change Stories								
Girls + Parents	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	Girls who benefited significantly from the program
Interviews								
Teachers/ Headmaster	1					1		2 nd round of sensitization done and
PRI	7	1	1	1	1	1	2	2 nd round of sensitization done
CDPO/DPO/ ADM	15	3	1	2	3	3	2	Availability
OC Kanyashree	2		1		1			Availability
DICO	3			1	1		1	Availability
KVK/DHO	5	1	1	1	1		1	Availability
Landesa Proj. Mgrs	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Landesa Sr.	2							

Staff	
UNICEF	1
Consultant	

In addition to these interviews, 6 Most Significant Case stories (MSCs) were conducted with girls and their parents to present a best case scenario of program impact. One girl from each district was selected to showcase impact.

Additionally, an assessment of girls vulnerabilities was conducted on the hard-to-reach OOS girls pilot in each 2 of the 4 GPs in each the 3 target districts, Purulia Nadia and Jalpaiguri.

Out-of-School Girls Pilot					
	Total	Jalpaiguri	Nadia	Purulia	Basis for selection
Girls (FGDs)	6	2	2	2	GPs included in pilot
Parents (FGDs)	4		2	2	
AWW/ICDS Sup. (Interviews)	6	2	2	2	
Facilitators (Interviews)	3	1	1	1	
Pradhan (Interviews)	2		1	1	
CDPO/DPO (Interviews)	3	1	1	1	

From the girls, we collected information about their vulnerabilities and insecurities, their current behaviors and perceptions with regards to attendance, marriage, girls' issues, knowledge about rights to land, and engagement in LBL. From boys, AWWs, PRIs and communities we wanted to know about their perceptions of girls' issues, the actions they had taken to support the girls, and the perceived impacts of the program on adolescent girls. The government officials that were involved in the program implementation were interviewed about the process of implementation as well as the perceived impacts of the program on adolescent girls.

FINDINGS

Our findings are presented in the following themes: 1) attendance and exposure to the program, 2) education, 3) early marriage, 4) dowry, 5) inheritance and land rights, 6) land-based-livelihoods exposure, practices and factors impacting sustainability, 7) girls' empowerment and 8) vulnerabilities of the girls that participated in the hard-to-reach OOS girls pilot.

GIRLS ATTENDANCE & PROGRAM EXPOSURE

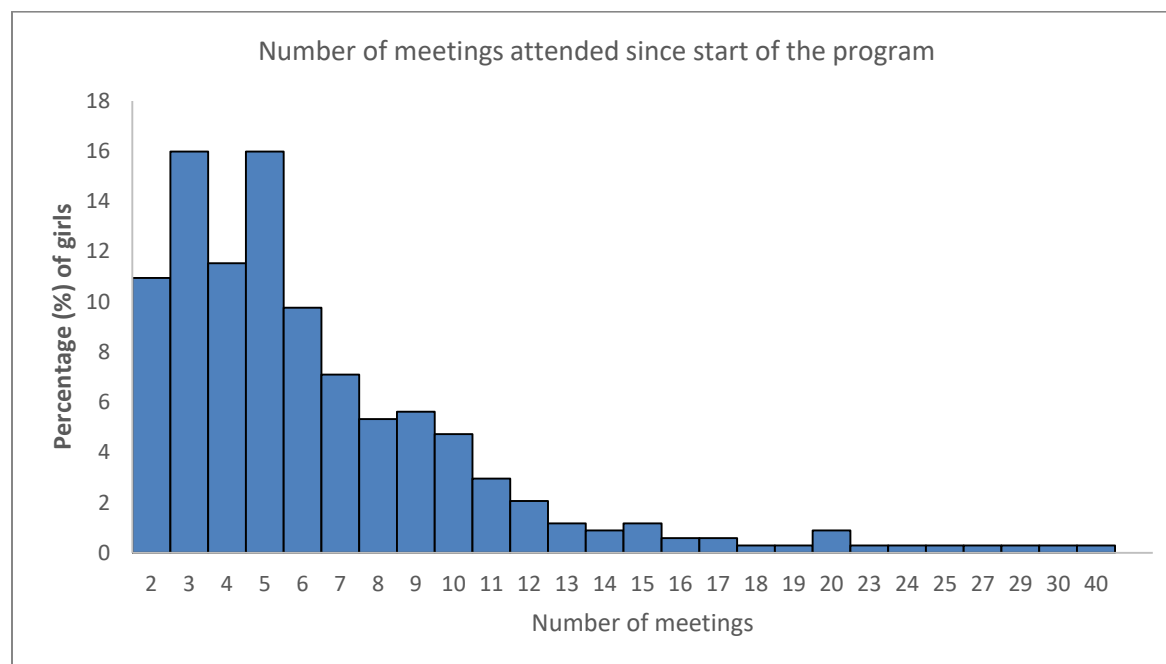
Research Question: How often are girls receiving the instruction and exposure intended by the program? What are factors impacting girls' attendance in the program?

Research Implications: Girls' attendance and frequency of meetings held are important factors impacting SABLA-Kanyashree program's effectiveness. They help us understand how the program was implemented as well as the factors that impact girls' attendance. With these we can make realistic assessments of scale of impact as well as make recommendations on how to address the constraints faced by girls and the front-line implementers for future interventions.

Analysis: The quantitative survey assessed the rate of attendance, rate of meetings held, and rate of exposure as reported by the girls. The qualitative research (focus groups and interviews) with girls, communities, MTs/AWWs and government stakeholders explored the factors that enabled or constrained girls' attendance, as well as girls' receptivity to the program, and stakeholders perspectives on how the program impacts girls.

How many meetings did girls attend?

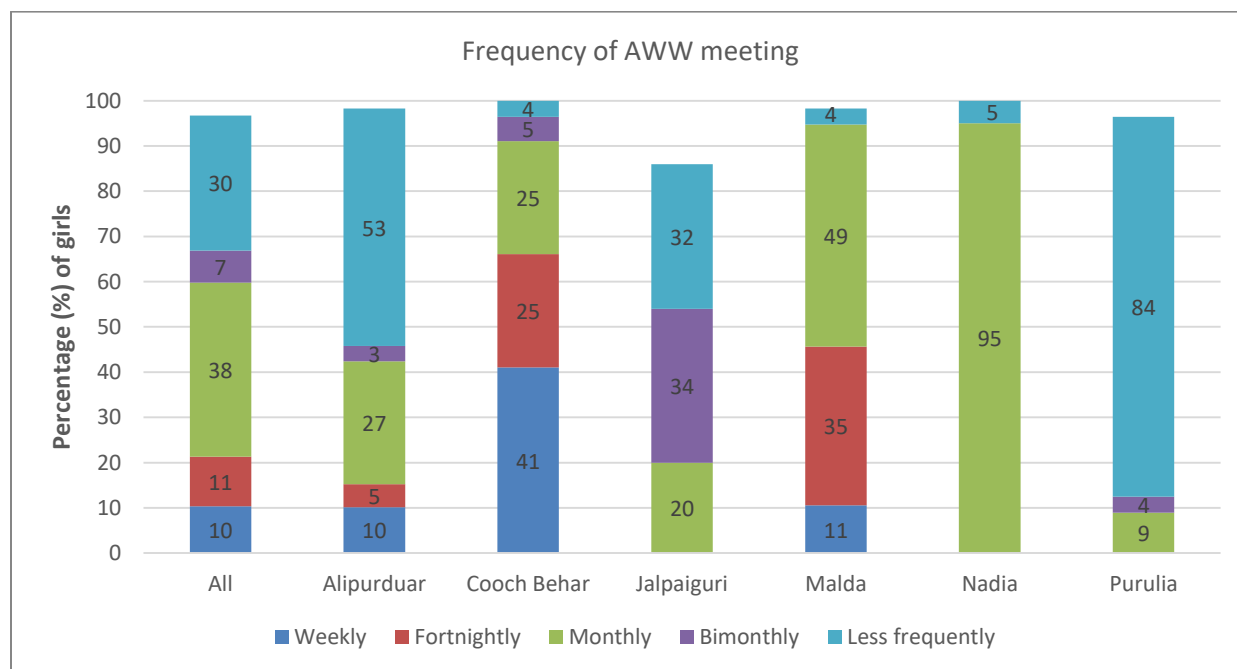
We first look at attendance rates as reported by respondents. Separately, we also collected attendance records maintained by AWWs, which we used to develop our sample, but only discuss self-reported attendance below.

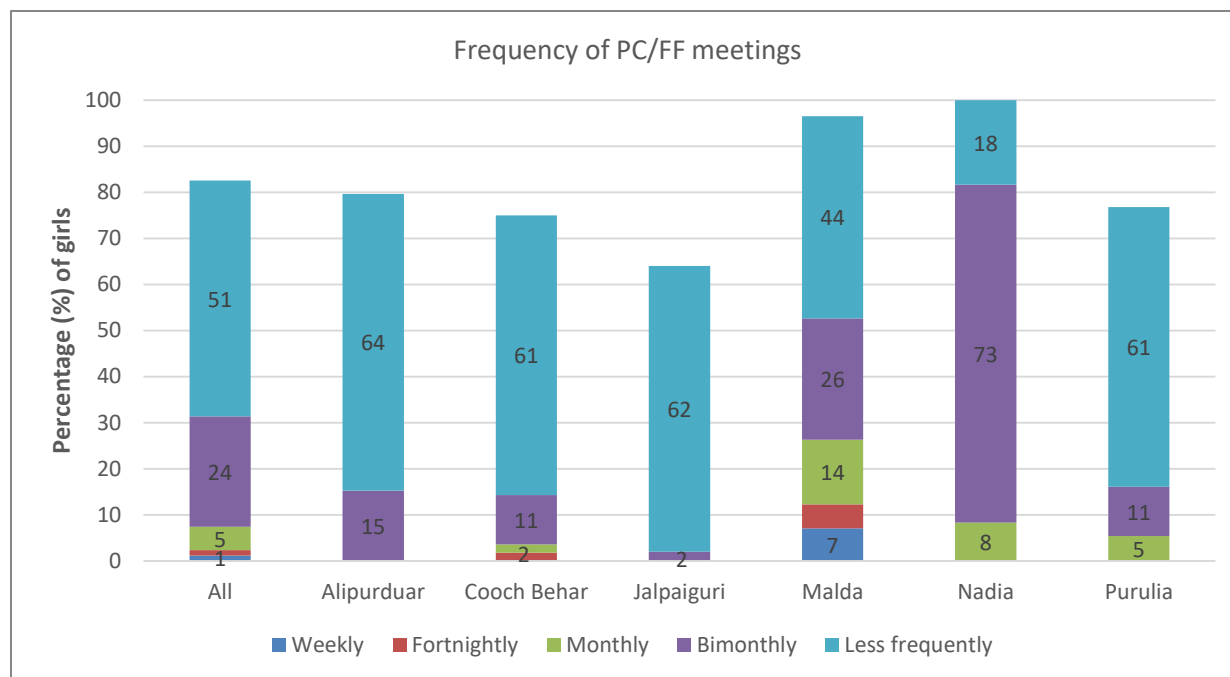


- Based on self-reported attendance rates reported through the endline survey, girls within the treatment group attended between 2-40 meetings since the inception of the program. As displayed in the chart above, about 65% of the girls reported attending between 2-6 meetings during the 2.5 year time-period.
- Ideally this should have been about 30 meetings if AWWs and PCs/FFs were regularly holding meetings.
- Girls' recall of the number of meetings they attended could be impacted by the long time frame - meetings started in October 2015.

How frequently were the meetings offered by either AWWs or PCs/FFs?

While there are a number of factors that may have contributed to the low rate of attendance by the girls, the frequency of meetings being held is certainly a strong influence. We asked girls in the treatment group to report how often AWWs offered meetings and separately how often PCs and FFs offered meetings, the results are described below.





- The two charts above showing frequency of meetings held by PC/FF and AWW highlight the gaps between program design and actual implementation which has implications for outcomes on girls.
- While this data is based on a total of 66 centers and may not represent the entire district, it should be noted that 55 of these centers that the treatment girls were selected from were better functioning centers and therefore frequency of meetings could be higher in these centers.
- Except for Nadia and Malda, a majority of the meetings conducted by PC/FFs occurred once every 3-4 months. This is in keeping with the design that centers are visited at least once every quarter by NGO staff.
- However, from the monitoring activities we know that LGG sessions were usually delivered only by PC/FFs and not by AWWs as planned in the design. With some exceptions, AWWs were often not equipped to teach the sessions and would mostly review the modules taught by the PC/FFs. As a result, when PC/FFs visited the center they would teach LGGs in one session and also clubbed groups with other groups so that all centers would be covered. While these satisfied targets set for the PC/FFs, it impacted the quality of the implementation for these reasons:
 - Girls found it difficult to attend clubbed sessions if the center was in another village (see reasons below where constraints to attendance are discussed).
 - With only 4-6 training sessions a year, missing 1 or 2 sessions meant that girls would not be exposed to several topics. This is one reason why it was hard to find more than 60 girls for the treatment group from functioning centers.

- Topics were never retaught by the PCs and FFs. Girls who missed sessions or girls who started attending later as they became eligible were not trained on several topics.

What factors are positively impacting girls' attendance?

From the qualitative focus group discussions and interviews with girls, MTs/AWW and government officials, we know that meeting attendance slowly increased over time as awareness and acceptance of the program increased. Moreover, girls were more likely to attend or more interested when the following things were in place:

- The sessions were held in the village or near their school;
- The AWW called them for a meeting;
- NGO staff or outside instructors taught sessions as opposed to the AWW;
- Parents encouraged them to attend;
- There was rapport within the group of girls;
- Sessions were held during a free day. Girls were keen to attend meetings and sometimes skipped school to attend.

“Although presently the LGG session are been conducted by Anganwadi worker, but still the sessions of the NGO personnel were competitively more effective. Even if the meeting is conducted once in a month, then also it would be effective for us. We feel that neither the Sakhi-Saheli nor the MT can explain as good as the NGO people.” – Girl beneficiary, Alipurduar

What were the constraints to attendance and factors that negatively impacted perceptions of the meetings?

- Some girls felt that their community members were not supportive of them attending sessions. For example, girls who participated in one FGD in Cooch Behar mentioned this as being a constraint.
- Meetings were not held regularly in many centers.
- Take Home Rations (nutritional supplement for girls) and tiffin were not provided. MTs highlighted that there was no funding provided for this. Sometimes they would pay out of pocket for snacks, especially if girls had a longer commute to the center.
- When meetings coincided with school, exams, tuitions, or household chores girls were less likely to attend.
- During school holidays attendance rates dropped in Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar, as girls would do need to do wage work.
- When sessions were clubbed with other groups, it created challenges:
 - Meetings were too far from their village.
 - Compensation for transportation costs and refreshments were often not given to girls or AWWs making it hard for the girls to attend.
 - Sessions were crowded and there was not enough space to sit or stand and it was hard to follow what was being taught.

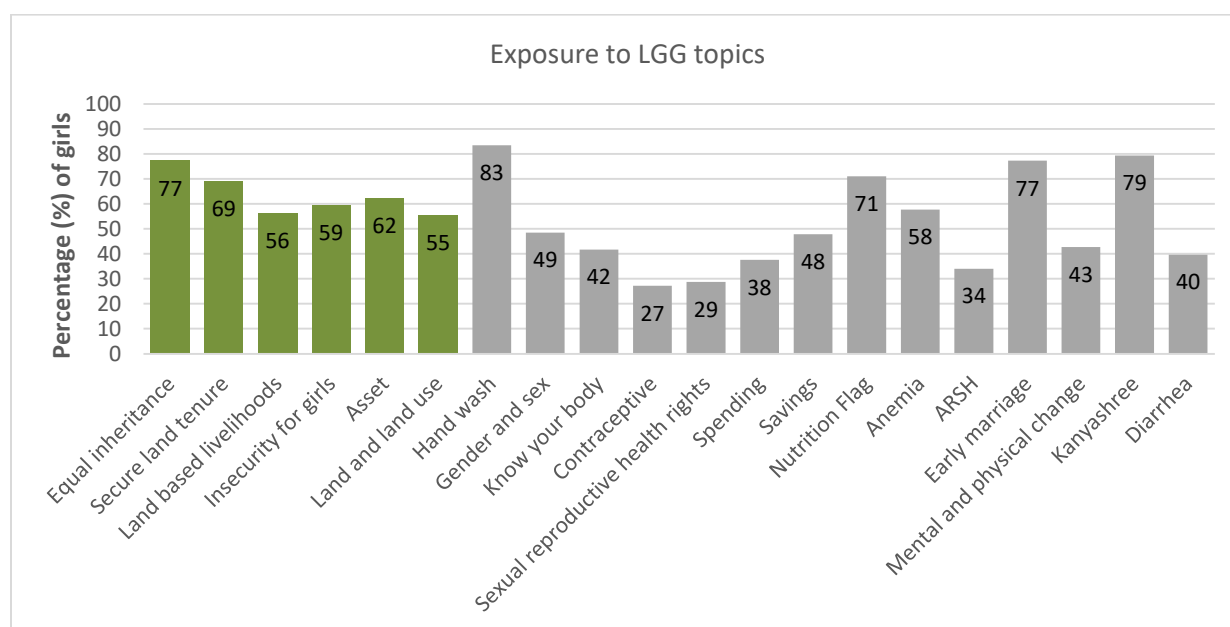
- Meetings that were taught by Sakhi Sahelis were not popular with the girls. Girls preferred meetings organized by NGO staff first, and then AWWs.
- Some girls mentioned that they would prefer female staff to teach the sexual health (ARSH) topics.
- Some girls/MT/AWWs felt that the current medium of instruction was not engaging enough and wanted to have audio-visual content to make the topics more interesting.

“There is no use of going to the sessions instead our parents say, we should focus on studies, some neighbors would say these sessions are a waste of time and it would be better if we sit at home instead and study or do household chores.” – Girl beneficiary, Cooch Behar

How often are girls exposed to LGG topics and Government offices?

We next explore the exposure rate to the various topics that are included within the entire SABLA curriculum, including the extracurricular activities associated with visiting government offices and LBL training. To do so, we report on self-reports of girls in the treatment group.

In total, the curriculum included 28¹ LGG topics, each one geared towards a different topic hypothesized to be relevant to achieving girls’ empowerment. Six of those topics related to land ownership and use. 100% of the girls in the treatment group expressed exposure to at least one LGG topic.



- The low reported exposure of girls to Contraceptives, Sexual health, ARSH topics could be because PC/FF/MTs and AWWs found it challenging to teach these topics and girls were

¹ Only 20 topics were delivered in the intervention because of implementation setbacks.

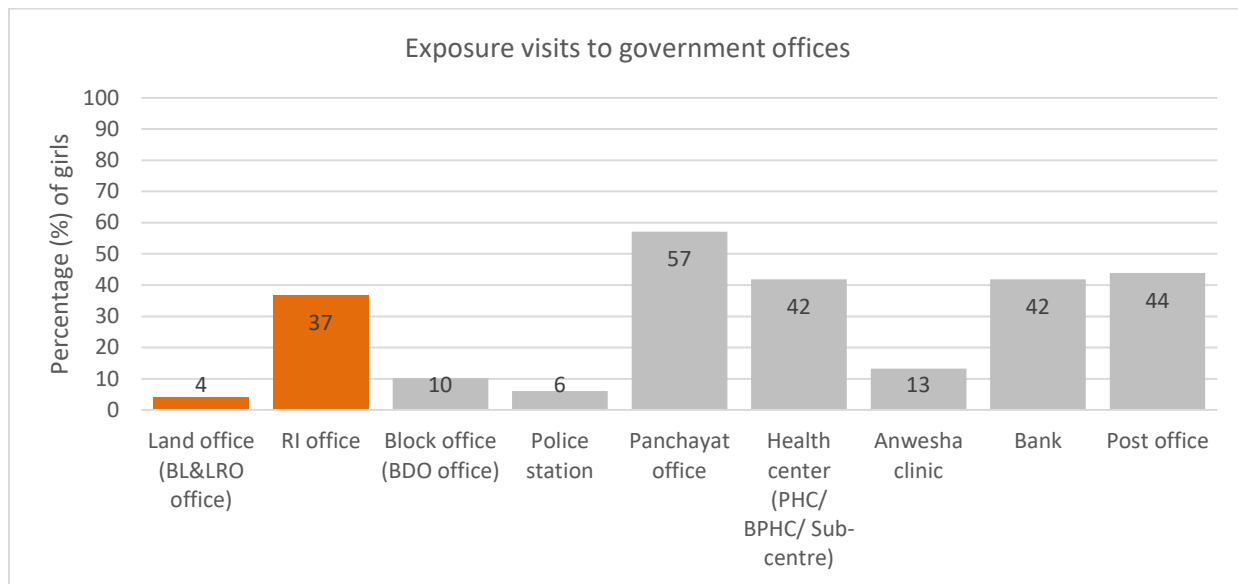
awkward. Furthermore in many areas community members were resistant to girls being exposed to sexual and reproductive health education.

- These topics were taught early on and therefore recall of these topics would be difficult.
- The low reported exposure to diarrhea is surprising since this is one of the 1st LGGs taught. This might also be a recall issue considering that most girls were exposed to this topic in October 2015 and topics are not reviewed once they are delivered.
- There could be a treatment bias because girls selected for the treatment had to have attended at least 2 meetings and be exposed to at least 1 Landesa topic. Therefore rates shown here across all topics are likely to be higher than average.

From the qualitative research we also learned that:

- Girls generally enjoyed the Landesa LGGs because they were new topics that they had not been exposed to before.
- Girls found some of the Landesa LGG content difficult to understand. This was made worse by the capacity of the instructors (PC/FF/AWW/MT) who were also not very familiar with land topics.
- Girls enjoyed the role-play in the LGGs.

“Equal inheritance and secure land tenure chapter is difficult for the girls to understand but at the same time it is also very important chapter.” – Master Trainer, Cooch Behar



- Only 23 percent of girls participated in any exposure visit
- Exposure to the Land related office of the BL&LRO was the lowest – only 4% of girls reported visiting the office as part of the program.
- From the qualitative research we understand that most girls found the exposure visits to government offices interesting.

- Many girls reported that exposure visits combined with LGG training were effective in helping them get a practical understanding of the workings of government offices and made girls understand where to go when they needed help. It also made girls more visible to government officials.
- Implementers such as AWWs and MTs feel that exposure visits have enhanced girls' confidence to interact with officials.
- One Panchayat member in Purulia said that girls are now coming to the Panchayat by themselves and getting certificates from them, which was not the case previously.

DOWRY

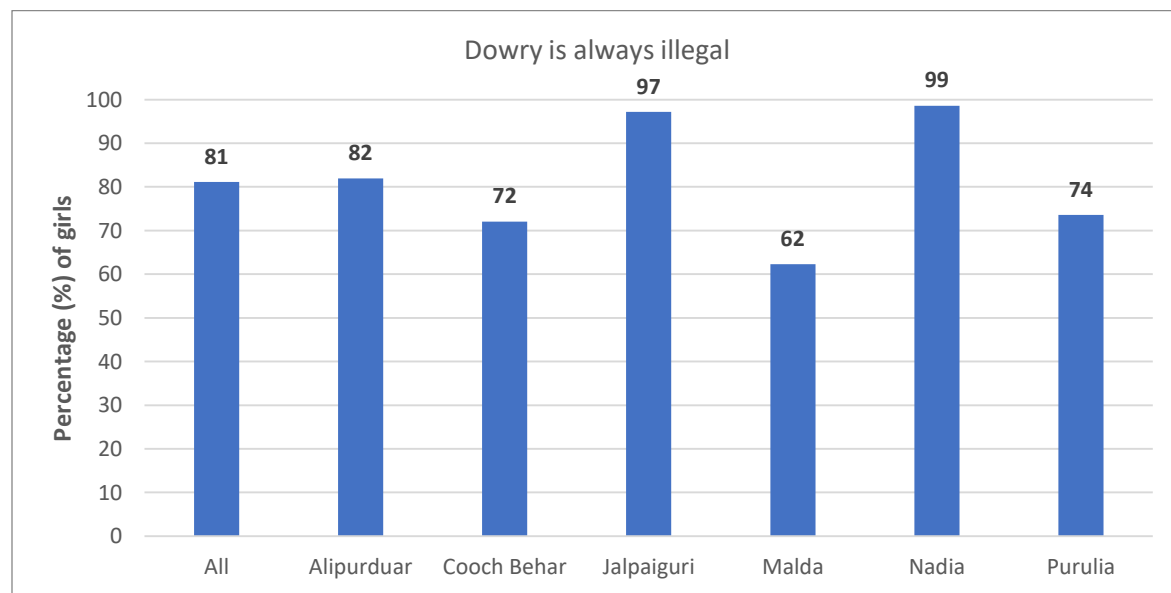
Research Question: What do girls and other stakeholders know about dowry laws, practices and harms and what are their attitudes toward dowry? Have their knowledge and attitudes been impacted by their exposure to the SABLA-Kanyashree program?

Research Implications: Awareness of dowry laws and its harms are important to reduce these practices in society. The practice of giving dowry is also linked to age of marriage and a denial of girls' inheritance, both of which can have long lasting negative impacts on girls.

Analysis: The quantitative endline survey measured the degree to which the girls understood that dowry is an illegal practice. In addition to absolutely legal and illegal, the respondents were also given the option to say that dowry was sometimes legal, either because the bride's and groom's families were Hindu or otherwise mutually agreed to engage in the practice of dowry. The qualitative research explored the knowledge and attitudes of all stakeholders including girls, parents, MTs/AWW, PRIs, boys, teachers and government officials with regard to dowry.

What is the current rate of knowledge about the legality of dowry across the surveyed districts?

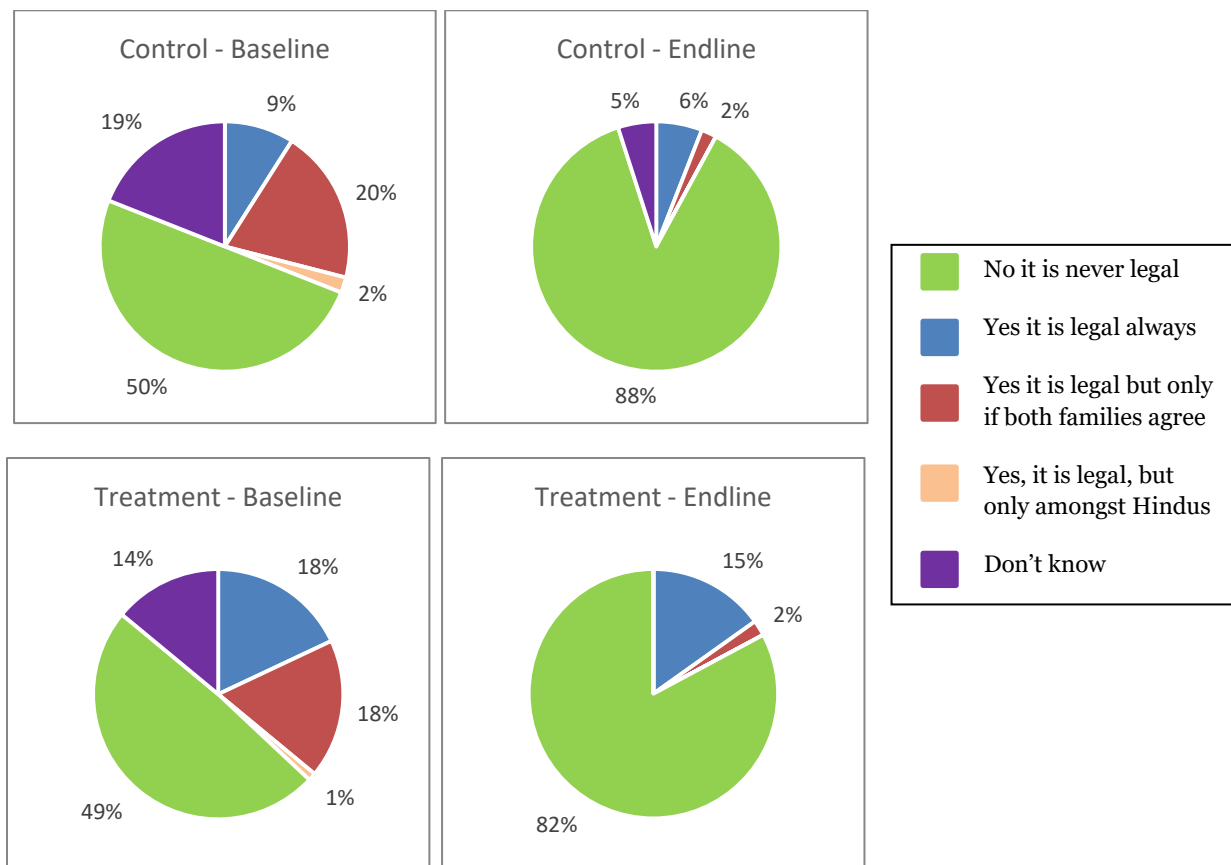
We first look at the percentage of girls who stated a belief that dowry is always illegal during the endline survey, as shown in the chart below.



- Belief that dowry is always illegal is fairly widespread across the surveyed districts, particularly in Jalpaiguri and Nadia, where almost 100% of girls answered the question correctly.

What effect did attending the SABLA program have on beliefs about the legality of dowry?

The next step is to understand whether there might be any program effect associated with improving the rate at which girls understand dowry to be illegal.



- We found that the percentage of girls who ultimately understood that dowry was always illegal grew consistently across the control and treatment groups. Any differential increase is statistically insignificant.
- This suggests either that information about the illegality of dowry is available outside of SABLA meetings or that girls who did learn this from SABLA meetings are sharing the knowledge with other girls in their villages (spillover effects).
- It is also possible that the same question asked during the baseline survey primed the girls to seek out the answer. However, considering the duration of time between the two surveys, as well as the relatively high rates of knowledge in Cooch Behar where the baseline was not conducted, we do not believe this issue to have had much influence over the results.

“Yes, dowry is very much there and it will remain for years to come. But ... now every cash transaction in dowry takes place in private...” – Master Trainer,

- The lowest increase in knowledge was experienced by respondents in Malda, where only about 11% of girls in the treatment group gained the correct understanding about the legality of dowry between the baseline and endline surveys.

The qualitative research assessed girls, parents, and other stakeholder's attitudes towards dowry and their perspectives on why dowry was being practiced.

What do girls know about dowry laws and what are their attitudes toward dowry?

- Girls in general understood that dowry is illegal but were not always clear on what the Dowry law was and what it stipulates.
- Even when girls did not know that it is illegal, they generally agreed that the practice of giving dowry is not good. Some girls expressed that it makes them feel like a commodity.
- Many girls who participated in the FGDs justified the practice of dowry because it allows them to get married and protects them from abuse at their in-laws hands.
- Some girls think that people do not know that dowry is illegal which is why the practice continues.
- Many girls said that dowry is still prevalent in their communities with the exception of girls from Scheduled Tribe communities. For example in Jalpaiguri and Purulia districts, where girls from Adivasi (ST) households participated in FGDs, they reported that the practice of dowry was not prevalent in their communities.

“With regards to dowry, it is difficult and time taking task to change the attitude. ... There are many laws but they are not very effective. I cannot go against the parents' wishes. If they get a good groom and want to give gifts, we cannot stop that. Now dowry is not prevalent like before.” – CDPO, Malda

What are other stakeholders' attitudes towards dowry?

- Most stakeholders agree that even with knowledge about dowry being illegal, it is still practiced and many transactions take place privately.
- Laws against dowry are not effective and officials have a difficult time stopping the practice of dowry.
- Many said that cash dowry has increased and sometimes motorbikes or other things were demanded.
- In most cases the girl's family willingly gives dowry for daughter's well-being in in-laws' place.
- Boys in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, and Alipurduar, who participated in sensitization activities in their schools, learned that dowry is illegal and some said that they would not demand dowry. These boys shared with their parents that they would

“You tell us ... is it possible to marry off our daughter without giving anything? Our daughters will use their household items. If my daughter uses their items then what dignity will be left for us? And if we give something to our daughter during marriage then she will have some respect and also some power/control at her in-laws.” – Parent, Nadia

not want to take dowry and said that their parents would be open to it.

- It was unclear if dowry was practiced in the Muslim communities that participated in the study. For example in Malda, we heard contradictory accounts of dowry practices. Girls said that their communities practiced giving dowry, but a government official we interviewed said that dowry was not practiced in Muslim communities.

EARLY MARRIAGE

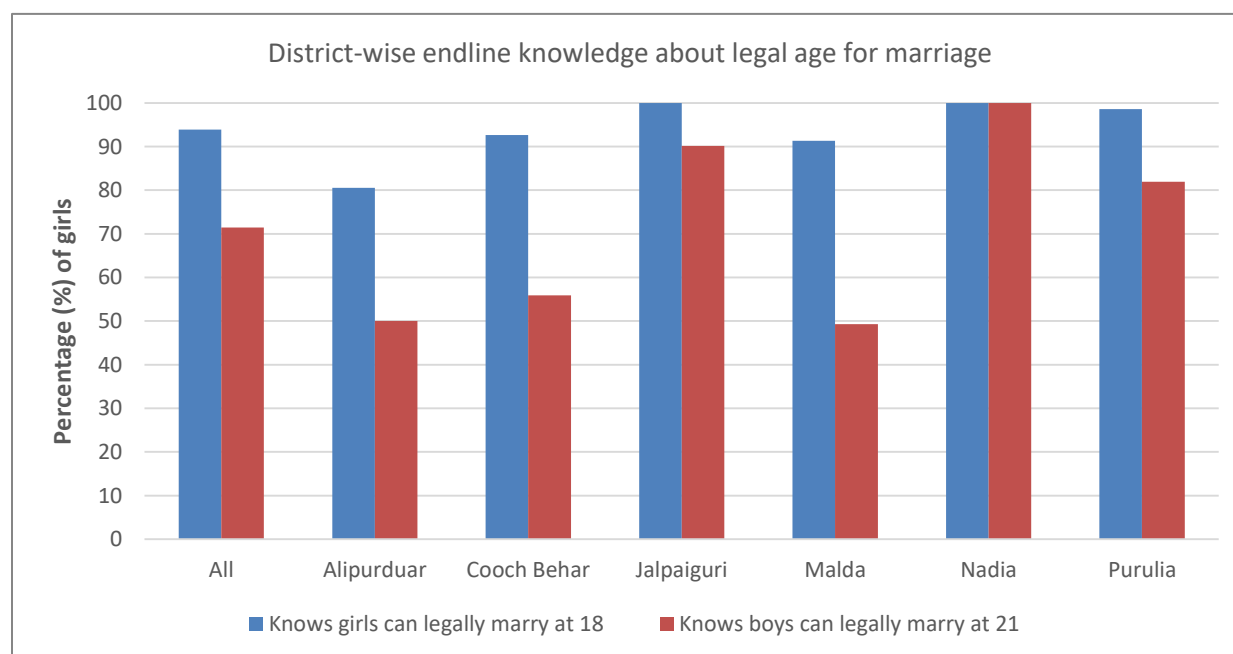
Research questions: Do girls and other stakeholders know about the legal age of marriage and early marriage harms? What are their attitudes toward early marriage? Have they taken action to stop or report early marriage? Has the program succeeded in changing knowledge and beliefs about early marriage?

Research implications: Understanding girls' knowledge about the legal age of marriage and their perceptions about early marriage will help assess the success of the SABLA-Kanyashree intervention that targeted programmatic efforts to provide education and awareness about the benefits of waiting until the legal age of 18 to get married. Furthermore, a girl's education and career opportunities are impacted by the age of her marriage, therefore delaying marriage could also increase a girl's chance of finishing school, going to college, or establishing a career.

Analysis: The survey questionnaire quizzed respondents on the legal age of marriage for girls (18) and boys (21).² The qualitative study asked girls and other stakeholders about their knowledge of early marriage harms and their attitudes, behaviors, and desires to delay or stop early marriages.

What is the current rate of knowledge across the surveyed districts?

We first look at the current knowledge rates based on responses to the endline survey, as shown in the chart below.



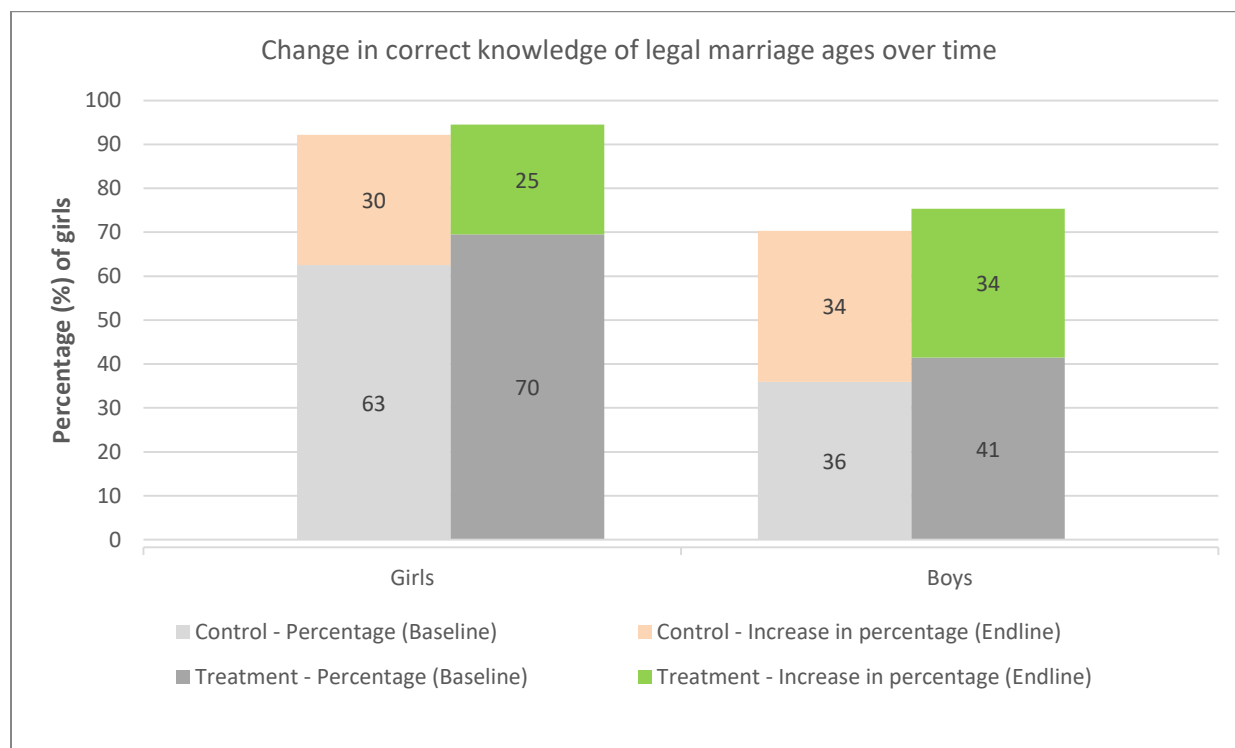
² Notably only two respondents reported having been married before the age of 18.

- Knowledge about the legal ages of marriage seems relatively high, particularly in Jalpaiguri, Nadia and Purulia.
- In Alipuduar and Malda, however, less than half the girls correctly stated the legal age of marriage for boys as 21 years of age.
- Further statistical analysis suggests that Muslims are more likely³ to report the correct age of marriage for girls.
- Girls who are members of a Scheduled Caste are more likely than members of Scheduled Tribes or Minority groups to report the correct age of marriage for girls⁴ and boys.⁵

“I am involved in generating awareness and especially I am involved in activities like stopping child marriage. This program has really helped to create awareness regarding the ill effects of child marriage and the situation has improved.” – CDPO, Jalpaiguri

What effect did attending the SABLA program have on improving knowledge rates?

The next step is to understand whether there might be any program effect associated with these generally high levels of knowledge by comparing the control and treatment groups’ level of knowledge over time, as displayed in the chart below.



³ 1% level of significance; models control for caste and district.

⁴ 1% level of significance; models control for district.

⁵ 5% level of significance; models control for district.

- The control and treatment groups experienced similar increases in knowledge rates over time. Any differential increase is statistically *insignificant*.
- This suggests either that information about legal age of marriage is available outside of SABLA meetings or that girls who did learn this from SABLA meetings are sharing the knowledge with other girls in their villages (spillover effects).
- It is also possible that the same question asked during the baseline survey primed the girls to seek out the answer. However, considering the duration of time between the two surveys as well as the relatively high rates of knowledge in Cooch Behar where the baseline was not conducted, we do not believe this issue to have had much influence over the results.

What is the state of girls' knowledge of early marriage harms?

- Girls in general were aware of legal age of marriage when asked during FGDs. Other stakeholders agreed that most girls are aware about the legal age of marriage for girls.
- Girls reported that the LGG on early marriage harms was useful. They understood the analogy of the flower bud being damaged if it is opened too early, as that of girls not developing fully and having health issues if they have children at a young age.
- Most girls expressed a desire to delay marriage, in order to study and become financially independent first.
- Some girls and other stakeholders noted that in some cases girls make a choice to marry early. They “elope” before 18 years if their parents want them to wait and they have boyfriends.
- Most were aware of the Child Helpline to report early marriage and said that they would use it.

“No, first my daughter will study in college then (we) will marry her off.” – Parent, Purulia

What are other stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors towards delaying marriage?

- All stakeholders agreed that awareness of early marriage laws has increased in general not just among girls, but also in the wider community.
- Most think that girls are getting married later because of the Kanyashree program – cash incentives to stay in school and delay marriage, and awareness raising, are both effective they believe.
- Parents who participated in the FGD were also broadly supportive of delaying marriage. However, some said that there were customary norms that pressured them to marry their daughters young. Some also said that daughters would elope when they were younger, and some highlighted the need for more community and PRI sensitizations to delay early marriages.
- Most government stakeholders believe that parents were more aware of consequences of early marriage and were delaying marriage of their daughters. This could also be due to other complementary efforts by the government to raise awareness on early marriage and education. For example, in one village in Nadia, a religious leader who participated in an

FGD with parents of adolescent girls said that the government had directed them to not officiate at weddings if girls are less than 18 years.

- Most boys who participated in the FGDs, expressed support for legal/late marriage age for girls. Many understood the harms of early marriage for girls and knew about Child Helpline to report early marriages. Many indicated that they would use the Child Helpline or go to the Panchayat or Block Development Officer to stop an early marriage.
- MTs/AWWs were also supportive of legal/late marriage. Many saw delaying marriage as an outcome of girls staying in school.
- Teachers in Alipurduar said that early marriage was the most appreciated topic in the boys' sensitization program. They could relate to it very easily as they are aware of it happening in their communities.

EDUCATION

Research Question: What are the knowledge and attitudes of girls who have attended the SABLA-Kanyashree program on education and the benefits of staying in school? What are the obstacles that girls face to staying in school? What are others stakeholders attitudes toward girls' education?

Research Implications: A key objective of the SABLA-Kanyashree program is to ensure girls remain in school and attend regularly. Girls and other stakeholders are made aware of the benefits of staying in school and incentives are provided to girls to continue education. There is also a greater likelihood for girls to marry later if they stay in school.

Analysis: The findings presented here are based on qualitative research and reflect the perspectives of all stakeholders interviewed for the qualitative endline research including girls, parents, MTs/ AWWs, PRIs, boys, teachers and government officials.

What are girls' attitudes toward education?

- Girls understood that staying in school decreases their other vulnerabilities, such as being forced to marry early or working to support the family.
- Most girls expressed a desire to finish school and develop careers or go to college.
- Some girls believed that education leads to empowerment and higher status within their households. Some mentioned that husbands and in-laws would not misbehave if they were educated and therefore empowered.
- Some girls noted that the Kanyashree money will allow them to study further.

“We want to be first married to our work, and then we will get married. If we earn an income our husbands or in-laws cannot misbehave with us.” – Girl beneficiary, Malda

What obstacles do girls face to attending and staying in school?

- There is a link between early marriage and dropping out of school. For example, in communities where early marriage was prevalent, education for girls was not valued.
- Girls from poor and isolated communities faced the biggest obstacles to education. For example in scheduled tribe communities (ST), many girls dropped out of school to earn money as agricultural laborers or take care of housework and siblings. In some cases their parents migrated with them and they could not attend school. In some cases they were not motivated to attend because schools were far and poorly equipped. Furthermore many of their parents had never been to school and did not see the value in educating their daughters.

“Girls in this village don't study much. Some girls said that once they turn 18 or complete high school they are forced to get married, or they are threatened by their parents that want to get them married.” – Girl beneficiary, Cooch Behar

- When schools were far, parents were concerned about girls' safety. Some parents in Nadia, for example, felt that their girls would be sexually harassed by boys if they were sent to school on their own.
- All stakeholders thought that more needs to be done to sensitize parents on the benefits of girls' education.
- Some, including parents and government officials, thought that educating girls was not good because it could make them too independent. Some parents felt that education would hinder girls' marriage prospects or increase the dowry they would have to pay to marry their daughters.
- All re-admitted girls did not stay in school. They often drop out again as the obstacles they face have not been sufficiently addressed.

How are other stakeholders attitudes towards girls' education? How are stakeholders creating an enabling environment for girls?

- In general, most stakeholders saw the benefit of Kanyashree and agreed that it has raised the specter of girls' education.
- Most government stakeholders view education as especially important for girls from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds to protect them from other vulnerabilities.
- Most thought that the sensitizations of communities, boys and PRIs were helping to create an enabling environment for girls.
- Many think that incentives for girls such as money and bicycles are helping them value their education more.
- Some parents saw the economic value of educating girls as they could get jobs and support themselves and their families in the future.
- The government prioritizing girls' education and setting targets for readmission has been a motivating factor for government officials to focus on girls' education.
- Several ICDS workers, PRI and other government officials have taken steps to get girls readmitted in school. Often this involved repeated visits to the girls' family to convince them of the importance of girls staying in school.
- All stakeholders, including boys and communities, felt that the dropout rate has decreased since the SABLA-Kanyashree program started.
- Boys in Jalpaiguri, who participated in an FGD, thought that if girls were educated they could help their children with studies and also contribute to the family economically, which would improve their quality of life.

"I think first thing we need to discuss with the parents is continuation of girls' education and not to think of marriage so early just like they do with their sons." – CDPO, Purulia

INHERITANCE AND WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS

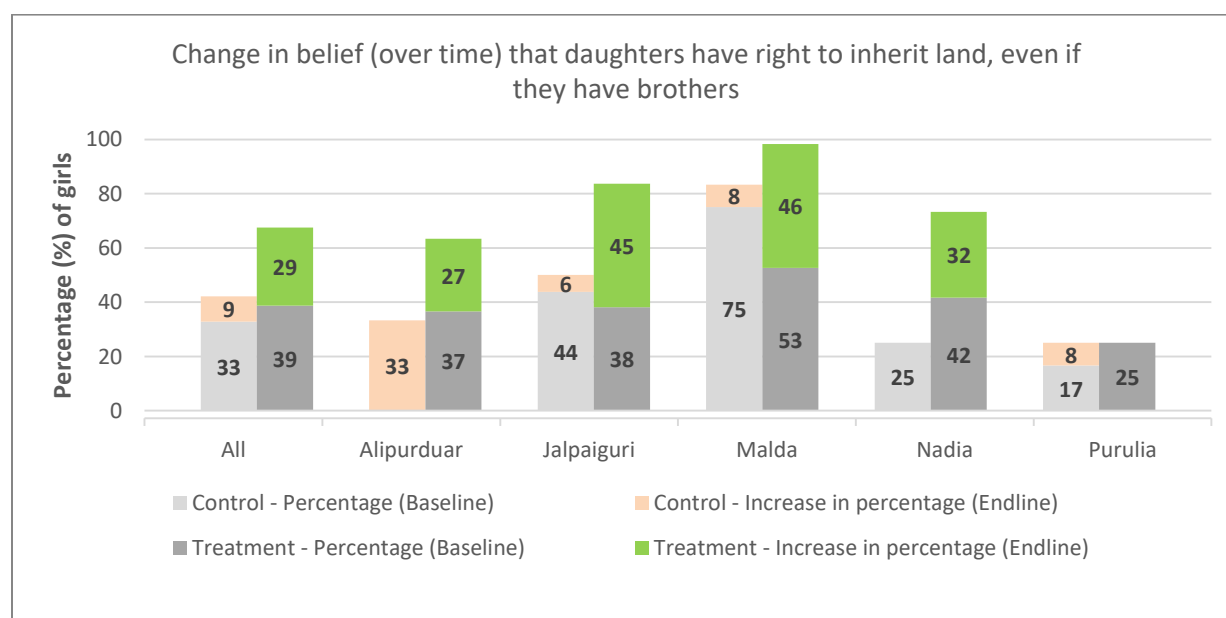
Research Question: Do girls and other stakeholders have a correct understanding of legal inheritance rights as it applies to both girls and boys? What are current perceptions on whether girls should inherit land?

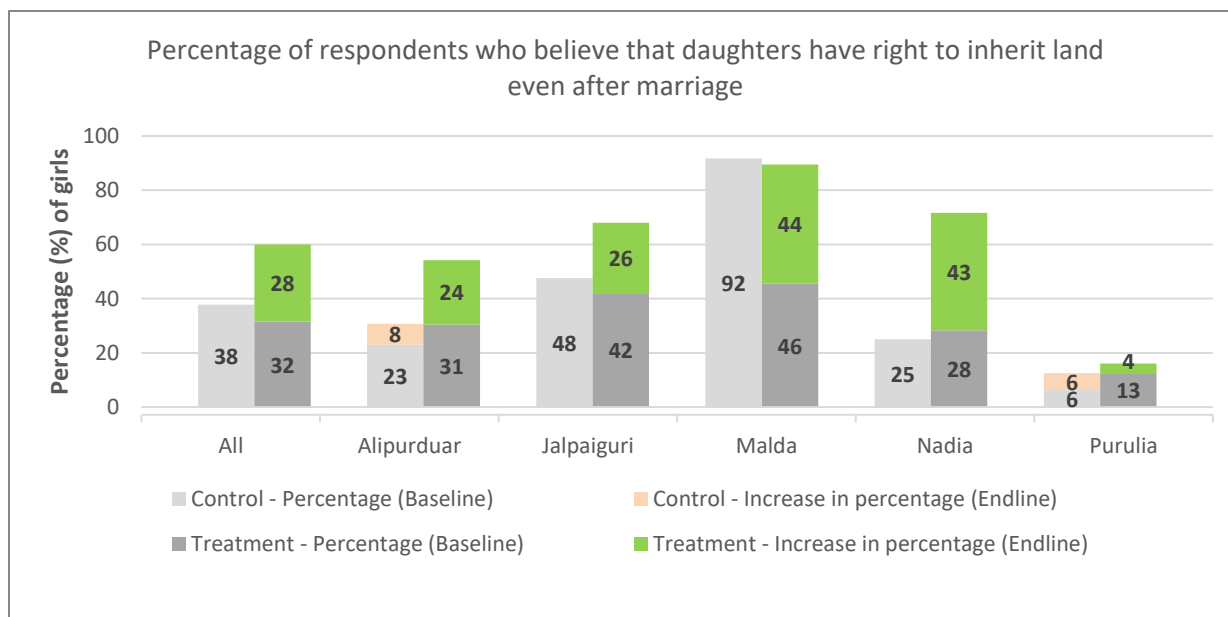
Research Implications: Examining girls' and other stakeholders' knowledge and perceptions of girls' legal inheritance rights will help us understand if girls and their communities have become more aware of girls' rights. An increase in awareness could foster a more enabling environment for girls, increase girls' status within their homes and communities, and could ultimately empower them to realize their land rights as women.

Analysis: The Quantitative survey included a few questions to ascertain perceptions of girls' legal rights to inheritance, specific to the topics discussed within the SABLA curriculum. The qualitative research is based on interviews and FGDs with girls, boys, parents, MTs/AWWs and government stakeholders and focused on stakeholders' attitudes towards the importance of land rights for girls.

Did SABLA participation help improve beliefs in girls' legal rights to inheritance?

We first look at whether the knowledge about a daughter's right to inheritance was improved by the SABLA program.





- Overall, participation in the program seems to significantly increase the belief that girls have a right to inherit, even if they had brothers, and even after marriage. In particular, in Jalpaiguri, Malda and Nadia, there was minimal to zero increase over time in the percentage of respondents within the control group, whereas the treatment group's rate increased between 26–46%. This suggests that information about inheritance rights is not easily available outside of targeted training sessions, and that information about inheritance rights were delivered effectively during the program.
- Statistically, girls in the treatment group are on average 24.7% more likely than girls in control group to answer that girls have inheritance rights even if they have a brother. Similarly, girls in treatment group are on average 21.9% more than girls in the control group to believe that daughters maintain that right even after marriage.⁶
- Girls that participated in the FGDs were generally aware about the land rights and the laws related to it, i.e. the Hindu Succession Act and Shariat law. They also know what a land title is.
- Many girls reported discussing land rights topics with their parents after they learned them at the meetings.

“No, still girls don't get share of the father's property but now adolescent girls have come to know that they also have share of the parental property. Even if girls now are not claiming their share but when they will grow up they will claim their share and they will learn to protest and will ask if their brothers have got share of the father's land then why can't they have their share?”
– Government official, Nadia

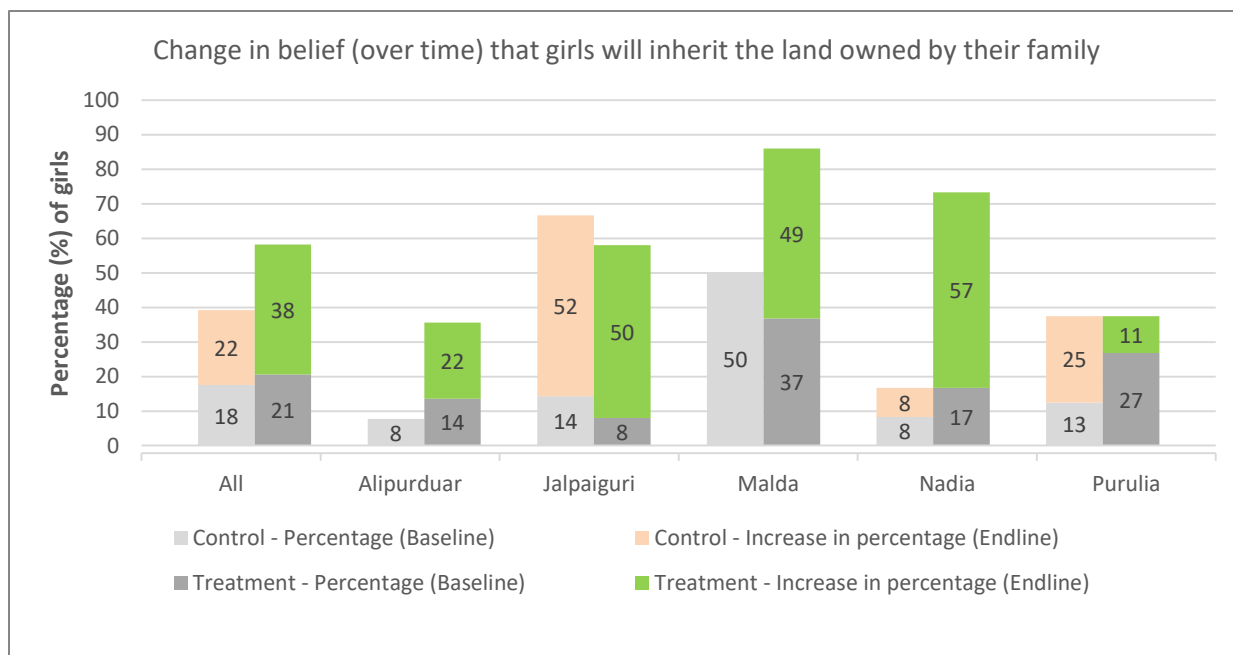
⁶ This is after controlling for religion and caste of the respondent as well as the district. The variable for treatment is statistically significant at 1% level of confidence.

- An unintended by positive outcome of increasing girls knowledge of their land rights is that it increased the knowledge of other stakeholders on tenure security and inheritance laws as these were topics they were not very familiar with before.
 - For example, implementers such as AWWs and MTs were generally not aware of girls inheritance rights till they were exposed to the content of the LGG. Many had reported that they now know how to formalize access to the lands they own or access.
- Some implementers find land rights topics hard to comprehend.
 - For example, even after they have been trained, many AWWs and MTs did not teach Landesa's LGGs.
- Some teachers in Cooch Behar said that land laws and land rights related issues were not clear to them so they never discussed them till they had been involved in the sensitizations.
- Teachers in Cooch Behar also said that the topic of Women's Land Rights (WLR) was new to boys.
- Other complementary efforts such as mandates to include girls' names in the legal heir certificate have increased the awareness of PRIs and parents on girls' inheritance rights. PRIs in Purulia encouraged parents to include their daughters on legal heir certificates but they also said that they could not force parents to do it.

“If a girl is given the share of property then she will have an asset which will help her in future problems like if her husband leaves her or divorce her, if some unforeseen events like death, disharmony in a family comes then the girl don't have to depend on her father's or brother's property if she is already having an asset. Moreover the asset in her name will give her power in the family she is living in.” – Boy participant, Cooch Behar

What are the attitudes of girls towards their inheritance rights?

The survey included a question about the family inheritance plan, specifically asking who will inherit land owned by the family.

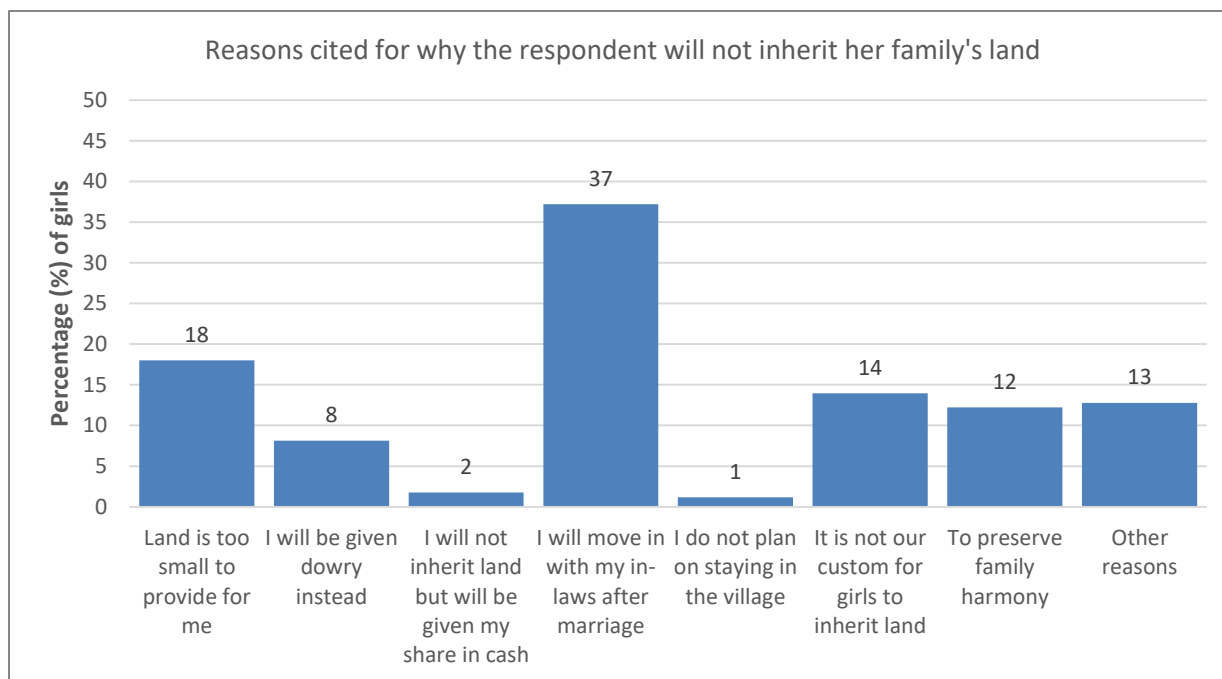


- Girls' belief in the likelihood of receiving inheritance increased at a much more significant rate after exposure to SABLA programming (treatment group). The increase is particularly high across girls in Malda and Nadia.
- Statistically, girls in the treatment group are on average 19.3% more likely to report that she will inherit her family's land relative to a girl in the control group.⁷
- While girls' inheritance is likely an unreasonable expectation given the current state of girls' inheritance practices in West Bengal, this finding points not only to girls' increased awareness of their land rights, but also their desire to inherit land.

"I believe that girls not getting a share of inheritance is not because of the lack of knowledge in the community, but because girls they are duped by people who already have the knowledge.... When girls are duped out of their share in the family property, it means that there are people in the same family who do have the requisite knowledge to ascertain that the girl signs her share away on legal documents. This is what we try to address through our work and performances (community theatre)". – DICO official, Malda

In case the respondents did not mention themselves as the likely benefactor, the survey asked them to explain why not. The below chart describes the responses.

⁷ Statistically significant at the 5% level; model controls for religion, caste, and district.



- Most commonly, girls cite plans to move in with their in-laws as reasons for why they will not inherit parent's land. Otherwise, they seem concerned about family harmony, custom, and the practicality of dividing small parcels amongst all the children.
- Examples of "other reasons" include: not having interest in inheriting land and uncertainty around whether their parents would feel that they are deserving of land.
- From the qualitative research we understand that girls are not expected or encouraged to claim their inheritance.
- Parents, girls, and boys said that it is customary for girls not to claim or inherit land, except if there are no male siblings.
- Inheritance practices were closely linked to dowry and marriage.
 - For example, parents and girls said that inheritance was often denied to girls because dowry was given as a comparable asset.
 - Some parents and girls reported having to sell land to give dowry, which precluded girls from inheriting land.
- There seemed to be consensus among different stakeholder groups that girls would not claim land for fear of alienating family members. For example, girls would value the support of their brothers in times of need and felt that claiming inheritance would impact their family dynamics. This was especially the case of girls who left their marriages/in-laws houses and needed to be accepted back by their natal families.

"When the parents are dead, several girls do not want to take the share of the land of the brother. Mostly women do not claim their share of the land from their brothers since they feel that it might strain the relationships between them. The original land holding itself is limited in number. In some cases, if the girl chooses to claim her share, she is seen as 'bad' by the community." – Pradhan, Malda

- Parents, boys, and girls also gave the small size of parcels of land as reason for not bequeathing land to girls; however, there seems to be an underlying desire for girls' families to not lose control of the land.
- Boys, who participated in the sensitization in Cooch Behar, seemed to be in favor of girls having equal inheritance rights.
- Some girls felt that claiming their land would help them if they were getting a divorce and wanted to be listed as legal heirs to protect their rights.
- Many stakeholders agreed that even girls knowledge of land rights could empower them in the future and could improve their standing within the family.
- Some indicated that male family members were insecure that girls were learning about their land rights.

LAND BASED LIVELIHOODS (LBL)

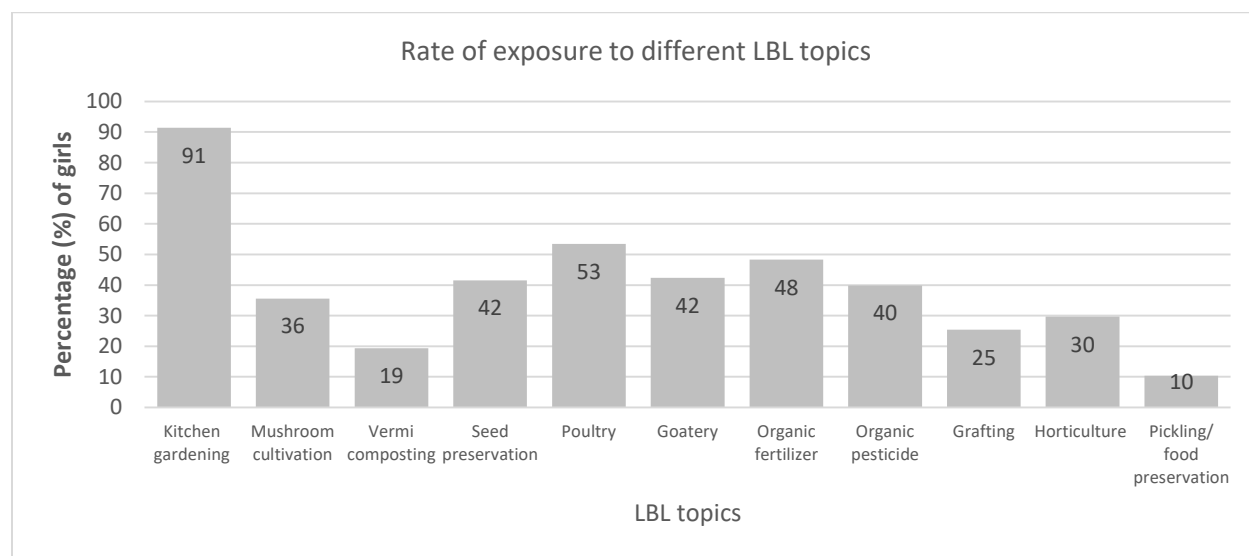
Research Question: To what extent have girls been exposed to LBL training through the program? Has the exposure led to an increase in girls' engagement with kitchen gardening and other LBL? What are challenges with continuing kitchen gardening or other LBL activities?

Research Implications: By examining the frequency of girls' exposure to LBL trainings we hope to assess the quality of the implementation of the SABLA-Kanyashree program. By examining how girls practice LBL we hope to understand the importance of LBL to girls' lives, as well as the factors that impact the sustainability of LBL practices for girls. This understanding will ultimately inform recommendations around further investment in such LBL trainings.

Analysis: The survey questionnaires asked a series of questions about exposure to LBL training, and kitchen garden access and use. In the qualitative focus group discussions and interviews all stakeholders we asked about the receptivity and relevance of LBL for girls, if they were practicing it after receiving training and if not, what might be challenges to sustainability.

To what extent have girls been exposed to LBL training through the program?

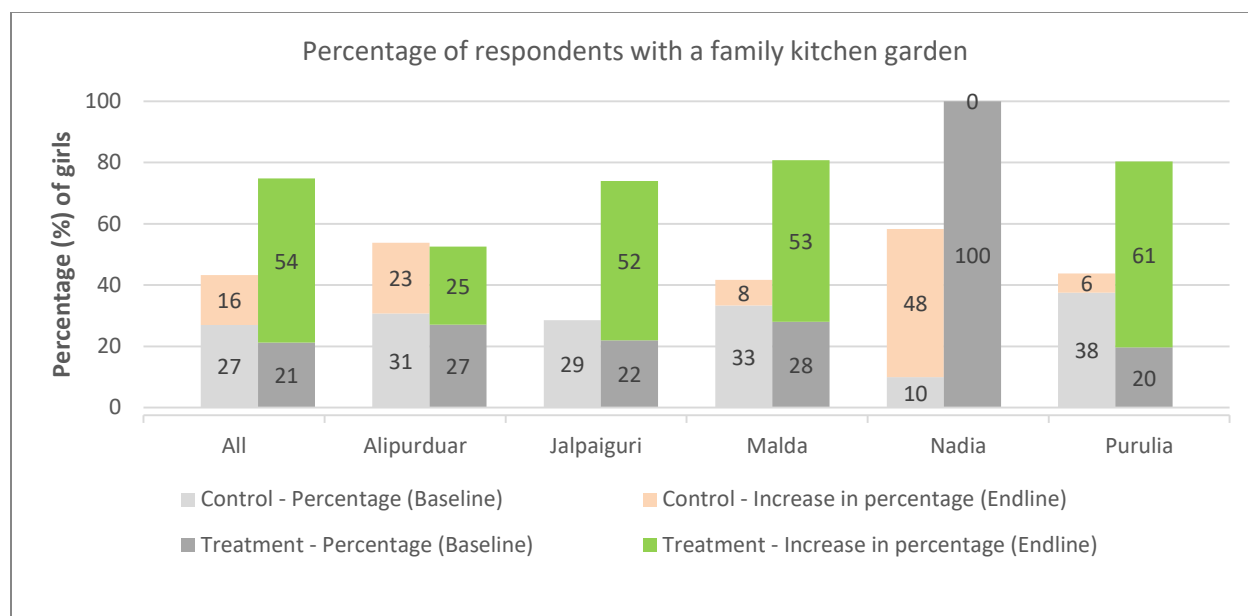
We asked survey respondents whether they received training on a number of different land-based livelihoods, as we hypothesize that LBL exposure will heighten the likelihood that a girl will engage in either kitchen gardening or animal rearing at home. The chart below displays the rate of exposure of girls across the *treatment* group to different LBL topics.



- The high percentage of girls exposed to kitchen gardening is expected because girls in the treatment group were given a classroom training on the basics of kitchen gardening in the form of an LGG.
- From the qualitative research we understand that hands-on training and provision of inputs such as seeds and saplings, makes the girls more likely to take up kitchen gardening.

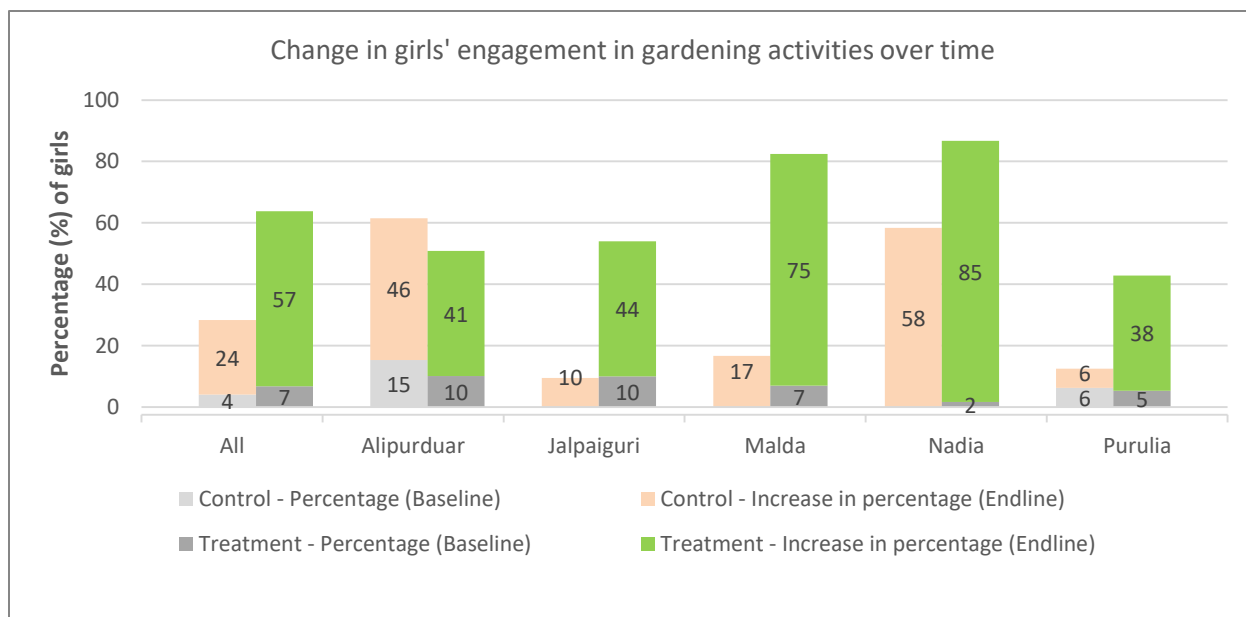
- Mushroom cultivation was limited to the northern districts of Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, where the climate is suitable to mushroom cultivation and people eat mushrooms.
- Exposure to poultry-related training was only offered in Malda.

Did the SABLA program lead to increased rates of kitchen gardening?

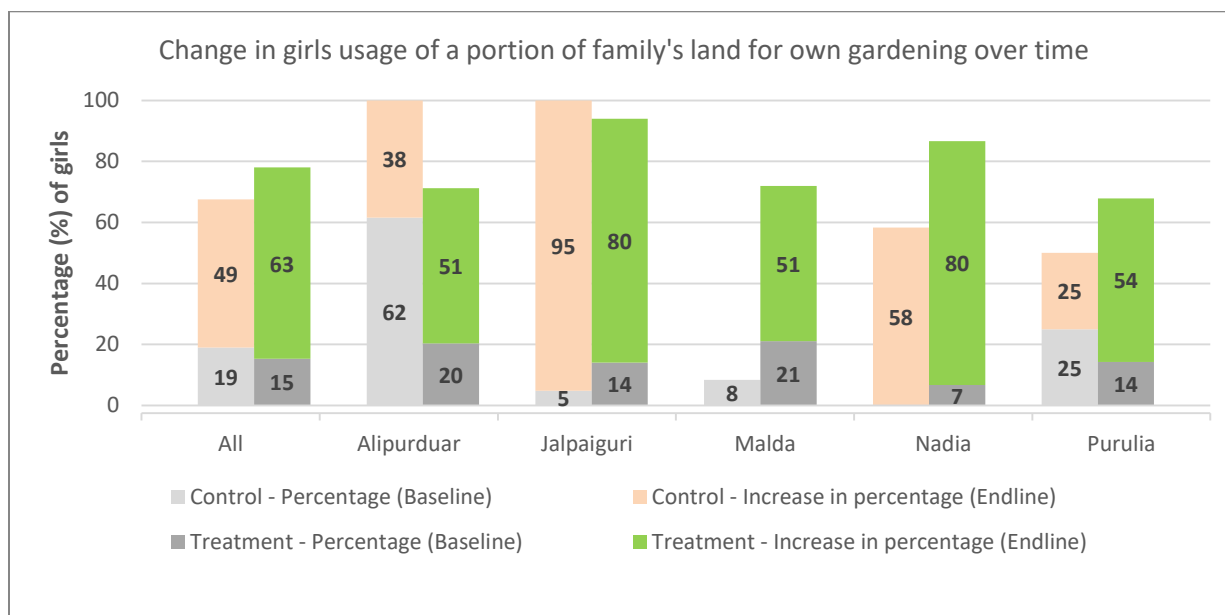


- Overall, 75% of girls within the treatment group reported having a family kitchen garden, the majority of which did not report having one at the time of baseline data collection. The increase in family kitchen gardening seems to be particularly prominent in Jalpaiguri, Malda and Purulia. The increase in family kitchen gardening amongst the control group, on the other hand seems to be minimal, except in Nadia.
- Statistically, respondents in the treatment group are on average 25.6% more likely to report that they have a family kitchen garden than respondents in the control group.⁸
- This suggests either that the program has influenced the girls who are passing on knowledge about kitchen gardening to their families, or that the trainings have delivered an enhanced understanding of kitchen gardening, which causes girls in the treatment group to report it more frequently.

⁸ The effect is statistically significant at 1% level after controlling for caste, religion and district.



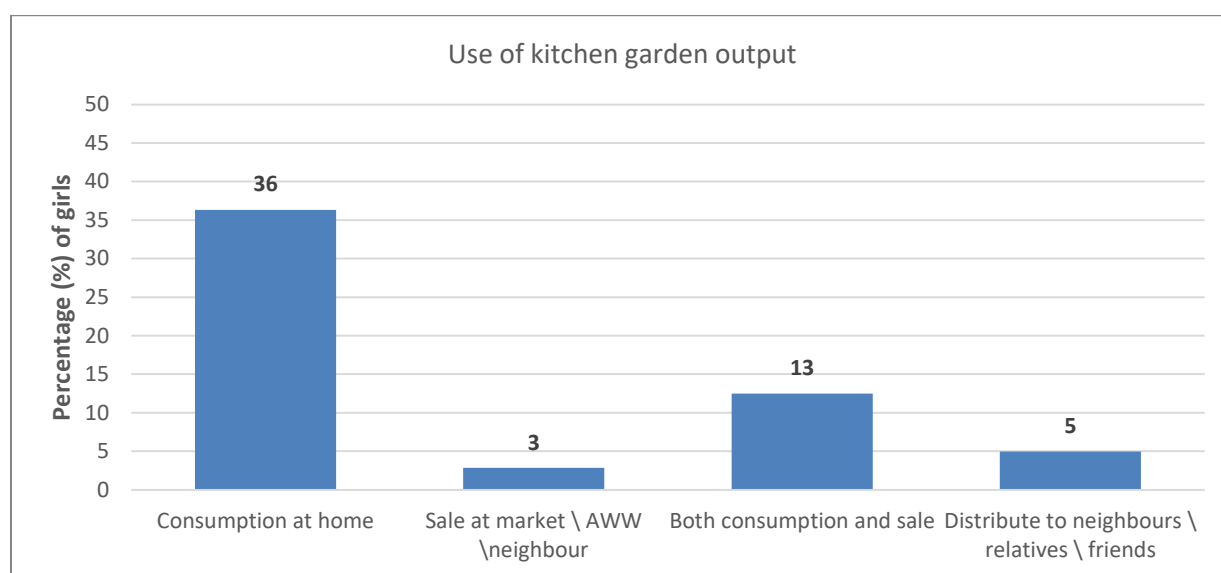
- Girls within the treatment group similarly report increased levels of active gardening since the baseline survey. The increase is significantly more dramatic than that experienced by the control group. The increase is particularly dramatic in Malda and Nadia.
- Statistically, respondents in the treatment group are on average 15.8% more likely to report that they have been actively growing any vegetables/fruits in the past two years than respondents in the control group.⁹



⁹ The effect is statistically significant at 5% level after controlling for caste, religion and district.

- The last question we ask is whether the girl has permission to use a portion of the families land for their own gardening. While the effect is not as prominent, there does seem to be an overall effect at the all-state level, and higher rates of increased practices among girls from Malda, Nadia and Purulia.
- Respondents in the treatment group are on average 13% more likely to report that they can use a portion of their family’s land for their own gardening than respondents in the control group.¹⁰
- Girls in the treatment group are more likely to have started kitchen gardening during the past 2.5 years than the control group.
- Out of those who reported receiving LBL kitchen garden training, 92% report that they have actively grown vegetables or fruits in their kitchen garden during the past 2.5 years.
- The qualitative research supports this. For example, from the discussion with girls in Jalpaiguri we learned that most already had kitchen gardens at home but their training helped them improve their gardens. In Malda, girls from all 3 FGDs reported practicing kitchen gardening or mushroom cultivation.
- Girls frequently reported getting family members’ help to maintain their kitchen gardens. In some cases, collective kitchen gardens set up as “model gardens” in some AWCs drew the support of community members who would help the girls in the garden.
- Mushroom cultivation was very popular and suitable for girls in the districts of Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Malda and girls are keen to keep practicing because:
 - Mushroom cultivation can be done indoors and many girls prefer doing activities indoors
 - Girls enjoy cooking and eating mushrooms with their families
 - In some cases girls have been able to sell mushrooms

What do girls do with the outputs from their kitchen gardens?

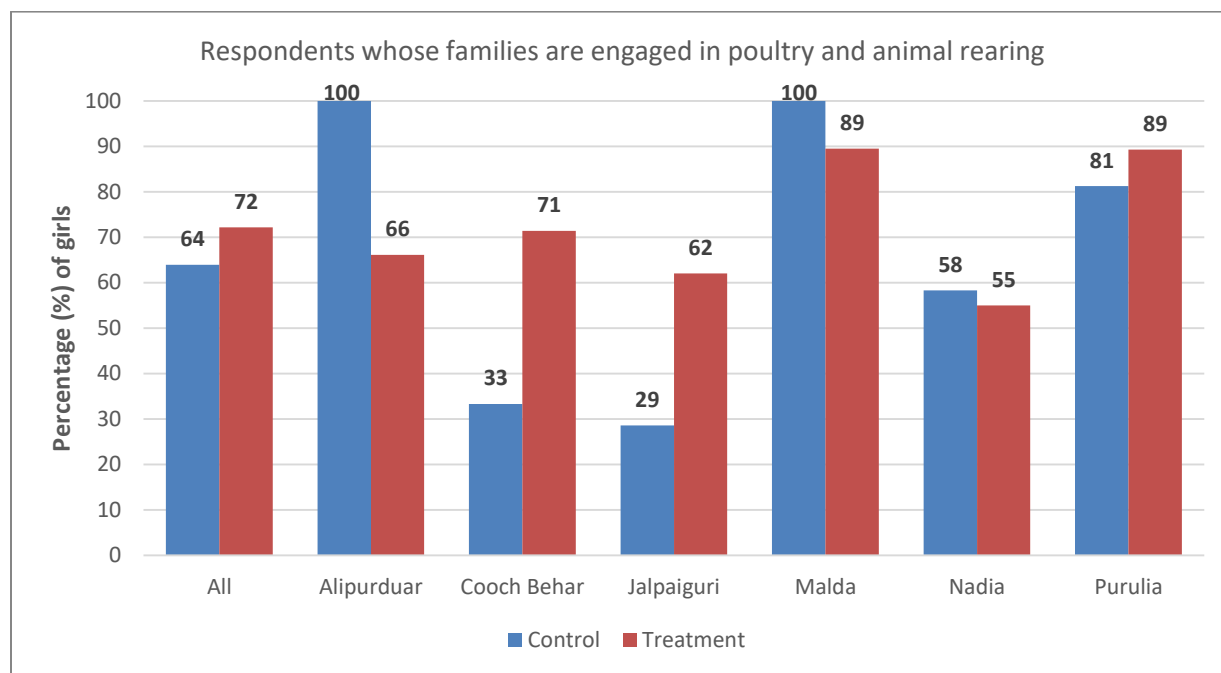


¹⁰ The effect is statistically significant at 5% level after controlling for caste, religion and district.

- The overwhelming majority of girls use their kitchen gardening outputs for home consumption.
- Girls from Malda and Jalpaiguri are the most likely to sell their produce in addition to consuming at home.
- The majority of girls reported that the money earned through the sale of produce is managed by someone else within the household.
- From the qualitative research we learned that girls are forming groups to grow and sell mushrooms and vegetables and are earning money. Some are saving, some using it on themselves, and some are contributing to household expenses.
- Some girls groups have created marketing linkages with Anganwari centers who bought their vegetables for the mid-day meal program for young children. Mushroom cultivation and other LBLs are particularly helpful to girls from poor tea-garden communities. Some girls used their Kanyashree money to set up kitchen gardens.

Girls in my center do kitchen gardening. They cultivated cucumbers, pumpkins and several other vegetables. Some of them have also purchased the seeds to plant these. Some of them also keep one fruit for seeds for the next season. These vegetables are sold by them and they earn income. This income provides them the incentive to continue the cultivation. – Master Trainer, Alipurduar

Did the SABLA program influence increased rates of animal rearing?



- Animal rearing within the family does not show any clear patterns across districts. In Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri, families of girls in the treatment group clearly engaged in animal rearing at a much higher rate than those of girls in the control group. However, in Alipurduar, 100% of families of girls in the control group engaged in animal rearing, while only 66% of families of girls in the treatment group did.

What challenges do girls face in practicing and sustaining kitchen gardens and other land-based livelihoods?

- Girls report needing more support to sustain LBL practices in the form of training, inputs and market linkages.
- Stakeholders who provided LBL training, such as staff from the Krishi Vigyan Kendriy (farmer extension programs), agree that sustainability is a problem for kitchen gardens or any land-based livelihood for girls. The reasons given are: lack of money to buy inputs, lack of time, lack of adequate space, lack of follow up training, lack of inputs like seeds, mushroom spawn and fertilizer, poor market linkages, lack of experience of working with girls, reluctance of girls to work in agricultural activities, and difficulties in reaching girls from Muslim communities to work outside their homes among other things.
- Some girls mentioned that the LBL activity did not suit their preferences. For example, some girls in Jalpaiguri mentioned not being in the habit of eating mushrooms so they did not want to cultivate them.
- Many girls did not receive training or training was not adequate. For example, girls in Purulia and Nadia said they did not receive any LBL training. Some received seeds but did not get training on how to use them.

“Well, you can understand that they won’t be interested in kitchen gardening because the vegetables which they will produce will straight go to the kitchen and if there is surplus it will be sold in the market by the father or the husband and the money which has been earned will not come in the wife’s hand or in the daughter’s hand.... This is a practical problem with kitchen gardening.” –

Assistant Dir. Horticulture, Purulia

GIRLS EMPOWERMENT

Research question: What level of agency do the girls currently exercise over their lives? How are they perceived vis-à-vis their male siblings? Has the program successfully influenced perceptions of girls' agency?

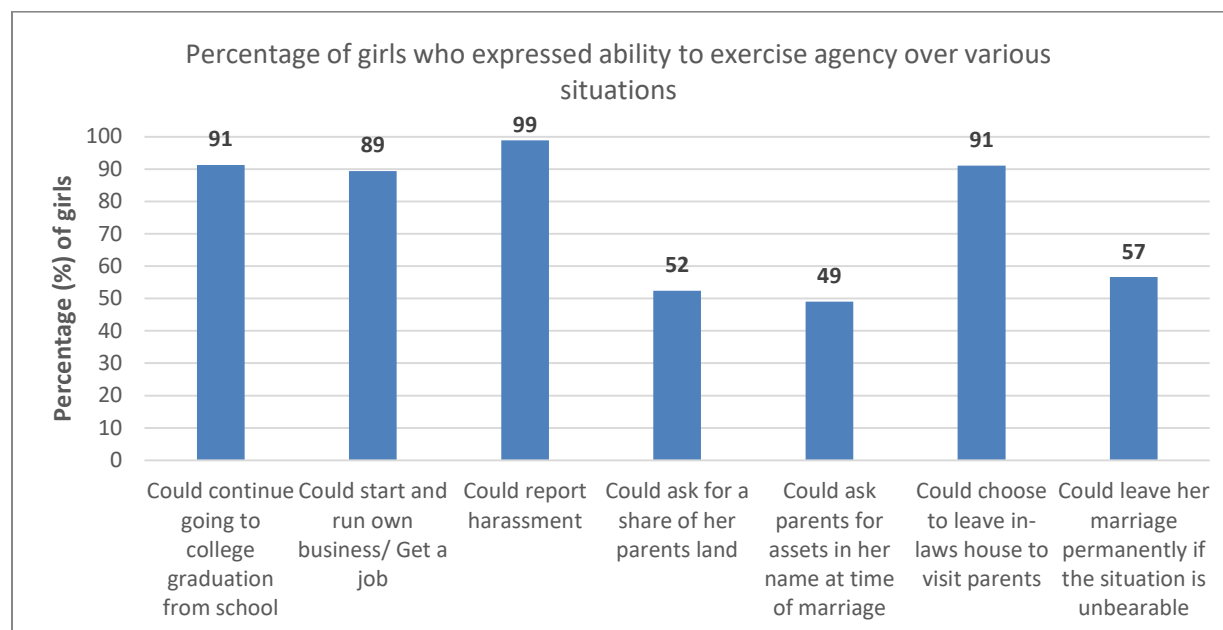
Research implications: Adolescent girls are vulnerable and have very little agency over their lives. They often cannot decide how long to stay in school, when and whom to marry, where to work, when to independently move around and what they will inherit among other things.

The aim of the SABLA-Kanyashree program is ultimately to empower girls. Girls perceptions about themselves and their gender are fundamental to their empowerment and can lead to better outcomes for realizing their rights.

Analysis: Girls were asked a series of questions during both the baseline and endline surveys to assess perceptions of their own agency across a number of different topics ranging from having the ability to start their own business to asking parents for a share of land. In the qualitative research we asked girls and the other stakeholders about their perceptions of girls' empowerment.

What is the current rate of agency experienced across the surveyed districts?

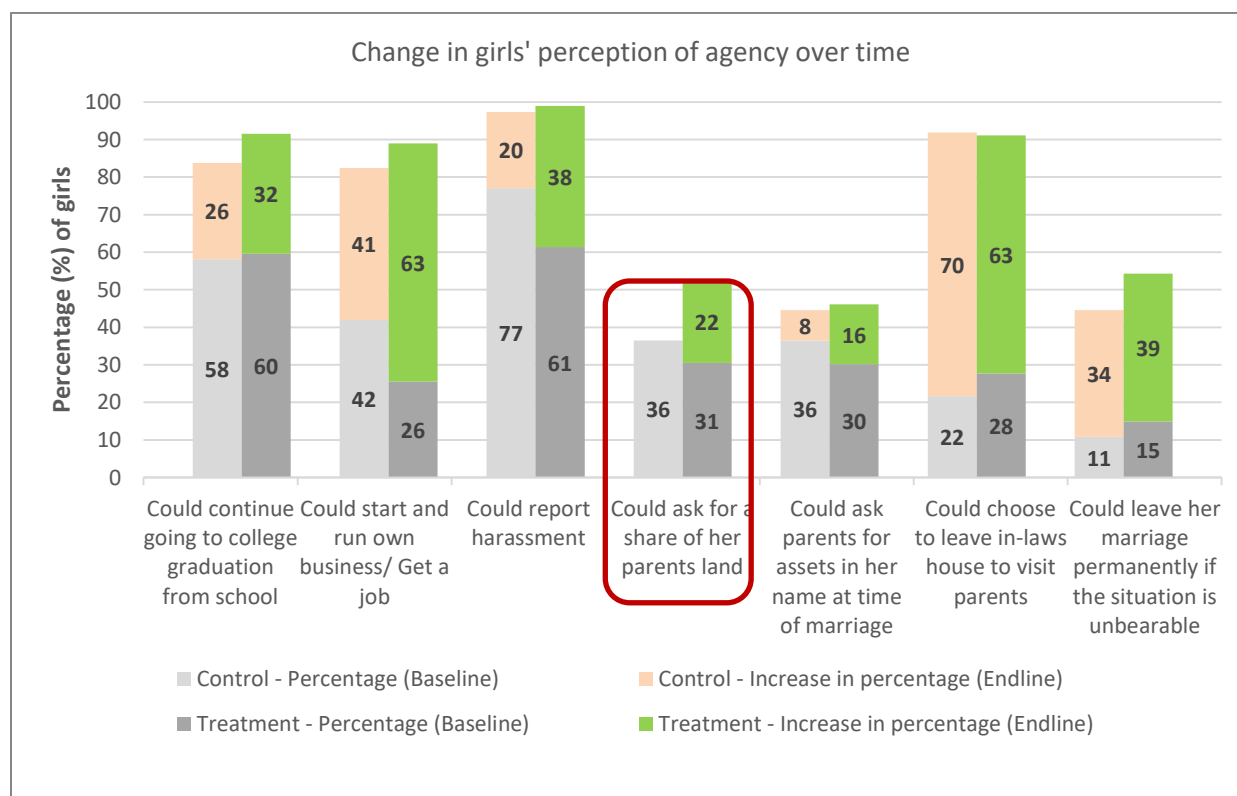
We first look at responses to the questions asked during the endline, to ascertain the overall levels of agency currently experienced across the study areas.



- Only half of the girls said that they could ask for a share of parental land and ask for assets at time of marriage, suggesting a dearth of awareness and confidence around issues related to land.
- Overall, levels of girls' perceived agency across topics related to education, income generation, harassment, and marital issues seemed high.
- In particular, almost all girls surveyed, said that they could report harassment, pursue college graduation, and leave their in-laws house to visit their parents.
- Fewer girls, however, felt that they could leave marriage permanently if the situation became unbearable.

What effect did attending the SABLA program have on improving perceptions of agency?

We next evaluate whether attending the SABLA program contributed to improved perceptions of agency. To help explore and possibly attribute influence of the SABLA program on these responses, we compare answers given at the time of the baseline with those given during the endline, disaggregated by control and treatment. The chart below shows the results of this analysis. Among each pair of bars, the first represents girls in the control group and the second represents girls in the treatment group. The upper portion of each bar represents the difference in the percentage of girls who answered yes in endline compared to percentage of girls who answered yes in baseline data for that particular question.



- The strongest effect of the program was on the perceived belief that girls could request a share of parental land. The control group, which was not exposed to modules on inheritance and related land issues, experienced no change in their beliefs over time. However, 22% of girls in the treatment group changed their belief between the baseline and endline, suggesting that receiving land-based instruction is valuable. Statistically, this means that girls who received SABLA exposure were on average 17.2% more likely than girls in the control group to believe that girls could ask parents for a share of inheritable land.¹¹ This suggests that information about rights to land was not readily disbursed to girls outside the program.
- This is in line with our qualitative findings that land rights awareness was new to girls and other stakeholders and girls have not been exposed to topics such as inheritance and tenure security in other forums.
- We also detected a statistically significant program effect related to reporting harassment, although that is probably driven by the low percentage of girls during the baseline that reported the same.¹²
- Across all other topics, no statistical significance in the differential increase in perceptions of agency and empowerment were detected.

“If we are being forced to marry now, we would report it to the Childline helpline ... or call the police. We are all aware about the helpline. This scheme has taught us to speak up and express ourselves. We are not going to hold back anymore.” – Girl beneficiary, Malda

What are girls’ attitudes towards empowerment?

From the qualitative research we learned that girls attributed increased self-confidence and awareness to the SABLA-Kanyashree program.

- Girls were aware about their insecurities and vulnerabilities and reported knowing better how to deal with them since attending the program.
- Girls in Malda and Nadia said that they learned the importance of building their own assets and felt that it would improve their status in the family and their communities.
- Girls in Malda and Cooch Behar said that they could feel the difference in empowerment levels between the girls who went to AWCs versus the others who did not attend meetings.
- Girls in Jalpaiguri felt that they were able to claim their land rights.
- The exposure visits made them more comfortable with visiting government and other offices. For example, girls in Malda said that they felt confident to interact with the CDPO about work that needed to be done at their AWC.
- Girls have taken actions as a result of their increased confidence. For example:
 - Eve-teasing and sexual harassment is a major vulnerability for most adolescent girls. Girls were more confident to report and speak out against these occurrences.

¹¹ Statistically significant at 5% level; controlling for caste, religion and district.

¹² Statistically, girls in the treatment group are 17.2% more likely on average than girls in the treatment group to report they would do so. The coefficient is significant at 5% level after controlling for caste, religion and district.

- Girls felt confident to share what they learned during the program with parents and others. For example, a girl in Purulia said that she learnt about early marriage from the center and told her parents about it and parents said that she would not have to marry early.
- Girls in Jalpaiguri felt that they were able to choose who they marry.

What are other stakeholders' attitudes towards girls' empowerment?

- In general all stakeholders report that girls are more confident, less vulnerable and are more empowered to speak up, move around and make their own decisions.
- Parents in Nadia expressed interest in seeing their daughters empowered, but some were fearful of girls safety and did not give them much independence to move around.
- MTs/AWWs in Malda who were poorly educated and often from low socioeconomic backgrounds reported that they too felt empowered by the SABLA-Kanyashree program as they were learning about their own rights and inspired other girls within their families by their work.
- Implementers report that they have seen changes in girls who attend sessions – at first most girls were quiet and would not speak up, now they are more open and participate in the games and role-playing.
- Several stakeholders report that girls are becoming more empowered to speak out. For example, one CDPO from Nadia stated that he rewarded a girl that spoke out against early marriage to the parents and informed the police.

“I am an ASHA worker and I am also a woman and I am working. Now, you can't sit at house and not let your daughters step out thinking that something bad is going to happen to her. If it is like this then no girl can move forward in life and become confident. But yes, girls have to be aware and more cautious when outside in order to avoid danger.” – Parent, Nadia

HARD-TO-REACH OUT-OF-SCHOOL (OOS) GIRLS PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

Description of program pilot

The OOS program was piloted in 3 districts by Landesa to target isolated and underserved communities where a majority of girls were not attending school. Girls in these communities were missing out not only on the education that is provided through SABLA-Kanyashree program, but also on the program's efforts to admit or re-admit girls to school.

The pilot added functional literacy training to the existing SABLA-Kanyashree curriculum to equip OOS girls with basic reading, writing, and math skills. Between two to five Gram Panchayats (GPs) were selected in each district. The main criteria for selecting girls for the pilot included:

- Girls were living in hard to reach areas
- Girls lived in underserved communities and their families were very poor
- Girls often needed to work, either at home or outside to earn money
- Girls' SABLA-Kanyashree program exposure was very minimal and girls groups were not running
- Girls were not going to school and therefore did not benefit from the Kanyashree program

Description of pilot sites

A description of the target girls and their communities in the 3 districts for the pilot are outlined below:

Nadia

100 girls in two GPs were targeted in Nadia's Nabadwip Block. The entire block is predominantly Muslim and the communities are poor and isolated and practice their traditional occupation of *tant* weaving along with agriculture. The villages are located on an island in the Bagirathi River. In the monsoon season it gets flooded and the entire village has to move to an adjacent village. In the summer, the villages deal with extreme water scarcity. Being on an island means that access to schools and other services is limited. Most households are indebted to the local money lender who they work for weaving *tant* fabrics. The high school is far, which serves as an additional obstacle for girls to attend school. Communities are landless generally and do not practice agriculture. Girls have some level of education, and a handful of girls have made it to high school (Class 8), most of them, however, only received a primary school education, and some of them never attended school.

Jalpaiguri

Most of the 114 girls targeted were *Adivasi* (tribal/STs) and lived in tea garden communities. They live on private tea-estate (company) land. The GPs selected are poorly served and underdeveloped. Girls deal with many barriers including language, poor access to education, food insecurity, and lack of support. Schools are hard to reach and most girls do not attend

school so that they can work. Parents work long hours away from the village and often migrate for months leaving adolescent girls do the housework and take care of siblings. Girls are at a higher risk for trafficking as they are live close to the country's border. There is high incidence of alcoholism and sexual abuse reported by the girls.

Purulia

The program targeted 104 girls in 4 villages in Ajodya Block. The villages are located in the Ajodhya hills, which are mainly inhabited by tribal communities such as the Santhals, Bhumij, Birhores, Munda, Oraons, and Gonds. In the targeted communities most households own *rayati* agricultural land. A majority of the girls has never been to school and are instead engaged in firewood collection, goat rearing, construction, paid domestic housework, and agricultural wage work. The girls help their parents in their own agricultural land and also on other people's farms. Girls from landless households migrate seasonally in groups with a local contractor to the plains for transplanting and harvesting rice. They go there twice, during the rainy season and winter. Sometimes girls as young as 10-12 years migrate for work. Schools are not easily accessible for the girls beyond elementary school.

Findings

Research Question: What are the vulnerabilities of OOS girls targeted for the pilot program?

Research Implications: Exploring the unique vulnerabilities of girls who live in underserved and isolated communities would help us to make recommendations for improving SABLA-Kanyashree's reach to particularly vulnerable girls as well as provide recommendations for scaling of the pilot tested by Landesa.

Analysis: The qualitative study explored 1) what the vulnerabilities were of the OOS girls targeted by the Landesa OOS program are; 2) what was the status of girls land rights, and 3) how were these girls relate to the OOS program.

The findings are organized by themes and reflect the perspectives of all stakeholders who participated in the study including girls, parents, Anganwadi workers (AWW), trainers, panchayat officials and Block Development Officers (BDO).

Land rights/Inheritance/Knowledge of Land Laws

Jalpaiguri

- Tea garden labor households live on private property and have access to small plots of land for their houses. Most are landless but some have other land to farm.
- Most girls understand that the land they live on is private company land that their parents do not own. They do however feel that their households have secure rights to these plots. Rights to land are generally bequeathed from generation to generation, usually to the male heirs. Girls in Adivasi communities (ST) customarily do not inherit land.
- A few girls understand that there are laws for equal inheritance, but admit that only males get to inherit land, unless there are no male heirs in their household.

- Most girls have their own kitchen garden on their household plots. Usually they use the vegetables for subsistence and sometimes they sell them.

Nadia

- Parents understand that Muslim Shariat Law prescribes that girls get half the share of their brothers but admit that they generally do not bequeath land to girls unless there is no male heir.
- Parents and girls say that families have to mortgage land to pay high dowries and therefore justify girls not inheriting land.
- All stakeholders agree that girls usually do not claim their share as they think it rightfully belongs to their brothers.
- Girls feel less equipped to buy or claim land on their own because they are not educated.

“In our Muslim Shariat Law both sons and daughters have rights over parental property and in this law it is written that son will get two halves of the property and one half daughter will get. But in reality this does not happen because a lot of money is needed to get the daughters married that’s why they are not given their share of the parental property.” – Parent, Nadia

Purulia

- Many households own agricultural *rayati* land. All stakeholders hold that tribal customary practices favor boys for inheritance. Girls do not inherit land, unless there are no male heirs.
- Awareness of inheritance laws is low and there is ambiguity on whether Hindu or Christian family and inheritance laws apply to Adivasi communities.
- Girls were not aware of equal inheritance laws and indicated that their fathers decide who will inherit the land.
- Girls and parents say that girls will leave and go to another village, so there is no need to give them land. Some parents said that if a daughter remains unmarried, then they will be allowed to stay in a part of the land but legally it won’t be given to her. Land is generally thought to be owned and controlled by the male head-of-households.
- Because land holdings are small parents justify only bequeathing land to their sons

Access to education

Jalpaiguri

- Economic factors are the main reason why girls do not complete school. Girls work as wage labor or engage in unpaid household work, and/or care for siblings. Parents are therefore not supportive of girls attending school.
- Schools are not close by, overcrowded and understaffed. For example, there are only three

Most of the girls drop out because the school is far away. The tea garden provides school bus but it can’t accommodate all. Also if one girl drops out the neighboring girls also drop out. The parents here don’t understand the importance of education as they themselves have also never went to school. – AWW, Jalpaiguri

teachers for 500 students for girls in one of the focus GPs. A bus is provided for transportation to school since it is hard to get there, however, it cannot accommodate all the students.

- A few girls wanted to be re-admitted to school but are not confident that they can attend because they are responsible for all the household work since parents are gone for long hours.
- A girl was readmitted by the AWW herself, but then she decided not to continue school. There is nobody in the house to motivate them to continue education.
- Most the girls that participated in the FGDs have brothers who are in school. They say that their brothers can take care of their parents properly later, if they are educated.
- Boys generally study till class 12. Girls mostly study till class 8, some study till class 10.

Nadia

- Economic factors are the main reason why girls do not complete school. They are expected to work in *tant* weaving when they are old enough.
- Schools are far and hard to get access especially in the rainy season.
- Schools are co-ed and not suitable for Muslim communities. Parents do not feel it is safe for their daughters who are subject to sexual harassment (eve teasing) in school. Mothers want a protecting wall to keep boys away from the girls.
- Schools are overcrowded.
- Many girls are interested in going to school but their parents expect them to work on the looms and earn money.

We are not able to study much because we have to weave tant to earn income in the family. Some families do work in the field –in their own land or on other's land. Girls help the family by weaving tant and boys help the family to cultivate the land. – Girl participant, Nadia

Purulia

- Most girls complete their primary education, as the primary school is nearby.
- High schools are far and the community is surrounded by forest, parents are hesitant to send girls on their own. Parents said that girls don't have bicycles so they cannot go that far to attend the High School.
- Schools are not functioning well. Teachers are reluctant to teach in distant schools and don't show up regularly. For example in one GP, teachers take turns to show up, clubbing several different classes together.
- A few girls were re-enrolled in school. But since teachers don't come regularly, classes are only conducted twice a week.
- Girls work at home or in wage work. Those girls whose households did not have land, migrated during planting and harvesting seasons to the plains. Girls as young as 10 years of age migrated in groups with a contractor.
- Parents have never been to school and see little use of education for their daughters

- The Pradhan indicated that if girls wanted to go to high school he could arrange for a hostel. He added that community awareness is required for the parents and that some parents want their daughters to have an education.

Early Marriage

Jalpaiguri

- Girls are predominantly from tribal communities and said that they usually choose their own husbands.
- Early marriage is common, but usually girls make the choice to leave home and marry “elope” at 16-17 years.
- Almost half of them know that the legal age of marriage for girls is 18 years.
- Girls shared that their friends eloped because they have to do a lot of work at home and face a lot of verbal and physical abuse from parents.

This is the reason why most girls elope here as they are not cared or loved at home and they think if they elope and marry they will find a better life. – Girl participant, Jalpaiguri

Nadia

- Girls and their parents are generally aware about the legal age of marriage.
- Girls are sometimes married off in secret, as parents know the laws about legal marriage. The official marriage ceremony happens after the girl turns 18 years.
- Girls are married at 14 years onwards in these communities.
- Girls and parents say that marrying girls younger means they can pay less dowry and prevent girls from being sexually assaulted.

Purulia

- Girls and parents understand that the legal age of marriage is 18 years and that the police can enforce this.
- In the area girls generally get married between 15 and 17 years and girls make a decision on when to marry.
- The AWW and panchayat with help of the BDO and police stopped an early marriage last year.

“I am only 11 years old but as I have become tall my father arranged a match for me to get married soon as everyone said that I have grown up and should get married. I told my parents that I don’t want to get married now but my parents did not listen to me, after that Panchayat members came to our house and made them understand and convinced them not get their daughter married so early. Hence, my marriage could be stopped.” – Girl participant, Purulia

Dowry

Jalpaiguri

- Dowry is not practiced in predominantly ST communities.

Nadia

- Parents report that families have to pay huge amounts of dowry to marry their girls.
- Dowry is demanded by the boys' parents. Parents borrow heavily to marry off girls. Girls earning can help toward this.
- Parents pay less if girls are married early and therefore parents feel pressured to marry their girls young.

Purulia

- Nothing is exchanged mandatorily for dowry. Sometimes, if the girl belongs to a wealthy family, the family gives gifts according to their own wish.

“We also have to give dowry at the time of daughter's marriage. The cash dowry here ranges from Rs.20,000 to 1,50,000. We have to give 1-1.5 Bhor gold (1 bhor=10 grams), sometimes we have to give a motorbike to the groom. If the girl's parents are unable to give all the above then they have to mortgage their land. In our Muslim Shariat Law it is written that accepting and giving dowry is a sin but still we have to give dowry otherwise our daughters won't get married.” – Parent, Nadia

Sexual Harassment and Violence

Jalpaiguri

- Girls say that they are vulnerable to sexual assault and eve teasing from boys and men within and outside the community.
- There also deal with domestic violence linked with alcoholism.
- Parents work long days and sometimes migrate for work leaving girls unprotected and unsupervised and subject to sexual predation.

Nadia

- Girls and parents report dealing with sexual harassment and eve teasing, but not from men and boys within the community. This is one reason why parents are reluctant to allow girls to leave the house for school. This is also the reason given by parents for marrying girls off young.

“Both of my parents work in the tea garden all day and are not around. I was working at home and someone knocked at the door. I thought it was my mother, when I opened the door it was a drunken boy who tried to force him on me. I shouted and the AWW heard and came after a few seconds and saved me... This is very common here, as many people know that the girls are alone at home throughout the day while their parents are working in the tea-garden.” – Girl participant, Jalpaiguri

Purulia

- Girls report that they do not deal with sexual harassment by boys and men in their own community. When they migrate for work, they are sexually harassed.

Program Receptivity and Relevance

Girls, parents and local government officials were largely receptive to the pilot program for OOS girls and recognized the benefit of the program for the girls. In most cases parents were initially reluctant to let their girls attend, citing the need for girls to work or help out at home.

Facilitators and AWWs along with Landesa staff did community sensitizations before rolling out the program. Facilitators hired by Landesa often had to visit individual households to persuade parents to allow girls to participate. The main takeaways from talking to girls, parents and other stakeholders are listed below:

- Many girls had never heard about the Sabla-Kanyashree program and had not received any Kanyashree benefits.
- Most girls liked the sessions and some, especially those in Purulia, wanted the sessions to happen more frequently than once a week.
- Girls in general thought the program is very relevant to their lives. They said that they learnt about topics that were new to them.

“My parents at first did not allow me to come to the center because we weave *tant* at home and will lose income if I go to the meetings. Instead of studying, my parents said that it is much more beneficial if I learn weaving which I can also do when I go to my in-laws after marriage.” – Girl participant, Nadia

In the future, they said that they would like to learn more about laws and their rights through this program.

- Most girls felt that attending the program increased their confidence. They felt more empowered after they learned to read and write and sign their names. Some of the girls said that they have never gone to school, but now they know how to read and write letters.
- In some cases attendance decreased because girls were occupied with household work or lived in remote areas far away from the center. For example, in Jalpaiguri and Nadia, girls that worked in the tea factory and in *tant* weaving respectively did not want to miss their daily wages to attend the sessions.
- Most parents and girls did not think it would be possible to meet more regularly since they could not afford to let their girls/work go, with the exception of Purulia where girls had more free time and their parents wanted them to be occupied.
- Parents became more receptive to the program and encouraged girls to attend. They saw the benefits of their daughters learning to read and write, as they might be able to get other work in the future. In Nadia, the facilitator who initially faced hostility and resistance, especially from the men and boys, said that talking to parents and conducting community sensitizations helped change parents attitudes toward the program.
- AWWs thought that the program motivated girls to continue school. In all about 37 girls were readmitted in school and more expressed the desire to continue their education after

attending the program. Some girls who got re-admitted to school are getting the Kanyashree cash incentives now.

- Government officials, PRIs, and AWWs thought that the program is good for the girls and they are seeing differences in the girls' confidence levels. Some asked think the program should be scaled to all remote villages in their districts.
- Facilitators who teach the girls see major changes in the girls in their confidence and eagerness to learn. The facilitator in Jalpaiguri said that girls are opening up about their problems and making future plans.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE (MSC) CASE STUDIES

The following six case studies are stories of girls¹³ who have benefitted significantly from participating in the SABLA-Kanyashree program. We present one story from each of the 6 implementing districts in West Bengal to illustrate that poor rural adolescent girls can become empowered through life skills and livelihood training, raising awareness of their rights, and by providing them with opportunities to stay in school and empowering them and their families to delay their marriages.

NAIMA BASAK, ALIPURDUAR

My name is Naima Basak and I am 19 years old. I have just completed my Higher Secondary exams. My family consists of my parents, my older brother and paternal aunt. My brother is disabled and has to be taken care of. Financially, we have always faced problems as my father is the only income earner of the family. Sometimes my mother collects wood logs for sale to earn extra income. My three older sisters are married and none of them completed school. I will be the first one in the family who attends college and I hope to complete my degree.

My father regrets not being able to finance my sisters and my education. Therefore, he



Najma Basak tending to her pigs on her homestead plot in Alipurduar District

encourages me to continue my education. During the week, I work three days as agricultural labor and I attend school for three days. The income from my work helps me to buy books, pay for tuition fees and buy clothes.

Three years ago my paternal aunt, who is the Anganwadi worker of this village, told me about the Sabla-Kanyashree convergence program and I started attending meetings. In the meetings, I learnt about the harms of early marriage. We were also taught about nutrition,

asset creation and the importance of financial security. I learnt how to best utilize my Kanyashree money. Earlier, I was worried to not be able to continue my education; however, the meetings have given me ideas of income earning activities that will help me with both continuing education and contributing to the household income.

¹³ Where necessary we have changed girls names, all photos are published with girls and parents consent.

When I received my Kanyashree money I used it to buy two pigs and eight hens. The hens now have chickens. I recently sold one pig with the help of an agent and have saved the money for transportation costs to college. At the moment, I am only selling eggs; however, I'd like to sell more chickens in the future. I did not receive land-based livelihood training through the SABLA-Kanyashree program at the center; however, my parents taught me how to rear animals growing up.



Naima doing agricultural wage work

In the future, I'd like to get formal land-based livelihood training in order to take care of my pigs and hens. Earlier some of my hens died and I did not understand why.

Also, a few times my pigs were sick and I had to call the doctor. I would not have to rely on the doctor if I get training on how to prevent illnesses. In order to sustain my livestock, monetary help from the government in form of a loan would be useful. My father helps me to sustain and expand my business and says that he will delay my marriage me.

In the future, I'd like to start a pig farm, as pigs are in high demand in the market and can be sold for Rs 9,000-10,000 (\$130-140). I also would like to buy my own land for rice cultivation. The rice would supplement my family's nutrition and we would need to depend less on buying food from the market.

The most significant change for me since attending sessions (SABLA-Kayashree program) is that I have learnt about asset creation, and that I, as a girl, am able to do both help my family financially and continue my education. In August 2017, I was given an award by the District Kanyashree Department for my efforts to obtain financial security and complete my education. Receiving this award has given me confidence.

PRANATI GUPTA, COOCH BEHAR

My name is Pranati Gupta and I am 16 years old. I live with my parents, who are farmers and work on our own land. I have two brothers, who are currently pursuing a college degree. My elder sister got married after completing class 12. I recently took my high school board exams.

About two years ago, the Anganwadi worker of my area informed me about the SABLA-Kanyashree program and she persuaded me to attend meetings. Mostly, I used to go to the centre to collect my share of Take Home Rations but later I also started attending meetings. In the meetings I learnt about good nutrition, the physical, mental, reproductive, and sexual changes that adolescent girls deal with. I found the meetings very beneficial. I have become more aware of my environment and surroundings and have started to talk to my parents when I face a problem. Everything I learnt during the meetings was new to me. I often went to the centre; however, a year ago the NGO worker stopped coming regularly and it became difficult for me to remember the topics.

The land-based livelihood training sparked my interest in working on land. I was not interested in it before. At the training I received seeds for different leafy vegetables, pumpkin and beans, which encouraged me to practise kitchen gardening.

From the Project Coordinator of the implementing NGO, I learnt about doing a kitchen garden on a small plot of land, how to make seed beds for vegetables, and how to preserve seeds so that they can be used again in the future. For me, the best part of the training was to learn about seed beds and how to cultivate lady fingers and pumpkin.

After the training my friends and I started practising kitchen gardening as a group in our courtyard. However, gradually their motivation faded as seeds were no longer provided. Since I practiced seed preservation I was able to continue cultivating vegetables. Now I have the desire to expand my garden. My parents support me in this, as they think I could use the profits from selling vegetables to create a poultry farm or raise goats. I think the reason I did not lose interest in kitchen gardening is the support and encouragement my parents give me.

When we first cultivated vegetables in our group, my father helped us selling them in the market and we also sold some vegetables to the nearby school for the mid-day meal. We earned about Rs 100 from the market and Rs 150 from school. I have kept the money in my account and have used it to purchase seeds, which I sowed after my board exams. In the future, I want to earn money by selling vegetables from my kitchen garden and continue my education with the income. I have saved my Kanyashree money for further education, too.

For me, the most significant change is that the land-based livelihood training has connected me with our land. I now enjoy doing agricultural work on the land, whereas earlier I used to stay away from it. It has also given me the opportunity to engage in productive work, which has increased my value in the family as my parents appreciate and support my effort. It is unusual for girls like me to have parents delay their marriage. However, my father thinks that I can supervise and monitor labourers on our land having received land-based livelihood training. He thinks it is important for girls in rural areas to know these skills as we can utilize them if we do

not receive financial support from our in-laws or husbands. He can see the benefits of land-based livelihoods for me to be financially secure and to be able to help them financially.

REBATI GOND, TEA GARDEN, JALPAIGURI



Rebati Gond is from an Adivasi family (ST). Here in her kitchen garden in the tea garden (estate) where she lives.

My name is Rebati Gond and I have recently turned 20 years. I lived with my family until last year. We are very poor and my mother works in the tea garden. My father is an alcoholic and never works. My three sisters got married a long time ago and the eldest one lives with us with her two children, and we help take care of them. I had to stop going to school in class 7, as the school was too far from the tea garden. In addition to that, there was no transportation to school and my family was not able to afford the education costs. Instead of attending school, I had to start earning to support my family financially. My younger brother is still attending school.

Recently, I left home and moved in with my partner as my parents wanted to marry me to someone else. We are planning to get married next year when the church provides the date. I am now also working in the tea garden. I came to know about the SABLA-Kanyashree program from the Anganwadi worker of my center. I started going to the center and learnt about child marriage, building assets, land use, reproductive and sexual health, and nutrition.

Earlier, nobody in my village, including my family members, pointed out the importance of asset creation or land in a girl's life. Girls in my village were also not told to be aware of their surroundings and who we could approach if we faced any physical or social harassment. The meetings gave me that knowledge and confidence.

The best part of the meetings was that I learnt about land-based livelihoods and kitchen gardening. The latter was my favorite topic, as I learnt which vegetables to grow in which season. I cultivated a kitchen garden at home and my eldest sister also contributed. My father sometimes helped me, too. I never received seeds or any type of support from anyone which would have been very useful. However, since I enjoyed doing it I bought seeds from the market. I have continuously practiced



Rebati working in her kitchen garden with her mother

vegetable cultivation for two years. I sold vegetables to the center and used the money for myself. I also distributed vegetables to my neighbors and contributed to my family's vegetable basket. It gave me satisfaction that I was able to help my family financially. Earlier, my mother would buy vegetables from the market every week; however, when I was living at home she was able to save a trip as she could use my vegetables.

I would like to start a business cultivating vegetables. However, land in the quarters (staff housing) of the tea garden is scarce. Therefore, I cannot cultivate vegetables for sale; however, I can grow them for personal consumption, which saves my family money. It would be good to get seed support from the government. This would not only help me but also other girls in the tea garden areas, as they could become economically secure in the future.

I also planted vegetables for our consumption in my in-laws place. Unfortunately, the kitchen garden was destroyed when the space was needed to construct a toilet. Now, there is no space for cultivating anything. My plan is to form a group with girls from this village and teach them kitchen gardening skills. I feel motivated to do this due to my positive experience during the land-based livelihood training that I received.

The most significant change for me is that through the meetings I have learnt about asset creation and have acquired business skills. I always thought asset creation or starting a business would need a lot of initial money; however, now I know that this is not the case. In addition to that, I share what I learnt through the program with other girls in the tea garden area to raise awareness about girls' insecurities among other girls.

CHAMPA DAS, MALDA

My name is Champa Das and I am 16 years old. I live in a village with my parents and am studying in Class 9. My father is a fisherman and my mother is a housewife. I was born in Bangladesh where two of my brothers are still living. The other three brothers live here, with my eldest brother living in another village. We have been living here for the past five years although my father purchased the land long ago.

Since 7th grade I have been associated with the SABLA-Kanyashree program. Our house is next to the Anganwadi Centre and I am often the first one the Anganwadi worker contacts for any meetings that are held at the center. However, for this program we were taken to another center for the meetings.

Through the program I learnt about land, girls' right over land, about *patta*, and equal inheritance. Through the games, I also learnt about other



Champa in her kitchen garden



Champa working in her kitchen garden

insecurities of girls and how to speak out against them, for example, eve teasing (sexual harassment). The game I loved the most was the Nutrition Flag which connected food groups to the various colors of the Indian flag and taught us to eat foods from all three colors.

I got more and more interested in the meetings and made sure not to miss a meeting. I attended even when I had to work. Although we were not given any specific training on kitchen gardening the facilitator still helped us learn the skills by instructing us on how to develop a kitchen garden theoretically. When she asked us who was interested in learning about it, I raised my hand and organized a group of ten girls to cultivate vegetables together. All were willing to participate but were reluctant to regularly water the kitchen garden. I assured them that I would do it from the community water pump. The girls helped me with sowing the seeds and I used natural fertilizer which

my family uses for growing mustard in our fields.

We planted eggplants, okra, pumpkin, bottle gourd, chilies, yam and *data* (a type of local leafy vegetable with pulpy stem). I wanted to continue to use fertilizer as I assumed that this would lead to better crops. Therefore, I went to the shop asking for seeds and fertilizer; however, given the small scale of our kitchen garden, the shopkeeper was reluctant to give them to me at such low quantity. I managed to convince him to sell them to me anyway. We also faced problems with finding good seeds, as we could not reuse old seeds except for *data*. Fertilizers and seeds are expensive, costing Rs. 50,000 which we could not afford as a group. Hence, I use leftover urea and natural fertilizer from my brother's cattle.

When I and the other girls started our kitchen garden, we collected five rupees from everyone to buy string to weave the net to protect our garden. All of us untangled the string rolls and wove it into a net. Other girls initially helped by tilling the land, cleaning the land, weaving and repairing the net but I only sowed the seeds with my mother. I also received help from the cook of the center. The only opposition I encountered was from my eldest brother who was not in favor of this and said that I have to pay him a fine for using the land. I told him that I would report him to the police if he would follow through with that. Some neighbors were also jealous of my efforts and stole a red amaranth plant that I planted. However, when I spoke out against it, no more thefts occurred. My parents, uncle and my middle brother support me in improving the kitchen garden. My parents created a support structure for the creepers and in return we consume some of the vegetables I grow at home.

My group sells some of the garden produce and makes Rs. 50 to Rs. 60. Eggplants and *data* do not bring us much money therefore I want to plant exotic vegetables like red and yellow bell peppers, which we could sell for more and which are in demand in the market. The money we earn from our sales, we divide equally. We have a notebook to keep track and whenever I get a customer I get one of the girls from my group to witness the sale.

My dream is to have a big garden for myself one day. However, in order to realize my dream, I need a job first. I like to become a police officer. I don't know whether I can qualify but I want to try. I will also get Kanyashree money next year and plan to loan out the money on interest for the money to increase. I have a share in the land that my parents own; however, among Hindus, daughters rarely inherit parental land. Hence, I would like to use my Kanyashree money to purchase a piece of land where I can cultivate vegetables and show others how it is done in the future.

KUNTALA BURMAN, NADIA

My name is Kuntala Burman and I have recently turned 18. I live with my parents, my elder sisters, and my younger brother. I am a regular member of *Kishori Samuha* (girls' group) at the



Kuntala in her family kitchen garden

Anganwadi Center. I like going to the center as I learn many things through the meetings. Previously there were more meetings and in the sessions we learnt about many topics through games, for example, a girl's right to education, right to have assets, about *dolil*, *patta*, *porcha* (land documents), about adolescent reproductive sexual health, and about early marriage harms. I was made the *Saheli* (peer leader) of the center and I still go to the center whenever the Anganwadi worker

calls me. I miss my cousin, who went to the center with me and was the *Sakhi* (peer leader). She recently got married after she turned 18 and moved to another village. She did not want to get married, however, as my mother says, in our village once a girl turns 18 years she cannot stay in her natal household, she has to get married. My parents always say that in poor agricultural families like ours, daughters get married early even if they want them to study further. I am still determined not get married early.

When my father and uncle tried to marry me, my friends helped to prevent it. My mother, father, grandmother, and cousin's parents said that they would marry us off. Our neighbors had married their oldest daughter and my family felt pressured to do the same. One of the neighbors mentioned a potential groom and the groom's older brother came to our house to meet me and talk about marriage. I was scared; however, told him that I do not want to get married right now. I have seen what happened to my older sister after she got married and learned about the consequences of early marriage at the center. My sister's husband had another wife, whom he did not divorce, and who lived with them. This caused conflicts with my sister and she moved back in with us. My middle sister also got married. Her husband died and she came back to live with us until she got re-married and moved to another village.

When my parents wanted to arrange my marriage, I confided in a friend. My friend shared it with our school teacher and the teacher called me to talk to him. He asked if my parents were trying to arrange my marriage and I told him that the groom's older brother had visited our house. My teacher informed the police about this and the police visited my house and brought me and my cousin to a children's home. We stayed there for five



Kuntala standing outside her home with her mother

days before my parents and my uncle picked us up from there. My parents and my uncle were asked by the staff at the children's home to sign a document that stated that they had no intentions to marry us at that moment.

My mother says that she will not arrange my marriage at the moment, as I am yet to receive my Kanyashree (K2) money, Rs. 25,000. We are poor and I feel my parents want to use this money for my wedding in the future.

I am still studying and will take my 10th board exam soon. After that I want to complete my Higher Secondary education and dream of going to college. However, I am not sure what my future holds. The program has given me the confidence to speak up and I will attempt to stop early marriages in my village.

NIPUNA SIL, PURULIA



Nipuna in her kitchen garden in Purulia

I am Nipuna Sil and I live with my parents, younger sister and elder brother in a village in Purulia. My mother is a homemaker; my father is working as an *Amin*, who helps the Revenue Inspector to measure plots of land. My elder brother studies in college and my sister studies in Class 9. I went to school until class 9; however, was not able to pass my class 9 exams. I was too embarrassed to study with my sister in the same class, hence I stopped going to school. I was depressed and stayed at home.

I heard about the ten days residential land-based livelihood training from my sister, who often goes to the Anganwadi center. From her I learnt that the training would be held by at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Farmer Field School).

In the ten days residential training I learnt about many things, for example, how to develop a kitchen garden, graft plants, level land, and sow seeds; I also learnt some other skills like making jam, jelly and sauce, which I am quite excited about. The training helped me boost my confidence and after receiving the training at KVK, I motivated other girls at the center with the help of the Field Facilitator and Project Coordinator from the NGO to prepare mango pickles with me for a stall at a fair organized by the District Rural Development Cell. Anupama, who is from another village, and I played the major role in forming this group. We sold various flavors of mango pickles at the fair. I, along with the other four girls, invested INR 1,090 to arrange the raw materials required for preparing pickles. We earned INR 1,575 and equally divided the money amongst us.

The kitchen gardening skills learnt from the training also helped me to develop my own kitchen garden at home where I grew brinjal, coriander leaves, and spinach. My sister grew a tomato plant in a separate patch, which produced 250 tomatoes. At the moment, I am growing guava, papaya, and ivy gourd in my garden. An important knowledge that I gained through kitchen gardening is not to use chemical fertilizers and pesticides as they are poisonous for the soil, the plant, and unsafe for us; instead, I use natural ways of preventing insects and pests. Using natural fertilizers like vermicomposting helps keep the soil fertile, the plants healthy, and the environment safe.

My life has changed since I participated in the land-based livelihood training, as I became confident to earn my own money, build my own assets and contribute to my family's income. The training also helped me to improve my communication skills and boosted my

independence. For example, I took the lead in forming and organizing a group with the help of the implementing NGO staff. My family members are helping me grow vegetables in my garden. My father brought me seeds from the market and my brother helped me levelling the land and watering the seeds. The kitchen garden has not only helped augment the nutrition content of our daily diet but I am also able to sell garden produce at our local market. I have earned Rs.45 by selling papaya and green leafy vegetables. I spent the money I earned from selling the produce on myself. Earnings from the garden produce also help me purchase food during tiffin hours in school.

The most significant change for me, however, is the courage, motivation and determination I gained to start school again. For the past year I have been continuing my studies and have joined tuition classes for my class 10 board exam in 2019. Before the meetings I was too embarrassed and depressed for failing my exam that I stayed away from school. Today, I am no longer a school drop-out and that makes me happy.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section summarizes the key takeaways from the evaluation. These highlights are presented thematically below:

Land rights

1. The SABLA-Kanyashree program **has improved girls awareness of their land and inheritance rights**. Participation in the program seems to significantly **increase girls' belief that they have a right to inherit**, even if they had brothers and even after marriage. For example, 26 to 46 percent of girls who were exposed to the program increased their belief that they had the right to inherit. Those who had not attended sessions (control group) saw a minimal increase, suggesting that information about their inheritance rights is not easily available outside of targeted training sessions.
2. Respondents' **belief in the likelihood of receiving inheritance increased at a much more significant rate after exposure to SABLA programming** (treatment group). The differential increase between the control and treatment group over time is statistically significant.¹⁴ While girls' inheritance is likely an unreasonable expectation given the current state of girls' inheritance practices in West Bengal, this finding points not only to girls' increased awareness of their land rights, but also their **desire to inherit land**.
3. Denial of inheritance rights for girls is closely linked to dowry practices as well as patrilineal customs.
4. Most girls, though more aware of their inheritance rights, are not likely to claim them to maintain good family relations.
5. Most other stakeholders report changed awareness of and support for girls and women's land rights.
6. The practice of including all daughters names – whether married or unmarried – on the legal heir certificate could have far reaching effects on adolescent girls status within their households and communities. For example, it forces families as well as local government officials to acknowledge that girls are entitled to inheritance – where social norms on inheritance currently strongly favor only male heirs. This is an area that should be further explored with research.
7. An unintended consequence of training frontline ICDS staff (Anganwari Workers) to implement the program is that it has raised their awareness of their own land rights as poor rural women.

Land-Based- Livelihoods (LBL)

1. Overall, 75% of girls within the treatment group reported having a family kitchen garden, the majority of which did not report having one at the time of baseline data collection. The increase in family kitchen gardening seems to be particularly prominent in Jalpaiguri, Malda and Purulia. The increase in family kitchen gardening amongst the control group, on the other hand seems to be minimal, except in Nadia.

¹⁴ Statistically significant at the 5% level; model controls for religion, caste, and district.

2. Statistically, respondents in the treatment group are on average 25.6% more likely to report that they have a family kitchen garden than respondents in the control group.¹⁵
3. The overwhelming majority of girls use their kitchen gardening outputs for home consumption
4. Economic empowerment is experienced differently based on whether the girls engage in communal or familial practices. Girls who practice in groups have been able to pool their resources, sell produce and share earnings. Girls who practice individually are often supported by family members.
5. **Some girls groups have created marketing linkages with Anganwari centers** who bought their vegetables for the mid-day meal program for young children. Mushroom cultivation and other LBLs are particularly helpful to girls from poor tea-garden communities. Some girls used their Kanyashree money to set up a kitchen gardens.
6. Hands-on training and provision of inputs such as seeds and saplings, makes the girls more likely to take up kitchen gardening. **Out of those who reported receiving LBL-kitchen gardening training, 92% report that they have actively grown vegetables or fruits in their kitchen garden during the past 2.5 years.**
7. However, most girls are not given LBL training, and girls often face obstacles to sustaining LBL activities. The reasons given are: lack of money to buy inputs; lack of time; lack of adequate space; lack of follow up training; lack of inputs like seeds, mushroom spawn and fertilizer; poor market linkages; lack of experience of working with girls; reluctance of some girls to work in agricultural activities; difficulties of reaching girls from Muslim communities to work outside their homes, are the main points mentioned.

Dowry

1. Belief that dowry is not legal or at the least is not a desired practice is widespread amongst girls and other stakeholders, and even amongst the control group girls.
2. However dowry is a widely accepted practice and seen by parent and girls as a way to ensure their safety and dignity/status in their in-laws homes.
3. Many government officials feel that laws against dowry are not effective and officials have a difficult time stopping the practice of dowry.
4. Dowry is less prevalent in ST communities

Marriage

1. Girls are generally aware about the legal age of marriage for girls.
2. There was no significant difference between treatment and control group girls' knowledge of the legal age of marriage suggesting that information is available outside of the SABLA meetings, or that there are spillover effects of the program.
3. Most girls who participated in the SABLA-Kanyashree program are aware of early marriage harms. Most communities and other stakeholders are also aware.
4. Early marriage is still prevalent in many areas, especially in poorer households and communities.

¹⁵ The effect is statistically significant at 1% level after controlling for caste, religion and district.

5. Early marriage is linked with dowry, girls that are married earlier need less dowry and poor households feel pressured to marry their daughters early.

Education

1. Girls are aware about the benefits of staying in school
2. There is a link between early marriage and dropping out of school. For example, in communities where early marriage was prevalent, education for girls was not valued.
3. Girls from poor and isolated communities faced the biggest obstacles to education. For example in ST areas, many girls dropped out to support their households through wage work or unpaid household labor. Furthermore many of their parents had never been to school and did not see the value in educating their daughters.
4. All stakeholders thought that more needs to be done to sensitize parents on the benefits of girls' education.

ASSESSMENT OF THE SABLA-KANYASHREE IMPLEMENTATION

Our research yielded several important insights into the implementation of the SABLA-Kanyashree program at different levels. The successes and challenges of implementation as well as recommendations for future programming for girls are detailed below.

Implementation Successes

1. The SABLA-Kanyashree program has elevated girls' issues and vulnerabilities in the eyes of government officials, communities and other stakeholders.
2. The spill-over effects of the multicomponent and multi-level program for girls has reinforced the value of girls in their communities.
3. Girls find the SABLA-Kanyashree program very relevant to their lives and enjoyed the different activities they participated in, especially the Learning Games for Girls (LGGs) and the girls groups.
4. Regardless of direct exposure to the SABLA-Kanyashree program, girls (treatment and control) knowledge of topics such as early marriage harms, benefits of education and dowry harms are high, suggesting that they are spill-over effects of the program for girls who are not active in the program.
5. Landesa's partnership with the West Bengal State Government resulted in importance to paid to girls land rights awareness. This is viewed as a major success not only by Landesa, but also by other technical stakeholders and government officials.
6. Stakeholders targeted for sensitization activities - PRIs, Boys and Communities – are largely supportive of the SABLA-Kanyashree program for girls and report seeing increased empowerment of girls.

Challenges with local-level implementation

1. Girls' sessions were not held as frequently as planned suggesting that
 - a. AWWs and NGO implementers faced heavy workloads, low capacity, and time constraints leading fewer sessions being held.
 - b. Targets set on frequency of meetings and number of girls to be covered may have been unreasonably high.
2. Girls did not frequently attend sessions because school and other responsibilities made them less available to attend sessions. Furthermore, the timings of sessions were often not convenient for the girls. Additionally, girls were not given refreshments or compensated when they had to travel far to attend meetings at other centers.
3. Frontline implementers such as AWWs and MTs did not often have the capacity or resources to implement the program, impacting the quality of the implementation and suggesting the need for
 - a. More frequent and intensive training and capacity building for frontline implementers and;
 - b. Better monitoring and tracking systems to track and better support poorly performing centers

4. After NGO funding was withdrawn, AWWs were expected to train the girls on their own, but most AWWs did not receive training themselves. Many did not have the materials needed to train the girls.
5. NGO implementers were expected to train AWWs to run girls sessions on their own, but PCs and FFs ended up teaching all the sessions and spent less time training AWWs.
6. After NGOs funding was withdrawn, Landesa staff became more involved in implementation in the districts and this was seen as an unsustainable model.
7. Exposure visits are seen as very useful to empower girls to deal directly with government officials. However, only 23 percent of girls participated in any exposure visit

Higher-Level Implementation Challenges

1. The lack of commitment coming from the highest levels of the state as seen in a) no clear directives given to the districts, b) infrequent reviews of the program, and c) no clear accountability mechanisms implemented, placed the onus on Landesa to motivate higher up government officials, propose innovations, oversee implementation, and make course-corrections, roles that should have been taken on by the government.
2. The DLCC – the main body to oversee program implementation and innovation in the districts did not functioning adequately, leading to patchy oversight of implementation.
3. Monitoring of the program was not institutionalized resulting in unreliable tracking of program implementation targets and quality.
4. Senior district and block officials often did not have clear directives on how to proceed. For example, in one district orders were sent to train Sakhi-Sahelis toward the end of the project with not clear directions on how Sakhi-Sahelis should be involved.
5. NGOs seemed to be a good stop gap measure to implementation while developing the capacity of MTs and AWW, however, it resulted in the program being perceived as an “NGO” program by many District and Block officials, potentially decreasing their interest and stake in ensuring a sound implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based learnings from our research activities as well as discussions with government officials and Landesa's staff. They are focused on helping the government and other stakeholders think through ways to make future girls programming interventions sustainable and scalable.

1. Ensure government institutionalizes the program by vesting a senior officer in the ministry with oversight and accountability over quality of implementation.
2. Ensure that the government gives clear directives to the districts for implementation.
3. Institute better monitoring systems to track progress and quality of implementation.
4. Ensure that DLCC (district level monitoring body) functions by meeting regularly, reviewing progress, innovating, and making course corrections as needed.
5. Ensure that clear directives on program implementation are sent from the state level officials to the districts and blocks.
6. Strengthen the capacity of the CDPOs to lead in their blocks and monitor AWWs, ensuring that they are holding meetings regularly, maintaining registers, reporting on problems.
7. If NGOs are used for implementation, ensure that their work is not hampered by delays in contract renewals by the government by setting aside contingency funds to keep program activities running.
8. Build the capacity building of frontline implementers (AWWs) on a continuous basis.
9. Provide better funding and incentives for AWWs to take on SABLA duties.
10. Scale Boys, Community and PRI components to create an enabling environment for girls. Build awareness and capacity of teachers to deliver curriculum on non-nutritional components in schools.
11. Incorporate programming in the schools for boys and girls, teachers and others.
12. Create special outreach program for OOS girls similar to Landesa's pilot for hard-to-reach girls.
13. Create more audio-visual content for girls LGGs.
14. Institutionalize practical LBL training through partnerships with farmer field schools (KVK) so all girls receive continuous hands-on training that is suited to their circumstances.
15. Create linkages between girls land-based livelihood activities, Anganwari Centers and Self-help groups to create a marketing outlet for products and provide support for the girls.