



ADOLESCENT GIRLS AS GAME-
CHANGERS: HOW THE *DEEPSHIKHA*
PROGRAMME INTEGRATES POLICY
AND PRACTICES TOWARDS
ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Overview

- Methodology
- Theoretical framework – Why WCD?
- *Deepshikha* Programme – Policy challenges, practical achievements
- Final thoughts

Methodology

- Small-scale qualitative research project
- Interviews, policy documents, observation of training
- Research in support of the core thesis objectives:
 - 1) How do global discourses of development policy, embodied in the MDGs, translate into local contexts?
 - 2) How do culture, norms and values shape the interpretation and implementation of the MDGs with specific reference to gender empowerment?

Theoretical framework – Why WCD ?

- Beyond the WID, WAD and GAD paradigms
- Women, Culture and Development (WCD)
- ‘[...] because women are a foundation from which we can illuminate the circumstances of people’s lives, including men’s lives. To focus on women within development in this way offers prospects for seeing the lives of people as more tangled and therefore richer than has hitherto been suggested. Thus, the WCD paradigm applies to both women and men.’ (Bhavnani and Bywater 2009, p. 62)

Field Research Site – India

- Millennium Development Goal 3 – to promote gender equality and empower women
- ‘Deepshikha’ - Unicef-funded and supported Adolescent Girls Life-Skills programme
- Chandrapur district Maharashtra, India



The *Deepshikha* Programme

- Transcending compartmentalised sectors of development work
- Strengthening individual confidence and critical-thinking skills to foster concepts of collective action
- Creating a dedicated space for adolescent girls to share experiences



Adolescent girls – transformative agents

- Agents of development not just beneficiaries of programmes – shaping the community and engaging with leaders
- Self-confidence to tackle issues within the family and community – challenging caste and class identities
- Addressing the MDGs actively and critically



Adolescent girls – transformative agents

- Strides made towards achieving MDGs 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 (universal primary education, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability respectively)
- Global – National – Regional – Local
- Top-down or bottom-up – perhaps a continuous loop?

Support for policy officials

- Three impediments to policy implementation:
 - 1) Administrative Officer – 3-4 year rotation, penalty posting, ‘making it through’ the socio-political environment
 - 2) NGOs and government ministries – focus on thematic sectors
 - 3) Lack of sufficient gender-sensitive training for government functionaries, block development officers and NGO-workers

Final Thoughts

- Continued support for life-skills/empowerment programmes for adolescent girls
- Complementary modules for boys so both girls and boys become transformative agents of development
- Better support and gender-sensitive training for policy officials, NGOs and others
- Goal 3, now and post-2015, engages in gender empowerment and works towards including all adolescents in empowerment programmes for building stronger communities, strengthening ties across sectors and engaging in nation-building.



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