

**Status of the Children Reported to be Dropped Out in Birbhum District: A  
Report Based on Spot Check of Sampled Cases of Drop-out**

**Carried out by the Pratichi (India) Trust on behalf of the  
Birbhum District Sarva Siksha Mission**

**Final Report**

**September 2014**

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## 1. Background

One of the detrimental factors that restrict the possibility of universalization of elementary schooling is school dropout – children having discontinued their studies in the middle of schooling. It is a well identified menace, and the recognition of the potential damage caused by school dropouts to the entire education system has led to framing and implementing public policies in order to eliminate this phenomenon. And, despite commendable achievements in the field – with substantial reduction in the rate of dropout over the years – the task of eradication of the disease is yet to be accomplished. The feature of dropout has a close connection with that of the socio-economic conditions of the households, which again has a relationship with that of the overall school functioning since poorer parents tended to have lesser capabilities to demand improvement in school functionalities. Districts, such as Birbhum, where socio-economic backwardness has been handed down to the present from the past, are more prone to be affected by the phenomenon of school dropout. Nevertheless, awareness of the district administration and the Sarva Siksha Mission about this problem has led to some pro-active interventions, one of which was the identification of the children dropped out of school, and enhancing the committed efforts towards bringing them back to the arena of school. The actions produced good results; yet, some of the children have still been reported to be left out.

In order to develop an understanding on the issue, the District Magistrate and Chairman of the District Sarva Siksha Mission, Birbhum, considered that a field-level investigation by an impartial agency be carried out and entrusted the task to the Pratichi (India) Trust. The Trust carried out, in the second week of September 2014, the exercise among 329 children (roughly 15%), sampled out, on a random basis, from a list of 2210 across twelve circles and one municipality in the district, specified by the SSM. Of the total 329 children 202 (61%) were boys and the rest 127 (39%) girls. Given the fact that the degree of drop out among the children has substantially reduced, mainly through the interventions made by the Sarva Siksha Mission, the survey had to be expanded to 77 villages (see Table 1) below and one municipality to find out the sampled children (See Appendix Table 1).

**Table 1. Distribution of Sampled Children Across the Villages**

Circle	Number of villages covered	Number of children surveyed	Average number of children per village/spot
Ilambazar	11	29	2.6
Ilambazar New	9	20	2.2
Labpur	3	19	6.3
Sarad Esat	5	9	1.8
Dubrajpur	10	52	5.2
Dubrajpur South	13	60	4.6
<b>Khayrasole South</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>12.0</b>
Rampurhat South	5	24	4.8
Mallarpur East	6	15	2.5
Nalhati South	5	24	4.8
Paikar	3	11	3.7
Khayrasole	4	22	5.5
<b>Total number of villages and children</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Dubrajpur Municipality	1	8	8.0
<b>Total Spots</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>-</b>

As reflected in Table 1, while the average number of sampled children per village was 4.2, Khayrasole South showed the phenomenon of drop-out to be quite high (the average number of dropped out children per village being 12).

However, the actual survey revealed that of the 329 children sampled out, from the list of reported dropped outs provided by the SSM, nearly nine percent (29 to be exact) were found to be currently enrolled in school. One had never been enrolled in school and another three as reported by the parents was dead. Again, parents of one particular child declined to answer the questions regarding the reasons behind their child's dropping out of school. Therefore, the analysis of the reasons behind dropping out and the current status of the children is based on the response pertaining to 295 children. Table 2 shows the distribution of the sampled children. Mention may here be made that the list provided to the Trust seemed to be infected by certain errors – in terms of both inclusion and exclusion. We have just mentioned about some children, whose inclusion in the list was not found appropriate by the survey. On the other hand in some areas we have found some children reportedly not attending the schools, though their names did not appear in the list. It was not possible to fathom the degree of such exclusion, since it required a full census of the villages; yet, the finding may be noted for making the subsequent interventions more comprehensive.

**Table 2. Status of Children Reported to be Dropped Out**

Category	Number	Percentage
Dropped out	296	90.0
Currently enrolled	29	8.8
Died	3	0.9
Never enrolled in school	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>100</b>

## 2. Social background of the surveyed children

Disaggregation of data following social background of the children reported to be dropped out showed that, one way or other, children of the underprivileged sections tended to be left out of the arena of school education at an early age. Of the total children covered under the survey, 50 percent belonged to SC category, while 9 percent and 39 percent respectively belonged to ST and Muslim categories; the 'other' children comprised microscopically 2 percent (see Table 2).

**Table 3. Social category of the surveyed children**

Circle	SC	ST	Muslim	Other	Total
Dubrajpur	51.92	26.92	13.46	7.69	100
Dubrajpur (M)	100	0	0	0	100
Dubrajpur South	55	3.33	41.67	0	100
Illambazar	41.38	41.38	13.79	3.45	100
Illambazar New	55	10	35	0	100
Khoyrasol	81.82	0	18.18	0	100
Khoyrasol South	44.44	0	55.56	0	100
Labhpur	0	0	100	0	100
Mallarpur East	80	0	20	0	100
Nalhati (South)	37.5	0	62.5	0	100
Paikar	18.18	0	81.82	0	100
Rampurhat (South)	37.5	0	58.33	4.17	100
Sadar East	77.78	0	22.22	0	100
Total	49.85	9.12	39.21	1.82	100

## 3. Pattern of drop out: Year and level

An encouraging finding of the survey relates to the declining trend of drop out over the last couple of years. This can be seen from table 3, which shows the distribution of sampled children according to the years of their dropping out: for nearly two third of the children the period of drop out was 2006-10, while the corresponding figure for 2011-14 was 24 percent (see table 3).

**Table 4. Distribution of children according to the period of drop-out**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
2001-2005	38	12.9
2006-2010	186	63.1
2011-2014	71	24.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>100.0</b>

However, the findings point out towards a fact which requires attention: analysis of the data pertaining to cases of drop out showed that while a little less than two third of the children had dropped out at primary level itself, majority of the rest were found to have left school at upper primary level. In other words, once children managed to cross the boundaries of primary and upper primary they showed a higher inclination towards continuing their studies (see table 3).

**Table 5. Distribution of children according to the level of their dropping out**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	5.43	8.04	6.42
2	6.52	7.14	6.76
3	11.41	12.5	11.82
4	38.59	38.39	38.51
5	14.67	10.71	13.18
6	8.7	11.61	9.8
7	7.07	2.68	5.41
8	5.43	5.36	5.41
9	1.63	1.79	1.69
10	0.54	1.79	1.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

#### **4. Present age of the children**

As found from the survey majority of the children surveyed belonged to below 17 years of age (see Table 6). And, since, most of them had dropped out several years ago, as shown in Table 4, the society, in general and the implementers of education in particular, perhaps missed an opportunity to bring these children to school. The parents perceived that their children were unfortunate to be born in such households which could not afford to support their education economically.

**Table 6. Age of drop-out**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percent</b>
6	0.34
10	0.34
11	1.02
12	3.74
13	5.78
14	18.71
15	21.77
16	24.49
17	14.97
18	5.44
19	1.7
20	1.36
21	0.34
Total	100

### **5. Reasons of Drop-out**

When it came to the parents' responses pertaining to the main reasons behind their children's discontinuing studies one could prepare a list of more than dozen causes. Yet an overwhelming majority associated the causes of drop out with poverty (41 %) and children's lack of interest in studies (27%). Another 5 percent responses that connected drop outs to weaknesses of school functioning (scared of teachers, failure in test, physical punishment, etc.) to the causes related to lack of interest the figure, climbs up to 32 percent, which cannot but be a major concern. Many of the parents complained that their children learnt nothing despite attending the school for four years, and this "failure" led their children's inability to compete with others when enrolled in higher classes. As one parent said, "if the child cannot even write his name after completing primary schooling what is the point sending him to school further?" And, in many cases, as was found from some responses, linking children's dropout with that of income generating or domestic activities, was somewhat deceptive: often, the case of children's lack of interest, which was frequently fuelled by poor quality of schooling, appeared first only to result in his/her being made to be involved in other activities. As a parent said, "a child reluctant to attend school cannot progress much; and when his educational prospect is bleak, it is wise to have him involved in substantial work so that he could be trained in livelihood income at an early age."

Interestingly, while almost no gender difference was found among the causes related to poverty, the case of lack of interest in studies revealed a striking difference between the boys (35 %) and girls (14%). Another major reason reported by the parents was children's involvement required for domestic purposes; and as a general pattern, here girls outnumbered the boys (20% as opposed to 8 % for boys). Again, for about one tenth of the girls the cause behind leaving the school was marriage – parents married them off, presumably at an early age.

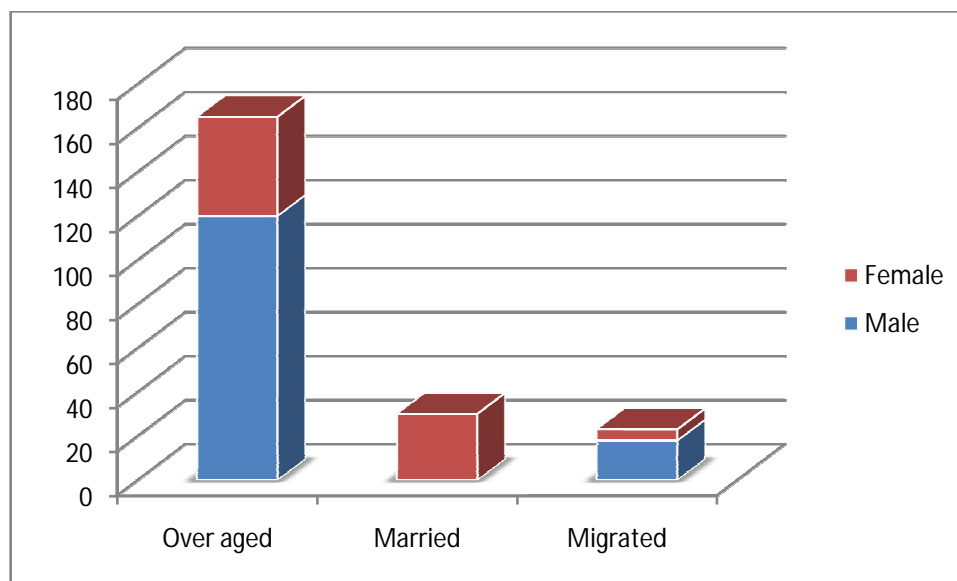


**Table 7. Reasons of drop out**

Reasons of Dropout	Boys	Girls	Total
Migrated out	1.6	1.8	1.7
Married off	0.5	11.6	4.7
Overage	0.0	1.8	0.7
Poor economic condition forcing to income earning activities	42.4	38.4	40.9
Punishment at school/ scared of teachers	3.8	0.0	2.4
Domestic involvement	8.2	19.6	12.5
Failed in school tests	2.2	2.7	2.4
Physical illness	5.4	7.1	6.1
Not interested in studies	34.8	14.3	27.0
Pursuing religious studies	0.5	0.0	0.3
Inaccessibility of upper primary/high school	0.0	1.8	0.7
Other	0.5	0.9	0.6
Total	100	100	100

### 6. Particular Cases of Migration, Early-marriage and Over-age Forcing Drop-out

Among the actually dropped out students (295 in number) found by the field survey, 165 (56%) were over aged. This followed by 30 (10%) cases – all girls – who were married off and another 23 (8%) cases who had reportedly migrated out. Rest 78 students were reported to have dropped out owing to other reasons. One observation worth noting here was that in cases of drop-out due to over-age and migration boys far outnumbered the girls (with the share of boys being 72 percent and 78 percent respectively), while in case of marriage the cases involved only girls, relating early marriage with that of a major obstacle for girls' education. And hence, the phenomenon of girls' were being married off at an early age must receive appropriate attention.



## **7. A Concluding Remark**

The findings of the survey suggest that the phenomenon of drop out is linked with that of past legacies; majority of the children had dropped out several years ago. Nevertheless, small as it was, a section of out-of-school children of primary and upper primary school going age were also found, and attention must be paid to bring them back to school.

Second, majority of the children had reportedly dropped out at a lower level of schooling (at primary and upper primary). That a sizeable section of the parents reported that the children dropped out owing to household poverty – in order to contribute to the family income – gives way to the assumption of their being involved as child labourers. While the trend of drop out appears to have declined, taking note of and ensuring social vigilance on the issue has not perhaps ceased to be important.

Third, and perhaps, most important is the issue of improving the quality of schooling: that 32 percent of the children (27% lacked interest and another 5 % found other reasons related to school functioning) discontinued studies because of some or other weaknesses of the school (failing to generate their interest on one hand and repelling them from school through physical punishment or failing them in tests) is bound to be a serious concern. And, in all probability, the improvement in schooling would lessen the proclivity to joining income generating activities at the cost of school education.

### Appendix Tables

Appendix Table 1. Distribution of surveyed children – gender-wise

Circle	Boys			Girls		Total
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage	
Dubrajpur	27	51.92		25	48.08	52
Dubrajpur (M)	4	50		4	50	8
Dubrajpur South	30	50		30	50	60
Illambazar	21	72.41		8	27.59	29
Illambazar New	15	75		5	25	20
Khoyrasol	12	54.55		10	45.45	22
Khoyrasol South	29	80.56		7	19.44	36
Labhpur	15	78.95		4	21.05	19
Mallarpur East	7	46.67		8	53.33	15
Nalhathi (South)	18	75		6	25	24
Paikar	6	54.55		5	45.45	11
Rampurhat (South)	13	54.17		11	45.83	24
Sadar East	6	66.67		3	33.33	9
Total	203	61.7		126	38.3	329

**Appendix 2. Social category-wise, circle wise distribution of the surveyed children**

Circle	SC	ST	Muslim	General	Total
Dubrajpur	51.92	26.92	13.46	7.69	100
Dubrajpur (M)	100	0	0	0	100
Dubrajpur South	55	3.33	41.67	0	100
Illambazar	41.38	41.38	13.79	3.45	100
Illambazar New	55	10	35	0	100
Khoyrasol	81.82	0	18.18	0	100
Khoyrasol South	44.44	0	55.56	0	100
Labhpur	0	0	100	0	100
Mallarpur East	80	0	20	0	100
Nalhathi (South)	37.5	0	62.5	0	100
Paikar	18.18	0	81.82	0	100
Rampurhat (South)	37.5	0	58.33	4.17	100
Sadar East	77.78	0	22.22	0	100
Total	49.85	9.12	39.21	1.82	100

**Appendix Table 3. List of Villages under the Circles Specified for the Survey and Number of Children in the Villages Covered by the Survey**

Block	Circle	Village	Number of children surveyed
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Bhagabatibazar	3
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Matheswarpur	2
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Batkar	3
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Beloa	3
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Goltikuri	2
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Murandihi	2
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Norsunda	2
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Kurmitha	1
Ilambazar	Ilambazar New	Golte	2
Number of villages 9			20
Labpur	Labpur	Mirbandh	5
Labpur	Labpur	Darbarpur	12
Labpur	Labpur	Hatia	2
Number of villages 3			19
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Sahapur	1
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Kamarpara	5
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Rangabandh	3
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Janubazar	5
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Khuria	1
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Ghuria	3
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Akamba	2
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Phulbagan	2
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Sukhbazar	1
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Gangapur	3
Ilambazar	Ilambazar	Debipur	3
Number of villages 11			29
Khayrasole	Khayrasole	Kharikabad	3
Khayrasole	Khayrasole	Badulia	8
Khayrasole	Khayrasole	Tarapur	6
Khayrasole	Khayrasole	Sagarbaya	5
Number of villages		4	22
Khayrasole	Khayrasole South	Sahapur	21
Khayrasole	Khayrasole South	Jamalpur	8
Khayrasole	Khayrasole South	Nabasan	7
Number of villages 3			36
Mallarpur	Mallarpur East	Khorasingpur	2
Mallarpur	Mallarpur East	Baropurigram	2
Mallarpur	Mallarpur East	Fatepur	4
Mallarpur	Mallarpur East	Amba	2
Mallarpur	Mallarpur East	Barturi	4
Mallarpur	Mallarpur East	Mallarpur	1
Number of villages 6			15
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Jashpur	10
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Sahapur	6
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Krishnanagar	1
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Pochera	4
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Lohagram	23
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Kuitha	1
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Badhagram	1
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Babupur	1
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Madanpur	4
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Kendula	4
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Rasulpur	3
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Jablai	1

Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur South	Paduma	1
Number of villages 13			60
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Raotara	6
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Chinpai	1
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Chinpai-Adibasipara	1
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Muthaberia	4
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Sagor	6
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Manirampur	1
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Baghersol	6
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Metela	8
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Asansuli	7
Dubrajpur	Dubrajpur	Majuria	12
Number of villages 10			52
Dubrajpur Municipality 1		Dubrajpur (M)	8
Suri II	Sadar East	Indragacha	2
Suri II	Sadar East	Haraipur	3
Suri II	Sadar East	Kabipur	2
Suri II	Sadar East	Rastanpur	1
Suri II	Sadar East	Talitpur	1
Number of villages 5			9
Paikar	Paikar	Kashimnagar	4
Paikar	Paikar	Paikar	1
Paikar	Paikar	Mitrapur	6
Number of villages 3			11
Rampurhat	Rampurhat South	Kamakshya	4
Rampurhat	Rampurhat South	Bagtui	4
Rampurhat	Rampurhat South	Kalikapur	2
Rampurhat	Rampurhat South	Barsal	8
Rampurhat	Rampurhat South	Dekuria	6
Number of villages 5			24
Nalhati	Nalhati South	Gosainpur	7
Rampurhat	Rampurhat South	Bhujung	10
Rampurhat	Rampurhat South	Paikpara	7
Number of villages 3			24