

# **A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India**

April 2022 Visit Report

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July 2022

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## Meeting with Dr Manika Bora, Jindal University

**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> April Dr Emily Henderson met with Dr Manika Bora, who is an Assistant Professor at Jindal University and a member of the project Consultative Group (CG). The meeting included discussions of the current FCF project and the new project. Manika contributed insights on gender and education from the schooling perspective, linking together gendered choices in the school level with higher education choices, particularly in relation to the value and purpose of education for girls, which in many families is closely linked with marriage. The meeting also included a discussion of women's mobility in Haryana, as Jindal University is based there.

## Interactive session with NIEPA vice-chancellor, CPRHE/NIEPA director, and the CPRHE faculty members

**4<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

Upon arriving at CPRHE, the team were met warmly by Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, CPRHE/NIEPA, as well as Prof Pradeep Kumar Misra, the new CPRHE director. The team presented Prof Misra with a Warwick plaque.

The FCF team's visit to India started with a very pleasant and enriching interaction with the vice-chancellor of NIEPA, Prof. N V Varghese, the director of CPRHE/NIEPA, Prof. Mishra, and faculty members of CPRHE. Prof. Varghese warmly welcomed the FCF team back to NIEPA. He shared some thoughtful insights into the higher education landscape of India and the evolution of bilateral relations between higher education institutions in India and the UK. Prof. Varghese acknowledged the value of the collaboration between NIEPA and University of Warwick in helping both institutions mutually learn and grow over the course of the project. He mentioned how the project has not only allowed for important academic research to be carried out but has also developed capacity. He shared his delight about continuing the partnership between the two institutions.



Prof. Ann Stewart shared her thoughts on the higher education landscape in the UK and how it is similar and different from that of India. She offered her gratitude to Prof. Varghese and NIEPA for their continued support and collaboration with the project and echoed how valuable the partnership has been for both institutions. Prof Stewart shared her thoughts on inclusion in HE and the similarities between institutions in India and the UK in the challenges they face in achieving inclusion and diversity.

Dr Emily Henderson shared her reflections on the partnership with NIEPA over the last five years and how valuable it has been to the project in navigating the many ups and downs of researching in a different context. She spoke about the project's contribution to the understanding of gender parity which goes beyond numeric gender parity and explores choices and how they are gendered.

Ms Nikita Samanta then briefly shared some insights from her PhD research and her time in Haryana conducting fieldwork. Faculty and consultants from CPRHE shared with the FCF team about their research. Dr Anupam Pachauri shared with the group about her research in accreditation and quality of higher education institutions. Dr Jinusha Panigrahi shared about her past and current projects in the area of financing higher education institutions. Dr Garima Malik shared about her work in governance and management in higher education. Prof Mishra shared his experience as the director and about his research and responsibilities in the area of teacher education and technology in education.

The team presented the CPRHE colleagues with copies of the project outputs and some Warwick memorabilia and presented a Warwick plaque to Prof Varghese.

This was followed by a lively exchange of thoughts and ideas on various aspects of higher education across UK and India which continued over lunch at the NIEPA campus. The FCF team were then given a tour of the NCERT campus by Dr Sabharwal.

In the afternoon, the team prepared for the event on 5<sup>th</sup> April. The team also met with Prof Varghese, VC at NIEPA, to clarify the presentation content with him and to have an interaction about higher education access and choice.

## **CPRHE/NIEPA and University of Warwick Webinar on Gendered Pathways to Higher Education Access and Choice**

***5<sup>th</sup> April 2022***

The CPRHE/NIEPA and University of Warwick webinar on Gendered Pathways to Higher Education Access and Choice was hosted on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at NIEPA, New Delhi. The two-hour webinar was attended by audiences from India and the UK with over 100 participants.



The invited speakers for the webinar were Dr Archana Thakur who is the Joint Secretary, Universities Grants Commission (UGC); Shri Harshit Mishra who is the Deputy Advisor, Education at the NITI Ayog and Dr. Rajinder Singh, Principal of Sanatan Dharma College, Ambala Cantt, Haryana.

Prof. Mishra, director of CPRHE, shared the welcome address. Prof. NV Varghese, Vice-chancellor of NIEPA, also shared a brief welcome address and shared his delight at being a part of the webinar as the chair. He congratulated the FCF team for their research which, he said, has contributed to a more in-depth understanding of the gendered HE landscape of Haryana.

Dr Emily Henderson then shared a presentation on the design and findings from the project. This was followed by Dr Thakur's inputs on how the UGC is supporting women in accessing and finishing HE. Shri Mishra then shared his appreciation towards Fair Chance Foundation and University of Warwick for carrying out the study in Haryana and sharing the findings, especially in relation of the role of the families in HE choices and the focus on gendered trajectories to HE.

Dr Singh, Principal of Sanatan Dharma College, who piloted the Outreach Activity Resource (OAR) as part of the impact phase of the project, shared with the audience the process and outcome of the 'taster day' activity. Following this there was a very lively and engaging question and answer session chaired by Prof Varghese, where several topics were discussed such as the role of teachers in enabling access; the role of social capital in choice making; the role of trailblazers in promoting education for women, among others.

Prof. Ann Stewart then shared some reflections on the wider significance of the contribution made by the project and reflected on the position of the UK in relation to widening participation.

Prof Varghese offered the concluding remarks and shared that the project and its findings have been relevant at various levels- it has aided colleges in Haryana, it has contributed to the academic research, and the policy community in India, which was evident from the attendees and speakers at the webinar. The vote of thanks was shared by Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, NIEPA, in closing.

(All outputs from the project including workshops are available through this [link](#).)

## **Debrief and planning session & Meeting with Dr Sharmila Rathee, Delhi University**

***6<sup>th</sup> April 2022***

Dr Henderson and Prof Stewart discussed next steps for the project following the events, including with Ms Samanta.

Dr Henderson met with Ms Sharmila Rathee, who is an Assistant Professor at Delhi University, in the Education Department, and a CG member. Ms Rathee discussed themes of education and gender in Haryana from her personal experience of having grown up there. She also updated Dr Henderson on her PhD progress.

## **Publications Meetings, Book Development workshop, Meeting with Director of CPRHE, Project planning meeting**

**7<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

- 1) Meeting to discuss contribution to an edited collection on widening participation in law schools

The day began with a meeting between Dr Sabharwal and Prof Stewart about a planned publication on Widening Participation in Law Schools.

- 2) Book Development meeting

In Attendance: (*In person*) Prof Ann Stewart; Dr Emily Henderson; Dr Nidhi Sabharwal; Sharmila Rathee; Nikita Samanta. (*Online*) Dr Anjali Thomas.

Apologies: Dr Renu Yadav, Dr Julie Mansuy.

Dr Henderson opened the meeting and thanked all the participants for coming together to discuss the book. She briefed all participants about the agenda for the meeting before moving on to a discussion about who the *intended audience* for the book is. The group agreed that

- The book should be accessible to India audiences and hence, the language should be kept simple. Dr Henderson confirmed that the publishers agreed that the book format should make it accessible to a wide audience.
- It should be useful to a range of audiences: students, young researchers, teachers in HE in India and internationally; policy makers and institution leaders. We should keep school leaders and policy makers at school level in mind as a target audience.
- One way of doing this would be to organise a review process with target audience to ensure its user friendliness, a process adopted by Dr Henderson for a previous publication.
- We should avoid jargon and, for contexts that may be obvious to Indian audiences, we may need some explanation for international audiences or vice-versa Pictures and graphs can make the book more user friendly. We can have about 10 pictures and 10 graphs.
- Prem Chowdhry's work could be relevant to the book and how we position the book.
- The book contributes to international scholarship on gender, higher education and widening participation. It will be necessary to find the best way of highlighting the empirical findings within a wider discussion of the literature.

Dr Henderson set out the *key approaches* to the book which will have a policy layer, a literature layer which includes studies of gender and WP and an Indian and Haryana literature layer, then an empirical layer which will highlight our data from the study, all woven into a narrative.

This was followed by a discussion on

- The pricing of the book – the 'Focus' format reduces costs; it can be set up as an affordable e-book.



- Timelines to finish writing the book: it must be finished within one year and the aim will be to have a first draft in the next 6 months. The group agreed on the stages and processes for the writing which will be led by Dr Henderson.
- Appropriate preface for the book.

The team discussed each chapter in some detail including obtaining appropriate database/s to gather data on Haryana (Dr Thomas shared a link suggesting a database) and the need to have another look at the qualitative data that was collected in phase 1.

After lunch, the team reconvened to discuss the two chapters on masculinity and femininity and the codes around them that were noticed during the study. This prompted a lively discussion around the ways in which femininity and masculinity is enacted in Haryana such as what constitutes a woman, e.g., physical appearance and attire and women in sports in Haryana and how they reconcile the two identities: the one as a sportsperson and the other as a woman.

Following this discussion Dr Henderson requested the team send her any notes they may have taken as it would be helpful to her writing process and said that she would make a start to writing the book in the coming weeks. She thanked the team for their time and participation and closed the meeting.

### 3) Meeting to discuss contribution to special edition of journal on phase 3 outreach activities

After the book workshop, Prof Stewart and Dr Sabharwal (apologies from Dr Yadav) met to discuss a planned publication on the piloting of the OAR (Outreach Activity Resource).

### 4) Other meetings

At the same time, Dr Henderson met with the Director of CPRHE, Prof Misra. The discussion included comparisons of the system of doctoral student recruitment in India and the UK, and the lack of research on doctoral education in India. The discussion also included engaging with Prof Misra on his recent work, particularly a book for teachers on learning about teaching, and a discussion of the placing of teacher education in the higher education research field.

The day concluded with a team debrief and planning session, where timelines were drafted for remaining outputs for the project.

The team met with Prof Varghese to thank him for his support and hospitality and engaged in further discussions, for example about the right to higher education.

## **FCF2 Project Work, Meeting with Dr Jinusha Panigrahi, NIEPA**

***8<sup>th</sup> April 2022***

In the morning, Dr Henderson met with Dr Jinusha Panigrahi, an Assistant Professor in CPRHE NIEPA. The discussion included issues of HE choice, as Jinusha had included this topic in her doctoral research in Orissa and Delhi. She discussed challenges of rural communities understanding the logistics of choosing HE in Delhi. Dr Henderson discussed her work on faculty members and on conferences and there was a discussion of different limitations on accessing international conferences.

Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson then engaged in FCF2 (i.e., the follow-up FCF project) planning for the remainder of the day.

## **Scoping Visit to Kurukshetra**

***9<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022***

Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson visited the town of Kurukshetra in the North of Haryana. This was a part of Haryana that the first FCF project (FCF1) did not include so this was a valuable opportunity to understand another side of Haryana ahead of writing the book. They visited some of the key sites as Kurukshetra is known as an important site of Hindu mythology. They also visited a private rural BEd college in order to understand the differences between various HE options. This college only offers degree level education in the area of Education, and the students are often teachers living in different parts of India who only attend the college at certain times. Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson were offered a college tour, though the college was not currently being actively used due to online education happening in the pandemic phase. The college site also included a school.

Dr Sabharwal had arranged meetings at Kurukshetra University (KU) on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April with the Geography Department. The university is prestigious and gained A+ status in the recent accreditation round. Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson were met by Prof Rajeshwari, Prof M S Jaglan and Dr Omvir Singh. The discussion was with the purpose of presenting the outputs of the FCF1 project and discussing the key themes of the FCF2 project. Regarding the FCF1 project, the colleagues discussed the ongoing linking of education with marriage for women; the issues around subject choice where there are temporary closures of, for example, Science streams in school because of a lack of teachers; policies relating to school distribution following school mapping and consolidation policies. In relation to the HE landscape, they discussed that many colleges are opened but with insufficient staff, especially as student numbers are growing.

Regarding FCF2, colleagues discussed whether faculty members are engaging in outreach. One colleague noted that, in rural government women's colleges, staff go to the surrounding areas to talk to students and their parents and go 'door to door' for this. This is partly motivated by the need to keep enrolment levels up, but also from a concern about low



enrolment from some areas. It was also noted that sometimes a loudspeaker is used in villages, to explain various aspects of HE. If faculty members go to the village, they may approach the sarpanch who may accompany the visit. Various informal mechanisms were identified. For instance, one colleague mentioned receiving phone calls from people he knows asking for HE advice. Sometimes alumni networks feature here, for instance an alumnus of the department who was a school teacher arranged for his students to visit the department at KU. It was mentioned that professional development sessions for faculty members on these issues of outreach would be beneficial. There was also a discussion of the organisation of the academic profession, where newly qualified faculty members serve for three years in a rural college before being able to specify a preference on location. It was noted that sometimes this system includes some teachers avoiding the rural posting and others becoming stuck in a rural posting for several years. Frustration was mentioned as an issue, with fairness in the system being questioned. This can lead to faculty members' attendance suffering. Many college teachers are from rural areas but do not wish to return to them. It was mentioned that college teachers may not have a strong commitment to social justice or to the innate values of the profession. Finally, there was a discussion of whether motivation to engage in outreach could be taught to teachers. It was noted that a single lecture would not suffice, but ongoing support would be needed. The attending faculty members were presented with copies of the project outputs.

Following the interaction with the Geography Department, Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson and Prof Rajeshwari met with Prof Manjula Chaudhary, the in-charge of the Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) which organises professional development for faculty members across India. The interaction was a discussion of the nature and processes of HRDCs. HRDCs provide in-service year-round professional development training for faculty members in the form of an induction programme (two weeks), a refresher course (two weeks), and short courses (five days). Some trainings are pedagogical, and others are subject based. The training calendar is approved by the UGC, who funds the training. There is a new mentor scheme where retired faculty members mentor new faculty members, though the pandemic prevented the scheme from being launched as planned. There was a discussion of how this scheme would work, as retired faculty members tend to reside in urban areas so there may be issues of allocating mentors to rural-based faculty members. The themes for the trainings are selected from a list provided by UGC and there were new guidelines for this in 2019. The content of subject-specific training is approved by Department Chairs. There is a subject coordinator for the HRDCs. Prof Chaudhary indicated that issues of equity tend to be mainstreamed across courses rather than focused on directly. Faculty members check the HRDC websites to identify their chosen courses and enrolment is on a first-come first-served basis. The training is for faculty members on permanent contracts only. Training is optional for Associate Professors and Professors, and they engage in few training courses. During the pandemic the training has been conducted online, but there was also online provision prior to the pandemic. On a separate note, Prof Chaudhary noted that, in the Mass Communications Department, faculty members visit schools to explain the degree and associated career paths. Prof Chaudhary was presented with the project outputs and suggested that the project findings could be useful in an HRDC course.

Prof Rajeshwari then accompanied Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson to lunch with a group of colleagues from the Geography Department, including a visiting colleague from JNU, Delhi. There was a further brief interaction over lunch including about methodology and gender issues in Haryana. Emily and Nidhi thanked the hosts and departed for Delhi.



## **FCF2 Project Planning Session at NIEPA**

*12<sup>th</sup> April 2022*

Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson engaged in project planning for FCF2, in particular revising the project aims, objectives and research questions, discussing the selection of case study institutions, clarifying the methodology and developing the implementation plan.

## **FCF2 Project Planning Session at NIEPA and Meeting with S. Arokia Mary, Central University of Kashmir**

*13<sup>th</sup> April 2022*

Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson's planning session for FCF2 focused on the research design and established how the research questions would be answered using different data collection techniques and how the study would be sequenced.

Dr Henderson then met with Ms S. Arokia Mary, and Assistant Professor from Central University of Kashmir, who works on gender and higher education and who was visiting Delhi. The discussion ranged around gender and doctoral education, doctoral policy in India and reflections on the FCF NIEPA webinar, which she had attended.

## **FCF2 Project Planning Session**

*14<sup>th</sup> April 2022*

Dr Sabharwal and Dr Henderson engaged in a final planning session which included planning out the activity timeline for the project, establishing project roles, and discussion of next steps. Dr Henderson then prepared for departure on 15<sup>th</sup> April.