

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

October 2019 Visit Report

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## Table of Contents

<b>Meeting with the British Council</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Meeting with the Research Advisory Group</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Meeting and Session at BPS Women’s University</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Day in the Field in Sonipat</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Day in the Field in Mahendragarh</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Conference at Haryana Central University</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Day in the Field in Sirsa</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Meeting with the Department of Higher Education, Haryana</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Meetings with Various Partners in New Delhi</b>	<b>9</b>

## Meeting with the British Council

*11th October 2019*

Attended: Ann Stewart; Nikita Samanta; Reesha Alvi, Head Society and Gender; Vishu Sharma, Head for Higher Education.

We briefed our colleagues at the British Council (BC) on the project and in particular, sought their advice on how best to develop the policy implementation stage.

The Head for Society confirmed that it is important to share the project with the appropriate government policymakers in Haryana in the first instance. We asked the best ways of making this approach and also the timing. The Head for Higher Education suggested using the channels available via our contacts at NIEPA but also offered to identify contacts on our behalf. We provided her with a brief outline of the project and a short agenda for a meeting on 23rd/24th October and this was sent on to the appropriate contacts in Haryana. She also suggested that we try to speak to Dr Pankaj Mittal, a member of our Research Advisory Group and now Secretary General at the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).

As a result of these suggestions and introductions we were able to arrange meetings with Haryana government officials responsible for Higher and Technical Education and with Dr Mittal at the AIU (see below).

We discussed what could be an excellent objective – the possible hosting of day/half day policy conference by the Government of Haryana in 2021 as part of our wider dissemination strategy. We also suggested that we could contribute to appropriate British Council initiatives in the area of higher education policy development in India. Our BC colleagues confirmed that there were excellent relations at the present time between Vice Chancellors from Haryana Universities and the BC as a result of their participation in the delegation that visited the UK recently. There is much interest in developing the Higher Education sector and developing international collaborative ventures.

We were alerted to the International Seminar on Governance in Higher Education Feb 20-21st 2020 and suggested that we talk to Professor Varghese at NIEPA about any opportunities that might arise for some contribution.

## Meeting with the Research Advisory Group (RAG)

*14th October 2019, India Habitat Centre*

Attended: Ann Stewart, Nikita Samanta, Nidhi Sabharwal, Ratna Sudarshan and Farida Khan

Apologies: Claire Noronha, Manish Jain, Pankaj Mittal, Asha Singh, Kiran Bhatta, Nandini Manjrekar

Ann opened the meeting with a brief introduction of the project and an update on how the project has evolved since the last RAG meeting in 2018. She spoke about the work of the two PhD students so far and gave the members present an update on the pilot data analysis. She then explained the purpose of her current visit to India which was to support Nikita's fieldwork, learn more about the institutional context for Nikita's research and to lay the foundations for dissemination of the project findings in 2021. Ann is keen to obtain an insight into the field realities through this visit. She also requested assistance from the members in reaching out to relevant authorities within the higher education sector in Haryana to ensure

that the project is able to provide information for the authorities about the purpose and aims of the project and potentially collaborate to disseminate the project findings.



Following this, Nikita shared her fieldwork plan with the members present and they offered many useful and insightful comments and feedback on her plans relating to the development of 'outreach' activities via a 'taster' event for school students to encourage and support them in making informed choices in relation to the opportunities available to them. There were concerns around colleges being oversubscribed and hence, being uninterested or unwilling to undertake outreach. It was suggested that we need to be clear on the range of public institutions that exist in India and understand their funding structure and entry processes. This is important for placing the colleges with which we are working within these contexts. Further, it was suggested we pay attention to access to minorities such as Muslims who seem to be absent from the sample in our pilot. One of our members kindly offered to provide us with material on the topic. Another suggestion was to map the various pathways to opportunities for students in Haryana. Our colleague highlighted the trend of school students to forego higher education to take coaching for public service entrance exams. Some practical advice relating to Nikita's fieldwork was also shared and it was suggested that Nikita follow-up with all (or as many as possible) participants at the evaluation stage to get a more well-rounded perspective. We benefited greatly from the engaged and lively discussion with RAG colleagues relating to the project as well as Nikita's fieldwork.

Following this item, Ann shared with the RAG members plans for the future of the project and potential dissemination events in 2021 which may include one academic workshop and a policy conference.

The meeting ended with an informal lunch where members shared interesting insights from their own research projects and the work with which they are currently involved.

## Meeting and Session at BPS Women's University Haryana

15th October 2019, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila University

Attended: Ann Stewart, Nikita Samanta, Manju Panwar, Dr Dipali Mathur

Ann and Nikita were met by Dr Manju Panwar at her office. They were introduced to Dr Panwar's colleague from the Department of Social Work, Dr Dipali Mathur. Ann and Nikita discussed the project with Manju and Dipali and shared views on the importance of research in social work. Manju



spoke about ways in which the university undertook outreach to encourage women to access higher education- personal visits to nearby schools and colleges, phone calls to potential students, etc. She also spoke about the work that was being done by her students in the nearby villages which the university had adopted. She spoke about the history of the university and its aim to

encourage education among women.

## शिक्षा से लैंगिक असमानता को कर सकते हैं दूर

बीपीएस महिला विवि के समाज कार्य विभाग में हुआ विस्तारक व्याख्यान

हरिभूमि न्यूज ११ गोहाणा

लैंगिक असमानता से समाज में असंतुलन की स्थिति उत्पन्न हो रही है। इस असमानता को खड़ा को केवल शिक्षा से ही मिटाया जा सकता है। यह बात यूनाइटेड किंगडम में वार्विक विश्वविद्यालय से प्रो. एन स्टीवर्ट ने कही। वह बुधवार को गाँव खानपुर कला स्थित बीपीएस महिला विश्वविद्यालय में उक्त विषय पर छात्राओं को संबोधित कर रही थीं। बीपीएस महिला विश्वविद्यालय के समाज कार्य विभाग में बुधवार को लैंगिक असमानता विषय पर विस्तारक



व्याख्यान आयोजित किया गया। कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता विभाग की अध्यक्ष डा. मंजु पंवार ने की और संयोजन डा. दीपाली माथुर का रहा। कार्यक्रम की मुख्य वक्ता प्रो. एन

स्टीवर्ट ने बताया कि वह भारत में लैंगिक असमानता पर शोध अध्ययन कर रही हैं। शोध के लिए हरियाणा प्रदेश के जिला सोनीपत, सिरसा और महेंद्रगढ़ चुने गए हैं। इस

कार्यक्रम में वार्विक विश्वविद्यालय की रिसर्च स्कोलर निकिता ने भी अपने विचार व्यक्त किए। इस मौके पर शिक्षक सोनहलाल और लूसी लूसी भी उपस्थित रहे।

Following this, Ann and Nikita were invited to have an informal session with about 30 students from the university who were pursuing masters and PhDs in social work. Ann shared the trajectory of our project with the students and explained the methodology we used. Ann and Nikita then had a discussion with the students about their perceptions of higher education and the challenges they faced in

accessing it. This was followed by a Q&A where students asked Ann and Nikita many questions about the project, pathways to a PhD, Ann's previous research in India and elsewhere.

After the session with the students, Ann and Nikita had an informal lunch with Dr Panwar where they discussed Dr Panwar's research. Ann and Nikita were then taken for a tour of the campus by two students who talked about their own higher education trajectories and also



explained the history of the university. They passed a group of women learning to ride motorbikes on campus under a scheme by the University in partnership with an automobile company and some other agencies which aims to empower women and make them self-reliant.

Ann and Nikita then attended the launch of a global communication campaign that the university was undertaking in partnership with a media house that focuses on information relating to the global development sector. Ann was invited to light the lamp at the start of the event along with the other guests present and she was given a plant as a token of gratitude. Ann and Nikita also had the opportunity to meet the Dean of Academic Affairs of the university, Dr Ipshita Bhansal, at the launch event along with the other guests and the associate editor of the media house that was hosting the campaign.

## Day in the Field in Sonipat District

*17th October 2019, Government College and Government Girls Senior Secondary School*

Ann and Nikita met with the principal of the sampled college, to discuss the upcoming 'taster day' which is part of Nikita's fieldwork. The principal seemed very interested and supportive of the project and expressed his enthusiasm for hosting the 'taster day'. They discussed the logistics of the Taster Day as well as the aims of hosting the event. Ann and Nikita also met with the acting vice principal. He informed Ann and Nikita of the various challenges faced by the college due to administrative pressures. Ann and Nikita were also able to visit one of the classes briefly and were shown around the campus by the principal. They learnt of the history of the college, which was first established in the 1980s and its trajectory since. It was a very fruitful visit and both Ann and Nikita offered their gratitude to the college staff for their support and warm hospitality.

Ann and Nikita then met with the English Teacher at a Govt. Girls Sr. Secondary School. The principal of the school was away on election duty on the day and hence, the English Teacher was given the responsibility by him to facilitate the arrangements for the Taster Day. She showed Ann and Nikita around the school campus which was large and had students from Grade 1 to 12. Ann was able to interact with some students and also observe the students being served the mid-day meals. They then met with the Block Education Officer to brief him on the project and seek his permission to allow the students to participate in the event. He was pleased with the aims of the project and offered his support for the same. He and the English Teacher also offered



to facilitate the attendance of boys from the Boys Sr. Secondary School by reaching out to the principal there.

## Day in the Field in Mahendragarh District

*18th October 2019, Government College; Govt. Girls Senior Secondary School and Govt. Boys Senior Secondary School*

Ann and Nikita along with Dr Renu Yadav, Project Consultative Group member, visited the sampled government college. The acting head of the college when Nikita last visited the college was also present briefly. Renu and Nikita explained the purpose of the taster day and the aims of the project. The principal assured them of his support for the event and agreed to host it on the 8th of November between 11am to 1pm. The schedule for the event was finalised. The members present further discussed the state of higher education in Haryana and the principal shed light on the challenges the college was facing with regard to a shortage in faculty.

After their fruitful meeting at the college, Ann and Nikita visited a Govt. Girls Senior Secondary School. They met with the principal and discussed the schedule of the event. The



principal seemed positive about having the students participate in the event. He also shared insightful information about the student demographics and career trajectories as well as the attitudes of parents towards girls education which he remarked was very positive. Following this, Ann and Nikita also visited a Govt. Boys Senior Secondary School. The principal of the school was away on

election duty and so Nikita and Ann met with one of the in-charge teachers. They had the opportunity to learn more about the school and students. They also met with other teachers in the school who seemed pleased with their visit.

## Conference at Central University Haryana

*19th October 2019, Central University*

Attended: Ann Stewart; Nikita Samanta; Dr Renu Yadav

Ann was invited by Dr Renu Yadav to participate in a panel discussion in the conference titled 'Headed Towards Zero: Sustainable Development in Economy, Environment and Society' hosted by the Central University of Haryana and International Geographical Union (IGU). The keynote address was given by Prof. Yukio Himiyama, President, IGU from

Hokkaido University, Japan. There were several other brief talks and presentations by academicians and practitioners from India, South Africa and Japan on the theme of the conference. Ann



presented her research on Gender and Ageing set within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as a part of a panel which was very well received. The panel was followed by an informal lunch with colleagues who were part of the conference.

## Day in the Field in Sirsa District

Nikita and Ann visited a college in Sirsa district to discuss Nikita's fieldwork. They were met by a senior faculty member in the college. The visit took place a day after the assembly elections in Haryana due to which a majority of faculty members and the principal were unavailable as they were deputed to election duty. After discussions about the schedule for the taster day and other logistical arrangements, Ann and Nikita were taken on a tour of the college where they met with other faculty as well as students.



Ann and Nikita then visited the two schools in the district that were to participate in the taster day and were greeted by enthusiastic students who asked Ann several questions about the UK. The faculty of the school was enthusiastic about the visit as well.

## Meeting with the Department of Higher Education, Haryana

24th October 2019, Panchkula

Attended: Ann Stewart; Nikita Samanta; Deputy Secretary of Centralised Training and Placement Cell for the Department of Technical Education Haryana; Secretary for the Department of Technical Education Haryana; Deputy Director for the Higher Education Department Haryana; Director for the Higher Education Department Haryana.



Ann and Nikita met with the Deputy Secretary and Secretary at the Haryana State Board of Technical Education. The Secretary gave a brief overview of education in Haryana and expressed his desire to collaborate with University of Warwick. Ann reciprocated with an introduction to Warwick and explained to them about the technical departments at Warwick. She also spoke of Warwick's long-standing relationship with the National Law Schools. The Secretary was kind enough to introduce Ann to the Vice-Chancellor of the National Law School in Sonapat over the phone. Following this, there was a lively discussion on the various avenues for collaboration between the two universities – through exchanges, placements but also research collaboration. The discussions particularly focused on our Sustainable Cities Global Research Priority; on humanitarian engineering, the Institute for Sustainable Development. Ann said she would happily forward any proposals/suggestions they may have to the relevant colleagues at Warwick.

Ann and Nikita were then taken to meet with the Director of Higher and Technical Education as well as other colleagues from the Higher Education Department. Ann explained the aims and purpose of the project to those present and the Director requested that we seek his approval for Nikita's PhD research in government college based on a proposal. He expressed his desire to be informed of the project's development and outcomes.

Ann and Nikita were then invited to have lunch with the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary during which they further discussed possible routes for collaboration.

We subsequently received the approval from the Director requested during this meeting.

## Meetings with Various Partners in New Delhi

*25th October 2019, the Association of Indian Universities, Ambedkar University, and NIEPA*

Attended: Ann Stewart; Nikita Samanta; Dr Pankaj Mittal; Dr Manish Jain; Dr Nidhi Sabharwal and Prof. N V Varghese.

Nikita and Ann visited Ambedkar University to meet Dr Manish Jain on the morning of the 25th where they discussed their impressions of their visit to Haryana. They discussed concepts of accountability and autonomy in the HE context. Nikita shared her experiences of the use of internet cafes for the online admissions process. Manish pointed out that there are a million young people in Haryana without jobs. Nikita shared her experience of students opting for applications for grade 4 government jobs as a way of gaining employment. We discussed the difference between employment and employability. Haryana government keen to promote the latter. We discussed the withdrawal of hard copies of brochures in colleges leading to less personal contact to be replaced by online processes. How do people make meaning of these difference discourses and modes of information provision? What sources are trusted? Who is trusted? How are such interactions understood? Manish kindly agreed to send relevant references to Nikita and to facilitate Nikita's visit to Ambedkar after her fieldwork and share with Manish and hopefully with other students some of her findings.

Following this, Nikita and Ann visited Dr Pankaj Mittal at the Association of Indian Universities (AIU). Nikita shared her fieldwork plan and impressions so far with Dr Mittal. Dr Mittal offered feedback and advise on this. Ann situated the project and specifically Nikita's fieldwork in the context of the current policies of Haryana to suggest that they may work in harmony as a continuum from the 'taster day' which Nikita is piloting to the Induction Sessions that the government of Haryana has proposed every college undertake at the start of the academic session. They also discussed the Draft New Education Policy in brief.

Ann further sought advice from Dr Mittal on the policy dissemination phase of the project and Dr Mittal offered insight into the best ways to go about this. She suggested we submit a preliminary report of our findings following which she very kindly suggested that she could facilitate/advise on routes to disseminate the results in order to reach the appropriate audiences.

After their meeting with Dr Mittal, Ann and Nikita had the opportunity to visit the library at AIU where the librarian, Dr Singh enthusiastically showed them around and offered several book recommendations for Nikita. He also offered his support and cooperation to Nikita for any further visits and assistance needed by her for the purposes of her PhD.

Ann and Nikita then visited Dr Nidhi Sabharwal at NIEPA. She introduced them to her colleague, Dr Garima Malik who works on governance in Higher Education. They then proceeded to meet with Prof. NV Varghese, Vice Chancellor of NIEPA. There was a lively discussion about the politics of India and the UK. Prof. Varghese offered some very invaluable insights into the history of Indian Higher Education and why the India Institutes of Management (IIM) and of Technology (IIT) were set up in the country. This was followed by a very informative discussion on the Draft New Education Policy. Prof. Varghese suggested that Nikita read the yearly publication by NIEPA that focuses on the various strands of HE in India. He also kindly agreed for Nikita to use the library at NIEPA for her research and to facilitate ways of linking policy makers with any appropriate academic findings from our research in due course.