

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Government of Punjab partners with Breakthrough and J-PAL South Asia to implement gender sensitisation curriculum in all government schools



Students participating in Breakthrough's gender sensitisation programme. Photo courtesy of Breakthrough

Chandigarh, India, March 8, 2021: The Government of Punjab's Department of School Education launched a partnership today with Breakthrough and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) South Asia to integrate a gender sensitisation curriculum for adolescents into the syllabus for all government schools in Punjab.

To change gender-biased perceptions and provide tools to enact behavioural change among adolescents, the Department of School Education will embed Breakthrough's gender equality curriculum in schools during the upcoming academic year. The curriculum consists of a series of interactive, safe, and open discussions held over two and a half years to empower adolescents to transform their gender attitudes, aspirations, and behaviours.

In a randomised evaluation conducted by J-PAL South Asia in 314 government schools in Haryana, the curriculum was found to significantly shift the gender attitudes and behaviours of both boys and girls, and led students to enact more gender-equitable behavior. The evaluation was led by researchers Diva

Dhar (University of Oxford), Tarun Jain (IIM Ahmedabad), and Seema Jayachandran (Northwestern University).

The Department of School Education will work with Breakthrough to train teachers to integrate the curriculum in standards 6,7, and 8. J-PAL South Asia will conduct an independent process evaluation to generate insights for sustained, high-quality, government implementation.

The partnership was launched by the Honourable Chief Minister of Punjab Captain Amarinder Singh on the occasion of International Women's Day. To mark the event, Shri Krishan Kumar, Secretary of the Department of School Education, Punjab, said, "In service of our mission to transform gender outcomes in the state and achieve gender parity, I am delighted to launch this initiative to directly address gender discrimination and encourage the growth of gender equitable mindsets in our young citizens. The expansion of Breakthrough's gender sensitisation programme throughout Punjab will bring about a ripple effect as this curriculum begins to shift gender norms and behaviours of our students, who will grow to shape the fabric of our state."

Sohini Bhattacharya, CEO and President of Breakthrough, said, "Breakthrough is honoured to partner with the Government of Punjab and J-PAL South Asia to bring systemic change to how we address gender equality. Applying a gender lens to the school syllabi and teacher training will lead to state-wide shifts in gender norms and go a long way in making sure that girls are valued and their dreams and aspirations are realized."

Shobhini Mukerji, Executive Director of J-PAL South Asia, said, "Many gender gaps persist despite economic progress, making it important to intervene directly and early enough to change norms and attitudes in order to bring about a more gender equal society. In uniting the Government of Punjab's commitment to improve gender outcomes with Breakthrough's expertise in developing programmes to change gender norms, this partnership offers tremendous potential to close the gender outcome gap by empowering every student with a gender equitable mindset and the tools to act upon it."

This initiative is part of an ongoing partnership between the Government of Punjab and J-PAL South Asia, wherein since 2017 J-PAL South Asia has worked with state departments to facilitate rigorous, policy-relevant research and the scale-up of successful programmes.

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Breakthrough was founded in 1999 with the mission of making violence and discrimination against women and girls unacceptable. Its work focuses on changing norms and cultures that perpetuate inequity and violence to achieve transformative change.

Breakthrough has been working with adolescents through an Adolescent Empowerment Programme (AEP) since 2012, to shape their gender attitudes and behaviours at a stage when their views are still malleable, and more progressive, gender equitable thinking can be instilled.

In a randomised evaluation by J-PAL South Asia, Breakthrough's gender equality curriculum, *Taaron ki Toli*, was seen to significantly shift the gender attitudes and behaviours of both boys and girls, even transforming views of students from conservative families with the most regressive gender views. Breakthrough currently reaches over 500,000 adolescent girls and boys from the ages of 11 to 18 years across the 5 states of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar and Jharkhand.

For more information, visit inbreakthrough.org

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a global research center working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. Anchored by a network of 225 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL conducts randomised impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty.

J-PAL was launched at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2003 and has 7 regional offices around the world. J-PAL South Asia, hosted by the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR), Chennai, and has built partnerships for the generation of new research and advancement of evidence-informed policymaking with 16 Indian state and central government ministries, as well as training partnerships with the governments of Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

For more information, visit povertyactionlab.org/south-asia

Additional Reference:

1. Dhar, Diva, Tarun Jain, and Seema Jayachandran. "Reshaping Adolescents' Gender Attitudes: Evidence from a School-Based Experiment in India." Working Paper, August 2020:

https://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~sjv340/reshaping_gender_attitudes.pdf

2. J-PAL Policy Briefcase. 2019. "Reshaping Adolescents' Gender Attitudes: Encouraging Students to Discuss Gender Equality in the Classroom." Cambridge, MA: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab:

<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publication/reshaping-adolescents-gender-attitudes.pdf>