



WHITE LOTUS TRUST



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**January-March 2020
(3rd Quarter Report)**

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Executive Summary

With essential support from Max India Foundation, the Girl's Blossom Bus (GBB) program continued to run smoothly over the January to March 2020 quarter and since July 1st 2019. It is highly satisfying that three hundred girls from twenty three villages have been provided free transport to and from School which has enabled them to successfully complete their school year and not a single one dropped out in the period.

The magnitude of this outcome and the critical need provided by the service can be appreciated when we consider the many reasons why education for girls remains a challenge in the India context and this area in particular. **Safety of girls** and women is a huge issue in villages served by the Girls Blossom Bus and parents of children from villages are rightly concerned. A December 2019 report in the Times of India¹ revealed there were 1396 cases of rape in Haryana in the first ten months of 2019 including a gang rape every second day. The extent of the lack of law and order in the State is well illustrated with only 18 convictions against 338 rapes, (reported) and will continue to impact on girls education and development outcomes across every social indicator until law and order in the state is vastly improved.

Provision of the GBB has also overcome challenges to girls education such as lack of personal and public transport, time and arrangements to drop and pick up daughters from school, dictate that distance to high school remains a hurdle to girls enrolling in higher classes and once they do, being able to get to school regularly enough to keep up and successfully complete a year of high school. Keeping this in mind, attendance levels are also an extremely important indicator of success and in this our wards have excelled over the course of the academic year as well. Not only have most achieved the minimum 60% required in order to sit exams, most of them have recorded around ninety percent attendance!

¹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/gurgaon/hry-sees-gangrape-every-second-day-5-rapes-every-day/articleshow/72861047.cms>

This report represents an individual victory for every girl that has managed to stay in school a year longer and collectively, as a community and a society in which girls have to fight harder than boys for a seat at school and to be taken seriously as potential breadwinners. We take heart from key outcomes in this report such as significant increases and even doubling of girls attending high school grades from nine to eleven at schools served by GBB! This is no mean feat when we consider in 2009 when this program began there was only one minority community girl able to reach grade nine!

We are deeply grateful to Max India Foundation for supporting this program and look forward to our continued partnership in the year ahead.

Glenn Fawcett
Executive Consultant
White Lotus Trust



Only education can fulfill the hopes and dreams of these capable young women and make them powerful agents of change in their communities.

Focus on Quantitative Outcomes

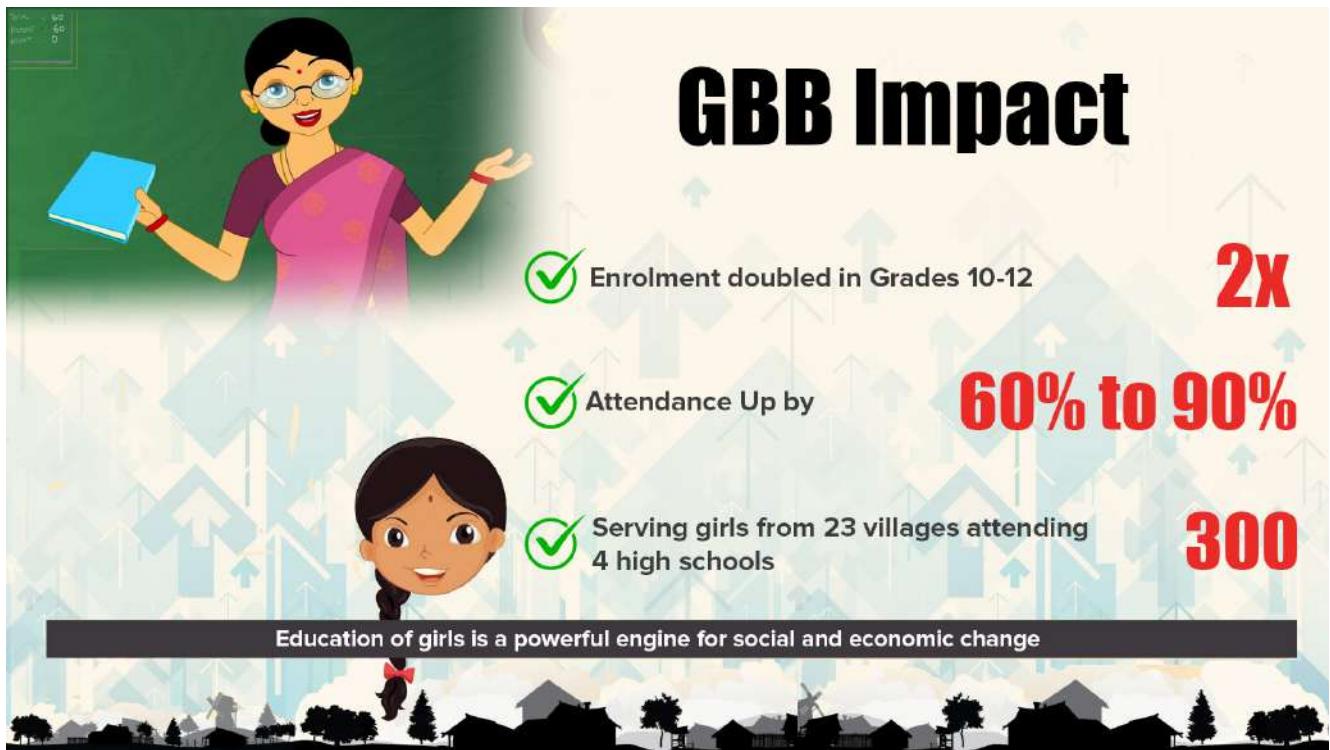
The six buses contracted for the GBB program provided daily transport to three hundred girls studying in grades six to twelve, six days a week to four high schools in Palwal district of Haryana. All are female students hailing from 23 different villages, attending four schools at Hathin, Bahin, Solara and Chaisa, all of which are situated a distance of three to nine kilometers from the students homes. There were zero dropouts across all three quarters and 20 sat for their year 12 exams in March 2020.

GIRLS BLOSSOM BUS – Number by Standard	
Six	30
Seven	25
Eight	24
Nine	83
Ten	76
Eleven	43
Twelve	20
Total	301

300 girls from 23 villages attending 4 Government Girls Senior Secondary Schools	
Rindka	Sapanki
Andhrola	Nangal Jat
Gohpur	Manpur
Buraka	Pawsar
Garhi Vinoda	Pahari
Lakhnaka	Solara
Mathepur	Bholda
Chilli	Rajpur
Firozpur	Khurd
Swamika	Bighawali
Pachanka	Mathepur
Malokhra	

Block Education Officer and principal, Girls Senior Secondary School at Hathin, Yash Pal Garg, has remarked provision of the Girls' Blossom Bus at his school is increasing the number of girls enrolling in year nine this coming year as well as increases in those reaching year 10, 11 and completing the grade 12 exams. He confirmed the girls on GBB now have an average of 90% attendance where previously, many had less than 60% and which disqualified them from sitting exams.

Principals and teachers at Solara secondary school confirm the number of girls attending years 10,11 and 12 has doubled at that school due to availability of transport on Girls Blossom Bus. Of the total 301, there are currently 139 girls from grades 10,11 and 12 travelling on the bus.



Focus on Qualitative Outcomes

Borrowing from our reflections in the last quarter report we can confirm the during January to March, the last quarter of the 2010-2020 academic year, community demand for seats on Girls' Blossom buses continued to grow. Requests from families, teachers and school principals to provide bus services to girls from villages in which we are not providing the service have continued unabated.

Significant increases in numbers of girls reaching years nine to twelve along very high levels of attendance provides clear evidence of a continuing growth in parental support for girl's education and all that goes with that. Many families that had previously married girls off by year 10 are now delaying marriages while increasing their levels of education and which will lead to significant social development in this otherwise backward area.

Unlike many rural schools in the backward rural areas of India, those our bus riders are attending are hives of educational activity bulging with students; classes are full and the teaching staff happy and inspired to teach. Having full classes has allowed schools served by GBB to flourish, not simply to remain open. These rural schools are now, for the first time, getting purpose designed classroom-laboratories that will offer practical experience in science subjects such as biology, physics and chemistry, subjects that were previously only learned in theory out of class textbooks.

The introduction and availability of laboratory taught STEM subjects in this region is truly ground breaking and will provide the kind of training that will eventually lead to the many employment opportunities offered for STEM subject graduates in today's modern world.

All put together, it is clear this program is having a significant impact on deep-rooted socio-economic and cultural beliefs and practices and which is changing the norms that dictate what a girl should and can do.

Provision of Education Materials

The program purchased school uniforms for one hundred and fifty girls in the lower classes and one hundred and fifty, Oxford, English-Hindi dictionaries for the girls in higher classes. We had planned a giveaway ceremony for late March and which was not possible due to schools closing down early due to Corona virus restrictions.



Special Report

We met with the Block Education Officer and Principal, Girls Senior Secondary School, Hathin, (GSSSH) Yash Pal Garg on March 16th and discussed access to sanitary napkins among the school girls and even their parents. We have long been interesting in developing adolescent girls empowerment groups with a view to awakening and liberating their capacity to bring positive change in their lives and to their villages. Part of the process is to identify issues that impact on the girls and on education in particular. Understanding sanitary hygiene (SH) is one such issue. There are many reports providing data on this issue and all agree that SH is an issue that impacts negatively on the lives of millions of India's girls, dropping out of school in swathes every year as they reach puberty. There have been a number of health department initiatives including village based info programs and fixing of sanitary pad dispensers in schools. We were shown the dispenser at GSSSH as well as an incinerator and both were out of use.

It is very common for government programs to fail in this way and that's why it's important for NGO's to intervene to ensure last mile delivery is complete. The principal felt the price was not competitive at five rupees and that may be so, but should not be a reason to ignore an issue that has such a huge impact on girl's education. We are now planning to design a survey that will provide us enough information about this issue to warrant setting up a program to make pads cheaper, less harmful to the environment and more easily available.



**Five rupee coin
sanitary pad
dispenser and
incinerator at
GSSSH. Not
currently in use.**

Girls Blossom Bus: Stories of inspiration



Sahreen wants to become a teacher!

Sahreen, daughter of Mubeen Hasan, a farmer of village Buraka, joined Girls Blossom Bus this year and is studying in grade 12 at Government Girls Senior Secondary School Hathin. Her elder sister only studied till grade five and then married off, even though her three brothers are studying. Sahreen's father is very supportive of her education and used to drop his daughter to school every day while there was no transport available. Some months back however, he had some health issues and it was quite painful for him to drive a bike and drop his daughter at school. As a result Sahreen's good grades became under threat as she began missing school about 10 days in a month. Winning a seat on the GBB has changed all that and she is now back on track. Mubeen is very happy Sahreen can attend school everyday without him dropping her and hopeful his health will improve.



Sahreen is happy in school and with her studies. She is an exceptional bright student expecting 95% marks in her Board exams and that would make her eligible for just about any profession she would like to pursue. She has her heart set on becoming a primary school teacher but unfortunately the Teacher Training College (TTC) at Nuh is forty kilometres away so it will simply not be impossible for her to attend. She will not be able to travel all that way to college on a daily basis and her family cannot neither afford or allow her stay in a paying guest situation even if they could overcome their concerns with respect to their daughter's safety and virtue. We discussed her options and promised we would investigate ways to help her attend the two-year TTC course at Nuh if at all possible.

Sahreen understands that all high school students need to have more than one option for further study in place and told us she would also be happy to study Arts in a college in Palwal traveling on Girl's Blossom Bus and after graduation.

She told us that even after getting very good marks, many girls still face many challenges realizing their dream of studying in a degree in college that leads a well paid job in their chosen profession. Sahreen thanked Girls Blossom Bus for making it possible to successfully complete her year twelve without giving trouble to her ailing father.



Lotus Outreach and White Lotus Trust would like to offer our sincere thanks and gratitude to Max India Foundation on behalf of the girls, families and broader communities benefitting from the Girls Blossom Bus