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Final Report

Evaluation of
TARA Akshar+ Programme

India Development Foundation
December, 2016

Executive Summary

Objective

The objective of this report is to assess the impact of the TARA Akshar+ (TA+) programme in eastern Uttar Pradesh (UP). TA+ is an adult literacy programme aimed at making formerly illiterate women functionally literate.

Introduction

Adult illiteracy continues to be a pressing problem in India. It has been 40 years since the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched in 1978. Despite this, and other programmes since launched – such as the Rural Functional Literacy Programme (RFLP), National Literacy Mission (NLM), Saakshar Bharat Abhiyan, etc. – India still has over 287 million adult illiterates. The situation is even worse in the state of UP where according to the 2011 census, 38 per cent of all persons aged 15 and above were illiterate, and 51 per cent of all women above the age of 15 were illiterate. Literacy is an important input for leading a fulfilling economic, social and personal life. It is empowering, especially for women, and allows them to reach their full potential, to improve their political and social participation, and to believe in their own capabilities.

Programme background

Given the above context, a programme like TA+ is a most welcome intervention. If it can provide an effective way of lettering, and thus empowering, adult women it can perhaps provide a solution to a most vexing problem. The TA+ programme consists of two parts. The first are classes. These follow an intensive computer enabled pedagogy which aims to make illiterate women functionally literate in 56 days. These classes are topped by a six-month-long post literacy programme called Gyan Chaupali (GC) which helps provide a range of skills to women and works to make literacy as a practice in day-to-day life. The

programme ran in 435 villages in multiple cycles with each cycle lasting for about nine months.

Methodology of evaluation

The indicators for this evaluation study were chosen based on the previous literature on adult literacy programmes and the specific context and design of TA+. We divided the evaluation into three broad categories:

1. Learning and retention

2. Life after learning

3. Programmatic evaluation

Learning and retention have been evaluated following the ASER[1] test format. Understanding of issues related to changes in say confidence, decision making ability etc. cannot be entirely based on quantitative data. Similarly while quantitative data can inform on what has changed, the "why" of the change needs qualitative assessment.

Therefore, the design of this study is mixed methods in nature. In fact, Padak and Padak (1991) also argue for a mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques while evaluating adult literacy programmes: "Programme evaluation data should strike a balance between quantitative measures and qualitative assessments of programme impact. Numbers alone, whether counts and demographics about adults served or results of tests cannot reveal the depth and breadth of programme effectiveness."

We first conducted a quantitative survey of about 2700 respondents (1500 TA+ graduates and 1200 women in the control sample). The selection of the control villages was done by using the propensity score matching technique.[2] The design and methodology of the qualitative round was guided by the findings from this quantitative round. A total of 61 respondents, including TA+ graduates, TA+ instructors, programme staff, and key community members were chosen for the data collection.

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[1]ASER stands for Annual Status of Education Report. This is an annual survey that aims to provide reliable annual estimates of children's schooling status and basic learning levels for each state and rural districts in India. Learning is measured through simple tools (Reading tools / Math tools) to test a child, a group of children.

[2]Propensity score matching entails forming matched sets of treated and untreated subjects who share a similar value of the propensity score. The most common implementation of propensity score matching is one-to-one or pair matching, in which pairs of treated and untreated subjects are formed, such that matched subjects have similar values of the propensity score.

Results

Based on our evaluation study we conclude that TA+ is a well-designed and professionally implemented and managed programme. Certain features of the programme such as the hiring process and compensation of instructors, design and delivery of the pedagogy and the institution of the GC have contributed significantly to the success of the programme.

TA+ graduates have made significant improvements in reading and numerical skills. About 80 per cent of TA+ graduates are able to cross the minimum threshold in our reading and numeracy test. Almost by definition, the corresponding number in the control sample of illiterate women is zero. Also about 30 per cent of TA+ graduates are able to read a class 1 level text and 20 per cent can add two, two digit numbers. Again this is a significant improvement given that these very same women were illiterate nine months ago.

TA+ graduates are more likely to travel independently, more aware and access schemes and services more often. One prominent finding from our study has been the increased ability among TA+ graduates to use mobile phones. Thirty per cent more TA+ graduates can dial the enumerator's phone number when compared to illiterate women in the control sample.

Our evaluation study also went beyond assessing the direct outcomes of the programme and tried to understand changes in the self-image, and the relationships of women with their families and communities. TA+ graduates are more confident and new zones of interaction have opened up for women, both within their families and beyond. They say that they now feel more able to deal better with their children and the world outside their families.

In our quantitative survey we find that six per cent more TA+ graduates are members of SHGs when compared to the control group. About eight per cent women in the control sample attend the SHG regularly, while proportion is 13 per cent for TA+ graduates. Similarly compared to eight per cent attendance in gram sabha meetings by the control group, 12 per cent TA+ graduates regularly attend these meetings. We also find that TA+ graduates are more likely to report gendered violence in their neighbourhood to the authorities.

Recommendations

In this section we make some recommendations regarding the programme. However, given our assessment of the design, implementation and monitoring of the programme we have no significant suggestions about changes in programme. Our major recommendations have to do with the sustainability and expansion of the programme and building further on the results achieved through this programme. The recommendations are:

1. Link TA+ programme to economic activity for sustainable empowerment

2. Longer Gyan Chaupali covering activities after literacy

3. Institutionalising the Gyan Chaupali spirit

4. Expand the programme in neighbouring areas

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

Literacy is the most basic requirement to lead a fulfilling economic, social and personal life. This point cannot be stressed enough. Yet the number of adult illiterates in India, especially women, remains alarmingly high. It has been 40 years since the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched in 1978. Despite this, and other programmes since launched – such as the Rural Functional Literacy Programme (RFLP), National Literacy Mission (NLM), Saakshar Bharat Abhiyan, etc. – India still has over 287 million adult illiterates. The situation is even worse in the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) where according to the 2011 census, 38 per cent of all persons aged 15 and above were illiterate, and 51 per cent of all women above the age of 15 were illiterate. In this scenario TARA Akshar+ (TA+) is a most welcome intervention. If it can provide an effective way of lettering, and thus empowering, adult women it can perhaps provide a solution to a most vexing problem. Empowerment allows individuals to reach their full potential, to improve their political and social participation, and to believe in their own capabilities. It is observed that empowered women have fewer children and higher child survival rates (Rosenzweig and Schultz (1982); Dyson and Moore (1983)), and also healthier and better-fed children (Lundberg et al. (1997); Kanbur and Haddad (1994)).

1.1 Objectives

Following the TOR document the following are the objectives of our evaluation study:

- Effectiveness of the TARA Akshar+ programme

- To evaluate the impact of the TARA Akshar+ programme

- To suggest opportunities and recommendations to capitalise on the attainments of the programme

- Recommend options to increase the programme's outreach in a sustainable and cost effective way

1.2   Programme background

TA+ is a unique computer-based teaching programme, designed and developed by Development Alternatives (DA). It uses advanced teaching techniques with the aim to make illiterate women functionally literate in 56 days. This programme is topped by a six-month-long post literacy programme called Gyan Chaupali (GC), which helps provide a range of skills to women and works to make literacy a practice in day-to-day life. The programme trains the trainers with rigorous training modules. Adult illiterate women are mobilised to participate in the programme. The participants finish the training programme with a test and are awarded certificates.

1.3   Organogram of TA+

Organisational structure plays an important role in the implementation process which further affects the impact of an intervention. Hence, we begin our evaluation of the TA+ programme by studying the organisational structure of the TA+ team. The following diagram illustrates the organisational structure of TA+ team:

TA+ Project Organogram

Project Coordination and Steering
(Senior Management)

Technical Support
1. Research & Development
2. MIS; M&E
3. Documentation & Reporting
4. Assessment & Certification

Operations Management
1. Planning & Design
2. Supervision

Administrative Support
1. Grants & Finance Management
2. HR Support
3. Admin Support
4. IT Support

HQ Team

Field Operations Manager (1)

Block Coordinators (6)

Senior Supervisor (35)

TA+ Supervisors (35)

Gyan Chaupali Supervisors (35)

DA Field Team

Field Team

TA+ Instructors (435)

Gyan Chaupali Facilitators/ Reserve Instructors (45)

Gyan Chaupali Tara Sahelis (435)

CSO Field Team

Figure 1.1: Organogram of TA+

Chapter 2

Evaluation design and methodology

The design of this evaluation is based on findings in the previous literature on functional literacy programmes and the design of the TA+ programme. Padak and Padak (1991) suggest that an adult literacy programme should be evaluated on the following categories:

1. Personal factors (which include both academic achievement and quality of life)

2. Programmatic factors (programme structure and content)

3. External factors (context based and financial)

They suggest that although academic achievement is important, programme impact on other personal factors should also be evaluated: "Changes in self-confidence or self-esteem or perceptions of improved relationships with others are logical quality-of-life factors that might be evaluated through interviews or conversations with adult learners". Stromquist (2006) reviews literature that evaluates adult literacy programmes around one outcome: political impacts. "The connection between literacy and political engagement is predicated on the assumption that as individuals become more exposed to information about their environment, especially the public institutions and government, they will be more prepared to intervene to make such bodies more responsive to their needs."

Given that TA+ is a programme for women, we designed our evaluation to better understand the impact of the programme on women's perception of their relationships with others: both within the family and with the broader community. This is important to understand how and to what extent TA+, as a functional literacy programme, has resulted in the empowerment of the participants. The GC is essentially a space where women from the same community get together to learn and practice their literacy skills. This environment may allow women to share their experiences, learn from each other and develop relationships. This may engender behavioural changes that may not have resulted from simply being lettered.

Based on these insights our investigation in this study focuses on the following:

1. Learning and retention

2. Life after learning

    (a) Mobility

    (b) Access and awareness

    (c) Health and sanitation

    (d) Decision making ability and empowerment

    (e) New zones of interaction

3. Programmatic evaluation

Understanding of issues related to changes — in say confidence, decision making ability etc. — cannot be entirely based on quantitative data. Similarly while quantitative data can inform on what has changed, the "why" of the change needs qualitative assessment. Therefore, the design of this study is mixed methods in nature. In fact, Padak and Padak (1991) also argue for a mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques while evaluating adult literacy programmes: "Programme evaluation data should strike a balance between quantitative measures and qualitative assessments of programme impact. Numbers alone, whether counts and demographics about adults served or results of tests cannot reveal the depth and breadth of programme effectiveness."

This study therefore follows a **sequential explanatory mixed methods design**. This design is characterised by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in the first phase, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the second phase. The second round of data collection builds on the results of the quantitative round (Creswell (2013)). The design is illustrated in the Figure 2.1.
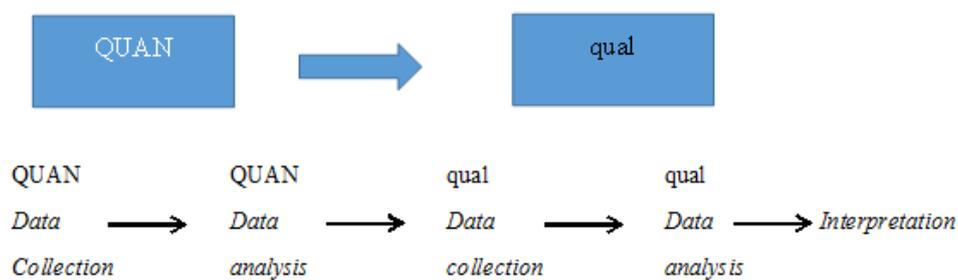

Figure 2.1: Illustration of mixed methods methodology

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This research design is particularly suited to the evaluation of TA+ programme as it is typically used to explain and interpret quantitative results by collecting and analysing follow up qualitative data.

To implement this design we first developed a quantitative survey instrument that was administered to about 1500 TA+ graduates and about 1200 women in control sample. The sampling strategy and selection of control is discussed in the following section. This phase was followed by analysis of the data obtained. After observing the key trends, the second phase was designed and implemented. Through purposive sampling, described in a later section, we chose interview and FGD respondents from among the TA+ graduates, key community members, TA+ instructors and TARA Sahelis, Development Alternatives staff and implementing CSOs (Civil Society Organisations). A total of 61 respondents were selected for the qualitative data collection.

2.1   Sampling Strategy

2.1.1   Sampling for the quantitative survey

Selection of treatment group

This study followed a two-stage cluster sampling method to select the TA+ graduates. TA+ has been rolled out in 435 villages of three districts of eastern UP. Six neighbouring blocks in these three districts have been selected for the intervention. These 435 villages act as our sample frame and distribution of these 435 villages across six blocks is described in the leftmost box of Figure 2.2. The first stage of the sampling involves selection of villages (see the middle box of Figure 2.2). We consider villages as clusters and stratify the villages across six blocks. This ensures the representation of all six blocks in the survey. We then rank the villages on their initial female literacy situation (according to the 2011 Census) and divide them into tertiles[1]. Two villages were then chosen from each tertile. Hence, six villages are chosen from each block (see the middle box of Figure 2.2). This process thus created a pool of 36 villages. Note that this strategy puts equal weight to each block. After selecting the villages, we selected the sample TA+ graduates.

Second level of sampling includes selection of TA+ graduates described in leftmost box of Figure 2.2. Currently, TA+ classes are not running in these six blocks. Beneficiaries have gone through the teaching module and are now participating in the GCs. Hence, our initial group consists of students from the GCs only. The second group consists of women who have left the GCs in the past six months or less. The third group comprises women who have completed the GC between six months and a year ago. Finally, the fourth group consists of TA+ graduates who passed out from GCs more than a year ago.

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[1]Tertiles divide the sample into three equal parts, so that 33.33 per cent of sample falls in each category.

This division is explained in the leftmost box of Figure **2.2**.
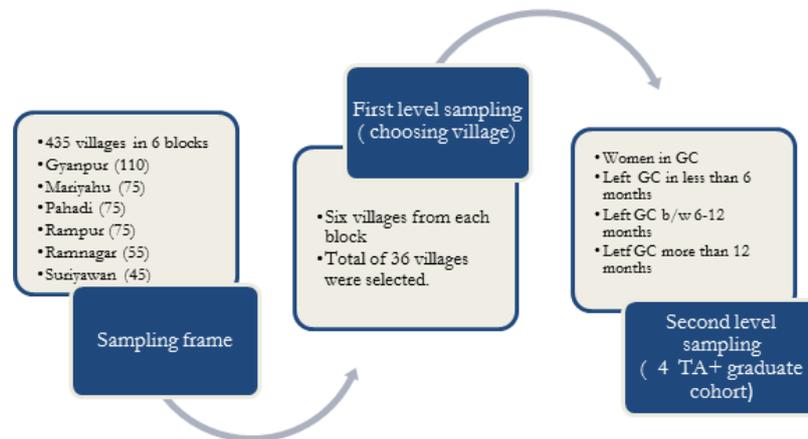
Figure 2.2: Sampling strategy

Selection of control group

Since the villages were not randomly allocated to treatment and control groups at the roll out of the programme, the standard difference-in-difference technique cannot be carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of TA+. Instead we adopted the following methodology to identify control villages.

We did a listing of all villages in neighbouring blocks of the treated blocks (this allowed us to estimate causal impact even if there are spill overs across villages in the same block) using the census data. Then using the propensity score matching (PSM) technique (a process to match treated and untreated subjects who share a similar value/score), and data from the 2011 census, we chose 36 villages (each treatment village matched to a control village) from these neighbouring blocks that are the closest matches to our treatment villages. Villages were matched on demographic characteristics, economic characteristics and access. For access we used distance of the village from nearest town from sub-district headquarters and district headquarters. We also used information on the roads connecting the village.

In these villages we randomly sampled women to form the control group. This methodology allowed us to analyse all the relevant comparisons in the data – TA+ women with illiterate women and TA+ women with women who are literate through normal channels – while keeping the costs of surveying down. A total of 1289 women were surveyed in this process, out of which 650 of them were illiterate. We treated the rest as a homogeneous literate group even though some variation in the education levels has been observed. The

reason for creating this general cohort is that there are very few highly educated women in the sample and only 27 per cent of the control sample has any schooling. Only nine per cent have above primary schooling. This does not allow for further refined analysis.

We should point out here that to understand the true impact of the programme only the comparison between TA+ graduates and illiterate women in the control sample should be looked at. This is because formally literate women could be substantially different to TA+ graduates or illiterate women in various observable or unobservable ways. However, the comparison of TA+ graduates to literate women in the control sample serves two purposes. First, for some outcomes it sets the benchmark of what some basic level of education can help women in this context achieve. Second, it increases confidence in the evaluation study by providing reasonable limits to what a functional literacy programme like TA+ can achieve.

2.1.2 Sampling for qualitative data collection

The qualitative data has been collected through purposive sampling techniques that are primarily used in qualitative studies and may be defined as selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, and institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions (Teddlie, Charles and Fen Yu, 2007). Such sampling has also been described as a type of sampling in which, "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 1997).

Keeping with the rigours of the definitions above, our choice of discussants for the focus group discussions (FGD) and key informants for the interviews (KII) was guided strongly by the purpose and objectives we attach to the TA+ evaluation. We ensure that our qualitative data sample is a subset of our quantitative data universe.

Following the quantitative sampling methodology, the three villages that we chose for our FGDs and KIIs are drawn one each, from each tertile, of the initial female adult literacy distribution. The composition of the focus groups was balanced by the age of the beneficiaries (see Appendix A.2).

Over and above our qualitative data collection in the TA+ villages, we also conducted FGDs and in-depth interviews with the TA+ instructors, programme staff, community members, local educators, TARA Sahelis and partner CSOs.

Our choice of these discussants and interviewees is directed by the functional and geographical space they occupy in the programme. Such that they are able to inform us of the commonalities and differences in the programme's successes and challenges across staff hierarchies, partner view points and physical space. The breakup of the number and roles of respondents in the programme are given in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Composition of qualitative sample

Role of respondent in the TA+ programme	Number of respondents
TA+ graduates	31
Programme staff	8
TA+ instructors	7
Partner CSOs	4
TARA Sahelis	6
Community leaders	3
Local educators	2

Note: The list of interviewees is given in Appendix A.2.

2.2 Field activities

The study was initiated on 22 August, 2016 with a recce to the study area with the TA+ team. The recce visit was planned to formalise the research questions and the methodology. Following the visit an initial meeting with TA+ team was organised to finalise the questionnaire and methodology.

The data collection exercise began on 1 October, 2016 and continued for the next 10 days. Treatment villages were surveyed first. In each treatment village approximately 50 TA+ graduate were surveyed. This number varied depending on the number of cycles of the TA+ programme held a chosen village.

We had the list TA+ programme participants for each village, along with their date of joining. For our survey, we had stratified the participants according to their date of joining the TA+ programme and randomly selected TA+ graduates from each strata. The TA+ graduates so identified were then verified by the enumerators through their names as well as their fathers' names. They were also asked to show their TA+ certificates.

Qualitative data collection was done through focus group discussion and key interviews. The TA+ staff had organised the discussion groups according to our pre-specified research requirements. We met these groups of women in secular spaces in their villages, such as schools, panchayat buildings etc. Our discussions were facilitated by the TARA Sahelis. We also interviewed the TARA Sahelis separately. We interviewed the key informants at time and place of their convenience.

Chapter 3

Evaluation result

3.1 Programme evaluation

We begin our evaluation with a programmatic assessment. This we do by drawing up a 'process map' to understand the programme. We then evaluate the programme design, implementation and monitoring with this map to guide us.

Figure 3.1: TA+ process map

3.1.1 Process map

1. **Identification of the CSOs**
   First, the CSOs that would help TA+ implement the programme on ground were appointed. A board was convened for their selection. The CSOs working in this area were identified and their details were collected. After the initial round of screening, the team visited the field to access their past and existing work. Based on these criterions the CSOs were selected.

2. **Engagement of the staff**
   (a) Monitoring staff
   Field monitoring staff for the programme – namely the block coordinators, senior supervisors and supervisors – were selected though a competitive process after placing advertisements in newspaper. The selection was done under the supervision of the chief programme manager (CPM).

   (b) TA+ instructors
   The TA+ instructors were selected jointly by the CSOs and TA+ staff. The candidates were required to be local youth who were graduates with a basic knowledge of computers. The instructors had to undergo a 17-day-long residential training before joining.

3. **Mobilisation**
   The CSOs and the TA+ team collaborated with each other in their efforts to mobilise women for the programme. The mobilisation was initiated by talking to the sarpanch and other influential community members. Mobilisation was aimed at, both, the learners and their families. The key features of mobilisation were:

   (a) The CSOs organised rallies, processions (*rath yatra*), and staged street plays (*nukkad natak*) to spread awareness and generate enthusiasm about the TA+ programme. They solicited the support of gram panchayats for these activities.

   (b) A team of five people (two women and three men) were assigned for door-to-door mobilisation in villages.

   (c) Outreach for the programme was extended through interactions with gram pradhans, aganwadis and ANMs (auxiliary nurse mid-wife). This was expected to ensure community buy-in from the very initial stages of the programme.

   (d) The mobilisers spoke to potential women students, and their families. This was to generate family consent.

   (e) In some places, former TA+ students were used as role models to mobilise.

4. **TA+ classes**
   (a) Planning and implementation
      i. Identification of location for the TA+ classes: Locations for the TA+ classes were decided after obtaining the consent of the concerned students. Since most villages that the TA+ programme operates in have *bastis* (hamlets) based on caste, students preferred that their class be held in their own (caste-based) *bastis*. The TA+ staff obliged, cautious that they were not seen as disturbing the social structure of the village. In the classes,

however, students were taught not to discriminate against others based on caste and religion.

Many students and community leaders also opened up their homes as venues for the TA+ classes.

ii. Timing of TA+ class: The class timings were based on the students' preference. The TA+ classes were held in three time slots; morning, afternoon and evening. The GCs were held twice in a day, at morning and afternoon.

iii. Class timetable: Classes would start by logging on to the computers, playing a four-minute-long film, and then teaching with flash cards for 10 minutes. This was followed by written practice of alphabets and words, and identification of alphabets and words on the computer.

iv. Pedagogy: The TA+ classes were designed for 56 days. The TA+ programme's teaching method and materials are extraordinary. Alphabets and numbers are taught through videos and flash cards. Each lesson has been assigned a time slot, and the computer based lessons have been programmed such that they cannot be tampered with.

(b) Monitoring

The TA+ senior supervisors and supervisors monitored the instructors. They then submitted their report to the block coordinators. Transparency in reporting and feedback was ensured by installing a location-detecting software, the Blue Dolphin TA+ app, in the android mobile phones of the programme staff. Photographs of the classes being held were asked to be posted on a WhatsApp group created for the programme staff.

(c) Feedback

Feedback was sought from the monitoring staff, as also the instructors. Such feedback was reviewed internally, and changes recommended if needed.

5. **Gyan Chaupali**

The TA+ students revise and practice their reading, writing and mathematics in the GCs, which was conducted for six months. In addition, the TARA Sahelis take them through lessons in health, hygiene and cleanliness. Guest lecturers are occasionally invited to talk to the students on special topics such as financial literacy.

3.1.2 Assessment

Our evaluation of the programme is based on focused discussions and in-depth interviews of TA+ staff across hierarchies, the implementing CSOs, TA+ instructors, TARA Sahelis

and members of the community[1]. An intensive literature and documents review has been carried out to enrich the evaluation.

We have analysed the programme under three headings:

1. Design

2. Implementation

3. Monitoring

1. Design

   (a) Clarity of objective
   The understanding of programme objective was symmetric through all the hierarchies of the organogram (see Figure 1.1). The objectives were clear to all staff members, CSOs, TA+ instructors and TARA Sahelis. All of them were aware of the purpose of the programme and there was uniformity in their responses with regard to it. When asked about the objective of TA+ all of them said, "*Angoothe se kalam tak*" (From thumb impression to signature).

   (b) Transparent selection of CSOs
   A transparent selection process was followed to choose the CSOs who were to implement the programme on ground. Preference was given to CSOs who had worked in the TA+ programme areas on the issues of women empowerment.[2] The CSOs finally chosen were familiar with eastern UP, its local issues and had past experiences of working in the same area for other projects on child and women empowerment.

   (c) Localised hiring
   Employing local instructors ensured that the trainers could connect with the women because of a shared language, culture and way of life. CSOs, programme coordinators and block coordinators had mentioned that the instructors from local areas could attend the classes on time. A senior supervisor pointed out that "teachers get lot of respect from locals and enjoy it". A woman TA+ instructor shared: "I bought a scooty. I can quickly go to my class and comeback home. My colleagues take a lift with me sometimes".

   (d) Effective salary of TA+ instructors
   The salary given to the trainers was higher compared to those offered to others in this region. This led to a huge, and high quality, turnout of candidates

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[1]Please refer to A.3 for the list interview respondents

[2]Some of the CSO representatives that we spoke to had been implementing partners for Swayaam, an earlier programme on women's empowerment.

for the jobs. At INR 8700, the salary of TA+ instructors was higher than the INR 5000 salary being paid to local primary school teachers. This higher salary incentivised the TA+ instructors to work harder, while recognising that they would be monitored to ensure that they earn their comparatively higher salary. As a block coordinator told us, "Generally a graduate school teacher in primary school gets INR 4500 and he has to stay at the school for the entire day."

(e) Low honorarium for TARA Sahelis
Recruiting TARA Sahelis in the GC programme had a twofold objective: i) to engage young women from the community in the programme such that community ownership is encouraged; ii) to ensure that the GCs are held regularly. The TARA Sahelis are paid an honorarium of INR 1000 so that they can be retained. But the programme coordinators we spoke to were of the view that the honorarium paid to the TARA Sahelis was meagre. This was echoed by the TARA Sahelis themselves. The low honorarium has resulted in a high attrition rate for the TARA Sahelis.

(f) Standardised pedagogy
A well-defined standardised pedagogy through the use of computer programmed lessons has been very effective. It has ensured that the instructors followed the pattern as designed for every class, that no lessons were modified or skipped. This adherence to both curriculum and pedagogy ensured high quality teaching irrespective of variation in teacher background.

(g) Strategy for retention of learning
The objective of GCs is to help students retain what has been taught in the TA+ classes, by ensuring practice and revision of lessons learnt. The GCs have come a long way in achieving their primary objective. More significantly, they have become spaces where women learn and discuss issues relevant to their lives.

2. Implementation

(a) Fair and transparent recruitment
Recruitments for the programme were done jointly by the CSOs and the TA+ staff. The mandate was to ensure that the suitable candidates, available locally, were selected. This was carried out effectively.

(b) Effective training
Just like its pedagogy, all the trainings imparted in the TA+ programme were standardised. This ensured uniformity in understanding programme roles and objectives, and consistency in implementation.

The TA+ instructors and supervisory staffs had to undergo 17-day-long residential training. This affected intensive interactions between them, in turn fostering a sense of shared purpose and camaraderie. Mid-term refresher trainings were organised to inform the TA+ instructors, all supervisory staff and CSO partners about the new changes in the teaching modules.

The TARA Sahelis were trained for three days before they joined the GCs. These trainings were held in their neighbourhoods for ease of access.

(c) Mobilisation

One of the TA+ programme's major achievements is being able to convince women of the benefits of joining the TA+ classes. This was doubly challenging since the students' families had to agree to send the women to the programme. Meeting family members, therefore, was an important part of the mobilisation strategy. The CSOs organised rallies, processions (*rath yatra*) and staged street plays (*nukkad nataks*) in the villages to spread awareness about the programme. Support was sought from gram pradhans, anganwadi workers and ANMs.

(d) Feedback system

The field staff and the TA+ instructors were assigned clear monitoring roles, ones that they are playing out most efficiently. The feedback that they provide from the ground is reviewed internally, and modifications in implementation plans are recommended if needed. We found many instances of such changes for improved functioning of the programme based on feedback.

(e) Community buy-in

The goodwill that TA+ enjoys in its villages of operation has perhaps been the largest contribution to its success. We conducted extensive interviews with community members, and found that they are not just aware of the TA+ programme, many are contributing to it and some even have ideas to offer regarding its sustainability. We include the TARA Sahelis in our analysis of the programme's community buy-in because they are young women from the community who have been engaged in the GCs so that ownership of the programme is shifted from staff to the locals by way of an exit strategy.

  i. Community leaders

    A. Awareness

      The TA+ programme enjoys high levels of approval among influential members of the community, such as gram pradhans. The relationships between community leaders and staff from TA+, and the CSOs, are cordial. The staff and CSOs have invested in nurturing relationships with leaders of the community, and interact regularly with them. The programme staff is, in turn, perceived by the community

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leaders as hard-working and focused on teaching women to read and write. Most importantly, they are seen as not meddling with village life.

B. Participation
Community leaders participate in TA+ events routinely, they make themselves available for meetings and lectures, facilitate connect between the programme and those in need of it. Occasionally, they even provide venues for classes.

C. Programme sustainability and their role in it
The TA+ classes, with their repeated cycles in every village, will cover almost all the unlettered adult women in these villages by the time the programme is over. Community leaders, therefore, perceive the TA+ programme's sustainability not as continuing its work in their villages, but as rolling out TA+ into newer villages and districts. But if classes to help the TA+ students revise (as they do in GC) were to continue, leaders of the community are doubtful that this would be possible post the programme staff's exit. The TARA Sahelis are not seen as effective transition of the programme from its staff to community ownership. For themselves, community leaders variously volunteer: to provide the Panchayat Bhawan, the local primary school and their home as venue for the classes. One Block Development Committee member commits to constituting an adult literacy committee that would work through the gram panchayat to mobilise the few odd women who might still be illiterate to join the TA+ classes if they were to continue.

ii. Local Educators

A. Awareness
Local educators are aware of the TA+ programme, and interact with the programme staff. There seems to be a give and take on programme and personal level.

B. Participation
The local educators are involved in TA+ meetings and events by the programme staff. A principal says that so impressed was she by the exceptional quality of the TA+ textbooks that she has used them to supplement teaching material for teachers in her school.

C. Sustainability and their role in it
The educators do not think that the TA+ programme can survive the exit of the programme staff yet. But they are of the opinion that a more intensive training for TARA Sahelis might make programme

sustenance possible. Also, there is willingness to lend school infrastructure as venue for continuance of programme post programme staff withdrawal.

  iii. TARA Sahelis

    A. Awareness

The TARA Sahelis are young educated women from the TA+ villages. They are usually aware of the TA+ classes before taking on their jobs. TARA Sahelis are commonly recommended for the role by their friends and relatives who are TA+ students. Therefore, it is not unusual for them to have accompanied TA+ students to their classes, and having informally helped TA+ instructors while doing so. This indicates that identifying homegrown human resource to support the TA+ class students to retain their learning is working out.

    B. Participation

The GCs run for three hours, and each TARA Saheli facilitates up to two GCs six days of the week (the classes are held for six days a week, also on Sundays if required). There are usually 10 to 15 women in a GC. Apart from helping the former TA+ class students revise and practice their reading, writing and math, the TARA Sahelis take them through lessons in health, hygiene, cleanliness and financial literacy. They use slates, stories and games to do this. Some of the TARA Sahelis we spoke to say that they are especially attentive to slow learners. Before joining, the TARA Sahelis undergo a two-day-long training by the TA+ staff.

    C. Sustainability and their role in it

The TARA Sahelis feel that the TA+ programme needs to continue if the desire to learn in women is to be kept alive. They propose linking the TA+ classes and GC to skill trainings and income earning opportunities to ensure programme sustainability. Though, most TARA Sahelis volunteer to continue teaching post TA+ staff withdrawals, they are unsure of their ability to organise and fund the classes.

3. Monitoring

  (a) Two-stage monitoring

A successful feature of the TA+ programme's monitoring mechanism is that it is done in two parallel streams. Both lines, one comprising the TA+ staff and the other CSOs, report to the same authority. This facilitates a concurrent system for checks and balances, as also triangulation of feedback.

3.2 Learning outcomes

The principal aim of the TA+ programme was to enable illiterate adult women to achieve functional literacy. Thus, the evaluation process logically should start by examining the learning outcomes of the TA+ graduates.

The sampled TA+ graduates were administered a literacy test, which follows an evaluation format designed by ASER.[3] The graduates were tested on their reading (language) and basic mathematics. The reading assessment tool consisted of three levels of difficulties: letters, words, and a short paragraph (class 1 level text). The TA+ graduates were first asked to read the paragraph within a stipulated time (one minute). Three marks were assigned for successful responses. Failure to read the paragraph, meant that the graduates were asked to read the words. If the graduates were able to read 80 per cent of the words in the stipulated time, they were awarded two marks. If the words were not read, they were asked to identify the alphabets. Identifying 80 per cent of the alphabets scored one mark.

The mathematics assignment also consisted of three levels of difficulties: single digit recognition (1-9), number recognition (10-99) and two digit summation. The testing methodology was similar to the language test. First, the TA+ graduate was asked to add two, two digit numbers. Any two out of eight sums needed to be correct. Correct answers got her three marks. If she did not manage to add, she was asked to identify five two digit numbers (out of ten two digit numbers). Right answers got her two marks. Wrong answers, meant that she would next be asked to identify single digits.

Language learning

The result of the language test shows significant learning by the TA+ graduates. Out of 1558 women, 492 (31.58 per cent) TA+ graduates were able to read a class 1 level paragraph. This is a considerable achievement of the TA+ programme. The learning results are summarised in Figure 3.2.

This figure shows 79 per cent TA+ graduates were able to cross the lowest level of difficulty in reading. Almost by definition the corresponding number among the illiterate women in the control sample is zero. This is a high level of success given that the TA+ graduates are women who were unlettered till very recently. More so because the corresponding number for literate women in our sample stands at 85 per cent. A larger proportion of literate women at 65 per cent, however, do have the ability to read a paragraph fluently compared to TA+ graduates (31 per cent).

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[3]ASER Centre was established in 2008 as an autonomous assessment, survey, evaluation and research unit within the Pratham network.
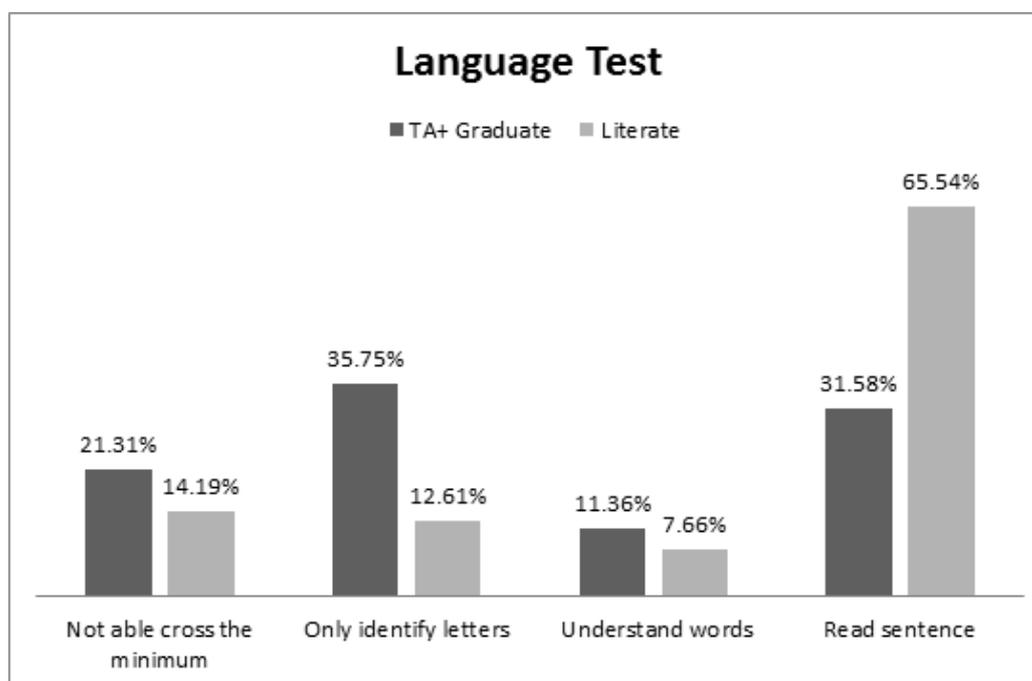
Figure 3.2: Language test

Mathematics learning

The results show that 81 per cent TA+ graduates were able to pass the minimum cut-off barrier in mathematics. Other results follow a similar pattern as the language test scores. Bulk of the TA+ graduates can identify single digit numbers, but only 21 per cent of them can add up two digit numbers. The literate cohort is doing better than the TA+ graduates in the highest parameter (adding two digit number), and their performance can be attributed their schooling in childhood.

Retention

This section will focus on retention of language and mathematics skills. Retention of acquired knowledge is critical for any adult literacy programme. Gallo and Beckman (2016) has reviewed a number of motivational strategies to increase retention and learning. We are particularly interested in studying retention of knowledge by the TA+ graduates. Our unique sampling design helped us measure retention of knowledge of both language and mathematics. The sample is divided into five groups according to the time they entered (and hence exited) the programme. The learning outcomes are shown in Figure 3.4. The result shows a 'bell' shaped asymptotically falling 'retention curve' against time. Each bar signifies average score obtained in respective examinations, i.e. mathematics and reading
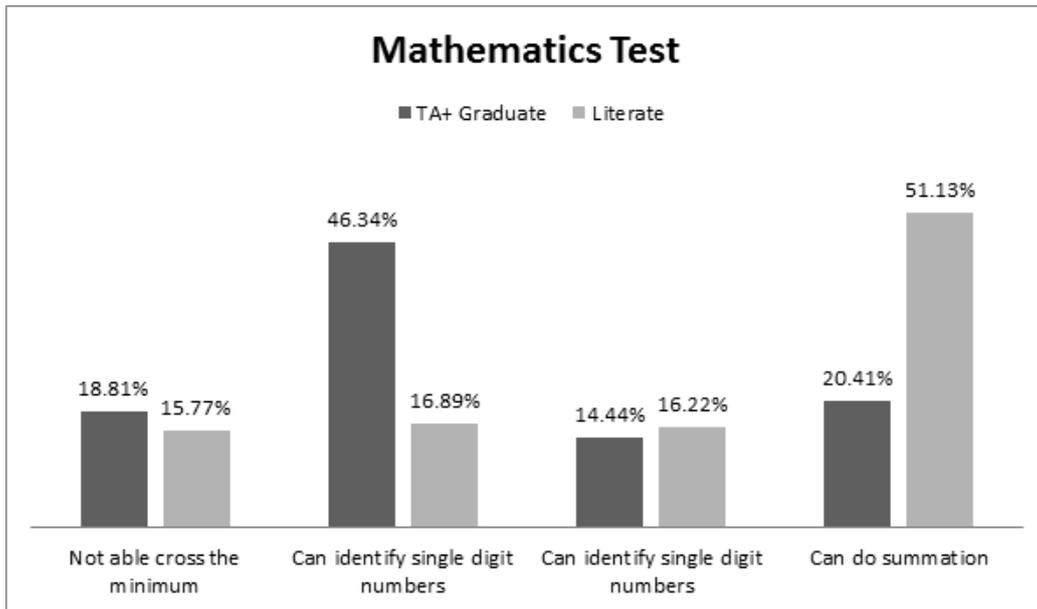
Figure 3.3: Mathematics test

test. Flattening of the learning curve in the long-run is critical for the success of GC and the programme as a whole. The result shows that in the long-run women who graduated the GC more than six months ago have, on average, scored 1.33 for reading. This means that a typical woman who graduates out of GC, will in six months time still be able to identify words easily. On the other hand a typical woman in long-run can easily identify two digit numbers.
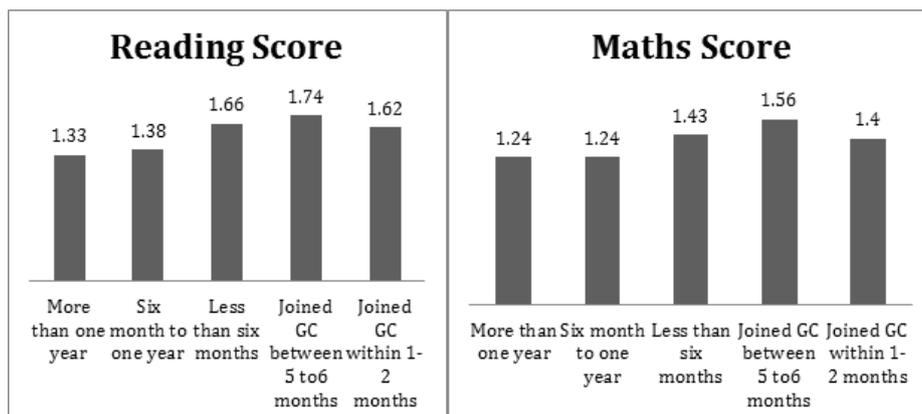
Figure 3.4: Retention of learning

On an average the TA+ graduates score the most when they are about to leave the GC. This indicates increased learning in GC. After GC, both reading and mathematics learning shows a decline. Though the retention does stabilise in the long-run (see the scores for more than six-months-old TA+ graduates). This finding indicates that the GCs have helped the TA+ graduates improve both their language and mathematical skills and retain their knowledge.

3.3 Mobility

Restricted mobility is often an accepted norm for rural women, especially poor illiterate rural women; so much so that travelling alone is often a self-imposed ban (Robinson-Pant (2004)). In fact, such women are fearful of negotiating their way in a world they are unfamiliar with, where they cannot decipher signs and directions to find their way.

Our quantitative queries intended to find whether there had been any actual increase in independent travelling by women after they had learnt to read and write. The qualitative research sought to understand the initial and embedded barriers to mobility faced by the TA+ graduates.

Table 3.1: Mobility

Pre-TA+	Post-TA+
• Family members would keep ordering us. Do not go here. Do not go there. • I could not travel on my own to any place.	• I will be less scared when I am out of the village (now). • (After joining TA+ classes) I accompanied my husband for a meeting in my child's school.
• Earlier I could not travel alone even up to Mariahu (neighbouring town). My family members also would not allow me to go anywhere. • I avoided going to my children's school for parent meetings (PTM, Parent Teacher Meeting). • We never go the to the gram sabha.	• Some of us attend the gram sabha meetings (now) when the pradhan informs us.

Note: The table comprises voices of TA+ graduates who participated in the FGDs we conducted. They spoke to us on condition of anonymity. The Pre-TA+ quotes are recall quotes. Note that some quotes may find mention in multiple tables as they relate to more than one theme.

3.3.1   Quantitative

Compared to illiterate women in the control sample, TA+ graduates are more likely to have travelled outside the village in the last six months. While only 69 per cent of illiterate women have travelled outside the village in the last six months, this number is 77 per cent for TA+ graduates. We observe no difference between TA+ graduates and the literate women in the control sample. We also do not observe any difference in the proportion of women travelling alone or in the reasons for travel (the main reasons being to meet relatives, shopping and medical reasons).

3.3.2   Qualitative

Even just getting out of home daily for the TA+ classes and GC has increased the mobility of the women. Other than this, the women did not provide instances that pointed to significant additions in their mobility that can be attributed to their neo-literate status alone.

3.3.3   Inference

Our quantitative data indicates that the TA+ graduates are travelling more than their illiterate counterparts in the control villages, and almost as much as literate women. These results present a very encouraging picture of the role that TA+ has played in the life of these previously illiterate women. This suggests increased confidence and ability among TA+ graduates to navigate the outside world.

The qualitative data gives us an insight into where this journey to improved mobility begins for the TA+ graduates. Restricted mobility is an accepted norm in the TA+ graduates' social context. As young girls and adult women they have never been allowed, or have been severely discouraged, to travel alone. Illiteracy had further limited their movements. But now, having learnt to read and write, and exposed to new ideas in the GCs, they feel both the desire and ability to be mobile. The TA+ graduates, for instance, say that they have begun venturing out to attend gram sabhas and parent teacher meetings – indicating enhancement of both physical and social mobility.

3.4   Communication

The UNDP-OGC's *Global Report on Communication for Empowerment* (2010) lists information and communication gaps felt by marginalised and vulnerable groups, and suggests that development interventions recognise the implications these have for programme design. These include: differential access to media by men and women; the necessity of safe

public spaces in providing support and expanding opportunities for communication; and the growing importance of mobile telephony.[4]

We evaluated the TA+ programme's impact on its participants' requirement to communicate, as also their ability to communicate. Preston and Hammond (2002) say adult literacy enhances communication abilities. Balatti et al. (2006) find adult literacy and numeracy courses improve the structure of the students' networks and their communication methods. The latter is best measured through mobile phone usage.

Table 3.2: Communication and the ability to communicate

Pre-TA+	Post-TA+
Expressions: • I avoided going to my children's school for parent meetings (PTM, Parent Teacher Meeting).	*Expressions:* • We have learnt how to conduct ourselves in the public and how to talk to people. (*Logo ke beech uthna baithna aa gaya hain*). • Now I am confident about attending the teachers meeting at school. My children also now have confidence in my abilities to speak to their teachers in the PTM. • When I came to know of this programme from other women, I contacted the TA+ teacher and said I was interested in joining the classes.
Over phone: • We could not calculate, could not read numbers, not dial mobile phone numbers. • I would wait for others to call me back if the phone connection went off. I did not know how to make a call.	*Over phone:* • Earlier I would ask others to dial numbers for me. We learnt to dial a mobile number after joining TA+ classes. • I can read the names on the mobile phone and dial the numbers. • Now, I can redial if the mobile connection cuts off.

Note: The table comprises voices of TA+ graduates who participated in the FGDs we conducted. They spoke to us on condition of anonymity. The Pre-TA+ quotes are recall quotes.

3.4.1 Quantitative

According to the survey, 55 per cent of TA+ graduates own mobile phones, as compared to 44 per cent illiterate women in the control sample (see Figure 3.5). During the quan-

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[4]The findings from five pilot countries and key learning from implementing the UNDP's C4E Initiative are synthesised and presented in the Global Report on Communication for Empowerment (2010).
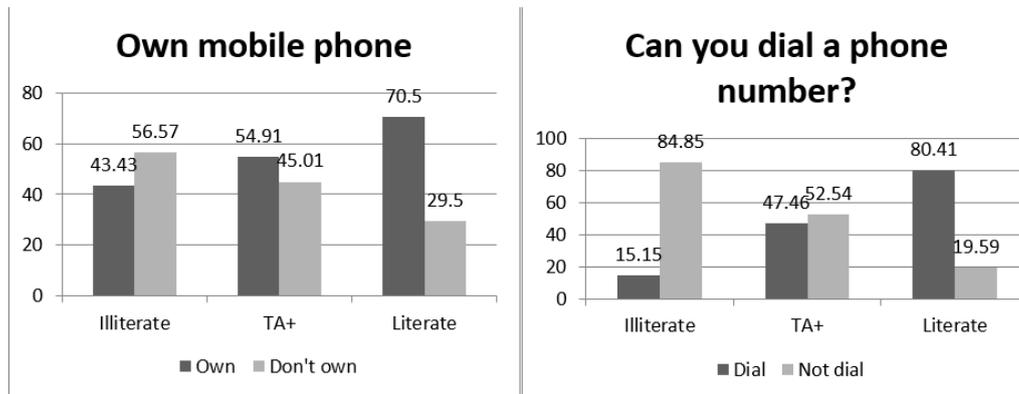
Figure 3.5: Communication

titative survey we asked the respondents to dial the enumerators' phone numbers. We find that while 48 per cent TA+ graduates can dial the phone number, only 15 per cent of the illiterate women in the control sample can. The corresponding number for literate women in the control sample is 80. Thus, because of participation in the TA+ programme around 33 per cent more women can now use mobile phones.

3.4.2 Qualitative

The ability to read and write has instilled, both, the confidence and the ability to communicate. The TA+ graduates are now communicating with their teachers, and fellow students. Some speak of feeling sufficiently equipped to attend the PTMs in the children's school.

The most repeated benefit due to the TA+ classes, as cited by the TA+ graduates, is their newly acquired ability to use the mobile phone. It is perceived as having liberated them from depending on others to fulfil their communication needs.

3.4.3 Inference

Literacy seems to have assured the TA+ graduates of their ability to communicate. Secure in the knowledge that they are now literate, they are able to better articulate themselves in public. They also negotiate interactions like PTMs that they earlier avoided because they saw themselves as insufficiently equipped to do so because of their illiteracy.

The mobile phone is arguably the most important communication device today. It is interesting therefore that there is not much difference in the ownership of mobile phones between illiterate women in our control villages and the TA+ graduates. What is stark, however, is the difference between the usage of mobile phones in both groups: The TA+

graduates are clearly leaps ahead of their illiterate counterparts in their ability to use the mobile phone.

3.5 Accessing schemes and services

Literature says that the ability to access schemes and services is a significant benefit of adult education. According to Preston and Hammond (2002) adult literacy enhances the ability to articulate needs and understand services that are available, ability to formulate goals, and the sense of control over one's life.

Quantitatively we first put to test whether their literacy has affected the information sourcing behaviour of the TA+ graduates, whether they are accessing and watching and reading more television and news than their illiterate control counterparts. We used two variables – namely the knowledge of the names of their gram pradhan and bank – to find out whether TA+ has increased the awareness of its participants. This new awareness has the potential to make significant changes to the lives of the graduates by enabling them to access schemes and services. Our qualitative tools corroborated the quantitative conclusions, and probed further to draw evidence to help understand our quantitative findings.

3.5.1 Quantitative

A positive aspect of having literate citizens is their engagement with and awareness of the world around them. To understand the impact of TA+ on this aspect of the participant's lives we asked them various questions related to awareness. We found that compared to illiterate women in the control, TA+ graduates have more access to newspapers and also read the newspaper more often. They also have more access to TV and watch news on TV more often. The TA+ graduates have made a substantial improvement over the illiterate women in the control sample. After participating in TA+, formally illiterate women have closed the gap between them and literate women (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7).

Eighty per cent of women in our sample, including both the control and treatment, have a bank account. Given this we do not find any significant changes in this variable across treatment and control. However we do find that compared to illiterate women in the control, 18 per cent more TA+ graduates know the names of their banks. Similarly, 11 per cent more TA+ graduates know the name of their gram pradhans. In fact, the results on this variable are quite interesting as TA+ graduates also do better than the literate women in the control sample.

Table 3.3: Accessing schemes and services

Pre-TA+	Post-TA+
• My in-laws took care of everything. I had no knowledge of any schemes and services. I have opened a zero bank balance bank account in 2014.	• After joining the TA+ classes, I have come to know of the ATM, also about how to call the police and the ambulance.
• So many of us live in *kutcha* houses.	• "Women who have gone to the TA+ classes can read now. They go to the pradhan and check whether their children's names are included in the Patrata Ghrihasti Suchi (The Ration Card List that is being updated under UP's food security policy)."— *Member, Block Development Committee (BDC), Seur, Ramnagar block, Jaunpur.*
• Most of us get water from public hand-pumps and wells.	• Parts of our village are very dirty. We need to go to our gram pradhan and demand that our village is cleaned up.
• Hardly anyone here has toilets in their house.	• We need to ask the pradhan to help us construct toilets and get electricity connections in our homes.
• Most of us use kerosene for light. We do not have electricity.	• In the Gyan Chaupali we were told that complaints to the police can be made by dialing 100 and 1090. • The 1090 number will be picked up by a woman police officer. • Earlier I could not even sign, now I can sign when I have to do bank work.

Note: The table comprises voices of TA+ graduates who participated in the FGDs we conducted. They spoke to us on condition of anonymity. The Pre-TA+ quotes are recall quotes.
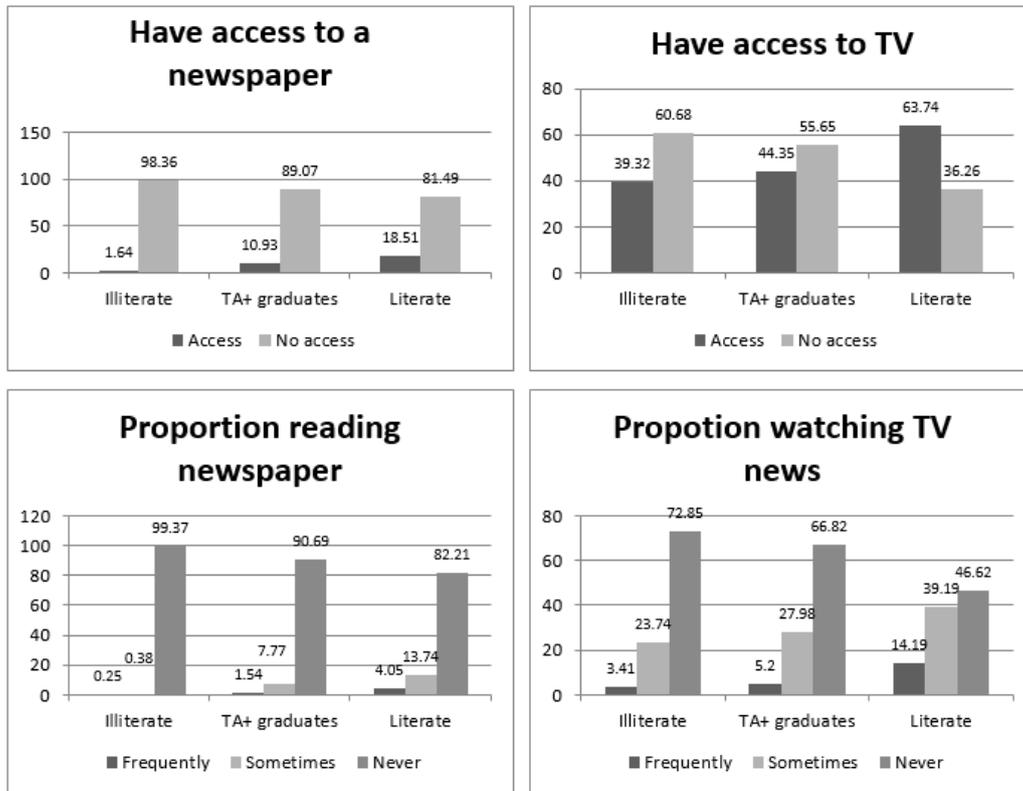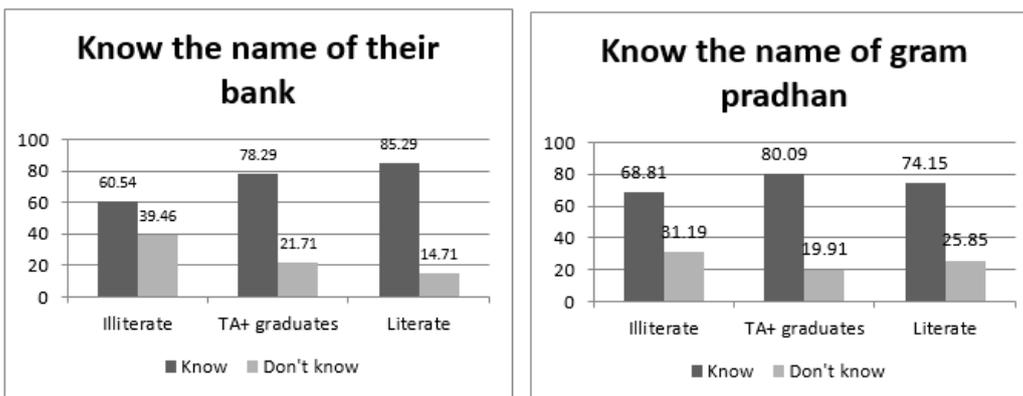
Figure 3.6: Accessing information

Figure 3.7: Awareness

3.5.2 Qualitative

The TA+ classes, and even more so the GCs, have informed women about the schemes and services that are their rights. They now know how to access NREGA for work, the panchayat for village amenities, the police to lodge complaints and ATMs for money. The TA+ experience has made them aware that they are deprived of basics like electricity and piped water. The lack of toilets in their homes is now seen as an issue that is worth raising when talking about the underdevelopment in their village.

3.5.3 Inference

Our findings suggest the efficacy of various modules in the GC that are aimed at assisting women to put their recent literacy skills to use in the real world. They read more papers, watch more television, and have understood the value of being better informed, and how to access information better.

3.6 Gender justice

Domestic violence and dowry demands are crimes against women. They occur in rural and urban areas, in rich and poor households, among the well and poorly educated. Literacy does not guarantee elimination of dowry abuse and domestic violence for women. Illiteracy, however, adds to their handicaps, and furthers their vulnerabilities. A study by Raya (2012) finds that data from various nations shows a consistent pattern that illiterate women are more vulnerable to abuse. In the case of India, illiterate women are nearly twice more likely to be abused compared to literate women.

As we framed our quantitative and qualitative enquiries, we recognised that a nine-month-long literacy programme cannot have eradicated violence and abuse from the lives of its women participants — nor was it the programme's objective to make this happen.

Instead, therefore, we sought to find whether literacy had transformed how the TA+ graduates perceived gender justice. Would they now react differently if someone was beating his wife? Is a woman being abused her personal matter, or should it be made public? As our quantitative data got these answers, our qualitative research geared itself towards understanding the cultural and personal contexts of the responses.

3.6.1 Quantitative

Attitudes towards and perceptions of violence and gender norms are difficult to understand through quantitative responses. However, to guide our qualitative data gathering around this theme we asked our respondents some reflection questions regarding their attitudes to domestic violence and dowry harassment being suffered by a (hypothetical)

Table 3.4: What would you do if your neighbour was beating his wife?

	Illiterate	TA+ graduates	Literate
Report to the police	19.02	25.5	23.41
Seek the Panchayat's intervention	9.31	11.71	9.77
Sort it out within her family	45.92	47.23	54.09
Take help from her maternal family	7.5	4.81	4.55
Return to her maternal home	3.62	2.28	1.59
It is not a problem	3.36	2.21	2.73
Will say nothing as it is a family matter	6.86	2.8	2.05
Can't say	4.4	3.45	1.82
Total	100	100	100

Note: Each entry in the table is a percentage.

Table 3.5: What would you do if a woman in your neighbourhood was being harassed for dowry?

	Illiterate	TA+ graduates	Literate
Report to the police	42.76	59.6	54.34
Seek the Panchayat's intervention	10.82	8.68	8.9
Sort it out within her family	20.21	15.4	25.57
Take help from her maternal family	8.87	7.25	4.34
Return to her maternal home	3.52	2.68	0.46
It is not a problem	2.35	0.52	2.51
Will say nothing as it is a family matter	8.47	3.2	2.51
Can't say	3	2.68	1.37
Total	100	100	100

Note: Each entry in the table is a percentage.

Table 3.6: Domestic Violence

Pre-TA+	Post-TA+
• In the villages these things (someone beating their wife or children) are not discussed openly. People hide them.	• We will lodge a complaint with the police only when we see that that the torture has gone out of hand. Also, only after asking the girl concerned whether she wants to continue being in her marital home or not.
• In our villages people don't like to interfere in someone else's family matter.	• If the man does not listen to us and stop beating his wife, if he continues to beat her, then we will complain about this to the pradhan. And if nothing happens still, we will dial 100.
• No one likes to make matters like these (someone beating his wife) public.	• One should go to the pradhan (if a man continues to beat his wife).
• If someone is beating his wife in the neighbourhood, we would try and protect her physically.	• I think it is best to make the girl understand (if she is facing violence at home).
• If the beating continues, one sometimes thinks of informing the woman's family... but not anything more than that.	

Note: The table comprises voices of TA+ graduates who participated in the FGDs we conducted. They spoke to us on condition of anonymity. The Pre-TA+ quotes are recall quotes.

neighbour. Tables 3.4 and 3.6 report the responses to these questions. For the case of domestic violence, the modal response was to advise the woman to "sort it out within the family" across TA+ graduates, illiterate and literate women. In the case of dowry harassment this was to "report to the police". The striking find, however, is that in response to both these questions, TA+ graduates are much more likely to say that they would advise the women to either report the matter to the police or the panchayat.[5]

3.6.2 Qualitative

By their own account, domestic violence is conventionally perceived as a family matter, and any neighbourly intervention to put a stop to it is seen as interference. The TA+ classes and the GCs have changed this perception somewhat for their women students. Whether or not they actually act upon this their newly acquired perception is yet to be seen. But, the realisation that the gram pradhan and the police should be approached has sunk in. Also, TA+ graduates now have information on how to access help, especially with regard to police helplines. They have been told that women police officers will deal with their complaints, and feel reassured by this fact.

3.6.3 Inference

The TA+ graduates discuss the abuse, harassment and violence that women are subjected to with their TA+ instructors, among themselves and in the GCs. They say they never spoke about these subjects earlier. And just the fact that these issues, till now shrouded in silence, are now a part of an open discourse is altering perceptions. The TA+ graduates might still think that the problem of a man beating his wife is best sorted out within the family. But they are now also clear that if such attempts at sorting out a 'family matter' fail, it is best to make such violence public knowledge. And report the perpetrator to the police and the panchayat so that he is punished.

3.7 Health and sanitation

There is extensive literature on the correlation between women's literacy and health indicators, particularly decreased fertility, child mortality and increased life expectancy. Adult literacy programmes are, indeed, known to influence knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding health. But these also need other development inputs, most importantly access to health facilities. Our study of the impacts of the TA+ programme on the health and sanitation habits of the TA+ graduates acknowledges this.

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[5]A caveat here is that for the responses to this theme we cannot attribute the entire observed effect to TA+ as we cannot distinguish this effect from an earlier programme, Swaayam, which ran here.

Table 3.7: Health and sanitation

Pre-TA+	Post-TA+
Health:	*Health:*
• I have a son and a daughter, my mother-in-law wants another child. Women often abort when they come to know that they are going to have a girl. You get to know through ultrasound.	• In the Gyan Chaupali we have been told that if we have fewer children we can take care of them better.
• We have to go to ANM to clear our doubts and queries (on reproductive and sexual health). They do tell us themselves. It is awkward.	• No information has been given in the Gyan Chaupali on how to delay the time between having children. It would be nice to get this information here.
	• My TA+ class teacher was a man. And the TARA Sahelis are too young and unmarried. So I can't ask them about things like how not to get pregnant. I have many questions.
Sanitation:	*Sanitation:*
• I was not so particular about cleanliness earlier.	• We were told about these things in the Gyan Chaupali — clearing your garbage neatly, washing your hands before cooking and eating. And that being clean prevents your family from falling ill.
• I did not know about the ghol that had to be given to children when they had diarrhoea.	• Water should be covered to keep it clean. Those who are not well should be given only boiled water to drink.
	• *Namak aur chini ka ghol* (salt and sugar solution) should be given to children suffering from diarrhoea.

Note: The table comprises voices of TA+ graduates who participated in the FGDs we conducted. They spoke to us on condition of anonymity. The Pre-TA+ quotes are recall quotes.

3.7.1 Quantitative

Our quantitative survey asked women various questions about access to health services and their knowledge about health and hygiene practices. We did not, however, find any significant differences in responses between the TA+ graduates and the women in the control sample. For example, about 85 per cent of the sample says that when someone falls ill then the first consultation should be with the doctor or the PHC (Primary Health Centre)[6]. Similarly, about 90 per cent women report that a child suffering from diarrhoea should be given either ORS (Oral Rehydration Solution) or salt-sugar solution.

3.7.2 Qualitative

Of all that is taught in the GCs, information on health and sanitation seems to have the highest recall, and utility. There is a demand that the GCs also impart information on sexual reproductive health, which is not a part of the GC curriculum. The current sources for such information are the ASHA workers and ANMs (Auxillary Nurse Midwives).[7,8] But the information does not come unsolicited, and some women say they feel embarrassed to ask.

3.7.3 Inference

The TA+ graduates are not significantly ahead of their illiterate counterparts on the information that we asked them with regard to health. It is to be noted here that a high percentage from both groups scored well on awareness around health. The reason for this could be that such information is disseminated through multiple sources in the rural regions, such as ANMs, ASHA workers, local teachers in primary schools and PHCs (Primary Health Centres). Also, many health interventions and schemes on health and best health practices may be running in the region.

Despite which, our qualitative research found that the GC lessons on health and sanitation are valued very much by the TA+ graduates. But this appreciation is accompanied

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[6]Primary Health Centres are state-owned rural health care centres with facilities to conduct minor surgeries. They focus on infant immunization, anti-epidemic programmes, birth-control pills, pregnancy related care etc.

[7]ASHA workers are mandated to create health awareness, provide information to the community on nutrition, basic sanitation and hygiene practices etc. They also ensure that provisions of ORS, iron folic acid tablets, oral pills and condoms are made available in the villages. They are between 25 and 45 years old with education up to class 10. They are chosen through a selection process involving various community groups, self-help groups, aganwadi institutions, the block nodal officer, village health committee and gram sabha.

[8]ANMs (Auxillary Nurse Midwives) are village level health workers between 17 and 35 years with education up to class 12.They are trained in community health nursing, nutrition, first-aid, infection, immunization, communicable diseases, hygiene etc.

by a request for information on reproductive health to be provided by TA+ instructors and TARA Sahelis. The TA+ programme is seen as a credible and sensitive information source.

Chapter 4

Beyond literacy: The TARA Akshar+ graduate breaks new grounds

This chapter presents the new zones of interaction that literacy has created for the TA+ graduate, both in the private and the public spaces she inhabits.
Section 4.1 focuses on the new connections literacy has forged for the TA+ graduate in her private space. We discover that mothers among the TA+ graduates are not just teaching – but also learning from – their children. And that this fresh give-and-take between mother and child seems to be improving the home learning environment. This is a new find, and adds to the literature on outcomes associated with women's adult literacy.
Section 4.2 studies the public spaces that the TA+ graduate inhabits. To find that her newfound confidence at being literate, and even more her TA+ experience, has impacted how she conducts herself, interacts and collaborates with those outside her family and community.

Over the years, there seems to be a growing recognition by educators and academics of the psycho social dimensions and benefits of participating in adult literacy programmes – but these are not adequately documented. There is, in fact, little literature that focuses on the social elements of adult literacy, like access to and expansion of networks and support groups, the social meanings learners attach to education, and the psychosocial benefits. These are, in fact, often variously deemed as 'tangential', 'peripheral', or at best 'serendipitous' (Prins et al. (2008)).

The qualitative data we gathered through our interactions with the TA+ graduates add valuably to the scant research evidence which shows that learners, particularly women who are poor and socially isolated – benefit from, and greatly value, not just the academic but also the social aspects of their educational experiences.

As we conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) with TA+ graduates from different cycles in different villages, some common themes emerged from the change stories that were being narrated. After codifying the data and analysing it, we conclude that the pro-

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gramme impacts felt by TA+ graduates have introduced novel experiences in two spaces in their lives, the private and the public.

We acknowledge that there is no definitive interpretation of private and public. These are social constructs, found variously in the body's inwardness, the home's privacy, the public nature of the roads we traverse, the community areas we occupy. Spaces can hardly ever be kept exclusively either public or private.

For the purposes of our study, however, we pare down these many-layered and often disputed constructs. We construe private space as the family, and public space as the community, that the TA+ graduate lives in.

4.1 Personal space

Within the TA+ graduate's private space which, by our definition, includes her maternal and marital families, we are focused on her relationship with her children. This is because a primary hypothesis of our study is that literate mothers help their children learn better.

The FGDs and interviews we conducted confirm our hypothesis, and go on to reveal a more complex give-and-take between the neo-literate mothers and their children than our hypothesis posits. Not only are the TA+ mothers helping their children learn better, their children too are helping them learn better. We contend that together, this teaching and learning, is making a new space of sharing and bonding over alphabets and numbers between mother and children.

4.1.1 Literature

Our hypothesis is informed by literature that substantiates the impact of mother's literacy on children's education. Hill and King (1995) study women's literacy in developing countries and conclude that it impacts family health, child survival and investment in child as human capital. Magnuson (2003) tracks women who undergo two programmes, one for educational enhancement and the second for labour force enhancement, and finds that the most significant outcomes on a child's readiness for school and performance come from the former.

Research evidence, in fact, links maternal literacy to enhanced support for children's learning, and improved learning environment at home. Educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school (Schultz 1991, Comings et al. (1992). Sengupta and Guha (2002) conclude that maternal literacy, compared to paternal literacy, is a more crucial contributor to the school enrolment decision for girls. Andrabi et al. (2012) find that mothers who have studied up to primary school, as against illiterate mothers, show greater interest and participation in their child's education – households with educated mothers spend an extra 4.6 hours a week to help children study. Okech et al. (2001a) evaluate a

Ugandan adult literacy programme to find that its graduates are nearly twice as likely to 'discuss children's schoolwork and check homework' as are non-literate parents. Fiedrich et al. (2003)) report husbands commenting that their neo-literate wives are "now educating their children with more diligence". Studies show literate and illiterate parents want education for their children, but literate parents possess the ability to support their children in practical ways, like meeting teachers and discussing progress with children (Save US (1997);Burchfield et al. (2002)).

Particularly relevant for this report is Banerji et al. (2013) that studies three groups of illiterate mothers of children in class 1 and 2 in rural Bihar and Rajasthan. Group 1 undergoes an adult literacy programme, Group 2 is taught to help their children learn, Group 3 is given a combination of the two interventions. Group 4 gets nothing and acts as the control. The results show that the adult literacy programme has pronounced effects on the mothers, as also on the learning of their children. But this effect is less than the combined effects of educating the mothers, plus teaching them how to help their children learn. Also that, the interventions, separate and combined, increase women's empowerment, mother participation in child learning, and education assets in homes.

4.1.2   Teaching children

Our review of literature, therefore, indicates that an expected outcome of literacy programmes for women, such as TA+, is that they enable mothers to teach, or at least assist the learning of, their children.

This is validated by our FGD discussants. Between the 31 of them, they have 91 children, 54 currently attending school. See Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Distribution of cohorts of children

	Number of Children
Class 1	6
Classes 2-8	31
Classes 9-10	9
Classes 11-12	8
Below admission age	16
Not attending/ completed education	21
Total	91

The neo-literate mothers share that they are able to teach their young children using their newly acquired familiarity with alphabets and numbers. Or, at least understand what their children are studying in school. The mothers say that they can now help

their children recognise and write alphabets and simple words, count, add up and subtract numbers. (For this and other other such observations by discussants, please refer Table 4.2.) They are also able to check on what their children are learning in school by going through their notebooks and textbooks. A young mother recalls how, before she attended the TA+ classes, she could never really tell whether her son, who is in class 1, was studying Mathematics or Hindi.

4.1.3 Learning from children

Many of our discussants, however, have older children. In fact, 43 children among our discussants' 54 school attending children are studying in classes above class 2 – and their lessons are beyond the grasp of their neo-literate mothers. Expectedly then, a sizeable number among our discussants say that they are still not proficient enough with their writing and numeracy skills to be able to teach their older children. A TA+ graduate declares that her son's class 2 lessons are still a challenging read for her. Most others say they can barely read from the textbooks of their children in classes 5, 6 and 7, much less figure out the complex mathematics being taught in higher classes.

Early into our first FGD, it becomes evident that not all TA+ graduates are equipped to teach their children, at least not yet. That their freshly attained ability to read and write notwithstanding, there remains a distance between the academic levels of the neo-literate mothers and their higher-primary-and-above-school-going children.

But deeper probing reveals that this gap is providing opportunities for the creation of a unique bridge between mother and children.

In that, far yet from being able to teach their older children, the TA+ graduates are learning from them instead. They are seeking assistance from, also being offered unsolicited help by, their children, while they revise their the TA+ and GC lessons.

Instances of children helping their mothers practice lessons at home are narrated. Mothers say they often ask their children to clear their doubts when they are stuck with their studies. More than one mother speaks of her children encouraging her to go to the TA+ classes, and pushing her to study at home. One mother says her daughter insists they sit together to do their homework.

The *maahol* (environment) at home is different post graduating from the TA+ classes, sums up a discussant. Never before had she discussed alphabets, spellings and numbers with her children. Another says that she had never really seen the insides of her children's textbooks or notebooks earlier. Similar novel experiences are cited: sitting together to study with children, seeking help from children, being goaded into revising by children, children administering dictation and other tests to check on their mothers' progress and sharing a new routine in the evenings.

In our literature review above, we draw out studies that link maternal literacy to improved children's educational attainment, enrolment, home learning environment and

support. But we could find no mention in literature of children teaching or helping their neo-literate mothers learn; either as a separate phenomenon or as an input to enhancing learning environment in an adult learner's home.

It is nevertheless an experience unmistakably playing itself out in the villages and homes that the TA+ intervention has touched. In which sense it is a ground breaking find, and one that, if studied, is certain to add to the outputs and outcomes associated with adult literacy programmes for women.

Pre-TA+	Post-TA+
	Teaching children: • In the Gyan Chaupali we are told to send our children to school regularly. • Yes, we can guide our children now. • The only thing we still do not know is English. • Now I can understand what my son is doing. Whether he is studying Hindi or maths. And when I can't help, I send him for help to my sister-in-law. • As literates we are able to write our names, and look after our children better and understand their studies.
• Earlier our children would make fun of us. Laugh that we could not even use a mobile phone, and were still going to attend the TA+ classes. • We never discussed reading and writing and studying with our children before. What would we discuss? We didn't know anything.	*Learning from children:* • I never feel ashamed in discussing my difficulties in studies with my children. My youngest daughter insisted that I must go to learn to read and write. She also convinced her *dadi* (grandmother). • My daughter gives me some exercises to do, sits down with her homework with me, and says, 'mummy you do your studies and I'll do mine'. • My elder daughter asks me sit to down with her, and she teaches me division (in math). • My youngest daughter helps me with my studies. She says, 'ma let me help you do your homework'. • I would ask my boy to help me whenever I got stuck with my studies. He would write and show me. • My children are very helpful and supportive of my studying. • Before this, we never spoke to our children about reading and writing and studies. • My children feel proud of me now. They do not have to say that their mother is illiterate any more. • The environment (*maahol*) at home is different now.

Table 4.2: Relationship with children

Note: The table comprises voices of TA+ graduates who participated in the FGDs we conducted. They spoke to us on condition of anonymity. The Pre-TA+ quotes are recall quotes.

4.2 Public space

The TA+ graduates tell us how being illiterate made them feel deficient and awkward in the world outside; and how the TA+ classes have changed that, by instilling new confidence in them. This has impacted how they conduct themselves with others in their villages, within their communities and with outsiders. And also made possible new interactions, and in turn, new collaborations in the public space.

4.2.1 Literature

Shared language and experiences, trust and personal development are evidence of social capital at work – which together result in commitment, networks, and shared values towards some common purpose or purposes (Kilpatrick (2001)). These are, in turn, inculcated through literacy, and augmented through education. Emler and Frazer (1999), Hall (1999), Nie et al. (1996), Putnam (2000), Green et al. (2003a) state that the more educated tend to join more voluntary associations, show greater interest, and take more part, in politics.

Specifically studying adult education, Preston and Hammond (2002) say it enables people to better understand the systems and networks within which they work and operate, to develop and maintain networks otherwise unavailable to them, to reanimate dormant networks or to disengage from networks. Feinstein and Hammond (2004) find that courses in adult literacy develop attitudes which promote social capital and social cohesion. Balatti et al. (2006) investigate four adult literacy and numeracy courses to find that 80 per cent of the students improved their structure of networks and communication methods. Osong (2016) evaluation of Nigeria's national adult literacy programme concludes that it helped participants understand their communities better, enhanced their communication skills and involvement in social activities.

Reviewing literature on adult literacy, Stromquist (2006) says that a common and robust finding is increased self-esteem among literacy participants, particularly women. Kagitcibasi et al. (2005) study an adult literacy programme in Turkey and conclude it has contributed to the participants' cognitive gains, as also to women's positive self-concept and social integration. A Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy report uses data from two adult family literacy programmes in Pennsylvania USA to find that they play an important role in helping poor women receive social support and, in turn, enhance their psychosocial well-being(Prins et al. (2008)). Many women learners, the study says, had limited social support and ties with people outside their programme and few opportunities for recreation. The literacy programmes fulfilled important social functions by enabling women to leave the house, enjoy social contact and support, engage in informal counselling, pursue self-discovery and development, and establish supportive relationships with teachers.

4.2.2 Public image

In keeping with the literature cited above, our discussants seem to have benefited from the connections between learning, the experience of learning, the development of self-confidence and an increasingly positive identity as a learner.

In all the FGDs we conduct, discussants share their shame at being labelled *'anpadh'* (illiterate) before attending the TA+ classes. (For this and other other such observations by discussants, please refer 4.3.) A tag that, they feel, now stands removed. Some even speak of being complimented for being literate (*padhee-likhee*) by friends and family. Anecdotes about family members indulgently calling the discussants *memsahab* and graduates are narrated.

4.2.3 Conduct

Ordered as girls, as also as adult women, to distrust and avoid strangers, and keep to their own communities, the TA+ graduates recall their wariness of the world outside. They say being illiterate compounded their inability, and awkwardness, with regard to their conduct and communication outside of their families and communities. They hardly ever spoke to people who were not in their circle of acquaintances, partly because they were told not to, also because they were ill-equipped to do so. Most discussants say that they rarely ever meet anyone without their family. A discussant remembers how her interfaces with outsiders were always tinged with fear (*'logon main uthne baithne main dar lagta tha'*).

Literacy and the about nine months of TA+ experience where they were seen by themselves and others as proactively trying to educate and improve themselves – has infused confidence in the TA+ graduates. They proclaim this in all the FGDs we conducted. In fact, when asked of the benefits of having attended the TA+ classes, among the top responses is having learnt to conduct oneself in public (*'logon ke beech uthna baithna aa gaya hain'*). Whether the interactions with outsiders are happening yet or not, the confidence to be able to negotiate ones way through them has clearly surfaced.

4.2.4 Collaborations

Though many of our discussants know each other from before, they say they had never met each other over a shared purpose before their TA+ experience, that too on a daily basis. None among our discussants have, in fact, ever been part of any groups or collectives; just three of the 31 have been members of SHGs.

Many say that for the very first time in their lives the TA+ classes have them grouping with other women who share their interest, and want to read and write like them. Some have even helped the TA+ staff mobilise other aspirant learners. Some others have opened

up their homes as venues for the TA+ classes and the GC. Yet others have recommended suitable candidates for TARA Sahelis from among friends and family.

Those who have completed the TA+ classes and GC some time ago say that they do occasionally sit with their books to revise at home now, but learning alone is not as enjoyable as when done with others. They perceive learning together as competitive and fun.

This new found collaborative spirit is voiced many times over as different discussants in separate FGDs voice the possibility of learning a skill with their TA+ batchmates and then setting up joint businesses.

4.2.5   Interactions

The TA+ graduates perceive literacy – and their experience of the literacy classes – as having improved their image, conduct and relationships in public. In turn, making possible interactions they had never experienced before. This increase in social activity and networking reported by the TA+ graduates is the consequence of their being at the centre of a range of new networks in relation to their teachers, the TA+ staff and their fellow students. All of which has led to their enhanced engagement with local life.

Before their joining the TA+ classes, say the discussants, they had never ever spoken or interacted at length with women from castes other than their own. This is not unusual, given that most villages that the TA+ programme operates in have *bastis* (hamlets) based on caste. For instance, the Mauryas, Sainis, Sarojs, Patels, Thakurs and Pandits live in separate *bastis* in the same village[1]. And women from one *basti* do not socialise with those from another. It is, therefore, common for a TA+ class group to have women from the same caste.

And yet, such homogeneous class groups are the centre point in the formation of many new and diverse relationships.

To begin with, the GCs bring women from different castes together, not because the programme intends to do so but due to the programme design. The TA+ classes are about two months long and there are many cycles of them in a village, whereas the GCs last six months. Naturally then, the GCs end up with learners from different TA+ batches. Discussants speak of getting to meet women from other castes at the GCs. Never ever could anyone have imagined such sustained interactions between women from separate *bastis*, exclaims a discussant. Issues such as unity and discrimination are discussed in the GC, say some.

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[1]Saroj is a Scheduled Caste (SC) in UP and Bihar. Maurya and Saini are listed as OBC (Other Backward Classes) in UP. The Patels are an agricultural caste; they are considered as OBC in UP, and are claiming similar status in other Indian states. Pandits were traditionally priests. The Thakurs are a landowning caste.

Next, none of our discussants have, barring one, ever been to school. They have never known teachers or fellow students. The TA+ experience has introduced them to both these. Those who have completed their TA+ classes and GC a while ago remember their teachers fondly. Some are still in touch with their teachers over phone. A TA+ graduate, from an 'upper caste', confesses to never having spoken to a Muslim before she met her TA+ teacher who is a Muslim. She is now convinced that Muslim families and values are not very different from her own. And not just with their teachers, all the discussants have developed their own unique relationship with the TA+ programme staff as well. Many help the TA+ staff mobilse learners, and also recommend their friends and family members as TARA Sahelis.

Many discussants have made friends with women they never knew before in the GCs. Summing up an intense discussion on the new alliances formed post the TA+ classes and the GCs, a discussant concludes that trusting is important, but it is impossible for the learners to trust one another unless there is dialogue through TA+ experiences.

And this seems to be playing itself out. A gram pradhan and TA+ graduate, from the 'upper' Thakur caste herself, remembers her brother-in-law having first told her about the impressive TA+ classes running in the *chamaran ki basti* (a 'lower caste' hamlet). So moved had she been by his enthusiasm, even though the inspiration came from a 'lower caste' *basti*, that she had contacted the TA+ staff. She had offered them her home as venue and convinced women from her community to join the class. Even as the classes and the GC now stand completed, she declares that her home is still open to being venue for TA+ classes, for women from every caste.

Pre-TA+	Post-TA+
Public image and conduct	*Public image and conduct*
• Earlier people would call me *anpadh* (illiterate). I was an *anpadh*.	• We have more confidence now.
• (We attend the TA+ classes because) if we are literate we will not be called *anpadh*.	• Fear vanishes when you are able to read and write.
• People taunt us. They joke about us wanting to learn to read and write at this age.	• I feel different now. Family and friends joke that I have become as confident as a *memsahab* after attending the TA+ classes.
• (Before I started going out for the TA+ classes) I used to go out with my family members only, so there was no question of interactions with others (*baahar walloh ke saath uthna baithna*).	• We are complimented for being literate. Some people even say that we have become like graduates. Now we are complimented for being literate.
• I would walk with my head bowed.	• We have learnt how to conduct ourselves in the public and how to talk to people. (*Logo ke beech uthna baithna aa gaya hain*).
• (Before the TA+ classes) I never interacted with anyone. I was not allowed to go out. My in-laws told me to stay in the house.	• When the TA+ classes started in our villages, families gradually started supporting women to join. They began understanding the value of education, like they never did before.
• Earlier I never had the confidence to be with people. I felt unconfident because I am not educated.	• Now I am confident about attending the teachers meeting at school. My children also now have confidence in my abilities to speak to their teachers in the PTM.
• I always interacted with lot of fear (*logon main uthne baithne main dar lagta tha*) I did not know how to communicate.	• Some of us attend the gram sabha meetings (now) when the pradhan informs us.
• I avoided going to my children's school for parent meetings (PTM, Parent Teacher Meeting).	
• We never go the to the gram sabha.	

Collaboration

- Before the TA+ classes, we (women) never did anything together.

Collaboration

- The TA+ classes led to our forming groups of 10 to 15 women who shared an interest in becoming literate.
- I met new people in the Gyan Chaupali for the first time. I made friends with some of them.
- Learning alone and learning with others are very different. There is a sense of competition when we learn with others.
- The TA+ classes were such fun that I would run to go to the classes. If I was late, I would sneak in through the back door.
- If we learn the skill to make something, we can all get together and do some business.
- We would like to do something (business) together. But trust is needed for that.

Interactions

- We never sat with people from other castes before the Gyan Chaupali.
- In our village, there are separate *bastis* (hamlets) based on caste. The Maurya, Saini, Saroj, Patels, Thakurs, Pandits all live in their own *bastis*. We rarely, if ever, interact with each other socially.
- Women from different castes do not visit each other's homes.

Interactions

- In the TA+ classes I met some women that I had never met before.
- Gyan Chaupali is not just about reading and writing. It is also about meeting each other.

- I am Bhind (OBC). I, along with some others from my community, attended classes with women from the Saroj (SC, therefore 'lower caste') *basti*. In the TA+ classes we have spoken about how we are all equal and that we should not discriminate against people from other castes.

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- When we were growing up we were warned by our families about talking to strangers. We were told not to reply if a stranger asked us something.

- We are Thakurs ('upper caste'). We live in the Thakur *basti*. My brother-in-law told me about the TA+ classes running in the *chamaran ki basti* (where the "lower castes" reside), then I told my husband to arrange for a meeting with TA+ staff.
- The TA+ classes and Gyan Chaupali are held at my house. The teacher who came to teach us was Muslim. He is a very good and hard-working teacher, a wonderful person. I have spoken to him over the phone since the classes got over.
- Though I am a Thakur, I am open to women from the *chamaran ki basti* coming to my house for TA+ classes. I will, however, not go to their Basti.
- We need unity in our village just as we need electricity and toilets.
- Trusting is important. But how can we trust one another unless we talk.

Table 4.3: Relationship with community

Chapter 5

Recommendations

After evaluating the TA+ programme we find that the programme has been effective in achieving its stated objective. Therefore, we do not have any significant changes to suggest in the current design, implementation and monitoring of the programme. Our major recommendations have to do with the sustainability and expansion of the programme.

1. **Link TA+ to economic activity for sustainable empowerment**
   The objective of TA+ is to empower women through literacy. Our quantitative and qualitative assessments have found this objective to have been achieved. The programme's next step, therefore, should be to sustain the gains made, and leverage these gains to enhance this empowerment. We propose that the best way to do this is to engage the TA+ graduates with economic activities. Given the lack of regular wage employment in the non-farm sector in this area, our recommendation is to connect the TA+ graduates to government sponsored skilling programmes. Further, to use the social capital and collaborative spirit that TA+ has generated for the programme graduates within their villages (quantitative and qualitative evidence), the women can be linked to supply chains that source products locally and provide these producers with market access. Given the literacy, confidence and team spirit that the TA+ graduates now feel, they will be able to organise themselves to deal with the supply chain.

2. **Longer duration for Gyan Chaupali**
   Our quantitative data has 67 per cent respondents saying they want longer GCs. This demand becomes all the more significant given that our data also shows a significant improvement in the test scores of the TA+ graduates after participating in the GCs. The women who skipped the GC, in fact, score systematically low in the reading and mathematics tests that we administered. Our qualitative analysis corroborates that the GCs have become spaces where women learn and discuss is-

sues relevant to their lives. In the light of such evidence, we recommend that the duration of the GC is extended.

3. **Institutionalising the GC**
   Our recommendation is to carry forward the GC through cultural events. Given financial constraints, we believe that cultural competitions, quizzes, along with cultural festivals, could be feasible ways of nurturing and continuing the goodwill and camaraderie generated by the programme.

4. **Remuneration for TARA Sahelis**
   TARA Sahelis receive INR 1000 per month as honourarium. We found that this amount is considered low given their commitment. The high attrition of TARA Sahelis corroborates our finding. We recommend an increase in honourarium of the TARA Sahelis. The TA+ staff and instructors we interacted with voiced a similar recommendation.

5. **Expand the programme to neighbouring areas**
   Our primary data collection and Census 2011 show that that approximately 60 per cent of active age women (of age 30 to 35 years) in eastern UP are illiterate. This, coupled with the successful implementation of the TA+ programme in six blocks of this region, makes a strong case for expanding TA+ in the neighbouring areas. The TA+ programme should be extended to neighbouring districts. This will increase the community of literate women and work wonders in not only achieving the goal of empowerment in the new villages, but also sustain the advantages gained by women in villages where the TA+ programme has been completed already. The community leaders and local educators that we interviewed are also of the opinion that expansion of the TA+ programme to the neighbouring districts is how its sustainability should be perceived.

6. **Dissemination of learnings from TA+**
   Our evaluation study finds TA+ to be an effectively implemented adult literacy programme, especially given the context of eastern UP. Beyond achieving its stated objective, which is literacy for women, this programme has been able to create social capital and generate goodwill for the TA+ team, which can be used for improvement in the region's governance and business environment. The programme's efficient design, implementation and monitoring strategies could serve as blueprint for other adult literacy programmes. They should be disseminated to a varied audience, including policymakers, educators, academics and civil society organisations.

7. **Information on Reproductive Health**
   There is a demand by TA+ graduates that the GCs also impart information on

sexual and reproductive health. This is not a part of the current GC curriculum. The graduates say that they usually source such information from ASHA workers and ANMs. But because such information does not come unsolicited, some women feel embarrassed asking. In the present TA+ structure, they point out, the TA+ instructors are often male, and the TARA Sahelis are usually unmarried and too young. This makes asking questions about sexual and reproductive health awkward in the TA+ classes and GCs. But formalising such content for dissemination in the GCs would solve this problem, say the graduates. The GCs are seen as a credible and sensitive information source.

8. **Mathematics training**
   Our evaluation does find gaps in mathematics skills of the TA+ graduates, and scope for improvement. Our interactions with the TA+ instructors also reveal gaps in mathematics lesson. We recommend more TA+ classes for (functional) mathematics e.g., calculating effective interest rates. If the TA+ graduates are to be involved in economic activities they will need to be comfortable with the effective interest rates, profit and loss etc.

9. **Projector for TA+ class**
   Our FGDs with the TA+ instructors informed us that that the computer screens are too small for the viewing of 10 students who typically comprise a TA+ class. Instructors say that projectors would help add to the ease of learning.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Our objective in this report was to assess the impact that the adult literacy programme, TARA Akshar+ (TA+), has had on the lives of women who went through the programme. To do so we evaluated the impact of the programme on the learning outcomes of the women, as also on indirect outcomes like physical mobility, access and awareness, health and hygiene awareness, and their attitudes towards gender justice. We also tried to understand whether the womens' perceptions about themselves and their relationships with others has undergone any change because of the programme. Finally, we also carried out a programmatic evaluation to understand specific features of the programme that could have contributed to its successes and challenges.

We find that overall the programme has been very successful in achieving its objectives. Not only have the direct outcomes of the programme, in terms of making women functionally literate, been achieved; the programme has also been very successful in creating a positive impact on the lives of the women in indirect ways. TA+ graduates are more confident, have a more nuanced understanding of gender rights and relate to world very differently. The programme has also created social capital in the villages it was present in and also generated goodwill for itself.

We believe that the programme can be built upon in the areas it was present in by linking the graduates to livelihood activities. This is possible because of the increased awareness among TA+ graduates individually as well as a group. The programme can also be successfully replicated in neighbouring areas given the similarity of these areas to the present intervention villages and a high chance of similar positive impact.

Appendix A

Appendix

A.1   Questionnaire to evaluate TA+ programme

General notes

- No response : '99'

- Household: One kitchen

1. **Basic details**

   (a) Name:

   (b) Age:

   (c) TARA Registration Number:

   (d) Are you married? (**Yes/ Never Married/Widow/ Divorced or Separated)**

   (e) If yes in (d), what is the educational qualification of your spouse?
       - **Illiterate**
       - **Literate**
       - **Primary (1 to 5 class)**
       - **Middle school (6 to 8 class)**
       - **Secondary school (9 and 10 class)**
       - **Senior secondary (11 and 12 class)**
       - **Graduate and above**

   (f) If no in (d), what is the educational qualification of your father/father in law?

- **Illiterate**
- **Literate**
- **Primary (1 to 5 class)**
- **Middle school (6 to 8 class)**
- **Secondary school (9 and 10 class)**
- **Senior secondary (11 and 12 class)**
- **Graduate and above**

2. **Programme evaluation: (These questions are only for treatment group)**

   (a) How many times a week was the TA+ class held? **(Numerical response)**

   (b) In a typical week how many classes could you attend? **(Numerical response, 0 to 6 days)**

   (c) If answer in (b) is 4 days or less than 4 days, then what were the reasons for your absence? **(If the respondent cites personal problems then investigator to write 1, for programmatic issues write 2, for teacher related issues writes 3.)**

   (d) Do you think the timing of TA+ classes were suitable for your daily schedule? **(Yes/No)**

   (e) Was the instructor regular?
   - **Present always**
   - **Present sometime**
   - **Frequently absent**
   - **Don't know**

   (f) Was the instructor on time for classes?
   - **On time always**
   - **Sometimes late**
   - **Frequently late**
   - **Don't know**

   (g) Did the instructor satisfactorily answer your queries in class? **(Yes/No/Can't say)**

   (h) Do you think that the TA+ centres were: **(Easily accessible/Accessible/Difficult to access)**

   (i) Was what was taught too difficult to understand? **(Yes/No)**

   (j) Do you think there was excessive use of computer in class? **(Yes/No)**

(k) Was the TA+ course (first 56 days) taught in a hurry? **(Yes/No)**

(l) How many days a week is/was the Gyan Choupali (GC) class held? **(Numerical response, 0 to 6 days)**

(m) In a typical week how many GC classes could you attend? **(Numerical response, 0 to 6 days)**

(n) Should the duration of GC be (six months at present): **(Shorter/Longer/Unchanged)**

(o) Did this programme (TA+ and GC together) benefit you? **(It benefitted a lot/It was moderately helpful/It was not helpful)**

(p) Would you recommend this programme (TA+ and GC together) to someone known to you? **(Yes/No)**

Literacy
Reading and numeracy test follows the ASER evaluation methodology.

3. **Migration**

(a) Number of household members who have been working and living outside the village for at least the last three months: **(Numerical response)**

(b) Does/do he/she/they send money back home? **(Yes/No)**

(c) If yes in (b), how do they send the money?
   - **Bank**
   - **Postal order**
   - **Money order**
   - **Through friends and relatives**
   - **Through mobile phone**
   (Multiple answers acceptable)

(d) Is the money sent to: **(You/Someone else in the household)**

4. **Mobility**

(a) In the last six months, have you travelled outside the village for any work? **(Yes/No)**

(b) If yes in (a), did you travel on your own at least once? **(Yes/No)**

(c) If yes in (b), what was the reason for travel?
   - **Work**
   - **To meet relatives**

- **Family function**
- **Shopping**
- **Medical**
- **Child's school**
- **Others**
  (Multiple answers acceptable)

(d) If no in (b), did you travel with:

- **Men in the household**
- **Women in the household**
- **Friends and relatives**
  (Multiple answers acceptable)

5. **Economic activity**

   (a) Are you currently engaged in any remunerative activity? **(Yes/No)**

   (b) If yes in (a), since when have you been in this activity? **(Numerical response in months)**

   (c) Were you engaged in any remunerative activity before your current engagement/or ever (irrespective of whether you are working now or not)? **(Yes/No)**

   (d) If you are currently not earning, nor have ever earned before, do you wish to earn? **(Yes/No)**

6. **Mobile phone use**

   (a) Do you own a mobile phone? **(Yes/No)**

   (b) If yes in (a), do you know your own phone number? **(Yes/No)**

   (c) If no in (a), do you have access to someone else's mobile phone? **(Yes/No)**

   (d) Can you dial my phone number for me?
   (Ask respondent to do so. Investigator to insert Yes/No)

7. Health and hygiene

   (a) Have you taken a family member to the hospital in the last six months? **(Yes/No)**

   (b) If yes in (a), were you alone? **(Yes/No)**

   (c) If someone falls ill, who should he or she be first taken to for treatment :

   - **Doctor**

- **PHC**
- **Desi vaid/Hakeem**
- **Try home remedies**
- **Take medicine advised by chemist**
- **Don't know**

8. What should be given to a child who is suffering from diarrhoea?
   (If the respondent answers "ORS"/salt and sugar solution/dal ka paani, investigator to insert 1. Otherwise 2.)

9. When should you boil drinking water?

   - **Always**
   - **During the monsoons**
   - **When someone is ill in the house**
   - **Never**
   - **Don't know**

10. **Social capital formation**

    (a) Are you part of any of the following: **(Yes/No for each)**

       - **SHG**
       - **Mahila Mandali**
       - **School Management Committee**
       - **Village Development Committee**
       - **Panchayat Samiti**

    (b) Do you attend these meetings? **(Yes/No for each)**
        (Investigator to treat "Sometimes" as Yes)

       - **SHG**
       - **Mahila Mandali**
       - **School Management Committee**
       - **Village Development Committee**
       - **Panchayat Samiti**

    (c) Do you attend meetings of the Gram Sabha?
        (Yes, No, Meetings not held, Don't know)

    (d) Which one of the following statements do you agree with? **(Yes/No for each)**

- **Most people in the village can be trusted**
- **Most people who are from outside the village cannot be trusted**

(e) Do you trust people from the following groups? **(Yes/No for each)**

- **Your neighbourhood (*Aas pados*)**
- **People from a different caste**
- **People of a different religion**

(f) If your neighbour was beating his wife then in your opinion what should the wife be doing?

- **Report to the police**
- **Seek the Panchayat's intervention**
- **Sort it out within her family**
- **Take help from her maternal family**
- **Return to her maternal home**
- **It is not a problem**
- **Will not say anything as this is their family matter**
- **Can't say**

11. **Decision Making**

   (a) Who takes decision in the following: **(You/Husband/Joint (you and husband)/Other family member/All family members together/ NA)**

   (b) **Your own expenses**

   (c) **Taking loans**

   (d) **Savings**

   (e) **Buying selling land**

   (f) **Day-to-day expenses**

   (g) **Child's education**

   (h) **Children's marriage**

   (i) **Purchase of durable goods**

   (j) **Contraception**

12. **Awareness**

   (a) Do you have access to a newspaper? **(Yes/No)**

   (b) If yes in (a), do you read a newspaper? **(Frequently/Sometimes/Never)**

(c) Do you have access to a TV? **(Yes/No)**

(d) If yes in (c), do you watch the news on TV? **(Frequently/Sometimes/Never)**

(e) Do you have access to a radio? **(Yes/No)**

(f) If yes in (e), do you listen to the news on radio? **(Frequently/Sometimes/Never)**

(g) Do you have a bank account? **(Yes/No)**

(h) If yes in (g), then account is open in whose name? **(In your own name/ joint account)**

(i) What is the name of your bank? **(If respondent says the name, investigator to insert Yes. If the respondent is unable to say the name, investigator to say No.)**

- **Yes**
- **No**

(j) Do you have any primary school going child/ren? **(Yes/No)**

(k) If yes in (j),

   i. Does your child/ren's school provide mid-day meals? **(Yes/No/Don't know)**

   ii. If your child is getting sub-standard mid-day meal who should you approach with your complaint?

- **Headmaster**
- **Teacher**
- **Panchyat**
- **Sarpanch**
- **Panch**
- **Don't know
  (Do not provide options. However, if any answer other than the given options to be entered as Don't know by the investigator)**

   iii. How many days did your child go to school in the last week (when school was open/ and given your child was not sick)? **(Numerical response/Don't know)**

   iv. What is the name of the village pradhan? **(If respondent knows the correct name, investigator to insert Yes. Otherwise No)**

   v. Please indicate the **top three** among the following problems you consider the most serious:

- **Lack of employment in village**

- **Poverty in village**
- **Discrimination against girls and women**
- **Poor sanitation in village**
- **Poor health care facilities in/around village**
- **Inadequate education for children**

vi. Women are usually paid less than men as daily wages for the same work. Do you think that this it is fair? **(Yes/No)**

vii. If a woman in your neighbourhood is being harassed for dowry, would you advise her to:

- **Report to the police**
- **Seek the Panchayat's intervention**
- **Sort it out within her family**
- **Take help from her maternal family**
- **Return to her maternal home**
- **It is not a problem**
- **Will not say anything as this is their family matter and so on**
- **Can't say**

A.2 Descriptive statistics of FGD participants

Three FGDs were conducted in three villages:
1. Jaisinghpur of block Rampur, Jaunpur district.
2. Gauraraja of block Pahadi, Mirzapur district.
3. Seur of block Ramnagar, Jaunpur district.
The total number of discussants was 31 women; ten each from Gaura Raja and Seur, and 11 from Jaisinghpur.
Thirteen among the women are from the Scheduled Castes (SC) and 15 are from Other Backward Classes (OBC), adding up to 28 among 31 women.

Age

The average age of the women discussants is 30 years, with 61 per cent below age 30.
The minimum age of the women is 18 and the maximum is 60.

Marriage and children

Eighty one per cent of the women are married.
The husbands of 50 per cent of the women have migrated to cities for work.
On an average, the women have three children, of who 60 per cent are boys and 40 per cent are girls.
The average age of the children is 12 years.
Of all the women's children, 54 per cent are currently attending schools; of them 53 per cent are in and above class two.

Household

The average size of the households is 7 to 8 members.
Of the 31 discussants, 10 live in kutcha houses, and 10 in semi-pucca houses.
Seventy five per cent of the women in the FGDs do not have direct water in their house. They use public water sources, such as hand pumps and wells.
Eighty two per cent women do not have toilets in their homes. Of them, 71 do not have access to even public toilets.
Sixty per cent of the women do not have electricity.
Eighty seven per cent women have access to mobile phones at home; of which 65 per cent have a mobile number of their own.

A.3   List of interviewees

Table A.1: TA+ staff interviewed

	Names	Designation
1	Rajesh Kumar	Programme coordinator
2	Rajiv Pandey	Programme coordinator
3	Rajesh Kushwaha	Block coordinator
4	Shailendra Kumar Singh	Block coordinator
5	Pradeep Srivastava	Senior supervisor
6	Jatashankar Mishra	Senior supervisor
7	Omendra Nath	Supervisor
8	Indresh Kumar Dubey	Supervisor
9	Rekha Maurya	Instructor
10	Sanjeev Kumar	Instructor
11	Manju Yadav	Instructor
12	Rubee Tiwari	Instructor
13	Dharmendra Kumar	Instructor
14	Sushila Devi	Instructor
15	Bina Mishra	Instructor

Table A.2: Civil society organisations

	Names	Designation	Civil Society Organisation
1	Rajeev Kumar Singh	Chief Functionary	Dr. Sambhunath Singh Research Foundation, Varanasi, UP
2	Tarun K. Diwedi	Chief Functionary	Society for Social Action and Research, Varanasi, UP
3	Nand Kishore Pandey	Chief Functionary	Shushrusha Samiti, Varanasi, UP
4	Brajesh Kumar Srivastava	Chief Functionary	Vivekananda Gramin Vikas avam Sanskritik Samiti, Varanasi, UP

Table A.3: Community Members

	Names	Village, Block, District	Background
1	Parvati Singh	Gauraraja, Pahari block, Mirzapur	Gram Pradhan
2	Avdesh Singh	Jaisingpur, Rampur bock, Jaunpur	Gram Pradhan
3	Vinay Kumar	Seur, Ramnagar block, Jaunpur	Member, Block Development Committee (BDC)
4	Madhuri Pal	Seur, Ramnagar block, Jaunpur	Principal, Prathamik Vidyalaya
5	Nandini Devi	Chakaipur, Rampur bock, Jaunpur	Teacher, Prathamik Vidyalaya
6	Sanju Vishwakarma	Jaisingpur, Rampur bock, Jaunpur	TARA Saheli since 9th Cycle, (December 2015)
7	Mamta Saroj	Gauraraja, Pahari block, Mirzapur	TARA Saheli since 9th Cycle, (March 2016)
8	Vinita Singh	Gauraraja, Pahari block, Mirzapur	TARA Saheli since 10th Cycle, (September 2016)
9	Manisha Gautam	Seur, Ramnagar block, Jaunpur	TARA Saheli for the 9th Cycle, (Oct 2016)
10	Meera Devi	Seur, Ramnagar block, Jaunpur	TARA Saheli for the 9th Cycle, (Oct 2016)
11	Roshni Bano	Seur, Ramnagar block, Jaunpur	TARA Saheli for 7th Cycle, (June 2015)

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