



A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana

## Phase 4 Report: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education

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**Accompanying resources for the project**

In addition to this report, other resources about the project are available on the project website: [www.warwick.ac.uk/haryana](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/haryana). This includes various Project Outputs such as project reports and presentations, as well as other information about the project and the people involved.

The project can also be found on Twitter and Instagram as @FCFHaryana.

The project Team can be contacted at [fcfharyana@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:fcfharyana@warwick.ac.uk).



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## List of Abbreviations

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BPSMV	Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya
CG	Consultative Group
CPRHE	Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education
FCF	Fair Chance for Education
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
NEP	National Education Policy
NIEPA	National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
OAR	Outreach Activity Resource
PB	Policy Brief
RAG	Research Advisory Group
SD	Sanatan Dharma
TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
UGC	Universities Grants Commission

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## Executive Summary

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This Phase 4 Report focuses on the contribution that the Fair Chance for Education (FCF) Project has made to HE policy making within the framework provided by India's National Education Policy 2020 and to the development of gender and Higher Education (HE) research agendas. It documents the impact and dissemination activities undertaken between 2020 and 2021 (with additional funding from the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Award scheme). Phases 1 to 3 established,

- that developing an outreach culture in HE colleges is both possible and desirable in order for more young people from often disadvantaged backgrounds to access HE and make informed choices about accessing HE, in the context of the prevalent gender conservative culture, and
- while Western outreach strategies are often primarily focused on individual young people, culturally appropriate HE outreach in Haryana needs to involve families.

The contribution to HE policymaking was achieved through two impact objectives. The first involved developing an *HE outreach culture* in Haryana (and beyond) which was based upon the nuanced, evidence-based understanding of issues, *provided by the FCF research*, that young women and men from marginalised backgrounds face when exploring HE options, thereby resulting in *enhanced informed decision making* within families. This involved developing *HE outreach facilitation skills* in HE colleges in Haryana.

This objective was achieved through,

- co-development and publication of a **Policy Brief (PB)** on 'Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India' containing a range of policy suggestions, which was endorsed by relevant regional and national actors, and
- co-production with local partners and publication of the 'Fair Chance for Education **Outreach Activity Resource (OAR)** for Higher Education Institutions. This guide, on how colleges can organise and evaluate a 'taster day' for students and family members, was based primarily upon Phase 3 research findings.

The second impact objective focused on gaining buy-in for outreach from local actors and national actors to ensure active participation in outreach activities within HE colleges in Haryana and to develop leadership in outreach at the district, state, and national levels.



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This objective was met by the co-development with FCF project partners and partner institutions of the PB and OAR and co-facilitation of three targeted events:

- The first event was hosted by Central University Haryana and shared the key findings of the FCF project as well as drafts of the PB and OAR. Three colleges agreed *to pilot the OAR* by organising taster days.
- The second event was hosted Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPS Women's University) heard reports of the hugely successful piloting of the OAR from the three college Principals.
- The third event was hosted by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. In this event, the *policy relevance of the project findings suggestions encapsulated in the PB and OAR ('road tested' through three successful pilot events)* for the development of an HE outreach culture was acknowledged by leading national education policy makers.

The FCF Project has contributed its *collaborative and participative methodology* to developing HE research agendas in India and beyond. It has built capacity among but also learned from HE scholars including within its Consultative Group. Its academic conference 'A Fair Chance for Education: Problematizing Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India' jointly hosted by TISS Mumbai and the University stimulated and enhanced academic scholarship.



## 1. Introduction

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This report documents the impact and dissemination activities associated with the Fair Chance for Education (FCF) Project. Its main focus is on the policy-oriented activities planned for the final year of the project (2021), which result from the culmination of the previous three research phases (Sections 2-9). It also documents the research-focused events which have taken place over the course of the project along with the published and planned academic outputs (Section 9).

A key factor affecting our plans for 2021 was the Covid-19 pandemic. Travel restrictions prevented the members of the team, based at Warwick University in the UK, from travelling to India to work with our partners and collaborators. They too were facing extremely difficult circumstances. Fortunately, the primary research gathering phases had almost been completed before the pandemic began. As a result of the pandemic, we were obliged to adapt our plans. We managed, with the significant assistance provided by our Indian partners and collaborators, to still achieve many of the planned impact activities in 2021. We extended the time scale for the project which enabled us to complete all these activities successfully in 2022.

We sought to supplement our original funding from the Fair Chance Foundation in order to undertake a more extensive programme of impact events and add value to the overall project. We were successful in obtaining approximately £42,000 from the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Award scheme (see Fair Chance for Education Project, 2022). Moreover, we obtained additional funding from the Fair Chance Foundation to support a post-doctoral fellowship for Dr Anjali Thomas to work on the planned activities.

In sum, this report,

- (a) documents the shift from analysis of the Phases 1-3 research findings (see Henderson et al., 2021; Thomas and Henderson, 2022; Samanta and Stewart, 2023) to the activities and outputs associated with this dissemination and impact phase.
- (b) describes the way in which we focused on a *range of audiences* with the aim of highlighting our contribution,
  - to Higher Education (HE) *policy making* within the framework provided by India's National Education Policy 2020
  - to the development of gender and HE *research agendas*
- (c) outlines the contribution that we consider our research has made to these two agendas.

## 2. Background context and summary of previous phases' findings

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The five-year funded FCF Project (01/01/2017 – 31/12/2021, extended due to Covid pandemic circumstances until 31/12/2022) explored gendered access to HE in Haryana, India. Specifically, it focused on gendered social relations and differences in choices, obstacles, and opportunities for young people. The project sought to devise a programme of actions leading to positive social change. Among the key characteristics of the research were its evolutionary methodology and participatory design, where each phase built on learning from the previous one.

**Phase 1** (2018) involved baseline research in state-funded HE colleges in Haryana, which established that families are heavily involved in HE decision-making (Henderson et al., 2021). The vast majority of students in government colleges had no history of HE in the family and many did not have sufficient information to make informed choices about HE. This resulted in gender inequalities in, for instance, the selection of HE college. The basis for gendered family decision making needed further exploration. **Phase 2** (conducted by Dr Anjali Thomas for her doctorate 2017 – 2021) established that family group decisions about young people's educational trajectories would benefit from tailored information about HE options, particularly relating to addressing gendered assumptions (Thomas and Henderson, 2022). **Phase 3** (conducted by Nikita Samanta for her doctorate 2018-2023) established that currently there is a limited culture of HE outreach for access and that government colleges catering specifically to students from marginalised backgrounds produce little or no information for prospective students. Colleges are engaging in plentiful *community outreach* activities, but for the most part this concept does not encompass *HE outreach*, i.e., activities aiming to improve HE access and choice for disadvantaged groups. At present, there are no government policies which support institutional level initiatives relating to active outreach for HE access – although colleges may undertake these informally. However, the research demonstrated that there is a willingness to engage in forms of active outreach for HE access including conducting 'taster days (designed to give young people a taste of campus life while providing them with additional information to enable them to make informed choices) (Samanta and Stewart, 2023).

The research project has established that,

- developing an outreach culture in HE colleges is both possible and desirable in order for more young people from often disadvantaged backgrounds to (a) access HE and (b) make informed choices, about accessing HE in the context of the prevalent gender conservative culture;
- while Western outreach strategies are often primarily focused on individual young people, culturally appropriate HE outreach in Haryana needs to involve families.

### 3. Influencing Higher Education policy making within the framework provided by India's National Education Policy 2020: a summary

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Our first, and key, *target audience* was local and national HE policy makers. The immediate local impact enhancement was set within a wider aim of contributing to efforts to expand access to HE in India. India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 includes outreach as a new target for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (para 14.4.2c). Therefore, we sought to demonstrate the relevance of our research to the development of this target through a practical demonstration of the way in which our findings could make a contribution.

Objective 1: to contribute to developing an HE **outreach culture** in Haryana, India (and beyond)

1.1 To achieve a *more nuanced, evidence-based understanding* of issues that young women and men from marginalised backgrounds face when exploring HE options, in local and national debates.

1.2 To enhance *informed decision-making* that families from marginalised backgrounds engage in when making decisions about young people's HE options in Haryana.

1.3 To develop the *HE outreach facilitation skills* of HE colleges in Haryana.

We met objective 1 through,

- the co-development and publication of a **Policy Brief (PB)** on 'Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India'<sup>1</sup> containing a range of *policy suggestions*, which was endorsed by relevant regional and national actors (through the processes and events described in detail below).

Initially we had intended to produce three policy briefs based on the three phases of the FCF Project (outlined in Section 2). Working with our collaborators and, in particular, learning from the expertise of our partners at the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), we produced one **substantial PB covering all three phases**.

- the co-production with local partners and publication of what was initially described as an outreach toolkit. Taking advice particularly from our local partners in Haryana, we renamed the toolkit the 'Fair Chance for Education **Outreach Activity Resource (OAR)** for Higher Education Institutions:

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<sup>1</sup> Find the FCF Project PB at:

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/r1aaa3083/output/policy\\_brief\\_published.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/r1aaa3083/output/policy_brief_published.pdf)

Organising a College Visit ‘Taster Day’ for Potential Higher Education Applicants<sup>2</sup>. This was a guide for colleges on how to organise and evaluate a college ‘taster day’ for students and family members based upon our Phase 3 research findings. The OAR included templates for the organisation, conduct, and evaluation of such an event, and it was successfully piloted with 3 colleges (through the processes and events described below).

Objective 2: to gain **buy-in** for outreach from local actors and national actors

2.1 To gain *buy-in for the need for outreach* on the access to HE agenda, both at state and national levels.

2.2 To gain *buy-in for active participation in outreach* by HE colleges in Haryana.

2.3 To *develop leadership in outreach* at the district, state, and national levels.

We met objective 2 through,

- the **active involvement of FCF project partners and partner institutions** – working with them to co-develop the PB and OAR and to co-facilitate **targeted events**.
- Endorsement of the research findings and suggestions encapsulated in the PB and OAR built through engagement with local, regional, and national policy makers at **three phased events** and the piloting of the OAR in government colleges.

**Event 1:** A one-day online (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) *state-level workshop*, organised by Dr Yadav at Central University Haryana (September 2021) for local education policy makers, (i) presented the draft PB and consulted on its policy suggestions and the draft OAR, and (ii) recruited colleges to pilot the OAR.

Four government colleges offered to pilot the OAR at a ‘taster day’ which they agreed to organise, however, only three were able to run the taster day. They reported back on their experiences at our second workshop.

**Event 2:** A one-day online *state-level workshop*, organised by Dr Panwar at BPS Women’s University (December 2021) for local education policy makers where (i) a finalised PB was presented; (ii) the very successful outcome of piloting the OAR was reported (over 1000 school students and some parents attended college taster days, in very challenging circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions); and (iii) the adoption by education policy makers of a taster day based on the OAR was supported.

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<sup>2</sup> Find the FCF Project OAR at:

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaaa3083/output/fair\\_chance\\_for\\_education\\_outreach\\_activity\\_resource\\_published.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaaa3083/output/fair_chance_for_education_outreach_activity_resource_published.pdf)

**Event 3:** A *national-level blended webinar* organised by Dr Sabharwal at CPRHE in NIEPA presented the research findings, policy suggestions (encapsulated in the PB), and OAR to national policy makers and obtained their endorsement. The college principal from one of the colleges who piloted the taster day further presented the college's experience of and support for the taster days.

Thus, *key local stakeholders* endorsed the PB at the first workshop in Haryana. *Key national policy makers* at the national webinar (Event 3) recognised the contribution and value of the research and its suggestions (encapsulated in the PB) to national policy making as well as the value of taster days/outreach events (supported by the OAR).

The following sections document in more detail the development of the outputs of the fourth phase of the FCF project.

## 4. Development of the Policy Brief

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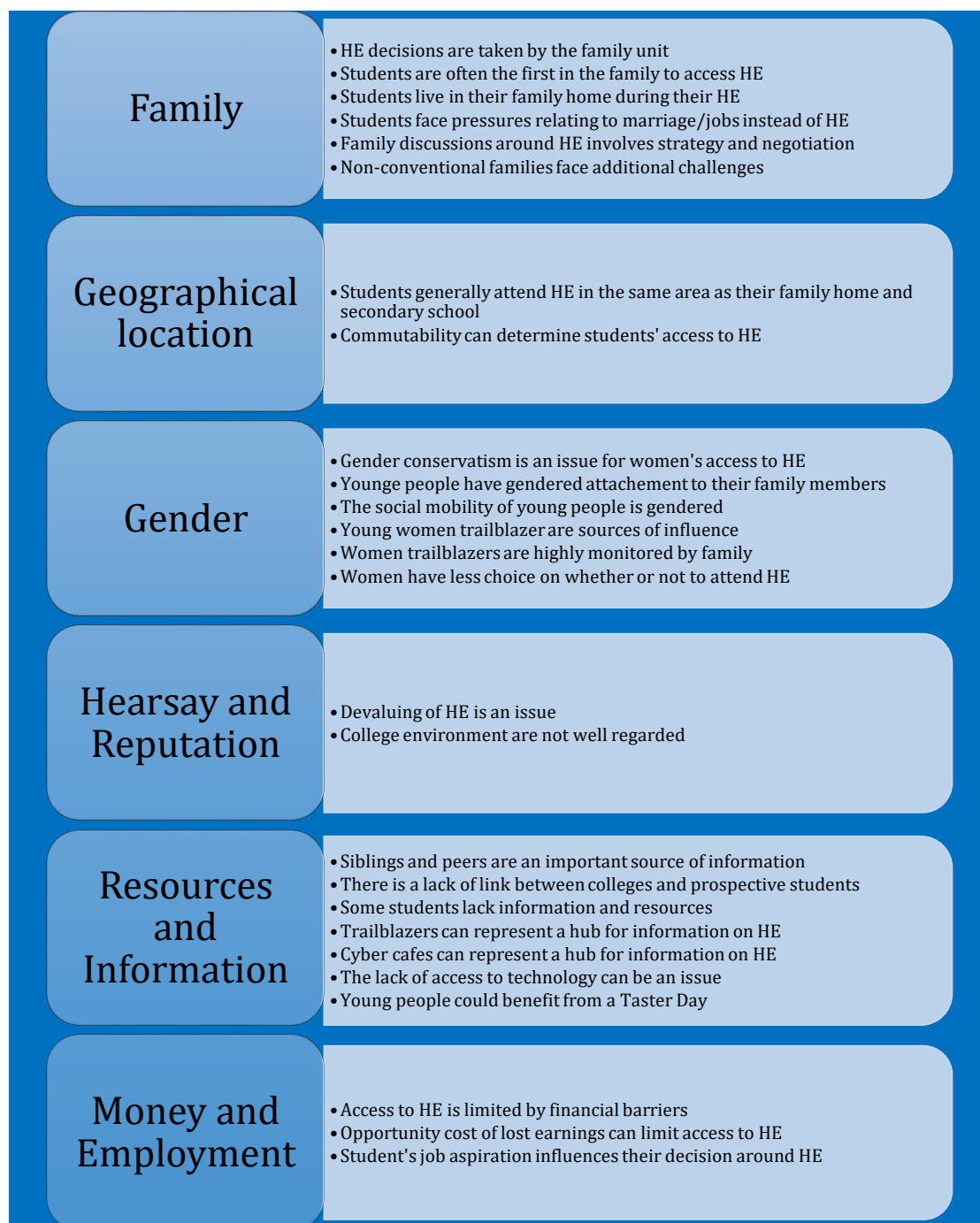
The PB was developed over 2021. In January 2021, the team convened reading meetings which considered different policy briefs on gender and education, especially policy briefs from India. The following policy briefs were selected and discussed in the group:

- Equalising Access to Higher Education in India by CPRHE, India (2017)
- Towards Gender Inclusive Development in Odisha: Some Policy Prescriptions by Oxfam India (2018)
- Education and Skills: Improving the Quality of Education and Skills Development by OECD, India (2014)
- The Internationalisation of Higher Education: Developing Global Graduates by the University of Warwick, UK (2018)

This reading meeting led to the development of a first draft of the PB by the team at Warwick. The team consulted its Indian partner Dr Nidhi Sabharwal during the reading meeting and for the initial drafts that were developed. During the meeting it was felt that the PB developed by the project should respond to and resonate with the NEP (2020) published by the Indian government. Apart from the strategies to enhance the collaborative development of the PB, the team agreed that,

- There would be one principal PB (following the format adopted by CPRHE/NIEPA for its policy briefs) directed towards HEIs because the main aim is to encourage colleges to develop ways of interacting with school and families.
- The PB needs to recognise that education is a pathway which extends from elementary education to HE, and thus there needs to be an understanding of the interaction between schools and HE and of how students take this path rather than a vocational one.
- The PB would set out the core findings from each stage in the project, identifying thematic points for each part and proposing suggestions for appropriate policy makers.

Following this reading exercise, the team put together a document which collated the project's findings and recommendations. This was visualised in the form of the following image:



*Figure 1: Summary of Project Findings and Recommendations*



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The team collaboratively drafted the PB over the following months. Once the team had developed the first draft, it was shared with the FCF project Consultative Group (CG) of early career academics and researchers from Haryana and India. Their recommendations and suggestions were incorporated into a second draft.

This second draft was then presented at the first event organised by Dr Renu Yadav at Central University of Haryana (see Section 6). Feedback from the first event was reviewed and incorporated into the third draft of the PB by the team. This third draft was circulated to the participants attending the national webinar organised at NIEPA and used as the basis for the project findings presentation. Its content received endorsement from key national policy makers (see Section 8).

## 5. Development of the Outreach Activity Resource

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The OAR was initially called 'the toolkit'. During the development of the toolkit, one of the project partners and members of the project's CG shared with the team that the terms 'toolkit' may not be advisable in the contemporary social and political climate in India. This led the team to develop the term Outreach Activity Resource or OAR which was approved by Indian partners and members of the CG in India.

The team replicated the practices used in the development of the PB to develop the first draft of the OAR. The team convened a reading meeting which explored toolkits from India and different parts of the world in April 2021. The team reviewed the different formats, identifying how they engaged with particular audiences. The team explored the following four toolkits:

- Advancing Human Rights Policy and Practice in the Agribusiness Sector: An Implementation Toolkit by Global Agribusiness Alliance (2020)
- Higher Education Support Toolkit: Assisting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities by Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Boston University, USA (2009)
- Assessing Unpaid Care Work: A Participatory Toolkit by the Institute of Development Studies (2021)
- Covid-19 Response Toolkit for Indian Higher Education Institutions: Institutional Resilience for Academic Planning and Continuity by O.P. Jindal Global University, India (2020)

The team collaboratively wrote the first draft over the following months. The OAR, like the PB, drew on the findings of the first three phases of the project. However, the OAR is especially influenced by the third phase of the project and Nikita Samanta's experience of organising taster days in Haryana in 2019. Once the team had developed the first draft, it was shared with the FCF project CG of young academics and researchers from Haryana and India. Their recommendations and suggestions were incorporated into a second draft.

This second draft was presented at the first impact event, organised by Dr Renu Yadav at Central University of Haryana (see Section 6). Feedback from the first event was considered and incorporated into the third draft of the OAR by the team. Further changes were made on the basis of the feedback and suggestions presented by college representatives of government colleges in Haryana who had piloted the OAR in their respective institutions in the second event (see Section 7). This collaboration of piloting, sharing of experiences, feedback, and suggestions from various stakeholders in Haryana and in India contributed to the development of the fourth draft of the OAR which was presented in the third national event (see Section 8).

## 6. The first event: workshop at Central University of Haryana

Developing an outreach culture through engagement with key project findings encapsulated in PB and OAR

The first workshop for the project was organised under the leadership of Dr Renu Yadav, a member of the project's CG, at Central University, Haryana. Dr Yadav was supported by the team in developing, planning, and organising this workshop. Representatives of the state, different HEIs, the Indian partners, and members of the CG in India were individually invited by the Indian partner institution to this online workshop. The main objective was to share the key findings of the FCF project and drafts of the PB and OAR. Different college representatives, who had been identified prior to the workshop, presented their response to the two drafts (which has been shared with them prior to the workshop). Their responses were recorded and subsequently reflected in the content of the workshop report.

The workshop report was uploaded to the project webpage.<sup>3</sup>

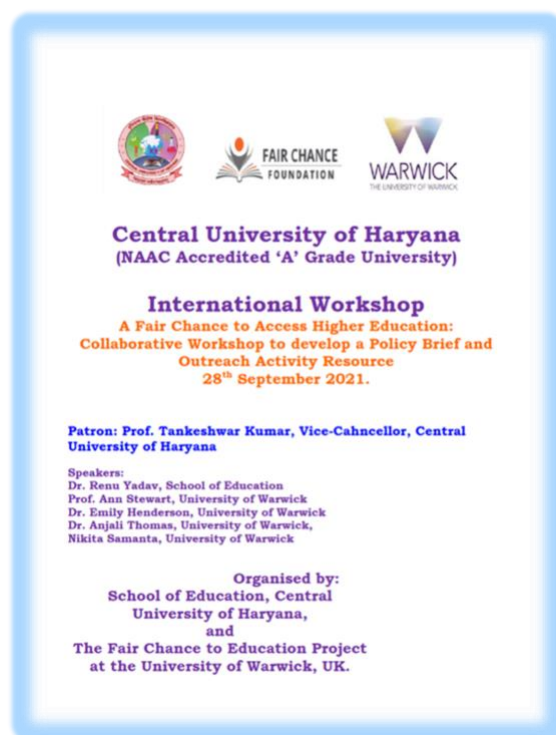


Figure 2: The Front Page of the Brochure

<sup>3</sup> Find the first event report at:

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop_report_final.pdf)

## FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education

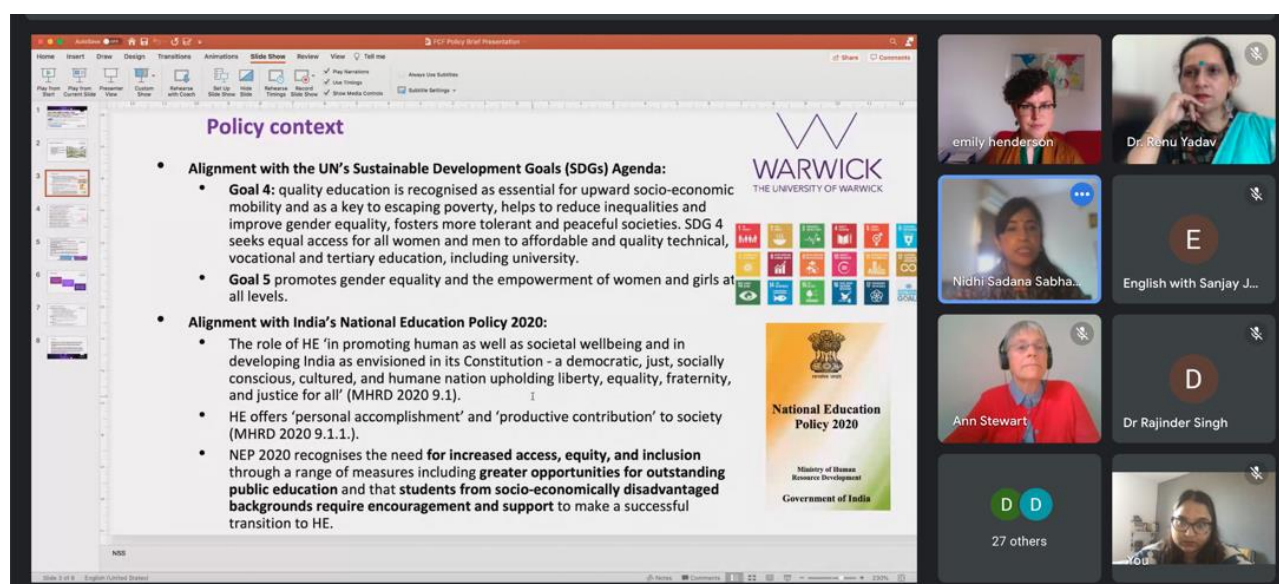


Figure 3: Screenshot of the Central University Workshop

### Developing outreach facilitation skills; gaining buy-in for active participation; piloting the OAR in Haryana

The team sought to test support for the OAR through the willingness of college representatives to volunteer *to pilot its use to hold an open/taster day* in their respective HEIs. Initially four college representatives volunteered, facilitated by the leadership of Dr Renu Yadav. However due to the Covid-19 restrictions in Haryana, only three out of the four volunteering colleges were able to organise open days within the time scale. These three college representatives, from different rural and urban government colleges in different districts across Haryana also committed to sharing their experiences in organising the event. They agreed to feedback suggestions relating to its further development and that of outreach practices in Haryana at the second workshop.

## 7. The second event: workshop at Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPS Women's University)

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The second online workshop was organised under the leadership of Dr Manju Panwar, a member of the project's CG at Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV). Similar to the first workshop, Dr Panwar was supported by the team in developing, planning, and organising this workshop. The event was attended by representatives of different universities, academics, college representatives of the three colleges which piloted the OAR, the project's CG, the Indian partners, and students of BPSMV.

### Extending buy-in for outreach; demonstrating facilitation skills; endorsing the OAR regionally

A range of speakers at the workshop provided the social and historical context of HE outreach in Indian universities and shared their experiences of organising activities. The key focus for the workshop was to share the experiences of the three college representatives who had used the OAR to organise open/taster days in Haryana and to hear their assessment of the processes involved and the event itself. Each representative provided a detailed account of their activities, the challenges they had faced, their evaluation of the usefulness of the activity, and their general assessment of the value of this form of outreach. All three considered the exercise very valuable, reporting considerable support for this form of outreach, with the outcome that over a 1000 young women and men had attended these taster days. The event was recorded and the content subsequently reflected in the workshop report.

The workshop report has been uploaded on the project webpage.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Find the second event report at:

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop\\_report\\_22.06.20.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop_report_22.06.20.pdf)



*FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education*



The flyer is a blue and white graphic with the following text and layout:

- WOMEN STUDY CENTRE**  
Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya &  
The Fair Chance to Education Project at  
University of Warwick, UK
- WARWICK**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
- FAIR CHANCE FOUNDATION**
- is Organising an International Workshop on*
- A Fair Chance to Access Higher Education: Collaborative Workshop to develop an Outreach Activity Resource**
- on 28th January 2022 (12:00-16:00 IST)**
- Presidential Address**  
Prof. R.K. Anayath  
Vice-Chancellor BPSMV
- Chief Guest**  
Dr Pankaj Mittal  
Secretary, Association of Indian Universities
- Key-Note Speaker**  
Prof. Ajmer Singh  
Vice-Chancellor CDLU, Sirsa, Haryana
- Resource Person**  
Prof. C.B. Sharma  
School of education IGNOU
- Resource Person**  
Prof Ipsita Bansal  
Dean, Faculty of Commerce and Management, BPSMV, Haryana
- Resource Person**  
Prof Renu Nanda  
Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Jammu, J&K
- The Panel**  
Dr Rajpal Kaushik  
Associate Professor, Govt College, Sirana, Panipat, Haryana
- The Panel**  
Dr Rajinder Rana  
Principal, Satnam Dharma College, Ambala Cantt-Haryana
- The Panel**  
Dr Karan Singh  
Principal, Govt College for women, Pali, Rewari, Haryana
- Convener**  
Dr Manju Panwar  
Director, Women Studies Centre, BPSMV
- Convener**  
Dr Renu Yadav  
School of Education, Central University of Haryana
- Convener**  
Prof Ann Stewart  
Professor, School of Law, University of Warwick
- Convener**  
Nikita Samanta  
Doctoral Student, University of Warwick
- Google Meet Link** [meet.google.com/smp-psrh-ehr](https://meet.google.com/smp-psrh-ehr)

*Figure 4: Flyer for the Workshop*



*Figure 5: Screenshot of the BPSMV Workshop*

The proceedings of this workshop were covered in local newspapers in Haryana on 29th January 2022. Both clippings (Figures 6 and 7) talk about the international online workshop organised by BPSMV. The clippings briefly describe the focus and discussions between the workshop participants such as the needs and benefits of inclusive and equitable access to HE, the need for outreach to young women and students from different deprived groups, and the social responsibility of HEIs to engage with communities.



Figure 6: Source Ujala Aaj Tak



Figure 7: Source Ajit Samachar






## 8. The third event: national webinar at CPRHE, NIEPA

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The CPRHE/NIEPA and University of Warwick Webinar on ‘Gendered Pathways to Higher Education Access and Choice’ was organised under the leadership of Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, one of the project’s partners, at CPRHE, NIEPA on 5th April 2022 as a blended event. Dr Sabharwal was supported by the team in developing, planning and organising this event. Dr Henderson, Professor Stewart, and Ms Nikita Samanta from the Warwick team were able, due to removal of travel restrictions, to attend in person.

### **Demonstrating national policy relevance of project findings for the development of an HE outreach culture**

The purpose of the event was to communicate national relevance of the project findings and the importance of an HE outreach culture. The pre-circulated concept note encapsulated key elements of the PB research findings, which were presented in more detail by Dr Henderson on behalf of the project team.



Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE)  
National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi  
and  
The University of Warwick, United Kingdom

Invites you to Webinar  
on  
**A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Higher Education Access and Choice**  
Tuesday 05 April 2022 | 11:00 - 13:00 hrs (IST)

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set new global values centred around inclusion - leaving no one behind. The SDG4 recognises access to quality education as essential for upward socio-economic mobility. Importantly, eliminating gender disparities in access to quality higher education (HE) is at the heart of the SDG4. Access to quality educational pathways to higher education (HE) is crucial in influencing informed decision-making pertaining to choice of HE studies and shaping careerpaths. Globally, there has been progress in achieving gender parity (in favour of women) in access to HE. In India too, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) reached 1.01 in 2019-20. However, there exists wide variations among states across India. The GPI varies from 0.83 in Bihar to 1.36 in Kerala. Even though gender parity of enrolment is being achieved, social and gender barriers remain for women and also for young men from disadvantaged groups, in relation to accessing quality educational pathways to HE and making informed decisions about post-schooling choices.

The empirical evidence generated by the 'A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana' study (a five-year collaborative research project of University of Warwick and research partners in India, 2017-2021), together with other related studies, show that many young people entering HE in India come from families and communities where there is little or no prior experience of HE, or of higher levels of secondary schooling. Students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups are often the first in their families and communities to access HE, so they lack adequate information regarding HE options and the admission process. As such, choices are being made without access to sufficient or accurate information. Informed choices about HE are thus limited. (Please find the link of the research brief here:[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/r1aaa3083/output/policy\\_brief\\_published.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/r1aaa3083/output/policy_brief_published.pdf)).

Furthermore, young people are arriving at HE with different levels of gendered dis/advantage. Families play a key role in educational decision making about HE futures of young people, and gender mediates many aspects of family decision making about HE. These gender influences include: whether and how a young person is able to go on to study; who is listened to and relied upon for information; choice of institution, particularly their location; how family resources are assessed to support young people's study; what the desired outcome of a HE degree may be. For women, college and subject choice are more likely to be based on the college being close to home and/or with a safe reputation, as opposed to availability of subjects or academic reputation. Thus, while there may be gender parity, there are still many gender-based assumptions which affect the HE choices which are available to both young women and young men. They lack access to informed, gender-sensitive information and support.

Government colleges are key institutions providing HE to young people who are first generation higher education learners, from lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or rural or semi-urban areas. Government colleges have the potential to play a greater role in the communities where they are located, to provide greater information and promote gender-sensitive decision-making in families. Government colleges can serve as college knowledge hubs within local areas, to provide knowledge on choice of college, course of study and career prospects. With appropriate support, colleges can become important agents of change in improving HE informed choice.

These research findings, supported by wider research on ways of facilitating access to HE based upon informed decision making, have resulted in the development of a resource pack – an 'Outreach Activity Resource' (OAR) to support colleges in organising a 'taster' day (an outreach programme, in the form of a college visit day, to provide information about HE) for school students, and their families where possible, to visit the campus, meet staff, learn more about the range of courses and the admissions process. (Please find the link of the same here:  
[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/r1aaa3083/output/fair\\_chance\\_for\\_education\\_outreach\\_activity\\_resource\\_published.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/r1aaa3083/output/fair_chance_for_education_outreach_activity_resource_published.pdf)). This latter phase of the project involved working closely with college principals and academic partners in Haryana, India. The colleges used the OAR to organise taster days, which proved hugely successful in both urban and rural colleges, in spite of ongoing pandemic restrictions.

Promoting a culture of widening participation and informed HE choice is a priority which is shared by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. NEP 2020 recognises the need for increased access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures, including conducting outreach programmes on HE opportunities among the socially and economically disadvantaged groups to support their successful transition to higher education.

Keeping this context in mind, this webinar aims to initiate a dialogue on the role of HE access outreach efforts by government colleges to promote gender equality in terms of HE access and informed choice. The objectives are to discuss the ways in which educational pathways to HE are gendered in terms of HE access and choice; to discuss factors which affect access to HE opportunities and informed choice, and which therefore contribute to gender inequalities, and to discuss institutional strategies to promote gender equality relating to access to HE opportunities and informed choice.

Figure 8: Concept Note



## FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education

The meeting was chaired by the Vice Chancellor NIEPA, Professor Varghese. The invited speakers were key national policy makers: Dr Archana Thakur, Joint Secretary, Universities Grants Commission (UGC); and Shri Harshit Mishra, Deputy Advisor, Education at the NITI Aayog (the apex public policy think tank of the Government of India with a remit to catalyse economic development and to foster cooperative federalism using a bottom-up approach). Both key speakers and the Vice-Chancellor NIEPA acknowledged the direct policy relevance of the content of the PB.



Figure 9: Concept Note Webinar Speakers

### Demonstrating local and regional buy-in for conduct of outreach activities

Dr Rajinder Singh, Principal of Sanatan Dharma (SD) College, Ambala Cantt, Haryana was the third key speaker. SD College was one of the three colleges to pilot the OAR. Dr Singh shared with the audience the process and outcome of the ‘taster day’ activity, thereby providing the participants with a lived example of the value of undertaking OAR and demonstrating the facilitation skills built through the process.

### Wider dissemination and engagement in outreach development

The webinar was attended by over 100 participants from India and the UK. It included a very lively and engaging question and answer session chaired by Prof Varghese, where several topics were discussed such as the role of teachers in enabling access; the role of social capital in choice making; the role of trailblazers in promoting education for women. Prof Stewart then reflected on the wider significance of the contribution made by the project and shared the UK context in relation to outreach and widening participation.

*FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education*

The Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA concluded the event by confirming that the project and its findings have been relevant at various levels: the project has aided colleges in Haryana and has contributed to the academic research, and the policy community in India, which was evident from the attendees and speakers at the webinar.

A recording of the webinar is publicly available on the NIEPA website.<sup>5</sup>

The workshop webinar report has been uploaded on the project webpage.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Find the NIEPA webinar recording at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8eWCVx0dek&ab\\_channel=NIEPANewDelhi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8eWCVx0dek&ab_channel=NIEPANewDelhi)

<sup>6</sup> Find the third event report at:

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop3\\_niepa\\_report\\_final\\_17oct22.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/workshop3_niepa_report_final_17oct22.pdf)

## 9. Contributing to the development of gender and Higher Education research agendas

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To date, the focus of this report has been on demonstrating the influence of our research to local and national education policy makers. We now turn to our contribution to the development of HE research agendas.

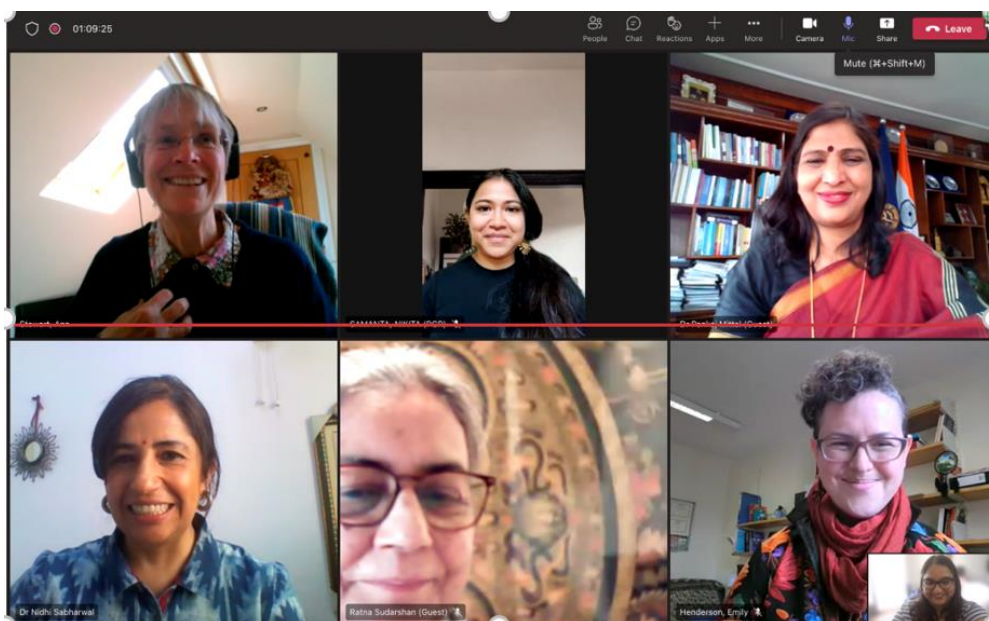
### Knowledge creation through research methodology

A key objective for the project as a whole was to work collaboratively with our Indian partners to develop and implement each stage. We also adopted a participatory methodology which entailed seeking advice and comments from a range of other local actors. We sought to use this participatory process to contribute to the development of scholarship on gender and HE, including research focusing on issues of diversity and inclusion.

Our partners have contributed in different ways over the course of the project. Professor Nandini Manjrekar (Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)) and Dr Manish Jain (Ambedkar University Delhi) contributed significantly to the early shaping of the project through the provision of a background scoping report and subsequently through attendance at other events over the course of the project. Dr Nidhi Sabharwal (CPRHE, NIEPA) has played a key role in the developing and implementation of every stage of the overall project. In addition, CPHRE at NIEPA has enabled us to present our work in ways that engage with contemporary Indian HE debates.

We established the following review bodies for the project,

- **Research Advisory Group (RAG)** for the project consisting of senior Indian researchers with expertise in HE and/or gender. We have presented our research for discussion at yearly meetings as well as circulating elements of our research by email in the interim. RAG members have assisted the team with the development of the project, providing invaluable comments and suggestions.



*Figure 10: Screenshot of RAG Meeting, 2022*

- **Consultative Group** of predominately early career academics and researchers who shared an interest and expertise in gender and education particularly in Haryana. Through the CG, the FCF Project team sought to create a mutually beneficial network of gender and HE scholars. On the one hand, the group members gained a greater understanding of the organisation of a transnational research project, and on the other, they aided the project team in its learning about the Indian context. This collaboration was facilitated through visits by two members Dr Yadav and Ms Rathee (along with Dr Sabharwal) to Warwick, funded by Warwick University's Institute of Advanced Study. During this visit they presented their work at an event hosted by the International Research and Researchers Network at the Society for Research into Higher Education.<sup>7</sup> The team gained a great deal from their expertise. The group also contributed to the project research with its collaborative and evolutionary methodology, for example, by piloting research instruments and providing comments on initial findings.

Members of the CG, as indicated above, have played a key role in developing expertise in and contributing leadership to the development of outreach in Haryana (through Dr Yadav and Dr Panwar hosting the two workshops and Dr Yadav's substantial contribution to the piloting of the OAR).

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<sup>7</sup> Find details of the presentation at:  
<https://srhe.ac.uk/civcrm/?civiwp=CiviCRM&q=civcrm/event/info&reset=1&id=379>

## *FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education*

### Capacity building of the doctoral researchers

Both doctoral students funded by the project have played key roles in the development of the research, and gained skills in the conduct and presentation of policy-oriented research, including workshop organisation, report writing, and meeting facilitation. They gained skills relating to the overall development, management, and implementation of a substantial multifaceted international research project.

### Stimulating and enhancing academic scholarship: the project's academic conference

The conference, 'A Fair Chance for Education: Problematising Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India' (15th -16th July 2021) was jointly hosted by TISS Mumbai and the University Warwick (and funded by the Fair Chance Foundation). Our original plan was to hold the event at TISS Mumbai, facilitated by our project partner, Prof Manjrekar, but due to the pandemic we shifted to an online format.



## Conference Report

A Fair Chance for Education: Problematising Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> July 2021)

Hosted by the University Warwick and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS Mumbai) and funded by the Fair Chance Foundation

December 2021

Report prepared by Anjali Thomas and Julie Mansuy



*Figure 11: Conference Report*



The aims of the conference were,

- to share the project's research findings including the policy focus relating to developing a research informed outreach culture,
- to discuss conceptualisations of access, gender, intersectional inequalities, unequal choices in HE in India,
- to bring together practitioners, academics and researchers from across India and internationally to discuss the various facets of HE in India, with a focus on gender, access and choice in HE, HE policy and methodologies to research access to HE, and
- to add to and encourage robust knowledge production and sharing within Indian HE research.

Themes of the conference were,

- Problematizing access, choice, affirmative action, widening participation and outreach activities within HE
- Gender, social class, Dalit communities, religious minorities and access to HE
- Families and communities and educational pathways to HE
- Policy on HE and gender
- Methodologies for researching gender and HE

The call for papers resulted in a large number of submissions, itself evidence of the influence and status of our research. The organising committee selected 14 papers for presentation at the conference. The conference itself drew a large number of attendees, with 113 delegates participating on Day 1 and 86 on Day 2. In total, 144 delegates participated in the conference across both days.

The conference report can be found on the project website.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Find the conference report at:

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/fcfconference\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/projects/rlaaa3083/output/fcfconference_report_final.pdf)

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- Sabharwal, N. S. and Malish, C. M. (2017). *Equalising Access to Higher Education in India*. New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.

*FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education*

Samanta, N. and Stewart, A. (2023). *Phase 3 Report: Institutional Initiatives to Support Informed Choice in Accessing Higher Education: Implementing a Taster Day in Government Colleges in Haryana, India*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Spencer-Oatley, H. and Dauber, D. (2018) *The Internationalisation of Higher Education: Developing Global Graduates*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Thomas, A. and Henderson, E. F. (2022). *Phase 2 Report: The Role of Families in the Gendered Educational Trajectories of Undergraduate Students in Haryana, India*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

## Appendix 1

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### The Team at Warwick

Prof Ann Stewart, School of Law

Dr Emily Henderson, Education Studies

Dr Anjali Thomas, Education Studies now Evaluation Researcher, Prosper Project, University of Liverpool

Nikita Samanta, School of Law

Dr Julie Mansuy, School of Law, now Founder and Director of Active4Research Ltd.

### Indian Project Partners

Dr Nidhi Sabharwal, NIEPA, CPRHE, New Delhi

Prof Nandini Manjrekar, TISS, Mumbai

Dr Manish Jain, Ambedkar University, New Delhi

### Research Advisory Group Members

Kiran Bhatta, Senior Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research

Farida Khan, Professor (Retired), Department of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi; Member, National Minorities Commission

Pankaj Mittal, Doctor, Additional Secretary, University Grants Commission; Former Vice Chancellor and Professor at Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya

Claire Noronha, Doctor, Founding Member and Director of Collaborative Research and Dissemination (CORD)

Ratna M. Sudarshan, Doctor, Former National Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration; Trustee: Institute of Social Studies Trust New Delhi

Asha Singh, Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences (Emerita), Principal Magadh Mahila College, and Former HOD of Economics (Emerita), Patna University, Patna

### Consultative Group Members

Dr Renu Yadav, Central University Haryana

Dr Manju Panwar, Bhagat Phool Singh Women's University

Dr Kamlesh Narwana, University of Delhi

Dr Sharmila Rathee, University of Delhi

*FCF Phase 4: The Contribution to Educational Policy Development of the Fair  
Chance for Education Research on Gendered Access to Higher Education*

Dr Manika Bora, Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University

Dr Lovitoli Jimo, Ambedkar University Delhi

Dr Anima Mali, Vidyanagar College, West Bengal

Dr Anjali Tiwari, University of Delhi

Dr Laksh Venkataraman, TERI University, New Delhi

Dr Shubhra Nagalia, Ambedkar University Delhi

Rachna Chaudhary, Ambedkar University Delhi



## Final Project Outputs

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### Project Reports

Henderson, E. F. and Mansuy, J. (2018). *Introduction to and Progress Report on the Implementation of the Research Project: A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Henderson, E. F., Thomas, A., Mansuy, J., Sabharwal N. S., Stewart, A., Rathee, S., Yadav, R., Samanta, N. (2021). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana: Phase 1 Findings Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Mansuy, J. and Henderson, E. F. (2020). *Project Development Summary (2016-2020): A Fair Chance for Education in Haryana Project*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

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Samanta, N., Thomas, A., Mansuy, J., Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., and Sabharwal, N. S. (2022). *Fair Chance for Education Outreach Activity Resource for Higher Education Institutions: Organising a College Visit 'Taster Day' for Potential Higher Education Applicants*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Stewart, A. (2023). *ESRC Impact Acceleration Account Round 2: End of Project Narrative – Enhancing Informed Choices for Higher Education: Building Outreach Culture in Haryana, India*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

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Stewart, A., Henderson, E. F., Sabharwal, N. S., Thomas, A., Samanta, N., and Mansuy, J. (2022). *Supporting Gender-sensitive Higher Education Access and Choice in Haryana, India: Policy Brief*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

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Thomas, A. and Henderson, E. F. (2022). *Phase 2 Report: The Role of Families in the Gendered Educational Trajectories of Undergraduate Students in Haryana, India*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

### Workshop/Conference/Visit Reports

Henderson, E. F., Mansuy, J., and Stewart, A., and Thomas, A. (2018). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – February 2018 Visit Report (Abridge Version)*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Henderson, E. F., Thomas, A., and Mansuy, J. (2019). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – February 2019 Visit Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Henderson, E. F., Stewart, A., Mansuy, J., Thomas, A., and Samanta, N. (2019). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – October 2018 Visit Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Samanta, N., Henderson, E. F., and Stewart, A. (2022). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – April 2022 Visit Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Samanta, N. and Stewart, A. (2020). *A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Educational Success in Haryana, India – October 2019 Visit Report*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Samanta, N. and Stewart, A. (2022). *CPRHE/NIEPA and the University of Warwick Webinar on A Fair Chance for Education: Gendered Pathways to Higher Education Access and Choice*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Thomas, A. and Mansuy, J. (2021). *A Fair Chance for Education: Problematizing Access and Mapping Gendered Pathways to Higher Education in India (15th-16th July 2021)*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Thomas, A. and Mansuy, J. (2021). *A Fair Chance to Access Higher Education: Collaborative Workshop to Develop a Policy Brief and Outreach Activity Resource on 28th September 2021*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Thomas, A. and Mansuy, J. (2022). *A Fair Chance to Access Higher Education: Collaborative Workshop to Develop a Policy Brief and Outreach Activity Resource on 28th January 2022*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

## Presentations

*April 2017*

**Ambedkar University Delhi, Delhi, India (invited)**

'Taking a position on gender and intersectionality through blogging: a participatory workshop' (Emily Henderson and Ian Abbott).

*April 2018*

**'Order/Disorder: Self and Society in Modern South Asia', University of Warwick, Coventry**

'Deconstructing Haryana: Dis/order in representations of gender, caste and education' (Emily Henderson and Anjali Thomas).

*June 2018*

**CEID (Centre for Education and International Development) Conference, UCL Institute of Education, London**

'Gendering access to higher education in Haryana, India: a comparative case study of two government colleges' (Emily Henderson & Anjali Thomas).

**CEID Pre-Conference workshop on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018 at Institute of Education, UCL, London**

'Activism, Gender and Higher Education: decolonising the research agenda' (Emily Henderson and Anjali Thomas).

**The Global Research Priorities on International Development Postgraduate Conference 2018, on Reassessing Poverty and Inequality: Theories, Representations and Approaches at the University of Warwick**

'Inequalities of Access: Intersectional barriers to higher education in the Indian and the International context' (Anjali Thomas).

*February 2019*

**International Seminar, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration and British Council, India (invited)**

Seminar title: 'Employment and Employability of Higher Education Graduates'; discussant for the panel entitled 'Education and Employment of Higher Education Graduates' (Emily Henderson).

*April 2019*

**International Institute for Higher Education Research and Capacity Building and the Centre for Comparative and Global Education, O.P. Jindal University, Sonapat, Haryana, India**

'Inequalities of Access: Intersectional barriers to higher education in the Indian and the International context' (Anjali Thomas).

*May 2019*

**Centre for Education Studies 7th Annual Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference on Education in Unequal Societies, at University of Warwick**

'A Qualitative researcher's positionality in higher education spaces: Reflections from the field in government colleges in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas).

*June 2019*

**The Global Research Priorities on International Development Postgraduate Conference 2019, on The Politics of Hope – Reviving the dream of Democracy and Development at the University of Warwick**

'Democratic Access to Higher Education: A study of how students and families perceive and access higher education in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas).

*September 2019*

**The 12th EASAS (European Association of South Asian Studies) PhD Workshop at the University of Stuttgart**

'Families Accessing Higher Education in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas).

*December 2019*

**Symposium on 'Inequalities in Indian Higher Education: Critical Perspectives' supported by British Council India and Fair Chance for Education Project, SRHE (Society for Research into Higher Education) Annual Conference, Newport, Wales**

'Student diversity and challenges of inclusion: Understanding experiences of students from socially excluded groups in campuses of higher education in India' (Nidhi S. Sabharwal); 'Hidden Social Exclusion in Indian Academia: Gender, Caste and Conference Participation' (Emily Henderson, Nidhi S. Sabharwal, and Roma Smart Joseph in absentia); 'Gendered Trajectories and an expansive concept of Access to Higher Education in Haryana, India' (Anjali Thomas and Emily Henderson); 'Higher Education and Social Stereotypes: Exploring Indian Women's Perspectives' (Anjali Tiwari).

*July 2020*

**UKIERI SPARC Webinar 'Sociology, Psychology and Gender Studies' (invited speaker)**

'India UK collaborative project on "A Fair chance for Education: Gendered pathways to Educational Success in Haryana"' (Emily Henderson, Ann Stewart, and Nidhi S. Sabharwal).

**University Grants Commission and Centre for Policy Research on Higher Education, NIEPA Webinar on ‘Advancing Gender Equity and Women Empowerment through Education’**

‘Rights or High-Level Policy?’ (Ann Stewart).

*October 2020*

**Department of Education Studies Research Seminar Series, University of Warwick (invited speaker)**

‘Gendered catchment areas for higher education choice in Haryana, India’ (Emily Henderson).

*February 2021*

**School of Education Research Seminar Series, University of Durham (invited speaker)**

‘Gendered catchment areas for higher education choice in Haryana, India’ (Emily Henderson, Nidhi S. Sabharwal, and Anjali Thomas).

*May 2021*

**AHRC GCRF Minorities on Campus Virtual Workshop 2, Coventry University**

‘Deciding to access Higher Education: role played by families in the educational trajectories of undergraduate students in Haryana, India’ (Anjali Thomas).

*June 2021*

**‘Education, the global South, and Beyond’ Seminar Series, Department of Education, Brunel University (invited speaker)**

‘Gendered catchment areas for higher education choice in Haryana, India’ (Emily Henderson, Nidhi S. Sabharwal, and Anjali Thomas).

*November 2021*

**‘Law for All: Widening Access to Legal Education in the UK and Ireland’ Online Workshop, School of Law, Queen’s University Belfast**

‘Pathways to Educational Success in India’ (Ann Stewart and Nidhi Sabharwal).

*March 2023 (forthcoming)*

**Celebrating Social Science Impact, University of Warwick**

‘Enhancing Informed Choices for Higher Education: Building Outreach Culture in Haryana, India’ (Ann Stewart).



## Academic Contributions: Journals and Books

Stewart, A., Sabharwal, N.S., and Yadav, R. (Submitted 2022). 'Building an Outreach Culture for Fairer Access to Higher Education in Haryana, India: A 'Bottom up' Contribution to Policy Implementation'. *Policy Futures in Education Special Issue: Considering the Global-local Relationship in Education*.

Henderson, E. F. (2019). 'Starting with Gender: Definitional Politics in International Higher Education Research'. In Henderson E. F. and Nicolazzo, Z. (Eds.) *Starting with Gender in International Higher Education Research: Conceptual Debates and Methodological Considerations*. London; New York: Routledge. (12-28)

Henderson, E. F., Sabharwal, N. S., and Thomas, A. (In press). 'From Gender Parity to Gender Prism: Looking Beyond Enrolment Parity to Explore Gendered Conditions of Access to Higher Education in Haryana, India'. In Varghese, N. V. and Sabharwal, N. S. (Eds). *Indian Higher Education Report*. Routledge.

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