

<b>Institution:</b> Brunel University London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 22 Anthropology and Development Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Raising Educational Provision and Aspirational Outcomes in Rural India		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2011 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Peggy Froerer	Reader	05/2002 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2017 - 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

### 1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Nearly 50% of India's 1,200,000,000 inhabitants are under the age of 25, making the country home to the largest number of young people in the world. Of these, 67% live in rural areas, where educational attainment is significantly lower and youth unemployment is substantially higher than in urban areas. Aimed at addressing this attainment gap, Dr Froerer's ethnographic research in rural Chhattisgarh, one of India's most impoverished states, was used by the Department of Education to publish a new curriculum manual which has been disseminated to over 45,000 primary and middle schools led by approximately 224,000 teachers and catering to over 3,000,000 pupils. Subsequently, the Government of Chhattisgarh committed to working with Dr Froerer through an MOU, formalising their intention to use her research to improve education and support young people in rural India more effectively in gaining awareness of attainable occupations and livelihood options.

### 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

For over 2 decades, Dr Froerer has been carrying out ethnographic research in rural Chhattisgarh, a central Indian state whose 29,000,000-strong population comprises over one-third of those categorized as *adivasi* (tribal) - the vast majority of whom live in rural areas and rely on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. Since 2002, this research has revolved around childhood, youth and education, and since 2010 it has focused on the relationship between education, aspiration and social mobility, and specifically on the ways in which marginalized rural young people's differentiated engagement with school education articulates with their livelihood options and aspirations for a better future. Since 2003 Dr Froerer has also worked with different government and non-governmental educational bodies in central India (schools, teacher training colleges, NGOs), publishing on issues related to educational engagement, inequality and aspiration (Ref. 1; Ref. 2; Ref. 3; Ref. 4; Ref. 5).

What this long-term research has revealed is that schooling in rural India is predominantly associated with the acquisition of salaried employment, with nurse/teacher/police/military being the (non-agricultural) occupations that are most visible in rural areas. Such occupations are also the most commonly depicted in school curriculum, and consequently feature most prominently in young people's aspirations for a future outside of subsistence agriculture. Very few rural youth, however, will actually succeed in acquiring such employment, owing to the economic, social and other structural disadvantages that accompany their marginalised status; nor are rural youth aware of the array of possible livelihoods outside agriculture, or how to

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access them. Deeming such disadvantages to be insurmountable, teachers in rural schools are not invested in supporting young people's successful educational engagement, or exposing them to the kind of occupations that may be more accessible than the nurse/teacher/police/military options with which young people are so familiar. Consequently, young people become disillusioned about the importance of schooling and the role it can play in enhancing their future prospects. This leads to lack of educational engagement and increased drop-out rates, along with high unemployment.

Dr Froerer's most recent research, which has been supported by her role as Co-Investigator in a large ESRC/DFID-funded project (Education, Aspiration and Learning Outcomes in Remote Rural Areas: India, Laos, Lesotho), seeks to further understand the relationship between education, aspiration and learning outcomes in remote rural areas, and is aimed at addressing the challenges raised within.

Grant-related research: between 2016 (then, Senior Lecturer) and 2019, Dr Froerer supervised research carried out by a postdoctoral fellow in rural Chhattisgarh, central India, in conjunction with the ESRC/DFID project. It is intended that the research findings will have relevance to these and other low-income countries that are concerned with raising the learning outcomes of rural young people. Findings will also be relevant to international agencies and organisations involved in shaping education systems and learning outcomes in low income countries.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

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#### Grants

Froerer, Peggy (co-I). 2016-2019. Education, Aspiration and Learning Outcomes in Remote Rural Areas (India, Laos and Lesotho), with Prof Nicola Ansell (Brunel, PI) and Dr Roy Huijsmans (Erasmus University, the Hague, co-I). ESRC/DfID (GBP595,101).

#### Outputs

- Ref 1.** 2020 Ansell, A., Froerer, P., Huijsmans, R., Dungey, C., Dost, A. (2020) Educating 'surplus population': uses and abuses of aspiration in the rural peripheries of a globalising world. In Fennia: International Journal of Geography. [10.11143/fennia.90756](https://doi.org/10.11143/fennia.90756)
- Ref 2.** 2015 *Adivasi* young people and the risk of education in rural Chhattisgarh'. Special Issue, *South Asian History and Culture* Vol 6(3): 365-379. [10.1080/19472498.2015.1030873](https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2015.1030873)
- Ref 3.** 2014 Poverty and Education in Rural Chhattisgarh', p. 173-203. In Nandini Gooptu and Jonathan Parry (eds.) *Persistence of Poverty in India*. New Delhi: Social Science Press.
- Ref 4.** 2012 Learning, livelihoods and social mobility: valuing girls' education in central India. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 43(4): 344-345 [10.1111/j.1548-1492.2012.01189.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2012.01189.x)
- Ref 5.** 2011 Education, inequality and social mobility in central India. *European Journal of Development Research* 23(5): 695-711. [10.1057/ejdr.2011.43](https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2011.43)

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Dr Froerer's ethnographic research goes to the heart of social and pedagogical problems in India brought about by a fundamental divide of rural and urban areas in the country. Her work, alongside Ansell, Huijsmans and others involved in the ESRC/DFID research, has resulted in the implementation of policy proposals which are geared around enhancing learning outcomes for rural young people.

Rural youth in India face economic, social, and educational disadvantages that prevent them from pursuing and achieving a variety of salaried employment options after graduating from school. This exacerbates a range of problems with which India struggles already, such as the fact that 75% of those who live below the poverty line are located in rural areas, which also have a much lower literacy rate than the rest of the country. According to India's 2011 census, rates of illiteracy in rural areas were nearly 32%, compared with 26% in urban areas. In Chhattisgarh, literacy rates in rural areas were 66%, compared with 84.05% for urban areas.

In light of the fact that approximately half of India's 1,200,000,000 inhabitants are under the age of 26 and forecasts that India will be the youngest country in the world into the 2020s, with a median age of 25, it is vital to reduce the educational inequalities and subsequent economic divide between urban and rural areas. High poverty rates map onto educational attainment, particularly in India's poorest states like Chhattisgarh, where 45% of the 29,000,000 inhabitants, comprised of nearly 50% under age 25, live below the poverty line. While primary school enrolment in Chhattisgarh is high, there are significant gaps in attendance and attainment, with fewer young people for rural areas carrying on into secondary and tertiary education.

Dr Froerer has provided policy sets to the Government of Chhattisgarh, which are directly geared towards improving educational engagement, raising aspirations, and reducing attainment gaps for rural young people. Her research has changed the state's educational strategy and improved policy-making through new and more effective decision-making frameworks.

She has shared her research findings and policy recommendations at 8 different meetings (between June 2017 and February 2020) with Chhattisgarh State Government officials from the Department of School Education. These included the State Planning Commission (SPC)—the government body that prepares and implements Chhattisgarh government policy—the Directorate of Education, the Chief Minister's Principal Advisor on Planning, Policy and Rural Development, the Director of Public Instruction and the Director of the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) – the 2 bodies responsible for curriculum development and teacher training (E3; E4; E5).

The recommendations outlined in these policy sets include curriculum revision and enhancement in line with improving educational engagement and attainment; the introduction of livelihood exposure visits and professional exchanges; the implementation of gender-neutral representations and approaches; and the integration of a vocational component into the curriculum. These recommendations have led directly to the creation and publication of a supplementary learning manual, which will be used by teachers in primary and upper primary schools. The Assistant Director of Samagra Shiksha, which is in charge of school education and teacher training in Chhattisgarh, confirms, "In view of these recommendations...the SA (Samagra Shiksha) is publishing a **supplementary curriculum learning manual [Gadhbo Nava Chhattisgarh]** that draws directly on these and other findings" (E1).

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In addition to the policy recommendations, which have been specially adapted for teachers and translated into pedagogical terms, this manual also includes a range of illustrations and child-friendly activities that can be utilised within the primary school classroom. As the Assistant Director notes, “This manual...translates these research recommendations into an accessible pedagogical format, with suggestions of how to integrate these directly into the school curriculum” (E1).

The impact of the new manual is significant. “At least one copy of this supplementary learning material,” the Assistant Director says, “will be disseminated to all primary schools (Class 1-5) and upper primary schools (Class 6-8) throughout Chhattisgarh, numbering **over 45,000 schools and over 3 million school children**” (E1). Teachers are instructed to draw on this manual and incorporate and integrate the activities and recommendations in their daily pedagogical practices. This represents the first significant stage in curriculum enhancement, and serves as an important step in expanding children’s awareness of different livelihoods and vocations.

Owing to the impact of Covid-19, which suspended global travel and led to widespread closure of schools in March 2020, follow-up visits (scheduled for June and September 2020) to collect additional evidence related to curriculum enhancement were postponed.

### MOU:

Policy recommendations have also been shared with a range of stakeholders, including international NGOs (Oxfam, UNICEF), state and local education NGOs (Samarthan, PRERAK, Azim Premji Foundation, Grammitra, Aspirational Districts Programme), 2 university departments of education (Ravishankar University, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Vishwavidyalay University), along with District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) principals, and numerous teacher training seminars. Dr Froerer has been working with these stakeholders, all of whom have expressed interest in the policy sets, on the most effective ways of implementing and disseminating the recommendations. As above, owing to the impact of Covid-19, any further dissemination and implementation activities in this regard had to be postponed.

At the September 2019 policy meeting, Chhattisgarh State Government realised the significant impact potential linked to Dr Froerer’s research and requested an MOU with Brunel University in order to formalise and implement the policy recommendations. This MOU, which was formalised in March 2020, highlights the following action points (E2):

- To implement the research findings and policy recommendations linked to the research ‘Education Systems, Aspiration and Learning in Remote Rural Settings’, carried out by Dr Froerer; specifically:
- To review and advise on revision of various aspects of the school curriculum (including the introduction of ‘livelihood exposure visits’ and professional exchanges; the implementation of gender-neutral representations; the introduction of a vocational component into the curriculum)
- The creation of vocational livelihood advisory team,
- Support and advise on production of supplementary learning materials, including digital platforms
- To modify and extend survey questionnaire (used in the original ESRC/DfID research) more widely throughout rural Chhattisgarh to capture a wider sample size.

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Dr Froerer's research has enabled the Government of Chhattisgarh to implement policy proposals and pedagogical interventions, in the form of the publication of supplementary learning materials and curriculum revision, and directly work towards providing rural youth with increased opportunities to enhance learning outcomes.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

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- E1** Letter from the Assistant Director of the State Project Office in Samaga Shiksha, C.G. Raipur, 13 March 2020
  
- E2** MOU between the Directorate of Public Instruction, Chhattisgarh and Brunel University London
  
- E3** Letter from the Principal of the District Institute of Educational & Training (DIET) in Korba, Chhattisgarh, 4 July 2019
  
- E4** Minutes from the policy meeting that took place in the Chhattisgarh State Planning Commission, which confirmed intentions of Chhattisgarh state officials and education NGOs to act on policy recommendations, 9 July 2019 (released on 15 July 2019)
  
- E5** Curriculum development and teaching manual, published by SCERT and aimed at teachers and students in Chhattisgarh