

Conversation with Safeena Husain

In this People First Talk, we learned how [Educate Girls](#) activates local leaders in remote communities across India in order to support more girls to go to school. Watch the talk [here](#).

Key ideas

- Educate Girls centers its model around *people* because they see that it's patriarchal mindsets that keep girls out of school. They have built a force of local leaders, in the form of community volunteers (Balikas) who support out-of-school girls to enroll in school.
- Volunteers are selected based on 3Ps - passionate, proximate and profile. *Passionate* means having a deep connection to purpose. *Proximate* means that the volunteers themselves come from the village in which they'll be working. *Profile* looks at 3Es - one's level of education, experience, and exposure - to ensure that volunteers have the foundations to do the role.
- This approach to sourcing talent has required disrupting dominant paradigms of "success" (e.g., the ability to speak English). Instead, the focus is on recruiting those *proximate* to communities and valuing their assets (e.g., relationships, understanding of local context).
- Nearly 50% of the volunteers are now men, driven by a realization that shifting mindsets about gender requires leadership across genders. Female volunteers also report feeling more respect and equality through their participation in this work.
- Another lesson learned is that it's these local leaders' *connection to purpose* that matters the most in successful interventions, much more so than any prescriptive tools or frameworks.
- Educate Girls has a strong results-orientation which has led them to make several choices:
 - Focusing on the 5% of the villages that have 40% of India's out-of-school girls
 - Staying in each community for the long-run until all girls are in school, oftentimes for a decade or more, in order to ensure sustainable and generational shifts
 - Staying relentlessly focused on their core mission by avoiding scope creep
- To enable wider systems change, Educate Girls has built a closely-aligned partnership with the government. For example, their own organizational structure mimics the government's structure so that collaboration is possible at each level (e.g., district level, block level).



**Safeena
Husain**

Founder, Educate Girls

"I learned that purpose really moves people and how everyone is looking for purpose in their lives. For us, that's deeply important, for everyone doing this work to find this connection to purpose."

Coming up next

Our next People First Talk will be with Cheryl L. Dorsey, President of Echoing Green on October 30th at 11:00 a.m. EDT / 3:00 p.m. GMT. You can register for the talk [here](#).