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OFFICE of INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

GAP Report Draft

# Grassroots Action Program

## Youth Aspirations and Upward Mobility in JJ Colony Bawana

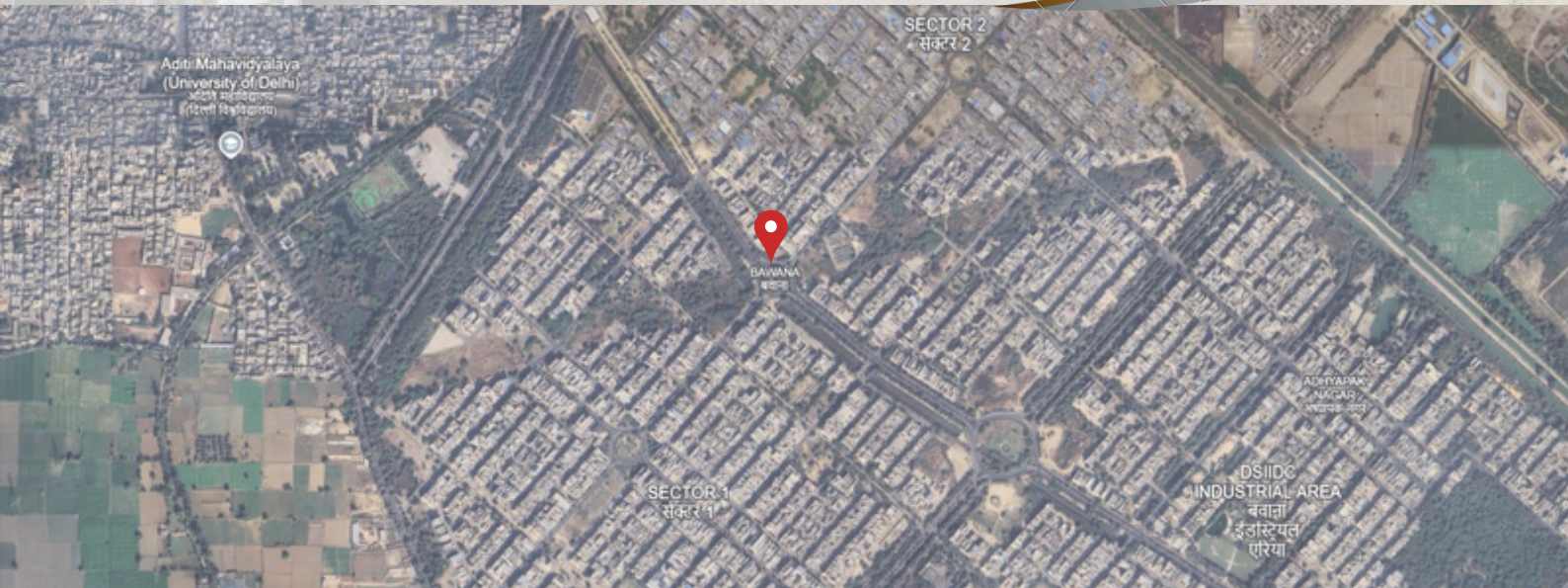
### A Report on Intersectional Aspirations and Multidimensional Mobility

## GAP Phase II

**Grassroots Action Program, Office of Interdisciplinary Studies IDEAS**
**O P Jindal Global University, Field site: JJ Colony Bawana, Delhi**

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**Najam Us Saqib**

# 1. Executive summary

Young people and young adults in JJ Colony Bawana do not choose education in isolation. They weigh forms of study against paid work, domestic responsibilities, family life, and the cost and safety of urban travel. A qualification may improve the prospect of employment, but it does not automatically guarantee income security. Upward mobility is therefore treated as multidimensional and relational: educational progress may coexist with occupational insecurity, loss of time, restricted spatial access or territorial stigma. The report describes this mismatch as mobility non-synchrony. Phase II comprises 40 interviews: 25 with men and 15 with women. Thirty-eight respondents perceived an increase in crime, while two did not. Thirty-five lived in a family-owned house; five rented or lived with relatives. Five students reported religious discrimination. These figures describe the interview corpus and are not estimates for the colony as a whole. Perceptions of increased crime should not be read as a substitute for police time-series data. The analysis is centred on interview narratives.

An 18-year-old woman is pursuing graduation through open learning and hopes to become a teacher. She links the absence of regular college to financial pressure and domestic work. Teachers and family sustain her aspiration, while restrictions on mobility narrow the route available to her. An 18-year-old man studies while working in a barber shop and hopes to join the Army; as the eldest son, he says that he has worked since childhood. These accounts are not simple oppositions between aspiration and withdrawal. They show how aspiration is sustained through compromise. The report's central contribution is its multidimensional account of mobility. Educational attainment, income security, work quality, control over time, spatial access, autonomy, recognition and neighbourhood conditions must be analysed together. The interviews reveal tensions among these dimensions; they do not constitute a numerical mobility index or demonstrate longitudinal change across the sample. An intersectional approach explains how the tensions are organised through financial constraint, gendered travel restrictions, eldest-son responsibilities, religious discrimination and the stigma attached to an address.

The programme implications follow from this analysis. Motivation or enrolment alone cannot sustain aspiration. Young people need help with documents, affordable and safe transport, educational routes compatible with paid and unpaid work, and access to employment whose quality can be assessed over time. Local organisations can help participants navigate these transitions, but the evidence does not establish causal programme effects. Public responsibility for services, safety and equal institutional treatment remains central.

# 2. Community background and the geography of opportunity

JJ Colony Bawana's opportunity structure was produced through displacement, peripheral relocation and subsequent consolidation. The colony is not simply a temporary settlement. The routes available to young people reflect two decades of changes in housing, livelihoods and local institutions, as well as continuing distance from central Delhi, uneven services, labour-market insecurity and the public meaning of the JJ address.

## 2.1 Relocation and Peripheralisation

In 2004, JJ Colony Bawana was established as a resettlement colony for families that were displaced from Yamuna Pushta and other settlements. Menon-Sen and Bhan (2008) record the effects of the displacement of nearly 3,000 households, including on their livelihoods, schooling, access to housing and public services and their ability to assert urban entitlements. This report therefore treats Bawana as a critical case in which legal plots coexist with distance from work, uneven services and exclusion from substantive urban citizenship.

Employment in and around the nearby industrial area does not automatically produce mobility or parity with workers in secure, regulated jobs. Factories and informal enterprises may provide earnings, yet the work can involve low pay, long hours, insecurity and limited progression. The relevant distinction is therefore not simply between employment and unemployment, but between forms of work with very different levels of security, dignity and future prospects.

Menon-Sen and Bhan's (2008) study of Bawana, together with Bhan's later work on evictions in Delhi, shows how peripheral relocation reorganised everyday survival. Families were moved away from jobs, schools, customers and support networks, sometimes to sites without essential services. The result was not a short-term inconvenience but a new geography of opportunity in which travel time and cost helped determine which institutions and jobs were practically accessible. This history remains relevant to young residents who inherited the settlement's geography even if they did not personally experience eviction.

Relocation and rehabilitation must be distinguished. Relocation means physical movement to a new site; rehabilitation requires the restoration or expansion of capabilities and access to opportunity. In Bawana, a legal plot can provide tenure value and a base for household investment, while limited education, transport, healthcare, childcare and secure employment continue to produce marginality. One measure to understand the resettlement over time is youth aspirations: has Bawana increased the opportunity for the next generation, has it

given them only partial stability, or has it left them with fewer choices about where to move? The difference between physical relocation and substantive rehabilitation is important for the current study. A plot could enhance housing security, but the household would bear the expenses of education, employment and care. Displacement seems like an inherited geography to those born during or after the time of displacement: the repeated locations of schools and colleges, the distance to work, the absence or establishment of social networks, and the reputation of the colony.

## 2.2 Housing, services and the industrial economy

Jagori's scoping study of seven newer blocks in Bawana (2014) shows that there is a relationship between infrastructure and educational access and gendered safety. The newer blocks did not have any primary or secondary schools at the time of the study and learners would travel to schools in older blocks. Lack of working street lights and poor public transport/safety during transit caused fear and parental limitations for girls to travel. Distance thus did not simply act as a neutral inconvenience, but as an institutional obstacle, which was gendered (Jagori, 2014). The study also has lasting educational implications as a backdrop because infrastructure limitations can compound other educational impacts: unsafe roads can decrease the likelihood of attending school, limited transportation can limit college options, and time to access water, sanitation or transportation services can be time away from studying. The Phase II interviews investigate what respondents think is still the same, what has changed, and how previous restrictions continue to influence current trajectories.

History is not used as evidence to suggest that nothing has changed in 2026. The participatory approach of Jagori is also relevant. Its work engaged women and young people in safety audits, focus groups, service mapping and advocacy, giving the residents the power to create evidence and engage with the service providers, instead of just being service beneficiaries (Jagori, 2014). GAP can extend this process and engage young residents as partners to interpret the results, confirm the mobility groups and establish realistic actions. Bawana's close contact with a large industrial area provides employment, but not necessarily good work. The industrial estate research records units that are unsafe, absenteeism of the law, irregular wages, a hostile environment for union activity and a high rate of serious work accidents (People’s Union for Democratic Rights [PUDR] 2018). Younger workers and women were also found to be competing for low-paid, insecure and short-term jobs as factories cut back on their employment, reporting after the COVID-19 shock (Mohan, 2021).

These sources help to provide context for the local labour market, but do not represent all youths in the colony. Qualitative analysis, therefore, looks at: do the respondents see industry as a desired destination, a temporary measure or a fall-back or work to be avoided. It asks about jobs and opportunities that have been envisioned or desired, and how these jobs impact health, time, continued education, household contribution and dignity. The opportunities of employment must be weighed against the safety of workplaces, travel time, hours of work, family consent and the responsibility of unpaid care work upon young women. Households in the interviews included 3 to 8 members, with the majority having 4-6 members. Thirty-five were living in a family house and five were living in rented accommodation or with relatives. These numbers reflect significant residential consolidation and do not measure dwelling adequacy, legal security, service quality or satisfaction. The desire to move, which is frequently associated with crime and stigma, indicates that belonging and home ownership are by no means interchangeable.

The next industrial estate is thus a relevant but unequal labour geography. It facilitates geographically convenient working for some residents, but does not ensure equal access, security and promotion. There were reported difficulties for Muslim respondents in accessing industrial space and appropriate work and time, transport and concepts of decent work further restricted opportunities for young women. The estate may serve as opportunity, boundary and fallback.

## 2.3 Education and the local institutional ecology

Prior evidence shows significant impact on education. While many children had been attending school prior to eviction, according to Nambissan (2025), who cited Menon-Sen and Bhan (2008), 40 per cent of the children were not attending school after one year of relocation. Families attempted to find space in the few available schools in the area, placed some children with relatives close to their previous schools or had their children's education disrupted. Girls' education was impacted disproportionately by safety, travel, and early marriage. Local educational provision continues to be unequal but grew in 2019.

Nambissan (2025) mentions overcrowding, limited resources, insufficient secondary and senior secondary education, and limited choice of subjects, such as the lack of science stream in the school mentioned. But the young were not deterred and went on the Patrachar and open-education paths. These trajectories demonstrate persistence and inequities in access to educational quality, content and institutional experience. The literature also mentions the social stigmatisation of resettled children and young people. A recognition based on the jhuggi-jhopri background, Bawana or JJ address or caste or religion can influence students' understanding of themselves and one's legitimate claim to an institution. These labelling

labelling situations can influence participation, peer relationships, confidence and persistence. The Phase II interviews therefore focus on particular encounters and responses, such as silence, confrontation, concealment, humour, withdrawal and peer solidarity and renewed determination.

Civil-society organisations have worked in Bawana since the period of resettlement, particularly in education and support for girls. Navjyoti describes child-education and remedial programmes developed for relocated families, while PEACE describes a community learning centre offering girls access to education (taaleem), a library, life-skills education, gender awareness and youth leadership (PEACE, n.d.; Navjyoti India Foundation, 2025). Together with other initiatives providing safe learning spaces and mentoring, these programmes form a local support ecosystem rather than a single, one-off intervention.

Evaluation should ask which form of support is available to whom and at what transition, rather than rank organisations as simply ‘best’ or ‘worst’. One programme may strengthen foundational learning, another may prevent dropout, and another may assist with college entry or public leadership. Mapping should follow the participant’s pathway and identify where a referral succeeds, where support is duplicated, and where it ends at senior-secondary transition, admission, financing, placement or retention.

Institutional histories shape present expectations and future plans. Where families have limited experience of higher education or formal recruitment, a pathway can be made visible by teachers, NGO workers, and older students and relatives. Open and distance education (ODE) can help to keep things going for those who are working both paid and unpaid and still studying. Some flexible routes, however, offer less campus exposure, peer networks and placement links. Thus, educational continuation as well as the quality of the route that it takes are considered.

## 2.4 Place identity, safety and belonging

Although officially planned, residents of Bawana are connected to public discourses of slums and illegality and nuisance through the ‘JJ’ label. Nambissan (2025) documents children in village schools being branded ‘slum children’ and subjected to stigma and humiliation. Ramakrishnan (2016) also demonstrates the way in which residents understood the state's treatment, based on caste and territorial position and the devaluation of the JJ address. Stigma is not just an underlying attitude. It can influence admissions, confidence, social interaction, job search, institutional claims and aspiration for housing. The qualitative analysis asks whether young people disclose, abbreviate, conceal, reinterpret or defend their address, and how anticipated stigma changes the institutions they approach.

Field research and community reporting reveal two patterns that should not be treated as opposites. Some young people describe weak attachment to Bawana and a desire to leave, while participation in local organisations can strengthen awareness, leadership and community connection. This is conditional belonging: attachment to people and social relationships can coexist with rejection of an unsafe, under-served or stigmatised environment.

The analysis identifies four orientations: wanting to leave Bawana; remaining because departure is not feasible; choosing to stay and improve the colony; and retaining local ties while moving elsewhere for education or work. These orientations may vary with gender, household resources, tenure, employment and exposure beyond the colony.

The fieldwork adds an important distinction. Respondents did not generally describe everyday relations inside the colony through communal conflict. Outside the colony, however, religion and locality became more salient in schools, employment and access to the industrial estate. A respondent can therefore express concern about safety within the neighbourhood while also anticipating religious or territorial discrimination beyond it.

> "Colony ka naam hi kharaab hai." English translation: "The colony's name itself has a bad reputation."

This is the short version of a longer story about reputation. Respondents explain that the name of the colony is a tag that sticks to the applicant/student and influences what they reveal, what they read into what others say, and what opportunities they seek. These anticipatory effects are of analytical significance when they are not explicitly mentioned in a formal rejection letter as the reason.

## 2.5 Phase I baseline and the structural backdrop

The qualitative trajectories are interpreted against the Phase I baseline. The archived household file supplied for this report contains 424 rows before exclusions; applying the recorded consent field leaves 377 households and 1,995 linked household members for analysis. These indicators do not describe individual Phase II interviewees. They establish the wider economic, educational and displacement context in which the qualitative accounts are interpreted.

The baseline indicators contextualise recurring references in Phase II to fees, travel costs, the need to earn, documentation and the practical value of qualifications. A distribution cannot show how a household allocates scarce resources among these competing demands, or why the same formal opportunity is usable for one person but not another. That explanatory task requires the qualitative phase.

Baseline household-count reconciliation. The three household figures refer to different stages of Phase I and are not competing sample sizes. Gupta and Bora (2026) describe the published study as covering 378 households. The archived export supplied for this report contains 424 household rows before exclusions. 377 households and 1,995 linked household members are generated upon application of the recorded consent field, and this is the analytic file used here. No documentation is provided to explain the one household difference between the published total and the consent-filtered file, and so the difference is disclosed rather than assumed away. All percentages below are based on the number of valid answers in those 377 consented households, not the common denominator of 378 or 424. Of the 373 households who gave valid income responses, 268 (71.8 per cent) earned less than Rs 20,000 per month. There were 230 households (61.2 per cent) who indicated they had borrowed out of the 376 valid responses to debt to cover expenses.

Among 377 valid relocation responses, 225 (59.7 per cent) cited displacement/eviction as a reason for relocation to Bawana, and 184 (48.8 per cent) cited that 2004 was the year of relocation. These are structural figures and do not supplant discursive and qualitative narration of money, work, distance and rehabilitation. Baseline patterns are also gendered. Non-enrolled family members aged 18-25 years were more likely to be married or doing household chores than men who were more likely to be employed. The qualitative narratives reveal how those categories are lived: workload of households impacts the feasibility of certain forms of study, responsibilities of earning become a compression of educational time and safety and permission affect the use of opportunities outside of the colony.

# 3 Research purpose, objectives and questions

## 3.1 Why qualitative research follows the baseline

Qualitative research follows the baseline for two reasons: Phase I relates to patterns at the household level; Phase II is focused on questions not answered by those distributions. What are the reasons for a student's use of open education? What is the meaning of earning to someone who has been working since childhood? What is the balance between family support for education and travel restrictions? How does the JJ Colony label shape encounters outside Bawana? These are meaning, process and negotiation questions. These are questions of meaning, sequence and negotiation. Enrolment status alone cannot indicate if regular college, open or distance study or early employment was freely chosen or adopted due to money or care/safety factors being impractical. Work can be a valued contribution of the household but can also decrease time for schooling. These overlapping meanings and trade-offs can be teased out in the qualitative accounts. The relationship between the two phases is explanatory rather than substitutive.

Interviews are useful in interpreting household patterns and have the ability to capture what survey categories cannot capture. Neither evidence layer is used to invent information missing from the other. Especially, a community level pattern is not a measure of the individual respondent's background or income, or participation in a programme, or caste identity. The analytical sequence is therefore clear. Phase I refers to income distributions, debt, education, work and relocation. Phase II addresses the question of how those conditions are incorporated into decisions, relationships and envisioned futures. An interview account documents a respondent's link between a goal and an example, a family's negotiation of a pathway, the reason an apparently available institution is not used and what a desired residential move is expected to change. Non-synchrony is also evident in narrative evidence: constraint in one indicator may be masked by another.

A respondent could be enrolled but cannot attend regular college, employed but not secure, living within a family owned house but still desire to move, and supported by an NGO but not connected to stable work. These combinations are not small exceptions that can be averaged out, but are key to the report's argument.

## 3.2 Research objectives

1. To interpret what upward mobility means to young people and young adults in Bawana across education, work, income security, spatial access, autonomy, dignity, belonging and intergenerational advancement.
2. To examine how aspirations are formed, sustained, revised or deferred through household resources, work, care, safety, information and institutional encounters.
3. To analyse how gender, class, religion, caste or community, age, household position, displacement history and territorial identity intersect to make the same opportunity differently usable.
4. To understand how relocation, crime perception, neighbourhood services, housing and territorial stigma shape belonging and the desire to remain in or move from Bawana.
5. To assess how the state, schools, NGOs, teachers, families and peers mediate aspiration pathways and where support breaks between education, training and valued employment.

## 3.3 Research questions

1. How do respondents define upward mobility, and which dimensions of change matter most in their accounts?
2. How do young people form and revise their educational and occupational aspirations amid social, material and institutional constraints?
3. How do intersecting social and spatial positions shape access to education, work, safety and recognition?
4. How do relocation, crime, infrastructure and the JJ Colony address affect belonging and residential aspiration?
5. How do formal and informal institutions widen, redirect or fail to convert aspirations into sustained mobility?

## 3.3 Research questions

The table sets out the report's analytical logic. It does not reduce narratives to illustrations. Each interview account is read as evidence about a mechanism, while the literature provides concepts for comparison and the baseline establishes the scale and distribution of relevant conditions.

| Objective | Narrative focus | Literature used | Triangulation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Meaning of mobility | Teaching, Army service, regular income, safe | Appadurai, Ray, Sen, Kabeer and Jeffrey | Enrolment, employment and housing indicators |
| Formation and revision of aspiration | Open education, household work, early earning and observed | Rama Devi and Sawmya Ray, Bourdieu, Jeffrey and | Income, debt and reasons for non-enrolment |
| Intersectional opportunity | Gendered curfews, eldest-son responsibility, religion | Crenshaw, Yuval-Davis, Anand and Tiwari, Borker, | Gendered enrolment and work patterns |
| Relocation and belonging | Crime, drugs, neighbourhood reputation and the | Bhan, Menon-Sen, Datta, Cernea and Wacquant | Displacement history, tenure and service indicators |
| Institutional mediation | Teachers, family support, Navjyoti, documentation and | Appadurai, Kabeer, Nambissan and institutional brokerage | Programme exposure and baseline context |

# 4 Literature review

The literature relevant to Bawana is dispersed across research on educational aspiration, education-to-work transitions, intersectionality, urban resettlement, gendered mobility and territorial stigma. Individual interview accounts cross these conventional boundaries. The review is therefore organised around mechanisms that answer the research objectives rather than treating each literature as a separate field.

## 4.1 Aspiration and the capacity to navigate

Aspiration must be distinguished from the capacity to pursue it. Appadurai's (2004) ‘capacity to aspire’ is not simply optimism. It is a navigational capacity through which people connect actions to a desired future, identify relevant institutions, learn from experience and revise a pathway without abandoning that future. Higher income groups tend to have more frequent exposure to pathways into education and employment and a greater density of credential maps, options and networks. Marginalised groups can value education just as much but have fewer opportunities to acquire and use this navigational knowledge. Ray's (2006) ‘aspirations window’ explains how people imagine the future through reference groups. A role model must be successful but also socially accessible enough to appear worth emulating. That person could be an older sibling who went to college, an NGO teacher, a neighbour in government service, a relative in a factory, a social-media personality or a peer who migrated from Bawana. The qualitative analysis asks who enters this window, what appears achievable and what seems too distant to guide action.

This literature warns against using an occupational label as a definition of aspiration. A ‘government job’ could mean a regular income, social security, fixed working hours, job security, a secure working environment, and peace of mind for parents. The same label may also conceal uncertainty about eligibility, examinations or the time required. The interviews therefore examine both what an aspiration symbolises and the pathway imagined between ‘here’ and ‘there’. Hopes and dreams also shift due to success, failure, unaffordable tuition, harassment, sickness in the family, marriage arrangements, poor training or multiple rejections. Adaptation does not necessarily mean reduced aspiration. It may reflect realism, temporary postponement or preservation of dignity in circumstances where pathways continually close. The analytical task here is to differentiate between chosen adjustment and forced resignation and demonstrate the means by which a valued future is sustained, changed or silenced. This is an alternative method of reading short answers.

The visible part of a drive towards regular pay, respect, a move away from the unsafe family job, parental support or the freedom to move through the city may be teaching, Army service, government work or business. Appadurai shifts attention to the pathway and its social visibility; Ray helps explain why local teachers, siblings and NGO workers may be more influential than remote success stories.

## 4.2 Education, capability and unequal conversion

Often, education is portrayed as the most legitimate path to escape from poverty and inherited work. The conditions of marginalised youth in Delhi, however, indicate that school attendance and a degree do not guarantee decent work. Students are likely to be directed to low-quality government schools, subjects of low status, open or distance education modes, short skill programmes and precarious jobs. A key question is therefore how educational participation translate into learning, recognised credentials, networks and secure employment? The "what" and the "how" of education make a difference. The value of a credential is determined by English language skills, access to digital resources, performance on examinations, reputation of the institution, knowledge of the admissions and recruitment processes, and confidence in unfamiliar environments. Bourdieu's notions about economic, social and cultural capital enable us to understand how students with the same formal qualifications can produce different results. Harriss's metaphor of the ‘wall’ highlights how caste and class privilege can monopolise opportunity while presenting accumulated advantage as merit.

A key element of mobility narratives is education, as it seems to have the power to disrupt the relationship between inherited occupation and future status. Sen's (1999) capability approach, however, questions what is actually created by the educational resources: what are substantive freedoms? Enrolment is not the outcome itself; it is an input. Whether a school or college place expands capability depends on learning, subject choice, safe travel, study time, digital access, language support, health, confidence and institutional recognition. Formal equality of access does not necessarily yield equal value if these conversion conditions are not present. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) explain how education systems perpetuate inequality and project the results as merit. Language, behaviour, cultural knowledge and confidence are not equally shared within households and classrooms and are rewarded by institutions. Bourdieu's (1986) economic, cultural and social capital all apply to Bawana: money for fees, travel and coaching; language, study practices and institutional familiarity; and information, recommendations and networks. The intervention for the payment of tuition only may not affect the other conversion resources.

Research in Delhi shows that marginalised young people may enter education yet be channelled into less-valued institutions, subjects or modes. Devi and Ray (2024a) locate Dalit students' interests and options within neighbourhood conditions, family compulsions and institutional stratification. In the case of open or distance routes, the routes may be formally accessible, but have fewer peer networks, less campus exposure and weaker placement links. The qualitative inquiry thus captures participation as well as mode, institution, subject/stream, attendance, learning support and perceived status. Quality is explored in terms of the young people themselves, not by ratings. This includes teacher availability and attention, classroom conditions, language of instruction, laboratory or extracurricular activity, examination preparation, counselling, disciplinary climate and treatment of students as capable. Humiliation and low expectations can narrow aspirations even while students remain enrolled; conversely, one encouraging teacher can make a previously unimagined path appear possible. Devi and Ray's work with Dalit youth in a working-class locality in Delhi is directly relevant to Bawana.

Their concepts of Mahaul and Mazboori (Majboori) identify the social, material and institutional conditions that sustain education or interrupt it, even when education remains valued. They show how participation can expand within a hierarchy in which distance modes, less popular subjects and institutions carry different network and labour-market value. The present report thus makes a distinction between continuing education, freedom to choose the form and the subsequent transformation of education into valued work. Nambissan's work on education and urban transformation adds a spatial dimension. The quality of education and availability of subjects, language, overcrowding and distance all influence the value of a credential, and relocated families may fight to be accommodated for education. The question is whether educational pathways give young people the knowledge, recognition, contacts and transition support they need to access a valued future?

## 4.3 Educated precarity, waiting and the returns to work

It has been well established through research on Indian youth that transitions do not follow a simple sequence from school completion to stable work. Some authors point to the frustration of qualifications bearing no fruits of the promised freedom: Jeffrey, Jeffery and Jeffery (2008) and Jeffrey (2010) analyse the ‘timepass’ of waiting, informal political activity and uncertain transitions among educated young males. Waiting is not ‘downtime’. It requires multiple applications, exam preparation, short jobs, domestic chores, skill courses, and handling family expectations. Devi and Ray (2021) identify a similar pattern among marginalised urban youth in Delhi: degrees or skills do not necessarily lead to white-collar work, and young people may move between low-paid, precarious jobs while continuing to

to hope for stability. This is crucial for interpreting upward mobility. A call-centre, sales, delivery or factory job may offer an initial income increase yet remain insecure, exhausting or without progression. The study distinguishes first entry from sustainable mobility and asks about contracts, wage regularity, hours, safety, commute, dignity, retention and the possibility of advancement.

The desire for a “respectable” job is therefore not reducible to occupational snobbery. Respectability may refer to protection from workplace abuse, regular pay, a setting perceived as clean, the ability to tell relatives where one works, and compatibility with family expectations. It can also be gendered: occupations regarded as acceptable for young men may be prohibited for young women because of timing, mobility, mixed-gender interaction or perceived risk to family honour. The findings examine how the category of respectable work is constructed and contested inside households.

Uncertainty in the labour-market could also affect the choice of education in advance. Families might choose a short course with a quicker return over a longer degree whose return is uncertain. Young people may choose subjects linked to a government examination or combine study and work to reduce risk. These decisions are not just decisions of low aspiration. They are measures for financial buffers that are constrained. Qualitative data shows the calculations used by households to balance current income, future likelihood and failure cost. The Bawana claim that an educated brother earns less than the speaker, is theoretically significant in that it situates aspiration in an observed labour market. It is not an abstract education rejection. A comparison between the delayed and uncertain return from credentials and immediate cash earnings. As Devi and Ray's research on the marginalised urban youth demonstrates, there is a reason to believe that this calculation is rational: education may increase expectations, but that employment is casual, poorly paid or unrelated to the credential.

Jeffrey's work on waiting among educated young men in North India similarly warns against a linear model of school, degree and secure job. Waiting may be filled with applications, examinations, short jobs, family work and political or social activity. In Bawana, almost all male respondents were reported as working. Their employment is therefore analysed for regularity, safety, progression and compatibility with study. Labour-market entry by itself cannot establish upward mobility.

## 4.4 Multidimensional mobility and non-synchrony

Conventional measures define intergenerational mobility through education, occupation or income relative to parents. For youth in a resettlement colony, these dimensions remain important but incomplete. Mobility can also include a movement from irregular to secure work; from dependence to autonomy; from a stigmatised address to residential choice; from silence to public voice; from restricted movement to safe access to the city; or from bureaucratic invisibility to recognised citizenship. The study therefore maps several domains rather than forcing all aspirations into a single ladder.

Sen's capability approach provides a basis for asking what resources allow a person actually to do and become. Kabeer's distinction among resources, agency and achievements adds attention to the process through which valued outcomes are negotiated. Used together, these approaches resist the substitution of one visible achievement for a fuller account of mobility. Enrolment, a job or a house may matter greatly, yet each must be interpreted alongside the freedoms and constraints with which it coexists.

This report uses mobility non-synchrony to describe progress in one domain alongside stalling or reversal in another. A woman can continue through open study while losing access to campus life and employment networks. A man can raise household income through work while losing time for education and leisure. A family can own a home yet continue to bear the costs of failing drainage or unsafe streets. The most powerful form of upward mobility is thus the ability to keep gains in multiple fields without continually giving up another basic ability.

## 4.5 Intersectional aspirations: gender, care and spatial access

Intersectionality is therefore employed as an empirical approach, a way of comparing the experiences of similarly situated young people who are differently located in a given institution or transition, as well as a way of exploring how multiple identities are salient in specific encounters. The aim is not only to document identity categories, but to understand the mechanisms by which these impact opportunity. Although youth aspiration is often presented as an individual plan, in low-income households it is frequently a family project. Parents may take on less consumption, siblings may share in the responsibilities of caring for and earning money for the family, and the expected benefits from the education of one sibling may be a source of support for the entire family. Thus, mobility can be wanted not to leave family but to safeguard it: to pay off debt, to have a house, or to educate younger siblings, or to lessen parents' physical work, or for health care. The question ‘What do you want to become?’ misses this relational motivation.

These negotiations can be analysed using Kabeer's (1999) framework of resources, agency and achievements. Agency is not limited to open rebellion against family control; it is also exercised within family relationships. It involves persuasion, delay, compromise, strategic compliance and mobilisation of allies. A young woman may secure college attendance by choosing a nearby institution, travelling with friends, maintaining domestic responsibilities or presenting employment as support for the family. Such compromises can be a way to increase capacity, but they can also recreate unequal burdens. The analysis must hold both dimensions together. The family mechanism is particularly significant considering the gendered Phase I results reported by Gupta and Bora (2026). Maternal education and work could be important as mothers can have information, bargaining power, earnings or work experience outside the house or commitment to daughters' continuation. But the same family may appreciate girls' education and restrict their entry into paid work. Education could improve marriage opportunities or status, but not grant permission to work.

Thus, support for schooling, support for higher education and support for employment are divided. Differentiated pathways exist in the birth order and household composition/care needs. An older daughter may leave education to care for younger children, enabling their schooling. An older son may begin paid work after a parent's illness, while a younger sibling may benefit from knowledge gained through an elder's unsuccessful application. These comparisons within households are analytically useful to the extent that they show who gets what and who is responsible for what, and not as a proxy for the “family background.” Opportunity is socially constructed by institutions and social relations that value social categories differently. Crenshaw (1989) warns against stacking gender, caste, religion and class as separate disadvantages. They co-constitute one another. A Muslim young woman from a relocated low-income household may be faced with constraints which cannot be understood by examining gender, religion, class or place separately. The relevant identity might shift during school admission, travelling, marriage and finding work, and when interacting with the neighbours.

Caste works, not only by overt discrimination, but by the cumulative educational privilege and networks, and by language and presumptions of merit. Harriss (2024) focuses on the ability of privileged groups to monopolise opportunity and to claim their status as individuals who have achieved success. Devi and Ray (2021, 2024a) demonstrate how historical and neighbourhood disadvantage remain relevant in determining the lives of urban Dalit youth in a city dense with educational institutions. The Bawana analysis considers reported acts of discrimination as well as quieter processes: lower teacher expectations, lack of referral, limited professional networks and concentration in particular streams. Religious identity may intersect with territorial stigma and gendered concerns about safety and

respectability. These mechanisms should not be assumed to operate uniformly across participants. The interviews focus on particular experiences and decisions, not necessarily on a general statement of the effects of religion. They also allow participants to explain when community networks offer support, mentoring, finance or belonging. Identities provide solidarity and resources and may be a basis for exclusion.

Place can itself function as an identity category. Once an address is known to be a JJ colony, an employer, institution, or outside person may assume poverty, criminality, low education or disorder. This classification can work with caste and religion as well as migrant origin. The study thus documents when participants share, abbreviate or conceal their address; whether they think that this has an impact on treatment; and how they react when people from the outside make assumptions. These are ways in which the city becomes a part of the stratification system. Instead of providing a checklist of identities, Crenshaw's intervention is here employed as a method of explanation. The question is about the ways in which, in a particular transition, social divisions become mutually constitutive. Distance is different if it is for women, as safety and permission will influence the distances traversed. Flexibility is different in class as open education could be selected for paid or unpaid work. Religion and the JJ address can be co-salient in a school or job encounter.

Care and earning responsibilities in the same household vary by age and birth order. Anand and Tiwari's study of poor women in Delhi illustrates the shelter–transport–livelihood link: peripheral relocation reduces acceptable work radius due to women's time poverty and the lack of speedy means of transport. Borker's Delhi research indicates that perceived harassment can lead to college choice and the quality of education women are willing to sacrifice for safety. These findings illuminate the young woman's account of returning before evening and not going to work. The constraint is produced through the interaction of money, place, gender, family concern and the timing of urban opportunity.

Rama Devi and Sawmya Ray's work on hunar and respectable work is equally important. Skill is interpreted through family judgements about what kind of work is good for a woman, where it is located and whether it preserves social respectability. A nearby or home-based route may enable participation while narrowing occupational range. Intersectional analysis keeps both facts visible: negotiation can widen agency, and the terms of negotiation can reproduce unequal burdens.

## 4.6 Displacement, rehabilitation and intergenerational risk

A narrow rehabilitation model evaluates whether a plot or housing unit was allocated. A capability-oriented model asks whether relocated residents can continue education and livelihoods, access transport, healthcare and childcare, maintain social networks, and participate with dignity. The Delhi High Court in Sudama Singh required meaningful consultation and basic civic amenities consistent with life and dignity. The broader literature on Delhi's evictions shows that peripheral relocation can sever the relationships and geographies through which low-income households survive.

For youth, rehabilitation must therefore be evaluated longitudinally. Relevant outcomes include schooling continuity at the time of relocation, cumulative learning loss, the availability of secondary and senior-secondary options, distance to college, safety, employment access, documentation, and the transfer or loss of community institutions. Rehabilitation is not a one-time event; it becomes an intergenerational condition.

Delhi's resettlement history shows that eviction is not only the loss of a dwelling. It can destroy proximity to work, school, transport, credit, customers, care networks and political intermediaries. Menon-Sen and Bhan (2008) document the everyday consequences of being moved from central settlements to Bawana, while Bhan (2009, 2016) situates eviction within changing ideas of citizenship and the "public interest" in a globalising city. Peripheral resettlement can grant a plot while simultaneously reducing access to the urban systems through which households produced livelihood and social reproduction.x

Cernea's (1997) impoverishment risks and reconstruction framework identifies landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common resources and social disarticulation as recurrent displacement risks. In an urban setting these risks require adaptation: joblessness includes the loss of customers and unaffordable commutes; social disarticulation includes broken school and care networks; marginalisation includes the stigma of the resettlement address; and common-resource loss includes parks, markets and public transport. The framework helps connect household histories to youth outcomes.

Rehabilitation should thus be assessed as a long-term capability process rather than a one-time allocation. The relevant question is whether relocation enabled residents to reconstruct education, livelihood, safety, health and political voice. For youth born after relocation, displacement remains present through inherited debt, parents' occupational decline, school location, the reputation of the colony and family narratives of loss. The study concerns not

only direct memory but also the intergenerational afterlife of relocation. Access to civic amenities and meaningful participation are also issues related to the legal right to housing and rehabilitation. In Sudama Singh v. Government of Delhi (2010), the Delhi High Court rejected an approach that treated evicted residents merely as encroachers without considering their contribution to urban life or the consequences of relocation. This is the basis for a substantive definition of rehabilitation used in the present research: A residence is not adequate without education, livelihood, transport, health and dignity. Youth aspirations offer a unique and sensitive indicator of whether this promise has been fulfilled.

Building on Datta's gendered analysis of law and space, it can also be argued that the need for legal residence can exist in the midst of the violence and incomplete nature of resettlement. The house becomes an investment place, a place of legitimacy and aspirations, and insufficient services, and peripheral location are still determining the way of life in the house. This tension is directly pertinent to a sample where the majority of respondents reside in family owned homes, but many would like to relocate due to the perceived issue of crime, stigma or limited opportunity.

## 4.7 Territorial stigma, religion and belonging

Belonging is neither the opposite of exclusion nor a simple attachment to place. A young person may value family, friendships and community support in Bawana while feeling ashamed of the address in a college or interview. Territorial stigma describes the devaluation attached to a neighbourhood and transferred to its residents. It can produce anticipated discrimination, concealment of address, avoidance of unfamiliar institutions, and a desire for residential exit. It can also generate solidarity, place-based activism and demands to improve the colony rather than leave it.

The qualitative inquiry therefore examines scales of belonging: household, lane/block, colony, Delhi, region of origin and imagined future locality. It asks not only “Do you belong?” but when belonging becomes visible, supportive, burdensome or strategically hidden.

Goffman's (1963) work on stigma focuses on the management of a socially discredited identity, while Link and Phelan (2001) define stigma as the convergence of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination under conditions of power. Applied spatially, Wacquant, Slater and Pereira (2014) describe territorial stigmatisation as the devaluation of places and the transfer of that devaluation to residents. Such stigma can influence public investment, policing, institutional encounters and self-presentation.

For young people, territorial stigma can be anticipatory. A participant may expect ridicule or rejection before it occurs and therefore avoid an institution, conceal an address, speak less in class or prefer opportunities mediated by trusted local organisations. Anticipated stigma is analytically different from a documented discriminatory event, but it can have equally real behavioural consequences. The analysis examines how expectations were formed and whether they derive from personal experience, peers, family warnings or widely circulated representations of the colony.

Belonging complicates any simple aspiration to “escape.” Yuval-Davis (2006) distinguishes emotional attachment from the politics that determine who is recognised as belonging. Young people might feel close to family, close to neighbours, close to language, close to religious places and support, and feel closed off or embarrassed by the colony. Some may wish to be discharged from their home; others may wish to receive more services and recognition at home. Others might envision living alone while providing for the community and so on. These various orientations are carried over into the findings. Hence, recognition is one of the aspects of upward mobility. A growing income does not necessarily mean mobility if the young person is still looked down because of his address, caste, religion or occupation. On the other hand, going to college, fluently speaking English, talking with officials, or being a mentor can be a mobility experience, as it alters the way people are treated and the way they see themselves, before they get paid.

The interviews enquire about the participants' experience of what they consider to be a sign that someone has “moved ahead” and what those signs are locally. This spatial process is added with the Bawana data which includes religion. Five students were said to have suffered from religion-based discrimination in education; respondents reported problems faced by Muslims in finding industrial space and proper jobs. There is broader evidence of discrimination in the first step of private sector recruitment, between equally qualified Dalit and Muslim applicants, in the correspondence study conducted by Thorat and Attewell. Devi's ethnography from 2025 contests the notion that urban conditions efface caste, arguing that ascriptive identity and urban space, in synergy, are determinants in shaping opportunity and emancipation. Such studies can be useful to interpret the reported double penalty if it is not assumed that caste and religion function in the same manner and that the same individuals tell them in the same way.

## 4.8 Institutions, brokerage and navigational support

Institutions mediate aspirations by opening or closing pathways. Schools allocate streams, credentials and expectations. Colleges offer access but may reproduce linguistic and cultural distance. Employers define what qualifications are valued. Government agencies control documentation, scholarships, transport and welfare. NGOs may provide remedial education, mentoring, exposure, career guidance and bridging networks. Families and peers provide resources, permissions and emotional support. Community and religious organisations may offer belonging and practical assistance.

Interventions should be assessed through mechanisms and transitions rather than participation counts alone. A programme is consequential when it changes what a young person knows, believes is possible, can afford, is permitted to do, or is connected to – and when this change produces a sustained educational, occupational or civic transition. Programme narratives should also be examined critically for selective reach, dependence on exceptional cases, short time horizons and the possibility that non-state organisations substitute for public obligations.

Institutions do more than supply services. They classify, advise, select, discipline and connect. A school can widen aspiration through recognition and information, or narrow it through low expectations and rigid streaming. An NGO can provide tutoring, but its larger effect may come from helping a student complete a form, meet a college mentor or persuade a family. A government scheme can reduce cost while remaining inaccessible because documentation, travel and procedural knowledge are missing. The study instead examines mechanisms, rather than numbers of institutions. Four mechanisms are particularly pertinent. For one it is by means of material resources that institutions offer fees, devices, books and transport. Second, they generate navigational information concerning courses, admissions, examinations and jobs. Third, they build networks by connecting youth to mentors, peers and employers. Fourth, they confer recognition, confidence and a sense of legitimate presence in unfamiliar spaces. Interventions need to be measured not just by attendance or completion of an intervention, but against the mechanisms and against actual transitions.

The same applies to institutional support – it can be targeted. Programmes can target youth who are already enrolled in programmes, families that community workers know, youth who can be reached at a certain time, or girls whose families allow them to participate in programmes at a local level. Youth who do not trust institutions or persons with disabilities and those working long hours may be underrepresented. Where possible, the analysis is

is differentiated between those who currently participate in the programme, those who do not and those who have stopped taking part. This avoids the situation where the access of the easiest-to-reach beneficiaries represent the institutional ecology of the colony. Civil-society provision and the state are a relationship that needs critical scrutiny. The locally embedded support, in particular to help with retention, is highlighted through the long-standing work of Navjyoti's child and remedial education programmes in Bawana and the Community Learning Centre operated by PEACE (Navjyoti India Foundation, n.d.; Popular Education and Action Centre [PEACE], 2025).

But projects alone cannot be the basis for lasting mobility. The investigation looks at whether non-state groups complement public institutions, assist residents to exercise their rights, or inadvertently validate the lack of state services. At transitions, the most important is institutional support. A student may require assistance with course recognition, correcting a document, applying for a scholarship, negotiation with family, preparing for an interview and staying in work at college. Some of the worth of an NGO or mentor is that it brings together these otherwise disjointed steps. This is practical navel gazing: information is useful, when somebody can tie it to a believable action. The literature also helps to disallow an uncritical glorification of Brokerage. Reliable transport, functioning sanitation, adequate schools or fair labour markets can not be replaced by local organisations. Short courses can broaden exposure but will not lead to a recognised credential or secure placement. Immediate support, transition it enables and wider public conditions needed to sustain the transition must therefore be distinguished during institutional analysis.

## 4.9 Literature synthesis and the contribution of the study

In the literature, mobility is understood not only as a change of occupation or income but as a reorganisation of security, family responsibility, dignity, autonomy and place. Motives are not mutually exclusive and can overlap; hence the report considers the goals of the respondents not career preferences but relational futures. One motive is intergenerational responsibility. Youth might envision mobility as helping out with parents, schooling younger relatives, or making their family home a safer environment. Aspiration in this form is not an individual act of departure from within the household, but a desired reallocation of security. The interviews explore who should gain from success and what family misfortune they would most like to alter. A second motive is dignity and social recognition. Young people may seek work in which they are treated with respect, paid punctually and not subjected to derogatory occupational or neighbourhood stereotypes. Education can be appreciated as it affords the language and institutional confidence to interact with officials, employers and professionals.

Here the definition of mobility is not just a change in income but also a change in treatment. The third is independence. For young women, this can mean being able to travel, postpone marriage, make purchases, take decisions and negotiate the terms of employment. For young men, it may mean less volatile dependence on contractors, parents or older family members. However, autonomy is relational in that participants may want more decision-making power, but continue to be deeply attached to family and community. Autonomy should not be confused with social isolation. Place and citizenship form a fourth motivation. Some may wish to withdraw from the colony because of stigma, access to services or a desire for a different environment for future children. Some may wish to see the colony itself improve and see education, or public employment, as a way to better represent residents. Mobility can thus be exit, voice or a combination of both.

The qualitative analysis does not assume that success means having to leave home; instead, it poses the question of whether or not participants envision leaving their homes, investing in their community, changing relationships or how Bawana is acknowledged. There can be a conflict of these motives. Family support may be limited with a secure job away from home, and a locally acceptable job may be less lucrative. The findings illustrate the priorities that youth place on these values and how they make trade-offs.

A mobility pathway is sustainable when it is not only attained but also compatible with the participant's safety, obligations, dignity and desired form of belonging.

# 5 Methodology and analytical strategy

## 5.1 Study design

This GAP study uses a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design in which qualitative inquiry explains patterns established in an earlier quantitative phase (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018; Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006). Phase I mapped household and educational conditions in JJ Colony Bawana; Phase II used qualitative interviews to examine how residents experience, interpret and negotiate those conditions. The qualitative findings are the primary subject of this report. Baseline statistics are used selectively when they clarify the structural context of a narrative theme. Integration follows the principle that evidence sources should meet around an explanatory question rather than merely appear side by side (Fetters, Curry and Creswell, 2013).

The unit of interpretation is the trajectory rather than an isolated response. Interview answers were read in the context of each respondent's current education or their work, household responsibilities, past experiences, future aspirations, support systems and account of the colony. In this way, seeming paradoxes can be kept as productive analytical units, supportive families can also limit mobility, employed participants can be insecure, homeowners can desire to move, and education can be valued although other income may be more pressing.

## 5.2 Participants and interview domains

The Phase II corpus includes 40 interviews (25 men and 15 women) with participants aged 18 to 35 (Grassroots Action Program, 2026). There is no probability-based sampling frame available for the field records, and a complete recruitment log has not been maintained; the documented sample is best described as purposive and access-mediated, covering a range of education and work situations. These encompass students, workers, people combining study and work, and those whose education had been delayed or diverted. Household size ranged from 3 to 8, most commonly 4–6. Thirty-five respondents reported living in a family-owned house; five rented or stayed with relatives. These arrangements were self-reported and not legally verified. Nearly all male respondents were reported to be employed. An employment total for women has not been inferred from the field summary as there is no comparable total for women.

The interview schedule included educational and occupational aspirations, motivations for mobility, barriers, shifts in aspirations, family and institutional support, identity and discrimination, relocation and belonging, access to government programmes and NGO support and priorities for neighbourhood improvement. These domains were not reported as separate questionnaire summaries but were connected during analysis. The qualitative principle of information power is used to evaluate the corpus, not statistical representativeness: the analytical strength depends on how specific the sample is, how rich the dialogue is and how clear the study aim is (Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, 2016). The report thus merges the attention to trajectories with the prudence of relying on repeated patterns in the interviews.

## 5.3 Defining youth and justifying the 18–35 age range

There is no universal age definition of youth. The United Nations uses ages 15–24 for statistical comparison; India's National Youth Policy 2014 uses 15–29; and the African Union defines youth as ages 15–35 (United Nations, n.d.; Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2014; African Union, 2006). These definitions demonstrate institutional variation, but they do not by themselves justify this study's boundary. The African Charter is cited only as an example of a recognised wider range, not as a policy standard for India.

The lower boundary of 18 was selected because the inquiry focuses on post-school education, paid work, household contribution, marriage and care, residential aspiration, and encounters with adult institutions; it also establishes a clear adult-consent boundary. The upper boundary of 35 reflects the prolonged and non-linear character of these transitions under conditions of precarity. Open or distance education, repeated short-term training, insecure work, study-work combinations, job searches, marriage, care and provider responsibilities can extend attempts to convert aspiration into secure mobility well beyond ages 24 or 29. A narrower cut-off would exclude the period in which this study asks whether education and early work lead to durable changes in occupation, income, spatial access and family position. This life-course reasoning is consistent with research on delayed transitions, educated waiting and precarious employment in India (Jeffrey, 2010; Devi and Ray, 2021).

The range also has site-specific historical coherence. In 2026, participants aged 18 to 35 were born approximately between 1990/91 and 2008. At the time of the major 2004 relocation, the oldest were about 13 or 14 and the youngest had not yet been born. The sample therefore encompasses a relocation generation: people who encountered resettlement as children and those who inherited its peripheral geography through family histories, schooling, labour-market access and the colony’s public reputation. The range is not assumed to be .

homogeneous. To the extent that the material allows, the analysis differentiates age groups (18-24, 25-29, 30-35) but does not attempt to make claims regarding prevalence in each age group that the qualitative design cannot support. Wherever the whole range is referred to in the report, the term young people and young adults is used

## 5.4 Narrative and thematic analysis

All interviews were analysed as situated narratives. First, each account was reconstructed in the context of four temporal questions: What had the respondent experienced? What was she doing now? What future did she want? What did she think might make that future possible? A thematic coding phase was then undertaken to identify common themes or mechanisms between the interviews, such as finance, early work, care, safety, family permission, documentation, stigma, and religious discrimination, as well as institutional support and desire to relocate

Coding combined reflexive thematic analysis with a structured framework linking objectives, narrative mechanisms and evidence layers (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Gale et al., 2013). Themes were not treated as frequency labels alone. They were tested against the sequence of each account, divergent cases, and against the conceptual distinctions developed in the literature review.

Narrative excerpts are presented in lightly standardised Roman Urdu because their phrasing carries analytical meaning that a polished English paraphrase can flatten. Capitalisation, spacing, punctuation and clear transcription slips have been corrected for readability; substantive meaning, code-switching and the sequence of each account have been retained. Terms such as mahaul, Mazboori (Majboori), paisa, colony ka naam and bachpan express how respondents understand education, duty, danger and respect. A labelled English translation follows each excerpt.

Quotation provenance was audited by status of the source. Schedule-based excerpts were checked word for word against the supplied interview schedules and mapped in a private log to anonymised schedule codes. Short quotations available only through the fieldwork update were checked against the supplied field-note wording and logged as field-note excerpts; they are not represented as independently verified audio transcripts. The reconstructed analytical respondent matrix was used only for coding structure and was not treated as a source of verbatim testimony.

The analysis also searched for divergent and negative cases. The two respondents who did not perceive an increase in crime remain part of the finding rather than being absorbed into the majority account. Caste was less explicit than religion and territorial stigma in the interviews, and the report does not treat relative silence as evidence that caste is absent from the city. These variations refine the claim and identify questions for follow-up.

## 5.5 Linking objectives, evidence and interpretation

Each research objective was linked to a defined set of narrative mechanisms before interpretation. Objective 1 used respondents' accounts of teaching, government service, earnings, safety and residential movement to identify the dimensions of mobility. Objective 2 examined how goals were revised under household and labour-market pressure. Objective 3 analysed how gender, class, religion, age and place operated together. Objective 4 connected crime, services and territorial stigma to relocation and belonging. Objective 5 examined where families, schools, NGOs and state institutions sustained a pathway, redirected it or allowed support to lapse.

The interviews were then placed in explanatory dialogue with the literature. Theory was not used to invent missing participant characteristics or predetermine the meaning of a quotation. Concepts such as navigational capacity, conversion conditions, timepass, respectable work and territorial stigma were retained only when they clarified a mechanism visible in the narratives.

## 5.6 Triangulation

Triangulation operates at three levels. First, Phase I household and roster data provide community-level indicators of income vulnerability, debt, displacement, education and work. Second, aggregate Phase II counts describe the interview corpus, including the sample profile, perceived increases in crime, housing arrangements and reports of religion-based discrimination. Third, scholarship and documented community accounts place the interviews within the history of Delhi's resettlement and uneven urban growth.

All Phase I figures in the report were recalculated from the household, household-member and education-roster exports. Only households recorded as having consented were included. For every indicator, the audit recorded the dataset and variable used, the eligibility rule, the number of valid answers and the number counted in the reported result; unanswered items were retained as missing rather than treated as 'no'. Education and occupation indicators in the appendix refer only to Phase I household members aged 18 to 25. They are not estimates for the Phase II interview group aged 18 to 35.

The three evidence layers answer different questions. Baseline percentages describe context but cannot explain an individual decision. Interviews recover decision-making but cannot estimate population prevalence. Historical and media sources illuminate longer processes but cannot replace current fieldwork. Triangulation is used to test convergence, explain divergence and prevent claims from exceeding the evidence.

## 5.7 Ethics, evidence status and scope

Participants are anonymised. Interview excerpts are reproduced in lightly standardised Roman Urdu: capitalisation, spacing, punctuation and unambiguous transcription errors have been corrected, but wording has not been expanded beyond the meaning supported by the schedule and surrounding answer. Field-note excerpts retain the supplied meaning and are identified by source status in the private quotation log. Extracts from different interview prompts are not joined to create a continuous speech, and personal identifiers are omitted. Only narratives in which respondents themselves disclosed a caste, community or religious identity, motive or experience were analysed under that category; none was inferred.

Evidence levels are kept distinct. Aggregate counts are reported only when the fieldwork summary provides a numerator; a missing denominator is disclosed rather than inferred. The finding that 38 respondents perceived an increase in crime is not a measure of police-recorded offences. Reports of discrimination are participants' accounts and were not independently adjudicated. Residence in a family-owned house is not proof of legal title. Baseline percentages use valid responses to the specified variable and do not describe the Phase II interview sample. The qualitative findings are not intended to represent the entire population of Bawana.

## 5.8 Study limitations and boundaries of inference

The Phase II corpus cannot estimate the prevalence of an aspiration, experience or attitude across JJ Colony Bawana. Patterns in the interview corpus are described by counts, such as 38 respondents reporting an increase of crime or five students reporting discrimination based on religion. They are not able to provide colony-wide rates or complete case distributions by theme. Thus, recurrence is not used as an estimate of population, but as an indication that a mechanism must be taken into account. Some of the claims were not independently verified. The changes in crime were not checked against police crime records; there was no independent adjudication of reported discrimination and residence in a family owned house was not checked against legal title. Such accounts are analytically significant because how people perceive conditions is the determining factor in their movement, applications and belonging; however, they must not be regarded as self-sustaining contingencies outside of other factors.

# 6 Narrative findings

The findings are organised around the research objectives, although individual narratives cross thematic boundaries. Each section begins with respondents' words and then connects the account to relevant literature and baseline context. Where one narrative illuminates more than one analytical problem, repetition of a key excerpt is intentional.

## 6.1 Education as aspiration and negotiated continuation

### Narrative sequence - woman, age 18, combining open-mode graduation with home-based responsibilities.

> "Hum graduation kar rahe hain, open mode se."English translation: "I am pursuing graduation through open study."
>
> "Humko teacher banna hai. Humein padhna bahut achchha lagta hai." English translation: "I want to become a teacher. I enjoy studying very much."
>
> "Yahaan apne teachers ko dekh kar hi socha."English translation: "I formed this aspiration after seeing the teachers here."
>
> "Bachpan se hi chaahte the ki teacher banein. Ghar par aise halaat nahin hain ki university ya college mein padhai jaari rakh sakein. Isliye open mode se padh rahe hain aur ghar ka kaam bhi kar rahe hain."English translation: "I have wanted to become a teacher since childhood. Conditions at home do not allow me to continue at a university or regular college, so I study through open mode while also doing housework."
>
> "Main graduation karna chaahti thi, lekin phir plan badalna pada." English translation: "I wanted to graduate, but then I had to change my plan."

The respondent is continuing graduation through open education rather than withdrawing from study. Her teaching aspiration is grounded in teachers she has seen in her community; the occupation appears possible rather than merely desirable. Enrolment status alone does not reveal this change of route. She connects the absence of university or regular college with family circumstances, and open education with the need to continue domestic work. Participation continues, but its institutional form has narrowed. The account therefore reveals a tension between educational continuity and substantive mobility. Learning is ongoing, with the viable path narrowed. The analysis does not presume that open education is necessarily worse, or that regular college is always better. It asks whether her chosen path

qualification, contact, time and institutional support needed for teaching. Educational ambition and the conditions for it are key. Even though it is not the traditional path to college, her aspiration remains. Meanwhile, it is not freedom of choice of the educational form to be equated with continuing enrolment.

The account therefore demonstrates the educational persistence and limited institutional access. The next two research objectives are addressed in this account. Teaching is a valued future, but route is planned for home conditions. Visible teachers make this aspiration navigable, as Appadurai (2004) points out, while Devi and Ray (2024a) provide an insight into how an educational Mahaul can coexist with Mazboori (Majboori). Phase I triangulation with 18–25-year-olds places the account in a larger pattern: flexible study can be a means of sustaining educational continuity, and the domestic sphere can limit the institutional form available. In general, higher education and vocational training were almost always mentioned in the context of employment and not as substitutes for employment in the interviews. Courses were evaluated by respondents based on cost, distance, length of course, recognition and earning potential. This is negotiated continuity: education remains important, while its timing and institutional form are adjusted to the demands of income and care.

## 6.2 Money, household work and the cost of aspiration

**The same account connects finance, neighbourhood safety, household rules and the practical possibility of study and work.**

> “Ghar ke maali halaat ek challenge hain. Colony ka Mahaul bhi theek nahin hai. Yahaan crime bahut badh gaya hai, jiski wajah se ladkiyaan zyaada bahar nahin jaatin aur gharwale unhein bahar jaane se mana karte hain. Woh chaahte hain ki ladkiyaan shaam se pehle wapas aa jaayen. Isliye woh kaam par nahin jaatin.” English translation: “The family’s financial circumstances are a challenge, and the colony’s environment is also not good. Crime has increased greatly; girls therefore go out less, and families restrict them. They are expected home before evening, so they do not go out to work.”
>
> “Maali pareshaani ka zyaada asar padta hai. Agar paise hote, to bahar jaakar bhi padh sakte the aur colony se bhi nikal sakte the.”English translation: “Financial difficulty has the greatest effect. With money, we could study outside and could also leave the colony.”
>
> “Haan, mauqe alag hain. Ladkon ko zyaada azaadi hai. Woh bahar jaakar padh sakte hain ya kaam kar sakte hain, aur shaam ko der se wapas aa sakte hain. Hum nahin kar sakte.” English translation: “Yes, opportunities differ. Boys have more freedom: they can study or work outside and return late in the evening. We cannot.”

‘Not going to work’ must be read in context. The respondent links neighbourhood safety and the family rule that girls return before evening to the feasibility of employment outside the home. This does not mean that the family opposes education or every form of work; she also describes her family as supportive. Support and restriction therefore coexist in the same account. That combination is central to an intersectional analysis. Money could expand educational and housing options, while gendered household rules and safety concerns limit which routes can actually be used. A financial intervention alone may not address unsafe travel, just as safer transport cannot remove fees, care responsibilities or lost earnings. Open education enables the respondent to retain a teaching aspiration despite limited funds, domestic work and restricted mobility. The point is not to romanticise constraint. The relevant questions are which aspects of her present arrangement she values and what she would choose differently if money, care and travel were less restrictive.

Her phrase agar paise hote links finance to both education and the possibility of leaving the colony. Sen's (1999) account of conversion and Anand and Tiwari's (2006) shelter–transport–livelihood analysis show why a scholarship that ignores distance, timing and safety may be insufficient. The baseline supports the structural context: 71.8 per cent of households with valid responses reported monthly income below Rs 20,000, and 61.2 per cent reported debt. The interview supplies the mechanism: limited resources narrow institutional choice; open education becomes the feasible route; domestic labour continues; and employment outside the home remains constrained by safety.

## 6.3 Early work, masculinity and compressed time

### Narrative sequence ,  man, age 18, combining study with responsibility for earning and operating a barber shop arrangement.

> “Padh bhi raha hoon aur kaam bhi kar raha hoon. Graduation karni hai.” English translation: “I am studying and working. I want to complete graduation.”
>
> “Mujhe Army mein jaana hai.” English translation: “I want to join the Army.”
>
> “Bachpan se sochta tha.” English translation: “I have thought about it since childhood.”
>
> “Ghar par kaam karne wala koi nahin hai. Mujhe hi sab kaam karna padega aur paise kamaane padenge. Ghar ka bada beta hoon; chhoti umr se kaam kar raha hoon.” English translation: “There is no one else at home to work. I must do the work and earn money. I am the eldest son and have worked from a young age.”

> “Maine bachpan nahin dekha. Main bachpan se hi yahaan kaam kar raha hoon. Main is dukaan ka kiraaya aur kuch paise maalik ko deta hoon; baaqi main rakhta hoon, aur yeh dukaan khud hi chalaata hoon.”English translation: “I did not experience a childhood. I have worked here since childhood. I pay the shop’s rent and some money to the owner, keep the rest, and run the shop myself.”

**Field-note excerpt:**

> “Mera bhai itna padha-likha hai, phir bhi mujhse kam kamaata hai. Paisa zaroori hai.” English translation: “My brother is highly educated, yet he earns less than I do. Money is important.”

This account cannot be reduced to whether the respondent is employed. He operates the barber shop and earns an income, but the interview does not establish his earnings, hours, contractual status or bargaining power. It would therefore be misleading to label him an entrepreneurial success, or evidence of occupational mobility, because he runs the shop. His work must be read alongside his education and family responsibilities. He has not abandoned his ambition; he is pursuing it while meeting an immediate duty to earn. The tension lies between supporting the household now and investing time and resources in a different future. The field-note statement about his educated brother does not reject education. It evaluates qualifications against observed labour-market returns. For respondents who contribute to household income, uncertainty about the earnings attached to higher education makes waiting more costly. Time is central to his statement that he has ‘not seen childhood’. Early work can develop skill, responsibility and income, but it can also displace education, preparation and leisure. Jeffrey's (2010) concept of educated waiting is relevant, although this respondent is not waiting outside the labour market; he is waiting while working within it. Nearly all male respondents were described as employed, which shows that employment and aspiration can coexist. The analytical distinction is between sustaining the present and building a secure future.

## 6.4 Territorial stigma, religion and institutional encounters

**The narratives locate territorial judgement at the intersection of gender, religion and institutional encounter.**

> “Colony ki wajah se bahut masail hote hain. Log colony walon ko mujrim samajhte hain; unko lagta hai ki colony mein sirf mujrim rehte hain. Ladki hona bhi bahut farq daalta hai. Ladke aaraam se ghoom sakte hain, lekin ladkiyaan nahin. Bahar bhi jab log sunte hain ki hum colony se hain, to woh humein ajeeb nazar se dekhte hain.” English translation: “The

> colony creates many difficulties. People assume its residents are criminals and that only criminals live here. Being a girl also makes a major difference: boys can move around freely, but girls cannot. Outside, people look at us differently when they hear that we are from the colony."
>
> "Haan, bahut zyaada. School mein kabhi colony ke naam par humein sunaaya jaata hai, aur Musalmaan hone par bhi." English translation: "Yes, very much. At school we are sometimes taunted because of the colony's name and also because we are Muslim."

**Field-note excerpt:**

> "Colony ka naam hi kharaab hai." English translation: "The colony's name itself has a bad reputation."

The account matters because locality stigma does not operate in isolation. The respondent places it alongside gendered mobility and her sense of how she is viewed outside the settlement. Place, gender and recognition are therefore experienced together. An address becomes territorial stigma when it is treated as a proxy for a person's conduct or worth. This report does not substantiate that stereotype, nor does it use individual concerns about crime to justify it. It distinguishes residents' feelings of insecurity from external judgement and unequal recognition. Communal tension was not identified as prominent within the colony in the fieldwork summary. This does not establish that tension is absent; it means that reported discrimination outside Bawana should not be recast as evidence of conflict within it. Future research should document the institution, setting and interaction in which exclusion occurs. The JJ Colony address is not merely geographical information: it can become a portable social judgement that shapes self-presentation, confidence and expectations of treatment in schools and labour markets.

This account links the third and fourth objectives. Religion and place enter an educational encounter, while the colony's criminalised image affects movement and recognition more broadly. Wacquant's (2008) analysis of advanced marginality and Wacquant, Slater and Pereira's (2014) work on territorial stigmatisation clarify the symbolic penalty attached to place. Thorat and Attewell's (2007) evidence on religious discrimination in recruitment helps explain how locality and religion can combine differently across gender and institutional settings.

The five reported cases establish that religion-based discrimination appeared in the interview corpus; they do not establish prevalence among Bawana's students. The quoted account shows how religion and locality can intersect in an educational setting. More broadly, respondents did not generally portray everyday life inside the colony through communal division, while Muslim participants described an additional barrier to schooling, formal employment and industrial-estate access outside it.

## 6.5 Crime, safety and residential aspiration

### In one account, the neighbourhood assessment and its consequences for girls' mobility appear in the same answer

> "Ghar ke maali halaat ek challenge hain. Colony ka Mahaul bhi theek nahin hai. Yahaan crime bahut badh gaya hai, jiski wajah se ladkiyaan zyaada bahar nahin jaatin aur gharwale unhein bahar jaane se mana karte hain. Woh chaahte hain ki ladkiyaan shaam se pehle wapas aa jaayen. Isliye woh kaam par nahin jaatin." English translation: "The family's financial circumstances are a challenge, and the colony's environment is also not good. Crime has increased greatly; girls therefore go out less, and families restrict them. They are expected home before evening, so they do not go out to work."

The finding concerns reported perception, not police-recorded crime. Perception nevertheless has material consequences when it shapes decisions about travel, study, employment and residential movement. The quoted account shows how felt insecurity can narrow the educational and employment options a young woman considers feasible. The issue is therefore not only whether respondents want to move, but what they expect relocation to change. Another neighbourhood may signify safer travel, less reputational damage and better access to education and work, not simply a larger dwelling. A housing-only account of aspiration would miss these desired freedoms. Thirty-eight respondents perceived that crime had increased; two did not. Participants referred to drug use among some young people, the involvement of some boys in crime, fear after dark and the effect of these concerns on the colony's reputation. These accounts cannot establish a crime trend, but they explain subjective safety, restricted use of public space and residential aspiration. Rules requiring girls and women to return before evening can affect college choice, employment and public participation. The two dissenting accounts remain analytically important because neighbourhood experience varies by location, time and personal comparison. The most accurate formulation is therefore a strong majority perception with practical consequences, not a substitute for analysis of police-recorded crime.

## 6.6 Families, NGOs and support across transitions

**The respondent identifies family and Navjyoti as sources of support, although the brief answers do not specify how that support was provided.**

> "Family ka support milta hai." English translation: "I receive support from my family."
>
> "Navjyoti ne bahut support kiya; family ka support bhi mila." English translation: "Navjyoti supported me greatly, and I also received support from my family."

The account also marks the limits of institutional support. Guidance may clarify a pathway or make a difficult transition more affordable, but a short course alone does not secure decent work. Programme evaluation should distinguish what local support can reasonably contribute from the infrastructure and labour-market conditions that require public action.

In the narratives, support operates through relationships and transitions rather than as a single benefit. Family encouragement can legitimise continued education, and teachers can make an occupation visible. The quoted interview does not specify whether Navjyoti's support involved tutoring, information, confidence-building, career guidance, counselling or another mechanism. Activities described in organisational documents provide programme context; they are not evidence of this respondent's individual experience.

Support becomes analytically meaningful when linked to a transition. Remedial education may strengthen learning, yet a pathway can still break at admission, transport, course recognition, documentation, placement or job retention. The institutional-ecology approach therefore asks where family, school, NGO and state support connects successfully and where a gap redirects or ends an aspiration.

## 6.7 Documents, services and neighbourhood capability

Residents identified safety, transport, employment, sanitation, drainage, water, roads, electricity and spaces usable by girls as neighbourhood priorities. These concerns extend beyond improving any single credential. They describe the conditions under which education, work and public participation become possible.

Documentation, transport and basic services may appear less dramatic than a career aspiration, but they often determine whether it can be pursued. Formal eligibility can be impractical due to application mistakes, mismatching of records, repeated trips and lost working hours, particularly in households with volatile incomes or limited public institutions' experience. Overall, respondents noted as priorities a safer colony, drug-related harm and

crime reduction, improved transport and employment, consistent electrical and water supply, sanitation and drainage, paved roads and public space that can be used by girls. These are mobility demands, as they alter the feasibility and costs of education, work and care and public participation.

## 6.8 Housing tenure and the wish to leave

One of the most startling results is that family-home residence and wanting to move co-occur. 35 respondents had a family owned house but that did not eliminate worries about crime, stigma, services or access to opportunity. A family-owned house can represent years of investment and provide stability. It does not, however, guarantee safe travel to college, fair access to work outside the colony, functioning services or respectful treatment. “Colony ka naam hi kharaab hai.” English translation: “The colony’s name itself has a bad reputation.”

The idea of leaving should then be interpreted as a mobility aspiration. The respondents linked the concept of exit to safety, education, employment and escaping the symbolic punishment of the address. Meanwhile, demands for neighbourhood improvement are also a reflection of investment in Bawana. There is a possibility of exit and attachment, as respondents differentiate their relations with people and community from the conditions of governance and representation of the place.

## 6.9 Narrative configurations across the interview corpus

The evidence in the interview corpus indicates a number of configurations instead of a typical pathway. The first is a form of educational continuity, in a limited way: open, distance or local routes that are upheld in conjunction with housework, the necessity of working or the difficulty of traveling. The second is early entry into labour markets without finishing school: young men who work to support families, but who may still aspire to go into the Army or the government, or to get a certificate or start a business. The third is gendered aspiration, in a context of limited spatial access, in which women negotiate safety, timing, care and family permission. A fourth configuration combines institutional aspiration with territorial stigma. Respondents seek education, industrial-estate access and formal employment while viewing the JJ Colony address as an obstacle; Muslim respondents may encounter an additional religious stigma.

The fifth is a fusion of residential consolidation with complaints, in which family investment in housing coexists with a desire to move because of neighbourhood history, reputation, inadequate services or perceived insecurity. The sixth is a mediated pathway where teachers, NGOs, family members or friends make a pathway intelligible, but do not ensure secure employment. It is not possible to establish a hierarchy of aspiration for these configurations. What is possible will vary according to family assets and social status, and various occupational aspirations may represent a shared wish for security, dignity and family support. The analytical task is to identify which routes can create a valued future, which conversion conditions make those routes usable and where a forced choice occurs between them.

# 7 Discussion and answers to the research objectives

This discussion brings the interview accounts, literature, five research objectives and baseline evidence into an explanatory dialogue. Quantitative indicators are used to describe the structural context, the narratives reveal how respondents negotiate this context, and the literature provides insights into the processes through which place, education, identity and institutions shape mobility outcomes.

## 7.1 Objective one: the meaning of upward mobility

The young woman's account combines continued education with restricted access to regular college and work outside the home. Educational continuity is therefore not synonymous with spatial autonomy. Because the study is cross-sectional, it does not measure individual gains or losses over time. It shows whether different dimensions of mobility coincide at one point in a respondent's life. This is sufficient to raise doubts about a one-dimensional approach to enrolment. The young man's narrative combines household responsibility, income generation and job insecurity. Running the business is not the same as having a safe investment or as having full control over returns. His statement that he has worked since childhood places the tension between present responsibility and future investment within a longer life course. That relationship would be obscured by a single label, ‘self-employed'. The housing profile gives a third contrast: residential consolidation is not the same as neighbourhood capability.

Historical and service records are used as a way of putting in perspective the cost of an established home; however, they cannot be considered to be longitudinal observations of Phase II respondents. Mobility cannot therefore be treated as an individual attribute in isolation from place. Personal resources are converted into mobility through safe neighbourhoods, functioning services and institutions that do not stigmatise an address. Qualifications alone do not capture these collective conditions, yet they are central to the analysis of aspiration and mobility. The narratives conceptualise mobility as a bundle of valued shifts. While teaching and Army service represent occupational aspiration, respondents also want regular income, a secure job, assistance for family members, safe travel, no stigma, and infrastructure and housing options. It is in these domains that Sen's capability approach comes into play to show why they should be regarded as substantive freedoms. The Bawana evidence shows that these dimensions move at different speeds. The open-education account in Section 6.1 shows educational continuity alongside constrained institutional choice.

The early-work account in Section 6.3 records household contribution alongside occupational insecurity. Section 6.8 records housing consolidation alongside neighbourhood dissatisfaction. Each combines progress in one dimension with constraint in another. Upward mobility is thus most meaningfully seen as an ongoing expansion of capabilities relevant to people's desired futures.

## 7.2 Objective two: the recalibration of aspiration

The interviews do not support a simple distinction between ambitious and unambitious participants. Rather, Mazboori (Majboori) recalibrates the route, timing and cost of aspiration. Education could be regular college or open education; the labour market may be a more attractive alternative to a longer education; residential consolidation may occur alongside a need to escape a dangerous or stigmatised neighbourhood. The valued future may remain; what changes is the pathway and timing.

> "Maali pareshaani ka zyaada asar padta hai. Agar paise hote, to bahar jaakar bhi padh sakte the aur colony se bhi nikal sakte the."English translation: "Financial difficulty has the greatest effect. With money, we could study outside and could also leave the colony."

Appadurai (2004) and Ray (2006) help explain the formation and navigation of aspirations; the inseparability of the Mahaul of education from material and institutional Mazboori (Majboori) is discussed by Devi and Ray (2024a); and waiting and uncertain conversion is discussed by Jeffrey (2010). Along with the narratives, this literature reveals that the ability and opportunity to change an education or career trajectory without giving up on a future vision is not evenly distributed. Revisions are less costly with financial buffers, informed adults, safe transport and believable institutions.

## 7.3 Objective three: intersectional aspiration pathways

Intersectional comparison does not presume that all women or all men take the same path. It asks how, and under which regulatory conditions, the same goal (for example, further study) is being achieved under different mixes of responsibility, permission and institutional access. A generic youth intervention is then not likely to be capable of capturing the conditions that make a route usable. Considering place, class and gender as distinct variables also masks the way these categories work together in a decision. Intersectionality is a way of moving away from the category and towards the configuration of constraints. The point is not to rank gender against class or religion, but one of the ways in which they intersect in a pathway. The route for the young woman studying at home is determined by money, household work and safety, and by gender and place. The young man in the barber shop follows a different route: age, birth order, gendered provider expectations, household obligation/uncertain educational returns.

> "Haan, bahut zyaada. School mein kabhi colony ke naam par humein sunaaya jaata hai, aur Musalmaan hone par bhi." English translation: "Yes, very much. At school we are sometimes taunted because of the colony's name and also because we are Muslim."

The second configuration occurs in the religion-and-locality account. Territorial stigma provides a general assessment about JJ Colony, and Muslim identity may create an additional institutional barrier. Movement also differs according to gender, and is influenced by the same neighbourhood reputation. Here, Crenshaw (1989) and Yuval-Davis (2006) help explain this interaction; Thorat and Attewell (2007) illustrate that religious identity can have an impact on recruitment even if qualifications remain equal; and Devi (2025) explains why urban residence does not necessarily imply that caste is dissolved. Thus, the Bawana evidence should be interpreted in light of the intersection of respondents' social and spatial location.

## 7.4 Objective four: relocation, belonging and safety

Relocation remains present through the peripheral geography created in 2004 and through current residential aspirations. Many younger respondents may not remember the 2004 displacement as their own experience but live within the opportunity space created by the displacement. Phase I documents the magnitude of displacement and when it occurred. The interviews show how crime perception, distance, poor services and stigma enter the present-day desire to leave.

> “Ghar ke maali halaat ek challenge hain. Colony ka Mahaul bhi theek nahin hai. Yahaan crime bahut badh gaya hai, jiski wajah se ladkiyaan zyaada bahar nahin jaatin aur gharwale unhein bahar jaane se mana karte hain. Woh chaahte hain ki ladkiyaan shaam se pehle wapas aa jaayen. Isliye woh kaam par nahin jaatin.” English translation: “The family’s financial circumstances are a challenge, and the colony’s environment is also not good. Crime has increased greatly; girls therefore go out less, and families restrict them. They are expected home before evening, so they do not go out to work.”

Bhan (2009, 2016), Menon-Sen and Bhan (2008), Cernea (1997) and Datta (2012) show why relocation and housing cannot be the sole measures of rehabilitation. The symbolic and relational aspects of place are explained by Wacquant (2008) and Yuval-Davis (2006). Together, these perspectives clarify the apparent tension among ownership, belonging and exit. Respondents may value people and community support while remaining dissatisfied with the neighbourhood and its reputation. Leaving can be imagined as a route to safety and recognition; remaining and demanding improvement is another way of claiming urban space.

## 7.5 Objective five: institutional mediation

Institutions expand pathways as they create less uncertainty at a particular transition. Teachers can make an occupation visible and attainable. Families can legitimise continued study. NGOs provide tutoring, counselling, confidence, information and occasionally employment support.

# 8 Policy and programme implications

Bawana's policy problem is not a shortage of isolated activities but weak connections among housing, education, transport, safety and secure work. Menon-Sen and Bhan (2008) show how peripheral relocation separated homes from livelihoods and schools; Jagori (2014) connects infrastructure and unsafe mobility to girls' educational access; Nambissan (2025) documents stratified schooling and territorial labelling; and PUDR (2018) shows that proximity to the industrial estate does not ensure safe or progressive employment. Policy should therefore be judged by whether it reduces forced trade-offs, not only by whether one headline indicator rises.

## 8.1 Apply a forced-trade-off test

For every scheme, implementers should identify the intended gain, the capability participants may have to surrender in order to obtain it, and whether the gain is sustained. Each output should be paired with a risk indicator and followed up after six and twelve months. Where the data permit, results should be disaggregated by gender, age or life stage, religion and locality so that a favourable average does not conceal a pathway that remains unusable for a particular group.

| Scheme area | Evidence that forced trade-offs are being reduced |
|---|---|
| Education and skills | Continuation and recognised progression improve without unaffordable fees, lost earnings, heavier care work or unsafe travel. |
| Transport and safety | Door-to-door time and cost fall, safe evening return improves, and the feasible set of colleges and jobs expands. |
| Employment | Wages are regular, hours and contracts improve, commutes remain manageable, and workers are retained or progress after placement. |
| Housing and services | Service improvements save time, support school or work continuity, increase felt safety and reduce compelled relocation. |
| Local support | Counselling leads to completed referrals for documents, admissions, scholarships or secure work, including for initially unreached youth. |

## 8.4 Measure employment quality

Because Bawana's industrial proximity can still lead to insecure work, placement partnerships should publish wage regularity, hours, contract status, safety, commute, retention and progression. They should also monitor reported locality- or religion-based exclusion. Training should be expanded only when it connects to a demonstrable job ladder.

## 8.5 Address territorial stigma institutionally

Schools, employers, placement agencies, and public offices should audit informal address filtering and provide accessible complaints and referral procedures. Communication about crime should respond to residents' safety concerns without attaching collective criminality to Bawana's youth. The test is whether applicants can disclose their address without losing access or dignity.

## 8.6 Link community safety with harm reduction

Residents' accounts of drugs, crime and relocation support youth outreach, counselling and de-addiction, safe public space, functioning lighting and accountable community policing. Monitoring should combine recorded incidents with felt safety and the hours and routes women can use. Young women and young men should participate in recurring safety audits.

## 8.7 Protect public responsibility while strengthening local institutions

Navjyoti and other local organisations can provide mentoring, learning support and navigation because they are embedded in the colony. Formal referral agreements should connect them to schools, colleges, welfare offices and employers, and should confirm whether each referral results in access. These partnerships must supplement, not replace, public investment in transport, services, schooling, safety and labour regulation.

## 8.8 Track multidimensional mobility over time

A longitudinal panel should revisit selected participants and record education, work quality, income security, control over time, spatial access, autonomy, dignity, belonging and neighbourhood conditions. Each follow-up should ask which gains were retained, what was surrendered to obtain them, and whether the trade-off was voluntary or compelled. This converts mobility non-synchrony from a conceptual warning into an evaluation rule.

# 9 Conclusion

The interviews show how young people and young adults in Bawana think through education, work, family obligation, safety and place. They neither lack ambition nor ignore the constraints around them. Their plans are repeatedly revised in response to fees, domestic work, the need to earn, travel, crime perception, family permission, institutional support and the social meaning of the JJ Colony address. The narratives make these connections visible. Open-mode graduation sustains a teaching aspiration while revealing restricted access to regular college. The wish to join the Army coexists with early work and responsibility for a barber shop. The comparison between education and immediate earnings shows how credentials are judged against observed returns. Accounts of crime and the colony's reputation explain why residential aspiration belongs within an analysis of safety, stigma and access to opportunity. The literature interprets rather than replaces these accounts. Appadurai and Ray clarify the navigational and socially visible dimensions of aspiration; Sen and Kabeer direct attention to substantive freedom, resources and agency.

Jeffrey, Devi and Ray explain waiting, precarious work, educational Mahaul and material Mazboori (Majboori). Crenshaw, Yuval-Davis, Anand and Tiwari, Borker, Wacquant, Bhan, Menon-Sen and Datta connect intersectionality, gendered mobility, territorial stigma, resettlement and the unequal geography of opportunity. Phase I establishes a structural context of low household income, debt, displacement, gendered educational trajectories and long-term residential consolidation. Phase II shows how those conditions enter decisions and relationships. The resulting account is multidimensional because education, work, income, time, safety, autonomy, recognition, housing and belonging do not necessarily move together. It is intersectional because the usability of an opportunity depends on a respondent's combined social and spatial position. Upward mobility is therefore defined as an expanded capacity to reach and sustain valued futures across several domains of life. Its opposite is not only declining income; it is the continuing requirement to exchange one basic capability for another. Reducing these forced trade-offs requires connected institutions, safe and affordable transport, recognised education compatible with work and care, fair employment, functioning neighbourhood services, and protection against territorial and religious discrimination.

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