

SAMATA samachara



'No progress without girls', Samata's message to the world on IDGC

Kumarvadde, Uma Patil, H.S. Srikantamurthy



Girls model their dream schools and villages in clay



Guests interacting with the girls

"We girls have lots of problems in our families and communities. But we need to realise that others created these to stop our progress. We should learn to convert these challenges into opportunities for a better life."

- Seethamma Chalawadi, President, CAB, Bijapur district, Karnataka

Samata once again celebrated girl power during the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC) celebrations, held in Bijapura and Bagalkot districts, on 22 and 23 October 2016. The events held at the district and village cluster levels reinforced the importance of focusing on girls' progress to build better families, communities and society at large.

Street art, sports, art and quiz competitions, clay modelling, children's parliament, testimonials and discussions, felicitation of successful girls showcased the skills, leadership and strength of the participating girls. It presented an opportunity for them to be role models, and garner support from the community. The events also highlighted the norms that limit girls' empowerment and the need to together challenge those barriers, and girls' abilities to achieve, when they can lay claim to their rights. Parents of 326 girls watched with pride as their daughters, who did well academically, were felicitated in front of the community. Girls interacted with women who followed their dreams to become police officers, government officers, mechanics, and university

professors. These women shared their life stories, struggles as women professionals and coping mechanisms to deal with biases against women who make independent choices.

Members of the Community Advisory Boards (CAB), constituted to intervene on the issues of girls and women at the village level, and adolescent girl leaders from the Parivarthan Plus groups led the organisation of the events. A total of 1562 girls, 210 boys, and 993 community members including parents participated in the events to show solidarity with the cause. In a repeated show of solidarity, this year too the village communities and governments contributed INR 36,000 in cash and kind to support the event.



Active Safety Committees plan for child friendly schools

H.S. Srikantamurthy

“Samata helping us to form Child Protection Committees, and training us members are very useful to help our children stay safe in schools. I have seen a lot of violence on girls, especially on television programmes. We will work to raise awareness in our communities so that such incidents do not happen in our villages.”

- Eraiah S Halabavi, President, Gram Panchayat, Bagalkot

A safe school environment makes children's rights a reality, upholds their dignity, eliminates bias and restores hope. It creates an enabling environment that supports a child's positive personality development. Keeping this in mind, the Department of Women and Child, Government of Karnataka, mandates every school to set up Safety Committees or Child Protection Committees (CPC), as part of the Karnataka Child Protection Policy 2016. In addition, schools must regularly conduct Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting and implement a set of physical safety measures, which includes separate toilets for boys and girls, and monitor them using a

government issued checklist.

Recognising the positive impact of a well-implemented policy in ensuring safe learning spaces for children, especially girls, Samata took the lead in helping schools set up these committees. A total of 56 schools constituted CPCs in the last three years. Samata team's effective advocacy with government departments of women and child, health, local government, and police led to their representation in the committees, as mandated by the policy guidelines. Training for committee members, on safety issues of children, conducted by Samata team, strengthened the functioning of CPCs and help the team to build stronger relations with the Deputy Directors of Public Instruction and school Headmasters. During the quarter, October to December 2016, 62 CPCs, with 529 men and 550 women representatives, were trained on the need for these committees, its roles and responsibilities, ways to make child friendly safe schools, POSCO Act, and the policy itself.

All committees made a one-year action plan, with inputs from student representatives, to make their respective schools child friendly and safe. While formulating the plans, the members gave specific attention to safety issues of girls in schools. Construction of school compound walls, separate toilets for girls and boys, eve teasing faced by girls on their way to school, and outsiders using the school compound all came up for discussion. Police ensured that their representatives in the committees would take the responsibility of addressing issues faced from outsiders. All plans were made with a specific deadline by which they were to be implemented.



Safety committee training and children's participation



My voice

“My parents wanted to get me married after I finished Class 9. I have a sister and my father wanted both our weddings to be held together. The Parivarthan Plus group members and Samata staff helped me by discussing the issue with my parents. I got the courage to tell my father that I don't want to marry now and want to continue my education. I asked him why I am not allowed to go to school, when my older and younger brothers are going to school? I also called the Child Help Line (1098). Now, I am in Class 10, and my parents never speak about my marriage but encourage me to study well.”

- Chaitra R Mulangi, Class 10, Kalpana Chawla Parivarthan Plus Group, Lokapura village, Bagalkot District



Girls put on their Kabbadi shorts to shatter gender norms

Ramesh M Sollapur, Annapurna Doddamani

"I am good at playing Kabbadi but the game was played only by men and boys. I always thought why? Today, I got an opportunity to play the game in front of such a big group and it made me proud. Winning the trophy was an exceptional achievement for all of us."

- Laxmi B Soudhi, Kittururani Chennamma Group, Bagalkot

On 25th and 26th of October 2016 respectively villages Teggi in Bagalkot and Shivanagi in Bijapur districts witnessed an age-old game, Kabbadi, being played differently. In perhaps a first for many in the audience, they watched 'teams of girls' competing to win the tournament. Kabbadi is a native, Indian contact sport traditionally played to develop physical strength and speed, and boost self-defense skills in young men. But girls in

Samata's villages liked the dodging and moving of hands and feet, wanted to play it and decided to train and compete. The 23 sessions of Parivarthan Plus training had convinced them that there is nothing outside of their reach, especially, not a game that boys play.

A total of 400 girls from across 40 intervention villages practiced daily, for two months, in their village grounds. Adolescent boys helped them learn the game and lay the court; the physical education teachers from schools trained the girls; village governments, communities and families encouraged them by giving them space to

train, resources to lay the court, and finally coming to watch them play the tournament. About 700 men and women watched the girls teams compete to win the trophy. For the girls, it was a moment of having worked hard to play a sport largely considered as the privilege of boys and men in their communities. It boosted their confidence, helped them realise their strengths and made them proud of their skills.



Sania Mirza Group, Narasalagi village, Bijapur district, Tournament Champions



Girls in action during the tournament



Partnerships with 'Sneha Clinics' improve girls' health

Kumar Vadde, H.S. Srikantamurthy

"Initially girls were reluctant to take IFA tablets. But now after proper guidance, they demand for the tablets during Sneha Clinic. I see a real change in the health seeking behavior of the girls. They also call me at night to discuss their personal problems. I am proud that now many adolescent girls visit my sub-centre."

-Kalavathi Narashivarav Desapandi, ANM, Sub centre, Muthagi village, Bijapura district.

Sneha Clinics are bi-weekly health clinics held at the Government Primary Health Centres under the State Rural Health Mission initiative. Aimed at improving the health seeking behaviour of adolescent girls, these clinics provide services such as personal counselling, and nutritious food, iron and folic acid (IFA) tablets and sanitary pads, regular check

up for sexually transmitted and reproductive tract infections. They inform girls about personal hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, stress management, and HIV/AIDS.

Samata's simultaneous work with the girls and the clinics have ensured increased uptake of services. For instance, in Muthagi village of Bijapur district, the team worked with 38 girls, between 12 to 16 years, to access the health services and help resolve issues that kept them out of school. The girls had low awareness on personal hygiene and menstruation that led to repeated absenteeism from schools. Samata along with Departments of Health and Education organised a series of clinics both at the PHC and the school, which helped these girls better understand their body and manage their health and hygiene, especially when they menstruate.

The Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife (ANM) and Accredited Social Health Activist have also played active roles in bringing about this change. Today, the girls not only have improved health but also are regular at school, which has helped them perform better academically. The impact of the clinic on these girls encouraged their peers to also access the services.



Adolescent girls at the Sneha Clinic in the primary health sub-centre, Muthagi village, Bijapura District



Project Update

Gautam Sudhakar

Period: June 2014 to November 2016

Indicators	Number	Indicators	Number
Girls who completed Parivartan Plus sessions	1105	Teachers Trained	431
Girls who are currently undergoing sessions	383	*SDMC members trained	435
Girls trained in leadership	480	Schools developed gender plans	64
Discontinued girls identified	257	Schools have gender sensitive committees	50
Dropped out girls identified	185	Schools using tracking tool	62
Discontinued girls brought back	110	Boys who completed Parivartan sessions	932
Dropped out girls brought back	37	Boys who currently undergoing Parivartan sessions	323
Girls linked to social entitlements	2703	Families linked to social entitlements	2319
Girls availed tuition support	1590	No of Girls/Women Vigilance committees formed	35

*School Development Management Committee



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H. S. Srikantamurthy edited the newsletter.

Editorial Team: Raghavendra. T., H. S. Srikantamurthy, Uma Patil, Kumar Vadde

H. S. Srikantamurthy suggested the name for the newsletter.

Shamshuddin Bajpe translated the newsletter into Kannada.

Siby Joseph, Artwist Design Lab designed the newsletter.

Art in Samata samachara: The title icon of Kittur Rani Chennamma is derived from Belagal Veeranna's shadow leather puppetry image of the legendary queen of Kittur, who is a symbol of the independence movement of India. The source image is obtained from Google images. The masthead border motif is derived from the traditional embroidery craft called Kasuti, practised mainly in northern Karnataka and done only by women on handloom sarees.

The newsletter is from Samata, a project to help 3600 adolescent girls, across 119 villages in Bagalkot and Bijapur, complete secondary school. Karnataka Health Promotion Trust [KHPT] in partnership with the Government of Karnataka, ViiV Healthcare, World Bank and University of Manitoba is implementing Samata. STRIVE, anchored at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, along with KHPT will evaluate the programme. The evaluation is funded by DFID.

Read more about Samata at <http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/projects/samata-keeping-girls-secondary-school>

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