

SAMATA samachara



**“No society can develop if it leaves its women behind,”
says D. Randeep, Vijayapura Deputy Commissioner**

Interview by Priya Pillai & Kumar Vadde



What has been your sense of the education scenario in Vijayapura since assuming your role as Deputy Commissioner in June 2014?

Education and learning per se does not have too high a premium mainly because it is seen only as a way to secure a job, either government or private, after Class X. Over the years, the drop out rate has reduced marginally but not enough to make a considerable difference. Enrolment rates are fairly good with a good balance of boys and girls. The challenge is to make the jump from enrolment to instilling learning capability in children.

Are there specific factors that are causing such high drop out from schools?

Children dropping out from schools are high especially during the summer. Families migrate to Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh in search of work in this season.

Government of Karnataka has opened seasonal schools to facilitate the education of children from those families migrating within the state. Interstate migration leads to children being taken out of school. Another reason could also be that the education system itself does not develop adequate interest in children to attend schools.

If you look at the data, school dropout rates of girls are much higher than of boys. What, in your opinion, explains this disparity?

There is a social angle to it. Instances of child marriages have been reported in this area. We realise that the community prefers to get girls married at 13 or 14 years of age. We get the data from schools. When we analyse it, we see the pattern. We make our efforts to stop it. Here, if you ask some people aged between 40 to 50 years, you will see that most of them were married before 15 years. Once they get married, coming back to school would be next to impossible. The discrimination against girls is evident from the low child sex ratio in the district. Through schemes like Beti Bachao, Beti Pado, we are making our best efforts to change this trend.

In your opinion, what issues need to be addressed to change the poor education outcomes in the district?

My focus would primarily be on trying to reduce dropouts by creating a stake for children and parents in education. There is also a need to change the perception of education among children and families. There are programmes such as the provision for midday meals and Nalli Kali geared towards that objective. However, we really must look at how to make classroom learning more interesting. How do we create an environment that is more conducive for the student to learn? How do we improve the quality of teaching? How do we instil in teachers, a sense of satisfaction and pride about their work? This is the real challenge.

For girls, the government has asked us to focus on social barriers that prevent them from attending school. For instance, families distribute different types of sweet when a boy or a girl child is born. The sweet *peda* given to celebrate the birth of a boy is more expensive than *jilebi* distributed when a girl is born. It is this attitude, of placing a lower value on girls that needs to be broken.

Government programmes such as 'Beti Bachao Beti Pado' focus on addressing the discrimination against girls and ensuring that they complete school. Another example is the rural development programme, *Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana*, wherein

a Member of Parliament focuses on developing model villages in a district. As part of this initiative, we visit the villages, find out the enrolment rates in the schools, conduct social mapping, and raise awareness on the importance of education. We drive home the problem of as a much larger social issue than just that of drop out. Actions to address the problem of girls' education need to factor in social, educational, economic and even health related causes.

In your opinion, towards what direction should our efforts be channelled?

We should reach a point in time, where there is no discrimination on the basis of gender. I come from an education system, where I found girls outperforming boys in every exam. In the state level Common Entrance Tests for Engineering, more than 450 out of 1000 ranks went to girls. Close to 30% of those who cleared the UPSC exam in my batch were women including the top two ranks. Post training, some of them were posted in very difficult situations and they excelled in their jobs. I come from a family, where all my aunts and my own mother were working professionals. It is perplexing that the social divide is so huge in a place

that is just a few hundred kilometres away from big cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Solapur.

What gives you optimism to continue to strive towards change?

I see a lot of hope because I travel a lot and see young women from backward minority communities doing well. I see women doing well in their board exams. I feel proud and believe that they should be role models. This is the question that you should be asking them – what helped them do what they did? It is only a question of providing opportunities. No society can develop if it leaves its women behind.



90% of girls from Samata's tuition classes pass Class X

H. S. Srikantamurthy

Tutorial support for girls, who struggle to perform well at school, is a key programme component of Samata. In 2015, this has helped 90% of girls from the intervention villages to pass Class X. This initiative tackles the girls' vulnerability to drop out due to poor performance while incentivising their parents to continue to support their education.

Samata's outreach workers map out the tutorial needs by talking to the girls and assessing their mid-term performance in school. Tuition

teachers are identified in consultation with the local schools, SDMCs and parents. Girls in Class X undergo tuitions, mostly in Maths, English and Science, for four months. On Samata's insistence, the teachers conduct weekly and fortnightly tests to monitor progress and identify girls that need more help to perform better.

This year, Samata has organised tuitions for 47 batches of 275 and 225 girls in Classes X and IX across 40 villages. Seeing the positive outcomes of tutorials on girls' performance,

some schools, in collaboration with Samata, conduct special classes for Class X students. Encouraged by the impact of this initiative, teachers in few villages have volunteered to provide tuitions for an extra month. Sunil Shaha, a tuition teacher in Nevaragi village says, *"Seeing the interest of the adolescent girls in attending the classes and the encouragement given by the Samata staff, I am motivated to continue classes for an extra month. This is really a commendable work."*



My voice

"Girls have a right to be equal to boys and to study and work. We should exercise those rights. My parents are also very supportive. If I don't study well and get a job, I will have to do hard agricultural labour in the field. I will be dependent on the landowner to earn money. But if I am a professional, I can lead an independent life because I will get a salary and be paid on time."

Chandrakala Basavaraj Advani



Shegunashi village government makes a girl friendly school

Sujatha Hebba and Ramesh Sollapur

Shegunashi in Bijapur district is a model village for how a local government's active interest in developing the village school can change the future of children. The village has a population of 1750 with a 68% literacy rate and most of its residents are from the SC/ST community. The local school has classes only up to Class VIII and students have to travel to the neighbouring village to pursue their secondary education. The local government supported seven girls with bus passes so that they could make this journey to continue their education. Being one of Samata's

intervention villages, the teachers and SDMC members from the local school underwent the gender-training programme. Post training, they along with the village government members, parents, students and Samata staff chalked out a gender sensitive plan to turn their school into a girl friendly space. Building toilets, play grounds and a school compound wall emerged as the main demands.

The school authorities, with the help of Samata's outreach worker, requested the village government to include the school's demands to be included in the government's

Annual Action Plan. This would allow for funds to be released from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme budget. The local government after discussing the matter in their monthly meetings agreed to the school's request and sanctioned ₹ 5,00,000 for the construction of the playground and compound walls. The school has started to build Volleyball, Kabbadi and Kho-kho courts and school compound wall in April 2016. A visibly excited girl student reacted saying, "We (girls) feel confident and more safe as the compound wall is being built for our school."



Mothers and girls in Samata villages make the Women's Day celebrations special

H. S. Srikantamurthy

On 8 March 2016, 21 Samata villages celebrated the International Women's Day (IWD). The events were made special by the active participation of more than 1000 mothers of the adolescent girls that Samata works with. They shared their dreams for their daughters and interests in educating them. The president of the village government assured many of financial support for their daughters' education. The event honoured mothers who support their daughters' education. Women presidents and members of village governments, Anganwadi workers, and students encouraging education of girls from SC/ST community were encouraged to speak. The forum discussed issues of wife beating, importance of girls' education, and rights of children and women.



Local self governments, self help and youth groups, and community leaders contributed ₹ 35,000 in cash and kind and supported Samata in organising the event. Competitions such as lemon and spoon, musical chair and balloon and biscuit games made it fun for all those who were present.

Participation of Lambani women from the tribal community made the IWD celebrations in Balkundi hamlet in Bagalkot district special.



Project Update

Gautam Sudhakar

Period: June 2014 to March 2016

Indicators	Number	Indicators	Number
Girls who completed Parivartan Plus sessions	750	Teachers who underwent gender training	431
Girls trained in leadership	181	*SDMC members who underwent gender training	435
Discontinued girls identified	153	Schools with gender sensitive plans	64
Discontinued girls brought back to school	21	Schools with school safety committees	47
Dropped out girls identified	125	Schools using tracking tool	60
Dropped out girls brought back to school	14	Boys who completed Parivartan sessions	342
Girls who availed tuition support	432	Families and girls linked to social entitlements	984

*School Development Management Committee



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Priya Pillai edited and coordinated the production of this newsletter.

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

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

Raghavendra Gangavathi 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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