

SAMATA samachara



Samata recommends way forward for girls' education

Samata team from KHPT attended the Karnataka state consultations on the New Education Policy held on 17 October 2015. Raghavendra T, Project Director of Samata spoke about the barriers inside and outside of school that affect girls' education. He presented the recommendations on addressing gender norms, interdepartmental convergence within the government and increasing the compulsory age for education. Kimmame Ratnakar, the Minister for Primary and Secondary

Education sought data on girls' education, from Samata's research, to be shared at the forum. The report of the state conference

on adolescent girls' education, organised by KHPT under Samata, was distributed at the event and was well received.



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APPI team visits Samata project site

A team from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI) led by Azim Premji visited Samata's intervention village, Hadagali, in Bijapur on 18 November 2015. KHPT's Managing Trustee, Mohan H L, briefed the APPI team about the organisation's work. The team interacted with adolescent girls and boys groups, local government officials, parents and the project team.

Premji was pleasantly surprised at the slowly changing gender norms in Samata's villages, where adolescent boys had begun to help with household chores and changed their attitudes towards girls. The boys had begun to think



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critically on gender and thereby redefine their roles within their families and communities. He asked students about their vision for the future. One of the girls had this to

say, *“I want to be a doctor because there are hardly any health facilities in my village. I want to provide better health services within my village.”* When asked about his inspiration

to invest in philanthropy, Premji said, *“My mother taught me the value of helping the poor. I contribute to education because I believe students are nation’s assets.”*



Samata villages celebrate the girl child

KHPT celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC) 2015 under the Samata programme with a host of new activities. Five teams of 53 adolescent girls staged street plays in 21 villages in Bagalkot and Bijapur districts. A professional theatre artist worked along with the groups to script and direct the plays. The effort signalled the breaking of barriers in many ways – girls travelled across the district for their performance, many of them leaving home for the first time; families extended their support even in instances when their daughters returned home after midnight after their shows in other villages.

Girls from the Samata programme also used IDGC to claim public spaces and make their voices heard. A mixed group of 160 girls and 130 boys created street art on the walls of school compounds, *panchayat office* and community buildings. Girls reclaimed public spaces and created an opportunity for direct communication with their communities. Vivid images with messages of support for girls,

their education and life choices adorn the walls of 22 villages today. All the street plays and wall paintings are social commentaries on discrimination against girls, child marriage, girls’ education and social entitlements.

In addition, the outreach workers from Bagalkot district interviewed teachers, girls and their families, *Parivartan groups*, village leaders and school management members on the programme. As a testament to the support for Samata, the team mobilised ₹ 46, 000 from the communities for the events. Teachers, community leaders and village governments contributed in



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both kind and cash to encourage the participating girls. Their support became a show of solidarity to the cause of the girl child and her education championed by Samata since the last four years.



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My voice

“I do not wish to get married. I want to do well and prove that girls are as capable as boys of taking care of their families. I want to send a message to society that even girls can take care of themselves. I want to show that marriage is not necessary to achieve your aspirations.”

Priyamani Maleppa Hadapad



Shilpa is in school after a year of absence



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Fifteen-year-old Shilpa, in rural Karnataka, is a year older to her class nine friends in school. After class seven, she did not attend school for a year. She stayed at home, accompanied her mother to work, and got ready to marry her young uncle. Today, she is in class nine along with her younger sister Asha.

Shilpa lives with her parents and four siblings in a single room shack made of rusted asbestos sheets and mud. The family's assets - three bicycles, a handful of steel utensils, two trunks and a chair - fit into a corner of the house. The house is in Tikota, a village 25 km west from the district headquarters Bijapur. It is built on government land. The family can be evicted anytime.

Shilpa's parents Sita and Raju works as agricultural labourer son the vineyards. During the harvest season, typically from February to mid May, she earns ₹ 250 and Raju ₹ 300 in a day. During off-season, Raju assists the village mason and Sita, when she gets work, earns ₹ 100 a day. Shilpa has three sisters and a brother.

Sita's fifth pregnancy and weak health forced the family into bonded labour. Raju had insisted on having more children until they had a boy. Sita also did not want to be the woman in the community with no capacity to have a boy. The child who will care for her once all the daughters marry and leave. The child for whom the family worked day and night, for three years, without pay, to repay ₹ 54,000.

When Shilpa completed 7th standard, her mother took her out of school, put her younger sister Asha in a hostel and moved with all other children to her parents' house. It was difficult to make ends meet with all the children in school and her husband drinking daily. Eventually, Sita had to return, as in her community, 'once a girl is given away, she has to take care of herself.' In her attempts to be fair, Sita took Shilpa's younger sister Asha also out of school.

Vijayalakshmi, an always chirpy, determined outreach worker from Samata had Asha's name in the list of students to be diligently followed up to help complete 10th standard. When Vijayalakshmi visited Asha's house, she learnt that both Asha and her older sister, Shilpa had left school. Vijayalakshmi started visiting them regularly, sometimes upto five times a day when it was time for the school to reopen. She persuaded Sita to put her daughters back into school. Sita says, "We got irritated with her. She would say that its ok even if you don't give me a glass of water but let your girls go back to school."

But for Sita, it looked impossible. There was no Government Secondary School in the village. The private school fee of ₹ 5000 per annum for two children was unaffordable. All she could give was ₹ 1000. Vijayalakshmi said she would speak to the school and request them to waive the remaining fee. Sita, however, had one more condition. "The school should take in both my daughters. I will

not let one child be in school while the other stay at home."

Vijayalakshmi then met with Jagadish Patil, the management committee member of the A. B Jetty High School and made the case for admitting Shilpa and Asha. He readily agreed. He feels, "So many girls roam here and there and struggle with poverty. If we help someone today, someone else will help us another time. I told herto bring as many girls as she wants to be admitted into the school."

It is not that Sita did not believe in educating her daughters, "I know the importance of education. I wanted to go to school too but at the time, there was no money." The family is looking forward to daughters' completing school, "It is only because of Vijayalakshmi's help that our children are back in school."

However, the norms of marriage stay intact. Shilpa's wedding has been fixed with her mother's 21year old brother. They are saving for the wedding, want her to be married when they are in good health and can still make money. Vijayalakshmi spoke to the boy's family and has convinced them to let Shilpa complete 10th standard. Shilpa says she likes whichever man her parents choose. But she does not want to marry anytime soon. She had insisted on going back to school. She likes to read, write and play and wants to be a teacher and says, "It is important for girls to study and stand on their own feet. I will tell my parents to cancel my wedding and let me study till I become a teacher."



Project Update

Gautam Sudhakar

Period: June 2014 to November 2015

Indicators	Number	Indicators	Number
Discontinued girls identified	122	Teachers trained	407
Dropped out girls identified	71	*SDMC members trained	331
Discontinued girls brought back	69	Boys who attended Parivartan sessions	356
Dropped out girls brought back	23	Girls who attended Parivartan Plus sessions	216

*School Development Management Committee



Acknowledgement

Priya Pillai edited and coordinated the production of this newsletter.

Editorial Team: Raghavendra. T, H. S. Srikantamurthy, 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, 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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