


# CREATING VILLAGE CHAMPIONS FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION



## INTERVENTION BRIEF – SAMATA: KEEPING GIRLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

 I got married at the age of 15 and my wife was just 7 or 8 years old. But I agreed to Bharti's wedding under pressure from the family. I got the courage to cancel it seeing the determination of my daughter, and [outreach worker] Jayashri-madam's encouragement to let her study and warning me against child marriage. Now my daughters go regularly to school."

RAMACHANDRAPPA BAGALI, FATHER OF AARTI AND BHARTI, BIJAPUR

Families, communities and village governments are often the key decision-makers regarding girls' lives. They can also be the most difficult to persuade in terms of delaying girls' marriages. Their support can ensure that changes initiated by Samata are sustained well after the end of the programme.

### In what ways does the Samata team engage with the community?

#### 1. Outreach to families

Outreach workers (ORWs) and supervisors gather families at one place in a village, once every three months. For each gathering, the ORW chooses one issue for discussion. The usual topic is child marriage, social norms, girl child education or social entitlements. The ORW may include an activity related to the topic or she may describe an experience from her own life.

#### 2. Street plays

Groups of girls from the programme perform street theatre on themes such as child marriage, girl child education, poverty and social norms. The ORW in charge of the cluster of villages selects the girls to participate in the street play group. The Samata team work with a professional theatre director to develop the scripts. The theatre director stays in the village and trains the girls over ten days. After the training, the girls do a mock session in one of the villages in the cluster. Later, they stage the play in each village.

The community learns of the upcoming performance from the panchayat and drum announcements in the village at least two days beforehand. Gathering the community and then the actual staging take place between 4.30 and 7.00pm.

#### 3. Wall art

Girls draw and write messages supporting girls' education on the walls of schools, panchayat offices and community centres. The walls carry messages against discrimination against girls and child marriage, and for girls' education and social entitlements. Curious community members gather around while the girls paint. This opens up the opportunity for discussion and interaction between the girls and members of the community.

#### 4. Community events

Families and village communities participate in the celebrations on the International Day of the Girl Child and Women's Day. These are held either at a venue in the district or in a chosen village within the cluster. ORWs and male mentors mobilise participants, with the help of adolescent girls and boys involved in the Samata programme.

At these events, parents who support their daughters' education are hailed as champions in their villages and given a platform to speak out. Also, to encourage girls' education are women presidents and members of village governments (*panchayats*), Anganwadi workers and students from the community of scheduled castes and tribes (SC/ST). Discussions in these forums highlight problem issues such as wife beating, as well as the importance of girls' education and the rights of children and women.

#### 5. Leveraging government partnerships

To strengthen its activities, Samata leverages programme partnerships with village, block and district governments.

Village level: ORWs lead efforts with panchayats, self-help and youth groups. Areas of focus include:

- ensuring that panchayats use the mandated 22% of their government budget for education
- persuading the School Development Management Committees (SDMCs) to develop school infrastructure
- partnering with community groups to conduct training for girls and boys
- enlisting support for programme events

**Block level:** The ORW Supervisor and the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) lead efforts to liaise with the Departments of Education and of Social Welfare and Women and Child Development.

Areas of focus include:

- providing scholarships and hostel facilities for girls
- mobilising teachers for training
- ensuring proper functioning of the SDMCs
- addressing reported issues of teacher conduct in the classrooms such as discrimination or harassment of students

**District level:** The DPC and the Deputy Project Director lead efforts to communicate with senior officials of the Departments of Education and of Social Welfare and Women and Child Development. Areas of focus include:

- getting approval for teacher and SDMC training
- accessing hostel admissions for adolescent girls
- creating awareness
- raising support for the Samata programme within the government



#### FATHER MIGRATES TO SEND HIS DAUGHTERS TO SCHOOL

Yamunawa and Shivappa are parents to 15-year-old Renuka. They live in Managuli, one of the intervention villages, where Renuka is part of the Parivartan group. She has two younger sisters and one younger brother. Currently, Shivappa works as a Supervisor in a mill nearby and gets paid between Rs.12–14,000 each month while Yamunawa works as a casual labourer with an insecure income. After participating in Samata and with the ORW engaging with them and their parents, Renuka and her sisters want to continue their education beyond Class 10. Earlier, their parents were not in favour of this. However, after discussions and reflecting on their own state of penury as a result of their lack of education, Shivappa has decided to migrate to Delhi for better opportunities so he can use the money to educate his daughters. Although this is going to split the family, Shivappa and his wife explain their resolve: *“Our parents could not do this for us, give us these opportunities. Look at us now. We want to do this for our children. If they get education, they will progress, they won’t suffer like us.”* They do not see the financial investment into their daughters’ education as a waste as they believe that ultimately higher education will translate into a better life for their daughters.

## How does Samata track the work with the community?

The Samata team maintains an event register to record all public events conducted under Samata, together with information about the number of participants, the agenda and the outcome of each event.

From 2013 to 2015, the Samata programme:

- raised 1.05 million INR from the community
- held 69 events with 17,515 participants
- organised 267 community meetings



#### LEVERAGING GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP YIELDS BENEFITS FOR THE SCHOOL

Shegunashi in Bijapur district is a model village: it demonstrates how a local government’s active interest in developing the local school can improve the future of its children. The village has a population of 1,750 with a 68% literacy rate. Most residents are from the SC/ST community. The local school has classes only up to Class 8 so students have to travel to the neighbouring village for secondary education. The *panchayat* 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 participated in the gender-training programme. Afterwards, they worked with the *panchayat* members, parents, students and Samata staff to design a gender-sensitive plan to transform 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 ORW, requested the *panchayat* to include the school’s demands in the government’s Annual Action Plan, to allow for funds to be released from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The *panchayat* agreed and allocated Rs. 5,00,000 for the requested construction. As the school began building, a visibly excited girl student said, *“We girls feel confident and more safe with a compound wall.”*

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