

SAMATA samachara



Leading political parties pledge support for girls' education and Samata



A state-level conference, 'Keeping Girls in Secondary Schools: Successes and Challenges' held in Dharwad, Karnataka, from 20–21 June 2015, by Karnataka Health Promotion Trust gathered support for girls' education and Samata. Sri Kimmane Ratnakar, Minister for Primary and Secondary Education, Karnataka noted the low education levels of girls in north Karnataka, and said, "...education levels in North Karnataka, especially those of girls, are very low. The Department of Education has to work together with the NGOs to provide girls with a safe environment and extensive opportunities."

Sri Arvind Bellad, Member of Legislative Assembly, said North Karnataka needed efforts such as Samata that addressed the link between HIV and education and said, "Persuading the importance of education upon girls and women is key as education opens the door for employment and can reduce

discrimination. It is an instrument for social change."

Sri Basavaraj Horatti, Member of Legislative Council and former Minister of Education concurred that the age of compulsory education under RTE need to be raised to 18 years. He extended support to Samata's efforts in preventing child marriage in North Karnataka. Sri Jagadish Shettar, Leader of the

Opposition in Karnataka Assembly sought comparative data on girls' education in North, Northeast and South Karnataka for discussions in the Assembly.

Over 300 participants from the Department of Education, senior Karnataka Administrative Service officers, civil society groups and technical experts participated in the event.

Vijayapura DDPI commits to take action at the conference

Influenced by the debates at the conference, S S Biradar, DDPI, Vijayapura pledged to take up various measures to further adolescent girls' education, such as:

- Filling up the vacant teacher posts as per the RTE guidelines that mandate a teacher student ratio of 1:30
- Starting hostels for girls in areas where migration is prominent
- Opening seasonal schools and appointing separate teachers to these schools
- Improving sanitation and running water facilities in schools
- Organising community friendly programmes to improve community participation in girls' education
- Organising tuition classes for the academically weak girl students



Adolescent girl leaders from Samata voice their concerns at the conference



Adolescent girl leaders from Samata raised pertinent questions on education infrastructure and quality to officials at the event. Akshata from Tikota village asked, "Girls and boys who have passed school are unable to read and write. Why

has there been no action to change this scenario?" Deepa from Hadagali village spoke about not getting her scholarship on time despite submitting the necessary documents and asked what needs to be done next. Yashoda from Adagal village

shared her concerns, "The toilet facility in the school is not proper. There is no water and it is very uncomfortable for us. It is the only toilet in the school for boys and girls."



Hippargi boys stop teasing girls and support them to attend school

Priya Pillai, Savitri Jagadaland, Mahadev Dunddappagor



A year ago, Hanumantha, an affable, young adolescent boy from Hippargi village thought it was fun and harmless to whistle at girls, sing songs or throw stones at the water pots carried by them. Today, he tells us about learning how teasing disrespects the girl, is not enjoyable for her and of slowly realising the idea of 'equal rights' for girls. He is proud to talk about the change, "We live on the outskirts of the village, in the middle of a field. My grandfather and father never allowed women in the family to study. After coming to the classes by Samata, I convinced them to send my seven-year-old sister to school. We may not be able to let her continue studying till higher

classes, but she can be independent and at least, help her family."

All his friends around had a story of change to tell us. Sangmesh does not take photos of girls anymore and helps his mother at home, changing in the process the idea of household chores being women's work, "Earlier, I never even thought of helping my mother or sister in their work. I bring water if my mother is washing clothes, cut vegetables for cooking and go to the flourmill. I am even ready to wash vessels because I want to change the thinking that washing vessels is only done by women. But in my house they won't allow me to do that."

Each of the fourteen boys was eager to say their bit. Kiran brooms his house, Sangappa has stopped asking girls if they want a ride on his bike, Avinash has stopped insulting his teachers, Prahlad and Abhishek do not lie during games, Sagar follows rules of the game, Akash does not steal money and Ajay helps his mother at home. They were happy about who they had become.

What about your girl friends at school? Praveen spoke for the group saying, "In schools, during the time for games, we used to tease girls saying that 'what can you play?', 'don't use the ground', 'we play better', 'you cannot

play for longer time'. We now think that girls can also play for equal time, can play any game and just as good as boys. We have started supporting girls. We never used to give volleyball to girls but now we do."

How did the change happen?

"We started playing Kabbadi together everyday. Sanju sir mentors us. When we are coached, we are taught not just to play well but also play fair. We come on time and are disciplined. After the game, we spend time with each other talking. Sanju sir discusses with us about teasing and gossiping about girls and tells us how it is disrespectful to them. We would not like it if it happened to women in our family. Why would we do it to other women?"

How can someone telling you about a bad habit, actually change it? The boys then speak personal and their heart, "If the person who tries to convince us is good, then we will change fast. Sanju sir tells us very realistic stories; is never rude to us; does not scold us, is very patient and repeatedly tells us to change. Most times, 'teaching' happens in the classroom or in the playground. But Sanju sir looks out for us even outside the sessions. We feel cared for."

Sanju Vittal Kamble joined Samata as a mentor for the adolescent boys in Hippargi village to train them in Parivartan programme. Parivartan mobilises rural boys into sports groups. The coach becomes a role model for the boys, channelling



My voice

"Girls should go to school, do well, and prove that they are as smart as boys. If I do well at school, then my family will support me in achieving my dreams. There is discrimination at home, hence its important that girls go to school and prove themselves as capable so that their families see the need to invest in them."

Ashwini Shreeshaila Kolkar

positive messages about gender, helping them to challenge masculine stereotypes, violence and attitudes about women. Sanju says, "I was not a very good person myself. The mentors training from Samata taught me to reflect on what happens in the society. I thought about the discrimination that my forefathers underwent as a Scheduled Caste and faced by women. I don't want that to happen again. When I came to Samata, I had seen very many women who were beaten up by their drunken husbands, men using cigarettes to hurt women, and sexual abuse. How will I live in a society where all men do these things? If I change, then I can be an inspiration to others too. As a mentor, my first responsibility is to change myself."

We ask the group if other boys don't tease them for doing girls' activities?

"Other boys make fun of us but we don't bother. Now, other boys are waiting to get into our group. We don't want to go anywhere. Earlier, we used to be told individually but the group makes a difference. If only one person changes at a time, then he will made fun of but if we change as a group, then nobody will make fun of us." says Sangmesh.

There has definitely been a change and others from the village vouch for it. Shravan who is not a member of the group and had joined our discussion, shares his joy and surprise "Earlier, I never thought of playing with these boys but I can see considerable changes in the boys after the group. They used to swear on each other's mother while playing but now they don't. I am now thinking of starting a sports club in the village."



Gallery of photos from the conference





Project Update

Gautam Sudhakar

Period: June 2014 to May 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,
Vanishri, Kumar Vadde

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

Raghavendra Gangavathi translated the newsletter into Kannada.

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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