

SAMATA samachara



Let every girl go to school



P A Meghannavar IAS
District Collector, Bagalkot

Education is the right of every child. Parents feel that there are no returns on investment in educating their daughters. Instead, they think of it as a liability, as they have to eventually spend on their daughters' marriage and related expenses such as dowry. However, this is a wrong notion and stems from the pervasive discrimination towards girls.

Girls are not a burden to the family or society. They are responsible actors of our society and should be educated. In fact, girls put more sincere efforts towards their studies and should be supported and encouraged. The scenario is changing gradually. People have started realising the importance of girl child education. Personally, I favour my daughter as she comes out with wonderful performance in school. It is high time that each and every girl is able to realise her right to education.



Government of Karnataka supports Samata

Raghavendra. T

On 3 February 2015, Samata team met with Mr. Veeranna G. Turamuri, Additional Commissioner, Department of Education, Dharwad Division and explained Samata's intervention and evaluation purpose and plans and requested for his support.

Recognising the importance of Samata's efforts in encouraging girls' education,

he has issued a letter asking the Deputy Directors of Public Instruction (DDPIs) of Bagalkot and Bijapur districts to support the programme.

Samata thanks the Government of Karnataka for extending its support to promote girls education and looks forward to a successful collaboration.



8 March is International Women's Day

Priya Pillai

Every year, 8 March is celebrated globally as the International Women's Day (IWD) for realising women's rights. The United Nations first began observing IWD in 1975.

Programmes, across the globe, use this day to build support for and celebrate the economic, political and social achievements of ordinary women. It is a day to pledge our support to women's equal participation in all aspects of life and to recognise gender equality as central to community development.

Samata, through its efforts to keep girls in school, is working towards a world wherein girls can exercise their freedom and choices to go to school, live a life free from violence and have equal opportunities to realise their aspirations.

This year, Samata will mobilise around 300 girls and their mothers, in district level conventions held in Bijapur and Bagalkot, to celebrate IWD. Experience sharing by women who have achieved success in social and public arenas and discussions on women's empowerment will mark the events.



Aadagal Gram Panchayat helps girls go to school

Tejaswini Hiremath



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Renuka Hadapad, the outreach worker (ORW) of Samata, regularly visited the SC/ST families in Aadagal to encourage them to send their daughters to school. Last August, she had parents telling her that they found the expenses of school bags and notebooks for their school going girls difficult to afford.

Renuka knew that solutions to local problems are best found through harnessing local partnerships. She approached the Aadagal Gram Panchayat Development Officer with a request to get the bags for these girls. On his advice, she presented on the need for supporting these families at the panchayat meeting and followed up the matter with them for two months. Finally, the panchayat distributed school bags to 65 SC/ST girls in a public function held on the Republic Day.

Thanks to the panchayat's help, Konappa Tigelannavar, whose daughter is in class 9, feels happy, "We have three children, and we do coolie work and can afford to send only our youngest daughter to school. Such support makes us send our children to school".



Ramachandrappa Bagali chooses education over marriage for his daughter

Priya Pillai and Jayasree P Kumbar

Ramachandrappa Bagali's family, in Nivaragi village in Bijapur, is large with six girls and one boy. The family cultivates sugarcane and peanuts in their five-acre land. The two older daughters did not complete school and are married. However, Ramachandrappa cancelled the wedding of one of his twin daughters, Bharti, to let her continue in school.

The family fixed Bharti's wedding to her cousin when she was in class 9. Ramachandrappa could not refuse when his sister asked for his daughter to be married to one of her sons. Bharti was considered lucky for the family, they needed a son to take care of the family assets, marrying Bharti and her older sister to the same family would save wedding related expenses and his sister's son's disability had made it difficult to find alliances for him from elsewhere.

Bharti though was keen to study. She refused to agree to the marriage saying, "my friends will tease me for marrying young" and threatening to



© Priya Pillai for KHPT

die if they went ahead with the plan. However, the family found it difficult to go back on their commitment.

Jayasree, Samata's outreach worker, got to know about this and acted soon. She visited Bharti's house discouraging her parents from proceeding with the wedding plans. She encouraged them

to let Bharti complete school and informed them about the law against child marriage.

Finally, after seven visits in ten days by Jayasree and Bharti's increasing determination bolstered by Jayasree's support, her family agreed to cancel the wedding.

Ramachandrappa Bagali had done the unusual and unthinkable – calling off his daughter’s wedding to let her pursue education. *“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 on pressure from the family. I got the courage to cancel it seeing the determination of my daughter, and Jayasree madam’s encouragement to let her study and warning me against child marriage. Now my daughters go regularly to school.”*

Ramachandrappa overcame resistance from his own family and defied the norms of his community to let his daughter study.

My voice

“I want to be a District Collector. In the tele serial Bangara, the lead character is a collector and a strong and resilient woman. I want to be like her, capable of handling any crisis in my life. Girls who go to school are treated with respect and taken seriously by the elders in the village. Those out of school are ignored and their voices are not heard. I want to move up in life, take care of my family and send my younger siblings to school.”

Yellamma Peerappa Chalvadi



Teacher training encourages schools to rethink gender norms

Sridevi Shahpur, Sarojini Roti, Kumar Vadde

Can training teachers change the way students view each other’s abilities? That’s exactly what happened after seven teachers from the District Banjara Education Society High School in Atharga village in Bijapur underwent gender training by Samata.

Till September 2014, boys and girls in the school never played together. Outdoor sports were considered as a boys’ activity. However, the gender training by Samata made the teachers aware about the unconscious ways in which they discriminate against girls. The teachers were quick to act after learning about the importance of providing equal opportunities for boys and girls. They spoke to the school management who was very receptive. They then introduced the idea of girls and boys playing together to the students, who discussed it with their parents.

At first, girls and boys were surprised and hesitant to play together.

They had never considered this a possibility. Boys said, *“We rarely played with the girls and always thought that outdoor sports are only for boys. But they can also play just like us. They have to be given opportunities.”* For girls, it was much more and they felt, *“Great! Now we get more importance in other school activities too because they see*

that we can do what boys do...it will help address gender discrimination.”

Samata’s gender training had helped initiate this change. S.B.Jangowdar, the headmaster, feels, *“First, we need to change ourselves as teachers and then our families. Once we get the experience, it is easy for us to initiate it in the school.”*



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Project Update

Gautam Sudhakar

Period: June to December 2014

Indicators	Number	Indicators	Number
Discontinued girls identified	88	Teachers trained	304
Dropped out girls identified	54	*SDMC members trained	126
Discontinued girls brought back	54	Boys who attended Parivartan sessions	511
Dropped out girls brought back	17	Girls who attended Parivartan Plus sessions	291

*School Development Management Committee



Acknowledgement

Priya Pillai edited and coordinated the production of this newsletter.

Editorial Team: Raghavendra T, H.S. Srikantamurthy, Tejaswini Hiremath, 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 has been 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 was 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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