

MENTORING ADOLESCENT BOYS TO REDUCE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



INTERVENTION BRIEF – SAMATA: KEEPING GIRLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL



Before, we teased girls. Now, we encourage them to be in school and to play volleyball. We have started to believe that girls can also play any game, for as long as and as well as boys. We have started supporting them.”

ADOLESCENT BOYS, PARIVARTAN GROUP, HIPPARGI VILLAGE

Samata mobilises adolescent boys into sports groups, with a designated male mentor for each group. The mentor delivers messages on respectful, healthy relationships, encouraging boys to abandon harmful stereotypes and support the rights of adolescent girls to a life free of violence and abuse.

The name of these groups, ‘Parivartan’, meaning transformation, reflects the purpose for which they were

formed: to change gender norms within their communities. Through play and discussions, the boys begin to realise that:

- strength is not violence
- competitiveness does not equal fighting
- being punctual is to respect others’ time
- cheating is not acceptable strategy
- aggression in the form of abusive language, does not make good players or good men

According to the theory of change that underlies the Samata programme, one important factor in keeping girls in school is to reduce gender-based violence by their male peers. This brief explains how Samata works with adolescent boys.

What is the key intervention for boys?

The Samata team use Parivartan, a programme to shift gender norms among adolescent boys through sports training by local male mentors. Young adolescent boys are gathered into groups around a popular local team sport. The training module adapted from the Parivartan programme for boys developed by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). A total of 89 groups have been formed across two districts.

Which boys are chosen to participate in Samata?

Boys who participate in the intervention:

- come from scheduled caste and tribe communities in Samata intervention villages
- live in the neighbourhood of adolescent girls who are part of Samata
- are in the age group of 12 to 29 years
- may or may not be in school

How are the mentors selected and trained?

The mentors are young men in the village who believe in social change and are interested in sport. At first, they are randomly selected from a large pool and given one round of gender training. Those who continue to be interested after the training are officially recruited as mentors. In the ten days of training, conducted in three phases, mentors learn about gender, violence reduction and strategies to work with adolescent boys. A total of 82 men have been trained as mentors.



PARIVARTAN CHANGES HANUMANTHA'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS GIRLS

Hanumantha, an adolescent boy from Hippargi village, used to think it was harmless fun to whistle at girls, sing teasing songs to them or throw stones at the water pots they carried. Today, he has learned that teasing disrespects a girl and is not enjoyable for her at all. He has slowly come to realise the idea of ‘equal rights’ for girls and 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 Samata sessions, I convinced them to send my seven-year-old sister to school.”*



How are boys mobilised?

Male mentors, mobilise the group of boys with the help of the Samata outreach workers (ORW). The ORW help the mentors to build rapport with the boys and, together with the programme supervisor, monitor and help to finalise the selection of boys to take part.

What is a typical Parivartan session?

The boys gather as a group once a week for a game of *Kabaddi*, volley ball or cricket in the village ground. Each group comprises between 15 and 20 boys, with an age difference of no more than two years between them.

The mentor trains the group in the chosen sport. He observes and identifies examples of boys' aggressive behaviour or language during the game. Each incident become a teachable moment, an opportunity to discuss gender and values such as strength, respect, ethics and 'fair play'. Every alternate week, the mentor leads discussion sessions as detailed in the training module. Sessions are interactive, augmented by storytelling, both real and fictional, that allows the boys to reflect and articulate on key issues.

Sixteen sessions, held in school or at the community centre, are completed over 32 weeks. Once the training of one group

in a village is completed, the mentor forms another group to be trained. By late 2016, a total of 1,571 boys had participated in the training.

In what other ways does Samata engage with boys?

1. Open forum discussions are held between Parivartan trained boys and Parivartan Plus trained girls. The ORW or the Supervisor facilitates these discussions at least once a month, at the village school or community centre. The aim is to create a cohesive, complementary force for change in the village.
2. Boys collaborate with the Samata team in organising events such as Girls' and Women's Day celebrations, street plays and community discussions. They help in mobilising donations in cash or kind, logistics and publicity. This gives public expression to their support for girls and girls' education.
3. A sports tournament marked the completion of Parivartan training by boys groups from different villages. At the prize giving ceremony, boys share personal stories of change and their learning from the training. A total of ten teams from Bijapur and Bagalkot participated in the tournament.



SANJU LEARNS TO REFLECT ON HIS BEHAVIOUR AFTER MENTOR'S TRAINING

Sanju Vittal Kamble joined Samata as a Parivartan mentor for the adolescent boys in Hippargi village, Bagalkot district. He says, *"I was not a very good person myself. The mentor 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 the discrimination that women face. I don't want that to continue. When I joined, 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."*



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