

SAMATA samachara



Community and local government together keep girls in school

Shabana Kurundwad, Vijayalaxmi and H. S. Srikanta Murthy



VC members with the family of a girl who was brought back to school



VC members engaging with the school to reduce the admission fee

In Samata's intervention villages, there is a slow and growing people's movement to keep girls in school. Convinced about the need to sustain Samata's outcomes even after the project ends, community and the programme team formed Vigilance Committees (VCs). Girls from Parivartan groups, other young, married and unmarried women in the village, community health workers (ASHAs and Anganwadi workers) and local government representatives form a 15 member committee. The VCs strongly believe in the right of girls to education. They meet monthly to take stock of girls in school especially those who have dropped out and are vulnerable to being married early. Being part of the village community, good rapport with the school administration and regular

conversations with Samata outreach workers help them to gather timely intelligence on these issues. There are now 29 VCs with 531 members across 29 villages.

The VCs have been active in resolving girls' problems in their villages. In Tikota village, five girls dropped out of school due to pressure from their families and their inability to pay the admission fee. The VCs met with the family, motivated them to rethink their decisions and convinced the school to reduce the fee. Today, all five girls are back in school. Elsewhere, in a tribal hamlet in Balkundi, sending Arathi to school was too difficult for her grandmother, as she struggled to make ends meet with no earning family member. The VCs assured the grandmother with help to fund

Arathi's education, and encouraged the Anganwadi teachers to supply extra food to the family. She is today happy to be back in school with her friends.

The VC members' own personal experiences motivate them to be agents of change. Shabana, an ASHA in Tikota village says, *"My mother chose my brother over me for school. I was married early, when I was 16 years old. My marriage fell apart due to problems from my husband. I decided to take control of my life, finished school and got a job as an ASHA. I stand on my own two feet now. Today, my mother often says that she should have sent me to school instead of my brother. I know the problems of girls. I can really motivate and help them to complete school."*



Samata engages with the government to take its work forward

Uma Patil, Parimala Patil and H S Srikanta Murthy

“Samata’s focus on working with the children from Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SC/ST) is the need of the hour. The outreach workers’ efforts have brought girls, who discontinued and dropped out, back to school. The teachers’ training, and the simultaneous work with girls and boys in the village, have together created a gender sensitive and enabling school environment for girls to study. The Lambani tribal hamlet, with high rates of migration and disabling gender norms, is one of the toughest areas to work. Its commendable that the team works with families there.”

- Deputy Directors of Public Instruction (DDPIs), Bagalkot district

Schools are an important stakeholder group in the fight for girls’ education. Samata brought together headmasters of all 69 high schools and higher primary schools in its intervention districts. The meetings were held on 21 July 2016 in Bijapur and 15 September 2016 in Bagalkot. Deputy Directors of Public Instruction (DDPIs), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Block Resource Centre (BRC) Coordinators, Block Education Officers (BEO) and subject

teachers participated in the event. Presentations on Samata’s activities in the schools and the progress so far were followed by discussions with the education department officials. It centred on issues of child marriage, migration and lack of parental interest in children’s education.

The team sought feedback from the headmasters (HMs) on four key aspects: impact of Samata in supporting them to keep girls in schools, the usefulness of Samata’s tracking tool in monitoring girls attendance, performance and continuation in school, ways to strengthen the school safety committees, and further ideas to collaborate with the school to minimise school drop out of girls. The HMs spoke about the prevailing gender norms that force girls to leave school. Schools which used the tracking tool found it helpful. The HMs requested Samata to further build capacities of the safety committee members. Some of the HMs suggested the formation of village level bodies to sustain Samata’s efforts specifically on preventing child marriage and school drop out of girls.

H. K. Gonal, DDPI, Bagalkot district, openly expressed his support

for the programme, *“Samata is our programme and not just another NGO programme. KHPT works closely with the education department to help us be more effective with our work. Extend all cooperation to the team. The village contexts are very challenging to work in and Samata’s collaboration with the schools have helped us do better. I will personally visit your schools to see the programme’s contributions.”*

The BEOs and HMs thanked Samata for the opportunity to interact with the senior officials, inform them about the issues faced by schools and programme’s impact on their work. The HM of Lokapura High School said, *“Gender sensitive training for the school development committee (SDMC) members and teachers have changed the way our school functions. Today, we have a gender action plan and are working towards making the school more friendly and safe for girls.”* Nandanur, RMSA Coordinator, Bagalkot said, *“Samata’s contribution has strengthened the capacities and functioning of SDMC and safety committees.”*

The expression of support from the higher officials boosted the morale of teachers and district and village level officials.



Samata’s presentation at the meeting



Discussion and feedback session with the headmasters



My voice

“I was irregular to school. I was not able to complete my homework or concentrate on my studies. So, I thought to leave school. My parents also decided to discontinue my education. But, changes started happening in my life after joining Parivartan groups. I realised the importance of education and got the courage to discuss my education and future with my parents. I know well that if I had not changed my thinking on education, my life would have been very different.”

- Laxmibai Madar, Class X, Sulebavi village



‘Becoming Our Better Selves’, adolescent boys share stories of change

Ramesh Sollapur, Sarojini Rotti and Parimala Patil



The tournament champions, Krantiveera Sangollirayanna Parivartan group, Kulageri village



Parivartan teams participating in the cricket tournament

“In our Lambani hamlet, there is no value for girls’ education. All of us in the Parivartan group thought the same. But the Parivartan sessions made a lot of difference in our thinking. Today, we take the lead in motivating the girls who have dropped out to get back to school. We have convinced two families to resend their girls to school. It feels good.”

- Banjara Bulldozers group, Balkundi hamlet, Bagalkot district

Samata’s Parivartan programme has focused on shifting disempowering gender attitudes and behaviours among adolescent boys through a sports intervention. Boys’ groups in the villages are taught values of equality, fairness, empathy,

and helpfulness through trainings in Cricket and Kabbadi. In the last two years, Samata along with male mentors formed 93 Parivartan groups with 1646 boys across 69 villages. Boys who completed the sessions expressed their desire to demonstrate their learnings and share about their personal journeys of change on a community platform.

Samata organised a tournament, where 10 teams from Bijapur and Bagalkot districts competed to win a game of cricket. Village communities fully supported the event and contributed ₹ 1.25 lakhs in cash and kind. The game saw no use of unnecessary aggression or expletives marking a definite change from how the boys interacted with each other

before Parivartan. The teammates helped each other and played with joy.

Post the event, boys shared their stories of change. They support their sisters and mothers at home, encourage their girl classmates to participate equally in all activities, and have stopped using bad language with their friends. Santosh Hallidamani, from Dada Parivartan group in Bijapur says, *“I was not interested in Parivartan when the mentor approached me. But my friend Vinod motivated me to join the sessions. I am now a proud member of the group. I convinced my family to send my sister to school and today, help the outreach workers to mobilise community support for Samata’s initiatives in my village.”*



Project Update

Gautam Sudhakar

Period: June 2014 to September 2016

Indicators	Number	Indicators	Number
Girls who completed Parivartan Plus sessions	998	Teachers Trained	431
Girls who are currently undergoing sessions	428	*SDMC members trained	435
Girls trained in leadership	480	Schools developed gender plans	64
Discontinued girls identified	257	Schools have gender sensitive committees	50
Dropped out girls identified	185	Schools using tracking tools	62
Discontinued girls brought back	110	Boys who completed Parivartan sessions	755
Dropped out girls brought back	37	Boys in Parivartan sessions	427
Girls linked to social entitlements	1569	Families linked to social entitlements	406
Girls availed tuition support	1150	Girls/Women Vigilance committees formed	37

*School Development Management Committee



Acknowledgement

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Editorial Team: Raghavendra. T., H. S. Srikantamurthy, Uma Patil, Kumar Vadde

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

Shamshuddin Bajpe 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, ViiV Healthcare, 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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