

SAMATA samachara



Women play and cross-dress to be bold for change

H S Srikantamurthy



International Women Day

Ask a group of people in rural India to draw someone who lifts weights or is a mechanic. It is likely to be a man with chiselled muscles or wearing a vest with black grease stains. More than 1000 women, in rural Bagalkot and Bijapur, came together to shatter this image, assert their strength and celebrate the 2017 International Women's Day theme of **'Be Bold for Change'**.

The Female Vigilance Committees (FVC) formed by Samata in its intervention villages organised sports competition in Weightlifting, Shot Put, *Lagori*, *Goti*, and Cycling. The initial hesitation to play in front of

the large group of people, who had gathered to watch, gave away when few women came forward. One of the participants of the Weightlifting competition had this to say, "We always do not believe in our strengths but today, we lifted 25 to 50 kg sack bags easily. Women have the power and we want to send the message to our community." Sports was fun and people watched. But when women cross-dressed as a Driver, Conductor, Lawyer, Soldier, Mechanic, and Doctor, it started conversation. Men and women asked, "Why are you dressed like this?". Participants saw this as an opportunity to get their message across, "Women are equal to

men. They can work just as men can and do all that they do."

The 2017 IWD was a collaborative effort. Members of FVC led the organising of the event, raising money and meeting with local government and other departments and self help groups. Local community institutions contributed ₹1,00,000 in cash and kind to the programme. Girls and boys from Parivartan groups, Male Vigilance Committee members and ASHAs and Anganwadi workers and local government institutions supported the event. A total of 1237 women, 410 adolescent girls, and 188 men participated.



Local government use budget funds to keep girls in school

Anjana Hugar, Ramesh Sollapur

Can an education programme influence local governance priorities to keep girls in school? The Vice President of Shivanagi village in Vijayapura district, S Badekar, would say yes, “*When it was brought to my notice (by Samata team) that many of the poor scheduled caste and tribe (SC/ST) girls did not have money to continue their education, I discussed this matter in the local government meeting, and was able to get the necessary funds sanctioned. I am happy that the funds are properly utilised and girls are going regularly to school*”. Till sometime back, 20% of the Local Government budget earmarked for improving educational needs of the children was used to conduct events or construct flag poles or platforms in schools. For the Samata team, this was money that could keep girls from the SC/

ST families in school than in the agricultural field as labourers.

The team met with the School Development and Management Committee, where Mr.Badekar was a member, to bring to their notice that government aided schools did not meet all expenses of their students. Girls were irregular at school and going to work to raise money for their uniforms, note books, and to get a bus pass to travel to school. This affected their performance, which in turn increased the likelihood of them dropping out of school. Convinced about the need to respond immediately, Mr.Badekar raised the issue in the next

General Body meeting of the Local Government, which sanctioned ₹26, 930/- to help 22 girls studying in government aided schools.

Enthused by the success of an effective collaboration with local institutional stakeholders, Samata teams has spread its advocacy efforts with Local Governments in all its intervention villages for better utilisation of their budgets. The response has been positive with many of them coming forward to help girls stay in school.



Grampanchayath



Parivartan girls learn about life and history in Mysore

Uma Patil, Kumar Vadde, H.S.Srikantamurthy

Hundred adolescent girl leaders from Parivartan groups travelled to Mysore on an educational exposure trip. They spent three days in the city learning about managing adolescent girl issues, personality development, career building and exam preparation for Class X. The days were filled with workshops facilitated by experts, who engaged the girls in conversations, games, knowledge sharing and stories from their own lives. Girls shared their problems in daily life, and learnt about how to cope with them, whether in school or at home or in the community. Facilitators gave situational examples that made these issues real and easy to relate to. A school Head Master spoke to the girls on preparing well for the exam using SQ3R method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review). He encouraged them to face lives

with courage, and study to prepare themselves for life and not just pass the examination. In the afternoons and on the third day of the visit, girls visited historical places in the city like the Mysore Palace, Art Gallery, museums, reservoir, temples, Mysore Garden and monuments. For the girls, most of whom have hardly travelled outside their villages, this was a new experience in many ways.

Seeing the world beyond their villages, interacting with other communities, and learning about ways of lives different from their own, the girls came back richer with experiences and stories to share, in school and homes. Their schools invited them to speak

to their friends giving them an often hard fought and won opportunity to be leaders and role models. Savitri, Revathi’s mother, had this to say, “*I am proud to hear from my daughter that she is able to set goals for her life and work towards achieving them in the future. I have four daughters and even though I am uneducated, I can understand the importance of educating my girls. I will encourage them to lead independent lives.*”



Exposure -AG



My voice

“Leadership is not for self, it is for others”, I believe it, though I am the leader of the Parivartan group, I give equal opportunity to all the girls in the group. We formed Female Vigilance Committee in our village to help each other on issues of violence against children and women. It is really a need of the hour. We are confident that we can take it further for our own development.

- Savitha Parappa Madara
Ranichennamma Parivarthan Group,
Minajagi, Bijapura District



Boy leaders train to become gender champions

Raghavendra T, Shivaraj, H.S. Srikantamurthy

Samata mobilises adolescent boys into sports groups, called Parivartan (transformation) groups, with a designated male mentor, to deliver messages on respectful, healthy relationships, encouraging them to abandon harmful stereotypes, and support the rights of adolescent girls to a life free of violence and abuse. 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 an essential strategy to win or that winning at any cost is perhaps not valuable, and aggression, through the use of abusive language, such as name calling each other's mothers, is not what makes them good players or men. Samata formed 89 groups with 1571 boys. Each group has 15 to 20 members with two leaders, called champions.

Champions are those who challenged gender norms and stereotypes and shown positive attitude towards women and girls. A total of 125 champions from Bagalkot and Bijapura districts underwent the Champions training. The training covered topics such as understanding personal relationships, dignity and respect, social norms that discriminate against girls and women, empowerment, right communication and information on HIV/AIDS. Role play, focus group discussions, agree-disagree questions helped boys to

understand the nuances of areas that we explored. The Johari Window technique was used to help boys understand themselves, others, and group dynamics better. They were asking lot of questions and challenging the facilitator on aspects like male and female physical power, tasks of men and women etc.

One of the boys had this to say about the training, *“It helped me understand the rights of adolescent girls, and how*

a positive attitude and behaviour from boys will promote the girls participation and encourage them to stay in school.” Another leader shared his plan, *“Our behaviour as boys will affect the lives of the adolescent girls in our communities, who are often made victims of the situation. We are the Gender Champions in our Parivartan group and we will do our best to change the thinking among our friends and family.”*



Champions Training



Project Update

Period: December 2016 to February 2017

Indicators	Number	Indicators	Number
Girls who completed Parivartan Plus sessions	1279	Teachers Trained	431
Girls who are currently undergoing sessions	383	*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 tool	62
Discontinued girls brought back	110	Boys who completed Parivartan sessions	1104
Dropped out girls brought back	37	Boys who currently undergoing Parivartan sessions	323
Girls linked to social entitlements	2703	Families linked to social entitlements	2319
Girls availed tuition support	1590	No of Girls/Women Vigilance committees formed	36

*School Development Management Committee



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H. S. Srikantamurthy edited the newsletter.

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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