

## ***Social Mobilisation for Rights of Adolescent Girls Focusing on Gender Equity and Education***

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### **SOCIAL MOBILISATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

***Deepen involvement of GPs<sup>1</sup>, SMC<sup>2</sup>, SHGs<sup>3</sup>, youth and CRPF<sup>4</sup> in the entire project area community mobilisation, engaging with the functionaries and the system and giving support to girls***

The mobilisers compiled lists of children that had discontinued their education after the Class 10 level and discussed the issue during parents' meetings. The participants were encouraged to resume their children's education at least up to the Intermediate level. Opinion leaders and groups such as the CRPF, SHGs, the SMC and youth were involved in efforts to reach them. It was noted that most of the seasonal child labourers that were employed in cottonseed farms and mirchi farms in outside villages were girls. In a number of instances, parents had accorded priority to boys' education and had been sending them to private school while they were unwilling to spend on their daughters' education and had sent them to government schools instead. In Miriyala, for example, 54 girls were attending government school and 27 boys were enrolled in private school. Such discrimination was questioned. The participants were asked to set a positive example for their children by practicing gender equity at home and by involving women/girls in the decision making process.

There has been notable change in parental attitudes towards girls' education. Many girls were being withdrawn from school at the Class 6-8 level earlier and there was pressure on them to get married earlier but this is no longer the case. Focus has shifted to girls' education. Girls no longer have to convince their parents to educate them after passing out of school. In fact, many of them have now begun to demand that they be enrolled in colleges. Their parents are also seeking counsel on higher education opportunities and details of hostels and colleges to which they can send their daughters. There has thus been a movement from a state of parental insecurity to that of hope and aspirations for girls' education. They have started to trust their daughters now. The parents of nearly 20 girls from Vikarabad permitted their daughters to apply for the Intermediate First Year Supplementary exams.

Many parents initially opposed the association of their daughters with the KBS<sup>5</sup> and the Gender Committee because they felt the girls would become too independent for their own good. The girls' mothers were invited to attend the Forum and the Committee meetings so that they could have a firsthand idea of their discussions and proceedings. They were convinced when they noted that the deliberations centred around issues such as girls' education, gender violence, discrimination, girls' mobility, health issues, the girls' aspirations and opportunities and so on. This gave the mothers confidence in them.

The mobilisers participated in monthly meetings of SHGs and the VO<sup>6</sup>, during which they initiated discussions on the status of girl child issues such as their education, child marriage, gender equality, abuse and so on. They informed the women that change began at home. They were women and they were expected to empathise with girls. They ought to treat girls on par with boys at home. Girls

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<sup>1</sup> Gram Panchayats

<sup>2</sup> School Management Committee

<sup>3</sup> Self-help group

<sup>4</sup> Child Rights Protection Forum

<sup>5</sup> Kishora Balika Sangham – Adolescent Girls' Forum

<sup>6</sup> Village Organisation

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ought to be given the freedom and the liberty due to them and to participate in all walks of life. Early marriage was detrimental to their welfare and hindered their development. No sanctions whatsoever must be imposed on girls.

Most of the discussions in SHG meetings earlier focused on issues such as savings. The women later began discussing issues such as dowry and marriage but now they have begun to emphasise girl child education and gender equality. Some of them have actually begun to entrust their sons with domestic responsibilities. They have begun show willingness to let their daughters travel outside the village to attend meetings and training sessions. A number of them have reduced the work burden on their daughters so that they can finish their homework assignments. They are also ready to educate them even at the undergraduate level.

One VO leader from Somla Thanda in Atmakur (S) mandal informed during a meeting that her daughter Sandhya had failed to clear the Intermediate exams in 2017-18 and that she had not permitted her to continue her education. She had been motivated by the efforts of the mobiliser to send the girl back to college. Another girl Bujji had passed the Intermediate exams and her father had wanted to marry her off but her mother – a VO leader had told him categorically that she would educate her further.

SHG members from Thallasingaram pledged to support their daughters in all possible ways. Women from Nutankal came up demanded subsidised education for their daughters at the intermediate level and are willing to approach government officials if need be. In another instance, the mothers of two girls from Gattikallu, Atmakur mandal that had failed to clear the Intermediate exams were convinced to permit the girls to reappear for them.

SHG and VO members participated in meetings of the KBS and shared their personal experiences with the girls and gave them valuable lessons on life skills. Sanghamitra members from Atmakur (S) mandal staged a protest at the local Police Station denouncing and demanding action against the rape of a 9-month old girl child in Warangal district. Members from Yepuru in Atmakur (S) mandal followed up two girls that had dropped out, to school.

Members of the Gram Panchayat, the CRPF and the SMC have been actively supporting the agenda of strengthening KBS and Gender Committees. They make it a point to participate in meetings of these Forums and express solidarity with them on issues concerning their wellbeing. Many members expressed during the meetings that their parents either lacked confidence in their abilities to clear the exams a second time or were unable to pay the fees. The members spoke to the girls' parents and convinced them to let the girls reapply for the exams, as it would only serve to secure their future. It would also build their self-confidence.

Response from both the girls and their parents has been generally encouraging and instances of girls that had failed to pass their exams even two years ago willing to give them again have also been recorded. A number of girls had missed the KBS meetings because they were being stalked by local youth. They came up with this feedback during their meetings and also communicated the same to their college managements. The CRPF and SHG members assured them that would not happen in future and convinced them to attend the meetings. They also counseled the youth involved. There is a great deal of improvement in the situation. There is demand from girls staying in hostels/studying in colleges based in Suryapet for orientation of youth at the college level on the POCSO<sup>7</sup> Act.

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<sup>7</sup> Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

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Gram Panchayat members, the CRPF and SHG members also discussed problems such as sexual abuse, harassment and discrimination that the girls were subjected to and resolved to address them. They also gave the girls tips on differentiating safe from unsafe touch. Their participation in the meetings has helped the girls identify symptoms of abuse/harassment and they have also opened up. One girl from Thallasingaram had been approached in an inappropriate manner by her own brother-in-law, who had been making advances towards her. She understood his intentions and told him very politely that she wanted him to maintain a distance from her.

The details of meetings held with various community groups during the half year are as under:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Gram Panchayat	128	2216
Youth	122	1665
SHG	217	3261
CRPF	154	1964
SMC	102	1347
<b>Total</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>10453</b>

### ***Prepare Panchayats for independent action***

The mobilisers undertook a special election campaign in the last week of January, during which they met contestants of the local body elections for the posts of Sarpanch and ward members) due to be held in February. They interacted with more than 700 contestants and submitted memoranda to them, demanding action by them on child right and girl child issues if they were elected to the posts.

The details of coverage by the campaign are as below:

<b>Mandal</b>	<b>Panchayats covered</b>	<b>Sarpanch contestants</b>	<b>Ward member contestants</b>
Atmakur	24	62	325
Nutankal	17	43	53
Maddirala	6	17	52
Shankarpally	10	20	24
Vikarabad	12	34	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>550</b>

They came up with the following demands:

- A child Rights Cell must be set up in every Panchayat
- The Panchayat must pass a resolution to protect girl child rights
- The Panchayat must track and follow up absentees
- The Panchayat must make budgetary provision for school infrastructure development
- The Panchayat must accord priority to girl child education
- The Panchayat must register all births and marriages
- The Panchayat must maintain and regularly update lists of child labour

The mobilisers asked the contestants to sign the document and pledge to work for the cause of education and girl child rights. Subsequent to the declaration of the elections results, they met the successful candidates and congratulated them on their election. They were also given a checklist of issues to be discussed by them during their review meetings. They later undertook school visits in March and June. Meetings were held with teachers and children to introduce the new members to

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them. The members were also given information on the KBS intervention and were urged to attend the meetings whenever possible.

The newly elected Sarpanchs of Maharajpet and Ponnagutta Thanda identified rooms in which adolescent girls from the village could assemble. Plans are in the offing to set up Model Centres in these villages. The Sarpanch of Maharajpet arranged an auto rickshaw to enable 13 girls from Irukunta Thanda to attend the HS<sup>8</sup> in the Panchayat headquarters, saving them the trouble of walking/cycling 5-6 kilometres. A mass meeting was held in Erravally, Vikarabad mandal with more than 150 participants including Chief Coordinator of MVF<sup>9</sup> Y Rajendra Prasad to introduce the intervention to the newly elected members.

### ***Prepare SMCs for monitoring attendance, quality of education and issues relating to gender discrimination in schools***

Meetings were held with the SMC across the project area to discuss the follow up of children after Class 10. They were given information on higher education options available to their children. They were particularly asked not to overburden girls with domestic burdens. Discussions were also held on their role in working towards gender equality in the school and for inclusion of girls in all spheres of activity. Government school authorities and the SMC in Thallasingaram, Nutankal mandal jointly designed a pamphlet to publicise the school. In addition to the facilities available in their schools, they added *Bharosa* (trust/confidence) and equal opportunities for girls. The school would also not discriminate on grounds of gender. The SMC chairperson partly sponsored the cost of printing the pamphlet.

### ***Develop a resource group in CRPF from among community and youth (girls and boys) who are actively involved in the program with sensitivity towards girls and gender equality and against gender violence***

Mandal level meetings were held with the CRPF to discuss issues such as gender equality, girl child abuse, child marriage and retention of girls in school. The meeting held in Maddirala on 13<sup>th</sup> May focused on sexual abuse of girls. The members resolved to pressurise the government to own up the responsibility for this and drafted a petition to the Tehsildar, seeking the establishment of a Fast Track Court to try such cases. The members planned village level meetings to discuss and address these issues on a priority basis.

Members in some villages have been urging Gram Panchayat members to verify the ages of both groom and bride before registering marriages. Members in a number of cases have realised that they must practice what they preach and some of them like Noppi Venkanna have shifted their daughters from government to private schools, sending across the message that they are willing to invest even in girls' education.

The CRPF and members of the KBS represented the need for repairs to the pipeline and for the provision of a bore well in the KGBV<sup>10</sup> to the Sarpanch of Atmakur (S). He referred the matter to the MPDO<sup>11</sup> also spoke to the Education Minister. The Minister sanctioned CC roads, an electrical motor and drainage facilities.

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<sup>8</sup> High School

<sup>9</sup> Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation

<sup>10</sup> Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyaya

<sup>11</sup> Mandal Parishad Development Officer

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The CRPF, the SMC, SHGs and KBS submitted a number of petitions to officials on girl child issues, the details of which are as under:

<b>Mandal</b>	<b>Petitioner</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Nutankal	KBS	District Collector – Suryapet	Prevention of child marriage
Nutankal	KBS, SHGs	District Collector and ICDS officials = Suryapet	Supply of Health & Hygiene kits to all girls aged 11-18 years including out-of-school girls and private college students
Maddirala	CRPF	Tehsildar, Maddirala	Action against sexual abuse
Maddirala	CRPF	Tehsildar, Maddirala	Extend the scope of the RTE Act to cover all children aged <18
Maddirala	CRPF, SHGs	District Collector, Joint Collector, District Education Officer, Project Director of the ICDS – Suryapet	Prevention of child marriage, strengthening the Child Marriage Prevention Committee, napkin supply for out-of-school girls and adolescent girls as well
Maddirala	KBS	Project Director of the ICDS – Suryapet	Protection of girl children's rights
Shankarpally	KBS	District officials	Model Centres in Ravulapally and Mahalingapuram
Vikarabad	CRPF	District Collector – Vikarabad	Abolition of child labour in brick kiln of Parigi

### **INVOLVEMENT OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND SCHOOLS**

Involving teachers in the formation and administration of Gender Committees was a challenging task in the earlier stages of the intervention. They came up with lame excuse and were skeptical of the success of the Committees. They were also not keen on following up absentees and dropouts to school. The persistent efforts of the mobilisers have finally paid off and the teachers have not only begun to cooperate but have also volunteered to coordinate the functioning of the Committees in a number of cases. Not only this, they have been assisting the members in writing Minutes' Books. In addition, they have been maintaining the contact details of every child and have been calling up parents whenever they have identified a long absentee. Hitherto indifferent teachers have now turned vocal advocates of gender equality and have been raising issues of concern such as gender violence, abuse and harassment during School Complex and district level meetings. This has earned them the goodwill of the children's parents and community-school relations are stronger than ever.

#### ***Work towards a code of conduct for schools on gender equality and against gender violence***

A district level orientation session on gender issues was conducted on 17<sup>th</sup> May for 30 teachers in charge of Gender Committees in Suryapet district. Participants included 17, 8 and 5 teachers from Atmakur (S), Nutankal and Maddirala mandals respectively. MVF Coordinators Dhanunjay and Bhaskar provided resource support on the occasion. The objective of the session was to evolve norms for creating a girl child friendly school atmosphere.

The teachers individually reviewed the functioning of Gender Committee and their personal roles in the process. They informed that children were being made to play separately in the task and that there had also been stereotyping in division of tasks between girls and boys as well in the choice of games. However, the children had begun to mingle with each other in the recent past. Both girls and boys had been keenly taking part in activities such as elocution, singing and skits.

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Teachers from Atmakur (S) rang up the mobilisers and appreciated the organisation's initiative to sensitise them to gender issues, as it was an area to which most of them had little exposure. Some of them suggested quarterly review meetings. Earlier, teachers had been against the idea of forming Gender Committees because they felt this would result in the children getting out of hand and that would also interfere with their education. Some of them had actually opined that the formation of the Committee would spoil children and encourage *affairs* between them. Not many of them had actively participated in the process of reconstituting the Committees. However, the mobilisers' efforts had led to a realisation among them that their fears were ill founded and that the children had actually benefited from this initiative. They had also changed their outlook.

Teachers in a number of schools had been taking proactive children on girl child issues. The mobilisers had to persuade and convince teachers in the past to take up the responsibility of supporting the Gender Committee earlier but the situation has changed now with teachers coming forward on their own accord in a number of schools. They have been assisting children in maintaining Minutes' Books and have been preparing action plans to address issues of concern. Relations between the Committee and teachers have thus been strengthened.

*The head teacher and teachers from HS Nutankal noted that 3 pairs of children attending the school from different villages had been attracted to each other and that this had affected their participation in classroom transaction. They counseled the children separately and told them that though this was natural for them at this age, it was more important for them to focus on their education for the moment. They also spoke to the children's parents. The parents of one of the girls Priyanka wanted to get the children married but the boy's parents were against this. The boy Vasu, who seemed visibly disturbed, was asked not to come to school for a few days. Priyanka herself quit attending school during that period. The teachers asked the both of them to return to school and counseled them again. The both of them took their education seriously and cleared their exams successfully.*

### **Facilitate preparation of a gender-based curriculum with involvement of school teachers and the SCERT from classes 1 to 10**

School staff meetings were held in 14, 9 and 5 HS respectively in Atmakur (S), Maddirala and Nutankal mandals respectively to discuss gender issues. The teachers poke on children's seating arrangements in class, their involvement in joint sport activities and their own stand on attraction between children. As many as 4 teachers from HS Yenkepally highlighted cases of attraction/infatuation. They informed that they had been clueless about how to approach it. They were told that this was a natural process and that they were expected, as teachers, to handle the issue smoothly. The mobilisers then asked them about the children's academic performance and they replied that they had nothing to complain about on that front. They were counseled to handle the issue carefully and proceed cautiously, working on the children's psychology instead of trying to intimidate them. Some teachers from HS Lingampally have come promised to seat girls and boys together in class.

Teachers from HS Mukundapuram in Maddirala mandal informed during the staff meeting that they had been getting girls and boys to stand apart from each other during the prayer hour. They felt that it was not necessary to seat them together even in class. The mobilisers replied that seating them together would help build a sense of camaraderie and do away with differences on gender grounds. The teachers responded positively and offered to try to get the children together. Teachers from Atmakur (S) mandal held an internal discussion on girl child issues, at the end of which they agreed to guarantee parents *Bharosa* (trust/confidence) that their daughters would be secure in school.

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Brainstorming sessions were held with adolescent girls in 11 villages and 1 KGBV of Shankarpally mandal and in 6 villages of Vikarabad mandal to seek their opinion on the features of a girl-child friendly school. The girls were divided into groups for the purpose of discussion, at the end of which they made group wise presentations on the points that they had listed. Interestingly, they focused more on what all the school should lack in order to create a pro- girl child atmosphere. These observations were later shared with Gram Panchayat members, the SMC, the CRPF and Mothers' Associations during their meetings. It is proposed to take up these issues with teachers later on during the next academic year and evolve a code of conduct for gender equality. ASHAs and the SC in villages of Vikarabad mandal offered to follow up the issue with school managements.

Key points that the children highlighted included:

- Not using suggestive language
- Not commenting on girls' appearance and their dressing/grooming
- Not passing statements like *why do you look at boys* or *what attracts you to that boy*
- Not referring to girls by nicknames or derogatory terms like gadidha (ass)
- Not scolding girls unnecessarily
- Not targeting specific girls in the classroom repetitively
- Not asking girls to stand outside
- Not touching girls' cheeks
- Not making physical contact with girls

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION

***Track, follow up and retain children in 59 HS, 31 UPS, 7 KGBVs, 3 Model Schools and 9 Junior Colleges to continue education up to 18 years of age***

A headcount exercise was taken up in 59 HS and 31 UPS of the project area in February to ensure the presence of all children in school. The mobilisers compiled lists of absentees and tracked each of them individually. The incidence of dropout was noted to be high at the Class 8 and 9 levels. Most of them were not confident of passing the exams. The mobilisers met them at their homes along with support groups prior to the exam and motivated them to give their annual exams without fail. They were told that their attitude mattered more than the outcome.

The outcomes of the Child Tracking exercise are as below:

Category	Class wise Strength														
	VI			VII			VIII			IX			X		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
Children on rolls	693	708	1401	729	866	1595	813	957	1770	882	937	1819	844	1027	1871
Present in class	593	624	1217	644	795	1439	710	871	1581	787	874	1661	797	1003	1800
Absent	100	84	184	85	71	156	103	86	189	95	63	158	47	24	71

Grand Total			
Category	B	G	T
Children on rolls	4275	4765	9040
Present in class	3842	4436	8278
Absent	433	329	762

The table above brings out that 91.6% of all children were present in class on the day of the visit. The corresponding percentages for girls and boys were 93.1% and 89.9% respectively.

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The mobilisers met head teachers of all High Schools before the exams and urged them not to pressurise children about their exam performance because it would only serve to unnerve them. They always had second opportunities. They also held meetings with the parents of children that were due to appear for the Class 10 exams and they were given information on educational career opportunities available to the children after they had passed out. The children were told to judiciously exercise their choice of subjects and college rather than merely opt for a subject combination just so that they could study with their friends. Nearly 25 children from Nutankal mandal applied for admission in Agriculture Polytechnic, Veterinary Polytechnic and paramedical courses.

A number of older children (aged 16-18), especially girls, that had dropped out of school were not keen on reappearing for the exams. Some of these girls had already been married. They were informed that they could apply for the Class 10 examinations through Open stream. This issue was also discussed with their parents, following which 8 girls applied for the examinations. Four married girls also resumed their education through the efforts of the MVF team to motivate them. Interestingly, their in-laws and husbands were supportive of their education.

The following table details of children appearing for the exams, passing them and followed up to the Intermediate level:

<i>Mandal</i>	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Children on rolls</i>			<i>Children Paying Exam Fees</i>			<i>Children Attending Exams</i>		
Vikarabad	17	361	324	685	361	324	685	359	324	683
Nutankal	8	173	203	376	173	203	376	173	203	376
Maddirala	6	78	95	173	78	95	173	78	95	173
Atmakur (S)	14	216	229	445	216	228	444	215	228	443
Shankarpally	14	281	352	633	281	352	633	281	349	630
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>1109</b>	<b>1203</b>	<b>2312</b>	<b>1109</b>	<b>1202</b>	<b>2311</b>	<b>1106</b>	<b>1199</b>	<b>2305</b>

<i>Mandal</i>	<i>Children passing Exams</i>			<i>Children reappearing for Exams</i>			<i>Children Admitted in Junior College</i>		
Vikarabad	245	245	490	114	80	194	300	272	572
Nutankal	165	199	364	7	2	9	161	198	359
Maddirala	74	94	168	4	1	5	74	93	167
Atmakur (S)	197	221	418	18	7	25	191	218	409
Shankarpally	239	330	569	42	21	63	260	342	602
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>1089</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>1123</b>	<b>2109</b>

It may be noted from the tables above that:

99.7% of children enrolled attended the exams

87% of children appearing for the exams cleared them right in the first attempt

100% of children that did not clear the exams in the first attempt applied for the Supplementary exams

91.5 % of children that attended the exams were followed up to Junior College

The mobilisers updated the educational status of children aged 11-18 years in 30 and 36 villages of Shankarpally and Vikarabad respectively through an exercise in May 2019. Children aged 14-18 were also involved in the exercise, as they could provide a valuable source of information on dropout. The survey teams identified the reasons for children's dropout and motivated them to apply for the Class 10 and Intermediate exams through Open stream. Door-to-door visits featured as part of this effort. Major contributory factors to girl's absence/dropout included eve teasing and the inability pay fees. The mobilisers sponsored fees and notebooks for the girls in a few cases. Quite a few girls that had



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graduated from Telugu medium had dropped out after being shifted to English medium schools because they could not understand what was being taught in class.

### ***EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BOYS IN SCHOOLS AND IN THE COMMUNITY***

#### ***Consolidate Gender Committees to influence all activities in schools where girls and boys have equal participation, roles and responsibilities***

There was initial hesitation by both girls and boys to mingle with each other, as they had not been accustomed to this either at home or in school. Conscious efforts were made to regularly engage them in discourse on gender issues such as discrimination, patriarchy, equality and so on. Gradually, the differences between them narrowed and they began to feel comfortable with and trust each other. Boys were particularly embarrassed to perform tasks that were usually handled by girls. They were involved in open dialogue on these issues, following which some of them responded that they had never considered the implications of gender based work division and that no one either at home or in school had encouraged them to think on those lines. They gradually got used to the concept of the Committee.

One important change that has been noticed is the seating arrangements in some schools, wherein girls and boys sit together on the same bench. Boys motivate girls that have dropped out of school or have been absent for long to resume their schooling and vice versa. Boys, in a number of instances, have raised their voices against those bullying/harassing girls in class.

Gender Committees were reconstituted in 11 and 6 schools of Shankarpally and Vikarabad mandals respectively during the reporting period. The newly inducted members were oriented on the concept of the Committee and their roles and responsibilities.

The Gender Committee has been actively addressing the issues of discrimination and harassment/abuse on a priority basis. Some girl members from Class 10 complained to teachers in HS Atmakur (S) that they were being harassed by some of their male classmates. The boys were suspended for one week, following which they mended their ways. Earlier, some of them used to write the girls' names on the walls of the school. They have quit this practice now after being counseled by the teachers. The children have begun to express themselves and openly discuss family and personal issues in the meetings. Boys and girls have not only begun to participate in combined study sessions but also visit each others' homes to seek clarifications or share notes. Their parents have also begun to accept this. The members share the details of the proceedings with them. More boys have come forward to share domestic responsibilities without inhibition, shedding notions of masculinity and breaking stereotypes.

Members of the Gender Committee in schools of Shankarpally and Vikarabad mandals were involved in group discussions on gender roles. They listed out chores/tasks performed by girls and boys, games played by them, items used by them and their occupations on charts. A debate was initiated on which tasks could be performed by both of them and on conditions at home, in society, school and office that could favour this kind of a change. Obstacles to the same were also discussed. This exercise, which was held in February, reached 222 children from 8 schools of Vikarabad mandal and 298 children from 5 schools of Shankarpally mandal.

The mobilisers made use of school staff meetings and gender committee meetings as a platform to emphasise the importance of children's joint participation in sports and other events in school.

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Though there was initial hesitation from teachers, there has been marked improvement in the situation and children in some schools are jointly taking part in games such as kho kho, cricket and basketball. Interestingly, boys are teaching girls how to play cricket – which is new to them, without poking fun at them. There are no inhibitions between girls and boys, who were hesitant earlier to play with each other. The teachers are also supportive of this agenda and opine that the gender gap has been narrowed.

*Bala Sabha* is being organised on one Saturday every month in high Schools of Maddirala mandal with 2 boys and girls each participating in role play and a wide range of other informal activities. Each child is responsible for planning and implementing one sub-activity per head. This has resulted in better articulation skills by girls, especially, who have become more expressive and are taking more active part in classroom transaction. Girls from HS Mukundapuram, Maddirala mandal scripted and performed a skit on gender discrimination.

The details of Gender Committee meetings and participants therein are as under:

<b>Mandal</b>	<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Vikarabad	42	672
Atmakur (S)	58	1075
Nutankal	34	596
Maddirala	21	317
Shankarpally	38	627
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>3287</b>

### ***Take up activities giving support and confidence to girls in KBSs***

The details of KBS operating during as in June are as below:

<b>Mandal</b>	<b>KBS</b>			
	<b>Forums</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
Shankarpally	76	150	1310	<b>1536</b>
Vikarabad	41	100	960	<b>1101</b>
Nutankal	63	345	1484	<b>1892</b>
Atmakur	64	285	1878	<b>2227</b>
Maddirala	9	0	314	<b>323</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>5946</b>	<b>7079</b>

The Forums in Maddirala were formed during the current reporting period. New Forums were also formed in 7 villages of Atmakur (S) mandal with 143 members.

KBS were reconstituted in all mandals of Suryapet district, as some members had left their native villages for higher education or after getting married. Members of the KBS assembled once a month on an average to discuss the status of abuse, gender equality, higher education, child marriage and problems faced at home, in school and at the community level. The members participated in a phone-in programme organised by television channel ETV and spoke to reporters on the role of the Gender Committee in empowering them and on the need to strengthen them further.

Members of the KBS supported the mobilisers in their efforts to work for improved retention of children in school by keeping track of long absentees and dropout and assisting i motivating them. They played a particularly important role in peer group motivation and ensuring that girls resumed their education after the lass 10 level. Members of some KBS in Vikarabad mandal pledged to continue their education at least up to the undergraduate level.

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Members of the Forum hoisted the National Flag in Thallasingaram, Yerrapahad and Mukundapuram on Republic Day – 26<sup>th</sup> January, in the presence of elected representatives, civil society groups and community based organisations. The girls spoke on the problems that had been facing at home, in school and in society and on the steps that they had taken to address them.

The details of KBS meetings held are as follows:

<b>Mandal</b>	<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Nutankal	119	1667
Maddirala	69	1184
Atmakur (S)	154	3581
Vikarabad	97	1456
Shankarpally	105	1691
<b>Total</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>9579</b>

*KBS members joined hands with the mobilisers and the CRPF to prevent 12 potential cases of child marriage during the reporting period. This number included 6 in Atmakur (S), 3 in Vikarabad, 2 in Nutankal and 1 in Shankarpally mandal.*

### ***Include boys in a phased manner wherever possible for specific activities***

Boys' Committees have been formed and are operational in 11 HS of Shankarpally mandal and 7 HS of Vikarabad mandal. The success of the Adolescent Girls' Forum intervention led to a demand from boys for an exclusive forum that would give them the space to discuss issues of concern to them.

### ***Consolidate activities in all 12 Model Centres and exchange visits***

A social audit exercise was taken up in Mukundapuram village of Maddirala mandal with the joint participation of members of the Adolescent Girls' Forum, the MVF team and ICDS functionaries. The survey team mapped the houses of members and leaders of the Forum, houses, schools, the Post Office, the Anganwadi Centre and key locations of the village. This exercise spanned 10 days. The girls read the newspaper at the Model Centre every Sunday. Girls attending the Centre made a presentation on the RTE<sup>12</sup> Act to an audience of 25 members on 30<sup>th</sup> June. At the end of the session, they demanded the extension of the Act to cover children aged up to 18. Another session on key provisions of the POCSO Act was attended by 21 girls on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

Two new Centres were established in Reddigudem and Maddirala villages of Maddirala village in response to a demand from the Gram Panchayat, teachers, the CRPF and women's groups. The mandal CRPF Convenor played an instrumental role in the process. The mobilisers and the CRPF collected details of girls aged 11-18 years from the Anganwadi Centre and met the girls personally. Dates were fixed for inaugural meetings in June, during the course of which the concept of gender was introduced to the girls. They were given an in-depth idea of the manner in which the other Forums had been functioning.

Girls attending the Model Centres in Thallasingaram and Pedanemila read a series of books authored by noted activist Kamla Bhasin and engaged in discussion sessions on their content. A session was organised for them on latest amendments in the POCSO Act. They participated in outdoor games for half an hour every week. Members of the local VO and SHGs visited the Centre regularly and

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<sup>12</sup> Right to (Free & Compulsory) Education

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addressed them on education, child marriage and girl child rights. They offered to stand by girls at all times.

New Year was observed in Nimmikal, Gattikallu, Patharlapahad and Thummala Penpahad Centres of Atmakur (S) mandal with the participation of Forum members, their parents and Anganwadi Teachers. Sport competitions featured in Nimmikal. The National Flag was hoisted in the SC Colony on Republic Day in the presence of 100 people. Members of the Forum played a key role in organising and implementing the event. Girl Child Day was celebrated in the premises of the Centre in Nimmikal. Participants included the Mandal Parishad President, the MPDO, the MEO<sup>13</sup>, ICDS<sup>14</sup> officials and the Girl Child Development Officer. A lawyer addressed 120 members on girl children's rights. The members also engaged in book reading sessions. ASHAs<sup>15</sup> oriented them on personal hygiene and Menstrual Health Management. Discussions were held on gender issues. The girls also mutually discussed family issues and problems. Counseling sessions were held for the girls' families where required. Quiz and drawing competitions were also held in the Centres.

Some village elders that visited the centre in Thummala Penpahad familiarised the girls with the history of the village. The girls also discussed issues such as the functioning of the government and compared different schemes of the government for girls, debating their usefulness. They took part in quiz and essay writing competitions and discussed their personal problems. *Naa Vijayam* gave them a forum to take pride in their personal achievements. Parents were also invited to the Centres for a better understanding of the intervention. Social mapping exercises were taken up in Gattikallu, Patharlapahad and Thummala Penpahad. Lady Sarpanchs from villages of the mandal were invited to address the girls. ANMs spoke on health issues. Newspaper reporters interacted with the girls on the changes that had been brought about in their lives at the school and family levels as a result of the intervention.

Meetings were held once a month in the Model Centres in Ravulapally, Poddatur and Parveda villages. The girls requested the newly elected Sarpanchs to provide them with space for setting up new Model Centres in Ponnagutta Thanda and Maharajpet. The response was good and the Sarpanchs accordingly identified two buildings. Charts have been put up and campaign posters pasted in the premises of the Centres. The girls went around from house to house in Maharajpet to collect books for the library. Girls in the existing Centres read books and newspapers daily and also borrow books. Boys have been a constant support for girl attending the Centres in the Centres in Shankarpally and in Siddulur, Madgula Chittampally and Madanpally Centres of Vikarabad mandal. The Sarpanch of Madanpally regularly invites girls to participate in the Panchayat meeting.

The Model Centres have also served as a demonstration site to showcase the intervention. Two SCFR representatives visited Parveda in April. Other visitors included social activists and Gram Panchayat members from Odisha and law students. They interacted with community members and girls on steps taken to ensure girls' retention in school, changes in the girls' situation, activities at the Centres and their life aspirations.

An exposure visit was arranged for girls from Reddigudem in Maddirala mandal to Mukundapuram, where they would interact with members of the Adolescent Girls' Forum to learn about their experiences. They contacted the teacher of the local school, who was skeptical of the girls' willingness to participate. The head teacher also echoed this opinion. The mobiliser had originally planned for just 8 girls but he spoke to 8 more girls after having met the head teacher. The response

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<sup>13</sup> Mandal Education Officer

<sup>14</sup> Integrated Child Development Scheme

<sup>15</sup> Accredited Social Health Activists

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was not very encouraging as the teachers had foretold and the mobiliser involved CRPF member Sheshagiri Rao in the matter. It so happened that the Sarpanch, whose daughter was among the girls scheduled to visit Mukundapuram, was not in town. Sheshagiri Rao and the mobiliser met him later and explained the objective of the visit to him. Impressed, he immediately prepared his daughter for the visit.

Eventually, 20 girls volunteered for the visit but not all of them could be accommodated and 12 of them were taken to Mukundapuram, where members of the Adolescent Girls' Forum shared their experiences with education, child labour, child marriage, life skills, extracurricular activities and resolution of problem issues. Girls from both villages took part in joint games. Impressed with what they saw and heard, the visitors promised to discuss gender issues with their parents back home and to share their newfound knowledge and understanding with them.

An exposure visit was organised for 58 girls from the Adolescent Girls Forums in Poddatur and Parveda to the Model Centre in Ravulapally during February, where they interacted with the members of the local Forms on activities at the Model Centre and went through the charts displayed there. They also participated in some games and a quiz competition. They later shared their own experiences.

### **Leadership Training**

Leadership training sessions were held for leaders of the Adolescent Girls' Forum at the mandal and village level as under:

<b>Mandal</b>	<b>Village level</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Mandal level</b>	<b>Members</b>
Atmakur (S)	25	636	1	54
Nutankal	9	218		
Maddirala	4	129		
Shankarpally			2	60
Vikarabad			2	105
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>209</b>

The training sessions had two broad components. The first comprised an input session on the below:

- Identifying discrimination
- Institutions in society
- Manifestation of discrimination in each kind of social institution
- Limits vs rights of males and females in family (one's limits define the other's rights)
- Forms of violence and their manifestation (demonstrated using Flash Cards)

The girls reviewed the functioning of their respective Forums and made presentations on their activities, achievements and lessons learnt.

The second component involved group discussions on and presentations on the following questions:

- What are the forms of gender discrimination practiced in your home?
- When did you regret the most having been born a girl?
- What are the challenges/obstacles to gender equality?
- What role must the government play in promoting gender equality?

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Participants of the mandal level training session in Atmakur (S) were divided into groups and asked to develop one script each for skits based on the themes of violence, abuse, child marriage and discrimination.

Subsequent to the conduct of the training session, members of the Forum from Vikarabad district met two contestants for the parliamentary elections and asked them to address the violation of girl child rights if they were elected to the Parliament. They also demanded extension of the RTE Act to cover children aged up to 18 years.

### ***INVOLVEMENT OF FUNCTIONARIES OF THE SYSTEM AT THE LOCAL, DISTRICT AND STATE LEVELS***

The SHE team of the Police Department conducted an orientation session for 160 and 550 students in ZPHS<sup>16</sup> Maddirala and ZPHS Nutankal respectively. They were addressed on life skills with specific reference to dealing with attraction during adolescence and on the POCSO Act, the Child Marriage (Prevention) Act and Toll Free No. 100.

The SHE Team undertook a special drive in Vikarabad, as part of which an average of 300 adolescent youth each from 3 Gram Panchayat headquarters, 2 private schools and one college were addressed by the Circle Inspector of Police, the Sub-Inspector of Police and Sarpanchs on the issues of gender equity, child marriage, ragging and the POCSO Act. They were motivated to study at least up to the Intermediate level. Officials of the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate oriented 160 youth including 85 girls in Maharajpet – Shankarpally mandal on the modus operandi of girl child traffickers and gave them tips on safeguarding themselves.

Orientation sessions were held for 46 and 35 Anganwadi Teachers in Nutankal and Maddirala respectively on 1<sup>st</sup> June. The mobilisers made detailed presentations on the POCSO Act and gender equality.

The mobilisers coordinated the conduct of the Education Department's Badi Baata annual school enrolment drive to follow up dropouts, bring children aged 6-8 years to school and shift children from Classes 5 to 6 with the help of Gram Panchayat members and other support groups. They involved the CRPF and the SMC in the issue and publicised the right of every child to education. Parents were welcomed to government schools and asked to enrol their children there. Earlier, the mobilisers from Suryapet district attended a planning meet held by the District Education Officer and later planned the implementation of Badi Baata with mandal officials. Petitions on quality education were submitted to Sarpanchs of 14 Panchayats in Nutankal. A mandal level meeting was also held with 140 people including girls and their parents.

Rallies featured in 9 and 8 villages of Shankarpally and Vikarabad mandals respectively with 80 and 108 participants. Pendlimadugu in Vikarabad had an enrolment of just 8 children in the government school last year. A Panchayat meeting was held to discuss the issue, as a follow up of which 20 children were shifted from private to government school. Notebooks and slates were supported for all of them. Earlier, the school had only one teacher on deputation in addition to one volunteer. The school has an additional teacher now and instruction is in the English medium. A donor gave away 5 computers to the school in Poddatur. One set of library books, notebooks worth Rs 5000 and plates were supported by other donors in the village. A local gave way stationery and teaching aids in Pilligundla.

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<sup>16</sup> Zilla Parishad High School

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Officials of the Education Department responded to repeated efforts by the MVF team and sanctioned a 100-seater Intermediate section in KGBV Atmakur (S). Additional teachers are yet to be appointed.

### **TRAINING**

A mandal level training session was conducted for 47 CRPF members on 16<sup>th</sup> April in Atmakur (S). The members reviewed the activities that they had taken up in their respective villages. The mobilisers called upon them to focus as much on girl child issues as on child labour and gave them tips on family counseling. They were exhorted to approach the Police Station and petition to officials on girl child issues as and when necessary.

A mandal level orientation session on the role of SHGs in girl child education was held on 21<sup>st</sup> February in Atmakur (S) with the participation of 35 members. They were given inputs on the following issues:

- The social status of women
- Responding to girl child issues
- Addressing sexual abuse
- Redressal mechanisms

The women spoke on the problems that they had been facing within their homes and on how they had countered them. They were counseled to look beyond economic issues and emphasise girl child issues as well. Some of them have begun to raise their voices against incidents of ragging in colleges and domestic violence.

A training session on evolving a Code of Conduct for gender issues in school was held for the project staff on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March. Training Coordinator Dhanunjay facilitated a discussion on the various forms of abuse, violence and discrimination to which children are subjected. Points listed included verbal abuse, physical abuse, corporal punishment, physical contact (unsafe touch), casteist remarks and gender stereotyping. Noting that though there were differences in degree between each of these forms of violation of rights, neither of them must be tolerated even to the slightest extent. This must be non negotiable. Mapping the violation of girl children's rights and dignity at the school level was preliminary to evolving a code of conduct. This could also help prepare teachers to internalise it over time.

### ***Facilitate preparation of a gender-based curriculum with involvement of school teachers and the SCERT from classes 1 to 10***

The MVF team undertook a critical analysis of curriculum prescribed by SCERT and the Education Department from Classes 1-5 to identify content in which gender discrimination/stereotyping was manifest. Likeminded NGOs, child rights activists and SCERT Resource Persons also contributed to this effort. The analysis focused not on just the written content but also the illustrations used therein. The outcomes of this exercise were later shared with the SCERT and the Education Department along with a petition demanding modification of Telugu curriculum to accommodate a component of gender equality with a girl child- friendly approach.

The details of issues identified class wise are as below:

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<i>Class</i>	<i>No. of Issues identified</i>
1	18
2	26
3	12
4	9
5	4
<b>Total</b>	69

The key points that emerged from the study are as under:

- Girls were depicted in stereotyped fashion (flowers in their pigtails, drawing *muggu*, traditional attire, standing in front of the mirror, etc.) while boys were portrayed as being modern
- Most boys were shown with books in the hands while there were very few illustrations of girls with books in hand
- Girls were shown assisting their mothers in domestic chores such as cleaning the home or cooking
- One illustration showed a boy yanking at a girl's pigtails with lookers-by laughing
- The content of most books portrayed boys as intelligent, brave, heroic and worthy of praise while girls were shown as inferior to them

### **CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY AT STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL FOR CHANGES IN LAWS POLICIES**

#### **One Billion Rising**

One Billion Rising or OBR is an international campaign for equality and justice for women against any form of discrimination. This campaign was spearheaded by us in Telangana and has over 35 NGOs as its members.

A mega event was conducted on 27th January 2019 in Hyderabad where all the members participated along with Smt. Shantha Sinha and Smt. Mallu Swarajyam, freedom fighter who were the chief guests. This gathering of over 1200 people was the platform to resolve against discrimination and injustice towards all sections of society.

International Women's Day was used as a platform to highlight gender discrimination and girl child rights. Participants of a mothers' meeting in HS Nutankal took part in a wide range of activities such as games, *burra katha*, *erikala sani*, dance-drama, skit and singing. They also shared their personal experiences. The 36 women that were present on the occasion included teachers, Anganwadi Teachers and SHG members from 7 villages. Speaking on the occasion, the women promised that they would treat their daughters on par with their sons. One of them stated that she wouldn't marry her daughter off until she had got employed.

Women from local institutions such as the Anganwadi Centre, the Health Sub-Centre and the Gram Panchayat participated in games in Atmakur (S) mandal. Donors gave away prizes to the winners. The mobilisers and key villagers also felicitated 56 women for their meritorious achievements. The two-day event witnessed the participation of nearly 170 members including Mandal Praja Parishad President Kasagani Lakshmi and MEO Dara Singh. A rally was held in Maddirala mandal to highlight gender inequality. The CRPF and members of the Adolescent Girls' Forum released an *Ika Chaalu* campaign poster in Mukundapuram on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.



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A meeting held in Parveda – Shankarpally mandal to mark International Women’s Day was attended by 40 members including school teachers. The head teacher’s wife, who was the chief guest, spoke on gender equality and invited the girls to share their experiences. The girls informed that their association with the Forum had changed their very outlook towards life and they had never experienced such a sense of freedom in their lives. They later took part in some games.

Nearly 250 people including the Market Yard Committee chairperson’s wife, SMC chairpersons and women CRPF members attended the celebrations in KGBV Shankarpally. The ZPTC and local MPTC were also present. They also honoured some active Anganwadi Teachers and urged the girls to focus on their education, which would give them bright prospects in future. Bank officials and teachers were among the 50 members that turned up in Madanpally – Vikarabad mandal. They appreciated the high standards of girl child education in the village and offered all possible support from their side.

The MVF Core team identified proactive mothers with keen interest in children’s issues and effective communication skills for inclusion in Mothers’ Associations for Quality Education. These Associations have 20 members each. They have been assembling once a month to review the progress of their activity and plan for the ensuing month. Discussion points on the agenda of these meetings include the status of girl children’s dropout, problems faced by children in school and the quality of education.

Members of the CRPF and Mothers’ Associations shared the results of an exercise that they had undertaken to assess children in classes 5-10 for Learning Outcomes in 3 subjects with mandal officials and demanded the setting up of an autonomous Commission to oversee the process of achieving Learning Outcomes. Mandal level meetings were held with these groups for the purpose. They welcomed the New Education Policy that provides for compulsory education up to the age of 18 years and promised to make use of this as an opportunity to ensure that every girl of this age group was enrolled and retained in school.