

Social Mobilisation for Rights of Adolescent Girls Focusing on Gender Equity and Education Report for the half-year January – June 2020

Introduction

The organisers followed up school absentees and children due to appear for the Class 10 and the Intermediate annual examinations. Exposure visits were planned for members of 65 KBS but could be arranged for members of only 40 KBS due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These included 11 resource groups and 29 visiting groups,

It was possible to train only 50% of the targeted Gram Panchayat and SMC members. Training sessions were organised for 123 people across 3 mandals. A teacher training session held in Suryapet as attended by 52 teachers.

A range of non-planned activities was implemented during the second quarter in response to COVID-19, primary among which was a survey of migrant families and their access to entitlements. The organisers lobbied with the Gram Panchayat to facilitate the provision of rations and other necessities to these families.

Organising KBS and community groups against the backdrop of the pandemic was a major challenge to programme implementation during the reporting period. It was noted that some parents had planned to get their daughters married underage. The lockdown restrictions hindered effective outreach activity and a few marriages could not be prevented. The organisers linked 4878 families (including 1164 children) to the government for rations and other entitlements.

One of the significant positive developments of the reporting period was children's, especially KBS members', access to mobile phones and their association with WhatsApp groups. Participation in Zoom meetings also helped them share information and a wide range of social issues and build perspective among them.

Teachers' Training

The Education Department conducted a training programme for 52 government school teachers from across Suryapet district on Empowerment of the Girl child, as part of a pilot programme by the State government. The programme was held on 3rd February. Upon a request from the Department, MVF deputed Project Coordinator Bhaskar to handle a session on various aspects of gender, violence and safety of the girl child.

Sharing MVF's experiences with gender issues and resolution of issues such as violence and abuse in schools, the resource person spoke on the below topics:

- Gender vs sex
- Importance of training school children on gender issues
- Importance of School Gender Committees, roles and responsibilities of the members and the role of the teacher in organising these Committees
- Attitudes of male teachers towards girl children and their impact on children's learning
- Gender gaps in school curriculum

At the end of the session, he urged the members present to strategise the organisation of Gender Committees in their respective schools.

SMC Training

A mandal level training session was held for the SMC in Vikarabad on 11th March with 23 male and 14 female members. Project Coordinator Bhaskar and MVF Training Coordinator Dhanunjay provided the resource on the occasion. The members reviewed the school situation and problems being faced in their respective schools with focus on the status of girls from HS sections, the quality of education,

the midday meal scheme and the problems faced by girls. They also spoke on the steps they had taken to address these issues. Unavailability of public transport in 3-4 villages and the shortage of toilets and water as the primary impediments to girls' education. They could not afford to travel by auto rickshaws. Other issues that were highlighted included gender inequality, use of abusive/improper language with girls, indifferent attitude of teachers and passing rude/vulgar comments against girls.

The speakers called upon the participants to prioritise such issues and address them with the help of the Sarpanch, the KBS and the Gender Committee. It was the responsibility of the SMC to ensure that girls were treated equally with boys everywhere. There must be no cultural stereotyping in school textbooks and syllabi. Both girls and boys must have equal playing and decision making powers. The SMC must take a stand in this regard.

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An orientation session was held in Mandal Resource Centre – Atmakur on 15th March for 32 male and 23 female SMC members. Chief Coordinator of MVF Raju and Project Coordinator Bhaskar facilitated the proceedings. Reviewing their activities, they spoke on the agenda of their meetings, the outcomes of their school visits and the problems that they faced. The resource persons addressed them on their roles and responsibilities, gender equality and discrimination, the ill effects of child marriage, key provisions of the CMPA, the POCSO Act and the RTE Act, the checklist to be used during school visits, basic infrastructure, monitoring teacher and child attendance, school grant utilisation, gender equality, negotiating with teachers for children's rights and harmonious relations/coordination with parents and teachers. A mandal SMC with 6 members was formed at the end of the meeting. The members resolved to assemble once a month without fail

SMC chairperson from PS Bopparam Chakkala Veerabhadraiah did not believe that it was practically possible to achieve gender equality and that it was mere wishful thinking. However, he changed his opinion after some of his fellow chairpersons/members shared their personal experiences. he is now an avid champion of the cause of gender equality.

Prior to the conduct of the workshop, the chairpersons hardly ever visited school of their own volition. They have now begun to take active part in school monitoring/administration. During his first ever visit to HS Gattikallu, the chairperson sought information on funding details. Upon being informed that an amount of Rs 2400 was available in the fund, he discussed plans to utilise the said amount. Boys and girls from HS Kotapahad and HS Thummala Penpahad are being seated together for online classes after the chairpersons insisted on this. The chairpersons of 4 schools asked the teachers to conduct school meetings with parents even if there was not much response from the latter. Turnout of parents has gone up from 8 to approximately 15 on an average now.

The head teacher of UPS Nassimpeta, who had taken over charge two years ago, had never shared details of the school grant. Subsequent to their participation in the orientation session, the SMC members sought details. They were informed that an amount of Rs 50000 was available. The members also went around the classrooms and tested some of the children at random in order to assess them for their learning levels. They noted that the children were not up to the mark. They pointed this out to the head teacher and asked him to be serious about his duties.

The head teacher of HS Yepuru initially refused to provide information to the SMC chairperson on school fund usage. The chairperson spoke to the MEO in this regard and he assured her that he would do the needed. The MEO visited the school a few days later and interacted with the head teacher. The latter invited the chairperson to visit the school and sign the receipt for uniforms to be issued to the children.

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A training session held for SMC chairpersons in Nutankal on 12th March was attended by 22 male and 9 female members. The participants also included MEO Ramulu Naik, 7 CRPs and 2 head teachers. MVF Coordinators Dhanunjay and Bhaskar, who were the resource persons, set the objectives for the training and informed them that they would be given inputs on the RTE Act and gender equality.

Following a round of formal introduction, the participants reviewed their activities and shared details of their meetings and the outcomes of their school visits. Most schools lacked drinking water and running water in toilets. The quality of teaching was also substandard. Very few teachers had been focusing on gender issues. Head teachers of HS Yenkepally and HS Nutankal were not serious about SMC meetings. The speakers dwelt in brief on the provisions of the RTE Act. They informed that the school and the family were an integral part of society. Girls were particularly affected when it came to unavailability of toilets. The SMC had to prioritise this issue and focus on gender issues. The MEO, who spoke next, called upon girls to study well and scale heights in life. He added that education added respect. Denouncing the custom of child marriage, he exhorted parents not to marry off girls underage.

A joint SMC meeting of PS Nutankal and HS Nutankal was held in late March to discuss the frequency of SMC meetings. Meetings had not been taking place in the HS as prescribed. The head teacher had also not been cooperating with the teachers. Both the chairpersons asked him why he had been so neglectful of his duties. The chairperson of the HS later spoke to the Gender Committee members on the problems that they had been facing. They told him that they had no water in the toilets. The chairperson promptly called up the Sarpanch and requested him to look into the issue. Water is now being fetched for the toilets in buckets from the public tap nearby.

During an SMC meeting that was held in UPS Yedavelli after a long gap, the Science teacher informed the SMC chairperson that the head teacher was not cooperating with the teachers. He was in charge of Mathematics but had not been teaching the children. The teacher in charge of the Gender Committee was very cooperative. The chairperson asked the head teacher to mend her ways. The vice-chairperson of HS Thallasingaram personally verified if Hall Tickets had been issued to all children from Class 10. He also rang up all the children's parents and sought their feedback about the conduct of online classes. The SMC of HS Lingampally got an electrical motor, which was burnt down, repaired.

CRPF Training

A training session was held for 25 CRPF members on 4th February in Vikarabad. Resource support was provided by Prakash and Narsimha. The members reviewed the status of child rights in their respective villages with focus on problems faced by children. They also discussed the outcomes of their hostel visits. One member from Arkathala informed that a teacher of the HS had been showing nudes to children from Class 6. Other issues that they focused on included gender inequality and children's learning outcomes.

The participants were given inputs on identifying children's issues, gender, coordination with the KBS and collaborating with the SMC. They were familiarised with the concept of the Gender Committee. Other areas that the resource persons touched upon were identifying hidden abuse, manifestations of gender discrimination, and role division at home. The participants were exhorted to transform their homes into gender neutral zones and to work hand in hand with other stakeholders such as the SMC, the KBS and the Gender Committee.

CRPF members from 6 villages of Vikarabad mandal have already been addressing girl child issues – on a priority basis. Ananta Rao from Madgul Chittampally encourages his niece to participate in all KBS meetings. In one incident, a 16-year old boy had gone to the house of a 14-year old girl from the village had gone to her house at 3 a.m. one day and had pulled her by the hand. Ananta Rao came to know of this and took the issue to the notice of the police. The officials asked the children's parents to sort out the issue between themselves, as both the girl and boy were underage. The both of them have stopped meeting each other.

A mandal level training session was held for 11 CRPF members in Shankarpally on 8th February. They reviewed the stats of child rights in their respective villages with focus on the quality of education, dropout, implementation of the midday meal scheme and problems faced by children. The resource persons addressed them on discrimination against girls in society. They illustrated through examples the different forms in which gender bias is practiced against girls and women. They also spoke on the strategies that could be employed to achieve gender equality in home and in public spaces including the school. They dwelt in fair detail on the link between child marriage and child

rights. They urged the participants to strengthen relations with the KBS and utilise their services where necessary.

Exposure Visits for KBS

One of the key activities taken up during the half-year was the facilitation of exposure visits for members of the KBS to Model Centres with a view to strengthening them. It was also proposed to use these visits as a means to enable mutual experience sharing between the Sanghas.

The details of the visits are as below:

Mandal: Shankarpally

Date	From	To	Members	Details
16 th Feb.	Gopularam, Dontanpally	Maharajpet	8 6	<p>KBS members from Maharajpet displayed the Village Maps that they had drawn. The Maps contained information on employees, child population, the status of child marriage and girl child dropout, using charts. They also spoke on the frequency with which they had been convened their meetings, their agenda and their interaction with the Sarpanch and the SMC.</p> <p>They made a brief presentation on the problems faced by them, restrictions on their mobility and their education and employment opportunities. They had not been visiting the SC Colony earlier, but this practice had changed.</p>
16 th Feb.	Mahalingapuram	Parveda	10	<p>KBS members from Parveda displayed the Village Maps that they had drawn. The Maps contained information on employees, child population, the status of child marriage and girl child dropout, using charts. They also spoke on the frequency with which they had been convened their meetings, their agenda and their interaction with the Sarpanch and the SMC.</p> <p>They made a brief presentation on the problems faced by them, restrictions on their mobility and their education and employment opportunities. They had not been visiting some parts of the village earlier but this practice had changed.</p> <p>The visitors also interacted with a VO leader and members of the Mandal Mothers' Association on girl child issues and their coordination with the KBS.</p>
16 th Feb.	Chandippa	Ravulapally	12	<p>KBS members from Ravulapally displayed the Village Maps that they had drawn. The Maps contained information on employees, child population, the status of child marriage and girl child dropout, using charts. They also spoke on the frequency</p>

				<p>with which they had been convened their meetings, their agenda and their interaction with the Sarpanch and the SMC.</p> <p>They made a brief presentation on the problems faced by them, restrictions on their mobility and their education and employment opportunities. They had not been visiting some parts of the village earlier but this practice had changed.</p>
1 st March	Kothapally	Proddutur	11	<p>KBS members from Proddutur displayed the Village Maps that they had drawn. The Maps contained information on employees, child population, the status of child marriage and girl child dropout, using charts. They also spoke on the frequency with which they had been convened their meetings, their agenda and their interaction with the Sarpanch and the SMC.</p> <p>They made a brief presentation on the problems faced by them, restrictions on their mobility and their education and employment opportunities. They had not been visiting some parts of the village earlier but this practice had changed.</p> <p>The visitors also interacted with a VO leader and members of the Mandal Mothers' Association on girl child issues and their coordination with the KBS.</p>

There has been improved turnout of girls in meetings and at the Centres. Interestingly, there is increased presence of older girls. Visitors from Gopularam, Mahalingapuram and Dontanpally replicated the Village Mapping exercise in their respective villages upon their return home. Girls from Dontanpally and Mahalingapuram spoke to the Sarpanchs of their villages and requested them for some space in the Gram Panchayat building. Both of them responded positively. Girls studying at the Class 10 and Intermediate level in Chandippa are regular participants in KBS meetings now. Members from the resource villages are more self-confident now and also take pride in their presentation abilities. The KBS has also earned the acceptance and cooperation of Sarpanchs and other key villagers.

Mandal Vikarabad

Date	From	To	Members	Details
9 th Feb.	Alampally	Madgul Chittampally	9	<p>One girl each from Chittampally made a presentation on different aspects of the functioning of the KBS, using charts. The girls informed that they had not been going to the SC Colony earlier but have begun to do so now. They explained the Village Map that they had drawn and also described a sketch that featured an adolescent girl shedding tears. The presenter explained the girls' emotions.</p>

				<p>In all, 15 girls from the village were present. Half a dozen boys from the village, who had also assembled there, informed that they had begun to socialise with the girls after the formation of the KBS. The ASHA, who was also present, appreciated the girls and expressed solidarity with their agenda.</p> <p>The visitors expressed that the idea of using charts was an ingenious one that was very effective.</p>
23 rd Feb.	Kompally	Madanpally	10	<p>Girls from Madanpally described the Village Mapping process using charts and also spoke on the problems associated with child marriage. Whenever they had an issue to deal with, they discussed the in detail and referred them to the best person/ institution that could resolve it. They had been following up on children's education and had been following up absentees and out-of-school children to school.</p>
13 th Jan.	Gottimukkula	Siddulur	10	<p>One girl each from the village made a presentation on different aspects of the functioning of the KBS. The girls informed that they had not been going to the SC Colony earlier but have begun to do so now. They explained the Village Map that they had drawn and also described a sketch that featured an adolescent girl shedding tears. The presenter explained the girls' emotions.</p> <p>In all, 15 girls from the village were present. They informed that there had been polarisation on caste grounds in the village in the past but the situation had changed. The Sarpanch had provided a room in the village for their use.</p> <p>The Sarpanch, the Secretary, the ANM and the Anganwadi Teacher were also present at the venue of the meeting. They spoke on the status of education, awareness among community on child marriage and girls' higher education. The ANM had played a vital role in preventing 4 child marriages. The girls had been supporting the education of some orphaned girls.</p> <p>The visitors from Gottimukkula informed that their Sarpanch had also given them a room and was a regular at their meetings.</p>
.22 nd Feb.	Pulsumamidi	Siddulur	8	<p>Girls from Siddulur described the Village</p>

				Mapping process and also spoke on the problems of child marriage. Whenever they had an issue to deal with, they discussed the in detail and referred them to the best person/ institution that could resolve it. They had followed up one girl that had dropped out of Junior College. her elder sister, who had been married young, had joined hands with them.
9 th Feb.	Pulmaddi	Madanpally	13	Girls from Madanpally informed that they had been assembling once a month and had engaged themselves in book reading sessions and discussions on newspaper clippings. They had identified and followed up some cases of child marriage and girl child dropout. They were regular participants in Gram Panchayat review meetings and VO meetings. VO leaders also attended their meetings. The local SMC chairperson arranged lunch for both the local girls and the visitors.

Mandal

Nutankal

Date	From	To	Members	Details
16 th Feb.	Yedavelli Miryala	Thalasingaram	22 13	<p>The visitors were joined by 32 girls from Thalasingaram. They spoke on the frequency and agenda of their meetings, their issues and how they had resolved them, petitions to Sarpanchs and head teachers, formation of the Committees, problems at home and how they had resolved them. They had convinced their non-cooperative parents to let them pursue their education. They had begun to go to their friends' homes more frequently for combined studies. There had also been a distinct transformation in gender roles and work division in their homes. They had been reading library books and participating in a wide variety of games. They had also learnt to question gender inequality within the family.</p> <p>The visitors were happy to learn that the girls from Thalasingaram had interacted with the Sarpanch, which they had not done so far. They promised to do so after their return home. They also asked the girls what steps they had taken to prevent child marriage.</p>
23 rd Feb.	Chilpakuntla	Thalasingaram	17	The participants included 24 girls from Thalasingaram. They used charts to explain their activities. They spoke on the frequency and agenda of their

				<p>meetings, their issues and how they had resolved them, petitions to Sarpanchs and head teachers, formation of the Committees, problems at home and how they had resolved them. They had convinced their non-cooperative parents to let them pursue their education. They had begun to go to their friends' homes more frequently for combined studies. There had also been a distinct transformation in gender roles and work division in their homes. They had been reading library books and participating in a wide variety of games. They had also learnt to question gender inequality within the family.</p> <p>The visitors also shared their personal experiences. Some of them had been traveling up to Nutankal by cycle to attend school. They had addressed some cases of eve teasing with the support of the Sarpanch, the SMC and the CRPF and had also stopped 2 cases of child marriage. In addition, they had also counseled two girls to pursue education. one of them had gone missing from home for a week and had just returned.</p>
23 rd Feb.	Machanpally	Nimmikal	13	<p>As many as 27 local girls attended the meeting. They used charts to explain the KBS intervention. They spoke on the formation of the KBS, its benefits, redressing school issues, frequency of their meetings and agenda, book reading, games and newspaper reading. They also spoke on how they had been identifying and resolving issues of concern and their status at home, in school and in the community.</p> <p>They informed that there had been a distinct change in gender roles and that gender equality had been achieved in most homes. They had also learnt to question and to assert their rights. the ANM and the Anganwadi Teacher, who were present, informed that they counseled the girls on various aspects of health and nutrition respectively.</p>

Mandal

Atmakur

Date	From	To	Members	Details
2 nd Feb.	Kandhagatla	Nimmikal	16	As many as 30 girls from Nimmikal turned up for the meeting. They spoke on the formation of the KBS, its benefits, redressing school issues,

				<p>frequency of their meetings and agenda, book reading, games and newspaper reading. They also spoke on how they had been identifying and resolving issues of concern and their status at home, in school and in the community. They informed that there had been a distinct change in gender roles and that gender equality had been achieved in most homes. They had also learnt to question and to assert their rights.</p> <p>The visiting girls informed that they had issues with mobility. This could be attributed mainly to an auto rickshaw accident in which a girl had succumbed. They had been trying to convince their parents to be more considerate of their needs.</p>
9 th Feb.	Midthanpally	Pedanemila	15	<p>The meeting was attended by 20 local girls in addition to the visitors. The latter spoke on the importance of the KBS and on the manner in which they had been identifying and addressing gender issues at the family, school and community levels. They also spoke on the problems that they had encountered, the way in which they had convinced their parents, the problems that they had faced in socialisation between boys and girls, and changes that they had experienced at the family level. They also spoke on their failures and challenges. Their self-confidence had also gone up and the gender gap in school and at the family had been bridged. Child marriage was one very challenging area. They had involved key community stakeholders and had addressed the issue to an extent.</p>
16 th Feb.	Isthalapuram	Nimmikal	9	<p>Participants at the meeting included 18 30 girls from Nimmikal. They spoke on the formation of the KBS, its benefits, redressing school issues, frequency of their meetings and agenda, book reading, games and newspaper reading. They also spoke on how they had been identifying and resolving issues of concern and their status at home, in school and in the community. They informed that there had been a distinct change in gender roles and that gender equality had been achieved in most homes. They had also learnt to question and to assert their rights.</p> <p>The girls also informed that they had prevented 2 cases of child marriage by</p>

				<p>contacting 1098. They had been given inputs on the key aspects of the CMPA, the POCSO Act and the RTE Act. They had received the cooperation of the SHE Team and the Sarpanch. Their parents had begun to cooperate with and trust them. The girls' mobility had increased. They have now begun going to the SC Colony and meeting their friends there, something unheard of in the past. They had also been celebrating each other's birthdays in school,</p> <p>The visiting girls informed that they had prevented some cases of child marriage and had been updating the Sarpanch on school related issues. Parents had begun sending them to distant places.</p>
1 st March	Isthalapuram	Nimmikal	7	<p>Participants at the meeting included 15 girls from Nimmikal. They spoke on the formation of the KBS, its benefits, redressing school issues, frequency of their meetings and agenda, book reading, games and newspaper reading. They also spoke on how they had been identifying and resolving issues of concern and their status at home, in school and in the community. They informed that there had been a distinct change in gender roles and that gender equality had been achieved in most homes. They had also learnt to question and to assert their rights.</p> <p>The girls also informed that they had prevented 2 cases of child marriage by contacting 1098. They had been given inputs on the key aspects of the CMPA, the POCSO Act and the RTE Act. They had received the cooperation of the SHE Team and the Sarpanch. Their parents had begun to cooperate with and trust them. The girls' mobility had increased. They have now begun going to the SC Colony and meeting their friends there, something unheard of in the past. They had also been celebrating each other's birthdays in school,</p>
23 rd Feb.	Vijayanagaram X Roads	Nimmikal	7	<p>Participants at the meeting included 27 girls from Nimmikal. They displayed charts on the formation of the KBS, its benefits, redressing school issues, frequency of their meetings and agenda, book reading, games and newspaper reading. They also spoke on how they had been identifying and</p>

				<p>resolving issues of concern and their status at home, in school and in the community. They informed that there had been a distinct change in gender roles and that gender equality had been achieved in most homes. They had also learnt to question and to assert their rights.</p> <p>The girls also informed that they had prevented 2 cases of child marriage by contacting 1098. They had been given inputs on the key aspects of the CMPA, the POCSO Act and the RTE Act. They had received the cooperation of the SHE Team and the Sarpanch. Their parents had begun to cooperate with and trust them. The girls' mobility had increased. They have now begun going to the SC Colony and meeting their friends there, something unheard of in the past. They had also been celebrating each other's birthdays in school,</p>
23 rd Feb.	Patha Suryapet	Nimmikal	12	<p>Participants at the meeting included 27 girls from Nimmikal. They displayed charts on the formation of the KBS, its benefits, redressing school issues, frequency of their meetings and agenda, book reading, games and newspaper reading. They also spoke on how they had been identifying and resolving issues of concern and their status at home, in school and in the community. They informed that there had been a distinct change in gender roles and that gender equality had been achieved in most homes. They had also learnt to question and to assert their rights.</p> <p>The girls also informed that they had prevented 2 cases of child marriage by contacting 1098. They had been given inputs on the key aspects of the CMPA, the POCSO Act and the RTE Act. They had received the cooperation of the SHE Team and the Sarpanch. Their parents had begun to cooperate with and trust them. The girls' mobility had increased. They have now begun going to the SC Colony and meeting their friends there, something unheard of in the past. They had also been celebrating each other's birthdays in school,</p>
23 rd Feb.	Kothagudem	Mukundapuram	15	<p>Participants of the meeting included 23 KBS members from Mukundapuram. They used charts to illustrate the</p>

				concept of gender, define the term Adolescent Girl, the process of forming a KBS, its uses and gender issues. They spoke on the manner in which they had identified and resolved gender issues and the challenges they had faced. Their parents had supported them all through. Their mobility had improved. Their village had been recognised for their contributions to gender equality and this had attracted visitors from 7 States
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Mandal Maddirala

Date	From	To	Members	Details
23 rd Feb.	Maddirala	Mukundapuram	12	Participants of the meeting included 23 KBS members from Mukundapuram. They used charts to illustrate the concept of gender, define the term Adolescent Girl, the process of forming a KBS, its uses and gender issues. They spoke on the manner in which they had identified and resolved gender issues and the challenges they had faced. Their parents had supported them all through. Their mobility had improved. Their village had been recognised for their contributions to gender equality and this had attracted visitors from 7 States.
16 th Feb.	Chandupatla	Mukundapuram	19	Participants of the meeting included 15 KBS members from Mukundapuram. They used charts to illustrate the concept of gender, define the term Adolescent Girl, the process of forming a KBS, its uses and gender issues. They spoke on the manner in which they had identified and resolved gender issues and the challenges they had faced. Their parents had supported them all through. Their mobility had improved. Their village had been recognised for their contributions to gender equality and this had attracted visitors from 7 States.
9 th Feb.	Kukkudam	Mukundapuram	18	Participants of the meeting included 15 KBS members from Mukundapuram. They used charts to illustrate the concept of gender, define the term Adolescent Girl, the process of forming a KBS, its uses and gender issues. One of the members spoke on key provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, the RTE Act, the POCSO Act and the CMPA, The girls also went in brief on the

				manner in which they had identified and resolved gender issues and the challenges they had faced. Their parents had supported them all through. Their mobility had improved. Their village had been recognised for their contributions to gender equality and this had attracted visitors from 7 States.
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The visitors were very happy at having an opportunity for learning from their peers. The use of charts was particularly effective in sending across the message to them. They resolved to transform their villages into resource institutions. KBS leaders from Yedavelli and Chilpakuntla are mobilising girls for meetings on their own and are informing them in advance of the schedule. The girls' mobility has improved and they are showing greater interest in combined studies and games. Their parents are more cooperative and do not hesitate to send their daughters to others' homes. The girls have become more expressive and articulate in speaking of their issues.

Girls from the hosting villages are happy about their presentation skills. Earlier, KBS meetings were being held in the school in Miriyala on Sundays, which was also the market day. The girls were hesitant. However, their turnout has improved by 50% after they were counseled by the organiser.

Gram Panchayat meetings on children's issues

A Gram Panchayat meeting was held in Parveda on 26th January to coincide with the Republic Day celebrations. Members of the KBS unfurled the National Flag in the presence of the Sarpanch, the MPTC and the SMC members, who gave away games material to them. They also motivated them to study at least up to the undergraduate level.

A Gram Panchayat meeting was held in Mahalingapuram on 29th January to discuss teacher absenteeism. One of the teachers had been absent for the last one week and had signed against her name in the attendance register when she next reported. The SMC chairperson, who noticed this, took some pictures. One of the school teachers informed this to the news media. The issue became public, following which an SMC meeting was held with the participation of the Sarpanch to discuss the issue. A letter that was addressed to the DEO and was signed jointly by the Sarpanch and the SMC chairperson. The teacher was asked to mend her ways, failing which the letter would be submitted to the DEO. She admitted her mistake and promised to be serious about her duties.

Organisers from Shankarpally participated in 7 Grama Sabhas, during which they shared information on problems faced by children in school and the status of school dropout. KBS members were invited to narrate their experiences. The organisers are being given 15-20 minutes during the Sabhas for their presentation. During the Grama Sabha in Dontanpally, the organiser informed that one of the two teachers posted in the local PS was highly irregular and occupied himself with his phone while in class. The Gender Committee had informed the organiser of this. The Sarpanch subsequently visited the school and assessed the standards of education.

Organisers from Vikarabad mandal participated in 12 review meetings, during which they discussed higher education of girls, child marriage, gender equality, school dropout and registration of births and marriages. The Sarpanch of Siddalur identified a room that the KBS members could use for their meetings. The Sarpanch of Pulsumamidi has been reviewing girl children's issues and also passed a resolution during a review meeting. He has been visiting the school once in 15-20 days. The Sarpanch of Madanpally mobilised Rs 1 lakh through donors to get the school playground levelled. Gram Panchayat members from Erravally followed up a girl to school. The Gram Panchayat body facilitated public transport for school-going children in Pulumaddi, Erravally and Pulsumamidi.

The Sarpanch of Gottimukkula had offered to solve any problem being faced by the girls and that all they had to do was to write the details on a small piece of paper. One Class 9 student from the village wrote to him that her alcoholic father often shouted at her in a drunken stupor without regard for her dignity. The Sarpanch had received nearly 60 complaints on alcoholism, school problems, domestic

violence, etc. He passed a resolution during a Grama Sabha to the effect that liquor would be no longer sold in the village. Another girl student informed him that a teacher had been touching her indiscriminately. He cautioned the teacher against such behaviour. He also participated in a KBS meeting.

The team from Atmakur participated in 72 review meetings organised by the Gram Panchayat. The Panchayat Secretaries invited them to attend the meetings. The organisers discussed child marriage, school dropout, seasonal work, domestic abuse and exploitation. They invited 2 boys and girls each from 16 villages of the mandal to represent their issues. This exercise has helped enhance the visibility of the KBS. The organisers also highlighted the need to form CMPCs at the village level. Upon coming to know that 18 children from Nimmikal were employed in NREGS job works, the organiser informed the Sarpanch. He took steps to withdraw the children from work. The Deputy Sarpanch, the ICPS team, the head teacher and the SMC chairperson also contributed to this effort. Responding to complaints of liquor and *Gutkha*, the Gram Panchayat banned them in 8 villages of the mandal. Resolutions were passed by the respective Sarpanchs of these villages to this effect.

Children from Atmakur informed that their teachers were very strict and did not tolerate irregularity or late coming. They severely punished children that did not wear the school uniform or shoes or did not finish their home assignments. However, one or more of them was always on leave, inconveniencing them. The Sarpanch, who had himself been a teacher in the past, questioned the head teacher sternly. The latter vented his anger at a girl that had been absent for one whole fortnight due to health issues. He had not permitted her to resume her schooling after she returned. He spoke rudely to her parents, who called up the organiser. She got the Sarpanch to speak to the DEO, who instructed the head teacher to take her in.

The organisers convened 6 Gram Panchayat meetings in Maddirala with 65 members and also participated in 45 review meetings. The team from Nutankal was invited to attend 19 review meetings.

The numbers of Gram Panchayats from which Sarpanchs, Deputy Sarpanchs and MPTCs participated in KBS meetings are as follows:

Mandal	Gram Panchayats
Shankarpally	7
Vikarabad	12
Atmakur	21
Nutankal	13
Maddirala	6
Total	59

Village SHG federation meetings

The organisers took part in monthly VO meetings and facilitated discussions on girl child issues such as gender discrimination, the status of women/girl children in the leaders' families, migration, girl child education, work division at home and the adverse effects of child marriage. The organisers were given the opportunity to speak first so that the leaders' schedule was not interrupted.

Organisers in Shankarpally pointed out to the members that the origin of gender based discrimination was very early and commenced at the stage of pregnancy. It is unfortunate that women are equally involved in taking such decisions. Some of the members disagreed with this initially but accepted it later on. Some of the leaders, who had 3 or more daughters, had not been educating one or more of them. A few of them shared stories of domestic violence. An SMC chairperson from Mahalingapuram, who was associated with the VO, informed that she had given birth to a third girl and that her husband and his family had not visited her and her daughter for more than five months. In another case from Pilligundla, the parents-in-law and husband of one of the participants had not cared for her even when she was pregnant.

Organisers in Vikarabad mandal called upon the women to prioritise their daughters' education and to not overburden them with work during the exam season. They ought to educate the girls at least up to the undergraduate level. The women reviewed changes in gender practices at home and informed

that they had been sitting together for meals and had been taking joint family decisions on key issues. They had the full support of men folk in their homes. The leaders have been maintaining regular contact with the organisers and referred some cases of child marriage and dropout to them. Around a dozen VO leaders from the mandal have been visiting schools on a periodical basis.

The organisers also participated in a mandal level SHG meeting held on 24th February that was held under the aegis of the *One Billion Rising* network. They addressed the members on the issues of higher education and child marriage.

The details of meetings in which the organisers participated are as under:

Mandal	Meetings
Shankarpally	15
Vikarabad	13
Atmakur	78
Nutankal	47
Maddirala	47
Total	200

The parents of 3 girls aged 10, 12 and 14 years respectively from Atmakur were always involved in fights with each other, due to which the children's education was disrupted. Their father had an affair with a woman from Suryapet. Upon coming to know of this, his wife picked up an altercation with the woman and approached the police in Suryapet. The officials asked her to go to the Police Station in Atmakur and submit proofs of her family members. She prepared herself for this but was restrained by the local VO leaders. They counseled her along with the Sarpanch. The children resumed their schooling, but the problem resurfaced not before long. The mother left home, taking along her youngest daughter. The other girls met the Sarpanch and told him that they wanted their sister back with them. The Sarpanch and the VO leaders counseled the parents a second time and the matter has been put to rest for now.

In an incident, a woman and her husband from SC Colony – Thallasingaram in Nutankal had affairs with two different people. The husband began to ignore the family and the wife stopped working altogether, which created problems for their children. At the other end, the man with whom the wife had an affair also quit working. The issue came up for discussion during a KBS meeting. The members informed the organiser that the second man's wife had been sending her daughter to work in order to support the family. She herself got accustomed to alcohol. She began to send her sons, who were studying in Classes 7 and 10, to Maddirala to fetch rice from the PDS outlet. The VO members counseled her to stop drinking at least for her children's sake. She did not listen to them initially but consented after they met her on 7-8 occasions. She reduced her intake of alcohol after some of the locals arranged rice for her locally.

The father of 12-year old Manisha and 13-year old Mahesh from Mukundapuram in Maddirala was a heavy drinker. He had an affair with another woman and he often beat his wife, who was a VO leader. The organiser came to know of this during a meeting. The Village Bookkeeper went to the woman's house, accompanied by 5 VO leaders and the organiser. When spoken to, the man replied that he was 50 years old but his wife did not care for him. He alleged that his wife didn't cook for him. The woman came up with a different version and told them that he did not like it when she even asked him where he had gone. The man was in a drunken state and the Bookkeeper and the organiser met him later. They warned him that action would be initiated against him under the Domestic Violence Act. The situation has improved now.

Anganwadi Teacher Gowri from Guguloth Thanda – Maddirala had an affair with her cousin Srinivas. Her two sons had been studying in a hostel. Srinivas had two daughters. His wife Parvati fought with him over his relation with Gowri. She left him and went to her mother's home. The VO leaders informed this to the organiser during a meeting. Gowri, at the other end, left her husband and stopped attending to her duties. Her father-in-law, who was a ward member, a VO leader from the village and the ICDS Supervisor went to her home in a group and counseled her. Her father-in-law told her that her job would be at stake if she persisted in such irregularity. She resumed her duties. At the other

end, Gowri's sister-in-law convinced Parvati, who was a good friend of hers, to return to her village. Parvathi's children are back to school.

SMC meetings

The details of SMC meetings held during the reporting period are as below:

Mandal	Meetings	M	F	T
Shankarpally	11	105	75	180
Vikarabad	16	90	50	140
Atmakur	45	181	212	393
Nutankal	13	74	63	137
Maddirala	29	144	156	300
Total	114	594	556	1150

The agenda of the meetings included school monitoring, roles and responsibilities of the members, coordination with the Gender Committee, follow up of dropouts and Class 10 children, basic infrastructure, midday meals, Hall Tickets for irregular children, child marriage, girl children's problems, and gender equality.

One of the key issues discussed during the meetings was gender equality and role division at the domestic level with emphasis on girls' access to education, sitting and eating together and decision making. It was noted that there were notable differences between families headed by educated and uneducated parents. This had also had an impact on children's status in the family. The participants were informed that there was close correlation between gender equity and retention. Understanding this would help them appreciate their role better. Other points that they had to focus on were girls' leadership roles in school and their participation in classroom activities. They were also asked to keep close contact with Gender Committees and work in coordination with the Committee and the KBS to strengthen them.

SMC members in all schools of Shankarpally have been participating in Gender Committee meetings. Children from HS Proddutur informed during a meeting that the head teacher had not issued textbooks to them. The members spoke to him, after which he handed over the responsibility of distributing the books to a girl student from Class 9. The computer instructor, who was not serious in her duties, was replaced. The head teacher of HS Kothapally had not issued the Hall Ticket to a student from Class 10, who had been away from school for 3 months on account of ill health. Her father resigned himself to the situation. The SMC chairperson came to know of this during a meeting and he spoke to the head teacher along with the mobiliser. The girl was promoted and is enrolled in the Intermediate section now.

Children from HS Mahalingapuram had not been given games material and the drum that was supposed to be used during the assembly hour were not being played. The newly appointed Physical Education Teacher was not serious about it. The SMC chairperson questioned him, after which the drum was brought out. Some girls have evinced interest in playing the drum and some have already begun to practice it. The SMC of HS Ravulapally facilitated the conduct of an essay writing competition on gender discrimination for girls on the occasion of Girl Child Day. He also evaluated some of the essays personally.

A mandal level SMC with 15 members was formed in Shankarpally on 12th February. Subsequent to the conduct of the formative meeting, the organisers took 4 of the key functionaries on an exposure visit to PS Urella and HS Gundala of neighbouring Chevella mandal, where the SMCs were quite active. They had contributed to school development and TLM. The quality of education was good and they had also increase the pupil strength of the local school. The SMC in Gundala had facilitated private transport for some children.

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A mandal level meet was held with in Shankarpally on 4th July with the participation of 16 SMC chairpersons. The meeting was facilitated by Narasimhulu and Nagamani from MVF. The

chairpersons reviewed the status of functioning of their respective schools after the introductory session. Key issues flagged by them included poor quality of education, late-coming by some teachers, improper implementation of the midday meal scheme, unwillingness by head teachers to involve SMC chairpersons in deciding on school fund utilisation and poor maintenance of bathrooms and toilets.

Some of the observations made by the chairpersons were as follows:

- Teachers from PS Mahalingapuram were late and had not responded to the chairperson even over phone.
- The compound wall of ZPHS Mahalingapuram needed repairs
- Teachers from ZPHS Kondakal had been conducting tuitions after 430 p.m.
- The SMC chairpersons of ZPHS Proddutur and PS Parveda got the issue of water shortage resolved in their respective schools
- Some children from ZPHS Ravulapally, who had not been partaking of the midday meal earlier, have changed their attitudes after being counseled by the SMC members
- The Model School had been facing shortage of teachers.
- Teachers from UPS Ervaguda were always late to school earlier but have turned over a new leaf now
- Math and Science teachers were appointed in Parveda because the head teacher, who was in charge of these subjects, was tied up by administrative duties. Two additional classrooms were also sanctioned for the school.
- An electricity bill of Rs 7000 was due from ZPHS (G) Shankarpally. – Rs 7000 due towards electricity charges – quality of education good
- Some boys from ZPHS (B) Shankarpally had been consuming banned substance and some of them even behaved with their teachers in an unruly fashion
- One lady teacher from PS Dhobipet had been reporting daily to school as late as 1130 a.m.

Summing up the presentations, organiser Nagamani appreciated the part played by the SMC in strengthening schools and also observed that the school is like family. she informed that Gender Committees had been formed in all schools of the mandal. The SMC must work hand in hand with them. Model Centres had been set up in some villages and girls had been assembling there on Sundays. Some girls had drawn Village Maps.

Organiser Narsimhulu lauded the SMC chairperson from Proddutur for his initiative. He had asked the school teachers not to send any child outside school and to contact him first if there were any need to do so. The chairperson from Parveda had told the teachers that it was not sufficient to merely to teach children and that it was important to ensure that the children could read and write properly. The chairperson from Kondakal had signed a blank cheque. This was not the right thing to do. In another instance, the authorities of the Girls' HS in Shankarpally had accepted donations in cash. Schools ought to shun this practice. They could accept donations only in kind.

Narsimhulu proudly declared that 12 chairpersons from the mandal were very active and were ever eager to do something or the other for their schools. It was necessary to focus on strengthening HS. He noted with regret that some HS teachers had been sending older children outside the school to fetch something or the other for them. They had to quit doing so and had to be friendly towards children. He opined that the best way to test children's learning abilities was to ask them to write on common things that they saw around them such as a tree or their school kitchen. This would bring out their real command over the subject.

In the concluding session of the meeting, Mandal SMC Convenor Mahesh Goud called upon the participants to regularly visit schools and gather everyone's feedback on school functioning. They ought to focus on the quality of education and not blindly sign on cheques presented to them by head teachers. They needed to know how the school fund was utilised. It was also necessary for them to inspect children's notebooks. They needed to have a never-say-die attitude and earn everyone's goodwill. Finally, they ought to be prepared to encounter any problem issue.

SMC meetings were being held infrequently in HS Siddalur, Vikarabad. The toilets were in poor condition and the incidence of seasonal dropout was quite high. The implementation of the midday

meal was also substandard. Some girls had not even been eating their lunch for fear that they would have to use the toilet. There was also acute shortage of water. The members were asked not to burden girls with domestic chores and were also urged to support the Gender Committees.

Anusha from Madgul Chittampally belonged to an immigrant family. She dropped out of school barely a fortnight after she enrolled, as she was subject to eve teasing by a local boy. The issue was discussed with the head teacher and the SMC, who warned the youth. SMC members from Gottimukkula are also very active and visit the school once a fortnight. The English Vidya Volunteer from the school in Zaidpally never went to his class and entrusted the head teacher with this responsibility instead. He changed his ways after the SMC reprimanded him. The SMC got a playground sanctioned through the Gram Panchayat in Madanpally. A local had encroached the playground earlier. The SMC followed up 2 and 3 dropouts to the PS and HS respectively.

Some youth had been littering the premises of HS and PS Nutankal with liquor bottles and community members had been defecating in the open. The teachers and the SMC complained to the police in this regard. The issue has been resolved. The SMC identified donors for sports uniforms that were distributed to 178 children from the schools in Yenkepally and Nutankal and in KGBV Thallasingaram. The Joint Collector gave away the uniforms.

The SMC chairperson and the Sarpanch mobilised funds worth Rs 15 lakhs from the Asst. Commissioner – GST, Hyderabad to meet the costs of tiles for walls, flooring, construction of toilets and bathrooms, provision of water pipeline, supply of purified water and a napkin making machine in Ramulu Thanda, Thetakunda Thanda – Kasigudem and Thetakunda Thanda – Kotapahad in Nutankal mandal. Minister Jagadishwar Reddy and the Commissioner – GST were present at the launch ceremony in addition to the Principal Secretary – Education., the DEO, the Tehsildar and the MPDO.

The newly elected SMC chairperson of HS Nimmikal requested the organiser to introduce her to the Gender Committee. She attended one of their meetings and spoke to them at length on the process of formation of the Committee, the frequency and agenda of their meetings and the challenges that they had faced. She was astounded to learn that the incidence of dropout and irregularity from her locality was quite high. She also tasted the midday meal and expressed dissatisfaction with its quality. She referred the issue to the head teacher.

Uma- a Class 10 student of ZPHS Kotapahad had dropped out of school after being stalked by a boy. She had been maintaining a distance from him but he had touched her on the shoulder lightly in a freak incident. Some of her classmate had seen this and had reported the issue to one of their teachers. The teachers spoke to her father, following which her grandmother asked her to stay away from school. Upon coming to know of this during a Gender Committee meeting, the SMC chairperson spoke to the girl along with the organiser. Uma, who was present at the next Committee, demanded to know why the teacher had targeted her when she had been innocent. She approached the head teacher. The teacher Nagamani apologised to Uma, The girl's parents filed a case under the POCSO Act and the youth was put behind bars.

Two youth aged 19 and 20 came to the school playground in ZPHS Maddirala one day around 9 .a m. Some of the girls asked them why they were there. They casually remarked that they were there to flirt. When one of the girls took the issue seriously, the youth dared her to call up the head teacher and gave her his phone. He was incidentally a tractor driver with a local leader. The organiser suggested the conduct of an SMC meeting to discuss the issue. The head teacher informed the MVF team and summoned the girl's parents to a SMC meeting. They were joined by 50 parents and the guilty youth. The girls narrated the entire incident before the youth arrived. They denied the occurrence of the incident. The head teacher took them to task and told them that they would be in trouble if they went overboard with their behaviour. One of the SMC members literally slapped the youth, after which their parents realised the seriousness of the issue and fell at the Sarpanch's feet. He told them that it was important for them to ensure that their children behaved properly. They gave a written declaration to this effect and the issue was resolved. The organiser spoke in brief on the POCSO and the Juvenile Justice Acts.

Attendance tracking of school and college students

The organisers took up a headcount exercise during November and February in all Upper Primary and ZP Schools of the project area to track children's presence in schools and verified the figures against entries in school attendance registers. They later met the absentees and counseled them.

The details of five-day absentees identified and contacted during November are as under:

Mandal	Five-day absentees	
	B	G
Shankarpally	184	93
Vikarabad	132	117
Atmakur	98	69
Nutankal	36	34
Maddirala	27	35
Total	477	348

The corresponding figures for the headcount taken up during February are as below:

Mandal	Five-day absentees	
	B	G
Shankarpally	136	126
Vikarabad	118	84
Atmakur	65	68
Nutankal	29	40
Maddirala	27	35
Total	375	353

It may be noted that there has been reduced incidence of five-day absenteeism. This has been possible largely due to strengthened Gender Committees, who have been identifying and following up absentees regularly. The members are one of the important contact points. Head teachers, the SMC and the CRPF also supported efforts to reach the children. Teachers from schools of Maddirala mandal have been maintaining telephonic contact with their students' parents.

Teachers have played an equally part in reaching these children. There had been resistance from some of them in the past but they have understood the significance of the tracking exercise and have begun to cooperate. There has been no discrepancy between absentees identified through the headcount and entries in the registers. They are also maintaining close relations with SMC chairpersons.

Sreeja and Swathi – both students of Class 10 from Girls' HS, Shankarpally were highly irregular. They would leave home for school but roam around aimlessly. Even when they went to school, they would drop out in the afternoon session. When questioned, they came up with lame excuses. The organiser and some women told them that were in an important phase of life and that they had to behave in a very responsible manner, failing which they would have to face the consequences. They mended their ways.

Radha Priya – a Class 9 student from Tangaturu – Shankarpally had dropped out for 2-3 weeks. The SMC chairperson identified her case and informed this to the organiser. The both of them went to the girl's house along with the Anganwadi Teacher and counseled her alcoholic father. He was not in favour of the girl's schooling because he felt that she was too old to attend school. The team told him that age was no barrier to education and that she was a good student. She finally returned to school. The team from Ervaguda followed up Manideep from Class 8 and Charan from Class 7 in a similar manner.

Praveen Kumar from Kotalaguda, Vikarabad injured his leg in an accident and was not in a position to give the exams. His parents were also skeptical. The organiser motivated him and encouraged him to appear for them without fail. They asked his parents to send him to the examination venue at least by

auto rickshaw. His father wasn't ready initially but gave in ultimately and the boy appeared for the Class 10 exams.

The names of 4 children that had shifted from HS Reddigudem in Maddirala mandal to private school had not been struck off the register. The teachers did this knowing very well that it was not right on their part. They would stand to lose their posts in otherwise case. The organisers pointed this out to them and asked them to strike the children's names off the registers. Tirupati Mahesh – a Class 7 student from Kandhagatla was a very good student but his parents, who were always embroiled in fights and arguments, took him out of school and put him in charge of grazing the family goats. The organiser and the head teacher motivated the couple along with the Deputy Sarpanch and the CRPF and brought him back to school. Mangalapalli Maharshi – a Class 10 student of ZPHS Yerrapahad dropped out of school for a silly reason. His father was very keen on his education but was short tempered. He once lost his cool and hit the boy, who stopped going to school. The class teacher tried to reach the man but he was inaccessible. The teacher counseled both Maharshi and his father at length, after which the boy resumed his schooling.

The organiser noted that 4 children from HS Patha Suryapet in Atmakur were absent during the afternoon but this had not been reflected in the school records. The teachers had manipulated the midday meal list. When questioned, the head teacher grumbled that the organiser always complained but eventually marked the children as absent. Guguloth Neeraja from Class 8 and her brother Nitin from Class 6 were left to fend for themselves after their parents migrated from Peepya Naik Thanda in Atmakur to another village in quest of work. The girl began to graze goats while the boy attended school. The Deputy Sarpanch and the organiser followed up Neeraja to school.

Gundepally Karthik – a Class 10 student from Settigudem in Atmakur dropped out of school for 56 days. He began to grow long hair for no specific reason and also did not talk to anyone. When the organiser probed him, he informed that He had fallen for a girl three years ago and he had avowed that he would cut his hair only after he had spoken to her. He was also unwilling to give the annual exams. The organiser advised him that silly issues such as these must not impede his progress. He got his hair cut after a couple of days and wrote the exams.

Two children from Class 8 in HS Nassimpeta – Atmakur mandal were highly irregular to their classes. They had to walk 4kilometres to school and this sometimes wearied them, due to which they bunked their classes. They had got accustomed to smoking and consumption of tobacco. They also stole a mobile phone on one occasion. The organiser met them along with the Sarpanch and the ward member and spoke to them. The Sarpanch counseled them on the importance of education. it would help them gain not just employment but social respect as well. The CRP also spoke to their parents. the teachers promised stationery for the children and they returned to school.

The Gender Committee informed the organiser that they had identified three boys from Yenkepally – Nutankal belonging to the same family. Their parents had migrated and they were regular to school in the couple's absence. However, their mother didn't let them attend school for six days upon her return home in February. she sent them to work, as they were being offered Rs 200 each a day. The teacher in charge of the Gender Committee and the organiser jointly counseled the parents and the children's paternal grandmother, who had been acting as their guardian. The mother was reluctant at first but later consented to send them back to school.

Follow up for 10th and Inter exams

The organisers gathered school wise information on all children that had registered for the Class 10 and the Intermediate examinations 34 both regular children and children that were appearing as private candidates. They sought the assistance of the KBS in this regard. They went to the houses of children that were absent from school/irregular and personally motivated them. Where possible, children were contacted over phone.

School Gender Committee meetings

The details of Gender Committee meetings held mandal wise are as follows:

Mandal	Meetings	B	G	T
Shankarpally	15	150	150	300
Vikarabad	20	194	194	388
Atmakur	53	436	436	872
Nutankal	27	200	211	411
Maddirala	30	280	287	567
Total	145	1260	1278	2538

The meetings were devoted to discussions on dropout, reasons for absenteeism/dropout and the problems faced by children at home – especially girls.

The Gender Committee of HS Mahalingapuram drew the attention of the organiser to the condition of a Class 9 girl with complaints of epilepsy. She often experienced giddiness and had seizures. On one such occasion, she shouted out aloud and both her classmates and her teacher grew pensive. She felt guilty about it and dropped out once for 2 weeks. Her teachers were also inconsiderate of her. The organiser took up the issue with the head teacher, who asked her colleagues not to behave in this manner. The girl has returned to school.

An overweight girl from Maharajpet was mocked at by the head teacher for her size. The latter had once sighted her speaking to a boy and she took this opportunity to make fun of the girl. The girl's mother came to know of this through the girl's fellow members of the Gender Committee meeting. She mobilised nearly 30 parents and they took the head teacher to task. She was forced to apologise to the girl and her parents.

The Gender Committee of HS Madgul Chittampally – Vikarabad mandal informed the organiser that some children that reported early at school for special classes had been wasting their time chitchatting. The organiser spoke to the teachers, who informed them that some of the children were reckless and that some others had been having night birthday parties in the school premises. They advised the children against doing so. A new Committee was formed in HS Zaidpally and the members were oriented on the roles and responsibilities of the Committee. Girls and boys from Pulumaddi are playing together due to the efforts of the Gender Committee. The Committee in Madanpally motivated one dropout to return to school.

A couple of Class 7 boys from Atmakur Model School proposed to heir juniors from Class 6. Some of their fellow students poked fun at them. This issue surfaced during a Gender Committee meeting. the members also informed that some Class 10 children had been taking selfies in the school premises. Some boys and girls had been going to the nearby temple during the short break. The teacher in charge of the Gender Committee assembled them together and counseled them. She also spoke in brief on the provisions of the POCSO Act. she consciously included one of the erring boys in the Committee, following which the situation improved.

Children from Class 10 in HS Atmakur were getting late to home, as the Study Hour extended to late in the evening until 630 p.m. The Gender Committee spoke to the head teachers and requested them to let the children leave earlier at 530 p.m. Some of the teachers had been closing the doors while class was in session because they did not want the children to be disturbed. The classrooms were, however, congested and this inconvenienced the children. In addition, whenever a teacher was absent, one of their colleagues would abruptly engage the children without notice, getting them to lose concentration. All these issues were resolved through a meeting of the Committee.

Some outsider youth from Isthalapuram had been passing on letters to Class 10 girl students through their classmates. The Gender Committee in charge counseled both the couriers and the children. the situation has improved. combined games are being held in ZPHS Kotapahad, where the PET was very conservative earlier. He changed his attitude after he was placed in charge of the Committee.

The Gender Committee of Thallasingaram – Nutankal informed the organiser that two boys from the school had proposed to two girls from their class and this had disturbed the girls mentally. The girls also informed this to the in charge teacher. She, along with the head teacher and the organiser counseled the boys. They tried to justify themselves and came up with lame excuses. They were told that there was no point lying to themselves. There was a time for everything in life but it was important

for them to focus on their education. They have stopped speaking to the girls. The Committee of HS Nutankal also reported and resolved a similar case involving a Class 9 boy.

Elocution, essay writing, sports competitions

Essay writing competitions on forms of social discrimination against girls were held for 102 KBS members from 5 villages of Shankarpally on 24th January to mark National Day of the Girl Child. The organisers later participated in a meeting held by the ICDS and local NGO SOS in Maharajpet. The Sarpanch shared his experiences with MVF, the KBS and the Model Centre. He promised to work for gender equity.

An elocution competition on girls' role in society was held on 24th January in Gottimukkula of Vikarabad mandal with 2 boys and 6 girls participating. An essay writing competition on the same topic that was held in Pulsumamidi was attended by 15 girls. As many as 15 girls from Pulumaddi, Alampally and Kothagadi took part in an elocution competition on gender discrimination and steps to do away with it. Donors sponsored English dictionaries for winners of an elocution competition in Mylardevarampally.

Essay writing competitions on forms of discrimination against girls in different community spaces were held in 20 schools and 2 colleges of Atmakur on 24th January with 374 girls participating. The girls also took part in elocution competitions. Dictionaries and General Knowledge books were gifted to the winners. The competitions were followed by a mandal level rally with the participation of 112 members including the MPP, the Tehsildar, the MPDO, the SI, the PHC Medical Officer, the CDPO and local teachers. Cultural events also featured. Prizes were distributed to the winners.

Essay writing competitions were also held in 11 villages of Maddirala with 150 children and in 12 schools of Nutankal with 198 children. Mandal level meetings in these mandals had a participation of 81 and 85 members respectively. Dignitaries that turned up in Maddirala included the MPP and the MPDO. The MPP, the ZPTC, the Tehsildar, the MPDO and the ICDS Supervisor were present in the mandal level meeting and a rally in Nutankal.

More than 30 KBS members from Parveda participated in the Republic Day celebrations. The organisers allotted separate benches for the members in Proddutur. Games events such as volleyball, kho kho and kabaddi were organised for 131 KBS members in 4 villages of the mandal. The National Flag was unfurled by girl youth in SC Colony – Vikarabad on Republic Day, in the presence of the local teachers. They were actively supported by boys. A Class 6 girl hoisted the Flag in Mylardevarampally.

International Women's Day was observed in 7 villages of Vikarabad. The Sarpanchs of Zaidpally and Athvelly felicitated 13 and 10 active women respectively. The MPDO and the CDPO felicitated 20 supportive mothers during an event in Maddirala on 8th March. The Sarpanch honoured 14 mothers from Nutankal for their contributions, on 7th March. A huge meeting was held with 167 members including the MPP, the Tehsildar, the SI and the MPDO. Games such as kabaddi, musical chairs, *Kolattam*, leapfrog, etc. were held for 86 participated women and girls. A mandal meeting held in Atmakur was attended by 150 people. The organisers also conducted public meetings in 4 villages with a turnout of 598. They felicitated 72 women, including proactive government school teachers, on the occasion. The MPP, the DM&HO, the CDPO and representatives of the ICPS and Childline were present.

KBS meetings

Issues discussed during KBS meetings included feedback on exposure visits for the KBS members, planning orientation sessions, gender equality/discrimination, violence, dropout, promoting girl child education, use of library facilities by children, book/newspaper reading and child marriage.

Subsequent to their return from the visits, most of the girls resolved to replicate the effort in their own villages and– strengthen their own committees based on their what they had observed, Additional visits were also planned.

The details of meetings held and participants are as under:

Mandal	Meetings	No. of Girls
Shankarpally	24	378
Vikarabad	38	564
Atmakur	178	2078
Nutankal	77	803
Maddirala	76	758
Total	393	4581

A joint meeting was held with 8 boys and 18 girls from Class 10 in Proddutur to discuss their higher education. They were not keen on continuing their studies. The children were counseled to enrol in Intermediate. They were encouraged to borrow books and read them whenever they had some spare time. It was decided that the KBS would encourage children from one village per cluster to borrow and read library books. Sarpanchs came forward to support this agenda. Responding to a demand from girls in Pilligundla, an amount of Rs 5000 was raised from donors and use to purchase sports material for them.

The Sarpanch of Gottimukkula – Vikarabad mandal offered all support to girls from his Panchayat and offered to resolve any issue that they brought to his notice. He would be accessible to them at any point in time. He also gave them some space in the Gram Panchayat office. They have been making use of this facility to play games. Ashwini from Madgul Chittampally was not confident of clearing her Intermediate First Year exams and did not pay the exam fees. Her friends told her they would boycott her if she didn't pay her fees. She did accordingly and passed them. Sunita – a former KBS member from Madanpally had passed her Intermediate exams from a KGBV. She participated in a meeting and shared her experiences. She had dropped out of school but her family had supported her all along and she had tasted success as a result. Members from Erravally motivated a dropout to return to school.

KBS members from 4 villages of Atmakur and 2 each in Nutankal and Maddirala hoisted the National flag on 26th January with support from Sarpanchs and SMC chairpersons. BS members from Nimmikal cut a cake on 1st January.

Organisers in Atmakur, Nutankal and Maddirala participated in rallies organised by the One Billion Rising network.

The details of child marriages identified and prevented are as below:

Mandal	Identified	Prevented
Shankarpally	13	11
Vikarabad	10	1
Atmakur	11	9
Nutankal	4	2
Maddirala	3	1
Total	41	24

COVID-19 INTERVENTION

The sudden imposition of lockdown in the last week of March 2020 following the onset of COVID-19 threw the lives of one and all into disarray. Practically the whole world came to a standstill. Migrant families and the poor were particularly affected, as they had no alternative sources of livelihood and their savings were next to nil. Absence of public transport meant that migrants could not return home. Hundreds of them wallowed in hunger, deprived of their basic rights. They could not meet their daily needs. Some of them left on foot for their hometowns, walking hundreds of kilometres. The State government had made provisions for rations to be issued to the needy, but a number of families could not access them for various reasons. Many children ended up malnourished, as they could not avail themselves of the midday meal provided to them through schools. Older children, who had their own issues, were more vulnerable. Girls were either overburdened with domestic chores, employed as agricultural labourers or married off. Boys, on the other hand, worked in farms or in small mechanics' sheds/garages.

Survey of access to entitlements

Many poor families could not access the Public Distribution System due to such factors as the absence of their names from local records or the non-acceptance of thumb impressions by biometric devices. Quite a few of them did not have their Ration Cards with them.

The organisers gathered information relating to families that could not avail themselves of rations and other entitlements. Notwithstanding restrictions on their movements, they either met these families personally or reached them through support groups such as KBS, the CRPF and youth. They gathered details of the family members, their nativity and the duration for which they had not got their rations. These details were shared with elected representatives and officials such as Sarpanches, ward members, Municipal Chairpersons, Tehsildars, Revenue Inspectors in charge of civil supplies, CDPOs Anganwadi Teachers and officials of the Health and Police departments. The PD – Women Development & Child Welfare and the District Collector were also contacted.

While the overall response was encouraging, there were some minor hiccups. Organiser from Atmakur Lalita informed the Tehsildar that nearly 3600 people had not received any relief material and proceeded to share the details with him but he expressed his helplessness. She made it a public issue and also sent a WhatsApp message to the District Collector. The media gave wide coverage to the issue. It was around this time that the Hon'ble High Court of Telangana delivered a judgement instructing the government to extend relief to all needy families without excuse. The organisers coordinated with the authorities to ensure that the families got their rations, ICDS supplies and other benefits.

The following table provides details of the families benefitted through this intervention:

Mandal	Migrant families that could not access benefits	Non-migrant families that didn't receive benefits	Families receiving benefits	Children aged 0-5 from families that received benefits	Children aged 6-18 from families that received benefits	Pregnant/ Nursing women
Shankarpally	20	22	42	20	54	2
Vikarabad	20	221	241	0	23	0
Atmakur	264	3336	3600	24	369	0
Nutankal	144	370	514	24	145	89
Maddirala	436	45	481	0	503	18
Total	884	3994	4878	68	1094	109

Examination follow up

The organisers compiled lists of all children that were due to appear for the Class 10 Board/ Intermediate exams during the month of March. They also gathered information from schools on children that were absent or had dropped out. They later met each single child in order to ensure that

they gave the exams without fail. The lockdown forced the State government to postpone the exams 3-4 times. Children and parents alike were not just anxious but tense about the conduct of the exams. The organisers kept in constant touch with them and updated them as to the schedule of the exams. Where they could not personally contact the children, they reached them either over phone or through their peers and community support groups.

The details of children that appeared for these exams and the outcomes are as under:

Mandal	Children giving/ passing the SSC exams	Children giving Intermediate exams			
		I Year		II Year	
		Appeared	Passed	Appeared	Passed
Shankarpally	639	455	329	431	431
Vikarabad	948	441	302	327	327
Atmakur	559	494	494	410	410
Nutankal	341	248	248	196	196
Maddirala	289	143	143	113	113
Total	2776	1781	1516	1477	1477

Child Labour

It was observed that children had suffered a lot due to COVID-19 and some of them were even subjected to violence. Quite a few of them were employed in agricultural farms. The team from Nutankal noted that children were being sent to work in left cotton farms during June. Some children's parents had engaged them in NREGS works that had been sanctioned to them. The organisers spoke to the Sarpanch and the Field Assistant and told them that this was against the law. Girls from Pedanemila were being sent to pluck lemons and boys were being put to work in cotton farms. There were also reports of children working in villages of Shankarpally mandal. Two boys from Parveda cluster had been going to a civil construction site. Some children from Siddulur cluster in Vikarabad mandal informed that their parents had left them free for one month but had later forced them to assist in their farm work.

The organisers referred these issues to the Tehsildar, ICDS officials, Sarpanchs and ward members. They also submitted petitions to them jointly with the CRPF. In many cases children were withdrawn from work and there are still hard cases which need some more efforts to get them released from work.

Child Marriage/Missing girls

The parents of some older girls felt insecure about their daughters and felt that it would be better to get them married off because they were uncertain about the reopening of schools in the near future. Stray incidents of girls' elopement were a key influencing factor in this regard. The organisers managed to lay off some of the marriages but a few parents were cautious and got the weddings performed away from home and public attention. The team from Nutankal received news from the KBS that a girl from Yedavelli was due to be married. They contacted the Tehsildar and the CDPO and counseled the girl and her parents along with these officials, the Anganwadi Worker and the CRPF.

In another instance in Pedanemila, the organiser could not make it to the venue. She, therefore, rang up 1098 and informed them about the incident. A team of officials went to the girl's house, where her grandparents denied any plans of marriage. The neighbours asked the officials how they could expect that weddings could be performed in a crisis situation like this. The officials trusted them and returned. However, the girl was married after 4 days in a far-off place. The girl had earlier been mainstreamed to Class 9 by the MVF team but had dropped out. The organisers counseled her during the follow up exercise and sent her to KGBV.

One girl from Ravulapally – Shankarpally mandal went missing one day. Her parents traced her four days later – she had left home with a youth. After she returned home, the village elders advised her father to get her married to the youth, as this could save the family embarrassment. He was, however, unwilling. The team from Atmakur mandal successfully prevented the potential marriage of a girl from

Class 10, with the support of the Sarpanch and the CDPO. A girl from Gattikallu cluster in Atmakur mandal had gone to the Class 10 exam venue and went absconding with a youth right on the first day. She was traced and brought back within a day. She refused to appear for the remaining examinations. The organisers counseled her at length, after which she consented to write the remaining papers.

A 16-year old girl from Annaram village of Vikarabad mandal, who had cleared her Intermediate First Year, left home one day unannounced. This issue came to light during the conduct of a survey in the village. The parents had not taken any action for two days until then. The organiser suggested contacting the police, who traced the girl's whereabouts within a day's time. She had accompanied a local youth to his village. The police didn't lodge a case, as she was legally a minor. The village elders were also supportive of the girl's parents. She, however, wanted to get married to the youth. The Sarpanch dissuaded her and told her that education had to be her priority until she turned 18 and that she could take her own decisions then. She agreed to resume her studies.

The incidence of such incidents being high, the organisers put in special efforts to prevent their recurrence. They spread across the message that child marriage was a criminal act and that it was also necessary to observe children thoroughly. They contacted local leaders and sought their intervention. They were requested to take all possible steps to curb child marriage, ensure that adolescent girls did not yield to temptation or take hasty decisions, keep children away from work and prevent child abuse/trafficking. The Municipal chairman, ICDS personnel, Sarpanches and ward members understood the gravity of the situation and cooperated. They used means such as *Dappu*, pamphlets and social media platforms to communicate to parents. They also discussed these issues during their periodical meetings:

Education

The organisers continuously kept in touch with children, disregarding the lockdown. The restriction of public movement did not hinder them from reaching the children. Where it was not possible for them to physically contact the children, they established telephonic communication through their mobile phones. They created WhatsApp groups for the purpose. Where children had no access to smartphones at home, they used their friends'/ neighbours' phones. Virtual meetings helped the organisers update the MVF head office on developments in the field.

Organisers from Shankarpally promoted the concept of reading and encouraged children to borrow library books and circulated them among each other. WhatsApp groups were created in Atmakur mandal to enable online teaching with available human resources, viz. teachers. Children were also asked to watch digital videos being telecast by the State government on specified TV channels.

The organisers also attempted to reach children and engage them with the help of local teachers. The teachers posted question papers (mostly objective/multiple choice questions) that the children could answer. Though this did not have the same effect as conventional teaching, the children at least had access to education. This also helped prevent them from getting absorbed into the labour force and being deprived of their basic rights. In addition, the organisers gathered information from children on the availability of cell phones that they could access for virtual (Zoom) meetings

Online meetings with stakeholders

Online (Zoom) meetings were held in Shankarpally and Vikarabad mandals with community support groups as under to discuss relief activities against the backdrop of COVID-19:

Mandal	Date	Group	Members
Shankarpally	17 th June	KBS leaders	13
	20 th June	Sarpanchs	7
Vikarabad	18 th June	Sarpanchs	7
	29 th June	KBS members	40

Discussions were held with Sarpanchs on the impact of the lockdown on the status of children's nutrition and education. Some Sarpanchs demanded the reopening of schools, claiming that there was pressure on children to work. Girls were vulnerable to abuse and at risk of being married

underage. The Sarpanchs were requested to prevent this from happening. They could reactivate libraries for children's benefit. Some of them promised to donate to libraries. It was also planned to petition for provision of the midday meal to children, reopening of schools or children's monitoring by teachers and textbooks for children to the Zilla Parishad chairperson, the MLA, the District Collector, the DEO and Mandal Parishad Presidents.

Other issues

During the initial days of lockdown, no problems were reported. In fact, parents were reported to have taken proactive decisions to safeguard their families. One lorry driver from Nutankal stayed away from work, as the occurrence of any untoward incident would put his family into turmoil. Another father employed in a petrol pump took a similar decision. Such gestures made children, especially girls, very happy. However, this did not last long. According to organiser Dhanamma, parents started becoming intolerant of their girls' movements.

One Sunanda (name changed) frequently went to meet a close friend of hers and got acquainted with a youth named Suresh (name changed). Though there was no relation between them and they had spoken to each other only coincidentally, some trouble mongers saw them speaking to each other and resorted to character assassination. As soon as the rumour about them being in love reached her parents, they not only stopped her from going out but also spoke insultingly to her. Sensitive as she was, she attempted suicide by poisoning. Luckily, she came out of the situation after being promptly attended to. Her parents repented their hasty behaviour.

Children also often began quarrelling with each other, vying for access to television in the absence of an alternative. Though this was not usually a major issue, the fact that they were largely idle led to frequent tiffs. Girls complained that they were overburdened with domestic chores. The Sarpanch of Mukundapuram received a complaint from a ward member that the mother of one girl from his ward had pledged her daughter's services against a certain sum of money that she had borrowed. A case was filed against the mother, who claimed that the girl was studying in Hyderabad. A case was lodged in the police station and she was freed from work.

In a gruesome incident in Thummala Penpahad cluster of Atmakur mandal, a pastor was alleged to have been harassing and inflicting violence on his two adolescent daughters. His acts were so embarrassing to be even spoken of. The girls contemplated suicide and actually attempted it once but were counseled by the organiser. The issue was also discussed during a KBS meeting and it was resolved to act against their father.

Review Meeting

An online (Zoom) meeting was held on 24th June to review the progress of activities during the period April – June. The entire project staff and the Project Coordinator participated along with Dr Shantha Sinha, National Convenor of MVF R Venkat Reddy and Chief Coordinator of MVF Y Rajendra Prasad.

Rajendra Prasad regretted the inability to organise training programmes for the KBS members as planned. He suggested the conduct of virtual meetings with the girls and sharing of information through digital mode. He informed that colleges had been inviting applications for admissions. Those interested could apply. Venkat Reddy recommended reaching younger children through adolescent children. This would engage the former productively.

Dr Shantha Sinha appreciated the role of the project team in initiating a debate in gender at the community level. At the same time, she exhorted them to be extra vigilant put in all possible efforts, in view of the pandemic, that vulnerable children were not sucked into the labour force, undoing the efforts of more than 3 decades. They could also take a cue from MVF resource persons in the project area of ASPIRE – Odisha and engage children in some form of academic activity or the other. She wished them all the best.