

SAFAR

A Journey into the Complex Society
of Underprivileged People



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FORWARD

'SAFAR', is about Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan's journey into the complex society where, Education, Health, Gender Equality and Equity are all at bay and the underlying issue within the community is, earning money to survive. It is a journey of those young girls and children who in spite of all hurdles faced by them, have emerged victorious in treading a path of their own.

The booklet highlights the efforts, struggles and achievements of the organization to bridge the gap between what is and what should be.

'SAFAR' takes us to a land where ignorance, access and control over public resources are limited. It also takes us to a land that grounds prejudices, superstitions and caste and class biases.

This booklet is an opportunity to thank all those who have been a part of the journey; our staff, the community, the government officials and our financial supporters who have constantly guided the organization, providing opportunities and challenges, in all our endeavors.

This booklet is thus a collection of the milestones during this journey. Your comments and feedback on the booklet will help in further development and progress of the work of the organization.

I express my thanks Sir Dorabji Tata Trust for extending support this publication and Ms. Nitika Pant for compiling this document

Devendra Mishra

Director

Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan

Sitapur

ABOUT THE PROGRAM



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The program Promoting Elementary Education among Girls is a three year program which is supported by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) and aims at working with children, adolescent girls and their parents along with the school administration and the gram panchayat to promote girl child education in the area.

The program focuses on out of school children and students who are irregular in school, with a special focus on the girl child.

The operational area of the program is Gondalamau developmental block of Distt Sitapur.

25 gram panchayats have been covered under the program. Data related to out of school children in the Area is presented below. (Source base line survey)

Table: Number of children out of school as per the survey conducted in September 08

SN	Name of Gram Panchayat	Total Population			Total Children			Out of School Children(6-14 yrs.)			Girls (12-18Yr)	Govt. Schools	
		M	F	T	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total	Girls	Pri	UP
1.	Tarsawan	1265	1037	2302	346	313	659	24	33	57	17	01	01
2.	Vijan Grant	1206	1001	2207	315	259	574	29	31	60	38	02	02
3.	Mareli	1031	864	1895	269	208	477	34	38	72	24	01	01
4.	Raushingpur	540	343	883	141	92	233	26	44	70	17	01	-
5.	Uttardhauna	370	312	682	138	125	263	18	15	33	33	01	01
6.	Udarapur W	599	502	1101	166	148	314	12	16	28	36	01	-
7.	Amta Mau	1315	1002	2317	373	362	735	53	29	82	23	02	-
8.	Gwali	667	606	1273	97	96	193	-	04	04	27	01	01
9.	Banpur	977	885	1862	225	161	386	15	26	41	26	01	01
10.	Kalli	1144	968	2112	241	229	470	19	49	68	27	02	01
11.	Chandpur	936	771	1707	252	196	448	14	39	53	48	02	-
12.	Jarigawan	1237	1137	2374	354	363	717	20	58	78	41	02	01
13.	Korauna	1535	1369	2904	592	550	1142	131	105	236	49	03	02
14.	Jainapur	1582	1566	3148	343	329	672	37	73	110	35	02	-
15.	Karkhila	997	850	1847	235	206	441	47	32	79	19	01	-
16.	Dengra	961	806	1767	240	225	465	49	30	79	06	02	01
17.	Raghunathpur	847	721	1568	199	199	398	60	36	96	24	01	-
18.	Kunrera	2134	1886	4020	579	491	1070	90	125	215	32	04	02
19.	Karua Mau	1478	1322	2800	369	392	761	39	85	124	60	01	01
20.	Nagwa Jairam	2134	1486	3620	413	348	761	56	78	134	53	03	01
21.	Dahelra	1453	1159	2612	390	390	780	38	73	111	40	02	01
22.	Ashrafnagar	1633	1558	3191	329	273	602	44	53	97	44	02	01
23.	Sarosa	1410	1207	2617	338	154	492	15	15	30	22	01	02
24.	Udaipur East	1035	1032	2067	273	238	511	26	24	50	24	01	-
25.	Aamba Ghat	1588	1243	2831	373	299	672	16	23	39	22	02	02
	Total	30074	25633	55707	7590	6646	14236	912	1134	2046	639	42	22

Pri.: Primary school ; UP: Upper primary school

ILLITERATE PHULA BECOMES LITERATE PHUL KUMARI

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Phul Kumari is a resident of village Ismailpur of gram panchayat Dalera in Gondalamau block of district Sitapur. She belongs to a poor schedule caste family which is illiterate and thriving each day to make ends meet. In fact in the village itself the people are less educated and do not show much interest in education of the children specially the girls of the village.

It was in the year 2008 that Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan started working on the issue of promoting education among the adolescents.

After fact finding, discussions and problem identification the organisation realized that it was necessary to generate mass awareness to spread the message of importance of girl child education. In the light of above various meetings with people of

different age groups irrespective of cast, class and gender were held. But, it was difficult to make the people understand about the importance of education. People would argue that even if they were illiterate they were able to survive and earn a living! This was depressing for the field staff for the organisation and they also started feeling disheartened. But...one day during one of the meetings there were 26 men and women were present. In the meetings only 5 people could actually write their names so it was again explained to the people that education was important for children in the present circumstances so that no one could take advantage of them. This somehow clicked and one of the male participants wanted to know about how he could learn to read and write. This was what the staff was waiting for and they explained the program to those present.

Inspired by this incidence Phula also showed interest and requested the field staff to teach everybody how to write their names so that the village could become fully literate. An old person Rameshwar supported and said that from the next day onwards all the adolescent girls would go to the centre to study and become functionally literate. Phula's brother also agreed to send his sister and daughter for the classes regularly. The place of teaching was also decided during that meeting.

Next day was a good start because even before the field staff reached the centre, there were 14 adolescent girls present! 22 year old Phula was regular in attending the classes, she was bright and intelligent but after a few days she stopped coming to the centre! This came as a setback because she was the one to actually stand up for her right to education. The teacher in the

ILLITERATE PHULA BECOMES LITERATE PHUL KUMARI

centre went to Phula's house to understand the real cause. Actually Phula was a married woman with a small child. She was separated from the family and her young son was with her in-laws. She wished her son could be there so that she could take him to the centre. A case had been filed in the court against her in-laws because she wanted her son back.

Phula was again explained the importance of education and how it could help in making her win the case. This was also an eye opener for her and she again started coming to the centre. Phula's father had opposed her visit to the centre but when he came to know that Phula had learnt to write her name, he was very happy and also commented that from now onwards Phula

would sign on all the government papers rather than putting a thumb impression on it. He felt proud of her. For the next date in the court, Phula signed all the relevant papers of her case and also tried reading some of them. The advocate was very happy.

This had an impact in the village where others also decided to send their girls to remedial coaching centre and its strength increased. 'Phula now became Phul Kumari'. She feels proud to say that now she is able to read and write small sentences, today she is only called Phulkumari, respected and admired by others. This is a sign of her victory and efforts of the organization to bring about change

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Hamare
Bhi Sapne
Pure Hone
Lage Ab
- *Adolescent girls.*

”

“

Hamein To Ehsas Hi
Nahi Tha Padai Itni
Zaroori Hai
- *Poor Muslim Family.*

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WILL POWER STANDS BY AMIR JAHAN



WILL POWER STANDS BY AMIR JAHAN

Rausinghpur is a Muslim dominated village of block Gondalamau, where education is the last thing pole would care for. In such a village, the case of Amir Jahan is an inspiration to all.

Being the eldest of seven brothers and sisters Amir jahan had to manage all the household chores and also care for her siblings. At a young age of sixteen Amir Jahan took care of all the responsibilities given to her. With little time to spare and the family being illiterate, her father did not send her to school, even though she was always interested in studies. She would recite the

poems her brother learnt in the village school and also sang small rhymes. She was shy and did not speak in front of others which made her a subdued personality.

After this village was identified under the program and interaction with the family members and the community was made, an open meeting in the village was held. In the meeting the people were told about the program and how it would benefit the adolescent girls of the village. Amir Jahan's father was also present in the meeting. Seeing the excitement among the other villagers he too decided to send Amir Jahan for one hour to the remedial centre even though he shared his resistance in this regard; he wanted her to complete her work and then only go to the centre. He agreed to send his daughter to the centre because of a female teacher there. This was opportunity for Amir Jahan who was very happy and thanked Allah for the gift. Thus began her journey to an all together new world, where she was free from the tension of completing household chores and managing the fights of her younger ones. Initially time management was difficult for Amir Jahan who was habitual of doing things slowly and keeping herself busy the whole days. But as her interest grew she learnt the art and with some support at home she was able to finish her work on time and reach the centre which stated at 1:00 o' clock in the afternoon. Seeing her zeal and motivation the other Muslim girls were also inspired and they also made similar efforts. This was not an easy task as many elders of the village made fun of the girls saying that they would now become officer/collectors and manage the outside affairs, they would now become teachers and teach the men. It was not their age and neither their work to

WILL POWER STANDS BY AMIR JAHAN

study and learn because they had to just manage home, for which education was not required!

Hearing the villagers speak Amir Jahan's father remained in a confused state of mind. She could sense this and everyday used to sit with the parents and tell them hat she leant in the centre and how much she enjoyed it. Thus she continued with her studies, where she remained in the world of new words and sentences, maths, writing and also enjoyed songs like 'beti hoon mein Beti mein tara baoongi, mein sahara banoongi.

Today Amir jahan has proved that the zeal to learn and hard work can make a person strong, confident and progressive. She gives the credit of her success to her father who later became supportive of her and never forgets to mention the consistent efforts made by did and bhaiya (teachers in the centre) of Shashwat Sahbhagi Santhan who always boosted her morale, spoke to her parents ad kept fighting for her so that she too could come to the mainstream like her brothers!

She now wants to continue her studies and also enroll herself in the government school so that she can also be a part of the formal schooling system.



THE ROAD NEVER ENDS

THE ROAD NEVER ENDS

Aged 17 Haseen Bano belongs to a poor family, with 4 more sisters and one brother who is pursuing graduation. The main work is of Zari Zardozi in the family which she does with other household chores. She lives in Gopauli village where 49 girls were totally illiterate when the program began.

A conservative, superstitious village did not approve of the need to educate the girls of the village and also considered it bad to study Hindi. Their focus was only religious education or Deeni Taleem, Duniyavi Taleem they always avoided. This became a major hindrance for Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan and the staff felt defeated in making the people understand about the

importance of learning and education. Interaction with the parents of the adolescent girls made the situation seem to be sad as no one was ready to listen to them. Worse was the case of Haseen Bano whose father was too orthodox and clearly stated in the interaction that he would not send his daughter to the centre as he feared her security and did not want her to learn Hindi or any other subject. He was very angry at the organization for promoting such a culture in front of the adolescent girls! This was insulting for the staff of the organization and they felt harassed and thought of not visiting the village again. Finally it was decided that once more an effort will be made in the village specially in the case of Haseen Bano. The approach to the matter was changed a bit and when a visit was made to the village the next time an interaction was made with the mother and brother of Haseen Bano. Prolonged discussions with the family made them understand that there was no harm in studying Hindi and other subject because this was her different from religious education. Haseen bano's brother and mother finally gave consent to her going for the remedial classes, but made sure that she came back home before her father returned from his daily work. This was some relief for the organization because now they could start some work in the village.

Haseen Bano was a happy girl now. She got some time for herself and enjoyed her studies also. The family feared that the neighbours might create problems for Haseen, so they approached the centre. A strategy was made to tackle this in which lady continuously met the neighbours and told them about the work of the organization and the effect it had in the

lives of the adolescents. Along with this Nukkad Nataks, slogan writing and meetings with the villagers created an amicable atmosphere where the villagers started relying on the organization. But... this was not to remain for long! Once some villagers heard the girls singing awareness songs, which according to the people was against their religion! This came as a blow to the efforts of the organisation which was trying so hard to make things work. Restructuring started and again a strategy was adopted in which two women from the community came to the centre daily and became observers of the process.

This was too much for Haseen Bano's family who stopped her from attending the classes and asked her to keep a tutor if she wanted to study. Haseen Bano could not take it any more she revolted by saying that if everything was to be done at home then why was there a need to go to the field and plough it! She could not tolerate the constraint on her and it outraged her.

The centre continued in the open in the close inspection of the two women from the community. The struggle continued when some boys started passing comments on the girls and the villagers raised fingers on the male staff of the organization. To avoid any kind of trifle in the community the male staff of the organization asked the girls to tie Rakhi on the hands of the teachers, to avoid unnecessary gossip in the village.. Later when trainings were organized for the girls and they became serious with their studies even Haseen Bano's father showed a positive bent of mind. As the days passed it was decided that the girls would be linked to formal system of education and would appear for class 8th exam. But for Haseen Bano this was

THE ROAD NEVER ENDS

again difficult. Some money was collected in the village and she could appear for an entrance exam for class 8. Father again refused, but this time her mother and brother came forward and supported her.

Today Haseen Bano is a changed person who has her own identity. She has enhanced her capacities and is respected in the family for her courage and will power.



MAYA THINKS OF FULFILLING HER DREAM



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Raghunathpur is at a distance of 15 Km from the block headquarter of Gondlamau. There are eight castes in the village whose main occupation is agriculture. The village is dominated by schedule caste- Paasi.

In the same village lives Mapa who is eighteen years old and is a dropout student of class five. About a year back Mapa was mostly busy with cattle rearing and agriculture and allied activities. While interacting with her family members and Mapa herself the staff from Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan understood that lots of effort will have to be made for bringing Mapa to the

mainstream of education. When asked about the reason for not continuing her studies further she told us that the teachers beat the students, so she left school and now it was five years. For her to begin things all over again was a very difficult task.

After a few days of toiling in the village a centre for girls was started in the village and the girls were called from their houses.

When Mapa's house was approached, she did not turn up and hid behind the curtains expressing her fear to be a part of the centre. She feared getting harsh scolding and beating in the centre. She was then daily approached and was convinced that she would not be scolded and offended. It was because of this that her self esteem was so low. After much pursuance Mapa started coming to the centre, but was slow in learning and knew alphabets and easy words and little bit of math. Special attention was given to Mapa in the centre so that she could speed up her pace of learning. Gradually she improved and started working hard becoming serious towards her studies.

After one year hard work and efforts of the organization Mapa has become confident and is articulate enough to talk to any official coming to her village. She can easily read and write Hindi and is able to solve math problems given the textbook of class six. She has become so aware that she now wants her name written in class ten so that she can further pursue her studies! She is ready and preparing herself to appear for class eight exams.



MAYA THINKS OF FULFILLING HER DREAM

found that there were 49 girls and 13 boys who were still illiterate. Girl child education specially educating the adolescent girls was an uncommon phenomenon in the village. Girls were meant for household chores, marriage and bearing children. The acceptance that the village had not progressed because of lack of education was a ray of hope.

Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan thus started the task of finding a solution to this need of the villagers. A movement to bring the villagers together and sensitize them towards the aspect of education and how it ultimately helps in the regeneration, development and progress of the village, was started in Gopauli. Apprehensive, curious and anxious eyes waiting to ask questions stood on all doors. This was to be a beginning of collective change in the area.

With support from the supporters, criticism from the offenders and a few onlookers, efforts were on in full swing and in a span of one or two months a parents' committee was formed in the village. In each corner the village slogans were written that promoted message related to the



THE VILLAGERS OF GOPAULI

The hamlet of Gopauli lacks in basic infrastructure facilities and people are mostly engaged in agriculture and daily wages work. Literacy rate is low as compared to other villages and the importance of education is still to be accepted by the people. The population comprises of 50% Muslims and 50% Hindus. There is no girl who has completed education up to class ten in the village! The hamlet is one of the most marginalised in the block of Gondalamau.

In a survey conducted by Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan it was

MAYA THINKS OF FULFILLING HER DREAM

importance of girl child education. This was related to the issue of rights of people. They were made to understand how ignorance and lack of information and awareness led to their inability to access government schemes and entitlements. Power dynamics thus played an important role when some upper caste people and those who had some hold in the village started playing games and created at in the way the organization was functioning. Still efforts continued and a stage came when the villagers started accepting the organization and its work.

Finally the day came when the parents' committee and some of the other active villagers made a strategy before the recently held MP elections. With support and guidance from the organization a collective decision was taken to raise the issue of school construction and road construction. Infact was also decided that no one from the village would vote till the candidates promised to fulfill their two demands. This was a big step taken by those villagers who were ignorant and had lost all hopes of any development in their area. Even today they give credit to Shashwat organization and now provide full support in terms of running the centre for the children as well as the remedial coaching centre for adolescent girls.





IRREGULAR SCHOOL BECOMES REGULAR

IRREGULAR SCHOOL BECOMES REGULAR

Korauna is one of the bigger gram panchayat of the area. After a survey conducted by the organization in all the villages of the panchayat many facts were highlighted. Upon entering the village the villagers got so excited that they all collected and thought a government official had come to tell about a special government scheme. This was an important event for the people living in this interior village. People were unaware and lacked information. Their society was a closed one and they did not like the interference of others in any of their matters. This emerged as one of the biggest challenges for the organization.

When they understood the reason for conducting the survey they got more anxious and did not want a new school in the village. They readily accepted that no school was required in the village and the existing one was useless as it was only spoiling the future of the children. Their children went to the nearby school in Korauna and this was more than enough for them. 'A school in the village would not be good for the future of children.' This was puzzling for the organization!

After much discussion which at times turned to some heated arguments the staff from the organization understood the real cause of the problems. The community clearly stated that there was a school in the village, without any teacher. In the premises

of the school animals were also tied. Till that day no one knew why the school had been started and where its teachers were! The survey highlighted that Ms. Sandhya the principal of the school, seldom visited it for an hour or two hours and then left. This was a major concern that we thought of addressing. Thus, neither the parents nor the children ever came to know about her visit. Maybe even the officers of the department did not know about this.

The parents of the enrolled children were upset because without discussing with them the children had been transferred to the village school from Korauna and the village school was in such a dilapidated condition. The situation continued till November. The children wanted to study but... There was unrest in the community and Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan was busy in motivating them asking them to collectively address the problem.

It was in November that an awareness campaign for the education of the girl child was organized in the village. Numerous activities like slogan writing, nukkad natak, meetings with adolescents and panchayat elected representatives, interface meetings etc. was conducted in the village. The school of the village was approached but as usual the school was closed with no teacher and no student present in the school. Immediately an open meeting was called in the village where all the respective stakeholders were present and this issue was discussed. The staff from the organization agreed to teach the children of the village for one hour daily till the opening of the school and the attendance of the teacher regularized.

IRREGULAR SCHOOL BECOMES REGULAR

So, the task of teaching the children began along with collectivization of the community around the issue of proper functioning of the primary school. The parents subtly started opposing the opening of the school in the village. After a few days when the news reached the gram pradhan he took notice of the fact and met the ABSA and briefed the problem to him.

In the meantime the principal of the school, Ms. Sandhya also came to know that special classes were being conducted in the villages and this she did not like. She also conducted a meeting and tried to oppose the work done by the organization. She even asked the people to oppose the remedial classes of the organization. Finally at the end of the meeting she admitted that it was difficult for her to manage school from Lucknow. Without

any solution the meeting concluded and things went on as usual.

Republic day was an eye opener when everybody saw that the principal was softer and properly spoke to the community and asked them to support her. This was followed by a plan to meet the government and present a written request in front of the education department for deploying more teachers in the primary school.

Today there are two more teachers in the school. The community, principal and the Pradhan never fail to acknowledge the efforts of the organization that led to an irregular school becoming regular.

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Padne
Mein Ab
Mazaa
Ata Hai

- *Children centre.*

”

“

Hamein Bahut Padna
Aa Gaya Hai, Aisa
Centre Sab Gaoon
Mein Khol Do

- *Women SHG.*

”

TORCH OF EDUCATION

In village Jamunapur of gram panchayat kalli people are illiterate and poor and also belong to the so called lower caste community. They are mostly daily wage earners and even the adolescent girls are engaged in the process of earning money. They work in the fields of high caste Brahmins and earn money.

Illiteracy was a bane for the people specially the girls. After the situation analysis and survey the girls were collected and they were told about the importance of the education and the program that the organization had envisaged. The girls were excited and in about an hour's time they collected their mothers for a meeting. After much discussion and deliberation it was decided that the girls would be taught for two hours daily. Understanding the problem of poor living condition of the people and the need for the girls to work, collectively it was decided that the centre would be opened from 1 to 3 o' clock daily. After this the girls could go to the fields for work. This clicked; earlier the mothers were not ready for the girls to be sent to the centre because of the problem of earning money.

The task was not to be so easy...Poonam's mother did not want to send her to the centre and could not give clear reason for the same. The next day the centre was started and except Poonam nearly 15 girls came to the centre. This was a good start, but Poonam who seemed bright and sincere became the next

target of the organisation. On the next day, the staff of Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan met Poonam's mother and again discussed about the importance of education in their lives and the reason's for not sending Poonam to the centre. Gradually she told that Poonam's father was an alcoholic so it was necessary for her to go out and earn money. She could not give time in the centre. To initiate the process it was decided that Poonam would come to the centre for an hour whenever it was convenient to her, so that it did not affect her work. He mother agreed and from next day onwards Poonam started coming to the centre.

The centre of Jamunapur thus progressed and the girls along with basic hindi and math also learnt about health and hygiene and personality development. Today Sarita who attends classes in the centre daily and was only 8th pass and could not even spell her name properly is one of the brighter students of the centre and is always inquisitive to learn new things. The centre has not only helped in creating an atmosphere and ability for the adolescent girls to learn reading and writing rather it has also helped in bringing about an over all change in them. The girls have become more organized and finish their work on time, they keep themselves and also their siblings clean, which is an achievement. They have become confident and always eager to learn new and more.

In the coming months the girls want to enroll themselves in formal schools and study further. Another gift of the centre is that it has stopped a local game of cards and stick; specially during centre time no one plays the game! This has led to a more gender sensitive environment in the village.

CHILDREN AS HARBRINGERS OF CHANGE



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Village Bhattapurva of gram panchayat Jainapur is an interior village where people are concerned with no one else, practice agriculture and are not much concerned with things in the outside world, even though they might be for their benefit.

During a survey conducted in the village the organization identified 50 children who had lost interest in studies and had

stopped going to the village school. They stopped opening their books; neither did their parents say anything and nor did they ever take pains of opening their books. Thus they always played and learnt foul language, which made them irritating and notorious. They were least concerned about their health and remained shabby and also misbehaved. The girls remained in their houses and did not interact with other girls in the village. Same was the case of the parents of the children.

A centre for children was started in the village but the problem of bringing the children to the school started. The children were least interested so it was decided that discussions with parents would be held and they would be asked to send their children to the centre so that some games could be played and the children could enjoy, complete responsibility was given to the parents.

On the next day after waiting for long the staff got impatient, but after some more time passed they saw a few boys coming towards the centre and interaction with the children started. The children showed lack of interest in studies so it was planned that some games would be played, which would interest the children. This proved to be a good strategy and from next day onwards the number of children increased because they started liking the games played in the centre. They now stopped roaming in the village and playing pranks, rather their language and behaviour started improving. This went on for about a week, and then slowly subjects were introduced to the children who were taught but keeping in mind that they would only learn in a play way method.

This interested the parents who could not understand why the

organization laid thrust on education of children and how there was a marked change in their children. This became a point of discussion for the community and they took interest in what the organization was doing. Soon the children got in the learning process and the centre of children became famous in the area. The children were involved in various programs conducted in the village like rally, slogan writing and also meeting with the parents of children. In the same so much confidence that she herself drags herself and is punctual in reaching the centre on time.

CHILDREN AS HARBRINGERS OF CHANGE

centre a handicapped girl also started coming to the centre after much perusal by the staff of the organization. Initially her family member used to bring her to the centre. But today she has gained so much confidence that she herself drags herself and is punctual in reaching the centre on time.

After a year of hard work and challenges one can see how the children who had lost all hopes of sitting under one roof and studying are together learning Hindi, Math and basic English. The centre of Bhattapurva is an example of where there is will, there is a way.

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Tumhari Sanstha
Aage Bade Hum
Dua Kareng
- *Community.*

”

“

Aisa Centre Pehle
Khul Gaya Hota To
Hum Intermediate
Kar Chuke Hote
- *Adolescent girls.*

”

EDUCATION BECOMES AN AGENDA FOR THE GRAM SABHA



EDUCATION BECOMES AN AGENDA FOR THE GRAM SABHA

Gondalamau block boasts of 74 blocks but also lacks in the fact that open meetings are hardly held in the gram panchayats. But today after some efforts by Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan the panchayats and the gram sabha members have become aware to an extent that gram sabha meetings are organized in the intervened villages at least. Raghunathpur is one of the gram panchayat where open meetings are held but the purpose is just to fulfill the agenda of the government!

It was in June that open meetings were to be held in the gram panchayats. The supervisor of the organization Mr. Rajkumar thought that this was an opportunity for the organization as well as the community to raise the issue of quality of education in the village. Meetings and interactions along with focused group discussions were held in the village where the community was mobilized and motivated to be a part of the open meeting. There was a section of the community who also opposed this because they feared opposition from the people.

Among other issues to be discussed in the open meeting the people were made to understand that quality education and its promotion was also the responsibility of the panchayat, so issues related to it could be a matter of discussion in the open meetings. Still number of people who would participate in the meeting was a big question because people had lost all hope of getting any benefit from such meetings!

On the 15th of June gram sabha meeting was organized in Raghunathpur. To everybody's surprise specially the panchayat, approximately 300 people were present for the meeting. Parents of the children were in large numbers. Hot discussions were held while the ADO panchayat addressed the gathering and initiated the discussion on various government schemes. Some decisions were taken and lastly all were asked to sign the register.

Mr. Raghunath was also present in the meeting, but could not speak anything because he was not a member of that gram sabha. From behind he kept nudging the people asking them to speak on the issue of quality education. Even the ADO finally


 EDUCATION BECOMES AN AGENDA FOR THE GRAM SABHA

asked the people to raise any issue they wanted to, which would affect the development of the village. Finally Sh. Kalika Prasad stood up and started telling about the condition of the school, by this time other women and men also stood up and gave their consent to what was being said. They shared that the teachers did not come regularly to the school. Those girls who were pass outs from the school could not even write their names properly and also write numbers. The ADO was requested to take some strict action to improve the quality of education the village, who

immediately noted the problem in the register of the panchayat, minute register and also his visit register. The people were also asked to meet the ABSA or BSA and apprise them about the problem, so that some concrete action could be taken.

So, for the first time education became an issue of concern and was put to notice by the ADO.

“

Kash Aap Hamare
Zamane Mein
Aaye Hote

- *An old lady and
a young lady.*

”

“

Sanstha Ab Sabko
Pada kar Chodegi,
Kuch Zaroor Karengi

Sanstha Wale
- *Community.*

”

SAJIDA DID IT!

and importance of education the neighbours told the representatives of the organization about the reason of Sajida to coming to the classes. Strange but true they told that her parents did not want her to learn Hindi because in their family girls were not allowed to study the Hindi language! This was a weird reason... but it was also the fact.

Interaction with Sajida continued so that she would somehow show interest and continue with her studies. But her father was reluctant and very rigid in allowing her to study further. He also said that she was a grown up girl who was getting married so it was necessary that she stayed at home and did the regular household work. After toiling hard and regularly interacting with Sajida and her family, her mother showed some interest and agreed on sending Sajida to the centre. She had to hide this fact from her husband who was not ready. This continued for a few days but finally the girl's father came to know and scolded her and her mother for the sinful act!

Once while Sajida was studying in the centre she saw her father coming there, she was surprised and very anxious. The animators from the organization could sense this and asked her to see this as an opportunity where she could ask him to allow her to come to the centre. This motivated her and with fear in her eyes she whispered to her father that he wanted to study and how education was helping her to understand things around her. She was always interested in studies and wanted to study more. The angry father was moved when he saw his child plead in front, he gave his consent and even hugged seeing her interest in education. He promised her that he would not scold



SAJIDA DID IT!

Sajida is a young girl who lives in Gopauli village of Karuamau gram panchayat. She is willing to learn new things and happily goes to the centre to study. A year back this was not the case; Sajida was a submissive quiet girl who stayed at home, busy with household chores and cattle rearing. An educational coaching centre was started in the village in September 2008 with the aim of educating the adolescent girls. The start was weak, with only a few girls coming to the centre. Gradually the situation improved but Sajida remained at home, her parents would not send her to the centre. In another instance while discussing the problem



SAJIDA DID IT!

her for studying and support her... But happiness does not stay for long; Sajida was to get married after month so this would not continue. Again talks were on and her parents agreed to talk to the groom's family. Sajida's father met the family who readily agreed to postpone the marriage for one year, because this would also give some time to the groom.

Sky was the limit for Sajida, she was punctual and regular to the centre and later also enrolled in the private junior school and appeared for the class eight exams which she cleared. Today Sajida is a happy girl wants to study more and prays that she continues her studies even after her wedding.

“

Agar School Mein
Masterji Dost Ban Kar Padate
To Aaj Hamein Hindi, Gadinth (Maths) Aati

- *Adolescent girls.*

”

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan was registered in October 1996, with the primitive years spent on understanding the area and lisioning.

Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan envisions a humane, gender sensitive and environment friendly rural society where people critically and actively participate in local self-Governance by embodying the values of humanism, egalitarianism, and equal participation.

The mission of the organization is to mobilize, organize, and strengthen people's institutions and bodies of local self governance in such a way that the rural communities become self sufficient politically, socially, and economically by utilizing local as well as global resources and knowledge.

It works with the poor, deprived and marginalized sections of society, especially women and children who are one of the most exploited segments of the society.

The main objectives of the organization are-

1. To mobilise and ensure participation of women and the underprivileged sections of the society into the local governance processes.
2. To facilitate the processes whereby the poor have access to health, education and livelihood opportunities.
3. To initiate organisation building processes among the poor and the deprived sections and develop their leadership and bargaining capacities to be able to take active part in their own development.
4. To strengthen and augment entrepreneurial skills of the poor and uplift them from the present state of poverty and powerlessness

Shashwat Sahbhagi Sansthan works through-

- Direct intervention at grassroots level.
- Capacity building initiatives for the target group.
- Consolidating and disseminating field based learning for policy advocacy.
- Mobilising and organising women around the issue of equal participation, leadership roles, entrepreneurial activities and rights to livelihood and entitlements.
- Sensitising and involving administration, government bodies and other stakeholders in ongoing programs and projects.

At present the organisation is working in 10 developmental blocks of Sitapur district, 10 developmental blocks of Hardoi district, 8 developmental block of Lakhimpur district and 9 developmental of Ferozabad districts of Uttar Pradesh.

To partner our cause the hands that have supported are-

1. Sir Dorabji Tata Trust Mumbai
2. NABARD, Lucknow
3. Government of Uttar Pradesh
4. US AID (AED)



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