



UMANG Vaani Newsletter

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A new initiative for empowerment of adolescents with the participation of men and youth

An adolescent girl's life is extremely challenging due to social norms. Important decisions, such as education and marriage of adolescent girls are usually taken by their fathers or elder brothers, due to which adolescent girls do not realize their potential and feel disadvantaged or deprived. Keeping this in mind, the UMANG program has started open discussions with men and youth on gender-based discriminatory practices, so that a sensitive and positive environment can be created within the society to enable adolescent empowerment.

For this discussion, a theory-based curriculum of twelve sessions has been developed under the UMANG program. The program includes topics, such as patriarchy and masculinity. Each session takes about 60-90 minutes to discuss the topic.

Apart from contribution by UMANG team members, suggestions from the men and youth of the village have also been taken into account while developing the curriculum. This discussion also provides an opportunity to men and youth to assess gender-based discrimination, current customs, as well as to assess their own thinking and role in the society.

This discussion has been started at district, block and panchayat levels with 40-50 men and youth under the chairmanship of District Magistrate, Block Officer and Mukhiya.

Along with this, after selecting 216 villages from four blocks (Godda, Mahagama, Jamtara and Nala) of Godda and Jamtara districts, upon receiving necessary consents of adolescents, youth and men living in these villages, small groups have been formed for discussions. Along with this, youth and men, who can play significant roles in the discussion, were also identified.

“Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan in Godda district along with organizations PBT and JBMM, ICRW and SATHEE has worked to connect youth club under UMANG project, which is a commendable step. In the coming times, there will surely be a decrease in child marriage rate in Godda district through adolescent empowerment.”

Abhishek Mandal
District Youth Coordinator
Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Godda

Participation of Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan :

Discussion at the village level has been started since January 2021 by organizing a workshop with the team and youth of Nehru Yuva Kendra at the block level. In these discussions, the youth of the club registered under Nehru Yuva Kendra are participating with great enthusiasm. By March 2021, about 8000 adolescent youth and men of Godda and Jamtara had participated in these discussions. The goal of UMANG program is to create a conducive environment for adolescent girls in the society by involving about 20000 adolescents, youth and men in discussions on gender, patriarchy and masculinity related issues, so that adolescent girls can be empowered and the rate of child marriage can see a significant decrease.

Friends,

Greetings with the next issue of UMANG Vaani!

“Violence has a tendency to get accelerated. We believe it should be curbed while it is still in its nascent stages.” I still remember the words of that 13-year-old boy. In October 2015, in a school in Khunti district, sitting with his friends on a platform built around a tree, he was telling me about the GEMS (Gender Equity Movement in Schools) program. This statement by Dipesh (name changed) reflects both the seriousness of and hope in the situation. Taking the matter further, the girl sitting next to him gushed on how this program has changed the environment of her school. “How did that happen?” when I asked. The children shared that they now sit together with ease.

GEMS is a school program. Its objective is to promote gender equality and stop gender-based violence so that girls can complete their education and realize their full potential. The program has been successfully implemented in many schools in Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Rajasthan for the boys and girls of class 6 to 8. On the basis of those experiences and learnings, ICRW is starting the GEMS program in 201 schools of Godda and Jamtara districts with support from the state government of Jharkhand along with the financial support of Echinda Giving, in collaboration with Parivartan Foundation and SATHEE. The program will be implemented with adolescent boys and girls in grades 6-11 under the leadership of trained teachers. It will cover 30,000 adolescents and will be based on three main learnings:

1) Early Start - Children from an early age, through a process of various socialization, start recognizing and understanding gender-based work and responsibilities, expectations, rights and wrongs. Therefore, it is necessary to hold conversations with children from an early age about these issues so that they develop a different perspective on these issues and build an ability to analyze and question these issues.

2) Gender Transformative Approach - To promote gender equality, it is imperative for teachers and children to understand the power and influence inherent in gender relations giving way to introspecting and analyzing their own thinking and behaviour. In addition to this, to question the unequal power relations and consequently, develop the ability to change them.

3) Process of Socialization - The role of schools and teachers is very important in the course of socialization. Schools, as an institution reach out to many children and make a long-term impact on them. But to promote gender equality, there is a need to change the schools' process, curriculum and methodology. Achieving gender equality is a continuous process and GEMS is a small but important step in that direction.

We will continue to share more information and experiences from this program with you in the coming months. Till then, take care of yourself and your loved ones. Don't forget to wear a mask and keep a distance of 2 yards. Remember that prevention is better than cure. We wish you all to be safe and healthy in these precarious hours of the pandemic.

Pranita Achyut
Director of Research and Programs
International Center for Research on Women

Dear Readers,

Please keep yourselves safe from COVID-19 and do follow these three things:



1. Always wear a mask



3. Wash your hands frequently with soap



2. Keep a distance of two meters with each other

...and keep reading UMANG Vaani.



Street Theatre with UMANG ...Learning becomes fun!

"Theater is another form of education. It is also an important instrument of social change. Theater can help us safeguard our future." (August Boal)

There is hardly any other art form in this world that is as powerful as theatre because theatre is not just a single art form, but a synced presentation of many art forms. Theatre not only entertains but also educates the society; therefore, playing an important role in imparting knowledge and intellection. While working through the UMANG project, we understood how social norms and rules play a crucial role in controlling the future of a girl child. We have seen that many parents halt their daughter's education midway by giving arguments, such as "it doesn't happen in society", "everyone does the same" or "what will people say"; eventually, marrying them off at a young age. In this context, a new campaign has been initiated with the goal of influencing social behavior and thinking, which will utilize integrated communication media - street plays will thus play an important part in addressing this pervasive social issue. Keeping in view the impact of street play and its wide social reach, this unique campaign has been created under UMANG project titled **"Ujale Ki Ore - Bitiya Ki Daud"**. (A girl's journey towards a brighter future)

"Ujale Ki Ore, Bitiya Ki Daud" is not just a street play campaign, but an important platform for social participation. Parents and community members play the most important role in the society on issues like child marriage and education for children. Through the entertaining medium of street play, we are trying to make parents aware about the impact of child marriage and the importance of education of children in the society, as well as honoring those parents who are empowered in helping their daughters pursue higher education. An important part of this campaign is a pledge by the parents, which envisions taking concrete steps for sending their daughters to school by signing the affidavit and ensuring their higher education.

This campaign was kickstarted by the Deputy Commissioner of Godda and Jamtara, both the districts where UMANG is implemented, on March 4 and 5, 2021 respectively. The campaign was commenced by flagging off the street play chariot towards the village and by signing the affidavit. The Deputy Commissioner of Jamtara, Mr. Faiz Aq Ahmed Mumtaz and Godda Deputy Commissioner Mr. Bhor Singh Yadav, appreciated this unique initiative of UMANG and said that it will ensure reduction in the rate of child marriages if we work together like this, as a conscious collective. This campaign aims at promoting girls' education, preventing school drop-outs and curbing child-marriages. With a vision to reach out to about fifty thousand people, the campaign is determined to create a dialogue on such social evils rampant in the community.



In this campaign, the role of partner organizations, namely SATHEE and Parivartan Foundation has been very important. This street play campaign is being successfully conducted with the technical support of Bangla Natak.com.

It is noteworthy that in the course of the entire campaign, **UMANG and Bangla Natak ensured to observe all precautions and guidelines related to COVID-19**, such as using masks. Sanitizers were provided to all the participants during the drama workshop and it was ensured that during the training, they maintained necessary physical distance. Along with this, masks and sanitizers were distributed free of cost to the spectators present at the demonstration in the villages. The demonstration was organized in an open and large courtyard. Before, during and at the end of the performance, all the spectators were given requisite information related to COVID-19. Furthermore, a banner based on the COVID-19 safety method was also displayed in the performance venue.

The goal of the campaign is to perform street play in 220 villages to about 50000 villagers, but owing to the second wave of COVID-19 and our prompt compliance with the government issued guidelines, the street play campaign has been put on hold since April. It will resume once the the government assents to roll out community related activities.

As of April 6th, the campaign has reached out to about 34,000 villagers in 143 villages. Furthermore, about 5,000 parents and guardians have signed the pledge and have given their consent in helping their daughters pursue higher education; thus aligning themselves with the ambitious vision of UMANG.



Inauguration of the campaign by the district collector, Jamtara



Launch of the poster by the district Collector, Godda



Mask distribution among the audience before the play



Felicitated girl students



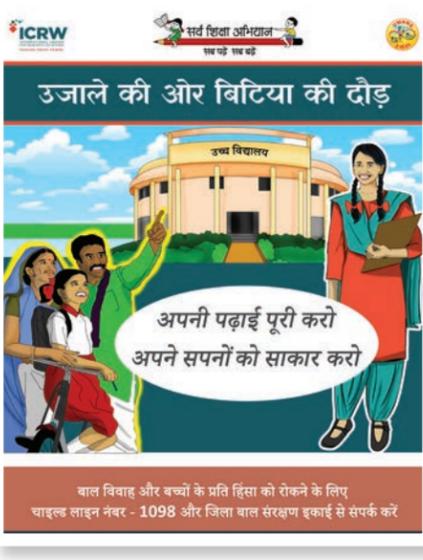
Signed commitments



Invitation Card



Banner for COVID-19 Guidelines



Poster



Street Play Banner



Street Play Workshop Banner



Story of Sunita

Pratima is my best friend. We both live in the same village and unless we meet at least once a day, it feels like something is amiss. I still remember the day vividly when Pratima's father suddenly passed away and she was crying while holding on to me. "What will happen to me and my mother now?" She kept on saying. I cried a lot with her, hugging her, I tried consoling her while feeling helpless for her in simultaneity. With a strong resolve, I encouraged Pratima to continue our education, so that we can fulfill our potential and build a better future for ourselves and our families. I feel happy when I see my friend and her mother getting the benefits of government schemes through VLCPC (Village Level Child Protection Committee) with the help of a Didi from UMANG. I say a heartfelt, "Thank you, VLCPC." In fact, by attending this meeting, Pratima, along with many of us, learned about various government schemes and in doing so, we hope that we will soon be able to avail the benefits of these schemes.

In the VLCPC committee meeting, when the predicaments post Pratima's father's untimely demise were discussed, she was advised to gather all the caste, residence, and income related documents to avail the benefit of the government schemes, upon the collective suggestions of the committee members.

With the help of a didi from UMANG, she applied online to avail the benefits. Not only Pratima, but another friend of mine also took information from VLCPC meeting and started the process of securing her documents and certificates.

Through this VLCPC meeting, we discuss the safety of children and in conjunction, take initiative for their protection by identifying orphans, unsafe, early marriages or child labourers. I look forward to this meeting every month and empowering myself with the discussions on children's issues.

Today, Not only I, but many members of our UMANG group have joined this VLCPC and are determined to attend the meetings. I would like to thank Sahiya Didi and all of UMANG Project for highlighting the problems of the children and for giving me a chance to join the committee and in the course, getting empowered. - Sunita Hebram, 16 years old, Sahardal Village, Jamtara



How an Ordinary Session became Extraordinary!

An example of how an ordinary plan can turn any activity into something extraordinary can be seen in the School Management Committee training organized in collaboration with the GEMS Project. As Head Masters of Belsar school, we had participated in several SMC trainings before, where only verbal discussions happen on school development and information related to management was given. In the past, due to the training being conducted in the same school and the sessions being conducted only orally, the attendance, focus and participation of the members used to be a challenge.



As a result, when I was first informed about SMC training by GEMS members, I was not very excited. But when when I learned that this training would be organized in our own school and when we were informed about the outline and session plan, I was convinced that this session would definitely be something special. After having attended it, today I have no hesitation in saying that all SMC trainings should be like this.

The subjects of training were the same, this time however, thanks to the presence of projectors and audio-visual media, school operations, mid-day meal according to the menu, cleanliness of the school, cleanliness, benefits to the students, quality of food, regular attendance of students, and the session on the topics, such as drop-outs, money received by the school, account operation of SMC/MDM etc. came out before the members in a novel way. The 100% participation of the members in the training proves that the self-motivated discussion session was successful and interesting.

This time, the presence of GEMS Project team was also helpful, who discussed the role and functions of SMC exhaustively along with creating dialogues on child marriage, gender, child labour etc. The training was concluded after discussing the precautions and government guidelines to be observed during COVID-19.

Thanks GEMS, for presenting the same SMC training sessions in a new and relevant way. We hope your ambitious vision is successfully implemented in our school, and we see our children taking steps towards a bright future.



Diwakar Sah, Head Master, Belsar

Women Collectives Gearing up to Stop Child Marriage

Project Concern International in partnership with Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society is strengthening the SHG federated structure to create an enabling environment for stopping any incidence of child marriage in their communities.

In the process, women members of self-help groups are capacitated to create a close bonding with their daughters to support their daughters in fulfilling their aspirations. Through a cascade model of training, active women sensitise the SHG members on the negativities of the social norm and encourage other women to identify that a different pathway for life is possible.

The first three topics are sensitization subjects - importance of equal opportunities in life to achieve goals, impact of gender discrimination in occupation choices, and alternative narrative at home to support daughters' education and aspirations and reject marriage as the only destination.

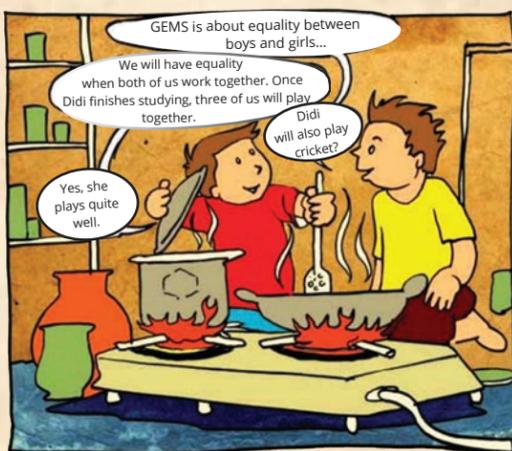
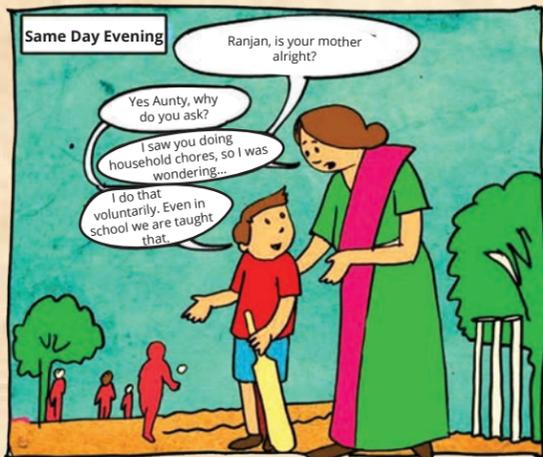
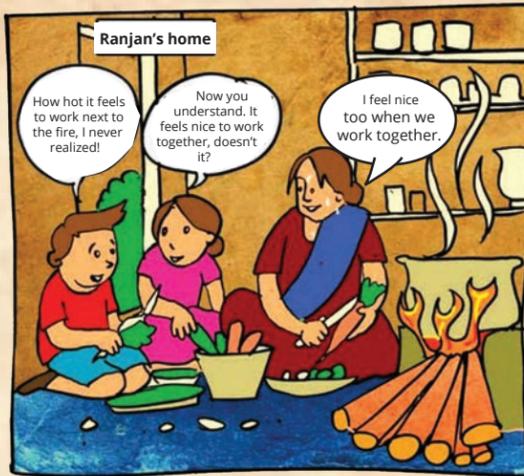
The modular sessions, coupled with occasional village level events, such as International and National Girl Child Day, International Women's Day have helped mothers to open up to their daughters and discuss their aspirations.

In addition, the 'social action committee' members of the 'cluster level federations' are strengthened to monitor the implementation of UMANG activities to ensure quality facilitation of UMANG modular sessions and capture feedback from participants.

As UMANG is getting deeper into the communities through SHG platforms, mothers are communicating with their husbands about not rushing for their daughter's marriage and give them opportunities for higher education and look out for a career. Now, families are realizing and recognizing that alternates are possible and they need to just change their way of thinking and deviate out for their own betterment.



Be it at home or outside, responsibilities are for all
Where does it say it's for a boy or a girl!



These stories are based on the "GEMS Comic Book" made under the GEMS program. For more information on the GEMS and UMANG program, contact I.C.R.W.

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