

# **Adhyapika Manch**

**Forum for Female Teachers in Rajasthan**

**Contributing to Addressing the Gender Gap in Education**



**Rajasthan Council of Elementary Education, Jaipur  
2015**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AM- Adhyapika manch

BEO- Block Education Officer

CCE – Continuous and comprehensive evaluation

GoR –Government of Rajasthan

HM-Head Mistress/Master

IDSJ-Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur

KGBV- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya

LJ- Lok Jumbish

MT-Master Trainer

POCSO- Prevention of sexual offence against children

RCEE- Rajasthan Council of Elementary Education

RP-Resource Person

RTI – Right to Information

RTE – Right to Education

SSA- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

TA –Travel Allowance

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rajasthan is predominantly a patriarchal State with a cultural legacy of devaluing girls and women. There are various social attitudes which discriminate against girls, boys being given more preference and mobility while girls are restricted to the household and domestic duties. Girls are denied access to basic services like education and burdened with household chores as a result of which drop out of girls continues to be a problem for Rajasthan especially at secondary level. With such a backdrop, the role of teachers, especially female teachers becomes extremely important in ensuring that girls stay in schools. However female teachers who come from the same social structure that the students belong to, also face a lot of pressure at work and at home and find it difficult to assert themselves in the school in front of male colleagues. Capacity building and improved motivation of female teachers is an essential step to support school completion by girls. Keeping this idea in mind, Adyapika Manch (AM) was launched, which is a platform for female teachers to meet and interact at a block level. This is a platform where teachers not just find time to recreate but also reflect on their own teaching practices, build capabilities, brainstorm and solve problems together and plan for improving their performance as teachers and role models for girls in school. It is a space for teacher to meet without inhibitions, have fun and feel a sense of belonging.

The Adhyapika Manch was started during the time of Lok Jumbish (LJ) as a response to the challenge that female teachers faced during residential trainings. After LJ was phased out, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) reintroduced the platform at the block level in 2011 as an effort to address the low motivation in female teachers and the increased drop out of girls in schools.

After 4 years of the AM being in practice, this documentation was attempted by Institute of Development Studies Jaipur (IDSJ) to understand the AM process, the successes and the challenges. This report seeks to understand the objectives and impact of this female teacher's forum and also hopes to inform State level on the advantages of continuing this forum and increasing its potential.

This documentation was conducted through a series of qualitative methods which included field visits to meet AM members in the districts of Tonk, Jaipur and Sikar, desk review of existing literature and report as well as a day-long consultation workshop at IDSJ campus with AM members across districts.

Through the various methods it became evident that AM as an initiative had been a unique practice in the lives of female teachers. Initially there was a bit of hesitation towards it but soon all teachers realized the potential of a forum that they could call their own. It was a space where teachers could get together, learn from each other's innovative practices, discuss matters of academic performance, overcome any administrative problems that they were facing in school

and well as discuss personal problems. It was also a space where teachers could showcase their individual talents and feel appreciated. There are many components that are explored through the AM. Teachers also focus on building their own capacities through trainings on a variety of topics like budget management in schools, innovative teaching methods and rights and entitlements for women and girls. The focus of the AM is to improve the status of girls' education. Thus AM members are also work towards making schools more girl child friendly. They also learn counseling so that they may be able to provide psycho social support to girls to ensure that there are no barriers in their education process. The AM also works to ensure that gender sensitive activity like activation of Meena Manch have taken place in all school.

Overall, the AM process has successfully worked to improve the confidence and motivation of female teachers. These teachers are now able to assert their positions in school, support girls to be in school by ensuring that they face lesser discrimination as well as working with the parents and community to advocate for the importance of girls education. They also work towards curbing practices like child marriage and child labour.

The teachers express how through the AM, they have now a new sense of collective identity which gives them the support and strength to perform their roles as teachers. They realize that they are not alone in the challenges that they face. This has given new encouragement towards their role as teachers and happier and motivated teachers are better able to support the academic and non-academic needs of students.

While the AM process has faced some challenges like budgetary concerns and lack of proper planning, it is a unique practice which should be continued. In the next phase, The AM members should be supported to have a more conceptual understanding on gender relations and what gender empowerment through education means for boys and girls in school. The AM can be used to further the cause of girl's education in the State and should be given more opportunity to do so.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

Rajasthan has culturally been a state where social and gender disparities have been ingrained in the social structure. While the state has recognized and been successful in addressing gender based discrimination and injustice over the past years, the status of women and girls is still a major concern.

In school education, there has been significant improvement in girls' enrollment and participation through a variety of girls' education schemes promoted by the Government and other supporting organizations. However, in primary and secondary education, discrimination towards girls continues to be a developmental challenge. Girls, while enrolled in school, continue to drop out, demonstrate low attendance and also face discrimination within the school structure.

Girls, form an extremely vulnerable group in Rajasthan where they face many risks throughout their schooling years. They are devalued in most families across Rajasthan. They are deprived access to basic services like health and education. On the basis of culture and safety, families don't allow girls to gain exposure to the outside world and are restricted to the home. Even at home, girls are subjected to exploitation like child labour, sexual violence and child marriage. One in two girls, in Rajasthan is married before the age of 18 years (47% of women aged 20-24) and end up giving birth at a premature age. Thus the girl child in Rajasthan, is subjected to perpetual risk of violence and discrimination.

Being in school can be one way to ensure that a girl is in a safe environment and is developing the skills and confidence to challenge her social boundaries in an attempt to modify her devalued status in the household and society. However, despite the extreme necessity for girls to be in schools, drop out of girls continue to be high in Rajasthan. Household responsibilities, marriage along with the safety concerns, backed by a strong patriarchal cultural practice form the primary reasons for girls to drop out of school.

The value of educating a girl child is still not an internalized idea in most areas in rural Rajasthan and thus schooling of girls is not a priority. Girls are constantly at risk of child labour, sexual violence, poor health and nutrition, lack of decision making power and restrictions on mobility. These deep rooted cultural ideas driving the devaluation of girls in families results in many boundaries for girl's education. These social boundaries forms and reinforces a cycle of deprivation in a girl's life and she is denied her rights of equality and justice throughout her life which in turn limits her mobility, confidence and decision making autonomy.

### **Adhyapika Manch – A Female Teachers Forum**

Educating girls through schooling is an imperative part of social development in a state like Rajasthan. Girl's participation and retention in schools till the completion of secondary education has been a priority for the State Education department. Keeping in mind the difficult nature of the task, many initiatives have been undertaken by the Government to address the gender gap in education.

As a part of the initiative to improve the quality of girls education, the, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan ( SSA)among other actors, recognized the extremely significant role that female teachers play in the life of a girl student. The girl student comes from a traditionally patriarchal household, a situation where she does not have opportunities to explore means to challenge her social boundaries. In this situation, the school becomes the primary space for providing girls the necessary skills to empower her and the teacher the primary catalyst in this process. Thus the teacher's ability, quality of facilitations and sensitivity towards girls in schools becomes extremely important for advancing girls education. It has been proven that the presence of female teachers is a reassuring factor for girls to be in school as for parents to send their daughters to school. Thus Teachers, especially female teachers in schools become a great source of inspiration to girls who start identifying with these women and aspire to be like them.

While it does become imperative for female teachers to keep in mind the deprivation that girls come to school and their position as role models, they are also burdened not just with teacher and school administration tasks, also by their own responsibilities for being women from the same society. Thus the SSA realized that providing female teachers with avenues to collectively motivate each other and work together to improve the quality of teaching is an extremely important step in ensuring that these teachers become more capable role models for girls in school. With this idea in mind, the SSA set up the Adhyapika Manch (AM) - the female teachers' forum.

What is Adhyapika Manch?

Adhyapika Manch is an informal forum for female teachers designed to provide some relief from the routine tasks, an opportunity for them to relax and rejuvenate, take time out to discuss challenges and strategies as well as reflect on their own competencies and methods of teaching. It is a platform to appreciate their own as well as efforts of other teachers and most importantly to share and learn from each other's experience. The primary focus of Adhyapika Manch is to motivate teachers to be more confident of their own abilities and effort so that they feel enthused to go back to their schools and feel encouraged to be more engaged in the teaching and nurturing process of students, especially girls.

By initiating the Adhyapike Manch (AM), SSA, wanted to create a platform that can empower female teachers to come together in one space to enhance their own skills and knowledge to enable them to deliberate on ways to contribute to furthering girls education, by creating a more girl child friendly environment in schools.

### **Rationale for the Study**

The main purpose of developing this report was to being to document the journey of AM as a platform, understand its impact on promoting girls education in Rajasthan as well as advocate for the continuation of this practice. Thus document traces the successes and limitations of this innovative practice and highlights the milestones till date.

It is also anticipated that the evidence and analysis presented in this document will inform the State Government about the necessity to continue this initiative along with giving it leverage after taking into account the current situation of girls' education. This report also seeks to bring to notice issues related to scalability, replicability and sustainability of these programmes so that the future of AM can be planned in detail. It is expected that this document will also help in institutionalizing and mainstreaming this process the intervention within the government structures and ensuring that budgetary allocations are accordingly made.

Keeping this overall objective in mind the more specific goals of developing a report on AM as a gender mainstreaming in education intervention are:

- Evaluate how the AM has impacted the lives of female teachers
- Analyze to what extent AM has really been able to influence the motivation of female teachers and contributed to increased retention of girls in schools
- Ensure that district officials are convinced about the importance and impact of AM as a means to promote girls education and participation in schools
- Support Government in extending the practice to all of Rajasthan as well as recommend it to other states where gender gap in education is high
- To increase the confidence of the members of AM by reassuring them about the success the platform
- Motivating teachers who are part of the AM to work harder to strengthen their contribution towards it and increase their motivation to generate more ideas for promoting and advancing girls education in the state

- Increase ownership among the members to generate block and school specific intervention to support girls to be in schools and ensure that they work on the psycho-social development of girl students in school

## **Methodology**

In developing this report on the successes and processes of AM it was necessary to adopt a multi-pronged methodology of primary and secondary research methods. Overall this document is based on qualitative methods of inquiry.

**Consultations:** The very first steps in the documentation process were a series of consultations which were carried out with UNICEF Rajasthan representatives and officials of Rajasthan Council for Elementary Education (RCEE) and SSA wherein the approach and broad framework for the documentation was discussed in detail. Basic details about the current situation of AM were shared. As overarching methodology for this report was discussed and shared and it was decided that out of the 7 districts which have demonstrated positive outcomes from AM, IDSJ team could visit the district of Jaipur, Tonk and Sikar to evaluate the process and collect the necessary data.

**Desk Review:** A detailed review of documents and reports was undertaken to analyze the current status as well as experiences of AM across districts. These included monthly reports of AM and report of AM review workshops. Information generated from this desk review helped in formulation of the framework of documentation and the key research questions.

**Framework:** Based on the information generated through discussion with SSA and UNICEF along with the desk review, a comprehensive framework for documentation was prepared with key issues to be analyzed and presented in the report. Guiding questions which were developed for the report are listed in Annexure 1.

**Good Practices and Case Studies:** It was understood that documenting good practices that have emerged in the AM processes along with case studies of members of AM and government officials who have been part of this process would be imperative to highlight the impact of the platform. Efforts for the same were undertaken as a part of the field work as well as review of secondary data. An effort was also made to document the experiences of an active AM as a good practice.

**Field Visits and Focus Group Discussion:** Field Visits were organized in six blocks each of the target districts and focus group discussions were carried out with members of the AM to

understand the processes that were put in place for establishing the forum. Key informant interviews were also carried out with select district level functionaries RP's and KRP's to assess their views on the processes and benefits accruing from the forum and the monthly meetings.

**One day Consultation:** A daylong consultation was organized with AM members from 18 districts at IDS, Jaipur. Detailed discussions were held long with presentation from members of each district of their experiences of AM in their respective blocks. The members presented the various activities initiated by the AM, in their respective districts and schools.

**Drafting:** The final step in developing this document was the drafting of the report. This report was presented to district officials, SSA and UNICEF in Jaipur, with feedback collected and incorporated in the final report. The final report was submitted after incorporating the feedback from relevant stakeholders along with still images.

## ADHYAPIKA MANCH – THE JOURNEY

The origin of Adhyapika Manch can be traced to the Lok Jumbish (LJ) Project implemented by Government of Rajasthan in the early 1990s. This forum was initiated as an experiment in 1994, with the purpose of improving the representation and active participation of women teachers in residential teacher training camps and to encourage them to develop themselves as trainers. It was noted that female teachers, who constituted around 40% of the teacher population in Rajasthan were not able to participate equally in the schooling process primarily because they were dominated by male counterparts in school as well as at home. Compounding the situation, female teachers were expected to prioritize their family and household responsibilities over school thus leading to lesser motivation for these teachers to take a more active role in schools or for the cause of supporting girl education.

When AM was first introduced, it became the first ever forum for female teachers where they were free from social norms and boundaries and could interact freely with each other. Over the years, the forums developed into spaces which enabled women teachers to break their isolation and assert their identities. These forums also become rallying points for women teachers to develop themselves as creative and articulate professionals.

‘Adhyapika Manch was an off shoot of an ongoing training programme of Lok Jumbish .....It was observed that participation of women teachers in such programmes was negligible. The reasons were not difficult to identify, the residential nature of the training programme was not suitable to women who were having small children to look after, the dominance of men in the training programmes both as participants as well as trainers was intimidating to most, there was resistance from family members, and finally, there was lack of motivation on the part of women teachers to seek professional skills. The idea of organizing meetings of women teachers was mooted at this point of the time. The very origin of Adhyapika Manch was unplanned. The efforts to involve teachers in the training programme had highlighted the need to start a forum for women teachers which could act as a support group and facilitate their participation in the various activities of Lok Jumbish. Soon it was clear that the participation of women was not just a question of apathy but representative of the gender discrimination in the society. Women were found to be having comparatively fewer options and lesser freedom to exercise their choice. This, in turn, meant that Adhyapika Manch had to play a more dynamic role in ensuring gender equity in the teaching community.’

---- Excerpts from, ‘Adhyapika Manch – A Mid Term Evaluation,’ conducted by Sandhan (1998)

It was evident that Adhyapika Manch has been an unanticipated success story (Sandhan 1998) Thus, even after LJ was phased out, the concept of AM was reintroduced in 2011 by SSA at a block level. It was rekindled with the objective to sensitize and support female teachers to work towards addressing discrimination and gender gap in education. The expected outcome of AM was that teachers will be more sensitive to issues of girls' participation in school and enable them to better support the regular attendance of girls.

Over the years, the SSA had confirmed that the presence of female teachers is an important determinant for girls attending schools thus ensuring the presence of competent female teachers in school is imperative. However it was also evident that female teachers in schools did not demonstrate leadership qualities. They were not aware of RTI, RTE or how to manage school level budgets allocations in school. Even when a few female teachers did demonstrate leadership skill, they were a minority and even then, they would not push their opinions over and above the male teachers in the school. Even when some female teachers were HM's, the male teachers would take the final decisions and the female teachers would not play a very active role. These female teachers did not take measures to look into the issues of poor attendance, active participation or the learning level of the girls in schools.

It is an established fact that girls look up to their female teachers in schools especially at an upper primary level. However, the position of the teachers in school at that time painted a poor picture of a role model for these girls in school. When AM was reintroduced, taking into account the situation, the primary objective was to make female teachers better role models for girls thus promoting girls education. The AM process started with selected teachers being trained through a series of workshops designed to develop strategies for teachers to ensure regular attendance of girls.

The larger objectives that were set up by the SSA are as listed:

- To promote leadership abilities and potential among women teachers
- To collectively promote school development and address personal problems of women teachers
- To build capacities among women teachers through special programmes
- To promote an understanding on gender issues
- To establish women teachers as trainers

Since the reintroduction, AM forums are currently active in 256 blocks across Rajasthan. Each district and block has modified the forum to meet its specific requirements and experiences and outcomes in every forum have been different. Overall it has been observed that the

experiences have been positive and teachers have embraced this initiative and taken ownership to continue it despite instances where specific funds were not available.

### STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING

With the re - launching of AM as a female teachers forum promoting girls education , all the districts in the State respectively formed AM as per the directives circulated by SSA. It was decided that a total of 100 teachers were to be made members of the AM in every block. Discussions at the district level revealed that initially some select teachers who already had demonstrated leadership skills were asked to participate in the meeting and form the AM.

In the words of AM members from Piparli, Sikar,

*“Our AM was established in 2011. Initially teachers were contacted on phone and asked to attend the meeting. In the first meeting around 85 women teachers participated. It was the first time that the women teachers were coming together in such a large number.”*

Speaking about the initial phase, AM members from Niwai block in Tonk District,

*“There was a government order and two to three teachers were nominated to attend the meeting. The first meeting was held in Niwai in July 2011. A total of 70-80 women teachers participated in this meeting. We were informed that it is a scheme for women teachers. A Sahyojika (Convernor) and a Sah Sanyojika (Co-Convernor) were nominated and an Executive committee was formed. The training was held much later in November. When it was launched we were told that it was a new concept.”*

While speaking to AM members during the process of documenting this report, it became evident that preliminary meetings of AM were organized by the block officials without much preparation. The participation was ad-hoc and the concept was not clear to many teachers. The members expressed that the first few meetings had been quite challenging as the teachers were not clear about the AM activities. Even the members in the meetings were not enthused and portrayed a skeptical attitude towards the forum as they felt it would not serve any purpose. The teachers pointed out that it was only after the training, that the concept and purpose of AM was fully comprehended by the members.

The AM in any block was formed under the guidance of the Block Education Officer (BEO) or Resource Person (RP). Once formed, quarterly meetings were organized in the first week of

August, October and January every year. For the same, a sum of Rs 60,000 per block was also earmarked for conducting the various AM activities as well as paying the paying TA and DA for participating teachers.

In the very first phase, AM was started in 248 blocks across the state. Subsequently, another set of guidelines were issued by the Rajasthan Council of Elementary Education, (GOR) on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 wherein 8 more blocks were included overall involving 256 blocks in AM activities. The membership of the each forum at the block level was maintained at 100 teachers and the time duration of membership was fixed for 2 years, post which election would be re held and new members would be selected. A *Sanyojika* ( *Convenor*) and *Sah-sanyojika* ( *Co Converor*) are identified from among active teachers member. They are then given the responsibility of facilitating the proceedings of AM meetings and coordinate every activity. Every AM was required to select an Executive Committee to carry out the directed activities. In every block, the Executive Committee is mandated to have 8-10 members to coordinate the functioning of the AM as per the directives from the department. The EC members are then made in-charge of various aspects like managing finances, sharing accurate information, maintaining public relations, documentation meetings and organizing events. The guidelines also stated that a two day platform for inter-block experience sharing of members called *Samagam* would be organized annually at the district level.

From the onset, the primary objective of AM has been to empower female teachers to become more sensitive to issues of girls' participation in school and as a result, enable them to better support attendance and retention of girls in school. In the trainings that these teachers go through, they are given an in -depth training on psycho-social counseling of girls in school, leadership and communication skills, information and clarity on Right to Education (RTE), Right to information (RTI) and Prevention of sexual offence against children (POSCO). The trainings have proved to have enabled teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in an effort to ensure a more nurturing and safer environment for girls in schools. They have in turn also become better role models for these girls

There are also provisions provides opportunities to members of the AM to come together for meetings. These meetings are spaces for members to debate and discuss on issues related to the following:

- Gender sensitization in schools
- Promoting a girl child friendly environment in school
- Awareness on women and child rights

- Enhancing efficiency and creativity of female teachers on information related to counseling on health, academic and social problems
- Trainings on additional skills and aspects like training on self-defense and judo courses and other new and innovative teaching techniques.
- Discussion around issues of women's rights and entitlements
- Other pertinent topics like superstitions everyday gender discrimination, violence against women , work related grievances of teachers, reproductive health issues and well as superstitions and traditional beliefs

To ensure that AM as a regular practice proceeds in an organised, purposeful and smooth manner, every AM is expected to send a detailed report of the meeting and the various activities to the State level.

Apart from these reports, interactions held during the documentation of this reports and the consultation held in Jaipur, made it evident that the AM meetings have taken into account the major issues surrounding barriers to girls' education in Rajasthan.

## COMPONENTS

The scope of the Adhyapika Manch to improve the confidence of female teachers to become change makers in the lives of girls in school was realized at the time of LJ. With SSA adopting it, the potential of the platform grew and yielded visible results in the empowerment process of female teachers. With this primary objective, some key activities taken up by AM are mentioned below:

### ***Enrolment and retention of out of school girls:***

The primary objective of AM was to improve the status of girls' education, central to which is ensuring that girls have access to schools. The AM has been instrumental in identifying out of school girls and enrolling them in school. AM members have also got girls enrolled in KGBV schools.

*"In the academic year 2013 – 2014 we collectively decided that every member would try to identify girls who were out of school and make efforts to mainstream them into schools. As a result in village Datawas, the AM member identified two out of schools girls and got them enrolled in the KGBV."*

AM member in Niwai, Tonk

Having realized the potential of the AM to reach out to the community, AM members have taken on the role of sensitizing parents, the primary decision makers in the lives of the girl. AM members spoke to parents on the importance of girls' education and encouraged them to send their daughters to school regularly. They have also appraised parents about the future options for their daughters and how an educated girl can contribute to the households' welfare.

### ***Improving quality of teaching and learning within class room***

It was reported that teachers who are members of AM have also made efforts to improve quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. During the consultation workshop, the teachers shared some good practices that had enhanced learning among the children in their schools. For example, in Ganganagar the AM members have introduced Hindi and Math in primary sections through games and activity based teaching methods. These are methods that they have discussed in their meetings and collaborated for peer learning through deliberate session on activity based teaching learning methods. Teachers, who are starting any innovating practice in their school, share the same with other members in the sessions. For example, in Niwai a teacher had organized a Science Fair in her school which was very much appreciated by the students. She shared the practice and outcome in the AM meetings and other Science

teachers also decided to adopt the same for their schools. Similarly, In Dungarpur, the issue of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) has been discussed in-depth during the AM meetings and an effort has been made to support teachers who were finding it difficult to comprehend CCE methods.

### ***Counseling of girls***

In Rajasthan, girls even when they come to school, face a variety of non-academic issues which also act as an impediment in their learning progress. Girls find it difficult to overcome these limitations and thus counseling by female teachers is extremely important. AM members have also taken up the task of counseling girls on a range of issues related to health and nutrition, menstrual hygiene, child marriage and sexual harassment.

Through the discussions at the district level meetings, it became apparent that the teachers tried to instill confidence among the girls and motivated them to speak out if they face violence at home or in public places. In Bikaner, the teachers provided girls with information and supportive counseling on sexual harassment. As safety during travelling to school is a major issue for girls, teachers have made an effort has been made to explain 'good touch and bad touch, and the necessary steps girls need to take when confronted with an adverse situation. They were also given information regarding existing laws that protect them. This has led to girls sharing their experiences openly with teachers and discussing solutions.

In Kota, the AM with financial support have been distributing sanitary napkins to girls and promoting menstrual hygiene. The AM members have also been instrumental in setting up toilets in some urban schools. Efforts have been made to provide dustbins in schools as well as encourage washing of hands.

Counseling related to prevention of child marriage has been a major focus for the AM. The AM has taken up prevention of child marriage as one of their tasks. The teachers have encouraged girls to raise their voice against child marriage not just for themselves but also to do the same for their peers and raise objections in the society when they come across cases of child marriage. The AM members have themselves stopped cases of child marriage like in Sawaimadhopur, where a member intervened and stopped a child marriage of a girl enrolled in the KGBV. In other situations when some girls who were being harassed by local boys en route to the school complained to the teacher who was a member of AM, the teacher confronted the boys and warned them that they should behave properly with girls.

The AM in some blocks have ensured increased enrollment as in the case of Jodhpur, where the members convinced the parents of a young widow to educate the girl and she was enrolled in the KGBV.

### ***Creating gender friendly environment in schools***

A primary focus of the AM has been to create gender friendly environment in their respective schools. However the understanding of gender friendly school environment differs from block to block. With this idea in mind, the teachers have ensured motivating girls for sports, equal task distribution to girls and boys within the school, improving condition of toilets, providing dustbins in schools and most importantly making sure that they listen to all the girls in the school and respond to any problems that they may be having.

For e.g: In village Ramgarh in Hanumangarh block, parents were not allowing girls to go out of the village and participate in a sports competition in another district. The head teacher of the secondary school who is also a member of the AM convinced the parents to send the girls under their guidance. Overall 7 girls participated in the inter-district sports meet and won prizes. Eventually, the parents were very proud of the girls.

Having understood how important availability of female teachers is for girls to be in school, the AM members in certain blocks have raised the issue of redistributing teachers so that female teachers are available in all elementary schools. They have also raised issues of safety for young girls and the need for better transport for them to be in school. Some members also met Panchayat leaders and school management committee to encourage them to escort girls to schools.

### ***Revitalizing Meena Manch***

The members of AM in different schools have taken a special interest in empowering the Meena Manch in their schools. Meena Manch is a platform focusing on increasing the confidence of girls as well as making them conscious about different social issues that girls face every day. Teachers also motivate girls to use the Meena Manch to create awareness in the community on issues of child marriage, child labour and domestic labour which are common causes for girls dropping out of schools. In Bikaner the members reported that the Meena Manch has also been effectively used to convey messages on issues related to violence against women and girls.

### ***Raising awareness on traditional social practices and women's rights***

One of the most actively practiced objectives of the AM has been to raise awareness about rights and entitlement for women and girls as well as on existing traditional practices which devalue women. As one of the activities, debates and essay competitions have been organized in various schools on declining sex ratio sexual harassment, child marriage etc.

Several active members of the AM in Sikar have also been nominated as members in the committee set up under the *Beti Bachao- Beti Padhao* scheme. It was also pointed out that the Collector had evinced an interest to attend the next AM meeting thus highlighting how the AM has been able to convey their messages to the wider community as well.

In many AM meetings different experts' like lawyers and doctors have been invited to speak on women's entitlements so that the members can inform themselves on their own rights and convey the same to their students.

### ***Publications***

AM members in some blocks have been able to develop their own magazine. This journal of the Adhyapika Manch has helped in building a group identity and sharing of good practices. The members as well as teachers from different schools have contributed to this magazine. These magazines have been the method through which other teachers across schools have become aware of several schemes for girls including rights and laws that protect girls. The case studies mentioned in the journal motivated teachers to take up some good practices and methods in their own schools.

### ***Problem sharing and solving at a professional and personal level***

One of the most unique and effective components of the AM has been that it is a space for female teachers to convene and share. These teachers, who have their own set of responsibilities, struggles and challenges can share and learn from each other on how to make their own experience as teachers better and in turn support the experiences of girls in their schools. These meetings also gave the teachers scope to talk about their professional issues like salary fixation, duty leave, updating of service book, task allocation in schools and clearing of travelling allowance (TA) bills etc. These AM groups in each block have been able to help each other claim their rights in terms of salary, postings and work load. They have also been able to overcome other issues that they may be having in the school. For example, In Nohar block in Hanumangarh district, a woman teacher was being harassed by the wife of the head

teacher and the members of the AM decided to intervene and talk to the head teacher and his wife and managed to resolve the issue. In Ganganagar due to the efforts made by the AM, nine teachers got promotions granted which were long overdue. The AM also took up a long standing case of a visually challenged teacher and got her the benefits of the 6th pay commission.

The AM has also provided a forum for women teachers to share their personal problems. The teachers were of the view that when personal problems are shared in an open forum they can be collectively apprised and solutions arrived at. This gave a lot of confidence to deal with the daily problems that teachers face at work and at home. Through the AM, all female teachers have found continued support and a collective force where they no longer feel isolated in the challenges that they face. They now have the confidence to claim their rights with the support of the larger group.

### ***Visits and Excursions***

Exposure visits to neighboring districts and places of interest have also been organized by the AM members. These trips have been organized through a collective fund contributed by each of the members. These excursions gave them an opportunity to be together, do something for themselves and feel surer of their own abilities. Many of these teachers had never gone outside of their district hence these visits were confidence boosters for them. They also provided opportunities for deeper and more personal interactions of teachers. During these trips there was lot of discussions on women's rights and problems of working women and all members have expressed how these trips helped in creating a bond among women teachers as they travelled and stayed together for 2-3days.

### ***Creation of contributory AM fund***

In some blocks the AM has created a contributory fund that is used for organizing different activities. For example, in Niwai block of Tonk district, a contributory fund was created in the year 2011-12, wherein all the executive members contributed Rs. 500 each and a total of Rs. 8000/- was collected. The members then collectively decided that this amount would be utilized to purchase school bags for students who belong to poor households. 100 bags were purchased and distributed in the government primary and upper primary schools in Niwai city in February 2012.

Another initiative started by the AM Niwai, has been organizing the farewell function for retiring teachers. In some districts they also encouraged the retired teachers to visit schools to talk and counsel girls.

### ***Capacity building***

Capacity building of teachers has been a core objective of the AM. The AM teachers themselves have facilitated this process on variety of issues. Trainings and talks have been organized at a block level which have included training on financial procedures, nutrition and reproductive health, gender based discrimination, yoga, art of living, use of first aid as well as self- defense.

Since there is a strong focus on recreation activities for teachers and AM is also a space for female teachers to have fun, the members have also organized dance and music competitions. The members pointed out that many of the teachers re-discovered their hidden talents and passions in this process. BY doing this it was also expected that once the teachers are happier, they will return to their role with revived enthusiasm and interest and be better able to relate to students.

*“I had forgotten that I could sing! I have not danced in a long time and the AM gave me an opportunity to reconnect with myself.”*

*----- AM members Niwai Tonk*

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF ADHYAPIKA MANCH

As a part of this documentation process, a one day consultation was held at IDSJ where interactive and in-depth discussions were held on the AM process and experience. AM members from different districts participated in this workshop. These discussions coupled with the field level interactions clearly emphasized the impact of AM in the lives of female teachers. These teachers who were had been provided with a forum where they could discuss personal and professional challenges as well as focus on their own abilities are now better capacitated to work towards enhancing girls education. It also relieved them from everyday stress and tension they face at home and school. It had helped in networking with teachers at the block and at the district level. The overall influence of AM can be understood at three levels:

### ***Teacher level:***

It is clear that the platform has been extremely successful in building the enthusiasm and confidence of the teachers themselves. Most of the members were struggling to maintain a balance between the dual roles they had to play at home and workplace. The attitudes towards working women continued to be stereotypical and male colleagues often looked down upon them and did not treat them as equals. It was also difficult for many women of the teachers to assert themselves and take on leadership roles within the school even when they were the head teacher.

During the workshop, the members were unanimous in stating that after joining the AM their self-confidence has increased. They had overcome many of their inhibitions and were able to articulate their viewpoint on a variety of school related issues. They could now speak up in meetings and public forums and also interact with department officials with ease. The members shared that the AM had facilitated their personal growth as they had become more sensitive to understanding the pervasive nature of gender based discriminatory practices in society. This had helped in addressing issues related to girls' education in a more comprehensive manner.

The members articulated that the AM has been a space for teachers to demonstrate their own competencies and talents. They said that they felt appreciated as they got a chance to showcase their abilities and got a lot of appreciation from other teachers. Being in this forum also gave them a sense of collectiveness. They realized that their everyday struggles are not just unique to them but something that all other female teachers also deal with. Thus they had to support and help each other and develop a common vision for ensuring a better future for the girls in their school.

The AM meetings also gave teachers opportunities to share good practices that they have adopted and also learn from others. Teachers were able to collectively brainstorm and resolve problems that they may be facing. Since, they had autonomy of the session to plan it the way they want, explore a plethora of topics, issues and activities , it resulted in teachers feeling a sense of ownership towards these meetings and making maximum use of this platform.

### ***School Level***

The teachers shared through a variety of examples that they had been able to contribute towards creating a more gender friendly environment in schools as a result of deliberate discussions in the AM sessions. They pointed out that the presence of a female teacher is essential in the schools as girls feel comfortable to talk to only female teachers about problems that they may be having whether academic or personal. The participation in the AM meetings and interaction with other teachers had helped in addressing problems of adolescent girls like discrimination within home, menstrual hygiene and violence against girls. The sessions on counseling helped the teachers to address problems that girls face and counsel these girls.

The planning and sharing sessions in the AM has encouraged teachers to initiate different activities in schools like science fairs, debates, competitions, Meena Manch etc based on the needs of respective schools. The members also pointed out that they have encouraged girls to participate in sports and other co-curricular activities including summer camps. Teachers became more assertive of their own decisions and in turn were able to help the girls in school do the same. Overall, they have become better role models for the girls in school.

The various capacity building efforts like training on financial procedures and cash book maintenance has also helped many female teachers in reducing their dependency on male staff especially on processing financial matters in the school. They have now taken on these roles more confidently and managed school budget allocations more effectively. The information that teachers received on legal produces like the RTI helped them inform students especially girls in schools on how they can access and use these rights. It also helped teachers answer the various questions publicly raised on school performance.

The AM members have also tried to adopt innovative methods in their classroom practices ad taught students with more enthusiasm. They have initiative more sensitivity in the classroom towards gender biased practices and encouraged more gender equality within the school like distributing equal tasks to both boys and girls and encouraging interaction between boys and girls.

***Community level***

Majority of the AM members shared that they regularly interact with parents and motivate them to send their daughters to schools regularly. They have also initiated discussion with parents and the larger community on child marriage and on occasions helped to stop cases of child marriage and re-enrolled girls in school. This was a change from the time when most female teachers were extremely apprehensive about talking to the community. Now they state how being a member of AM gave them the confidence to be surer of themselves and go out in the community. Their presence in the community has also resulted in more mothers coming to the school and taking an interest in their daughter's education.

## REFLECTIONS

The power collectiveness and belonging which female teachers in Rajasthan have found through the Adhyapika Manch has helped raise voices among schools and support the cause for girl's education inside and outside the school. Adhyapika Manch has also been instrumental in resolving issues around girls' education in turn helping more and more girls stay in school by ensuring that girl child friendly atmosphere prevails in schools. The Adhyapika Manch has been an extremely effective platform for female teachers to express their own problems, learn from each other and work together to tackle common issues as a result of which they have emerged as more confident and motivated teachers.

Teachers have also expressed how their experiences from the Adhyapika Manch have even helped teachers in their personal life.

### **Teachers Reflecting on Change at a Personal Level**

*"I feel born again... It helped me understand myself and explore my own potential... I feel like I have emerged with a new personality."*

----- AM member Dungarpur

*"At a personal level, we are all social workers doing good work but Adhyapika Manch has recognized us, and our work and that has motivated me and all of us a lot."*

----- AM member Bundi

*"I have seen change in the behavior and attitudes of the girls in my school. This is a result of the increase in the confidence level of teacher. Adhyapika Manch gave us this."*

----- AM member Ajmer

*"My hesitation in doing things has completely gone away. Don't I don't feel scared to go anywhere and talk to anyone. I go to the village alone and talk to parents."*

----- AM member Jodhpur

*"My self-confidence has increased a lot... I feel happier now that I can travel to Jaipur on my own without feeling scared"*

----- AM member Jaisalmer

The Adhyapika Manch by building the capacities and motivation level of female teachers has aided to promoting girls education and creation of girl child friendly environment in schools and the community. Throughout the State there have been many instances where not just teachers, but even girls in school have spoken about how there has been a change in the school

environment after AM activities were started. There have been reported examples members have been highly instrumental in preventing certain discriminatory practices and improving lives of girls. Some of these examples are mentioned below:

#### **Jhunjhunu:**

When the AM members in Jhunjhunu district found out that a 7 year old girl studying in an upper primary school in Buhana was being married, the teachers decided to take a step against it. While child marriage has been a grave problem that has existed in the community, prior to the AM activities, these teachers did not have the courage to stand up against vases of child marriage, a practice that so deeply rooted in the values of the community. With new found confidence, the AM members took a step and went and spoke to the parents to persuade them to delay the girl's marriage. They did not however stop there. These teachers also caught hold of the middle man organizing the wedding and informed the police about him. The police then got involved into the situation and the wedding of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade girl was stopped.

#### **Ganganagar:**

In Ganganagar district, a 15 year old girl had suddenly stopped attending school. Later the teachers found out that it was because she had been married off to a man who was 40 years old. The teachers, some of whom have been members of the AM were told that the girl had come back to her native village for a few days. The teacher had already discussed a plan of action for helping this girl in their AM meetings and these teachers took this opportunity to go and meet the parents of this girl. On meeting the parents they found out that the girl has returned to her parents' home as she was abused and miss treated by her husband and in laws. The girl was highly reluctant to go back. The teachers spent many days visiting the girl and her parents and would counsel them. Finally the parents decided that it was better that she did not go back to her in laws and instead the girl was re enrolled in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and completed her education.

#### **Jhalwar:**

In a school in Jhalawar district, a girl who was a victim of child marriage but was still in school suddenly decided to drop out. One of the teachers who was a member of the AMh started to find out why she did so. IT turned out that the person she was married to had a reputation of having some kind of mental illness and the other students in the school used to make fun of her for being married to someone who was 'mad'. The girls got very depressed and lost all hope for her future and decided to stop coming to school. This teacher decided to do something about it. She started visiting her in her home and counseling her while giving her hope for her future life. In a matter of a month the girl regained her confidence and started coming back to school.

The teacher had also counseled the other students in her class and explained to them how they were being insensitive towards their classmates and made the school a better environment for the girl to rejoin.

#### **Dausa:**

In Dausa district, an AM member identified a few out of school students who worked in the brick kiln.. This teacher took the initiative to speak to the parents who worked at the same brick kiln, about sending their three children to school but the parents were hesitant and afraid of how the kiln owner would react. This teacher then took the bold step of approaching the brick kiln owner and told him about child labour law and how he could be put in jail for employing children in the kiln. As a result of this, the children stopped working there and were enrolled in the nearby school.

#### **Bikaner:**

In Bikaner district, the Adhyapika Manch took on the issues of violence against girls in as an initiative of their own and started organizing session with girl students in schools on domestic violence, good touch and bad touch and how to ensure their safety in public spaces. They also oriented girl son their rights and entitlements. These sessions were conducted by AM members in their own schools and were spread throughout the district. school and thus was conducted across the district.

#### **Tonk and Bundi:**

The Adhyapika Manch in Tonk district created a contributory fund which also included the participation of retired teachers. Having identified the needs of many disadvantaged students especially those belonging to lower castes or extremely economically deprived families, the AM decided to use this fund for the benefit of these students. The money was used to support the buying of books and stationary and other material that these students and their families could not afford to buy. The AM members of Bundi district, created a similar contributory find for the disadvantaged students by facilitating a process where these students became E friends with students in California University and generated funds from there for their higher education.

#### **Ganganagar:**

In Ganganagar district a girl student with a good academic record had to drop out of school due to financial constraints at home. The girl's father was an alcoholic and refused to spend money on his daughter's education. The AM member discussed the issue with the teachers in

the school and all the teachers decided to contribute money for the girl's education. They even bought a bicycle for the girl so that she could attend school regularly. Due to the efforts made by the teacher, the girl could complete her schooling and is now studying in the Government Engineering College in Bikaner.

The AM platform has no doubt been a very positive step towards creating a girl child friendly atmosphere not just in the school but also in the community. These teachers have touched the lives of many girls and even worked extensively on changing mind sets of parents and community members on the importance of educating girls. Having emerged as leaders themselves, the AM members have also been able to challenge many stereotypical notions about women in the community and women as professionals. In one such example, AM members in Govindgarh Jaipur, started speaking out about how the distribution of tasks given to women teachers in schools continues to be discriminatory. Most paperwork is given to women teachers and they are supposed to look after all the cultural activities and the *Bal Sabha*. The teachers had discussed these matters in the AM meetings. As a group, they took up cases of individual teachers who were facing issues of this sort and presented them to the BEO. As result, the BEO had to start treating female teachers in school more professional and acknowledged the need to have a more gender unbiased and equitable distribution of tasks among teachers.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### **Adhyapika Manch Jhalarapatan, Jhalawar**

In a Government upper primary school in Mandawar, a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student had stopped coming to school mid-session. The class teacher, Ms Jain, who is also a member of the Adhyapika Manch tried to track the students absenteeism and after much scrutiny found out that she had stopped coming to school because of eve teasing her way to school.

Since it was an out of school matter, Ms. Jain found it difficult to resolve it on her own. But she was determined to do something about it as there had been cases in the past where girls had dropped out for similar reasons and she wanted to stop this trend. She began by discussing the matter with the Head Teacher but despite her expectations, the Head Teacher did not support her in resolving the matter. Ms. Jain was also apprehensive of speaking with the teasers as they were village goons and even the Head Teacher was afraid of confronting them. She then decided to speak with the parents of the girls and even the parents supported the decision of the girl to stay out of school rather than facing this kind of harassment every day.

Unable to solve the matter on her own, Ms Jain took the issue forward in her AM meeting the following month. Some other AM members decided to join her and together they visited the village and started raising the issue at a Panchayat meeting. Through this, many people became aware of this kind of harassment that girls face when they are going to school. The Panchayat member decided to join the teachers in starting a dialogue with these boys who would harass girls. As it turned out many of these boys were graduates of the same school. The teachers along with the Panchayat members started counseling the boys on why they harass the girls. The teachers also reached out to the families of these boys and spoke to the parents. The boys and their families were informed about the consequences of their actions and how they were being very bad role models for younger boys in the village.

Through this dialogue the boys realized that what they were considering “just fun” was actually a really harmful thing that they were doing. They apologized for their behavior and promised to never harass any girl in the village and ensure instead that girls had a safe commute to school.

Ms. Jain was extremely happy and content that the matter was resolved with peaceful dialogue and the girl returned to school. She now says how proud she feels to be a part of such an empowered and influential group- The Adhyapika Manch.

### **Adhyapika Manch Pilibanga, Sri Ganganagar**

This success story of the Adhyapika Manch in Sri Ganganagar district is about how this platform was influential in minimizing the impact caste based discrimination and promoting the studies of students especially belonging to socially backward communities.

Sri Ganganagar is considered as relatively developed district in the state. However, social relationships are equally strained and placed in rigid hierarchies as in other districts. Ganganagar has relatively high population of Scheduled Caste (placed lowest in socially ladder and some of caste/sub-caste in this social category are considered untouchables, which is legally prohibited in India). The social biases in the society transmit in school and sometimes can be observed, minutely, among children.

As a reflection of the wider society, the social composition of enrolled children in Government Upper Primary School, Goluwala is socially divided and leaning towards prioritizing higher caste students. Lower caste students would face a lot of discrimination in the school from other students and even from teachers and this resulted in many students from SC communities dropping out of school.

One of the teachers in this school who was also the member of the AM, raised this problem in the next AM meeting. And all the AM members unanimously agreed that this can be resolved primarily through counseling of families, pursuance and dialogue with society involving both sections – Schedule Casts and Upper Castes. Counseling of parents and the society on such a sensitive issue would require special skills and thus the AM facilitated a process of organizing a workshop for its members so that they are better equipped to start a dialogue and raise awareness and sensitivity in the community about these discriminatory practices. This workshop helped member teachers to gain confidence and understanding the fundamentals to conduct dialogues on social issues in an open platform.

The teachers would engage with the community on this issue at parents meetings, in community awareness programmes, and any other medium of interaction that they could find. As a result of their continued efforts, they started to raise awareness in the community and the lower caste students who had dropped out of school started re-enrolling.

Teachers of GUPS Goluwala who are also members of Adhyapika Manch say that they gained confidence from activities of Adhyapika Manch which helped them to use the counseling skills and enhanced capacities to hold dialogues with community members on other sensitive issue as well. Now they feel that they can fight all form of discrimination.

### **Adhyapika Manch Buhana, Jhunjhunu**

Ms. Rajbala Yadav, member of Adhyapika Manch and teacher in Government Girls Upper Primary School, has become a role model of determination and invaluable contribution towards girls education in her district through her initiatives as a part of Adhyapika Manch.

Child marriage is a common practice in Rajasthan and is driven by very strong and binding social norms. However there are any reported cases of child marriage arising because of financial gains driven by malicious intentions.

Ms. Rajbala, was informed that a 7<sup>th</sup> grade from a nearby school was getting married and the girl's father was marrying her off for a certain amount of money. When she reached the house she understood that the situation was already out of control as the middleman had completed the transaction and taken an advance of INR 40,000, as part of his 50% share of organizing the wedding. Not knowing what to do, Ms Rajabala immediately informed the coordinator of the Adhyapika Manch and told her that she was going to intervene in the matter and may need the support of the larger group.

Ms Rajbala started to seek out the parents who shunned her out completely. She tried to talk to the middle man about how it is illegal to be part of a wedding of an underage girl and instead the middle man made threats to her life. But she did not give up. She decided that she would keep putting pressure on the family. After a few weeks when she did not get any response from the family, she decided to go to the police.

The police intervened in the matter and called off this marriage. On the request of family and girl herself, no punitive action were taken against father and the middleman but police warned that if they were found marrying the girl before 18 years again, they will would find themselves in the lock-up.

Ms. Rajbala expressed that mere presence of Adhyapika Manch boosted her confidence because she knows that a team of high spirited women is always standing behind her and this belief gave her the courage to take the bold step that she did and saved a girl's life.

## Exemplary case studies of Adhyapika Manch

### (1) Ms Shobha Kanwar in news for a cause

Ms Shobha Kanwar is in news again but for a good reason. Earlier she was in news because of her initiative to connecting government school children with schools children of California, as pen friends. This time she is in news for motivating village members for constructing toilets for personal and community hygiene.

Please check the news coverage –



बूंदी। यह एक ऐसे मजदूर का किस्सा है, जिसने अपने कच्चे घर में पक्का शौचालय बनवाने के लिए परिवार का पेट पालने वाली बकरियां बेच दीं, पैसा कम पड़ गया तो ब्याज पर उधार लिया और उम्रभर की बचत 10 हजार रुपए भी खर्च कर दिए। ये हैं श्यामराज डोली, नदीपार बरूधन गांव के रहनेवाले हैं। घर के नाम पर एक कच्चा कमरा है। बस वही रसोई, बेडरूम, गेस्ट रूम है। मियां-बीवी सहित दो बच्चे हैं। झोपड़े में छोटा टीवी जरूर है। टीवी में उसने कई बार प्रधानमंत्री, मुख्यमंत्री को झाड़ू निकालते, सफाई और शौचालय बनवाने की अपील करते देखा। वह भी शौचालय बनवाने के बारे में सोचने लगा। पर इतने पैसे पास नहीं थे कि बनवा पाता। इस दौरान गांवों में ओडीएफ कार्यक्रम चला। करीब दो महीने पहले शिक्षक-अधिकारी घर पहुंचे, सरपंच भी मिलीं। सबने शौचालय बनवाने के लिए समझाया। फायदे बताए। 10वीं तक पढ़ा-लिखा था, बात समझ में आ गई। ठान लिया कि मकान पक्का बने ना बने, शौचालय तो बनेगा। सरकार से कुछ नहीं मिला था, पैसा पास था नहीं। एक बिस्वा भी जमीन नहीं। पांच बकरियों व थोड़ी मजदूरी, शादी-ब्याह में ढोल बजाकर परिवार गुजारा कर रहा था। पर शौचालय तो बनवाना था। पत्नी इंद्रा से सलाह-मशविरा किया। उसने भी हामी भर दी। बोली लोटा लेकर बाहर जाने में शर्मिंदगी होती है। बस प्लान बन गया। पांच में से तीन बकरियां बेच दीं। इनसे 11 हजार रुपए मिले। पैसा कम था। 16 हजार दो रुपए सैकड़ा पर उधार लिए। शेष पेज 6 पर

## सिटी फ्रंट का शेष बकरियां बेच दीं, ब्याज पर लिए पैसे...

**ग्रामीण कर रहे प्रशंसा:** मियां-बीवी मजदूर बन गए, मजदूरी लगी नहीं। लगे हाथ पानी की टंकी भी बना ली। गांववाले भी बड़ाई कर रहे हैं कहते हैं अरे वाह ! श्यामा काम तो तैने आच्छा कर लिया। दूसरे लोग भी देखादेखी शौचालय बनवाने लगे हैं। बकरियां बेच देने से घर चलाने में दिक्कत तो हो रही है। पर हम खुश हैं। पत्नी इंद्रा कहती है, तंगी तो पहले भी थी, और झेल लेंगे, पर लोटा लेकर बाहर जाने की शर्मिंदगी तो नहीं झेलनी पड़ती।

**हर घर में शौचालय हो:** श्यामराज ने बताया कि उनकी पत्नी घर की इज्जत होती है। वह बाहर शौच के लिए जाती थी तो शर्मिंदगी होती थी। देश का नागरिक होने

के नाते मैंने सरकार की बात मानी। बाकी गांववाले भी शौचालय बनवाएं, सफाई रखें। मेरा यही निवेदन है। शोभाकंवर मैडम और अधिकारी एक दिन घर आए, मुझे प्रेरित किया। तभी ठान लिया शौचालय तो बनवाना ही है।

बरूंधन पंचायत के हर घर में शौचालय बने, सरपंच, टीचर्स, अधिकारी, स्कूली बच्चे भी घर-घर जाकर समझा रहे हैं।

मॉर्निंग फॉलोअप कर रहे हैं। श्यामराज को भी समझाया। उसकी वजह से दूसरे लोग भी शौचालय बनाने के लिए प्रेरित हुए। नदी पार बरूंधन में महज पांच परिवारों को छोड़कर बाकी शौचालय बनवा रहे हैं।

-शोभाकंवर, शिक्षक, राजकीय उमा विद्यालय, बरूंधन

Gifts from Pen-friends from California



## **(2) Ms. Mamta draws attention of teachers in Shiksha Sammelan for the girls**

Ms Mamta Sharma, Teacher in Government ----- School, Kota, along with other members of Adhyapika Manch took decision to raise voice to ensure awareness and priority of Menstrual hygiene in schools for girls in age of puberty. She communicated her point across all teachers and decided to raise her voice in Shiksha Sammelan, 20-21 October 2016. Raising the issue of menstrual hygiene in school for girls is an achievement of adhyapika manch, as such issues in the state are not yet discussed openly, even among women.



Pl check the video enclosed.

[AM\\_Mamta on Menstrual hygiene in Shikshak Sammelan.mp4](#)

## **(3) Ms. Monika Gaur made her presence in literature festival**

Monika, member of Adhyapika manch Bikaner, is not only a good teacher of subject English but equally excelling her skills in poetry. Her consistent efforts took her to level of national literature festival.

# साहित्य कुंभ में छलका राजस्थानी भाषा का दर्द, 'बाळा दी राज उण ने बरसां पैली'

जयपुर से मदन कश्यप

साहित्य के महाकुंभ में राजस्थानी भाषा का दर्द भी खुब छलका। अपनी ही भाषा में कविताओं ने अपना दुखड़ा इस कदर बयां किया कि मातृभाषा को लेकर जञ्वात भी उपनने लगे। इसमें आक्रोश था, अपना हक पाने की ज़िद थी। काव्य पंक्तियों ने हर किसी को इस कदर मुग्ध किया कि दूसरी भाषाओं के जानकार भी पंडाल में राजस्थानी के हिमायती बन उठ खड़े हुए।

जयपुर लिटरेचर फेस्टिवल का तीसरा दिन था शनिवार को। संवाद में 'पोएट्री ऑवर्स' : कविता निरंतर सत्र में बीकानेर के कवियों ने अपनी रचनाओं से हर एक का दिल जीत लिया। बीकानेर के ख्यातिप्राप्त कवि डॉ. नीरज दया बोलें- 'राजस्थानी भासा म्हरें रात रल्योड़ी है। आ ओली जे आपने कविता री



फेस्टिवल के तीसरे दिन संवाद में बोलते बीकानेर के कवि डॉ. नीरज दया।

ओली नीं लागे तो कोई बात कोनी...। आप रै मुँहे फूल झड़िया-मरी राजस्थानी भासा, बाल दी राज उण ने बरसा पैली। कोनी राज री मानता।' दहिआ की कविता जानना चाहता हूँ मैं और खोखली हंसी ने भी श्रोताओं की खुब दाद बटोरी। बीकानेर की ही ख्यात कवियत्री मोनिका

गौड़ की दबंग आवाज भी श्रोता खुब कागल हुए उन्हि। उन्होंने द्रौपदी को केंद्र में रखकर राजस्थानी कविता 'अब तो मान रे महारा मान' काव्यपाठ किया। मन बेताल कविता को भी पंडाल में खुब सराहा गया। 'जंगल में देखन की तरह, कागज में खुशबू की तरह, सहेज

लेना उन्हें'...आंख में आंसू की तरह बची रहेंगी किताबें। कवि दुःखत की थी ये कविता। किताबों की दुनिया को बनाए रखने के लिए दिल की बात कहें तो मंत्रमुग्ध पंडाल तालियों से गुंज उठा। बदलते वक़्त में किताबों की अहमियत को कविता के माफ़त दुःखत ने खूबसूरती के साथ पेश किया। सेशन में अंग्रेजी के साथ ही राजस्थानी, हिंदी कविताओं की भी धूम रही। लेकर आंक लव की अपनी पहली किताब से चर्चित हुई पूनम ने मुँवाई पर हुए आर्तकी हमले को भी कविता का केंद्र बिंदु बनाया। वे कहती हैं-उस पल आतंकियों ने दिन को अंधेरे में तब्दील कर दिया था। नरसंहार पर जब उनका काव्यपाठ जारी रहा तो आंखों में पुरा घटनाक्रम सहज ही तैरने लगा। सवाल-जवाब के दौर भी चले तो कवियों ने कल्ल-जो दिल से निकले वही कविता का असल रूप है। सुदीप सेन से सेशन को मॉडरेट किया।

## मन बेताल चढ्यो चेतना रै काँधे....

### जेएलएफ में राजस्थानी का जादू छाया

जयपुर। यहाँ चल रहे 10वें लिटरेचर फेस्टिवल के कविता निरंतर सत्र में भाषा के अलग अलग रंगों से सजी कविताओं का वाचन हुआ जिसमें राजस्थानी, हिंदी, कश्मीरी और अंग्रेजी में वैश्विक कविता के स्वरूप

की तालियों ने साबित किया की कविता के भाव भाषा के बन्धनों से ऊपर हैं। बीकानेर के डॉ. नीरज दया ने अंगूठो, खोखली हंसी कविता प्रस्तुत कर राजस्थानी काव्य की गंभीर उपस्थिति दर्ज करवाई डॉ. दुष्यंत ने



मोनिकाजी की कविताओं ने धूम मचा दी

नज़् आये। खाखच भरे पंडाल में राजस्थानी की सशक्त कविता के हस्ताक्षर के रूप में बीकानेर की प्रख्यात कवियत्री मोनिका गौड़ ने मन बेताल चढ्यो चेतना रै काँधे.... कविता में समाज के ज्वलंत प्रश्नों को उठाया वहीं द्रौपदी रा ओळमा कविता में स्त्री विमर्श की मज़बूत अभिव्यक्ति दी। गौड़ की प्रभावी प्रस्तुति पर दर्शकों

हिंदी कश्मीरी में नसीम सैफई, अंग्रेजी में पूनम जोशेफ व इस वर्ष के कन्हैया लाल सेठिया पुरस्कार विजेता उड्डिया के जयंतो महापात्र ने अंग्रेजी में कविता सुनाई संचालन सुदीप सेन ने किया। इस सत्र में नन्द भारद्वाज, सी पी देवल, आईदान सिंह भाटी, अम्बिका दत्त, गौतम अरोड़ा जैसे राजस्थानी के मुखर प्रवक्ता उपस्थित रहे।

## CHALLENGES

The Adhyapika Manch has been functioning for the past four years in different blocks in Rajasthan. Various activities have been initiated by the AM to raise awareness as well as improve school environment from the perspective of women and girls. While most AM's have functioned according to stipulated guidelines defined by the State department, and have been successful in empowering female teachers, there have also been many challenges in its proceedings which need to be addressed to give this platform more scope and potential for the future. Some of these challenges which have emerged have been listed below:

### ***Frequency of meetings and budgetary provisions***

In the initial two years it was stipulated that four meetings of the AM would be organized per the academic session. However, gradually the number of meetings per session was reduced to two. In addition, the budgetary provisions were also curtailed and the blocks had not received the funds to carry out the meetings. This proved to be an impediment in the AM proceedings as teachers needed to meet more often. The AM members were unanimous in stating that the meetings should be organized every quarter or more frequently for meaningful discussions and dialogue. In addition there should be clear direction on usage of funds.

### ***Lack of pre- planning in meetings***

The field discussion during this documentation also made evident that proper planning for meetings based on current and pertinent needs were not organized on a regular basis. Even the agenda for each meeting was not defined and this was a limitation in making effective use of the platform.

### ***Limited Membership***

The membership of the AM is limited to 100 teachers per block. Most of the teachers expressed how this was a small number and did not have provisions for many other teachers who were keen to be part of the AM meetings. Also, since one of the objectives of the AM is to address issues related to girls' education, all teachers should be given an opportunity to participate in AM.

### ***Paucity of time within school schedule***

The members pointed out that given the daily school schedule, it was difficult to initiate innovative activities in school. The teachers had to complete various school related tasks and there was no time to introduce new activities or visit other schools for improved learning.

### ***Social attitudes of gender discrimination***

The teachers have identified that one of the biggest challenges they face in furthering girls' education and a trying to bring about a change in the status of girls is the continued discrimination and devaluation of girls and gender stereotyping prevalent in the community. While girls aspire to pursue higher education, they still had to negotiate with parents to study further. AM members expressed that they have been working towards a vision of all girls being in school, the members expressed that a lot more needs to be done for it at various levels.

### ***Attitude of male colleagues***

The relationships among women and male teachers also reveal gender discriminatory patterns where women teachers are not treated at par with their male counterparts. A common issue emerging from the discussions was regarding the attitude of male colleagues who are head teachers, male teachers, block officials and district officials towards the overall AM process. The AM activities are not seen as important by male teachers and male colleagues also make disparaging remarks when women teachers go for the meetings.

### ***Adhyapika Manch is limited to elementary schools***

Many of the AM members are now teaching secondary and higher secondary classes. However, since AM activities are limited to elementary classes, not many of the initiatives can be taken up at the secondary and senior secondary level where retention of girls is a big problem and requirement of girl child friendly schools environment is highest.

## WAY FORWARD

The Adhyapika Manch began with a specific purpose of providing a forum to women teachers for professional and personal development so that they may be able to further the cause of gender equality in education and reduce the drop-out rate of girls. While participation in AM meetings and activities has enabled women teachers to have an identity as a group, there are some aspects to be considered while moving forward.

The AM platform has been created keeping in mind the gender gap in education and the inequality and discrimination towards girls and women in the larger community. However at a conceptual and practical level it needs to be reiterated that gender equality in education not only implies that both girls and boys have equal access to schooling; it also means that the process of education is geared towards changing stereotypical expectation from girls and boys and thus in turn transforming gender relations and unequal positioning of women and men in society.

It is no doubt that the AM platform has been highly beneficial to female teachers to change their perception of themselves, develop their own capabilities and improve their confidence to help girls in school. However, it is necessary to take the next step for AM to be more sensitive to understanding that gender is not just as only a women's issue; unequal gender relations curbs the freedom of both girls and boys and hinders development of their capacities to the fullest. This has to be clearly understood at all levels. Keeping this idea in mind, teachers could also start sensitizing the boys in their schools and include them in activities like the Meena Manch so that these boys are more conscious of the discrimination that girls face and work collectively towards changing it.

One of the main components of the AM has been to make their respective schools more responsive to girls. Creating a gender friendly environment in school entails that not only the women teachers but all the stakeholders- male teachers, head teachers, students, parents move from a state of 'being aware' to 'being concerned' and initiate action for change in an effort to ensure that all girls complete school. . This would also require many systemic changes at district and block level and the AM should have increased opportunities to influence this process.

Keeping the above mentioned ideas in mind, the listed activities are recommended for inclusion in the he AM activities for the future:

- Each AM should plan a gender sensitivity analysis of the schooling and classroom processes in their respective blocks to arrive at what needs to change for ensuring

gender friendly environment in schools. A specific school based action plan could be developed on the basis of this analysis

- Orientation programmes on gender sensitivity with the head teachers and educational managers should be conducted and followed up at regular intervals. This is essential for the smooth functioning of activities like AM
- The AM meetings should be well planned. The convener and co-convener should take up the responsibility of ensuring that teachers take ownership in turns of the different sessions organized and block level and district level officers should also attend these meetings
- Regular and timely flow of adequate funds should be ensured. The current situation indicates that lack of funds has curtailed the AM activities
- Regular monitoring of the AM activities is essential. A basic monitoring system can be worked out for the same
- The information regarding the activities of AM should be shared with all head teachers at nodal level
- All the women teachers in the block should get an opportunity to become members on a rotation basis. This would help in covering all schools in the block
- The training of the *Sanyojika* and *Sah-sanyojika* should be well planned and a training module should be developed from a gender sensitivity perspective
- Regular inter-district sharing meetings should be organized as it would provide an opportunity for cross learning
- Documentation of AM activities should be initiated and streamlined
- The AM activities should also be introduced in the secondary level to address needs of the adolescent girls and boys studying in Classes 9-12

## IN CONCLUSION

Adhyapika Manch has been one of the most innovative practices that have been introduced in Rajasthan. Given the highly patriarchal setting of the State where girls are devalued and girls' education not a priority for most families, the role of female teachers in school is extremely important. These teachers have found a collective voice in the AM which has made them feel less isolated in their schools and given them new found energy to take on their role as change makers in the lives of students. The capacity building of female teachers to feel more confident of their own selves and addressing their concerns has helped not just to create happier and more motivated teachers but also teachers who want to be more involved in the education process of girls in their school to ensure that barriers to school completion for girls are removed.

Overall, the influence of AM has been extremely encouraging for female teachers in Rajasthan. The impact of the platform has not only been a huge personal boost for teachers but also ensured better environment for girls in school, better quality of education as motivated and confident teachers automatically teach students better. The influence of the AM has spread to the larger community as well. While the outcome of the platform cannot be quantified in its impact, the observations discussions and interactions with different stakeholders involved in the session has clearly highlighted how AM as a platform has been an extremely positive step in the direction of girls education through the capacity development of female teachers.

## GLOSSARY

*Mehndi*-Henna application on hands

*Samagam*- platform for inter block sharing among AM

*Sanyojika*- Convener

*Sah-Sanyojika*- Co- Convener

## REFERENCES

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Various district reports from (2011-2013) shared by RCEE.

## ADHYAPIKA MANCH: FEW PICTURES

Picture 1: Group Discussion



Picture 2: Sharing in meeting of Adhyapika Manch



Picture 3: Meeting of Adhyapika Manch



Picture 4: Adhyapika Manch Members learning self defense techniques



Picture 5: Teacehrs learning self defense techniques



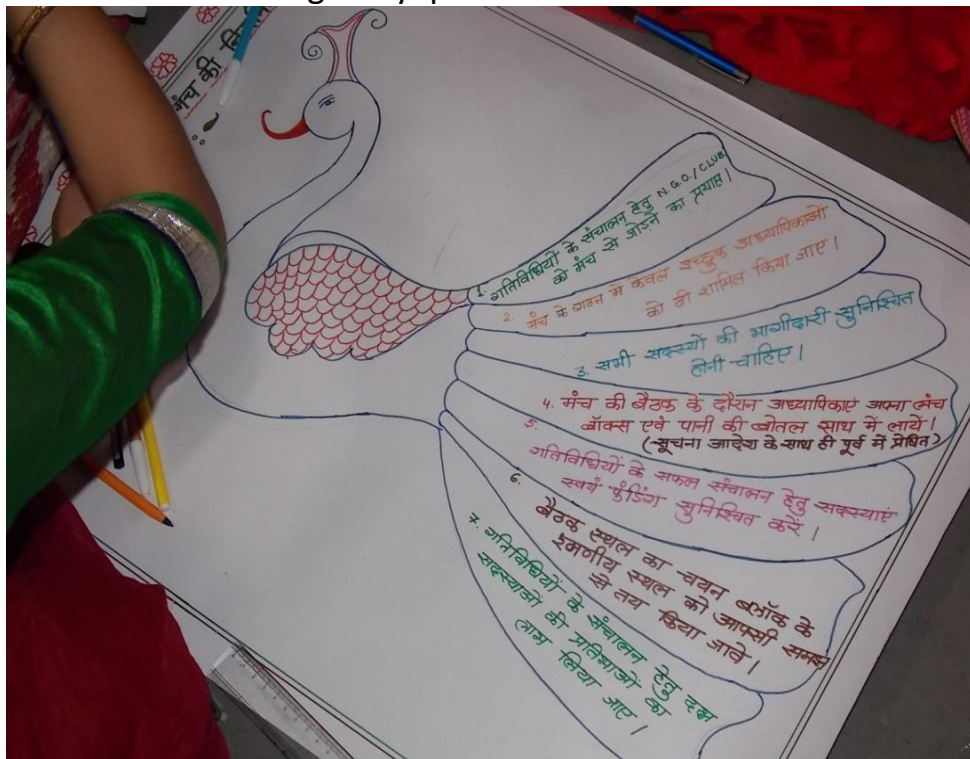
Picture 6: Adhyapika Manch teachers playing with girls



Picture 7: Adhyapika Manch M members learning digital literacy



Picture 8: Presenting Adhyapika Manch Members work



Picture 9: Group work in Adhyapika Manch Workshop



Picture 10: ToT for Adhyapika Manch



Picture 11: Group Activity with Adhyapika Manch Trainers



Picture 12: Block level meeting



Picture 13: Sharing of Achievements in workshop



Picture 14: Recognising special contribution of Adhyapika Manch memebrs



Piture 15: Adhyapika Manch members with girls in home for special able children



Picture 16 : Adhyapika Manch members celbeating deepawali in home for specially abled children



## ANNEXURE

Guiding questions for the field level interactions with different Am members, and key informant interview.

### **Formation of AM**

- What is the Process of formation of AM; how are the teachers identified?
- What is the structure and composition of AM?
- How does the AM function?
- What is frequency and structure of meeting?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the AM members?
- What are the key determinants of a active/successful AM?
- What are the challenges in functioning of the AM?
- What are the monitoring mechanisms in place?
- What are the various activities taken up by the AM at school and community level?
- Are professional problems of women teachers discussed?
- What are the suggestions for better functioning of AM?
- Has membership of AM facilitated leadership avenues?
- What has been the response of male colleagues about AM?

**Impact of AM :** The impact of the AM has been assessed at three levels:

#### ***Individual level***

- What has motivated women teachers to join the AM?
- How has the membership in the AM benefitted at a personal level and in functioning /role as a teacher/professional level?
- How has AM helped in improving skills as a teacher; what changes can be perceived?
- What are your suggestions for better functioning of AM?
- Any good practices in your district that can be included?

#### ***School level***

- How have teachers addressed the issue of enabling environment for girls and barriers to girls schooling?
- What are the various activities that have been carried out at the school level?
- What are the Girl Child friendly /gender friendly efforts made in the school
- What has been the response of girls and boys?

#### ***Community level***

- What efforts have been made by the AM at the community level?
- What is the nature of linkage with SDMC? What has been the response of the community members?