

**ADOLESCENTS AS CITIZENS
&
CHANGE AGENTS
FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

Program implemented by SAHAJ

In collaboration with SARTHI and SWATI

Supported by Ford Foundation

Report of external evaluation by
Dr. Nilangi Sardeshpande
Ms. Hetal Shah

Executive Summary

The project, ‘**Adolescents as Citizens and Change Agents for Social Accountability**’, supported by the Ford Foundation was conceptualized on the basis of the experience of SAHAJ of working with adolescent boys and girls on sexual and reproductive health in urban Vadodara for almost a decade. The project was implemented in partnership with two other non government organisations, in four districts of Gujarat in western India. SARTHI was responsible for implementation of project activities in District Mahisagar and District Dahod. SWATI implemented the project in District Surendranagar and SAHAJ implemented the project in urban Vadodara as well as SAHAJ facilitated the implementation of project in Dahod, Mahisagar and Surendranagar.

Goal of the project was to create a model of leadership/ citizenship amongst adolescent girls and boys from a gender and rights perspectives. Important activities of the project were to increase awareness about gender, sexuality, rights, and entitlements related to government programmes for adolescents like SABLA (for out of school adolescent girls), Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (for both boys and girls) and Nehru Yuvak Kendra Scheme, to promote collective action by local groups of girls and boys, to advocate with stakeholders on adolescent rights issues and to monitor and evaluate the progress made towards the Goal and to document lessons learnt.

The project was implemented in 20 anganwadi areas¹ in each District i.e. total of 60 anganwadi areas in three districts. The anganwadi areas were selected in such a way that they were in the jurisdiction of one Primary Health Centre in the selected district. In Vadodara, 20 slums and 10 schools were included in the project. In addition to adolescent boys and girls (11 to 18 years), the project also aimed at involving parents of adolescents and other stakeholders from the villages / bastis such as the Panchayat (elected local government) representatives, anganwadi workers, and ASHAs² to create an informed support system for the adolescents at the level of community / village / basti.

The project focussed on entitlements of three schemes viz., SABLA, NYKS and ARSH. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess how far the project has achieved its objectives after

¹ Anganwadi is a village level centre under the Government of India’s Integrated Child Development Scheme to improve nutritional status and pre school education for under 6 children, provide nutritional support to pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls.

² ASHAs are Accredited Social Health Activists (community health workers/volunteers) appointed under the National Health Mission of the Government of India.

three years of implementation. The evaluation attempts to provide an understanding of the challenges faced and highlight key achievements of the project and also gives recommendations for future programming.

The evaluation covered the entire project period from 2013 to 2016 in selected villages of all three project districts and *bastis* of urban Vadodara. The evaluation used qualitative methodology and supplemented the quantitative data obtained from prior fieldwork such as the midterm evaluation, 2015 and other quantitative data obtained through the project's internal monitoring mechanisms.

Desk review of relevant documents obtained from SAHAJ and those collected through field work was conducted. In-depth interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders were the two research methods used for gathering information relevant for answering evaluation questions. Total 28 interviews were conducted during evaluation and through FGDs, opinions of around 120 stakeholders were captured.

Findings

There were considerable variations across these three field areas. In Vadodara, the project was implemented in the urban Bastis. District Surendranagar is bordering with Kutch, and the area is arid, whereas district Mahisagar and district Dahod predominantly have tribal population. Dahod and Mahisagar are the less developed districts of Gujarat with high rate of migration and poor infrastructural facilities.

Evaluation of the project shows that the project was extremely relevant for building citizenship and rights awareness among the adolescent children. Out of the three schemes, which were chosen under the project, maximum work was done on claiming the entitlements under SABLA program where as the other two programs NYKS, and ARSH were relatively less emphasised. It was also seen that the once the adolescents got trained in filing Right to Information applications, they also took action for issues such as cleanliness, availability of water or availability of public transport etc.

The end term evaluation revealed that there was certainly an increased awareness among the adolescents about their entitlements and the skills imparted during the project period equipped them to claim these entitlements. The Jan Samwads (Public Dialogues) were

helpful in establishing accountability of the program managers for adolescent related schemes. However, overall participation of other stakeholders such as parents and the PRI members was quite low in the monitoring process.

The project has led to increased self-expression and greater awareness about adolescent rights and entitlements among girls and boys.

To understand the impact of the project, visit was also made to one of the villages where the program was not implemented. Interviews with the adolescent girls as well as the ICDS worker in this village revealed that there was significant difference between the awareness about the entitlements under SABLA program in the area where the Ford Foundation supported program was implemented. The peer leaders in the project areas as well as the other members of the groups of adolescent girls and boys were enthusiastic and full of confidence to resolve the problems faced by their communities. The ICDS workers were also more involved in the implementation of SABLA program. The training received by the ICDS workers about SABLA program was appreciated.

Most of the participants remembered the trainings about gender based discrimination, importance of hygiene and cleanliness, right to education, sexual harassment, menstruation and personality development.

It is remarkable that all the adolescents interviewed during the end evaluation process said that even if the project ends officially, they would continue to do the work. They felt confident about resolving the community problems as they were now equipped with the skills such as filing RTI or initiating dialogue with the program managers. In a way, the positive changes brought about through this program have long lasting impact.

Involving school going children in the project was one of the biggest challenges as it was difficult for these children to carve out time to attend the meetings and training sessions. Backlash after Jan Samwad, non response from officials, lack of involvement of parents, non-availability of funds for year III were other challenges faced by the implementers.

Lack of proper and timely documentation, absence of strong leadership in the project at state level, lack of meticulous planning were seen as some of the internal factors which has impacted the project negatively.

Selecting peer leaders and giving them additional inputs so that they can take up issues of their community, creating a federation of adolescents' groups and involving ICDS staff were some of the effective strategies in the project.

Recommendations

Some of the key recommendations for the project are to continue the hand holding process for another 2, 3 years to ensuring the sustainability of the activity, using existing spaces such as the Village Health Nutrition Sanitation Committees or the Gram Sabha (Village General Body mandated in the Constitution) for institutionalising monitoring mechanisms, focusing on ARSH along with SABLA are some of the recommendations for the design of the program.

Both children as well as their parents have demanded that the trainings should include skill development related trainings which would enable the children to secure jobs once they complete education. It is also recommended that the trainings should use more activities like games or films. The training material should be in pictorial format as well because in tribal areas, the literacy levels are quite low, even though the children are attending school, they are not very proficient in reading or writing.

A Few Illustrative Case studies

Regulating anganwadi services

There are 20 girls and 23 boys in the group of Nanirel village (Mahisagar District). The group sessions are conducted regularly in the village. During one of the meetings it emerged that the anganwadi worker does not weigh, measure heights, calculate BMI or give iron tablets and ration to the girls. The anganwadi is in the Kataka Paliya. The leaders called the anganwadi worker for the following meeting. She did not come. The peer leaders called up the ASHA to come to the meeting. She complied. Varsha and Gayatri, the peer leaders, asked her why the girls had not received any services from the anganwadi even when the program has been going on since a long time. The anganwadi worker later told them that school going girls are not supposed to get any services from the anganwadi. The girls then talked about the Sabla program. The anganwadi worker noted down the phone number of the peer leaders and also gave ration to girls the following month. The peer leaders called her the next month and she

informed them that the ration had come the centre, but when they went to take it she said it had finished. She said she received less stock this time. The peer leader called field officer Gangaben from SARTHI and told her about this, who advised them to write an application and meet the ICDS officer in Fatehpura. The girls made an application but as soon as the anganwadi worker came to know of this she said that she would get the ration from some other anganwadi and give it to the girls. She requested the girls not to give such an application to the officer. The next day she brought the ration from other anganwadi centre and gave it to the girls in this group.

Widening the coverage of the anganwadi centre

Nana Natwa is located in PHC Ukhreli (Santrampur Taluka, District Mahisagar). It has a tribal population of about 850 and has scattered homes mostly on the hills or on the farms. The anganwadi centre here is situated at the entrance of the village in the primary school and has a separate room and is almost as old as the ICDS programme. Garadiya and Sanda villages (having 10 -12 households but in the same revenue village) are situated on the boundaries of Nana Natwa. Women and adolescents from here are supposed to be receiving services from this centre. After the orientation meetings in the village and the Peer Leaders trainings, it was reported that residents of Balu Faliyu from Garadiya do not get any services from this anganwadi. This was reiterated during the parents' workshop also. The girls' group and peer leaders started mobilizing to look into this issue. After a fact finding exercise, it was found that the anganwadi worker does not live in Garadiya; she comes from an adjacent village. She is only seen during the polio rounds. Finally after a few follow-ups the peer leaders and Savitaben (Field Officer in SARTHI) finally managed to have a meeting with the anganwadi worker. The parents from this faliyu also attended this meeting. When asked why services were not given to this group, the response was 'It was not covered in the anganwadi area'. There was an argument between the parents, peer leaders and the anganwadi worker. She took the matter to her Supervisor who in turn spoke to the ICDS officer. Savitaben also met the Supervisor. The result was that this Faliyu is now included in the anganwadi area of this worker. She will now reach a population of 1073 instead of 887.

Involvement of boys

Anil Kumar Shivabhai who lives in Jainabad (Surendranagar District) and has done BSc, tells his story.

“I, Parmar Anil Kumar am associated with Deepakbhai (Field officer SWATI) and the adolescent work since the last 5 months. I have participated in 5 – 6 trainings. In this programme I have solved the water problem of Vankar Vaas in my village. We were not getting water supply. Our adolescent boys group solved this problem. We learnt a lot from the meetings on ‘Rights and Responsibilities’ team building, gender discrimination, beauty and cleanliness. I got an understanding on helping in household chores, how to work in a team. I also learnt a lot about sexuality. I have got information on how to mobilise team members, conduct a meeting and work with the team members. Earlier I could not even talk to a girl. I had a lot of misconceptions related to discrimination between women and men – like, I should not talk to girls, not help in household chores, I kept away from such things”.

“I also visited the Nehru Yuvak Kendra office once. We met Officer J. V. Dafda. He told me that he would give us sports kits. But he has not done anything for us. We applied in NYKS and had to do a RTI. I got all this information after I joined this programme. We conduct meetings with our group and discuss about this and other programmes....Got information on ARSH centre, on Anganwadi Schemes, Mamta Taruni Programme also. We i.e. Prakash, Arvind, Lalo, Vardaan, Narottam, Jagdish, Balder, etc. work very well in our group”.

Addressing leakages in the ration shop

Dalpat is 16 years old and lives in Mulada (District Surendranagar). He has passed Class 9. He is leader of the adolescent boys’ group. His work as a leader is very good. Dalpat mobilises all the adolescents for the meetings and is present for all of them. His family comprises of his mother, father and sister, Hetal. His father is very supportive. He encourages them to attend the meetings and try to solve problems. Dalpat and his sister Hetalba gave an application in the anganwadi. Pandit Din Dayal who runs a ration shop (fair price shop) did not give people the required ration. Dalpat filed an RTI to find out where the quota disappeared if it was not given to the people. Dalpat also helped in writing an application for the bus service. He also took signatures of the girls and put it as an attachment. Dalpat is quite excited about all this. He says that all this was possible because of the group efforts.