

PRAJWALA

Swachh Bharat, Swachh Vidyalaya

July 2019 - December 2020



PRAJWALA Impact Narrative

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Urmul Trust would like to express our deep gratitude to Centre for Environment Education for the continued support for this programme.

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***ACRONYMS USED THROUGHOUT THE REPORT**

CEE : Centre for Environment Education
KGBV : Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
WASH : Water, sanitation and hygiene

PREFACE

Historically, the Thar desert had to grapple with its challenges. The remoteness and isolation have resulted in its peripheral development of communities. The people have not been able to fully reap the benefits of modern India's growth story. The western region of Rajasthan fares poorly in all the human development indicators. However, these struggles and challenges should be looked at as opportunities that remain untapped. Through these harsh conditions, the land, life, and living of the desert remain invincible.

In this journey, the girls of the region have been much worse. The desert districts of Barmer, Bikaner, and Jodhpur fare poorly in all the human development indicators such as low female literacy levels, high infant mortality rates, high incidents of child marriages etc. Traditional conservative practices and the persistence of the feudal ethos have continually kept the adolescent girls deprived of opportunities, confined to interiors, and passive decision-makers from cradle to grave. In such a difficult social context, conversations around WASH infrastructure and practices further takes a backseat. It thus becomes important to make the girls at the center of change and re-imagine hygiene as a powerful tool to break the shackles of patriarchal structures. It would ensure the social, educational, and psychological well-being of our girls. Our girls would not be silent spectators in deciding their own destiny.

Through the course of the eighteen months, the interventions under Prajwala project impacted adolescent girls in 18 Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalaya in three districts. This report is an attempt to collate the experiences and challenges along this journey of collaboration, courage, and hope.

INTRODUCTION

National Evaluation undertaken by 'Education for all in India' pointed towards the problem being faced by Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs) pertaining to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). Since girls are a vulnerable category and need to develop an understanding of hygiene and sanitation practices, Rajasthan Elementary Education Council and National Stock Exchange Foundation proposed a comprehensive WASH intervention in KGBVs from July 2019. The project, 'Prajwala'-Swachh Balika Swachh Vidyalaya is a model project on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in KGBVs. This comprehensive WASH intervention in KGBVs is a joint initiative of Rajasthan Elementary Education Council and National Stock Exchange Foundation. It was further supported by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) as the knowledge and implementation partner and UNICEF as the technical partner.

The project is being run in 200 KGBVs across Rajasthan, which are residential schools set up by Government of India for girls from marginalised communities belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and girls below the poverty line and residing in difficult remote areas of Rajasthan.

Phase wise roll out was adopted for the field level implementation with 72 schools in first phase and 128 schools in second phase. The programme is being run by two approaches: self-implementation in 29 schools by CEE and implementation by local partners in 171 schools. Urmul Trust, was a local partner, is running this programme in 18 schools in Barmer, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur districts.

RATIONALE

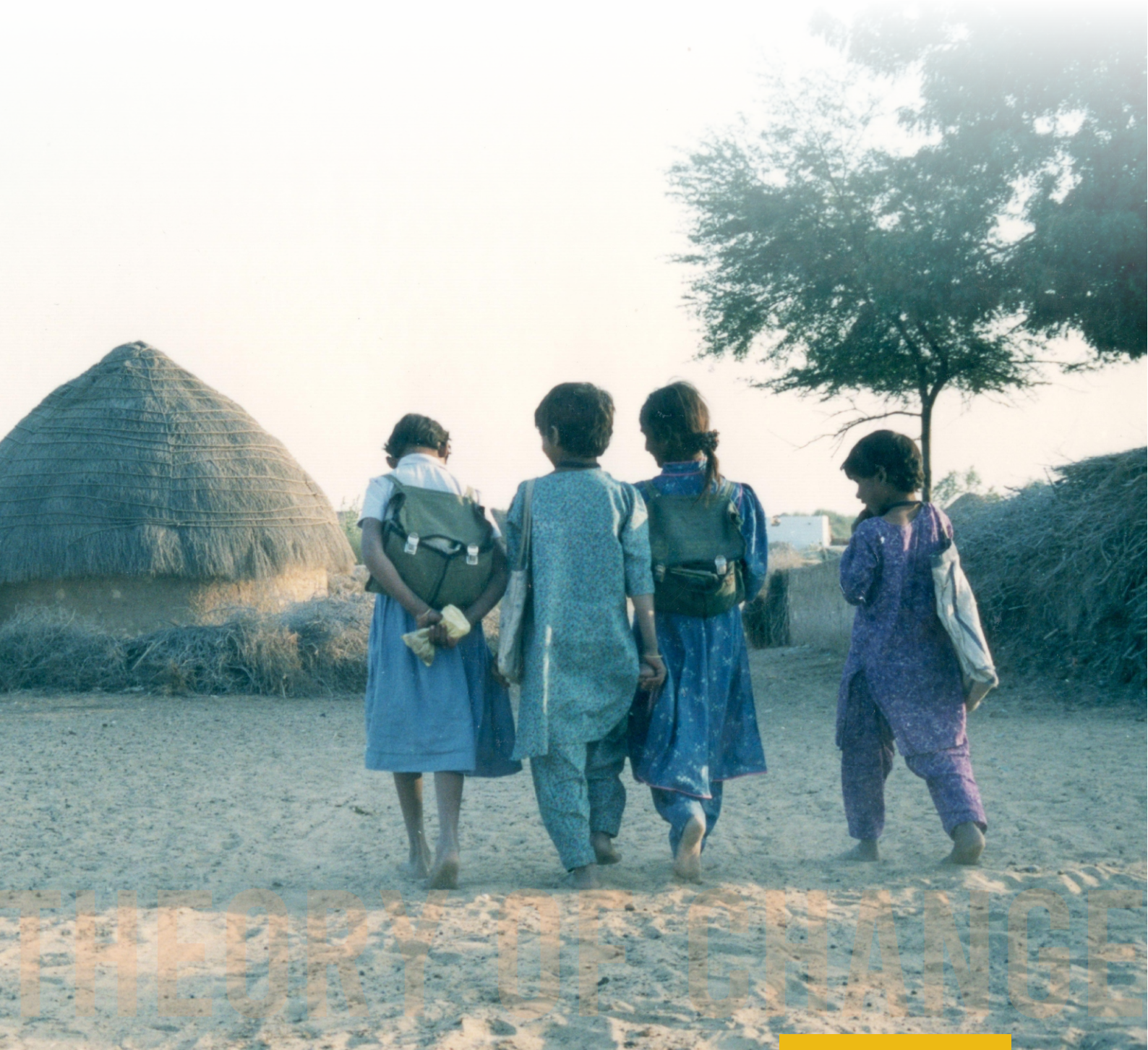
A benchmarking study was undertaken with participatory WASH appraisal, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices test, assessment of WASH practices and survey for infrastructure, since a limited data was available with the Government related to WASH in KGBVs. As reflected in the state report card, these residential schools had availability of toilet and drinking water. However, from the lens of adequacy, accessibility and functionality, gaps were found in these units on parameters like number of units, child friendliness, inclusiveness (facility for child with special need), usability and child safety.

There were flaws in structural design. Sanitation blocks were in dilapidated condition in all schools. Due to improper sloping there were consistent problems of water logging in the toilets and bathrooms. The schools had an open drainage system and there was no segregation and further management of solid waste. There was a vast gap in operation and maintenance of available facilities and WASH behavior among users including students, teachers and non-teaching staff.

The ownership among stakeholders such as students, teachers and non-teaching staff was lacking, leading to low prioritization of maintenance of these available facilities. In some schools, awareness sessions on menstrual hygiene management were organized for students with support of manufacturers of sanitary napkins but the knowledge of students still remained rudimentary. The absence of any training for teachers and school management further aggravated the problem of WASH.

THEORY OF CHANGE —

To achieve self-reliant, holistic transformation in the rural communities, the members are linked with the required resources, awareness, knowledge and technology. The communities would then be able to organize themselves for collective action, enhancing their well-being and quality of life.



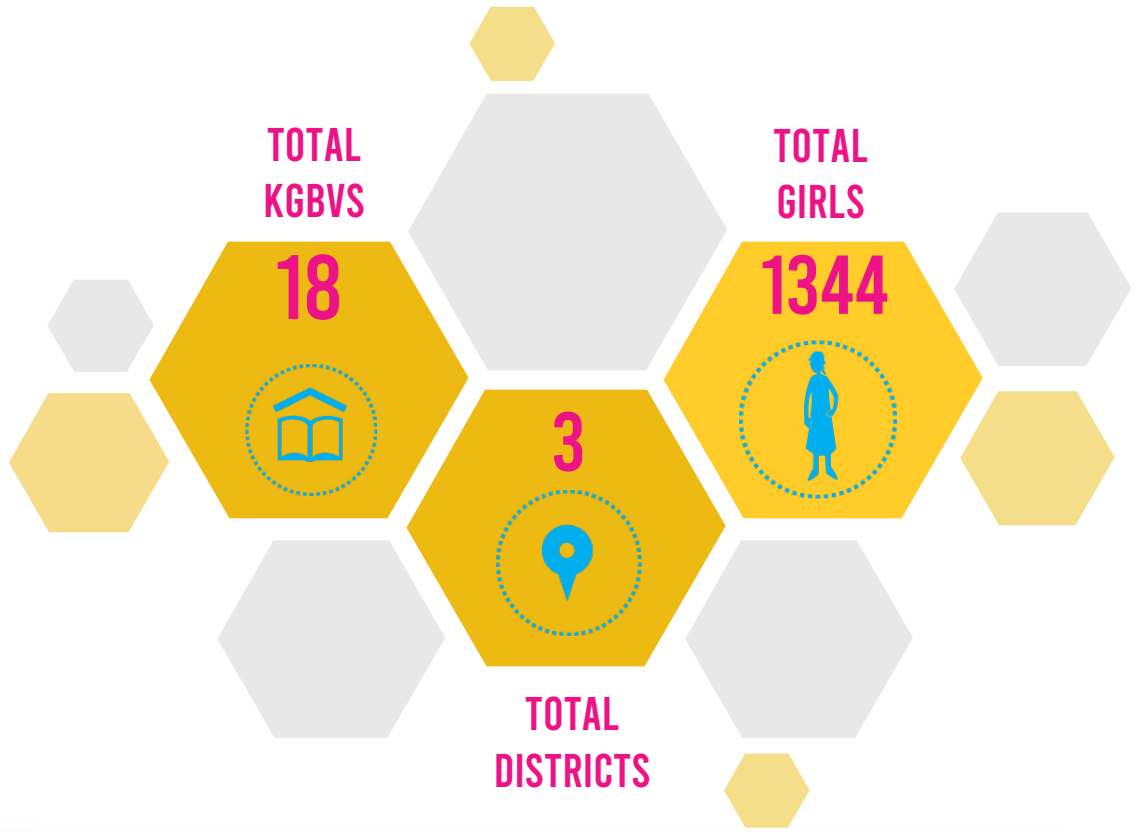
OUR STRATEGY

The programme included both the technical and human development interventions that are necessary for sustainable WASH practices in the identified schools. The programme looks into three major components:

- 1. Retrofitting of WASH infrastructure in KGBVs for making them child friendly and gender sensitive*
- 2. Enhancing awareness, knowledge and behaviour change on the aspects of WASH by students, teachers, government officials and sanitation workers*
- 3. Building or improving systems around operations and maintenance.*

The accepted WASH standards of UNICEF three star approach and Swacch Vidyalaya guidelines were referred during the benchmarking process.

OUR OUTREACH



OUR INTERVENTIONS

A) CONDUCTED BASELINE SURVEY TO DRAW UP DISTRICT-LEVEL ACTION PLAN

Participatory assessment of WASH practices and baseline survey was undertaken for every school to understand current scenario, gaps in practices and infrastructure. A school level action plan with appropriate activities for inculcating adequate WASH practices, setting-up inclusive WASH infrastructure and proper upkeep through operations and maintenance guidelines were planned.

B) DEVELOPED INCLUSIVE WASH INFRASTRUCTURE

Developing of child friendly and gender sensitive WASH infrastructure were set-up for improving WASH scenario and raising the standard from mere availability to adequacy, accessibility and functionality. Improved WASH infrastructure and awareness would greatly benefit the girl child and enhance their attendance levels during their menstruation cycle. In the long run, it would create a cascading effect in their families and communities. WASH kits like water testing kit, seed kit, accessories for improving hygiene practices such as gloves, apron scarves, etc. were procured and distributed in schools.

C) ENSURED SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure sustainability of the initiative for strengthening WASH facilities and awareness levels in schools, regular interaction with partners and line departments at state, district, block and panchayat levels were undertaken. The focus was maintained throughout the programme design to promote effective participation and strengthen citizen monitoring systems and accountability mechanisms. For strengthening implementation of WASH in schools, linkages with national and international programmes were continuously sought.

D) ENCOURAGED BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

For the WASH interventions to be sustainable, behaviour change is always the starting point. Changing behaviour and social norms to improve hygiene practices was essential to making and sustaining progress. IEC materials for enhancing awareness of each target group

such as teachers, non-teaching staff, students, adolescent girls, school management committees, etc. were developed and used during training stakeholders and were also posted across the schools. Further, regular participatory discussions with all stakeholders for fostering behaviour change for WASH were organised. The programme team encouraged the constitution and orientation of WASH committees comprising adolescent girls. Initiatives such as Global Handwashing Day and Kishori Bal Mela, showcased efforts for WASH in schools and enabled building synergy with state, national and international programmes.

The school managements in these meetings were encouraged to prioritize best practices of WASH in school development plans by retrofitting existing infrastructure and optimally using their own finances. The programme team even went ahead and supported managements by aiding them to solve day-to-day operations and maintenance issues. They were even motivated to network and leverage in-cash and in-kind support from government agencies like the municipal corporations, MGNREGA, Panchayati Raj Institutions and individual donors for WASH facilities.



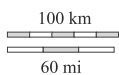
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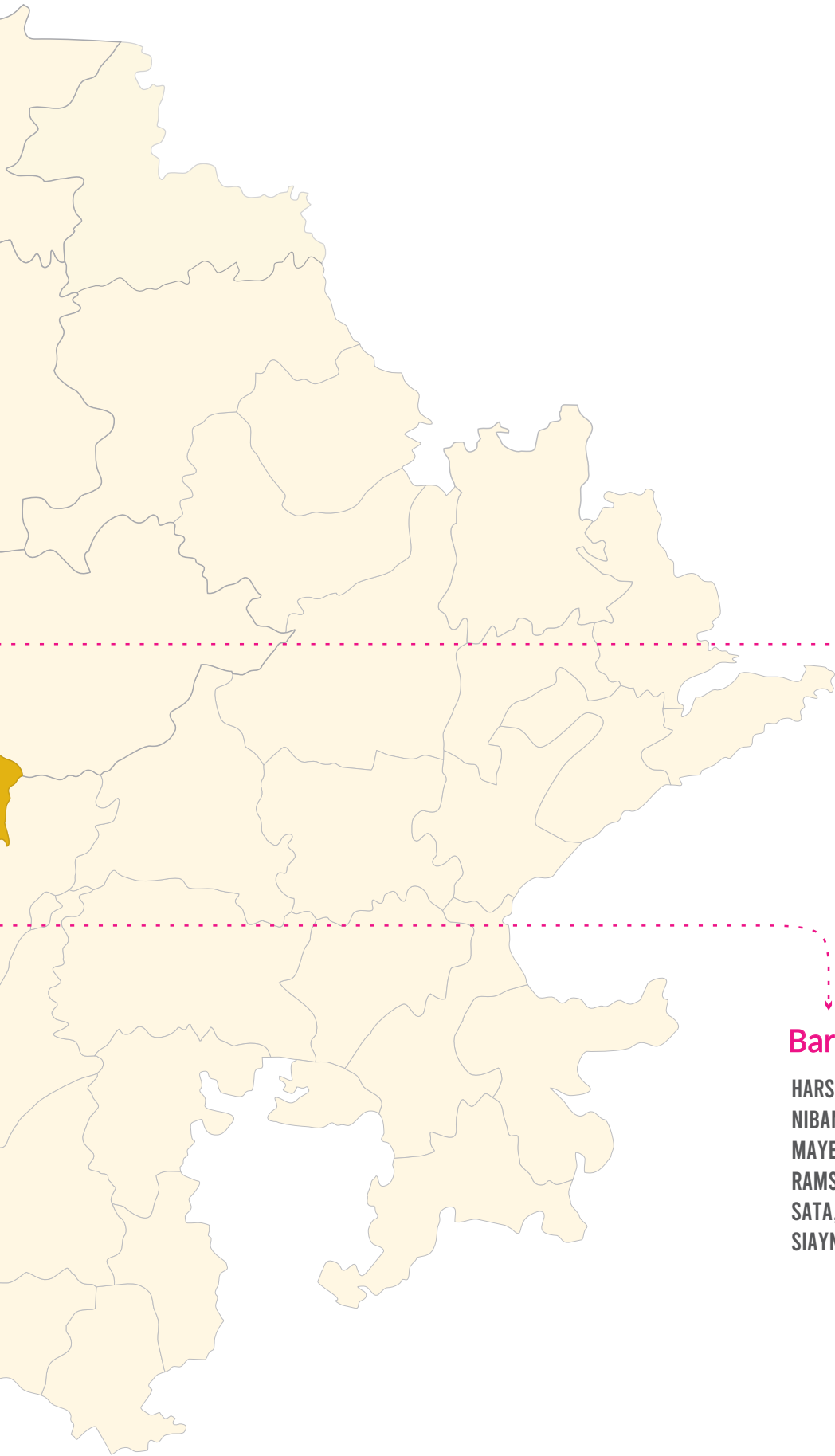
- 1- To ensure hygienic preparation of meals Raveena, a student giving aprons and gloves to cooking staff in KGBV Sata in Barmer district.
- 2- Along with WASH practices to be followed, the facilitators disseminating information on good and bad touch in KGBV Sonu in Jaisalmer district.
- 3- Usha accompanied by other staff members in setting up the kitchen garden in KGBV Nandwan in Jodhpur district .
- 4- The girls were encouraged to unleash creative skills and design drawing mats in KGBV Mahilawas in Barmer district.

OUR PROGRAMME AREAS

Jaisalmer

BHADREYA,
NACHNA AND
SONU





BHAVI
BALESAR,
JAMBA,
NANDWAM,
OSIAN,
PHALODI
POPAWAS
RATKUDIYA, AND
SHARGARH

Jodhpur

Barmer

HARSANI,
NIBANIYO KI DHANI,
MAYELAWAS,
RAMSINGH MUGADA,
SATA, AND
SIAYNI

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

► *To ensure the overall well-being of girls our interventions addressed the following goals*



**SDG 1:
NO POVERTY**



**SDG 3:
GOOD HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING**



**SDG 4:
QUALITY EDUCATION**



**SDG 6:
CLEAN WATER AND
SANITATION**



**SDG 10:
REDUCED INEQUALITIES**



**SDG 12:
RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION**



**SDG 15:
LIFE ON LAND**



**SDG 17:
PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE
THE GOAL**

CASE STUDIES

A Wash Activist In The Making

*Manju Balyan
14 years old
KGBV Jamba*



Manju is the fifth child in a family of six children. To fulfil the needs of such a big family, her father is forced to work hard. When she had not attained the legal minimum age, under societal pressure, her father married off her elder sister early. Manju is determined to spend her time at her school wisely and make the most of it. She actively started taking part in the activities organised by Urmul Trust. She is an active member of Child Cabinet and kishori balika groups. In the programme activities, she enthusiastically takes part in imparting awareness on the importance of hygiene. She painstakingly, with the aid of her family, prepares posters and models to make the session more interactive. The students completely enjoyed her session and she is even further motivated to continue voicing issues about best hygiene practices. She excitedly told the programme team that she plans to be associated with the team and become an advocate for better WASH infrastructure.

Dismantling Taboos Around Menstrual Hygiene

*Pooja
13 years
KGBV Jamba*



In a family of five siblings, Pooja is the youngest. Although, she is enrolled in school but during the cropping season she is forced to contribute to farming. She is part of the child cabinet in her school. She not only actively takes part in the activities but encourages her peers to do justice to their responsibilities as well. She believes that menstrual taboos made it difficult for the girls to talk about inadequate WASH infrastructure. As soon as the activities started in her school, she aided the programme team to generate awareness on maintaining menstrual hygiene and not letting societal norms dictate their behaviour. Pooja wishes to become a police officer. She shared, "It does not mean that I would take a step back and not motivate my own sisters to challenge the discriminatory social norms that

CASE STUDIES

discourage girls from freely discussing issues concerning their hygiene and well-being.”

Building A Healthier Future For Girls

Rama Devi
41 years old
KGBV Bhadariya



Rama was always encouraged to complete her schooling and become financially independent. She joined KGBV Bhadariya a while back. She is happy to be serving students who came from marginalized communities. She got associated with the programme as soon as it was launched in her school. She emphasises on improving the water harvesting system in the school and ensures that the school management pay special attention to it. She facilitates the activities of child cabinet, kishori balika groups and participation of students in school management committee meetings and encourages them to demand for inclusive WASH infrastructure. She confesses that earlier she had never realised the importance of hygiene but after continuous interaction with the Prajwala programme team she has become confident that this can never take a backseat. She encourages other staff members to prioritise issues around WASH. She shares, *“As a woman I believe I have to ensure that these girls live in the most hygienic conditions.”*

Water Conservation Champion

Priyanka Parmar
14 years old
KGBV Shergarh

Priyanka has a total of eight members in her family. Her mother manages the household work and her father is a tailor. Priyanka's entry into KGBV was due to her elder sister's insistence and her parents are convinced that the facilities available in the KGBV would be good for her. She says initially she was an introvert in her school. In the child cabinet, she is the Minister of Water wherein she ensures that the water system is maintained. She



pushes the school management to manage the waste water from the kitchen for the kitchen garden in their school. She participates in organising awareness sessions on the importance of water conservation. Her sessions were received well by the other girls. She says, *“I wish to champion the cause of water conservation. Our region has a scarcity of water and we must do everything to manage it properly.”*

Discussing Menstrual Hygiene Management Hesitance

Nirma
15 years old
KGBV Balesar



Nirma has 7 members in the family including four brothers and parents. Her father is suffering from a mental illness so he was unemployed and her mother managed the household chores. Her family couldn't afford her fee so thought it was best to admit Nirma in a Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya. The Prajwala programme team motivated her to become a member of the kishori balika group in which all members were informed about menstrual hygiene management. The team members sensitises the students about the hormonal changes in their body and advises them in case of any problem to approach their teachers. The girls are further recommended to always follow a balanced diet during their menstruation cycle. Nirma happily shares, *“I was always hesitant to ask details about menstrual hygiene in my family but things got better in my school. These conversations have given us the confidence to approach our elders in case of any concerns.”*

Finding Joy

Urmila Lakhara
13 years old
KGBV Nandwan



Urmila has a family of five members. Her father had committed suicide and the responsibility of managing the household fell on her mother. To take the financial stress off her mother, she and her sister enrolled in KGBV. Urmila is close to Babita from the Prajwala programme team and she excitedly engages in all programme activities. Babita shared that she had seen Urmila become confident and her proactive interest in the kitchen garden was endearing. With a team of girls she volunteers to manage the kitchen garden of her school. She said that looking at the vegetables in the garden gives her a sense of achievement. She gushed, *“You know I am really happy when I look at this garden. It is as if these plants are growing along with me and keeping me company.”*

CASE STUDIES

Fighting The Pandemic

Rekha
12 years old
KGBV Phalodi



Rekha is the youngest child in her family. Her father is a daily wage labourer. Her school is far away so her parents got her admitted to the KGBV Phalodi. During the pandemic, Rekha with other children prepared posters that detailed hygienic practices that should be followed. She encourages her community to practice social distancing and regularly monitor their health for any symptoms. She extensively spreads awareness about how simple handwashing and wearing a mask would help in combatting the pandemic. She is continuously lauded by her community members for stepping up to educate everyone. These informative sessions were especially important in the early days of the pandemic when the residents of the remote villages in the Thar had little knowledge about the virus and precautions. Rekha shares, *“In the six months before the pandemic, it is almost as if we were getting trained for protecting ourselves in the pandemic. All those awareness sessions helped us take precautionary measures.”*

Kitchen Garden, An Epitome Of Balance Diet

KGBV Nandwan



The KGBV has developed a kitchen garden to demonstrate chemical free agriculture, effectively manage kitchen waste and serve a new means to save money. It is looked after by the girls of KGBV the garden is a source of diverse vegetables which constitutes a balanced diet. Cultivation of mangoes, guava, jamun, amla, gulmohar, neem and chillies are undertaken in the kitchen garden. The environment minister of the child cabinet, says “We enjoy contributing to the kitchen garden. We take help from our school staff members to first get the land levelled and then plant fruit bearing trees that provide ample shade.” The students water the garden during evening and plough the soil to maintain aeration. *“Our kids happily come and look at the growth of the plants. The kitchen*

garden has indeed been a pleasant and nutritious addition to our school campus. Organically growing our plants and vegetables in the kitchen garden makes us confident to consume them without any inhibition.”, says the cook of the school.

KGBV Mahilawaas

Inculcating Good Hygiene Practices



It has been accepted that the denial of the basic right to water and toilet facilities clearly violates the rights of children to study in a safe and hygienic environment. The school management of KGBV Mahilawaas is proactively implementing the WASH guidelines. Through multiple training sessions the girls are informed to “keeping their hands clean” and are taught the practice of washing hands with soap and water – before and after meals, after using the toilet, after coming back from school, after coming from the playground, etc. With the girls residing in the school premises it became even more important to adhere to the best WASH practices. Babita Singh, field coordinator with Urmul Trust added, *“It is remarkable to see all these girls learn and inculcate these practices in their lifestyle. With the advent of COVID-19, we are even more happy that our girls were prepared to follow hygiene practices and remain safe during the pandemic.”*

Safer Together

Ankita
12 years old
KGBV Bhavi



Ankita comes from a family with limited resources. Her father is a livestock rearer. Due to living in extreme poverty, he pays little attention to the education of his children. Only after coaxing from their neighbours, he finally agreed to admit his daughter in the nearest KGBV. Ankita performs academically very well and started showing keen interest in activities around hygiene and well-being organised by Urmul Trust. With the onset of COVID-19, she along with her peers actively stitched masks for members of her community and distributed them. During her interactions with families, she advocates for strong adherence to WASH practices. In the past six months, she demonstrated strong character and managed to take charge to keep members of her village safe. She says after completing her education she wishes to devote herself to the field of teaching. She happily says, *“A teacher has the power to change the lives of so many people. I want to motivate more people to maintain their hygiene and keep their families safe.”*

CASE STUDIES

Motivating Peers

Brahaspati
13 years
KGBV Ratkudhiya



Brahaspati comes from a family of eight members where she is the youngest child. Two sisters who were elder to her had been married quite young and her brothers were forced to work at restaurants to earn income. Her aunt advised her parents to send her to KGBV and from there on her journey was onward and upward. Brahaspati takes part in all school activities and she is the part of the child cabinet at her school. She takes special interest in the matters of cleanliness and hygiene of her peers. She engages with her school teachers and Babita from the Urmul Trust team to spread awareness about the importance of hygiene practices such as washing hands and regularly cleaning our spaces. During COVID-19 she has been able to remain connected with her schoolmates on Whatsapp and she has been regularly motivating them to wear masks and practice social distancing. She says happily, *“All the training by the Urmul team before the pandemic helped us to battle it more effectively.”*

Leading The Fight

Shyam Lal
45 years old
KGBV Ratkudhiya



Shyam Lal is a teacher with KGBV. He is always passionate about helping the vulnerable people in society. He is motivated to go above and beyond his role in the school. He is a member of the school management committee and actively initiates good discussions in the meetings. When the Urmul Trust visited KGBV, he was the first one to show interest in the initiatives and pledged his commitment. During the lockdown imposed because of COVID-19, he helped identify the families that did not have basic sanitation facilities and provided them with masks and sanitisers. He ensures that the members of those households take care of their hygiene. He remains connected with his students to keep checking whether they follow

the hygiene practices they were taught in their training with the Urmul team and they all used to all reply affirmatively.

Managing Waste Effectively

Raveena
20 years old
KGBV Sata



Raveena works as a helper in the KGBV. She has studied till eighth grade. She has been working at the school for the last two years. She takes care of the cleaning of the school and the hostel. She enjoys taking part in all the programme activities. She says before this programme there was hardly any focus on maintaining the hygiene of girls. The programme team gave her gloves and mask to wear while cleaning. She is also made aware of the importance of waste segregation and how to dispose of hazardous waste and reuse dry and wet waste. She proudly tells the programme team, *“I am happy that I have learned how to scientifically reuse and dispose of waste. In this day and age, we have to be responsible about our consumption.”*

Encouraging Hygienic Practices

Sarita
13 years old
KGBV Nokha



Sarita comes from a modest background. Her father practices rain-fed farming and her mother is a homemaker. Sarita completed her education only till sixth grade. Her school was far and the lone journey for a thirteen year old was considered to be unsafe by her family. But, Sarita remained insistent on completing her education. Her parents got her enrolled in the nearest KGBV. Sarita values her education and with utmost zest took part in all the school activities. She participates in all the child cabinet meetings, balika samoo sessions and school management committee meetings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she is leading efforts to spread awareness in her community on the importance of following hygiene practices to battle it. Through continuous interactions on WhatsApp, she inspires other girls in her community to ensure the hygiene and safety of their families. Her perseverance has resulted in all the KGBV school students from her community to generate awareness and ensure their well-being during this pandemic.

WAY FORWA



WAY FORWARD

The world is still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic. It has taken a heavy toll on finances, health and mental well-being globally. Maintenance of hygiene has proved to be essential for protecting lives. It is no longer a matter of choice. In these testing times, Urmul Trust with its partner agencies is prepared to arrange for hygiene kits and disseminate information on WASH practices so that our communities are better prepared towards this pandemic and any future public health crises.



PRAJWALA



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