

Adolescent Education, Development and Empowerment in Arain, Ajmer - A Process Narrative



March 2016

Preface

It is an emotional moment for me to write this preface. Being involved with the 'Programme for the Education and Development of Adolescents in Arain Block' from 2006 to 2015 definitely opened up new vistas of knowledge; but, even more significantly, it proved to be a transformative experience as it connected me directly to my parents' ideals and dreams. AAEA had come into existence with my mother, Mrs. Kanta Marwah, as Founder Secretary in 1971. She, with my father in tow, had already been working with under-served communities - especially with women and children - since 1963-64. My father, Mr. M.K. Marwah responded to this narrative with a little paragraph about the beginnings of AAEA. He writes: "My wife Kanta and I led normal lives of college teachers. The 1962 India-China war gave us a jolt. We began to think that we have to rise above our personal lives."

The idealism to strengthen the nation by finding time to do 'social work' may seem naive in today's environment. But it is important to bring it to mind when hooliganism is being served up as nationalism. I am writing as a war rages in the country around the sedition case slapped on student activists and students and intellectuals powerfully challenge the self-styled arbiters of patriotism. Progressive nationalism, in contrast, has always been inclusive and factored on caring.

The nationalistic urge to better the lot of disadvantaged fellow citizens has been powerful enough to keep AAEA afloat for 45 years. After my mother passed away in 1997, my father, and then I, found ourselves drawn into carrying forward her lifework. AAEA continues to draw sustenance from personal commitment of teachers, professors, and government employees. Out of the hundreds that keep it going, hardly a couple have a degree in development. Most are there because my mother's social work touched their lives or their hearts. Professionally speaking, AAEA is, perhaps, an anachronism in this age of specializations. But I am not yet convinced of our irrelevance.

It is noteworthy that this particular process narrative to which I am writing the preface should have made my father think of the beginning of AAEA and me of what we are about. In certain senses this programme is also imbued with the same kind of nationalist sentiment my parents felt as young people and which I have filtered to be about the need to deliver the promise of nationhood to all citizens. *Doosra Dashak* programme on which our programme is based was formulated with Mr. Anil Bordia at the helm and, significantly, Mr. Bordia and my parents had a long association. My father writes in his note: "In 1971 Mr. Anil Bordia was posted as Collector at Ajmer. He heard of us doing social work in Muslim and Harijan areas. He told us that an institution should be set up so that we could work and get government grant for our work... He gave a room in the Collectorate for the office of the new institution." For the

young bureaucrat, like my parents, the urge to facilitate and do social work came from a sense of responsibility. Of course, the programme has been detailed and delineated by experts in the field but, in my opinion, what gives it soul is this.

Dr. Shobhita Rajagopal and Mr. R.S. Sharma have contextualised our initiative comprehensively and in developmental terms in the narrative that follows. I am neither competent to introduce the document, nor can I add to it in any way. I am a writer of novels and plays and, like my parents, a teacher of Literature. However, there were two features of this programme that captured my imagination most. Firstly, it became possible to inscribe a feminist spirit within the programme. AAEA had always prioritized girls and women. My father writes in his note: "We did work among all citizens but our focus was on girls and women - the girl child was recipient of our attention. The Association believes that if the country is to make progress girls and women have to be in the vanguard." This well-meaning, progressive sentiment extended into initiatives against domestic violence, protection of girl children, education of young married women, and even a performance and continuing discussions on same-sex love in the programme. Our workers participated in several workshops and conferences for gender sensitization and gender activism. The conversations I had with them on these issues are memories I will cherish most as I learnt a lot from the experiences and daily courage of so many.

The second related feature is the extensive use we made of theatre: workshops with camp participants for awareness, sensitization and, most important, for need assessment; workshops with workers for all of this and also for review and planning. Often, the field workers would find it easier to 'act out' the problems they had faced rather than talk about them conceptually. It helped that I was member of an activist theatre group, *pandies'*, and was able to make resources developed over thirty years with Delhi University students available to the programme. My experience with using theatre in Arain has convinced me of the wide scope and usefulness of participatory theatre to break gender, caste and communal stereotypes, and indicate future directions for development.

The most successful aspect of the programme - the transformation of the *Bhil Basti* in Sarwar - could come about only because we discovered the deplorable condition of the *Bhils* through these techniques. In 2012, we made a special request to bring the *basti* under the programme. Our request was granted even though the *basti* did not fall under the *gram panchayat* area; it was technically urban and came under the municipality. For this broadness of vision that was evident throughout our partnership with SDTT these nine years, I remain very grateful to them.

Anuradha Marwah
Secretary, AAEA

Acknowledgement

This report has been made possible with the combined effort of many individuals who were closely involved in the Adolescent Education and Development Project in Arain.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the adolescent boys and girls, community women and men and members of youth groups in Sarwar block, Arain, who took time out and provided their valuable insights during discussions.

We would like to thank the project team members who had worked in different capacities in the project and staff of Ajmer Adult Education Association, Ajmer for sharing their experiences, various documents and their extensive support during field work. Special thanks are also due to Shri Sanjay Palod, AAEA, for making available all the reports and data pertaining to the documentation.

Finally, we wish to thank Dr. Anuradha Marwah, Secretary AAEA, Ajmer for giving us this opportunity to take up the documentation of an important educational initiative - Adolescent Education and Development Project, Arain, and for her continuous support throughout the documentation process.

Shobhita Rajagopal Ph.D,
R.S. Sharma
Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur



Abbreviations and Glossary

AAEA	-	Ajmer Adult Education Association
ANM	-	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
BEO	-	Block Education Officer
DD	-	<i>Doosra Dashak</i>
GP	-	<i>Gram Panchayat</i>
LJP	-	<i>Lok Jumbish Project</i>
LSE	-	Life Skill Education
MNREGS	-	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NGO	-	Non Government Organisation
NAEP	-	National Adult Education Programme
OBC	-	Other Backward Caste
PRI	-	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RTE	-	Right to Education
RTI	-	Right to Information
SC	-	Scheduled Caste
SDTT	-	Sir Dorabji Tata Trust
SDO	-	Sub Divisional Officer
SKP	-	<i>Shikshakarmi Project</i>
SMC	-	School Management Committee
ST	-	Scheduled Tribe
WDP	-	Women's Development Project

Glossary

<i>Dhani</i>	-	Hamlet
<i>Gram Shiksha Kosh</i>	-	Village Education Fund
<i>Kishori Manch</i>	-	Girls' Forum
<i>Menhndi</i>	-	Heena applied on hands
<i>Prerna Kendra</i>	-	Centre for Continuing Education
<i>Sahabhagi</i>	-	Participant
<i>Yuva Manch</i>	-	Youth Forum
<i>Zenana</i>	-	Women's Quarters

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Introduction

Adolescence marks the developmental transition from childhood to adulthood, a time when many important social, economic, biological and demographic events set the stage for adult life. It is characterised by rapid physical growth, social and psychological changes, sexual maturity, development of adult cognitive processes and transition from childhood socio-economic dependence to relative independence. The nature and quality of young people's future lives, as well as a country's future social and economic development, depend largely on how well adolescents navigate this transition. In India, myriad social, economic, and health factors may undermine the ability of adolescents to lead full and productive lives.

The challenges facing adolescents are increasingly recognised and documented. Adolescents are a heterogeneous group with diverse needs that vary depending on factors such as age, gender, marital status, place of residence and educational attainment. There has been a concerted effort on the part of the government to address the needs of young people through programmes and policies directed specifically at them. However, most legal policies, legislations and programmes define adolescents differently, often conflating them with children or young adults. Despite these efforts, adolescents continue to face a number of vulnerabilities and challenges, highlighting the gaps in the implementation of programmes and policies. (*Population Council and UNICEF/2013*).

The initiative 'Education and Development of Adolescents' in Arain¹ block of Ajmer district in Rajasthan, was implemented by Ajmer Adult Education Association (AAEA) from March 2006 to August 2015 with support from Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT). It was started with the aim of providing value-based and integrated education to adolescents and ensuring participation of beneficiaries in the process of social change. The project drew upon the design and experience of *Doosra Dashak*², implemented by the Foundation for Education and Development, Jaipur.

AAEA, a registered voluntary organization, has been working in Ajmer district since 1971. The focus of the organisation has been to bring about positive changes in the lives of the poor, excluded, marginalized and minority social groups and motivating them to educate and empower themselves. Education has been seen as an indispensable tool to bring about social transformation. With a team of committed field workers, AAEA has been working on realising this goal by empowering women and men, children and adolescents. The Head Office of AAEA is located at

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1. Arain block was divided in 2014-15 and a new block, Sarwar, was created with 20 *gram panchayats*. Out of 90 project villages, 57 villages of 12 *gram panchayats* became part of Sarwar block.
 2. *Doosra Dashak* (the second decade) is a programme for education and development of adolescents, being implemented by Foundation of Education and Development in Rajasthan, since 2001. It aims at providing a second chance of education to unschooled adolescents by organizing 4-month residential camps based on integrated curriculum for holistic education.

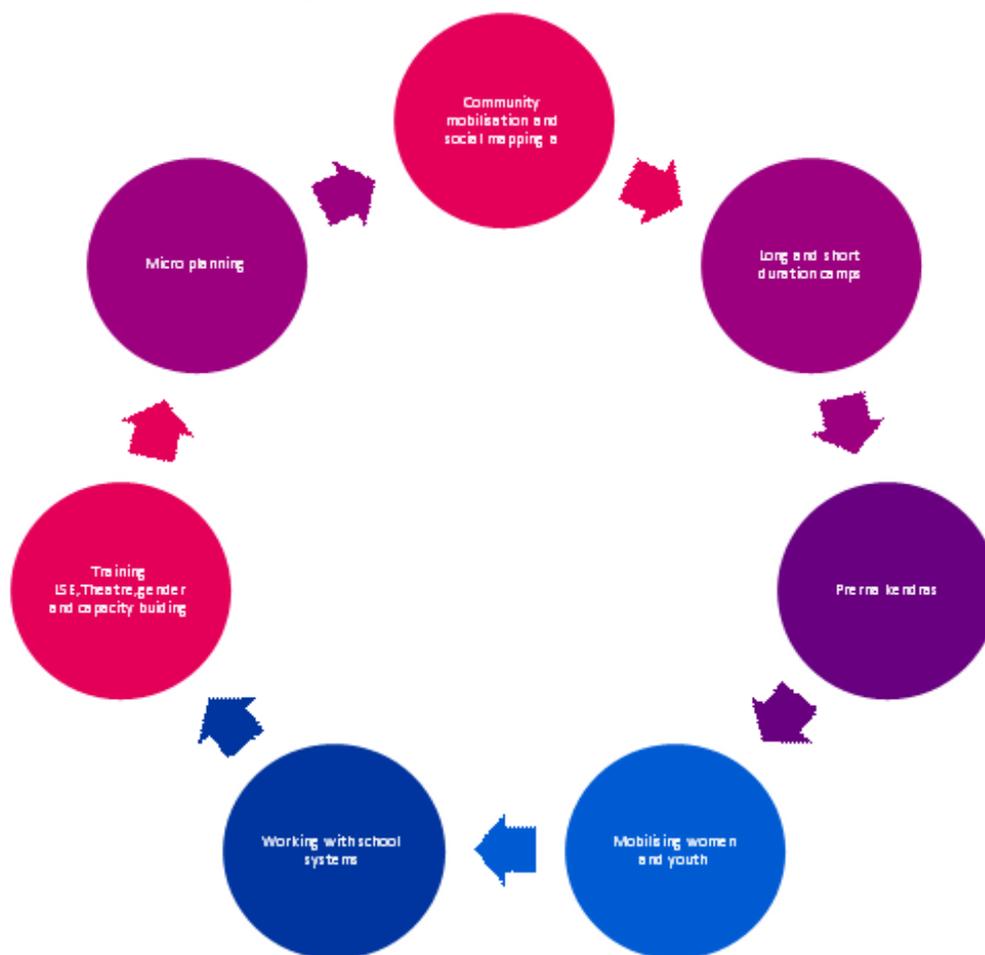
Ajmer. A Field Office was established in Sarwar for the project.

In Arain block the project was implemented in three distinct phases and adolescents in the age group of 11-20 years were the main target group. The total funding support received from the SDTT for the period 2006-2015 was Rs. 2,61,75,000. See Table 1.

Table 1: Phases and Phase-Wise Funding Support of the Project

Phase	Period	Funding Support
Phase I	March 2006 - April 2009	65,87,000
Phase II	May 2009 - June 2012	95,91,000
Phase III	September 2012 - August 2015	99,97,000
Total		2,61,75,000

The project strategies were based on an understanding that holistic and integrated education was not only about imparting knowledge but also focussed on the development of personality of the adolescent learners, meeting their learning needs and equipping them with skills for future. Therefore, main activities of the project included:



Community Mobilisation and Social Mapping laid the foundation of the project in the selected area. Intensive interaction was carried out with community members in the selected villages that led to understanding the educational needs of adolescents in the area and identifying adolescents for camps.

Long and Short Duration Camps were organised for out-of-school adolescents thus identified. These camps aimed at facilitating learning and confidence building. Over the project period short duration camps on specific themes were also organised for continuing education.

Prerna Kendras were established in project villages which drew larger number of adolescents in camps. These centres emerged as multipurpose centres for community and adolescents.

Working with Women and Youth were intrinsic to the project. Regular meetings were held in the project area that led to women emerging as leaders and taking up issues related to women and their development. Collectivising youth around a range of issues was taken up throughout the project period. This led to the emergence of a block level forum for youth called IMDAAD.

An effort was made to **work with government schools** in the project area in the third phase of the project. A number of trainings and activities were organised within schools and with teachers and head teachers.

Other strategies have included training programmes for adolescents on Life Skill education and Theatre in education. Micro planning activities were also intrinsically woven into the entire project.

This Report

This process narrative attempts to capture in-depth, the experiences of the project implemented in a backward block of Ajmer district in Rajasthan over a period of nine years. It is not intended to be an evaluation but attempts to understand the various interventions, strategies and the changes it brought to the lives of the adolescents and their immediate environment as well as the critical learnings emerging from the project. This evidence-based document also raises issues related to the need and sustainability of similar interventions that focus on adolescent needs.

Objectives of Documentation

As per the Terms of Reference the main objectives of the documentation are:

- To document and analyze the ways in which social change was initiated by this programme on education.
- To document learnings on adolescent girls education - in the context of extensive practice of child marriage in the block.
- Share the learnings of the project with larger community of academia, NGOs and civil society organizations.

Methodology

This report is based on intensive discussions at the field level with different stakeholders i.e. the adolescent boys and girls, community women and men, the project staff - both field workers and programme managers. In-depth interviews were also carried out with several resource

persons who were associated with the project. Since the project was implemented in three phases, many individuals who had worked in the project had left. An attempt was made to contact these individuals who were associated in different capacities, during different periods of time and discussions were held with them.

An effort was also made to study the various documents and reports related to the project i.e. Annual Reports, Workshop Reports and related publications, as well as audio-visual material that had been prepared during the project to understand the various dimensions of project implementation.

The report begins with a short introduction which states the background, objectives and methodology of the documentation process. Chapter 2 presents the contextual environment in which the project was implemented and highlights the initial stages of project implementation; Chapter 3 describes the long and short duration camps that were the mainstay of the project; Chapter 4 focuses on the concept of *Prerna Kendras*, the continuing education centres; Chapter 5 highlights role of women's groups and youth groups that emerged in the project area; and Chapter 6 focuses on a range of activities that were initiated in the project area. The final Chapter pulls together the overall learnings and formulates some recommendations for future programmes for adolescent education.



Chapter II

Initiating the Project

The project Education and Development of Adolescents in Arain block was initiated by the Ajmer Adult Education Association (AAEA) in the year 2006. For over four decades the Association has been actively involved in the field of Adult Education, Non-Formal Education and Continuing Education. The organization was also closely associated with several government supported programmes i.e. the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP), the Women's Development Project (WDP), the Shikshakarmi Project, the Lok Jumbish Project (LJP). It has also promoted Self Help Groups and Community Jan Shalas. The organization has long experience of working on issues related to Women's Rights and Empowerment, Violence Against Women, Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS's, as well as Child Rights.

In the early years, AAEA primarily focused on promoting Literacy and Education. In 1970s, AAEA started 20 literacy centres for children in Ajmer who either worked in shops and in factories earning poor wages. These children were from the most marginalized communities and had never attended school, as their parents felt that they had no use of education. AAEA started motivating the parents and also started distributing nutrition to the children with UNICEF support. Gradually, 20-25 children were enrolled across the 20 Literacy Centres.

Literacy Centres were also started in the Khadim Mohalla of Ajmer city for Muslim women who had restricted mobility due to *pardah* and were confined to the four walls of the home. This area is in the vicinity of the famous *Dargah* of Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chisti. Initial discussions were held with older women in the *Zenana* and they were motivated to send younger women to attend the adult education centres. In the first year itself 5 young women appeared for Class VIII examination and passed.

Another experiment carried out by AAEA was in a village Bisundani in 1971, located 70 miles from Ajmer city. It was started with a goal of linking an entire community with literacy. The community women and men were conservative and traditional. A literacy centre was started and old and young men and women started attending the centre. They were taught reading, writing skills, and arithmetic. In one year all community members above 6 years of age were enabled to read, write, add and subtract. A follow-up centre and a library was also established to help the neo-literates to continue their learning. In the first year four booklets were also created and published for the learners. These books focussed on local concerns and issues, e.g. one of the books raised the issue of irrigation and agriculture in and around the village.

In 1974, the State government sanctioned 50 Non-formal (NFE) and two continuing education centres to AAEA. 30 NFE centres were opened in Arain block and 20 NFE centres were

started in Ajmer city. An effort was made to enrol boys and girls who had never enrolled in school and those who were school drop outs. Many of the rural children were involved in grazing livestock, sibling care and domestic work, or used to work as farm labour. They were slowly initiated into the world of letters and the 3Rs. Awareness raising around issues of personal hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness was also carried out

Building on the vast experience of working in education, the AAEA decided to start the project in Arain Block, one of the most backward blocks of Ajmer.

The Backdrop and District Contest

The State of Rajasthan is the largest state in India and has long been considered as a state with poor development indicators. Ajmer district is located in the centre of the state. The district shares its boundaries with Nagaur district on the north, Bhilwara district on the south, Jaipur and Tonk districts on the eastern side and on the west by Pali district. According to the Census 2011, Ajmer district ranks 8th in terms of population, 14th in terms of area, and 11th in terms of population density. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in Ajmer district is 18.5 percent and 2.5 percent respectively, whereas the State percentage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population is 17.8 and 13.5 respectively. The sex ratio of Ajmer district (951) is significantly higher than the State sex ratio (928). The literacy rate in Ajmer district was recorded 69.3 percent, which is higher than the State Average (66.1 percent), and it ranks 8th among the other districts of the state. Gender gap of the literacy rate is 26.7 percent in the district. It is to be noted that *Ajmer was the first district to be declared fully literate under the TLC in the early 1990's.*

Arain block located in Ajmer district has 30 *gram panchayats* and 130 villages. According to Census 2011, the total population of Arain is 159058 persons (80771 male and 78287 females) with 29171 households. The population in the 0-6 years was recorded at 24132 (12630 males and 11502 females). The SC population in the block was recorded 34055 (17477 males and 16578 females). The ST population in the block was 4862 (2461 males and 2401 females) (*Census 2011*).

The selection of Arain block for the intervention by AAEA was based on an analysis of various development indicators especially education and health:

More specifically as per the initial project proposal, the rationale for choosing/

Box: 1 Development Indicators in Arain block in 2006

The overall literacy rate in Arain block was 44.11%, much lower than the district percentage of 64.60%. Despite the attention and inputs of numerous educational programmes and projects over the years female literacy rate was extremely dismal - male literacy was 61.94% compared to female literacy that was just 23.86%. The participation rate in elementary education (6-14 age group) was 84.13% and 60.79% for boys and girls respectively. However, the dropout rate between class I to V was quite alarming. 54.64% children had

dropped out of school before completion of five years of education. Drop-out rate of girls was even higher at 57%

In addition the health indicators showed that infant mortality rate was higher than the state average. The mean age at marriage for girls was 16.1 years with 42.1% of females married between the age of 15-17 years. In addition according to health surveys carried out by the AAEA team between the years 2006-2009 it was found that gender is operative in health as well with much larger number of adolescent girls reporting physical ailments than the boys. The addiction level in boys was, however, alarming with more than 80 per cent boys being under the influence of tobacco and other even more lethal drugs. (AAEA: *Project Proposal 2006*).

More specifically, as per the initial project proposal, the rationale for choosing/selecting Arain block for the project rested on the following:

- (a) Despite huge investment made in this block, and its proximity to Ajmer city, it continued to be educationally very backward.
- (b) There is a large percentage of SCs. There is recurrence of caste tensions, the so-called upper class communities oppressing the SCs.
- (c) Ajmer Adult Education Association Ajmer has been working in this area for the last 20 years; in the process a number of good workers have emerged. (AAEA *Project Proposal 2006*).

Project

Given the above backdrop and the non-fulfilment of the goal of universal primary education and literacy, the project hoped to address the needs of educationally deprived persons in 11-20 years age group in the area and bring them within the fold of basic education. The project intended to provide them with learning opportunities for holistic development, by creating mechanisms for monitoring the extent and the manner in which their learning could impact their lives. The project also hoped to address issues related to physical and psychological changes that seriously affect adolescent lives. The issue of early marriage, drug addiction and sexuality was also sought to be addressed. It was felt that if adolescents could be provided with relevant education and skills and imbued with idealism they could become a source of social change and economic advancement.

Project Objectives

The main objectives of the project, as laid out in the initial project proposal, were:

- To secure active support of the community and build their organizations.
- To develop designs of need-based integrated education in which learning is emphasized along with its absorption and practice in personal life.
- To transform the educational scenario in the areas covered under this project by

provision of relevant and need-based learning opportunity to educationally deprived persons in 11-20 age group and simultaneously to reduce the gap between in school and out of the school educational facilities.

- To establish a system of continuing education for participants and the village community to promote individual and group learning and practice.
- To constitute a team of committed professionals who will analyze the educational challenge at the local level through a participatory process and work towards capacity enhancement of the non-formal education system in this project and towards widening school inclusively.
- To take steps to widen appreciation of the goals and strategies taken up under this project in order to influence programme for education and development of adolescent persons and to impact the formal and non-formal education system.

Rolling Out The Project

A number of activities were carried out in the first year to create a favourable environment for the project. These activities helped in establishing a relationship in the villages where work was to be initiated. According to the Annual Report 2006-07, during Phase I, a total of 50 villages were selected by the project team. The field office was established in Sarwar. The project team began work in 3 *Gram Panchayats* (GP) and 15 villages of Khiria, Ajagarah and Fatehgarh. In the second year work was expanded to 14 villages of 3 GPs - Bhagwanpura, Lallayei and Birla. In the third year 21 villages of 5 GPs were selected and finally the project was spread over 11 GPs and 50 villages. (See Annex I and II for Map and List of Project Villages).

According to discussions with project personnel, some of the initial steps included:

Identification and Selection of Team: The various posts for the project were advertised in local dailies i.e. Community mobilisers, Project coordinators, account and technical assistants. The candidates who applied were interviewed by the AAEEA functionaries and a team of individuals who would be working at different levels was selected. Initially, two persons were identified from *Doosra Dashak* to lead the project. Since the AAEEA had been working in the area of adult literacy in Ajmer, there were trained and experienced field workers who could be identified for the project.

Community Mobilisation and Creating Awareness Among Community Women and Men: The task of identifying adolescents for camps, especially girls, was particularly difficult during the initial stages. One of the first activities was to create awareness about the project in the selected villages through community programmes - *nukkad nataks*/plays were organised and films and puppet shows around the theme of education were shown. A lot of discussions took place on village level problems with the community members in every village. An effort was made to establish contact with the *Sarpanch* and other representatives of *Panchayati Raj* institutions.

Village level meetings with community women were also organised in the three villages and a

total of 24 meetings were held in the first year. The initial discussions focussed on status of women and girls' education, women's rights and the need to form strong women's groups.

Social Mapping: Social mapping was carried out to assess the status of adolescents in the project area. Household data was collected and the community mobilisers who were engaged in the project made door to door contact in the identified villages and interacted with the parents and other members. This exercise also helped in identifying the adolescents for the residential camps. The team members recall that it was a big challenge to convince parents that their children should study. It was then decided that short camps will also be organised for dropout students and longer duration camps would be organised for those who had never enrolled in schools. The list of dropouts was verified with the school authorities. The analysis of the social mapping was shared with the community members. To illustrate:

During the social mapping carried out in the initial 15 selected villages in the block, the total number of adolescents in the 11-20 years of age who were out of school were 754; and the number of never-enrolled were 471. Caste and gender variations in out of school and in school adolescents were also huge. It was also found that 57.3 per cent of all out of school adolescents were girls; STs were overwhelmingly illiterate or dropouts; SC and OBC girls were far more disadvantaged than their male counterparts in the same community. (Annual Report 2006-2007).

The Residential Camps: The social mapping helped identify the adolescents who could be motivated to join the educational camps. In the first year 2 residential camps for adolescent boys and girls were organised from October-November 2006 to February 2007. A total of 47 girls and 33 boys participated in these camps. Majority of girls and boys who participated in the camps belonged to OBC households followed by SC.

Prerna Kendras as Learning Centres: For continued support to the adolescents who had attended residential camps, *Prerna Kendras* were also started in 4 villages where larger number of adolescents had participated in the residential camps. In 2006, a broad outline of the *Prerna Kendras* was evolved. Continuing education programmes for adolescents, such as science fairs, short term training on specific themes, libraries, worksheets and letter writing and Open middle schools for older adolescents, served to reinforce the learning in residential camps through the *Prerna Kendras*.

Yuva-Youth Melas were organised in three villages to reach out to local youth who could support the various activities of the project and coordinate the *Prerna Kendras*. The community mobilisation that preceded residential camps and the camps themselves were followed by organising the adolescents at the village level in groups and at the block level in a federated structure called IMDAAD. Learning was translated into action through these organisational formations which provided solidarity and mutual support to young adolescents. These adolescents played a major role in immunisation campaigns, malaria control, and provision of drinking water and advocacy activities, such as right to work, right to information and steps against exploitation of women.

In order to promote decentralization and better coordination, 50 villages were divided into 3

According to the erstwhile Project Co-ordinator, Archana: The early years were challenging and we had to cross many hurdles at different levels; it was important that we identify active members from the community who would support us; we had to put in a lot of effort to sustain the groups! (Personal Communication, 2015)

clusters. New and fresh workers were encouraged to contribute their best through several training programmes. There was consistent effort made to provide workers with opportunities to enhance their documentation skills. Planning and review meetings were held to help the workers to assess their own work and formulate changes in strategies and activities.

To ensure the smooth functioning of project initiatives, a good working relationship was established with different government departments, i.e. Education, Woman and Child Development and Health. This was done both formally and informally. A relationship was also forged with people's representatives as well as those in charge of village level organizations. Sufficient coverage was given to the activities of the project in the media, local newspapers and magazines. Visitors were encouraged and were another medium of disseminating information about the project. All initiatives of the project were undertaken with gender sensitivity.

The project aimed at promoting overall development of adolescents by addressing the issue of educational deprivation. It focussed on transforming deep-seated value system and changing attitudes about education, especially for girls. Given the organically interlinked nature of the project, a set of strategies was devised to continuously engage with the adolescent boys and girls, parents as well as community members. This helped in creating a relationship of trust between the project functionaries and community members which later helped in taking the project forward.



Chapter III

Reflections from the Residential Camps

One of the main activities of the Adolescent Project in Arain-Sarwar was the long and short duration residential training camps for adolescent boys and girls. These camps, while providing the essentials of basic education, conveyed the ideology of holistic education for leadership through organised action for community benefit.

The residential camps (both long and short duration and pro-active education since the first year of their inception. It has also been challenging as many of the adolescents joining these camps have been first generation learners. These camps have, therefore, focussed on innovative efforts towards integrated education that has included:

- Combining new knowledge with the already existing knowledge levels of adolescents;
- Linking learning with their context and existential realities, challenges and problems;
- Facilitating new learning through reinterpretation of their life experiences and redefining relationships with immediate environment;
- Linking learning with practice, with due emphasis on application of knowledge and skills in one's life; and
- Integrating literacy numeracy with life skills, areas of social concern and framework of values.

The short term duration camps focussed on providing an opportunity to camp graduates, school-going children and members of the women's groups to transmit both knowledge and values. There was also a special emphasis on certificate courses involving short term subject-based training to help complete elementary and secondary levels through Open schooling.

In the course of 9 years, a total of 32 camps (13 long duration and 19 short duration camps) were organised in Sarwar, Arain. A total of 1421 adolescent boys and girls participated in these camps.

Learning Together: Long Duration Residential Camps for Adolescents

The primary focus of the long duration residential camps has been facilitating learning for dropout and never-enrolled adolescents in the project area to complete their primary levels. The aim of the camp was to teach the children numeracy and literacy skills of at least grade III levels, and also inculcate a set of values and life skills among the students. In the course of three months, generally adolescents acquired level of grade III/V, besides learning about life skills, health/reproductive health-related issues and a whole range of other subjects. The participating adolescents were largely drawn from poor households and many had experienced

disadvantages and deprivation.

The specific objectives of the long duration camps were:

- Mainstreaming non-literate, never enrolled and dropout adolescents into the educational stream.
- To raise the educational levels of the adolescents according to levels set by *Doosra Dashak*.
- To facilitate an understanding among adolescents on life skills.
- To create awareness on rigid social norms and practices.
- To enable adolescents for deprived communities to plan their future through education.
- To build confidence among adolescents.
- To build strong youth forums at the village level.

The first 3-month camp for girls was organised from November 2006 to February 2007. A total of 47 girls participated in this camp. In the boys camp held during the same period a total of 33 boys participated.

The identification of learners was carried out by the project team members during the social mapping exercise. Door to door contact was made and discussions were held with parents in the households where girls and boys had dropped out. The team members recollect that it was very difficult to convince parents to send girls to the camp. Since most of the girls who attended



the camps had never stepped out of their villages, their security was a major concern for most parents and family members. To illustrate:

Ms. Shimla reached village Bhatolav to collect the girls who had been identified for the long duration camp. When she reached **Kali Bairwa's** house, Kali's grandmother confronted her. She stated that: 'I am sending my grandchild to study in the camp; but if anything untoward happens to her *mein tumhari chamadi udhed doongi* ' (I will skin you alive). While Kali was in the camp her grandmother came to visit her 2-3 times to ensure that her granddaughter was being looked after. Kali also shared in the camp since her parents had died, the grandmother was supporting her and was earning a livelihood through wage labour in order to support her studies. (*Annual Report, 2006-2007, AAEA*).

In the early years of the project, the project team was supported by resource persons from *Doosra Dashak* and Sandhan. The integrated curriculum followed in the camps focussed on learning and building an understanding around 13 issues: Language, Science, Maths, Panchayati Raj, Sanitation, Nutrition, Gender Sensitivity, Life skills, Secularism, Human Rights, RTI, Caste System and dynamics and substance/drug abuse.

Using the micro planning method (a method that was extensively used in the *Doosra Dashak*) wherein each adolescent who participates in the residential trainings (camp or LSE) becomes a *sahbhagi* (participant) and a candidate for continued inputs from the project, the academic and social growth was tracked along 13 parameters. A system of grading was evolved and the students were divided into groups as per their entry levels of learning; how they intended to adopt the learning in personal life; and his/her commitment to extend the benefits of learning to peers and community. This benchmark helped the master trainers to track and assess the learning of each student. Data collected through this process was collated and classified. A brief report of the outcomes was prepared. The learning needs of the adolescents were based on participant-wise assessment. Recalling the experience of the first long duration camp Samata, who was the gender coordinator in the first Phase, stated:

"The first week was devoted to helping girls settle in and get used to a routine in the camp - ice-breaking exercises, playing games and interaction with teachers were all attempts to familiarise the children into camp life. During the first week the teachers also gauged the levels of learning and focussed on refreshing oral concepts and behaviour. In every camp it was evident that some girls/boys were familiar with the written word and some were able to recognise alphabets and numbers. Each girl/boy was observed very closely throughout the camp period. Teachers diary was maintained daily and lesson plans were prepared. Some adolescents had to be supported a lot. In the camps there was a lot of emphasis on games/sports." (Personal Communication, 2015)

In the focus group discussions held during the Youth mela in Sarwar in August 2015, some of the adolescent girls who had attended the residential training in 2007, shared their camp experiences:

Vishnunath attended the 3-month residential camp in the year 2007 organised in Fatehgarh. She had never attended school and was married at the age of 16 years. During the social mapping exercise one of the project team members visited her house in Sapunda and informed Vishnunath's parents about the camp. Since Vishnunath had not been enrolled in school, her parents were not certain whether she could learn anything in the camp. A total of 20 girls were identified from the same village for the camp, so Vishnunath's parents agreed to send her too. Vishnunath recalls: *"It was winter and nearing Diwali, we were picked up from the house; I had packed two sets of clothes. When we reached the venue there were many other girls from nearby villages. I felt very odd and many girls started to cry, I also wanted to cry. On the first day of the camp we were made to sit in a circle and asked to introduce ourselves. We recited a prayer and sang several songs. One of the teachers explained the timetable and girls were given different responsibilities in the camp."*

"The teachers gave us a test and the girls were divided into groups of A, B, C, D and E. Since I had never been to school I was not very confident but in a month's time I started recognising matra and could read words. I also started learning tables. We played a lot of games too. Once when my parents and brother visited the camp, my brother asked me to read from a book and I read out a passage. He was happy that I had learnt something in the camp. After I returned from the camp I started attending the Prerna Kendra. Since I was married when I joined the camp there was no opposition from my husband's family. My husband is only a 8th pass and I have now completed my Class X through Open schooling. I learnt a lot in the camp and made many friends. This experience will stay with me forever."

Gayatri of Indrapura village had dropped out after completing her primary schooling. The project coordinator had visited the village and met with parents of dropout girls. He shared that they could complete their elementary levels in the camps. He motivated the parents and assured them that the girls would be looked after and took responsibility for their safety. Gayatri recollects: *"There were 50 girls in the camp. I felt odd, initially. We followed a strict timetable where we would study in the morning and then play in the evening. We learnt yoga too. The teachers were friendly and looked after us well. It was only after a month that our parents came to meet us. We also talked about health issues and the older girls were given information regarding menstrual health. We also learnt about the functioning of the panchayat and panchayat elections. After returning from the camp, I used to go to the Prerna Kendra for 2 hours in the evening. I feel that if I had not attended the camp I would have never studied further. Now things have changed in our village, many more girls are enrolled in school which has been upgraded to Upper primary, i.e. Class VIII."*

The experiences in the adolescent boys camps were also similar. There were many boys who had dropped out of school and were motivated by project personnel to join the camp and get linked to education again.

Over the years several camps were organised to address the education needs of adolescents who

15 year old Gajraj belonged to Inderpura and had dropped out of school as he failed in Class VI. When he joined the camp he used to fight with other boys and would say that he belonged to the upper caste and would not interact with boys from disadvantaged groups. He was also not serious about his studies. But when the teachers in the camp started to work with him gradually his attitude changed. He realised that he should not differentiate on the basis of caste lines and that everyone was equal before law. He started taking a keen interest in his studies and would ask a lot of questions especially during the sessions on health and social issues. As a result he stopped chewing tobacco after he finished the camp. Subsequently he became an active member of the youth group in his village.

Pradhan belonged to village Daulatpura and had dropped out from school when he was in Class IV. When in school he was irregular and would attend classes only for 10-16 days every month. He used to graze goats. Pradhan was identified to attend the 3-monthly camp of Adolescent Project at Fatehgarh. He stated: *"I got to understand the importance of education in this camp. In the camp I studied hard and completed the level of class V with 1st division. After finishing the camp I re-enrolled in the village school in class VI and continued my studies for 1 year. Then my uncle (mausaji) took me to Ajmer and I was enrolled in a school in Class VII. Currently I am studying in class Xth. My uncle runs a juice shop by the name of 'Oswal Juice Center' near Kali Temple, Faisagar Road. After returning from school at 1:30 I help with this shop till about 9 pm. I sell juice, cold drinks, ice creams and other snacks here. During my school holiday also I help out in the shop. I study from 9 to 11 pm. The remuneration for working in the shop was Rs. 2500 in 2012. Now my uncle pays me Rs. 4500 per month. I keep some money for my basic needs and send Rs. 3000 to Rs. 3500 home."*

"Prior to joining the camp in Fatehgarh, I was addicted to chewing tobacco and beetle nuts. I used to consume 4-5 packets a day. Along with the studies I was made to understand that any intoxication is injurious to health. Gradually, I quit this addiction in the camp itself. Today, I do not indulge in any type of intoxication. This camp has changed my life. Along with my education now I am also earning money and can make an economic contribution to my family. I plan to continue my studies till Class XII and then I want to join the police force."

had dropped out at different points in time. While the focus has been on scholastic learning equal importance was given to building self confidence and raising awareness on issues of health/hygiene, water and sanitation, and so on. The overall process of the camps did not change over the three phases of the project as seen in the case below:



In the four-month camp organised in November 2013, a total of 60 boys participated from 14 villages. Majority of boys belonged to ST households followed by SC and OBC. On the first day of the camp, a number of ice-breaking exercises were carried out. These activities also helped in breaking down inhibitions and hierarchies among the teachers and the taught. The first week focussed on assessing the adolescents on language and mathematics to understand their level of learning. A small written test and an oral test was carried out and the adolescents were divided into C, D, E groups as per their levels. At the end of the camp an evaluation was carried out that revealed that 24 boys completed Class V level, 14 boys were able to complete Class IV levels and 8 reached a Class III level.

The teachers also noticed that 42 out of 60 boys were addicted to smoking, and chewing tobacco. Regular discussion on the adverse impact of tobacco consumption motivated several boys to give up smoking by the end of the camp. Other issues that were discussed in detail during the camp included: Life Skill education, *Panchyati Raj*, Human Rights, sensitivity to people with special needs, confidence building and counselling for future. Various exposure visits were also organised to *Anganwadi* centre, IT centre during the course of the camp.

Out of 60 students who enrolled 46 boys stayed and completed the camp. On the last day of the camp, a function was organised where the *Zila Pramukh* and *Sarpanch*, parents and several other government functionaries were invited to felicitate the students. (*Annual Report 2013, AAEA*).

Short Duration Residential Camps

Short duration camps have primarily been of two kinds: (i) 20-day camp for continuing education of dropouts; (ii) 15-day camp for preparing adolescents for Open schooling examination of Classes X and XII. The total of 19 short duration camps were organised during the project period and 809 adolescents were trained in these camps.

The first short duration camp for boys and girls was organised in December 2006. A total of 65 adolescents participated in these camps - 34 boys and 31 girls.

Nirmala, a young girl from Sohanpura, had completed her education upto Class V. She could not continue her studies as there was no upper primary school in her village and her parents were not willing to send her to the school outside her village. When the project functionaries discussed with her parents that Nirmala could study further in the camp, she joined the 20-day camp organised by the project. Nirmala was a talkative and playful girl and a keen learner. She also helped other girls in the camp with their lessons. Her inquisitive nature and eager to learn attitude led her to become a peer instructor. After completing the camp, Nirmala started preparing for the Class VIII examination through Open schooling and cleared it with first division. She also participated in the Life Skill training, Youth Forums, and other activities organised by the project. Nirmala worked with other girls from the camp to create a girls forum in her own village. Nirmala's own interest also led to her preparing for the Class X examination through Open schooling.

A review of the various Annual Reports shows that the curriculum in the short duration camps also focussed on creating an understanding among adolescents on issues like gender equality, caste-based discrimination, nutrition, substance abuse, adolescent health, reproductive health, water and sanitation and disabilities. Different methods, like case studies, stories, role-play and audio-video materials, were used extensively in the camps.

According to the Annual Report 2009-2010, in February 2010, two short duration camps were organised in which 67 girls participated in Inderpura and 43 boys participated in the camp organised in Fatehgarh. A number of subject specialist and resource persons were invited. At the end of the camp the BEO was invited to take the final assessments of adolescents. On the last day of the camp a play based on Domestic Violence Act, 2006 was also staged by *Pandies' Theatre*.

In the subsequent years, along with students who had dropped out till Class VIII, older adolescents joined the camp who wanted to give their Class X examination through Open schooling. Subject specialists in Mathematics, English, Sanskrit and Science were invited to teach the adolescents. (AR 2010-11).

During field level discussions many of the girls who had attended the short camps stated that they were helped by the teachers to prepare for Open school examination.

Box:2 Some Voices

Meenakshi, Bhil Basti, Sarwar: *"I dropped out of the school after Class IX due to household responsibilities. However I was keen to continue my studies and complete schooling. I attended the short camp and prepared for my examinations and completed my Class X. Now I plan to give my Class XII exams."*

Suman Gujarwada: *"I attended a 15-day camp to prepare for Class X examinations. I had dropped out of school since the Senior Secondary school was 5 kilometres from my village and I heard that the school environment was not good. The behaviour of the male teachers was not good so my parents did not allow me to enrol in the school. We worked hard in the camp and different subjects were taught to us. We were encouraged to study well by the teachers."*

The Annual Report 2012-2013 gives details of the 15-day short duration camp organised in Inderpura from 22 February to 8 March 2013. A total of 40 girls participated in the camp and were prepared for Open schooling examination for Class X and XII. After a benchmark assessment, micro planning was carried out. The girls were divided into three groups and the teachers not only carried out subject-based teaching but also carried out discussions on many other issues. The case of Lalita cited below indicates that the short duration camps have facilitated the education of many girls who had to face a lot of struggle to continue their education.

Case of Lalita

A camp was organised for the preparing students to appear for Class X Examination through the Rajasthan State Open Schooling at the community centre in village Inderpura from 5th to 19th January 2015. Once during the dinner session of this short term residential camp, the Project Director found that one of the girls, **Lalita**, was forlorn. When he spoke to her it seemed as if she wanted to continue with her studies but could not as her brother was not permitting her to do so.

Lalita belonged to Borada village. She studied in a private school till Class V after which she joined the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya at Arain. During her summer vacations in class VIII, she went to Borada. Her brother at that time had gone to Kishangarh. When he returned he handed over a transfer certificate to her. She enquired as to why he got the T.C. even without once talking to her. He angrily replied that he had decided to withdraw her from the KGBV and that henceforth she would study in the village. Lalita resigned to the fact and started attending the school regularly. She was relieved that she could continue with her education.

One day on her return from school during the Class IX examinations she found her family members quarrelling. She told her brother that he should not quarrel everyday. This angered her brother and he asked her who are u to preach me. He went on to say that she had started talking too much and that he would see to it that she would never attend school. Lalita thought that he had shouted at her in anger. But when she prepared herself to go to school the next day, her brother threatened that she would find him dead if she went out of house. Her sister in law also started taunting her and questioned her if her studies were more important than her brother's life. As a result she did not go to school and failed in Class IX. She tried hard to convince her brother but he was relentless. Once when Lalita's uncle visited her family she requested him to take up her case. Looking at her eagerness to study further, he supported her and convinced her brother. She was informed about the residential camp in Inderpura where students were being trained. Then she decided to appear for Class X from Open School and joined the residential camp being organised in Inderpura.

Many of the adolescents who have attended the short duration camps were older adolescents with some educational background. In the camp they got an opportunity to prepare for the examinations in a concentrated manner and also learn about other issues affecting their lives.

Understanding Outcomes

The residential camps focused on integrated education imparted by experienced trainers and teachers. The focus was beyond literacy as it also explored development of personality and building an understanding on a range of issues. Both the long and the short duration camps attempted to link the learning with the given context of the adolescents and their existing



realities and challenges. The integrated curriculum adopted from *Doosra Dashak* also focused on combining new knowledge with the existing knowledge of the adolescents. A total of 1421 adolescents were covered over a period of 9 years in the residential camps across 90 villages.

The adolescents who attended the camp were reported to have achieved levels of Class III -V by the end of the course. Many adolescents were mainstreamed into schools and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya and have continued their studies. Other continued their learning by attending the *Prerna Kendras* and completed their elementary and secondary levels through Open schooling. Some of the outcomes reported by the field workers and coordinators during the focus group discussions include:

- The camps enabled adolescents to live together irrespective of differences of caste, class and religion.
- The various activities in the camps facilitated better articulation and expression and increased confidence and ability to reflect and think on a range of issues.
- The adolescents gained knowledge on health issues, life skills, functioning of *panchayati raj* institutions and democratic processes.
- They learnt to cultivate a positive attitude towards life and showed an overall willingness

to take up social and developmental causes.

- Awareness on substance abuse and addiction to tobacco and alcohol led many young adolescents to give up these addictions.

It also made evident that given a supportive environment, poor parents can and do make adjustments to send their children to school /learning centre and are willing to make sacrifices to make this possible.

Box 3: I Want to Join the Police Service

"My name is Sonia Mali and I am resident of Surajpura village. I studied upto Class V in the government school in my village and then dropped out of school. When the project team members visited my home, they talked to my parents about the camp where girls were given training on many issues. They persuaded and convinced my parents that I should be enrolled in the 4-month camp. I met many girls in the camp who were like me. We learnt many new things in the camp. I later attended the camp for Open schooling have now appeared for my Class X examination. I encourage girls in my village to study. I also participate in the meeting of the womens groups. I want to join the police service as I want to help women and girls who face violence and abuse. The project was like a boon for me and I want all the girls in my village to be strong!"



Chapter IV

Evolution of the *Prerna Kendra*

Prerna Kendras (PK) were started to provide continuing education to adolescents, especially in villages, where adolescents had participated in large numbers in the camps organized by the project. In the first year of the project, 4 *Prerna Kendras* were started. These emerged as multipurpose centres - with a library, an information centre and as a forum where community members and adolescents could discuss various issues pertaining to the development of the village. Each *Prerna Kendra* had an Incharge/Instructor to coordinate the various activities in the *Kendra* both inside and outside the *Kendra*. The Incharge had the responsibility of organising various learning events and activities for adolescents in and around the village. They also had the responsibility of tutoring students who were preparing for the Class VIII and Class X examinations through the Open school system.

According to the Annual Report 2006-07, in the first year a total of 132 adolescents linked up with the *Prerna Kendras* in the villages i.e. Daulatpura, Bhatolav, Samelia and Hingtada. These included adolescents who had attended the residential camps; those who had attended the *shivir* in the *prerna kendras* and other adolescents. They were given inputs and prepared for Class V and VIII examinations. There were more girls than boys linked to these centres. Several activities were carried out in the *kendras* i.e origami, science experiments, writing competition, games/sports etc.



Discussions with field coordinators in Sarwar revealed that the primary problem faced during the initial years was explaining the structure and purpose of the *Prerna Kendra* to the parents and other community members. However, gradually the *Prerna Kendra* started emerging as an information centre as well. The village community was given information about relevant government schemes and people started coming to the centre to seek information. The concept of *Gram Shiksha Kosh* (Village Education Fund) to sustain the activities of the Kendra also emerged. The funds generated were to be used for purchasing teaching learning material and meeting out costs of functioning of the *Kendra*. Youth Forum meetings and Parent/Guardian meetings were also organised at the centre. Various activities like sports meet, singing and painting competition were also activities organised at the centres on a regular basis. These

Box:4: The Case of *Prerna Kendra* at Miyan

Miyan is at a distance of about 7 kms from Sarwar. 13 girls from this village participated in the residential camp and were faced with the difficulty of continuing their education after the completion of the camp. At the request of these girls and their parents, a Continuing Education Centre was started in the village and an instructor was appointed. He motivated the villagers to support him in this work. The close association with the village community and the need for a more involved role led to this Centre being converted into a *Prerna Kendra*. Source: *Three Year Report (2006-2009)*, AAEA.

By the end of the second year, there were 10 *Prerna Kendras* functioning in different villages. A total of 643 adolescents (354 girls and 289 boys) were linked to these kendras. Of these 37 adolescents were preparing for Class V examinations and 25 were preparing for Class VIII examinations.

In 2010-11, it was decided that to increase the participation of the community members in the *Prerna Kendras*, each centre should also be developed around a core issue/focus area. The areas identified were:

<i>Prerna Kendra / Village</i>	Core Issue
Bhagwanpura	Science Centre
Syar	Information Centre
Tajpura	Environment Centre
Daulatpura	Art and Culture
Laxmipura	Art and Culture
Goverdhanpura	Art and Culture
Sapunda	Information Centre
Kasana	Environment Centre
Hingonia	Library

Prerna Kendras and Focus Areas

In the Centre which developed as a Science Centre, small experiments were carried out. Magic shows were also organised. In the centre that had a focus on environment seeds and soil samples were collected; the centre with a focus on art and culture organised dance, *mehndi* (henna design) and song competition. In the information centre all types of information pertaining to government schemes and programmes were collated. The centre where the library was opened promoted reading among community members and adolescent boys and girls. The adolescents who were linked to these centres benefitted from all the activities as it gave them an opportunity to learn new things (AR-2010-11).

In the *Prerna Kendra* in Hingonia students who were enrolled in Classes IX and X used to come and study mathematics and English. All of them were helped by the instructor. When the examination results were announced by the school, out of the 55 students who had passed the

The Prerna Kendra in my village Daulatpura started functioning in the year 2006. I used to attend school and in the evening go and study in the Prerna Kendra. Many other adolescent girls and boys used to come to the centre and study. The Instructor Shri Ramlal Gurjar was very popular and also used to make us play lot of games. Initially, I was not confident, I could barely speak or express my opinion. However, due to the efforts taken by the project staff, I started speaking with confidence. We also started the Yuva Manch and named it Azad Hind Yuva Manch. Our meetings were held at the Prerna Kendra. I was able to reach Class XI due to the Prerna Kendra. Many adolescents have been helped to appear for different examinations.

Gradually, the number of *Prerna Kendras* also increased. By the end of the second phase a total of 18 *Prerna Kendra's* were functioning in Sarwar Block. A total of 549 adolescents (170 boys and 379 girls) were linked to these centres. The creative activities carried out in the *Prerna Kendra's* included embroidery, learning new/modern *mehendi* designs, preparing greeting cards

Box:5 Case of Bhil Basti- Sarwar

The *Bhil basti* is a *dhani* located in the Sarwar Nagar Palika area and is 2 kilometres from Sarwar town. The *basti* is divided into three parts and is spread over an area of 3 kilometres. The work with adolescents in this *dhani* was initiated in the third phase of the project i.e. in September, 2012. According to the survey carried out in 2012, there were a total of 145 households in the *dhani* - 30 are SC and 115 are STs. Most of the houses were *kaccha* and the *Kalbeliya* community was residing in tents. There was no proper road leading to the *basti* and during rainy season it was difficult to access the area. There was no electricity. The main source of livelihood was casual labour as well as trading in cattle. Some persons and children were also involved in collecting rough garnet stones.

The project team carried out a door-to-door survey and organised discussions with the

community women and men in the area. The survey indicated that the households had poor reach to government programmes and had remained deprived of education, health, water and electricity facilities. There were 52 children in school-going age group in the *basti* but there was no schooling facility within reach. In the initial phase of project implementation in this area a total of 26 boys and 10 girls were identified for the long duration camps and 8 boys and 8 girls for the short duration camps. Some of the adolescents who attended had attended the camp are now enrolled in school:

Jaisingh Bagariya is 15-year old and is a student of Class VII in the Government school in Sarwar. His father works in the nearby stone crushing factory and has studied upto Class XII. His mother never went to school. Jaisingh has 4 siblings. According to Jaisingh: *"Prior to joining the 4-month camp, I used to take goats for grazing, I had never attended school; then Devnarayanji met my parents and told them that they should send me to the camp. He told them that I would learn many new things in the camp. When I reached the camp there were many other boys like me there: we were 63 boys in the camp. Initially, I made friends with a few boys of my own community; later on I became friends with everyone. We started learning about words and would make many words from one word. The teachers were very helpful and would encourage us to study hard. We also played many games in the camp. I could complete my level V in the camp and was given a certificate. Then, with the support from the project team, my father got me enrolled in school in Sarwar in Class VI. I am studying in Class VII now. I go to school everyday and attend the Prerna Kendra in the evening. I am determined to finish my schooling. If I had not attended the camp I would have wasted my time grazing goats!"*

12-year old **Chandra Prakash** who is currently enrolled in Class VI, also attended a camp in 2012. He stated: *"I stayed in the camp for 4 months and did not think about my home or miss my parents. Apart from studies we learnt many songs in the camp and also trained in theatre. We used have lot of discussion on health-hygiene, child marriage, addiction to drinking and smoking. We also discussed issues related to panchayat and how elections are conducted. I now realise that it is important to study and would like to improve the economic condition of my family."*

A Prerna Kendra (centre functioning in the evening) was started in the community hall as part of the project to facilitate their education. According to **Satyanarayan Rao**: *"We started the Kendra on 8th April 2013 after a community meeting. In the past two years a total of 52 adolescents have been linked to camps from this basti and 32 have been mainstreamed."*

16-year old **Meenakshi** dropped out of government school after completing Class IX stated: *"I was advised by my teacher that I could appear for Class X examination through Open schooling. I came to the Prerna Kendra and was informed that I could join the 15 day camp where I would be coached to take the examination. I joined that camp and we used to have*

studied a lot and could give my exams without a problem and cleared the examination. I am also preparing for my Class XII examination through Open schooling. The camp gave many girls like me an opportunity to continue my education."

"Given the poor conditions of water and electricity in the basti, the community, along with the project team, also took up the issue of electricity and water supply in the basti. They decided to write an application to the BDO and local MLA. Due to the motivation and regular support of the project team the land where the basti was located was converted into 'Abadi land' for residential purpose in 2014. The community members also put a lot of pressure on local authorities and 36 household electric connections were obtained. Today 70 households have electricity connections. Water supply was also restored in the village due to the efforts of the Yuva Manch and women's groups. Beela Devi, recalling the incident, stated that we all went to the BDO's office and told him that - 'You are sitting comfortably with electricity in your office but we have no electricity and are bitten by snakes and insects at night' - and after our protest the electric connections were provided in 15 days!"

One of the main tasks of the project was to pressurise the education department to start a school in this area. A Sanskrit school was transferred to this area in 2014. The total enrolment in this school is 32. But there is no school building as yet. The classes are conducted in the *Prerna Kendra*.

A Youth *Mela* was also organised in the *basti* in August 2015 in which around 500 persons participated. The participants included adolescents associated with from five *Prerna Kendras* in Gujarwada, Supa, Sampla, Gopalpur and Sarwar, teachers, *panchayat* members and members of women's groups and *Yuva Manch* and IMDAAD. Several competitions were organised for the adolescents. Many of the youth who had attended the camps also shared their experiences. A tree plantation was also organised in the *basti*. The *Mela* ended with a resolution that the work on education would be continued post the project with community efforts.

According to the community women and men who met during this documentation, the project team has enabled members of the community to access various government entitlements like compensation on death of household head, widow pension, old-age pension, *jananani suraksha yojana*, opened bank accounts, *Bhamashah* cards. Some effort has also been taken to create awareness on child marriage and stop child marriages. (AAEA, 2015).

There are also instances wherein young men who had been associated as Instructors in the PK have become government teachers:

Prahalad Kumawat is a government teacher today in village Samelia. In 2006 Prahalad got associated with the Adolescent Project and got an opportunity to go to Bhawanagarh in Baran district to attend a Science *Mela* being organised by *Doosra Dashak*. When he came back to Sarwar he participated in the 20-day adolescent camp as a Master trainer. He later joined

the project as a Coordinator and was made incharge of 5 PK. Later, he also worked as an Instructor in one of the *Prerna Kendras*. He would teach the adolescents who would come to the centre. He decided to improve his own educational qualifications and completed his B.Ed from Jammu University. In 2012, he was selected as a government teacher and joined the school in Samelia. He continued to be associated with the youth forum in the village. As a government teacher he was also invited by the project functionaries to conduct the end line assessment of the adolescents attending the 20-day camp. (*Personal Communication,2015*).

By the end of the third phase of the project the number of *Prerna Kendras* were reduced to 5.

Over the years a total of 1594 adolescents were linked to the *Prerna Kendras* in the various villages. Since the project period was ending in 2015, the project team also initiated a dialogue with the community members on how the *Prerna Kendras* would be sustained.



Chapter V

Mobilising Community Women and Youth Groups

The project viewed working with women and youth as an essential part of working with adolescents. There was an early realisation that in order to promote girl's education it was also important to focus on women's collective as a support system for girl's education.

Working With Women's Groups

Formation of women's groups was viewed as an entry strategy into new villages and also as a mechanism for encouraging families to send their non-school going children to the residential camps. According to the Annual Report 2006-07, in the first year women's meetings were organised in different villages wherein a number of issues affecting women's lives were discussed and the need to form a collective emerged. Gradually, due to the efforts of the team members women started participating in project activities.

The first training of women in the project was organised in June 2007 in Sarwar. The objective of the training was to facilitate women to understand their own status within the household and community and enabling them to become 'active actors' in development. On the day of the training women started gathering at the training venue. The resource person and trainer, Asha, started an informal discussion and the training began with women singing *Meera Bhajans*. There was lot of discussion on the life of Meera Bai and how she had to face a lot of humiliation from her family and society. The women pointed out that women were subjected to a lot of injustice in everyday life and that this situation should change.

During the three-day training all the women stayed together and rose above caste distinctions. They analysed problems related to girls status, their education. Violence against women was another issue that was taken up for detailed discussion. An exposure visit to the local police station was also organised. The women also talked about alcohol consumption among men in their homes and villages and consequent violence meted out on women and girls. A number of case studies on women leaders who had fought for their rights were discussed. The women realised the importance of collective and the need to build strong women's groups. On the last day of the training women prepared an action plan on the activities they would take up in their own villages.

Over time, some of the women's groups have come together for resolving village level problems related to water and electric supply; they have also taken action against cases of violence against women. 'Successful' women's groups had strong leaders who were able to address both community problems and those of individual members. Many women emerged as leaders in the project area like the case of Beela Devi cited below:

Box 6: Our Struggle for Bringing Electricity in Our Village

My name is Beela Devi Bheel and I reside in Bheel Basti, Sarwar. When the Prerna Kendra was started in our Dhani, all of us were happy. We felt that the adolescents would not only study but also learn valuable life lessons at the Kendra. When the members of the project team, would organise a group meeting with the women, I wondered what they would teach us. When we first went for the meeting, we discussed the composition of the group. We were also told that no money would be given for attending the meeting. We talked about all the relevant aspects of our lives and together tried to find solutions to our problems. Once during a meeting some women raised the issue that there has been no electricity for the last 25 years in the village/basti and as a result they were forced to live in darkness. The women also complained that politicians only visit when they have to ask for votes and then did not look back or help. During the meeting the field coordinator suggested that if the women's group made an effort, then the problem of electricity could be resolved. Since the women were keen to resolve the issue, they agreed and with the help of project team, prepared a memorandum for the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Sarwar. They also decided that no woman would go for work the next day and they would all go to meet the SDO. It was further decided that those not present in the meeting would be told about the action taken by the group.

However, the next day when it was time to go to the SDO's office, more than half of the women dropped out and they went to the nearby factory for work. Even then I did not lose hope. I went to the factory and made all women quit work and took them all to the SDO's office. For the first time I got the opportunity to talk to the officer along with other women. The SDO assured that action would be taken immediately. After 20 days, officers from the electricity department came to the dhani and electric poles were erected. Everyone in the dhani was happy. I learnt about the importance of collective work from this project. Even now we have our meetings and we discuss issues like health, education, consumption of tobacco and alcohol, vaccination etc.

The members of the women's group have also made an effort to get the adolescents involved in education camps. Recently the Prerna Kendra run by the project, made me the president with the consent of the gram shiksha samiti. I was delighted and decided that I would work towards improving the level of education in the village. By going in the meetings and becoming a part of the various training, my life has taken a turn for the better.

*My name is **Rameshwari** and I am a resident of Bhagwanpura and a member of the women's group that was formed under the adolescent project. The meeting of the samooch takes place every month and a number of local issues related to child marriage, sanitation and hygiene, work and education are discussed in these meetings. The meetings have helped me to learn about government programmes.*

According to the data shared by the project team till March 2015, a total of 442 women were organised across 38 villages of 3 clusters of project area.



Formation of Youth Forums and IMDAAD

One of the positive outcomes of the adolescent project was the emergence of youth forums in the project area. The idea of social change as enunciated in the project proposal was made possible by these small organizations working at the rural level. The formation of IMDAAD, a collective of the youth forums and its active performance, may be seen as the result of work done in the past few years. IMDAAD implies support and cooperation. The youth groups worked as catalysts for positive action and motivating participants at the rural level. As of March 2015 a total of 683 adolescents (600 boys and 83 girls) of 47 villages across 3 clusters of project area had become members of the youth forums.

In the third year of the project i.e. in 2008, IMDAAD took the shape of a block level association of the youth. In the early years a number of strong and active participants emerged. A conversation with members of several youth forums threw up the need for a block level organisation. Office bearers were selected and by common consent the association was named IMDAAD.

IMDAAD took on the responsibility of providing periodic and need based guidance and support to youth forums and making them self-reliant. The key areas of work identified included:

- To make the youth forums and IMDAAD self-reliant.
- To enhance abilities of members.
- To work towards a youth movement in the project villages through IMDAAD.

- To increase participation of girls in forums and IMDAAD.
- To encourage new emerging forums.

IMDAAD meetings were held once in 2 months in which representative of different youth forums shared their problems and discussed solutions. The rules of the organisation were also prepared by the young men and women who were involved. A token contribution of Rs. 30 was collected from each member to make the group self-reliant. The accounts and receipt book in the name of IMDAAD was also maintained to ensure complete transparency.



The members of IMDAAD visited villages and helped in resolving problems of the elderly and women. They members helped in writing out applications for old age pension, widow pension and Palanhar yojana which intended to provide care to destitute children. Special emphasis was also laid on strengthening new forums through meetings and training at block level. To illustrate:

IMDAAD - YUVA MANCH - Block Level Meeting: 31st May 2008 - 1st June 2008

The meet began with introductions. The various youth groups from 9 villages shared the activities they had carried out in their respective villages. These included tree plantation, cleaning of drains, survey of students who consume tobacco or drugs, cleaning village paths/ roads, preparing list of disabled persons in the village, slogan writing, helping during pulse polio campaign, cleaning village water tanks, helping community members to fill up pension forms, survey of persons eligible for pension schemes, opening bank accounts and fixing and repairing water pipelines;

During the meet the youth groups all discussed the various challenges faced by them. These included:-

- Lack of roads.
- Lack of ANM.

- Unhygienic surrounding - water collection.
- Lack of transport facility.
- No playgrounds in school.
- The PRI/Sarpanch does not take an interest in village infrastructure.
- Some community members are not supportive and oppose initiative taken by youth.
- Local level politics.

On the second day of the meet the participants discussed the need for youth to collectively come together as a group as it would help:

- In building community linkages.
- Serving the disadvantaged and poor.
- Raising voice against any injustice.
- Can take up issues and put pressure.
- Group identity can help in improving village environment.

In the meeting the basic rules to be followed in IMDAAD were also put together.

Box: 7 Reflections, Ranjeet: Youth Leader and President IMDAAD

30-year old **Ranjeet** belongs to village Manpura, 16 km from Sarwar. His parents did not receive any formal education. His father was a *Bhat* (traditional geneologist) and mother was a housemaker. He has four siblings, 2 brothers and 2 sisters. His brother studied upto Class VII but sisters are only literate.

Ranjeet is a double MA and is currently working as Block Co-ordinator for the 'Arogya Pulse Pariyojana' run by Disha Organisation in Ajmer.

Ranjeet recalls: *"When I look back I realise that eight years back I had almost no social existence and identity in the community. But today I am not just self reliant but also have a special status and identity in the community and the nearby area. This transformation is the result of my association with the Project started for adolescent education and development in Sarwar. I joined the adolescent project as a volunteer in 2007 and got involved in the 'Theatre Training' organised in January 2007. I participated in their activities with full energy and enthusiasm. I also realised that the adolescents who had not got opportunities to study should be supported."*

"With the help of the project I was trained as a journalist in Vividha in 2008 and started working on the various village-related problems. When the Yuva Manch was federated as IMDAAD at the block level, I was unanimously selected as the President. I organised a Yuva Mela in my village and took up development issues like - collection of drainage water and irregular supply of electricity. I also helped getting job cards and identifying the right people for MNREGA. We put a stop to corrupt practices in MNREGS. We also carried

out a survey of 1500 households across four villages on addiction among youth in the 15 years to 25 years age group in the project area. Alcohol addiction and gutka-tobacco chewing was found to be high. The findings of the survey were shared with the village community. This resulted in a ban on liquor sales in some of the village."

"The youth groups worked with women and collectively tried to resolve village level issues. I have represented IMDAAD in several Youth conferences organised in different districts where Doosra Dashak is working. Due to the education and the communication skills learnt during the project, I became confident and articulate. I joined an NGO and got the opportunity to work with the tribal community of Udaipur for two years. My work was recognised and I was given the Best Social Worker Award in the district by the SDM on 26 January 2015."

"I would like to put on record that if I had not come in contact with the project, I would not be the person I am today. When someone acknowledges me as a youth leader and social worker, today I feel very proud that I was able to make a small difference to my village. I hope to continue my efforts even after the project has been completed. This has become the goal of my life and I will always strive to live by the morals and values, I learnt through my association with the project."

Discussion with some members of the youth group in Sarwar during the field visit, revealed that from time to time the Youth Forums have organised meetings and training to arrive at a collective understanding of development issues. They also tried to find local solutions to various problems like corrupt practices in government schemes, unemployment, lack of awareness, female illiteracy, lack of hygiene, and social evils like child marriage, dowry and caste-based exclusion. The youth groups also used various means of communication like *nukkad natak*, slogan writing, writing poems and songs and making posters to create awareness in the project villages.

16 year old **Nirmala Dhakad** of village Sohanpura, had dropped out of school after completing her primary schooling. She participated in the first 20-day residential camp organised for adolescent girls. On completion of the camp she was keen to complete her Class VIII and started preparing for it. She also attended various training programmes organised by the project. She became an active member of IMDAAD and helped the adolescent girls in her village to set up a *Kishori Manch*. Through this forum they addressed several issues. For example: One of the problems in the village was that the ANM was irregular and no one in the village was aware of her schedule. The girls wrote an application to the Incharge of the PHC, demanding that the ANM visit their village on a regular basis. They also got signatures of the community men and women. Acting on the application, the PHC Incharge instructed the ANM to visit the village regularly. She contacted the members of the *Kishori Manch* and the girls helped her in identifying women and children who needed to be vaccinated, etc. The ANM assured the girls that she would make regular visits and requested the girls that they should call her whenever there was a problem and not complain to the authorities.

As is evident mobilising the youth through IMDAAD provided a platform for the youth to engage in practical action and use the knowledge and capacities gained through program inputs. It also provided solidarity and mutual support among the adolescents. The leadership trainings provided additional capacity building to create a cadre of youth leaders for social change. The program focussed on building individual capacities and collectives of socially aware individuals. These forums also helped make most of the youthful energy that would otherwise get dissipated into negative behaviour patterns.

Gayatri Gujar took the stage and confidently spoke about her camp experience and her subsequent education journey in the *Yuva Mela* organised in Sarwar in August 2015. She spoke of how she was an active member of *Yuva Manch* and had attended several trainings on Life Skills Education and Theatre Training. She is now enrolled in college and is a role model for girls in her village. She aspires to become a teacher and wants to teach children who have been deprived of education.



Chapter VI Other Initiatives

A number of other activities were also intrinsic part of the project. These focussed on imparting life skill education, training in theatre, working with government schools, building understanding on issues of Violence against women, and evaluation through micro planning. Enhancing and building professional skill of the project management team was also crucial to help in achieving the expected outcomes.

Life Skills Training

Life skills training camps were organized since the beginning of the project. The participants were drawn from among school-going children and adolescents who had dropped out. The duration of these trainings was 4-5 days. The first day usually focussed on familiarizing the participants with each other and making them comfortable in the training venue. The learning needs were outlined by the trainers and an attempt was made to help them go beyond their individual experiences and to appreciate what has been inaccessible to them so far.

In the training for girls, the atmosphere was as important as the skills they learnt. The project team attempted to create a free and light-hearted atmosphere in which the girls were enabled to forge an identity for themselves and learn to live life with confidence.

It was the last day of life skills training for girls. The mood was upbeat and celebratory. The girls were singing, dancing, teasing their instructors and imitating each other for fun. Among this group were girls from Manoharpura and Gurjarwada villages. They insisted on inviting not only the staff but also the Project Director to celebrate with them. In the course of their conversation they told the project members that their English teacher would come drunk to class, ask them for money for his alcohol, misbehave with the older girls and would even be violent. The girls' anger was palpable as they narrated these incidents. One of the girls from Gurjarwada told us that when she told her family about this, she was made to drop out from school. The other girl was scared that the same would happen with her and hoping to continue her education, was forced to put up with the teacher's abusive behaviour.

The girls were assured that the project members would speak with their families and would take some action about the teacher. The parents were told about the teacher and they then took the matter up with him. As a result there was an improvement in the situation within the school and the trust in the project also grew.

Reports were carried in newspapers about the teacher, describing his behavior without

mentioning the names of the girls. The education department took this seriously and information about drunken behaviour of staff was sought from the heads of all schools. This has had a great impact on all the schools in the area. *AAEA (2006-2009)*.

Similarly during the Life Skill training for boys, they were encouraged to be zealous, to create a positive image of themselves in society and to work towards achieving their goals. Discussions and activities were organized to facilitate the same. By the end of the training, these boys become articulate about their problems and ideas. A great improvement was noticed in their confidence levels. They could talk freely about issues they were hesitant to talk about earlier. A case to cite is as follows:

For boys, determination of goals was the primary focus of the training. They spoke of their ambitions, of becoming big businessmen, doctors, engineers, army men, painters, singers, musicians and political leaders. They wrote about what they would have to do in order to attain their goals and then worked out a step-by-step plan of goals for each year. They were surprised and inspired with how they had managed to figure out a direction for themselves in such a short while. The training was seen by them as a guidance camp and they looked upto to the Project Director as their role model. *Three Year Report (2006-2009), AAEA*.

According the Annual Report 2014-15 a total of 77 adolescents of 9 villages participated in the Life Skill Education training in Jirota.

Training in Theatre

Pandies' Theatre, a Delhi-based activist theatre group, has been training marginalized children to create theatre that articulates their perspective on their problems. The group, using theatre as a politically empowering tool, does not envisage the role of theatre as merely one of confidence building or personality development but a methodology that enables those on the margins to make contributions to the social process, a space usually denied to them by the powerful.

The *Pandies' Theatre* group was associated with the Adolescent project in Sarwar with a focus on empowering communities on the margins so that they can articulate their perspectives and also making the mainstream acknowledge their contribution as important. It has been a long-term partnership. *Pandies' Theatre* organised several workshops over the project period in which number of adolescents participated.

According to the consolidated report (2006-2009), the first two workshops were in Sarwar village, Arain distirct. They were conducted in residential camps. The purpose of these workshops was to teach children the nuances of theatre performances and to enable them to articulate their points of view on issues concerning their existence. Family, gender relations, education and government policy: all came up for discussion and critique. The workshops followed a similar trajectory: the facilitators divided the fifty plus (an almost equal mix of boys and girls) young participants into four groups. These groups were then taken through a theatrical methodology



of theatre games, image and machine-making, narrativisation/short story making, scripting and performance. The participants were encouraged to increasingly do things by themselves with the facilitators taking a back seat, keeping their involvement at an *a la carte* basis in the latter stages of the workshop.

The first five-day workshop in January 2007 culminated in a public performance on 28th January. The second set of workshops took place in June 2008, from 22nd June ending with a public performance in another village on the 28th. Each time four plays emerged from the exercise. The first experience was of raw theatre where the theatrical mode opened door of communication and revealed repressed zones that would normally not find their way to anyone outside the immediate community. The plays were on the following themes: Father's alcoholism cured by the children, education of the girl child, plight of the rape victim, and dowry. The first set of workshops worked on essential but simpler themes, the second evidenced a far more complex grappling with issues of their concern - fantasy, desire and sexual relationships, same sex relations found articulation in the second series. The themes were: Debt suicide, education of the young women after marriage, girl acquiring magical powers and setting right social wrongs. The issues of homosexuality and same sex marriage were also discussed. The transition from the first to the second not only showed an increase in confidence of adolescent boys and girls but the ability to think and contribute on major issues usually thought to be beyond their capability was also evident. The third foray, facilitated by AAEEA in their office premises, was in a De-addiction and Home-placement programme for platform children run by NGO, *Khilti Kaliyan*.

The first set of workshops was conducted by Sanjay Kumar and team members. Ms. Anuradha Marwah, the Secretary of the Association, was co-facilitator in both the workshops. Reflecting on the workshops, **Sanyukata Saha**, a young facilitator, recounted:

The two workshops with AAEEA's Sarwar project that I have been a part of over the past couple of years have been imperative in my understanding of applied theatre today. Applied theatre does not work if you are an alien in the community. However, my first day at these workshops proved that art has the possibility of overcoming all such divisions. As language decided to be the primary issue of concern with us trying to communicate in Hindi and the children choosing a dialect of Marwari instead, we stood in front of them awkward and indecisive. As a girl with short hair (me!) stood in front of them, while a boy with long hair and painted toes stood beside her, the children sat there pointing at us, cracking jokes in a language we did not understand, and laughed.

Music, however, came to our rescue as one of our desperate minds suggested a game of Antakshari. A number of folk songs and Bollywood numbers after we had finally cracked the stubborn wall of ice. As I look back on those two and half days of intensive workshops, I think it was the awkwardness of the first few moments that broke the 'us' and them.

The workshop however, was more challenging than we were prepared for. The girls in my group threw the word 'rape' in the conversation like common salt. Some of the girls were as young as seven or eight. The boys in the group were a little uncomfortable but somehow apathetic. We decided to centre our piece on this issue. One of the older girls in the group seemed more personally affected by the issue than the others and she played the role of a victim of gang rape. On the day of the performance (in a village called Inderpura) her last monologue left the audience in an uncomfortable silence. The girl later took on the role of a leader within the camp and went on to work as one of the facilitators for the organization.

The next workshop in Sarwar, almost a year later, brought with it a different set of challenges. Although one felt at home with most of the facilitators and as few of the participants were from our previous workshops, most of the faces were new. My group was really keen on taking up the issue of women's education in Rajasthan. As the State still had high instances of child marriage, education of the married girl is of concern amongst educationists. An unmarried girl, or one who has not started living with her in-laws, can still be considered fit to study. However, once a woman is bound by the marital world, she is bound by domestic responsibilities, left with no space to exploit her potential.

A play around this issue was problematic as one of the boys in the group, who had a young bride in his house, could not reconcile to the issue. For him the concept of his wife devoting time to education while she was expected to look after the household seemed unacceptable. There were involved debates within the group about the issue but none could get him to agree that it was important and possible for his young wife to gain from education. Despite his discomfort he volunteered to play the role of an adolescent boy who helps the new bride benefit from education despite objections from the family and the society. Without conviction in the issue he could not stay involved in the process. A number of disagreements with the group later, our protagonist did not show up for one of the sessions. The rest of the group unanimously decided that he could not be a part of the piece. I supported their decision.

In retrospect I wonder if this particular workshop was not as successful for my group as it could have been. The one dissenting voice was thrown out and the possibility of encouraging debates with our audience with him as the antagonist's voice might have worked in favour of the issues that we were trying to raise. However, it might have been a pragmatic concern as the boy had resorted to violence on being asked to leave. Also, his presence in the group had enriched the discussions within the group and reached a point from where it could not lead to anything positive.

As a postgraduate student of 'Theatre and Development Studies', I see these workshops and their analysis as an important resource for my understanding of applied theatre in the country. Negotiations with caste, gender, language, class, and religion, define and dynamics of the frameworks within which one has to work. Sarwar provided a site of dialogue with all of these. (Source AAEA, 2010).

Working with School Systems

The work with school systems has been an intrinsic part of the adolescent project in Sarwar. Focussed work on with schools began in September 2009 in 7 schools of the project area. A total of 145 adolescents in schools were addressed. Different activities were organised with school students i.e. essay writing, training on LSE, debate competitions and leadership development. Consequently, systematic work was carried out with teachers and students of government schools in different clusters.

During the period 2009-2015, approximately 6064 adolescents and 100 teachers have participated in various activities with government schools. These included:

Participation in School Enrolment Drive: In 2010-2011 rallies were organised at the beginning of the academic session, to motivate children from marginalised groups to enrol in schools in large numbers.

Training of Adolescents in Schools: In 2011-2012 an effort was made by the members of the *Yuva Manch* to enrol school going adolescents as members of *Yuva Manch*. They also organised trainings in leadership, self expression and sanitation and hygiene for these students.

Mainstreaming of Out of School Children: In 2012-13, a total of 43 children who were out of school were mainstreamed in schools. 3 students were also enrolled in private schools as per RTE. In 2013-14, 50 adolescents who had attended the long duration camp in Inderpura, were mainstreamed in the schools

In 2014, a total of 27 girls of 11 villages were mainstreamed in the KGBV in Kekri and Arain blocks.

Organising Essay Competition: In 2012-13, a total of 430 students participated in an essay competition on *Hindi Diwas*.



Interactions with Members of SMC: Regular interactions to improve school conditions and facilities have been carried out across government schools in the project area. Training of SMC members have also been organised wherein the role of SMC members, their rights and duties have been explained and discussed along with maintaining income and expenditure account.

Monitoring Supply and Quality of Mid-day Meal: The project team, alongwith the teachers, made constant effort to check the supply and quality of mid-day meal in the schools in the project area.

Academic Support for Quality Improvement: In several schools an effort was made to help students with Hindi writing and solving problems in Maths, especially definitions and recognition of geometrical shapes. Discussions were carried out with teachers on CCE and the need to maintain individual record of students' progress.

Training on Health and Hygiene: Effort was made to share information on the adverse impact of tobacco and alcohol addiction, the importance of nutritious diet and following hygienic practices.

Training of Head Teachers and Teachers: Trainings have also been organised with around 100 teachers on the following issues: National Curriculum Framework, Right to Education, Functioning of School Management Committees, Identifying Dropout Students, Maintaining Teacher's Diary and Developing Students Portfolio and Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation.

Micro Planning Process

The micro planning process adopted from *Doosra Dashak* combined the monitoring of participants, reviewing the project outcomes and planning for the future. Project implementation was seen to be facilitated through sustained contact with participants, assessment of the quality of residential training, followed by monitoring at six monthly intervals. A bench mark was established

at the outset through an understanding of the level of skills of the participant. An assessment of progress was further made at the end of a residential training and later monitored at six monthly intervals. The assessments were based on the basis of the 13-15 parameters. As formulated by DD the major thrust areas were: literacy, language, arithmetic, leadership qualities, articulation skills, equality of caste and religion, democracy and democratic values, rural development, personal cleanliness, cleanliness of surroundings, health and nutrition, reproductive health, maternal health, information about health facilities, drinking water and substance abuse.

The indicators of each parameter were visualised at three levels:

- Acquired Knowledge and Understanding.
- Its Translation Into Personal Life.
- Willingness of Participants to Serve Others in the Community.

A grading of each participant with respect to each parameter was attempted on a five-point scale from A - E, where A denotes the highest level of performance, and E the lowest. Data collected through this process was collated and classified. It served both as a review and helped in planning process.

According to the Three-Year Report (2006-2009) the micro planning process was adopted from the second year onwards. Before the first micro planning process, a two-day training programme was organised for the project staff. On the suggestion of the team members the micro planning materials/tools were consolidated and a module was prepared. This consisted of questions, diagrams, topics for discussions and background material to cover all grading respects. After the first micro planning exercise, it was evident that the participants at various levels were taking leadership in village level activities. For reproductive health there was consistent progress as the grading improved in the three micro plans. It was evident that the participants were discussing bodily functions and physical and psychological changes during adolescence with their peers with confidence. (AAEA, 2009).

Professional Development and Capacity Building of Project Team

Since the project was challenging and required developing an understanding on a range of issues impacting adolescent lives, professional development of the project personnel was an intrinsic activity and viewed as process of human development. New knowledge and skills were acquired through specialised trainings, mutual learning and critical reflection on practice. The team members were encouraged to participate in various training programmes and issue based workshops. Exposure visits were also organised to different organisations.

The various annual reports indicate that project team members regularly participated in the various training/ activities organised by Doosra Dashak in different districts like Life Skill

Education, Micro planning, Science fairs, Women's meet. The team members also attended trainings on conducting Jansunwai and social audit, Sakshar Bharat, subject based training in Hindi and Mathematics, using theatre in education and formation of SMCs. Some of the team members also participated in a National level workshop on Water conservation in Delhi in 2013. In 2014 the team members also participated in a gender sensitization training in AAEA, Ajmer.

According to the three yearly report (2006-2009) "Workers are told to prepare different issues and then to create a general understanding about them. They are asked to prepare work-related or issue-based action plans. They have to give presentations that can be understood by everyone and have to coordinate the sessions. At RPMs zonal level presentations have to be done differently, using charts, audio recordings, video recordings, exhibitions, plays, songs, poems or photographs. All these inputs also helped the project team members in handling sessions at field and block level trainings. The experiences of some project personnel, are cited below:

Shiv Singh Chauhan, was a resident of Moyna, sub-division Masooda, district Ajmer. He had experience of community development as he had worked with several organisations in the field. When he joined the project in Sarwar he found that whenever an activity is planned, the opinion of all workers was sought. Each worker in the project had information regarding the budget for each activity and how much money had been spent. Everything was transparent unlike the organisations he had previously worked with. He got the opportunity to lead and to work with women at the ground level. He also learnt to closely interact with disadvantaged groups and to eat and sleep in their homes. Initially, it was all difficult but gradually, it seemed the natural thing to do. He attended various trainings organised by Doosra Dashak and had the opportunity to teach and learn, to convert his weaknesses into strengths. He also learnt to express himself clearly and coherently.

Mahavir Prasad Sahu joined the project as a trainer. The learning opportunities offered by the programmes and training of the project gradually helped him become a field coordinator. There were a lot of challenges in working with adolescents but the team members always faced the challenges that enhanced their leadership potential, and provided an opportunity for demonstrating their ability and efficiency. To add value to the efforts of the workers, research and planning were carried out systematically and with complete impartiality. There was no space for prejudice as all tasks were carried out in a transparent and logical manner. The various training programmes led to honing leadership qualities and also improved efficiency.

It is evident that the project interventions were aimed at multiple levels in the broad framework of integrated education combining areas such as education, awareness generation and development issues. In every phase of the project some activities were expanded while new activities and intervention areas were also added. The clear focus on addressing needs of the marginalised was not lost throughout the intervention years.

Chapter VII

Distilling the Learning and Way Forward

The project on Adolescents Education and Development was initiated in Arain-Sarwar with a specific purpose. The project area was challenging as most development indicators were adverse and caste and gender based exclusion acute. It was evident that there were a large number of adolescents from disadvantaged communities who were out of schools and were not engaged in any academic activity. The project aimed to fill this gap by addressing educational concerns of this deprived group. The strategy adopted was wide ranging. The target group was identified systematically. An effort was made to bring together the relevant stakeholders i.e. parents, community members, youth groups, women's groups, PRIs, teachers and school management who supported the process of social transformation.

The focus on adolescents in the project was highly relevant and responded to a major need. It focussed on building confidence and self reliance of adolescents in Sarwar block, in addition to enhancing their capacity to reflect, analyse and articulate their problems. It increased awareness on health and hygiene, reproductive /maternal health and related issues of human rights, democracy as a way of life, women's equality and gender discrimination, discrimination on the basis of caste, class and religion and so on. The primary focus was to develop a wide ranging worldview of issues impacting adolescent life.

Since the project was concentrated in one block the various interventions were designed taking into account the local context. The support systems were provided by community women and men, women's groups, youth groups and teachers and PRI representatives.

The following Table 2 on next page presents the overall coverage and reach of the project over the project period 2006-2015 It indicates that over 25000 individuals were covered by the project through different activities.

According to the Secretary of AAEA, Ajmer, It took 2-3 years for the project to emerge and establish itself. There were too many challenges to address. It was only in 2009 that the activities became more focussed. The consolidation of the first phase also took place during this time. (Personal Communication, 2015).

The project team members also articulated that the project helped create a relationship with the community and built an environment for education. The fact that the project was addressing adolescents in the age group of 11-20 years itself was challenging as it is a stage where they undergo both physical and emotional changes. The biggest challenge was also building the trust with parents ,so that they would send children to the camps.

Table 2: Coverage and Reach of Project Activities 2006-2015

Name of Activity	No of Activities	No of Participants / Beneficiaries
Three/Four Months Residential Camps	13	612
Out of these presently studying in Schools		202
15 Days/Short Duration Camps	19	809
Out of these presently studying in Schools		375
Life Skill Education and Career Counselling Camps	21	1551
Non Residential Camps		6064
Training of Youths through Certificate Course		271
Teachers Training (Govt. PS and UPS)		91
Organizing Rally		1451
Number of Women Groups formed	23	442
Training of Women Groups	13	465
Number of <i>Yuva Manch</i> formed	47	683
Number of <i>Yuva Melas</i> organised	47	2072
Reaching Youth through <i>Prerna Kendra</i>	16	1594
Sports Competition	1	813
Training Provided to Community Members (Male+Female+Volunteers)	90	8533
Total	290	25451

In the expected outcomes outlined in the project proposal for Phase II by AAEEA, it is evident that the indirect reach of the project was also significant e.g. (As shown at Annex I).

What Did We Learn?

Discussions with the project team members both past and present brought out several areas of learning.

Changing Perceptions About Education Especially Girls Education

It is clearly evident that the project enabled a change in attitudes regarding the need for education, especially of girls. The fact that a large number of girls participated in the residential trainings with parental support and consent was a significant step. The parents and community members observed the changes that came about in the boys and girls who attended the camps and encouraged the adolescents to study further. This led to many adolescents continuing their education in schools and also attending the *Prerna Kendras*. Some of the older children also prepared for examinations through Open schooling. The various groups, i.e the women's groups, youth groups also helped in creating the environment for education in project villages.

It also established that a well designed intervention that delivers quality education will be readily accepted by the community. The case of the *Bhil Basti* amply demonstrates how a well planned strategy can benefit girls and other community members. Parents who were hesitant to invest in girls education were found to be furthering girls education.

The project outcomes also established the need for diverse set of Continuing Education activities

to help adolescents in the process of self-development.

Reinforcing Learning Through Integrated Education

The environment provided in the residential camps gave a number of disadvantaged adolescents an opportunity to live and learn together. Each learner was supported by the group of dedicated trainers. The focus was on providing holistic education wherein the adolescents developed an understanding of sanitation, reproductive health and life skills, civic and political education through educational programs organized for them. It gave the adolescents an opportunity to articulate their concerns and find solutions for them. It also helped them to bring about changes in their attitudes and values on issues of caste, class and religion.

Many of the adolescents who joined the camp continued their learning by attending the Prerna Kendras. They were later mainstreamed in schools and were able to continue their education. The adolescents we met were eager to continue their education and many were engaged in further studies.

Creating Aware and Responsible Individuals

There is evidence to show that the interventions had a positive impact on the adolescents, community women and men who were engaged in the program. The camps, training programmes, theatre training opened the world of possibilities for adolescents and youth from poor and marginalized communities. It developed articulation, self-confidence and the ability to engage in meaningful relationships with a variety of persons. It exposed them to an alternate set of values that are progressive and liberal and at odds with the values they grow up with. The activities also sensitised them to a range of issues from village development to social ills like alcoholism and violence against women. The youth and women's collectives got the opportunity to take up civic action and learn the techniques and strategies needed for successful social action.

Sensitising the Local Institutions and Government Delivery System

The various activities carried out in the project gave an opportunity to work closely with various government departments and *Panchayati Raj* system. The various training programmes with teachers and students in schools enabled taking forward new ideas about teaching and learning into the government system. This close association also led to the teachers providing support during camps or whenever necessary.

The local institutions of governance also developed a sense of ownership towards the project activities. They participated keenly in the camps, *yuva melas* and meetings and discussions. A change in the community attitudes was clearly visible in the project areas.

Ensuring Backward and Forward Linkages

The project experience clearly brings out that any transformatory process should put in place

linkages at multiple levels. One of the positive outcomes of the project has been that integrated education was sought to be achieved through a range of activities - camps, continuing learning centres, linkages with schools, formation of youth groups. The learnings of the project could be consolidated by AAEA in identifying specific activities where they could provide future support.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Development initiatives even though small in scale can serve as a valuable reference points. Today, considerable progress has been made in access to elementary education in Rajasthan. There are more girls enrolled in schools as compared to 2006 when the project started in Arain. The experience of the Adolescent Education and Development Project in Arain block suggests that providing holistic education, integrated to lives of adolescents in a context of multiple disadvantages and deprivation can be extremely challenging. In the current context, when the Right to Education Act has entitled children to an education of reasonable quality based on principles of equity and non-discrimination, the learnings from the project remind us that it is possible to change a bleak scenario. There is enough evidence to show that making interventions context sensitive and by providing space and flexibility, social change can be initiated. It is also evident that systematic planning, coordination, training, partnership and a committed human resource, helped in furthering the education of disadvantaged children in a remote block of Ajmer district. The project's continuous engagement with the communities also helped towards creating an enabling environment for them and a better future. The project formally ended in August 2015. However, the voices of boys and girls who were touched by the project reverberates a sense of hope and confidence that they would continue to take forward the learnings from the project.

Some recommendations, that flow from the above narrative and foregoing analysis that can be taken forward by AAEA, are:

Analysis of Micro Planning Data: During the course of the project, a large amount of micro planning data on 13 parameters was collected by project functionaries. This data has not been fully analysed and needs to be examined in greater detail to evaluate the relationship between the inputs and the outcomes over a period of nine years. This analysis would also give a more realistic picture of the outcomes and achievements of the project.

Tracer Studies of Learners: Since a large number of students have passed out of the residential camps it would be interesting to collate their stories to understand their educational and career trajectories.

Supporting the Leadership of Women and Youth: The relationship built with community women, men and youth in the project areas over the years needs to be nurtured. The AAEA team can look at open-ended support to activities that are planned by different groups. e.g. small action projects can be planned with youth groups and women's groups. Linkages can also be made with the different departments and agencies of Government of Rajasthan for funding support.

Exploring Skill Development Projects: Since the project primarily aimed at addressing needs of young women and men and actively worked with youth groups, it would be timely to look at avenues of skill development and vocational training in the project area. An effort can be made to explore the opportunities provided by the Rajasthan Skill and Livelihood Development Corporation or the *Mukhyamantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana*. Youth from the project villages could be identified for skill development trainings.





No.	Expected Outcomes of 3 years 2009-2012	Direct Reach 2009-2011	Indirect Reach 2009-2011																
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue-based survey in 10 villages. Women's groups and youth forums to work for benefits to the rural community. To form women's groups in 40% and youth forums in 50% villages by the end of the sixth year Empowerment of IMDAAD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue-based survey of 20 villages. In 34% villages, 204 women involved through women's groups and 368 boys and girls were involved through youth forums 56% villages have Youth forums Imdaad organized a Youth Fair and held two competitions for the entire block. The community is playing a direct role in empowering 10 women's groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth forums made issue-based 7 women's groups have tried to get support through what they have learnt. 																
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50 active participants to be developed into a Peer Educator team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation of a team of 65 peer educators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation of 80 other peer educators at primary level. 																
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools prepared to make the micro planning process more scientific to be organized and made the basis for further action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Micro planning tools have been organized and used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Related background material has been prepared as needed. 																
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the next three years, 200 adolescents will have benefitted from the 3-month camps, and 200 from the short duration camps. 300 school boys and girls will be trained in issues of cleanliness, <i>Panchayati Raj</i> and gender sensitivity. 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>B</th> <th>G</th> <th>T</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>3-month camps</td> <td>95</td> <td>103</td> <td>198</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Short duration camps</td> <td>60</td> <td>90</td> <td>150</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>155</td> <td>193</td> <td>348</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 529 school boys and girls trained from Short L.S.E., Seminar, Theater, etc. 		B	G	T	3-month camps	95	103	198	Short duration camps	60	90	150	Total	155	193	348	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost 200 other school boys and girls will benefit. The importance of education will be discussed at the village level.
	B	G	T																
3-month camps	95	103	198																
Short duration camps	60	90	150																
Total	155	193	348																
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the beginning to the end of the sixth year of the project, a total of 300 participants to be involved in the certificate courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 258 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Another 100 boys and girls are benefitting. 																
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through 10 <i>Prerna Kendras</i>, to work at the grass root level with the village community and schools and help participants in the certificate courses with their preparation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 800 villagers are associated with 10+8 <i>Prerna Kendras</i>. 750 school boys and girls are associated with <i>Prerna Kendras</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents of 8 other villages have been associated with these <i>Prerna Kendras</i>. 350 villagers are associated. 300 school boys and girls are associated. 																
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prepare complementary material for the syllabus, the need for which is already being felt. To improve the issue based abilities of workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complementary material has been prepared as required. Workers have developed good understanding of crucial issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New ideas have got space. We are now accomplishing more work in lesser time and with limited human resources. 																
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of all accomplished work to be available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation at cluster and block level. Profile of 1042 participants is being prepared and will be ready by end of sixth year. Film <i>Yuun Likhio</i> on the programme has been made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in abilities of workers. 																

Table: Cluster-wise and Gram Panchayat-wise List and No of Villages Covered in the Project

S. No.	Name of Cluster	Name of Gram Panchayat	Name of Revenue Villages in Gram Panchayat Revenue	No of Revenue Villages
1	Syar	Khiriya	Khiriya, Indrapura, Ganeshpura, Daulatpura, Samelia, Sompura	06
2		Lallai	Lallai, Madanpura, Rajpura, Sapunda	04
3		Ajgara	Ajgara, Bhatolao, Manpura, Sohanpura, Hingtara	05
4		Syar	Syar, Jatipura, Sarsunda, Goverdhanpura	04
5		Harpura	Harpura, Kachoulia, Kumhariya, Kasana, Sunaria	05
6		Hingonia	Hingonia, Peeproli, Bilawatia Khera	03
7		Birla	Birla, Chandrai, Sadapur	03
8	Jalia	Bhagwanpura	Bhagwanpura, Miyan, Chakwa, Chakwi, Chhapri, Jagpura, Tajpura	08
9		Rampali	Ajgari, Gundali, Bilia, Chandali, Dorai, Pratappura, Rampali, Surajpura	08
10		Sarwar (Municipality)	Bhil Basti Sarwar	01
11		Soompa	Soompa, Sampli, Jalia, Kherishankar, Gopalpura, Kalyanpura, Shyampura	07
12		Saampla	Saampla	01
13	Fatehgarh	Fatehgarh	Fatehgarh, Dhanwa, Marogala	03
14		Manoharpura	Manoharpura, Gurjarwara, Dhous, Ramgarh, Laxmipura	05
15		Borada	Borada, Dantri, Deoria, Mundoti, Jhaloosi	05
16		Kasheer	Kasheer, Kharwar, Banthali, Shri Rampura	04
17		Jheetota	Jheerota, Dothali, Sarwar, Gurjarwara (Jogian)	04
18		Gothiana	Goythiana, Jorawarpura	02
19		Dhasook	Dhasook, Pandarwara, Balapura	03
20		Mandawaria	Mandawaria, Keria, Khera Gopalpura, Jhadol	04
21		Sandolia	Sandolia, Kakalwara, Gundali, Modi, Seel	05
	03	21		90

List of AAEA Functionaries and Members of Project Team Met by the Documentation Team in Ajmer and Sarwar

Anuradha Marwah	- Secretary AAEA
Sanjay Palod	- Accountant AAEA
Dev Narayan	- Project Coordinator
Mahavir Prasad Sahu	- Field Project Coordinator
Sawarlal Purohit	- Field Project Coordinator
Hemraj	- Continuing Education Coordinator
Raghuvir	- Cluster Incharge
Sardar Singh	- Cluster Incharge
Ranjit	- President IMDAAD
Dhanraj	- Member Yuva Manch
Satyanarayan	- Incharge Prerna Kendra, Bhil Basti
Prahalad Kumawat	- Government Teacher, Sameliya
Archana Naik	- Ex-Project Coordinator - 2009-2012
Samta Upadhyaya	- Gender Coordinator - 2006-2008
Bela Devi	- Women's Group Leader, Sarwar Basti

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A Few More Glimpses of Activities

