



GRAAM

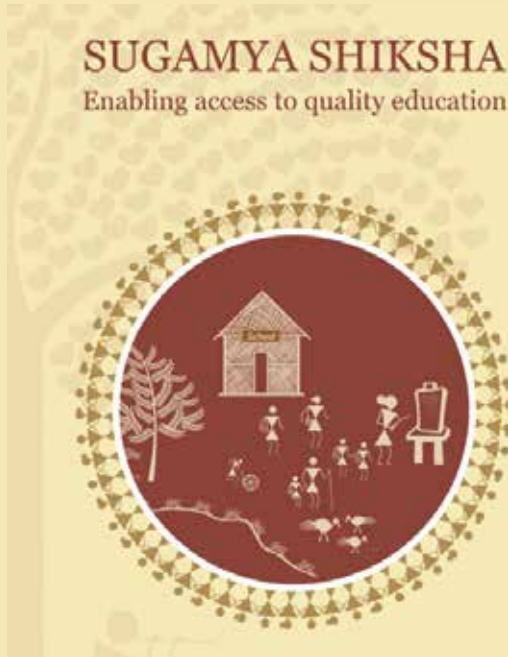
Grassroots Research And Advocacy Movement



# STORIES OF CHANGE

The lore of Sugamya Shiksha





**Sugamya Shiksha** is a collective effort of ideologies that intend to bring success by filling certain void areas in the public education system. The program takes a holistic approach with new initiatives for strengthening government programs/activities in the schools. This program emphasizes on preparing and constructing illustrative models in conceptualizing the strength of public schools. The project aims at strengthening the public education system by complementing resources to ensure comprehensive learning and development of children. Sugamya Shiksha envision to empower the student of Government school across various primary dimensions like skill development, health, resource management and school development. It evolves an individual as an ideal citizen of India, and thus ‘comprehensive school development program’.

The objective is to build synergy between school and other stakeholders, mainly the local community. Also, to create an extended platform at school to facilitate effective learning which is not limited to the syllabus, but which would motivate the children from diverse cultural and socio-economic background to pursue education with a clear dream and aspiration in life.

Sugamya Shiksha was initiated in 2016 with 3 schools and one district. By the end of 2020 it was expanded to 38 schools in 6 districts reaching 10478 children.

### SUGAMYA SHIKSHA SCHOOL DATA (2019-20)



PROGRAM SCOPE



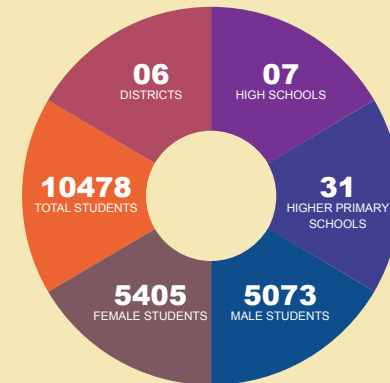
**09**  
PROJECTS



**16**  
SUB-PROJECTS



**156**  
MAIN ACTIVITIES



Titles	Pages
VIVE L'AMITIÉ <i>Long Live Friendship</i>	1-2
ATTENDEZ L'OPPORTUNITÉ <i>The Long for Opportunity</i>	3-4
ENTSCHLOSSEN <i>The Show of Grit and Firmness</i>	5-6
IKTSUARPOK <i>The Feeling of Anticipation</i>	7-8
TADHARJ...IITHARA... <i>Excitement of Rolling</i>	9-10
DIGNO <i>Dignified</i>	11-12
KOMOREBI <i>Sunlight penetrating through the forest canopy</i>	13-16
WABI SABI <i>Finding Beauty in Imperfections</i>	17-18
COMUNITÀ PER LA SCUOLA <i>Community for School</i>	19-22
YUÀNFÈN <i>The fateful coincidence</i>	23-24
HENKA SURU YOI HŌKŌ E <i>Change for the better</i>	25-27



1

VIVE L'AMITIÉ  
Long Live Friendship



Venu decided to quit school. He would come to the school, but not attend classes. He would get ready for school every morning, bring his bag with him and leave it in the class. He would then sneak out of the school before anyone could see. Later in the evening, he would promptly return to the school to collect his bag and head back home. The school had given up on him after several attempts to change his mind.

What made him choose to do so? Why did Venu not want to attend school?

The answer was, “Punishments”. Punishments that can have adverse impacts, especially in early childhood that could leave irreplaceable scars. Venu had undergone one such experience. He was punished for being mischievous in the class. He said, “I am afraid of this teacher in our school. He once slapped me on my back. I felt bad and insulted. Since then, I decided not to come to school.” But he had to answer back home. He was afraid of his parents too. That is when he decided he would do the rounds to school every day, but would go spend time elsewhere and not attend classes.

What changed the scene for Venu was a new intervention at school. Sugamya Shiksha took notice of Venu’s ongoing struggles at school. One of the facilitators started making enquiries in the conventional way. But Venu countered back the imposition of facilitator’s expectations on him. The facilitator found herself guilty of forcing a child to do something that was not his interest. After several such attempts, a friendly attempt to understand what Venu was going through made him open up. The friendly approach adopted by Sugamya Shiksha’s facilitators was reassuring and brought back Venu to the class. To continue learning this time. His participation in skill labs and Sandhya Shaale enthused him with the joyful learning process, particularly the use of videos and fun-filled activities. He even took up the responsibility of leading some activities. Venu expressed, “Previously I was

punished in the class and I felt insulted, which made me quit school. But today, my classmates listen to me. I feel good now”.



*Sandhya Shaale*

One day, a facilitator brought the children outdoors for a Nali Kali session. Almost immediately, it became a point of discussion among every teacher at school. They themselves began attempting this strategy in their classroom engagements. Including the teacher Venu was afraid of. Although initially hesitant, Venu chose to attend that class. By the end of the session, he had managed to overcome his fear. Ever since, he is a regular to all the classes. From disappearance to attending classes in rapt attention, Venu is back enjoying his learning at school. He expresses, “I like this class because I get appreciation. My teacher here is friendly and hears me out. My teacher is my friend.”

A small change from being affirmative to friendly triggered many around the school to think differently. Venu happens to be just one instance, while there are many such untold stories. Venu like situations disappoint the community and make them take less interest in the ongoings of the school. Healthy affiliation and a good rapport were the only things attempted by the facilitators to get Venu to make a new attempt. And the community took to appreciate the school. It was the love and acceptance that Venu was longing for. He embraced learning through innovative learning approaches like peer learning, audio-visual aids, experiential learning and physical activities. With leadership, Venu started committing to responsibilities and gradually earned his teachers’ appreciation. Venu being the stitch in time probably saved nine more like him, leaving the teachers much inspired for similar acts.



*Sandhya Shaale*



# ATTENDEZ L'OPPORTUNITÉ

The Long for Opportunity



### *Activity School Election*

This is the story of Reshma. She is like those many children who dream of a life with plenty of freedom to do things that otherwise would only remain a dream. For the lack of opportunity, most of the girls will never realise their own potential. Reshma comes from a full family with four other sisters and her parents. Due to conservative beliefs, the family had its daughters married early to avoid the society's scorn. Being the youngest, Reshma got her opportunity to sit and interact with her elder sisters about life after marriage. The talks convinced her that she had to decide for herself what she wanted to do in her life. The immediate decision she made was to continue her studies. Thankfully, her sisters and brothers-in-law were supportive of her decision, an unlikely gesture in a society which took pride in deciding the fate of a girl child. Her father, also the product of the same society, did not shy from signalling his intent of marrying Reshma off like her sisters. He had instructed her to stop school after completing her grade 10.

But, Reshma had already decided what she would do in her life. And it takes just one window of opportunity to make it count. One such window of opportunity came Reshma's way too. Reshma had been an active member in the district level Makkala Samsath\* organised by Sugamya Shiksha. In the previous year she was the honourable speaker and this year the leader of opposition.

Reshma had voluntarily chosen to experience this different podium at Makkala Samsath. The intriguing idea drew media's attention and as part of the coverage, her performance at the Samsath was elaborately covered too. She came across the newspaper in the school carrying the article and decided to take it home to show her family.

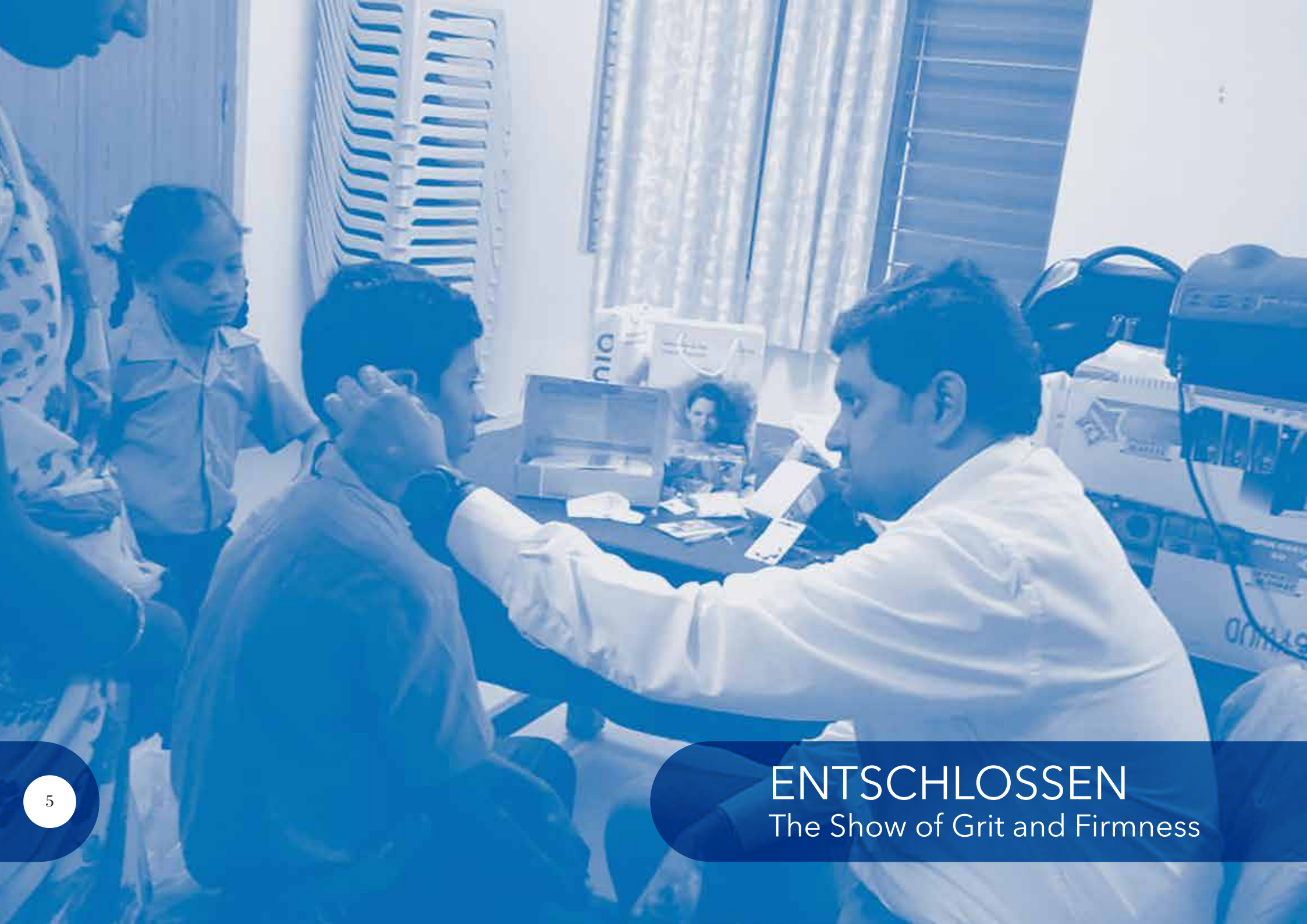
As she arrived at the front door, she found her family waiting to welcome her with gleaming eyes and wide-open arms. The news had already reached them through coverage on a local TV channel. For Reshma, she was more eager to share this news with her father than anybody else. But little did Reshma know she had a surprise in store. A friend of Reshma's father had come across the news article of Reshma's success. He had apprised her father of the news immediately. On his part, Reshma's father was brimming with pride and praised his daughter to whomever he met along the way. On meeting Reshma at home, her father emotionally expressed saying, "I feel really proud to be your father. Continue your studies and I am sure you are going to achieve greater heights. No matter what comes in the way, I'll take care of it. You just go for it". Reshma's father could not hold onto his excitement. He went around the colony sharing her story of success with the neighbours. He even called the extended family members to share the news and urge them to watch the next telecast.

Reshma's story was an eye opener for the village wherein the community serves as an influential factor in deciding the destiny of girl children. Ever since Reshma did well for herself, other parents in the village have bettered their aspirations for their children. They now lend support to each other in their children's education, irrespective of the gender. Reshma ensures that the school cabinet is active in tracking and taking decisions. A friend of Reshma coordinates the Savitribai Phule Tanda (Also known as Meena Tanda)\*, as its secretary. She shares that it is the ideology and joint efforts of Reshma and Mamata that ensures a healthy and safe space for girls in the school. They take vigilant initiatives starting from spreading awareness on female



### *A portable sanitary napkin incinerator being demonstrated.*

health and sanitation to taking necessary steps like utility of the incinerator\*. They ensure all girls in need of an incinerator understand the functioning of the incinerator. They go around the jatha in the village to create awareness about female health. The meticulous efforts of Reshma and her inspired friends have left the villagers speechless, reviving the dreams of the girls from her village.



# ENTSCHLOSSEN

The Show of Grit and Firmness



### *Pre - Screening*

Discrimination is a perception of unjustified distinctions between human beings based on categories, groups or classes to which people are assumed to belong. Dis-ability - physical, mental or emotional, is often treated with similar disregard. When disability is seen with a gendered lens, girls/women are shown to face significantly more difficulties than boys/men. A differently abled boy is perceived to be a fighter, while a girl of such ability is seen as timid and innocent, and in need of support. This imposed thinking forces parents to compromise, invariably making the girl to compromise with a lot many things, including her ability to make a choice.

Manya, a grade 7 student of GHPS Iduguru, had to face a similar challenge with hearing disability. Her parents got to know about her hearing disability early on. But they reacted contrary to the general perception and decided to give their child a different understanding of life, by cultivating a belief in her different abilities right from her basic senses. They wanted to convey that this difference in Manya is not a matter of discrimination but a chance to shine. Even while they knew it was not going to be easy always. As for Manya, she wanted to do well in her studies and sports.

After the necessary tests, Manya was equipped with a hearing aid that had a strange appearance. At first sight, it grabbed anyone's attention looking at her. Also, this aid made no difference in Manya's hearing, making the situation more complicated. Fellow children in the class started bullying her for this difference in appearance. It gradually became difficult for the elders to control the situation and Manya started reacting violently at people bullying her. At one point in time Manya plucked the hearing aid out and refused to wear it anymore.

When the situation at school was turning tricky to handle, in came Chirayu, an awareness drive that works in assisting services and aids for the differently abled. Chirayu started to make small interventional changes with Manya. To everyone's surprise, she started showing gradual improvements in her response to sounds. The first instance of improvement was noticed by her mother, when Manya started reacting to claps and clicks, and to people calling her name out. Over time Manya grew confident and with confidence started to voice for herself at various forums. She bagged positions to compete at district level sports meets for differently abled children. A series of such incidences and resulting change in many made the family realize her potential. The essence of these positive developments made Manya explore more on her way. She even emerged as the centre of attention at this year's district level Sugamya Kreedotsava.

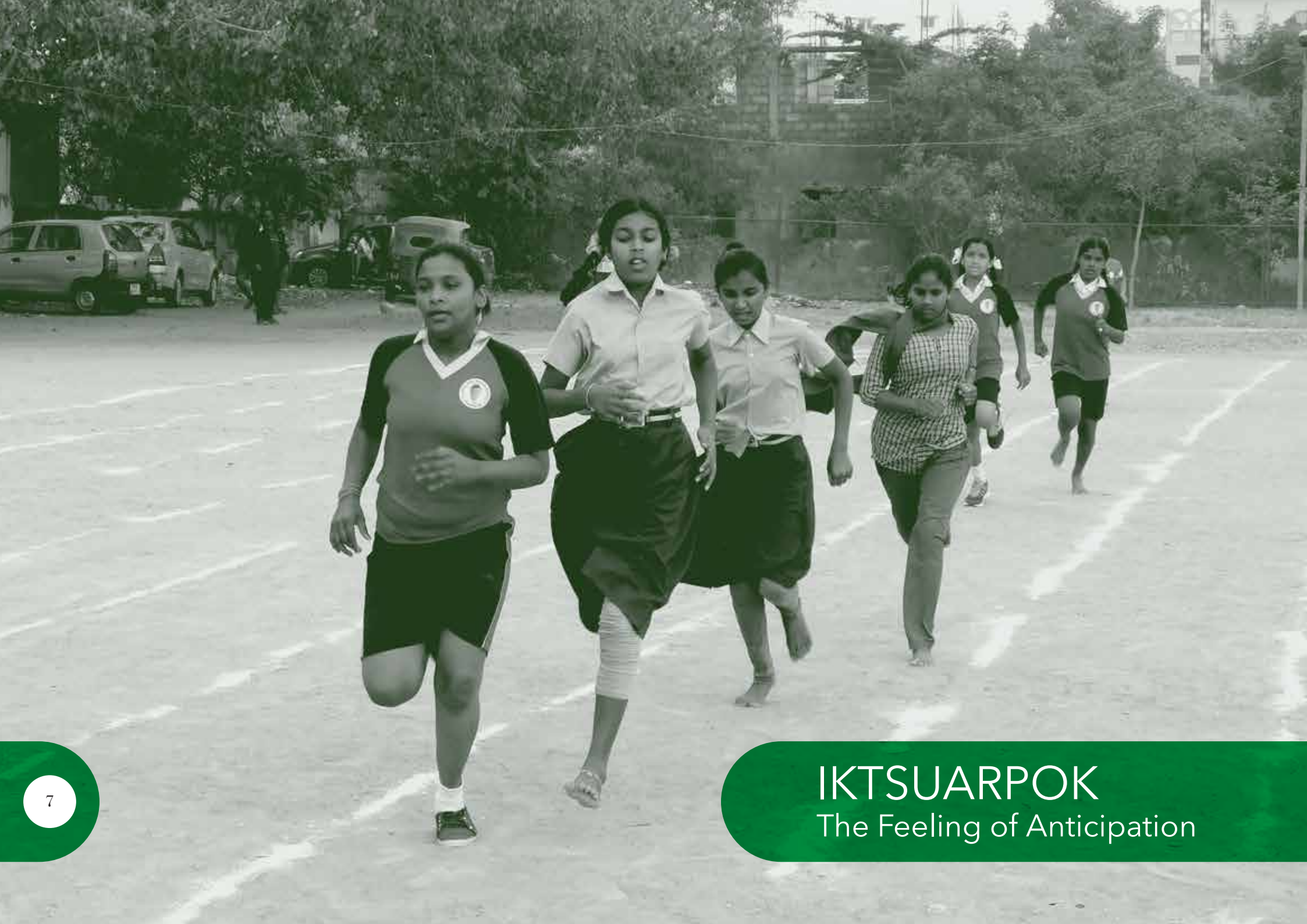


### *Chiraya Dental*

Manya's story tells us that it is not just about the extent of efforts put, but about timing as well. Manya had almost given up on her dreams, was lacking confidence and was constantly looking for sympathy. But Chirayu gave her the platform to live the different life her parents had dreamed for her. The villagers who were sceptical about the abilities of differently abled girls were made to reconsider their position through Manya's case. Gradually the community began treating Manya at par with other children. Some even considered Manya as their pride and ever since are encouraging of girl children to aspire and make a choice.



### *Parents - Counseling*



**IKTSUARPOK**  
The Feeling of Anticipation



*Girls running race*

Sports is a universally shared human culture and a great unifier. It intrinsically does not discriminate between people of different gender, colour or status. But due to social prejudices, the society keeps girls away from sports, especially when they are menstruating. Oftentimes it is forgotten that sports refreshes one's body and mind and helps in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Sports is also known to enhance self-efficacy and is used as an effective method of communication. In Karnataka, the number of girls representing different sports across levels are gradually increasing. Yet, many in the rural parts of the state find it challenging to get such an exposure due to social and cultural barriers.

Divya from GHS Udburu had one such incidence of overcoming the gender barriers of sport. Like most of the children her age, Divya was interested in sports. She enjoyed participating in kabaddi, kho-kho and track events. Sugamya Shiksha's Jockey Fit Children Program supported her dreams of pursuing sports at GHS Udburu. Her punctuality at the morning training programs was reflective of how serious she took her pursuit. She was also eager to compete in the year's Sugamya Kreedotsava (Sugamya Shiksha's annual district-level sports meet).

However, fortune at times can skip a beat and that is exactly what happened with Divya. She started menstruating on the day of Sugamya Kreedotsava, while waiting in the bus to get to the venue. She was disappointed with the encounter. She got worried about being allowed to compete. With a heavy heart and mix of emotions swelling inside her, Divya got off the bus and headed homewards. She decided so because of her history of experiencing stomach cramps during the first few hours of menstruation. And also because of the prevalent custom of taking bath at the onset of menstruation. She was not sure how to explain it to her parents. For one moment she thought of not telling them, and considered taking a painkiller instead. That would help her compete in the tournament. But her obedient self would not allow her to simply walk out of the house without informing. So she decided to share her state of confusion with her mother.

Divya was surprised by her mother's response. She said, "Oh, come on. You just can't get away with this situation every time. This is just like any important physiological function of your body that you can't escape. Learn to live with it. I understand you face pain; you should not let yourself down but learn to fight it. Just imagine, all your efforts in the past one month will go in vain if you quit now. So, I would suggest you go for it."

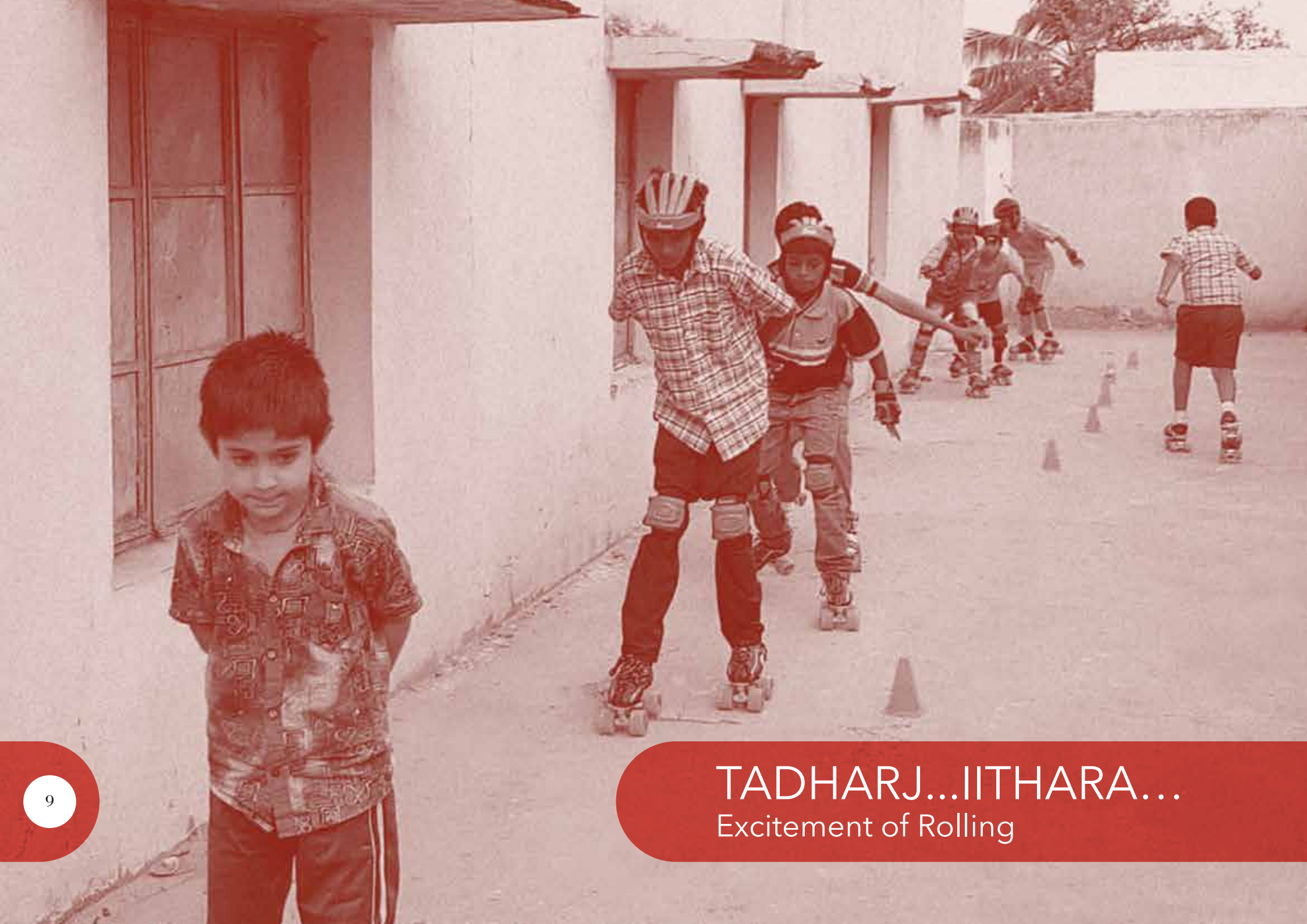
Divya did not know what to tell her mother at that moment. Perhaps, this might not be the case with all the

adolescent girls of rural Karnataka who aspire for a future in sports. She felt it could have been possible because of many reasons. One could have been their assured relationship of mutual trust and support. The other, possibly the more important one, could have been the constant menstrual awareness programs of the Savitribai Phule Tanda at the school. Divya would regularly share the discussions held in the Tanda with her mother. She would talk about the video named 'maitri', which dispels the myths and advocates for rational safety measures during periods. Whenever Divya would take her friends' home, they would all sit together and discuss menstruation and practices around it without any hesitation. Her mother could have been a passive participant to all these discussions, although from a distance. Besides, the science chapter on human reproduction also clearly stated the measures to be taken during the period of menstruation. And Divya realised it never mentioned about avoiding sports. This way Divya realised how her mother could have encouraged her the way she did today, by using a collection of reasoning.

Since then, Divya has inspired a lot of girls from the Savitribai Phule Tanda\* to take part in sports activities and other physical activities without any concern or hesitation. She has also spread this awareness among the mothers through her friends. She advocates for women to attend to their lives as-usual, and not sit aside like in earlier days when sanitation was a major concern.

Divya concludes,

*"I want my teachers, friends and family to share this story to whomever they can. I would be glad if this story can inspire someone, no matter boy or girl. One need not be hesitant in sharing such situations irrespective of sex because this is just another biological process happening with us and not be a matter of embarrassment. These incidences must be spoken about to draw attention towards hygiene."*



# TADHARJ...IITHARA...

Excitement of Rolling



Childhood is often remembered, particularly school days, for the time spent playing with friends. And schools also provide the first exposure to sports and extra-curricular activities. GHPS Udburu created a similar environment for its children with support from the Jockey Fit Children Program. Sports, particularly roller skating, got cemented into the school children's fancy. This initiative earned GHPS Udburu the moniker of becoming the first government school in Karnataka to have a skating rink constructed.

For India's sporting aspirations, athletics track at government schools is a dream almost impossible to realise. But when GHPS Udburu was presented with a skating rink and a coach, the children were confused. They thought their play area was being concretised. Until select few students were offered skating materials like roller skates and shoes. It then grabbed everyone's attention.

In the academic year 2017-18, Suganya Shiksha initiated in-school training with approximately 25 students. Latha, studying in grade 6, was one of those 25 students selected for training. Initially, Latha was too scared to be trained. As time passed and she got trained by a professional, she gained the courage along with the moral support of her parents. Three years from then, Latha is now one of the best skaters at the school. She competes at various competitions and even helps junior skaters with their practice. Latha recently participated in a skating marathon held at Makkala Dasara, as part of annual Dasara festivities. During the marathon, government officials who attended the event appreciated the participation of government school children in a skating-like event. Latha also participated in a skating competition organized by Decathlon in Mysuru.

Although it took quite some time for children to accept skating in their school, it emerged as a blessing for learning, with it getting integrated along with science and mathematics lessons. This enabled students to enjoy the space well and embrace fun filled learning.

Skating also reduced absenteeism and brought discipline within the children. As a consequence, their academic performance began improving. This change produced substantial appreciation within the community members too. The community now supports smoother functioning of the school. They are also amplifying the thought of propagating skating among other government schools across Karnataka.

Similar to other sports, skating also possesses the ability to increase the heart rate through aerobic respiration process. It coordinates for healthy joint development, as discussed by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC). Skating thus serves a purpose similar to other physical activities at school, improving the cardio-vascular health of the children.



*Skating Coaching*

This is why children of Udburu just don't run... they roll... the excitement gained through rolling and the excitement to do more is a complimenting process that keeps the skating rink here alive.





A thoughtful obligation to sports performance is when a competitor competes with self to get the best out of him or her. Success in sports is just not about winning against the visible competitors but, succeeding against the invisible self. This harness for self-success is the essence of self-esteem, confidence, empowerment, perseverance, concentration, creative risk taking, etc. That is how individual sportsmen, like swimmers and athletes manage to compete and better their previous timing. This is called the true spirit of sportsmanship where one struggles to get the better self out of the present. Innumerable researches have quoted the achievements of children in academics and life skill development due to sports' direct influence on the mindset of an individual. It was based on this knowledge that physical education was made compulsory, corroborating The Kothari Commission Report on Education in 1965.

Our cultural roots have always had physical forms of playing in open spaces. A major portion of the population, irrespective of the age group, always has gravitated towards sports. But lack of infrastructure, time, preparation, motivation and enclosing of public places for private gains have become a disadvantage for



*Shot put at Sugamya Kreedotsava*



*Sugamya Kreedotsava*

the growing up children of today. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult for children without access to taste the flavours of true sportsmanship. Sugamya Kreedotsava is one such platform where children get this opportunity to compete at the district level for various sports. Those exemplar students are identified and entitled for sports scholarship, followed by regular coaching every morning in the school premises assisted by certified coaches. This is called the Fit Children program (JFC)



*Kabaddi at Sugamya Kreedotsava*

Ganashree is one example emerging out of the Jockey Fit Children Program. Ganashree used to be a timid, hesitant and an introvert who always preferred to be alone. She wasn't regular to the school and just did not find any interest in the happenings at school. During leisure, when everyone else played, Ganashree would be found sitting alone deep in her thoughts. She was known for her silence at home too. With Sugamya Kreedotsava taking shape, everyone was informed, and so was Ganashree. She voluntarily enrolled for the Jockey Fit Children Program (JFC). After a span of time, she herself volunteered to participate in team events and emerged as a winner too. This engagement eventually triggered her to serve as a leader in the tasks assigned to her, which included the responsibility of leading the girls' team in the JFC. This phase of leadership made her committed and responsible, as she was answerable for the accomplishment of tasks assigned to her. At the same time her commitment for her role solidified with her learning from the Savitribai Phule Tanda. It focused on female safety, awareness and health and thereby, cumulative success. Those consistent sessions helped her plan her activities and tasks in the JFC. She became more vocal of her thoughts in different forums, breaking her long-time silence. She then noticed similar team games and team activities performed in Sandhya Shale. Thus, she decided to join Sandhya Shale and extended her active participation there as well. The feeling of success, respect and dignity experienced by Ganashree triggered her to take up the leadership and eventually work towards her betterment through Sandhya Shale. "in today's life physical exercise is not fun for people anymore. They go outside only when prescribed by a doctor. We being from rural villages wish to protect the happiness students feel while being in the field and playing. Sports is not alien, when collaborated with maths and science and language. It will improve the learning environment and children's learning. Thus, sports must be given equal importance and priority." – Harish H M, PET, GHPS Doddmandiganahalli, Hassan



# KOMOREBI

Sunlight penetrating through the forest canopy



*Makkala Samsath*

Democracy is the power owned by every common man to speak out with dignity and be heard. Democracy has the potential to assure power to everyone with the need. This practice rightly justifies – “a democratic government is for the people, of the people, by the people”. It is an aspiration in India to expect governments to rely on this form of administration where everyone is reserved equal opportunity and responsibility to give and receive.

Makkala Samsath, a parliamentary mock-up, is a formal stage constructed by Sugamya Shiksha for running the district level assembly meeting. At the Samsath all the student ministers meet and discuss the current issues as well as excellence in respective schools. The stage is headed by the student prime minister, under the direction of few student ministers guided by lead personalities from those related fields. These personalities provide an understanding of the plans and policies pertaining to development programs at provincial and regional levels. This space thus builds an open dialogue with policy makers, planners and bureaucrats, who decide and act on schemes and policies.

GHPS Iduguru was a part of the mock parliamentary set up. The school had a space behind the dining hall weeded with lots of wild plants. This space formerly was used as a kitchen garden for producing vegetables for the school’s consumption. Over time the space went into disuse and trespassers started using the school ground for playing cricket, and sometimes villagers grazed their cattle in the school premises. Hemanth, a timid but a boy with vision, saw a lot of aesthetics in imperfections and in the woods. He always thought the school ground could be converted into a mini-forest. One day, he decided to clean that space by uprooting the weeds. One after the other children started joining him in the clean up activity. In no time, the area was cleared of all the unwanted weeds.

Hemanth served as the Gardening Minister of the school and thus was easier for him to raise his concerns at the larger level. In the subsequent student cabinet meeting, Hemanth raised his thoughts regarding the idea of resuming the kitchen garden at the school. The idea inspired other cabinet members too, while they sensed that they need to have enhanced knowledge regarding gardening practices. The Sugamya Shiksha facilitators then suggested that this need for assistance could be raised in the following Makkala Samsath event. Likewise, in the same meeting they also raised the fear of the abandoned water tank, which could collapse some day and risk the children playing in the school ground. Both these scenarios were presented in the Samsath and the student ministry also placed their expectation for the same. The dignitaries were overwhelmed to listen to the initiatives and efforts put forth by children based on their conception. And they obliged with immediate action.

This recognition received by Iduguru school served as a burning factor in children for formulating their further actions. A resource person from the district Horticulture department paid a visit to the school and elaborately described the 'how-to' of a healthy garden in the school premises. Working away at the suggestions, the school children planned their next moves for implementing the same. They cleared the remaining weeds through shared responsibilities, tilled, ploughed the space and planted vegetable seedlings. To take care of the plants from being trespassed, the children under the leadership of students' cabinet decided that those children who reside nearby would safeguard the garden for one hour during weekends and holidays. This was agreed as a cyclical process with priority given to children residing nearby. The children missed the cycle sometimes, but they ensured that the plants weren't left unattended.



*Children attending to the School's kitchen garden*

This change at school drastically reduced trespassing during weekends. But they realised that there were some difficulties during weekdays. Post school hours, here and there, some outsiders would come and use the school ground for playing cricket. To avoid another lapse, they decided to increase the number of Sandhya Shale participants. More populated the school premises, the more it looked happening. Thus, the student cabinet planned and ideated for amplifying the number of participants in Sandhya Shale through class visits and home visits. Each one brought a friend with them and gradually the participant numbers at Sandhya Shale increased. They would have a gala time within the school premises, but post school hours, with a good peer-reviewed self-learning space. This on the other hand protected their kitchen garden with so many children taking care until dusk, and also looking after their school premises from being vandalised. Additionally, this space also accounted for the safety of the kids, as most of their parents would get back home after work only by 6PM. This way, Sandhya Shale ensured these kids' safety and quality investment of time.



*Children attending to the School's kitchen garden*

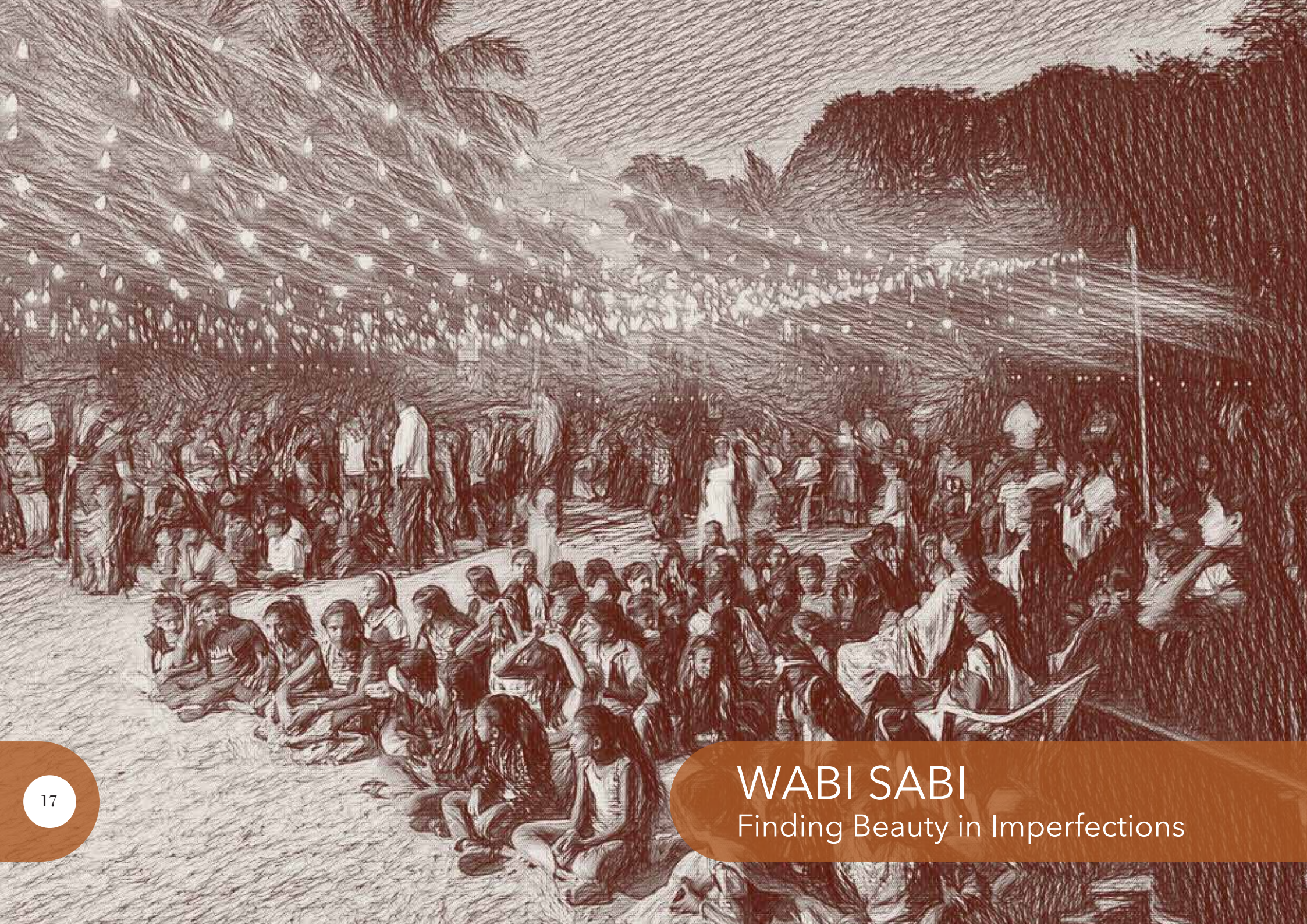


*Children attending to the School's kitchen garden*



*Children documenting their floral observations*

Witnessing this cumulative impact, the SDMC sensed the need for them to be responsible. They came forward to take up initiatives of revamping the school infrastructure. In one such instance, they worked to get funds released by the Gram Panchayat for renovating the toilets. With these changes, the community gradually became respectful and appreciative of the school premises. Unlike earlier, now everyone from the village, irrespective of their stand, works for the protection of the school and prohibits any kind of trespassing activities in and around. They are able to thoughtfully share that the school is for the betterment of children and hence not to be utilised by outsiders for any other reason but schooling.



# WABI SABI

Finding Beauty in Imperfections



Government schools face a lot of day-to-day challenges. Many of them are either ignored or concealed in hesitation. Among these, security of the school and the children is a major concern. Most children at such government schools come from a background where the parents are daily wage workers, either as labourers in factories or construction sites or farm lands. These parents commence their day around 8AM and do not return home until 6 or 7PM, while the kids get back home after school by 4:30PM. In the absence of their parents, children are mostly expected to care for themselves. And co-curricular productive engagement after school hours is mostly a privilege these children cannot afford.



*Parents attending meeting convened for issues related to the school*

The other instance includes vandalization of school premises, for activities other than education, and illegal ones many times. Because it is a public space, people feel free to use it for any convenience, as per their requirement. But illegal activities recorded till date have brought about casualties, that are also physical, and have caused mental strain among the children too. Even though such incidents are within the community's knowledge, seldom do any formal action against it get requested or initiated.

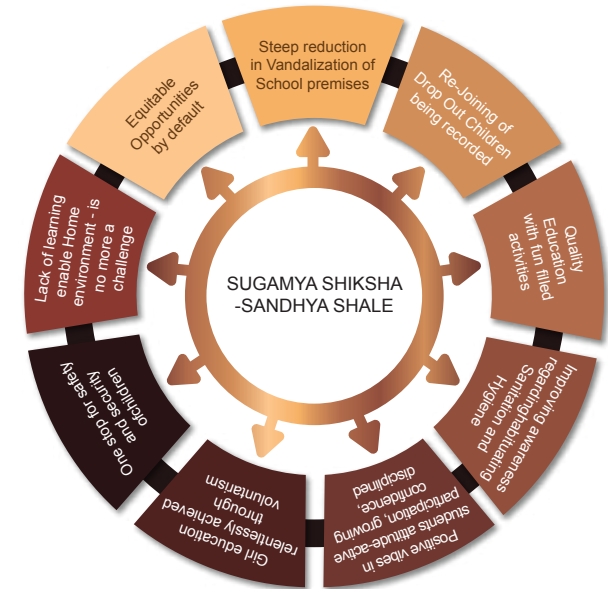
What best comes out of such a situation depends on the extent to which families encourage children and involve themselves in their child's education. GHPS Doddamandiganahalli, Hassan illustrated this idea in one form of action. The school conducted **Beladingala Bhojana Karyakrama** (moonlight dinner) during Sandhya Shale hours. Parents were invited and were welcomed by the students. In another instance, **Mussanje Koota and Sandhya Deepotsava** (Evening fair and Celebration of lights) was conducted by GHPS Beerihundi, Mysuru. Around 150 parents took part in the event. Nearly 200 lamps were lit in the school campus. Students from Sandhya Shale presented a skit called "Each drop counts". Post the organized events and discussions, fun games and activities followed. The evening ended with all attendees enjoying a delicious potluck dinner.

The objective of celebrating such an evening was to present the fortnightly progress report of Sandhya Shale children to the parents and the school. The curriculum attempts to integrate assessment into the process seamlessly. It also connects the community with the school to stimulate parents' involvement in their kids' curricular routines. Of several efforts made to build synergy between community and the school, such informal podiums make the most difference.

These interventions have been formulated as initiatives under 'Sandhya Shale', which is a process of holistic development of an individual, ensuring versatile growth of learners. What Sandhya Shale could show us was a very precise action against few prominent challenges. Over the course of time, it bagged the trust, attention and appreciation from the participating children, by virtue of the impact it had caused. It commenced with two objectives (bold text above), but it could show a comprehensive improvement against all the potential challenges faced by a school site (as shown below).

These events brought about some significant changes in the schools such as :

- Parents started taking interest in their child's academic performance by regularly interacting with teachers about their activities at school.
- Parents and SDMC members started to attend all the meetings and gatherings with more enthusiasm and excitement, while showing greater consideration for the issues related to students and school.
- Parents are extending support for the 'Annual Day' celebrations. People from the village are appointed to teach dance and drama for the celebrations.
- In GHPS Doddamandiganahalli construction of a compound wall at school resumed, with SDMC members, Gram Panchayat members and school head master working together to secure the school premises.





# COMUNITÀ PER LA SCUOLA

Community for School



**School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC)** is an initiative by the Government of Karnataka to ensure community ownership and participation in the matters of education at local government schools. Among members of the committee, the mandate ensures it includes 9 parents of the children studying in the same school. SDMCs are vested with sufficient power and functions to ensure that the schools are managed better with issues related to academics and developmental activities paid the due attention.

Over the years, numerous small-scale impacts have been observed in the intervened schools. Among them, some are specially noticed - In GHPS Hosaholalu, KR Pete - Hosaholalu, SDMC members supplied mops, broomsticks, buckets and other necessities to each class for the upkeep of cleanliness. In GHPS Koorgalli, Mysuru, SDMC president supported the complete expenditure of reconstruction of school compound walls. During one of the school mapping sessions, SDMC members succeeded in getting 25 lakhs approved from the PDO for the development of school infrastructure, including compound wall, play area and other facilities.



*Teachers Meeting*

In GHPS Nitturu, Hassan, SDMC members decided to support the school by tiling the toilets and providing plate racks for students to leave their eating plates at school. For both the initiations, a willing donor was identified for support. In GHPS Idaguru and GHPS Mudugere, President and Vice President of the SDMC have been visiting the schools every day and are being more involved in the school activities post Makkala Samsath. They also initiated school mapping in collaboration with all other SDMC members.



*SDMC mapping*

SDMCs work with differing interests and likely impact across different schools. However, there are schools where SDMCs have performed exceptionally well and the results of their performance can be seen in schools' infrastructure and in students. SDMC members and teachers from Sugamya Shiksha (SS) schools visited select schools where the SDMC teams had introduced new ideas for school development. Our SDMCs observed the working procedures in those schools and tried initiating similar steps in Sugamya Shiksha schools.

*“I am happy to contribute towards the betterment of our school. The minimum I could do. Thanks to Sugamya Shiksha for offering me this dimension.”*

*– A member from the SDMC*



*School renovation with community support*

Making SDMCs effective takes activities and exposure, beyond just meetings. Under Sugmya Shiksha, the SDMC annual plan with other activities /meetings involves, school mapping - identifying the requirement of schools, exposure to schools, where SDMC has made a difference by exploring and suggesting information on different government projects that can be connected with school development.

Mr. Chennakeshava, is a mason worker and an SDMC member of Hosaholalu school, KR Pete. He had visited one of the schools with the SDMC group and was left inspired by the activities done by the SDMC members of the visited schools. Upon return, he purchased the required materials and with an assistant rebuilt the compound wall of the school, which was barely standing up. Now the school gate can be opened without the fear of the compound falling down In Hootagalli school, Mysuru, the school had a good strength of around 350 children. Although the strength at school, there weren't enough rooms to accommodate all the children. They had to be accommodated in available rooms giving rise to congestion and hampering children's free movement. The school was able to half construct a room, but could not go any further due to lack of support.

Sugamya shiksha organized a Makkala Santhe (Children's fair) in the school and the SDMC made sure that the Panchayat President was invited to attend the program. The SDMC members took the opportunity to show and explain the difficulties, and made a request for two additional classrooms. The effort paid off and today two new classrooms are available at school for children to ably learn.



### *SDMC Exposure Visit*

The Women SDMC members of Hanumanthapura School, Hassan got connected with different Mahila Sangha (Women's cooperative) in the village and through them got fans and learning materials for the school.

The Beerihundi School, Mysuru learnt of the MNERGA program after visiting other schools to gain exposure and suitable information. The SDMC members visited Panchayat office and brought the PDO to visit the school. As a result, the school now has a compound wall and its buildings freshly painted by the Panchayat.

These highlights re-state the role of SDMCs in school development in a decentralised and community owned model. The effectiveness of which shows up only through collaborative functioning of the school, SDMC and government bureaucracy.



# YUÀNFÈN

The fateful coincidence



In India, primary education is predominantly funded by the Government of India. The investment decisions basically follow a pattern of expansion of educational facilities across the country. Since educational requirements tend to hold not-so-immediate prominence in budgetary allocations, keeping a check on the overflow of resources and ensuring equitable distribution is essential. For this purpose, school mapping is the tool being incorporated across the public schools in different states.

School mapping tool can be described as a micro planning tool constituting a set of techniques and procedures to estimate education requirements at local level, by working out a better match between the supply and demand management of education. However, it is always necessary not to confuse school mapping with the literal locating of the public schools. The objective is to create equality of educational opportunities by levelling off of the existing disparities in the distribution of educational facilities. The underlying factor is the approach to understand spatial and demographic dimensions of the location in planning the educational process. It thereby justifies the envisioning of school as a social institution or as one phase of a miniature society.

In GHPS Mudugere, the community participation substantially increased after witnessing several processes of Sugamya Shiksha. The children attending this school were from a background wherein the parents included migrant workers, who travelled in search of seasonal jobs. The intermittent presence of the parents affected children's education, an unfortunate reality. It also thereby affected the functioning of the school. With varying commitment came varying expectations. While there was one group which thought it is necessary for teachers to be strict with the children for their betterment, there was another which argued with the teacher for being strict saying, "let her/him be however she/he wants, I myself do not question them, who are you

to question them or punish them? Teach them only what you can without physically punishing them". The latter group thought that the sole responsibility of them is to question the teachers on failing certain professional expectations. These questions and varied protocols from the community were confusing to the school. The teachers always wanted a school board they could share their challenges with, and collectively come up with solutions for the same. However, the school was always disappointed with the community because they never believed in the teachers. This was an age-old problem at GHPS Mudugere, and subsequently built reluctance amongst the teachers, followed by community and eventually the children.

There had to be a compromising solution to bring the community and the school together for the sake of children's education. The attempt to arrive at this compromise ensured the school cabinet sat down for a meeting with the Sugamya Shiksha facilitators to track the status of resources at school. After plotting, they sat down with the school teachers to collect their perspectives. Post this, on the day of school mapping, the participants were divided into multiple groups and were sent out for observation of the school premises. Each of these teams included a student cabinet member, teacher, Gram Panchayat member and an SDMC member. Each team presented their findings and recommendations to a larger team.

After mapping the resource requirement of the school, the same was pitched to multiple parties, including individuals to CSR funds to Gram Panchayat to SDMC to government departments. As a result of this joint effort, interest groups came forward to support the school, renovating the school building, ensuring enough classrooms for the kids, proportionate number of toilets, kitchen and a temple. Along with these the donors also committed to distribute fans and other necessary electrical appliances to the school. Looking at the zeal of the complete environment, the teachers stepped forward

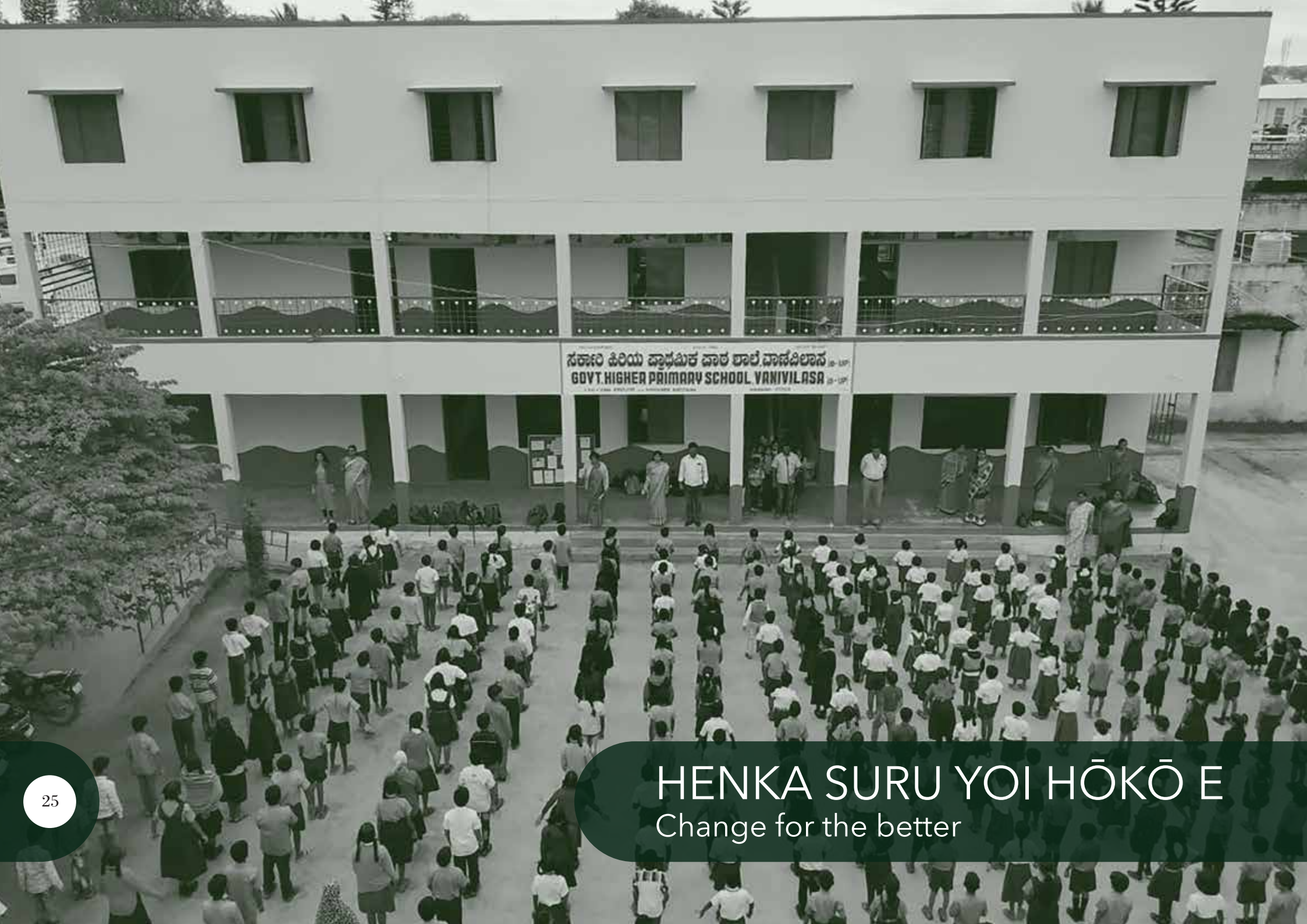


*School SDMCs in the planning process*

to take the responsibility of painting the complete school, joining hands with the SDMC, with the school taking up a major share of expenditure drawing funds from the school administration budget. The school which had been falling to ground with wear and tear for 25 years received a facelift, while the relationships between the community and the school also got mended.

*"Keen observation towards the requirement of the school based on a collective choice of the school, students and community ensured a conscious flow of resources. At the same time, it has also helped us develop our knowledge regarding many subtle things for the school's growth. When we look at it from the outside, things look very different. However, with attempts to fix it we also got to understand the reality."*

*– a community member*



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HENKA SURU YOI HŌKŌ E  
Change for the better



### *School mapping by a student group*

Children mostly spend time between home and the school. The time is spent learning the essential during these growing up years. What is learnt at each of these places reflect on how children conduct themselves in the other. For this reason, it becomes essential these two places exist and correlate to each other in creating a healthy learning environment for children. Realistically speaking, not every child's learning environment will be as balanced. An extended period without the balance in the learning environment leads to children's under-development.

GHPS and GHS Udburu are instances within Sugamya Shiksha wherein the children come from a heterogeneously composed community. It includes single parents, separated and/or widowed mothers and families with aggressive environments. Despite their respective social and economic conditions, parents of course want a better life for their children. A life always better to theirs. They visit schools to understand the progress of their ward/s and share their expectations with the teachers. The parents somehow try accomplishing this in one way or another, although at



### *Community engagement at school after renovation*

times things get monotonous and reluctant at both ends. But in the recent past, the community felt ignored by the school administration. The constructive dialogues that were gradually built over a period of time seized to exist. This situation had a direct impact on the children's learning. The lack of parents' attendance at school created a distraction in the children, giving rise to aggression in their behaviour. Also since they grew up watching the same every day.

When Sugamya Shiksha first entered the school in the year 2017-18, it took almost the entire academic year to understand the subtleness of this situation at the school. Despite all the commitments offered to the school, the community was skeptical if work would be delivered on the promises. Despite being the spine of surveillance for the Sugamya Shiksha program, the community and the school had objections to arrive at a compromise. It came down to a situation where Sugamya Shiksha could not operate anymore without the support of the community and the school. In May 2018, Sugamya Shiksha took on the responsibility of conducting an enrollment awareness drive for the school in the community. Teachers chipped in too, giving their ideas a try. That was a start in the shift of attitudes for the school and the community.

As the enrollment procession started its campaign around the village, the community took notice of it spreading a sense of positivity about the school within the community. The first of the changes was to change the appearance of the school – by painting the school's

building and the compound wall. The rationale was to grab the attention of the community with something vibrant and visible. This intent was backed by a previous experience of a pilot version from GHPS Udburu, where the community responded positively for school painting. The newfound vibrance in the school tempted the community members into paying a visit. The visits thereafter were rightfully utilised to ensure they became regular once again. As a result, the school started to see significant changes for good with the timely support coming from the community, SDMC and the Gram Panchayat. The school upgraded its seating arrangements with new desks and benches. Timely CSR funds ensured computer and science labs followed into the school. CSR funds also ensured renovation of the school building and outdoor flooring. Within no time the school received a massive facelift, becoming the community's pride.

The proud Head Master beamed – “These changes directly hit the conscience of two kinds of people - the teachers and the larger community. If a third party could take such meticulous efforts to build the school in the village, what is our role being the primary actors of this institution? This is firstly our responsibility. We struggled all these days and now that everything is slowly falling in place, we will give a fresh start to our school. This shift in momentum has triggered a decline in conflicts between the community and school. From a feeling of rejection towards the school to a feeling of

acceptance, our Udburu village has travelled a long way.”

He went to say, “Our school received a facelift and resembles a private school now. Everyone travelling the road has started paying attention to this change. Many parents decided to withdraw their children from private schools and got admission in GHPS Udburu. This was made possible only by the coming of a basic infrastructure at the school. It has renewed confidence about the school and has created a sense of success it could bring in the children. Our children from the GHPS are also part of the Sugamya Shiksha program, which is a truly comprehensive student development program. The program has developed more yielding and a prospering personality in the children ever since. It is easier for us to build ahead now. The Gram Panchayat supports all these changes by ensuring regular water supply to the school. Earlier, I would call them continuously from 9am to get water only by 11am. Now everything has changed and is still changing.”



*School renovation with community support*

The major lag was the obsession with the role, position and only the assigned responsibility. But when these responsibilities were re-imagined as a service, everything started to happen instantaneously. Thereafter, the progressive shift in Udburu school was made possible through collectivised efforts. One positive development inspired another and the whole process worked like a relay race, working towards achieving a common goal. The preliminary factor was the right conception of leadership, which was more about listening, turning a challenge into an opportunity. Today we see no such days when at least one parent is not present at the school for one or the other reason. A testimony for the impact the school has brought about in its children’s education once again.



*Study desks*



*Library*



*School enrollment and awareness drive*

## Partners at Sugamya Shiksha, apart from the Government school ecosystem, include:



**GRAAM** is a development research and public policy engagement initiative. It was founded with the aim of nurturing a space for evolution of public policy embodying community 'voice'. A space based in empiricism, democratic principles and a progressive interaction of the key stakeholders of development including the state, citizenry, private sector, civil society and academia.

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