

ADOLESCENT EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

A TOOLBOX OF INITIATIVES



Adolescent empowerment programming in Rajasthan

UNICEF's adolescent empowerment programming in Rajasthan focuses on increasing opportunities for education to reduce the vulnerability of girls and building their life skills to empower them with an enhanced ability to speak against early marriage and for child rights. It provides technical assistance to the Departments of Women and Child Development, Education and Social Justice and Empowerment and strengthens the alliance of civil society organisations (CSOs) to end all forms of violence against children and women.

Adolescent empowerment toolbox

The adolescent empowerment initiatives can be considered as ready-to-adapt tools in an adolescent empowerment toolbox. They consist of wide ranging components such as strengthening of adolescent forums in and outside schools, self-defence trainings in schools and by giving an impetus to the enrolment of dropout girls in Open Schools, and facilitating access to government schemes.

Sports for fitness and empowerment



The LAADO project uses Sports for Development (S4D) to empower adolescents, especially adolescent girls, to provide them an impetus to become agents of change express themselves, make choices regarding their lives and protect themselves from violence, exploitation and harmful practices.

The Leveraging and Advocating for Adolescents' Development Opportunities (LAADO) project is being implemented in select blocks of Tonk, Bikaner and Jodhpur districts of Rajasthan in partnership between the district administration, UNICEF and the implementing NGOs – Pink City Cycle Rickshaw Chalak Sanstha (PCCRCS) in Tonk and Urmul in Bikaner and Jodhpur districts.

Core life skills for empowerment and employability



The Opportunities for Life (O4L) intervention was piloted in Dungarpur district to strengthen employability and self-empowerment skills among girls studying in classes 9–12 in five Sharde (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya – IV) hostels. O4L was designed to help young girls to develop their personalities, acquire self-empowerment skills including self-awareness, communication, resilience, decision making and employability, with the ability to negotiate through the highs and lows of life and to evolve as more self-assured adults.

Access to schemes for social protection



The Government of Rajasthan runs many schemes aimed at building access to education, protecting the rights of girl children and preventing child marriage:

- Providing bicycles to girls
- Financial assistance to girls on achieving critical milestones through the Mukhyamantri Rajshri Yojana
- Cash incentives to orphaned/single-parent girls from below poverty line (BPL) families enrolled in classes 1–12 through the Aapki Beti Yojana
- Financial assistance to vulnerable children in certain categories through the Palanhar Yojana
- Higher education/skill building avenues to rights holders of the Palanhar Yojana through the Mukhyamantri Hunar Vikas Yojana

Communities are informed about the schemes by Saathins and ASHA Sahyoginis at the Panchayat level, by CSOs implementing projects in various districts or by volunteers. Schools also disseminate this information to children.

Child marriage free gram panchayats set examples



A gram panchayat which encourages empowerment opportunities for all children and delays marriage for girls (after 18 years) and boys (after 21 years) for three consecutive years is declared a Child Marriage Free Gram Panchayat. As many as 140 gram panchayats in three districts of Rajasthan have demonstrated the model using a community-led approach through community mobilisation, linking vulnerable children to social protection schemes, forming adolescent groups, coordinating with Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) and the police, celebrating successes and felicitating adolescent champions, taking mass pledges against child marriage and regular monitoring and review.



Self-defence for safety and security of girls

Self-defence trainings for adolescent girls were piloted in 200 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVVs) in 2014–15 and are now being conducted in all government schools of the state. The trainings are aimed at providing adolescent girls with the ability to utilise their physical and mental prowess while in difficult situations. They also aim to build a sense of confidence and well-being among adolescent girls.

Teachers as role models for adolescent girls

Adhyapika Manch are fora for women teachers to build their leadership skills and brainstorm, have healthy discussions, discuss the challenges that they face at school and collectively solve problems, and in the process improve their performance at school as teachers and as an inspiration for girls in the school.

At present, there are nearly **25,000** female teachers across the state, covering **301** blocks of **33** districts, who have grouped into Adhyapika Manchs at the block level.



School-level and community-level groups to increase participation



Child and adolescent groups help build conversations and promote values that propagate child and adolescent rights and build awareness of social norms, with a specific focus on the girl child. The following groups were formed and energised to create dialogue groups around adolescent empowerment:

1. Meena Manch – Peer groups for girls in classes 6–8
2. Gargi Manch – Peer groups for girls in classes 9–12
3. Child Rights Club – Peer group for girls and boys
4. Bal Sabha – Platform for engagement between children and community members
5. Kishori groups – Community-level group for those adolescent girls who cannot access Manchs in school



Saathin training to increase their effectiveness



The Saathin is the key frontline functionary in Rajasthan who takes the women and adolescent empowerment agenda of the Directorate of Women Empowerment, Department of Women and Child Development to communities. Saathins play a key role in adolescent empowerment and ending child marriage in gram panchayats. A specific training programme is being developed for them based on findings from a capacity gaps assessment in 2019 in three districts – Karauli, Udaipur and Jaaisalmer.

Concerted panchayat-level efforts for 100% retention of children in schools



An Ujjiyari Panchayat is one where all children are in age-appropriate classes, enrolment drives are conducted every year, previously out-of-school/dropout children are being mainstreamed through bridge curricula and extra classes, parents participate actively in school affairs and PRI members act as key influencers to promote schooling. The Panchayat Elementary Education Officer (PEEO) plays a crucial role in turning her/his panchayat into an Ujjiyari Panchayat.

Social and behaviour change communication as a key component



Focused and intensive communication campaigns have been undertaken in Rajasthan since 2014, aimed at realisation of child rights, with a specific emphasis on preventing child marriage. These campaigns are aligned with the Global Programme for Ending Child Marriage (GPECM) and implemented in partnership between the state government and UNICEF. The campaigns are critical in challenging and disrupting social norms around child marriage and gender. The Ladli Samman campaign was run in three phases in nine districts of Rajasthan from 2014 to 2016. In 2019, the Laado Shakti and Samvardhan Abhiyan was launched in Tonk district with a similar aim and approach. The campaign objectives are to create widespread awareness among stakeholders, identify dropout and out-of-school children between 12–17 years of age and mainstream them, promote an enabling environment for holistic development of the girl child, link vulnerable families with social protection schemes and document and demonstrate models and success stories.