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## Self-defence trainings for adolescent girls

### The need for a self-defence programme for adolescent girls

Adolescents form a crucial 21 per cent of the Indian population. Given appropriate investments and right opportunities, they are representative of a significant demographic dividend. One of the key challenges facing this large group, especially adolescent girls, is a sense of lack of safety and security. Gender-based violence and crimes against girls and women lead to an unsafe environment, impeding their educational and career opportunities.

Gender-based violence is an issue which would take long term, strong prevention and response policy measures and structural changes. In the immediate term, a programme was piloted to provide self-defence training to adolescent girls in Rajasthan. The programme was piloted in 200 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyayas (KGBVs) in 2014–15, wherein 19,054 girls were given self-defence training. Recognising the need to increase investments in the safety and security of young girls, especially adolescent girls, the Government of Rajasthan has since then taken strides to invest in self-defence trainings for adolescent girls in all government schools across 33 districts of the state. The programme is now being implemented in 33,210 schools in Rajasthan.<sup>1</sup>

“When we started the programme in KGBVs, we had around 20,000 girls. Slowly we extended it to girls in upper primary schools and then to girls in secondary and senior secondary schools. We are now going to extend it further. Last year, we provided self-defence training to around 1,114,800 girls. This year, the self-defence training is being imparted in 33,210 schools, including around 1,150,000 girls in upper primary, secondary and senior secondary schools. Along with self-defence training, other martial arts will also be included in the training.”

Snehlata Harit  
Rajasthan Administrative Service (RAS)  
Deputy Commissioner  
Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan  
(RMSA)

<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the Department of Women and Child Development in partnership with UNICEF championed a 10-day physical defence training in two blocks of Karauli district. Under this specific intervention, 150 out-of-school girls were identified. These girls were then trained through the 10-day period and engaged with, on different life skill focus areas. Some of these adolescent girls also opted to be linked to schooling again. Further to this, the Shiksha Setu guideline was notified by the Department to enrol out-of-school girls to open schools. The schooling fees would be reimbursed by the Department by leveraging Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) funds.

**“I have trained around 400 girls in three KGBVs and 160 teachers at state, district and block levels in the last three years. I have got very positive feedback from teachers on these trainings. Even the girls have become more confident and have started sharing their experiences with their teachers, which they didn’t earlier.”**

**Sharmila Kanwar  
Class 3 Teacher  
L2 English  
Government Senior  
Secondary School  
Hathoj Jhotwara, Jaipur**

Globally it is acknowledged that self-defence training for adolescent girls helps them get a sense of the levels of safety, which implies that they realise that they must acknowledge and respond to a situation which makes them feel uncomfortable. The training also imparts physical abilities, mental strength and a greater alertness in streets and towards people.

## What will self-defence trainings do?

The trainings are aimed at providing adolescent girls with the ability to utilise their physical and mental prowess while in difficult situations. The trainings also aim to build a sense of confidence and well-being among adolescent girls.

### Specific objectives of the self-defence trainings

- To propagate self-defence related knowledge and techniques among secondary and senior secondary schools in the state
- To orient adolescent girls on the life cycle, from the perspective of adolescence and women’s rights, gender equality, and government

schemes for the benefit of children and adolescents and thus equip them with knowledge to use this information for entitlements and to avail schemes

- To sensitise them on adolescent-related issues, encourage discussion and dialogue on these issues, and inculcate social and moral values. This would help in creating an adolescent-friendly environment.

## Approach to implementation of the self-defence programme

In 2014, a 10-day training programme was organised for all female physical education teachers employed in state-run schools in Rajasthan on a pilot basis. The training programme was undertaken in close collaboration with the Rajasthan Police Academy and organised in the Academy premises. Based on learnings from this programme, the updated intervention was launched in 2018. Based on the success of the learning and a dire need to augment continuation of the activity; the core team for creating a self-defence programme manual was officially set up in 2018.







### Module development

A workshop was organised in 2018 to develop the training modules to train physical education teachers for the self-defence programme which would integrate it within the regular school curriculum. This was an intensive and consultative exercise which was conducted in three phases<sup>2</sup> keeping the regional context in mind. Since self-defence techniques are vast and varied, only the most basic and essential techniques which could be used to defend oneself in times of danger were elaborated in the module.

**Modules used as a reference guide by physical education teachers in all government schools, in 33 districts**

Development of the modules on self-defence was important, since these modules were used as a reference guide by physical education teachers in all government schools in 33 districts of the state. They were in Hindi, easy to comprehend, and could be used easily.



**880 Master Trainers trained**

### Training of Master Trainers

The training modules were finalised and 880 Master Trainers were trained to take them forward in a cascade mode. Some adolescent boys and girls were also trained to be volunteers for the programme. Their training included demonstration sessions and training on basic warm-up exercises and self-defence techniques. The self-defence modules detail out a 10-day training schedule for physical education teachers, with a day-wise agenda. The training package consists of all the essential information for teachers to take the self-defence education programme forward in their respective schools.



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**“If there is a need to use these newly-learnt skills, we can use them at any time. If any unfortunate incident happens to us, we are prepared to take care of ourselves now.”**

**Rekha Gujjar  
Class 8 student  
KGBV, Annapura Sikar**

## Session plans for roll-out of self-defence programme in schools

The self-defence sessions can be planned as per the convenience and schedule of the school. Six sessions need to be planned for self-defence training of adolescents in schools.

Two types of trainings are provided as part of the plan. First, outdoor sessions are conducted for physical training to prepare the girls for physical defence in case of an eventuality. Second, there are classroom sessions in

which the girls are oriented on issues related to child protection, women’s legal rights, acts and legislations such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and educated on human anatomy and adolescent-related physical, mental and emotional issues. The sessions also provide important precautionary tips for adolescent girls to be alert and ready for undesirable circumstances. The following table details the sessions with suggestive days and dates.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF provided technical assistance and guidance in the development of these modules.

## Session plan

Six sessions between Monday to Wednesday over two weeks (between 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of every month)

**Session 1**  
Morning  
6:30–7:15 AM

Preparation/  
warm-up exercises



**Session 2**  
Morning  
7:30–8:15 AM

Technical session  
(Karate techniques)



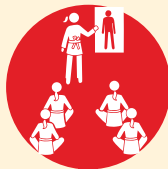
**Session 3**  
Morning  
8:20–9:00 AM

Technical session  
(Karate techniques  
and yoga *asanas*)



**Session 4**  
Morning  
11:00 AM–2:00 PM

Technical session  
(classroom)<sup>3</sup>  
(For 10-15-year-olds)



**Session 5**  
Morning  
4:00–4:45 AM

Practice and exercises  
.....  
Revision and cultural  
programmes



**Session 6**  
Morning  
4:50–5:55 AM

Practice and exercises  
.....  
Revision and cultural  
programmes



<sup>3</sup> (Definition of self-defence; its importance; human anatomy; common ailments during adolescence; pregnancies at a young age; child marriage; HIV/STIs; gender-based violence; alcohol and drug abuse; tobacco use; malnutrition and obesity; exercise and nutrition; physical, mental and emotional changes during adolescence; sexuality; building a dialogue with boys and girls; child rights; child and adolescent welfare schemes and programmes.)

## Future course of action

The Government of Rajasthan has scaled up the self-defence programme as a mandatory activity in schools to build awareness and confidence of girls through information dissemination, knowledge building and physical training. The trainings have benefitted lakhs of girls in KGBVs and other government schools. They see the merit

in these trainings and feel confident that they would not hesitate to use the skills they have gained when needed. The self-defence programme will provide an impetus to the efforts being made to encourage girls to continue and finish their higher education. In areas where children and adolescents, especially girls, feel unsafe going to school, with a continuous onslaught of incidents of harassment and eve teasing, self-defence trainings will provide them the succour and confidence to deal with such situations.

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.

To this end, UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the Department of Women and Child Development, Department of Education and Department of Social Justice and Empowerment to build awareness, sensitisation and capacities among frontline workers and mobilise communities to make them active partners in planning and decision making. UNICEF is also strengthening the alliance of civil society organisations towards ending all forms of violence against children and women.

In its adolescent empowerment efforts, UNICEF has also actively worked for inclusion of child protection programming in schools of Rajasthan and for out-of-school children, with 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. UNICEF's programming is facilitating access to various government schemes and programmes influencing children's education, among economically weaker sections, to ensure that entitlements reach all children and they can continue their education.