



Rising Leaders: Empowering Adolescent Girls in Jharkhand through UMANG's Leadership Training Program





UMANG is an ICRW conceptualized, and IKEA Foundation supported comprehensive, multi-layered girls empowerment program to increase their retention in school and reduce the prevalence of child marriages in Godda and Jamtara districts of Jharkhand. UMANG is being implemented by ICRW in partnership with SATHEE, Badlao Foundation, PCI and in close association with government of Jharkhand. The program uses a socio-ecological framework and gender transformative approaches for multilayered intervention at individual (adolescent girls), family (parents, siblings), community (men & boys, women, and other community members) and system (schools, local governing structures like PRI, child protection mechanism , etc.) levels.

Objective

This leadership training program aims to empower adolescent girls by bolstering their leadership skills, fostering decision-making abilities, and enriching their understanding of available opportunities. Furthermore, the program aims to provide them with the necessary skills and capacities to improve their employability.

Innovative Approaches

This initiative empowered girls through Kishori Group. The program promoted leadership by keeping the adolescent groups formed regularly and integrating sports, decision making and confidence to claim public

spaces so that adolescents can lead their groups. The group, an offshoot of the UMANG program, uses innovative approaches and diverse activities such as GEA for capacity building, enabling adolescents to identify themselves as community leaders. The adolescent girls approach their village head, ward members and share their concerns. Also, in their social meetings, they discuss issues of adolescent girls like education, drop- out from school, marriage, etc.

Collaborative Efforts

This initiative leveraged a collaborative effort by engaging SHG members, fostering male involvement, and support of Panchayat. This multifaceted approach ensured a holistic program promoting adolescent leadership and mobility.

Challenge

The initiative faced some challenges due to lack of conducive spaces for discussions and play, hindering girls' engagement. In addition, the discontinuation of education of girls was a challenge.

Solution

Adolescents' lack of communication skills comes across as a huge hindrance to achieving their aspirations and facing challenges. During various sports activities and group education activities of UMANG conducted to empower adolescent girls and promote their aspirations, it was realized that if they are guided, they can become good leaders and help others like them. They can raise issues related to the challenges of adolescent girls.

For this purpose, a 2-day workshop was organized with about 100 interested and selected girls from different villages in the UMANG area of work, in which they were made aware of the nuances of building leadership skills. During the workshop, various qualities of a leader like sensitivity, self-confidence, logical and critical thinking, inquisitiveness, self-reliance etc. were discussed through various activities and games to develop leadership skills with the adolescent girls. After the workshop, the girls met the Panchayat representatives of their village and identified Anganwadi, Panchayat Bhavan or other suitable place and selected the place for the discussion. The girls also demanded from the Mukhiya sports materials like football for playing. In some places teenage girls have formed their own football team and they are playing regularly and taking part in competitions. Adolescent girls are also coming forward and participating in community events in their villages, like pujas, etc.

Impact on Stakeholders

Girls exhibit heightened confidence, effectively negotiating marriage delays. They demonstrate improved capability in seeking information and accessing essential services, fostering motivation for higher education and professional growth. Two girls started giving tuition to about 20 children in their village to keep them connected with education and for their own education. They also hold meetings with men in the village on the prospects of adolescent girls and gender issues. Discussion with the adolescent girls and giving information to the people with the help of the "Government Scheme Document" prepared under UMANG is also a part of their discussion. One adolescent directed another adolescent from her village to join foster care.

Around 60 girls from both blocks are pursuing higher studies, and few of them have shifted to the district level. Most girls have started going to village-level libraries for their studies, many girls are involved in skill development, and some girls are studying to be nurses. Some girls have started giving tuition to meet their studies and their own expenses. The girls have spoken to their parents and helping some more girls to continue their studies.

After the training in Amarpur village, Godda, six adolescent girls are collectively studying in College. They have formed their group in College and are leading various cultural activities, sports, and workshops at the college level on different platforms.

Following the leadership training for girls from Jamtara and Saluki, they are sustaining their group. The entire team from the village is going outside the district to play football. Whenever there is a cultural program in the village, all the girls from the group perform in Anganwadi or Manjhitan (religious place). This group encourages adolescent girls at the village level to attend school and stay connected to education.



“It is always said that girls cannot do this, girls should not go out, girls are weak. They can never do what they like at home. But, on our own, we tried and did everything on our own. Now I express my views in my house. I tell everyone that I play football. I also talk about my dreams at home; I want to complete my studies and join the police.”

– said an adolescent girl during leadership training, June 2022, Godda, Jharkhand

“For the first time, I have come out of home for training. Mother refused, brother and father also refused to allow it. I talked to everyone separately and got a chance for the first time. I want to do something after studying. I am the only one selected from my entire group for leadership training.”

–said an adolescent girl during leadership training, July 2022, Jamtara, Jharkhand

“There is no such place for girls where they can sit and talk among themselves; we will create Kishori Club so that they will get a chance to share their views with everyone.”

– Leadership training, June 2022, Mahagama block, Godda, Jharkhand.

Two hundred adolescents underwent leadership training in four batches across Godda and Jamtara.

The residential leadership camp organized by UMANG has emerged as a catalyst for transformative change among adolescent girls in Godda and Jamtara. By instilling leadership skills, fostering confidence, and encouraging aspirations, the program has not only empowered these girls but also sparked the formation of Kishori clubs, embodying a sustainable and community-driven approach towards gender equality and adolescent development. UMANG remains dedicated to breaking barriers, challenging societal norms, and fostering a generation of confident, informed, and empowered young leaders.

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Primary Authors: Nasreen Jamal and Amajit Mukherjee



ICRW Asia

Module 410, NSIC Business Park, 4th Floor, Okhla Industrial Estate, New Delhi - 110020

Tel: 91.11.46643333 | E-mail: info.india@icrw.org | Website: www.icrw.org/asia

Facebook: @ICRWAsia | Twitter: @ICRWAsia

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/international-center-for-research-on-women-icrwasia/>

ICRW Jamtara Project Office

Ground floor, 726-A/1 P2, Krishna Nagar, Mihijam, Jamtara, Jharkhand - 815354