



The New Journey of UMANG

Friends, as you know, the UMANG programme has been actively empowering adolescent girls. Taking this journey forward the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), with support from Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, is going to launch a closely linked programme called Mathan with an aim to understand masculinity-based perspectives and encourage positive thinking among men, in addition to women and adolescent girls. As part of this programme, efforts will be made to challenge norms of masculinity, institutional practices, behavior and approaches in around 10-12 panchayats in two blocks of Jamtara district. A multi-pronged approach is envisioned to create a transformative path for a continuous process of change in these villages where ICRW and partner organizations are already working towards the empowerment of adolescent girls.

This programme will basically provide young men, boys, women, and girls an opportunity to examine and embrace gender-based critical and positive thinking. The aim of the programme is to validate the process of transformation at both individual and group levels. The programme also seeks to encourage intergenerational dialogue among

men and women from all age groups and between parents and children, particularly between fathers and sons. Another focus area of the programme is to provide leadership guidance to men and boys interested in volunteering, promoting gender equality, engaging and collaborating with other key institutional stakeholders within communities to support positive engagement.

The individual and group level discussions with boys, women, adolescent girls and families to understand and learn about the process of change and their struggles will also be an integral part of the programme to achieve the overall goal of gender equality.

“Youth has an important role to play in the empowerment of adolescent girls.” ICRW and Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) have trained around 120 youth in Godda district on gender issues, with an aim to bring down the rate of child marriage. These young people are triggering gender conversations in their respective villages. NYK will continue to support this initiative in coming days.”

**Honey Sinha,
District Director,
Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan,
Ranchi, Jharkhand**

UMANG on Wheels

Under the UMANG programme, Mr Faiz Aq Ahmed Mumtaz, Deputy Commissioner of Jamtara inaugurated the second phase of street play campaign on 21 November 2022 by flagging off three teams. The campaign posters were also released on the occasion. As part of this initiative, a total of 370 street plays will be staged in 212 villages of Jamtara (Jamtara and Nala blocks) and Godda (Godda and Mahagama blocks) districts. The two-month long initiative will strive to reach around 60000 villagers to disseminate the messages on adolescent girls' education, reduction and eradication of child marriages through the medium of street plays. The entire campaign will be coordinated by Sahyogini, a partner organization of the UMANG project. Further details about the campaign will be published in the next edition of UMANG VAANI.



Dear Readers,

Namaste/ Johaar!

With immense pleasure and excitement, we present to you the seventh edition of UMANG VAANI. The UMANG program has been actively working towards adolescent girls empowerment in the last few years and it has been able to successfully work towards realizing its goals so far. The journey of UMANG began in the year 2018. As per the NFHS-4 survey data, the districts of Godda (65%) and Jamtara (43%) recorded very high rates of child marriage in Jharkhand. Only 40% girl students were enrolled in secondary education here. A higher number of child marriages were witnessed in teenage girls who dropped out of school. In view of this, with an aim to empower adolescent girls and reduce the rate of child marriage, a collective movement in the form of UMANG program, started in villages and schools to encourage group learning activities. Young girls would sit in groups to discuss important issues like gender, education, aspirations, communication and leadership capacity, child marriages, violence, bodily changes.

Gradually as the journey of UMANG progressed, it was realized that the lives of these young girls are affected by various factors. We expanded the activities under the UMANG project to include several other components like dialogues with youth, men and women from self-help groups, activation of VLCPCs reinstating child protection committee and scheduling its monthly meetings, kickstarting football matches with girls and street plays to make the society sensitive towards gender issues, etc.

UMANG's journey has taught us that its continuation is of paramount importance, to fully reap the benefits of the momentum on gender empowerment built up with the community so far. The Education department recognized the significance of program like Umang through concurrent engagement and collaboration with the program and in 2020 Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) was expanded to additional 200 schools with the GEMS project. To make education more gender inclusive and ensure regularity, Jharkhand Education Project Council also partnered with ICRW to create an activity manual for teachers on the issues of gender equality and parity. To further Gender equal education, initiatives have been taken to make audio-visual content available in all 271 schools across the district. In Jamtara district, a project named MANTHAN is being started with an aim to have continuous dialogues with men, so that the society is able to break the shackles of gender inequality and create a gender-equal environment for all. We hope that teachers, schools, adolescent boys and girls, and every individual who has been part of UMANG in some way or the other, will pass on the learnings to future generations.

We not only hope, but have full faith that you will enjoy reading this edition of UMANG VAANI. We also welcome your valuable suggestions and feedback.

Yours sincerely

**Rajendra Singh
Assistant Director,
Project Implementation, ICRW**

We Rule the Fields Now

In this patriarchal society, gender has an impact on every small and big aspect of our lives. Whether it is clothing choices, skin colour, education, marriage, nature official or household work, or even the way of getting up, sitting, walking, and talking, gender divide dictates our rules and behaviours in all spheres of daily life. Thus, Sports is also not left untouched by such gendered norms. Associating football with boys and games like Kho-Kho with girls is an example of the prevalence of archaic forms of gender inequality.

With the idea of ending the monopoly of boys in field sports, adolescent girls staked their claim for equal representation on village grounds by beginning to play football in 2020. During the UMANG group sessions, the girls expressed their desire to play, and eventually started to play in their respective groups. While the girls wanted to play, they were unfamiliar with the rules of the game. UMANG took cognizance of the situation and started training its workers in several batches in the nuances of the football game so that they can guide the adolescent girls. From time to time, football expert (coach) was also engaged to provide guidance and regular practice thus hone the girls' football skills. The enthusiasm and dedication of the girls towards the sport gave them an identity at the village and block level. With a desire to convert their aspirations into dreams, UMANG organized district level football competitions in Godda and Jamtara. During these competitions, teams of girls which often traveled from distant villages became a topic of positive discussions and got recognition. People greatly applauded such an initiative and reached out in large numbers to encourage and boost the morale of players.

32 teams each from both the districts participated in this competition which was played in different stages to finalize the winner, including league matches, quarter finals, semi-finals, and final. The adolescent girls expressed their happiness, celebrating that **"they can also play football. Neither field nor football cares if it is a boy or a girl who is kicking the ball and playing on the ground; if anything, it only matters in people's thinking and perspectives."**



We are the tomorrow...

There was a huge crowd in front of the middle school of Gaechhand village in Godda block that day, as if the whole village had assembled there, everyone had gathered in large numbers and their enthusiasm was palpable.

But what for? What was the occasion that brought together the entire village? After all, what was it for which an ordinary village afternoon had become so special? Yes friends, you guessed it right, this UMANG, the initiative for the empowerment of girl child. Caused by a group of 7 girls who had participated in a five-day workshop on street theatre in Godda, and on that day, they are finally going to perform a street play in their very own village.

As the play began, young girls expressed their dreams and desires in front of a jampacked audience through their acting. During the play, when all the performers raised their fisted hands in the air and said **"we are girls, we are power, we are the tomorrow"**, the audiences' eyes gleamed with hope, and they joined in saying **"we are all with you."**

A theatre-based communication and personality development workshop for adolescent girls and boys was organized in both UMANG districts in June 2022. It was decided that 15-30 days, the adolescents will use the medium of communication arts taught in the workshop street plays in their respective villages, and this performance was part of the program. It is noteworthy that this performance was not limited to Gaechhand village, it was organized in 25 villages across Godda and Jamtara districts where a total of 160 workshop participants staged plays approximately 3000 people from their respective villages.



Organization of capacity building workshops on leadership skills for adolescent empowerment

In a step towards empowering adolescent girls, UMANG selected about 100 girls, with guardians' consent, from the districts of Godda and Jamtara and organized a two-day residential workshop for building leadership skills among adolescent girls and encouraging them towards defining their own identities. Understanding leadership and nurturing it along with acquiring communication and teamwork skills are essential for everyone to lead a successful and fulfilling life. The workshop sensitized the adolescents on these issues and provided lessons in building capacities to work towards achieving their dreams and aspirations. The girls were further trained to provide guidance and support to other adolescent girls in and around their villages. After the training, the participants were ready to face the familial and societal challenges and raise voice for the same. In the words of

participant Riya Halder, "This workshop has been very helpful in boosting our self-confidence and making our point anywhere without hesitation. Every teenager should get this kind of opportunity so that they can speak their mind and become a successful leader."



GEMS Program



The GEMS program is being implemented for the last two years in 201 middle, secondary and higher secondary government schools in three blocks of Godda and Jamtara districts namely Poraiyahat, Pathargama and Narayanpur (Jamtara). Its main objective is to promote the idea of gender-based equality by reaching out directly to about 30,000 students and around 60,000 family members indirectly. This program is being run in collaboration with the Jharkhand Education Project Council and under the leadership of teachers. As part of this program, around 500 teachers have further deepened their understanding of gender issues by participating in a four-day training and multiple rounds of dialogues.

Under the program, sessions are being organized with the help of teachers on diverse topics, such as gender-based discrimination, violence, physical changes in adolescence, employment, child marriage, self-identification, and effective communication with students from classes VI to XII. ICRW and its partner organisations, SAATHI and Badlao Foundation, have played a pivotal role in the implementation of this program. We are excited to learn that the New Education Policy highlights the importance of gender-inclusive issues. Although the presence of ICRW and its partner organizations will gradually decrease going forward, gender-based programs will continue to be conducted by the same teachers with some changes. In order to transition smoothly, and for the understanding of children, there is also a plan to provide a softcopy of ICRW's teaching materials along with audio-visual material to the schools. It gives us pleasure to inform you that based on the experience so far, the Jharkhand Education Department, while observing the major sessions (courses) of the GEMS and UMANG program, have sent 15 sessions in a slightly modified form to the Jharkhand Educational Research and Council with suggestion to upload these on Diksha portal. The process is ongoing. We believe that this joint initiative by us will play an important role in promoting and enabling a gender equal environment in schools and society.

UMANG is a lifestyle...

UMANG is not just a program but a complete lifestyle, and to start it at the school level is a very commendable step because children adapt the learnings of schools in their lives. When the program started in 2019, it was a subject of enthusiasm among the teachers, but once the trainings started with the help of UMANG workers, teachers understood the significance and transformative nature of this program. We further got more clarity when the Principals were oriented on gender related issues and the UMANG program.

Such programs not only bring a sense of equality among the children but also refines the attitudes of us teachers and brings about a behavioral change. Teachers are able to discuss all kinds of issues with ease. Children have also become more vocal now, they have become critical in the classrooms and speak freely. There has been a visible increase in our confidence level. The program has led to visible changes in school environment as teasing each other, name calling, and violence among children has reduced; boys and girls now freely play together, they talk and even sit next to each other. Programs such as UMANG encourage children to aspire and also fuel their enthusiasm to study.

Now that the regular operation of the UMANG program has stopped, teachers do not organize class sessions regularly but they do engage in discussion from time to time. Such programs should keep running, as discussion with new children is also essential. Even today, girls are married very early in our society, this kind of program also gives a message to the society. Such initiatives has an impact on society and can play a vital role in changing the gender notions which dictate that boys and girls are different.

Srijan Murmu
Principal, Utkramit High School, Sundarpur, Nala



Football is not just a sport for us, it is our identity...



I got the inspiration to play football from my father who was also a football player in the past and is now a coach. But this game cannot be played alone or with just 1-2 people, thus I was also not able to play.

In 2020, when I joined UMANG, a team of adolescent girls was formed and that is the first time that I could meet girls in a group. Regular meetings started taking place under the UMANG project. Few days later, a football session was started as part of the program, along with discussions on issues like gender, group activities and team sports were also included. However, not all girls would play. While some were getting full support from their families, other parents would not give permission and often argued that football is a boys sport and girl should not be playing it. Gradually, we could explain and change the thinking of everyone. My father and UMANG didi further helped us in reaching out to the community. We started playing regularly and kept practicing. We were then trained with the support of UMANG program where, trainers visited to teach us the nuances of the game and motivated us to practice regularly. Under the UMANG program, a district level tournament was organized. Our team participated in it and played up to the district level. Such competitions motivated us further to play the game and now we always participate in such tournaments. We have won several matches. It is football that has given an identity to us and our village - where a girls team plays. In the beginning, we used to wear the boys uniform but now we have our own uniform and boots provided during the UMANG tournament. With the money we win in matches, we buy football, go to other villages to play, pay for our commute, etc. The happiest thing is that now when we go to play, the people who used to stop us from playing earlier, come to watch our matches.

Purnima Murmu
16 years, Class IX
Village: Jaspur, Nala, Jharkhand



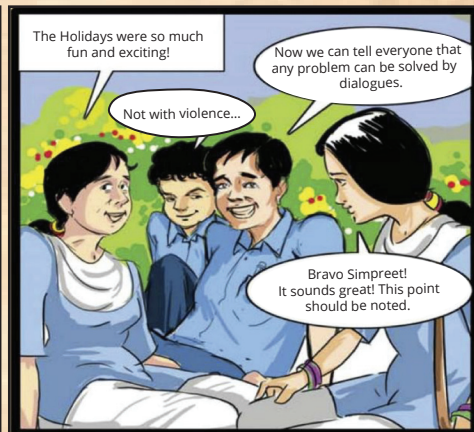
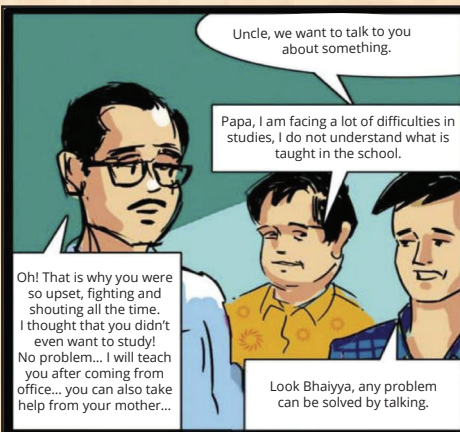
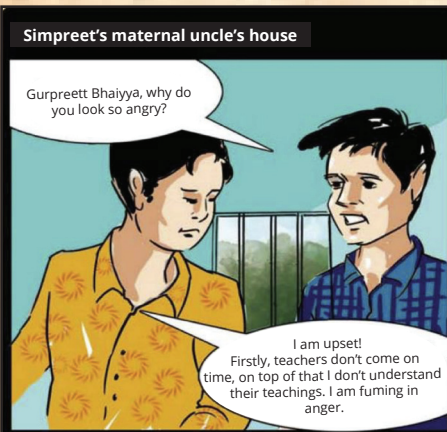
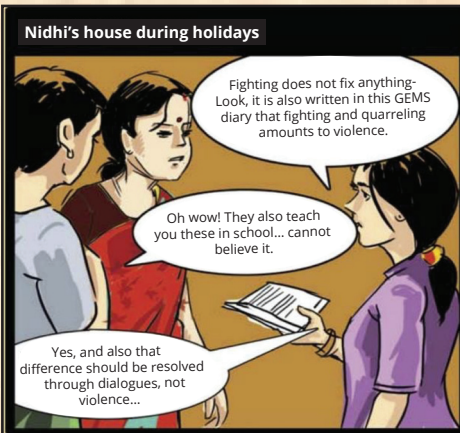
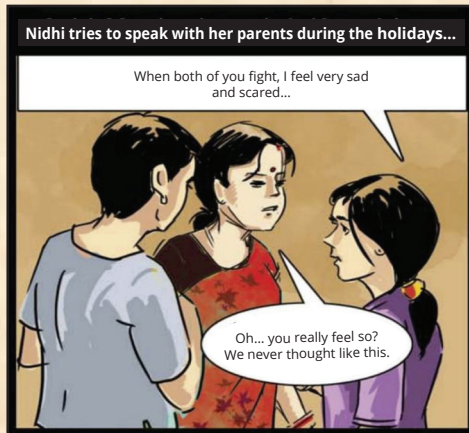
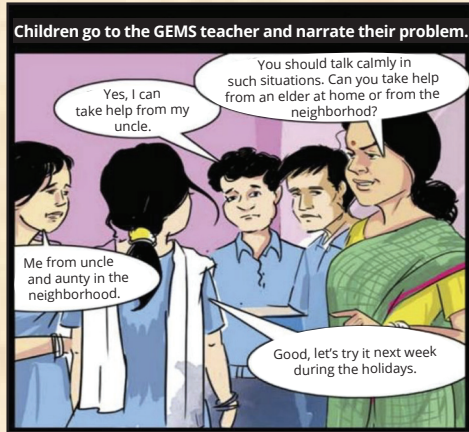
I, Sangeeta Kumari, working as an Associate Teacher in Government Middle School, Motia, express my heartfelt gratitude to all the representatives associated with the UMANG program through this latest edition of UMANG VAANI. Your consistent efforts, especially the gender-related session based in schools, are benefitting all our students, all of us teachers in school can feel a unique change in their behavior patterns and confidence. Girls are now actively participating in all school activities at par with the boys. As all the sessions of UMANG are very educational and based on everyday life, its impact is affecting the students in a very positive way. Such sessions should be started in schools across the state. UMANG is making positive impact not only on the students but also the teachers in the school. Being a female teacher, I am also becoming more confident now. Thank you, UMANG!

Sangeeta Kumari
Associate Teacher
Government Middle School,
Motia, Godda





Dialogues creating waves, the foundation of violence caves...



To see the animation for these stories, visit the ICRW website or Youtube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXtsQwZZZq3BGSReTdCEUrvPRmQiiFa2u>

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the IKEA Foundation for supporting the UMANG program and our local partners in the creation and dissemination of this magazine - SAATHI (Godda), Project Concern International and Parivartan Foundation (Jamtara). We appreciate the following for their support and thank them for their important contribution in the conceptualisation and writing of UmangVaani: ICRW - Dr. Ravi Verma, Amajit Mukherjee, Pranita Achyut, Dr. Nasreen Jamal, Rajendra Singh, Paras Verma, Nalini V Khurana, Bineet Jha, Triloki Nath, Sakti Ghosh, Nitya Agarwal, Project Concern International - Ankita Kashish, Nawab Parvez, Poonam Kumari, Sanjeev Singh, Anita Kumari, Shalini Kumari, Sathi - Hemkant Murmu, Bibhash Jha, Subodh Majhi, Badlao Foundation - Arvind Kumar, Zahoor Ansari. Bangla Natak.com - Ananya Bhattacharya, Abhipasha Ghosh, Suman Das. Sahyogni - Gautam Sagar.

For more information about this newsletter, please contact:

Pointperson	Organization	Contact number
Dr. Nasreen Jamal	ICRW Asia	9431391359
Sushmita Mukherjee	P.C.I.	8920132942
Hemkant Murmu	SATHEE	6203088294
Arvind Kumar	Badlao Foundation	8210932507



ICRW Ranchi Office:

405, 4th Floor, Krishna Mall, Ashok Nagar,
Between Road No. 1&2, Opposite Central GST Office,
Ranchi - Jharkhand - 834002
Tel. - 0651-2244416/2244417

ICRW Asia Regional Office:

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
Module No 410, Fourth Floor, NSIC Business Park Building
Okhla Industrial Estate, New Delhi - 110020, India
Tel +91.11.46643333 | Fax : 91-11-2463.5142
Email : Info.india@icrw.org