



She

THE CHANGE

SWIPE

Dear Readers,

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights brings you "She The Change - Aug 2022" - a compilation of inspiring stories from various villages where girls have taken a stand and fought against societal pressures and practices and also risen against their physical disabilities.

We hope the stories will inspire and give strength to other girls who wish to aspire something in their life amid societal pressures at each step. This is the time to support them in their struggles and celebrate the journey they travel.

If you have a story to share, do write in to info@haqcrc.org and help us amplify the cause.

Thank you and best wishes,



Bharti Ali
Co-Founder & Executive Director



Acknowledgements

1- Society for All Round Development, Reodar

Society for All Round Development (SARD) is an NGO located in Reodar, Rajasthan, and its key focus areas are education and literacy.

2- Kishori Balika Manch (SARD)

Kishori Balika Manch is an association/group of girls aged 13-21 years that has been set up in every gram panchayat level by the Society for All Round Development, Reodar. Girls who have joined belong to different backgrounds, some of them have been child brides, some have never been to school and some are school dropouts, while some have recently joined school. Meetings are conducted every three months with these girls where various important topics are discussed and issues specific to these girls are identified and addressed. Awareness campaign regarding child marriage is led by these adolescent girls in every Akshaya Tiritiya. Issues that are not resolved at the Panchayat level are further taken to block, district, and state-level with help of the organization.

3- Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti (MJAS)

MJAS is a women-led, rights-based organization working towards emancipating women and adolescent girls from normative traditions as well as inhuman practices which will continue to inflict them. The Samiti has consistently carried out synchronized efforts against women's discrimination to ensure achievement of their constitutional and human rights. Along with providing assistance in the cases of violence, desertion, social practices and caste based- discrimination and land related issues, MJAS has been flagging issues and concerns of the women's movement in Rajasthan since 1980s.

4- The Play of Dots by Sukhmanni Bhandari

This extraordinary book paints an absorbing picture of the lives of para-athletes. It provides a bridge between medical practice and social and cultural research drawing on authentic investigations. This book hopes to visualize the stories, journeys and voices of the Indian Para-athletes who are making India proud. Sukhmanni hopes that, we together as a society, recognise and reward their efforts and do all that is necessary to normalise their lives and ensure the grant of equal opportunities to them.

5- Disha Vihar

Disha Vihar is a non-profit organisation, established in 2002 that works primarily in the domain of Gender, Health, Energy & Environment, Education, Disaster Management and Child & Youth Development. Its primary office is in Munger, Bihar.



NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

JANKI BAI GOUD

For Janki Bai Goud, the threat of physical and sexual abuse has long remained a central challenge. In her remote village. She not only faced the issue of physical disability (blindness), but the constant fear of physical abuse.



Janki, who lost her eyesight at the age of 5 due to measles, bought into the merits of joining a Judo and Self-defence Training program initiated by Sightsavers, an international non-government organisation, in 2014. The decision was transformative as it helped reorient the course of Janki's life. In 2017 she was crowned National Champion in Blind Judo.

She flew on a plane for the first time to win a Bronze Medal at the Judo Asian and Oceania Championship held by the International Blind Sports Federation in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. International competitions instilled pride in her and her community when she disproved cynics who previously thought she couldn't accomplish anything.

After the event, she remarked, "My family is feeling good, this has changed my life." Before joining Judo, Janki barely spoke due to her low self-esteem, and her body language was very negative. The win helped boost her confidence. Today she is an unofficial spokesperson for the program organisers and teaches younger Judokas.

Janki proudly proclaims, "Once I was looked down upon, as a daughter of a daily wager, no one thought I could do anything, let alone go out and work."





After I won medals I earned both respect and recognition. Besides visually-impaired girls, even those who have healthy eye-sight now want to learn judo from me. I am very happy that I led the Indian team to victory in Uzbekistan, which not only made my parents and village proud but also my country”.

The remarkable feat not only won her official felicitations when she returned home but accolades from the state chief minister. Recently, Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh) district authorities indicated their willingness to build a judo academy named after Janki, to facilitate better training for visually-impaired girls. At present, there are no training centres in the district.

To her, judo is more than just a means of self-defence now. She has become deeply passionate about the sport. Janki’s courage and dedication inspire one to emulate her mental strength and determination.

Judo has helped Janki rejuvenate herself and thereby transform her mind and body to achieve what was unthinkable. She is a living example that life need not stop even if you have disabilities. Her struggle and success story is a lesson for all, as Janki has proven that life and success exist beyond physical ability.



MEERA GAON, MEERA GHAR




THIS IS THE STORY OF A BRAVE AND DETERMINED GIRL WHO WITH THE HELP OF HER PARENTS AND THE SUPPORT OF THE VILLAGERS HAS HELPED AND INSPIRED MANY YOUNG GIRLS AROUND HER.



DEVIKA BELONGS TO THE RAJPUT COMMUNITY WHEREIN WOMEN ARE KEPT IN 'PURDAH'. BOTH HER PARENTS ARE EDUCATED AND HER YOUNGER BROTHER, AGED 17, IS CURRENTLY STUDYING IN 11TH GRADE. HER FATHER WORKS IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR AND HER MOTHER IS A WORKER IN THE ANGANWADI CENTRE. THEY HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION IN THE VILLAGE AND ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR SIMPLICITY AMONGST THE VILLAGERS. DEVIKA IS THE FIRST GIRL IN HER VILLAGE TO COMPLETE HER EDUCATION. WATCHING DEVIKA SUCCEED AND MOVING FORWARD IN LIFE HAS INSPIRED THE OTHER VILLAGERS TO ALSO SEND THEIR DAUGHTERS TO SCHOOL AND COLLEGE. ALL THE DAUGHTERS OF THE VILLAGE WILL NOW STUDY AND MOVE FORWARD IN THEIR LIVES.

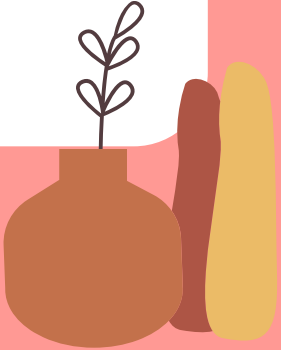

Darr ke aage jeet hai



“Oh really Didi, is this true? This is such good news! I am elated to hear that. If you all had not supported me, I would never have been able to do this. Didi, it was never easy for me.

However, during these tough times, the unconditional support and guidance you provided has helped us win the case.”

It is challenging for any child to raise their voice against sexual harassment. If the culprit is a member of the family, it becomes even more tough. Ketki had to undergo something similar. When she thought of raising her voice against the harassment done by her father, even her mother did not take her side. However, Ketki had made up her mind. She had faced enough of this and was not ready to step back. She went to the nearest Police station and filed an FIR against her father. With timely help provided by an NGO's social worker, she found the way ahead, but it was going to be a challenging journey.



Facing your parents in a court of law and appealing against them drains a child mentally and emotionally. Everyone tried to convince Ketki to take the case back and forget everything.

When the Bal Kalyan Samiti's social worker came to know that Ketki was being pressurised to withdraw the case, she helped her move to a child care centre. The social worker supported and guided Ketki throughout the case.

It was a long fight after which her father was declared guilty and imprisoned to jail for 14 years. Ketki stood like a rock throughout and ensured that she also made her future secure. She completed her graduation while staying in the shelter home. Now Ketki is pursuing an MBA. When the social worker Didi told her that Ketki was entitled to compensation by the government for her mental and emotional losses, she exclaimed, "Didi, is this true? Can I use this amount for my IAS coaching? I dream of becoming an IAS officer and helping people as you do. Hope I can be of help to the society!"



A YOUNG GIRL RISES & FIGHTS FOR CHANGE

Chandni, a young and energetic girl belonging to the OBC community, lives with her family in the small village of Dhavli. She is 21 years old and is currently going to college. Her father owns a small grocery store in Revdar, while her mother is a housewife. Her brother is 18 years old and is currently in Grade 12. She also has three sisters, one of whom is married and the other two are still in school. Her family lives a humble life and adheres to old customs and traditions.

Chandni has been a member of Kishori Manch for four years and has been an integral part of the Kishori leadership training programmes. She also attended meetings and training outside of her village.

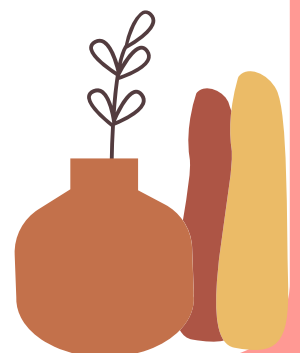
When Chandni's sister married a boy with three brothers, everyone in her family assumed that Chandni would also marry her sister's brother-in-law. Two marriages at a single gathering would save them time and money, as well as the search for the bridegroom. But Chandni did not like the boy since he had only completed 9th grade and had no suitable job. Chandni was forced to give in when her family insisted.





But God had different plans. The marriage was short-lived. The boy used to dominate Chandni and would not allow her to leave the house. She became frustrated and left the place to return to her parents' village, but her parents were of an orthodox mentality. They sent her back, but nothing had changed. The husband's behaviour had not changed and he also made Chandni leave her studies. Chandni took a firm stand in the face of opposition from her in-laws as well as parents. She returned to her parents' home and refused to return.

She convinced her parents to file for a divorce. Chandni got her divorce with the support of her family. She is now living with her parents. She is continuing her education and aims to support her family.



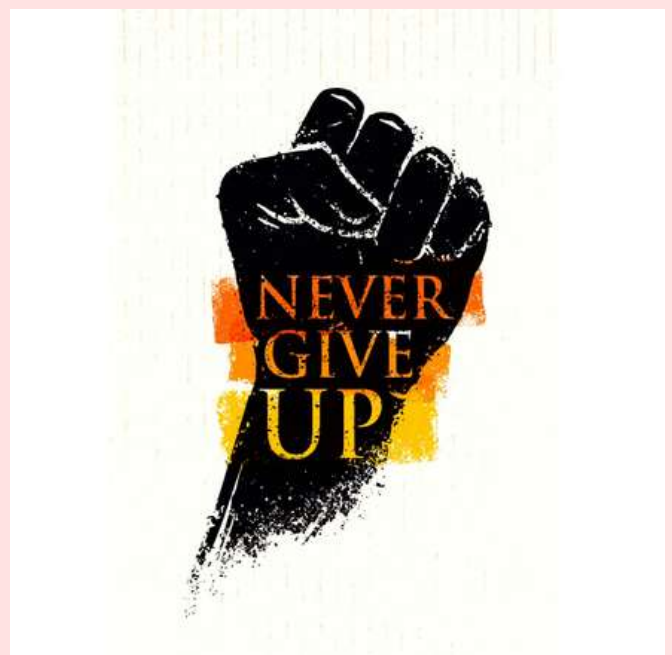
It is never too late to start afresh

Life has its own ways of putting people down but then also uplifting them and blessing them in various ways. Tiny steps undertaken can often lead to big achievements. This story is an example of one such life changing action, undertaken by a girl named Priya, a member of Kishori Balika Manch, the community adolescent girls' group, an NGO in Methipura.

Priya belongs to a tribal community under the Padar Panchayat of Methipura district. She became a victim of the KHEECH custom of her community. At the tender age of 17, she was forced into this malpractice by her parents and the community members. She was forced to carry out the entire household work by herself and was not allowed to meet or talk to anyone. It affected her terribly and she went into depression to the point that she started forgetting her own name as well.

A chance meeting with Samli, who was a member of the Kishori Balika Manch, changed the course of Priya's life. They both started meeting regularly and Samli also took Priya to the Manch meetings where Priya met other young girls and also realised that girls could also have goals and dreams in life. She had found a friend and a guide in Samli. Gradually Priya found out ways of getting out of her home and she started attending meetings of the Kishori Balika Manch regularly. She was now more dedicated to give her life a new direction. She thought of contesting the ward elections of her panchayat. But it was not going to be easy.

The two most powerful politicians were going to her opponents. But Priya with all her efforts, the help of the NGO's members and the Gelu Hanja ward panch won by 70 votes. She was elated and decided to now go for the Panch elections. But this news did not go down well with her opponents, and they abducted Priya and her parents at 3 am in the morning. Priya was asked to resign from the post. When she resisted, she was asked to pay 1 lakh in cash to each of the other contestants. Priya believed in her strong principles and refused to back down. As a result someone else was declared as the panch. Priya knows and understands that politics is a dirty game, but she won't back down. She still has hope of contesting elections in the coming future and wants to be a part of mainstream politics.



Dedication goes a long way

This is the story of a young and hardworking girl who has actively worked towards the betterment of medical facilities in her village.

Radha Rani is a 21-year-old girl currently studying in Grade 12. She lives in a small village named Thal. They are a small and simple family. Her father works in the agriculture sector, and her mother is a housewife. Her sister is married, and she stays with her in-laws. Radha has been working as support staff for ASHA since 2017. She has been involved with Kishori Balika Manch NGO for 3-4 years and actively participates in its key events.

Radha's dedication to this platform has been commendable. Her hard work and timely actions have proved beneficial to the villagers. She helps pregnant women in getting themselves registered in hospitals. She also takes them for regular medical check-ups and ensures the safe delivery of the babies.

In addition, she makes sure that every woman gets to avail the benefits of the RAJSHRI scheme. Radha also focuses on the health and well-being of the village children.

Two children suffering from malnutrition were taken care of by her. She referred them to Sirohi district hospital for better medical facilities. Two handicapped children were taken by her to Udaipur hospital, and one of the child's operation will be performed soon. She helps the children fill out their insurance forms so that their treatment is not hampered due to lack of funds.

Every alternate Thursday, she organises a meeting with the young girls and expecting mothers of her village to sensitise them about their health and available health facilities. She is also associated with the Covid-19 survey team. She has left no stone unturned to provide the villagers with proper testing, home isolation, and quarantine facilities.

Radha Rani's dedication towards the NGO and her village proves that giving back to the society in which you live is what makes you a responsible citizen. She dreams of completing her graduation and wants to become the ANM. She hopes to make her family proud by her achievements. She lives to fulfil the dream of a happy & prosperous village.





Sports opens-up the doorway to freedom and empowerment for girls. It enables them to be more confident about their bodies, instills self-confidence, increases their capacity to negotiate the challenges posed by patriarchy and social mores, and increases their mobility... Ajmer district in Rajasthan is not just famous for its Dargah and Pushkar Mela. It is also known for its beautiful handicrafts, the colour and its culture. But, behind this beauty lies the lives of young children who are married off- sometimes when they are only a few months old. While some of these are boys, most are girls. It is to change the lives of these girls that football for girls was introduced in 2016. Although, girls playing football may be a common sight elsewhere, in Ajmer it is unheard of. In fact, in a society highly fractured by gender and caste, the resistance to girls playing football was one of the biggest hurdles this initiative had to overcome. The resistance came from all quarters- communities, families, schools and even administration. It was the girls who showed the way. They formed groups to go to each one's house to talk to parents and getting their approval. Even today, they go and meet with the families of girls who are absent from practice sessions.

It was socially difficult for girls to wear shorts and jerseys. So, having been allowed to play football by their reluctant families, they began playing in salwars. The next step was to wear their shorts over their churidaars or tights.... then they began folding up their salwars or churidaars. Soon enough there were girls running around on the fields in their football kits.

Initially teachers were also not happy. Their main worry was around 'how they would control the girls if they became too forward'. Some warned that all girls will fail in exams. Several other teachers were witness to this incident but none said anything nor objected. The academic results of the girls surprised everyone. All the girls had not only passed their exams but, improved their marks over the previous year.

Football for Girls has shown that it breaks the notion of gender norms; gives the girls confidence and most importantly gives the courage to say NO to child marriage for themselves and to stand up for others. In the case of girls who are already married or engaged, football helps them to break traditional roles and enables them to negotiate better.

From a Google advertisement to an interview with Barkha Dutt, these girls are receiving the recognition they deserve and motivating others to follow in their footsteps.

They still struggle, still face similar pressure of marriage but they now have a thirst for more. And this ambition will continue to make a difference for ages to come.



HAQ: Centre for Child Rights is a human rights organisation that focuses on all rights for all children, recognising them as citizens of today and adults of tomorrow.

Founded in 1998 and registered under the Societies Registration Act, in June 1999, HAQ envisions an inclusive society where all children grow up in an environment that rests on the principles of non-discrimination and equality and where the human rights of all children are recognised, protected and realised.

With this vision, the organisation strives to mainstream child rights and children's concerns in all development planning and action through knowledge creation, evidence-based advocacy and communication, direct support for children in distress, collaboration and partnership.

HAQ's strength lies in its capacity to straddle micro and macro issues impacting children, undertake research and documentation, bring hands-on experience into policy advocacy nationally as well as internationally, and strengthen governance for children by holding the duty bearers accountable. For HAQ, ensuring accountability is not only about monitoring performance but also about strengthening the existing systems through building the capacity of key stakeholders to generate a timely and effective response and empowering rights holders (children).

HAQ believes that in reaching out to children in distress, civil society organisations should not replace the government and allow the abdication of state responsibility. Instead, the role of NGOs like HAQ should be to provide technical assistance and/or set up model interventions for the government to replicate and sustain.



Centre
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THANK YOU

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