




ANNUAL
REPORT
2020-2021

 Samarthya

ABOUT SAMARTHYA

The relationship between people and governments in democratic societies is defined by a core belief that governments work on behalf of the people they serve, and that those people can effectively engage with their government. This relationship is never perfect but, in healthy societies, structures and systems exist to strive for continuous improvement.

Samarthya was started in February 2017 with the belief that the best way to preserve our democracy is to take part in it. From then on we are in pursuit of strengthening structures that promote community participation in the governance of public institutions.

VISION

A world where everyone has the power to speak up and shape decisions impacting their future



MISSION

Enable sustained effective participation of communities in governance of public services

THE CRISIS

Poor community participation in the decision-making and governance of public institutions results in unresponsiveness of the state towards their needs & interests, and a feeling of dissatisfaction among communities, and a lack of power over decisions that affect their lives.

Often communities are blamed for being unsupportive and are mostly treated as passive recipients of information, as someone who needs to be 'educated' rather than an equal contributor in development.

Low community participation stems from:

Lack of spaces to enable participation of community

There are no active platforms where different stakeholders come together to collectively dialogue and act. From our experience in public schools of Punjab, meetings of School Management Committee, a representative governing body, almost like panchayat of the school, happen only on paper. A study in public schools of four states reported that decision making primarily by principals and suggestions were taken from educated parent member as per need

Lack of capacity of the state & community to engage with each other

As per data collected from schools in Sonapat, Haryana, 73% of the community members felt that they didn't have enough knowledge to perform their role as members. A teacher, frontline of the public education system, goes through over 30 hours of in-service training every year. Improving community participation doesn't get discussed in any of such training sessions.

Lack of belief that community participation is important or possible, for the development of public services

Even when community are able to participate in these spaces, it is mostly seen as lip service. Their presence is only of as much value as their signatures on the attendance registers. Many government officials in education department in Haryana, too endorsed that formation of SMC was only a formality and SMC meeting is only for signature

THEORY OF CHANGE

Our programs are designed around the theory of change:



FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY



PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE



**ACTIVE INCLUSIVE AND
REPRESENTATIVE LOCAL
PLATFORMS**



**CITIZENS HAVE VOICE AND
AGENCY TO REPRESENT THEIR
INTEREST**

OUR PROJECTS

We have been working with public schools to strengthen their School Management Committees (SMCs). School Management Committees (SMCs) are elected bodies mandated to be formed under section 21 of RTE in all government and government-aided schools, intended to bring in community voice in school's development and act as an accountability mechanism. It consists of representatives of various stakeholders such as parents, school staff, local representatives,, students.

Various research by the World Bank, UNESCO suggests that increased community participation in schools leads to improvement in the quality of education, efficiency of a school. This has also been an integral part of India's school education policies and is viewed as an essential element of decentralizing education governance. Our projects



Samarthya partnered with the District Administration of Sonipat to empower SMCs in 15 schools in Rai block. The partnership started in 2018. In March 2021, the school management committees of the schools that we work in completing their term of two years, and the SMCs were constituted. This project impacts a total of 8500+ students.



Samarthya has been a part of the Punjab Education Collective, working directly with the Punjab State Education Department. We work through the state machinery to launch initiatives reaching ~19000 schools aimed at improving community participation catering to 27 lakh students.

SMC ACTIVATION PROGRAM : SONIPAT

The key focus areas of the program are:



Improving parent teacher engagement



Conducting effective SMC trainings



Improving the quality of SMC meetings



Improving awareness of grievance redressal mechanism



Conducting effective SMC elections

PROGRAM OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:

We continuously build capacity of SMC members & staff, by providing knowledge, skills, & mindsets. This led to varied issues being raised in SMC meetings. SMC members feel more confident & understand the importance of their role.

53%

of SMC members were aware of only 1-2 responsibilities of SMC. The rest 47% interviewed couldn't tell any (2019)



100%

of the members are aware of at least 3 responsibilities of SMC. Few could even tell 5-6 such responsibilities (2021)

66%

of the members are aware of at least 3 ways of identifying issues in the school (2021) which is a huge increase from 9% members in 2019.



Student SMC member

"SMC is a body that meets to talk about the welfare of the school, issues that need to be resolved. I too have raised issues like lack of cleanliness, water & the need for increasing the height of toilet walls. This experience has taught me a lot. My fear to express myself has gone. Now, I can even stand on the stage & speak about anything."

SMC ACTIVATION PROGRAM : SONIPAT

PROGRAM OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:

SMC meetings are a primary space for the school governing body to come together, discuss issues, and act on them. These have been happening regularly ensuring that the agenda is co-created by staff & SMC parents together where both bring up points to discuss. and decisions on school issues are taken by consensus. Regular effective meetings lead to, not just development of schools but also increased satisfaction in parents, stronger trust on staff & increased confidence to voice out their opinions.

Proper documentation of the issues raised, follow-up on the issues, and redressal of those, are important aspects of improving the functioning of SMC & building trust between staff & parents. This ensures that the school/state actually responds to voices of the community

The current SMCs are have reached a level of increased ownership and the schools have been accepting of community's contribution. **The next year's focussing on easing the transition of new SMCs and building capacity in staff towards sustainability**

100+

SMC meetings have been conducted across schools with more than 50% parent attendance (2020-21)

93%

of the members said that issues are raised by both staff and parents in the meetings. (2021)

60%

of the 100+ issues raised in the meetings have been completely or partially resolved in all schools (2020-21)

EFFORTS IN SCHOOLS:



SMC members conducted home visits when schools closed due to COVID, to speak to parents about various ways the teachers are teaching



SMC members submitting their demands to MLA, in the presence of BEO

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION : PUNJAB

With the same focus areas from the Sonipat program, we scaled up our learnings, designed and have been running the program in 19000 schools in Punjab through the state machinery. Understanding the principles of large-scale change, we design and implement initiatives to improve community participation in the governance of schools. Our work under each initiative is divided in three phases:

<p><u>Initiate:</u> Setting up structures/ processes, defining and communicating roles of different personnel</p>	<p><u>Improve:</u> Making incremental shifts in multiple processes and engaging with key stakeholders</p>	<p><u>Sustain:</u> Sustaining changes by encouragement, formalizing processes, building hand-over team</p>
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STATE-WIDE INITIATIVES LAUNCHED/ PROCESSES IMPROVED:

VIRTUAL PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS & SMC MEETINGS

With a strong belief in the power of people in the power of communities, we, with the Department set our goals. In the year 2020-21, 19000+ schools conducted this 2-3 day event of **PTMs & SMC meetings** every 2 months with the objective to inform parents about the child's & school's progress, appreciate them for all the support and listen to their feedback, suggestions, and challenges.

Virtual parents-teachers meeting held
CHANDIGARH : The Punjab education department is conducting virtual parents-teachers meetings. The week-long event commenced on Monday and will conclude on Saturday. Over 1 lakh government school teachers will be interacting virtually with the parents of about 27 lakh students studying in more than 19,000 government schools across the state. They will also be taking feedback related to online education.

2 per year (2019-20) → 2 per quarter (2020-21)

Frequency of Parent-Teacher Meetings and SMC meetings improved

40% (2019-20) → 70% (2020-21)

Average Parent Participation in PTMs increased



About Samarthya

Theory of Change

Our Projects

Partnerships

Response to COVID

Team

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION : PUNJAB

STATE-WIDE INITIATIVES LAUNCHED/ PROCESSES IMPROVED:

SCHOOL VISIT FORMS

Research points out that schools that were supported over time by their districts were more likely to write plans for community involvement, identify a budget, and implement activities. The addition of community partnership in leaders' roles meant redefining their everyday activities which started by devising their school visit forms

34000

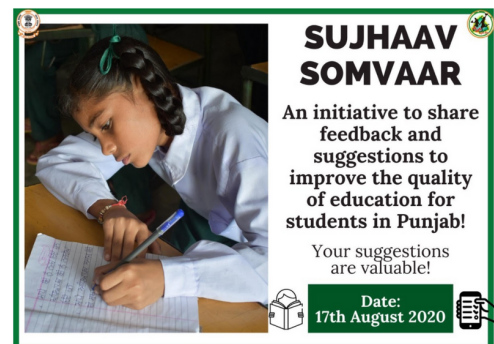
school visits by leaders recorded by 700+ leaders for ~6000 schools in recorded coaching conversations about SMC-related activities

SUJHAAV SOMVAAR

Enabling the participation of stakeholders in policies is an important part of building a responsive state. With the launch of their various initiatives during school closure, it became imperative for the department to get real-time feedback from the ground. We worked with the department to launch 'Sujhaav Somvaar' for the same.

~1800

suggestions were received which were later analyzed in multiple such feedback loops



ENROLMENT HELPLINE

To ease the process of admissions for the students, we co-created the initiative of launching helpline numbers for enrolment so parents across Punjab could easily access public education without any barriers.

“Since yesterday, I received over 40 calls. In most of the calls, parents have been enquiring about the admission process. Earlier, parents used to enroll their children by visiting the schools, but as the schools are closed, they are facing problems. But, I have guided the parents on how to contact the schools that are near them,” said Gurjot Singh, assistant director, DPI secondary.

PARTNERSHIPS

We also stepped into enabling communities to participate in the governance of public services through our partners.



Samarthya partnered with SRIJAN to support the 600+ women leaders of Federations in Shivpuri, Morkhed, and Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh in attempting to solve their most pressing issues faced by their

communities. We created resources, designed sessions, and facilitated capacity-building workshops for the women leaders of Self Help Groups and the staff of Srijan. The resources and the workshops have been aimed at building the capacity of women leaders to participate in the governance of their local public institutions by leveraging platforms such as School Management Committees, Ward Sabhas, Gram Sabhas.



Samarthya also partnered with Breakthrough Trust to build the capacity of their ground staff in Jharkhand and Bihar and share resources that can help them activate SMCs in the schools that they work with.



In Sonipat, we with the Breakthrough Trust staff, partnered with District Administration to launch a helpline 'Bacchon ke Saathi' for all enrolment-related queries of parents and students. It also supported the emotional and mental well-being of children

RESPONSE TO COVID

RATION SUPPORT:

Lockdown due to pandemic led to complete loss of income for most of the parents we work with. It led to an inability of parents to put food on the plate for themselves and their children, hence affecting their nutrition as well their access to learning. Funds were raised to provide 650+ ration kits to the families living in Sonipat(Haryana) & Pali (Rajasthan) to support them till the time they were able to start earning again.

HOPE IN CRISIS

At the onset of the pandemic, at the end of the academic year, a lot of children, especially those studying in government schools didn't have any access to education including textbooks of the new grade they were entering at the time. SMC members in Sonipat started going door-to-door working to enable an exchange of books between children from different grades covering more than 300 students in her community

DEMOCRACY WINNING IN HIGH COURT

In July 2020, Delhi Government issued a circular that laid out formation of new SMCs by the process of online draw of lots with just a 7-day window for parents to nominate themselves. Our former SMC members feared that the constitution of SMCs, by an opaque, exclusionary method if went unchallenged could become the norm and take away the opportunity for parents to participate in choosing their representatives. These women went to the Delhi High Court, challenged the circular, and got the Delhi Government to

accept this as a stop-gap emergency measure. On 21st December 2020, the Delhi Government submitted in court that elections will be held within two months of school reopening.

Samarthya's co-founder, Advocate Garima Sharma, led this fight with them

CORAM:
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE NAVIN CHAWLA

ORDER

% 21.12.2020

This petition has been heard through video conferencing.

The learned counsel for the respondents, on instructions, submits that on the re-opening of the schools in physical form, the election of the Committee as provided under Section 21 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, shall be held within a period of two months thereof. The petitioners are satisfied with the assurance given by the respondents.

In view thereof, binding the respondents to the statement made, the petition is disposed of.

NAVIN CHAWLA, J

DECEMBER 21, 2020/rv

MEET THE TEAM



[**in**](#) **Sahil Babbar**
Co-founder and Lead,
Development and
Communications



[**in**](#) **Sidharth Chopra**
Co-founder and Lead,
Program
Implementation



[**in**](#) **Narendra Shandilya**
Co-founder and Lead,
Program
Implementation




Dharmendra Singh
Community and Govt
relations lead - Sonipat





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