

Education Improvement Program- Edu-key

Since 2002, Yerala Projects Society (YPS) is implementing an ambitious educational improvement program called 'Edu-key'. Under EduKey I (2002-2005) we worked more for infrastructural development in the schools; ensuring active participation of the community and Village Education Committees (VECs) in education process of the children; and generating a sense of ownership towards school among the villagers. EduKey II (2006-09) focused more on improving the quality of education. We are enthused with the remarkable achievements of Education Key Project in the spheres of infrastructure development in schools; community organisation, participation and monitoring; and enrolment and retention of children in schools. However, a lot of work remained to bring the quality of education to desired standard levels. Hence YPS constantly brainstormed to develop innovative yet practicable ideas like Philosophy for Children, Reading for the Smallest, and WHY Group-Monthly Bulletin.

Also, an urgent need was felt to include gender equality component in EduKey III. Gender inequality in the project area is alarming. It is evident in adverse sex ratio, child marriages, dowry, domestic violence, poor health and education of women, destitution, little political participation, etc. YPS felt that it was the right time to build on the work already done and make interventions for bringing more radical changes like gender equality. A few completely original ideas like gender-equality through sports were evolved, which are probably the first of its kind in the world.

We realize that this program aims at a change in attitude and in age old traditions. This is a challenge. Youth with their energy and idealism, children with their innocence and sense of justice will form the mainstay of the project. We will help in nurturing their qualities and developing their capacities to collectively bring social change.

By motivating, enabling and involving multiple stakeholders, we are focussing on the following **key targets under EduKey III:**

- To enable Bal Panchayats, women's groups, youth groups, and VECs for new achievements in terms of quality education for all, health and gender equality.
- Leadership development of women for enhanced participation in community activities, especially for Reading for the Smallest, quality education for all, health and gender equality.
- Make opportunities for girls and boys to mix together and perform joint activities creating a favourable environment for gender equality
- To provide creative opportunities to the youngest of children and students so that their mind is unlocked; they begin to question and seek answers; and develop in a socially progressive manner
- Enhance performance of teachers through training in the interactive teaching method

Curiosity Centre, this is again on going process. The centre is based on Nemo Science centre at Holland. The aim behind this is to motivate the children for being curious and develop the scientific approach. The centre has indoor & out door exhibits to facilitate children to develop scientific views. There are 78 exhibits including Water exhibits, Sky watch, Science toys, puzzles, mental mathematical games, etc. The schools from the area visit with the school students. To encourage them to be curious & knowledge oriented.



To make children curious we have made 17 curiosity clubs in the schools, through this the children are motivated to ask questions. These questions are then discussed with all children & teachers to get the answer based suited for. The teachers are not giving answers directly but for the correct answer the discussion among students is carried out. Since 5 years we have reached up to 30000 students visitors.

Balpanchayat (Change makers): The equal number of girls & boys are selected from every school to form Balpanchayat groups per village.



These active children have under gone through 2 trainings per year. Today we have 220 changemakers working in 22 villages with equal participation of girls & boys. The trainings focus on the Gender equality & child right. The trained group then act as a responsible factor of the society for the over all development. The training module is activity oriented to help children think & react. Also the children are sensitizing in the sense of respect to inculcate gender equal thinking in them. They take care of cleanliness in the classroom, school premises and in the village. They also look after the personal cleanliness. The change makers are also trained through various other activities for Gender issues e.g. mixed sports (Korfball, judo)

Gender Equality section in Curio city center : To sensitize children, youth we have developed the GE section in CC. The section consists of posters, Computers. The posters are displaying the various happenings from the life of the people.



This indicates various criteria to observe Gender discrimination at present. Ten computers are loaded with identified computer games helps in sensitizing boys & girls in the sense of gender equality & respect.

Mixed games: The game is a media we can use to impart the thinking process in the girls & boys on gender issues & in the sense of respect.



The games judo for junior children & korfbal for senior children are played by girls & boys together. In the same ways some Indian games also modified to make mixed teams of girls & boys like cricket, kho-kho, lezim. Through the mixed games the boy & girl come to know natural potential in them which then diverted in the sense of respect. The team spirit developed in them help to interact with each other and also to know. All 220 change makers have trained for the same & the tournament cum demo competition have arranged in the area to reach up to 250 spectacles through these tournament. The schools have teams for the same regularly practicing the same

Why group & bulletin: To help children for correct & logical answers we have formed the group of teachers called 'Why group'. The group discussed some of the selected questions of children & the answers of these questions are then published in the monthly bulletin. We have published 7 editions of bulletin and distributed them in the project area.

Philosophy for Children (P4C): The children in the project area are can? able to think on themselves. To inculcate thinking process we have started philosophy for children. The program is a continuous process we work in weekly sessions with children. The session allows all the children to share their thoughts on certain topics.



This is proved theory helping children to grow & improve the I.Q. of the child. The research also proved that it also help in improving the E.Q. of the child & make the child more concentrated towards the work or studies.

Bicycle Bank :

In Jalihal area there is very good access to primary education as every village and hamlet has primary schools. It was observed by YPS that major dropout , especially of girls, takes place after seventh standard when they enter into secondary level of schooling. The dropout is mainly because of the distance the girls have to travel every day to reach the school and to get back.



Parents are reluctant to send they daughters to distant schools as they are worried about their safety. To solve this problem, YPS provides bicycles to the girls when they go into secondary school. Girls every day travel in groups to attend the school. They feel confidant. They save lot of time and energy. Most important things is their parents feel safe. So far 400 bicycles are provided. When the girls complete their secondary level education they return the bicycle to the bank, which is given to other girl. Using these bicycles more than 550 girls (some girls go double seat) continue their education every year!