



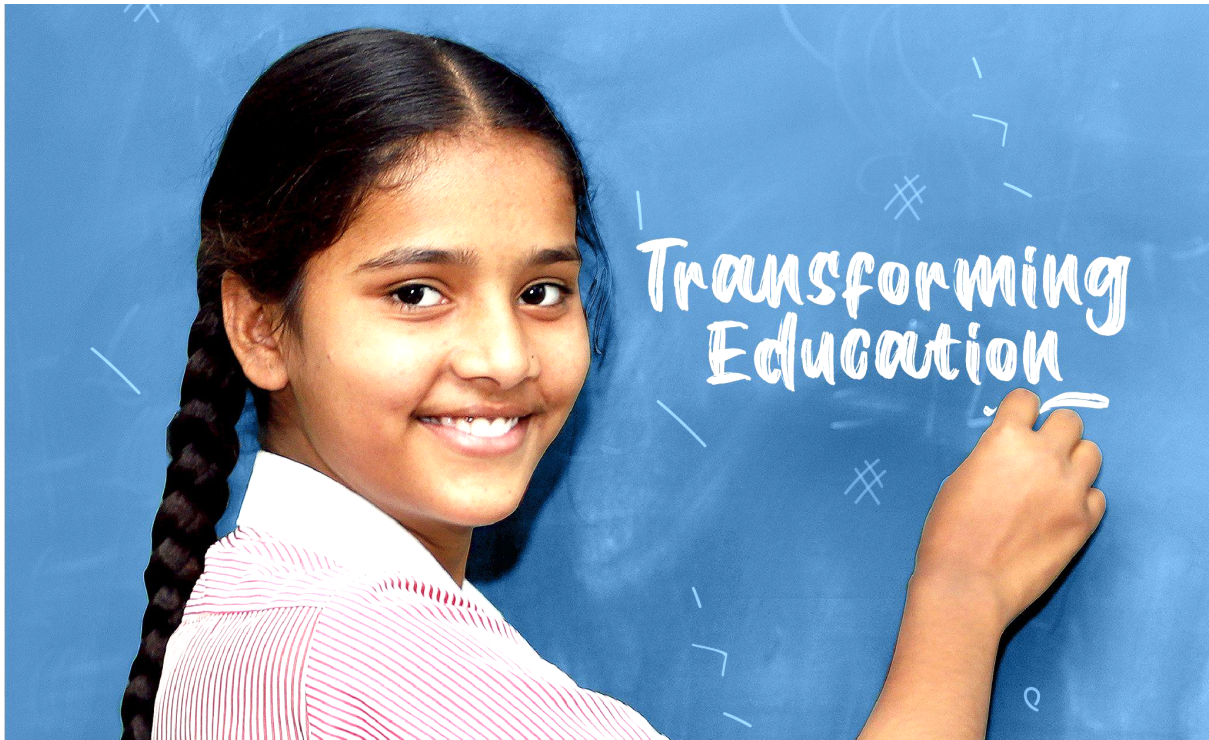
Boys Camp Report

Educating
boys to
become
advocates
of gender
justice

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About Study Hall Educational Foundation (SHEF)



Study Hall Educational Foundation (SHEF) believes that the goal of education is not just to know, but to learn to live¹. We see classrooms as radical spaces of possibility and believe education is a powerful way to develop an authentic democratic society, provided the why, what and how of education is first transformed. To that end, SHEF has been working for nearly four decades to redefine education, and has built a network of initiatives and an institution around this commitment. The network comprises nine educational institutions and four outreach initiatives that provide quality education to all children, with a special focus on girls. Using a holistic, inclusive, life-outcomes based approach, we have re-cast education across the entire range of challenges that children face in building their agency and personhood.

SHEF began its work in 1986 with the goal of providing a high quality education to all children, in the process redefining education to be empowering, contextualized to children's lives, and focused on achieving high life outcomes. In this way, we go beyond the traditional scope and goals of education, which focus on academic skills and preparation for the labor force. SHEF also prides itself in its culture of care, which forms the bedrock of SHEF's educational philosophy, pedagogy, and programs. Our critical pedagogy, central to our work, is rooted in this ethic of care. While being guided to critically examine their social realities, children must feel secure in the knowledge that their teachers care about them as persons, and care to understand their lived realities. SHEF's work also seeks to address key barriers in educational spaces that block the agency of teachers and students (especially those from marginalized communities) and hinder the transformative process.

¹ a quote from Boleslavsky

About Aarohini



Image 1: Teachers from KGBV participating in a discussion held by Aarohini's program manager Ms Priyanka Saxena

The Aarohini Initiative emerged from several years of work in Prerna Girls School and Prerna Boys School. The success of their dialogic, critical, feminist approach to education and empowerment resulted in the idea that these dialogues be recorded and shared with a wider audience, particularly teachers working with girls from marginalized communities.

In 2012, the curriculum from Prerna Girls School was consolidated and successfully implemented in all 746 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) in Uttar Pradesh and 200 KGBVs in Rajasthan. This initial iteration of the program was essentially a girls' education and empowerment program designed to help girls studying and residing in KGBVs learn to critically examine and understand the social and political conditions of their lives, the systemic causes of their oppression, and collectively find ways to strengthen themselves, resist oppressive forces, and thereby transform their lives. Now, in the second iteration, the Aarohini Initiative seeks to bring boys into the wider conversation and prepare teachers working in co-educational schools to address issues of gender injustice in the classroom and the wider community.

Through Aarohini, teachers undergo a series of three trainings that enable them to prepare themselves and their students as advocates of gender justice. Through these training, teachers evolve into advocates of girls' right to equality, able to prepare their students as equal, active, democratic citizens.

Executive Summary



Image 2: A snapshot from the camp where boys are in discussion about gender and patriarchy

A 5-Day Residential Boys camp focused on educating boys to become champions of gender justice was organized by Study Hall Educational Foundation's (SHEF) Aarohini Initiative in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh Government's Sarv Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA). This camp had participation from 78 boys from 43 upper primary government schools in Laharpur block², Sitapur. The purpose of this camp was to help boys learn to deconstruct patriarchy and harmful constructs of masculinity. They were engaged in active discussions and activities to help build a gender lens, learn to reframe their notions of what it means to be a boy and a man, and help them to become advocates for the women in their lives.

Following the camp, boys demonstrated significant positive shifts in their understanding and attitudes. Nearly all boys (98.7%) recognized societal influence in shaping gender differences, compared to 85.9% at the baseline. The camp prompted a reevaluation of traditional masculinity, with a change in views on physical strength, dominance, and loudness as essential qualities of a good man. Moreover, the boys exhibited a more informed stance on harmful practices like dowry, with 75.6% agreeing it should be stopped due to its harm. Additionally, a majority (83.3%) displayed increased gender sensitivity by reevaluating their perception of clothing's role in provoking boys, showcasing a growing awareness of gender discrimination. The camp effectively instilled a more inclusive and gender-sensitive mindset in the boys.

² Recognizing that it is equally imperative to include boys in the discussion on gender equality in order to achieve a more egalitarian society, SHEF's Aarohini Initiative has been working closely with 43 Upper Primary government schools in Laharpur block of Sitapur, since 2019. Aarohini has trained 110 teachers in critical feminist pedagogy and built their capacity to conduct critical dialogues in order to increase children, especially boys' social consciousness and awareness of gender prejudices.

Objectives of the Gender Justice Camp



Image 3: Activity illustrating the difference between a boy's lifestyle versus a girl's lifestyle

1. Empower young boys as gender justice advocates by fostering understanding of equality, respect, and inclusivity, to raise a generation that challenges stereotypes and promotes equality.
2. Raise consciousness about gender issues and masculinity among boys, encouraging thoughtful reflection on traditional notions and inspiring healthier expressions of identity.
3. Equip boys with essential helpline contacts, ensuring they're informed about available support systems for addressing any concerns related to gender-based violence or discrimination.
4. Cultivate young boys into "Champions of Gender Justice," offering them opportunities for growth, enabling them to create a positive change in schools and communities by exercising equality.

Five Day Gender Justice Camp



Image 4: Children showcasing the lifestyle they want in the future

The 5-day residential Boys' Camp, meticulously organized by the Arohini team, had a central focus on empowering young boys to champion gender justice. This transformative event aimed to raise awareness and understanding of crucial gender issues and redefine the concept of masculinity. Commencing on June 19th at Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra in Lucknow, the camp brought together 78 boys from 60 villages in the Laharpur block of Sitapur district.

Throughout the camp duration, the boys actively engaged in interactive sessions and enriching activities designed to heighten their sensitivity towards gender-related matters. They candidly discussed the gender roles they observed in their daily lives, shedding light on the inequalities faced by their female siblings and family members. Thought-provoking conversations on masculinity encouraged them to contemplate the importance of breaking the silence surrounding gender-based violence, while also identifying real-life role models who embodied positive qualities. The boys received guidance from Prerna Boys school alumni, who mentored them in deconstructing toxic masculinity and reshaping their understanding of what it means to be a boy and a man.

The camp curriculum delved into critical topics such as child marriage and dowry, enlightening the participants about their detrimental effects. Unanimously, the boys agreed that these practices must be halted. They actively brainstormed solutions and eloquently portrayed their vision of a fairer and gender-just world through powerful dramatic presentations.

To provide a refreshing break, the boys enjoyed visits to the zoo and Science City. In a heartfelt closing ceremony, they shared their personal stories, poems, and artistic creations,

reflecting their aspirations for positive change within themselves, their homes, and their communities.

The camp reached its pinnacle with a felicitation ceremony, where the boys were awarded certificates for their participation. This recognition served as a catalyst, inspiring them to become change-makers and role models for others. The camp left an indelible mark, successfully instilling a profound sense of gender equality and empowerment among the young boys, nurturing a collective vision for a more inclusive and equitable future.

Methodology

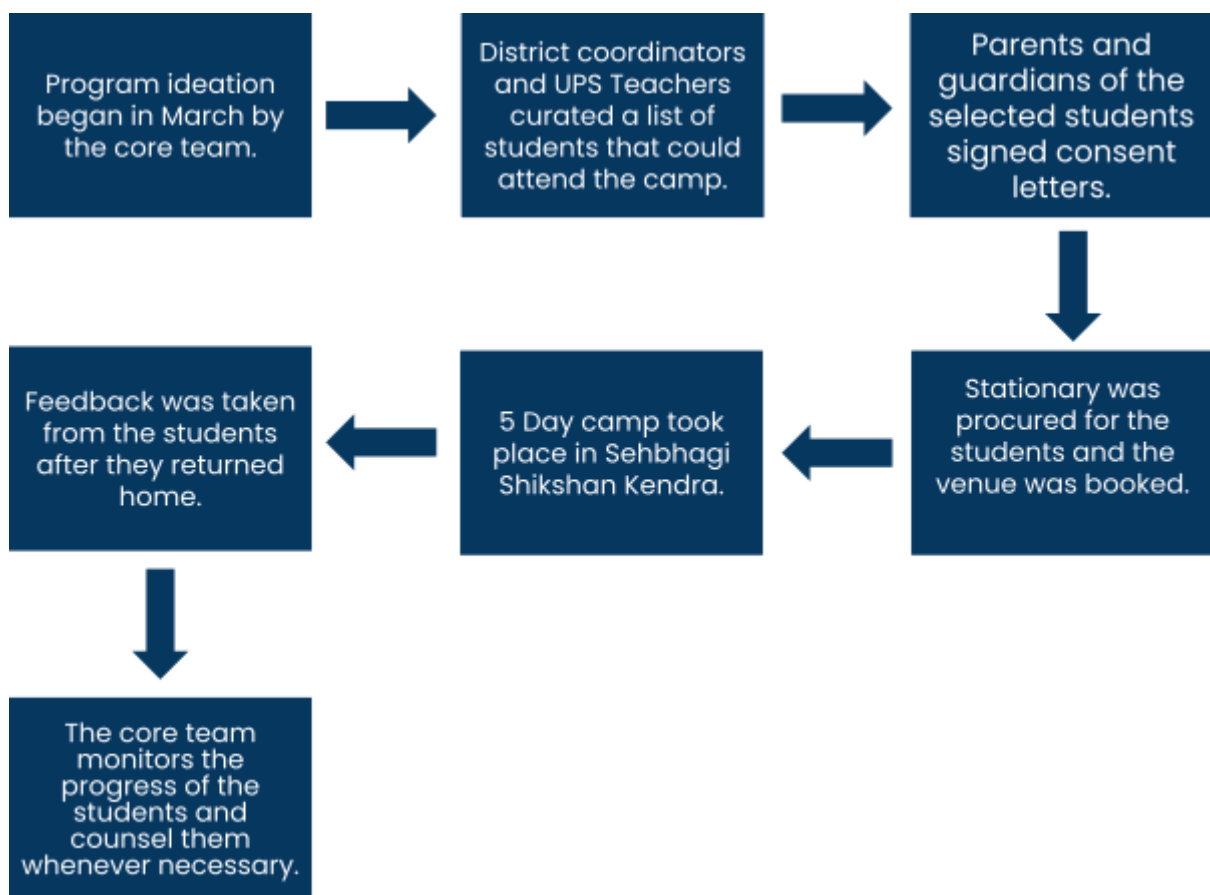


Figure 1: Process flow

Conceptualization (March 23): The planning for the "Gender Justice Camp" was initiated by Aarohini's core team. During this phase, the team conceived the camp's objectives and essential components.

Participant selection and parental consent: Collaboratively with UPS (Upper Primary School) teachers, Aarohini's two district coordinators meticulously curated a group of 78 boys from 43 different schools. To ensure full compliance and participation, parental and guardian consent forms were collected.

Government permission: Prior to the camp's commencement, all requisite permissions were obtained from relevant government authorities.

Execution of the Gender Justice Camp: The pivotal stage of the Gender Justice Camp, strategically designed to empower the selected boys as "Champions of Gender Justice." This comprehensive camp featured a series of sessions addressing critical topics such as child marriage, dowry, and the redefinition of masculinity. To facilitate optimal engagement and provide personalized attention, the participating children were divided into two cohorts, each comprising 39 boys and 10 Aarohini team members.

Monitoring and feedback: Continuous monitoring and evaluation were fundamental to assessing the camp's impact. A virtual Zoom meeting convened with 43 UPS teachers deeply engaged in the camp allowed them to share their observations, insights, and perceptions of any changes observed in the participating boys. The Sitapur District Coordinator and UPS Teachers remain in consistent contact with these young participants, providing ongoing guidance and support, thus ensuring the sustained development of these emerging advocates of gender justice. This enduring engagement underscores the initiative's unwavering commitment to its long-term goals.

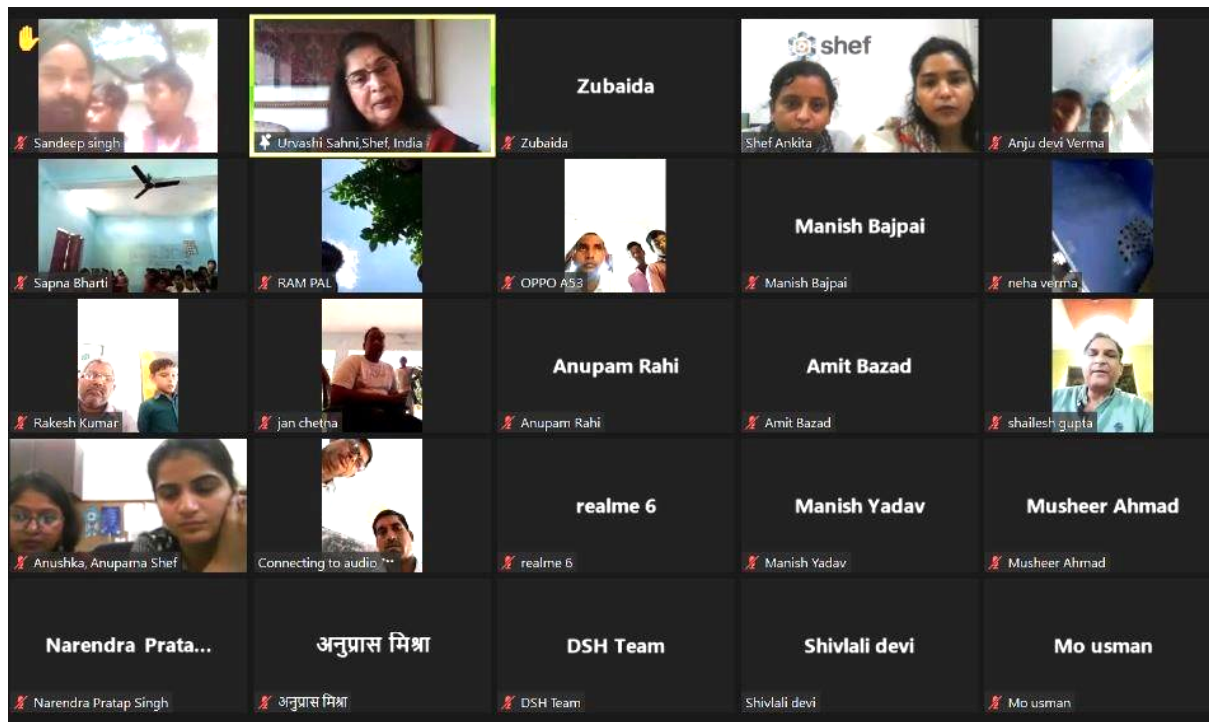


Image 5: Zoom Call in progress with students, teachers and District coordinators of Sitapur

Profile of participants

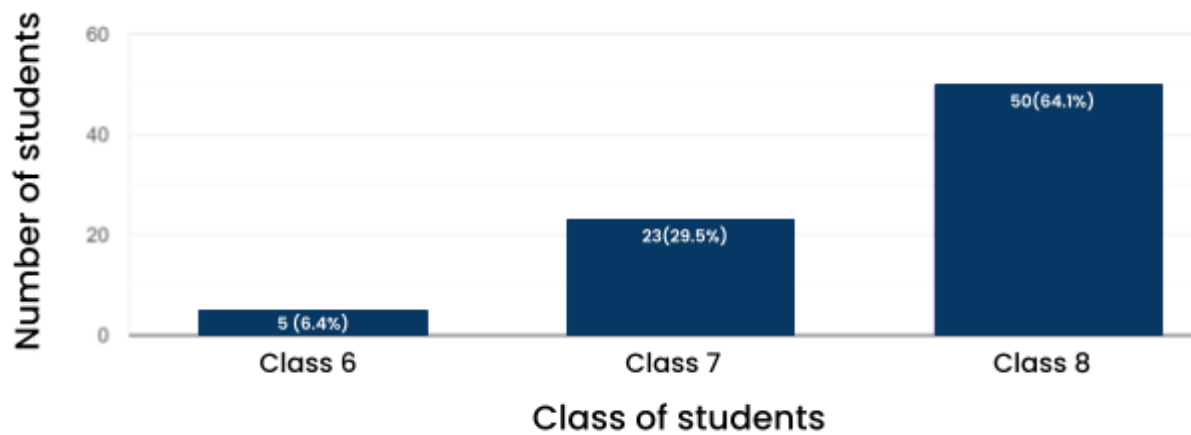
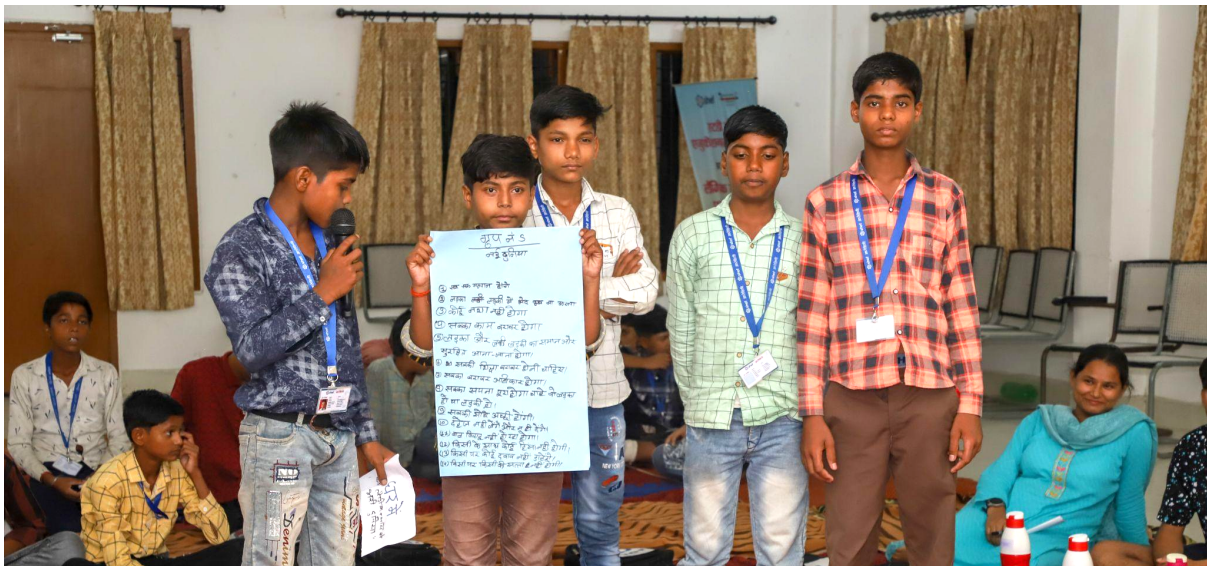


Figure 2: A total of 78 children from 43 upper primary schools of Laharpur block of Sitapur district were to participate in this five-day camp, in which a total of 78 boys from 41 schools participated. 4 boys from two schools could not attend this camp due to health reasons. Of the boys who participated, there were 50 (64.1%) boys in class 8, 23 (29.5%) boys in class 7, and 5 (6.4%) boys in class 6.



A snap from the the boys camp where boys are envisioning an egalitarian society

Impact: Mindset shift in boys before and after the camp

A baseline and endline assessment were done, where boys were asked to introspect on their understanding of gender equality, the attributes of a good man, patriarchy and dowry using a basic form.

The distinction between boys and girls is made by whom?

(Before)

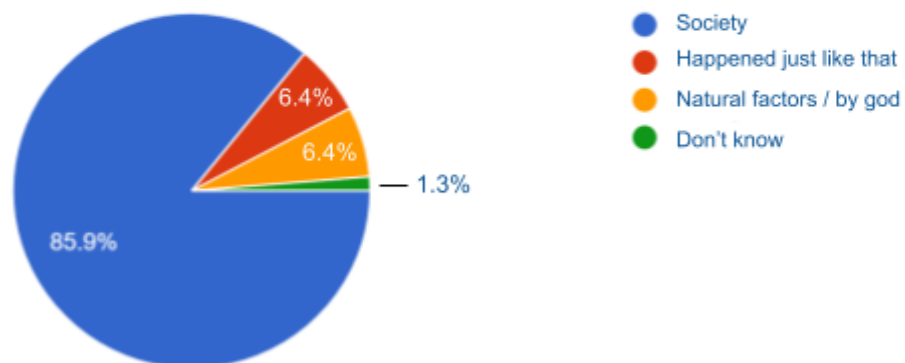


Figure 3: As critical dialogue sessions continued in schools, the baseline assessment revealed that 85.9% of boys had a clear understanding that society had constructed the patriarchal framework. The remaining 14.1% of boys selected alternative options, including 6.4% believed it was "self-created," another 6.4% thought it was "by nature/by God," and a smaller portion (1.3%) who indicated uncertainty with "don't know."

The distinction between boys and girls is made by whom?

(After)

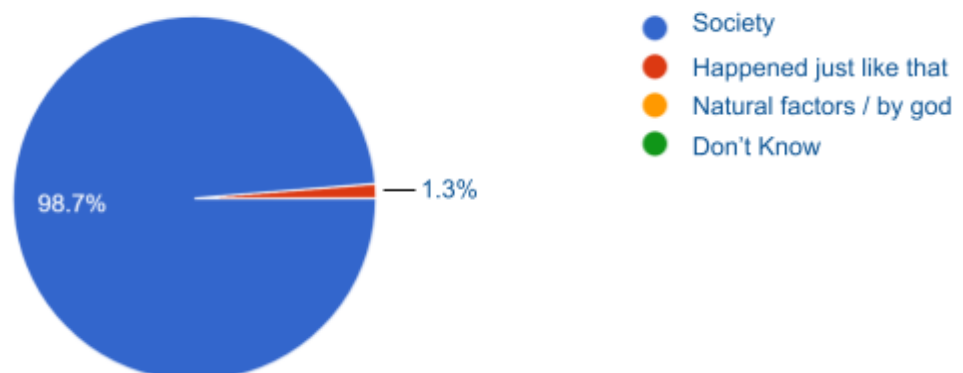


Figure 4: During the endline assessments, a notable 98.7% of boys recognized that societal influence created distinctions between men and women. However, 1.3% of the boys, while beginning to comprehend the patriarchal structure, expressed the need for additional guidance and education.

Who is an ideal man (select any five)

(Before)

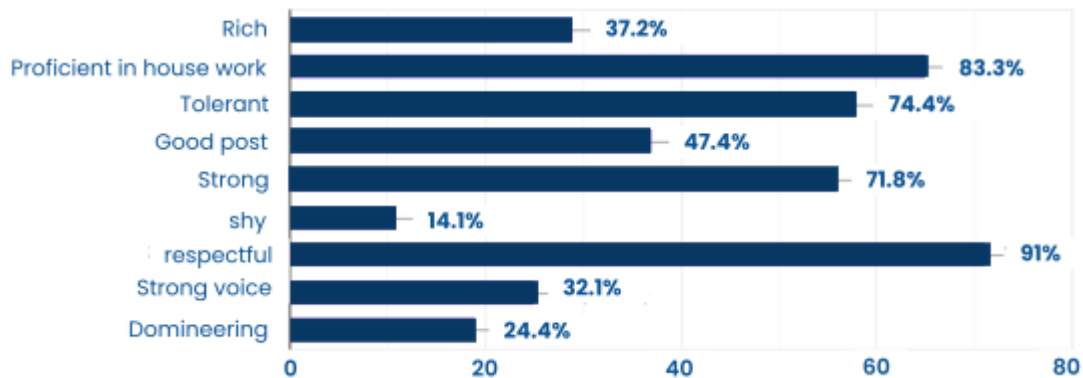


Figure 5: During our exploration of the concept of an ideal man, we asked each student to choose five defining attributes. A significant 83.3% of the boys identified proficiency in household chores as a key quality of a good man. Other characteristics, such as physical strength (71.8%), were also prominently mentioned. Additionally, traits like confidence (24.4%) and having a commanding voice (32%) were subjects of discussion among the boys and were considered as attributes associated with a good man.

Who is an ideal man (select any five)

(After)

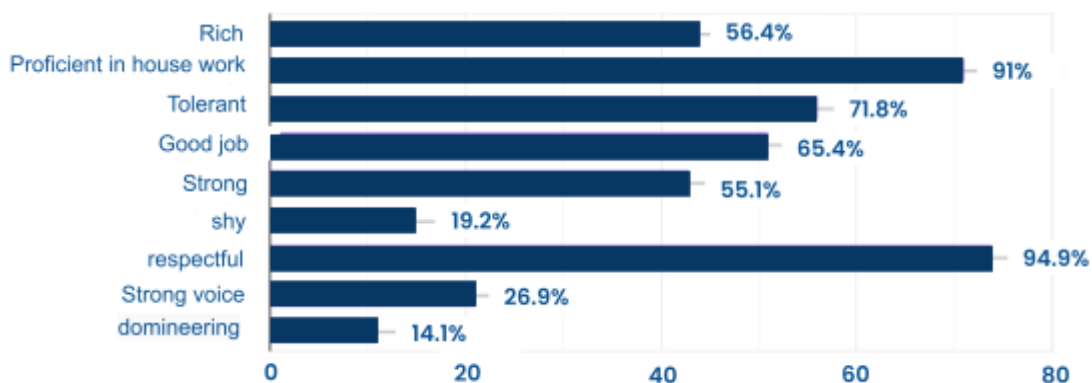


Figure 6: At the conclusion of the camp, a significant 91% of the boys concurred that proficiency in household chores is a fundamental characteristic of a good man. Additionally, the boys underwent a transformation in their perspectives regarding strength, domineering attributes, and possessing a loud voice, as they no longer regarded these as indispensable qualities of a good man. This shift underscores a notable change in how these boys perceive masculinity and traditional stereotypes.

Dowry is a necessary practice in marriage ?

(Before)

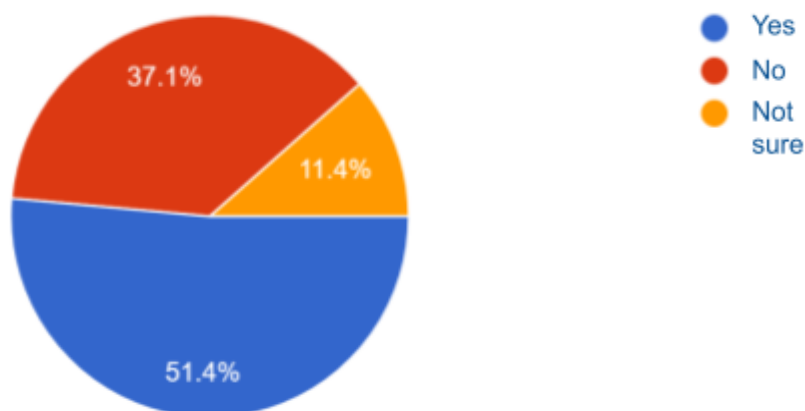


Figure 7: Critical dialogues that were held at the school made a significant impact on the boys. During initial discussions at the camp, 51.4% of the boys believed that dowry was an essential part of marriage, 37.1% of the boys disagreed and 11% were unsure of whether Dowry was a good or bad practice.

Dowry is a necessary practice in marriage?

(After)

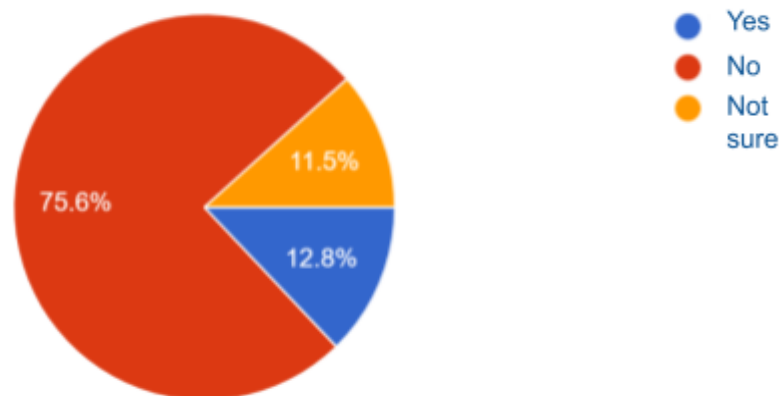


Figure 8: At the end of the camp, most boys (75.6%) agreed that dowry should be stopped because they understood its harm. A small group (12.8%) still thought dowry was okay, and a few (11.5%) were unsure if it was good or bad, showing a significant shift in the mindset of the boys.

Girls wear shorts or fancy dress to provoke boys?

(Before)

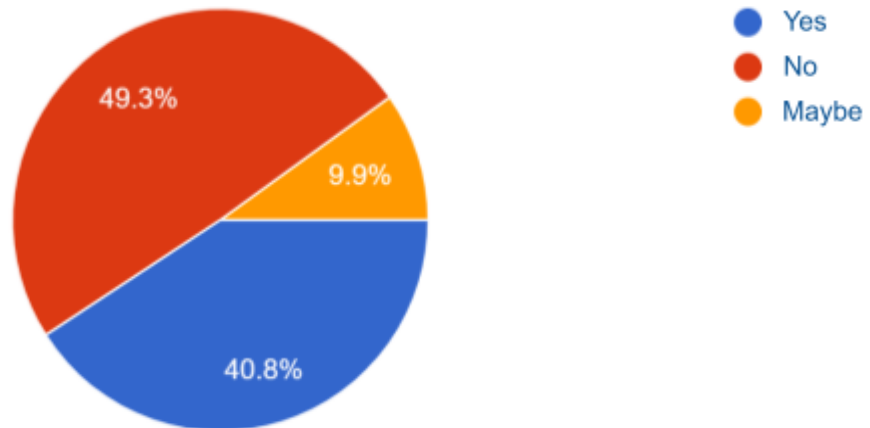


Figure 9: During initial conversations, 49.3% of the boys said that girls' clothing doesn't provoke boys, and 40.8% believed that it did. About 9.9% weren't sure.

Girls wear shorts or fancy dress to provoke boys?

(After)

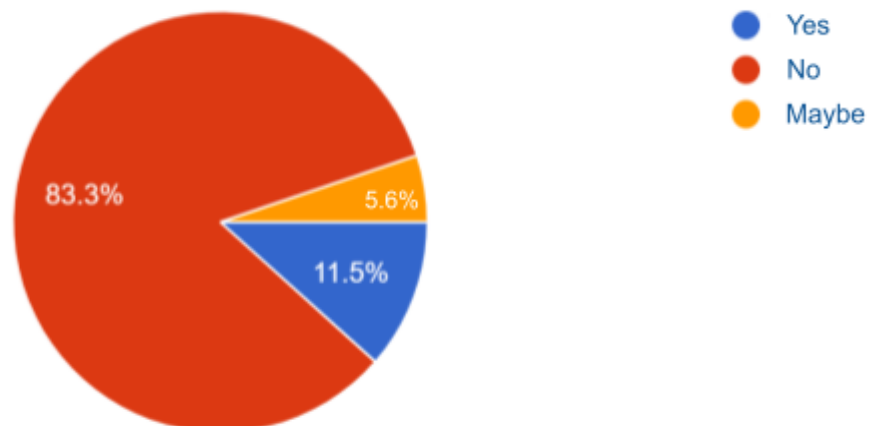


Figure 10: By the end of the camp, 83.3% of the boys changed their minds and disagreed with the question. Showing signs of a greater understanding of gendered mindsets. Meanwhile, 11.5% still agreed with it, and 5.1% weren't sure. Thus indicating that a majority of the students were more aware of gender discrimination.

Success stories



Ranjeet

Class 7 student saves cousin from a lifetime of slavery

Ranjeet (11), a class 7th student of UPS Nibori was part of the “Gender Justice camp”. After returning from the camp he learned that his 16-year-old cousin's marriage was arranged by his uncle. He talked to his parents about it and convinced them to counsel his uncle. Despite his parent's counseling, his uncle proceeded with the wedding. Ranjeet reached out to the village pradhan but their efforts were not fruitful because his uncle disagreed and hastened the wedding preparation.

Disheartened by his uncle's actions Ranjeet resorted to warning his uncle that if he continued with the marriage he would have to register a complaint against him which finally made his uncle stop. Ranjeet was successful in stopping his cousin's marriage, saving her from a lifetime of slavery.



Arpit

Brother saves his sister from early marriage and helps her continue her education

Arpit (12), a class 8th student of UPS Nagaimallapur lives with his parents and two sisters in Sulemaanpur village. After attending the 5-day camp he was able to realize the disparities between him and his siblings. The way he was treated at home was completely different from his sisters.

He found out that his father was planning to make his sisters dropout of school and have them stay at home and get them married as soon as possible. He persuaded his father to reconsider his decision. As a result, his elder sisters, who were in grades 9 and 10, were enrolled in Rajkiya Balika Inter College in Laharpur to continue their education.

Testimonies



“In these 5 days our children have learned about many gender issues like child marriage, dowry and patriarchy, They understand these issues and to raise their voice against any form of injustice.”

Anupam, UPS Teacher Akaichanpur



“Now that they have attended and started taking responsibility, we will include them in our parent and community meeting. They are our agents of change.”

Shagufta UPS Teacher Laharpur



“This initiative has been very beneficial for the boys. They now have a deeper understanding of gender issues and discuss them with their classmates.”

Sandeep UPS Teacher Nimauchi



“In the future, this kind of camp should be conducted with more boys. This camp has had a great impact on the boys who participated.”

Rampal UPS Teacher Rawal Adser



“Both girls and boys together can bring change, we should sensitize more boys as we sensitize girls regarding gender issues and all teachers should include their students in these meetings.”

Shaheen Ansari, BEO Laharpur, Sitapur

Sequence of events

The five-day camp was divided into different sessions and activities, focusing on various aspects of gender issues, masculinity, dowry, and creating a gender-just world. Here's a breakdown of how the camp was divided:

Day 1 (19th June):

- Arrival of 78 children from the Laharpur block at Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra
- Registration
- Ice-breaking session to build rapport among the children
- Introduction to Aarohini team members and orientation about SHEF and the camp's objectives
- Formation of groups and naming of the teams
- Baseline form filling to assess children's prior understanding of gender issues

Day 2 (20th June):

- Morning meditation session
- Feedback of previous day and introduction session to get to know each other better
- Session on gender roles and discussing the differences in daily routines between boys and girls
- Group activity to identify and discuss the differences observed in their respective groups
- Collage-making session to express their thoughts, likes, dislikes, fears, and hurdles related to gender issues

Day 3 (21st June):

- Morning Zumba dance session
- Sessions on the marriage system, child marriages, and their consequences
- Role reversal activity to understand the condition of girls in society
- Group activity to brainstorm solutions to the problem of child marriages and gender discrimination
- Session on masculinity, discussing qualities associated with heroes in movies and real-life heroes

Day 4 (22nd June):

- Activity to discuss and debate in favor of and against the dowry system
- Story-making activity to find solutions to the problem of dowry
- Dramas depicting a fairer and gender-just world, showcasing positive changes in various settings
- Discussions on the impact of these changes on families, workplaces, and society

Day 5 (23rd June):

- Visit to the Zoo and Science City
- Discussion about changes the boys would like to see in themselves, their homes, and communities
- Boys from Prerna and Alums sharing their stories to inspire the participants
- Felicitation ceremony by dignitaries, distributing certificates to all participants

Overall, the camp was structured to engage the boys in meaningful discussions, activities, and reflections, aiming to promote gender equality, empower them to challenge harmful practices, and envision a more equitable future.



Image 6: Children participating in the session

Way Forward



Image 7: Happy faces

Sustained Guidance and Monitoring: It is imperative to maintain continuous support for the 78 identified "Champions." This means regularly checking in on their progress and well-being through frequent field visits. Our commitment to these children extends until they successfully complete their higher education. This approach ensures that they receive the necessary encouragement and assistance along their educational journey, addressing any challenges they might encounter.

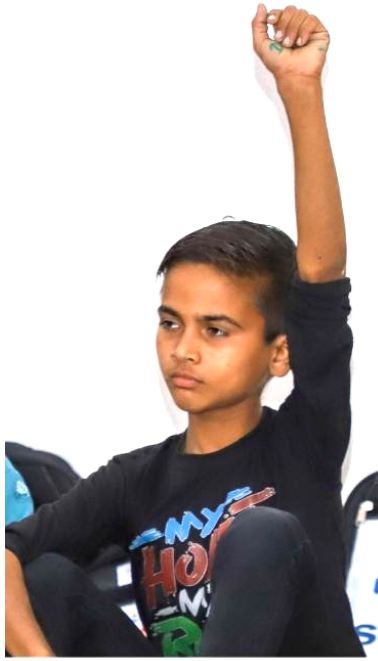
Engaging Community Leaders: Building a supportive community environment is essential for the success of these children. To achieve this, we will arrange meetings with Gram Pradhans and village heads, to garner their backing. By involving Gram Pradhans, we aim to create a united front against prevailing harmful social practices in the village that might hinder the children's development. This collaborative effort can contribute significantly to a more conducive environment for their growth and education.

Teacher Involvement and Development: To further enhance the integration of our work into the mainstream educational system, we will organize specialized workshops for teachers. These workshops serve a dual purpose. Firstly, they will provide an opportunity for educators to share their insights and feedback on the effectiveness of the critical dialogue classes. Secondly, teachers will receive guidance on how best to incorporate the trained students into regular classrooms and parent-teacher meetings as well as community meetings.

Snapshots from the camp













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