



TALES OF GIRL POWER!

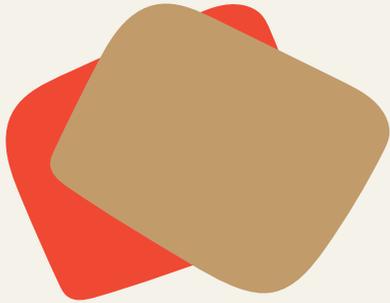
Stories of Change from Children GOOD

Children Empowerment For



GETTING OUT OF THE DEVADASI SYSTEM AND PREVENTION OF FURTHER DEDICATIONS

terre des hommes 
stops child exploitation



About Children GOOD

Children GOOD or Getting Out of the Devadasi System is a project which works towards addressing child exploitation arising out of the Devadasi system in lower caste communities. Operational in North Karnataka, the project functions in 5 districts and 51 villages reaching out to a total of 2641 adolescent girls.



About THE DEVADASI SYSTEM

Traditionally, Devadasis were women who were dedicated to a life of worship through performing art. With time, exploitation seeped into lower-caste Devadasi communities. These women began being used for sex and gradually that came to be their role in society, and soon their identity. Generations of women in the same family were dedicated to a life of sex work, and there was no way out. The ceremonies were covert and the women were given green bangles, vermilion, a black and gold chain which continues to remain the mark of the Devadasi woman.

The system, which has now taken the form of caste-based exploitation, makes its women victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. They are also discriminated against and do not have the platform to exercise their rights and avail of services entitled to them.

Life is also very difficult for their children. They drop out of school early due to the taunts they face, they are discriminated against and often abused by their mothers' partners. The girl children are also vulnerable to being dedicated as sex workers.





EMPOWERING CHILDREN OF DEVADASIS

How Children GOOD works

Girls from Devadasi families are grouped into

Children's Clubs

where they are trained in

Child Rights, Advocacy and Life Skills

so as to make them participate in their development and be **Agents of change.**

These clubs are called Kishori Clubs and the girls are called Kishoris.

The girls are also provided with educational facilities, access job-oriented vocational skill training, communities are sensitised and families access social security.

This book documents stories of successful interventions by children, who through training and sensitisation have worked to solve community issues.



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STORY 1

SOLVING DRAINAGE WOES

This is the narrative of a group of girls from Vijayapura district's Manasa Kishori Sangha, whose efforts of hard labour and perseverance resulted in a beneficial change. Babaleshwara is a small and humble village in Karnataka. The majority of the inhabitants in this area are socially and economically disadvantaged.

This village's Kishori Club were doing their due diligence and undertaking a survey when they discovered a severe problem with a damaged drainage. This resulted in severe issues such as poor housekeeping, contaminated drinking water and rubbish overflowing into the highways, all of which required urgent maintenance.

The Kishoris took it upon themselves to bring about these changes. They shot photographs, documenting the difficulties, and detailed each of the issues on a notice board to garner much-needed attention. As these disasters needed fixing immediately, the Kishoris agreed to create a Grama Panchayat (local government) application and submitted it to have the Panchayat look into the issue of the inconvenient drainage water system.



The Grama Panchayat on the other hand did not produce any favourable effects. The girls trudged on and persisted in their efforts to bring about change.

They formed a group of all the children over the age of five. They then educated and enlightened the children about the problem, and went back to the Grama Panchayat officials with the children to request for the drainage pipe renovation. It was still in vain.

However, impressed with their efforts, as a happy and welcome surprise, the village's elders/leaders joined hands with the Kishoris and attempted to bring change to their surroundings. The women went on and raised awareness about how contaminated the drinking water of the village is and how the wastewater being circulated can lead to serious health problems.

The Panchayat ultimately realised that leaving the drainages damaged and open around the village's residential area was a significant concern. They repaired the broken pipes and ensured that water-related sanitary issues in public spaces were treated with the same care.

The Kishoris expressed their gratitude to the locals and Grama Panchayat for embracing their efforts to bring about positive change in the community.

STORY 2

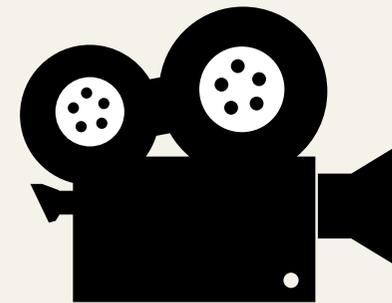
VIDEOGRAPHY BRINGS TOILETS

Byalala is a remote village in Karnataka's Vijayapura district. Like many of its neighbouring villages, Byalala isn't a well to do village. Poverty is rampant and many essential amenities are lacking in the area.

This village Kishoris however, are nowhere near slow-paced. They in good conscience decided to inspect the village to make sure it had all its essential resources.

They used a video camera to walk around the community and capture the areas that needed to be rebuilt or repaired. Upon looking, they ran into the issue of lack of bathroom facilities. They videotaped the incident and spoke about it on camera.

To get everyone's attention, a few Kishoris from the Manasa Kishori Sangha wrote about the absence of bathrooms on a notice board. Akshatha, Sushmitha, Lakshmi, Chandrika, and Yellamma were among the valiant girls who chose to pay a visit to the Grama Panchayat.



They filed a complaint with the Grama Panchayat, requesting that they investigate the matter and take action. However, Gram Panchayat did not effectively respond to this and chose to ignore the matter.

The Kishoris were not about to give up. The girls, with the camera, recorded the requests of their fellow villagers and obtained the community's agreement and support to persuade the Gram Panchayat.

They identified all children over the age of six and convinced them to join hands in bringing about change. They all went back to the Gram Panchayat and re-applied for the construction and restoration of toilets in Byalala village.

The Grama Panchayat received the kishoris and resolved to investigate the village's lack of public toilets. The girls were successful in constructing a basic toilet facility for their hamlet.

The Kishoris expressed their gratitude to the Grama Panchayat for their prompt response and action in constructing public toilets in their hamlet. They were extremely grateful for the villagers' assistance.

STORY 3

ENSURING JOBS DURING COVID-19

Shiragaon is a small village located in the Chikkodi region of the Belagavi district. Here the main source of income comes from the agriculture farming of maize corn, sugarcane and tobacco. Teenage Deepali is a resident of this village who is studying arts. She is one of the 35 members of the Mother Theresa Kishori Sangha. She is diligently involved in all the group activities. She possesses leadership qualities to a great extent and this story is a testimony to that.

Her family's condition was undisrupted until the country was hit with COVID-19 second wave during March 2021. Many people in the village lost their only source of income. Even Deepali's family suffered this loss. During a training session she was taking part in under the GOOD project, she heard about the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. She thought about it for a while and decided to gain more information on it so she can help people in need.

JOB



She went to the village and made a list of 150 unemployed people. She decided to meet the Grama Panchayat Development Officer on 10th June 2021 and discuss the plans for providing them with employment. She requested the officer to provide employment opportunities to all 150 unemployed Shiragaon villagers. She presented information on all the people eligible for acquiring a job card under the MGNREGA scheme.

The Panchayat Development Officer was so impressed by her leadership strength and sense of compassion that he promised to work on her request.

He provided job cards to all the 150 people with a daily wage of ₹283 up to 100 days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme. Many people were provided with jobs like planting tree saplings in public places, construction work and others. Deepali took a stand and decided to work hard towards her goal. This effort of hers resulted in changing the lives of hundreds of people for the better. Through her courage and willingness to make a difference, many people in her village were able to earn their daily wages in the difficult times of the Covid-19 lockdown.

She states that every girl child is capable of becoming a leader. This is exactly why Deepali firmly stands with the idea that education of girls is what that leads to a better society.

STORY 4

SURVEYS SOLVE CIVIC ISSUES

Halagani in Viayapura is a quaint village in Karnataka's northwestern region. Basics such as street lighting, water scarcity, trash management, school bathrooms, and other infrastructure are frequently lacking in this area.

This village's Kishoris who share the common traits of being smart, alert and exceptional decided to survey the village when they happened to discover some issues. They displayed their talents by using a camera to capture the damaged areas and started to pay close attention to the root of the problems.

The Kishoris agreed to write the issue on the notice board, naturally expecting it to capture the attention of every villager. But no one batted an eyelid or took the time to figure out what was going on or how bad the problem was.



The Kishoris requested renovation and upkeep to the Grama Panchayat, but they did not answer. As a result, the girls bravely filed a complaint with the Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) about the damaged public property that was causing health problems among the locals.

The Kishoris were successful in resolving the concerns of streetlights, water, and garbage management after receiving a response from the PDO. But it seemed like the issue suited the phrase, “you win some, you lose some” because the issue of the restroom facility was neglected by the administration.

The Kishoris were not about to let that happen and stay silent. They raised the issue with the District Legal Service Authority during a meeting. Venkana Hosmani of the District Legal Authority personally visited Halagani village to investigate the matter and gave them a favourable response. He spoke with the Grama Panchayat and ensured that toilets were built where they were needed.

The Kishoris were successful in meeting the needs of villagers who had previously been overlooked, and their efforts resulted in a significantly positive change. They appreciate the help they've had from Venkana Hosamani and the Grama Panchayat.

STORY 5

A CHILD MARRIAGE IS STOPPED

In the remote areas of the Koppala district in Karnataka lies a village named Hiresindogi. Like much of the neglected rural areas of Karnataka, the majority of people residing here are mainly made up of economically and socially backward people.

This village's Kishoris have been working their best to bring about beneficial improvements to the village which they call their home and have spent their lives in. Through the GOOD project, they were given instructions on how to eradicate anti-social behaviour from society. To make sure that they work better as a team, they were also included in group discussions and leadership development seminars.

The Marie Curie Kishori Sangha from Hiresindogi recently intervened in a child marriage incident and saved a child's life from a lifetime of abuse.



During the COVID-19 second wave, a 16-year-old girl named Saroja was almost married off. Her family was undergoing economic distress and her parents resolved to marry her as soon as possible. On August 8, 2021, Marie Curie Kishori Sangha intervened and successfully stopped child marriage.

The Kishoris even went out of their way to persuade the parents to encourage their daughter to sit the impending SSLC exams. Saroja is expected to receive vital personality development training sessions with the help of the project and their team.

The Kishoris of the Marie Curie group expressed gratitude to everyone involved in achieving a significant difference that prevented a young girl from becoming a child bride.

STORY 6

LIGHTING UP THE STREETS

Managuli is a tiny village in Karnataka's Vijayapura district. The area lacks many essential amenities.

The Kishoris of this hamlet decided to conduct a survey and document the issues that the residents were encountering.

Upon doing this investigation, the girls came across and discovered a lot of roads that didn't have street lights, and it was risky to utilise them for transportation at night. They videotaped the incident and spoke about it on camera.

A group of Kishoris decided to do something about the state of roadways without street lights.

Among the many ways they handled this situation, they also posted a problem on the notice board to get Grama Panchayat's attention. They also sent a letter to city officials, demanding that the street light problem be resolved as quickly as possible.



To their dismay, the Grama Panchayat did not respond positively to the girls valiant efforts to bring about safe changes to their village.

The application was then given to the Grama Panchayat again. The Kishoris next tried a different strategy to persuade the Grama Panchayat to accept the problem.

They identified all youngsters over the age of five and formed a group to go back to the Grama Panchayat and make a new request.

This time, even the villagers and elders were forewarned of the situation and pledged to continue working until the goal was met with success.

The Grama Panchayat ultimately installed street lights in all of the roads with constant power supply, as a result of all the Kishori's hard work and perseverance. Due to the great response of Managuli Grama Panchayat, the gloomy roadways became a lot safer area at night.

STORY 7

ENSURING SAFETY AND HYGIENE

Maraba is a remote village in the Koppal district's Kudligi taluk. The majority of the population here is socially and economically disadvantaged. To survive and engage in day-to-day activities, the people of this village rely on cultivation as their main source of income. They mainly farm maize corn and ragi to earn their wages. The project has identified 22 Devadasi families who engage in this field for a living.

When the kishori groups were started, Many families adamantly refused to send their daughters. However, after some time, the daughters educated their mothers about the value of education, socialization, and women empowerment. After overcoming numerous obstacles, the girls chose to call their group 'Mahalakshmi Kishori Sangha,' which includes 32 members.

In all their wisdom, the Kishoris stopped a child marriage during the lockdown of the second COVID-19 wave by dialling 1098 as a helpline number, on their own. 1098 is a helpline run by the service of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.



They handled the situation flawlessly, following protocol, informing the police, and, most importantly, keeping the underage bride safe until the cops and officials arrived. The Kishori's quick thinking and hard work saved the girl's life.

The Kishoris did not stop there, they also assisted the locals in abandoning unsanitary practices, such as defecating in the open. The villages used a garbage dumping lane as a toilet alternative. The Kishoris posted it on the village notice board, but no one glanced at it. They repeatedly asked the Grama Panchayat to investigate the problem, but they received no response.

The Kishoris resolved to send an application letter to the Grama Panchayat that had all of their signatures. They wanted to stand by what was right. The officials then acted rapidly to clean up the area around the lane. They even stated that they plan to keep the hygiene in this manner. The village is becoming much cleaner and healthier as a result of Kishori's hard work and determination.

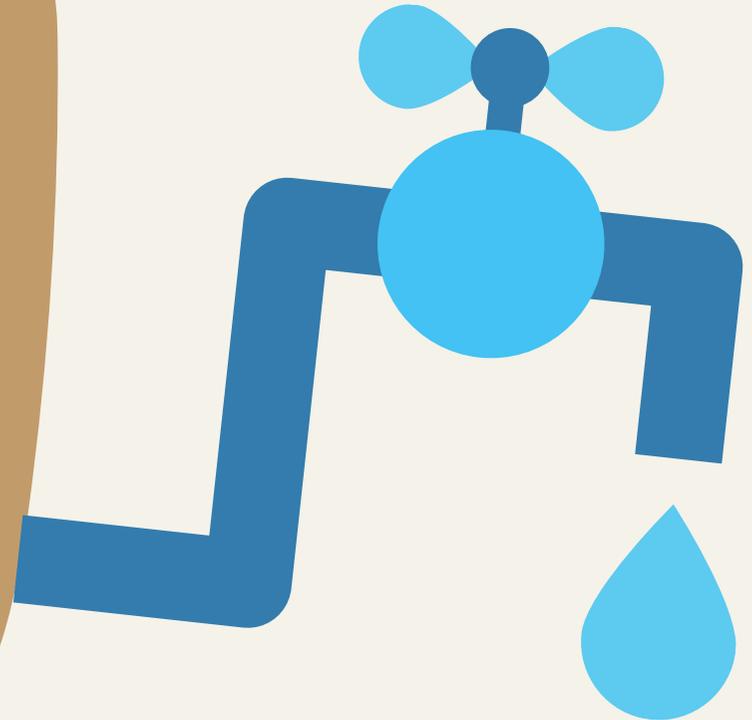
STORY 8

BRINGING CLEAN WATER

In the state of Karnataka, Yallamana Budihala is a small village. It's one of the many villages that's drowning in poverty. The village had an extremely concerning drainage system.

The Kishori's of this village are ever-present and are very concerned about maintaining public hygiene. The canals were not allowing rainwater to pass through. As a result, concerns such as collecting dirty stagnant water or rainwater running on the roads arose, making it an inconvenient path for all modes of transportation. To make matters worse, individuals began to grow ill as a result of the area's proximity to a source of garbage and unsanitary sewage water.

Almost every house in Yallamma Budihala is quite old, and the roofs are all made of mud/soil tiles. Residents in the region used to have a lot of problems during the rainy season due to the inadequate upkeep of the drainage system and sewage canals that were connected to it.



As a result, it weakened the water taps in people's homes, making it difficult to find clean drinking water. They'd have to deal with throat infections, viral fevers, a bad cold, and gastrointestinal problems. They would also become unwell frequently as a result of mosquito-borne illnesses.

The village's Kishori's were more than aware of the issue and decided to do something about it. They paid a visit to the location and made films of all the regions afflicted by issues such as contaminated drinking water, damaged sewage canals, and poor drainage system upkeep.

They then forwarded the recordings with a written application to the authorities. After investigating the problem, the authorities realised it was serious, and the health of every villager was at risk.

The authorities immediately rebuilt the drainage systems, made separate canals for sewage pipes and rainwater, and ensured that it was kept clean at all times.

The Kishoris were the driving force for clean drainage services reaching every home in the village. The devastating village area was finally given comprehensive rehabilitation thanks to the Kishoris of Yallamma Budihala's presence of mind and active engagement.

STORY 9

SETTING UP A MARRIAGE REGISTRY

During COVID-19, the village of Kudali in the Bagalkot district was seeing a lot of child marriages taking place.

This was happening as families were economically weaker and thought this would be the opportune time to get their girls married. Many of these marriages were not reported because no one ventured out in the lockdown to notice.

However, the village's Kishori girls, who were trained to be hawk-eyed were noticing this trend picking up and decided to put a stop to it.

The girls visited the local Panchayat and brought the issue to their attention. The girls spoke to the Panchayat Development Officer and asked to set up a registry of all marriages taking place in the village.



The marriage register would ensure that all marriages taking place are legally documented and can be later verified.

The girls also advocated with the Panchayat to ensure the submission of legal age proof documents to enter the marriage in the registry. This way, the Panchayat could ensure that only marriages of those above 18 are legally registered.

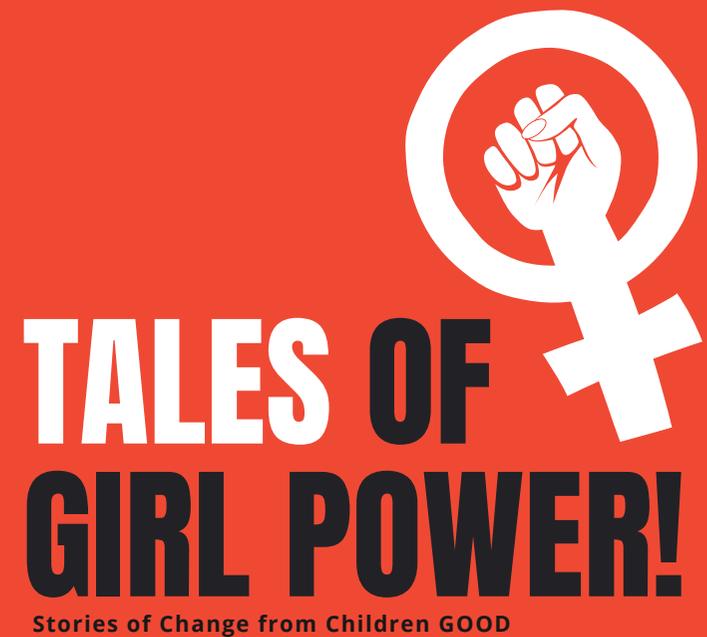
Even priests were told to ensure the legal age verification process before solemnising weddings.

After the setting up of the marriage register, all marriages taking place in the village were documented without fail. It became a simple tool for authorities to verify marriages and stop early marriages from taking place. Since the register, they have not been any cases of child marriage in the village.

The Kishori girls continue to maintain a close watch on the marriages taking place and take pride in their efforts to stop child marriages during the pandemic.



Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) is a Child Protection Organisation which takes children out of exploitative situations and provides them with a conducive environment to develop. In India TdH NL addresses child labour, child marriage, child abuse and child sexual exploitation across states of Karnataka, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.



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