



HALF YEARLY PROGRESS REPORT

Reporting Period
October 2019 - March 2020

SAKHI

Strengthening Adolescent Girls, Knowledge,
Women's Rights Health and Income



Half Yearly Progress Report 2019 - 2020

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Strengthening Adolescent Girls, Knowledge,
Women's Rights Health and Income

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ABBREVIATIONS

UKSVK	Uttar Kshetriya Samaj Vikas Kendra
DSSS	Diocesan Social Service Society
AGs	Adolescent Girls
AGG	Adolescent Girls' Group
CHC	Community Health Centre
PHC	Primary Health Centre
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
Govt	Government
AWC	Anganwadi Centre
AWW	Anganwadi Worker
RTE	Right to Education
RTI	Right to Information
FIR	First Information Report
POCSO	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences
HB	Haemoglobin
BMI	Body Mass Index
IFA	Iron Folic Acid
SHG	Self Help Group
TT	Tetanus Toxoid
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
POU	Point of Use

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The Adolescent girls' empowerment program (SAKHI) is a social, health and economic asset-building program targeting vulnerable adolescent girls aged **10-19** being implemented across **124** villages in three Northern states namely Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan & Uttarakhand. Each intervention presented in this brief had a positive effect supporting its theory of change, some with evidence of impact on longer-term outcomes.

The core of ongoing SAKHI are the weekly group meetings, health sessions and triangular sessions with parent-teacher, vocational courses etc. that were conducted over the course of two years. The girls' groups comprised of **10** to **20** girls who met with a trained mentor. As per the need, the groups were also segmented by age and caste. The girls were provided short training sessions on a range of health, life-skills and financial education topics, as well as a chance to discuss important experiences. The primary goals of the proposed initiatives were to reduce social isolation and build assets that would facilitate positive change in the intermediate and longer-term for adolescent girls as they transit to adulthood.

Two additional components were added the first component of SAKHI was that selected Ags were promoted as HEALTH SAKHIs and rendered service voluntarily in promoting the health deliverables like health and vaccination camp, organizing pregnant women and lactating mothers for awareness camp etc. The second component is identification of **40** new volunteers boys and girls from each DSSS who will be a catalyst in streamlining the project interventions after the completion of the project.

Further the emerging entrepreneurs (adolescent girls) are instrumentalizing their skills and are contributing to their respective families. The objectives of Gender sensitization events were well achieved as deliberations and discussions with youth (especially male) having come up with suggestions and strategies to deal with emerging concerns according to their social setup.

The adolescent group from Gorakhpur has come up with an initiative and has developed sustainable methods for disposing of their sanitary waste: a low-cost pot incinerator. It is essentially a small earthen pot which is lined with dried leaves and which works as an incinerator into which all the menstruating Ag's throw their used sanitary pads. Once full, the waste is soaked with some oil and burnt, the resultant ashes are then disposed of.

Vocational courses (stitching and embroidery, computer and beautician) are also being introduced wherein **1080** adolescents have enrolled. All the planned activities were being implemented but the outbreak of Covid -19 led the project activities to a halt with the announcement of the janata (people's) curfew and the subsequent nationwide lockdown called by the Union government to control the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID- 19) pandemic.

IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT AND ITS OBJECTIVES

Objective 1 : Promote adolescent girl leaders and strengthen girls forum

Planned activities : Group formation and group work activities.
Networking with school teachers and community based workers.

Immediate outcome / result :

Ags through group work have been educated on their rights; opportunities for modern livelihood etc have discouraged the occurrence of child marriage in the intervention areas.

In January 2020, Rajasthan had Panchayati Raj Election. The adolescent girls and the community members were mobilized to actively participate in Panchayat elections: role of community in the selection of rulers directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy. The adolescent girls through group meetings enhanced the capacity of other Ags and ensured that all actively participated in the elections.

Two adolescent girls, Ms Pooja from

Loharwada village, Ajmer and Ms Veena Garacia from Banswara contested the Panchayat election. Ms Pooja contested for Pradhan but lost whereas Ms Veena won the election and has become the Ward Member. Both these girls are an inspiration to all. Pooja shared that contesting the Panchayat Election was not an easy task. The biggest struggle in many places for Ms Pooja was to get the crowd to focus on her own campaign as the political fortunes of the men.

The loss in the election for Pooja has turned out to be a learning and she is preparing herself and other Ags to fight for a noble cause.

The adolescent groups are gradually getting the attention they deserve by the community leaders. The focus on these groups is increasing and is being viewed as drivers of



Group work activities

social change.

Health frontline workers and Adolescent groups are working collectively in meeting the health needs of Ags.

Since the outbreak of Covid -19 in many

places the Adolescent groups worked as warriors and played a vital role in distributing masks, ration kits and developed wall paintings for community awareness. From March 22 no planned activities had been done due to the lockdown.

HEALTH SAKHI

120 Health SAKHIs also referred to as volunteers are playing an integral role in delivering the project objectives. Health SAKHI's are ensuring the demand of health services are met and are assisting the frontline health workers in organizing immunization and health camps, counseling service for adolescent girls and in some cases referral to PHC or CHC, listing the pregnant women and lactating mothers with Anganwadi centers for maternity benefits etc., as follows:



Health Sakhi's with community members



Adolescents with supplementary nutrition packets

✦ No. of pregnant women registered with Anganwadi workers	440
✦ No. of lactating mothers who received supplements from Anganwadi centers.	490
✦ No. of adolescent girls who received Iron Folic Tablets (IFA) from Anganwadi.	2635
✦ No. of adolescent girls referred to PHC & CHC for counseling and treatment	1950
✦ No. of adolescent girls who received sanitary pads through Health Sakhis	2872
✦ No. of adolescent girls vaccinated with TT	1944
✦ No. of girls who did Hb test	1331

Objective 2

: Decrease in the number of girls who marry or give birth before the age of **18**.

Planned activities

- : (i) Home visit by the animators to Ags homes.
- (ii) Networking and lobbying with the govt. Authorities to prevent child marriages.
- (iii) Counseling sessions and home visits to beneficiaries on family planning.

Immediate outcome / result:

Home visit:

Home visit and community interaction is a regular phenomenon and the beneficiaries, project stakeholders are counseled on the threats of early marriage and child bearing.



Home visit

The community realizes the threat of child marriage but the prevailing custom and tradition, poverty etc. somehow enforce the community to abide by it. Regular home visits and counseling sessions have assisted in combating the rituals.

Adolescent Girls Group (AGG) as an intervention strategy showed a significant effect towards decrease in the number of early marriages and increase in the number of school retentions. The AGG efficaciously contributed to postponing **114** marriages of

adolescent girls.

Besides counseling against early marriage the parents were also mobilized by encouraging them to participate in open discussions and to express their concerns about education of girls.



Session on prevention of early child marriage

The sessions encouraged the girls and gained a better understanding of their environment-related social issues and their impact on their lives. Many girls have started performing productive activities and are playing a key role in decision making.

Networking and lobbying with Govt. authorities

The govt. authorities, pradhan and other influential people of the community are being met regularly for project updating. They have assured their support for legal action against any incident of child marriage.



Networking meeting

Sessions on Family Planning

Eligible couples were met and were counseled on the importance of family planning and delay in birth, **166** family planning sessions were organized; men's participation remains low due to work schedule and migration to a new place.

Family planning sessions were on the advantages of natural family planning methods over contraceptive for healthy future prospects.



Session on family planning

Objective 3 : Upgrading the health status of Ags by enhancing their knowledge and developing training modules.

Planned activities : (i) Sex education (knowing our body, menstrual system and hygiene).
(ii) Kitchen garden.
(iii) Healthy cooking.
(iv) Food and flag.
(v) Swasth kishori pratiyogita
(vi) Celebrating World Health Day and organizing a health exhibition.
(vii) Kishori health camp, conducting HIV/AIDS & TB awareness programs.

Immediate outcome / result :

Sex education (knowing our body, menstrual system and hygiene):

Menstrual hygiene management is a problem for adolescent girls especially for rural girls. To combat this and empower them on hygienic practices various sessions on sex education like information on menarche awareness, type of absorbent used, disposal, hygiene etc. were organized for the adolescent girls.

Among girls' awareness prior to menarche, mothers were the most frequent source of information but after SAKHI's intervention the frontline health worker and health

SAKHI is the source of information.

A unique and best sanitation practice is being followed by the Ags in Gorakhpur diocese; Ags have developed a Mutka (Earthen Pot) used for disposing the used sanitary napkins.

In Gorakhpur diocese **four** Health SAKHIs have joined Pragati India Multi Services Pvt. Ltd. as sales girls, the company makes natural sanitary pads. Each girl has the target of selling **500** sanitary pads and on its accomplishment they will earn Rs. **6,500**.



Health session for Ags

Kitchen garden and healthy cooking



BMI Exercise with Ag's

During BMI exercise it was found that many girls were underweight, anemic and some were on the borderline.

The SAKHI team listed such girls and had counseling sessions with them and their guardians. The frontline health workers too assisted in the counseling sessions that covered the causes, symptoms, treatment, and prevention of anemia. They were encouraged to take Iron Folic Tablets. The health workers also instructed them that daily consumption of green vegetables can keep anemia at bay by increasing their haemoglobin (HB).

The families were instructed and guided on the importance of kitchen garden, **793** families raised kitchen gardens. Depending on kitchen gardens for vegetables, the families are saving **Rs. 400 to Rs. 500** monthly.



Adolescent girls in kitchen garden.

146 sessions on healthy cooking mainly focused on making quick and nutritious meals from the locally available resources and on advice to increase the intake of locally available Vitamin- C and iron rich foods.

Objective 4 : Increasing stay in school concept.

Planned activities : (i) Regular girl friendly sessions between parents, teachers and Aags.
(ii) Teacher-sensitization program.
(iii) Networking with the state and central govt. on various schemes.

Immediate outcome / result :

63 Girl friendly sessions with parents and teachers were organized. In these sessions, debates and discussions related to girls' perspectives such as right to education, emphasis on weak students, equal learning opportunities, re-admission of drop-out girls, right to food, safe drinking water, health & hygiene, friendly behavior with girls etc.



Girl friendly session

SAKHI team assisted **320** weak students by organizing extra coaching (free of cost) which was facilitated by animators, vocational instructors, health Sakhis and few adolescent girls. The village leaders and other influential people have appreciated the efforts and are providing resources like venue, pencil, pen, copy - book etc. for the coaching classes.

Objective 5 : Legal literacy and advocacy campaign, “Me and My Friend” for Aags.

Planned activities : (i) Training on legal rights like child rights, property rights, RTE, RTI, FIR etc.
(ii) Training on laws and acts related to women-domestic violence act, dowry act, POCSO.

Immediate outcome / result :

Adolescent girls in general face different forms of discrimination on the basis of gender,

caste, socio-economic status etc. To address these issues various initiatives were planned thus streamlining and making the adolescents aware of their rights and duties.

The girls and women members through group meetings and training sessions have been sensitized to their rights and duties, consequently many girls have started addressing the injustice and ill practices, for instance, the issue of domestic violence was shared in the group meeting, further govt. officials were informed of the issue and necessary action was taken.



Session on domestic violence

In Gram Sabha the adolescent girls raised the issue of toilet (household) construction where the contractor used substandard material. The gram sabha considered the plea of adolescent girls and an audit was done. Based on the findings the contractor was given notice and was directed to reconstruct the toilet.

Objective 6 : Sensitization of boys towards gender injustice and violence against girls.

Planned activities : (I) Gender distinction (biological and psychological).
(ii) Behavior modification counseling sessions.

Immediate outcome / result :

50 sessions on gender sensitization were organized in which **920** participated. They were imparted education on distinction between sex and gender, anatomy of the individual's reproductive system and secondary sex characteristics and their role based on the sex of the person. Every child has a right to reach their full potential, and gender inequality prevents this by limiting what they can and can't do. Overt gender discrimination and a devaluation of women are ingrained into our daily lives, it is extremely important to identify and address this problem from a very young age.

The children were sensitized to building a gender sensitive and gender equitable society. Attitude formation among adolescents is crucial, organizing aforesaid sessions in schools assists in demolishing and rebuilding the archaic beliefs among students.

146 sessions on behavior modification especially on bullying were organized in govt. and private schools in which **3415** boys & girls participated. These sessions were facilitated by school principals, teachers and SAKHI team wherein the students were informed that bullying is a serious health problem and may include physical or verbal injury. Bullying is the most significant of school problems.

Counseling sessions were organized with students who faced bullying in schools. Concrete plans like monitoring team, class monitors etc. were formed to keep track of bullying and action was taken on those who were involved in bullying.



Session on behavior modification

Objective 7

: Capacity building of adolescents and raising livelihood options.

Planned activities

- : (i) Basic and advanced stitching training course (embroidery & croshia).
- (ii) Training on required language medium / career counseling / personality development etc. for girls / boys.
- (iii) Basic and advance computer training.
- (iv) Any training as per the requirement (trades: jewellery making, electrical/mobile course, beautician course) (Equipment, Maintenance & Raw Material).



Tailoring course

Immediate outcome / result :

Girls lack access to financial capital and have limited opportunities to gain education, knowledge and skills that can lead to economic advancement. Inadequate policy framework and inequitable gender norms also often create barriers to girls' economic advancement.



Beautician course



Computer course



Tailoring course

Vocational training plays a key role in helping girls get jobs. Through SAKHI program vocational training (tailoring, beautician and computer) courses were initiated. These assisted the girls in enhancing their technical capacity, entrepreneurship and business skills.

Around **1920** girls have completed the stitching course, **1440** the beautician course and **960** the computer course. The vocational training path has led to success of many girls who are financially independent and assisting the family. The vocational course supported through SAKHI project has brought a change in the lives of the poor and marginalized families through self-help. It has assisted them in realizing their full potential and has met their aspirations for a better life.

The outbreak of Covid -19 pandemic and lockdown has impacted the income of adolescent girls but the zeal to earn and grow independently still persists among them and they are eagerly waiting for the lockdown to be removed.

During this reporting period **480** girls are being trained in the Stitching and Embroidery course, **240** girls are pursuing computer course whereas **360** Ags are enrolled for the beautician course.

Objective 8

: Continuous community mobilization through IEC & BCC activities.

Planned activities

- : (i) Nukkad natak.
- (ii) Film shows.
- (iii) POU training.
- (iv) Community exchange program.

Immediate outcome / result :

As part of BCC activities, all 12 DSSS organized film shows.

The logistics for film show like venue, sound system, durries, chairs etc. were arranged by the community.

Wall paintings and spot fixing activities were organized to raise awareness of Covid -19. Adolescent girls, SHG members etc. took the lead in sensitizing the community on Covid -19. They have prepared masks for distribution.



POU



Film show

COORDINATORS' MEET

A coordinators' meet was organized on March 16-17, 2020 at Sampurna Jeevan Vikas Samiti (SJVS) - Banswara. The Objective of the meeting was to share, reflect and assess the ongoing project activities and plan the way forward. The Coordinators of 12 DSSS participated in the meeting; the meeting was facilitated by UKSVK team.



Coordinator's meet

Key highlights :

- ◆ External evaluation may be organized depending on the present circumstances; however the coordinators were reminded of documentation of all reports, facts and figures.
- ◆ Strategies for linking the adolescent girls who have completed the vocational course in order to boost their livelihood.
- ◆ Community awareness activity on Covid -19 to be implemented in the target villages.
- ◆ Rebuilding the capacity of dropouts and analyzing their progress, organizing free coaching and financial support through community contribution.
- ◆ Mainstreaming the health SAKHIs and volunteers as catalysts in streamlining the project goal beyond the SAKHI project.

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

A. Workshop on Catholic Social Teaching (CST) & Key Strategic Pillars (KSP):

A workshop on CST & KSP was organized for the SAKHI coordinators, animators and members of Faith Based Organizations. Fr Antony facilitated the session and shared that the church teaches us to have compassion on those who are poverty-stricken and that we should be giving to the less fortunate and feeding the poor. The Church, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation. Further Fr Antony shared four important principles called Catholic Social Teaching as follow :

- ◆ Dignity of the human person
- ◆ Common good
- ◆ Subsidiarity
- ◆ Solidarity

These principle emerged based on the Ecclesiastical Doctrine written by Popes. Each point was shared and discussed with bible quotations and with relevant examples on the present scenario. Further he shared that from these 4 basic Principles flow the other Principles of the Church's Social Teaching:

- ◆ Human rights (first of all, the right to life)
- ◆ Universal sharing in the goods of the earth
- ◆ Private property

- ◆ Preferential option for the poor
- ◆ Environmental protection
- ◆ Promotion of peace
- ◆ Participation in government and society.



Workshop on CST & KSP

Then Fr Antony spoke on the emergence of the four Key Strategic Pillars (KSP) and their importance:

- ◆ Empowering animation
- ◆ Dialogue
- ◆ Volunteerism
- ◆ Community sharing

B. Training of women leaders:



Workshop for women leaders

As shared in the last progress report UKSVK had organized a series of capacity building programs for the identified **120** women leaders, of whom some are from SAKHI intervention area. In this reporting period another **120** women leaders were identified and were trained on, “Livelihood and skill development based services for different income generation activities”. The remaining two topics: i). Training on Social Security Schemes and Services. ii). Training on services of banks and financial institutions have been postponed due to the Covid outbreak.

C. Monitoring / Field visit:

UKSVK team conducted the monitoring visit of the ongoing SAKHI program and visited all **12** diocesan partners. The purpose of monitoring is to have a better overview of the SAKHI projects, their objectives and results and to become better acquainted with the stakeholders.

The UKSVK secretariat team members discussed the activities realized and output developed so far, as well as to see any encountered problems in operational and / or financial implementation; the secretariat team also proposed the solution to tackle several challenges faced by the project.

All of the team members from the diocesan partners were present at the monitoring visit.



Monitoring / Field visit



Conclusion

Adolescence is an amazing period of growth and experiences monumental changes in every single aspect of their lives as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The initiatives planned and implemented through SAKHI project has been instrumental in realizing the needs of the adolescent girls. Group activities, training sessions, exposure visit, community exchange programs etc. have led to enhancing the knowledge, vocational skills and decision making power of adolescent girls. Health SAKHIs are playing a key role in stewardship (promoting and advocating health services).

The holistic approach was ensured to empower girls through quality education for both in and out of school girls. The participatory and inclusive approach led the girls to be self-motivated and actively participate. The program was able to modestly delay marriage, increased self-efficacy, financial saving, behavior and sexual and reproductive health knowledge.

The onset of COVID -19 has reiterated that public health outbreaks disproportionately affect girls and women and threaten to reverse the progress made with regards to their mobility, education, livelihood, sanitary hygiene, sexual and reproductive health rights. Through the lockdown, the SAKHI team was in touch with girls in their community through social media and communication platforms to understand their need especially making food kits available to them.

Glimpses of Covid -19 response





LIST OF ANNEXURES



KITCHEN GARDEN... A BLESSING FOR ME

Miss Rita Garaciya is from Kumbpura village of Banswara District. Her parents Mr. Jagadish Garaciya & Mrs. Dithu Garaciya are farmers. Rita is a member of Mariam Kishori Samuh since **2017** and is a regular member of the group. She is in class **10** and is enjoying her academic work.

Group activities are a regular phenomenon. During one of the group meetings the girls of Mariam Kishori Samuh expressed their desire to visit a health centre for routine health checkup. The SAKHI team after consulting with the officials of PHC arranged the visit and had their health checkup done. After a few days the officials of PHC shared the checkup report in which the HB (Hemoglobin) count of Rita Garaciya was low.

The SAKHI team visited Rita and informed her of her health condition. Further she was mobilized to have iron rich food and urged to develop a kitchen garden. She was informed that a kitchen garden can be established and maintained on a small patch of land with minimum technical inputs. It is cost-

effective, practical and easily meets the balanced dietary requirements and adds substantially to the family income.

Rita and her family members took the initiative and developed their own kitchen garden. When plants started to grow in her kitchen garden it kept her motivated. She started using the vegetables grown in her kitchen garden. Seasonal vegetables like Bhindi (Lady Finger), Lauki (Bottle Gourd), Baingan (Brinjal), Mooli (Radish), Karela (Bitter Gourd) etc. were grown.

Rita was also registered at the anganwadi centre for extra supplements and iron folic tablets. Regular visits and counseling sessions were organized for Rita. After six months her HB test was redone and the results were satisfactory. Rita and her family members are thankful to the SAKHI team for the timely support and motivation. A simple kitchen garden has directly contributed to their household food security. It has increased availability, accessibility and awareness of the importance of a nutritional diet and has also improved their social status.



BREAKING THE MYTHS

UKSVK and its partners are working for the empowerment of women and children through community programs and have been working for women's health, education and livelihood for over a decade and have transformed thousands of lives.

The SAKHI program started in **2017**. Since then activities are being implemented for enhancing the capacity, knowledge and vocational skills of adolescent girls. Adolescence is recognized as a special period that requires specific attention as it marks the onset of menarche, hence good hygienic practices during menstruation are crucial to maintain a healthy life. The adolescents were trained on menstrual hygiene practices and waste disposal.

In January **2020**, a training session on disposal of used sanitary napkins was organized for the adolescent group in Gorakhpur diocese. Mrs. Sudha, Health

Instructor gave information on low cost incinerator (Pot Incinerator) in which wood is used as a fuel to burn used sanitary napkins and is very suitable for rural environment.

After the training, Ags decided to establish a low-cost incinerator at their homes as there is an orthodox myth, that if a girl burns the used sanitary pad she will not have her periods and will not get pregnant after marriage.

Training on making a pot incinerator was imparted to the **11** Health SAKHIs in Chilona village, after which they arranged one and placed it in their homes. Further, the trained Health Sakhi disseminated the training to other girls groups and **206** Ag's started using this matka/pot incinerator. Two girls, Prachi and Sangita replicated this in their school and college. Prachi placed a matka incinerator in her Junior High School, Chilona and Sangita in her college (Rekha Pathak Inter College, Mishrauliya). Approximately **600** Ags are using the matka incinerator.

Presently **219** pot incinerators have been placed in the target villages and approximately **1020** Ags are using the incinerator to dispose of the used sanitary napkins. This practice has helped in keeping the surroundings clean and eco-friendly.

SAKHIs from Khalilabad districts have broken the orthodox myth and are burning the used sanitary napkins.





COMBATING CORONA BY ADOLESCENT GIRLS

warriors, organized counseling and psychosocial support for the needy and vulnerable, mobilized people to install Arogya Setu App.

The outbreak of Covid -19 was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on **30 January 2020** by WHO. The pandemic has caused severe global socioeconomic disruption, including the largest global recession.

The first case of the **2019-20** coronavirus pandemic in India was reported on **30 January 2020**, since then the graph has marched on and is still progressing. To combat Covid -19 every individual on the planet is contributing in his/her own way to overcome the disaster by social distancing until a vaccine or treatment for the disease is available.

The adolescent girls groups of SAKHI project also contributed to Covid -19 relief activities. The girls were engaged in wall paintings, pamphlet distribution, **400** masks were prepared and were distributed to community members and migrant laborers. They also arranged grocery kits, safety and hygiene kits. The SAKHI team assisted in establishing community kitchens, coordination with govt. officials and corona



Girls distributing masks

As our nations rally together in the global fight against COVID -19, it has been inspirational to witness the collective spirit of citizens who are putting self-interest aside to come together for the greater good.



A MARCH FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY... a prelude in political arena

Pooja never thought that one day she would represent her gram panchayat and fight panchayat elections. Being born in a poor family life was full of challenges for her since childhood.

But today, Pooja is a member of Adolescent group of her village. She is very active and owns group activities. Considering her performance and interest in SAKHI project, she applied for the post of Health Sakhi and got selected. On joining, she has gone through various training and exposures. She started to conduct awareness sessions on healthy practices and seasonal diseases. She also provided handholding support to the community members in application and follow up of government schemes and entitlements.

During this process, she built good rapport with the community and came close to them. The community motivated her to fight the panchayat elections. She filed her application and made efforts for the same. Unfortunately she did not win but got a lot of support from the community.

Today, she is trying to approach more girls so that they can be mainstreamed.

“Project Sakhi gave me confidence to step out from the home and raise my voice. It was really a life time achievement for me that I fought the panchayat election. I did not win but the self respect and popularity I earned are beyond any victory”. Says Pooja

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