

IMPACT STORIES FORMAT

Story Title	Challenging child marriage to education
Date	04/10/2024
Prepared by	Gayatri Seva Sansthan
Name of partner Organization	Gayatri Seva Sansthan
Name of Daksha/Daksh	Laluram Bhil
Name of SKB centre	Eklavya Nagar
Cluster	Kharka
Block	Salumber
District	Salumber

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT:

Lalu Ram Bheel, a 31-year-old from the Bheel Basti in Eklavya Nagar, Salumber district, Rajasthan, represents the many men impacted by the societal issue of child marriage. Born to a financially struggling family, Lulu's father, Modaji Bheel, faced health challenges, which limited the family's economic opportunities. With five brothers and one sister to support, Lulu was married at the tender age of 18, shortly after completing 12th grade, to Kesi Bheel, who was just 16. The decision to marry him off so young stemmed from the family's dire circumstances and the belief that a young man's responsibilities should start early.

Lulu's story is not just about individual struggles but reflects a pervasive societal problem—child marriage. This issue often targets girls, but it also ensnares young boys like Lulu, limiting their potential and educational opportunities. In a community where the primary livelihood involves fishing and manual labor, education is often sacrificed for immediate financial relief.

CHALLENGES FACED:

Lulu faced multiple challenges stemming from his limited income sources and the pressures of being part of a large family. With five brothers and one sister, the financial burden on his parents was immense, leading them to prioritize immediate economic relief over educational aspirations. As a result, Lulu was married off at the young age of 18, just after completing his 12th grade, leaving him grappling with feelings of lost potential.

When he first attended training sessions at the Sakhiyon Ki Baadi (SKB) center, Lulu struggled with self-doubt and anxiety about speaking up, as he had never held a formal position before. Despite completing the training and gradually gaining

confidence, the persistent societal pressures weighed heavily on him. In his community, the norm of child marriage often overshadowed the value of education, particularly for girls. Additionally, families frequently migrated during peak seasons to harvest lotus roots, disrupting children's education for four to five months at a time. This cycle of poverty and limited opportunities made it difficult for Lalu to envision a brighter future, forcing him to confront societal expectations while nurturing his dreams of personal and professional growth.

INTERVENTION/ACTIVITIES:

In April 2018, the SKB program, supported by the Gayatri Seva Sansthan and IIFL Foundation, began its mission to promote girl's education. Lalu joined the program as a resource teacher, where he played a crucial role in shaping the future of local children. He took the initiative to enroll both boys and girls in school, emphasizing the importance of education. Lalu worked tirelessly to ensure that children who had dropped out or were irregular in their attendance received the support they needed. Through engaging activities and teaching-learning materials, he created an environment that sparked interest in education among children and parents alike.

Thanks to Lalu's dedication, many children began attending the SKB center regularly, and he successfully enrolled 30 children in local schools. The parents recognized the positive impact of the center and actively supported their children's education.

OUTCOMES:

As a result of his efforts, Lalu Ram Bheel has become a respected figure in his community, known for advocating against child marriage and promoting education for girls. He has facilitated the enrollment of 30 children in local schools, gaining verification from the village sarpanch. His work has brought significant recognition to the cause of girl's education and has led to increased awareness in the community about the importance of delaying marriage for both boys and girls.

Furthermore, Lalu's advocacy has contributed to raising awareness about government initiatives aimed at benefiting the community. His recognition as a social worker earned him appreciation from the institution, along with a monetary award of ₹1,100. Initially having completed his 12th grade before joining the SKB program, Lalu has since pursued further education, completing his B.A. and currently studying for a BSTC, demonstrating his belief in the power of education and personal growth.

Through Lalu's journey, it is clear that child marriage is not solely a female issue; it is a societal problem that affects both genders and requires collective action. His

transformation exemplifies how empowering resource centers like SKB can create a ripple effect, fostering awareness and ultimately leading to significant changes in community attitudes towards child marriage and education.

GOOD QUALITY IMAGE: - 3-4 IMAGES (Attach below)



