



STORIES OF CHANGE

Fathers Care Campaign

2013

**Centre for Health and Social Justice
New Delhi**



From the Hotel, Back to School

Salaideeh village is 6 kms from the District Headquarters of Koderma. The residents of this village are economically very weak. Almost all of them collect mica scrap and sell them for a living. Earlier, the parents would take their children along with them to collect mica scrap but after working with and having constant dialogue with the parents, the children have started going to the schools.

After all these efforts there was one little boy, Dhaneshwar, 11 years who was not going to school and instead working in a hotel. He lives in the Turiya hamlet of the village. Dhaneshwar's father is a very poor man and a drunkard. Earlier he worked as a labourer in Nashik, Maharashtra and now since 6 months he was at home without any employment. His mother is a hard working woman; after completing her household chores she goes to the forest to collect mica scraps. The economic condition of the family has gone from bad to worse and she alone has been taking care of all the expenses for the house and her family of two sons, two daughters and her husband. Considering their condition Dhaneshwar's mother sent him to work in the hotel for Rs. 500 a month.

One day few staff from SAMARPAN, member organisation of the Fathers Care Campaign, went to the village and organised a *Bal Sabha* (Children's Gathering). On discussion with the children the facilitators got to know about Dhaneshwar's employment in the hotel at Nirunhadi Chowk. After the gathering the facilitators went to Dhaneshwar's house and got to know that he comes home every Sunday. Next Sunday the facilitators made a visit to his tola and met with him and his mother. After a long conversation Dhaneshwar expressed his desire to study and play like other children and his loath to go and work in the hotel and that he was sent forcibly by his mother.



The facilitators discussed the matter with his parents and told them that they were spoiling his life and future for few rupees a day. His mother was unwilling to listen and continued to express their poor economic conditions and her unaffordability to pay for his educational expenses. The facilitator explained the mother about the free education scheme till the eighth standard in the local village school which includes educational expenses and provision of nutritional food. His mother expressed that her past experiences has developed a disbelief in any kind of government provisions or schemes. The facilitators reassured the mother that her son would get all of what is said free of cost. The mother agreed to send Dhaneshwar to school on the condition that she should not have to bear an added burden of her son's education.

The facilitators visited the principal of the local public school in Salaideeh and discussed about Dhaneshwar's situation. The principal was very keen and gave admission to Dhaneshwar.

Today Dhaneshwar studies in the 3rd standard and is very happy to attend school. His father has reduced his consumption of alcohol and accompanies his mother to the forest to collect mica scrap. Dhaneshwar, his siblings and his mother feel happier than before though their struggles continue.

My family, My responsibility

Ravi Kumar, 46, has been working in the social sector since 1991. He got married in 1994 to Devyani Verma. Currently both are working in an organisation called Mahila Mukti Sanstha. In the long course of work both have developed an understanding on gender discrimination, domestic violence and worked on various issues related to women. Although he was working on gender issues he was not able to relate it to his own life, he continued to live by following all the gender norms.

Ravi expressed that he felt embarrassed to do the household chores, Devyani after coming from a busy day at work would take up the responsibilities at home from cleaning, washing, cooking and even making tea for Ravi. Ravi was completely dependent on his wife at home.

As Devyani's responsibilities grew at workplace she often travelled to various places. In her absence Ravi would either eat out or sometimes even sleep hungry. This caused problems between the two. In 2012, on behalf of his organisation, Ravi became part of Forum to Engage Men (FEM), Jharkhand and the recently launched Fathers Care Campaign. In the course of the campaign he was part of a number of training workshops which covered topics such as patriarchy, masculinity, gender equality, parenting, responsibilities of a father, etc. Ravi was inspired through the facilitators and left a deep impact on him and compelled him to reflect on his own behaviour.



After this he made small changes in his behaviour starting from home. Instead of asking his wife he started making tea on his own. This was only the start, he then helped his wife in doing all the household chores including washing clothes and dishes and even sweeping the floor. Now when his wife goes out of town for work he manages the house all by himself. He is even in the process of involving his 18 year old son to do work at home so that burden is not only on his 16 year old daughter.

Now as part of the Father Care Campaign Ravi is working in 15 villages in Ichak Block to motivate men and young people to join the campaign. He is also working towards creating a safe and better and violence free environment for women by encouraging youth and men to reflect and change their behaviour and practice gender equal norms.



My daughter's education, Equally important



Kranti Marandi with her father, Finiram Marandi

Finiram Marandi is simple farmer of Jodakaram Niche Tola. He first came to know about the Fathers Care Campaign in February-March, 2013 in his village. He was a silent listener during the launch of the campaign. He has participated in village level meetings and a block level training. He observed many things during the training and thought about his daughter's future after every meeting that he attended. He learnt about the various drawbacks as a result of a neglected approach towards girl child in his family.

After much reflection he decided to provide a platform of higher education for his daughter which was earlier being hampered due to the economic load of his son's education and her participation in work in their home. He finally decided to send his daughter, Kranti Marandi, to the college hostel at Hazaribagh, Jharkhand.

We noticed that his interest on his daughter, Kranti's, study had changed after our continuous dialogue and discussions during trainings and meetings under the FEM campaign initiatives.

Now his daughter is doing her graduation in English Honours and also preparing for competitive exams to get into railways. Finiram's brother and other family members also support her in her studies. It is an achievement for us to see that Finiram has managed to get his daughter a better education despite the economic problems in his family.

We observed his daughter Kranti is preparing railway exam and preparing to finish her Graduation with English Honors'. However there are too many economic problems in her family.



Stories from Madhya Pradesh



Story 1

Arvind Vankhede, 35 years, acknowledged that he used to threaten his children thinking they will not get pampered this way and also scold his wife frequently. He used to spend most of his time outside the house with friends consuming alcohol and at home he often beat his children. After joining the *Fathers Care Campaign* under the Pradeepan organization, he was part of various discussion forums. With the help of stickers containing messages (campaign material) about a father's responsibility towards his children, he realised that indeed a responsible father can lead to a better future for the children and a happy and friendly environment at home. As a father he needed to become responsible so he changed his behaviour. Now he is very happy as he spends time with his children to do fun activities. His children do not feel scared of him any more and they talk about different things.



Story 2

My name is Gaindlal Barpeta and I am 45 years old. On January 2013, Pradeepan organisation as part of the Father Care Campaign held a programme in our village. In the programme I was happy to learn about responsible fatherhood. It was said that as mothers always take responsibility of their children but fathers should also take equal responsibility so that children grow and develop better. Also, parents should not discriminate between their sons and daughters.

After this I spent more time with my children, I helped them in their homework and started having conversations with them. My children felt very good and enjoyed spending time with me.

I also reflected about my earlier behaviour due to which my children stayed away from me and were scared of me. Now my children talk to me freely without any hesitation. Earlier I used to discriminate between my son and daughter by always giving the better and bigger to my son first and then to my daughter but now I treat them equal and do not discriminate in any form. I am very glad to be a part of this campaign which has brought many changes in my life.



Story 3

My name is Maruti Kaushik and I am 42 yrs old. I live in Bhilai village in Betul, Madhya Pradesh. I used to think that a father's responsibility at home is to earn and provide for the family. During the programmes of the Fathers Care Campaign in my village, I got to know about the real responsibilities of a father. The messages of the campaign touched my heart deep within and realised that earning money and buying items for the home and family is not my only responsibility. I also realised that I was not being a good father by beating my children. Since February, 2013 I have been understanding my behaviour and making changes. Now when my children make mistakes I do not beat them, instead explain to them in a calm way about why something is right and wrong. I also made an effort to go to my children's school and meet the teacher and talk about their progress in school, since then my children have been doing well in school. I also participate in the household chores like cutting the vegetables, fetching water, etc. My wife and me are very happy about my changed and responsible behaviour.