

Kukma GP: Inspiring ideas and work on Girls' Education

Kukma Gram Panchayat (population as per 2011 Census: total 7,216, females 3,483, males 3,733) of Bhuj Block is located in Kutch district in the state of Gujarat, India. The village is located at about 10 KM from Bhuj, the nearest town and the district headquarters. Children's population below 6 years includes a total of 986 (female 458, male 528). The population also includes 1,547 persons (739 females, 808 males) from the SC community and 64 persons (32 females, 32 males) from the ST community. Recipient of Deen Dayal Upadhyay Sashaktikaran Award 2020, Kukma is equipped with effective and efficient programs ranging from early childhood development to women's empowerment and to modern infrastructure such as CCTV cameras.

Governance: Kukma has undergone transformation under the leadership of Mrs. Kankuben Vankar, Sarpanch. There are 27 CCTV cameras, which help to monitor cleanliness and other amenities and services. One public park was renovated for children to play. One more garden work is ongoing. All the committee meetings in the village are regular with discussions and actions taken on the required matters.

Child Nutrition and Education: There are no malnourished children in the village (thought it was one of the challenges earlier), and the GP members visit the AWCs regularly to support the AWCs. The GP ensured 100% enrolment and attendance of girls in schools by organising local transport, which was otherwise identified as a challenge. Mrs. Kankuben created an innovation: the girl with the highest education in a ward was recognised by naming a street with her name e.g. Sonali Marg (street) as in the picture beside. There are 30 streets with such girls' names in Kukama.

Women empowerment: On 10 March 2019, women's day was celebrated by encouraging girls to choose their model women and present it. Eight girls had participated, and model women were given awards.

Public Health: Immunisation was done by the health department, but the Sarpanch reviewed the same, and provided local support, resulting in 100% children covered.

Child Protection: The GP addressed the harassment issue of the girls by boys. Safety audit was conducted with the support of Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (a local NGO) and a resolution was passed to take strict actions with a copy given to the police department.

Drinking Water and Sanitation: clean drinking water has been ensured by CSR funds. Safai Abhiyan (sanitation campaign) was conducted through street plays, and the CCTV cameras are helping to monitor if anyone is littering. As a result, the village is clean.

Other: Liquor use was also a challenge in the village. The GP passed a resolution to impose a fine of Rs. 2,500 for the person drinking or making liquor, and Rs. 1,500 reward for the person providing information.

Leadership: There are 10 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) in the village. In 2018, there were 6 Severely Acute Malnourished (SAM) children in the village. The well-to-do families were encouraged, who adopted (i.e. informally took responsibility for) these children, and provided support until the children became normal. The Sarpanch and GP ward members are visiting the AWCs regularly and conducting monitoring. Kukma is a large village. As the girls from far away wards (e.g. Ashapura and Avadh colonies) had to walk 2.5 KM to reach school, they used to drop-out. GP arranged local transport with 65% cost paid by GP and 35% by parents. This ensured 100% enrolment and attendance of girls in schools. The girls continuing education were encouraged by naming the streets on their names.

