

# CORNFESSIONS OF KARAWADA



# सफरनामा

01 INTRODUCTION

02 SAANJHA MANCH

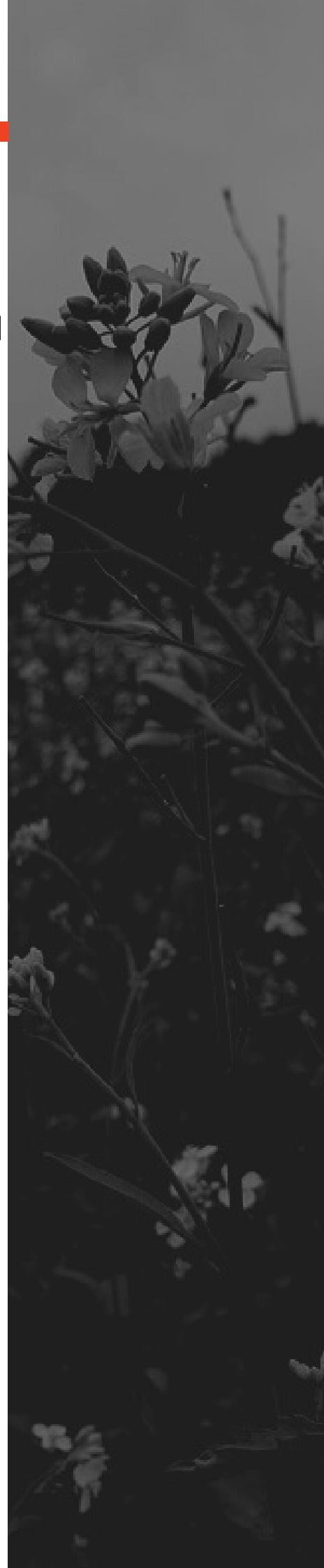
03 AANGANWADI

04 VILLAGE SPIRIT  
ACADEMY

05 HOUSEHOLDS

06 HEALTH CARE

07 SELF-HELP GROUPS



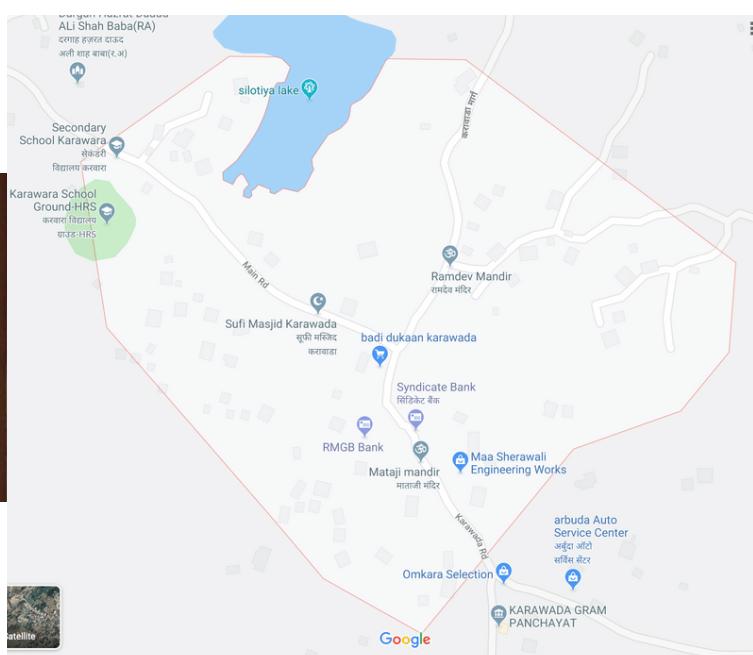
# INTRODUCTION

Hi! We are three enthusiastic explorers who seek to find answers to questions on this small, beautiful village, Karawada. Welcome to Confessions of Karawada. We are your hosts- Mahi, Margi and Riddhi.

Karawada is a small, hilly village in Udaipur district of Rajasthan, India and is a few kilometres away from the Gujarat-Rajasthan border. With a population of 2,980, it covers an area of 519 hectares. The villagers mainly earn their livelihood from manual labour and practice subsistence crop and stock farming. Non-farm activities include small scale manufacturing, shop-keeping, transport, etc. Karawada is well-connected with neighbouring villages and towns of Pahada, Padela, Bambala, Phutala and Dechara, among others.

The village comprises of about 600 households belonging to several castes. The communities residing in and around Karawada are Bhil, Jain, Patel, Muslims, Banjara, Kalal, Panchal, and Brahmins.

From the description above, we hope you got a brief overview about the build of the village. As we proceed further, we will get into the further details of the village through various case studies and inferences.



# साँझा मंच

Saanjha Manch. The first time we entered this beautiful, cozy, aesthetic place, we knew for sure it had some great history. And indeed, it did. But, we had a huge lot of questions. What did they actually do here? Let's find out!

साँझा मंच translates to a shared platform!



Saanjha Manch is an initiative started by ALFA, which in fact, led to the making of ALFA. Lokesh Kalal, its founder, told us a lot about its building.

Karawada is a village that comprises of multiple communities so conflicts are bound to happen. These conflicts came to a high during the 2002 Gujarat riots. Since, Karawada is 3-4kms away from the Gujarat-Rajasthan border, there were a lot of repercussions faced by Karawada. They gathered some youth, organized meetings and made the youth understand the importance of unity and diversity. This took place in a small building which came to be known as Saanjha Manch. They established a library where people could come from any religious identity and read about diverse topics. Soon, ALFA was registered as an NGO and it started its peace building activities officially from 23rd December 2006.

The organization's idea of Saanjha Manch, or common space, encourages thoughts and opinions of all people in a safe area with no judgment.



# आंगनवाड़ी

Aanganwadis are the rural children care systems in India built by the Government of India to maintain health and hygiene among children. It includes the basic health care activities, nutrition, education and pre-school activities. During our tour, we visited two Aanganwadis of Karawada and got enlightened by the work that is done there. We met a very inspiring lady, Mrs. Ramila Sharma, who has been working in the aanganwadi since 2006. Now, you may be wondering what was so "inspiring" about the worker at this aanganwadi. She was not just a dedicated worker, but a keen learner as well. She had to drop her education after 12th grade because her parents married her off to another household. She then had kids and was busy with household chores . These things never became hurdles for her. She started studying again when her children were in 12th grade and completed her degree in Bachelor of Arts. She also wanted to pursue M.A. but the work in aanganwadi kept her busy. Here's a question that popped up in our head- Did her husband have any problem with her working and studying? We were amused by her answer! She really had a very helpful and supportive husband. He was the one who got her into the job at this aanganwadi and helped her apply for University. She has two daughters and one son of which, one daughter is preparing for UPSC, one is in 9th grade and her son is preparing for IPS. She has certainly set an example that education has no age bar.



Mid: Mrs. Ramila Sharma (aanganwadi kaaryakarta). To her right and left, are "aashas", who are her helpers.

**Mrs. Ramila Sharma is an exemplary example of how educated and aware parents can provide and guide their children to pursue further studies. She has shown how opportunities will pour if one has the will to do something and is dedicated enough. Perhaps, what we need is more awareness among the parents so they send their children to school and support them for further studies. Awareness can be spread through detailed parent teacher meetings in schools and aanganwadis, monthly workshops and through informative pamphlets, leaflets and posters.**

Their main work is divided in 4 parts. The first part includes giving nutritional food (पोषाहार) to 0-2 y.o. children which is distributed every Thursday. This food includes a mixture of soya bean, oil and sugar. These packets are sent by the child welfare department under the state government. The second part includes making the 3-6 y.o. children learn the basics like numbers, alphabets, rhymes, short stories etc. Things taught at the aanganwadi are similar to those taught at a kindergarten. She later highlighted that despite this provision of free education, parents prefer sending their children to a private school. To our surprise, she added that parents who don't want to educate their children more send their children to government schools and those that are keen to educate their children send them to private schools for better education. This raises a lot of questions!

We certainly do not have perfect answers to these questions, as they can never be completely answered. Yet, we attempt to clarify certain things as we proceed further.

We asked Ramila the procedure that was followed before she was hired as a full time aanganwadi karyakarta. She had to first fill up a form, which was followed by an interview. She was then shortlisted and trained for a month. The same procedure is followed for the selection of government teachers and aanganwadi workers as well. There may be complaints regarding their availability but this can be dealt by cutting off the wages if they are unavailable for an invalid reason.

Do government schools not provide quality education and facilities? Is that a reason as to why many parents do not prefer sending their kids to an aanganwadi? Have people lost faith in the government?





The third part includes maintaining the health in the village. There is one "aasha sahyogini" who is responsible for dealing with all health related issues. She has to check if there are any illnesses among the households and if any, she has to take the patient to the hospital. She is paid as per the cases brought to her. There is a visiting doctor who checks all the 0-6 y.o. children once every 6 months. The workers ensure that all the vaccines assigned by the government are given on time. For pregnant ladies, the medicines and vaccines are given when they visit aanganwadi. This is called "tikakaran". They are given all the nutritional advice and informed about basic hygiene. The aasha sahyogini is also responsible for taking women for regular check-ups.

The fourth part includes taking care of all the girls that have dropped out of school (किशोरी बालिका), who either were not willing or allowed to go to schools due to economic conditions or due to lack of interest. The malnourished girls are given iron tablets. They are also given education on personal hygiene. These girls are given raashan which includes daliya, ghee, grains etc. The staff is, however, very encouraging when it comes to them pursuing further studies.

There are many vaccination drives arranged by them and they ensure that each and every person in their record is vaccinated. The aanganwadi gets its funds when they provide proof in terms of bills to the government.

Ramila also mentioned that the infrastructure was bad and that she had complained to the officials so many times but the officials didn't take any action, even though they'd come for regular inspections.

Aanganwadis are a great initiative by the government for providing quality education to children younger than six years. Most aanganwadis in Karawada work very efficiently. We think that villagers should use these more efficiently.



# VILLAGE SPIRIT ACADEMY

A round shaped building on a hill. Two small rooms nearby, made of bricks. Four iron doors on a platform. Farms all around the place. Does this ring any bells? It didn't, to us, at the first look.

Turns out, it's a private school that goes by the name Village Spirit Academy, an unconventional school, run for the rural kids by the rural youth.

Village Spirit Academy was started by a college dropout, Rahul Dubey, who was on an internship for three months in the village of Karawada, to which, he felt like he belonged. So, he stayed here and helped develop the quality of education. The building is eco-friendly and is made of mud blocks so that it is strong, lasting and cost-effective. The school definitely lacks many resources. The school does not have partitioned classes which causes a lot of disturbance to the teachers as well as the students, which in turn, affects the overall quality of education. The teachers are not very experienced since they are local youths who could not pursue their careers outside the village due to lack of opportunities or other reasons. Many fund-raising campaigns have been launched in the previous years which has helped ALFA develop the school to what it is now and we believe that more funds can cause exponential increase the level of education that is being provided here.



# HOUSEHOLDS

家  
庭  
户  
口  
統  
計  
局



After so much information about different places in Karawada, we were eager to explore the lives of the villagers. There were many questions in our mind.

So we began by visiting houses and understanding the lives of the people. They always welcomed us with a cup of tea and made us feel comfortable and at home. This showed that they truly believed in “**अतिथि देवो भवः**” . They were quite responsive to all the questions we asked.

What is their daily routine? How do they earn their livelihood? What is their culture and tradition? How do they educate their children?



They spoke in Wagdi. At first we found it quite difficult to understand, but later it became easier, since it's similar to Gujarati and we hail from Gujarat. We started off our conversations by asking them about their daily routine. They have a fixed schedule- Waking up at 5 a.m., taking a bath, preparing tea and breakfast, herding goats, buffaloes and cows, preparing lunch, farming (which mainly consists of planting maize, rice, gram seeds) and doing labour (working on others' fields to earn), milking cows, preparing dinner and sleeping at about 10 p.m. They told us that they did farming just to fulfill their familial needs and not to earn their livelihood. Labour was the major source of income. Many men from Karawada work in Kuwait as labourers. Their earnings were enough to complete their family's daily requirements and educating their children. They usually sent their children to the government school in Karawada and further studies were either done in Kherwara or Udaipur or the places around it. They had a belief that they shouldn't send their children far away. But this case was not found when we spoke to the women in their 30s and 40s. They proudly told us that they would make their children study whatever they want and also weren't hesitant in sending them to any place for better education

If someday you run out of money, would you discriminate against your daughter and educate your son instead?



While women in their 30s and 40s didn't discriminate on the basis of gender, they would love to educate all their children till they are able to stand on their own legs. It was clearly visible from their eyes that they would surely give a better life to their children. It clearly displayed an increase of awareness and knowledge among the villagers. Due to this, not only has the education level and quality improved but even the marriage policies have improved. We took a deep dive into understanding their marriage policies. They don't believe in dowry, but, as a part of their rituals, the groom's family has to give Rs. 85 to the bride's family when they fix the marriage. They don't have a magnificent ceremony; they just perform all the rituals in their verandas near their houses. Hearing all of this, we assumed that there won't be any cases of early marriages.

The answer we got was different generation wise. The old women agreed that they had come across the same situation in the past and they preferred educating their sons and their daughters would usually only be schooled till grade 10. They would then be kept busy with household chores and then would get married at 18.

घूंघट इधर है  
बुरका उधर है  
इनके दरमियान औरत किधर है



But, we were very shocked when we saw two girls of around our age wearing saree and hiding their faces behind a veil. First of all, they were very shy to talk to us, but later, we found out that one of them was 20 and had a 4 y.o. kid. She fled with her boyfriend at the age of 14 and got married to him. Another girl was about 17 and she got married at an early age because her mother died and her father was very poor. They dropped out of school and didn't wish to pursue further studies. We were also shocked, yet again, to see a woman hide her face behind a veil when an elderly man entered the room. This veil was kept to show due respect to those men that are elder to them. Women are made to do things that are completely unreasonable and demanding, all in the facade of patriarchy. Fighting patriarchy can get daunting but we need to curb it out. This can only be achieved when people are aware and more exposed.

We definitely believe that circumstances can change for good if we take certain efforts to do so. Gatherings can be arranged where the villagers can debate on whether such traditions are viable or not. Small, informative skits and plays can be entertaining media through which such messages can be conveyed.

"You have to be strong enough to say if the culture doesn't work, don't buy it. Create your own."



We see a stereotypical thinking in the minds of these villagers, but, we do not see any signs of gender bias amongst them. There were many small instances where we could evidently see development in these terms. For instance, when we visited one house, we were served tea by a male member of the family. Whenever they would plan on buying or selling cattle or planting anything in their fields, opinions of women and men, both, mattered equally. Women and their opinions are definitely respected. If there are fights of any sort within a couple, the villagers would form a group, talk to the couple and solve the issue on the ground level itself.

We then wanted to know more of how this worked. Things like, how voting decisions were taken, intrigued us. We asked them a lot about how they would decide who they want to vote for. What usually happens is that the entire village or an entire household collectively decide who they want to vote for. We found it quite odd that the whole family gives vote to a single candidate only and individual choice doesn't matter. These decisions are taken on the basis of many things. They take into consideration their policies, of course, but more importantly they look at feasibility. They decided their vote on the basis of who is more approachable, belongs to their community, lives near their house, is more powerful, and which party do they belong to. Women of the village supported women candidates more. They see if the candidate lives nearby so that it is easier for them to contact them. We asked about the conflicts that occur during this process. But they said that there is hardly any difference in the candidate chosen by each one in the family. They find it quite easier to approach a female sarpanch. But to our surprise it was brought in that whenever there is any female sarpanch, she doesn't even attend the panchayat meetings, all the decisions are made by her husband and she is just called to pass the bills and laws. She acts like a puppet and is not able to govern by herself. The main reason for this is that women members that are elected are illiterate so they do not understand all of the paperwork. They, then, cannot understand the new government schemes and work towards the welfare of the village. This condition can be improved when people are more educated and aware about the gender equality.

# सात्त्विक जीवन, सात्त्विक भोजन

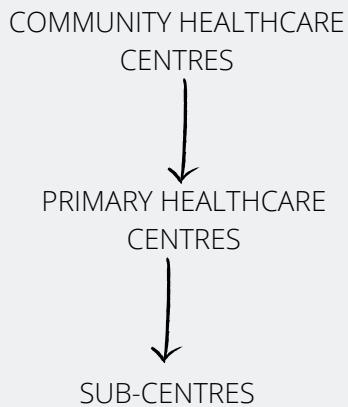


This education can be implanted in the schools itself, so that future generations don't have to suffer. People also lack knowledge regarding the functioning of the central and state governments, working of panchayat (how decisions are made and how the various cases are handled, the voting process, the various schemes issued by government etc.) When we got into a conversation with a widow, she wanted to educate her children but due to lack of money she wasn't able to. She was unaware about the Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS). Many others, like her, are unaware about many of these schemes made by the government and miss out on it. So, to increase awareness, there can be pamphlets and posters distributed among the villagers where all government schemes are described in their regional language. Various informational campaigns can be organized. This village also has good ties with its neighbouring villages. Apart from that, they share the same culture and traditions. They celebrate festivals like Diwali, Holi, Makar Sankranti and Navratri. The celebration mainly includes wearing new clothes, cleaning their houses, washing their cattle, buying jewelry, preparing sweet dishes, singing traditional tribal and Wagdi songs etc. These gives them utter joy. Karawada is a beautiful place to live in, but it lacks many basic facilities. The parts of the village that are situated in the forest areas did not receive the benefits of electricity until one year ago, or even six months ago. Isn't it strange that people started using cell phones before the arrival of electricity? They don't have well connected road networks, either. They also lack water facilities. People who don't have borewells still have to travel many kilometers to get water. Many of the houses do not have toilets. It is hard to live in such conditions. So, then, what do they do to improve these conditions? They told us that they have complained to the panchayat and to various government officials several times but no one is taking initiative to improve their condition. This can be sorted if and only if the government takes these matters more seriously and puts in more effort. The youth and the villagers should build more serious action plans and seek help from NGOs.

# HEALTH CARE



प्रेषित प्राप्ति के साल से बढ़े



Health care is a major issue in Karawada. We went to the Primary Health Care Centre in the village of Pahada, near Karawada. We met the on duty doctor, Dr. Abhishek and learnt a lot about how the health care system works in villages.

Death rates are at an all time high in Karawada. In our stay of 15 days, we heard of at least 4-5 deaths in the village. This was especially shocking for us because of what we inferred from the PHC that Karawada comes under. Let's analyse.

The main diseases that people suffer from, here, are skin diseases like dermatitis, fungal infections, etc. Women mainly face problems during pregnancy since it is a very vulnerable time for them. Infections during pregnancy are very common.

They also deal with anaemia. The government provides with blood transfusion, iron tablets and syrups during this time, free of charge. In fact, all the medicines in the PHC are given free of cost. Despite this, many children are born malnourished and face issues post birth.

The doctors are qualified enough to at least make the patient stable once they come to the PHC, and then, if required, they refer them to higher levels of hospitals. Ambulance services are available too, the villagers just need to make a call. So then, where does the problem lie? Turns out, most villagers lack basic health education and awareness, due to which, they do not bring the patients to the hospital soon enough. They do not use the ambulance services. They wait until the condition gets as worse as it can, and then bring extreme cases to the notice of the PHC staff. We definitely cannot blame the PHC, for it is trying its best to get the health care level to a decent level.

→ दुवा भाडार कक्ष	चिकित्सा अधिकारी कक्ष
→ पीने का पानी	लेबोरेट्री
→ ड्रेसिंग रूम	टिकाकरण कक्ष
→ पुरुष वार्ड	मंत्रीपूर्ण किशोरी स्वास्थ्य -
→ शोचालय	सेवाए परामर्शकक्ष
→ लेबर रूम	शोचालय
→ महिला वार्ड	हैयरी कम्प्युटर कक्ष

त्रिवितीकाकरणसमयसारणी
गर्भवती महिला के लिए :-
• गर्भावस्था में जितनी जल्दी ही सके टिटेनस-1 एक टीका
• टिटेनस-2 : टिटेनस के पहले टीके के एक माह बाद दूसरी टीका
• टिटेनस(बूस्टर) : यदि गर्भवती महिला को पिघलती न वर्षी में टिटेनस- के दोनों टीकलग चुके हो
• लोह/आयरनोलिया कम से कम 3 महीनों तक प्रतिदिन एक गोली अवश्य खाये। कूल मिलाकर कम से कम 100 मेलिंगॉड्स लानी है।
• पहले वर्ष में सभी टीके लगवाए, शिशुका जीवन सुरक्षित बनाए।
शिशु तथा बच्चों के लिए :-
• जन्म पर - बी. सी. बी. हैप्पीटाइटिस-बी. का टीका पोलियो ० खुलक
• १½ माह पर - पैन्टाक्वेलेंट. पोलियो शेटावायस. F.I.P.V. D.C.V की पथरासरक

We believe that health education, awareness and exposure is very necessary in these villages. Villagers should be encouraged to visit the doctor more often, especially since everything is free of cost, the reason is mainly that they believe in household medicine more than in doctors. There should be workshops and seminars on these matters. The villagers have all the access to facilities and hence, they should use those to their advantage.



# SELF-HELP GROUPS

A SHG (self-help group) is a community based group with 10-20 members. These are basically informal associations of people who choose to come together to find ways to improve their living conditions. The members are usually women from similar social and economic backgrounds, all voluntarily coming together to save small sums of money, on a regular basis. Majority of these are financial intermediary committees wherein one person collects the money and gives the money to the member person in case of emergency.

Coming to the villages in and around Karawada, there are several SHGs which are run by ALFA. These mainly focus on collecting money from everyone on a monthly basis and then lending it to the ones who need it urgently. They also have a unique name for themselves. We interacted with three SHGs in total by attending their monthly meetings.

स्वयं सहायता समूह



The first one SHG whose meeting we attended was called Parvati and it comprised of women of the village Bambala, which is around 3km from Karawada. The second and the third ones are called Sarasvati and Mahalaxmi and they function in the village of Padela. In all the three meetings, we interacted with the member women of different ages. It turned out that they deposited 105 rupees every month which was collected by the head of the SHG. This money was then withdrawn by the member in case of any urgency and then she can return back in installments. Through our conversation with them, we could make out that most of them were either around 50-60 years old or were very young about 20-30 years old. Although most of them were shy to open up and answer our questions in the beginning, there were a few women who were interactive and chatted with us without any hesitation.

By the end of our conversations with the members of the SHGs we were pretty clear in our heads and mostly all our questions were answered. So, it was the case that as these villages are very small, there are no banks here and all they have here are ATMs. So, it is inconvenient to go to the nearest town/city every time and especially when there is medical urgency.

What is the need of the SHGs in first place? How is it different from the structure of banks? What are the benefits that the members get by joining it? What kinds of people are associated with?

So, they join SHGs wherein the money saved remains in the village with the head of the SHG which can be withdrawn at any hour. Secondly, what they said is that by this method, they could save up some amount. Basically all these women come from families with very low incomes and thus there is no scope for savings, but by joining these SHGs they have to keep aside some money and in that manner they save some amounts.



Why is it that not everyone is a part of SHG?

Through our research we also came to know that not every household is associated with a SHG. Those all who are a part of it are probably more educated and awokened.

**Every woman associated with the SHGs should go around their houses and ask the women of the neighbourhood to join it as it is very beneficial. We also noticed that the main officers of ALFA who currently handle the SHGs are males. We think that even women can fulfil these duties if given proper training and directions.**

# UNTIL NEXT TIME

---

We hope you got some insights on this little, beautiful village of Karawada. Our stay here was wonderful. We hail from the city of Gandhinagar, so this experience was extremely wholesome and fulfilling for us. We stayed in a place we would have never imagined staying in. We ate food we never thought we would. At some points, it would get a little daunting, but you never learn unless you get out of your comfort zone. We got to know humans who inspired us to be better humans. We met some brave hearts, some who wanted to achieve so much, but didn't have direction. And on that note, we are also youth of this nation, the youth that wants to make a difference, the youth that wants to learn, inspire, innovate and grow. We are the youth that wants to improve. Through the medium of this report, we wish to make a small attempt at understanding the working of a place we didn't know even existed, through which, we learnt the true meaning of life, the meaning and necessity of simplicity in life. We took pleasure in the little things we experienced, from drinking tea at a stranger's house that felt nothing less than a cup full of love and warmth to walking 6kms to the village of Bambala, not knowing if the way leads to where we want to go, but knowing we are heading somewhere. That was enough for us. We got reminded of the fact that no matter how small you think you are, you will always make a difference. So, on that note, we urge you to never stop trying to make a change, no matter how daunting it gets. The world needs the youth, more than anyone else. Our nation is calling for the youth.

**If not now, then when?**

**If not us, then who?**

**JOHN LEWIS**

*It's been a great journey all this while. We hope you had fun with us!  
Here's us, Mahi, Margi and Riddhi, signing off. Until next time!*

