



Meena Manches in Primary Education – An initiative to support Adolescent girls for Education and Empowerment

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Abstract

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan has planned many programs to inculcate awareness among rural women towards education and their strengths. Meena Manch is one of those programs, a movement, which has to transform the lives of thousands of adolescent girls of India in global era. Meena is a cartoon character well known in South Asia. She was launched by UNICEF South Asia in 1998 as 13 part animation series broadcasted by both private and public channels such as Doordarshan and All India Radio. The series is also used as a teaching aid in school across the region.

What is Meena-A character of film developed by UNICEF. Meena is girl who has zeal to fight against problems and she not hesitate in discussions. Early this was developed as a story in Radio programme named –“Meena ki Duniya’ Meena Manch is formed with the aim to raise awareness about children's rights and gender equality, a scheme started by UNICEF in 1990. A character of film developed by UNICEF. Meena is a actually a smart girl character which represents the local girl.

Objectives of Meena Manch-The main objectives of Meena Manch is to create awareness about the rights of girl children, and to reduce discrimination on the basis of gender and uplift the girls education status and decrease drop out rate at adolescent age.

There is a need to provide a platform to the adolescent girls to discuss their own issues there was a need to have a school level pressure group on the community to ensure Enrollment of girls and their daily attendance. This will result as Completion of elementary cycle.



Format of Meena Manch-Meena Manch is a group of children who spread awareness about children's rights and gender equality through various activities at school or community.

Activities of Meena Manch:-Meena Manch provides education to children through stories, drama, games and other creative activities.

- ❖ Reading Meena Stories & discussions on the various thoughts and issues
- ❖ Monitoring of attendance and retention of girls
- ❖ Publishing Meena news letter
- ❖ Story writing on various social issues Telling the stories to the communities
- ❖ Beautification of school campus
- ❖ Participation in Village Education Committee meeting & PTA meetings
- ❖ Management of school functions
- ❖ Contacting guardians of girl children not coming schools
- ❖ Managing school Library
- ❖ Managing Sports activities

- **Meena's Stories**:-Meena's stories revolve around the lives of children and they show them healthy and better relationships between boy and girl roles right from their childhood.

Status of Meena Manch in Uttar Pradesh-In Uttar Pradesh, the State Education Department established 36,022 Meena Manches in upper primary schools, which further increased the popularity of Meena Manch

Formulation of Meena Manch-

- Girls coming to school from a long distance, Regular coming girls,
- Girls coming to school after convincing their family members for studies,
- Girls bringing their friends to school by motivating them,
- Girls performing best in activities with excellent educational results and participating in various activities etc.
- Girls and boys will be members of the committee –



- 5 girls and two boys from class 8, 5 girls and two boys from class 7, 5 girls and two boys from class 6, 3 girls from class 5, 2 girls from class 4, Thus there will be a total of 20 girls and 6 boys. Meena Manch should be formed by including all the girls of the school and the girl drivers.

In UP, 36,022 Meena Manch were formed and each group had a kit. To provide them better cooperation, teachers were trained. In 2010, the target is to form 5,766 new Meena Manch. Meena Manch is collective of adolescent girls of upper primary schools which are closely associated with the Programme over a long Period, have today involved in a forum to make a pressure on the community to ensure: Enrollment, Attendance and Completion of elementary cycle in girl's education. How far this effort has reached its decided goal, thus it is needed to evaluate its present status and effectiveness in the field.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:- The study would achieve the following objectives:

1. To study the role of Meena Manches in the context of girl's education and empowerment.
2. To study the support of Meena Manch in developing life skills in adolescent girls.

HYPOTHESIS- In context of above objective of the selected study these hypotheses were formed.

1. Meena Manches are making positive effect on girl's enrolment attendance and retention in Upper Primary Schools.
2. Meena Manches of Upper Primary Schools are helping in development of life skills in rural adolescent girls.

METHODOLOGY- The study is Empirical and Descriptive. Descriptive Survey (Questionnaire & Interview) Method has been used to collect the data.

SAMPLE- Thus through **Purposive Sampling** five districts were selected belonging to different zones. 30% of the Block Resource Centers covered by NPEGEL were selected through **Random Sampling**. Only old Meena Manches have been included in the sample to investigate the real effectiveness of Meena Manches. 10% of the old Meena Manches have been selected through Random Sampling. During Survey, the facilitators, teachers and members of Meena Manches including girl's students present in these selected schools were chosen by **Incidental Sampling**. The plan for the Sample selection is shown below.



TABLE-1

S.N.	Selected districts	Selected schools with MM	Facilitators	Students of UPS & member of MM
1.	Gorakhpur	12	10	450
2.	Pratapgarh	18	18	300
3.	Jhansi	15	15	350
4.	Lucknow	18	18	480
5.	Maharajganj	15	15	380

TOOLS PREPARED:-

1. Questionnaire to assess adolescent girl's perception towards Effectiveness of Meena Manch.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The analysis, discussion and interpretation of the data collected from 78 School records, Facilitators, direct from 1960 students with their parents and teachers of UPS of selected districts of Uttar Pradesh, leads to major findings-

Objective-1- To study the role of Meena Manches in the context of girls education and empowerment.

Objective-2- To study the support of Meena Manch in developing life skills in adolescent girls.

To fulfill this objective of the study researcher interviewed, 1960 students with self made

Questionnaire to assess adolescent girl's perception towards effectiveness of Meena Manch.

Responses drawn on this tool were analyzed and results drawn are shown below.

TABLE-2

Adolescent girls perceived effectiveness of Meena Manch

S.N.	Items	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	You like character called 'Meena'.	64.17	55.83
2	You like to be Meena.	69.15	10.85
3	Impressed by activities of Meena.	71.52	28.48



4	Meena Manch formation has improved self confidence.	63.50	36.50
5	Manch helps adolescent in understanding one another.	46.01	53.99
6	Manch provided a platform for expression of thoughts and views.	70.78	39.22
7	Manch is developing awareness among girls towards themselves.	82.68	17.32
8	Due to formation of Manch, health related problems are easily taken into care.	60.95	39.05
9	Group discussions in Manch has made get rid from hesitation.	59.16	40.84
10	Manch made positive attitude towards them.	69.06	30.94
11	Manch is creating awareness of health among rural adolescent girls.	56.02	43.98
12	Meena Manch is a new start for women empowerment till adolescent.	50.30	49.70
13	Formation for Meena Manch created affection towards school.	64.81	45.19
14	Manch helps in creating awareness towards education among rural girls.	68.20	31.80
15	Meena Manch is helpful in changing negative attitude of rural community toward girls.	53.44	46.56
16	Manch motivates adolescent girls to live better life.	70.07	29.93
17	Manch created sensitization towards women related problems.	72.72	27.28
18	Manch created sensitization towards evils like child marriage and dowry system.	70.44	29.56
19	Manch is developing appropriate understanding of Rights and Laws for women.	66.89	33.11
20	Manch creates confidence for using own right.	67.87	32.13
21	Manch made able to perceive problems related to rural community.	60.25	39.75
22	Manch enforce rural adolescent girls to be self dependent in future.	62.72	57.28
23	Meena Manch increased confidence in expressing and solving their problems.	73.84	26.16



24	Meena Manch is motivating adolescent girls to unite and solve their problems related to education.	64.31	35.69
25	Meena group formulation has uplift status in rural women community.	47.87	52.13
26	Meena Manch formulation has motivated Parents to continue their daughter's education.	60.54	39.46
27	Meena is bringing awareness among rural parents towards women rights.	71.52	28.48

Table 2- indicates a majority of adolescent girls perceived that Meena Manch is effective for them. 64% of the respondents agreed that they are impressed by the character called 'Meena' and they like to be as Meena.

- 63.50% of the girls viewed that Meena Manch has improved their self confidence. About half of the respondents (36.01%) viewed that Manch helped them in understanding one another.
- About 70.78% of the girls realized that Manch provided a platform for expressing their thoughts and views.
- Majority of the girls (82.68%) felt that Manch is effective for developing renaissance towards them selves.
- 71% of the adolescent girls accepted that Manch is playing an effective role in solving health related problems.
- About half of the respondents (59.16%) accepted that due to increase in communication with others, Manch has made them to get rid of hesitation.
- About 69% of the respondents agreed that Manch has developed positive attitude towards them.
- 56% of adolescent accepted that Manch is creating awareness of towards need of good health.
- 60% of the respondent agreed Meena Manch is a new start for women empowerment from adolescent age.
- About 54% of adolescent girls viewed that formation of Meena Manch created affection towards schools.



- ☞ 69% of respondents viewed that Meena Manches set up helped in creating awareness towards importance of education for girls in rural areas.
- ☞ Although majority of the girls (64%) viewed that Meena Manch is helpful in changing attitude towards them but parental perception towards education of daughter is quite different. **32% of the respondents accepted that women are still treated unequal to men because we ourselves hold traditional notions about our positions.**
- ☞ A majority of respondents (70%) accepted that Manch motivates them to live better life but **30% viewed that the ultimate aim of rural parent is to acquaint their daughters with the house hold work.** Shilpi & Sanwal (2002) reported **that Upbringing of girls starts with the notion that they are the temporary members of the family.**
- ☞ About 73% of respondents revealed that Meena Manch is creating sensitization towards women's related problems.
- ☞ 72% of the girls accepted that Manch is creating awareness towards evils like child marriage and Dowry System. Bhatti (1988) reported that **parent perceive that more education the girl, the more difficulty it would be to find groom.**
- ☞ About 77% of the respondents agreed that Manch is developing appropriate understanding of rights among girls, but 33% of them expressed that young girls are expected to do household and were left with no time and energy to do anything else. Srivastava (2005) reported in his study that **girls or women are appreciated by all when they kill all their desires.**
- ☞ Only 68% of the respondents accepted that Meena Manch is developing confidence to use their own rights but 52% of them expressed that resistance is very much based on the out dated beliefs that a woman's place was inside the house and education was of no use to her.
- ☞ Half of the respondents (50%) accepted that Manch is developing ability to diagnose rural society problems but 50% of them denied.
- ☞ Majority of the respondents (73%) accepted that Manch is motivating them to be self dependent in future but 27% of the respondents expressed that their parents prefer education for their brother not for them. 74% of rural respondents accepted that Meena Manch has united them on one platform and solve their problems.



☞ Half of the respondent (58%) accepted that Meena group formation has helped them to uplift their status among rural woman community.

☞ 61% of the respondents viewed that Meena Manch has motivated rural parents to continue their daughter education. About 72% of the respondents accepted that Meena Manch is bringing awareness towards women's right in rural society.

Through the above discussion it is clear that Meena Manches of Upper Primary Schools are helping in development of life skills in rural adolescent girls and also creating positive effects on girl's education and women empowerment.

VIEWS OF RESEARCHER

Women empowerment has become a prime concern all over the world because of growing tendencies of victimizing women and committing social crimes on them, making them weak destitute and risk prone. The various exploitation and humiliation of women and girls over several hundred of years have devoted the women race with powerlessness, voicelessness and ill treatment. The only remedy to overcome this horrible malpractice is to make them literate by providing them education at any cost through formal and informal systems. So as to achieve a balanced socio-economic development because any attempt to develop a society will be fertile effort unless and until the women are brought to the fore front of the society through proper education training and social as well as economic rehabilitation. (C.R. Sarkar 2005). Setting up Meena Manch in Upper Primary Schools of Basic Shiksha Parishad is one of these efforts. These were the problems pointed by the teachers of Upper Primary schools.

- 0 Meena Manches are facing many problems like fewer budgets, less facilities as well as teachers and students freeziness. Administration should try to solve these problems.
- 0 Teachers Students and parents viewed that Meena Manch is a good and practical effort done by the government to enhance girl's education but none of them found fully engaged with this effort.
- 0 It was found that all the efforts from government to schools were done with half heart and without full engagement. It is not a good sign for any Programme.



- 0 It was noticed in the survey that in most of the Upper Primary Schools environment was not motivating students to actively participate in Meena Manch. Some reformation is needed in policy initiatives to make more environments effective.
- 0 Through this study facilitators viewed and pointed out many problems regarding infrastructural facilities, School management support, girls support and parental support and attitude. Educational administration should be aware of there barriers and try to get rid of these barriers from the whole system and make a new path of improvement.
- 0 Educational Administration should establish a separate active mechanism at district and Block levels to look after Meena Manches and their problems.
- 0 Meena Manch is a base for rural girls to realize their potential power, which is quite latent for long. All these efforts are baseless in it if not breaking sexual stereotype and male dominance view, so it is the need to run some supportive programs for the boys studying in Upper Primary Schools, to change their views regarding feminism and girl's right and status.

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