

## CONNECTING BACK TO THE EDUCATION

Nirma, a resident of Badgaon, a village in the gram panchayat Patan in Kishangarh, has achieved an impressive 78% in her 12th standard exam. Not only did she celebrate this milestone but she also decided that she will study further and enroll in a college.

This was easier said than done! The first hurdle she faced was her own parents. They were adamant and when asked why, they made it clear that they were afraid of the lack of public safety and the danger of something happening to her while travelling to college and back.

Nirma was not ready to take a no from her parents; she was so heartbroken that refused to eat for two days and tried to make her parents understand what going to college means to her.

Meanwhile her friend Priyanka who is a member of the adolescent forum heard about the distress that Nirma was in and she swung into action and informed other members of the adolescents' forum and together they contacted Jamila, a Gram Sakhi in Patan.



Together, they met Nirma's parents and held rounds of discussion with them and deliberated on all the steps they could to strengthen the safety of Nirma and other girls traveling to the same college. This included using the Helplines to preempt any problems. These suggestions were endorsed by the panchayat and this reassured Nirma's parents and they finally agreed to allow her to enrol in a college in Kishangarh.

Nirma is now overjoyed at the prospect of pursuing her dreams. This heart-warming story testifies clearly the power of the community and the importance of ensuring zero tolerance to violence against women and girls to enable them to pursue education.

## ARSHAD'S STORY

Arshad, is a bright and ambitious 16-year-old boy from Sursura village in Kishangarh. He found himself in a very difficult predicament when his parents decided that while performing a marriage for his elder brother, he would also be married off so that all the expenses incurred in organizing separate marriage for the two sons could be saved.

Arshad got in touch with Ruby, the Gram Sakhi of Sursura Gram Panchayat.

Ruby has been actively campaigning against early marriage so when Arshad approached her to reason with his parents, she met with the parents and explained to them the adverse effect of marriages done against the will and wish of the young people.

Thanks to Ruby's efforts, Arshad's parents finally relented. They agreed to let him continue his studies and Arshad felt very relieved.



Ruby explained Arshad's parents about the adverse effects of early marriage and convinced them

Today, Arshad is doing well in his studies, and is grateful to Ruby for her unwavering support.

Clearly when it comes to gender, one has to address the structural barriers that women, persons of diverse gender and men experience. The patriarchal mindset and values challenge all of them in different ways and if it is not addressed, we end up by reinforcing and legitimizing gender inequality and the growing subordination of women and girls and 'normalization' of violence against them.