When JIVA began, one of the biggest challenges was the state of the SMCs, none of which were functioning in any of the villages in the project area. The teaching methods of government teachers were not engaging and students were not interested in education. Dropout rates were very high and attendance was poor in the government schools, especially during the harvest or near any holidays. Most of the students in 7th and 8th grade could not read a single word and the school facilities were all in poor condition. Migration presented another challenge, as many children from the Kalbelia and Bagariya groups migrate with their families for work and avoid attending school due to caste discrimination.

When JIVA started, our first priority was to establish Education Resource Centers (ERCs) in each village to improve the academic level of the students. We also built the capacity of government teachers, SMC members, child parliament members, and students through exposure visits, trainings, meetings, and workshops. We learned from the parent-teacher meetings that JIVA conducted at the ERCs that there was a communication gap between the parents and students, so we organized events to create community awareness related to education and social issues. The events, such as Science Day and Environment Day, have succeeded in engaging students and government school teachers. We also motivated children to study hard by awarding the highest achievers, and also encouraged parents to increase their involvement in the village development activities.

Since JIVA started these initiatives, the students have started to organize events on their own. The child parliaments and SMCs are functioning properly, the 10th grade board results have improved, and the participation in school activities has increased. Changes in these villages are encouraging and indicate that the level of education and community engagement in the JIVA villages will continue to improve. Some parents have even hired a private tutor for their children to teach them after school. We expect these villages to be known as model villages and that they will share their thoughts and examples to create positive change in other communities too.

112 School Management Committees are the government recognized organization of parents and teachers that represents the community and is responsible for holding the its public school accountable.