

# *Education for Empowerment*

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*A Decade Long Journey*

*Khavda, Bhuj, Gujarat*  
*2009 - 2019*



**SOLARIS** CHEMTECH



# Education for Empowerment

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SARD

SARD is a leading civil society registered way back in 1996, working with the most underprivileged and deprived communities to improve the access and ensure the quality completion on education and health.

SARD has been able to mobilise support from many multilateral and bilateral organisations, leading corporates and individuals over its 22 year journey. SARD believes in strengthening the mainstream systems and processes by working closely with the Government and does not believe in creating a parallel system. Many of its models, approach and learnings have been mainstreamed within the system and SARD manuals and modules have been adopted and scaled up by many state governments.



**SOLARIS**  
**CHEMTECH**

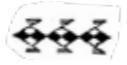


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Education is the most  
powerful weapon that  
you can use to change  
the world.

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Nelson Mandela



## *a word from the* **STAKEHOLDERS**

### *Solaris Chemtech (Yoginder Singh, Solaris)*



I am happy to know that SARD is coming out with a dissemination document which will showcase the variety of interventions undertaken by them in Khavda with the support of Solaris for many years now. We are working in Kavda with SARD since 2009 and various approaches were adopted with a view to ameliorate the living conditions of people nearby our factory.

Among other things, SARD and Solaris together, since inception, focused on mainstreaming the girls and students into local government schools from the religious institutions. This process of formalizing education was a very important, as a challenging step which we had undertaken initially. In order to produce the desired results in the government schools, a series of training and capacity building programs were carried out, in which the technical competencies of the teachers in the schools were enhanced. SARD and Solaris also hired para-teachers from in and around the Khavda in order to fill in the lack of qualified teachers in the schools initially and took a lot of effort to train them up to the required technical level. Overall, a lot of quality focus was driven into the program and a variety of stakeholders were interfaced with to uplift the community addressing their basic needs.

Together, we have also renovated school infrastructure, set up innovative child-friendly child resource centers, and also ensured the supply of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities for the school students and administration. The school buildings have been adorned with the concept of BaLA (Building as a Learning Aid), in which all the major walls of the school campus have been filled up with concepts and messages in a child friendly attractive manner. Through BaLA paintings, the children, teachers and community has a pride, feel motivated on coming to their school every day. Along with the BSF staff, we had also arranged a run for unity which included the Solaris employees, school children and various important field person and seniors from the BSF unit. This marathon was an inspirational moment in our journey and it was the first time that BSF people interacted with civilians in a public forum and shared their experiences of guarding the borders with the children and employees.

To develop the skills of the village youth, SARD and Solaris conducted various vocational training programs for the youth and adolescent in the neighboring areas. Counselling was also done through a very innovative Mobile Library concept which helped the youth get access to important information and resources to prepare for public service exams. Another milestone in our work has been the establishment of an “agricultural centre of excellence” in which we were able to demonstrate low cost advanced technology following organic farming methods to grow vegetables, spices etc. This centre has not only been used to educate the nearby farmers of these innovative yet locally suitable technologies, but also to generate revenue by utilizing the produce grown.

The journey has not only helped reduce the gap between Solaris and community, but we have developed very strong relations with the local schools, health centres, panchayats and the youth. I am sure that this partnership will be reckoned as a role model in a very remote and rural area of India and many more such models can be developed through CSR in the future.

### *Sudhir Bhatnagar (CEO, SARD)*



We at SARD value our partnership with Solaris for the holistic development of the deprived and disadvantaged communities in remote rural area of Kutch district of Gujarat.

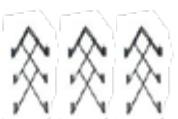
Working with deprived communities has given us an insight of their issues, bringing them back from religious school to formal school, preparing local youths as a Para teachers and changing the mind-set of parents of girl child education and its importance were quite challenging. The initial focus of bringing children from 6-14 years, mainly girls was taken up as priority. The key objective was to motivate girls from remote rural areas to minimum complete high school education. Looking back, today we feel satisfied on being able to march these girl children, not only to complete high school, but also to pursue higher education.

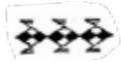
The local government school teachers' capacities have been built to learn and use the innovative learning aids to make their teaching abilities and style more interesting to children. The brick and mortar buildings were transformed to be live with more colourful rendition of language and mathematical concepts following the tenets of BaLA (Building as Learning Aids) and children were able to relate to many concept with these talking walls. The impact of this was evident with enhanced enrolment and retention rates and has resulted in successful learning level outcomes and completion of classes with quality.

SARD laid emphasis in evolving collaborative models where community, employee of Solaris and local para military forces were able adopt a school or village for holistic development. The local religious leaders changed the timing of religious school and ensured that their children attended the formal school for holistic education. The panchayat worked with SARD in a collaborative manner to support the initiatives and contributed from their official funds too. The para military forces found working in Border villages more meaningful with their community engagement and sought for more frequent opportunities to work with the children and community. The respect for Solaris has gained significance within the community with larger acceptance including officials from local governance and the local armed forces. This all round synergy between community, government and corporate is seen as an ideal role model for other corporate houses to emulate in bringing positive change especially in such a remote semi-developed areas.

### *Principal, Khavda Senior Secondary School, Khavda, Kutch, Gujarat*

SARD had done tremendous work in making school a better space for learning. I was posted here as a principal in 2005 and I have seen ever rising growth of education in Khavda. SARD trainings have essentially filled gaps in an efficient manner, among government teachers addressed through adequate training and pedagogical requirements of the students. We have seen greater number of enrolment of students in higher education. It is the outcome of their strategies and planning that enrolment of girls is increasing year by year. It is with their help we have 2 girls who would appear for class twelfth exam, which is an unimaginable achievement for me as a principal of this school. Besides, one of the most significant aspects of our collaboration with SARD is that they have expanded the horizons of learning in school through activities and hands on learning methodologies. This school and Khavda would always be grateful to SARD.





## SARD's philosophy on EDUCATION

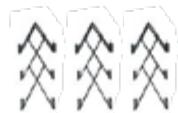


SARD has been working in the education space right from 1996 and working towards improving the overall learning level outcomes in Government Schools. SARD views education as both a process of achieving inclusive and holistic growth and a product in the form of a more just and equitable society.

Focus is also on the development of all aspects of a child's being, be it cognitive, behavioral or emotional. The aim of education, as envisioned by SARD, can only be achieved through development of humanistic teaching-learning approaches and supportive learning environment. Therefore, enhancement of positive discipline among learners and building of supportive culture in schools finds a prominent place in the perspective adopted by SARD on education.

### *Some of the major pillars of SARD's philosophy on Education*

- ❖ Improving learning level outcomes through innovative pedagogy and promoting hands-on application
- ❖ Promotion of cognitive and skill development
- ❖ Inculcating and Integrating Technology in the classroom
- ❖ Building classroom as a meaningful learning resource by integrating BALA concept in intervention schools
- ❖ Promotion of talent and creativity by hosting periodic events and competitions and quizzes
- ❖ Gender and culture sensitive education



# KHAVDA

*the untold story*



*Khavda, a village at the western most border of India, was chosen as a site for its factory by SOLARIS chemtech in 1993. The foundation of factory opened the gates for inter and intra-regional migration across the country which attracted attention of the government and company officials towards the deprived condition of education and school system. SOLARIS though an emerging entity in Kutch, extended varied facilities to the local people through its CSR activities and worked to elevate socio-economic condition of the region.*

*Khavda predominantly inhabited by Muslims, Hindus comprising backward and marginalized classes. There was a scarcity of modern school system following a particular time frame to accommodate students from diverse backgrounds. This resulted in increased drop-out rates in early schooling and discontinuation of education beyond primary levels, especially among girl children. Even if some pursued primary education, the drop outs were near total when it meant pursuing senior secondary education.*

*Solaris was working in this area for quite long and had pursued community development with help of some local NGOs, however, could not bring in much change. SARD intervention was brought in by the Solaris management in the year 2009 after being referred by some other prominent corporates, who had a positive experience with SARD interventions.*

*SARD's holistic intervention in the Senior Secondary school of Khavda has brought tremendous results. SARD pitched and used education to achieve inclusive and holistic growth and to form a just and equitable society.*





## *some of the initial CHALLENGES*

### *Geographical Terrain and Livelihood*

Khavda is situated in the desert region of the Kutch where vegetation is scarcely available. It lacks in basic amenities like tap water and LPG gas in the interior villages.

### *Language*

Kutchi is cited as dialect of both Gujarati and Sindhi popularly spoken in the Kutch region of present times of Gujarat. However, due to low literacy levels, the teaching staff in schools are from Gujarati speaking area.

### *Low Literacy Levels*

According to the census data of 2011, Khavda had the lower literacy rates as compared to whole of Gujarat - The total literacy was 52.45% compared to 78.03% of Gujarat. Male literacy rate is 63.78 and female literacy rate goes down to 39.95%.

### *Lack of Private Schools*

There were no private schools in the village so Government schools had the absolute mandate of imparting education.

### *Alternate Educational Institutions*

With the larger number of Muslim population, the traditional Madarsa education plays quite a significant role.



## *the SARD INTERVENTION*



### 1 *Bridge classes to mainstream girls from Madrasas*



### 3 *Provision of special teachers for English and Mathematics to government schools*



### 2 *Capacity building of para-teachers*



### 5 *Talent promotion and sports activities among children*



### 4 *Child Resource Centres were developed to provide on-site remedial support to address learning gaps*



### 6 *Infrastructure work in selected schools and BaLA*



### 7 *Periodical trainings for government teachers of entire Khavda cluster*



India should walk on her own shadow - we must have our own development model.

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam



# SARD & KHAVDA

## *the journey of change*



*Khavda, being a challenging and extremely remote area to work in, required a different strategy and approach to uplift the community and children. The education and literacy levels are quite low, and it was a process of continuous and gradual change which enabled SARD and Solaris to bring trust within the community.*

*Many innovations and approaches had to be piloted and tested before results were seen. Be it either education, livelihood, talent promotion, or skill development, SARD and solaris interfaced with a variety of stakeholders in order to push the needle.*

### *1. Bridge classes to mainstream girls from Madrasas*

Taleemshallas were established in 2009 and continued till 2015. SARD worked very closely with the religious leader and the local population to enrol the students, especially girls, into government schools and mainstream them into the formal education system. Bus for transporting children from schools to home were also initiated so that regular attendance can be assured and ensure transition of the students from primary to upper primary grades.





## 2. Capacity building of para-teachers

Due to lack of quality manpower and resources in Khavda, SARD decided to identify people from the community itself and developed them as para-teachers. A lot of rigorous yet methodical training was given to them to enhance their understanding on subjects such as Mathematics.

## 3. Provision of special teachers for English and Mathematics to Government Schools

Since the schools in Khavda did not have any dedicated teachers for English or Mathematics, SARD developed teachers who stepped into these positions and ensured that the child does not miss out on the education.



## 4. Child Resource Centres were developed to provide on-site remedial support to address learning gaps

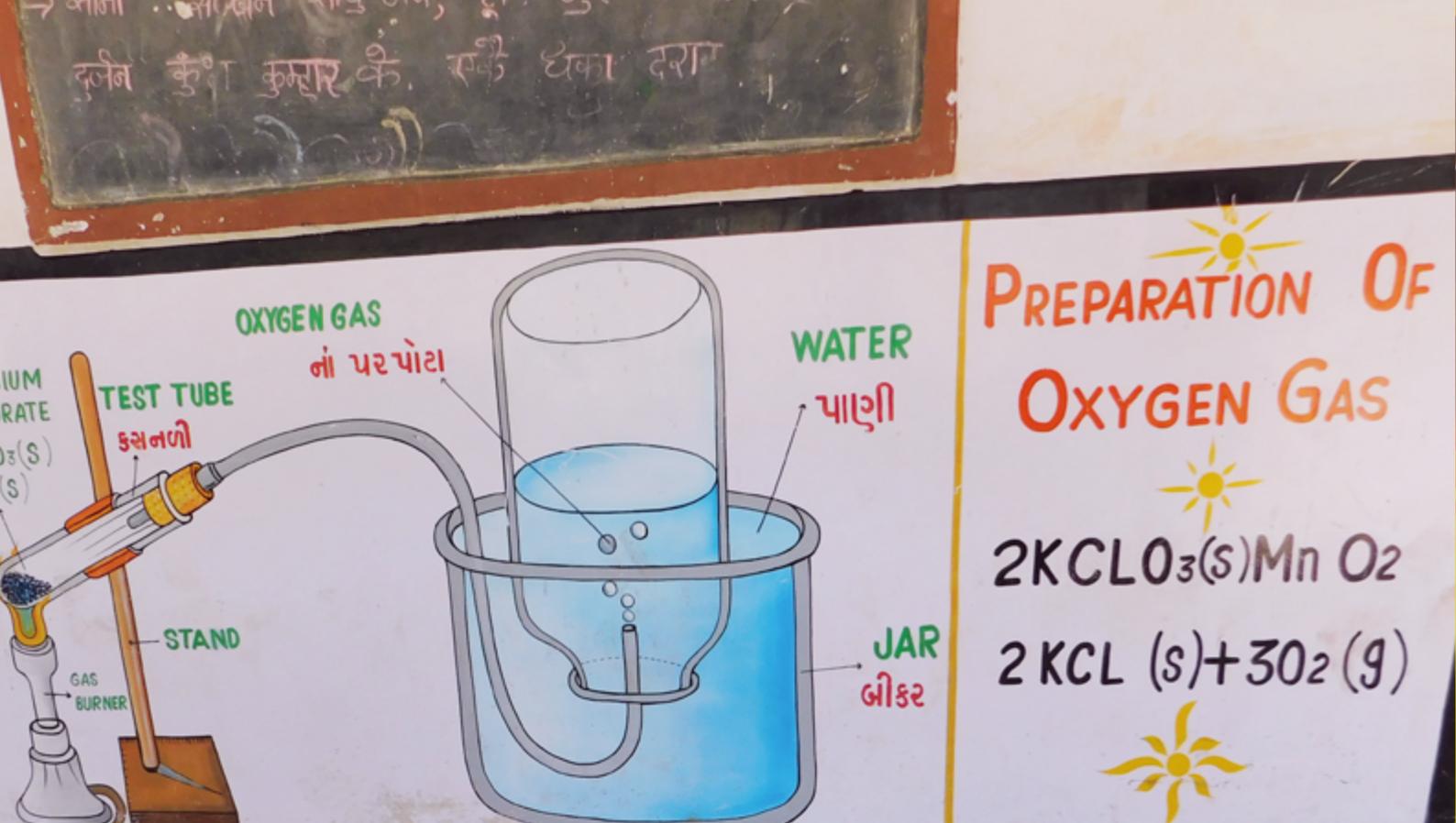
SARD adopted selected rooms inside the school and developed these rooms into child resource centres where learning happens in a very hands-on manner. Each wall of the resource centre was decorated after certain theme and was referred to as talking wall and a lot of low cost innovative teaching learning material as learning resources were developed in the local language to address the gaps.

Through baseline surveys and assessments, SARD identified the weak students and remedial classes for these students were initiated. Regular and Periodic assessments were done to capture the increase in learning level outcomes of the children in Gujarati and Maths subjects.

### Aims of child Resource Centre

- ❖ Self Learning
- ❖ Group and collective learning
- ❖ Freedom for experimentation
- ❖ Education beyond information





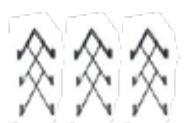
## 5. Talent promotion and sports activities among children

Talent promotion among children were aimed at nurturing their extra-curricular abilities in terms of sports, debates, painting, quiz competitions etc. These activities were observed on a regular basis in the school and children were encouraged to participate and showcase their extra and creative talents in a meaningful manner.

## 6. Infrastructure work in selected schools and incorporating BaLA

In order to ensure access of safe drinking water to the students of the government schools in Khavda, SARD renovated and upgraded the toilets and drinking water platforms to make it child friendly and inclusive. Sensitization sessions on the importance of WASH was also done to make the students aware of the importance of water conservation and preservation.

To maximize the learning of the children outside the classroom, SARD transformed the entire look of the schools using concept of BaLA. Various conceptual paintings were done in many school walls and boundaries so that the child can relate to topics even outside classes.

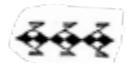




## 7. Periodical trainings for government teachers of the entire Khavda cluster

SARD intervention in schools ensured enhanced levels of educational performance of children. This achievement was possible after lots of initial challenges, however, with steadfast training and capacity enhancements workshops for all the teachers of the entire Khavda Cluster. These trainings have been immensely useful to the teachers to promote hands on learning among children by identifying and working around common errors, hardspots and weak skills/misconceptions, focusing on Mathematics and Language skills. These trainings have helped to increase the results of the students who are attending the 10th and 12th standard exams.





## some unique INNOVATIONS

### 1. Mobile Library

A mobile library was launched so that the children and youth of Khavda are not deprived of the joys of reading and learning. This innovative approach towards library opened a new horizon of knowledge for school children and other residents of the villages. As soon as new useful material arrives in the market, it is added to the mobile library. It contains books for competitive examinations of both state and National levels, and novels in different languages for all age groups. The colourful bike full of books brings smile on the young faces of the children living in the remotest area of the country.

### 2. Run for Unity

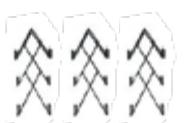
SARD, in collaboration with Solaris Chemtech and personnel of the Border Security Forces, organized an event called “Run for Unity”, where each and every participant contributed towards the cause of educating Khavda by dedicating their time to the Run.

This was the first time such an event was held in Khavda, where the theme was of national integration and promoting awareness on important social issues. A marathon was conceived to further foster the spirit of nationalism and patriotism through awareness of the important role the BSF plays in securing our national borders and augmenting support for the families of the martyrs who have lost their lives serving the nation.

### 3. Vocational and Skill Development Classes

SARD has recently started a 3 month course on Dress Designing and Stitching Vocational Classes for the women from Khari Village of Bhuj District.

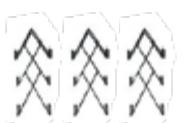
In parallel to that, a 3-month course on Mobile Repairing and Servicing has also been initiated for the youth from Khavda Village. Many of the beneficiaries of these courses have started their own tailoring and repair shops after their respective training.

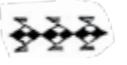




#### 4. Agriculture Centre of Excellence

SARD, in collaboration with agriculture experts trained by Israel and MASHAV set up an agriculture centre of excellence in which various farming innovations are tried and piloted. In this centre, various vegetables such as tomato, cucumber and other spices are being organically grown. The centre is completely self-sustainable and has become a hub for demonstration to the local farmers in the area.





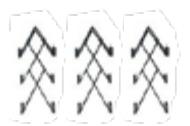
the way

## FORWARD



SARD has shown that education reform can happen even in the most challenging and backward areas of the country. In the near future, SARD is keen to do the following:

- ❖ Regular capacity building of the teachers of the schools in the entire khavda cluster and expansion to other blocks
- ❖ Scale up of the education model to other deprived parts and districts of Gujarat to enhance learning level outcomes
- ❖ Mainstream some of our innovations such as BaLA, Child Resource Centre etc within the system
- ❖ Bring in more resources and corporates on board and to promote convergence among the schemes and the community
- ❖ Work with other target groups to promote life skills development and gainful livelihood practices







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Design: One Small Design Studio  
Photographs: Society for All Round Development, One Small Design Studio

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A large, dense crowd of Indian children and women is gathered outdoors. The children, mostly boys, are seated in the background, while the women, dressed in vibrant saris, are seated in the foreground, looking towards the right. The scene is set against a backdrop of a yellow wall with red and blue patterns.

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