

## Case Study

Interview unique number: 04  
Interview date: 29/11/2019  
District: Chittorgarh  
State: Rajasthan

Name: **Salma Banu**  
Age: **42**  
Gender: **Female**  
Education: High school  
Marital Status: **Married**  
Highest education: Metric (Xth Standard)  
Current self-employment/ employment status: **Self-employed**  
Type of impairment: **Locomotor (upper limb)**  
Any other members with disabilities in family: **NA**

Salma is a 42-years-old woman with disability who resides in a rural setting located in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. She acquired deformity in her left hand when she was two years of age.

Salma started her schooling when she was three years old and told that her school was close to her home and many Muslim students studied with her. She told that she didn't face any issue getting admission in the school as the school was run by her father's friend. However, her mother was nervous in sending her to the school because she believed that, 'the diverse needs of a girl with disability if not accommodated could make her schooling experience depressing.'

Salma stated, "I had fever when I was two and my family took me to see a 'quack' who gave me an injection, and after that my hand got deformed.

Later, it was diagnosed as polio. My father used to work in Devgarh. He took me to Jaipur regularly for treatment. I also took indigenous treatment but nothing changed."

***Salma recalls her childhood school uniform issue: "In school, there was option of choosing either a skirt that had hooks or a salwar (lowers) that had strings for uniform. My mother chose skirt because I was able to close the hooks myself and it was easy to wear. My mother broke all conventional norms of not making me wear salwar, while it was mandatory for Muslim girls to cover legs."***

Salma's further emphasised that reasonable accommodation needs to be provided for all diverse requirements of individuals. They often struggle with infrastructural and attitudinal barriers that either excludes them or makes it extremely difficult for them to join the mainstream education system. Simple thing like a convenient school uniform design played a major role in easing Salma's anxiety to attend the school.

Salma expressed that, "my classmates used to make fun of me and the teacher scolded me for being slow in packing my bag when the school gets over as I could do it with ne hand only. So, I started packing early to avoid all the above. Later, my friends from my neighbourhood who studied with me in the same class started helping me pack my bag."

Salma also highlighted that their primary school didn't have toilets and that they had to go outside in a nearby jungle for open defecation. When she started going to a middle school, there were toilets, however, in a dilapidated condition. She describes the condition of toilets and her struggles as follows,

***"There was no light and water and we only had urinals without running water. It used to stink a lot. During periods, I was not able to adjust the cloth pad with one hand. I used to be scared that my uniform will be stained. Once it did happen and I was ashamed that now everyone will know that I am down with periods. Hence, I turned the skirt around in front and hid the stains by folding it. As there was no water in the toilets, I used to wipe my hand with leaves or mud but there was nothing to wipe my private parts."***

She feels sad that there is no information given to young girls regarding menstruation and hygiene management, which results in mental trauma and unhealthy hygienic conditions. Especially, in case of women with disabilities, situations become even more complicated.

Salma recalls, "I got my first periods when I was 14. I told my mother that I saw blood in urine and asked her what has happened to me? I was scared! When my mother told me that I have to live with this throughout my life and every month I will face this, I was shocked. Before I could even understand more about my body and biological changes I was experiencing with puberty, I got married at 16."

After her father-in-law's death, she realized the need to stand up against patriarchy. She states,

***"I was married when I was 16 years old. I studied only up to class 10. I was not allowed to study further by my in-laws. I got burdened with family chores. There were lot of issues in the society such as early marriage, patriarchal restrictions and I was not allowed to work outside. I was discouraged and told ' we have everything at home, hence there is no need to step out.' I could not take it anymore and revolted 'getting food and shelter is not everything for me. I want to explore the world and grow, and get empowered."***

Currently, Salma works in an SHG where she makes spices, do tailoring and earns reasonable monthly income. She has recently started stitching and knitting. She describes that she feels confident after being able to earn money on her own.

She emphasises further that women with disabilities should have access to medical treatments and information on sexual reproductive health rights. She narrates the following instance with tears in her eyes.

***"Four years ago, I had some uterus related issues and thus went to see a gynaecologist. It was extremely uncomfortable to see that there was no female doctor when I went for ultrasound and sonography. I underwent hysterectomy. I was not informed about the pre and post surgery repercussions and was given medicines without my consent. I did not have awareness about my right to be informed about medical treatment and felt miserable."***

Salma proudly narrates that she has gained confidence after she started earning. Her financial status improved when she started a grocery shop in her home. She looks after the education of her children and take care of many household responsibilities independently.

***She happily informed "I am a DPO member in Chittorgarh and all women with disabilities have raised funds and set up tailoring units to run an SHG. This has never happened before in my district and we have created history."***

***"In our, DPO we have started recognizing and identifying women and men with disabilities in the community. We connect with them to understand their current situations and motivate them to join our DPO. We have started one to one conversation with everyone. This is not a job for me anymore; I am living with disability and for persons with disabilities."***

She asserts that her thinking has evolved and she feels confident in speaking up for the rights of persons with disabilities (PwDs) as well as women with disabilities (WwDs). She mentioned that, 'SDG training has boosted my confidence and if I face any discrimination, I now know how to deal with it and find solutions.'

She elaborated her active advocacy skills with the following instance,

***"While travelling on the bus, the conductor misbehaved with a man with disability and slapped him. He had a bus pass yet the conductor was not letting him stay on the bus. I couldn't see that happening, so I walked up to him and challenged him by telling that he is wrong and he should stop humiliating the passenger with disability. The conductor realized that the passenger was not alone; he let the man remain seated."***

Salma shares the following recommendations:

1. Menstruation hygiene management in each school should be provided inside the toilets
2. There should be provisions of games for children with disability
3. Facilities of mobile crèches for working mothers with disability at the ward level

### Salma's Aspirations

***“People have started recognizing my work, and my position. My neighbours have started seeing me as someone very influential due to my DPO position and connection with high profile persons in the government and gram panchayat. They see me as future political leader and if I am given an opportunity I would like to be in politics. My neighbours have suggested me to be Ward Member of their area and they will vote for me. Other religious communities have started recognizing me as well such as Jain community. There is no caste, class and religion divide for me. People have started recognizing me as woman with disability rights activist. And this is me, new Salma without any prejudice. I live for myself and my family, and want my sisters- women with disabilities also to live like me- chin up and smiling. We have coined a new word too, sisterhood, united we stand together and can upheld our rights.”***