

## Case Study

Interview unique number: 03  
Interview date: 29/11/2019  
District: Chittorgarh  
State: Rajasthan

Name: **Shweta Garu**  
Age: **27**  
Gender: **Female**  
Education: **M.A.**  
Marital Status: **Unmarried**  
Highest education: **M.A.**  
Current self-employment/ employment status: **Self-Employed**  
Type of impairment: **Locomotor**  
Any other members with disabilities in family: **NA**

Shweta is 27-years-old independent woman who runs a boutique at home and also impart training to other women on disability rights. She became disabled due to an incorrect surgery, which happened at the age of five and she was in the first standard. As she grew older, her legs started to get deformed. Although, she underwent several surgeries, however, deformity could not be corrected. As she was unable to attend school regularly, her mother started to teach her at home.

Shweta stated, "I did not have any disability when I started my school in first standard. Due to surgeries, I was lagging in studies but I kept trying to make up. My teachers appreciated that despite my disability and skipping school, I was able to study well. I never faced any discrimination in school due to my disability."

Till standard five, she studied in Chittorgarh and after that her family moved to her grandmother's house and continued her studies there. Shweta describes her schooling experience with pain.

***"I never participated in extracurricular activities such as dance, P.T. etc. I was tempted to participate but I could not due to inferiority complex that I might not be able to perform like others. Hence, I always compromised and teachers would not select me for any event/ activity. I decided to sing prayers during assembly time, however withdrew soon as I felt being stared and talked about after it. The friends were supportive but didn't support me during games. They thought I am a 'liability' due to me disability. There was no caste or class divide in the school except disability, which became the biggest barrier and there was no bridge to reduce this gap."***

Shweta expressed her disappointment regarding lack of awareness among students and people towards assistive devices such as callipers, she used to wear. People end up making fun of her gait and looks. She felt depressed, hence stopped using the callipers, which resulted in permanent deformity in her legs. She narrated:

***"In school I wore callipers and people used to make fun of me. Girls used to insult me as my shoes resembled boys shoes. I used to get scholarship from 'Samaj Kalyan Vibhag' so, the girls started to humiliate me by saying that I wear such shoes deliberately to get scholarship and that I had no issues as such. I used to feel very bad and I took off the callipers. The doctor had always emphasised that I should not stop wearing callipers as they support my legs and helped making me walk better. But I stopped wearing callipers and slowly the situation got worse. I lost my ability to walk and started crawling!"***

Just like all the other girls with disabilities, Shweta also experienced extreme difficulty and embarrassment while using the toilets in her school. Her clothes used to get dirty and then she had to go back home to change the clothes. She faced issues sitting down in Indian squatting toilets. There was no light, running water and door latches in the toilets. She used to take a young girl along who waited outside. She would often tease and threaten Shweta that she takes too long in the toilet and does even know how to urinate while squatting on floor. Shweta felt embarrassed every time she had to use the toilet. She felt ashamed and highlighted that provision of accessible toilets is of utmost significance for women with disabilities (WwDs).

**"I always took someone along as an escort to the toilet and would make her stand outside to keep a watch as there was no latch in the door. Until class 10<sup>th</sup>, every month, during periods I avoided going to the school for first two days of heavy flow. Growing up it stressed me every time I was about to menstruate."**

Shweta recalls violence and abuse at school, as teachers used to beat her a lot because of her absence from school and she was slow in studies. She shared one of her experience of abuse at home,

***"When I was in first year of graduation, I was abused by a 'body massager' who was hired to massage my deformed legs. He used to touch my upper body also intentionally. For few days, I asked him to behave and only to massage my legs. However, he continued to be abusive and then I spoke about it mildly with my mother. She said, 'if you want to get cured, adjust and accept.' But I was not comfortable and prayed to god that this should stop immediately. However, I never had courage to raise voice against his 'bad touch'."***

Shweta has learned a lot from her struggles and the adversities she experienced at home and in school. People who have known her in the past are now proud of her growth. She handles accounts at the DPO and runs a small boutique at home, where she uses a motorized stitching machine. She is also a trainer at Self Help Group (SHG) of Chittorgarh where she teaches women with disabilities (WwDs) to stitch. SHG aims towards self employment of women, while earning from business model.

**Shweta asserts, "I will connect with more women in the field and make them aware about their rights and to STOP violence at home and in community. I want to work on the SDGs that promote health and well being. I will promote rights-based advocacy focusing on SRHR in the field"**

Shweta states,

***"My confidence has increased multi-fold and now I am able to express myself when something goes wrong against me. I know that it is my right to speak up and I should not be afraid anymore. With SDG training my strength and faith in my own self has increased. I train women to become financially empowered by becoming part of SHGs and earn a decent income. Now the WwDs have started earning slowly and are confident as they are now recognised as productive citizens of the society. I helped create opportunities for these women for their economical empowerment and self-respect."***

She elaborates on how important it is for WwDs to have information about their sexual and reproductive health rights so that they have 'command' over their bodies and intersectionality of poverty, illiteracy, violence and disability cannot make them feel 'vulnerable'. She got information about her organs and hormonal changes that women undergo during puberty, pregnancy and menopause from her sisters' science book. Earlier she was hesitant and felt embarrassed to talk about even menstruation, however with gender training given by Samarthyam DPO and Anjlee's confidence (trainer for these training), she feels 'liberated' and for the first time, she narrates 'I want to happily disclose about my relationship with a man with disability'.

**"I have a boyfriend who is also disabled and we are planning to get married. Families have started talking and discussing about the same. I am thrilled with my new relationship and excited for a new life ahead with him. Earlier no one cared about me. My family talked about my younger sister's marriage and they started looking for a groom for her. My relatives and family members never asked me what do I want. "**