

Adolescent Girls from the Sphoorthi Project Represent Youth from Karnataka at the National Level

Consultation for Adolescents and Young People on their Education, Skilling and Career aspirations, jointly hosted by UNICEF and Head Held High foundation



Sphoorthi girls, Jayamma (6th from L -R) and Pavithra (9th from L-R) with other young representatives from six states with senior officials of UNICEF.

Introduction

Head Held High Foundation has partnered with UNICEF on a key program **The Young People's Agenda**. UNICEF launched the program on the 1st of October in New Delhi at a high visibility event where UNICEF Executive Director and the UN Secretary General announced the launch. At the centre of this event and future discussions would be to engage adolescents and young people in conversations and co-creation of solutions. There were two phases to these consultations co organized by HHH and UNICEF, beginning with Bangalore, Karnataka.

Phase 1: Two- day State Level Consultation

A day long workshop held on **17th Sept** designed to hear voices from the young people in the age group of 10-24 years from the following categories:

1. Young people in school
2. Young people out of school
3. Young people living in institution care and protection like shelter homes, juvenile justice homes, remedial homes etc.
4. Girls
5. Young people with special needs/disabilities, and
6. Young people in tribal and other minority communities

On the **day 2 of the consultations on 18th Sept** with Educators, Special educators, Solution providers, NGOs/CSOs, private sector, government to brainstorm and arrive at some of the possible solutions for **flexible learning, career guidance and referral pathways and income generating opportunities including employment and entrepreneurship.**

The state level consultations were organised in 6 states, namely Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Gujarat, with key objectives to listen to the challenges, needs, dreams and aspirations of the young people on their education, skilling and career choices and enable the process of co-creating solutions with the young people. It witnessed participation of government, civil society and private sector partners. The consultation witnessed participation from 20 solution providers and about 46 adolescents.



KHPT participated in the Karnataka consultation, with representation from five adolescent girls from Sphoorthi program in Koppal. The girls were able to confidently articulate their aspirations, dreams in the consultation that made many people break those stereotypical beliefs about girls.

This is one of the first initiative of bringing together adolescents and multiple stakeholders/solution providers together on one platform, to bridge the gaps and to make a young person's transition from education to employment seamless.

Phase 2: Two-day National Consultation



Sphoorthi girls, Pavithra and Jayamma and Sphoorthi project coordinator, Raju Kataraki, at the National Consultation held at Delhi.

The two day national level consultation was aimed to generate solutions for a better transition from education to economic opportunities in the form of employment or entrepreneurship. The consultations was with and for young people and was envisaged to result in the formation of an alliance with private sector, solution providers, NGOs/CSOs and government to address the education, skills and employment aspirations of young people. ***This consultation was a collective effort by Niti Ayog and UN agencies in a sector still neglected in India: the transition from school to work, from***

childhood to adulthood of more than 250 million adolescent in the next 10 years, with a least 1 million expected to join the labour force every month, mostly in the informal sector.

The national conclave in Delhi was the convening of, invited young people and solution providers from the 6 states. The invitations were made based on – *for the young people*: ability to voice opinions and issues, clarity of thought; *for solution providers*: unique solutioning that addresses critical challenges faced by the young people and ability to scale and replicate solutions.

The national conclave witnessed participation from, 30 young people, 43 solution providers (*including chaperons*), 75 invitees (*approx.*) from education, life skills, employability skills and employment backgrounds, Govt and bilateral agencies engaged in skilling, education and youth welfare, Private sector like Taj Hotels, Ambuja Cement, HCL, SVP and others.

Two Sphoorthi girls, Jayamma and Pavithra from Koppal were selected for the National Conclave to share their voices, needs and solutions with the larger audience at the national level with the Central Government officials. The Sphoorthi girl's participation clearly depicted that with opportunities for exposure and hands-on mentoring, Adolescent role model girls can break some of the stereotypes and beliefs about the girls. It was clear that our vision of empowering girls is realisable. The confidence that the girls exuded while sharing their experiences and asking questions to the government representatives about how they can support them in improving education system and providing quality education in their district Koppal, was inspirational. Several solution providers present at the consultation were in admiration of the Sphoorthi girls.



Young participants with Henrieta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF

Voices

- *“The girls are so confident, I wish I can make my children so confident at such an early age. It has been an overwhelming experience to meet Sphoorthi girls”, **Organisers.***
- *“I am highly impressed by the Sphoorthi girls and KHPT’s amazing work to empower and inspire girls” by organisers,” **Organisers***
- *“The role-model approach is really one of the best pathways to follow for adolescent empowerment” **A participant from a civil society organisation***
- *“We asked the Sphoorthi girls some really tough questions, but were amazed to hear their answers. They have answers to all questions. They are truly empowered girls”, **UNICEF team representative***
- *“The fact that these girls went to Delhi is a great achievement. The other elders and children in the village will now look to Pavitra and Jayamma as an example to follow,” **Jayamma’s school teacher.***