

Evaluation Report of project 'Improving the Quality of Life of Adolescent Girls from Marginalised Communities in Koppal District, Karnataka', funded by APPI and implemented by KHPT – Highlights

Sphoorthi, a 3-year pilot project, funded by Ajim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI) implemented by KHPT with a goal to improve the quality of life of ca 4240 adolescent girls from disadvantaged households in Koppal taluka, Karnataka by enhancing education, health, and nutritional status. **This project** implemented in 51 villages of Koppal. It adopted a multi-tier approach working to build role model girls and parents through a) modular participatory trainings and perspective building sessions covering topics like gender, rights, leadership, communication, financial management, nutrition, hygiene, decision making and equality; b) role model driven Samvadas or interface platforms for girls, parents, adolescent boys and officials from panchayat and discuss, debate and problem solve together; c) Parent- child meetings to build father-daughter relations and improve parent-child communication, trust and mutual respect; d) sports and theatre to build confidence of girls and e) exposure visits for girls and parents, to other towns/ cities and interactions with women achievers to build aspirations of girls.

On 30th Nov 2018 this 3 years project phase ended and the funder appointed an external evaluator to evaluate and study the outcomes achieved by the project and also trace the journey of achievements that the programme had till date since inception. Hence the external evaluator visited the project site, assessed the impact through methods like group interactions, interview with individuals, government functionaries, case study compilation, role plays, meeting with non-program girls etc. Through these participatory process the evaluator assessed and various aspects of the intervention were observed and accordingly the inferences drawn.

Highlights of changes observed by the Evaluator are given below.

The relevance of the project can be gauged from the fact that there is an immense need of the intervention in the area, as per the various stakeholders. The lives of the girls who are the main beneficiaries is improving as planned in the project. An overarching change has been evident in the lives of the Role Model Adolescent Girls who are part of the Spooorthi Project. Besides the girls themselves, it was also observed that as a cascading effect, the families and the communities were able to benefit from the empowering process that the girls are going through as part of their involvement in the groups. The peer girls have begun to demonstrate the changes due to their interaction with the RMAGs. The project has found relevance in an area that is socio economically the most backward region of the State of Karnataka.

Knowledge of practices that promote good health: Accessing health entitlements is an important component of the project. However, to be able to access the health entitlements the girls need to be aware about various aspects of Preventive and promotive health. This is an area in which the project has been working on, and the girls have been getting the necessary inputs. During the course of the discussions with the girls, it was found that they displayed a fairly good knowledge of different health practices that lead to positive health.

Access to sanitary napkins and iron tablets: There is a clear improvement in the haemoglobin levels in girls. While prior to joining the project, like most of the girls in the region, the girls attending the program were also found to be anaemic. There has been a significant improvement in the haemoglobin levels as the girls have been accessing government supplies of iron tablets from the local health centres. Access to sanitary napkins has also increased.

Delayed marriage: It was observed that many girls have delayed their marriage as a consequence of their participation in the programme. Many girls reported that with the support of the groups and as a consequence of the knowledge they had been able to delay their marriages. Talking to the group of parents revealed that child marriages had stopped altogether in their particular villages.

Knowledge about nutrition: During the course of the interactions with the girls, it was evident that now they have a good idea about the nutritional values of food. Interacting with other family members to educate them about nutrition in an activity that girls of the Spoorthi Programme are engaging in these days. Post the evaluator's interaction with the parents, this fact got validated. Nutrition related knowledge is another aspect that was not necessarily seen to be related to only the intervention of the programme

Kitchen Gardens: The kitchen gardens were an interesting experiment and found to be of value in expanding the knowledge of nutrition as well as improving food security. However, the scale of implementing this component could have been significantly higher.

Mainstream education: As far as education is concerned, now the girls are clearly more aware about the possibilities that would open up for them in case they would pursue education at Higher levels. The evaluator found many girls who have been increasingly taking advantage of the educational facilities in the region.

Remedial Education: The remedial education component has been one of the most crucial mainstays of the programme. In fact, it was felt by the evaluator that as the programme provided access to remedial education, the Spoorthi programme was a success in the area. Remedial education is very cost intensive and clearly unaffordable and its provision to the girls as part of the programme was crucial to the high level of acceptability of the programme.

Continuity of Education: There are many girls who were seen to be pursuing their school and college despite multiple hurdles. Many girls who had dropped out of school have gone back to complete their studies. The evaluator discussed about these girls with their teachers and headmasters, as to whether they are any different from others who were attending their same school or college. The feedback provided to the evaluator by the concerned headmasters was that girls coming from the project, were extremely focused on academics and they were clear about the fact that if they complete their education, they will be better placed to be able to create a career for themselves and be self-reliant.

Support to Other Girls for completion of Education: Not only their own education, but education of other girls has been an area of support by the Spoorthi girls.

Scientific Temper: The stress of the programme on eradication of superstition and development of scientific temper is an extremely appropriate step taken in the right direction. This is with reference to the project intervention in a region deeply steeped in superstition and exploitation of girls based on obscurist religious and cultural beliefs and traditions.

As far as gains from the project are concerned in the above areas of increased access to entitlements in the area of Health, Education and Nutrition, it was observed that there is a cascading effect on the larger community due to the positive impact of the programmatic intervention. Friends, boys, community members, school / college mates and others have also been seen to be impacted in the above domains. This fact was reiterated by other stakeholders.

Relevance of the project in the current socio-political-geo context: In terms of relevance of the project, to the region as per the specific context, it is pertinent to note that there are not any other projects of this kind running in the region. The levels of empowerment, confidence, scientific outlook etc., that we see in the girls who are from the project is far greater than other girls of the region.

Talking to the various stakeholders, whether it is government officials, Panchayat members, parents of the adolescent girls, education professionals and government functionaries there was an overwhelming support to the initiative and unanimity in the opinion that the project is a much-needed intervention in the area.

Regarding strong strategy and roadmap for the future relevance of the project: The organisation is in the process of developing the same. While there are clear pointers that there are discussions and thought processes happening about what needs to be done to address the aspirations of the girls more work in the form of guided discussions need to be undertaken to further crystallize the plan of action.

Key Takeaways:

The project is relevant as there is a need for the intervention. The Spoorthi girls have on the whole, shown an increase in empowerment levels.

In terms of the social need, the area is backward and girls are not given independence to decide about even simple aspects of their lives. The project helps overcome this.

Many of the changes that are seen in programme girls are also visible in the non-programme girls, thus making it clear that empowerment levels amongst the adolescent girls are also rising due to other catalysts in the area, such as improved educational inputs, exposure to the outside world and general improvement of nutrition levels.

The project is addressing the need of empowering the girls to be able to independently take decisions.

While there is an overall improvement in the empowerment and awareness levels of adolescent girls in the area, the girls exposed to the programme have shown greater depth of

knowledge and higher levels of confidence besides possession of more comprehensive soft skills.

The community is desirous of the project. It also appears to be adequately involved in the same.

Other stakeholders (including the Government) have also shown involvement to further the aims and objectives of the project. These also further their own objectives.

Remedial education was possibly the most crucial reason for acceptance of the programme by the parents. While this may be a positive aspect of the programme, the risk is that other aspects of empowerment of the girls may not be a desired change for parents of the girls, but due to remedial education being a critical felt need, it may possibly be actually masking out possible low preference of other programme goals. Remedial education is in any case a welcome input amongst any community that sends its children to school, owing to the social pressure of excelling in academic performance. A programme that offsets the cost of remedial education inputs is in any case welcome and not much work needs to be done to promote the same.

Eradication of superstition is a component of the programme that is invaluable due to its need in an environment of cultural backwardness.

Brief Profile of the External Evaluator

Name: Mr Rajeev Singh

Education: (Professional & Degree Courses) (1) MA in Medical and Psychiatric Social Work (MA-MPSW)– 1986: Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) – Mumbai. (2) BA (Honours) in Geography – 1984: Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi

Competencies: Possess rich and diverse experience of working in the development sector, including at the senior/middle management level at CARE India, The American India Foundation (AIF), Child Rights and You (CRY), UN Volunteers/UNDP, Delhi School of Social Work and IGSSS.

- ❖ Analytical skills and policy perspectives from government, donor, academic and NGO experience.
- ❖ **Post graduate in Medical and Psychiatric Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. (India).**
- ❖ Experienced in strategic programme management, Research, Advocacy and Content Development. Committed to rights based approach.

Programme management Competencies: - Capacity Building, Monitoring and Evaluation, facilitating a good working environment, Networking, Liaison and Advocacy, Documentation and Communication Strategies, Change and knowledge management, **technical assistance in ICT, Social Media. New Media, film editing and programming content for diverse groups of stakeholders.**