

INSTITUTIONAL UPDATE: ADOLESCENT HEALTH THEME

JANUARY-APRIL 2022

Sphoorthi model to be scaled- up across Karnataka

The Sphoorthi model has been recognised by the Government of Karnataka. During his budget speech in March, Mr Basavaraj Bommai, the Chief Minister of Karnataka announced its scale-up across the state. KHPT will work in five Aspirational/Special Development Program (SDP) talukas in the districts of Belagavi, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Kalaburagi and Raichur.

Women's Day Celebrations

KHPT celebrates International Women's Day with adolescent girls

On International Women's Day (8 March), KHPT organised a unique event titled "Kannadi: A Reflection of our Inner Strength," featuring five adolescent 'Super Girls' from the Sphoorthi project in Koppal. The event was streamed on Zoom and YouTube for staff and volunteers across the country. The five 'Super Girls'- Nirmala, Shivleela, Suma, Shivamma and Vidya shared their stories of struggle, courage, power and triumph.



Shivamma said, "During the lockdown, schools were shut. When we had our monthly period, nobody thought of distributing sanitary pads to girls. I then thought of approaching the DC and he made one lakh pads available."

Suma said, "I never bonded with my father, I was scared. Parents' meetings and interactions through Sphoorthi made me realize that parents' support is the best in the whole world. I developed all the courage I needed."

Joining the event virtually, Ms Uma Mahadevan, IAS, Principal Secretary, Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka, addressed the gathering, saying, "It is important to continue to build networks of solidarity and resilience. We need to teach women about legal remedies, which is a source of strength for them and their children."

Ms Priyanka Mary Francis, Director, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka, lauded the efforts and courage of the girls in a pre-recorded message, saying, "The government has to work with organisations like KHPT and other NGOs to bring visible changes in the field so that our fellow sisters can come out of their cocoons."

Dr Maithreyi Ravikumar, Strategic Lead, Adolescent Health, said, "We always think of social change as something big. Working with the girls has shown that social change is about nudging the status quo. Sometimes changing the status quo is just about having a little courage."

The event ended with an address to staff from Mr Mohan HL, CEO, KHPT, who talked about how the Sphoorthi girls could influence and teach all the staff to make a big difference in their work.

Adolescents talk about periods to observe Women's Day

In the wake of International Women's Day celebrations, the KHPT Koppal office collaborated with Uninhibited (an NGO working to destigmatise menstruation) to celebrate International Women's Day with adolescent girls on March 5.

A training programme was organised to educate young adults and Adolescent Counselors on menstruation. The training was organised so that the adolescent girls and Counselors could organise similar training programmes for the women and girls in their native villages on International Women's Day. 32 adolescent girls from Koppal were taught about periods, the importance of talking freely about them and home remedies to follow during menstruation. In addition, a helpline number, 'Hello Sathi,' was introduced that can be called to get any information related to menstrual hygiene.

The interactive sessions helped the participants to shed their inhibitions and talk freely about periods.



Shilpa, Counsellor from Hatti village organised a session for adolescent girls on March 8

A group of teenage girls graduate to become 'Barefoot Counselors'

16 adolescent girls graduated as 'Barefoot Counselors,' in January. The online graduation ceremony saw participation from adolescent girls, KHPT staff and trainers from Baduku-Centre for Livelihood Learning. The 16 new graduates are part of a team of 34 Counselors who have been trained to improve the mental health of rural adolescent girls and young women through peer-led counselling and facilitate access to psycho-social care and mental health services in their villages. They will work in 153 villages of the Koppal block in the Koppal district.

Editor of The Economic Times Online Healthworld visits Sphoorthi project in Koppal

As part of KHPT's media engagement initiative, Mr Shahid Akhter from the Economic Times visited Sphoorthi's project in Koppal. The objective of the meeting was to understand the situation and multiple vulnerabilities faced by adolescents in a backward district like Koppal. Mr Shahid interacted with adolescent girls,

and parents, and discussed child marriage and school dropouts, while learning about how they overcame obstacles to reach their goals.



Mr Shahid interacting with the adolescent girls of Koppal

Adolescent Thematic organizes a visioning workshop

The Adolescent Thematic team organized a visioning workshop between 29-31 March. The objective was to bring together the KHPT team and experts working with adolescents to discuss our program approaches, and

strategies, and decide on a clear way forward to steer the program with a clear vision and mission.

The discussions during the 3-day session focused on Gender, Adolescents Vulnerability and Community-centric Design. Four adolescent Sphoorthi girls joined virtually during the meeting and shared their experiences as Sphoorthi girls and also gave a few new ideas to be included while rolling out Sphoorthi 2 in two new blocks of the Koppal district.



Staff presenting the gaps in the schemes which are available for adolescents' wellbeing.

KHPT field tests a 'Boys' Module' with adolescent boys on Gender

KHPT has been working with adolescent girls in the Koppal region of Karnataka to improve the overall quality of their lives by working with their families, boys and community groups. KHPT felt the need to work with rural adolescent boy and address issues that affect them. A boys' module is being developed to address their issues and one of the components from this module was field-tested with a group of boys from Koppal on 6 March. The session was facilitated by Goutami, one of our staff who works for Sahita Careline.



Adolescent boys from Koppal with the facilitator Goutami

The first session focused on educating the boys on the difference between sex and gender. In the second session, the boys were divided into two groups and were asked to list down the advantages of being a girl or a boy. Through this session, the boys realized that societal norms are the main reason for not understanding the needs of girls and creating a non-conducive environment for them to grow and thrive. A poem on the behaviour



Boys engaged in a group activity

of boys and girls was read out as part of the third session to make the boys understand the difference between sex and gender.

"Such sessions should be conducted in the village at least on a fortnightly/weekly basis as relevant topics like these are not discussed in schools," Sanjay Kumar, a participant.

Adolescent girls distribute Fortified Blended Food (FBF) to vulnerable communities in Koppal



Adolescent girl distributing the FBF packet to another adolescent

KHPT has implemented an intervention addressing malnutrition among adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating mothers, and children between 6 to 36 months in 153 villages of Koppal block in Koppal. Adolescent girls have been grouped into collectives and are at the forefront of distributing ShaktiVita, a Fortified Blended Food (FBF) packet to vulnerable communities. The adolescent collectives are formed at the village-level and have representation from different castes and religions. The aim of forming these collectives is to create opportunities for girls to learn about project management, documentation of their efforts, communication skills, and money management. Since the girls visit several villages they are also developing confidence to travel and communicate with different kinds of beneficiaries. A total of 3425 new beneficiaries and 14349 repeated beneficiaries received FBF during the period January- March 2022.

KHPT puts up a stall at an 'Arogya Mela,' in Yelburga

An 'Arogya Mela' was organized by the Yelburga Health Department on 24 April to raise awareness of the health services available at the block level. KHPT put up a stall at this mela. Minister for Women and Child Development, Mr Halappa Achar visited the stall and encouraged everyone to consume ShaktiVita, a Fortified Blended Food (FBF) mix. ShaktiVita is being distributed in a few parts of the Koppal district as part of KHPT's initiative to reduce malnutrition among vulnerable populations. The FBF mix is being produced and managed by SHGs who were capacitated by KHPT.



Minister Hallappa Achar visiting the KHPT stall

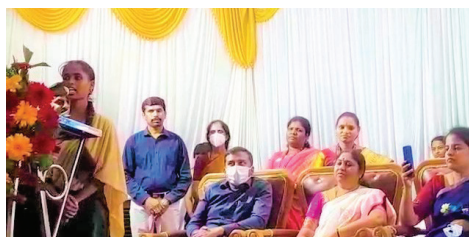


On the spot cooking demonstration by KHPT staff

Government Engagement

Adolescent girl from Koppal speaks during 'Video on Wheels' launch

Kavya, a 16-year-old Sphoorthi girl from Budhgumpu village, Koppal district, addressed people during the launch of 'Video on Wheels,' in Koppal. 'Video on Wheels,' is a statewide mobile van campaign to raise awareness and prevent child marriages. This initiative was launched by the Department of Women and Child Development, in collaboration with the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj and the Department of Information and Broadcasting, Government of Karnataka. The drive comes in the wake of an increase in complaints of child marriages during the pandemic.



Kavya addressing the audience during the launch of 'Video on Wheels.'

Narrating her story, Kavya said, "I fasted for three days to tell my parents that I will get married only after I complete my education." Her protest was successful and her parents stopped forcing her to get married. Urging other girls to study further she said, "Every girl should complete her degree." Kavya said her dream was to see a 'child marriage-free Karnataka.'

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Priyanka Mary Francis, Director, Women and Child Development Department, Government of Karnataka, said, "The Panchayati Raj department and my department will work together to make child marriage and violence-free panchayats."

KHPT presents adolescent health interventions at a NITI Aayog round table

Dr Maithreyi Ravikumar, Strategic Lead, Adolescent Health presented the Sphoorthi multi-stakeholder model for adolescent empowerment and the Adolescent Vulnerability Mapping Framework in February as part of a roundtable organized by NITI Aayog Roundtable on 'Promising Practices Towards Addressing Adolescent Priorities in a post-COVID World'. The Roundtable was presided over by Dr V K Paul, Honorable Member (Health), NITI Aayog.

Advocacy and Communications

KHPT participates in a media roundtable in New Delhi



The Adolescent Health Thematic participated in a media round table on 16 March held in New Delhi. Ms Maithreyi Ravikumar, Strategic Lead, Adolescent Health Thematic, made a presentation on the Sphoorthi project that aims at empowering adolescent girls. She also detailed the vulnerability mapping exercise for adolescent girls across India.

Two adolescent girls, Suma and Nikita from Koppal shared their journey of empowerment and how they became champions of change.