



Sphoorthi Bi-Monthly

March - April 2023

Role Model Girls join former CM of Karnataka in launching the Sphoorthi project

Sphoorthi girls from the Bagalkot district joined the former Chief Minister of Karnataka Shri Basavaraj Bommai as he launched the Sphoorthi: Girl-Leads-Girl project in Hungund, Bagalkot district on March 21. KHPT with the support of the Department of Women and Child Development, Karnataka aims to empower 1,50,000 adolescent girls in 11 taluks of Belagavi, Kalaburagi, Bagalkot, Raichur, and Vijayapura in the next three years. The Women and Child Development minister Shri Halappa Achar formally inaugurated the Sphoorthi program in Yelburga, Koppal district on March 17.



Sphoorthi girls with the CM during the launch

What are our girls up to?

Sphoorthi girl shares her story at a Community Radio programme launch on International Women's Day

Anitha, 17, a Sphoorthi girl from Koppal, spoke at a Community Radio programme launch on International Women's Day (March 8) in Bengaluru. In her speech, Anitha talked about her struggles, how she overcame the pressure to get married at a young age, and how the Sphoorthi project helped her fight discrimination.

"I am glad to have shared my story and it was a good experience to be a part of this initiative."

The programme was launched by Mrs Uma Mahadevan, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka.



Anitha during the recording of her story



Sphoorthi girls attending a remedial class

Sphoorthi adolescent girls attend remedial classes

Sphoorthi girls in Kalaburagi, Belagavi, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, and Raichur attended remedial classes in English, Science, and Math. These classes have not only bridged the gap between school and home learning but have also reinforced concepts learned in school. Teachers selected from the villages tutored the young girls. These classes have benefited over 2500 girls.

Districts' Corner

Sneha Kuta organised to improve family support for Community Organisers

Several of our Community Organisers (COs) have had to negotiate with their families to travel through deserted roads, searing heat, and to be on their reasons for coming home late. These challenges are not small for young, female frontline workers. In spite of this, they have not been deterred from working with adolescents and empowering them.

"Whenever I stepped out for work, my family asked where I was going and why I was meeting adolescent girls," said Vidya, our CO from Hunsagi taluk, Yadgir district.

In light of these issues, our Yadgir Sphoorthi project staff, Mr Prakash Marpady, Project Lead, Chinthan D'Souza, District Programme Manager, Mr Raviraj Acharya, District Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Mr Veerabhadra Swamy, Finance cum Admin Officer has brought a shift in the work culture.

They organised 'Sneha Kuta,' a unique event aimed at raising awareness of the work of our Community Organisers to increase understanding, evoke sympathy and improve support back at home.

The family members were blindfolded and asked to go for a walk with the COs. This helped in strengthening the faith and confidence between the COs and their family members. This simple event is the first step in bringing changes in the personal and professional lives of our frontline workers.

"My husband picks me up and drops me off from villages now," says Savitha, another frontline worker from our project.



CO during the blindfold act



COs, FCs and TCs with their family members

District Coordination and Executive Committee conducts its first meeting in Bagalkot

District Level Coordination and Executive Committee (DCEC) and State Level Monitoring Committees have been formed to oversee Sphoorthi project implementation in Bagalkot. The DCEC's first meeting was held in Bagalkot on March 23. The meeting was chaired by Mr Sunil Kumar, Deputy Commissioner (DC). Ms Akkamahadevi, Deputy Director WCD along with Mr Manohar, the Child Development Project Officer, and Anganwadi supervisors were present at the meeting. Twenty adolescent girls selected as Role Model Girls from the Bagalkot district interacted with DC and explained their roles and responsibilities as role model girls. The DC instructed all the Anganwadi Supervisors and other government officials to extend their support to the Sphoorthi project.



KHPT staff with the DC and other government officials

Shakti Vita stall set up at a local fair

A Shakti Vita (Fortified Blended Food) stall was set up and managed by KHPT's Koppal team at the Gudneppana Jatre (local fair) on March 10 and 11 in Koppal block, Koppal district. This event aimed to raise awareness of nutrition, healthy eating practices, dietary diversity, and the benefits of consuming Shakti Vita. A cooking demonstration was held at the event, and visitors got the opportunity to taste freshly prepared porridge made of Shakti Vita.



Mr M Sundaresh Babu, IAS, DC of Koppal visiting the Shakti Vita stall.

International Women's Day celebrated with families of Community Organisers

International Women's Day was celebrated across Raichur, Kalaburagi, Belgavi districts on March 8 with the family members of our Community Organisers. The objective of the event was to create awareness about women's rights, and gender equality. The program helped the family members of our field team to understand the project, and the relevance of their work, and urging family members to extend support to our ground staff.



KHPT ground staff with their family members

Nutrition project's end-line survey reveals positive changes among vulnerable populations

A qualitative and quantitative end-line survey was conducted in March 2023 to assess the impact of a nutrition project which was implemented in Koppal, Yelburga, and Gangavathi between March 2022-2023. The project aimed at reducing malnutrition among adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and children from the most vulnerable communities in Koppal district.

Key Findings (March 2022- 2023)

- 96% increase in the level of awareness among adolescent girls about the need to consume nutritious food.
- 50% of infants up to 6 months started appropriate complementary feeding along with breastmilk.
- 5% decrease in underweight, and wasting in children between 6-36 months.
- 5% increase in normal Body Mass Index among adolescent girls.
- More than 90% of adolescent girls and children have consumed Fortified Blended Food (FBF) every day.

The study objectives included identifying the impact of the project activities, distribution of Fortified Blended Food (FBF) and intake, community perceptions of nutrition, challenges faced by Frontline Workers and the scope for improvement of FBF consumption. There were around 1600 respondents to this survey. The second-year intervention was in Koppal (153 villages), Yelburga (143 villages), and Gangavathi (195 villages).

Advocacy Efforts

- In all five Sphoorthi districts of Kalaburagi, Vijayapura, Raichur, Bagalkot, and Belagavi, the Sphoorthi team met the district-level officers and updated them about the Sphoorthi project in their respective districts. The team also conducted advocacy meetings with Child Development Project Officer, and ASHA to apprise them and seek their support in preventing child marriages and school drop-out.
- In April, the Koppal team of KHPT met Mr M A Redder, the Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI), the education department and other district officers to introduce the project and seek their support for empowering the girls through Sphoorthi.

Stories from the ground

Happy Mother and Son!

26-year-old Sona Kausar, is a housewife from Lakmapur village of Kuknoor taluk, Koppal district. She has two children and became weak after she delivered her first child. Unable to do household chores, she depended on her mother for support. She was identified as a beneficiary and our Nutrition Volunteer started distributing packets to her. Initially, Sona was reluctant to use the health mix, despite the Nutrition Volunteer telling her about the benefits of using it. After three days, her mother motivated her to consume and she continued till her health improved.

“Instead of tea, I started having Shakti Vita porridge.”

Also, when she became pregnant with her second child, she discovered that her child’s weight was less. She started consuming Shakti Vita again and became healthier, helping deliver her second son with fewer complications.

“After consuming Shakti Vita, I was able to produce more breastmilk.” This, in turn, has helped her second child get the required nutrition for his growth and development.



Sona Kausar at her home with her second son

ABOUT KHPT

KHPT is a not-for-profit organization that spearheads focused initiatives to improve the health and well-being of communities in India. In 2003, KHPT was founded with a single mission to reduce the prevalence of HIV in Karnataka's high-priority pockets. The initiative's success made it a scalable model at national and global levels and KHPT became a learning site for innovative approaches. With these strengths, we learned and reflected on our decade-long experience leading us to look beyond HIV to four other thematic areas namely Maternal, Neonatal & Child Health (MNCH), Tuberculosis (TB), Adolescent Health (AH), and Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC); thereby extending our services to a diverse set of communities operating intensively out of 4 states in India (Assam, Bihar, Telangana and Karnataka). The unique DNA of our programs is a combination of evidence generation, grassroots community connections and government relationships.

KHPT

engage, innovate, empower

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