



# SPHOORTHI

## BI-MONTHLY

MARCH - APRIL 2024



# ABOUT US

KHPT is a not-for-profit entity, founded in 2003 to improve the health and wellbeing of communities in India through focused, scalable, evidence-driven interventions, particularly among vulnerable communities in India. Starting with interventions to address HIV/AIDS, which were scaled well beyond Karnataka, 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)

The Adolescent Thematic focuses on gender-based empowerment programmes to address malnutrition, menstrual hygiene, gender-based violence and the mental health of adolescent girls, particularly across the Kalyana Karnataka region. KHPT's 'Sphoorthi' adolescent girls' empowerment program has been scaled up by the Government of Karnataka to prevent child marriages. The Sphoorthi model works to build 'power within' adolescent girls through life skills education, leadership and communication training, exposure visits and sports camps; improves parent-daughter relationships to build girls 'power with' significant stakeholders, and encourages community-level participation of girls to gain 'power over' or access to community resources.

# EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

## 1. Adolescent girls meet the WCD Minister

345 girls from the Sphoorthi programme from Belagavi, Koppal and Yadgir met Smt. Lakshmi Hebbalkar, the Minister of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka, on March 5 in Belagavi. During the interaction, the Minister encouraged the girls to stand up against gender discrimination and to work towards their life goals. Urging the girls not to give up their rights, she said, "Adolescent girls like you should live with self-respect, cleanliness, determination, and strive to build your future."



*WCD minister addressing the girls*

A gallery walk was set up where the Minister was introduced to the Sphoorthi project and its objectives.

The girls also performed an Intimate Interactive Theatre (IIT) show on child marriage prevention and the value of education for girl children.



*An IIT show in progress*

## 2. Adolescent Resource Girls trained to become effective community leaders

A group of 42 Adolescent Resource Girls (RGs), who are former Sphoorthi Role Model Girls, received training in communication and leadership skills in Gadag between March 16-17. These skills will help them perform their roles as Resource Girls by supporting the Sphoorthi project and also enable them to take on more significant roles in their gram panchayats and emerge as community leaders. The interactive and activity-based training included short film screenings, sessions for self-reflection, and group discussions to foster self-awareness and understanding of social identities.



*Resource Girls during a group activity*

# WHAT ARE OUR GIRLS UP TO?

## 1. Adolescent girls attend a workshop to develop insights for an AI solution

A two-day, activity-based, participatory workshop was conducted with 21 Sphoorthi girls from Belagavi, Kalaburagi, Bagalkot, Raichur, Vijayapura, Koppal, and Yadgir between March 27 and 28.

The workshop aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the social expectations, realities, and barriers faced by the girls, as well as the key influencers in their lives. Based on the insights received, we are hoping to identify broad directions and areas where a technology solution or app can complement the ongoing empowerment initiatives.

The workshop adopted a free-flowing participatory process that created a space for the girls to engage and share about their lives in a confidential, respectful non-extractive manner.



*River of life activity for the girls*

## 2. Sphoorthi girls discuss menstruation with senior government officials

On March 7, 30 adolescent girls were invited to an event by the Women and Child Development department in Kalaburagi district. At the event, the girls spoke about access and usage to menstrual cups and overall menstrual hygiene management.

Ministers and officials of the Government of Karnataka appreciated KHPT's Life Skill Education flipcharts which are effectively used to discuss issues related to adolescent girls, including menstruation, gender, violence, and the value of education.



*The girls interacting with government officials*

Shri. Priyank Kharge, Minister, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj and Shri. Dinesh Gundu Rao, Minister, Health and Family Welfare; Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB) chairperson Ajay Singh and other senior government officials participated in the event.

### 3. RDPR Minister interacts with adolescent girls

Sphoorthi girls from Sannati village, Chittapur taluk of Kalaburagi met Shri Priyank Kharge, the Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka on April 28. In the interactions, the girls discussed the Sphoorthi project, its activities, and the changes it is bringing to their lives. They also showed the Minister a profile of their village, which contained all the necessary information. Additionally, all the Sphoorthi activities had been documented in the file. The Minister appreciated their hard work and was pleased to interact with the girls.



*The minister looking at the village profile file*

## DISTRICTS' CORNER

### 1. KHPT shares strategies to address malnutrition through dissemination workshops

KHPT organized a dissemination workshop in Koppal on March 21 to facilitate discussions and share experiences related to activities conducted through a three-year nutrition project supported by the HT Parekh Foundation. The discussions focused on KHPT's strategies for addressing immediate malnutrition and collaborating with local government staff and frontline workers to reduce the underlying causes of malnutrition. The workshop was attended by Health, Women and Child Development department officials, local NGOs, adolescent girls, and women.



*Stakeholders at the dissemination workshop*

Mr Tippanna, Deputy Director of Health, Koppal District, said, "Despite numerous programs and interventions being implemented by various organizations, the persistent issue of malnutrition remains unresolved. Meaningful progress in reducing malnutrition can only be achieved through collaborative efforts. In Koppal, a remarkable transformation has been observed among adolescent girls, who now exhibit remarkable levels of skill, confidence, and knowledge."

Another dissemination workshop was organised in Bengaluru on March 26 which was attended by the central team of KHPT, project staff from Koppal, the CEO and senior management team of the HT Parekh Foundation, other NGO representatives including the UNICEF Nutrition Consultant.

## 2. Koppal team celebrates Community Organiser Day

Around 100 ground staff of Sphoorthi Koppal participated in the celebration of Community Organiser's (CO) Day. The event took place on March 29 at a park in Munirabad, Koppal district. The staff engaged in team-building activities, played games, and bonded as colleagues. This event was also an opportunity for them to learn from each other and work together to strengthen collaborations.



*Tug of war activity*

## 3. Sphoorthi girls participate in a meeting with the DC of Kalaburagi

The third meeting of the District Coordination and Executive Committee (DCEC) was chaired by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ms B. Fouzia Taranum, IAS, in Kalaburagi on 6 March. She invited the Role Model Adolescent Girls to showcase how the Life Skills Education sessions are being conducted. The girls demonstrated the lessons using flipcharts and showed the DC how they were being taught. Officials from the Health and other departments appreciated the content and design of the flipchart and expressed their willingness to use it for their training as well. The DC also praised the girls for their efforts and was impressed by their courage and bravery. Also, Mr. Shivayogi, the District Project Coordinator presented an update of the Sphoorthi project.



*The girls sharing their stories with the DC*

## 4. Sphoorthi girls selected as Youth Icons

The Zilla Panchayath CEO selected five Sphoorthi girls from Koppal as youth icons to volunteer for the Systematic Voters Education & Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme. As part of the committee, these girls will encourage people especially the youth to vote and support the SVEEP programme. The girls have started encouraging their peers at the village and gram panchayat levels and attended SVEEP programmes in their area.

SVEEP is the flagship program of the Election Commission of India for voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India.

*Source: Sveep website*

## Mending sibling relationships

Arguments and fights are quite common among siblings. Manjula, 15 and her brother Nagaraj from Madalingnal village, Hunasagi taluk were like any other brother-sister duo. But hearsay caused misunderstanding between the siblings, resulting in the two not talking to each other for seven months.

Nagraj heard from his friends that his sister was in love with a boy. An enraged Nagaraj, confronted his sister, Manjula. Despite Manjula telling him that it was a rumour, Nagaraj was unhappy and wanted answers from her. An argument broke out, resulting in a rift between the two. Manjula was upset because Nagaraj did not believe her even after telling him that she was not 'loving' anyone and only concentrated on her studies. Nagaraj thought his sister was lying and stopped talking to her.

The rift between Manjula and her sibling had an impact on her mental health. Her brother wanted her to quit school so that her alleged love affair would end. As a result, she was not allowed to go out or play, making her feel trapped and unhappy.

But the situation changed when Nagaraj participated in a samvada between boys and girls in their village. Manjula saw this as an opportunity to reiterate her stand and mend the relationship with her brother. During the Samvada, she refrained from saying anything negative about her brother, despite the problems she faced. Instead, she praised him for the care and support he provided at home. Nagaraj was surprised after hearing her speak and realized that his sister had not spoken openly about the issues between them and had not portrayed him as a bad elder brother. This moved him and he realised that it was wrong of him to doubt his sister, and said 'sorry.' This one word was enough for the siblings to forgive each other. At the end of the meeting, Nagaraj and Manjula hugged each other emotionally. Manjula expressed her love for her brother by feeding him sweets.

"This Samvada has made me understand my sister better," said Nagaraj.

Samvadas provide a platform for girls to gain support, improve the parent-daughter relationship, encourage boys to respect girls, break gender discrimination and also get support from the community to solve their problems.

## Arming Oneself with Knowledge

Shilpa, a 20-year-old mother from Janganmar Kalgudi village in Gangavathi taluk, Koppal district, cuddles her 3-month-old daughter as she talks about the importance of breastfeeding. As part of the nutrition project, she attended the sessions held at her Anganwadi centre, where she gained knowledge not only about breastfeeding but also about nutrition, health, sex and gender, gender equality and caring for her baby.

"Initially, I was hesitant to go alone, but when my neighbour accompanied me, we attended the sessions together," says Shilpa, who initially did not show much interest in going to the Anganwadi centre. After attending just two sessions, her curiosity was piqued, and she attended every session regularly. Upon returning home, she discussed what she learned with her husband and mother-in-law, who encouraged her to continue attending. Shilpa was able to attend all the Anganwadi centre sessions because her husband, Durgesh, supported her by dropping her off and picking her up.

"I would have regretted it if I had not sent her to the Anganwadi," says Durgesh, who is happy about how the project is supporting pregnant women like her.

The meetings also provided a safe space for her to interact with other mothers, who shared about their health and parenting, fostering cross-learning. The lesson has made her change her dietary pattern and now she consumes more vegetables, sprouts, and pulses.

Due to low Hb levels, Shilpa also experienced dizziness and felt weak. But all these symptoms disappeared when the Hb level improved from 8.5 to 11.2 grams per deciliter after consuming Shakti Vita.

Armed with knowledge and confidence, other mothers like Shilpa are now in a better position to take care of their health and also ensure their little ones get the best start in their lives!



*Durgesh and Shilpa with their toddler*

# KHPT

engage, innovate, empower

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