

# BOYHOOD AND BELONGING

## A Gender Transformative Intervention with Boys



## A LEARNING BRIEF

Gender plays an important role in shaping young people's practices, but an analysis of how gender shapes masculinities has received less attention compared to research that examines how gender shapes girls' and women's development. The scant available literature on adolescent males in India shows new economic and health challenges, early push into paid work, and demands placed on them to perform adult roles of assuming responsibility for the family and caring for ill relatives. Also, local masculine hierarchies impact their identities, behaviours and gender relations within the community.

Although gender norms adversely affect girls and boys, most existing adolescent gender programs primarily focus on girls and involve boys only in a supportive role. There is a dearth of programs that tries to engage with adolescent boys by understanding their unique needs and by leveraging their interests.

Using a Human Centred Design approach to identify adolescent boys' concerns and needs, and influences of local masculinities on their behaviours and gender relation, we developed an intervention to adolescent boys' knowledge and behaviours to improve their well-being, as well as improve gender relations in the community.

## The Human Centred Design Approach

Human-centric design (HCD) puts people first, creating solutions that are easy to use, meaningful, and tailored to real needs. It focuses on understanding how users think, feel, and interact to improve their experience.

In order to design a program for adolescent boys, data were collected from **20** boys, aged 10-18 years, from **5** villages of Koppal district, in north Karnataka. Data on boys' everyday lives, challenges, peer influences, gender norms and support systems was collected through ethnographic explorations, Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews.

The data showed the importance of developing an intervention to address young boys' self-efficacy, self-reflection, functional literacy and money management skills in boys, and help them better understand the role of masculinity in shaping their choices and behaviours.

### Gender Norms and their influence on adolescent boys' development

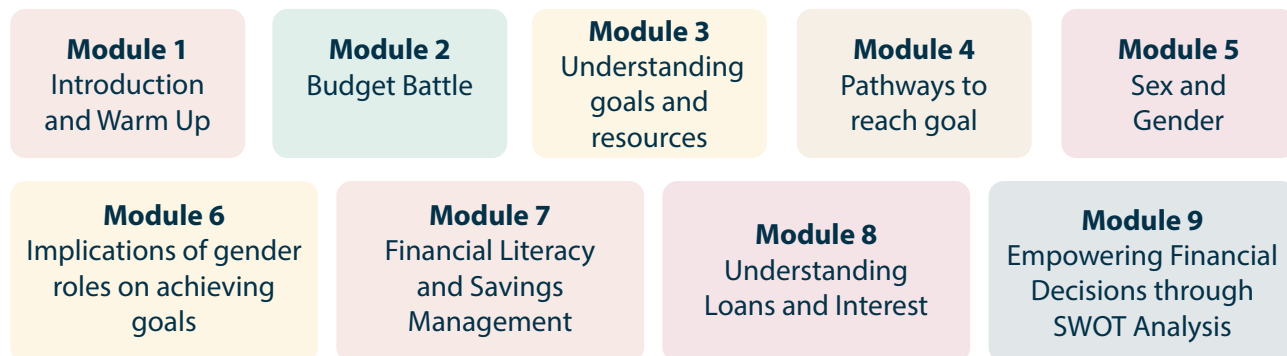
- 01** The need to perform the role of a "good son" – taking care of parents, settling down, having financial independence
- 02** Conducting 'sister's marriage' is an important responsibility for boys
- 03** Betting activity is rampant amongst boys and causes stress and anxiety amongst them
- 04** Boys lack information on careers and are hesitant to seek support on these topics
- 05** Parents and other elders shape boys career pathways, which are limited to traditional occupations considered 'masculine' (e.g., farmer, JCB operator, driver, engineer)

## A Gender Transformative Intervention with Boys

The intervention was designed to address the findings from the HCD, which showed considerable influence of local masculinity norms in shaping boys' behaviours and gender relations in the community. Masculinity norms shaped boys' educational and career pathways, contributed to anxieties around earning money to take care of family responsibilities, particularly towards their sisters' marriage, and influenced practices such as betting. Thus, a gender transformative intervention to engage boys in self-reflection to understand how their behaviours and practices were shaped by these norms was designed.

To make the intervention interesting and engaging for boys, a game-based approach was designed to teach boys' skills for money management and financial planning. Further, a 'Life School' approach (consisting of periodic face-to-face events and activities and interaction with mentors) was combined with a digital mentorship model, to prevent fatigue, boredom and dropout amongst boys, that are common issues of multiple-sessions based interventions. Gender transformative messages were built in to all activities, modules and mentor-engagement sessions (online and offline), to increase boys' self-reflection on gender norms that influence their behaviour, in a subtle and tacit manner.

Games such as 'Budget Battles' to increase boys' reflections over betting behaviours, motivated by gendered practices of consumption, gendered spending practices tracked through online wallets, influence of gender on achieving one's life goals, knowledge about financial instruments and savings, and SWOT analysis activities were built in to the model. The nine modules included:

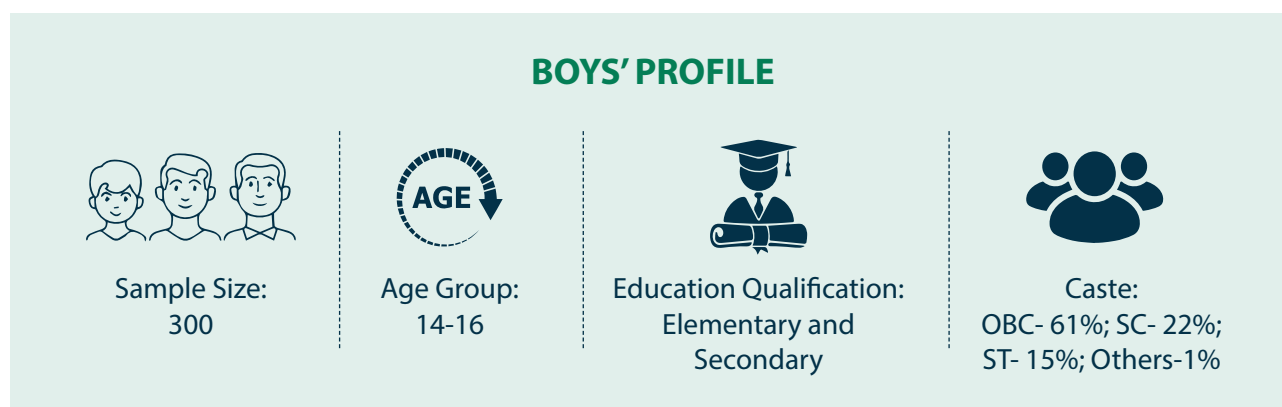


## Intervention geography and boys' profile



## Getting the boys to talk: Polling Booth Survey

Quantitative baseline and endline surveys were carried out through a Polling Booth Survey. In this method, the boys gave their responses through a tab which was placed in a ballot-box-like prototype. This ensured anonymity, encouraged participation and motivated them to answer honestly and barricaded them from unwanted influence from other participants. Given the local context, this method respects privacy and cultural norms, making it suitable for collecting sensitive information. A simple random sampling technique was used to identify the sample set of Gram Panchayats first, and, further to draw **20** boys from each Panchayat.



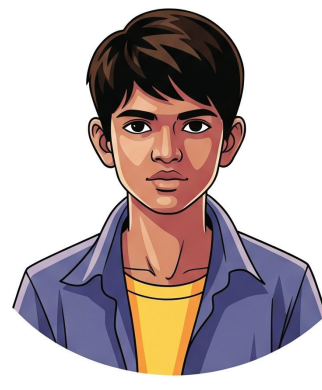
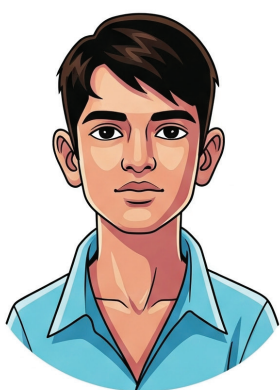
## Intervention Outcomes

### • BETTING

>While half the sampled boys did not view 'betting' as a problem in the baseline and endline, the percentage of boys spending part-time earnings on betting decreased from **24%** to **20%**, from baseline to endline

### • HOUSEHOLD CHORES

- ▶ Changes in gendered beliefs on household division of labour were visible, with **0%** boys stating that they should not help with household chores at endline, compared to **27%** at baseline
- ◆ **65%** boys reported helping with household chores such as cooking, washing, sweeping, at the end of the project period compared to **21%** at baseline



### • BOYS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS GIRLS

- ▶ Further, changes were noted in terms of boys' perception towards girls as well
- ◆ **71%** boys accepted the need to prioritize girls' education within the family at endline, compared to **58%** at baseline
- ◆ **56%** boys strongly opposed discriminatory practices such as dowry at the end of the project period, compared to **31%** at baseline

### • GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- ▶ Significantly, changes were also observed in attitudes towards gender-based violence, with
- ◆ **64%** boys strongly disagreed that it was the girls' fault when sexually harassed by men, compared to only **41%** who disagreed at baseline
- ◆ **60%** also strongly disagreed with the notion that girls should not oppose advances made by boys, compared to only **37%** who held this opinion at baseline
- ◆ **22%** boys only strongly believed that girls get spoiled by using mobile phones at endline, compared to **38%** at baseline

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