

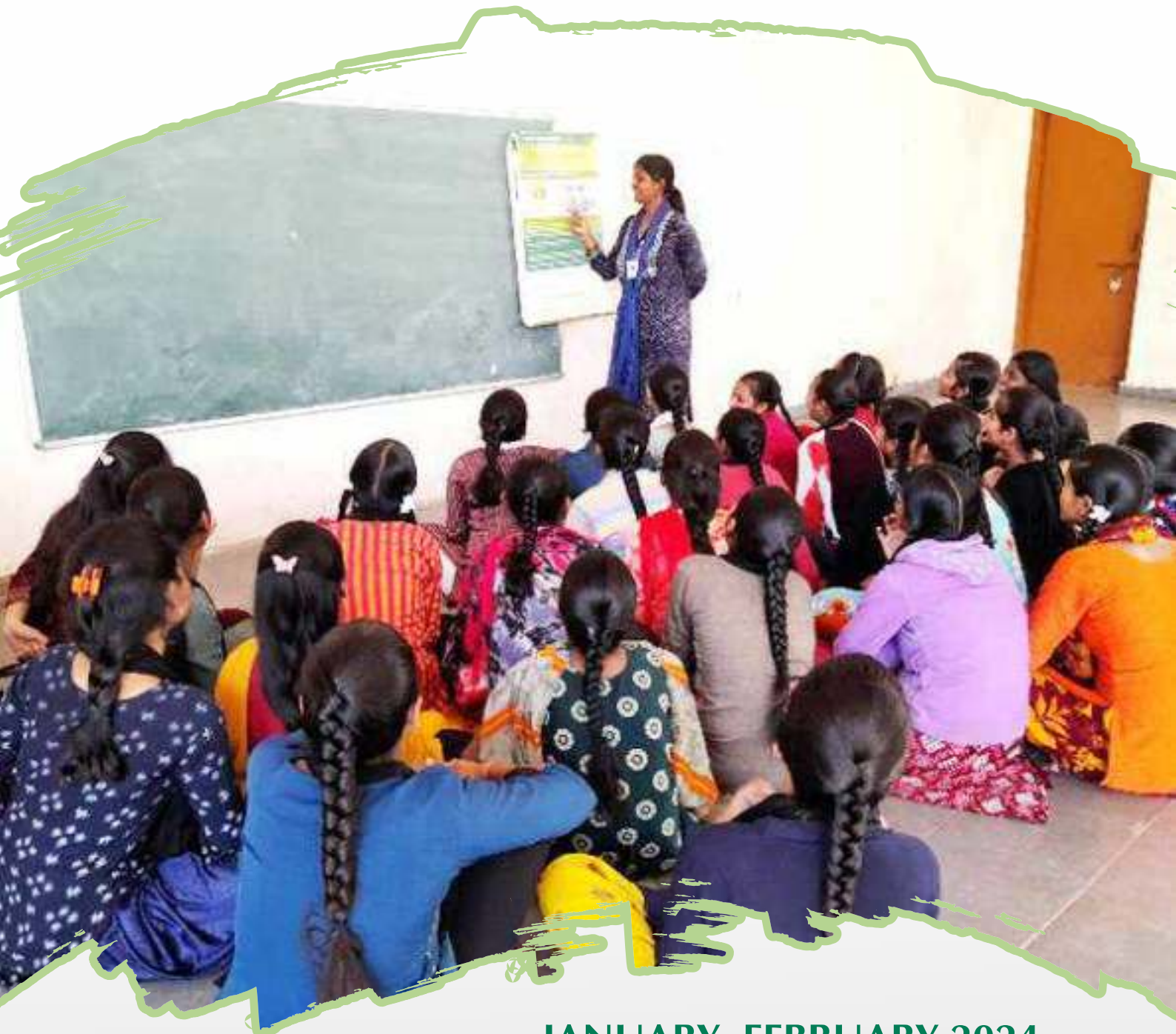


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**KHPT**  
engage, innovate, empower

# SPHOORTHI Bi-Monthly



JANUARY- FEBRUARY 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.

## Adolescent girls participate in the State Monitoring Committee meeting in Bengaluru

On 31 January 2024, the State Level Monitoring Committee for the Sphoorthi Program was organised. The meeting was chaired by Mr Prakash G C, IAS, Secretary of the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD). In attendance were the Commissioner of PR, RDPR, Joint Director (PDM), Women and Child Development Department, Joint Director, Department of Youth Empowerment and KHPT's CEO Mr Mohan HL, Dr Shobha Reddy, Director, Programmes, Adolescent Health Thematic Lead Dr Satyanarayana Ramanaik, Strategic Lead Dr Maithreyi Ravikumar, Programme Implementation Lead, Mr Joevalan Niranjana, and the Advocacy Lead Mr. Manohar. They gathered to discuss the progress of the Sphoorthi program. The committee approved continuing the program for the next year subject to the availability of funds from the government. During the meeting, the Sphoorthi girls put up an impressive Intimate Interactive Theatre show which earned them well-deserved appreciation.



*Adolescent girls with senior government officials*

## EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

### 1. Life Skills Education sessions conducted in remote hostels

In rural areas, a large number of adolescent girls migrate to other taluks for higher education. To reach out to these girls, the Community Organisers and Role Model Girls from the Koppal and Yadgir Sphoorthi project are visiting hostels to impart important Life Skills Education (LSE) sessions. The sessions are conducted on weekends and weekdays, depending on the girls' regular school schedules. Girls who are not a part of the Sphoorthi intervention also are gaining knowledge from the sessions. The hostel staff has welcomed this initiative and is supporting the mobilization and encouragement of these sessions. The hostel staff welcomed the initiative and encouraged the girls to attend the sessions.



*A Community Organiser conducting the LSE sessions in a hostel*

Kaveri, an adolescent girl at Moraji Desai hostel in Hunasagi taluk says, "Having good values and confidence is essential, especially when we're far from home in a hostel. These sessions help us stay focused on studying.

"Our hostel visits have proven beneficial to these girls as they are learning what they have missed back at

home. Also, we can see visible changes in their behaviour and eating habits." Sushma, Field Coordinator, Koppal

So far between January- February 2019\* girls have been reached through the hostel intervention.

## 2. Peer Girls attend Leadership and Communication Camps

Peer Girls (PGs) across Belagavi, Raichur, Kalaburagi, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Yadgir and Koppal are participating in Leadership and Communication (L&C) Camps. The activity-based camps aim to equip PGs with skills for managing conflicts, enhancing organization skills, and motivating them to take on leadership roles in their community. Around 29,000 PGs have attended these camps.

The L&C camps are being conducted by Role Model Girls (RMGs) who previously were participants in such camps conducted by Sphoorthi ground staff. The RMGs were trained to transfer their learnings and knowledge to their PGs to not only broaden the scope and impact of the project but also to reinforce their learnings from the camp

"I enjoyed all the activities at the camp. I have learned how to speak better, and this will help me negotiate at

home. I have also understood the importance of working together to solve issues for girls," Akshata, Peer Girl.



*Peer Girls participating in an activity at the camp*

## 3. Breaking gender barrier through sports

Adolescent girls across Yadgir Belagavi, Raichur, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, and Kalaburagi are actively participating in kabaddi matches and playing volleyball, throwball, and cricket to break the gender barriers. These girls will use the sports meet as a platform to showcase their athletic abilities, step out of their homes, and promote a spirit of inclusivity and empowerment. So far, 3946\* girls have actively participated in various games. The sports meet for Koppal will begin in April 2024.



*Girls in a kabaddi match*

*\*data only for Yadgir, Belagavi, Raichur, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, and Kalaburagi*

# WHAT ARE OUR GIRLS UP TO?

## 1. Adolescent girls put up an Interactive Intimate Theatre show on Leprosy

Five adolescent girls performed an Interactive Intimate Theatre (IIT) performance at Kodekal Gram Panchayat on February 4. The performance focused on leprosy, its causes, treatment regimen, and dispelling any misconceptions surrounding the disease. The audience actively interacted with the girls by answering the questions raised by the girls on leprosy. IIT is proving to be a powerful medium to start conversations with relevant stakeholders and create a personal and immersive experience for the audience, where they not only observe the story but also become integral participants.

"Watching the show helped us understand leprosy better. We used to believe in myths, but now we know we should seek medical help when needed. We've learned to respect and treat those with leprosy kindly." Mahatheshppa, Kodekal GP Farmer.



*Girls performing an IIT show*

"Even though I didn't know much about leprosy, I'm proud of myself for speaking up in front of the community. Acting out the struggles of those with leprosy helped me learn and gain confidence"- Akshatha, Adolescent Girl

## DISTRICTS' CORNER

### 2. Barefoot Counsellors interact with Koppal district's Chief Executive Officer

Ten Barefoot Counsellors (BFCs) got an opportunity to interact with Mr Rahul Ratan Pandey, IAS, CEO, Koppal district. In their interaction, the BFCs spoke about their aspirations and ambitions; and described how the BFC model worked, the training they had received, what kinds of counselling they provided, and the challenges they encountered.

The CEO was impressed with the model and expressed his interest in extending it to other blocks of Koppal. He also asked for a WhatsApp group to be created with the counsellors and himself so that immediate support could be initiated to address issues, especially violence.



*Adolescent Girls with the CEO*

### 3. Gram Panchayat Education Task Force members participate in a workshop

A workshop for Gram Panchayat Education Task Force (GPETF) members in Karatagi, Kankagiri, and Gangavathi blocks of Koppal district was conducted to orient them on a toolkit for community to manage and monitor its nutritional outcomes to ensure sustenance and long-term impact of the nutrition intervention within communities. The members comprised frontline workers, Panchayat Development Officers, Child Development Project Officers and other village-level officials. The training aimed at building capacities to identify critical indicators of nutrition and health that the community will be interested in monitoring.



*GPETF members discussing indicators for the monitoring toolkit*

### 4. Belagavi district Sphoorthi team meets WCD Minister

On February 6, the Belagavi district Sphoorthi team, along with Mr Manohar, the Advocacy Lead, Adolescent Health and Ms Roopa, Sphoorthi District Project Officer, Belagavi met Smt Lakshmi Hebbalkar, Minister, Women and Child Development at her residence. During the meeting, they briefed the Minister about the Sphoorthi project and requested a specific time for an interaction (Samvada) with the adolescent girls. The minister showed interest in learning about the program designed to empower adolescent girls, as well as the various activities that support the project's objectives. She agreed to allocate time and communicate with the team to interact with the Sphoorthi girls.



*Sphoorthi Belagavi team interacting with the minister*

### 5. Sphoorthi girls participate in District Coordination and Executive Committee meeting

On February 21, the second District Coordination and Executive Committee (DCEC) meeting was conducted in Raichur under the chairmanship of the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) and Co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary of ZP and attended by other members of the committee. The Committee interacted with the Sphoorthi Girls, and Role Model Adolescent Girls (RMAG) and demonstrated the Life Skills Education sessions which they are conducting to the Peer Girls in their villages. The Committee promised to extend the support for the implementation and opined that the Sphoorthi program to be extended for the long term and scaled up to other taluks in the Raichur District.



*The DCEC meeting is in progress*

In February, the Koppal Adolescent Health team supported the District Commissioner of Koppal in applying for the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration in 2023. The application, titled "Empowering Adolescent Girls through the Sphoorthi project and focusing on Anaemia Mukta Adolescents," was submitted under the category of Holistic Development of Districts. The application has crossed the second round and the award will be declared after a total of four rounds of selection.

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

### Together, We Can!

#### **A group of adolescent girls in Bagalkot, working together successfully changed the face of their school**

A group of adolescent girls from Aihole Gram Panchayat in the Hungund block of Bagalkote are currently studying at Aihole High School. Facing constant challenges and issues in both primary and high school, the girls and their Community Organizer decided to hold a community Samvada (dialogues) at the school. Participants included members of the Gram Panchayat, secretaries, accountants, the president, Panchayat Development Officer, School Headmaster and teachers, ASHA, and Anagnawadi teachers.

During the Samvada, the girls brought to the attention of the school authorities and other members of the gram panchayat the lack of proper drinking water facilities and the absence of water facilities in the school's toilets. Initially, the members stated that since the primary section of the school is private, they may not be able to address the issues raised by the girls, as supporting a private school may not come under their mandate. However, the girls emphasized that the high school is aided and receives benefits from the Mid-day meal scheme, and therefore urged the gram panchayat to support the water and sanitation facilities of the school.

The girls expressed their desire for their school and gram panchayat to serve as a model for others. They requested the gram panchayat officials to support their cause and highlighted the issue of the lack of a proper compound wall.

The President mentioned that he received his education from the same school and in a few months, he will be taking care of the compound work. It has been almost a month since the community Samvada took place and due to the dedication of the school headmaster, the school now has proper taps for drinking water and 24/7 water supply in the washrooms. This improvement has helped many students to access better facilities at school and has also reduced the absence of girls during menstruation.

As a result of this entire experience, all 39 members of the RMAG currently pursuing high school education have learned the importance of their collective strength in finding solutions to issues affecting children and adolescent girls. They have realized that involving community leaders in the process is crucial for achieving their goals.



*The students of the Aihole High School*

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