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KHPT
engage, innovate, empower

SPHOORTHI BI-MONTHLY

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ABOUT US

KHPT is a not-for-profit entity, founded in 2003 to improve the health and well-being 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.

KHPT's Adolescent Team meets ICPS officials

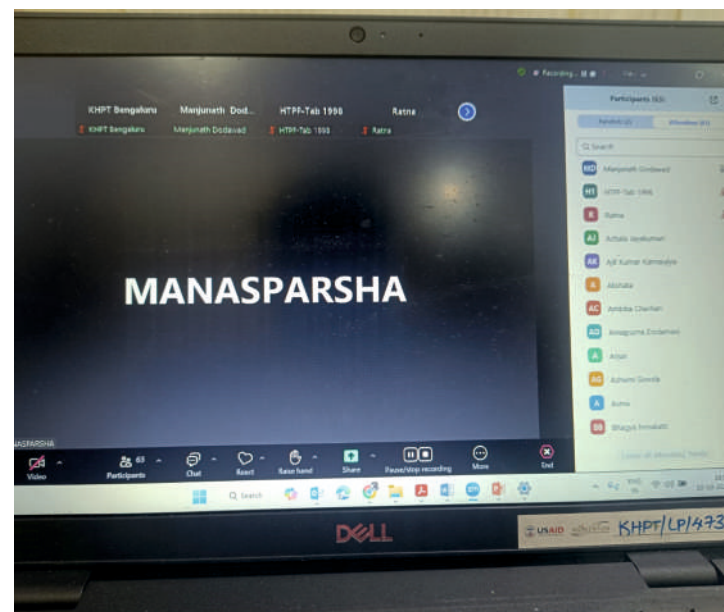
The KHPT Adolescent Team met Ms Haleema, Project Director, and Mr Dattatreya Bhat, Senior Assistant Director of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), Government of Karnataka, and Ms Roopashree, Assistant Director, of the Women and Child Development Department and appraised them of the current activities and achievements of Sphoorthi project implemented in eleven blocks of five districts of Karnataka. The team also briefed on the newly proposed training program for the government officials of fourteen districts which have high numbers of teenage pregnancies. The training will equip government personnel with the tools and knowledge to help prevent child marriages and teenage pregnancies in the districts. The presentation outlined the key objectives, structure, and anticipated outcomes of the training.

MIND MATTERS: Observing World Mental Health Day

Every year, World Mental Health Day falls on October 10, and this year's theme was 'Mental Health Challenges and Solutions in the Workplace and Beyond.' Aligning with this theme, the KHPT Adolescent Health team organised an online panel discussion to explore mental health challenges in the workplace and rural settings, focusing on practical solutions, community participation, and reducing stigma.

The panel included people from various backgrounds including Barefoot Counsellors, a transgender person, a RSKS Counsellor, a psychologist and KHPT's staff from Koppal.

The Koppal staff and Barefoot Counsellors shared their experiences in addressing mental health issues and reducing stigma in rural areas. Dr. Tavikumar, a psychologist, emphasized the importance of mental health in the workplace and discussed strategies to overcome related challenges. Additionally, Dr Maithreyi Ravikumar, Strategic Lead for Adolescent Health at KHPT, provided insights into the challenges of addressing mental health issues and the available options for seeking help.



A screen grab of the panel discussion

WHAT ARE OUR GIRLS UP TO?

Sphoorthi girls attend the second State Monitoring Committee Meeting

The second State Monitoring Committee meeting for the Sphoorthi project took place on September 5 in Bengaluru. The meeting was chaired by Dr Shamla Iqbal, IAS, Secretary to the Government, Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Empowerment of Differently Abled, and Senior Citizens. Key officials, including Dr M. R. Ravi, KAS, Director of the Directorate of Child Protection, and Ms Pusphalatha G Rayar, Joint Director of DWCD, and key officials from National Rural Livelihood Mission, Education, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj attended to review the project's progress. The committee members interacted with Sphoorthi girls and field staff from the districts. A group of adolescent girls performed an Interactive Intimate Theatre (IIT) show on teenage pregnancy, which the members received well.

Representatives from KHPT, including Mr Mohan HL, Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Satyanarayana Ramanaik, and Dr. Maithreyi Ravikumar presented the progress of the Sphoorthi project and the future implementation plans of the project.

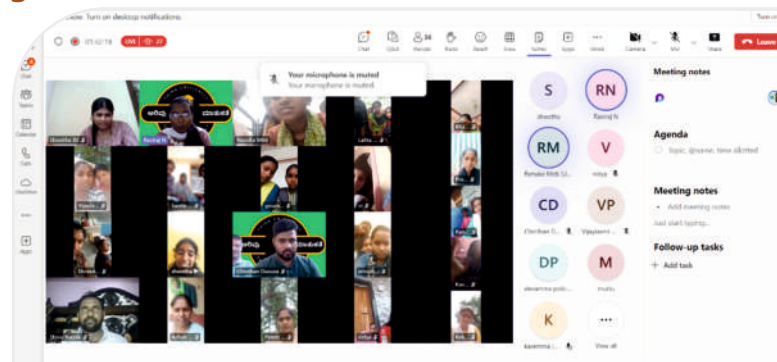


An adolescent girl interacting with Dr Shamla Iqbal

Arivu Mathukathe webinar organised in Yadgir

In September and October, the Sphoorthi Yadgir team organized a webinar titled "Arivu Mathukathe," aimed at adolescents. The goal was to create a space for young adolescents to discuss topics relevant to them with experts, peers, and thought leaders, thereby expanding their social and professional networks. The format of the webinar encouraged respectful dialogue, allowing adolescents to practice the art of agreeing to disagree while developing their critical thinking skills. Two specific webinars, "Girls Vision for Future" and "My Dream School," saw active participation from adolescent girls.

Girls took the opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns at this forum.



A screen grab of the webinar

Opinions of girls

- Midday meals should be prepared and served hygienically.
- In every school, libraries must exist.
- In a few schools, there are no compound walls. So, cows graze and sometimes, people drink and smoke on the premises.
- Schools should have gardens.
- Students should not fear their teachers.

DISTRICTS' CORNER

International Day of the Girl Child celebrations

October 11 is celebrated annually as the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC). On this day, adolescent girls from the seven Sphoorthi districts—Koppal, Yadgir, Kalaburagi, Belagavi, Raichur, Bagalkot, and Vijayapura—came together to celebrate and make their voices heard in the community. Through rallies, speeches in schools and gram panchayats, and Interactive Intimate Theatre performances, these girls are on a mission to promote their rights across their communities.



A rally take out by adolescent girls



Interacting with stakeholders in a village



A rangoli drawn to celebrate IDGC



IDGC celebrations at a school

Sphoorthi girls participate in District Coordination and Executive Committee meetings

Two meetings of the District Coordination and Executive Committee (DCEC) were held in September and October in Kalaburagi and Belagavi districts, respectively.

The DCEC meeting in Kalaburagi, was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ms B. Fouzia Taranum, IAS. Officials from Law, Police, Education, Social Welfare, RDPR, and other key line departments were also present at the meeting. The project's progress was presented by Mr Shivayogi Matapathi, District Project Coordinator, KHPT.

The third DCEC meeting in Belagavi was held on October 9. Chaired by Mr Mohammed Roshan, IAS, Deputy Commissioner (DC) the meeting was attended by the Deputy Director of the Women and Child Development Department, the Deputy Director of the Department of Public Instructions, the Program Officer from ICPS, and the Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) from all talukas of Belagavi district.

Ms Roopa S Koodalagimath, District Program Coordinator (DPC), Sphoorthi Project, Belagavi presented an overview of the Sphoorthi Project, detailing its background, outcomes, aims, objectives, and activities, and provided updates on the progress in Belagavi district. During the meeting, the DC discussed the project's objectives, the number of beneficiaries, and the Role Model and Peer Girl concepts. He also reviewed the outcomes of Phase I of the Sphoorthi Program in Koppal. The DC gave suggestions, including the need to improve nutrition levels among girls by organizing BMI measurements or Hb tests in collaboration with the Health Department. Additionally, he emphasized ensuring that school dropouts, and absentees for more than seven days, be brought back to school through coordination with the Department of Education and Women and Child Development.

Key highlights from the meeting:

- Police and district officials were appreciated by the stories of children who successfully halted their marriages participated in Janaspandana programs, and secured bus facilities for their villages.
- An orphaned girl from Chittapur taluk shared her inspiring story of overcoming challenges with the support of the Sphoorthi project staff. Impressed by her resilience, one of the attending officers pledged to sponsor her education and that of her younger sister.
- The Deputy Commissioner directed that all orphaned children should be registered under the government sponsorship program.
- Kalaburagi Assistant Commissioner of Police, Ms Bindu Rani, IPS, invited the children to visit her office for an exposure visit and an interaction with her.



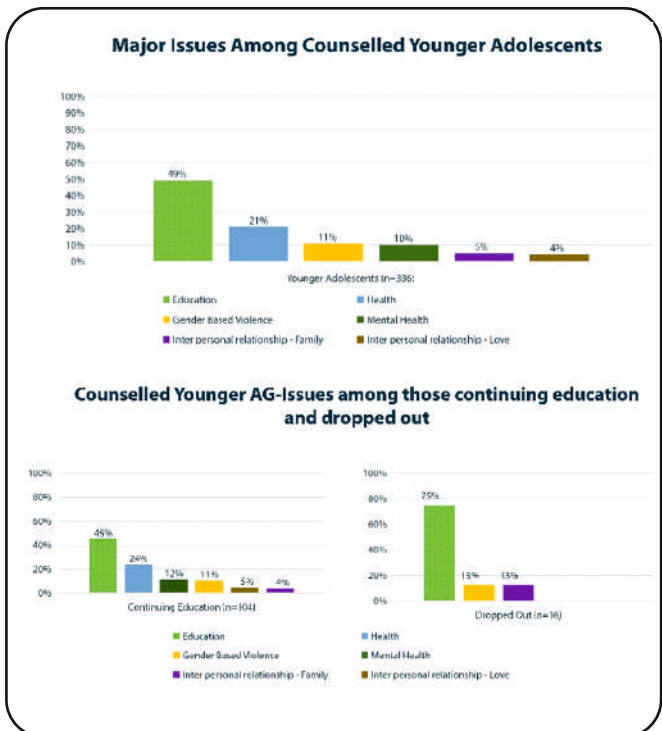
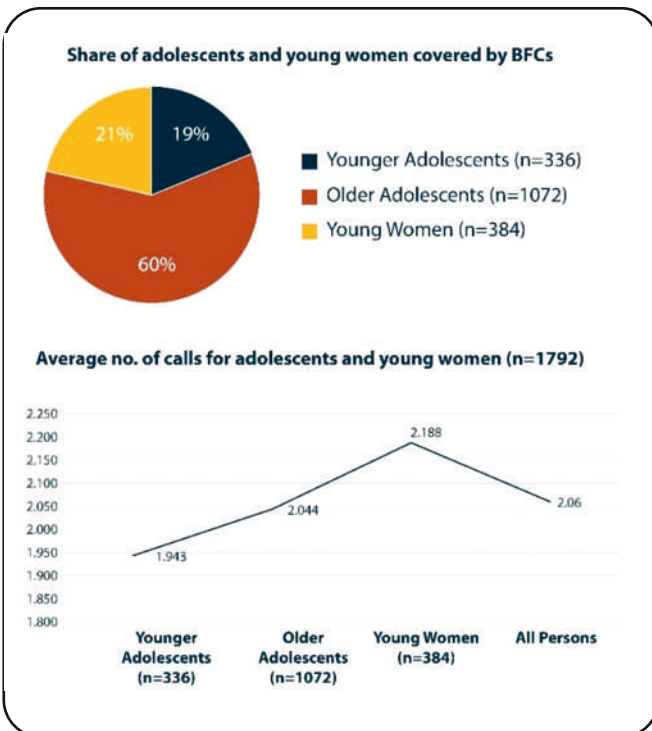
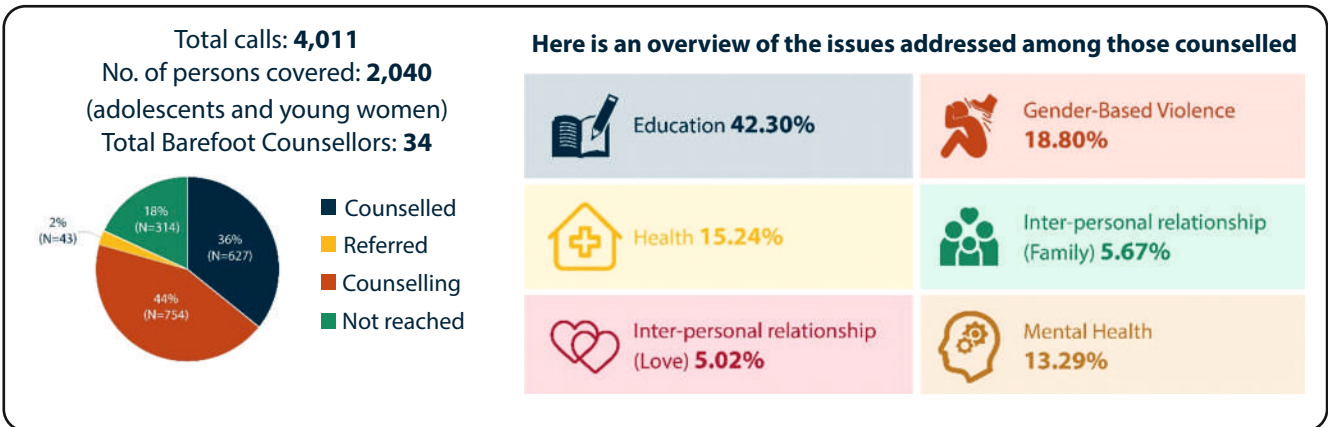
Sphoorthi staff at the DCEC meeting

KNOWLEDGE CORNER

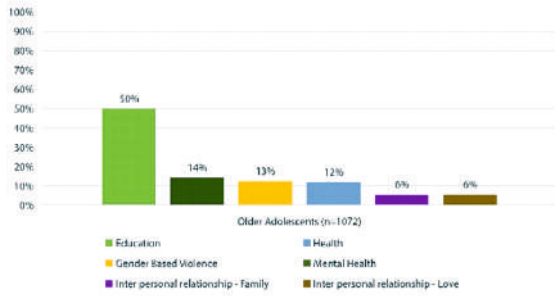
BAREFOOT COUNSELLORS

Reaching rural adolescent girls and women for mental health support

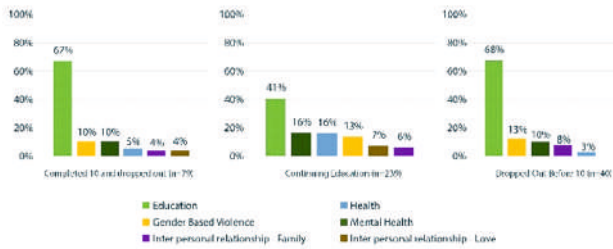
To address the mental health concerns of adolescent girls and young women in Koppal 34 trained Barefoot Counsellors (BFCs) have been established to provide counselling support. The Barefoot counsellors have been providing support to girls and women in the community since June 2022. Below we present some data on their reach.



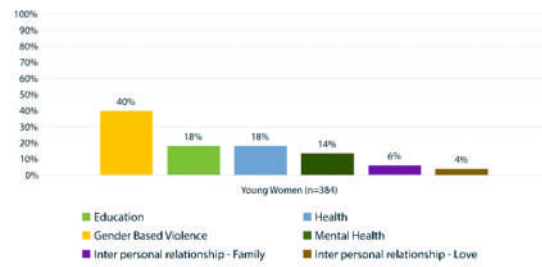
Major Issues Among Counsellled Older Adolescents



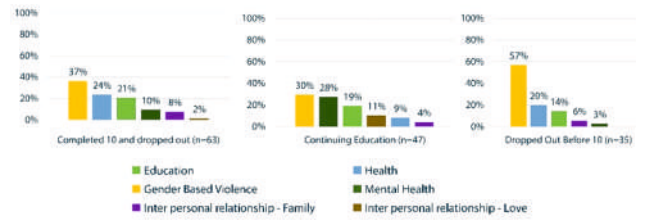
Counselled Older AG- Issues among those continuing education, dropped out, completed secondary schooling and dropped out



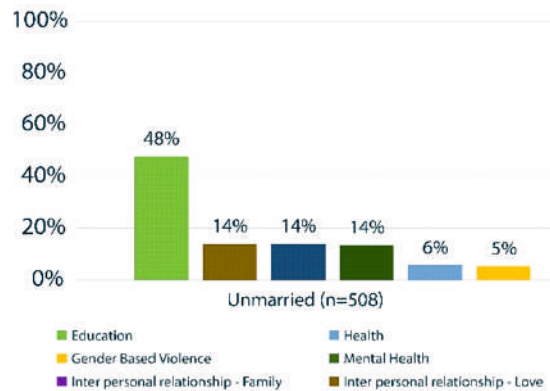
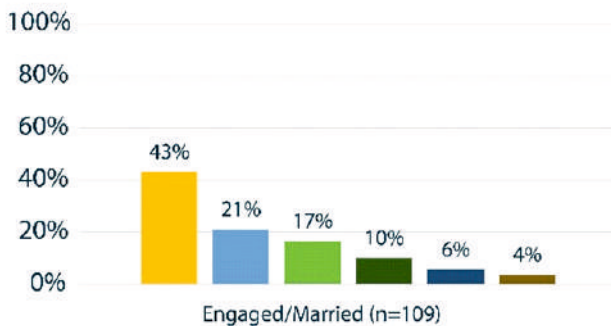
Major Issues among Counsellled Young Women



Counselled Young Women - Issues among those continuing education, dropped out, completed secondary schooling and dropped out



Major issues among married AG and young women



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Coming out of preconceived notions of gender roles

Swimming can be viewed as a sport, recreation, or a lifesaving skill. For girls, at least in rural areas it is concerned that body image and modesty can prevent girls from swimming. But challenging this, Ganga* decided to learn to swim and prove that girls can take up swimming.

Ganga lives in Gokak taluk with her parents and a younger brother. Agriculture is their main source



Ganga swimming in a local well

of income. Ganga had joined Sphoorthi as a Role Model Adolescent Girl when she was studying in standard 8. At that time, she was not interested in swimming. Ganga thought that swimming was suitable for boys.

Ganga attended the Life Skills Education sessions conducted by Maheshwari, a Community Organizer working in her village. The sessions like "Self-confidence and Self-respect" and "Gender Equality" inspired Ganga to do something differently and realised that

she had the confidence to take up swimming and break gender norms. Emboldened by the sessions and the community organizer, Ganga learned to swim after finishing Class 8 with the help of her aunt's son during the holidays.

"If someone falls into the water and is looking for help, I am confident I can save them. I developed swimming skills to dispel the myth that only boys should be ahead of everything. I have also thought of teaching my girlfriends to swim," says a happy Ganga.

**name changed to protect identity*

Giving wings to dreams- Life and Times of Rubiya!



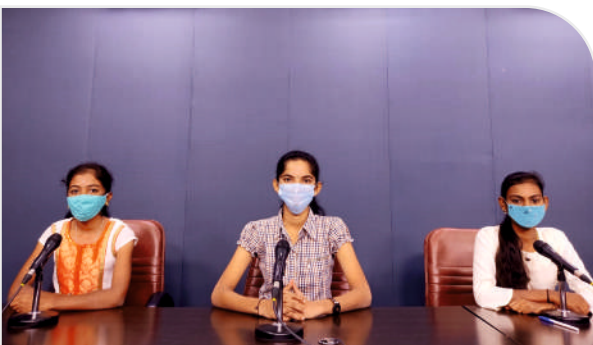
Rubiya's journey, from a shy adolescent to a bold and confident young woman, is a testament to her determination, resilience, and unwavering self-confidence. This story is a reflection of her journey from a Peer Girl involved in the Sphoorthi project in Koppal to her current role as a Field Coordinator in Raichur.

Rubiya's journey as a Peer Girl began in Karkihalli village, within the Hirebagnal panchayat, when she was 14 years old. Initially reserved, she found that the Life Skills Education sessions helped her break out of her shell and taught her valuable lessons. As a result, she became more self-aware and started to observe her community from a more focused perspective. The training helped Rubiya gain knowledge, skills and confidence to take certain bold decisions, not only for her own development, but also to change certain critical discriminatory practices within her community. For example, working as a surveyor for KHPT, post her Sphoorthi journey, Rubiya befriended Krithika, a girl from the SC community, who she had observed sitting alone during lunch. Rubiya slowly started inviting the girl over for lunch to her home. When Rubiya's family resisted this, she gently persuaded them to stop practicing discrimination, explaining that it made others feel uncomfortable. As a Nutrition Volunteer for KHPT later, Rubiya similarly took some steps to actively reduce discrimination by her fellow volunteers. A fellow NV, Asha, was initially reluctant to visit a Scheduled Caste (SC) colony to distribute the food packets. Rubiya explained to her that discrimination and untouchability should not be practiced. To support Asha, Rubiya accompanied her to a home in the SC colony, which helped Asha also overcome her fears and let go of her inhibitions.

Rubiya further went on to become a Community Organizer for the Sphoorthi project also. As a Community Organizer in the Sphoorthi program, Rubiya became a strong role model for the girls she closely worked with, showing them by example, on how to overcome gender and other discriminatory norms in the community. Not just by organizing regular program activities such as Life Skills Education sessions, but additionally she has also built a strong rapport within the community, and effectively ensured convergence by bringing all different stakeholders in the community such as community members and gram panchayat leaders earning a strong reputation in her Gram Panchayat. Through innovative and bold steps such as organizing local festivals associated with boys, with the help of girls, like Ganesh Habba, despite being a Muslim girl, she has led by example in breaking gender and socio-cultural norms in the community.

Rubiya's journey is replete with several such thoughtful and remarkable efforts made to change norms in her community.

In 2021, she was also invited to participate in the 'Freedom from Violence,' campaign organized by RDPR to create awareness for over six lakh students across Karnataka on Gender Based Violence, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rubiya made a significant impact by going live from a studio in Bengaluru to address adolescents across Karnataka on how to counter gender-based violence and advocate for their rights. Her personal quest for



Rubiya during the online campaign



Rubiya talking to a mother on the benefits of consuming Fortified Blended Food

learning has also not stopped, as Rubiya consciously taken some steps to broaden her horizon.

"I felt maybe I was working in my comfort zone, working from my village as a Community Organizer in Sphoorthi", she thoughtfully explained.

While aspiring to stand for Panchayat elections in the near future, Rubiya has however taken on the challenge of working out of a new district in the short term.

"I am gaining valuable experience in this new project. I am collaborating with gram panchayat members to form the School Development and Monitoring Committee in the Devdaurga taluk and to re-establish the Kavalu Samiti," says Rubiya.



Rubiya interaction with a stakeholder

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