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**KHPT**  
engage, innovate, empower



# SPHOORTHI BI-MONTHLY

**November-December 2024**

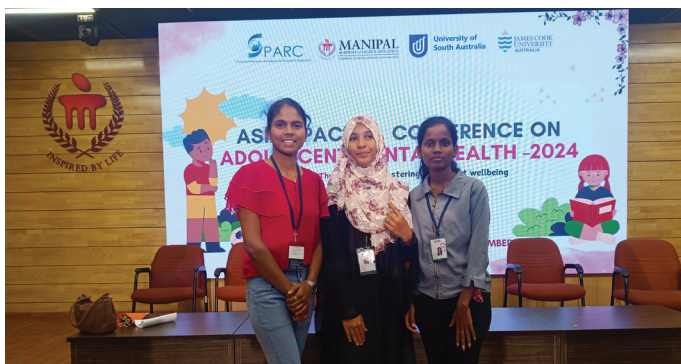
## ABOUT US

**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.



**BFCs explaining using the flipchart**



**The 3 BFCs- Indira, Aisha and Uma**

## Barefoot Counsellors model showcased at a three-day international Asia-Pacific Conference on Adolescent Mental Health

KHPT's Adolescent Health team was invited by the Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) to participate in a three-day international Asia-Pacific Conference on Adolescent Mental Health from November 28 to 30. During the conference, the team showcased its community-centric approaches to adolescent mental health by setting up a stall, participating in a panel discussion, and organizing a workshop.



### An IIT show by the 3 BFCs

Setting the importance and need for a rural adolescent barefoot counselling intervention through a presentation, Interactive Intimate Theatre (IIT) performance, and a Barefoot counselling demonstration, the team contributed significantly through community-centric perspectives to the discussions around mental health. Three adolescent Barefoot Counsellors (BFCs) from Koppal shared their experiences by explaining how they work, their challenges in rural areas, and how the model has benefited adolescent girls and young women.

Dr Sathyashree Goswami, Consultant, KHPT, shared practical field insights from her vast experience of working on adolescent health and gender transformative approaches, at a panel on 'Building resilience: Strengthening coping strategies in adolescents.' Over the three days, the stall saw a footfall of over **100** delegates, while the workshop was attended by students and faculty of MAHE.



**Dr Sathyashree (with the mic) sharing insights**

## DISTRICTS' CORNER

### **KHPT trains Kavalu Samiti members from Koppal and Yadgir on their roles and responsibilities**

In November, KHPT Adolescent Health team trained approximately **170** members of the Kavalu Samiti across **12** Gram Panchayats and four blocks of Koppal and Yadgir districts. These included Panchayat Development Officers, Frontline Health Workers, school teachers, adolescent girls and boys, Beat Police, and other members. This training equipped participants with a comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities and essential knowledge about issues affecting women and children.



**Stakeholders in a group activity**

Members were trained in legal frameworks, role of local governance and local strategies for prevention of violence against adolescent girls and women through participatory approaches.

To create a more streamlined and effective committee at the Gram Panchayat level to address critical issues related to women and children, the Government of Karnataka instituted Kavalu Samitis in 2019 by merging three committees - the Committee to Prevent Trafficking in Women and Children, the Child Marriage Prevention and Coordination Committee, and the Child Protection Committee.

### **Sphoorthi girls attend District Coordination and Executive Committee meetings**

In November and December, two District Coordination and Executive Committee (DCEC) meetings were held in Koppal and Vijayapura.

In November and December, the DCEC meetings held in Koppal were chaired by Shri Nalin Atul, IAS, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the Koppal

district. The discussions focused on the issues of teenage pregnancies, child marriages, and POCSO cases.



### **DCEC meeting in Koppal**

The DC emphasized the need to prioritize efforts aimed at preventing child marriages and filing FIRs in the event of any underage marriages. The DC appreciated KHPT's efforts at innovatively addressing adolescent health concerns, and tasked the team with conducting awareness programs in schools, colleges and the community. Officials from other departments, including Health, Education, and Women and Child Development, attended the meeting.



### **Sphoorthi girls at the DCEC meeting in Vijayapura**

The DCEC meeting in Vijayapura was chaired by Shri B.T. Bhoobalan, IAS, Deputy Commissioner (DC), Vijayapura. Shri Rishi Anand, IAS, Chief Executive Officer, Shri K.K. Chawan, Deputy Director of the Women and Child Development Department, along with other officials from various departments of the Government of Karnataka, participated in the meeting. Ms. Vijayalakshmi Kohalli, the District Program Coordinator of Vijayapura, explained the activities of the Sphoorthi program.

A demonstration on a life skills session titled "Why Life Skills are Important" was presented by the

adolescent Resource Girls. The session thoughtfully engaged the participants on gender norms and roles.

After the session, it was noted that the adolescent girls learned valuable lessons through the Life Skills Education (LSE) program. When asked about their future aspirations, they confidently responded, “We want to become District Commissioners like you.”

### Stakeholder Consultations to engage community structures around adolescent health conducted in Chamrajnagar and Raichur

KHPT is conducting a pilot intervention called ‘Ambassadors of Change’ to build adolescent girl leadership at the Panchayat level. This initiative envisions a system within which adolescent girls’ formally play a role within the Panchayat, through the formation of adolescent girls’ sub-committees with diverse representation, at the panchayat level.

As part of the intervention, to understand the gendered barriers to adolescent health, two consultation meetings with government officials including Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) workers, ASHAs, Community Health Officers and representatives from Panchayat Raj Institutions and NGOs, school teachers, parents, and adolescent girls were conducted in Chamrajnagar and Raichur.



**Stakeholders at the consultation**

The participants discussed adolescent issues in their gram panchayats and offered solutions to address them. The participants reached a consensus that working collaboratively can comprehensively address the concerns of adolescent girls, leading to more effective interventions and sustainable community empowerment.

To know more about the project click [here](#).

### LSE sessions conducted in the hostels of Koppal

Life Skills Education (LSE) sessions are an important component in the Sphoorthi project. In Koppal, many girls involved in the project have moved to nearby hostels to pursue higher education. To ensure these girls continue to benefit from the project, LSE sessions are being held in their hostels by the Koppal field staff. So far, approximately 5,000 girls have attended the LSE sessions conducted in their hostels.



**A ground staff from Koppal conducting the LSE session in a hostel**

### Training on ‘Community Ownership’ conducted

A two-day training session was held for the Yadgir Sphoorthi team at KSRDPR University in Gadag. The theme of the training was “Promoting Community Ownership to Enhance Adolescent Girls’ Well-being.” The goal was to emphasize the importance of engaging with grassroots institutions, as well as both official and informal organizations, to create a supportive environment for adolescent girls and to ensure the project’s sustainability beyond the project period. To achieve this, the team recognized the need to instill a sense of community ownership among its members, ensuring a lasting impact on the project at the local level.



**KHPT Yadgir staff participating in a group activity**



**KHPT Koppal staff in a brainstorming activity**

## Workshop to revision and strengthen Sphoorthi programme implementation

To strengthen the cohesion of the Koppal Adolescent team and enhance strategic program delivery a workshop was organised in Dharwad in December. The focus was on discussing the successes, challenges, and strategies related to the Sphoorthi project. Group activities were organized to encourage problem-solving and teamwork, helping to align efforts toward a common goal.

## WHAT ARE OUR GIRLS UP TO?

**1.** Kavya and Ghalemma, two Sphoorthi girls from Koppal participated in Karnataka Child Rights Parliament, organized by the Karnataka Child Rights Observatory on November 25. The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka Shri Siddaramaiah is the Chief Guest of the gathering. This year, on behalf of the CM, Mr Ritesh Kumar Singh, IAS, Principal Secretary to the Department of School Education and Literacy engaged students across Karnataka on a discussion on children's rights.



**Ghalemma and Kavya at the Karnataka Child Rights Parliament**

Ghalemma during her 10-minute interaction with appreciated the government initiatives like the provision of eggs and chikkis and urged for their continuation and expansion. She also highlighted the need for greater awareness and education on adolescent health.

**2.** On Constitution Day (November 26), special events were organized across Bagalkot, Raichur, Belagavi, Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Koppal and Vijayapura to educate and empower adolescent girls about the principles of the Indian Constitution. The events began with a collective reading of the Preamble, emphasizing core values such as justice, equality, and liberty.



**AGs during the reading of the Preamble**

**3.** Adolescent girls from Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Raichur, Koppal, Kalaburagi, and Yadgir are participating in Children's Gram Sabhas to voice their concerns and seek solutions from the gram panchayat members. The girls are bringing various issues to such meetings, including child marriages, lack of proper toilet facilities in schools, bus services in their villages, and school dropouts.



**An adolescent girl speaking at the makkala gram sabha**

**4. 6,210** Resource Girls (RGs) from Bagalkot, Raichur, Belagavi, Vijayapurura, and Kalaburagi conducted LSE sessions for **586** Peer girls in their respective villages. During these sessions, the RGs provided information on various topics like anaemia, nutrition, menstruation, and gender inequality. Additionally, the girls were informed about student scholarships available in schools and were guided on how to find solutions to challenges faced in their village.



**RGs conducting a LSE session**

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

### A Path to Transformation: Sphoorthi's Efforts in a boy's transformation

“Seeing other children in the neighborhood with their school bags brought tears to my eyes,” said Gangamma\*, the mother of 13-year-old Ravikanth\*, who had stopped attending school after class IX. A simple board game, several meetings, and ongoing discussions with peers have transformed a shy and stubborn adolescent boy into a mature and



**Ravikanth chatting with his mother**

responsible young adult. He now attends school, understands the importance of saving, and, most importantly, respects his mother and supports her whenever necessary.

Now Gangamma's tone has changed, and she said her son looked like a 'hero' with a school bag. As a single parent, she always worried about her son because he was not going to school and always said, 'I want to work and earn money.' Despite trying her best to change his mind, she did not succeed.

Ravikanth's hope was rekindled as he became involved in the Sphoorthi project, where he learned

many valuable lessons that changed him. He actively participated in the budget battle board game with his peers, where he learned about the risks of betting and the importance of saving money for the future. During a series of monthly meetings, a topic on the “negative consequences of not going to school” resonated with him.

Initially, he did not interact but just listened to the diverse perspectives shared by his peers. ultimately leading to the conclusion that education is essential for leading a good life. He confided to the Boys' Mentor, Vishwa that he had dropped out of school. Vishwa immediately did not say, 'Please join immediately' but gave him space to express more and slowly started motivating him to join back to school. “I did not want to become like the other boys in my village who were into betting,” said Ravikanth

Gradually, he began to change, a transformation his mother did not anticipate occurring so soon. Today Ravikanth has not only started going to school but his upkeep also improved and helped his mother with the household chores.

“The day he returned to school, he called me and shared this news. I was so happy to hear those words from him,” said Vishwanath.

**KHPT works with rural adolescent boys in Koppal to help them recognize how gender norms also act as barriers to their own personal development. The intervention also discusses the deeply ingrained gender roles in the community, challenge stereotypes, and encourage meaningful conversations about the roles assigned to men and women.**

## Language no barrier to knowledge transfer

At the Rangampetta Anganwadi center in Surpur urban, Anganwadi teacher Nasima Banu was actively mobilising Muslim mothers to come to the center. She planned to discuss how to care for children and handle interactions with adolescents gently and diplomatically in Urdu.

Inspired by the Sphoorthi project Nasima is one among 17 Anganwadi teachers who are on a mission to empower girls and women in Surpur by providing critical knowledge and skills that will benefit them.

The Sphoorthi Life Skills Education sessions are in Kannada. Despite this, the Anganwadi teachers have taken it upon themselves to translate important lessons into Urdu and convey messages to mothers and adolescent girls.

“You have given us the confidence to transfer critical knowledge to our girls,” says Nasima

“The mothers are responding positively to the sessions. They discuss their children’s health concerns, and we provide solutions to address them,” adds Nasima. “Somedays we conduct Life Skills Education sessions on Sundays,” says Sainaz, another Anganwadi teacher.



**Nasima addressing the mothers**

The Anganwadi teachers are also extending their support to Kavitha, a Community Organiser who works in the same area by assisting her in mobilizing mothers and adolescent girls. They have also established a WhatsApp group for mothers to facilitate communication about meetings and to conduct Life Skills Education (LSE) sessions. Additionally, they have helped Kavitha organize community discussions, known as Samvadas.

Anganwadi teachers, such as Nasima and Sainaz, play a vital role in conveying important messages to women and girls, ensuring the project’s sustainability beyond its timeline.



**Sainaz interacting with a group of mothers**

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