

Kishori Panchayat (Adolescent Girls' Forum)

Kishori Panchayat (KP) is one of the crucial Community based Organizations formed in the CLICS program to facilitate participation of adolescent girls in CLICS program and their involvement in health related decision-making at village level. These forums are being promoted in recognition that the behavioural patterns acquired during adolescence may not only last a lifetime but may have profound effect on the health and well-being of future generations as well (WHO 1997). It also acts as a forum for their development and as a platform through which they can voice their needs and understanding.

The Kishori Panchayat comprises of adolescent girls in the age group of 12-19 years, both school going and non-school going. Initially, all the adolescent girls in the village are enlisted and they are invited to form adolescent groups, comprising of approximately 20 adolescent girls. Thereafter, these adolescent groups, select their representatives who come together to form Kishori Panchayat, a decision-making body at village level for adolescent girls.

The Kishori Panchayat conducts its monthly meeting on a fixed date every month. The opportunity of this meeting is utilized by the program to provide health education to the adolescent girls on topics related to maternal and child health. Utilizing the setting of Kishori Panchayat, adolescent girls have also been trained for various life skills; thus helping adolescent girls to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to manage their own lives with confidence and competence and make informed choices.

When Village Coordination Committee is formed at village level, two members of the Kishori Panchayat are included in the committee. This, to some extent, facilitates the right to participation through their involvement in the VCCs. The program ensures that the members of the Kishori Panchayat are consulted on matters concerning their own lives and enables them to contribute to the well-being of the community. Kishori Panchayats are gradually changing the traditional mind-sets in society regarding young people and adolescents.

Young adolescent girls also get an opportunity to get involved in arts and craft in their groups, along with the key area of program intervention related to bring down child mortality and mother's health both during and post the pregnancy in a sustainable manner. They regularly attend workshops and organize campaigns in their communities; participate generally in various community endeavours designed by them with the help of the project facilitators like for instance a sanitation drive.

Under each KP, four sub-committees are formed: Education, Health, Cultural, Sanitation. Each committee is provided training for conducting its activities. Since majority of the girls are school going, trainings are organised during vacations. Symbolic measures such as proper oath taking are also used to increase sense of ownership. KPs are also given vocational training and encouraged to organise events in the community. Participation of non school going girls is sought in such events. In some villages to reach out to non-school going girls the KP meetings are called during the evening hours.



Building Skills in Adolescent Girls



Adolescent Girls Group: Clean Drinking Water Initiative



Members of Kishori Panchayat communicating health message through role play



A member of Kishori Panchayat writing a slogan on wall to promote iodized salt