



# Stakeholders Convention on Alliances for Adolescent girls' health

**Madurai Symposium 2015**

Venue: Thamukkam Grounds, Madurai

September 13, 2015

*Organized by*



**Sustainable Healthcare Advancement (SUHAM) Trust**  
(A Healthcare Initiative of DHAN Foundation)

## Background

Adolescence as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19 as per the definition of WHO. It represents one of the critical transitions in the life span and is characterized by a tremendous pace in growth and change that is second only to that of infancy. Biological processes drive many aspects of this growth and development, with the onset of puberty marking the passage from childhood to adolescence. The biological determinants of adolescence are fairly universal; however, the duration and defining characteristics of this period may vary across time, cultures, and socioeconomic situations where lot of investments is needed to set positive behaviours and attitude. The process of adolescence is a period of preparation for adulthood during which time several key developmental experiences occur. Besides physical and sexual maturation, these experiences include movement toward social and economic independence, and development of identity, the acquisition of skills needed to carry out adult relationships and roles, and the capacity for abstract reasoning. While adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential, it is also a time of considerable risk during which social contexts exert powerful influences, comparatively it is higher with girls.

As per the census 2011, every fifth person in India is an adolescent. 236.5 million Adolescent population against the total population of 1205.6 million, it

occupies 21 per cent of adolescent girls. The sex ratio among adolescent girls has little increase from 882 to 898 and attained decadal growth of +12.5 per cent compared to 2001 census. Investing in this segment of population is the best way to leverage the nation's competitive advantage – it is a demographic dividend to the country's development. The literacy rate of adolescents was increased considerably and consistently which leads to increased knowledge and exposure. But lot more challenges especially health, nutrition and hygiene yet to be addressed.

## Health Challenges faced by adolescent girls

This is the period when a person is most vulnerable; the overall growth and development and also the physical, reproductive and psychological changes expose the adolescents to many risks such as health, nutrition deficiency, hygiene, mental health, sex behaviours, personality development, skill needs etc. Health and nutrition is one of the predominant challenges for adolescent girls where they need support from family, society and system majorly on awareness & exposure, nutrition support, peer pressure, timely counseling and behaviour & practice changes. Careful and unobtrusive attention to each aspect of health at this stage will help adolescents grow into healthy and responsible adults. One of the most common health concerns among adolescent girls in our country is undernutrition and anemia. One third of the adolescent girls in India are underweight and as per the NFHS 3 data, 56 % are anemic. Many of these girls are born with deficient iron stores because their mothers were anemic



during pregnancy. Poor cognitive functions and general ill health affect their potential to achieve the best in studies and other activities. Although iron supplementation is advocated for adolescent girls, it is healthier to improve their overall diet as these girls have diets deficient in calories, proteins and other essential nutrients. Malnourishment and obesity often seen in affluent adolescents can also predispose them to health problems like polycystic ovary and metabolic syndrome. Irregular and infrequent cycles are often seen for a few years after menarche and don't need any intervention. Irregular cycles and heavy menstrual bleeding requires complete evaluation including hemoglobin estimation and coagulation profile as some congenital coagulation disorders may manifest as puberty menorrhagia. Maintenance of good hygiene especially during menstruation is important. Poor menstrual hygiene and early sexual exposure can lead to reproductive tract infections with long term morbidities. Sexually transmitted infections including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) may persist as chronic or recurrent infections and may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease involving cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries. Psychological problems like emotional disturbances, depression, low self esteem, anxiety and eating disorders may also affect the health of adolescent. Apart from this many adolescents face pressures to use alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs and to initiate sexual relationships at earlier ages, putting themselves at high risk for intentional and unintentional injuries. Psychological support and counseling can overcome these

problems. Understanding the critical health and socio-health challenges of adolescent girls, each stakeholder must have the roles to perform for overcome the challenges and support the girls.

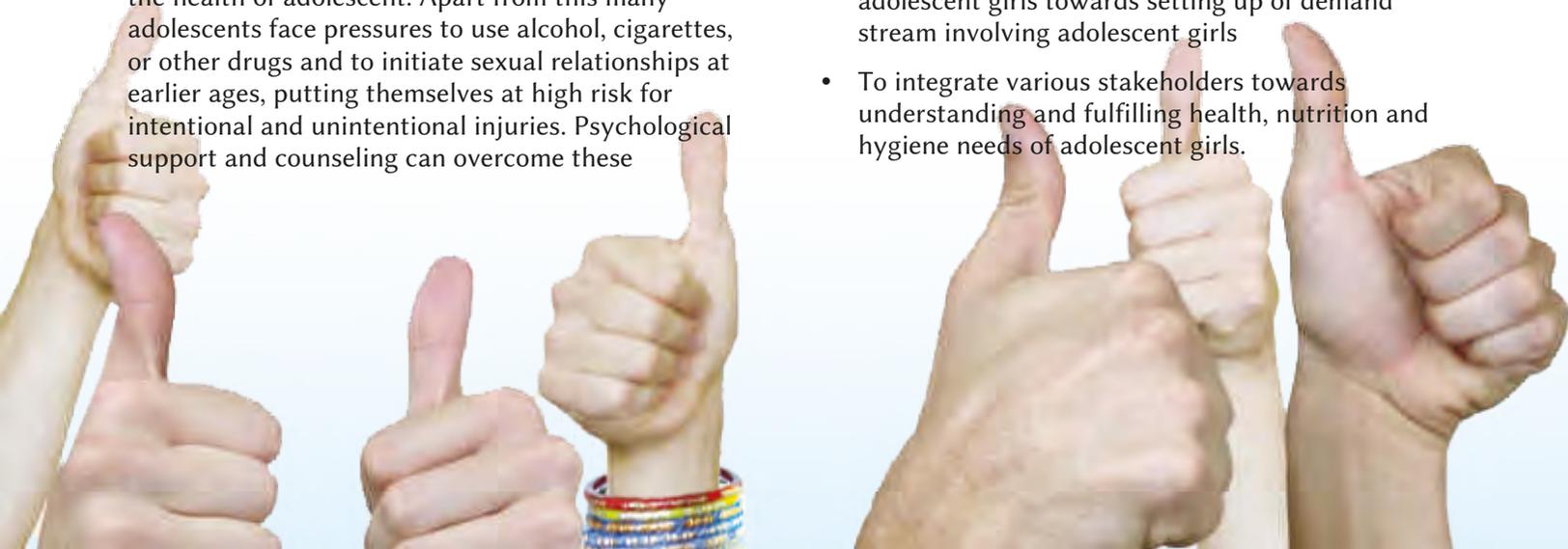
### **The Workshop**

Adolescent girls' depend on their families, their communities, schools, health and nutrition service providers and their workplaces to learn a wide range of important skills that can help them to cope with the pressures they face and make the transition from childhood to adulthood successfully. The stakeholders' convention is organised involving above stakeholders and participation of 300-400 adolescent girls to understand and appreciate the felt needs of adolescent girls and experiencing the efforts taken by them in addressing the issues around them. The convention would bring declarations on Adolescent girls' health at the end of the event.

### **Objectives**

The focus of the convention will be towards the following objectives;

- To review the existing health and nutrition status of adolescent girls in various context
- To explore the various skills and capacity of adolescent girls towards setting up of demand stream involving adolescent girls
- To integrate various stakeholders towards understanding and fulfilling health, nutrition and hygiene needs of adolescent girls.



## Participants

The event is organized with the participation of adolescent girls from Madurai urban, Madurai Rural especially from Anaemia control project under SBGF of Government of Tamilnadu, Theni, Dindigul and Salem districts who are members of adolescent girls groups' / school health clubs promoted by DHAN Foundation. The delegates from DRDA, health department, ICDS & education department, panchayat presidents, school Headmasters, teachers and speakers will be participating for providing special address.

## Programme content and structure

The convention focus on three aspects as follows'

- Sharing the earlier experiences and learnings from adolescent girls from various districts
- Initiatives and experiences of different stakeholders on adolescent girls' health
- Presenting the DHAN's model on 'adolescent girls health and nutrition involving different stakeholders'
- Special address by the guests and speakers
- The sub group discussion on future directions and setting up of demand stream would be one of the major focus areas of this convention. The medium of deliberations will be in Tamil.

For further information, please contact

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