

Adolescent Boys and Girls Program for Gender Equity in Maharashtra, India

Ongoing

Background:

In India, deeply-rooted notions of power and gender have led to the cultural acceptance of excessive mistreatment and adverse health outcomes of girls and women. Girls in India age five or less are 75% more likely to die than their male counterparts (Census of India, 2011). In addition, women who marry earlier (before age 15) are found to have their first birth an average of three years before women who are married between 15 and 20, and seven years earlier than women who marry between 21 and 25 (Jensen & Thornton, 2003). More specifically, 90% of adolescent pregnancies in lower resourced countries occur in girls who are married, which is attributed to their higher exposure to sex, lower probability of utilizing contraception compared to unmarried peers, and the pressure to conceive soon after marriage (Psaki, 2016). Challenges to achieve gender equity must address the intersections between child marriage, reproductive health, girls' education, and the acceptance of gender based violence.

The Adolescent Program for Gender Equity will provide a comprehensive training curriculum to address these issues for boys and girls ages 12-16 in Ahmednagar. This project aims to initiate a cognitive shift in the minds of the young participants that will follow them through their life and facilitate better health outcomes for both male and female participants. While achieving full gender equity is not realistic with a single program or project, providing participants with the knowledge necessary to reshape attitudes and behaviors is a promising first step to seeing that change in larger society.



Research and Implementation Partner(s):

Center for Studies in Rural Development at Institute for Social Work and Research in Ahmednagar, India

Research Core(s):

Economic Security
Financial Inclusion

Activities and Collaborations:

The curriculum of the program aims to teach participants about the importance of education, gender equity, reproductive health, leadership, and gender-based violence. Short-term program outcomes include increasing female participants' school attendance, increased knowledge on the importance of education for girls, increased knowledge of sexual/reproductive health and a reduction of harmful attitudes in regards to gender-based knowledge.

GSDI and CSRD have collaborated for over five years, beginning with an MOU signed between the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Pune, where CSRD is affiliated. As research and implementing partner, CSRD will realize the project's goals on the ground and coordinate with the communities in the areas where the project will be implemented. GSDI will support CSRD in the implementation of the intervention, data collection and analysis.

Next Steps:

In Spring 2017, the control and intervention schools where the curriculum will be taught in an after school program setting were confirmed. After that, teachers will be selected and trained and begin teaching students when the school year begins in the fall.