

# Young Health Programme in India

India has the fastest growing urban-poor population in the world. However, urban services and infrastructure have not kept pace with this rapid growth. There are significant issues related to water and sanitation including lack of potable water, waste disposal and sewage maintenance. Access to health services is limited and awareness about sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS is low.

The Young Health Programme in India is focused on improving the health and well-being of young people in marginalised areas of Delhi. Today the Programme is building on five years of successful work and expanding into communities across the North West of Delhi where there is a high prevalence of risk behaviours, including tobacco use, alcohol abuse, poor eating habits and inactive lifestyles, that can lead to non-communicable disease (NCD).

The Programme is being implemented by Plan India in partnership with local partners: Nav Srishti and Dr. A.V. Baliga Memorial Trust.



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**Key issues for adolescent health in urban slum areas include malnutrition, hygiene and sanitation, communicable diseases such as TB and Malaria, non-communicable disease prevention including tobacco use and alcohol abuse, substance abuse, anaemia in girls, unwanted pregnancy, illegal and unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted infections. Early marriage, exploitation and violence all compound the difficulties of adolescent physical and psychosocial development.**

## What do we want to achieve through the Programme?

During the next five years the Programme expects to reach over 130,000 adolescent girls and boys across 5 communities in North West Delhi. The Programme will also indirectly influence at least 80,000 people in the wider community, including parents, policy makers, educators and health professionals.

### Objectives:

- Build the knowledge and capacity of young people (boys and girls aged 10-24) on limiting risk behaviours, enabling them to protect and promote their long-term health
- Raise awareness and mobilise communities to create a safe and supportive environment that facilitates healthy behaviour among young people
- Improve access to and quality of youth-friendly services that support the health of young people
- Strengthen the implementation of policies and laws that support prevention of risk behaviours among young people

## What activities are taking place locally?

The Programme is reaching out to young people from communities across the five resettlement areas of Bawana, Jahangirpuri, Sultanpuri, Kirari Suleman Nagar and Holambi Villages all in North West Delhi.

### Local activities taking place include:

- Training adolescents to become Peer Educators, who engage and inform their peers on health issues and provide refresher training for existing Peer Educators
- Supporting Health Information Centres (HICs) to effectively deliver a range of activities to engage adolescents on key health issues
- Arranging themed camps and fairs addressing specific adolescent health issues
- Training teachers in how to be more responsive to adolescent health needs
- Increasing health services available in the targeted settlement community and training health providers in sexual and reproductive health clinics on how to offer “adolescent-friendly” services
- Ensuring sustainability of the initiatives by gaining the support of community groups and stakeholders (legislators, community leaders, police) for adolescent health initiatives
- Advocating for an enabling policy environment and legal framework which reinforces laws and regulations related to risk behaviour prevention

## What has been achieved so far?

YHP India operated in five resettlement communities across Delhi from 2010 to 2015. After 5 years there has been significant progress in the targeted areas and the legacy of the YHP will continue even as the Programme expands into new communities.

- Established 15 HICs across five communities in Delhi which serve as a space for youth to come together and focus on health-related issues
- 2,200 Peer Educators trained and supported via the HICs to carry out awareness raising activities among their peers and communities
- 199,387 young people reached directly by YHP and 119,770 wider community members, including health professionals, educators and policy makers, received messages about youth health
- 13,685 parents benefited from outreach activities via the HICs, increasing overall awareness of health messages within their families and communities
- Peer Educators and the YHP staff referred 1,551 adolescents in need of medical advice/services to health facilities for issues such as TB, dengue, malaria and sexual reproductive health (SRH)
- Establishment of special clinics with opening times for adolescents in all five project communities. This has resulted in a steady increase of adolescents accessing health services at Government health facilities, instead of remaining unsupported, or resorting to unqualified doctors known as ‘quacks’.
- Training of 623 Government health professionals including Anganwadi workers (family health), ASHA workers (community health) and ANMs (Auxiliary Nurse Midwives) on key YHP thematic areas.
- School-based activities including the establishment of water and sanitation committees in 18 schools to improve sanitary practices and facilities.
- 90 Community Stakeholder Groups established to map out advocacy issues, develop action plans and implement the activities in their communities.

## Local partners

The Programme is being implemented on the ground by Plan India in partnership with Nav Srishti (navsrishti.org), a volunteer organisation supporting women, children and other underprivileged sections of society and the Dr. A.V. Baliga Memorial Trust which provides literacy services through resource centers that it has established in slums, resettlement areas and unauthorised colonies throughout New Delhi. Many of its programmes focus particularly on the education and empowerment of women and girls.