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Advika

Every Girl Is Unique

Government of Odisha's commitment to adolescent empowerment

Adolescents are potential agents of change in their own lives and communities. Through meaningful and productive engagement, they can develop skills and capacities that foster resilience and support communities to transform at the same time. Hence, adolescents must be given adequate opportunities to groom themselves, showcase their skills and be motivated to represent themselves in the community as peer leaders.

While the efforts of the Government of Odisha have had a positive impact on the education, health and general well-being of adolescent girls, most schemes are targeted at select age groups among adolescent girls. To maximise the impact of all its schemes across adolescent girls of all ages, the state government launched the **'Advika, Every Girl Is Unique' programme** on October 11, 2020 on the occasion of International Girl Child Day. It is the best example of the highest political commitment towards adolescent empowerment and ending child marriage and all kinds of violence against children and women.



Photo Credit: © UNICEF/ Zishaan Akbar Latif/2018

What is 'Advika'?

'Advika' means unique. The programme aims to educate and empower every girl child who is unique and should be able to make her own decisions regarding her life.

This state-wide programme, launched in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA, is a renewed commitment towards the empowerment of adolescent girls through education and life skills. Advika is a common and coordinated platform for linking all schemes targeted at all adolescent girls of Odisha in the 10-19 years age group, from rural and urban areas, in and out of school.



Purpose

It aims at making vibrant and adolescent friendly 'Kishori Diwas' (Saturday sessions) by imparting life skill education to deal with their day-to-day challenges and issues, and creating a space for girls to express themselves and find solutions to their problems. It provides them with the opportunity to become aware and connect with relevant social protection schemes for them and their families.

Resource package

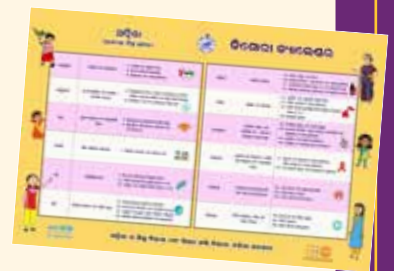


AWW Pocket Book is a short and simple guiding tool for Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) to engage with and empower adolescents with relevant knowledge to prevent and protect themselves from child marriage, child trafficking,

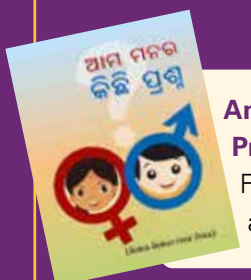
child sexual abuse, child labour. It also includes information on gender equality, nutrition, health, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and online safety, where to seek help in case of violation, information on various child protection legislations, contact details of referrals such as one stop crisis center, CHILDLINE etc. The AWW can also use the pocket book to conduct separate sensitisation sessions with adolescent boys on gender and child protection issues.

Kishori Kalender is an annual calendar that describes specific month-wise topics/themes based on which AWWs hold effective weekly sessions with adolescent girls every Saturday.

Each month's theme is discussed followed by viewing audio-visual spots/comics/tools etc.



Kishori Barta is a booklet with key messages on various adolescent health, nutrition, personal hygiene and protection issues to engage effectively with adolescents during weekly Saturday sessions.

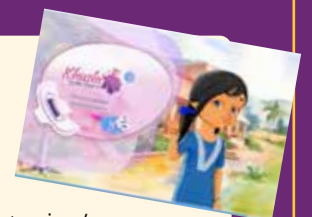


Ama Manara Kichi Prashna is an FAQ booklet for adolescent girls



Multimedia package is a series of animated films, short videos, Tiki Mausi videos, audio-visual

spots, and comics on various topics/themes mentioned in the adolescent calendar. These are used along with other communication materials during the weekly Saturday sessions.



How is Advika implemented at community level?

- Every Saturday, girls of the village gather at the Anganwadi Centre (AWC)
- Two girls are assigned as 'Sakhi' and 'Saheli' (both mean 'friend') to assist the AWW and be peer leaders in disseminating key messages and information in families and communities
- Discussions are held with adolescent girls based on the Kishori Kalendar. Weekly theme-based sessions are held using the AWW pocket book, Kishori Barta, FAQs, short films and animated series
- Engagement is done with boys on specific days/sessions at AWCs and peer volunteers are identified among them to set positive examples to break gender stereotypes and challenge harmful social norms and practices.



Monitoring effective implementation

A MIS captures details of Master Trainers and the resource group and other training details. Mapping and tracking of adolescent girls along with details of monthly calendar sessions conducted in AWCs are also captured through the MIS. Besides this, the best practices, innovations, activities/sessions, case studies and photographs under Advika programme are captured.

Role of SHGs in Advika implementation

The large network of **Women Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) (70 million women in 7 lakh groups)** represent Odisha's greatest potential. **SHGs** play a crucial role in implementing Advika by creating an enabling environment for girls to survive and thrive through collective actions to challenge discrimination and violence. The strategies include community mobilization, counselling adolescents and their parents, identifying and monitoring dropouts, preventing child marriage and any other abuse or exploitation and its reporting, and awareness on health and hygiene, sanitation, and MHM.

Key roles of WSHGs in Advika

- Support AWWs in mapping and tracking adolescent girls
- Ensure that each girl attends school regularly and no girl drops out of school
- Support and empower girls to prevent child marriage, child trafficking, child sexual abuse child labour or any other violence
- Engage with adolescent boys to break gender stereotypes and harmful social norms
- Support boys to prevent themselves for being pushed into child labour, child trafficking or any other form of exploitation

Role of Gram Panchayat Child Protection Committees (GPCPCs)

- Support effective implementation of Advika in their villages and discuss adolescent-related issues in their quarterly meetings
- Support prevention and addressing any violation of child rights and violence against children including sexual abuse
- Popularise helpline numbers such as CHILDLINE 1098, women's helpline, one stop crisis centre
- Identify and support vulnerable children and their families to link with government welfare schemes and programmes.





Role of peer leaders

The AWW selects one Sakhi and one Saheli among the adolescent girls as peer leaders who can support the children and adolescents in their village in raising their voice, spreading awareness on child protection and other issues affecting adolescents, motivating continuation of education, and informing the AWW and SHG members in case of any violation.

Key roles of peer leaders in Advika

- The selection of peer leaders is done on a rotation basis atleast for a period of six months so that more adolescents get a chance to participate and gain leadership skills.
- Peer leaders disseminate key messages and information to other adolescents and also in the community and work as change agents/change makers in the community.
- They also participate in the quarterly GPCPC meetings.
- They are planning to create a group at sector level/project level and help field functionaries i.e. AWWs, ASHAs, and SHGs in conducting awareness drives and community sensitisation and counselling. They will be part of the larger district-level forum 'Balya Bibah Pratirodh Manch'.



I wholeheartedly support and appreciate the Advika programme. I am confident that the initiative will reach out to and benefit several families. In today's concerning social scenario, I hope and believe that it will bring about a significant change. It will enable girls to fulfil their dreams and not neglect them. It will provide girls with a new perspective to life and their future. We can include all adolescent girls from rural and urban areas under one umbrella. The pocket book, calendar and videos have been launched keeping in mind that discussions on important topics as per the calendar will be held in the Saturday meetings. The programme aims at empowering girls to understand and practise life skills in their own lives thereby preparing them to face all odds, giving them courage, empowering them to voice their opinions and live on their own terms.

Smt. Tukuni Sahu

Hon'ble Minister, W&CD and MS, Odisha

Women and girls have always been at the centre of our state policies. By launching Advika, we hope to make a positive impact on adolescent health, nutrition and skills as well as protect adolescents from all kinds of violence. When they become mothers in the future, we will be able to see a difference in them because we would at least have prevented child marriage and ensured good nutrition for them in our efforts to tackle the challenges that come with young motherhood and early pregnancies."

Smt. Anu Garg

IAS, Principal Secretary
Department of W&CD and MS, Odisha



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