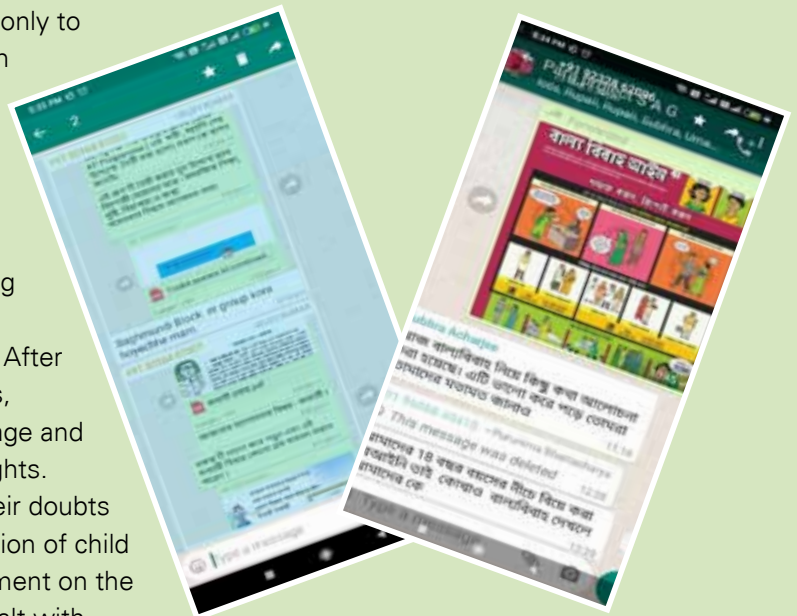




INNOVATIVE ENGAGEMENT OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Closure of schools and government services for adolescents due to the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact education of adolescents, access to services and increase vulnerabilities especially for adolescent girls in West Bengal. But the Purulia district administration came up with an innovative idea to connect with adolescents under the state-run Scheme for Adolescents Girls – Kanyashree Prakalpa (SAG-KP) convergence programme using the popular WhatsApp channel. Under this initiative, Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) have formed WhatsApp groups with the support of Project Coordinators and Field Facilitators involving adolescent girls' group leaders (Sakhi-Sahelis). These Sakhi-Sahelis are working as peer educators and change agents among their peers and in their communities.

With the support of the implementing partner CRY, these channels have been used not only to share information on COVID-19 prevention and good hygiene practices including handwashing but have gone ahead and started discussing modules from the life skills education package as well. A wide range of IEC materials like posters, presentations, leaflets and videos including those developed by UNICEF have been circulated through these digital platforms. After the IEC materials are shared in the groups, members are encouraged to actively engage and share their experiences, feeling and thoughts. They also get the opportunity to clarify their doubts and concerns. Specific issues like prevention of child marriage and menstrual hygiene management on the occasion of MHM Day 2020 were also dealt with.



This online initiative has provided adolescents with a very good opportunity to share their experiences and concerns and showcase examples of their positive actions in the field. So far, **1,500** adolescent girls have been directly reached and another **6,000** have been reached through them in a cascade manner.



Regular internet connectivity is a challenge in a remote district like Purulia but that could not beat their enthusiasm to stay connected with each other and learn new things in these difficult times.