

Integrated Rural Health Development Training Center
IRHDTC/Nepal

'I am a Child, not a Bride- Phase II' Campaign
Activity Report of Friend-Raiser Event

Introduction

Addressing the issues of adolescent girls in Parsagadhi municipality required a collective effort and a unified approach, recognizing that these concerns are not exclusive to the girls alone. To step up integrated efforts to make the municipality girls friendly (for the first phase) and the objective to make the entire Madhesh Province a girl's friendly province, a distinct approach was applied. This approach led IRHDTC to organize an exceptional event named "friend-raiser," where adolescent girls had the opportunity to become friends with the mayor and minister, fostering collaboration and support for their cause.

IRHDTC organized a Friend-raiser event involving key stakeholders for the well-being of young adolescent girls. The event spanned two days at different locations. On December 19th, it took place at Shri Rastriya Secondary School, Barwa Chatauli, with the full attendance of 106 Vision Child Club members.

On December 20th, the event was held in Janakpur at the Ministry of Health and Population, with the participation of 11 leaders from the Vision Child Club.

At the first event, all 106 students were actively involved. Mayor of municipality Gokarna Pathak, other government officials, and principals along with focal teachers from 11 community schools were also present. The following day, only the leaders of the Vision Child Club were brought to Janakpur capital city of Madhesh Province to meet with the Health and Population Minister Birendra Prasad Singh.

Objectives

- Establish a supportive environment where adolescent girls feel comfortable sharing their problems, knowing that there are concerned stakeholders ready to listen and address their issues.

- Improve communication channels between adolescent girls and concerned stakeholders, providing a platform for adolescent girls to express and address their concerns more easily.
- Create opportunities for adolescent girls to connect with key stakeholders, such as government officials and community leaders, fostering a supportive network.
- Encourage collaboration between adolescent girls and stakeholders to collectively address and find solutions to the challenges faced by adolescent girls in the community.

Training Outcomes

The mayor is now committed to making Parsagadhi a better place for girls. He promised to visit their school regularly and invited the Vision Child Club members to visit the municipality as well. He also assured them that they'll be part of upcoming local planning process. The minister is on board to make the entire Madesh Province more adolescent girl-friendly by quickly addressing their issues. School principals pledged to create a comfortable environment for girls in schools, which include having adolescent girl-friendly toilets, providing sanitary pads, hot bags, and even a resting room for them when they're not feeling well. Other important people like government officials and teachers also promised to support the girls in every possible way.

The event helped the adolescent girls form strong connections, making it easy for them to share their problems comfortably. Now, they feel confident enough to talk about their issues and work together to solve them. This is a big step towards creating a community where everyone, especially the girls, feel heard and supported.

The event places a strong emphasis on creating safe and supportive spaces where adolescent girls feel secure sharing their concerns. The goal is to build trust and encourage open communication. Importantly, the program empowers the girls to collaborate with influential figures such as the mayor, minister, government officials, principles and school teachers.

This friendship fosters open communication channels, making it easier to discuss and address challenges promptly. All these efforts aim to make Parsagadhi Municipality a better place for girls. The focus is on supporting and enhancing the lives of girls in our community. It's a collective effort to ensure that the girls feel heard supported, and that their needs are addressed effectively within the community

Mayor Gokarna Pathak expressed, "I am really impressed with this event, and should be done more of these. I realized that I usually look at problems from my point of view, but I appreciate hearing about the issues from the perspective of the adolescent girls. I promise to visit your school often and before making decisions that affect you, I'll ask for your ideas and opinions. I want to include you in decision making process, hear what you have to say, and make sure your voices are heard. Now onwards I have believed that it's very important to listen to the adolescent girls and involve them in every important decision as the girls are the bright future of Parsagadhi.

"Our event gathered significant media attention, being featured on more than 25 platforms, including mainstream online news portals, local newspapers, and radio stations. This is a big moment for Madesh Pradesh because it's the first ever time young girls are connecting with elected leaders.

Health and Population **Minister** of Madesh Province **Birendra Prasad Singh** said, "I will always be here to help and support young adolescent girls. If you have a problem that can't be fixed locally, you can come directly to me. I am really amazed to see such young girls from Madesh Pradesh speaking openly and boldly about their problems. I am doing everything possible to make Madesh Pradesh Girls-Friendly."

Team Involved During Training

Yadusudan Kunwor: Facilitator

Dharma Raj Rimal: Facilitator

Ram Bhandari: Central Level Monitoring

Bhumika Nepal: Program Officer

Conclusion

In summary, the event has brought positive changes for the girls in Parsagadhi. The mayor, minister, principles and other important people are now committed to making the municipality more supportive and girl-friendly. The girls feel comfortable sharing their problems and everyone will be working together to solve them. The focus is on creating a safe and supportive community where girls can flourish. It's a big step towards ensuring that the voices of the girls

are heard and that their needs are taken care of. Overall, the event has created strong connections and a sense of support for the girls in Parsagadhi Municipality.

Annex

An adolescent girl handing memorandum to Mayor



Adolescent Girls becoming friends with the mayor



Adolescent girls performing on awareness song in cultural attire



Adolescent girl shaking hands with her new friend, Minister Birendra Prasad Singh, Health and Population Ministry, Madhesh Province



A group photo after friendship program with minister



Vision Child Club leader Madhu sharing gifts with Minister Birendra Prasad Singh