



ADOLESCENTS AND RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT A CASE STUDY FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Sandra Joseph

Associate Professor Department of Social Work Stella Maris College (Autonomous) Chennai, India

ABSTRACT

A challenging action-research study titled, 'Continuing Education for Disadvantaged Adolescents in Chennai City', a community intervention project for adolescents residing in an urban fishing community was carried out between 2016-2018.

Identifying needs of disadvantaged adolescents is a complex interplay of socio-political and cultural institutions and structures in a given location. Challenges confronting adolescents are hidden behind other urban social evils and have not been duly recognized as pertinent to their development. It is important to understand that the adolescent stage of life is crucial and that adolescents too have an equal right to live in dignity and in a proactive environment.

The study explores social meanings and contexts of disadvantaged adolescents and their environments. It analyses the dilemmas of adolescents residing in an urban developing area along the shoreline of the Marina beach, Chennai. It depicts everyday experiences of out-of-school adolescents and its impact on their aspirations for a better life. Using qualitative research methods, the study uses life trajectories to collect data. The study finds that most of their lived experiences act as impediments to their personal growth and development. The study offers a model that enables the adolescents express their needs and identifies that alternative skills training is a possible answer to their current needs. It covers a gamut of needs, the main focus however being on education; training and capacity building that leads to holistic development. The research is intervention-based and hopes to serve as a guide of informed strategies and as a model for working towards creating meaningful 'space' for continuing education for adolescents.

KEYWORDS : out-of-school adolescents, equitable access, disadvantaged adolescents, skills, livelihood skills, multi-stakeholder partnerships, continuing education

1. INTRODUCTION

The word 'adolescence' is derived from the Latin word 'adolescere' which means to grow up (Lerner et al 1993). It is a period of psychosocial development between puberty and adulthood (Erikson 1959). Adolescence begins with the onset of physiologically normal puberty and ends when an adult identity and behaviour are accepted. This period of development corresponds roughly to the period between the ages of 10 and 19 years (WHO 1986).

According to Stang and Story (2005), the age range is usually divided into three stages; Early adolescence as Stage I between 10 and 14 years, Middle adolescence as Stage II between 15-17 years and Late adolescence as Stage III between 18-21 years of age. A lack of awareness of the distinctiveness of adolescence has led the society to generally identify these stages with late childhood or early adulthood.

Increasing awareness of the potential and necessity for working with young people and an increased recognition globally on investing in adolescents, and that the failure to do so runs the risk of undermining the progress made in the first decade of life has paved the way to work towards enhancing the need to have more meaningful interventions. Schooling without learning is not just a wasted development opportunity, but also a great injustice to children and youth.

The convention on the rights of the child (CRC) defines a child as "every human being below the age of 18 years". Consequently, adolescents upto 18 years are holders of all the rights enshrined in the convention; they are entitled to special protection measures and according to their evolving capacities, they can progressively exercise their rights.

2. An Overview of the Indian Situation

In the recent past India has seen some positive movement in the enrolment and participation in school education. Through the inception of the National Policy on Education in 1986, India aimed to achieve complete enrolment through making free and compulsory education mandatory at school levels. The Constitution of India in its Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 45), directs the State to provide free and compulsory

education for all children up to fourteen years of age. After more than seventy years of independence India continues to struggle with issues pertaining to school dropouts, child labour, child trafficking and even issues of child marriage.

A historic milestone was achieved in the year 2010 when Article 21A, and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 became a reality. It anchored the values of equality, social justice and democracy that can be achieved only through education. The adoption of the 'right of children to free and compulsory education' has created a momentum to further the efforts of ensuring quality education for all. The National Youth Policy 2003 includes 13-35-year olds as youth but recognizes adolescents aged 13-19 as a special group. The launch of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan - Education for All - 2011* was a major leap forward in providing education for all.

India is a signatory to several international commitments towards human progress. One such significant document is the 'Dakar Framework for Action', which aims at 'quality education' for all by the year 2015, emphasising the literacy goal, gender equality and other quality parameters. The nation also has to its credit several well intentioned interventions that are planned and executed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of School Education and Literacy), Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The New Education Policy in 2016 and the draft policy of 2019 highlights inclusive education, learning outcomes, strengthening vocational education, reforming school systems, accelerating rural literacy, new teaching pedagogies, comprehensive education with ethics, physical education and arts and crafts. The adoption of the CRC General Convention on the Rights of Children during adolescence in 2016 testifies to the increased recognition during the adolescent period. The World Bank has warned of a learning crisis in global education particularly in low and middle-income countries like India. The UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 highlights 'Adolescent Empowerment' as a key strategy for major change. 'National Skills Development

Initiative' in 2009 that provides adolescents, women and school dropouts with opportunities to acquire vocational skills.

The Government of India further launched through the Ministry of Labour and Employment in 2009, a scheme that provides adolescents, women and school dropouts with opportunities to acquire vocational skills titled the 'Saakshar Bharat Scheme' (Ministry of Human Resource Development 2009). However, in spite of these advances the space for adolescent engagement is much less flourishing than for youth, with adolescents falling somewhere in the middle, sometimes considered as children (technically they are while under 18 years) and sometimes considered as youth (15-19 year olds). The distinct issues affecting adolescents has tended therefore to receive less attention, as can be seen in the minimal number of adolescent-specific policies or forums.

India's Youth Policy of 2014 reiterates the need for 'adolescent friendly clinics' to provide counselling and treatment. As early as in the year 2002, the National Education Policy reflected a sense of urgency to work towards achieving international goals such as early childhood care and education, ensuring children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minority groups gain access to free and compulsory education, equitable access, improving adult literacy, eliminating gender discrimination and improving the quality ensuring literacy, numeracy and life skills.

The recent past, further saw the launch of the draft of the New Education Policy in 2016 and very recently in 2019, that speaks about enabling inclusive education, ensuring learning outcomes in elementary education, strengthening vocational education, reforming school systems, accelerating rural literacy, implementing new teaching pedagogies in science and maths, and evolving a comprehensive education with ethics, physical education, arts and crafts. A critique of the draft policy highlights that by and large this policy has not given priority to the actual needs of those who represent the marginalised sections of the society.

Despite these massive responses, parameters such as equity, inclusion and justice still evade the nation's progress, particularly for the disadvantaged sections. The country has not made significant accomplishments particularly in the primary, elementary and high school education levels. Social stratification of the Indian society reflects marked inequalities in the educational and employment scenario of the disadvantaged sections. Predominantly, caste, class, religion, ethnic boundaries and gender have persistently been the impeding factors for low levels of education among the disadvantaged sections in the nation. Attempts to address these inequalities have been poorly implemented and have not sufficiently reduced disparities and unequal access, resulting in large numbers of disadvantaged adolescents.

After more than seventy years of independence India continues to battle with issues pertaining school dropouts, child labour, child trafficking and even with issues of child marriage. Despite India's Constitutional guarantee for providing free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen years, the country still grapples with issues of inadequate access and poor quality of education. Sustained efforts committed partnerships and well-coordinated processes by concerned bodies, (local/ government bodies, INGOs and NGOs) is an imperative for concerted action. Not only has India the onerous task of providing quality education, but also the responsibility of equitable and accessible education.

Investing in adolescents' education and empowerment needs to be identified as a separate development agenda. The

adolescent stage of human life is sandwiched between the child and the adult stage and invariably does not find its independent position. There is a growing need to focus on adolescent' transition from childhood to adulthood. Informal learning opportunities, both in and out of school can build competencies and skills for gaining access to the world of employment. Providing opportunities to participate in processes and decision-making for the self and family can build their abilities to communicate, participate in civic activities and provide for invaluable contributions to development of family, community and the wider society.

When it comes to the girl child, globally they still lag behind boys in secondary school participation. Girls' disadvantage is highest in least developed countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Girls' secondary education is critical to their development and can help postpone early marriage and pregnancy that can have adverse effects on girls' health, well-being and economic prospects.

Providing opportunities for adolescent girls and boys to participate in processes and decisions that affect them is one of the most effective ways to build their skills and confidence, and to improve their ability to communicate with others. Participation in social, economic, political and cultural debates not only contributes to civic engagement, it also improves adolescents' ability to hold governments and other duty bearers to account. Adolescents can provide unique and invaluable contributions to their families, communities and wider society and must be supported in doing so. Evidence shows that when adolescent girls and boys are supported and encouraged by caring adults, along with policies and services attentive to their needs and capabilities, they have the potential to break long-standing cycles of poverty, discrimination and violence.

3.Existing Initiatives in India

It is well-known that the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, has set in place a number of programmes and policies aimed at increasing enrolment and retention in school and providing technical and vocational education training. However, there is a growing need to focus on adolescents' transition from primary to secondary school, which is often difficult in developing countries. Innovative non-formal learning opportunities, both in and out of schools, can help provide 21st Century competencies and skills for gaining adequate employment.

Adolescents are one of the most voiceless groups in our society. They are either treated like children or pushed into Adulthood. Adolescents aged 10-19 years constitute about one-fourth of India's population with an enormous potential to contribute to India's economic growth and development. In order to contribute, adolescents must be healthy, educated and equipped with information skills and confidence that would enable them to contribute to the growth of their communities and the country as a whole. A key challenge in addressing these issues is the lack of a universal definition for adolescents. Investing in the education of adolescents needs to be given due priority and identified as a separate development agenda in the planning process. The adolescent stage of human life is sandwiched between the child and the adult stage and invariably does not find its independent position.

There is a growing need to focus on the adolescent's transition from childhood to adulthood. Informal learning opportunities, both in and out of school can build competencies and skills for gaining access to the world of employment. Providing opportunities to participate in processes and decision-making for the self and family can build abilities to communicate, participate in civic activities and provide for invaluable

contributions to development of family, community and the wider society. The scarcity of quality schools is one of the major reasons for high rates of dropout from schools before completing five years of primary education. Girls are more likely to dropout even earlier.

At the global level, WHO and UNICEF define adolescents as those aged 10–19 years (WHO 2012; UNICEF 2005). While the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India (GoI) has adopted the WHO definition, various agencies of the government continue to use different definitions and age groups. One of the major actors in the field of child development in India is the UNICEF. A disturbing fact reported in UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2016, states 'that unless the world tackles inequality today in 2030, sixty million of primary school age children will be out of school'. The report further states that 'they will become part of a vicious, intergenerational cycle that curtails children's opportunities, deepens inequality and threatens societies everywhere'. They will become part of a vicious, intergenerational cycle that curtails children's opportunities, deepens inequality and threatens societies everywhere.

UNICEF supports the national programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in ensuring that all children complete five years of education. The strategy is built around three inter-linked themes: access, quality and equity. It also supports the provision of equal opportunities for disadvantaged children, especially girls, urban poor, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and working children. It also works closely with the government of India to support the education of the girl child at the elementary school level. It further supports alternative learning strategies, such as bridging courses and residential camps for adolescent girls who are out of school. This is to ensure that these girls emerge motivated and continue education.

Educational advancement has seen vast changes and new concepts in the recent past. The rights-based approach to elementary education, student entitlement, shift in emphasis from literacy and basic education to secondary, higher, technical and professional education, the endeavour to extend universalization to secondary education and to reshape higher education has been the centre of paradigm shifts in the country. Even more recent developments include a new impetus to skills development through vocational education in the context of the emergent technologies and multi-disciplinary learning methodologies. These efforts over the last few years have improved levels of accessibility, infrastructure and literacy but to a large extent still lack in equity and quality education.

4. Rationale and expected outcome of the study

It is imperative to pay attention to the adolescent period as India as a nation will soon experience this high proportion of adolescent population in the next two decades (Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 2017). Efforts of the government of Tamil Nadu to include the disadvantaged adolescents into the mainstream of development in the State is said to be significant in relation to other States in the county. However, much of the interventions are criticised for being welfare oriented rather than developmental/participatory in nature, which ideally leads to higher achievements in holistic development. Despite such emphasis, challenges confronting adolescents has not been duly recognized as important and therefore not in the forefront of urban social planning. Other priorities such as poverty mitigation, health care and primary education have taken precedence and rightly so.

Identifying specific needs of adolescents and negotiating their legitimate space, given their unique characteristics and

challenges, needs visibility and has to be brought to the forefront of development practice. The study, therefore, seeks to explore social meanings and contexts of adolescents from disadvantaged coastal communities and their environments in the specified geographical location. It additionally aims to depict everyday experiences of out-of-school adolescents and its impact on their aspirations for a better life.

5. Statement of the Problem

Challenges confronting adolescents have not been duly recognized as imperative and therefore have been prevalent with little intervention. There has been much research on children and youth, but adolescents are usually made to fit within these two categories and are not recognised as an independent category according to their age specific needs. The research seeks to sufficiently answer questions on the causes of children dropping out of school and suggests possible ways to rectify this urban challenge.

The study envisages launching a strong initiative for the 'Empowerment of Disadvantaged Adolescents'. Using the 'Systems Approach' in the intervention plan, the study presents the complex interplay of social institutions and structures and furthermore highlights the importance of 'family' and 'community' for appropriate and meaningful change. Being an action-research study, it suggests creating new spaces in terms of their age-specific needs. It negotiates and strategizes a proposal with multi stakeholders to carry forward the creation of 'Adolescents Space'. Through its interventions it seeks to further empower poor and disadvantaged individuals, families and communities towards fostering an inclusive and just education for adolescents. One of the major intervention outcomes envisaged is to provide educational and training support through multi stakeholder partnerships for adolescents through life /soft skills and livelihood skills training.

One of the major intervention outcomes envisaged is to provide educational and training support space through a multi stakeholder partnership for adolescents with the aim of developing their core competencies, life /soft skills and livelihood opportunities. It suggests and intervention model to be implemented in order to establish a visible space for developing skills specifically for the disadvantaged adolescents. In view of enabling the adolescent population to realise their fullest potential, it is important that they must have access to recent opportunities for training and to face the world of work.

6. METHODOLOGICAL OUTLINE

The article stems from an action research study funded by the International Federation of Catholic Universities, Paris, titled 'Continuing Education for Disadvantaged Adolescents' executed in a coastal fishing community named Nochikuppam, in Chennai, India. The design was qualitative in nature that involved observing and describing social, economic and political issues that out-of-school children face and the reasons for which they drop out of school. As it was not possible to identify adolescents who were out-of-school, using purposive sampling technique under the non-probability sampling design was appropriate. The sampling comprised of drawing up life trajectories of twenty respondents (school going and out of school) between the age group of 11 to 17 years.

Using case narratives to collect data, the study finds that most of their lived experiences act as impediments to their personal growth and development. Eliciting from respondents, the study suggests negotiation of 'adolescent space' and recognition of this is a major requirement to fulfil their aspirations. It covers a gamut of needs, the main focus however being on skills training and capacity building of the

adolescents. Based on field observations and participatory techniques such as transect walks, focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews that enabled to gain deeper insights into the day-to-day lived experiences of adolescents under study. Besides secondary data were collected to corroborate facts elicited from the study. Required consent from the concerned respondents was obtained. Informed consent, confidentiality, safety and health of researchers were important considerations. The study offers sufficiently clear research results, so that practitioners may decrypt tangible situations and make decisions on social work interventions that are both curative and preventative, adapting it to their own context and requirements.

7. Theoretical Directions and Conceptual Understanding

The 'systems approach' has grown with a wide acceptance in social work theory since the 1970s. The term 'systems theory' to social work was first introduced in 1930 (Hollis & Taylor 1951). Even before the term 'systems theory' was proposed, social workers adopted a 'person-in-environment' perspective (Whittaker & Tracy 1997). Systems theories provide an intellectual foundation for reintegrating the psychological and sociological discourses by recognising that a range of socio-economic and cultural systems impact on people in myriad ways. The initial proponents of the systems theory highlighted its potential to provide scientific credibility to the profession and to develop an integrated theoretical foundation that would capture the central elements of social work practice in all its varied forms.

In the decades of the seventies and eighties, the systems approach in social work practice gained wide recognition and acceptance. The shift focused on a unifying perspective, one that was not bound by methods but rather was shaped by situational or environmental parameters. (Goldstein 1973, Pincus & Minahan 1973, Middleman & Goldberg 1974, Siporin 1975, Bronfenbrenner 1979). To prepare social workers for practice, the social work curriculum needs to emphasise on teaching practice perspectives that view the whole of social problems in a more broad-based understanding. An integrated practice framework for social work assumes that the root of problems originates in the larger environmental context and be resolved by collective action.

Criticisms about the application of the systems theory to social work portray it as being weak in what should be its concern about oppressive forces, does not consider the incompatibilities of capitalism and class and its hindrances to social integration. A major criticism has been in its limitations to define boundaries of systems and sub-systems in the realm of societal structures. Despite these ideological criticisms, systems thinking does enable a methodological and organizational rigor in practice (Milner & O' Byrne 1998; Milner, Myers & O' Byrne 2015). The model is well suited to work in communities as it aids the practitioner in assessing the broader territory of intervention and to work in collaboration with other agencies. This experiment is an attempt to map the systems theory through a field work project that provides a perspective to locate the practitioner and enhances an understanding of the complexities of social work practice.

In Social Work, the term 'system' means a set of dynamic general relationships that together process 'stimuli' (inputs) through a subsystem of closer relationships, thereby producing 'responses' (outputs). The process is one of changing inputs into outputs. In each case, the process takes place within boundaries. To place the eco-systems model in the context of a theoretical framework, an elucidation of several key concepts in the model, its goals, and skills of practice is briefly discussed. The model is based on the eco-systems theory and opens-up a variety of opportunities for intervention and change. It subscribes to the philosophy of

social work and to people's participation in development. The focus of social work practice is on the interactions between people and systems in their social environment. People are dependent on social systems for help in obtaining the materials, emotional or spiritual resources and the services and opportunities they would need to realize their aspirations that help to cope with their life tasks. The eco-systems theory views an individual as existing in a web of relationships (Evans and Kearney, 1996).

There are six steps involved in the change process identified as the action system: engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and termination. Engagement is when practitioners orient themselves to the problem and begin to establish communication and a relationship with the client system and others addressing the problem. Assessment is the investigation and determination of situations affecting an identified problem or issue as viewed from a micro, mezzo or macro perspective. It is gathering information about a problem so that decisions can be made about solutions. Planning specifies as to what should be done by whom and when. Intervention or implementation is the process whereby the client and the practitioner follow the plans to achieve the goals. Once goals are met and change takes place it is imperative to terminate the relationship. Evaluation is a process of determining whether a given change effort was worthwhile (Pincus and Minahan, 1973). Subsequently, follow-up is carried out to examine if the intervention is successful and moving in the right direction as envisaged in the planning stage.

The study focussed on the systems theory applicable to Social Work Practice (Pincus and Minahan 1973). The theory states that behaviour is influenced by a variety of factors that work together as a system. A person's parents, friends, school, economic class, home environment and other factors all influence how a person thinks and acts. Seeking to help correct missing or ineffective parts of that system can have a positive impact on behaviour. In systems theory, one must observe and analyse all of the systems that contribute to an individual's behaviour and welfare, and work to strengthen those systems. This may take the form of providing positive role models, therapy or other services to help create a more supportive system for the individual.

8. Aim and objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to explore social meanings and social contexts of adolescents and their environments. Since focussed attention is on disadvantaged adolescents, the present study envisages launching a strong initiative for empowerment of adolescents. Adolescents also have an equal right to live in safety and dignity in a proactive environment. This study aims to cover a gamut of needs for adolescents in the community ranging from basic needs to health and education, empowerment and protection from abuse. This will lead to a holistic development initiative for disadvantaged adolescents in the community. Since the study was an action research study based on a qualitative approach the objectives of the study were to:

1. study the reasons for dropping out of school
2. understand the challenges faced by adolescents that hinder education
3. explore the programmes provided by government and non-government organisations for adolescents
4. develop a link with Government, non-governmental bodies and Corporate initiatives working for adolescents
5. enhance opportunities for adolescents that will build self-esteem and overall development

Applying the process for Social Work intervention as suggested by Pincus and Minahan (1973) the following presentation gives an overview of the research findings and

intervention of the action research study. I Phase – Exploration, Assessment and Planning, II Phase– Implementation and Goal Attainment, III Phase – Evaluation and Termination.

9. Implementation

I Phase – Exploration, Assessment and Planning

Profile of the Community

The study was carried out in Nochikuppam, primarily a fishing community located in an urban developing area along the shoreline of the Marina beach, Chennai. It is one of the oldest settlements in the city with a population of over 2670 families and the second largest fishing community in Tamil Nadu. The area is populated by migrants from the neighbouring rural districts and consist primarily of the MBC (Most Backward Community), a caste group strongly associated with the fishing occupation.

Caste discrimination is widely observed between the dominant fishing community and the non-fishing communities such as the SC (Scheduled Caste Community). The primary occupation being fishing, several of them are daily wage earners. There is a high incidence of child labour, illiteracy and high school dropouts, domestic violence and alcohol and substance use. Infrastructure and basic amenities are minimal. Poor housing facilities and lack of basic amenities, a lack of access to water, sanitation and garbage disposal systems. lack of health care and medical facilities, an unstable political system and a high debt status of the community marks the distinctiveness of the community.

There are a number of government and private schools surrounding the community but not located within the community. Schools are well maintained in terms of structure and buildings, some schools being better than others. Government schools are free of cost while private schools require fees. The children go to both government and private schools. Early childhood education does not seem to be a challenge. It is during middle school, that children between the age group of 12-17 dropout of school due to various reasons. The problem does not lie with the unavailability of schools as there are many schools around the area that provide education and have sufficient amenities. Some of the problems with regard to education are:

Low academic performance and fear of public examination

Children complain that the teachers in their schools question them on the subject that they are teaching and beat and embarrass them if they are not able to answer. The double periods of classes for each subject make classes very boring and children avoid going to school on those days. The children are more often associated with poor academic performance because unlike other children in the city they cannot afford high tuition fees for extra classes. The fear of class X and XII board exams has terrified these children, they either attempt the exam, fail and dropout or they dropout before they write these exams leaving them with no educational certificates further leading to no proper employment opportunities.

There are a large number of single parents in the slum whose husbands have either passed away due to alcoholism or certain illnesses like Tuberculosis and communicable diseases. A good number of either parent abandons the family. These single parents have great difficulty in taking care of their children with no support of any kind. Being uneducated worsens the problem as they have no choice but to do menial jobs and earn money to take care of their children. The children on the other hand might be stopped by the parent from going to school and forced to go to work or the child himself/herself feels guilty for the struggle of the parent and willingly drops out of school to support the basic needs of

the family.

Another reason why children drop out of school is due to ill health. They cannot afford to go to the hospital and be treated as the private hospitals require fees and the government hospitals are too far away and require travel and thus they stay at home for many days and once they recover they have already missed too many days of school and they are forced to dropout as they are not readmitted or they don't feel like going to school because of the number of missed classes that they fear they will not be able to catch up.

Schools do not readmit children who have been absent for a number of days without a medical certificate. Many of the school going children are found to be taking many days of leave in the name of sickness and eventually dropout of school due to frequent absenteeism.

Girls in the area are married by the age of 18 or younger either by their own wishes or the wishes of their parents. The children have constant pressure from their peers and start bad habits such as alcoholism, smoking and drugs at a very small age. They join together and bunk school, roaming the streets and come back home in the evening without the knowledge of their parents. They also get into relationships and run away from home to get married and then come back home being pregnant. Some teachers give the children a severe beating and collect fines for any misbehaviour of the child like playing in the classroom or coming late to school.

Profile of the Respondents

Age of respondents ranged between 11-17 years, 10 of the respondents were school going and 10 were out of school and an equal number of boys and girls in each. There was a mixture of adolescents from both private and government schools, all belonging to Nochi kuppam. Some belonged to the most backward community-MBC, and others belonging to the Scheduled Caste – SC community. The family occupation was primarily fishing and the SC community, although residing in the same area, were not allowed to practice fishing as an occupation but other menial jobs such as net picking, cleaning and segregating the fish, etc. They were also involved in occupations outside the community such as painting, driving, housekeeping, etc.

Among the out of school adolescents, two were married and living with their husbands. The families were rather small, detrimental to the common belief that families of the lower socio-economic groups tend to be large.

The income of the family was around Rs. 500-600/- per day or between Rs.2500 – 10,000/- per month. The out of school children who went to work were paid between Rs.7000-8000/- per day and for smaller odd jobs such as a mechanic assistant or water delivery, they earned Rs.200-300/- per day.

Although the background information of the respondents was similar, there were hardly any differences between school going and out of school children with regard to support they received from outside, their family education, income and school experiences.

Parents and the family environment influence the behaviour and decisions taken by adolescents. Adolescents are moving towards becoming independent physically, emotionally and cognitively, and yet growing. They require reassurance, support and unconditional love in tough times.

Parents of the school going and out of school adolescents had little or no education. None of them reached class twelve. Although among the out of school adolescents, sibling's education seemed to have an effect on the other siblings. In

families were the older siblings dropped out, the younger sibling was more likely to dropout and in fact much earlier than the older sibling.

Parents worked in low paying jobs which was not sufficient to take care of the family's needs. They often got into debts and found it difficult to pay it back. Among the school going children, few received support for their education from relatives and institutions which helped them to stay in school, they reported that they were never without food and always got help from outside if they needed it. Out of school respondents stated that they were many days without food and their parents were in debts.

Gender Inequality, alcohol dependency and domestic violence was common in the households of both school going and out of school adolescents. Fathers under the influence of alcohol created havoc which affected the lives of the adolescents in different ways. Gender Inequality is seen in the maternal home and in the home after marriage. Mothers are given the responsibility to take care of the children.

Death in the family usually resulted in many life changes as the family member might have been a source of entire or partial provision to the family. This traumatic event left families in poverty and struggling to continue their education. Discrimination in School and Community

Much data pointed out to discrimination experiences in school and community. Respondents had grave experiences to share which point to the poor quality of teaching and a lack of sensitivity to the adolescent stage of life. These life experiences have made life more difficult for them and as a result created a disinterest in continuing their education.

II Phase – Implementation and Goal Attainment

Having collected data on the respondents' background, a deeper understanding of the community and the adolescent environment was built. The social workers/researchers focussed on establishing a good and meaningful relationship with the community and the adolescents. This phase of the action research was to identify and create meaningful spaces for the adolescent expressions and for their current needs in terms of psychosocial and spiritual development. It was important to identify the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social needs. Space can represent all of these ideals and more. Schools can create spaces for young adolescents. The most important spaces we might create is the space to express one's worth, one's deepest desires, one's aspirations, especially those from the marginalised sections. Everyone rightfully need space, but the question is: have the right types of spaces been created for them.

Several direct and indirect data were collected in keeping with the plan of action. Networking with the local Corporation/Private schools and health centres to identify key questions of the research was a major task of the project. It aimed to research and analyse complexity, sensitive areas in need of exploration such as the involvement and contribution of the parents, teachers and the community as a whole.

- As part of the intervention phase of the project, Leadership skills training is being given to students of Classes VII, VIII and IX in nearby schools in partnership with IDF (Indian Development Foundation) an NGO working towards health, education and empowerment.
- A summer camp was conducted for the children of the area in which life skills were taught over three days.
- A rally was conducted for Girl Child Education with the students of St. Raphael's school
- A Life skill training centre was initiated in partnership with multiple stakeholders

Furthermore, the following are the envisaged intervention plans as a follow up of the research.

Assessment of physical and mental health status

- Training programme for trainers
- Situational assessment of the girl child
- Coping skills for adolescent related issues
- Sexual and gender-based violence
- Personal security of adolescents
- Provision of basic social services, including education
- Enrolment of dropouts in mainstream education.
- Awareness on reproductive and sexual health, HIV and AIDS
- Participation of girls/young women in empowerment programmes
- Participation in environmental protection
- Awareness on Civic Rights and Social Responsibility
- Cultural exhibition of talents and honing of abilities
- Networking with parents, family members and service providers like teachers, etc

III Phase – Evaluation and Termination

Adolescents have an equal right to express their aspirations, live in safety and dignity in a proactive environment despite the hindering forces. Young people from disadvantaged coastal communities definitely face shame, dishonour, discrimination and isolation which has indelible scars on their psychological health and their learning capacities.

Though several efforts to cater to this group is evident, the interventions are still uneven which leaves a large number of young people out of the development agenda. Even though enrolment in school in almost complete, the completion of schooling has a long way to go. The mean years of schooling for India is 5.12 (Planning Commission, 12th Five Year Plan, Govt. of India) is lower than the average for developing countries which is 7.09 years.

Strategically planned and designed programmes for adolescent will result in high social returns and an improved human capital. The research suggests the following to stakeholders concerned with adolescent development.

To the Government – Scrap rote learning, encourage research based learning from a young age, Enhance the quality of Teacher's training institutes, reduce heavy load of syllabus and include activity-based, student-centered teaching methods, Skill based training for adolescents who have already dropped out of school, Availability of a counsellor in every school.

To schools – Regular assessments to measure progress in learning, only recruit trained teachers even at the primary level. Teacher evaluation on a regular basis

To teachers – Make the classroom learning fun and activity-based, identify students who are more likely to drop out, take efforts to go beyond classroom learning, establish working relationships with family and community, understand that education is not merely passing in examinations.

To parents – Send children to school despite difficulties, awareness on importance of education and on the need for girl child education, Involvement in the child's wellbeing, meeting with the teachers regularly.

10. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are many reasons why adolescent dropouts of school. Incapable government, poverty, unemployed parents, teacher factor, peer pressure, child labour, illness, lack of interest, etc. It is essential that the government, schools, teachers, community and parents work

together holistically to bring about a positive environment for adolescents to grow in. The convention on the rights of the child (CRC) clearly outlines their rights and heralds them as the innate benefit of both boys and girls. UNICEF is guided by the CRC along with CEDAW and therefore is mandated to invest in adolescents, especially girls as right bearers and a marginalized population. Neglecting the growth of adolescents will deeply cause harm to a successful future and will only lead to continue the cycle of poverty. One drawback is that adolescence is not a significant demographic in the component of youth population. A good education is the key to ending poverty among adolescents. Skill training is essential in times of early school dropout, so that they are equipped to find employment. Implementation of effective and early prevention is essential in areas where high dropout rate is evident.

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