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GO-GIRLS-GO

Closure report

1 MAY, 2020 - 31 JULY, 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adolescent girls (15-18 years) in India are experiencing huge transitions. Their aspirations for and imagination of a better future has grown exponentially. But they face cultural, social and institutional constraints in fulfilling their aspirations. Norms and practices based on entrenched patriarchy inhibit their economic participation, and restrict their mobility due to insecurity, sexual harassment and violence in schools, at home and in public spaces. Despite policies, legislation and institutions aimed at promoting gender equality, most school educational programmes remain gender blind, with adolescent boys and girls not learning and practising equal gender relations. Equally important, being young and girls, they lack confidence, voice and choice, unable to articulate their aspirations and shape their identities. These constraints operate together, resulting in continued exclusion of young girls from actively exercising leadership and making use of opportunities to fulfil their aspiration. There is urgent need of a model which

- Focuses on girls completing their education
- Focuses on girls joining vocational education
- Focuses on aspiring young girls to strengthen their agency to lead change
- Prepares boys to support them in realising their aspirations in an enabling, violence-free environment
- Contributes to the sensitisation of educational institutions towards supporting young girls to exercise their leadership and agency in choice of career and livelihood, including the need for learning gender equality
- Takes an integrated approach to combating violence and strengthening voice, self-reliance and participation of young girls to demand equality

Go Girls Go was piloted in 4 government schools of Delhi, focusing upon girls, so that they can complete their education, join vocational education, and strengthen their agency to lead change. The project also worked with a large number of adolescent boys who were capacitated to support in creating gender just and safe spaces in schools, homes and the community. The project complies with the sustainable development goals 4 (which is to provide universal quality education) and sustainable development goal 5 (which is to create universal gender equality).

The project adopted a multi-stakeholder approach, which involved interventions and workshops with the students of government schools, parents of students and other community leaders. The project was implemented in two phases; the mode of delivery for the first phase (May, 2019 to April, 2020) was

face-to-face, the second phase was implemented between (May, 2020 to July, 2020) through a virtual mode.

PROJECT BRIEF

The project was designed to inspire young girls to strengthen their agency to complete their education and lead change. Most significant change that the project aimed to achieve was that the girls would experience an increase in self-confidence and aspire to complete education, learn skills, and increase their agency and ability to question decisions pertaining to their life. This change was brought about through the carefully crafted and executed participatory workshops that were built on the lived experiences of adolescents. The modules allowed the girls to build self-confidence, analyse their life situations and learning to commit to individual and social change.

This project demonstrates a scalable model to help achieve SDGs 4 and 5, which can be used by policy-makers seeking innovative solutions for national development through enhancing educational status and economic empowerment of girls.

Project goals:

- Adolescent girls learn and exercise their agency.
- Sensitisation of adolescent boys to gender equal norms and prevention of violence against women and girls -- building their capacities as peers to influence the wider community and create an enabling environment for girls to be treated equally.
- Educational institutions learn to be open to providing equitable education to boys and girls.
- Demonstrate a scalable model to help achieve SDGs 4 and 5 that can be used by policy-makers seeking innovative solutions for national development through enhancing educational status and economic empowerment of girls.

Total Outreach:



520 Adolescent boys and girls (420 through face-to-face sessions and 100 through online sessions)



340 Adolescent girls gain self-confidence and voice



280 Adolescent boys sensitized to equal rights for women

KEY ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

1. Participatory learning programme:

The Participatory learning programme was divided into 3 modules that focused broadly on discovery of self, dismantling gender and manifestation of gender stereotypes in their lives and leading social change.

Discovery of self:

Adolescents are confronted with a wide range of issues that can range from dealing with changes to their physical appearance to being accepted in friendship groups. This is further exacerbated by experiences of gender based violence. These experiences impact their behaviour and in the manner they interact with others. It has been well documented that by becoming more accepting of themselves, adolescents are better equipped to deal with the challenges that may cause damage to their self-confidence. It has been our experience that often the lack of self-confidence among adolescents is linked closely to issues of self and identity and a lack of awareness on the same.

During these sessions, adolescent girls and boys were encouraged to answer 4 questions about themselves:

- I am good at ...
- My strengths are ...
- Things that my family and friends like about me ...
- My weaknesses ...
- I am proud of myself because of these qualities

A safe space was provided for the conversations to take place in. The discussions were deeply reflective and indicated some of the challenges young girls and boys are facing today. The deeply reflective responses mentioned how family and friends can be strength and a weakness at the same time. They counted skills, ability to control emotions, excellence in education and participation in sports as strengths and not being able to do any of these as weaknesses.

These sessions helped to build a self- appreciative attitude among the participants, while they came to believe that any weakness can be converted into strength if they believe in themselves.

At the end of the session while Sumitra from Haryana felt ***“It is important to talk about our strengths and it is equally important to talk about our weaknesses so that we can work on it, this activity has allowed me to look on both the things for the betterment”***

Anandita from Odisha felt, ***“My strength is that I am girl, often people try to make it a weakness but for me it’s my strength”***

Charting life goals in the River of Life:

Participating adolescents were aided to metaphorically associate their life with a flowing river. This deeply reflective exercise allowed the girls and boys to reflect on their life – hurdles and happy memories and trace it along with the river’s course.

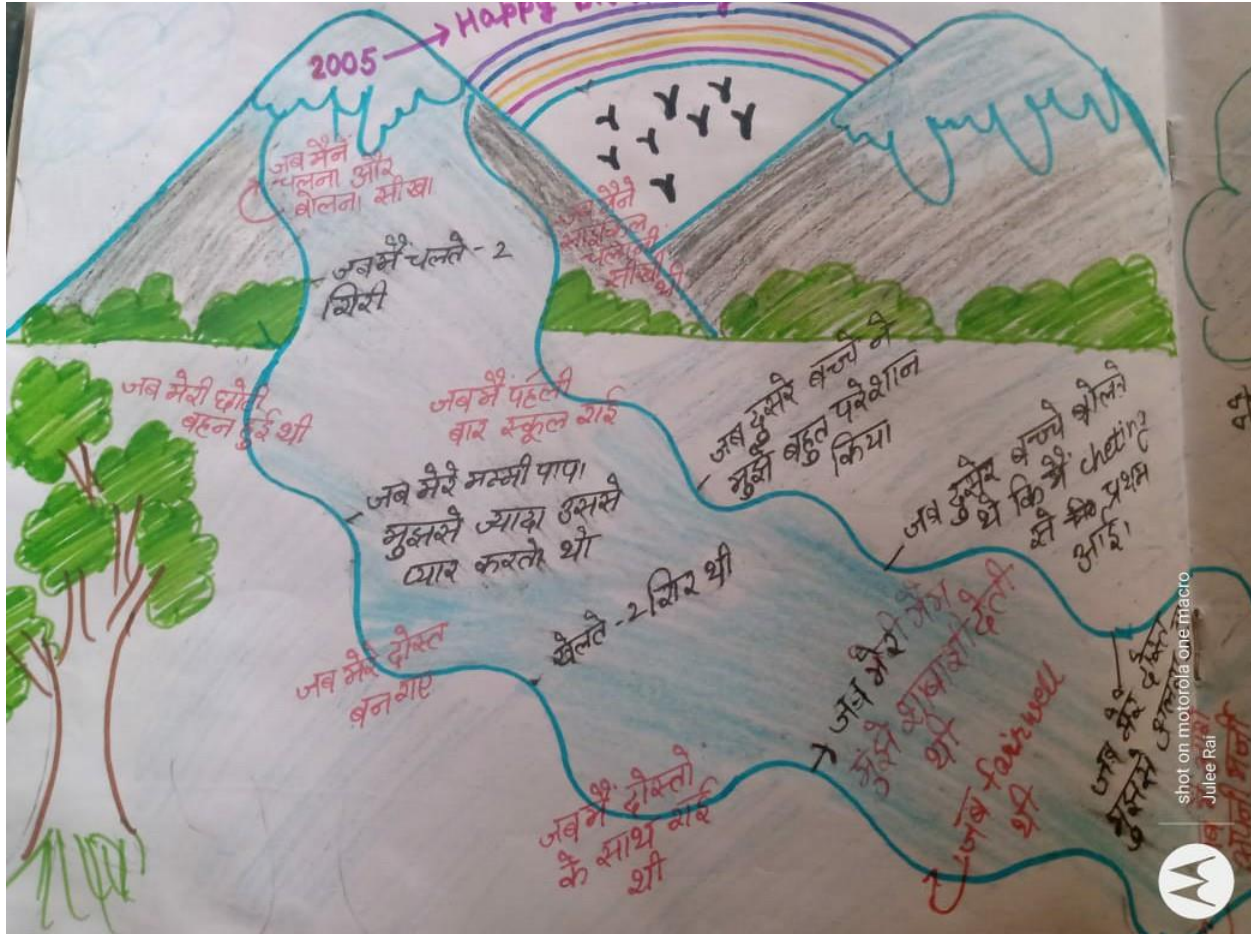
“After doing activity, I still can’t believe that so much has happened in my life till now and I overcame every single hurdle of my life. Now, I am very sure about myself. I know that I can get over any situation with my positive attitude”. – (female)

However, observations like the one made by Anandita came through more starkly in the next session as they began to visualize their future, and were able to clearly identify opportunities, threats, supporters and influencers in their life.

“Gender difference and discrimination is a big challenge for us in achieving our future dreams of career and how what we want in our life.” (female)

They learned that it is good to be ambitious and to believe in their abilities and strengths, yet the challenges imposed by gender presented real threats to them achieving their life goals.

“We never sit and plan for our future but after this activity I am aware what I want in my future and what are the various challenges that I can face while achieving my goals. So, now I am going to work on them and will try to overcome my future challenges.” – (male)



River of my life exercise: female participant

Dismantling gender:

The purpose of this session was to deconstruct notions of gender into simple relatable concepts. Unboxing gender in this manner is a powerful method that allows both the boys and girls to develop their own understanding of gender, it is empowering in the realisation of it being a social construct thus dynamic and changeable.

The fact that women can give birth is biologically determined, but the expectation that they should do all the housework because they are women is socially constructed and is very wrong. Also, the belief that men should be 'brave' and 'strong' is also socially constructed. It is very sad that these things are deeply ingrained in us that it looks almost natural to us- Female

"The activity has challenged me to think out of the box, whatever I have learnt I will share this with my family especially younger brother and sister." – Female

Establishing gender-equal relations at home:

With COVID-19 and lockdown the burden of domestic work in all the cases fell on the girls (and their mothers). Girls talked about how this increased burden of household chores is making it difficult for them to attend online classes or study. They also shared a fear that they might not be sent back to school since the family has now become used to the presence or the role she was playing in completing household chores. But often, these roles become normalized to such an extent that it becomes difficult to recognise it in everyday lives.

Tools for gender analysis were taught to adolescent boys and girls who took on the task of applying the tools first in their own lives and homes and then in the lives of their friends. Analysis allowed both girls and boys to introspect and discuss deeply with each other.

"We could only imagine things that we constantly see and told, after this activity I will look things differently and will not assign gender to any work." – Male

"Now, I am aware of the fact that anybody can do anything, like boys can do household work and girls can run family business because it is all about the choice and interest."- Male

"I always help my mother in household works but from now onwards I will encourage my father to also help her in household chores." – Female

Building Equal Futures (A study by adolescent leaders on youth, gender and violence):

Once skills on conducting a participatory research project were learned, boys and girls went on to design and conduct a rapid assessment among their friends and families. Keeping the participatory model in mind, the questions and corresponding options (for answers) suggested by each fellow were shared in the WhatsApp group and taken into account while preparing the final questionnaire, which was then collated into a Google Form. This survey was conducted with other adolescents of similar age group who were either their friends, classmates, cousins or some acquaintance from the family. Within one week, the fellows were able to get responses from 127 adolescent respondents. (Report enclosed as an attachment)

Violence Against women and girls:

Participants learnt to identify different types of violence against women and girls. The exercises helped boys and girls to understand and accept that violence was common and normalized and systemic.

“Sexual harassment is a common form of inappropriate behavior, it happens with almost every girl and woman”- (male)

It also helped them build understanding on different power structures and the manner in which it impacts women, girls, families, communities and society as a whole. At the end, both boys and girls pledged to take personal responsibility to end violence against women and girls at home, schools and in public space.

Laws that protect us:

The objective of the session was to introduce two important laws concerning children: Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) ACT and Juvenile Justice (JJ) ACT. They were made familiar with the process of filing a complaint and given information on various Helpline numbers. After the session, participants became aware about their legal rights through POCSO ACT and JJ ACT.

This session has helped me to understand my rights and what needs to be done if something happens with me or somebody else”- (male)

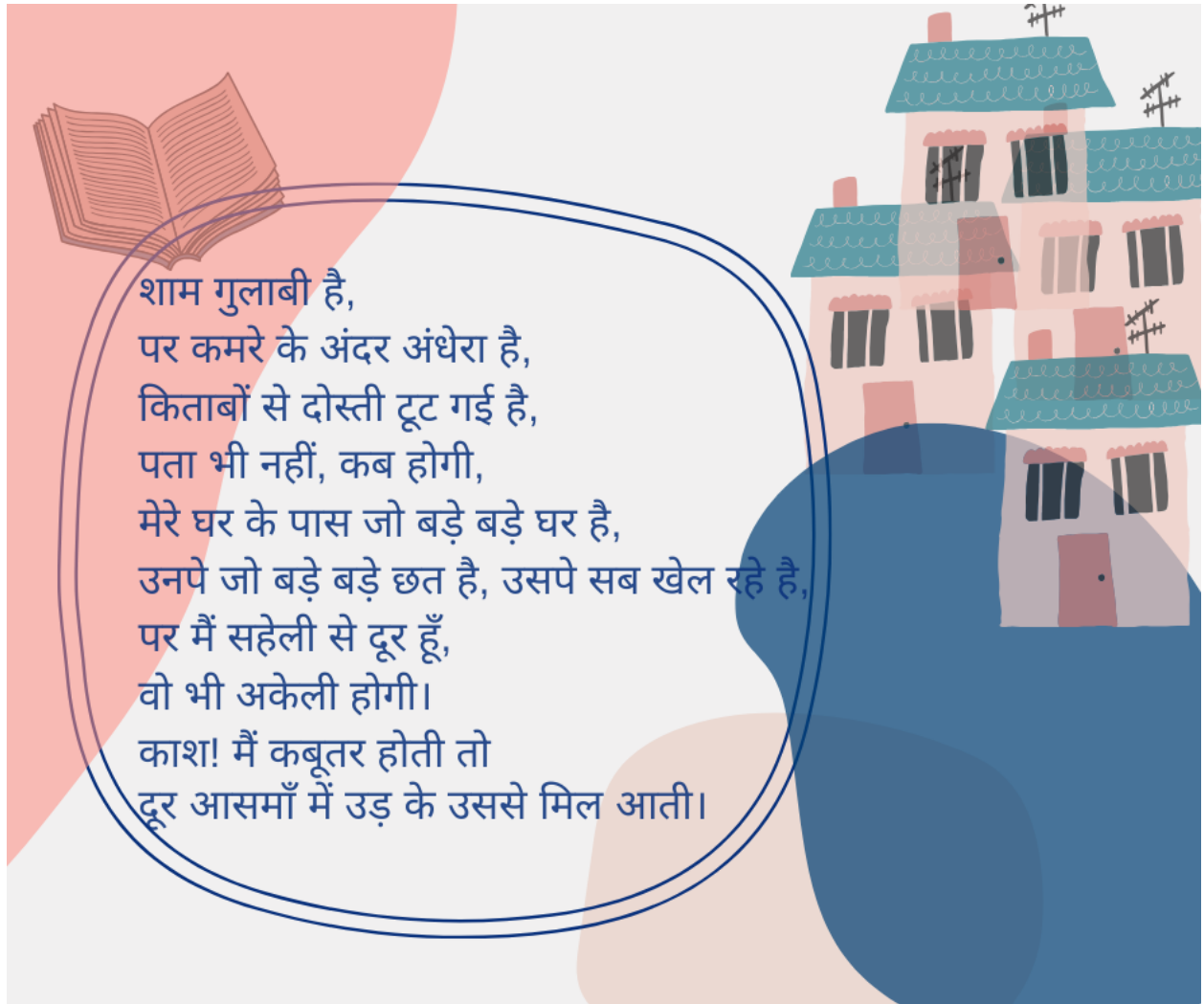
Social media campaigning:

The session on social media campaigning was conducted in order to build capacity of girls and boys on using social media platforms for advocacy. They were made familiar with social media tools which they can use for advocacy and campaigning. Participants learnt how to run a campaign on social media and make effective use of available tools like Photoshop, Canva, Blogspot and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Many participants are now using these platforms to raise awareness on different issues. One of the participants, Jatin, has started his own blogspot called ***‘talk and explore’*** to inform people about different social issues and try to influence their behavior.

Using poetry for expression

With current situation, children are finding it increasingly hard to cope with loneliness, fears about the coronavirus or a loss of the routines and support

that come with school. Poetry writing workshops were conducted with both boys and girls. Expression through poetry helped boys and girls to face their fears, apprehensions, pain and vulnerabilities. The girls expressed their vulnerabilities in their homes during lockdown, violence, restrictions on freedom, patriarchy, gender roles and dreams of better futures. Anandita has written many poems on gender discrimination, violence against women and girls; drew paintings and created creatives with the help of canva app, she is even running her own campaign on girls empowerment. All the poems were presented in an anthology of poems called Rooftop Poetry series. Click here for [rooftop poem gallery](#) created by the participants.



One of the poems produced by the participants on their experience of Covid

Career counselling:

Based on the outcomes of 'River of Life session' where each participant talked about their **career aspirations**, a series of workshops on career aspirations was conducted. External career counsellors were invited to conduct these workshops. The workshops helped to build learning about the various career options available after 10 and 12 grades and guidance was provided on their selected career options and admission procedures. The workshops also gave opportunities to the students to discuss their passions and dreams with the counsellors. These workshops met 4 major components of career counselling:

1. Information sharing on opportunities to fulfill chosen/identified careers
2. Focused career counselling (focused and detailed information on their chosen career options)
3. Information about various livelihoods options
4. Workshop on various schemes/incentives for economic empowerment of adolescent girls



Youth leadership summit:

Youth leaders met in a virtual leadership summit to discuss the role of youth in changing prevailing gender inequalities and ending violence against women and girls. Recognising that rape is the least likely to be reported of all violent crimes, they talked at length about how it needs to be easier for victims to approach police. Adolescents were aware of the fact that even when laws banning sexual offences exist, they still do not get properly implemented. Female participants shared their experiences of being stalked online, of declining mental health during lockdown, and of the burden of household chores on girls, among others.

Uncovering Fake news:

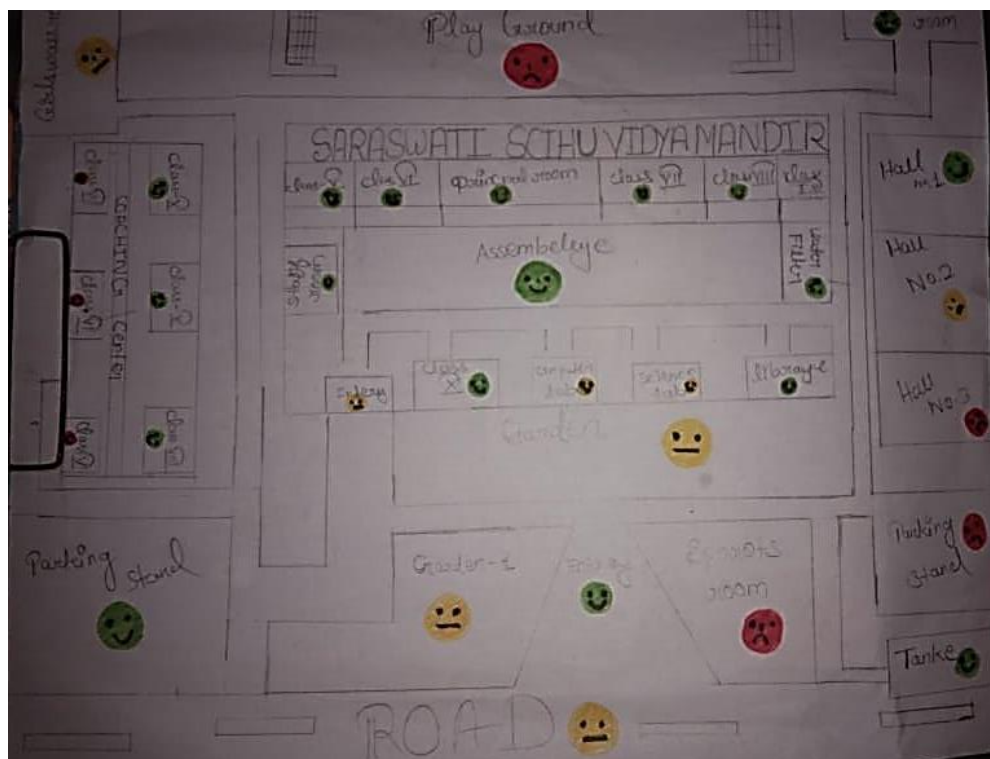
A lot of misinformation is being shared on social media which is harmful and creates confusion in the minds of young people and restricts them from understanding the difference between real and fake information. A session on fake news was organised to bring in an understanding on ways to analyse the authenticity of information that is being circulated on social media. The session also introduced techniques of doing fact check on social media.

Participatory safety audits:

A large part of the project focuses on enhancing leadership among both boys and girls to take action on creating safe spaces within their schools, and communities in order that girls may be able to access available opportunities to further their education and choice of career without fear of harassment. Participants under this project, conducted Participatory Safety Audits of their respective schools and communities. PSAs helped in providing a spatial analysis of safe and unsafe spaces of their schools and communities. The core objective of conducting the PSA exercise was to develop an appropriate strategy to reduce incidences of sexual harassment and to create safe spaces for women and girls. Some of the findings of PSA were:

- The walls of the schools are very low in height, anybody can scale the walls and get into the school.
- Most of the participants said that toilets are unsafe places for girl and for small boys. In schools, toilets are usually situated at far end corner of the school and are very isolated.

- Crowded places like playground, canteen area, markets were marked as unsafe for girls.
- Most of the participants mentioned that the road to school is very unsafe. Girls gets teased and harassed by men and boys on the way to school or while coming back from school, men and boys wait for girls outside school and pass comments on them.
- Most of the participants agreed that the presence of teachers is an important indicator for safety. Girls said that boys behave properly in front of teachers.
- In their communities, girls expressed that places close to their houses are safe because they are easily accessible and also they know people around these spaces. Girls avoid going to any space outside their own house. If they do go then they are always accompanied by other women/girls/male member of the family.
- Boys stand in group in the crossroads. Eve teasing, commenting, chit chatting and playing loud songs- this is what they do while standing there. This creates an unsafe environment for girls.



Safety Map of a school made by a female participant

Creating safe on- line learning spaces: Advocacy with school teachers In Haryana:

Four workshops were organised for government school teachers and principals of Haryana. The broad outline of the 5 sessions was:

- Introductory discussions with school principals: To build a common understanding on the objectives of the teacher training program. Each principal nominated two teachers from their school to attend the intensive teacher training course.
- Module 1 for teachers: Understanding gender and its impact on the way children learn
- Module 2 for teachers: Incorporating gender in teaching
- Module 3 for teachers: Child protection and Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act

During discussion, teachers expressed their struggle to conduct online sessions. According to teachers, many parents have requested to provide recorded videos which can be used at the convenience of the student. There has been a paradigm shift in the role of the teacher with the introduction of online classes. They have to prepare power point presentations to simplify the lessons. Apart from this, they also shared how online classes are more prone to cybercrimes, they said with WhatsApp groups boys have easy access to girls mobile numbers. Concerns about the safety of girls were even more urgent according to the teachers. The teachers expressed that issues of Child Protection and safety of students in schools are hardly ever discussed, they felt that these topics are needed to be discussed at a larger level but this hardly happens. Teachers expressed that they require a proper training on how to handle complaints of violence.

Counselling with parents of adolescent girls:

Parents of adolescent girls were invited for an online counselling session. During the session, adolescent girls shared their career aspirations and other future goals with their parents. Parents were happy to see their daughters being able to gain self-confidence and promised to support their daughters in fulfilling their dreams. It is available on this link:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKnUiMfFVKg&t=42s>)

Audio-visual material for gender sensitisation:

A self-learning audio-visual resource kit has been developed to enable students and teachers of schools, to deepen their understanding on gender. This resource kit consists of an informational A/V with a supporting reading document.

DEVIATIONS IN THE PROJECT:

With physical-distancing, quarantine and lockdowns becoming the norm, the Go Girls Go project was also redesigned in order to ensure that the program continues and those who were part of the project receive continued support.

- The learning modules for the Go Girls Go project were converted to be conducted in an online manner
- Sessions were conducted in an online manner – via zoom, google meets and whatsapp
- Structured interactions with parents increased, as there was a realisation that the girls would need extra support from home for them to be able to have access to a mobile device and to be able to attend the sessions
- The sessions going online provided an opportunity for the project to also expand its scope in terms of geographical locations. With factories and other workplaces in cities being shut, several families of the children attached with the project travelled back to their villages. Online interactions allowed them to stay connected and also allowed the inclusion of other children from the vicinity to also participate. The locations that were added were Jharkhand, Odisha, Gurugram, Sonipat and Panipat in Haryana
- The project also worked closely with the Haryana Education Department to introduce and share the Go Girls Go model with them. A session was conducted with the teachers on creating safe learning spaces for students virtually and in schools.

CHALLENGES FACED

1. Corona Outbreak caused disruptions in the completion of project deliverables. Schools were closed and it became impossible to take face-to-face sessions in schools.
2. Many students had limited or no access to smartphones and internet connectivity. Therefore, it became extremely difficult to bring them on board

and make them attend online sessions. Participants were also unfamiliar with the technology and online virtual platform (zoom) so they faced difficulty in using zoom app. They had never used zoom app so they were reluctant to use this app.

3. Participants did not have personal smartphones and they were using phones of their immediate family member or their family only had one smartphones at home. Due to this participants had to miss classes when the smartphones was being used by other family member.
4. Schools have also shifted to online classes; there were times when sessions clashed. Different participants had different timing for their online classes; therefore, sometimes it was difficult to find a common time for the session which is acceptable to all participants.
5. Some parents were reluctant to let their children attend online session. They thought that online session is an added burden on the families as it will require recharge of internet data pack. Some even said that the topics of the online session are not important and relevant; it might make their daughters stubborn and defiant.

MAJOR LESSON LEARNT

- COVID-19 pandemic is driving the rapid adoption of digital technologies across sectors. It has become the most important strategy to stay relevant.
- During this time, facilitators learnt how to conduct online sessions with participants without losing essence of f2f sessions. Facilitators adapted and modified modules to cater the needs of virtual modality. They looked for different ways to convey their information in the most effective manner. They designed more interactive and engaging activities for the participants so that they can sustain the interests of participants and also it helps them to participate more.
- Since participants were taking sessions from their homes as opposed to school classrooms, their parents and other family members were able to see/listen everything when the sessions were conducted. Therefore, the facilitators had to be very mindful of the language being used in the sessions and avoid using terms that could hurt their families' traditional and conformist sentiments. Though facilitators didn't compromise with the content and learning objective but only modified their language.