



Partnerships for Change

Evolution of SRIJAN



Partnerships for Change

Evolution of SRIJAN

(Sexual and Reproductive Health Initiative for Joint Action Network)

Priyanka Sreenath

Supported by: Deepti Agarwal, Sunil Mehra



Published by:
MAMTA - Health Institute for Mother and Child
B-5, Greater Kailash Enclave-II
New Delhi 110048
India

Copyright © 2009. MAMTA - Health Institute for Mother and Child

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part without permission of the MAMTA - Health Institute for Mother and Child provided full source citation is given and the reproduction is not for commercial purposes.

Suggested citation: Priyanka Sreenath, Faiyaz Akhtar, Anil Kumar Mishra, Deepti Agarwal, Partnerships for Change: Evolution of SRIJAN Network, Young People's Health and Development: A Sexual and Reproductive Health Centered Action Approach, New Delhi: MAMTA - Health Institute for Mother and Child.

For additional information :

Priyanka Sreenath
MAMTA - Health Institute for Mother and Child
B-5, Greater Kailash Enclave-II
New Delhi 110048,
India
Telephone: 91-11-29220210/20/30
Fax: 91-11-29220575
Email: mamta@ndf.vsnl.net.in
Website: www.mamta-himc.org, www.yrshr.org, www.12teen.org



This document was made possible by the generous support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) under the terms of Sida Contribution No. 72004205 - Twinning Institutional Collaboration Project in India by MAMTA and RFSU (Swedish Association For Sexuality Education). The contents are the responsibility of the strategy team under the project 'Young People's Health and Development: A Sexual and Reproductive Health Centered Action Approach' and do not necessarily reflect the views of Sida or the Swedish Government.

Acknowledgement

My colleagues in Networking, Mr. Faiyaz Akhtar and Mr. Anil Kumar Mishra, join me in expressing our deepest gratitude to all SRIJAN partners, especially members of the Working Group, for their unstinting support and guidance in coordinating the activities of the network and achieving its objectives.

We appreciate the hard work put in by members of the youth forum across SRIJAN states especially young positive speakers whose dedication to the cause has been the constant source of motivation for us.

This also gives us an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of the members of the Networking team over the period of five years, S.K. Bhalla, Iram Saeed, Aditi Puri, K. G. Venkateshwaran, Rooman Arif and Manoj Das, in bringing SRIJAN to its present shape.

We also thank our colleagues in the project especially Geetha Nambiar, Chhaya Singh, Rajesh Padhy, Smita Mitra and Subha Sankar Das for supporting the network through strategies that include Informatics, Advocacy, Research & Documentation and Pilot Intervention.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of Mr. Kishore Singh, Diaspora Ltd. for undertaking the painstaking task of collecting the experiences of partner NGOs in seven states that served as the basis for writing this document.

Priyanka Sreenath

Foreword

Being a member of SRIJAN family, this document on 'Networking' gives me an opportunity to reflect on our journey together. When MAMTA was contemplating on the idea of a network to work for health and development of young people, we started pinning up lots of hope and aspirations to it. Thanks to Sida and RFSU for helping us to realize our dream.

As an organization, we had little understanding about the technicalities of a network at the outset, but the excitement of team members never faded, even in times of uncertainty and confusion. The periodic evaluation and review of SRIJAN network during the project period have always been very encouraging and provided the team and the SRIJAN Working Group, the much-needed guidance to strengthen the network in every feasible perspective. Hence, the period of five years witnessed persistent trials with a number of approaches and activities to build network capacities and streamline its functioning.

At times it also disappointed the team members when they were not able to capture the progress, in terms of numbers or statistics, which would establish the impact that this network was making at various levels. My personal view is that five years is too less a time for a fledgling network on an issue like YRSHR to reach a stage where it initiates joint advocacy, unlike other networks where people come together with a well defined agenda. A lot more time and in-depth work goes into building a common understanding and technical capacities to deal with issues that are loaded with values and strongly influenced societal norms.

For me, when I interact with people in SRIJAN communities, especially young boys and girls, the experience is immensely satisfying. The change in perception and attitude are all so evident, when they discuss on matters of sexual and reproductive health and rights with remarkable ease and confidence. It inspires me to deliberate with partner NGOs on effective means and methodologies to capture these underlying changes that are contributing towards the attainment of larger goal of health and development.

Bringing meaningful youth participation into the network was one of the key agenda of SRIJAN. The formation of SRIJAN Youth Forum and Positive Speakers' Forum to bring young people's voices at center stage is a significant step towards making our efforts rights based and youth centric.

This collective strength of SRIJAN network and the change it has inspired in numerous communities across seven states, gives me immense confidence to market/promote it as a network with the potential to yield good returns in terms of better Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People and hence the overall health and development. This shall reflect on National MDG achievement.

Undoubtedly, SRIJAN is a precious asset for all partner organizations and will always remain so. The forward journey, as I see, lies in cementing the acquired capacities of SRIJAN and making its optimum utilization towards furthering the agenda of YRSHR. I request all state governments to capitalize on their potential.

Dr. Sunil Mehra

Contents

Acknowledgement

Foreword

Background

I. Evolution of SRIJAN

- Evolving Structure of the Network
- Emerging Models in the States
- Functional Mechanism
- Building Ownership Among SRIJAN Partners
- Introducing Components for Sustainability
- Addressing Challenges
- Journey So Far

II. Building Capacities within SRIJAN

- Identification of Training Needs
- Process of Capacity Building
- Achievements
- Addressing Challenges

III. Enabling Youth Participation

- Mobilizing Young People
- Nurturing Youth Leaders and Youth Advocates
- SRIJAN Youth Forum
- Young Positive Speakers Forum (YPSF)
- Achievements
- Addressing Challenges

IV. Creating an Enabling Environment: Advocacy for Policies and Programmes

- Identifying Issues and Stakeholders
- Building Capacities on Advocacy
- Youth Led Advocacy and Awareness Generation
- Signature Campaigns and Memorandum to Parliamentary Committees
- Advocating with Member of Legislative Assembly and Panchayati Raj Institution Members in States
- Issue for Policy Advocacy at States
- Addressing Challenges
- Achievements
- Forward Plan

Annexure

- I List of Network Partners
- II Abbreviations

Partnerships for Change

Background

BACKGROUND

The last decade witnessed a significant change in the trend and composition of the Indian population with a notable increase in the population of young people. Young people between 10 to 24 years comprised around thirty percent of the total population, while adolescents alone constituted 22 percent (Census 2001). This sizable population of young people also came into view as a heterogeneous group. The fact that decisions taken by these young people as they enter their reproductive years would decide the future course of nation's development was widely recognized. However, policies and programs on health, development and services offered by the government were not particularly directed towards addressing the issue of Young People's Reproductive and Sexual Health in a holistic manner. Among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on reproductive and child health, only some had clarity on what would be appropriate strategies and approaches to reach out to such a vast and diverse population. This assumed all the more significance in the country where religious and cultural sensitivities often pose challenges to any intervention that seeks to address issues related to sexuality, or challenge existing gender norms. These interventions were however vital to restrain early pregnancies, unsafe abortions, maternal deaths and rising incidences of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV among young people.

Networking To Promote Young Peoples' Reproductive And Sexual Health Across The Country

MAMTA- Health Institute for Mother and Child had been working on maternal and child health since 1990 and had been driving the initiative through clinics it established in Tigri and Sangam Vihar, resettlement colonies of Delhi. With a far fetched objective of empowering the urban poor of the area with information and knowledge for achieving optimal and sustainable health and development, alongside extending preventive and curative services, MAMTA carried out information and educational activities with gender sensitive participatory processes.

Interactions with the target groups provided MAMTA an in depth understanding of the concerns and challenges of people in the community especially those who were young, with regard to their reproductive and sexual health. These concerns were marked by widespread ignorance and misconceptions which remained unarticulated and un-addressed in absence of a supportive environment.

This particular community based intervention led to the realization of the need for formulation of appropriate programs to address the concerns and challenges of young people nationally. Given the geographical expanse of India, the issue of Young Peoples' Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights (YRSHR) called for extensive reach and micro sensitization in order to affect a positive impact. Initiating a fresh outlook to an existing dilemma, MAMTA, embarked upon a strategy led agenda and envisaged the formation of a network of proactive organizations and institutions with presence at national, state and district levels. The objective was to build capacities within identified organizations and institutions across the states to work on sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people and to collectively advocate for prioritizing the issue in policies and programs of government and donor agencies.

Project on YRSHR With 'Networking' as a 'Carrying Strategy'

MAMTA undertook consultations with various agencies working in India to initiate a broad based integrated approach on YRSH with a Gender and

Rights perspective. In 1999, Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) expressed willingness to support and explore viability of project based interventions on the issue in the country. Earlier initiatives from Sida to spearhead a program on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Rajasthan had identified MAMTA as the NGO partner active in the field of SRH.

In 1999-2000 Sida facilitated an exchange visit between MAMTA and Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU), an NGO based in Stockholm, in order to explore the possibilities of a programme oriented twinning in the field of YRSHR. RFSU, the Swedish affiliate of International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) had seventy years of experience in YRSHR, developing pilot interventions and successful advocacy programmes in Sweden. RFSU also had experience of supporting similar interventions in Tanzania and Zambia.

The exchange visits provided basis for the pilot project under MAMTA-RFSU partnership, 'Evolving Strategies for Better Health and Development of Adolescent/Young People' from March 2000 to June 2003. This was to test an overall viability of such project in India as well as the strategies that would work in Indian context. Hence, the pilot project worked with specific objectives under five different components namely Informatics, Advocacy, Networking, Pilot Intervention, and Capacity Building. The project was implemented in ten states (seven through the Network and three for Pilot Interventions). It aimed at reaching out to young people between 10-24 years, especially those under disadvantaged and vulnerable settings, with relevant information and services on Reproductive and Sexual Health with Gender and Rights perspective.

The strategic outlook was to create a multi-layered YRSHR promotive capacity in India connecting organizations through a network across seven states. In March 2001, a network on YRSHR,

'SRIJAN' officially came into being with MAMTA serving as the secretariat for the network. SRIJAN literally means 'Creation' and stands as an acronym for Sexual and Reproductive Health Initiative for Joint Action Network.

Based on the learning from the pilot project, a more comprehensive and strategically focused project, "Young People's Health and Development: A Reproductive and Sexual Health Centered Approach, was designed for the period of June 2003 to June 2008. The objectives and the components explored under the pilot were reframed and 'Networking' emerged as a 'Carrying Strategy' for the project. Informatics, Advocacy, Pilot Intervention, Research & Documentation and Global Partnership were identified as strategies that would support the network in acquiring necessary capacities, strengthening resource base, documenting evidences, undertaking research and would facilitate exposure to innovative approaches for reaching out to young people. Each strategy had its own specific objectives and outcome indicators yet they were designed as such that they mutually support each other. The geographical area of coverage remained same, but the focus in the second phase had shifted to 'Creating an Enabling Environment'.

Apart from establishing SRIJAN, Networking as a strategy involved consolidation of network through reinforcing understanding on YRSHR issues, intense capacity building of partner NGOs, evolving new approaches to enhance young people's participation, enabling youth forums and promoting joint advocacy on YRSHR nationally. The following chapters would highlight some of the efforts undertaken towards consolidation of SRIJAN during the project period.

Chapter One

Evolution of SRIJAN

Evolution of SRIJAN

Networking is ever-evolving process. The dynamics of processes involved for a network was a new experience for MAMTA and hence establishing one on reproductive and sexual health and rights of young people was a challenge in the initial years. Gradually, as the organization acquired new learning and explored opportunities to bring them into practice, the network on YRSHR began to evolve with SRIJAN taking a formal shape in the year 2001. Ever since, SRIJAN has come a long way with many new interventions and partnerships that have helped to carry forward the agenda of health and development of young people in different parts of the country. Bringing on functional mechanism, building ownership among partner organizations and efforts towards introducing mechanism for sustainability of the network have together facilitated the consolidation of SRIJAN network for the task envisaged for it. This chapter presents the processes involved in evolution of SRIJAN, focusing on the structure and functional mechanism in terms of co-ordination, monitoring progresses, participation and effectiveness.

Concept And Processes Of YRSHR Network (2000-2003)

The pilot project had two objectives that illustrated the required actions for building up a 'Network':

- i. Assess institutions to facilitate and support their intervention process on YRSHR
- ii. Establish countrywide networking and establish common areas of interests on YRSHR

The first and foremost objective was to identify institutions/NGOs with some working experience on sexual and reproductive health or with young people and assess their technical and administrative capacities in order to identify areas for capacity building in future. The second objective involved developing a framework for the network, identifying geographical areas, building

partnerships at state and district levels and evolving administrative and financial guidelines.

'Networking' being a new experience MAMTA undertook a systematic review of some of the existing networks. The focus areas were :

- their operational mechanism;
- roles and responsibilities at different levels;
- components/ mechanism for sustainability and its feasibility: and
- scope of integrating YRSHR in the existing networks.

MAMTA also made a study visit to RFSU and its branch offices in Sweden to learn from their experiences.

Networks reviewed included :

- National Alliance for Women (NAWO)
- National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)
- Family Planning Association of India
- Indian Network of NGOs in Development, Environment and Protection (INENGODEP)
- Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI)
- Confederation of India Industries (CII)
- Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)
- Resource and Support Center for Development
- Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)
- South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS)
- Indian Committee on Youth Organizations (ICYO)

Based on the learning, MAMTA developed a concept note and shared it with a select group of professionals working on SRH issues. Later, during a two day brainstorming workshop (from 31st August to 1st September, 2000, Delhi), a draft on functional modalities of YRSHR network was prepared. The workshop was actively participated by representatives from UN Agencies, International Donor Agencies, RFSU, Government Departments, Apex Institutions, National level NGOs and Research Institutes. MAMTA further developed a 'Perspective Document' for network on YRSHR with goal, objectives, geographical coverage and functional mechanism.

Geographical Spread

Though the objective was to establish a countrywide network, a decision was made to initiate the network in few states and gradually as the processes becomes clearer; expansion to other states could be undertaken. Based on the health and development scenario and the availability of a strong agency with some experience on sexual reproductive health and young people to serve as the nodal agency for the

state; seven states- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra were selected for establishing the network.

Network Structure

The structure that was finally proposed had committed NGO partners at the district and village level, a nodal agency with strong presence in the states to serve as State Facilitating Agency (state secretariat) and MAMTA in Delhi as the national secretariat for the YRSHR network. The network partnership was to be mutually supportive, adding value to the YRSHR network by enhancing each other's capacities through sharing of information, knowledge and experiences on health and development of young people.



SRIJAN Structure 1

Identification of State Facilitating Agencies

The nodal agencies to serve as SFA were identified on the basis of relevant experience; commitment to the issue; and readiness to share responsibility. The agencies identified as SFA to initiate the process in the identified states were:

- Academy for Nursing Studies, Andhra Pradesh
- Child in Need Institute, West Bengal
- Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness, CHETNA, Gujarat and Rajasthan
- Institute for Health Management & Planning, (IHMP), Maharashtra
- Parivar Seva Sanstha, Uttar Pradesh
- Arogyam Center for Health and Development, Bihar

The Working Group

The State Facilitating Agencies together with other organizations like MacArthur Foundation, Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), and National Institute for Public Policy and Child Development (NIPPCD) that offered support from outside formed the 'Working Group' for YRSHR Network.

The Working Group reviewed the 'Perspective Document' prepared by MAMTA and the proposed goal, objectives and functional mechanism for the network were revisited. Small groups were formed to look into the partnership criteria, financial allocation to states and an action plan for six months with budget for regional / state level consultative meetings was finalized. In December 2000, the Working Group met again and finalized the 'Perspective Document on Network'. Thereafter, the Working Group Meetings (WGMs)

became the official platform for all programmatic and administrative decisions with regard to the YRSHR network.

In June 2001, the group deliberated on the draft guideline for Network that included different aspects, such as membership criteria, functioning systems, technical and financial support to network partners, coordination and grievance redressal. This meeting also led to finalization of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SFAs and arrangement for financial reporting .

YRSHR Network takes a Formal Shape

In March 2001, YRSHR Network achieved its formal shape when a national level workshop was organized for select NGO partners from each state to build a common understanding on the functioning of YRSHR network. These NGOs were entrusted with the responsibility of building similar understanding among NGOs in their respective states. Representatives of UNESCO, UNICEF, RFSU, Government and Positive Peoples' Networks shared their experiences on the issue with the participants.

By June 2001, the network had evolved in five states (West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh) and another two states (Gujarat and Maharashtra) were in the process of activation. At the end of pilot project, YRSHR Network had 94 committed NGOs in 5 states and Network of Maharashtra by People Living with HIV-AIDS, took over the responsibility of SFA from IHMP.

The YRSHR network soon acquired a new identity and was named 'SRIJAN', Sexual and Reproductive Health Initiative for Joint Actions Network.



Identification of Core Issues

Following discussions with the network partners; six core issues were identified for promotion through the network. Issues were (i) Integration of Sexuality Education in School Education System; (ii) Preventing Early Marriages and Early Pregnancies; (iii) Making Youth Friendly Health Services Available and Accessible; (iv) Preventing HIV Infections; (v) Promoting Optimum Sex Ratio; and (vi) Education Retention. Gender and Rights were taken as cross cutting issues.

Information dissemination and sensitizing local actors and key stakeholders to create platform for joint and consistent advocacy on YRSHR formed the core activity of SRIJAN. Peer education became the most preferred approach for reaching out to young people.

Progression of SRIJAN in 2003-2008

The evaluation by Sida conducted in 2002 stated, *“although the groundwork has been laid, it is nevertheless clear that the SRIJAN network is still very much dependent on MAMTA as an administrative centre, but more importantly in terms of YRSHR capacity building, information dissemination / communication and sheer financial underpinnings.”* It further recommended that *“if the network is to come into its own, it is likely that a number of organizational measures will have to be introduced, albeit in a gradual manner and over time.”* However it also emphasized that *“the creation of mutually interactive statewide networks is critical for the reach and effectiveness of any YRSHR effort in India. It is in fact likely that without such networks the other components of the project lose much of their justification.”*

The forward plan for the second project 'Young

People's Health and Development - A Reproductive and Sexual Health Centered Action Approach (2003-2008), tried to develop a design that could include all learning of the pilot and address the identified gaps. 'Networking' too came up with well defined objective that had to be addressed during the five year period.

Objectives

The main objective for networking under the second project was **“Strengthening the Network in seven states along with enabled youth forums to monitor services and integrate YRSHR.”**

The three specific objectives were:

- I. Consolidation of the network and reinforce understanding of the YRSHR amongst Network Partners.
- ii. Expansion of SRIJAN Network for greater outreach of YRSHR issues and concerns of young people.
- iii. Evolving and setting the momentum towards the creation of distinct strategy for greater involvement of young people.

Further to the efforts of the 1st phase (primarily focused on developing coordination among network partners and capacity building to a certain extent), with the assumption that capacitated partner organizations would in turn motivate other organizations to work on YRSHR issues, the second phase specifically emphasized on the overall consolidation of the network through systematic capacity building and information / resource sharing, decentralization for greater outreach, enhancing participation and ownership among SFAs and other partners, advocacy and youth participation.

Structural Models Within SRIJAN

SRIJAN has worked with three different models in the course of its evolution. The models which the state networks have adopted so far are:

- The Direct SFA model (Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh)
- The Zonal Co-ordination model, ZC (Bihar and Uttar Pradesh)
- The SFA model twined with the ZC system (Rajasthan and West Bengal)

During the second project, SRIJAN saw some changes in the state leadership. In 2003, SFA for Uttar Pradesh opted out of the network. In 2004, the partner NGOs with assistance of MAMTA reorganized the network administration in the state by decentralizing the role of SFA through a 'Zonal Coordination System'. The State was divided into 4 zones, where in one partner NGO from each zone was elected as zonal coordinator to carry out the role at the zonal level.

Later in 2006, SFA for Bihar expressed inability to continue and the 'Zonal Coordination System' introduced earlier in Uttar Pradesh was adapted by the partner NGOs in Bihar. Bihar was divided into 5 zones with five zonal coordinators working under direct guidance and support of MAMTA. To provide continued support to the zonal coordinators, MAMTA opened an office in Lucknow and designated a dedicated staff to coordinate networking in the two states.

Besides, in three other States, SFAs invited interested partner organizations for a democratic way of selection, to take on the roles and responsibilities of SFA and provided support to the newly elected SFA. ANS in Andhra Pradesh, Chetna in Rajasthan and CINI in West Bengal passed on the baton to Navajyothi (2006), Seva

mandir (2007) and Health Vision and Research (2008) in the respective States. Rajasthan and West Bengal also adapted Zonal System while being facilitated and supported by the SFA. This led to a third model of functioning.



SRIJAN Structure 2

Though there is a lot of similarity in coordination and communication patterns of these three models, all three models have contributed to the growth of the network in their own unique ways. The three models have their relative strengths and have provided an opportunity to each state to develop into a distinct model taking into account the dynamics among state partners. The most important characteristic of SRIJAN was the flexibility given to the State Networks, irrespective of the functional model being practiced in the state, to grow in their own contexts and prioritize issues under YRSHR umbrella for advocacy and intervention at the local level.

SRIJAN (as in June 2008)

States	No. of Districts	No of member NGOs
Rajasthan	9	21
Gujarat	9	22
Maharashtra	9	13
Andhra Pradesh	10	10
West Bengal	19	20
Uttar Pradesh	18	18
Bihar	20	30
Total	94	134

Functional Mechanism

The second project started with several institutional strengthening measures. It aimed at enhancing participation and ownership among partners for steering the network forward. In December 2003, the guiding principles of the SRIJAN Network were reviewed and the roles and responsibilities of the national and state secretariats were revised. For the first time, the roles and responsibilities of network partners at the district level were defined in the guiding principles. Decentralization and Rotation of Roles in network administration for effective coordination and enhanced participation emerged as two core principles during this project.

At the central level, 'Working Group' continued the role of guiding network's administrative and programmatic functioning. Working Group Meetings (WGMs) were facilitated by the national secretariat. These meetings in successive years took some major decisions with regard to decentralization of national secretariat's responsibilities, like,

- (i) WGM to be conducted on a rotational basis
- (ii) WGM to be held twice in a year
- (iii) Increasing the number of members in the

working group to accommodate at least one partner NGO from each State apart from the SFA (Later as ZC system came in, representatives of each zone were also included). This gave opportunity to more network members to participate in the decision making processes.

- (iv) At the State/Zonal level, Network partners would meet at least once in a year for the annual planning of SRIJAN. This emphasized on participation of partners in planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting.
- (v) Change of SFA/ ZC on a rotational basis with a new partner being given opportunity to serve as SFA or ZC. New SFA/ZC would be chosen democratically by partner NGOs.
- (vi) It was agreed upon that all NGOs who either received funds of Sida as a part of YRSHR and / or were a part of the regular capacity building programs under the YRSHR program would be considered as partners. Others may be defined as 'interest groups'.

Systems of Functioning

Making Action Plan and Budget

Preparation and finalization of action plan was a participatory process where in all partner NGOs met at the state /zonal level under the guidance of SFA/ ZC to discuss and develop an action plan for the state/zone. Before these meetings were convened, the national secretariat used to send a guideline on the annual budget and required initiatives to each state/zone. The guideline also included those initiatives and activities that were planned under different strategies of the project under the central action plan but had to be executed in collaboration with the state partners at the state or district level e.g., issue based capacity building by Informatics organized at the state level, Advocacy Workshop by Advocacy strategy, consolidation of Youth Forum at the state and national level under networking strategy etc.

This was followed by a meeting between SFA/ZC and MAMTA for the finalization of action plan and budget involved.

Annual State/Zone Level Meeting

In all states and zones, partners met under the guidance of SFA/ZC at least once in a year (either in the beginning or at the end) to share experiences and discuss district specific challenges, status of issues pertaining to YRSHR in the state and decided future plan of action for the coming year. The SFA also updated partners with latest decisions at the Government level and made arrangements for issue-based orientation and interactions with experts and officials. These meetings also provided the platform to discuss issues pertaining to administration, finance, reporting, other management issues or requirement of material or technical support by partner NGOs. The annual meeting was aligned to the decision of the WGM but states and zones had freedom to decide the frequency of the meetings as per their state specific requirements (from 2 to 4 meetings per year). It had been noticed that often a State level event provided the opportunity for all partners to get together to demonstrate collective strength and also to share and discuss important issues. Possibility of quarterly meetings were more at the zonal level due to smaller geographical spread and lesser number of partners. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, states with zonal co-ordination system, 'State Core Group' used to address programmatic as well as management issues. The group comprised of representative of all zonal coordinators and a staff from the secretariat.

Technical Support Visits

Technical support visits were imperative for strengthening the technical and managerial capacities of individual organizations and the overall functioning of the network. These visits were undertaken by secretariat as well as SFAs and ZCs to their respective partner NGOs. Secretariat conducted minimum of two visits per

state in a year while SFA/ZC visited partners once or twice depending on the requirement. These visits involved monitoring progress on the action plan; adherence to the rules of finance and accounts, assessing organizational resources and capacities and identifying training needs; facilitating linkages with stakeholders at the local level; providing support for organizing events at the local level, etc. Technical Support Visits in particular attempted to provide guidance for mainstreaming YRSHR issues in the organizational goal and mission and simultaneously in other projects and programs, e.g. women's empowerment, domestic violence, literacy, street children, HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health.

Reporting on Action Plan and Budgetary Expenditure

Reporting on a mutually agreed MIS was an essential part of the project in order to assess the overall progress made under 'networking' as a strategy. Understanding the limitations of the NGOs at the grass-root level with regard to compiling data and writing reports, SRIJAN Working Group worked hard to simplify the reporting format. Much of the reporting was for the budgeted activities given in the action plan whereas efforts at the local level towards establishing linkages, advocacy, mainstreaming were captured additionally through follow-up calls and discussions during technical support visits. A format for financial reporting was also developed and shared with the Working Group. Although the attempt was to keep it simple, the format and guidelines on financial management were formulated keeping in mind all the requirements of donor agency and auditing firms.

SFAs / ZCs were required to send their progress and financial reports on a quarterly basis. It helped to collate quantitative and qualitative information from the state/zonal networks and to keep stock of budget utilization and financial management in the respective state/zone.

Guiding Principles of SRIJAN

Network Membership Criteria

- Members can be organizations/ institutions / individuals - government, non government or private
- Organizations / institution / individuals working with adolescent and young people or in principle agree to working with adolescent and young people
- Should have in principle agreed to work in the rights perspective
- Should have willingness to contribute (time, resources etc.) to the network
- A formal letter as their acceptance to be part of the network is needed

Functioning of the Network

- The network would have a 'Working Group' called as the Coordinating group (CG) at the centre
- Members of the CG will be drawn from the various regions
- These members would facilitate the networks in respective regions
- In each region, an organization / individual would be identified as the regional facilitator
- Memberships in the region should be renewed annually
- Number of members in each region should be decided by the regional networks
- A formal letter of acceptance from the members is required to be a part of the network
- Regions should have their rules for exclusion of members which should be shared with and accepted by the CG
- Regional networks should frame their annual activity plan and communication systems and finalize it in consultation with the CG

Coordinating Group

- Members of this group will be drawn from the various regions
 - Total number of members would be between 7-10
 - The initial CG would be for three years and then the processes for inducting new members would be put in place
 - A formal letter of acceptance from the members is required to be part of the CG
 - Key decisions of the network would be taken by the CG
 - The CG would meet three times a year
 - Any member who is unable to attend the CG meeting more than thrice would be excluded from the CG
 - The CG would look at strengthening the network partners through technical support and various other inputs as deemed fit from time to time
- continued...

Support to Partners

... continued

- Activities meant for the networks would be supported
- Individual / organizational efforts would not be supported
- Activities selected for the network should further the cause of YRSHR
- Regional networks should work at mobilizing resources for sustaining their network
- The CG would look at providing technical support to network partners

Grievance Redressal

- Redressal of complaints / grievances would be the responsibility of regional networks. Only if they want will the CG extend support in these matters
- Mechanism for grievance redressal should be clearly laid down by the regional networks

Building Ownership Among Partners

Vision, Mission and Goal

To further enhance partners' ownership over the network, a participatory exercise was undertaken to redefine SRIJAN's Vision and Mission statement in the year 2006. The objective was to create a platform where all partner NGOs could share their own views and perspectives and collectively develop a 'Vision and Mission Statement' for the Network. At the same time this exercise was to provide opportunity to each organization in the Network to reflect on their institutional values and vision with regard to young people's health and development and incorporate the understanding in their own mission statement. The exercise was first initiated at the central level with the participation of secretariat and all SFA and ZCs. Subsequently it was taken to the states for all partners to participate. It culminated into a final workshop in December 2006 where the partners came together to define the Vision and Mission statement for the SRIJAN network. Later in a Working Group Meeting, these statements were finalized.

VISION STATEMENT

By the year 2011, SRIJAN will successfully establish a self governing and adaptive national youth forum owned and managed by young people for sexual and reproductive health, life skills and livelihood linkages where young people are capable of dealing with problems of SRHR and life skills.

MISSION STATEMENT

SRIJAN will work towards creating an enabling environment for young people to build, manage & take ownership of their forum by enhancing their understanding & skills with regard to SRH & livelihood.

GOALS

1. SRIJAN partners are able to deal with the issues of young people mainly focusing on SRH and livelihood.
2. Formation of youth forum from village to block to district to state up to the national level by 2011.

SRIJAN SAMVAAD

In 2007, a 'SRIJAN Editorial Board' comprised of representative from each state and zone was formed for a Newsletter that would serve as an advocacy tool as well as promote network's work for wider visibility. SRIJAN brought out the first edition of its newsletter 'SRIJAN SAMVAAD' in the year 2008. This newsletter focused on key policies in the context of young people, good practices by partner NGOs, and update on key activities taken under the network.

Introducing Components of Sustainability

Sustaining the network on YRSHR beyond the project period is a challenging task and will be influenced by various factors inside and outside the network. However, several steps have been taken towards building components of sustainability within the network that includes mainstreaming of YRSHR issues and expanding the work through interventions with support of other funding agencies.

Mainstreaming was taken up at two levels. First, by the partner NGOs in their other projects and secondly, mainstreaming the agenda of 'Sexuality Education', 'Youth Friendly Health Services' and 'Youth Information Centers' in policies and programs through advocacy and collaborations with different departments and line ministries. The evaluation in 2002 had also recommended identification of institutions at the national and state level such as NCERT, SCERT, through which YRSHR issues could be introduced into educational material and curriculum.

The first level of mainstreaming was undertaken by MAMTA together with SFAs and ZCs through various issue based capacity building exercises and during technical support visits wherein

partner NGOs were explained linkages between YRSHR with other development issues. The second level of mainstreaming was undertaken through meetings with key policy makers and functionaries, one-to-one interactions and other advocacy initiatives by MAMTA at the national level and by SFAs and ZCs at the state level. Many of these initiatives at the national level have been documented under the advocacy strategy of the project.

The introduction of Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) Programme under RCH-II (NRHM- GOI), is a realisation of SRIJAN's dream for youth friendly health services. Although a lot still needs to be done to ensure implementation at the state levels. In this regard, initiatives are undertaken at the state levels as well and recently MAMTA also signed an MOU with SIFPSA, SPMU-NRHM (Government of U.P.) for piloting Scheme for Adolescent Counselling for Health (SACH) in eighteen districts of the state. Besides, several partner NGOs have established linkages with schools to conduct sessions for adolescents. The partner NGOs are advocating for integration of Adolescent Education Programme introduced by NACO and Department of Education in the school education system in districts.

Also, MAMTA in collaboration with Lund University of Sweden has started a training programme on Adolescent Friendly Health Services (AFHS) for public health professionals from different states in India. The three week residential training involves a study visit to Sweden followed by development of a change project on AFHS. Around twenty five participants of the first batch have initiated a project on AFHS through websites, information centres and youth clinics.

Initiatives by Partner NGOs

Most network partners including SFAs and ZCs have mainstreamed YRSHR issues into their

other projects and interventions and proposals for new projects. Partner NGOs have also attained some success in mainstreaming YRSHR in other organizations and institutions through sensitization workshops and trainings.

The capacity building processes have helped network partners to develop their own team of trainers and master trainers on themes such as gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. They in turn have contributed to the institutional growth of the organizations by developing linkages and collaboration with other agencies for conducting trainings on YRSHR issues.

Many network partners organize regular orientation meetings on YRSHR for their staff, community workers, and members of self help groups (SHG). Navajyoti in Andhra Pradesh, for example, organizes sensitization meet on YRSHR for its women SHG members and village youth leaders, network partners of Rajasthan do similar activities for their staff and youth group members engaged in community development and income-generation programs. Partner NGOs have started including update on YRSHR in the agenda for their annual review and planning meetings.

With regard to youth participation, most organizations have institutionalized peer educator training on YRSHR issues and celebration of National and International Youth Day. Also young people are being involved in huge numbers on other events like rallies, campaigns etc. Opening of Youth Information Centers/ Drop-in Centers are other initiatives that have helped in maintaining youth participation. Another interesting outcome was that in several places in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Bihar, peer educators have joined the organization as program staff and are currently engaged in youth-related programs of the organization. In Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, youth members have developed cultural forums that help

organizations in multiple ways to sustain YRSHR issues and mainstream them in other youth development programs. These cultural groups perform on invitations from other NGOs, institutions and government departments.

Encouraging breakthroughs have been reported by our state partners in mainstreaming the cause in other projects and programs:

- In Uttar Pradesh, YRSHR issues were mainstreamed into ADB-funded vocational program for youth in Hardoi and DFID funded Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) program in Unnao.
- In Rajasthan, network partners mainstreamed YRSHR and leverage it in projects supported by UNICEF, CAPART and Rajasthan Livelihood Mission.
- In Andhra Pradesh, Navajyothi has engaged partners of MEDVAN, a network of twenty four voluntary organizations working in Medak district, on YRSHR related activities. Five network partners in the state are currently engaged in developing training modules on SRH for Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (APSACS). Also, one partner NGO has contributed towards the draft on Marriage Registration Act for the state.
- In Bihar, UNICEF has collaborated with SRIJAN partners to organize training programs on gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in selected districts of the state. In some states, staffs of partner organizations are selected as District Resource Persons (DRPs) for Link Workers Training.
- In states of Rajasthan and Bihar, SRIJAN partners have contributed in the draft of State Youth Policy.

- It is a growing consensus amongst network partners that sustained awareness campaigns, enhanced participation of peer educators in running youth information and counseling centers, linkages with governance institutions and advocacy measure to a large extent have provided openings to mainstream YRSHR in health and development sector, but this has a long way to go in achieving the desired results.

Some schools in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat are now giving permission to network partners to work with their students on YRSHR. In West Bengal, after relentless efforts of developing a group of peer educators within a school, a high school administration near Kolkata has issued a formal letter to a network partner to initiate life skill education in the school.

Expanding YRSHR Horizon

The other way of bringing sustainability of YRSHR issues in the network was to initiate more such or related projects/programs under SRIJAN umbrella. MAMTA endeavored to expand the work on YRSHR with the network partners and the first initiative in this regard was 'Right to Know' project with financial support from UNICEF. Network partners at two sites in West Bengal and Rajasthan, were involved in a formative research to assess the knowledge gap on Sexuality and HIV among young people between 10-24 years. To take it forward, communication strategies were designed and communication materials developed with the active participation and ownership of young people. Young people were also trained to carry out the research. The successful implementation of this assignment together with local NGOs inspired MAMTA to initiate more such partnerships. MAMTA also supported partner NGOs to establish linkages with the government programs and donor

agencies and shared information on other funding opportunities.

Later, MAMTA partnered with eighteen SRIJAN members from Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to develop proposal for DFID supported 'Challenge Fund' on the issue of "Enhancing Prevention and Access to Services for Reduced Vulnerability of Rural Youth to HIV/AIDS in the three states of India". The project was successfully implemented in the year 2006-07. Thirty SRIJAN partners together with MAMTA applied for funds on Youth and HIV issues under the multi-donor funded 'Innovation Fund'. Many such partnerships in different states helped the network to undertake interventions at the grassroots and to enhance its reach to more young people than was possible through financial support from this project alone.

In Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, four partners have successfully implemented an intervention for Children Living with HIV/AIDS with the support of Clinton Foundation. Partner NGOs in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, two in each state have successfully implemented a program on Prevention of Parent To Child Transmission of HIV (PPTCT program) with support of America India Foundation.

Presently, four partners are implementing GFTAM supported program on Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Community based Care and Support in Maharashtra. In Uttar Pradesh, six more partner NGOs are implementing project 'Stop TB in India' with the support of WHO. The project also focuses on increased vulnerability of patients of TB towards HIV and promoting counseling and testing on HIV for clients of DOT. Recently fifteen partner NGOs each in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and five partners in each state of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have come together to implement a project on Early Marriage with support of MacArthur

Foundation. Four partners in Uttar Pradesh and four in Bihar are implementing a similar project with the support of European commission, focusing on the improvement of sexual and reproductive health of young people by increasing age at marriage.

Addressing Challenges

Communication with Partner NGOs

Establishing an effective mechanism for communication among network partners turned out to be one big challenge in the overall co-ordination mechanism. Conventional means of communication like postal/courier services and phone were inadequate in terms of matching the desired pace of inter-partner co-ordination. It ended up in a time lag before information reached the partners and telephonic conversations were taxing since it needed significant investment in terms of time (and money) to contact concerned persons individually. Also, telephonic conversations bore the risk of information loss since not being documented. Non-availability of mobile phone with project coordinators, who were often in the field or traveling, added to the difficulty in establishing contact. Email could have been the solution but many NGOs working at the grassroots lacked adequate infrastructure (computers), access to internet and most importantly computer literacy.

Thus a decision was made to support the network partners in enhancing their capacities to communicate through internet. Training workshops were organized to provide hands on experience to project heads and coordinators from partner NGOs on the use of web mail, internet surfing and accessing e-database on youth on the YRSHR website. The change was gradual but significant. Today internet serves bulk of the communication need within the network with

each state network successfully managing its own listserv/group mail. Postal/courier services are now only being used for sending and receiving hard copies of the MOUs or dissemination of certain resource materials.

Decentralization of secretariat's work has facilitated dissemination of information and resource materials; hence SFAs and ZCs took over the responsibility of circulating them further to the partner NGOs in different districts. Secretariat steps in occasionally when there is urgency or requirement of additional or specific information materials in individual districts. In the year 2004, the 'Informatics' strategy had initiated list-serve, a tool to electronically disseminate latest information on YRSHR issues, upcoming events, conferences, scholarships, projects, etc. The list-serve is sent twice in a month. This further encouraged partners to get connected through internet to receive these information which otherwise were not accessible to them. Besides, the website www.yrshr.org in english and www.12teen.org in hindi with 'e-counseling' and an exclusive database on youth in all states, created by 'Research and Database' strategy led to gradual increase in interest and participation in internet based communication among partner NGOs.

Developing Common Understanding on YRSHR and Building Capacities

Majority of NGOs identified as partners had some experience of working on maternal and child health. Each of them demonstrated a unique ability in terms of community mobilization and establishing linkages with the stakeholders. However, with regard to resources and their scope of work and technical capacities to implement a project on YRSHR, partner NGOs were extremely diverse. Some NGOs were relatively large, well established and professionally managed with their

own structured interventions while the majority of them were managing projects with scarce staff and resources, complementing government initiatives through activities at the grass-roots. Hence, as a first step it was required to build a common understanding on issues of Gender, Sexuality and Rights of youth. It was equally important to initiate focused measures to enhance their skills on program implementation and management.

Following several measures in 2004 towards capacity building, the network in 2005-06 focused on systematic capacity building of partner NGOs through training and exposure to best practice

elements of the SRIJAN network partners in other states. It was supported by production and dissemination of varied resource materials under 'Informatics' strategy to strengthen their existing knowledge base. Also, the concept of organizing a 'Thematic Meet' was developed where in participation of each and every partner organization and their youth members was envisaged. These meetings were instrumental in providing a national and international perspective on these issues and also to develop a sense of ownership with a collective strength of a network.

ChapterTwo

Building Capacities

Building Capacities

To establish a multi layered promotional capacity on youth's sexual and reproductive health and rights in India, it was imperative to lay the foundation for a strong functional management system. The purpose was to align the partner NGOs (varying in terms of knowledge and technical capacities) within SRIJAN network towards the common goal to create conducive environment for YRSHR . MAMTA-RFSU embarked upon this initiative through knowledge enhancement of partners on YRSHR issues, building training and advocacy skills and by imbibing professionalism in their overall management system. Hence, 'Capacity Building' of partner NGOs formed an integral part of network's functioning. It was investment with major gains. This chapter will provide an insight into the eight years of investment towards capacity building to bring network at its present status.

IDENTIFICATION OF TRAINING NEEDS

The role envisaged for SRIJAN network involved range of activities from awareness generation, information dissemination to initiate a joint and concerted advocacy on YRSHR. As the partners had different levels of experience it was required to build their capacities up to a certain level where all can share a common understanding on issues as well as approaches.

During its planning and familiarization trip to India in March 2000, the RFSU team along with MAMTA had identified theme areas and issues for training and skill building in SRIJAN. It was also decided that staff from MAMTA would be provided trainings on Training of Trainers (TOT), pattern to facilitate similar trainings for staff at intervention sites and project coordinators of the partner NGOs. The theme areas and issues identified were:

- Young People and Gender and Sexuality (including sessions on Adolescence, Adolescent Pregnancy; Sexually Transmitted Infections; Condom Promotion, Sexual Abuse)
- Youth Friendly Health Services and Adolescent Counseling
- Sexuality Education (Curriculum Development and IEC for adolescents and young people)

Master trainers from MAMTA officiated numerous sessions amongst SFAs and their local partners with key focus on 'Gender & Sexuality'. A mid term evaluation in 2002 however observed little progress. Hence, 'Capacity Needs Assessment', effective strategy for capacity building and cascading approach to capacity transfer were recommended.

Technical Capacity Assessment (TCA) In 2005

In the light of experiences of the pilot project, MAMTA planned a systematic capacity building for specific target groups - SFAs, partner NGOs and Youth. The training needs were identified through Technical Capacity Assessment (TCA). In 2005, MAMTA initiated the TCA exercise for network partners in partnership with SFAs in four critical areas:

- a) Conceptual Clarity on YRSHR and Related Issues,
- b) Organizational Management (project development and financial administration),
- c) Advocacy Skills and Linkages with Key Stakeholders, and
- d) Empowering and Enabling Youth Participation

The main purpose of the TCA exercise was to get an overview of the different capacities of the network, its areas of strength and weakness and available technical resources at the command of the network partners.

The TCA exercise clearly indicated that almost all partner NGOs, especially those at grass-roots required trainings on 'Gender and Sexuality', both at basic as well as advanced levels. Also, it highlighted the urgent need to organize trainings on program implementation and management including trainings on financial management and accounting. TCA emphasized focused training on eight key areas: (i) Gender, (ii) Sexuality, (iii) Rights, (iv) Advocacy, (v) Program Documentation, (vi) IEC Development, (vii) Proposal Development, and (viii) Monitoring & Evaluation.

The capacity development in these identified key areas aimed at:

- a) Enabling network partners to grow in areas of conceptual understanding on YRSHR thematic components; programmatic interventions and administrative capacities;
- b) Capacitating potential youth at all levels to advocate on YRSHR; and
- c) Informing and strengthening health and development sector on YRSHR

Processes Adapted

The capacity development of SRIJAN formed an integral part of networks functioning. MAMTA, as the network secretariat planned and designed the capacity development programs in form of trainings of trainers, basic trainings, workshops, orientation meets and exposure visits keeping in mind the broad deliverables of the networking strategy as well as the needs of the partner organizations. These capacity building exercises aimed to create and consolidate a core team within network's own human resources and build

the information and knowledge base, enhance thematic understanding, conceptual clarity, and technical skills on YRSHR theme areas. The network secretariat identified partners for trainings based on their interest, language comprehension and most importantly their capacity to further transfer the knowledge to colleagues, partner NGOs and other organizations and institutions in states and districts.

The capacity building exercises undertaken during project period were categorized as:

1. Issue Based (*Young People and Gender and Sexuality; LGBT; RIGHTS; Policies and Programmes, Sexuality Education, Youth Friendly Health Services*)
2. Skill Based (*Advocacy; Campaign Planning; Effective Communications; ICT; Proposal Writing*)
3. Management Based (*Guidelines and Workshop on Financial Management; Project Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation, PIME; Individual Communication Skills with focus on business communication, change management and problem solving and decision making; Improving Communication at the organization level with focus on documentation and reporting, knowledge management, communications tools for effective presentation of ideas, thoughts and experiences.*)
4. Trainings for Enhancing Youth Participation (*Peer Education, Edutainment like Puppetry, Advocacy and Communication skills to young people*)

Network being a 'Carrying Strategy', all six strategies under the project, especially 'Informatics', 'Advocacy' and 'Networking' at the secretariat contributed towards the capacity development of SRIJAN in its own ways.

The 'Informatics' developed training module on

Gender and Sexuality. This was prepared to address participants at two levels, (i) Basic Training and (ii) Advanced Training on TOT pattern. Informatics also developed orientation training on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) issues and on 'Rights' and 'Youth Friendly Health Services (YFS)'. The strategy also focused on developing issue based publications and Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials and their dissemination through different medium across the network. 'Informatics' also developed web portals in english and hindi (www.yrshr.org; www.12teen.org). These websites also have a section on e-counseling; and list of frequently asked questions as a reference material for young people. An electronic newsletter, 'List-serv' to update partner NGOs with the latest developments and happenings on the YRSHR and related issues in other nations was also introduced.

The strategy on 'Advocacy' took up the responsibility of acquainting partner NGOs with technicalities of advocacy; building skills and enhancing their understanding on socio-cultural and policy environment. It also involved enhancing the capacities of team at MAMTA to further transfer the knowledge to partners at the state level.

'Research and Database' identified the need to provide evidences on health and development status of young people across network districts and initiated an exclusive online database on the official website, www.yrshr.org. Data collected from authentic sources, (such as Census of India, NFHS, DLHS-RCH, SRS, NACO and Crime in India by Ministry of Home Affairs) were further compiled under 15 broad categories, namely:

1. Population Distribution;
2. Fertility;
3. Sexual Practices;
4. Mortality;
5. Family Planning;

6. Health Care;
7. Reproductive Health;
8. Marital Status;
9. Nutritional Status;
10. Education;
11. Work Force;
12. Social;
13. Crime Data;
14. Substance Abuse;
15. Physical Mistreatment and Quality of Care.

These were presented through Data Tables, Graphs and Maps for easy understanding. The entire exercise aimed at strengthening advocacy, implement formulation and designing intervention programs for young people at different levels. Besides, R&D in partnership with SRIJAN members undertook research studies on "Action research addressing masculinities as a strategy to reduce sexual risk behaviour among young men in India" and "Assessment of the vulnerability of rural population to HIV/AIDS other than those covered under Targeted Interventions."

Other significant processes undertaken in last five years included organizing Thematic Meets; Study visits to the sites (Koramangala in Bangalore; Bawal in Haryana and Varanasi in U.P.) under Phased Intervention strategy on Youth Friendly Services and Sexuality Education; exposure visits to best practices in Sweden; and exchange visits among partner NGOs to each others intervention areas. Exposure was also provided through participation of network partners in international and national conferences and seminars facilitated by 'Pilot Intervention' and 'Global Partnership' strategies.

Initially, most of the issue based trainings were conducted by experts from RFSU. Gradually with internal capacity build up, MAMTA spearheaded the training initiatives along with partner NGOs at state and district levels.

Trainings And Workshops

One of the major steps in the process of building capacities of various partners was organizing trainings and workshops to sensitize them on issues; and build their skills to further strengthen capacities of other partners and institutions and take the advocacy efforts forward. To achieve this end, MAMTA and RFSU organized number of trainings and workshops for network partners as well as their youth members.

The new understanding and perspective is reflected on almost all aspects of SRIJAN's functioning be it advocating on core issues with parents, communities, decision makers, religious leaders and elected representatives or empowering young people through Peer Education. It also resulted in enhanced capacities and skills of partner organizations to work independently on several issues and formulate new projects on identified YRSRH themes.

Training on Gender and Sexuality

Organizing 'Basic' as well as 'Advance' training on Young People and Gender and Sexuality for representatives of partner organizations has been a more systematic and need based process in SRIJAN's last eight years of journey.

Basic training on gender and sexuality was designed to enhance the information and knowledge level of participants, sensitize them to shed individual socio-cultural inhibitions with regard to sexuality and empower them to address myths and misconceptions prevalent in the society. The interesting games and exercises on 'Value Clarification' helped partners to identify their own values and take a stand with regard to sexuality and related issues in a non-threatening environment. It also aimed to enable participants to mainstream YRSRH , Gender and Rights issues in their own work, projects, and programs. On the other hand, the Advanced Trainings were on TOT pattern wherein identified participants

from basic trainings were provided with detailed knowledge on the issue in context of global health and development; training methodologies and provided opportunity to practice facilitation skills.

Occasionally 'Follow-up Training' was also organized to encourage trainers to share their experience, discuss problems faced by them during trainings, and introducing new training methodologies and skills. Trainings on 'Forum Plays' and 'Forum Theater' during once such follow-up meeting, were highly appreciated and found beneficial by the trainers. This also provided an opportunity to update knowledge on YRSRH and related issues. These master trainers support MAMTA in conducting state based trainings and also conduct trainings independently in their own states.

In the year 2003, MAMTA developed a training manual for facilitators on 'Young People and Gender and Sexuality' in English. The manual was revised in 2006 and translated in Hindi, Telugu and Bangla.

Training on Youth Friendly Health Services

This training aimed at creating an enabling environment for youth friendly health services through enhancing understanding on its relevance not only among the network partners but also among the health service providers. A separate Training Manual on Youth Friendly Centers and Services was also developed and published in English and Hindi.

Training on Sexual & Reproductive RIGHTS

The understanding on 'Rights' especially in context of sexual and reproductive health was essential to advocate on various issues as much as for bringing in Rights based approach into implementation , more so because the target beneficiaries were often marginalized members of the community. MAMTA, under the 'Global

Partnership' organized trainings on 'Rights' with focus on sexual and reproductive health rights of young people in collaboration with IPPF, London. Internationally recognized experts interacted with participants on the issues and facilitated an understanding on mainstreaming Rights in the existing projects and programs. A handbook on international declarations and Rights, 'Breakingthrough: A Guide to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights', was made available to partners and was also published in Hindi as '*Ek Pahal Adikaron Ki Ore*' for wider dissemination.

Training and Orientation on LGBT

For the work on sexual and reproductive health especially with regard to HIV, it was important to enhance understanding and sensitivities towards the Rights of LGBT population as well. This aimed to reduce discrimination against this population and capacitate partner organizations to incorporate LGBT issues in their organizational work as well.

Trainings on Advocacy

These trainings were also organized over the years in partnership with international and national experts. Besides, issue specific trainings were conducted with RFSU like 'Motivating Political Will' and 'Campaign Planning'. Trainings were done in cascade pattern reaching out to all potential partner NGOs at the state level. The 'Handbook on Advocacy' became popular not only with the partner organizations but also amongst other organizations working on similar issues. The advocacy efforts at the state and districts were further supported with IEC material in form of a film on young people, 'Pratibimb' and posters on early marriage, HIV and sexuality education adapted and produced in three languages.

Workshop on Fund and Accounts Management Management of funds and maintenance of accounts was another essential area for capacity

building. MAMTA organized a three-day workshop for the sub-grantees on the requirements of the donor. MAMTA also developed a financial guideline and made it available to the SFAs and ZCs. A few organizations were also provided hands on training at MAMTA. These together with technical support visits by finance and accounts personnel helped streamline the financial reporting of many organizations. Majority of partner NGOs have now adapted computerized accounting with 'Tally' replacing manual accounting.

Workshop on Project Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation (PIME)

This was conceptualized in response to the needs expressed by many of the partners to get their capacity strengthened on Project Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation issues. It aimed to train "middle staff" people working mainly at the State Facilitating Agencies and Zonal Coordination Agencies and select district level partner NGOs. The PIME training focused on planning, log frame analysis, proposals, process documentation, monitoring and evaluation. It facilitated understanding on progress tracking, relevance of MIS and case studies in reporting.

Proposal writing workshops were also organised separately in few states. These enabled understanding of the issues in a fresh light through analytical approach and were appreciated by partner NGOs.

Building Capacities of Young People

Engaging young people as partners in this endeavour was the key requirement of the YRSHR project. Though several partner NGOs were working with young people and some of them had introduced 'Peer Education' mechanism, the efforts towards enhancing youth participation was loosely woven across the

network. The visibility of their efforts was random and participation was largely event based. Hence, It was important to build similar level of consciousness on YRSHR among young people as well. MAMTA adapted few established and innovative approaches to reach out to young people and nurture potential youth as leaders and advocates. These efforts are discussed in detail in subsequent chapters on Youth Participation and Advocacy. Some of the approaches undertaken were:

- Peer Education (*with a manual on Peer Education in english and hindi*)
- Entertainment Education (*street plays, role play, puppetry with a manual on making puppets with easily available materials*)
- Facilitating Youth Friendly Publications (*Arushi, Stepping into Adolescence*)
- Web portal in english and hindi (enriched with issue based information, e-counseling, page for youth participation thus inspiring interaction among youth on YRSHR issues)
- Youth Internship
- Conventions and Meetings

SRIJAN Resource Centers: Strengthening Resource Base at the State level

The need for capacity building led to the establishment of an exclusive resource center on Young Peoples' Sexual and Reproductive Health and related topics. The 'SRIJAN Resource Center' is managed and coordinated by MAMTA and it functions as a 'Clearing House'. It collects relevant books and materials and disseminates across SRIJAN Network. It also caters to specific information and material needs of partner organizations and facilitates collection or publications accordingly.

To further strengthen the resource base at the state level, states are being supported to establish state level resource centers that involves training

on library management and library soft ware operation along with financial support to purchase books and periodicals. Resource centers in Jaipur (with CULP) and Patna (with NIDAN) have already been established.

Thematic Meet

Thematic Meetings provided opportunities for network partners as well as youth representing diverse areas of the country to build new perspectives to view relevance and progress of YRSHR and learn on different related themes. Besides, it provided opportunity for skill building on ICT, Effective Communications, Management issues, Puppetry etc. These meetings also proved



to be occasions to display collective strength of the network in terms of experiences and capacities and advocate with key stakeholders at the national and state level on its core issues. Thematic Meetings were organised thrice in the project period and all have been well received by partner NGOs. The last thematic meeting organized by the SRIJAN Andhra Pradesh at Hyderabad in October 2007, witnessed participation from 121 partner NGOs and 35 youth leaders across seven states.

Exposure Visits

The second project also focused on exchange visits to facilitate learning from the emerging best practices of SRIJAN networks in different states and exposure visits to interventions especially on sexuality education, youth centers and youth friendly health services. Three sites under 'Pilot Intervention' strategy of the project focusing on Sexuality Education and Youth Information Centers, [in Bawal (Haryana), Koramangala (an urban slum in Bangalore) and Pindra block in Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)]; YFS model under private-public partnership in Gosainganj (Lucknow – Uttar Pradesh); and 'Friends', at Tigri, a resettlement colony of Delhi were some of the locations extensively visited and studied by the SRIJAN partners. Besides, several others were provided with opportunities to participate in international and national conferences like Asia Pacific Conference, held in Hyderabad in 2007 and Agricultural Medicine and Rural Health at Aurangabad, Maharashtra in 2008.

Later in February 2008, a study visit to Stockholm (Sweden) was organized for select representatives from SRIJAN partners. The visit

provided exposure to some of the best practices with regard to sexuality education and youth friendly health services in Sweden. It encouraged partners NGOs to adopt similar approaches in their intervention areas or advocate for implementation of suitable programs in their respective states and districts. The delegates also visited Swedish Parliament and interacted with the Swedish Parliamentarians who are closely associated with SRH issues of young people.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The capacity development plan for network partners presents an interface between theory and practice. In the pre-2003 phase, network partners had very little understanding on YRSHR issues. Most partners had initially found it challenging to communicate with stakeholders on issues pertaining to 'Sexual and Reproductive Health' and that too in context of young people.

Trainings on 'Gender and Sexuality' with interesting value clarification exercises and methodologies enhanced technical knowledge and skills to overcome these problems. Now they

From delegates of Study Visit to Stockholm, 2008

“The Swedish government takes all the necessary steps to shape the life and career of young people and issue of sexuality has not been left on the choice of individual rather a national policy has been designed and formulated towards ensuring health and rights of the people. Rights of sexual minority are equally respected. Advocacy must be done through all possible channels and platforms to adopt the national policy of Sweden on the key issues of YRSHR so that TFR, IMR and MMR could be minimized in our country”, says Lajwanti Jha, Secretary, Madan Bharati Samaj, Zonal Co-ordinator from Bihar .

“A major insight is that programs which seek to address SRH of young people successfully should have specific laws in place and thus, in the Indian context advocacy is a key issue to consider. Sexuality education and preventive services for young people need to be addressed as a matter of rights. School-based sexuality education should be re-introduced at the earliest in states where it has been withdrawn and SRIJAN network could take up the challenge”, says Vibha Marfatia, Executive Director of SAHAS, partner NGO in Gujarat.

are able to present arguments for YSRHR with increased sensitivity and empathy towards other views and thoughts.

Another remarkable achievement of capacity development measures especially advanced trainings on Gender and Sexuality, is the development of a core group of three to five master trainers in each state that engages itself in capacitating others in the sector. It has earned SRIJAN a popular profile and helped in mainstreaming of YRSHR issues in other projects of the network partners as well as in other non-network organizations' projects and programs. In Andhra Pradesh, the government department invited a network partner to train health supervisors on YRSHR. Network partners in this state conduct trainings at Mandal level for Primary Health Center personnel. In Maharashtra, capacity development not just capacitated the participating youth; it also helped them to play a greater role in opening of the Youth Resource Center in every district. Many participants have become trainers on HIV/AIDS and are presently involved in Link workers' training under NACO, UNDP initiative. In Bihar, several NGOs are involved in conducting trainings for UNICEF program under Integrated Child Development Scheme.

Exposure to good practices and other intervention sites have helped them break the ice with stakeholders and seek their support for YRSHR interventions. Further training on advocacy with a 'Handbook on Advocacy' and 'Advocacy Kit' as reference material provided confidence to approach key stakeholders and develop linkages with state institutions and key functionaries. It led to meaningful participation in advocacy measures initiated by SFAs or MAMTA. It has also helped them to reduce the socio-cultural barriers existing in the community by enlisting support from religious leaders and *jati samaj* who have come forward in a big way to prevent practice of early marriages.

Some partner NGOs have also demonstrated competence for policy advocacy. Network partners in Rajasthan, Bihar, and Gujarat have been involved in drafting the State Youth Policy,

while in Andhra Pradesh, the network has contributed towards the draft on the Compulsory Marriage Registration Act in the State.

One of the most significant outcomes of 'Young People and Gender and Sexuality Trainings' has been its success in making 'participation of young people especially marginalized youth for their Reproductive and Sexual Health' an important agenda of health and development sector. The trainings and other efforts on enhancing youth participation have given a contingent of very articulate youth leaders whose remarkable transformation is acknowledged by each and every network partner. Besides, it also helped in building organic links of the Youth Information Center and Youth Forums with Panchayats and schools.

Workshops on proposal writing and management of project funds and maintaining accounts helped network partners in project formulation, streamlining of their financial system and leveraging of funds from other agencies. Some network partners succeeded in receiving projects on the lines of YRSHR with support of other donor agencies that in turn has impacted their institutional and implementation capacities. For example, SFA in West Bengal has been able to get a project on behalf of SRIJAN West Bengal.

Moreover, these exercises have provided confidence and skills to undertake trainings for other NGOs, state institutions and to facilitate mainstreaming of Gender and Rights and specially YRSRH in all programs related to health and development. These apart, SFAs and other network partners have also organized a series of workshops in their respective states, zones and districts on issues like peer education orientation, EMEP, YFS, organizational planning and coordination and documentation.

In 2006, an evaluation of the project noted that, *"compared to the situation observed by 2002 evaluation, this team was struck by the notable difference at the SRIJAN as well as at the field activity level - in terms of common understanding as well as ability to articulate and discuss sexuality and YRSHR issues in general. In the sense of*

increased capacity of the SRIJAN membership to promote YRSHR in a consistent way the efforts have clearly generated an impact.” However, the evaluation also highlighted the need to introduce organisational and managerial capabilities in addition to technical expertise as criteria for SRIJAN membership and participation in capacity building exercises.

Later, when a study visit to Stockholm (Sweden) of representatives of partner NGOs was decided in early 2008, the selection was based on the statement of purpose (SOPs) submitted by the interested candidates.

Almost all SFAs, ZCs and other network partner NGOs consulted during the preparation of this document view capacity development opportunities as the biggest gain to SRIJAN that the project will leave behind.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

Although in both phases of the project special attention was given to capacity building through structured training programs, hundred percent coverage of SRIJAN could not be achieved mainly for two reasons. First, due to the dynamic nature of the network new organizations joined the network, while some others opted out. Secondly, the sustainability of human resources within network organizations was a challenge. As a result, project coordinators and key staff members who had been part of the capacity building exercises moved out and new personnel joined the team.

It has been difficult to gauge the acquired capacity for financial management. Even though most of the grassroots NGO partners have shown confidence in financial reporting, they find it difficult to meet the requirements for financial reporting. Likewise, the workshop on proposal development ushered in a fresh outlook towards project design, but many of them still express inadequacy in drafting final proposals.

It is understandable that skills like advocacy can only be acquired over a period of time and with

experience. Some partners within the network have shown more inclination as well as the potential to take on this crucial role. However many other are still in the process of learning and feel the need for follow up trainings on advocacy, especially those in West Bengal and Maharashtra.

Partner NGOs' Commitment to YRSHR issues

Sustaining the momentum within SRIJAN emerges as one of the challenges before the network. During interaction, Zonal Coordinators of Bihar (Nidan and IDEA) expressed that motivation and commitment can lead to sustainability of efforts only for a short period. Some partners in A.P. and West Bengal felt that mainstreaming of YRSHR in other projects of partners as well as in other NGOs' programs, and the skills and experience acquired by partners to undertake projects on YRSHR issues would lead towards sustainability. Network partners in Rajasthan and U.P. suggested that if they succeed in integrating YRSHR issues with livelihood issues of the youth and start vocational trainings, the accrued fund can be utilized for sustaining trainers and master trainers.

CINI project functionaries in Kolkata hold the view that, *“The network has enhanced the capacity of the partners to engage on gender and sexuality related issues. However, the impact has so far been moderate. The transfer of acquired capacity has not been very effective and uniform. Therefore, the network should continue and MAMTA ought to continue anchoring the network, especially because the rights and the advocacy issues are still new for a large number of network partners.”*

Similar perception was shared by project personnel in Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh in Nagpur *“Despite scarce financial support, the fact remains that engagement with SRIJAN has increased our level of confidence to effectively address YRSHR issues. We, however, still do not feel that there has been substantial reduction in social stigma and government departments' antipathy towards HIV/ AIDS victims. Also, the referral services and youth friendly spaces have also not expanded significantly in our areas, and a*

lot remains to be done in this direction. We cannot afford to lose such a platform which provides opportunities to engage with youth and other stakeholders on a larger scale.”

Partner NGOs in U.P. believe *“Since there is no need of a large fund for the sustainability of YRSHR issues in other projects, the network should continue, even with limited resources, for achieving the bigger goals of expanding youth friendly services as well as retaining and stabilizing the youth force who are currently in the network’s fold.”* They further add *“The network has enabled us to understand the system and process of facilitating a network. Continuance of such a network is essential in order to center-stage it in the development sector as well as for maintaining new engagements with governance institutions.”*

Zonal Coordinators from Bihar (Nidan and IDEA) stated that their relentless efforts have made SRIJAN one of the few notable networks existing in the state, having wide synergy with legislators and government departments. They feel that *“wrapping up of such a crucial network at this stage will forfeit many opportunities that we have built up in all these years. As far as financial sustainability is concerned, we can influence other donors to support us.”*

JOURNEY SO FAR

At the end of the project, MAMTA has been able to establish a functional network of more than a hundred committed NGOs at national, state, district and village levels. There is a formal structure in place with well defined roles and responsibilities of partners at each level and clear guidelines for its smooth functioning. Presently, SRIJAN has 134 partners with 5 State Facilitating Agencies and 9 Zonal Co-ordinators across 94 districts in 7 states of the country. Besides advocating together on YRSHR, network serves as a platform for sharing information, ideas and experiences as well as understanding and disseminating knowledge on health and other development needs of the youth.

The SRIJAN partners have enhanced technical and managerial capacities to initiate and implement similar interventions in their own areas. Communication and co-ordination systems have greatly improved. A large number of partners are being reached through email communication that has reduced the lag period for response or exchanging information. With the new learning and skills acquired, several partners are now sharing the responsibility with MAMTA towards further strengthening the network and building capacities of other NGOs and institutions in states and districts. The knowledge base has increased to a greater level and a common level of understanding has been infused across the network wherein more consistent efforts towards policy and program implementation can be initiated.

The network has a national youth forum with a strong force of thousands of sensitized youth members. It has core committees at national, state and district levels with eight members at each level to guide and monitor the activities of Youth Forum. Youth forums at each level have a well defined role and are presently being supported by the respective mentor organizations. An achievement in this regard is formation of Young Positive Speaker's Forum which is an integral part of the SRIJAN Youth Forum.



MAMTA continues with its efforts towards formalizing actions for the sustainability of SRIJAN and is endeavoring for more systematic, concerted efforts on institutionalization of 'Peer Education', integration of 'Sexuality Education' in school education system and implementation of 'Youth Friendly Health Services' at the state and district level. MAMTA also recognizes the need of taking state level advocacy to a higher degree

thereby state partners can be engaged in evidence based advocacy for formulation of suitable policies and programs in the state and triggering efforts of similar intensity in districts and villages.

Chapter Three

Enabling Youth Partnership

Enabling Youth Participation

In order to create an enabling environment for young people's reproductive and sexual health and rights, it was essential to involve young people as partners in the initiative. From spreading the message among peer groups and community to sharing platform with policy makers to voice their concerns, young boys and girls have matched pace with NGO personnel. Involvement of young people as 'Agents of Change' was the prime focus in the entire functioning of the SRIJAN. The 'Vision statement' for SRIJAN drawn collectively by partners, reflected their aspiration to establish a self-governing and adaptive National Youth Forum, owned and managed by young people to advocate on YRSHR and livelihood opportunities. The initial efforts were to enhance their understanding and knowledge on YRSHR and train them as Peer Educators; however gradually as the network evolved, potential peer educators were entrusted with the responsibility of youth advocates with increased participation in decision making processes and larger advocacy initiatives on YRSHR. The task of developing youth leadership on YRSHR drove the network partners to devise strategies for youth mobilization and institutionalizing mechanisms to reach out to the youth through dialogue, counseling, participation in youth events and campaigns.

YOUTH MOBILIZATION

A few SRIJAN partners in their own individual capacities had some experience of working with young people and had involved young people in their programs at the local levels. There were also a few youth groups facilitated by other agencies, like *Kishori Manch* and *Bal Panchayat* in Rajasthan, *Bal Sansad* in Gujarat etc. But mobilizing young people under SRIJAN was a challenging task in the given socio-cultural context. Firstly, the Sex and Sexuality was a taboo subject in the society and secondly SRIJAN aimed to reach adolescents and young adults with greater focus on unmarried youth. The need for capacity building of young people and enlisting support of parents and community was felt acutely and so was the requirement of issue-based resource materials for Information Education and Communication (IEC). While MAMTA undertook capacity building at a larger scale for partner NGOs through conducting trainings and providing resource materials and facilitated the process of developing youth leadership; partner NGOs started identifying and selecting potential youth in

the area for peer education trainings. The idea was to create a pool of Peer Educators and Youth Leaders. The key processes undertaken included establishing contact with young people and their parents in the area; convincing them for attending sessions conducted by NGOs; identifying potential youth with willingness to become peer educator, conducting trainings and issue-based sessions once or twice a week. At some place as in Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, local youth were engaged in the survey on youth and sexuality and youth mapping, hence generating a force of committed youth group to work with.

Peer Education

Peer education was an important vehicle to inform and educate youth on SRH challenges and address their concerns. NGOs organized regular peer education trainings for select group of young people in batch of fifteen to twenty. There were separate sessions for girls and boys. Though efforts were directed to mobilize both the sex in equal numbers to attain a gender balance among

peer educators, at some places it took time to get the girls out of their houses. Community meetings, meetings with parents, teachers and decision makers in the area were held time to time to enlist their support. MAMTA developed a handbook on 'Peer Education' to build a common understanding among partners on its significance and approaches involved.



Wide-range of issues under peer education trainings included challenges of growing-up, early marriage and early pregnancy, contraception, STIs and HIV/AIDS, Substance abuse etc. Gender and Rights were cross cutting issues. Building life skills to negotiate, communicate and seek help was integral to peer education. Beside, MAMTA provided resource materials like training manual on adolescent sexual and reproductive health for community workers and peer educators; handbook for young people like 'Stepping into Adolescence'; Arushi; Frequently asked questions; in different regional languages.

In addition special trainings to reach messages on SRH issues in an entertaining way, was organized for select peer educators from each state. Entertainment education was a medium to reach illiterate and marginalized youth. Trainings on use of innovative games and puppetry and shadow story telling, were organized with experts

in these art forms. MAMTA developed a manual and a CD on making puppets with locally available material. Also, young people practiced staging street plays with NGO staff on different occasions.

On the whole, efforts aimed to promote health seeking behaviour of adolescents and young people, irrespective of their age, gender and marital status. Several partner organizations have tried to organize these trainings at a regular interval to maintain the numbers of peer educators in the community keeping in mind the possibility of drop-outs. The frequency of these trainings and number of trained peer educators vary in different NGOs, yet the ripple effect has helped to spread the messages far and wide.

The mid term evaluation of 2006 found widespread reach of peer educators across the network. The report stated that "Peer Educator process is undoubtedly the one that is likely to be more effective in terms of reach as well as impact on the ground. We were unable to get information on how many Peer Educators that had so far been trained or were active. However, the number (at least in nominal terms) is likely to be considerable as this is a standard feature throughout the SRIJAN. Throughout our field visits we met with, and had some opportunities to get glimpses of, the work of, Peer Educators in virtually all places and organisations."

The report further emphasized that, "the Peer Educators have been identified, and indeed come to be relied upon, as the core vehicle by which the programme promotes a youth dialogue (rather than being a one-sided information system). Given this it is in our view of critical importance that the Peer Educator process is being subjected to a focal participatory evaluation. The current lack of systematic information as to their actual inputs, their self-perceptions, and the factors that promotes (or otherwise) their sustained contribution need to be corrected on a priority

basis in order to enable actions to be taken during the remainder of the current phase.”

During the study for this documentation, it was found that capacity building of youth group members by MAMTA, SFA and individual partners has worked to great extent as they have acquired knowledge on gender and sexuality. This has in turn helped them break gender barriers in skills development and engage more confidently in advocacy efforts to develop linkages with schools, teachers, PRIs, ANMs. Peer educators now talk about the issues like sexuality, masturbation, safe sex, condom demonstration with much ease and comfort. Moreover, they have gained confidence and their communication and presentation skills have also improved. This enhanced capacity has further impacted their attitudes, behaviour and practices.

As yet another mean to sustain peer education at the organization level, mentor NGOs in almost all states have facilitated formation of cultural groups of youth members and have trained groups of peer educators on street plays and theater, for example 'Malli' act in Andhra Pradesh, is a musical drama on early marriage performed by young people that has received state-wide recognition; and SRIJAN Sanskritic Manch (SSM) in Bihar etc.

Creating Safe Spaces for Young People: Youth Information Centers/Drop in Centers (YIC/DIC)

In order to increase youth participation, SRIJAN partners established youth information centers, popularly called as Drop-in centers across the network. The idea is to provide an informal space for recreation and access to issue based information for the youth in the area. These centers are maintained by peer educators and supervised by a NGO staff. There are in-door and out door games, magazines, newspapers and youth friendly IEC material on various issues in the local languages. SRIJAN resource center at

MAMTA publishes and acquires such resources and makes it available to NGOs for wider dissemination through these centers.

Besides, NGO staffs conduct sessions on issues pertaining to YRSHR on a weekly basis and occasionally screen educational films. These centers also provide opportunity to peer educators to discuss problems and specific concerns that they have encountered, with the NGO staff. Most of these centers have a 'Question Box', wherein young people can put in their questions without disclosing names. The question box is opened by the center in-charge and answers are prepared in consultation with NGO staff, doctors and counselors. The answers are shared during the weekly meetings and are also filed and kept with other resources for youth to read according to their convenience.

The 'Question Box' method is a great success and it helped several NGOs to compile a range of questions and their answers related to adolescence and SRH. Few of them are published in the form of a handbook as a resource material for young people, such as 'Yauvanam' by SRIJAN Andhra Pradesh.

In a short span these centers have gained acceptability in the community and have become popular with youth in the local areas. Young boys and girls visit the centers in great numbers.



Separate timings for girls and boys, its location within the NGO establishments, or public places like Panchayat Bhavans etc. and management by trained staff facilitated its acceptability among parents and community. Even parents, teachers and other community members do get engaged in DIC and YIC based activities. At many places, it has been seen that families in the community have voluntarily provided their courtyard for these youth meetings that reflects change in perception about issue related to sexuality.

Such regular interactions between NGO staff and young people in the area, contributed a lot in building self-confidence and self-esteem among youth. The level of knowledge generated inspired MAMTA and SRIJAN partners to design innovative activities to enhance youth participation for larger advocacy.

Arushi, Youth Magazine by Young People

Arushi is published by the editorial board formed by peer educators engaged with SRIJAN. These peer educators are selected on the basis of their interest and skills to write stories and narrate experiences. All seven states have their representatives in the editorial board. The members meet once or twice in a year and decide the theme for the issues. Accordingly, a workshop is organized for them to enhance their knowledge on the theme and writing skills and help them refine their stories or experiences during peer education and give a shape to the magazine. This serve dual purpose, one to create an issue based youth magazine while building capacities of these selected members on thematic issues and secondly to create a tool for advocacy on YRSHR.

Celebration of National and International Youth Days

This was strategically adopted by SRIJAN to reach YRSHR agenda to a larger audience and

provide greater exposure to young peer educators who were gradually taking up the role of youth advocates. It provided a much needed platform for young people to voice concerns and make demands for appropriate actions. The events organized on these days turned out to be great success with mentor organizations and youth advocating together with key stakeholders and functionaries. The theme for NYD/IYD was selected according to the specific needs of the state. Some of the themes were early marriage; migration and HIV; need for adolescent education etc. Now, these celebrations are common phenomena across the network.

In an campaign against early marriages, hundreds of youth members actively participated in the signature campaign to retain the legal age of marriage of boys at 21 in the new Child Marriage Prohibition Bill of 2005.

NURTURING YOUTH LEADERS AND ADVOCATES

Thematic Meetings, Youth Conventions, Workshops on Advocacy and Youth Internships

In an endeavor to develop youth leadership and



train potential candidates as advocates, MAMTA organized a series of direct capacity building programs for young people. It started with inviting potential youth in 'Thematic Meet' organized in 2004. In 2005, Youth Conventions were held in all seven states on the common theme of Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy. Hundreds of young people participated in the state youth conventions and advocated for stronger social and political response to early marriages. It was followed by 'Regional Youth Convention' in 2005 in Kolkata and Jaipur. Around 200 peer educators participated in RYCs. These meetings and conventions were addressed by key functionaries and experts and various skill building workshops were organized. Youth participants used innovative and folk media to communicate social and cultural environments under which early marriages take place in their area. Young people were oriented to the legal and social implications of early marriage and were invited to share their opinions.

During these conventions 40 potential youth, who could be groomed as future advocates, were identified for a national level workshop on 'Building Advocacy Skills' organized during the 'National Youth Meet', held in Delhi, on 4th and 5th January 2006. The purpose of the workshop was to (i) build a pool of youth ambassadors at the state and national level; (ii) strengthen their advocacy skills; and (iii) to provide visibility to the voice of young people. MAMTA facilitated meeting of youth advocates with key functionaries at Delhi.

The 'National Youth Meet' aimed to facilitate formation of a national level youth forum. Representatives of all seven State Youth Forums joined hands to draw an action plan and implemented in the next spell in association with their mentor organizations.

Few youths were selected as 'Youth Ambassadors' and were provided exposure

through participation in international and national conferences. In 2005 Youth Ambassador, Arindam Roy, was selected to represent the Indian Youth Perspective for the UNGASS Youth Report on HIV/AIDS. Later during the 7th ICAAP Conference held at Kobe, Japan, in July 2005, MAMTA along with a team of Youth Ambassadors represented 'The Indian Youth Perspective'.

In thematic meets organized in Delhi and Hyderabad, youth representatives were integral part.

Youth Internship was also provided to 10 young people from different states that included seven days orientation and opportunity to work at Bawal, a 'Pilot Intervention' site and at 'Friends', Youth Information and Counseling Center in Tigri, Delhi.

SRIJAN Youth Forum

Young people are equal partners in processes (initiated by the government or other agencies) that address their needs and concerns. 'Youth Forums' are a more formal setup being created with an objective to harness the potential of these peer educators and to organize them into an independent youth body that 'comes of age' in due course of time and is able to continue advocacy efforts and work for other young people in their own areas, autonomously.



Over the period of last five years, a number of young people had been trained as peer educators and advocates. But only some states were able to establish a youth forum. In 2007 and 2008, major steps were taken to consolidate these forums at each level. It was envisaged that Youth Forums be formed at three strategic levels i.e. District; State and National. A common guideline was followed and district level partner NGOs organized youth meeting at the district level where in a core group of 6 to 8 youth representatives were elected through a democratic process. Out of this two elected youth representatives from each district participated in state level meeting organized by the SFA (and one ZC in U.P and Bihar) during the year 2008 for formation of forum at the state level. Similarly two to four elected members participated and elected a core group to serve the National Youth Forum at a meeting held at Delhi in December 2008. Roles and responsibilities of each member of the core group at all levels have been defined. Mentor organizations at each level would provide guidance and technical support to facilitate the functioning of these forums.

At present there are 20-30 members at the district and state and 60 at the national level with core group of 8- 11 members at each level. Another important group which is an integral part of this forum is Young Positive Speakers' Forum with total of approximately 50 members. There has been a conscious effort to involve both boys and girls in all these forums and provide opportunities for equal participation.

Young Positive Speakers' Forum (YPSF)

'Young Positive Speakers' Forum is a group of young people living with HIV (15-24 age group) who have come forward to take on the role of advocacy on young people's sexual and reproductive health needs with stakeholders in

their respective communities. The Young positive speakers' forum was first established in Maharashtra and is being supported by MAMTA and NMP+. Potential and interested young people were identified and invited for five day training at Pune in 2007. The purpose of this forum was to provide visibility to the cause and support to youth living with HIV and address their fears and inhibitions; help them gain self-confidence; and build their capacities and skills as peer educators and youth advocates. The mentor organization with district network of PLWHAs and SRIJAN partner NGOs facilitated their activities that included positive speaking on the rights and concerns of youth living with HIV; awareness and education on SRH issues with focus on HIV;



reducing stigma and discrimination and are also engaged in encouraging voluntary counseling and testing for HIV.

A similar forum has been established in early 2008 in Uttar Pradesh with 18 members from 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh and 2 districts of Bihar. This was undertaken with the support of Uttar Pradesh Network of People Living with HIV, UPN+. Select positive speakers from the two states have also been trained as youth advocates. A follow-up training was also organized by MAMTA in February – March 2008 in New Delhi.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The most remarkable achievement of the network has no doubt been creating an enabling environment for increased youth participation and empowerment. The social myopia to look at YRSHR issues as something alien to social ethos, custom, tradition and culture has been overcome to a great extent in the intervention areas of the network. Across all states, peer educators and youth leaders have been engaged in awareness campaigns and grass roots advocacy on need-based issues through different mediums like street plays, exhibition, poster display, drama, puppetry shows and awareness rallies, especially on International Youth Day, World AIDS Day and National Youth Day as well as Women's Day. Besides, peer educators undertake advocacy with parents, community members, schools, PRIs and religious / caste leaders through sensitization meetings. They also participate with their mentor organizations in interface with government officials / PRIs / service providers / police on occasions like Youth Day, AIDS Day and Women's Day.

In most states, one of the major responsibilities of peer educators and youth group members is to organize monthly parents and teachers meetings on YRSHR and develop interaction with school teachers on life skills and adolescent education.



Staff and field coordinators of the network partner organizations assist them in the tasks and coordinate their activities and meetings. The meetings normally take place once a month, but youth group members informally meet every week in most of the states. In states where DICs exist, peer educators are responsible for its up keeping and management as well.

The above initiatives for reaching out to the youth have evolved and refined over the years based on lessons and experiences gained under the project. The mosaic of innovative practices for institutionalizing methods and mechanisms of youth mobilization as well as opportunities to enable their participation presents remarkable facets of the network. The district and state youth forums, cultural groups as SRIJAN Sanskritic Manch in Bihar and Malli in Andhra Pradesh; Young Positive Speakers Forum, effective use of religious and cultural festivals in Bihar, U.P. and Gujarat to raise awareness on issues like HIV, early marriages etc. and 'Youth Caravan' organized in Bihar and the drafting of the State Youth Policy in Bihar and Rajasthan are some key achievements of the network.

As Kanika, a graduate from Ashurali village, South 24 Pargana explains *“SRIJAN enabled me to broaden my vision. Earlier, I had tremendous inhibitions in talking on subjects like gender and sexuality. However, now I have no inhibition, no hesitation. I can freely talk on these issues with anyone including male members in my family. I tell my friends that if they want to grow in a healthy and confident manner, they must understand these issues.”*

Moreover, this process has been institutionalized to a large extent through the setting up of DICs and YICs where monthly meetings are attended by local stakeholders like PRI members and ANMs. Besides, a strong contingent of young people, comprising of thousands of peer educators and

youth group members, in 94 districts and more than 210 blocks has developed into a critical mass of change agents. If mechanisms of sustainability are put in place, this large pool of resources has the capacity to reach out to a much larger number of people for impacting the functioning of governance institutions and policy makers.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

The most critical challenge that all network partners face is the high dropout rate of peer educators. Depleting base of PEs is likely to impact the functioning of most of the YIC, DIC and counseling centers, In all states, fifty peer educators drop out every year. Migration and job insecurity are the two main reasons leading to this drop out phenomenon.

Several partner NGOs have mainstreamed Peer Educators' orientation and training into their organizational system by conducting regular training programs. Some partner NGOs in Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have linked the PEs with livelihoods programs which further helped them to retain the PEs. A majority of the network partners feel that sustained awareness campaigns, enhanced participation of PEs in running YIC/DIC and counseling centers, linkages with governance institutions and advocacy measure to a large extent have provided openings to mainstream YRSHR in health and development sector, but the journey is not finished yet.

Some schools, in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat are now giving permission to network partners to work with their students on YRSHR. In West Bengal, after relentless efforts of developing a group of peer educators within a school, a high school administration near Kolkata has issued a formal letter to a network partner to initiate life skill education in the school. In Andhra Pradesh,

Advocacy with local administration helped in the registration of a few *mandal* level Youth Groups, such as in Vishakhapatnam.

The Rajasthan partners reported that they have attempted to address some of the key challenges through context-specific capacity building of youth groups, involving youth in other projects and vocational activities and developing youth leadership. The Gujarat network partner have too mainstreamed YRSHR issues into other project components and are promoting youth members to develop linkages with community groups and schools. Many suggest interlinking of YRSHR issues with livelihood programs to sustain the motivation among youth members.

SUGGESTIONS ON SUSTAINING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

As stated by a representative of a partner NGOs in Andhra Pradesh, *"YRSHR is a missing link in government programs and schemes and, therefore, ensuring youth participation at every level of planning and decision-making and youth interface with government officials is crucial for center staging YRSHR."* Hence, the present momentum created by the project must continue. Most partners share this view as they still find the efforts in the mid-way in achieving the goals of YRSHR.

Network partners in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar have plans to mainstream peer educators in government-run Shiksha Mitra Yojna. Similarly, they also have planned to mainstream several of their youth groups with NYKS and Panchayats.

Many partners have also learnt how to use the (Right to Information) on YRSHR related issues, but very few have been able to transfer the skills to youth for leveraging government resources and

monitoring their program. This area needs further strengthening to enable youth to access government programs and provisions.

Spread of the network and its youth forums will prove advantageous for evidence-based advocacy on the locally identified issues as well as for national level advocacy themes. To strengthen network and advocacy, partners learnt that it will be important to:

- a) Introduce or strengthen mechanism for retention of peer educators and their continued engagement in running YIC and other youth friendly services,
- b) Link them with livelihoods related government programs or ensure their placements in government schemes,
- c) Promote their participation and role in network,
- d) Keep encouraging them and support them for youth advocacy at panchayat and block levels, and
- e) Strengthen linkages with schools and colleges for advocating sexuality education curriculum.

Chapter Four

Creating an Enabling Environment

Creating an Enabling Environment

The purpose of establishing SRIJAN was to undertake collective advocacy to build a larger consciousness on young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights. It aimed to develop consensus among stakeholders for evolving suitable approaches to deal with sexual and reproductive health related concerns of adolescents and youth. The efforts were directed towards influencing policy decisions and formulation of appropriate programs. . Youth participation and leadership were identified as means for effective advocacy under SRIJAN.

The task was to be carried out at the national level by the Secretariat and at the state level by SFAs/ZCs with the support of SRIJAN network partners at the grassroots. This section has tried to capture some of the process involved in initiating advocacy in SRIJAN; youth led advocacy activities and initiatives taken by the partner NGOs at the local level.

IDENTIFYING ISSUES AND STAKEHOLDERS

As all decisions were taken collectively during Working Group Meetings, issues for advocacy were also identified collectively in those meetings. At times, different issues were identified for national and state level advocacy depending on the interest of partners and the state specific priorities.

The joint working group meeting of MAMTA/ RFSU and SFAs held in 2003-04 identified some common issues for advocacy at different levels. Prevention of Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy; Sexuality Education and Youth Friendly Services were a few agenda that was taken up for larger advocacy across SRIJAN. In the last three years, the issues decided for national level advocacy include Right to Information and Access to Services for Young People (2005), Campaign against Lowering of Age for Marriage (2006) and HIV/AIDS, Migration and Youth (2007).

In the WGM, the constituencies with whom advocacy had to be pursued were also identified, such as elected representatives and government functionaries; educationists, media, medical professionals, lawyers. The network also endeavored to establish a working forum of identified constituencies for influencing the national and state policies and programs that could have favorable impact on young people's sexual and reproductive health.

BUILDING CAPACITIES ON ADVOCACY

MAMTA together with its collaborative partner RFSU undertook a number of measures to enhance understanding about issues, existing policies and programs and different process involved in advocacy among network partners. It also identified potential partners to initiate advocacy processes at the state level. Workshops on advocacy were organized and resource materials in form of a 'Handbook on Advocacy', 'Advocacy Kit' and 'Posters' were made available to partner NGOs. Besides, a web portal on YRSHR was launched with information on issues

and an exclusive database on young people with state and district specific statistics. (See *chapter III on Building Capacity*). In response to partners' demand for training on Advocacy, MAMTA conducted an orientation workshop in 2005 for selected partners from four SRIJAN states - Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Bihar. The advocacy team at MAMTA also facilitated sessions during a state level workshop for Gujarat and Rajasthan partners. In addition in 2007, realizing the need to update partners on latest policy changes, MAMTA organized an orientation on key policies and programs and interactions experts and government from Delhi for representatives of SFAs and ZCs. These were further disseminated to state partners in separate meetings convened with participation of state level stakeholders.



The activities undertaken regularly by the partner NGOs in their advocacy efforts are as below

- Orientation and training of network partners and peer educators
- Sensitization and awareness generation meetings with all stakeholders - parents, elders of the society, schools and members of Panchayati Raj Institutions
- One to one interaction with PRI members,

media representatives, service providers, government departments, and political leaders

- Creating opportunities for youth to take a lead and voice their concerns through organizing National and International Youth Days, International Women's Day, World AIDS Day as well as facilitating participation of youth representatives in Youth Conventions; Thematic Meets; Yuvakriti (organized by NYKS), Arushi Editorial Board (Arushi is a magazine brought out by SRIJAN youth members), etc.

SRIJAN Thematic Meet

- SRIJAN Thematic Meeting organized to provide network with a perspective to carry forward the issue in their respective states and district; also presents opportunity to showcase collective strength of the network in terms of experiences and capacities and advocate with key stakeholders at the national and state level on its core issues. During the project period, three thematic meets have been organized. The last thematic meeting organized on YRSHR and Millennium Development Goals by SRIJAN Andhra Pradesh in October 2007 at Hyderabad, witnessed participation from 121 partner NGOs and 35 youth leaders across seven states. The highlights of the meetings were key functionaries from the state government and representatives from national and international organizations who addressed the delegates on different aspects of YRSHR.

YOUTH LED ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS GENERATION

Organizing Youth Conventions and Representation at National International Events

Young People were identified as partners in the advocacy initiative on YRSHR. A series of activities towards mobilizing youth, training them as peer educators and building their capacities to serve as youth advocates have been organized by MAMTA and partner NGOs.

During 2005-06, State Youth Conventions were held in all seven states on the common theme of Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy. Over 500 young people in each state participated in the State Youth Conventions and advocated for stronger social and political response to early marriages. These state conventions were marked by presence and support of the senior officials and elected representatives in the state capitals. As in Uttar Pradesh, the convention was addressed by the State Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs.

In 2006, two Regional Youth Conventions were organized by SRIJAN West Bengal and SRIJAN Rajasthan in Kolkata and Jaipur respectively, where over 200 young people participated. They used innovative and folk media to communicate social and cultural environments under which early marriages take place in their area. Young people were oriented on the legal and social implications of early marriage and were invited to share their opinions.

Around 40 young men and women were identified from the two Regional Youth Conventions to participate a National Youth Meet in Delhi and share their recommendations on Child Marriage Bill with line ministries of Women and Child Development, NACO and Youth Affairs. A group of youth advocates also met Mr. Oscar Fernandez, the member of Parliamentary Forum on HIV and AIDS, and presented their recommendations. National Youth Meet also led to identification of potential youth to serve as 'Youth Ambassadors'.

In 2005, Youth Ambassador Arindam Roy was

selected to represent the Indian Youth Perspective for the UNGASS Youth Report on HIV/AIDS. MAMTA along with a team of Youth Ambassadors representing 'The Indian Youth Perspective' during the 7th ICAAP Conference held at Kobe, Japan, in July 2005. In 2007, a member of Young Positive Speakers Forum from Maharashtra and a youth member from Bihar represented India with a delegation that was comprised of senior officers from Ministry of Health and NGOs in a Seminar on HIV and AIDS organized by Govt. of Sweden at Stockholm. Besides, youth members were provided with several other opportunities to participate and present their views at several occasions. These exposures helped in providing visibility of issues of Young People in India.

Events and Festivals as a Platform to Promote YRSHR

At the state level, celebration of national and international youth day witnessed young people in large numbers coming together to advocate for a cause. These celebrations provided opportunities for interaction with policy makers and key functionaries and promote YRSHR issues with active support of media. In recent years, SRIJAN youth members have participated and performed in the Annual Youth Meet organized by NYKS on the occasion of National Youth Day. These days are also celebrated at the district and block level



wherein local stakeholders are invited to interact with youth members.

SRIJAN youth members have also been organizing awareness campaigns on YRSHR issues on important festivals and cultural events celebrated locally, like Ganga Mahotsav in Varanasi, Lucknow Mahotsav, Deva Mela in Barabanki, Maghar Mahotsav in Gorakhpur, (all in U.P.); Chhath, Holi, Mahaviri Mela and Jain festivals in Bihar; Bhandari Poonam and Ambajee Mahotsav in Gujarat and Ganga Yatra in West Bengal etc. Awareness programs in the form of cultural programs; rallies and camps attract a large number of devotees and patrons and facilitate conveying messages in a non-threatening way. In Bihar, youth members organized successful camps for awareness generation and counseling at railway stations and bus stands during festive seasons like *Chaat Puja* and *Dussehra* as migrant labor visit home during these festivals.

Impact of Youth Led Advocacy at the Grass Roots

Most remarkable aspect of grass-roots advocacy has been the initiatives taken up by various youth groups across seven states to stop early marriages. In some cases, the youth groups have also developed linkages with the local police stations and other concerned authorities, such as in the case of Tharuni in Andhra Pradesh, CULP in Rajasthan, AGP in South 24 Parganas of West Bengal and YCIT in Mehsana of Gujarat, SWI in Varanasi of UP and TRMSAP in Amravati of Maharashtra. PEs from AJF in 2007 stopped traditionally held mass marriage in Ahmedabad to save 22 such girls getting married at an early age.

Another important achievement of the youth groups is its success in sharing government's infrastructure such as schools and panchayat bhavan for Youth Information Centers (YIC) and

counseling centers. Many such centers have been opened in SRIJAN districts of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. The sustained engagement of PRI members, school teachers, ICDS workers, parents and elders of the village in regular meetings in some states such as Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh has also brought YRSHR another development agenda of the village for discussion and action.

Linkages with Schools

Other important youth led advocacy initiatives by most of the partners have been developing linkages with schools for orienting students and teachers on the issue. Despite having faced many odds to develop such linkages, most of the partners NGOs have institutionalized the mechanism of establishing linkages with schools through Peer Educators and Youth Leaders. Most SFAs and some partner NGOs work with varied numbers of schools; partner in Mehsana district alone works with 20 government and government aided schools; similarly, partner in Warangal district works in 30 high schools and 45 upper primary schools. In most other SRIJAN districts, each partner NGO on an average works with 2 to 5 schools.

In Gujarat, Young Citizen of India Charitable Trust (YCIT) organizes a five day long training every year on YRSHR for students and teachers of government and government aided schools. Two teachers and two students from each school in the intervention area take part in this training. Nidan has initiated another innovative practice in its own zone in Bihar, where a group of five peer educators who are also members of the State Youth Forum undertake weekly orientation class for students of different class in different schools on gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

In West Bengal, Health Vision and Research developed a group of peer educators within

Kusumba Haritala High School, located at Rajpur Sonarpur near Kolkata, to introduce Life Skill Education in the school's time table. The teachers who were resisting the idea in the beginning have now turned supportive and life skill education continues in the school.

ADVOCACY WITH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Signature Campaign And Memorandum To Parliamentary Committees

As network had envisaged, SRIJAN partners came together on few occasions for putting up demands for a favorable decisions at the parliamentary level with regard to YRSHR issues. In 2006, all SRIJAN network partners launched an intensive signature campaign against the central government's proposal for Lowering the Age for Marriage for boys to eighteen. Youth participated in all states to collect signatures against this proposal, which also provided opportunity to advocate and spread awareness on the issue of early marriage and early pregnancy. Bihar SRIJAN network alone collected 1,00,000 signatures and handed over to the Speaker of Bihar Legislative Assembly who was invited to address the youth rally on the occasion of International Youth Day in Patna. Similarly, partner NGOs in Andhra Pradesh mailed lakhs of signatures on inland letters to the Prime Ministers' Office. The signature campaign by the network partners in West Bengal was appreciated by the Governor of West Bengal and Minister for Panchayati Raj visiting Kolkata that time and signed the banner carrying thousands of signatures. SRIJAN Uttar Pradesh also invited one of the members of the Parliamentary Committee to flag off a rally and interact with SRIJAN youth members on the issues on the occasion of International Youth Day in the same year. The same day SRIJAN Uttar Pradesh

organized a Youth Parliament at Lucknow where youth members interacted with the panel of experts that comprised of a retired chief justice, functionaries of Uttar Pradesh, SACS, Family Planning Association, media and civil society groups.

Similarly in 2007, 11 state and zonal network partners from Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh sent their notes to the Venkaiya Naidu Committee on Sexuality Education, a Committee formed by the Government of India to review 'Adolescent Education Program' introduced by NACO and Department of Education. The parliamentary committee had later given its suggestions with approval for introducing the curriculum on adolescent education in the school education system.

Advocating With Member Of Legislative Assembly(MLAS) And Panchayati Raj Institution Members In States

As a strategic follow-up to the advocacy initiatives taken up by MAMTA and select partner NGOs at the national level with key departments and line ministries, partner NGOs in states are initiating meetings with the MLAs and PRI members and one to one interactions with key functionaries in the state. In November, 2008 Bihar organized a workshop of select MLAs and MLCs under the guidance of Honorable Minister for Health, Govt.



of Bihar. Uttar Pradesh SRIJAN organized a similar meeting in Varanasi with guidance of Member of Parliament from Varanasi. Partners in Andhra Pradesh submitted their request and recommendations to the Honorable Chief Minister at a function organized in the Legislative Assembly and reached their request to around forty members participating in the function. Besides, one to one meetings were organized with key functionaries in the department of health, social welfare and youth affairs, SACS through SRIJAN's initiative.

Advocacy in Districts and Villages

Partners NGOs in districts, with increased understanding on YRSHR, are engaged in carrying out advocacy with stakeholders at the local level like PRI members, Collector, Block Development Officer, Medical Officer. The objective is to enlist their support in creating enabling environment by reducing barriers at the local levels on educational programs for adolescents and young people on their reproductive health. The partner NGOs at grass root level are organizing meetings of PRI members to sensitize them on health and development needs of young people and update them with latest policies and programs. The collector and functionaries at the district level are also invited to address the PRI members and initiate a constructive debate and dialogue on

health and development of village youth. Apart from building understanding on YRSHR, these meetings also aim towards seeking inter-department collaboration and co-operation for the health and development of young people in the village and district.

Network partners have also undertaken grass roots advocacy on a number of issues pertinent to their target communities and people.

An incident narrated by Rajendra, a PE at Amravati, shows effectiveness of grass roots level advocacy. Rajendra says, *“SRIJAN provided us with an opportunity to interact with young people and other sections of society on gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. We interacted with schools and religious leaders and our efforts paid dividends. Our biggest satisfaction was when we succeeded in saving a school going child Yogesh from being de-schooled in Tiosa block under the pretext that his father had died because of AIDS and that his mother was also infected. We launched a campaign under SRIJAN banner and announced that the student is not infected, and furthermore, school authorities had no right to expel the student. We continued our activities and finally the school was forced to re-admit the child.”*

ACHIEVEMENTS

Besides the efforts towards positioning YRSHR at the national level, some of the specific issues that have come up for state level advocacy include



Migration and its impact on youth (Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh)

- Promulgation of Compulsory Marriage Registration Act and implementation on Child Marriage Prohibition Act (Andhra Pradesh)
- Development of State Youth Policy (Bihar and Rajasthan)
- Second Line Treatment for HIV (Gujarat and Maharashtra)
- SRIJAN Bihar organized an all stakeholders' meet on HIV/AIDS and Migration in association with BSAC, ANS Institute, International Health Organization IHO, at Patna. Youth groups of various network partners organized successful camps at railway stations and bus stands during festive seasons in targeting thousands of immigrants for counseling on HIV and AIDS. The continuous advocacy on youth-centered issues and concerns influenced Bihar Government, as is evident from their invitation to Bihar SRIJAN for participation in drafting State Youth Policy.

The advocacy on YRSHR helped SRIJAN Bihar in developing linkages with international agencies like UNICEF, Plan International, International Health Organization; different government departments, and civil society groups.

SRIJAN Andhra Pradesh called for a state-wide campaign in 2006 on effective implementation of Compulsory Marriage Registration Act (CMRA) and Child Marriage Prohibition Act. More than 20,000 inland letters signed by youth and students were posted to the Prime Minister and the State Chief Minister. Advocacy not just helped the network to mount pressure on the government to pass the CMRA, but also developed the advocacy and negotiation skills of partner NGOs and youth members.

In Gujarat, partner NGOs have developed linkages with the government health department as a partner in Mehsana reports that the efforts have led to the opening of an ART centre in the district, the only ART Center in North Gujarat. The organization acts as a link between HIV/AIDS patients and hospital. A forum of people living with HIV has also come up in Mehsana. The partner NGO has also conducted sustained advocacy with Chief Medical Officer and for Youth Friendly Counseling Center in the district hospital.

In Maharashtra, as a result of advocacy initiatives undertaken by the state network of SRIJAN, health and referral facilities have increased and improved in several districts, such as Amravati and areas of Nagpur. The Nagpur based partner was also awarded by UNAID for their commendable work in the field of HIV/AIDS and youth.

In Rajasthan, the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Government of Rajasthan, organized a meeting in 2007 at the state secretariat in Jaipur to discuss and share the final draft of the State Youth Policy. SRIJAN partners played a vital role in reviewing the old policy and drafting the current one. Advocating on YRSHR with key functionaries have also resulted in a call for a proposal from the network on youth related health issues. Further to enlist support of government on endeavors towards prevention of Early Marriage, SRIJAN Rajasthan organized media events in Jaipur where the State Minister for Department of Women and Child Development along with the Principal Secretary and the Chairperson of State Women Commission released SRIJAN Posters on Prevention of Early Marriages, '*Haldi ki Jaldi Kyon*' and '*Bal Vivah Ke Unchahe Uphar*'. The Honorable Chief Minister of Rajasthan had also issued a note of appreciation to SRIJAN for disseminating social messages to prevent child marriages in the State.

The advocacy efforts also helped Rajasthan network partners to gain information on spaces of youth participation in National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREGA), provision for adolescents and youth in National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and National AIDS Control Programme III, skill building trainings under the Rajasthan Mission of Livelihoods, *Yuva Jyoti* Scheme of CAPART and the process of registration under Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan. The information base would further help the youth to undertake advocacy campaigns on their entitlements and rights. The network advocacy efforts helped the youth of Kapasan block to get job cards under NREGA.

SRIJAN Uttar Pradesh has also succeeded in advocating with health department on health related service delivery and opening of youth counseling centers at primary health centers in some districts. The trainings conducted by SRIJAN Trainers for Anganwadis and ANMs have led them to seek peer educators' help in reaching out to adolescents in several districts of Uttar Pradesh. Partners NGOs have also found their advocacy efforts effective in positioning the issues of migration among youth and vulnerability to HIV in different districts. A few partner NGOs are now on the board of Technical Support Group on Adolescent Health under National Rural Health Mission. Besides, SRIJAN Uttar Pradesh is represented by the network partners as members in the State Health Society and District Health Society under the National Rural Health Mission. A few partner NGOs are also members of the PCPNDT Committee. Network partners have also advocated with the administration on NREGA implementation and are a part of the Social Audit teams. Each network partner in the state organized PRI sensitization meetings on child marriage. Five village heads associated with the network have got elected in panchayat elections in Pindra block in Varanasi district.

SRIJAN Uttar Pradesh also organized advocacy meeting with media persons at Lucknow in 2006 and 2007. After the advocacy meet, the media urged the network partners to provide data, evidences and case studies for publishing on YRSHR issues which the partners have started supplying to them.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

Although the efforts at the national level have contributed towards some favorable policy change; the state advocacy has not been able to make much impact with regard to YRSHR primarily due to lack of experience and uneven capacities across network partners to plan and undertake systematic advocacy. Hence, most of the advocacy efforts were disjointed, either event or day specific. Also, in many states, the socio-political environment was not favorable enough for a dialogue on issues of sex and sexuality. Hence, in spite of being able to establish good linkages and sensitize and orient key functionaries, efforts couldn't attain its expected outcome. For example, strong reactions against Adolescent Education Program in states like Rajasthan, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh have created hindrance to the progress chart.

“Rights and Advocacy are new things for a number of partners, and they are trying to formalize it in their planning. But SRIJAN West Bengal has a lot to learn from MAMTA on this issue”, says representative of CINI.

Some partners also feel that media, an important stakeholder, is not aware of youth rights and therefore sensitizing media through conducting youth-media get together and disseminating best practice elements of youth initiatives is very essential.

ACHEIVEMENTS

Most partners have reported to have learnt that effective advocacy helps in leveraging resources from government and creating pressure on state institutions for delivering their services and ensuring entitlement. Endeavors to center stage YRSHR issues and youth have helped many to reach out to different constituencies like elected representatives, media, and key functionaries of various related departments. Organizing advocacy campaigns and events have enhanced their visibility in the area. A major change that partners have found is that constituencies like media have started recognizing them as credible source for YRSHR related news, peer educator experiences, voices of youth and related data and statistics. It has also helped most network partners to locate the state resources for the sexual and reproductive health of youth and their development to formulate better advocacy plans supported with reasoning and evidences.

FORWARD PLAN

As a forward movement, SRIJAN network plans to intensify advocacy efforts at the state level and take it to districts as well if resources permit. MAMTA will continue providing technical support and directions for evidence based advocacy. MAMTA also plans to take forward the agenda with select NGO partners who have potential for carrying out effective advocacy with state level stakeholders particularly elected representatives and functionaries in departments of Women and Child, Social Welfare, Health and Education.

With a favorable policy environment and programs introduced at the national level, it would be easier for the partner NGOs to advocate for its implementation at the state and district level. As a forward plan SRIJAN will be advocating for three key actions to influence health and development of young people:

- (i) Implementation of Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) Program under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM);
- (ii) Promoting Legal Age of Marriage and Appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officer as stated in Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 2005; and Compulsory Registration of Marriage across the state; and
- (iii) Implementation of National Adolescent Education Program (AEP) in the state through school health system.

Annexures

Annexure I

List of SRIJAN Partners

Andhra Pradesh

1. Navajyothi, State Facilitating Agency
2. Society for Education Research and Development (SEREDE)
3. Star Youth Association (SYA)
4. Santhoshi Mahila Abhyudaya Samithi (SMAS)
5. ARIDS
6. Society for Womens Awareness and Rural Development (SWARD)
7. NEEDS
8. Academy for Nursing Studies
9. Mahila Sanakshem Sangh (MASS)
10. THARUNI

BIHAR

1. Institute for Developmental Education and Action (IDEA), Zonal Coordinator
2. Shaktivardhani
3. Mithilanchal Mahila Seva Mandal
4. Vananchal Kalyan Samiti
5. Jan Nirman, Sitamarhi
6. Kanchan SevaAshram ZonalCoordinator
7. Sevayatanama
8. Usha Silai-Bunai Prashikshana Kendra
9. Mansi
10. Vaishali Samaj Kalyan Sansthan
11. Narayani Seva Sansthan
12. Shama Vikash Samiti, Zonal Coordinator
13. Nalanda Pragati Manch
14. Raviskalp
15. Mahila Vikas Samiti
16. Antodya Samiti Simariya
17. Prakash Jan Seva Sanstha
18. Anupam Mahila Chetna Samiti
19. Nidan, Zonal Coordinator
20. Mahila Bal Jyoti Kendra
21. Lok Kalyan Samiti
22. Nav Jagriti
23. Mahila Bal Balika Vikash Kendra

24. SARTHI
25. Mandan Bharti Jagriti Samaj, Zonal Coordinator
26. Jan Vikash Samiti Itasagar
27. Bal Mahila Kalyan
28. Adharshila Grameen Vikas Sansthan
29. Panah Ashram
30. Sahitya Kala Manch

Gujarat

1. CHETNA, State Facilitating Agency
2. K H Jani Charitable Trust
3. Akhand Jyot Foundation
4. Jyoti Sangh
5. Samarthan Trust
6. Chuval Gram Vikas Trust, Ahmedabad
7. Chuval Gram Vikas Trust, Mehsana
8. Young Citizen of India Charitable Trust
9. Social Awareness for Health and AIDS – SAHAS
10. Yusuf Meherally Centre (YMC)
11. Young Man's Christian Association (YMCA)
12. Kachchh Network of Positive People
13. Manav Kalyan Trust
14. Gram Vikas Seva Trust
15. Samarthan Trust,
16. Mahila Patch Work
17. Aarogya (Centre for Health-Nutrition Education and Health Promotion)
18. SAHAJ
19. Prayas, Anjar
20. Olakh
21. Sundaram Bharati
22. Prayas, Dahod

Maharashtra

1. Network of Maharashtra by People Living with HIV and AIDS, NMP+ State Facilitating Agency
2. Nehru Yuva Mandal
3. Abhinav Bharat Institute of Rural Development(ABIRD)
4. Janhitay Mandal
5. Lokdeep Manav Vikas Sanstha
6. Rashtra Sant Tukdoji Maharaj Shikshan va

- Arogya Prasarak Mandal
7. Matoshri Ramabai Ambedkar Pratishthan
 8. Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh
 9. Amarbhim Krida Mandal
 10. Prakash Shikshan prasarak Sanstha
 11. Chandrabhagabai Mahajan Sevabhavi Sanstha
 12. Vasundhara sevarth Samajik Sansodhan Ani Vikas Seva Sanstha
 13. Kalavati Adarsh Mahila Vikas

Rajasthan

1. Seva Mandir, State Facilitating Agency
2. Navachar Sansthan, Zonal Coordinator
3. PRAYAS
4. Jatan Sansthan
5. SEHAT(Society for Education, Health Awareness & Training)
6. Centre for Unfolding Learning Potential (CULP), Zonal Coordinator
7. Student's Relief Society (SRS)
8. Bal Rashmi Society
9. CECOEDECON
10. Adarsh Gyan Mandir Sansthan,
11. Gramodaya Samajik Sanstha,
12. Gram Vikas Navyuvak Mandal Lapodiya, Zonal Coordinator
13. Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS)
14. Dhara Sansthan, Zonal Coordinator
15. SURE
16. Rural Education Development Society-REDS
17. Seemant Kisan Sahyog Sansthan
18. NIRA (National Institute of Rural Awareness)
19. Shree Jan Jeevan Kalyan Sansthan
20. Urmul, Zonal Co-ordinator
21. Shikshit Rojgar Kendra Prabandhak Samiti (SRKPS)

Uttar Pradesh

1. Social Welfare Institute, Zonal Coordinator
2. Jan Kalyan Mahasamiti
3. Samarpan Sewa Samiti
4. Sabla
5. Samvad Samajik Sansthan
6. Daud Memorial Christian Grameen

- Vikas Samiti, Zonal Coordinator
7. Rudra Dhiraj Prashikshan Samiti
 8. Kisan Sewa Sansthan
 9. Shoharatgarh Environmental Society
 10. Vigyan Foundation
 11. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Studies in Rural Development, Zonal Coordinator
 12. Navchetan
 13. Gramin Punarnirman Sansthan
 14. Award, Zonal Coordinator
 15. Laxmi
 16. Sarvajanik Grameen Vikas Sansthan
 17. Nav Jagriti Janhit Seva Sansthan
 18. Institute for Integrated Society Development

West Bengal

1. Health Vision and Research (HVR) State Facilitating Agency
2. Netaji Pathachakra
3. SANTANA
4. New Bharati Club
5. RHDC- Rural Health Development Centre
6. Sreepur Mahila O Khadi Unnayan Samity (SMOKUS)
7. Sri Aurobindo Anusilon Society
8. KALYAN
9. Nivedita Community Care Centre
10. Sister Nivedita Kalyan Samity
11. Nari Mukti Mahila Samity
12. Nari-O-Sishu Kalyan Kendra
13. Moyna Rural Health Development Centre (CINI)
14. Chapra Social & Economic Welfare Association
15. Association for Social & Health Advancement(ASHA)
16. Ashurali Gramonnayan Parishad
17. Saheed Shibsankar Seba Samity
18. Adampur Unnayan Samity
19. Sandeshkhali Chetana Samaj Kalyan Kendra
20. CINI

Abbreviations

ANS- Academy For Nursing Studies	STI- Sexually Transmitted Infections
ADB- Asian Development Bank	HIV- Human Immuno Deficiency Syndrom
AGP- Ashurali Gram Unnayan Parishad	PRI- Panchayati Raj Institution
AP- Andhra Pradesh	WGM- Working Group Meetings
ART- Anti-Retroviral Therapy	RFSU- Swedish Association for Sexuality Education
BAJSS- Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh	SACS- State AIDS Control Society
CINI- Child In Need Institute	SRH- Sexual and Reproductive Health
CMRA- Child Marriage Registration Act	Sida-Swedish International Development Cooperation
CULP- Center for Unfolding Learning Potentials	SFA- State Facilitating Agency
DFID- Department for International Development	SRIJAN- Sexual and Reproductive Health Initiative for Joint Action Network
DIC- Drop-in Center	TCA - Technical Capacity Assessment
EMEP- Early Marriage Early Pregnancy	UN - United Nations
ICDS- Integrated Child Development Scheme	UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
IEC- Information Education and Communication	UNICEF- United Nation's Childrens' Funds
IHMP- Institute for Health Management and Planning	UP- Uttar Pradesh
IYD – International Youth Day	USAID- United States Agency for International Development
LGBT- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender	VANI- Voluntary Action Network India
MEDVAN- Voluntary Organisation Network in Medak District	WB- West Bengal
MDG- Millenium Development Goals	WGM- Working Group Meeting
NACP- National AIDS Control Programme	YFS- Youth Friendly Services
NACO- National AIDS Control Organisation	YIC- Youth Information Center
NREGA- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	YRSHR- Young Peoples' Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights
NRHM- National Rural Health Mission	ZC- Zonal Cordination/Zonal Co-ordinator
NCERT- National Council of Educational Research and Training	MOU- Memorandum of Understanding
NMP+- Network of Maharashtra of People Living with AIDS	
NYKS- Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan	
PE- Peer Education/Educator	
PHC- Primary Health Center	
PPNDT- Pre-Conception and Pre- Natal Diagnostic Testing	
PRI- Panchyati Raj Institution	
PIME- Project Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation	
ICT- Information Communication Technology	



MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child is a non-profit, non-government organisation aiming to improve Sexual and Reproductive Health of current and future generations through Rights-based approach. Through its various interventions the organisation constantly strives to bring about an equitable and sustainable change in the lives of young people in India and in South Asia. In addition to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, MAMTA has a significant focus on Maternal and Child Health, and HIV Prevention, Care & Support programmes. Working in the context of poverty and addressing gender and Rights issues is a common mandate within all areas of work.

Established In 1991, MAMTA presently has interventions located in three countries (India, Nepal and Bangladesh) and 12 states in India. Its headquarters are located in New Delhi, with state offices in Lucknow, Chandigarh and Jaipur. MAMTA's interventions are made possible through partnerships with more than 150 organisations across India and South Asia.



RFSU (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education) was founded in 1933. Today it is the leading organisation in Sweden in the field of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). RFSU sees openness on sexuality as the point of entry of health promotion and prevention. Rights to sexual and health services, and sexuality education are key tools in the struggle for a healthier and more equitable society.

RFSU's five international programmes on Sex Education and the right to information about sexuality, STI and HIV/AIDS, Right to sexual and reproductive health care, Health and rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals, Women's right to safe abortion and reduced maternal mortality, Right to freedom from sexual violence and violence based on gender covers Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, China, Mongolia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Supported By:

