

*The Better Life Options  
Program for Adolescent  
Boys in India*

Copyright 2002  
The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA)  
50-M, Shantipath, Gate No. 3  
Niti Marg, Chanakyapuri  
New Delhi 110 021

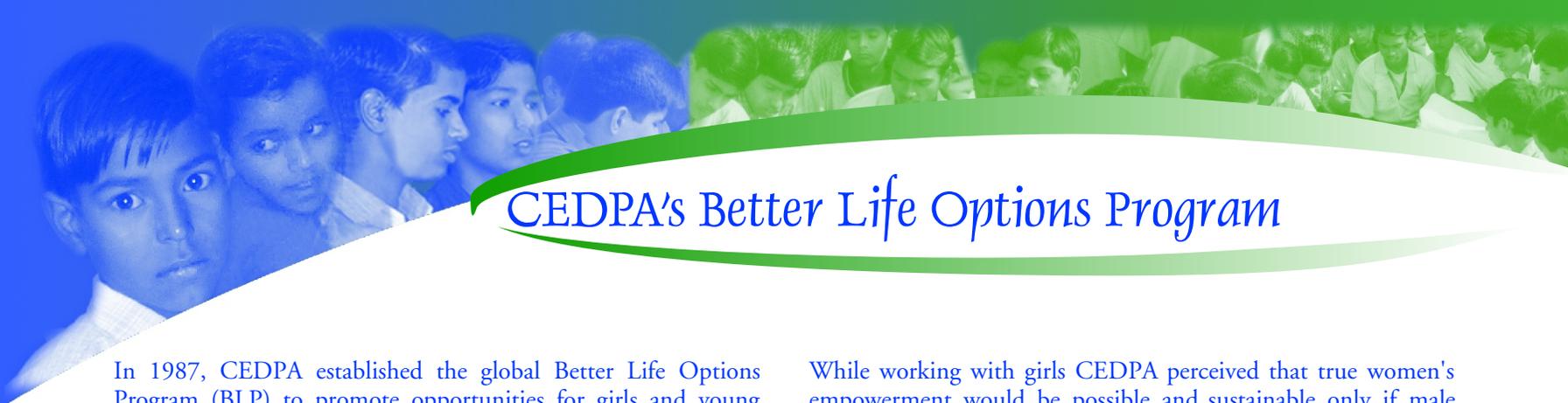
Illustrations: By Adolescent Boys, Participants of Better Life Options Program



The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) is an international non-profit organization whose mission is to empower women at all levels of society to be full partners in development. Since 1975, CEDPA has been working globally to enable women to be full and responsible partners in development by promoting their access to development opportunities. Its strategies for empowering women include programs in reproductive health, family planning, advocacy, capacity building, gender awareness and youth development.

# Table of Contents

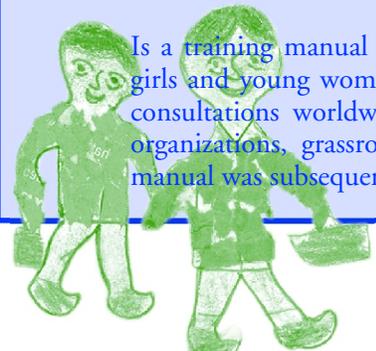
<b>Cedpa's Better Life Options Program</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Better Life Options Program For Adolescent Boys</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Adolescent Boys: The Indian Scenario</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Needs Assessment</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Participatory Material Development: Adaptation of the Manual to the Indian Context</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Pilot Testing the Indian Manual</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Pilot Testing Feedback</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Pilot Testing Results</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Launching the Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Program Implementation</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Program Impact</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Changing Lives (Quotes from Boys)</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Lessons Learnt</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>22</b>



## CEDPA's Better Life Options Program

In 1987, CEDPA established the global Better Life Options Program (BLP) to promote opportunities for girls and young women to make better life choices concerning their health, economic status, civic participation, education, employment, decision making abilities and family planning. The program is based on an empowerment model and combines elements of education, family life education, life skills, vocational training, health services and personality development. Based on the core belief that confidence and high self-esteem are the foundation for personal growth, BLP uses a program guide for facilitators entitled *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Girls* that actively involves girls in creating their own solutions to situations they encounter at home, in their neighbourhood, in school, at work and with male and female peers. In India, the program was launched in 1987 and has since changed the lives of over 23,000 adolescent girls and young women.

### ***Choose a Future!***

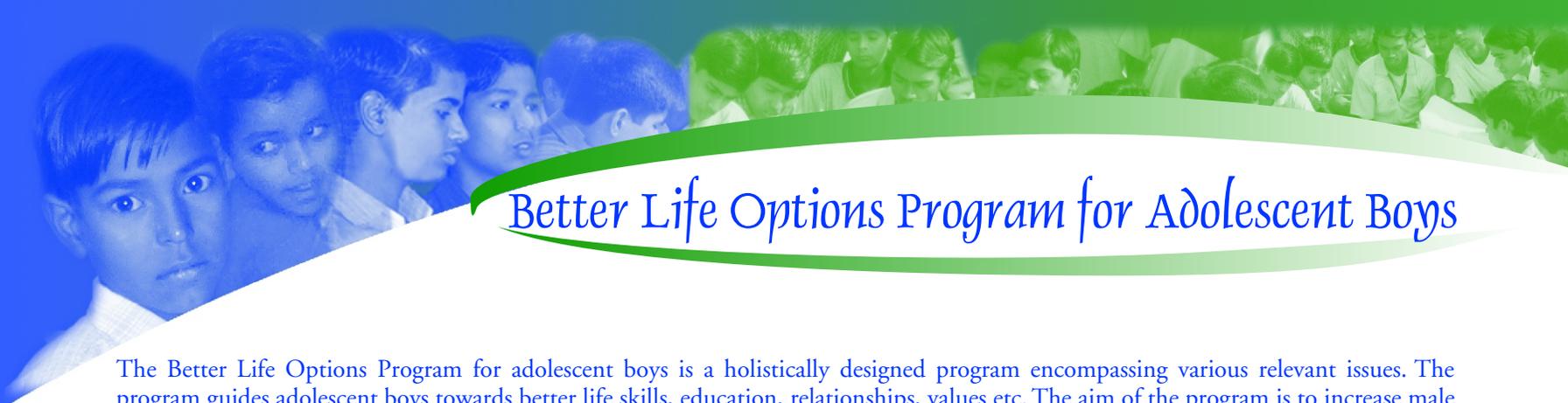


Is a training manual for facilitators and trainers working to empower adolescent girls and young women. It was developed by CEDPA after three years of intense consultations worldwide with adolescent girls and young women, international organizations, grassroots level organizations and government agencies. A similar manual was subsequently developed for trainers and facilitators working with boys.

While working with girls CEDPA perceived that true women's empowerment would be possible and sustainable only if male support and behavior change was forthcoming for women's issues. "You have changed my life, now please change the thinking of my future husband" was an often heard refrain at CEDPA's programs. The need for a similar empowerment program for adolescent boys, to effectively challenge gender inequalities was also expressed by the communities and by the boys themselves.

This resulted in a perception shift in the thinking of CEDPA and its partner organizations from working exclusively with women to working with men to empower women to finally addressing the needs and issues of adolescent boys. Though boys have greater access to education and vocational training they have little access to family life education or reproductive health information and services. Further, they need to be sensitized towards women's issues and be given an enabling atmosphere which supports changing attitude and behaviors.

**Realizing the critical role that males need to play in women's empowerment, CEDPA decided to launch a Better Life Options Program for adolescent boys.**



## Better Life Options Program for Adolescent Boys

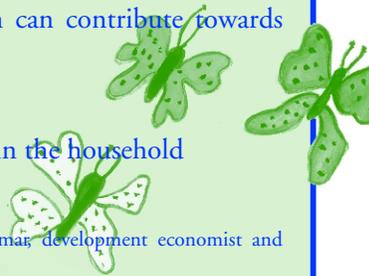
The Better Life Options Program for adolescent boys is a holistically designed program encompassing various relevant issues. The program guides adolescent boys towards better life skills, education, relationships, values etc. The aim of the program is to increase male involvement in reproductive health decision making, expand life opportunities, improve gender sensitiveness and establish an enabling environment for young adolescents to mature into healthy, self confident, productive and responsible adults.

In 1999, CEDPA developed a global training manual, *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys* for facilitators and trainers working with boys aged 10-19. In India, the manual was adapted to include issues specific to the Indian context and the adapted version *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* was launched in 2001.

“There are four important ways in which men can contribute towards women's health-

- by promoting greater freedom for women
- getting better informed and educated
- encouraging discussion and conversation within the household
- influencing community action”

-“Women's Health: Is there a role for men?” by Dr. Shiv Kumar, development economist and UNICEF advisor



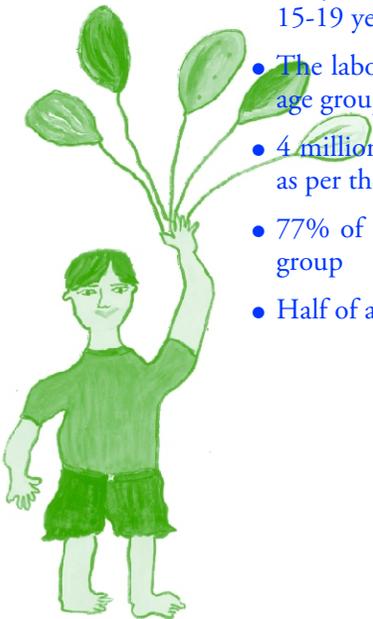
“Since true foundation cannot fail  
But holds as good as new,  
Many a worship son shall hail  
A father who lived true.  
Realized in one man, fitness has its rise;  
Realized in a family, fitness multiplies;  
Realized in a village, fitness gathers weight;  
Realized in a country, Fitness becomes great;  
Realized in the world, fitness fills the skies.  
And thus the fitness of one man  
You find in the family he began,  
You find in the village that accrued,  
You find in the country that ensued,  
You find in the world's whole magnitude.  
How do I know this integrity?  
Because it could all begin with me”

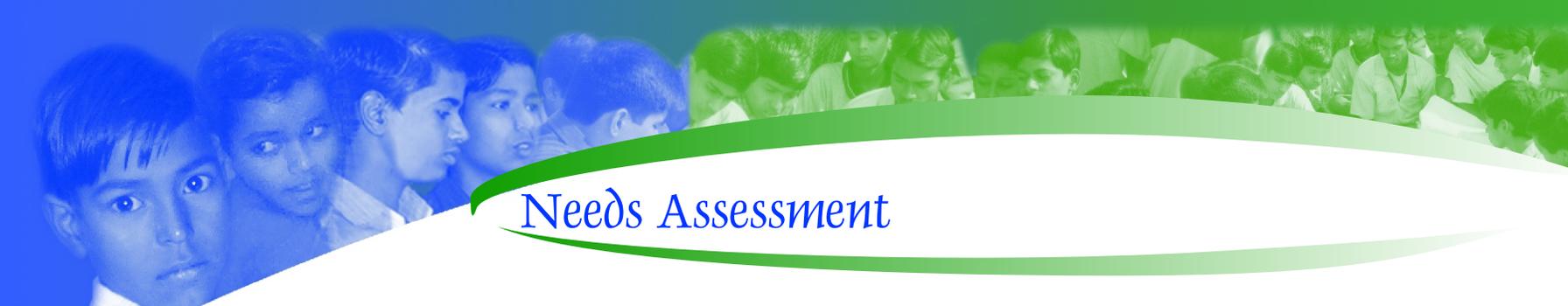
Quoted by Jim Bever, former Mission Director,  
USAID, at a CEDPA workshop in 1999.

## Adolescent Boys : The Indian Scenario

The world over, adolescents aged between 10-19 years account for more than one fifth of the population. In India this age group forms 21.4% of the total Indian population. In fact, the Indian Youth (age 15-24) accounts for 17.7% of the world's total youth population. Despite their large numbers, little attention has been paid to address the needs and issues of adolescent boys. In India,

- There are approximately 100 million adolescent boys, between 10-19 years
- One out of every five boys in the age group 10-19 years is illiterate
- Only 19.8% of rural and 34.8% of urban adolescent boys in the 15-19 year age group complete high school
- The labour force participation rate of adolescent boys in the 10-14 age group is 5.7% and in the 15-19 age group is a high 43.8%
- 4 million adolescent boys in the 15-19 years age group are married as per the 1991 census
- 77% of total HIV infections occur among those in the 14-45 age group
- Half of all new cases of HIV/AIDS are among people under 25





## Needs Assessment

The introduction of the global *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys* training manual in India, in 1999, was preceded by a needs assessment exercise undertaken by CEDPA's partner organizations in the country. The aim was to uncover the adolescent boys' actual needs as against those perceived by parents, teachers or others. Focus Group Discussions with boys revealed there was deep dismay and unhappiness with the way society portrayed them at large. Their portrayal as “trouble makers” or “no good elements” was a far cry from their aspirations for a society free of vices, for career guidance, and for an environment that was supportive and trusting. Most boys also expressed the desire for small families with equal opportunities for girls and equal power sharing with their spouses. They objected to the intense pressure to do well in academics and earn

a livelihood instead of “wasting time” in pursuing hobbies or “wasting time” with friends. In a discussion titled “Becoming a Man”, during the workshop that marked the launch of the global manual in India, the boys revealed that they liked talking to girls. However, societal pressure forbade any form of interaction with girls. The only “sanctioned” form of interaction with girls was ‘eve teasing’. The boys also admitted to experiencing mental trauma and confusion by the changes taking place in their bodies. “We do not know what is going on. We can neither talk to anyone in the family about this, nor can we go to our friends as they are as ignorant as we are. Sometimes when the problem becomes too much, we are left with no other alternative but to visit a local quack”.

### Important issues identified by boys:

- Career guidance and counseling
- Vocational skills development
- Avenues for self employment
- Scope and possibilities for financial assistance
- Awareness of basic skills
- Accessing and linking with existing resources
- Social issues like gender equality, education for all, community free of vices, small families, supportive and trusting environment
- Health issues
- Self confidence and communication

### Barriers to development identified by boys:

- Financial constraints
- Poor quality of education
- Work pressure
- Early marriage
- Lack of opportunities
- Lack of guidance
- Peer pressure
- Bonded labour in some areas





## Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India

*Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys* is a training manual based on a holistic model and addresses various issues including relationships, marriage, gender, fatherhood, health, family, education, work, legal status and community involvement. The global manual was tested extensively with adolescent boys from South Africa, India, Ghana and Nepal. It is based on two principles:

- Boys have the right to make choices to determine their future, and
- Boys can develop the capabilities to make choices

In India, the manual was adapted to include issues specific to the Indian context. The aim of the Indian manual *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* is to foster self respect, self esteem, supportive peer relationships, expanded skills in analysis, decision making, problem solving and negotiating and increased access to resources among boys aged 10-19.



# Participatory Material Development: Adaptation of the Manual to the Indian Context

To effectively address the specific issues faced by adolescent boys in India, it was decided to adapt the global manual to take into account the Indian milieu. The project was made possible by grant aid from The Summit Foundation and was adapted in collaboration with CINI, SPYM, BGMS, NIPCCD, KEM Hospital, CASP, Prerana, CARE, UNFPA, UNESCO and USAID. The project aim was to adapt and introduce the *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* training manual in eleven states in India.

## The main objectives of the project were to:

- Develop a draft *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* training manual for facilitators working with adolescent boys.
- Pilot the draft manual, receive feedback, incorporate the suggested changes and finalize the manual
- Integrate the *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* training manual into ongoing programs for adolescent boys
- Develop a video film to disseminate information about the program.



## The main activities undertaken to achieve this end were:

- Conducting needs assessment to determine India specific issues and concerns and drafting modules accordingly
- Piloting and receiving feedback from at least three partner organizations
- Finalizing the manual after incorporating the changes
- Organizing a conference to launch the manual
- Identifying 8 partner organizations to participate in the implementation of the project
- Providing technical assistance to the identified NGOs to assess their current adolescent programs and develop programs to integrate *Choose a Future!*
- Developing a video film to disseminate information about the program



The adaptation process was participatory and collaborative in nature. It brought together the most significant findings of grassroots level NGOs and used key learnings to design a holistic package. The process began at a four-day workshop, in August 1999, titled *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys* in which 50 participants from 11 states and 33 organizations including NGOs, government agencies, media, academic institutions, international organizations and youth pooled their resources and exchanged ideas. The workshop focused on,

- Sharing the *Choose a Future!* global manual and its development with workshop participants
- Reviewing the situation of adolescent boys in India
- Sharing learnings and experiences of NGOs working with boys

- Assessing the needs of adolescent boys in India
- Identifying ways to use the manual as a tool to develop programs
- Brainstorming a shared vision for working with adolescent boys in India
- Outlining a strategy to collaboratively adapt the manual and develop a complete training package for India

The workshop participants reviewed the manual and shared their comments and suggestions on how best to adapt it to the Indian context. Thereafter, a core group was formed, that reviewed individual modules and sessions and rewrote them as per the feedback received from participants at the workshop. The feedback and the comments from participants proved invaluable

in adapting the manual for Indian needs. Further reviews highlighted the need for a Facilitator's Handbook and the need to add more posters, games and fun things. Subsequently, the pre pilot version of the manual was finalized at a workshop held in May 2000. The youth, represented by five young boys, were also keenly involved in this workshop and provided valuable insight into the issues and strategies to be adopted. The participants discussed virtually every aspect of the manual and its significance as they chose the video cassettes that should be included as

training aids, whether the language was clear and easy to follow, whether the manual adequately presented gender issues, child rights, value clarification, whether the time allotted for each exercise was sufficient, how well would the Indian adolescent identify with a particular module, etc. A videocassette was also added to make the package more interesting for the boys. Supplementary material for the package - films, training aids, games and exercises and the Facilitators' Handbook were also reviewed and finalized.

**The final *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* training manual for facilitators encourages experiential learning and explores and addresses the issues of -**

- Self awareness
- Value Identification
- Gender Awareness
- Feelings
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal relationships
- Families
- Community
- The world of work
- Puberty
- Reproduction
- Health
- Marriage, Partnership and Parenthood
- Legal rights
- Environment
- Taking off from here (My life beyond)



# Pilot Testing the Indian Manual

The pre pilot draft, originally developed in English, was translated into Hindi and Bengali and was pilot tested by four indigenous NGOs across four different states of India.



The *Choose a Future!* training manual was pilot tested by four NGOs over a period of two months from December 1, 2000 to January 31, 2001 in four different parts of India. The manual was field tested on 187 school going and non-school going boys. 78 boys belonged to the age group of 10-14 years while 109 were from the 15-20 years age group. Seven boys covered in the testing phase were married, of which 4 had children.

The NGOs used two different approaches to test the manual. Three NGOs - Prerana in Delhi, Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh (BGMS) in Indore (Madhya Pradesh) and Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM) in Mewat (Haryana) identified groups of boys studying in local schools/colleges and invited them to bring their non-school going friends to participate in the project. The Child in Need Institute (CINI) in Calcutta (West Bengal) tested the project with a network of boys enrolled with its youth clubs and communities.

## Preparatory Phase of 1 week, which included,

- Selection of facilitators
- Orientation workshop for facilitators
- Community level meetings involving parents, teachers, opinion leaders and other community members to prepare an atmosphere conducive to training and learning
- Selection of adolescent participants

## The piloting was carried out in three phases:

### Training Phase of 6 weeks, which included,

- Training sessions with adolescent boys
- Analysis of feedback received from participants, facilitators and observers

### Feedback Phase of 1 week, which included,

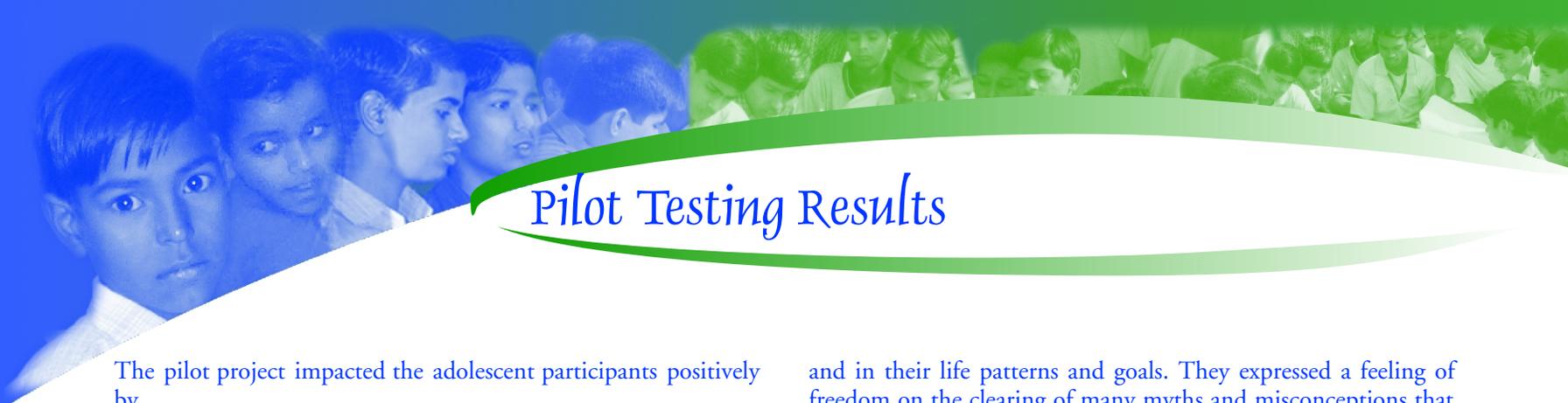
- Compilation of feedback and detailing of changes to be incorporated

## Pilot Testing Feedback

The resultant feedback from the various members was largely positive and encouraging. The participants found the issues interesting, useful and entertaining. They especially enjoyed the games, stories and the field visits though some younger participants found certain modules difficult to comprehend. The facilitators and observers also found the manual largely satisfactory. They detailed the portions that they felt were a little difficult for younger adolescents to comprehend and suggested converting certain illustrations into posters to enable larger groups to attend. They also suggested the inclusion of certain case studies, role-plays, training material and other activities designed by other agencies working with adolescents, which were used by facilitators during the pilot stage. These suggestions were included in the final *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* training package for facilitators that was launched in 2001.

Danish, a training facilitator at SPYM opined, “the program has provided a platform to speak and had given options for the future.”





## Pilot Testing Results

The pilot project impacted the adolescent participants positively by,

- Providing useful knowledge about male puberty and the physiological, psychological and the social changes that accompany adolescence
- Providing accurate knowledge and encouraging proactive and positive attitude towards reproductive health and family planning
- Providing information regarding HIV/AIDS and encouraging boys to reduce risky behaviour and increase the use of condoms
- Resulting in reduced eye teasing and increased healthy interaction with girls
- Providing new resolution skills that enable boys to successfully deal positively and peacefully with conflicts and dissatisfaction
- Increasing gender sensitivity and appreciation for gender equity
- Increasing awareness of human rights and reproductive and child rights
- Inculcating leadership skills that shall benefit the wider community and will help develop youth educators who can expand the program in their villages

The young men shared an increase in self-confidence, self-esteem and ability to articulate. They felt more equipped to take decisions and experienced the development of a sense of responsibility overall - within the family, in interaction with girls

and in their life patterns and goals. They expressed a feeling of freedom on the clearing of many myths and misconceptions that had been plaguing their adolescence and sexuality. They now realized the “consequences of one instance of unprotected sex” and stated that the program for boys “should be everywhere-in remote villages, cities and even in the school curriculum”.

### Wives Benefitted too

Subash: “Earlier I had no knowledge, now I share the knowledge that I’ve learnt with my wife. Earlier I’d make decisions on my own, now I involve my wife.”

Banesh: “There has been a change in my husband. Earlier he was very quiet and did not talk to me but now he talks to me about various issues and is more caring.”

Subash (21 years) and Banesh (19 years) are husband and wife and have post training jointly decided to have their first child after two years and the second child after a gap of five years. Subash has also started assisting his wife and mother in household chores and has assumed the responsibility of waking up at 4.00 a.m. and fetching water from miles away - a chore that is traditionally regarded as a woman’s job.



## Launching the Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India



The feedback received after piloting was incorporated into the training manual and the package was finalized. The final package, which was developed and printed in both English and Hindi, consists of the *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys* training manual, Facilitator's Handbook, additional reading material for facilitators, video films, games, flash cards and anatomical models of the male and female reproductive systems.

The *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys* training package was officially launched on November 8, 2001, at New Delhi. Dr. Francois M. Farah, UNFPA Representative for India, gave the keynote address and released the manual.



## Program Implementation

After the *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* training package was finalized, a one-year Better Life Options Program for adolescent boys was implemented through eight NGOs that were awarded sub grants (CCRC in West Bengal, NESYPM in Assam, KEMHRC in Pune, SPYM in Haryana, Sandhan in Rajasthan, DCT in Gujarat, Prerana in Delhi and CASP in Pune, Delhi and Mumbai). Two other NGOs (Tribal Cultural Society in Jharkhand and Parivar Seva Sanstha in U.P., Orissa, Delhi, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Karnataka) were provided with technical assistance to integrate the training package into their already existing adolescent development programs. The project period was from May 2001 to April 2002. Before implementation began, orientation and

sensitization meetings were held with parents, teachers, and other community members. A three-pronged strategy was adopted to effectively reach out to maximum number of adolescent boys. The NGOs adopted a mix of strategies depending on the contextual conditions in their implementing areas. The main strategies adopted were:

- Integrated approach wherein the *Choose a Future!* training package was integrated into vocational training classes, remedial tutoring classes, etc.
- Camp approach where boys were intensively trained in camps of short duration
- School approach where the *Choose a Future!* training package was imparted in the classroom



In West Bengal, CINI Chetana Resource Centre (CCRC) trained 400 boys in the 15-19 years age group by using an integrated approach. It combined Life Skills Education and vocational training with the *Choose a Future!* training package and conducted the entire program through two community-based organizations. The boys were divided into 16 batches and each batch of boys underwent training over 40 working days.

In Assam, the North-east Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses (NESPYM) adopted two approaches - integrated approach and camp approach. It earmarked nine different partner organizations through which the program was implemented in schools and communities. It trained a total of 443 boys through 1 integrated and 6 camp approach sessions.

**KEM Hospital Research Centre** in Pune adopted the school approach and covered 418 adolescent boys under its program. It translated the manual into Marathi (the local language) and implemented three programs for boys of classes 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Certain modules pertaining to the use of condoms and other family planning methods were not taught to classes 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> but were taken up for classes 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM)** in Haryana trained 400 boys (175 in the age group 15-19 years and 225 in the age group 10-14 years) by adopting an integrated approach and by holding regular sessions for boys. Each week, the senior boys attended 3 days of sessions from the *Choose a Future!* training package and 3 days of computer training while the younger boys were exposed to regular sessions of *Choose a Future!* three days a week.

**Sandhan** in Rajasthan adopted three different approaches. It trained the boys through Residential Training Camps where the boys were trained intensively round the clock, conducted short term training for tribal boys living in nearby hostels and trained boys through “Shikshakarmi” (teacher) Schools. A total of 400 boys were covered by the three approaches.

**Deepak Charitable Trust (DCT)** in Gujarat trained 383 boys through the school approach. Boys of classes 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> were trained in a classroom setting in two large senior secondary schools situated in DCT's project area, near Baroda.



*Prerana* in Delhi trained 434 adolescent boys by adopting both the integrated and camp approaches. It used forums like remedial tutoring, youth clubs, short term camps and vocational skills training to train the boys.

*Community Aid Sponsorship Program (CASP)* adopted the school approach and covered 593 adolescent boys in Delhi, Mumbai and Pune. The boys from the children's council in Delhi coordinated the activities at the school level. In Mumbai, CASP worked closely with night schools to impart training to boys working in restaurants. In Pune, boys of classes 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> were reached through after-school activities.

*Parivar Seva Sanstha (PSS)* trained 4526 boys through formal institutions, communities and alliances with other NGOs. It reached out to boys in schools, training institutes, colleges, industries, prison and volunteers of Scouts and Guides and NYK and NSS. It also covered non school going boys including drop outs and newly married and about to be married youth. Attempts were also made to train marginalized young people like street children and differently abled children including the mentally challenged.

*The Tribal Cultural Society (TCS)* (affiliated to Tata Steel) adopted the school approach and targeted 400 Class 8-10 students of 5 schools in Singhbhum East and West districts of Jharkhand. At the onset, the program covered only boys, but on request from the female students and teachers, girls were also enrolled into the program. The sessions were held jointly for both boys and girls. 5 more schools have been added in the 2002-03 academic year. The program has also been integrated into the SAHAS project, which focuses on advocacy and



development of strategy for adolescent sexual health, which is being implemented in association with FPIA, U.S.A. TCS' sister concern, the Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS) has trained 40 facilitators under a Youth Leadership Camp to integrate the *Choose a Future!* package into their ongoing programs.



A total of 8397 boys were trained through May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001 to April 30<sup>th</sup> 2002, using the *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* training package across eleven states in India.

Organization	Project area	Strategies adopted
CINI Chetana Resource Centre (CCRC), West Bengal	Old Malda	Integrated approach
North-east Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses (NESPYM), Assam	Timona, Bandla, Keherukhanda Harchura, Padmapur, Bongalmora SOS Village Guwahati Don Bosco School, Sonaighuli	Integrated approach, Camp approach
KEM Hospital Research Centre (KEMHRC), Pune, Maharashtra	Pabal village, Shirur	School approach
Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM), Haryana	Gurgaon (Nagina)	Integrated approach, Regular sessions
Sandhan, Rajasthan	Jodhpur (Bap), Baran (Bhanwargarh)	School approach, Camp approach, Hostellers training
Deepak Charitable Trust (DCT), Baroda, Gujarat	Nandesari, Angadh	School approach

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Project area</i>	<i>Strategies adopted</i>
Prerana, Delhi	Aali, Lalkuan, Jaitpur, Meethapur, Molarband, Tajpur	Integrated approach, Camp approach
Community Aid Sponsorship Program (CASP), Delhi, Mumbai, Pune	Sangam Vihar, Delhi, N Ward, Ghatkopar, Mumbai Rajiv Gandhi Nagar Slum, Pune	School approach including night schools
Parivar Seva Sanstha (PSS)	Orissa, U.P., Rajasthan West Bengal, Delhi, Karnataka	School approach, Integrated approach with ITIs, prison, industrial workers, street children and mentally challenged
Tribal Cultural Society, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand	East and West Singbhum districts, Jharkhand	School approach





## Program Impact

The program brought about dramatic changes in the lives of adolescent boys and has given them a new direction and purpose in life. The project not only impacted the lives of the participants but also brought about far reaching changes in the attitudes of all involved- the teachers, principals, family members of participants and other community members. It opened up hitherto taboo topics and gave all concerned a new hope and confidence regarding the boys' future.

Post program questionnaires and focus group discussions reveal that the information levels, awareness levels, communication abilities and decision-making skills have shown a marked improvement in the boys. The boys are now no longer victims of myths and misconceptions and are aware of facts regarding issues related to puberty, masturbation, reproductive health, family planning, HIV/AIDS (spread and prevention), etc. The boys also displayed an increased sense of responsibility towards family members, especially mothers and sisters. They are now more focused on their studies and their future. They are increasingly more sensitive towards gender issues and responded that they no longer felt inclined to eve tease or sexually harass girls. In fact, they strongly advocated gender equality and felt that girls should be given equal opportunities at home and outside and that the Better Life Options Program must be implemented for adolescent girls living in these areas too. Many parents revealed that the boys had

become concerned about addiction and were trying to dissuade their parents and others from consuming liquor, tobacco, “guthka”, etc. “He refused to write tobacco in the list of grocery that had to be bought”, revealed one mother to the facilitators. The boys exhibited a change in attitude not only towards their selves and family but also towards the environment. Many had started watering the plants or had planted trees as reported by their family members. They had also taken to recycling waste and some had joined hands to construct soak pits.

Importantly, post program the boys are more confident and self assured regarding their abilities to take decisions and resolve conflicts peacefully. They are open to communication and have found the confidence to speak in public. Many of the project participants are propagating what they have learnt and are generating awareness amongst their peers and in the community.

Hari Om, a participant from Rajasthan has started a forum in the village Geegchi. The forum called “Nai Roshni” has 25 members and has undertaken the job of maintaining cleanliness in the streets and in village surroundings. The forum is also encouraging parents of non-school going children to send their children to school.



In Vilasgarh in Rajasthan, boys have started a forum called “Surya Manch”. The forum meets every Sunday to discuss various issues and take appropriate action where possible.

In Haryana, the BLP participants are now involved in different community programs. They organized a cleanliness drive and even participated in the Pulse Polio Immunization program with health department officials and the local PHC.

Parents, teachers, trainers and other community members have also been very positive about the program. Many parents said that they were happy with the BLP program because it has given the boys information that the parents could not have given because they either did not know, or were too ashamed to talk about such issues.



Kamal Vilas, a Shikshakarmi (teacher): “*Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* is so useful that it should be included in the school syllabus.”

Village elders: “If adolescents learn some literacy along with these issues then we will not only promote and support the project but will also ensure participation in these camps.”

A participant's sister: “Now my brother treats me well. He even shares some of my work.”



## Changing Lives (Quotes from boys)

### Self Esteem

“Now I have the knowledge and feel like a complete man.”

### Peer Pressure

“Earlier, I could not handle peer pressure. If my friend would ask me to drink with him, I would give in. But not now. Today if he puts pressure on me to drink and smoke, I will not give in.”

### Gender

“My mother is often ill. Therefore, I help in the house in the forenoon so that my sister can go to school. And I attend the afternoon school.”

### Puberty

“I liked it (BLP) a lot since I got to know why all these changes are taking place in my body.”

### Family Planning

“Population is increasing at a very fast pace....therefore, I shall have just one child.”

“When I look back, I realize that I have benefited greatly from this program. I am from a very small village. My thinking too was limited to the confines of my village, Now I have a wider perspective. All the wrong notions about puberty that I picked up from the elders were dispelled. We got an opportunity to discuss about our lives and I realized that I can achieve a lot more. Yes, I have benefited greatly from this program.”

- Rashid

### Family Planning Choices and Child Spacing

“I learnt about the different choices for family planning and realized that we should postpone marriage till we are independent. Also, we should space our children.”

### Sex Education

“I did not know the consequences of intercourse with a girl....Now, I have realized the consequences of one instance of unprotected sex and how just one mistake can spoil our future and our career.”



## Lessons Learnt

The Better Life Options Program, using the *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* training package has proved to be very beneficial to boys. However, to have a far-reaching impact and to truly help the boys the program must be implemented on an ongoing basis. It is important that any queries or issues arising from the boys' new found confidence and decision making abilities be dealt with in a trusting and appropriate environment.



## Conclusion

The Better Life Options Program has been successfully implemented in 11 states in India and has reached out to over 8000 boys. But there are over a hundred million adolescent boys in India still waiting to be reached. The way forward is to identify more NGOs and organizations with partners who will implement the program using *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* as the pivot of their development package. We know that the Better Life Options and Opportunities Model works. It has proven to be effective in bringing out far reaching, significant changes in the lives of young adolescent boys. The idea now is to expand the program by franchising the Better Life Options and Opportunities Model using the *Choose a Future! Issues and Options for Adolescent Boys in India* manual. An evolution in thinking has been initiated. It is now imperative that we continue to recognize, listen and respond to boys' own needs. Only then can men and women be equal partners in life.





By publishing this report, we hope that the organizations that are endeavoring to initiate health and development programs for adolescent boys will benefit from it. We also hope that the lessons that we learnt and the strategies that we followed can in some way be adapted to your needs or provide you with ideas required for your specific needs.



The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA)

50-M, Shantipath, Gate No. 3

Niti Marg, Chanakyapuri

New Delhi - 110 021

Tel: 91-11- 4672154, 6886813, 6883497, 6886172

Fax: 91-11- 6885850