

## About Adolescence Education Programme (AEP)

### Profile of Young People:

India is home to 253 million adolescents; young people in the age group of 10-19 years who comprise 21% of the country's population (Census, 2011). Not only does this cohort represent India's future in the economic realm, but its experience, attitudes and behaviours will largely determine whether India is able to realize the vision of an equitable civil society envisaged in its constitution.

Fortunately for all of us, adolescents see the challenges before them in fresh ways and are responding with enthusiasm and imagination. With the right investments, they can reach their full potential as individuals, leaders and agents of progress. And the world clearly needs their energy, participation and skills. But delivering this transformation requires collective action on education, health, employment and a commitment to real civic engagement by diverse stakeholders including, Government Departments, academia, development partners and civil society organisations.

Sixty one percent boys and 53% girls in the age group of 15-19 (National Sample Survey, 66th Round, 2013) are enrolled in schools and these numbers are likely to increase making schools important spaces for reaching out to adolescents. In school settings, students not only acquire knowledge but also imbibe values, develop an understanding of social norms that finally influence their behaviours. School education also plays an important role in reinforcing or challenging stereotypes among young people. School-based interventions are feasible and cost effective as school going adolescents are easily accessible. Importantly, schools also have a social standing and recognition as institutions of learning. Hence, any intervention implemented through schools has enhanced credibility and acceptability.

### The Life Stage of Adolescence

Adolescence is a very special period of a person's life where an individual assumes a sense of self-identity and is marked by a myriad of emotions including enthusiasm, idealism, self-doubt and anxiety. It is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood and is characterised by a number of physical, emotional, cognitive, intellectual and attitudinal changes.

### Need for Adolescence Education:

Adolescence Education (AE) has been conceptualised as an educational response to the need for support, encouragement, clarifications and information that adolescents often express in order to make sense of their rapidly changing world.

Adolescence Education (AE) is guided by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 which recommends that education should instil 'independence of thought and action, sensitivity to others' well-being and feelings, learning to respond to new situations in a flexible and creative manner, predisposition towards participation in democratic processes, and the ability to work towards and contribute to economic processes and social change." Based on these principles, AE aims to provide young people with accurate, age appropriate and culturally relevant information; promote healthy attitudes and develop skills to enable them to respond to real-life situations effectively.

## **The Adolescence Education Programme (AEP)**

At the national level, the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) is co-ordinated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in partnership with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This programme is a major initiative within the larger Quality Improvement in Schools Scheme of MHRD.

The guiding principles of Adolescence Education clearly articulate that adolescents should be recognised as a positive and valuable resource that needs to be respected and appreciated rather than being treated as a problem, AEP should contribute towards realising the transformational potential of education and that the programme should enable adolescents to articulate their issues, know their rights, counter, shame and fear, build self-esteem and confidence, and develop ability to take on responsibility for self, relationships and (to an extent) the society around them. The guiding principles also recommend that AEP should influence the entire school curriculum and ethos rather than being a stand-alone program.

### **AEP Implementation Strategy**

The interventions include support for integration of life skills and adolescent concerns in the learning materials of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) at the secondary level. The other important program component is implemented through schools in the Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS). This program component works through a cascade training approach that has created a pool of school system and board specific master trainers who orient nodal teachers who are further entrusted with the responsibility of transacting life skills based education to school students (classes 8, 9 and 11, ages 13 through 18) using interactive methodologies.

To facilitate the nodal teachers to transact life skills based education in the classroom, NCERT, with support from UNFPA has developed training and resource materials that recommend a minimum of 23 hours of transaction around the themes of understanding changes during adolescence and being comfortable with them, establishing and maintaining positive and responsible relationships, understanding and challenging stereotypes and discrimination related to gender and sexuality, recognizing and reporting abuse and violation, prevention of substance misuse and HIV/AIDS. To create an enabling environment for the implementation of the AE programme, advocacy sessions are organized with principals of participating schools and sensitisation sessions are held with parents.