



Kishor Swasthya Manch: Empowering Adolescents for a Healthy Future

An Initiative by
National Health Mission,
Government of
Uttar Pradesh,
India



Introduction

India is home to 253 million adolescents (aged between 10 to 19 years) which accounts for one-fifth of the country's total population (Census 2011). Uttar Pradesh, with a population of about 240 million (based on Census 2011), is India's most populous state and comprises the largest adolescent population in the country.

The Kishor Swasthya Manch (KSM) initiative is a pioneering effort by the National Health Mission, Government of Uttar Pradesh, aimed at addressing the crucial health, nutrition and other development needs of adolescents. Adolescence is a transformative period marked by rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth. While infectious diseases are less prevalent during this stage, the prevalence of unhealthy diets, sedentary lifestyles, mental health issues, substance abuse and environmental risks pose significant challenges to adolescent well-being.

The Inception

The KSM initiative was developed based on the two successful pilot programs on anemia awareness in the state. In 2018, Anemia Free Adolescent Events (AFA) was initiated in 25 districts with poor weekly iron and folic acid supplementation (WIFS) coverage. These events were organized in selected inter-colleges (schools with classes from 9-12) with a focus on building awareness about anemia and consumption of IFA tablets. Simultaneously, in 20 districts, mentor activity to address the issue of anemia amongst adolescents was piloted by Nutrition International, a development partner

The KSM event encompasses various activities such as group awareness sessions, counseling sessions, distribution of IFA tablets, sanitary napkins, health check-ups, treatment and referrals, competitions such as quizzes, debates, and cultural events to promote adolescent health, nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

“The KSM program in our school taught us a lot about good nutrition. We also learnt about the importance of personal hygiene, especially during periods. My friends and I took part in a lot of fun activities such as rangoli competitions as part of KSM”

— Madhvi, Student, GGIC School, Akbarpur, District Ambedkarnagar

working with the Government of Uttar Pradesh. Based on the learnings the event was repackaged as KSM including all components of RKSK and being implemented across the state. The KSM event, held annually in two selected inter-colleges (schools with classes from 9-12) in each block of all 75 districts, encompasses various activities such as group awareness sessions, counseling sessions, distribution of IFA tablets, sanitary napkins, health check-ups, treatment and referrals, competitions such as quizzes, debates, and cultural events to promote adolescent health, nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. The primary objectives of KSM are to sensitize adolescents on health and nutrition topics, address their health concerns, provide point-of-care treatment and counseling and promote interdepartmental convergence for adolescent health. To achieve these objectives, the following key strategies have been adopted:

♦ **Planning:** The state health department undertakes comprehensive planning at the district and block levels to ensure the effective rollout of KSM activities in schools. Micro-plans are prepared, adequate resources, subject specialists for nutrition, anemia, menstrual hygiene management, mental health etc. are mobilized. Doctors were included for health check-ups, nurses and paramedics for blood testing, preventing over indulgence in online games & internet browsing and logistical requirements.

♦ **Convergence:** KSM activities are organized in collaboration with the departments of Health, Education, Women & Child Development and Panchayati Raj Institution. Coordination among these departments, and with political leaders, local administration, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and influencers, is crucial for the program’s successful implementation.

KSM ACHIEVEMENTS



30 lakh adolescents were sensitized on adolescent health and nutrition issues








7 lakh adolescents have been tested for hemoglobin levels



Sensitized over 45000 teachers and 6000 school Principals on issues related to adolescent health

IMPACT

A comparison of key indicators between the National Family Health Survey (NFHS - 4; 2015-16) and NFHS - 5 (2019-21) reveals positive changes which may be attributed to the KSM initiative:

INDICATOR (%)	NFHS-4 (2015-16)	NFHS-5 (2019-21)
 Anemia in boys (15-19 yrs)	31.5	28.2
 Anemia in girls (15-19 yrs)	53.7	52.9
 Teenage pregnancies	3.8	2.9
 Early marriages among girls	21.1	15.8
 Use of hygienic methods during menstruation	43.4	70.5

♦ **Mobilization:** District Information Officers ensured advocacy through local dailies and publications.

♦ **Monitoring and Reporting:** To understand the reach of KSM, inter-departmental coordination, and effectiveness of program, reporting is ensured from all the districts. Online reporting ensures accurate data collection and evaluation of the KSM events, facilitating evidence-based decision-making for future initiatives.

Coverage

Since its inception in 2018, the KSM initiative has made a significant impact on adolescent health in Uttar Pradesh. The program has been organised in 822 blocks and 75 urban areas, reaching a total of 1790 inter-colleges annually. From 2019 onwards, the KSM activities have engaged approximately 30 lakh adolescents, providing awareness on various health and nutrition topics. Additionally, over 7 lakh adolescents have been tested for hemoglobin levels through this initiative. KSM has sensitized over 45000 teachers and 6000 school principals on issues related to adolescent health.

Way Forward and Conclusion

Adolescents are now the torchbearer for spreading the health and nutrition messages in their families and community. The success of the events led to an increase in KSM activities in urban areas. KSM is now included as a part of population policy of Uttar Pradesh. With collaborative efforts and engaging activities, KSM initiative has positively impacted millions of adolescents in Uttar Pradesh, leading to improvements in health indicators and laying the foundation for a healthier future.