

Our Health, Our Voice

(PRIA, Martha Farrell Foundation, SHLC (University of Glasgow) and Gurugram University Initiative¹)

Manifesto by adolescents living in Informal Settlements in Gurugram to make Mitrata clinic facilities effective and adolescent friendly

In order to improve facilities in Mitrata Clinics (AFHC services), adolescents in urban informal settlements in Gurugram envision the following changes:

- Given the adolescent population of Gurugram, increase number of Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHC), especially catering to adolescents from informal settlements
- Need for female and male counsellors in each AFHC
- Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education should be made available for boys as well
- Revive Peer Educator component of the RSKS scheme to increase use of AFHC services
- Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics should be situated closer to the informal settlements to reduce cost of transportation to go to the center
- Soft skills for AFHC support and medical staff, especially skills to engage with adolescents
- Counsellors of younger age at the AFHCs will increase confidence among adolescents to have conversations about private health-related matters and open up to seek counselling.
- Suitable, locally-relevant behavior change material (IEC) should be distributed to adolescents in the community.
- Improve community outreach by Frontline Health Workers, especially targeting out-of-school children and children from migrant families living in informal settlements

In order to explore, in-depth, the reasons behind poor uptake of AFHC services and insufficient knowledge regarding cost-effective medical services, a participatory visioning exercise was conducted at Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) on 13th and 14th August, 2021 to prepare an agenda by adolescents to improve their access to health systems and delivery of health services. The purpose of conducting the visioning exercise is to increase the participation of adolescents in determining health service delivery and to suggest policy changes from the perspective of target group. Adolescents from five urban informal settlements, namely Chakkarpur, Sikanderpur, Nathupur, Ghata and Harijan Basti participated.

Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RSKS) was launched on 7 January 2014 to ensure universal coverage to adolescents in the age group of 10-14 years and 15-19 years. The scheme has provisions to enable establishment of Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHC) to cater to diverse needs of adolescents, to ensure comprehensive and equitable access to adolescent-specific health needs.

The participatory action research study, conducted in Gurugram, revealed poor health-seeking behaviour among adolescents. 91% of the adolescents, who participated in the survey lacked knowledge about AFHCs. Focus-Group Discussions with mothers revealed poor outreach on adolescent health from Frontline Health Workers (FLW).

Considering the Covid-19 pandemic situation that has impaired health systems and taking into account poor health-seeking behaviour among adolescents from low-income communities, living in informal settlements, it is imperative to explore ways in which adolescent participation and engagement with AFHCs can be increased and strengthened, so that more adolescents become aware as well as benefit from the services.

¹ This participatory research with adolescent boys and girls was conducted in 5 informal settlements (Harijan Basti, Chakkarpur, Ghata, Sikanderpur and Nathupur) in Gurugram city. The purpose of this research is to promote the use of participatory research methodology in the field of adolescent health.