

**Review Article**

## **A REVIEW OF GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES IN ADOLESCENCE DEVELOPMENT IN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Being on the verge of becoming the youngest country in the world, India at present has the largest population of adolescents. While the world is home to 120 crore individuals aged 10 - 19 years, India has 25.32 crore adolescents, with Maharashtra accounting for of 2.13 crore of them (Census Report 2011).

An attempt is made in this paper to review the initiatives of the state of Maharashtra towards catering to needs of this section. Attempt is also made to highlight the legal and policy frameworks along with schemes and program for protecting the rights of adolescence and suggest a convergent approach for efficient and effective usage of existing resources. In the long run, the initiatives could contribute in not only addressing adolescent needs in a more comprehensive manner, but also in developing them into mature citizens firmly believing in secularism and democracy; the principles upheld by the Indian Constitution.

**Keywords:** *Adolescence Initiative, Welfare of Children and Women*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is defined by the United Nations as the period between 10 and 19 years age group. It is a peculiar stage in the life cycle, full of internal and external changes typically depicting it as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood with rapid changes at biological, psychological as well as social levels.

It is a phase of shaping adult mental processes, individual identity and social outlook which continues in an individual throughout life.

This is an age of experimentation and experiencing relative freedom on one hand and insecurities, vulnerabilities and associated risks on the other. This period also demands greater attention to gender and culture-specific challenges and barriers.

Corresponding to specific needs, investing in adolescent development and their participation can accelerate the fight against poverty, inequity and gender discrimination.

It will prepare the adolescents of today to deal with intergenerational implications of current economic turmoil such as unemployment, explosive urbanization and migration, climate change, etc. and thus, recognize that they are not only the future but also firmly part of the present – living, working, contributing to households, communities, societies and economies of the nation.

#### ***Adolescence in Maharashtra***

Adolescents constitute 25.32 crores that is 21% of the population of India. Maharashtra has 2.13 crore adolescents, that is 19% of the total state population and 8.4% of the total adolescent population in the country.

Rural adolescents constitute 1.22 crore and urban adolescents are 0.91 crore; 57% and 43% respectively. Male adolescents constitute 1.13 crore and female adolescents constitute 0.99 crore; 53% and 47% respectively (Census of India, 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

#### ***Concept and Purpose of Mapping of Adolescent Initiatives***

Adolescents are a dynamic and diverse section of our population. Age-wise this group stands at the threshold of childhood and adulthood and hence needs consideration under all services that cater to both. Their development needs are diverse making them come under the purview of many sectors that often work independent of others.

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Mapping is therefore a significant tool towards exploring a convergent approach in addressing adolescent issues.

It entails a thorough viewing of existing initiatives in their entirety. It is a robust viewing of the current legal, policy and programming scenario that aims to comprehend inherent linkages within them and tap into the synergy potential to enhance their effectiveness.

With this aim author tries to reviews and do mapping of all initiatives specific to this age group in Maharashtra.

It covers government initiatives and is meant to evolve a knowledge base and exchange platform for convergence between state and civil society actors.

In order to get an all-encompassing and perceptive overview of adolescent programming, the mapping looked into major themes and broader aspects such as international commitment, national and state laws and policies, and key programme by the Centre and State Government.

### **Mapping of Government Initiatives for Adolescence at State and National Level**

#### *International Conventions and Treaties on Adolescence*

India is signatory to UN Conventions and treaties for welfare of children and women. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (applies to all adolescent females) signifies that Adolescents come under the purview of both Child Rights and Human Rights and thus, stand as a crucial link for establishing the ground for the realization of both.

International Conventions and Treaties related to Adolescents ratified by India and commitments that give a reference frame for Policy and Programming are as follows:

- UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education, 1960
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989
- Resolution of the 64th World Health Assembly, 2011
- World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), 1995
- Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 1994
- UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000
- International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, 2006
- UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, 2001
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966
- Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993
- UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979
- Millennium Development Goals, 2000

#### **National and State Policies**

Since adolescence age comes in purview of childhood phase the policies such as Maharashtra Child Rights Policy, National Policy for Children, 2013, National Policy on Education 1986 (Modified 1992), National Policy on Child Labor, 1987 is significant to be considered.

They are in verge of being youth National Youth Policy 2003 lays foundation for adolescence welfare. Also Maharashtra Women's Policy, 2014 mentions about welfare and rights of girl child.

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Considering the trafficking of adolescent girls for flash business adolescent girls are prone to HIV/ AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Hence, National AIDS Prevention and Control Policy 2002 is important to be considered here.

Considering the prevalence of anemia among adolescence girls (67%) and boys (57%) (DLHS-4) and the subsequent intergenerational impacts like low birth weight babies and maternal mortality other related issues are dealt in the National Nutrition Policy, 1993, National Health Policy, 1983.

DLHS- 4 data shows that 4.8% of total births were by female adolescents in the 15 - 19 years age group. Also the lower nutritional status, early marriage and high fertility in adolescent girls results in higher morbidity and mortality. This problem is addressed in National Population Policy, 1997 and 2000.

### **National and State Laws**

In spite of existence of Child Marriage Restraint Act (1979), which is meant for checking and prohibiting the marriage of girls before the age of 18 years and boys before 21 years, data from DLHS- 4, 2012-13 signifies that 12% of currently married women were married before 18 years of age 9.3% of currently married men were married before 21 years of age (DLHS – 4). Also it makes clear that 14% of girls in rural areas and 9.3% of girls in urban areas were married below the age of 18 years (DLHS - 4, 2012-2013)

In order to prevent the adolescent girls and women being trapped into sex business, government has enacted acts such as Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act of 1956 (SITA), Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1986 (ITPA) and Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, Devdasi System Abolition Act 2005.

Many adolescent children fall prey to sexual abuse from adults leading to tremendous mental and emotional turmoil and sometimes pregnancy affecting the further life of an individual. Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act 2012 talks about sexual offences against children and the punishment for the same.

Medical Termination of Pregnancies Act (1971) makes abortion legal in case of adolescent being pregnant out of rape. As per the 2011 census, 23.13 lakh adolescents in Maharashtra are employed; that is 11% of the total adolescent population in the state. Of the total adolescent workers, 65% are male workers while 35% are female workers.

It is significant to note that out of total adolescent workers in rural areas, male workers are 59% and female workers are 41%. Whilst out of the total adolescent workers in urban areas, male workers are 78% and female workers are 22% (2011 census).

This concludes that majority of adolescents workers in urban areas are male (17.94 lakh) as their migration rates are higher and exposing them to associated risks.

In order to prohibit and regulate Government has introduced Child Labor (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986.

Gender disparity in education is evident in the school age population in Maharashtra with 75% of girls aged 6 - 17 years attending school, compared with 81% of boys in the same age group (NFHS 3).

A significant number of children are out of school. They are mostly girls, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

As per the study conducted by UNICEF and ICRW on Delaying Marriage for girls in India, UNICEF and ICRW, March 2011, formal education especially at the post-primary level is the strongest predictor of the age at marriage.

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 tries to ensure that all adolescence get free and compulsory education in the country. In spite of this there is considerable number of school dropout especially amongst female adolescence.

There are also many other acts which are directly or indirectly related to welfare of adolescence protection and development such as Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 and 2006, Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 etc.

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Following table gives decade wise enactment of acts since 1950 till date.

<b>1950 to 1960</b>	Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act of 1956 (SITA)
<b>1971 to 1980</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical termination of pregnancies Act (1971)</li> <li>• Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1979</li> </ul>
<b>1981 to 1990</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narcotic Drugs &amp; Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985</li> <li>• Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986</li> <li>• Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1986 (ITPA)</li> <li>• Child Labor (Prohibition &amp; Regulation) Act, 1986</li> <li>• The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act 1987</li> </ul>
<b>1991 to 2000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 and 2006</li> <li>• Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000</li> </ul>
<b>2001 to 2010</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devdasi System Abolition Act 2005</li> <li>• Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005,</li> <li>• Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009</li> </ul>
<b>2011 to 2013</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act 2012</li> <li>• Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013</li> </ul>

### **National and State Programme**

Based on the policies and acts government has designed various schemes and programme for adolescent development and protection.

National Rural Health Mission and National Urban Health Mission, Integrated Child Development Scheme, Mid-Day Meal Program, Reproductive and Child Health Program, Integrated Child Protection Scheme, National AIDS Control Program, Kishori Arogyavishayak Jeevan Koushalya Yojana, Rashtriya Kishor Swasth Karykram Kishori Swasth Yojna, ARSH clinics, Adolescence health education program (AHEP) are the program catering to not only health needs but also health related life skills.

In order to ensure 100 percent enrollment of adolescents in schools programs such as Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), Maharashtra Prathamik Shikshan Parishad (MPSP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), and National Child Labour Programme. In order to do counseling and support to victims of rape and acid attacks Government of Maharashtra has introduced Manodhirye Yojana Ujwala scheme offers services such as rescue, repatriation, reintegration of the girls who have been trafficked.

Life skill education in adolescence phase plays a very important role. If these skills are acquired the individual as an adult will make sustainable contributions towards the development of society. These life skill education for adolescent has been imparted through education system and also at community levels. Some of them are Meena Raju Manch, Kishori Utkarsh Manch which are implemented at school level and Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA) at community level through anganwadis.

### **Monitoring and Vigilance Structures**

Government has set up monitoring and vigilance structures to ensure that the rights of adolescence are not violated and every adolescent gets protection from abuse and discrimination.

- Child Welfare Committees at District Level
- District Task Force for Child Labor Elimination
- District/ Block/ Village Child Protection Committees (proposed)
- District Level Vigilance & Monitoring Committee of NRHM

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- District Level Vigilance & Monitoring Committee of Rural Development Department
- Women and Child Development Departments Vigilance groups for trafficking
- Sarv Samaveshak Samitee Headed by Collector of District
- Ahar Samiti under the Chairmanship of Chief Executive Officer, Z.P.
- Atrocity Act The District Level Vigilance & Monitoring Committees are Functioning under the respective District Collectors and the Committee Reviews Implementation of the Act Every Month
- Minorities Education National Monitoring Committee

### **Proposed Convergence Approach**

It is a common experience that every department in government implements their schemes and programs in isolation. But if all these departments adopt an integrated convergent approach regarding data and information; plans and budgets and common implementation protocol which would facilitate the tracking system and lead to holistic development and protection of rights of each adolescent in the state. Also common quality standards and a common accreditation mechanism for adolescent related service institutions would bring about convergence in laws and policies. 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment in Panchayati Raj has given statutory power to Gram Sabha to make resolutions regarding village development. Also Mahila Sabha prior to Gram Sabha focuses on women's issues. These are formal democratic forums in every Gram Panchayat of India. It is recommended to set up kishor sabhas (adolescent assemblies) and linking these to gram sabhas (village assemblies) and mahila sabha leading to convergence empowerment. Kishor sabhas would play an important role of conducting child audit of their village and sensitize the government functionaries, elected representatives and the villagers about the rights of children and its violation.

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