

COMMUNITY MATTERS

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LEADING CHANGE
CHANGING LIVES

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MORE WORK, LESS TALK

WHEN the *State of World Population Report - 2023* hit the headlines recently for highlighting India's emergence as the world's most populous country, it was one of those annual report launch occasions when the publisher, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), comes into limelight.

The United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency is not highly visible, at least in India. It is probably because the agency is more focused on its work on sensitive issues in a country as diverse as India.

UNFPA's low profile is paying off. Working closely with government agencies and partners, the UN agency is walking the talk and silently raising development indicators related to its mandate in focus states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan, thereby contributing to overall development in the country, as highlighted in the reports in this edition.

We at *Outlook* believe such positive impact stories even of publicity-shy change enablers need to be told not only for their feel-good factor value, but to share experiences and learnings with like-minded organisations and decision-makers to inspire them to undertake such positive initiatives. We are glad to partner with UNFPA to take these stories forward and spread the message of positivity and hope amongst masses.

Rajiv Tikoo
Rajiv Tikoo
Edition Editor



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Andrea Wojnar
Representative, UNFPA India, and
Country Director, Bhutan

FOREWORD

UNITED Nations Population Fund, also known as UNFPA, is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. At UNFPA, we work to build a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

In India, we focus primarily on improving sexual and reproductive health, enhancing life skills of young people, promoting gender equality and human rights, and population matters.

We along with our partners work in alignment with government agencies and undertake innovative initiatives at the ground level in our focus states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan to advance our mandate.

For example, in Bihar, Talim-i-Naubalighan, an adolescent education programme, is imparting life skills education to Muslim students from poor families studying in government-affiliated *madrasas*. It is supported with evidence-based research to identify and address systematic gaps and inform policy formulation.

A Life Skills Education initiative in Madhya Pradesh seeks to equip adolescents and teenagers with life skills to enable them to make informed decisions for their health and well-being, as well as fight negative social practices like gender inequality and child marriage.

In Rajasthan, Girl Friendly Gram Panchayats are helping improve development indicators of women and girls in the state. An Adolescent Girls' Group teaches social, health and financial skills to young girls for their well-being, ending child marriage and stopping gender discrimination.

The UNFPA Odisha State Office uses data analysis to identify and plug gaps in the healthcare infrastructure in Sinapali, Nuapada, in western Odisha, thereby enabling more pregnant women to deliver babies under medical care and lowering the maternal death rate.

This special edition by *Outlook* seeks to highlight in detail positive impact initiatives of such foundational work by UNFPA to make these stories available in the public domain for replication by like-minded organisations.

This is by no means a complete dossier of our work. Going forward, we will be happy to share more stories of change to fuel hope of a bright future for youth, particularly girls and women, in challenging circumstances.



Source: UNFPA

MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN THOUGHT AND ACTION

In India, UNFPA works primarily in four areas—improving sexual and reproductive health, young people, promoting gender equality and human rights, and population matters

THE United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was set up as the United Nations global sexual and reproductive health agency in 1969. Operating in over 150 countries, the agency works to promote access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, maternal health care and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. It also advocates for gender equality and empowerment of women. In India, the UN agency works primarily in four areas—improving sexual and reproductive health, young people, promoting gender equality and human rights, and population matters.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

To advance reproductive health in India, the agency supports various interventions of the government at the national and state levels. UNFPA supports initiatives focusing on reducing mother and infant mortality, as well as providing a variety of high-quality contraceptive options. Programme management is another cross-cutting area of interest for UNFPA. It is done by increasing the availability of human resources and developing their skills in programme design and monitoring and evaluation.

Young People

UNFPA invests in the rights of adolescents and young people. The work ranges from gathering data to identifying the vulnerable, taking into account their education, livelihood skills and health, including sexual and reproductive health, and addressing their concerns. The agency also promotes the teaching of life skills in schools and other academic institutions. It also provides teenagers with accurate, age-appropriate and culturally relevant information on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) concerns, encourages positive attitudes and helps them develop the skills they need to react responsibly and positively to real-world circumstances. The agency also engages with at-risk teenage girls through dialogue. Youth involvement and leadership are encouraged.

Human Rights and Gender Equality

UNFPA has come up with targeted initiatives that give young women and girls access to health and education services, life skills and knowledge on how to support themselves at the workplace. The agency strives to promote an atmosphere that is supportive of human rights through its work with families, communities, local leaders and men and boys as change agents, and reduce discriminatory practices and violence against women and girls. Women and girls are also provided access to healthcare facilities if they face violence.

Population Matters

As India enters an important phase of demographic transition, UNFPA is working with the government on issues related to the youths, who are part of the working population, as well as an ageing population. The agency is also working towards reducing India's maternal mortality and infant mortality rates, harnessing demographic dividend and increasing sex ratio at birth.

Source: UNFPA



RAJASTHAN

ENGENDERING PANCHAYATS

UNFPA's support to the government's women empowerment initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and setting up of Girl-Friendly Gram Panchayats has helped improve development indicators of women and girls in the state

SHAILAJA TRIPATHI

PRIYANKA Meena, 19, lived in a small *kaccha* house in Dekwa village of Sawai Madhopur district in Rajasthan. Her farmer family laboured in others' farms to earn Rs 50,000 annually. Priyanka, too, had to drop out of school in the eighth standard in 2016 to shoulder family responsibilities. Today, Priyanka lives in Jaipur, earning Rs 9,000 a month, which was unimaginable for the family until a few years ago.

The change in her life was brought about by a *sathin* (Gram Panchayat-level functionary of Women and Child Development Department in Rajasthan), who introduced her to the Adolescent Girls' Club. Such clubs were established by UNFPA in collaboration with the Directorate of Women Empowerment, Government of Rajasthan, to impart social, health and financial skills to girls.

Priyanka learned from the discussions at the club meetings that education and skill building could help her achieve economic independence. This led her to negotiate with her parents to return to school. The girl put in a lot of hard work and obtained 67% in her class 10 examination. Her parents were eager to support her academic pursuits. Later, looking at Priyanka's interest and *sathin's* support, they sent her for the skill development programme hosted by the government free of cost at the block level. After completing the six-month course, Priyanka was hired by a retail establishment in Jaipur.

As she looks forward to a bright future,

“

I was inspired after joining the Adolescent Girls' Club and found my way forward. This has boosted my confidence and today I am working in a city like Jaipur

Priyanka Meena
Sawai Madhopur district

a beaming Priyanka says, "I was inspired after joining the Adolescent Girls' Club and found my way forward. This has boosted my confidence and today I am working in a city like Jaipur." Her father Kailchand Meena adds, "With the support of this programme, my daughter is working in Jaipur. This is an unexpected result for us. This support should be continued so that other girls can also get benefit from this."

There are many more like Priyanka in the district who stand tall today. In another instance, 18-year-old Manju, one of the five children of her farmer parents, got married along with her elder sister in 2021 to save the family from additional expenses of solemnising a separate marriage. Due to the awareness gained through the Adolescent Girls' Club, Manju is aware of the negative impacts of child marriage. She felt confident and courageous to speak up and bargain for her rights and convinced her parents to let her postpone moving in with her husband so that she could continue studies.

Manju wants to become independent and is currently working towards achieving her goal of becoming a teacher. She is enrolled in a six-month residential computer training course, studying for Bachelor of Arts and also preparing for examinations to become a government teacher. Manju is confident that she will soon start teaching others and pass on knowledge and skills to them. She says, "I am proud that today I am honing my skills and learning computers. In our society, girls still do not get opportunities to move out for

Source: UNFPA



education or training.”

Adds Manju’s proud and supportive father, “I will put in best efforts to fulfil the dreams of my daughter. I will support her studies and not send her to her husband’s place until she herself decides to go.”

Priyanka and Manju are role models not only in Sawai Madhopur, but all over the state. In Rajasthan, the instances of child marriage have declined by 10 points in recent years. While 35.4% of women (aged 20–24 years) in the state were married off before they turned 18, as per National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4), the figure has dropped to 25.4%, according to NFHS-5. This decline has been achieved through concerted efforts by the state and central governments, UNFPA, other UN agencies, civil society organisations and other key stakeholders.

Besides, UNFPA has also lent support to government’s other women empowerment initiatives like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao or BBBP (Save the girl child, educate the girl child). The BBBP scheme was introduced by the government of India in 2015 to address the issue of the declining child sex ratio (CSR) and promote overall development of girls.

Bolstering its commitment to the girl child in Rajasthan, UNFPA in partnership with the Department of Women and Child Development designed the Girl Friendly Gram Panchayat (GFGP) programme as a good practice under BBBP. A pilot project was launched to set up seven GFGPs in Sawai Madhopur in August 2018 and the learnings were used to set up two Gram Panchayats in each of the 33 districts in the state.

A GFGP is a panchayat that encourages socio-economic empowerment of girls, while also ensuring their survival, health, protection, education and dignity. GFGP aims to end gender-based discrimination and the practice of child marriage and gender-biased sex-selection.

The programme focuses on



Source: UNFPA

HIGHLIGHTS



No. of women (20–24 years) married before 18 drops

From 35.4% (NFHS-4) to 25.4% (NFHS-5)




Literacy rate of girls goes up

From 56.5% (NFHS-4) to 64.7% (NFHS-5)



strengthening the community-based action groups, who are sensitised and oriented to develop an enabling environment that supports girls in realising their rights and full potential. GFGPs reflect women’s active involvement in decision-making at various levels.

The action groups are created with participation from a range of stakeholders, including Panchayati Raj Institutions, departmental workers at the local level, young girls and boys and community leaders. The action groups devise an action plan to establish a panchayat where girls are supported and enabled to thrive. The aim is to ensure holistic development of girls and women, which encompasses their safety and protection, as well as their health, education and skill development.

As a result of the intervention, improvements in markers of the development of women and girls have been registered. For instance, no child marriages have taken place in these panchayats in the previous three years. The number of women registering for antenatal care (ANC) check-up in the first trimester has increased from 73% to 91%, and the immunisation of girls has improved from 80% to 90%. Girls who drop out of school are linked to education and skill development. Social, health and financial skills are imparted to adolescent girls. Challenging the issue of restricted mobility, they are now getting linked with skills development courses at district level and pursuing job opportunities outside their villages. Encouraged by its impact, the Rajasthan government is now scaling up the initiative with the support of UNFPA. 

MADHYA PRADESH

BUILDING LIFE SKILLS

The Life Skills Education (LSE) initiative of the state government, which is supported by UNFPA, seeks to equip adolescents and teenagers with life skills to help them make informed decisions for health and well-being and fight negative social practices, including gender inequality and child marriage.

SHAILAJA TRIPATHI



Source: Nanna Heitmann/ Magnum Photos

SAMEER Markam, a student from Mandla district in Madhya Pradesh, had become addicted to chewing tobacco. Life skills acquired during the Umang classroom sessions on substance abuse helped him overcome the addiction. A relieved Markam says, "I had fallen prey to tobacco chewing. I wanted to leave this bad habit. Life skills acquired during the Umang classroom sessions, particularly the one on substance abuse, helped me to get out of this addiction. I feel so relieved now."

Ashvary Malakar, another student, ITI (Industrial Training Institute), Bhikangaon village, Khargone district, adds, "As a result of LSE (Jeevan Tarang), I felt many changes in my life such as respecting others, putting across my point boldly and clearly, and self-confidence. I can freely share my viewpoint and discuss my problems."

Umang School Health and Wellness Programme and Jeevan Tarang are part of the Life Skills Education (LSE) initiative of the state government, which is supported by UNFPA and Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh (BGMS) as the technical support agency. These initiatives work to equip adolescents and teenagers with life skills, help them make informed decisions for health and well-being and fight negative social practices, including gender equality and child marriage.

Umang School Health and Wellness Programme being rolled out by the Department of Education and the Department of Medical and Health in partnership with UNFPA focuses on students studying from classes 9 to 12. The initiative has been implemented in 9,306 government high and higher secondary schools in all 52 districts of Madhya Pradesh, reaching 24 lakh adolescent boys and girls. Training has been also imparted to 12,599 teachers as part of the initiative.

Tailored for students enrolled in government industrial training institutes (ITIs) of Madhya Pradesh, Jeevan Tarang instills life skills in students to enable them to make productive use of their occupational abilities. The initiative's aim

is to cover over 59,000 adolescents in 238 ITIs in the state. So far, training has been imparted to 176 training officers in 46 ITIs under the initiative.

India has the biggest adolescent population in the world, with one in five citizens belonging to the age group of 10-19, according to the National Health Mission of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Adolescence can be defined as the stage of human growth between puberty and adulthood. An adolescent experiences many changes physically and mentally. It is more challenging particularly for adolescent girls, who may face challenges like gender discrimination and even child marriage.

These life skills initiatives are important for more than one reason. According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), 5,187 girls belonging to the age group of 15-17 were reported to have had a live birth, been pregnant with their first child or begun childbearing. The survey found that young women with less than five years of education (8%) or no formal education (19%) have begun having children. Women with 12 or more years of schooling, who have begun childbearing, account for only 2% of those surveyed. The young mothers are understandably curious and have questions. Students, too, have questions and problems that can be best resolved by experienced adolescent counsellors,

Life Skills Education

The number of schools LSE is implemented in

9,292

No. of adolescent boys and girls in classes 9 to 12 covered

24 lakh

No. of LSE teachers trained under Umang

12,599

Officers of Bhopal, Indore and Ujjain zones trained on the Jeevan Tarang manual

500



Source: UNFPA

who are usually inaccessible and expensive. In order to address these issues, UNFPA and the Department of School Education of the government of Madhya Pradesh collaborated to set up the Umang Helpline, a toll-free hotline that provides counsellors to students and non-schooling adolescents throughout the state as part of an intervention under the life skills education programme. Services for psychological counselling have been assigned to trained counsellors. More than 200,000 parents and adolescents have used the helpline services thus far. Umang programme has also won the prestigious Chief Minister's Excellence Award.

Shamsunissa Khan, a teacher at Shaskiya Gathamandir Vidyalaya, Seoni, says that LSE has succeeded in bridging the communication gap between teachers and students. "Earlier, students, especially girls, if they were being harassed, were not able to share it with us. Now they openly share their issues with us. Teachers and students have formed a close bond due to the LSE programme."

UNFPA has been also addressing the issue of toxic masculinity, which has been identified as one of the root causes of gender-based violence. In order to educate boys and girls about encouraging positive masculinity in the school setting, UNFPA has created the training booklet *Ujjwal*. A total of 185 participants were trained on the

Digital Sakhis

Young women like Durga, Prachi and Akanksha, known as *Digital Sakhis*, are being trained to use smart phones for storytelling to bring in a positive transformation in the society

“

I did not know how to make videos before this workshop. I have not only learnt how to make videos but also tell stories through my mobile phone

Durga, Indore

I was not as confident on camera before, now with practice, I can tell my stories with much more confidence

Prachi Mori, Bhopal

The storytelling session has helped us mobilise more youths; we are now sending them videos and educating them about menstruation rights, Poshan and other important topics

Akanksha, Bhopal

manual in six sessions as part of a state-level ToT (Training of Trainers). For the training of nodal teachers from more than 9,000 government schools in the state, district-level training is being provided. The guidebook is covered from classes 9 to 12.

Learners are also attesting to its positive impact. "LSE helped us in not only improving our personality, but also in building our perspective towards life. Sessions of Jeevan Tarang helped us know ourselves and respect the feelings of others and accept their NO," says Narendra Singh Chouhan, a student of ITI, Bhikangaon village, Khargone district.

Some of them have become public champions, like Divya, 16, and her sister. Divya is a *Sathiya* or peer educator under the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) or National Adolescent Health Programme implemented by National Health Mission in Chattarpur with the technical support of UNFPA. Divya facilitates meetings of adolescent girls clubs in the Tikuri village in Chattarpur district and provides information on health, reproductive health, nutrition, gender issues, etc. She says, "I am passionate about health and have an in-depth understanding of family planning, sexual and reproductive health because my mother is working as an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) in a village in Chattarpur and she has sensitised me on these issues. These are not topics that one should be coy about discussing or addressing. It is an important aspect of a person's health."

Strengthening its work with the age group, UNFPA has been also actively participating in RKSK, which focuses on six thematic areas comprising nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, prevention of injuries and violence, prevention of substance abuse and non-communicable diseases.

RKSK's goal is to provide all Indian adolescents with the resources and assistance they need to realise their



Source: UNFPA



Source: Nanna Heitmann/ Megnum Photos

full potential by empowering them to make wise decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Peer educators are used to make community-based interventions with the intention of boosting nutrition, enhancing sexual and reproductive health, improving mental health, reducing harm and violence and preventing the abuse of drugs.

UNFPA interacts with out-of-school and in-school youth in 13 districts and links them with youth-friendly health services under RSKS, which has 102 Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHCs). A total of 102 counsellors have been also trained to support the initiative. Action for Adolescent Girls (AAG) is another initiative by UNFPA to serve adolescent girls.

To address the issue of gender-based violence, UNFPA organised a three-day training of functionaries of one-stop crisis centres of Department of Women and Child Development in partnership with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in September 2022. Trainers were also drawn from the Department of Women and Child Development and TISS. In collaboration with the Department of Women and Child Development, UNFPA also conducted a seminar on gender equality and the

Women's Status

Percentage of females aged 6 years and above who have ever attended school has increased

From 64.0% (NFHS-4) to 67.5% (NFHS-5)



Percentage of women (age 15-19 years) who were mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey has dropped

From 7.3% (NFHS-4) to 5% (NFHS-5)



No. of married women who usually participate in three household decisions has increased

From 82.8% (NFHS-4) to 86.0% (NFHS-5)



role of media earlier this year. The panelists discussed gender-based violence and gender discrimination.

The state is making steady progress on development markers for women. For example, the female population aged 6 years and above, which has ever attended school, has increased from 64.0% (NFHS-4) to 67.5% (NFHS-5). The share of women (age 15-19 years) who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey has fallen from 7.3% (NFHS-4) to 5% (NFHS-5). The number of married women who usually participate in three household decisions has increased from 82.8% (NFHS-4) to 86.0% (NFHS-5).

The incidence of ever-married women aged between 18 and 49 experiencing spousal violence has dropped from 33.3% in NFHS-4 to 28.1% in NFHS-5.

UNFPA is also working to extend its reach, particularly in the state's distant and rural areas. Through various forms of communication, the international body intends to raise awareness of the Umang Helpline among both in- and out-of-school youth. Plans for training programmes to orient adolescents are being widened in scope and scale.

ODISHA

DATA DIVIDENDS

The UNFPA Odisha State Office uses data analysis to identify and plug gaps in the healthcare infrastructure in Sinapali, Nuapada, thereby enabling more pregnant women to deliver babies under medical care

NAINA GAUTAM

ODISHA has seen advancement in maternal health over the years. More pregnant women are getting medical care and more babies are born in medical facilities under trained supervision. It reduces health risks to both mothers and babies as is the case in deliveries at home.

The indicators bear a testimony to it. Births at medical facilities climbed to 92% as per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 from 85% in NFHS-4, which in turn more than doubled from 38% in NFHS-3. More than four-fifths (82%) of the women were cared for by a doctor during antenatal check-ups compared to 8% by an auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM), lady health visitor (LHV), nurse or doctor, as per NFHS-5.

While prenatal check-ups increased from 64% (NFHS-4) to 77% (NFHS-5), postnatal care was usually provided when a baby was born in a hospital. According to the survey, 94% of new mothers in public health facilities and 93% of new mothers in private health facilities had a postnatal check-up within two days of giving birth, in contrast to 71% of home births.



Source: UNFPA



Highlights

Births in health facilities go up

From 85% (NFHS-4) to 92% (NFHS-5)



Births at home go down

From 15% (NFHS-4) to 8% (NFHS-5)



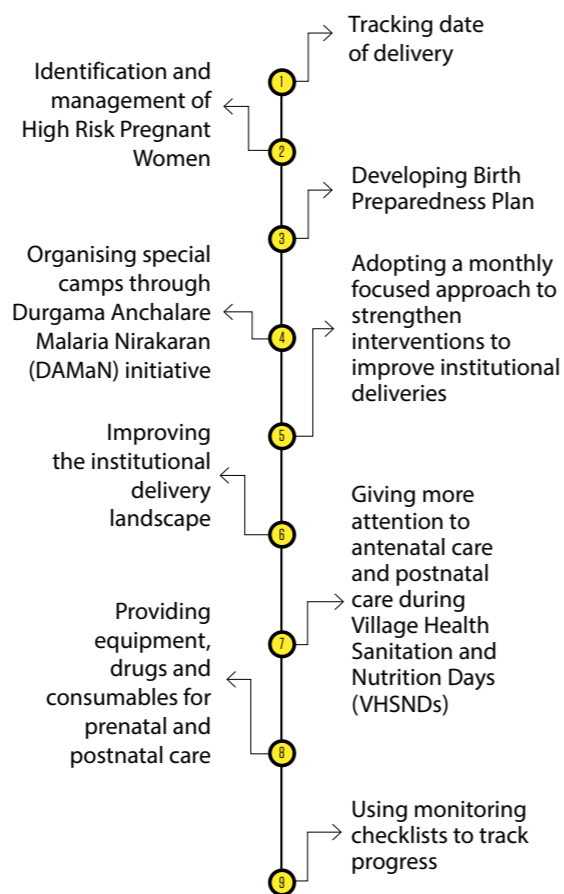
Source: Getty Images

However, the progress was not spread evenly through the state. A few pockets in western Odisha had maternal healthcare indicators that were well below the state average. Data further revealed that the incidence of home deliveries in Sinapali block was the highest in the Nuapada district in western Odisha. The Sinapali Community Health Centre (CHC), a small healthcare facility, was stressed because it had to cater to 32 remote villages in Nuapada.

Taking note of the situation, UNFPA with the assistance of key stakeholders used insights from the micro-level data to address the maternal mortality challenge. The UNFPA Odisha State Office mapped and clustered health institutions at the community and primary health centre level where indicators were poor. The data collected at the block level was further scrutinised by the district-level official to figure out the gaps and develop a need-based plan of action. Helpful insights gathered through field and community-level engagement, too, fed into the action plan. Localised micro-level plans were implemented to improve the ecosystem of institutional delivery or healthcare facilities with trained personnel.

Using a target-oriented approach on a monthly basis, attempts to improve institutional delivery were strengthened and enhanced on multiple fronts. Supplies of medicines and consumables were made available for antenatal and postnatal care. Low-performing Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition

HIGHLIGHTS



Days (VHSNDs) were given more attention in an effort to enhance prenatal and postnatal care because inadequate care can cause maternal mortality. The district and block-level monitoring officers were provided with a checklist to monitor progress.

ANMs also identified high-risk pregnant women during VHSNDs and they were given red card. The card holders were duly taken care of and referred to the higher medical facility. Camps were also organised to provide high-risk mothers with IV iron sucrose to overcome anaemia.

To promote institutional deliveries, information about the due dates of expectant mothers was obtained. Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Aanganwadi Workers (AWWs), ANMs and other supervisors were provided the list of due dates of expectant mothers. They used the lists to keep track and facilitate institutional deliveries.

ANMs also developed a birth preparedness plan for each pregnant woman in order to encourage institutional birth in the seventh month of pregnancy. Counselling was provided to the expectant mothers during joint home visits by health supervisors and ANMs. Women, who lived in hard-to-reach areas, received special attention. The facility of maternity waiting home, locally called *Maa Gruha*, was also made available.

In addition, as part of the Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative, dedicated camps for women were established. Women and children who were in high-risk groups received special attention. They were identified and referred to the tertiary facility for treatment and management of complications.

The effort of data collection, analysis and need-based action led to close the infrastructural gaps that hampered institutional deliveries. By end of November 2022, institutional deliveries showed a jump from 70% to 92%, according to Health Management Information System (HMIS). There was a reduction in maternal mortality and infant mortality, too.

UNFPA is now meeting with field-level functionaries and programme staff to review progress and decide on the future course of action to further improve maternal parameters in the state. It is hoped that lessons of interventions in areas like Sinapali will further help improve maternal health and lower the rate of maternal mortality rate in Odisha. [Q](#)



Source: Outlook



Source: Getty Images



Source: UNFPA

BIHAR

TRANSFORMING YOUNG LIVES

Talim-i-Naubalighan, a joint initiative by the Bihar government, UNFPA and other agencies for adolescent life skills development, is changing lives of lakhs of Muslim students from vulnerable and poor families studying in government-affiliated *madrasas* in the state

NAINA GAUTAM

No. of young Muslims in the age group of 10–24 years in Bihar

56 lakh

Young Muslims' share in the total Muslim population in Bihar

32%

SOMIYA Naz, a student of Madrasa Saleemia Eazia, loves sports, but until some time back, she could not find opportunities to explore her interest. Things changed after the launch of Talim-i-Naubalighan (TIN), a life skills development programme for adolescents in Bihar. The victory in a 100-metre race at the *markaz* (resource centre) level has given her confidence and opportunities to pursue her dream.

Naz is not alone. Currently, TIN is enabling 2.5 lakh Muslim students from vulnerable and poor families studying in 2,500 government-affiliated *madrasas* in Bihar realise their potential.

The success of the programme rests on the comprehensive planning, right from its design to implementation. TIN was launched as a pilot project in two districts in 2018 under the Bihar State Madrasa Strengthening Scheme in collaboration with the Minority Welfare Department (MWD), UNFPA, Bihar State Madrasa Education Board (BSMEB), Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, and Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANNU).

After the pilot in 2018, TIN was scaled up in 2020 to cover 1,942 government-affiliated *madrasas* from *wastania* (middle school) to *fauqania* (secondary school). The programme was expanded in 34 out of 38 districts in Bihar in 2022.

The programme, besides targeting to nurture young talent, is also aimed at helping Bihar grow as a modern secular state where young citizens learn to respect the identity of various communities.

TIN took the help of principals and nodal teachers (two teachers from each *Madrasa*) to strengthen the existing local ecosystem for implementation. *Madrasa* management committee meetings were activated in all *madrasas* to play a key role in providing internal support.

Teacher Training Modules (*Dareecha-i-Aagahi* or Window to Awareness) were developed and workshops conducted to orient *madrasa* teachers to teach students to go beyond rote and prescriptive learning to constructive learning and develop critical thinking, scientific temperament and inquisitiveness. Till date, 3,446 nodal teachers have been trained.

At the same time, attention is also given to the class routine and other small activities such as bell-keeping, attendance records and maintaining class-specific routines. Other features of TIN include facilitating career and health counselling and enhancing access to rights and entitlements.

Rukhsana Khatoon, a student of class 8 at Madrasa Darul Uloom Mustafiya, Madhepura, Purnea, says, "Good health means not only protecting myself from diseases, but also developing good habits to take care of myself on a daily basis."

One of the focus areas is imparting gender education,



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We are confident that with UNFPA's support, the Talim-i-Naubalighan programme will transform madrasas and fulfil our mandate of inclusive growth, development and prosperity

Amir Subhani
Chief Secretary,
Government of
Bihar

Source: UNFPA

HIGHLIGHTS

Target Number
of students
1.52 lakh

Govt-affiliated madrasas
covered under TIN
1,942

Madrasa Resource
Centres identified &
strengthened
50

Nodal teachers
trained on
Dareecha-E-Aagahi
3,446

Source: UNFPA

including creating awareness against practices such as child marriage and violence against women. The results are encouraging. While boys are learning about gender equality at madrasas, girls have started taking to outdoor sports like playing football and cricket. The intended beneficiaries include 57% young adolescent Muslim girls.

TIN has a three-pronged approach, which comprises strengthening of madrasas through resource centres, using web-based MIS for tracking progress and teacher training.

The entire programme is run on a three-tier structure. At the ground level are the Madrasa Markaz (Madrasa Resource Centres or MRCs), each having 40 madrasas under it. They were established to coordinate for activities related to training and capacity building of principals and teachers, systems strengthening of madrasas, health and career counseling, community collaboration, access to rights and entitlements and facilitating the development of creative expressions of adolescents. At the next level are 10 Regional Resource Centres (RRCs), each overseeing five MRCs or 200 madrasas, which have been set up to strengthen critical systems education.

The top tier is made by the State Resource Centre (SRC), formed as the lead institution to manage the RRCs and MRCs. As the apex institution of the programme, SRC focuses on system strengthening and programme implementation, policy and advocacy.

A tech-enabling work environment has been created with the development of a mobile application and a web-based dashboard—a management information systems (MIS) tool for planning, reporting, reviewing and monitoring—and a rights and entitlement portal.

The results of TIN are emerging and being noticed. Amir Subhani (IAS), chief secretary in the government of Bihar, says, “We are confident that with UNFPA's support, the Talim-i-Naubalighan programme will transform madrasas and fulfill our mandate of inclusive growth, development and prosperity.”

Considering that young Muslims in the age group of 10 to 24 years constitute 32% of the community population or 56 lakh of the total young population in Bihar, the programme's importance cannot be emphasised enough. Though aimed at minorities, TIN is set to contribute to overall development in the state. [📄](#)

UNFPA

Three Transformative Goals



ZERO
Unmet Need for
Family Planning



ZERO
Gender-Based Violence
and Harmful Practices



ZERO
Preventable
Maternal Deaths

UNFPA seeks to achieve these goals in collaboration with government agencies and partner NGOs by focusing on promoting gender equality, undertaking advocacy on sexual and reproductive health issues, enhancing life skills of young people, and using population data to inform policy making





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