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## ADVIKA REACHED 10 LAKH (ONE MILLION) ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN JUST A YEAR

Bhubaneswar, 11th October, 2021

‘Advika-Every Girl is Unique’ is an initiative of WCD department to reach out to millions of young girls and boys at the village level through the Anganwadi workers. It was launched on 11 October, 2020 on the International Day of Girl Child. The program aims to impart life skill education to the young mass thereby enabling them to play proactive role at the community level besides capacitating them to deal with various issues and challenges of life confidently.

Today is International day of Girl Child and one year completion of ADVIKA programme. To mark this occasion the Women and Child Development Department organised a state level webinar to commemorate the day at the State level. The event is also being observed at district and project level wherein many programs are being organised to create awareness on the issues of girl child and theme for the year with focus on intensifying Advika initiative that completed one year on this day.

The State webinar was chaired by Smt. Anu Garg, Principal Secretary, WCD Dept and graced by the Chief Guest Smt Tukuni Sahu, Hon’ble Minister, WCD with distinguished guests and invitees in presence of Smt. Sulata Deo, Advisor WCD Department, Smt. Sandhyabati Pradhan, Chairperson OSCPCR, Ms. Monika Neilson, Chief of Field Office, UNICEF, Mr. Mohammad Nadeem Noor, SPC, UNFPA and renowned Odia Cine Star Sabyasachi and Archita. Also connected on the occasion were district level officials including DSWO, DCPO, PO and Supervisors. Thousands of anganwadi workers and young boys and girls joined the program via the you-tube link created for the programme.

The theme of 2021 Intl Day of Girl Child is “**Digital Generation, Our Generation**”. The day marks the call for equal access to internet and digital devices for girls and targeted investments to facilitate opportunities for girls to safety and meaningful access, use, lead and design technology. Infact digital inclusion and literacy opens new avenues to learning, earning and leading for girls, especially during COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic situation has unfortunately deepened the gender divide around connectivity and online safety, with girls facing economic and social barriers to internet and device access.

Principal Secretary, WCD Odisha in addressing the gathering highlighted that Advika program was started a year ago on this day of International day of Girl Child that reinforces the government’s commitment to empower girl child. It has directly reached 10 lakh adolescent girls and boys, 600 master trainers have been trained on Advika module who are now helping train district level trainers to take the process forward at the anganwadi level. She announced the launch of Advika application that will create a platform for the adolescent girls and boys to share their issues and concern and get required help.

Director, ICDS & SW stressed that Advika Program is helping create Peer leaders who will act as change agents and help address issues and challenges of young people especially girls. He said that in coming days District and State level convention of Peer leaders shall be organised to encourage the good work being done by them.

Sakhi- Saheli Payal and Rashmita Naik from Nabrangpur and Dhenkanal shared about their experience of getting associated with Advika Program and how the forum is helping them getting to know about many issues including child marriage, domestic violence, COVID, helplines available for women and children, menstrual hygiene etc. They shared about the work

done by them during COVID pandemic wherein they created awareness on covid protocol and the need for getting vaccinated.

Anganwadi worker Smt Bijulibati Suna said that they ensure the participation of maximum young boys and girls every Saturday at anganwadi centres and discuss the themes as mentioned in the Advika Calender. She said that the platform is helping the adolescent girls to share their issues and concerns.

Prabina Mishra, CDPO, shared that the district of Subarnapur is taking initiative to link both boys and girls with Advika program. She felt that the Advika program should continue for long as it is helping to create a forum where issues and challenges of young people are heard.

Hon'ble Minister, WCD & MS Dept Smt Tukuni Sahu, congratulated the department for the success it has been able to receive for the Advika program. She said that the program will help to create a healthy mindset and thereby help achieve a better and healthy society for all.

Famous Odia Cine Star and the very familiar and popular 'Ollywoord Superstar' Sabyasachi Mishra and leading Actress Archita Sahu in their talk mentioned that It is because of the efforts of all that change is now visible in society with regards to the status of women, however we have to move till we reach out to each and every girl of the State. They congratulated the department for their efforts and hoped to be able to get associated with them to create visible change at the field level.

Smt. Sulata Deo, Advisor WCD addressing the audiences said that we have to work to ensure that no girl child is left back and every girl gets equal access to education, nutrition, safety and growth.

In sharing the field level experiences, Smt. Manjulata Pradhan, DSWO, Kandhamal intimated that the districts have ensured that Advika Program reaches each and every anganwadi centre of the District. District and block level task force have been formed and all efforts are being taken to reach out to the interior villages as well.

Ms. Monica Nelson, Chief of Field Office, UNICEF addressing the house said that investing in adolescent girls is always a game changer. Drop-out rates of girls has reduced. Also increased reporting of child marriage prevented and decline in child marriage has been recorded which is very much encouraging. Advika is one of its kind of initiative of Government of Odisha that aims to provide life skill education to the young people, avoid any form of violence with a convergent approach. Within one year advika has been able to provide appropriate, safe and free space to our adolescents there they can discuss their issues and for that we need to talk about girls with boys to keep the momentum up and break the stereotype.

Mohammad Nadeem Noor, SPC, UNFPA – The world is changing at a rapid pace and so it is necessary to train our young people for the same. He emphasised on the importance of age 15 years as the same decides if the young person will move to labour force or reproductive force. He emphasized on converting adolescent girls into productive work force.

Sandhyabati Pradhan, Chairperson OSCPCR – said that she has interacted with few young girls and happy to see the impact of Advika program on their life. Further she felt that self-defence training can also be taken up by the department which will further help to strengthen the process of empowerment of girls.

Ghasiram Panda, State Programme Manager, Actionaid – He congratulated the department for making Advika program reach to each and every corner of the State. He said that there is now a need to further build the capacity of the Sakhi-Saheli to help create a cadre of leaders who can play proactive role to address issues and challenges of young people at community level. He also emphasised the need to involve men and boys in the effort of empowerment of girls and finally reiterated the need to link young people with higher education especially skill development program.

The meeting ended with Principal Secretary requesting suggestions from the field with a period of 10 days, on the basis of the same Advika -2 shall be launched.

## FACTSHEET -

1. More than **10 lakh adolescent** boys and girls have been reached through ADVIKA programme just in 1 year.
2. Nearly **1 Laks Sakhi Sahelis** have been identified and more than 200 project level whatsapp groups of sakhi-sahelis have been formed. District level whatsapp groups have been formed in many districts. Sakhi-sahelis are now become instrumental in raising their voices, barring their own marriages, mobilizing the communities, supporting frontline workers in home visits, counselling, taking pledges for 'no to child marriage, Yes to School, participating in various platforms such as Village, Panchayat and Gram Sabha and 'Day for Children' Meetings in Panchayats.
3. Resourceful ADVIKA packages with AWW Pocket book, Kishori Kalender, Kishori Barta disseminated to all 30 districts with Social messages of the Hon'ble Chief Minister to supplement advika sessions with life skill education.
4. 600 master trainers have been trained to orient the supervisors and AWWs on LSE and use of resource packages
5. 'ADVIKA' – now become a platform to track vulnerable adolescents and their families, mobilizing communities, addressing gender issues, preventing child marriage and linking to social protection schemes and skill opportunities.
6. As of now during the period of 1 year, 1620 child marriages have been successfully foiled and nearly 7000 villages of the State are now declared child marriage free for which advika contributed significantly.
7. Many adolescent girls are being linked with higher education, social protection schemes and livelihood based vocational training.

It is further being initiated to create and institutionalise State Level Adolescents' Forum/Collective. In coming days, linkages with Skill and livelihood based vocational and skilling opportunities for the adolescent girls through PR&DW and Skill Development and Technical Education Department to be strengthened and broadened through ORMAS, DDU GKY, Skilled Odisha etc. Besides this, technology based ADVIKA mobile app to be embedded into the system.

It is the best example of the highest political commitment towards adolescent empowerment and ending child marriage and all kinds of violence against children and women.

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