

# “Growing Up”

Towards gender sensitization and RSH  
for young people in South Asia

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Reaching Men to Improve Reproductive Health for All

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# India

## Key Demographics

- Total population 1.03 Billion +
- Children (0 –18 years) 400 Million
- Young people as percentage of total Population 30%
- Percentage of girls:boys enrolled in secondary school 39% : 59%
- Sex Ratio of Child population 927 females per 1000 males

# India

## HIV/AIDS statistics

- Total HIV infected: 4.58 million + \*
- HIV prevalence: Young Men (15 – 24) 0.34 %  
\*\*
- HIV prevalence: Young Women (15 – 24) 0.71 %  
\*\*
- HIV Prevalence: Adults 0.80 %

# India

## HIV/AIDS Knowledge Levels

Percentage respondents knowing that having an uninfected partner and consistent condom use can prevent HIV/AIDS

46.8%\*

Percentage of respondents aware of linkages between STD and HIV/AIDS

20.7%\*

\*NACO National Baseline general population behavioral surveillance survey 2001; Sample size 3832 respondents; Mean age: 15-49 years

# Young people in India...

- Of the 1.03 billion population an estimated 400 million are children between 0-18 years
- School attendance rates among children between 6 -14 years is 79%\* (UNICEF 1999)
- Approximately 50% of young women are anaemic
- High rates of teenage marriages and pregnancy
- High rates of violence against women within marriage including dowry harassment and death

# India

## Adolescent RSH: Some Notable Indicators

- Girls taken out of school at a younger age. Usually after menarche for fear of sexual violence
- Continued low age of marriage despite present laws preventing marriage below 18 years - early age for commencement of sexual activity
- Over 50% of ever-married adolescent girls have begun childbearing
- Sexual activity among unmarried adolescents on the rise in urban areas (evidenced by growing numbers of unmarried adolescents seeking abortion)
- Poor service delivery infrastructure for adolescents

# India

## Context for SRH communication programmes for young people

- Sex still a taboo subject
- Fledgling life skill initiatives only in private urban schools
- Low involvement of boys in discussing issues relating to girls' RSH needs, and vice-versa
- Low parental involvement in RSH for young people
- Lack of TOT programmes

# India

## Context for SRH communication programmes for young people-Boys left out!

- School fledgling efforts comprise a doctor student session with girls to talk about menstruation and menstrual hygiene
- Boys left out of such discussion or interaction
- Reproductive and sexual health treated synonymously therefore young boys not addressed as they do not have any apparent reproductive health needs!!
- Influence of social and cultural understanding of gender and their roles

# The Project: Growing Up

## The WHY...

Existing SRH communication lacks...

- ... Context
- ... Long term vision
- ... Coherent strategy/spiral of information

## The solution must...

- ... address young people...
- ... in a sustained fashion...
- ... combine audiovisual and direct interaction...
- ... in an easy-to-use, thought-provoking-yet-fun way

# The Project: Growing Up

## The WHAT...

- A film based module designed to establish a consistent and sustainable sex education curriculum in urban schools
- Films accompanied by a facilitators guide that enables individual usage patterns to be guided by trained facilitators, and aligned to the specific needs of particular adolescent groups
- Extensively researched within urban settings in order to create widest possible usability

# Growing Up

## Making the difference

- ... is meant to provoke discussion in a facilitator-led group
- ... encourages positive role models, images and viewpoints
- ... starts with basic information and builds on it gradually
- ... addresses issues ranging from puberty and adolescence to safer sex, contraception, sexual choices, STIs and HIV/AIDS
- ... is customizable to the needs of specific groups

# Growing Up ...thus far

- Conceived under BBC WST/Ford Foundation  
SEX & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION: INDIA project (1998)
- Series of 9 films in 3 trilogies for 9 – 14, 14 – 18,  
19 – 21 years age bands
- 1<sup>st</sup> trilogy in English (for 10 –14 years) complete  
and in wide distribution nationally and internationally
- Hindi adaptation of 1<sup>st</sup> trilogy nearing completion
- Second Trilogy in English for 14 -18 year olds  
under production

# Growing Up

A schematic view

## Trilogy I (9 – 14 years)

Puberty

Adolescence

Infatuation, love, sex

## Trilogy II (15 – 18 years)

Pregnancy/contraception

STIs, HIV/AIDS, safer sex

Sexual Choices and Rights

## Trilogy III (18 – 21 years)

Childbirth/Parental responsibility

Gender roles and stereotyping

Sexual harassment

# Growing Up

## The HOW

- Research included extensive workshops with a sample of target audience population as well as discussion sessions with experts and NGOs working with adolescents
- Total sample size: 850+ adolescents
- Pre-testing of film components like muppet designs, songs and dramatized sequences with target audience in FGDs

# Growing Up

## Formative research group profile (Completed film modules)

- Age 9 - 15 years
- Family Income group US\$ 120 – 750/month
- Marital Status Unmarried
- Access to info Radio, Television, Films
- Education School going
- Socioeconomic setting Urban/middle class

# Growing Up

## Inferences from school interactions - 1

- Young people willing and wanting to discuss issues around sex, sexuality
- Young people inhibited by lack of supportive environment and social taboos
- Incomplete knowledge regarding reproductive anatomy, and lack of basic information around sex and sexuality
- Moral ambiguity around desire to know more about the opposite sex
- High levels of misinformation, especially regarding masturbation, HIV/AIDS, contraception, conception

# Growing Up

## Inferences from school interactions - 2

- High level of media influence especially TV soaps & films portraying gender stereotypes and roles
- High level of discomfort among boys with regard to career options traditionally seen as women's jobs (letting the woman be the primary bread winner, being a nurse, teacher, secretary)
- Almost defeatist acceptance of their future prospects by girls. Low expectation of sensitivity from their male counterparts

# Growing Up

## Inferences from school interactions - 3

- Low levels of information regarding prevailing reproductive laws
- High level of awareness regarding the political correctness of responses to questions around gender but lower levels of attitudinal or behavioral change

# Growing Up

## Inferences from school interactions - 4

- Resentment in girls regarding gender inequity
- Gender inequity recognized by boys, but no understanding of their role in creating a more equitable environment
- Boys more keen to know and learn about the sexual act: Unlike girls, do not see it as synonymous with marriage
- For girls, sexual act linked to moral character and synonymous with marriage
- Guilt patterns associated with feelings of sexual excitement in both boys and girls

# Growing Up

## Inferences from school interactions - 5

- Social restrictions on everyday interactions between boys and girls creates distance and tension
- Younger boys (age 10-12) willing to contribute to household work and share the duties with their sisters.
- Yet by age 15 – 16, familial demarcations lead to unwillingness to do household chores.  
Now only willing to handle outdoors work

# Growing Up Dissemination

## 4-pronged strategy

- Target schools, nodal agencies, field level agencies
- Centralized distribution ensures...
  - ... continued access to hi-quality sets
  - ... creation of unified database to track usage
  - ... organized updating & feedback mechanism
- Dissemination/Training workshop series
- Web-presence/discussion forum

# Growing Up ...Across South Asia

The Growing Up trilogy in English...

- ... addresses a socio-economic population stratum that is found in most urban cities across South Asia
- ... features cultural and racial indicators that are common from Pakistan to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka to the Maldives
- ... is in English, a lingua franca across the region
- ... has already been distributed as far afield as Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Pakistan...

**...and is now the basis for new SRH initiatives in countries like Bangladesh**

# Growing Up ...about Ideosync

- A development communication group specializing in targeted communication design
- Focus on adolescent issues, sexuality, gender and reproductive health
- Award winning team of professionals
- Provides integrated communication design, production and implementation strategy design services & consultancies