

Metropolis Foundation's ARSH Program Transforms Adolescent Health, Empowering 2.2 Lakh Girls

Category: Business

written by News Mall | March 28, 2025



Metropolis Foundation, the CSR arm of Ameera Shah-led Metropolis Healthcare Limited, India's second-largest diagnostic laboratory chain, successfully hosted the Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) Conclave in Mumbai. As part of its flagship CSR initiative Too Shy to Ask (TSTA), the conclave reaffirmed the Foundation's commitment to adolescent health awareness and empowerment.



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The Too Shy to Ask initiative is a comprehensive adolescent outreach program designed to educate, empower, and encourage young girls through a dual approach-physical and digital outreach. The physical outreach, implemented under the ARSH initiative, addresses critical gaps in reproductive and sexual health education by directly engaging with adolescents through on-ground interventions. This is further complemented by the award-winning 'Too Shy to Ask' App, which provides confidential, science-backed health information, supported by medical experts.

Since its inception in FY 2021-22, the ARSH initiative has made a significant impact in collaboration with community-based organizations across rural and urban areas of Maharashtra and Chennai. Over the past three years, it has reached 17 blocks, 606 villages, and 238 panchayats, directly empowering more than 2.2 lakh adolescents, while indirectly benefiting 1.1 million individuals, including their families and communities. The program is built on three core pillars: capacity-building in reproductive & sexual health and life skills, the formation of Kishori Manch advocacy groups consisting of 10 to 15 girls at the community or school level,

and the engagement of key influencers, including Panchayat members, ASHAs, teachers, and village development committees, to create a supportive environment for adolescent well-being.

A pivotal element of the initiative is the **Kishori Manch, adolescent-led advocacy groups** trained in reproductive health and life skills. These groups serve as agents of change, leading community-driven initiatives to address pressing social issues such as child marriage, menstrual hygiene, and access to ARSH education. By taking ownership of these challenges, Kishori Manch members develop and implement actionable solutions, ensuring a sustainable micro-level impact that contributes to broader societal change. The involvement of key influencers has been instrumental in ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of these efforts. By actively supporting adolescents as they implement their action plans, these stakeholders help create an enabling ecosystem that fosters lasting behavioral and social transformation.

Commenting on the program's impact, **Dr Duru Shah, Chairperson, Metropolis Foundation**, said, *"Adolescents must be at the centre of conversations shaping policy and social attitudes. Through this initiative, we have directly observed the remarkable potential of young girls when they are equipped with the right knowledge and support. They are not just beneficiaries of awareness programs; they are emerging as leaders, challenging deep-rooted societal norms, and driving meaningful change in their communities. By fostering their confidence and empowerment, we are not only securing their future but also laying the foundation for a healthier and more progressive society."*

The Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) Conclave brought together over 100 adolescent leaders, NGO partners, Panchayat members, and healthcare experts to discuss practical solutions for adolescent health and rights. The event featured skits, role plays, and testimonials from Kishori Manch

members, who have been actively working to bring change in their communities. Their stories highlighted how adolescents are taking the lead in addressing key social issues at the grassroots level.

The conclave also showcased success stories from the program. In Mumbai, Ayshea rejoined school after Kishori Manch members intervened and convinced her parents to delay her marriage. In Palghar (Maharashtra), young girls organized a rally against child marriage, prompting the Gram Panchayat to pass a resolution against the practice. In Pune, adolescent leaders collaborated with local authorities to ensure the installation of proper sanitation facilities in schools, preventing girls from dropping out due to inadequate infrastructure. In Nandurbar, an aspirational district of Maharashtra, the program has empowered 88,000 adolescent girls, formed 1,937 Kishori Manchis, and developed 1,923 action plans focusing on health, hygiene, and nutrition. Recognized for its impact, the initiative in aspirational district was recently felicitated at an event attended by representatives from government and industry bodies, reinforcing its role in driving sustainable adolescent health interventions.

The discussions at the conclave emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in creating lasting impact. Representatives from nine NGOs, including Digantar Swaraj Foundation (DSF), Child Help Foundation, Manthan Foundation, Family Planning Association of India, SHARP, Bharat Cares, Astha Parivar, and Citizen Association of Child Rights (CACR), participated in the event, sharing insights on strengthening the ARSH initiative.

About Too Shy to Ask (TSTA)

Launched in 2017, Too Shy to Ask (TSTA) is an award-winning digital platform dedicated to adolescent health awareness. Designed to provide confidential, science-backed information, TSTA serves as a trusted resource for young individuals

seeking guidance on reproductive and sexual health, nutrition, gender rights, and legal awareness. Available in five languages-Hindi, Marathi, English, Gujarati, and Tamil-TSTA is free to download on iOS and Android. It features an “Ask the Expert” tool for anonymous queries and a Parents’ Corner to encourage open conversations between parents and adolescents. With 1.9 lakh installs, a 4.5-star rating, and engagement from 10+ NGOs, TSTA continues to empower adolescents across India. Beyond its mobile and web apps, TSTA also offers a dedicated website with a language translation tool for broader accessibility. For more information, visit: www.tooshytoask.org

About Metropolis Foundation

Metropolis Foundation is the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of Metropolis Healthcare, which is focused on positively impacting the lives of the people. In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, (i.e., SDG 3,4,5), Metropolis Foundation’s CSR initiatives are aimed towards imparting education, creating awareness on Gender, Equality, Health, and Women Empowerment. For the past 3 decades, Metropolis has been at the forefront in conducting impactful camps and driving numerous workshops for different sections of the society. The company has partnered with societies, corporate groups, educational institutions, government bodies, NGOs, wellness foundations and a host of other organizations to make a difference to the lives of people. Metropolis is currently driving three CSR programs i.e., Too Shy to Ask (TSTA), MedEngage Scholarship Program, and Preventive Healthcare Programs.

