Kishor Varta
A CHSJ IVRS communication platform

- Kishor Varta- meant for adolescent boys in particular to call a toll-free number and listen to information on issues of gender equality, body literacy, health, delaying age at marriage, etc.

- This information is provided to them in the form of audio stories. Four main characters have been created, who through their life stories and the various incidents in their life, make the callers solve their key problems and help move the story forward.

- The characters and stories are- Lakhanpur ka Raju, Dada ka Gussa, Haldi ki Jaldi and Dulhan ki Baatein.
Objectives

• To increase knowledge and change attitudes of adolescents on gender discrimination and sexual reproductive health and rights issues with a focus on greater autonomy, mobility and education of adolescent girls within the gender equality framework.

• To increase dialogue and accountability with the existing village service providers, especially ASHA, ANM, AWW, PRI members, group of parents

• To increase digital skills of adolescent and community members and to improve access to information and decision making
Background to Pilot Phase

- Mobile phones have reached almost each village in the country and are present in each home but do they help rural communities, solve social problems, help adolescents with their issues or be used for leadership development and aiding community networking?

- Prior history of work in Rajasthan, work with adolescents and youth in Bundi district. Pilot phase carried out through the support of MANJARI Sansthan (Bundi). Bundi has distinct socio-cultural problems that require high focus ARSH interventions.

- Issues of Child Marriage and traditions like Aata Saata and Naata Pratha are rampant in the region.
Programme Theory

• Technology based learning will attract adolescents as active learners.

• Periodic meetings and discussion will enable the adolescents to reflect on these lessons and adopt new behaviours.

• Meetings with parents will enable the parents to understand the changes among their children and also to discuss gender issues affecting the girl children.

• The adolescent gender and health education will sensitize boys towards gender issues and create a sense of empowerment among the girls. This will lead to adoption of new roles by boys in their families, including supporting their sisters.
Community participation on issues is increased. This will result in:

- More discussion around child marriage and involvement of Community as a whole to stop child marriage

- Reduction of school drop-out among young girls

- Knowledge about SRH among adolescents is improved

- Girls have improved mobility opportunities - including playing organised games/sports

- Sense of self confidence and leadership increases among young boys and girls
Can mobile phones help rural communities?

Community Level Presumptions

• **FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION/ RESPONSES:** The communities will be able to hear messages on specific issues through their mobile phone, allowing them mobility and privacy.

• **DEVELOP LEADERSHIP SKILLS:** The system will mobilise and develop leadership skills among marginalised communities and give a voice to them.

• **DEVELOP COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** It will aid community members to communicate with each other along these new ideas and information and enable them to discuss problems affecting the entire community.
Can mobile phones help rural communities?

Community Level Presumptions

- **NETWORKING:** It will lead to the development of a community networking system and build linkages with different stakeholders.

- **REFLECTION:** This platform will also work as a catalyst for reflection and will help individuals in speaking about their personal experiences and opinions.

- **NEW ACTIONS:** Further, it will bring in a new culture of individual and community actions based on identification and ownership of these issues.
**Expected Outcomes**

- **Adolescent girls** - Increase in leadership; improvement in the educational status through re-enrolment and reduced drop-outs; delayed age at marriage; improvement of health status; increased mobility; economic decision making, raising questions on cases of discrimination.

- **Adolescent boys** - Sensitization and increased work sharing at home, reflection on behaviours in the family and relationships. Supporting sisters in decision making, taking public action on gender and SRH issues etc.

- **Community** - At the level of the community, there will be greater participation of adolescents in decision making, support actions of adolescents and create opportunities for joint action through greater understanding of gender based discrimination.
Expected Outcomes

- Incorporation of gender module in the regular school curriculum.
- Increased role and responsibility of service providers towards adolescent health entitlements.
- Parents group has been set up to monitor and hold accountable the various service providers.
- The issues have acceptance and are discussed openly at the PRI level.
- Media sensitized and raising issues related to adolescents.
- Stakeholders group also monitoring if schools and education system is gender friendly.
- Setting up of new gender social norms at the individual and community level and silence around RSHR issues is reduced.
Background to Pilot Phase

• Started with 30 Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools of Nainwa Block (Bundi) to maximize interaction with adolescents. Reinforcement of the fact that Kishor Varta is a part of the formal learning methods available in the community.

• The schools lack basic amenities along with the issue of non availability of female staff- acceptance that there is gap in dealing with adolescent girls’ issues. Therefore Kishor Varta is an alternate method of reaching to adolescents and enabling them to access information which is not available due to hesitation and stigma.

• Kishor Varta offers an alternate model of learning for adolescents who are not part of the school system, are drop-outs, etc
Methodology and Process

- **Selection of Issues**: Issues of adolescents and youth had been identified previously through a door to door baseline survey conducted in 30 villages of Rajasthan.

- **Story development (Module)**: Content selection, script writing with a focus on reflection by introducing levels and breaks to analyse and understand one’s own prejudices and practices, audio-dramatization of stories, demarcation of phases and sequence of issues.

- **Field test of the stories**: Feedbacks on the stories were taken from adolescents and youth groups of the ongoing project in Bundi.

- **Interactive content**: Option to engage with the stories and select answers and move story ahead. Feedback loop ensured through option for asking questions and sharing of experiences.
Methodology and Process

• **Facilitation of the stories on a regular basis:** Monthly field visits by facilitators which involves interactions and discussions with students as well as teachers.

• **Documentation of the experiences of the listeners:** Listeners’ queries, confusions and curiosity is documented through the incorporated feedback option in the flow chart.

• **School teachers as primary allies:** Orientation and permission of teachers and school authorities.

• **IVRS package:** Stories for adolescents, factbook for facilitators, message oriented posters and SMSes for the community, publicity material, etc

• **Data analysis and loop:** Through analysing number of Calls, Options Selected, Stories preferred, Feedbacks and Questionnaire response
Mobile Based ICT4D

- **Technology is not a standalone** but reinforces the already existing community level work. Stories are developed as a part of a package.

- **Information** is relevant and constantly updated to attract local users.

- **Simple to use platform** and software applications offer more flexibility and scope for improvisations.

- **Process involves various stakeholders** who will work with each other and the local service providers and create the environment for the community to create new social aspirations and change norms.
• Localised and also wider structure- Formation of new gender and social norms as well as reinforcing values of networking- Focus not on promoting technology

• Improved access and skills on digital tools. Mobile for learning and setting of new norms.

• Enhances Organisational management systems, supports practices of on ground strategic decision making.
Kishor Varta Activities

• Targeting schools in Nainwa district of Bundi.

• Developing online education module delivered on phone through interactive audio stories.

• Identification of educational volunteers and monthly group meetings of adolescent boys and girls.

• Linkages with teachers, PRI, ANM, ASHA, etc

• Community campaigns to build ownership and create supportive environment

• Detailed MIS and reporting of changes, challenges and success stories
Preparatory Phase

• Creating **audio-story based** adolescent gender and health intervention which is continuously updated. The content is developed through discussions in the community.

• **Identification and training of community educational volunteers/facilitators** who will be responsible for conducting periodic group discussion with girls and boys separately and with parents.

• **Delivering modules** through IVRS based mobile phones
Field Intervention

- Identification of field partner (Manjari Sansthan) and intervention villages

- Baseline on issues of gender discrimination and RSHR

- Introducing intervention to large village group

- Promoting the IVRS number among girls and boys, through creative advocacy material and discussions

- Meeting with boys and girls separately discussing topics that were part of the IVRS stories. (At these meetings action plans for change are discussed)
• Quarterly meeting with parents

• Meetings with ANM, ASHA, Anganwadi workers, PRI members to ensure greater linkages and support from service providers and to improve accountability of health services for boys and girls

• 6 monthly camps/ gender mela/ Community Campaigns will be organised in association with the ASHA, Anganwadi Worker, calling for the community to adopt practices which promote the gender equality.

• Monthly meeting of educational volunteers for planning and monitoring.

• Regular MIS and End line survey to measure changes
Outcomes

• Over 50,000 calls in 3 months since July 2015. Over 16000 calls registered in October. Of these, 6000 callers have had a deeper engagement through responses, feedbacks and audio messages.

• As reported by the students, teachers as well as the backend data generated, the stories are very popular as means of providing information.

• Adolescent girls and boys are regularly calling and demanding more information, especially on issues related with body literacy, health, reproductive and sexual health, etc.

• Demand from adolescents to create stories for parents as well.
• Adolescent boys and girls are informing their friends about the stories and prompting them to listen to various episodes that may be of relevance to them.

• Some reports already of boys helping their mothers with domestic work sharing.

• Science teachers have appreciated the stories on body literacy stating that these were topics that they felt discomfort in teaching, but the audio stories have provided an entry point, based on which discussions can be held.

• The Block Education Officer (BEO) and Chief Judicial Magistrate have appreciated the stories and CJM has also stated that these (and the method) can be used for legal awareness in the community.