

# INFORMING ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN ABOUT SRHR DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC THROUGH RADIO DRAMA:

LEARNINGS FROM HEALTHY TRANSITIONS FOR NEPALI YOUTH PROJECT (HTNYP)



## INTRODUCTION

Save the Children, along with local partners Karnali Rural Development and Research Center (KIRDARC), Social Awareness Center (SAC), Panchtara Yuwa Samrakshyak Manch (PTYSM), and Everest Club have been implementing the 'Healthy Transition for Nepali Youth Project' (HTNYP) in four districts of Karnali state from April 2018. The project is designed to strengthen the understanding and knowledge related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), maternal and neo-natal health, targeted towards adolescent girls (15 to 24), young women, their parents, spouses, and in-laws. 40 health facilities and 4 referral sites of Surkhet, Dailekh, Jajarkot, and Kalikot have also been supported under the project.

On 24th March 2020, the government of Nepal declared a nation-wide lockdown to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The stringent measures imposed by the government, along with the announced health and safety protocols

halted key activities of the 'Healthy Transition for Nepali Youth Project'. Therefore, to continue the project during the unprecedented situation, alternative ways for project continuity was explored, and the radio was identified as one of the most effective mediums for project adaptation and continuity.

'Swastha Rupantaran' (or, Healthy Transition), a 15-minute capsule model radio drama series based on the HTYP curriculum was produced focusing on humanized narratives and commentaries on sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues, twinned with COVID-19 messages to make the program more relevant and contextual. These capsule-based radio dramas were aired from local FM stations of project working areas and cascaded to adolescent and young women groups of the project to further diffuse the content, and to initiate evidence-based discussions and dialogues on SRHR topics.

## 'SWASTHA RUPANTARAN' CAPSULE-MODEL RADIO DRAMAS

### Topics discussed in the radio series:



Family planning



Care during pregnancy



Gender based violence



Menstruation hygiene management



Mental health



Early marriage

A 15-minute capsule model radio drama series 'Swastha Rupantaran' (Or, Healthy Transition) was developed based on the HTNY curriculum. The design process of the radio drama series involved thematic experts, social and behaviour change communications specialists, implementing partners and government counterparts. The issues and the sub-issues of the radio series were identified

as part of the curriculum, and the messages were twinned with critical COVID-19 messages to contextualize the radio broadcast. Episodic radio dramas were reviewed by the thematic team to ensure that key SRHR messages of the curriculum was well-reflected in the radio dramas. Content level approval from National Health Education Information Communications Center (NHEICC) under the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) was also garnered as part of the review and gatekeeping process.

Target audiences and local partners were also included in content level consultations, and selection of FM stations for strategic broadcast of the radio dramas. To understand the knowledge level change in targeted population, social mobilizers initiated regular catch-up with the adolescent and young women groups under the HTNY project, and reinforced key messages aired in the radio program. This also supported in garnering insights and knowledge level change observations in the target audiences, who discussed the knowledge, attitude, and practice level change after listening to the radio drama series.

# PROCESS FOLLOWED TO DEVELOP AND MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE RADIO CAPSULES

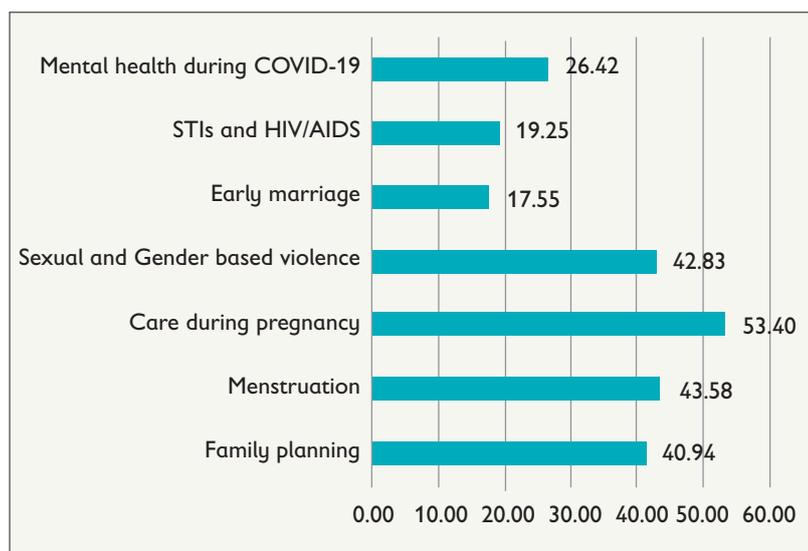
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content level consultation based on HTNY curriculum with technical experts, SBCC specialists, local partners, and government officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback collection from listeners using Save the Children's toll-free number embedded in radio dramas and radio public service announcements (PSAs)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of key COVID-19 messages to twin in the radio series</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of online monitoring system to understand knowledge, attitude, and practice level change in target beneficiaries</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of story arc, character development, and story plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of quality benchmarks of radio program and conduct QBMs to garner reviews and comments from local stakeholders, FM station partners, community level staffs, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production of 15 minutes long radio capsule dramas on different themes ranging from contraceptive use to mental health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and course correction of the radio series content after garnering feedback from the listeners</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of draft scripts and episodes by thematic team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cascading of the radio series through a targeted approach in adolescent and young women group of HTNY project</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selection of local radio stations to broadcast the radio series</li> </ul>	

## LISTENERSHIP OF THE RADIO DRAMA SERIES

Save the Children conducted a series of in-depth interviews (IDIs) with beneficiaries to understand the behaviour and knowledge level change in target audiences after listening to the radio drama series. IDIs were structured to understand the impact of the radio series, key behaviour or knowledge level change paving way for critical individual change actions, resonance and reach of the radio broadcast. Similarly, the data of IDIs were triangulated with the monitoring data, traced through online monitoring, and follow ups with key target beneficiaries.

### Key insights from in-dept interviews (IDIs):

- Nearly one third (28.41%) of total beneficiaries (group members) were monitored and surveyed through phone and online monitoring system
- More than four fifth (88% in monitoring and 80.5% in IDI) of the beneficiaries reported to have listened at least one episode of the radio drama series
- The episode on care during pregnancy was reported to be the most popular episode (Fig. 1)
- A majority of listeners (99.34%) stated that the radio series was helpful in informing them about critical SRHR issues
- Out of 1508 adolescents and young women surveyed via phone, 97% stated to have understood the message included in the radio series, and 99% participants stated that the broadcast time was appropriate
- 95% of the IDIs participants stated that the drama series was contextual and relevant, and properly reflected the norms of the society which further strengthened listenership



# BEHAVIOUR AND KNOWLEDGE LEVEL IMPACT OF THE RADIO DRAMA

Evidence from the in-depth interviews (IDI) suggests a knowledge and attitude level change in target audiences after listening to the radio drama series. Most respondents stated that the radio dramas have supported in disseminating critical information related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

“After listening to the radio series, I have become more conscious about my health, and have started using cotton pads when I have periods, as it is healthy and hygienic.”  
- **A listener from Kalikot**

IDIs conducted with adolescent girls and young women suggests an increase in knowledge related to menstruation hygiene practices.

“The radio series inspired me to speak out against violence and seek support from people you trust if your rights are violated. I have started staying inside the house when I have my periods and have told my parents that I will not go outside and sleep in the cowshed when I have my periods.” - **A listener from Jajarkot**

One of the adolescent girl from Kalikot expressed,

“from the radio series, we learnt that it is important to properly wash cotton pads with soap and water when we have periods.”

Similarly, many participants also attested to have increased information on consequences of early marriage, help seeking and reporting of violence against women cases, etc. As one of the behaviour change actions, many participants also expressed that the radio drama empowered them to advocate against harmful social norms, such as denouncing the practice of ‘*chaupadi*’ as a result of the radio show.

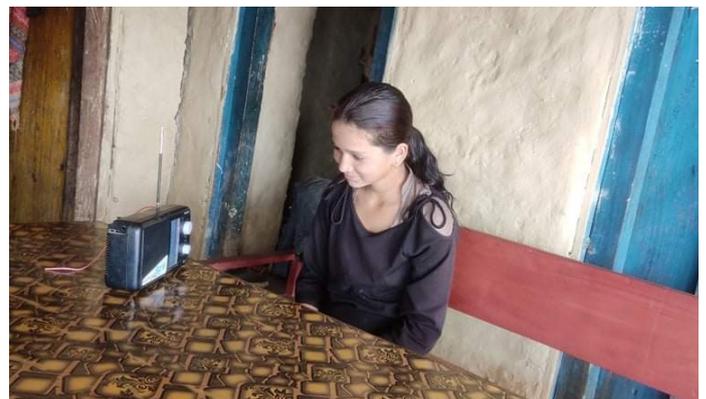
IDIs conducted with women group suggested an increase in knowledge and attitude level change related to service seeking behaviour and increased acceptability to contraceptive use, pregnancy care, family planning tools, mental health, etc. Participants also expressed that the radio series empowered them to garner evidence-based information, which in turn supported to address myths and misconceptions related to birth spacing and use of contraceptives.

“My perception towards the use of family planning tools changed after listening to the radio series. I have decided to opt for birth spacing method, as I have a 17 month old child.” - **Listener from Dailekh**

There is evidence that suggest that the radio drama series through humanized and contextual dramas have supported in creating an enabling environment for dialogues and discussions related to SRHR issues. During the IDIs, a majority of participants expressed that the subtle use of drama to communicate about SRHR also supported with busting myths and promoting dialogues in traditional communities. Similarly, 64% respondents suggested that the radio drama series has empowered individuals, especially group members to discuss the consequences of violence against women, and herald discussions on actions required to address harmful social norms which affected the holistic well-being of adolescent girls and young women.

“The radio series has informed me about the importance of antenatal check-up visits during pregnancy. Similarly, I also know about the 20 second handwashing rule to protect ourselves from COVID-19, and the importance of menstruation hygiene management.”  
- **Listener from Dailekh**

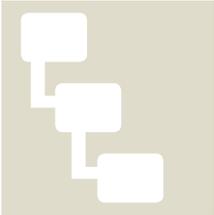
Strategic messaging on COVID-19 embedded in the radio series was also acknowledged by the participants. Participants expressed that the radio series helped understand critical SRHR services during COVID-19 and enabled them to generate information on help seeking behavior during the pandemic. For example, the radio drama featured critical information on neo-natal care, nutrition, and use of contraceptives during the COVID-19 situation.



## WHAT WORKS



**Radio series for social and behavior change:** Evidence from our learnings suggests that radio series based on social and behavior change messages, twinned with an ‘edutainment approach’ supports with humanizing taboo related subjects such as, use of contraceptives and menstruation hygiene practices. The subtle use of radio dramas humanizes the context, and discussions on social norms related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) supports in heralding unbiased discussions and dialogues. Identification of key behavior change messages, and behavior actions helps to evaluate triggers and nuances of change in target beneficiaries. For example, there are cases where respondents have spoken out against harmful social norms such as, ‘*chaupadi*’, and some have even started conversing with their spouses on the effectiveness of family planning with the creative use of radio series.



**Cascading and agency building:** Radio series broadcast through local FM stations are strategically cascaded to adolescent girls and young women groups of the program. Audio files of the series is disseminated through WhatsApp and Viber groups, and group sessions are initiated to discuss the learnings from the radio series. This further provides an enabling environment to reflect and review the critical SRHR messages and discuss on future course of actions establishing how the information would support in making sound decisions around SRHR and well-being.



**Partnership and collaboration:** The radio series were designed in close coordination with Save the Children’s technical experts, government officials from National Health Education Information Communications Center (NHEICC), and local partners. This collaboration supported with the due diligence of the content, and with the crafting of radio series messages, and the desired behavior level change outcomes. Similarly, Save the Children also partnered with local FM stations to broadcast the radios series, and collect feedback from the listeners, which supported course correction, and the development of new story arc and contents for the radio drama series.



**Robust monitoring system and feedback loops:** To ensure the effectiveness of the radio drama series, and understand the knowledge, practice, and behaviour level change in target audiences, feedback loops and monitoring tools were established. Feedback loops were created in the form of audience response in the radio series, where listeners shared their reaction to the radio content using Save the Children’s toll-free-number. Similarly, in-depth interviews were conducted with the group members of the adolescent girls and young women group to understand knowledge level triggers which transpired into behavior change actions. For example, denouncing harmful social norms such as ‘*chaupadi*’ or, using inter-personal skills to effectively discuss the importance of family planning with spouse and in-laws.



### Nepal Country Office

Airport Gate Area, Shambhu Marg

Kathmandu, Nepal

GPO Box: 3394

Tel: +977-1-4468130/4464803

Fax: +977-1-4468132

Email: [post.nepal@savethechildren.org](mailto:post.nepal@savethechildren.org)

[nepal.savethechildren.net](http://nepal.savethechildren.net)