

# YOUTH SPEAK



Insights and recommendations from Advisory Group members<sup>1</sup> and young leaders of Youth Ke Bol<sup>2</sup> on young people's access to sexual and reproductive health

- <sup>1</sup> The Advisory Group is a representative set of young leaders from across India who advise on the mandate and strategy of Youth Ke Bol. As part of Youth Ke Bol's engagement strategy to incorporate the voices of young people and build partnerships with them as critical stakeholders for change making, the group will work towards advancing access to contraception.
- <sup>2</sup> Youth Ke Bol is a pan-India, diverse and representative 1 million-strong youth-led coalition. Dasra, in partnership with UNICEF YuWaah, Restless Development and Yuvaa, is facilitating the creation of Youth Ke Bol.

Youth Ke Bol aims to bring together young people, between the ages of 18-29, from Tier 2 and 3 cities across India to improve the quality of life of young people by strengthening their access to contraception and sexual and reproductive health.

## FOR YOUNG PEOPLE; BY YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2021, the foundational pillars of Youth Ke Bol were co-designed with 150 young people. The co-design approach consisted of a series of workshops and subsequent youth-led validation research, which underscored that young people believe:

**“SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INFORMATION AND ACCESS LEAD TO POWER AND AGENCY TO MAKE BETTER LIFE CHOICES”**

It provides options for everyone to follow their individual dreams. If the conversation is normalized, free from taboos and stigma, young people can unlock the information they need to feel confident, connected and safe. They will be equipped to make wiser decisions, and society will be healthier and better because of it.

## WHAT IS YOUTH SPEAK?

‘Youth Speak’ is a collation of insights and recommendations from Advisory Group members and leaders of Youth Ke Bol on access to sexual and reproductive health. It represents insights from 150 young people we spoke to in 2021 during the co-design phase and 226 young people we spoke to in September 2022.

# WHO DID WE SPEAK TO?



**226**

Respondents



**127**

Female



**89**

Male



**7**

Non-Binary



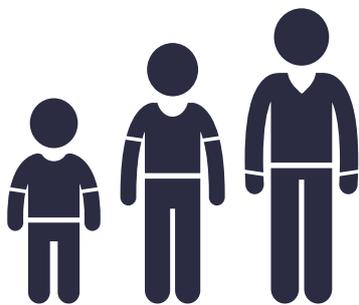
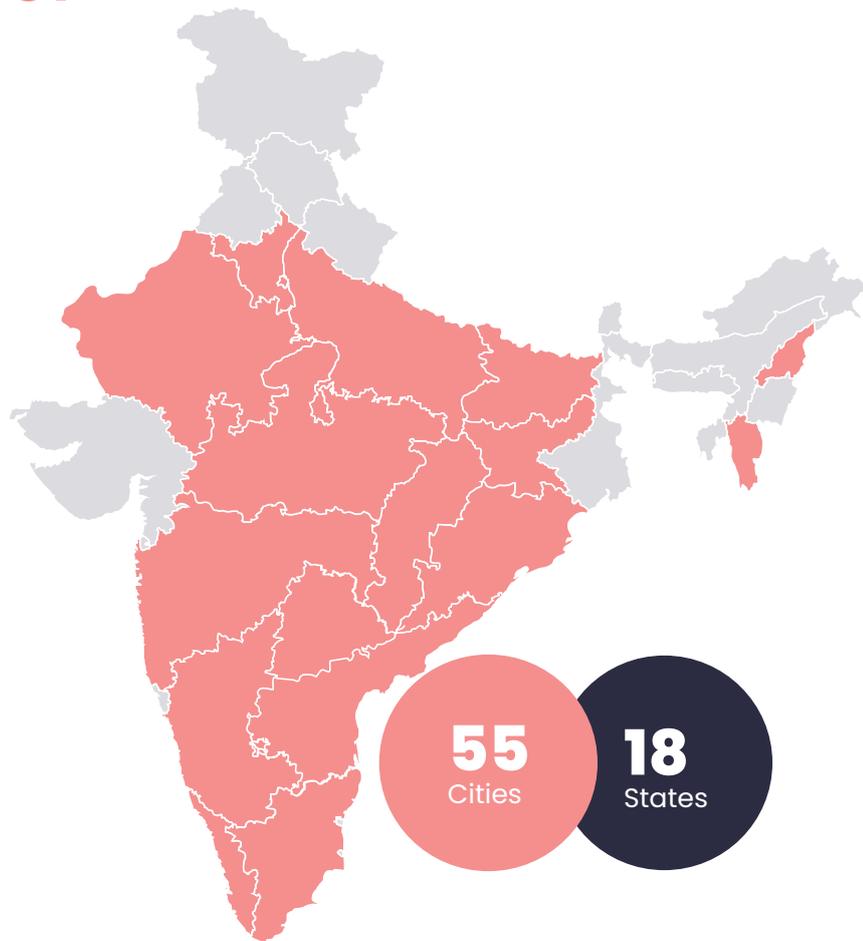
**0**

Transgender



**3**

Prefer not to say



**11**

Respondents  
17 and below

**177**

Respondents  
18-24

**38**

Respondents  
25 and above

## WHAT DID WE ASK?

- > Do you feel you have access to trusted information about sexual and reproductive health?
- > Which aspects of your life does safe access to contraception directly impact?
- > Do you have access to spaces or platforms where you can speak to elders/ officials/ decision makers about your aspirations?
- > Which individuals and platforms do you feel comfortable speaking to?
- > Do you face challenges in accessing information and services related to sexual and reproductive health?

# YOUNG PEOPLE SEE A CLEAR LINK BETWEEN ACCESS TO CONTRACEPTION AND FULFILLING THEIR ASPIRATIONS

The 226 young people who responded saw a clear link between access to contraception and their ability to:



**Over 60% of young people saw a clear link between their access to contraception and ability to access both education and employment**

Lack of access to contraception has significant perceived impact on the aspirations of young Indians. Of the 127 women who responded, following saw clear link between their access to contraception and their ability to:



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Young people view sexual and reproductive health access as a means to being able to make better life choices. There is a need, therefore, to ensure that young people feel included by society, and are prepared to manage their sexual and reproductive health needs with confidence.

As per NFHS 5, The total fertility rate for women (i.e. the number of children she will have in a lifetime) between 15-49 years is lower for women with more than 12 years of education (at 1.8) compared to women with no education (at 2.8)

# YOUNG PEOPLE WANT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INFORMATION AND INTERVENTIONS TO BE MORE ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE AND APPROACHABLE

However, there are barriers which impede young people's access to sexual and reproductive health:

**41.1%**

respondents report lack of awareness of existing services and information

**19.4%**

respondents report lack of access due to social stigma and biases

**13.27%**

respondents report negative/biased attitudes of health workers and service providers

**11.9%**

respondents report social discrimination/marginalization

**6.6%**

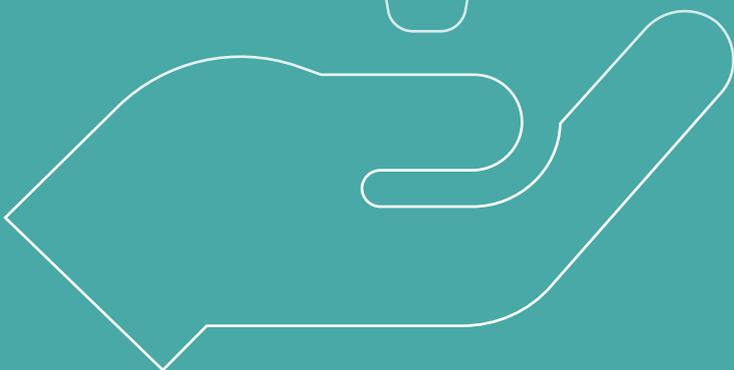
respondents report high costs

**65.1%**

of women respondents and

**71%**

of men respondents said that they have access to trusted information about sexual and reproductive health



# RESPONDENTS WHO IDENTIFY AS NON-BINARY FACE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER BARRIERS WHEN IT COMES TO SOCIAL STIGMA, BIASES AND HIGH COSTS. MORE WOMEN REPORTED FACING BARRIERS THAN MEN IN ACCESSING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Barriers	 Women	 Men	 Non-binary	 Prefer not to say
Negative/biased attitudes of health workers and service providers	17.3%	7.8%	-	33.3%
High costs	7.8%	3.3%	14.2%	33.3%
Social discrimination/marginalization	14.9%	8.9%	-	
Social stigma and biases	20.4%	14.6%	71.4%	
Lack of awareness of existing services and information	37%	49%	14.2%	33.3%

## As NHFS 5 data shows:

- Adolescent girls and young women 15-24 years have the highest (17.4%) unmet need compared to higher age cohort of women in India.
- With fewer than one in 10 men - 9.5% - using condoms, female sterilisation remains the most popular method of contraception and has even risen from 36% to 37.9% in the past five years. Male sterilisation remains unchanged at 0.3%.
- More than one-third of men believe that contraception is women's business and that men should not have to worry about it

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

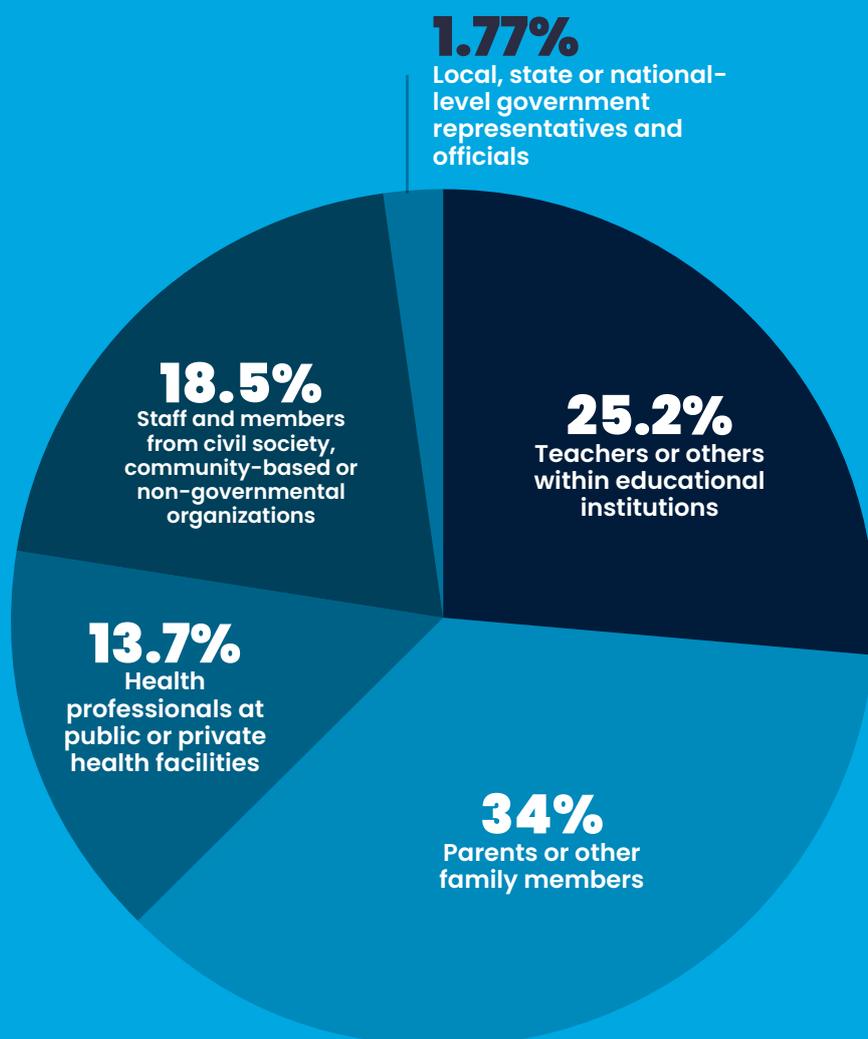
To ensure improved sexual and reproductive health for youth, men and boys need to be included in the dialogue and need to understand their role in the journey to healthy and positive relationships. Creating opportunities and strengthening existing health and family planning programs like Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) including School Health and Wellness Programme (SHWP), increasing engagement of men and boys therein, will ensure that ALL young people have a stigma free and non-judgmental open discourse around sexual and reproductive health

# YOUNG PEOPLE WANT INCREASED ACCESS TO SPACES, OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES WHERE THEY CAN DIRECTLY SPEAK TO DECISION-MAKERS ABOUT THEIR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND ASPIRATIONS

A larger number of the young people we spoke to expressed that they could speak to Parents or other family members and Teachers or others within educational institutions, while few felt that they could speak to health care professionals. This shows that young people need better access to public spaces and stigma free care from the health system.

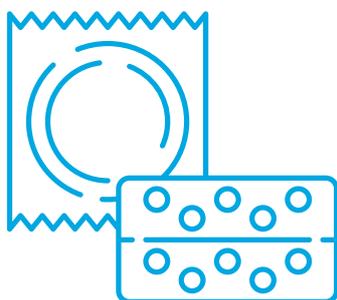
## 57.9%

of respondents have access to platforms where they can speak to individuals or institutions about their aspirations



## According to the Understanding the lives of adolescents and young adults in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (UDAYA) study:

- **93–96% of boys and 96–97% of girls** had heard about Aanganwadi Workers (AWWs). Fewer adolescents had heard about ASHAs—58% of younger boys compared with 80% of older boys and 77% of younger girls compared with 92–93% of unmarried and married older girls.
- **10% of younger boys (10–14), 11% of younger girls (10–14)** had interacted with Aanganwadi workers or ASHAs, as compared to 31% of married older girls (15–19) and only 8% of unmarried older girls.



### According to NFHS 5:

- 96.9% of adolescents (15–24) with no schooling have knowledge of any contraception method, as compared to 98.8% of those with 12 or more years of education.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The crux of the solution lies in access to credible information, having safe, open and stigma free youth friendly spaces where youth can gather and talk about these issues openly. Availability of such equitable spaces and opportunities will not only impact health outcomes but is critical for youth to navigate other key issues like employment, education, and decisions around marriage.

# WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE RECOMMEND?

1

**Normalize conversations around contraception and family planning using social and behavior change communication (SBCC) campaigns and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for parents, teachers, community leaders, service providers and young people**



[We need] open discussion between us and our younger sibling, friends, next generation, and awareness on this topic.”

- YOUTH RESPONDENT

2

**Make access to sexual and reproductive health information and services safer and easier by creating and institutionalizing youth-friendly interventions and offering gender intentional care**

95% of our respondents wished that all young people in India could confidently walk up to a store and buy reproductive health products including contraceptives.



Having the right information at [the] right time would save me from a lot of self-doubt, from insecurities and stereotypes I have, eventually helping me explore the world better.”

- YOUTH RESPONDENT

3

**Mainstream the participation of all young people in SRH conversations; especially boys and men, where they start to see their role in the journey to gender egalitarian roles and relationships**

73% of our respondents would like long term contraceptives to be targeted at men



For female mother may talk about it but for men it not a proper talk. No chance for talk... whom to talk about condom?... many sessions are done with females only.”

- YOUTH RESPONDENT

4

**Introduce sexuality education for young people in-school and for out of school youth in communities**

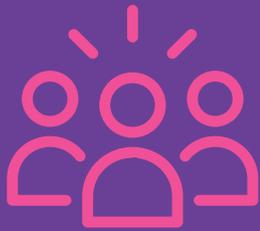
Over 91% of respondents said they would like to see comprehensive sexuality education in schools.



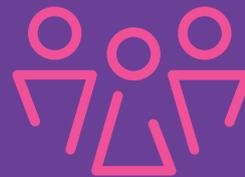
If schools introduce the spectrum of sexual identity and gender in classes, this will help youth acknowledge [these diverse identities] and feel safe and secure. We need to change what normal means for us.”

- YOUTH RESPONDENT

# HOW WILL YOUTH KE BOL DELIVER ON THE HOPES AND RECOMMENDATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE?



**Building leadership and capacities of youth leaders**



**Creating state based chapters for youth to have networks and safe spaces**



**Amplifying youth voices through campaigns to build positive, representative narratives around sexual and reproductive health**



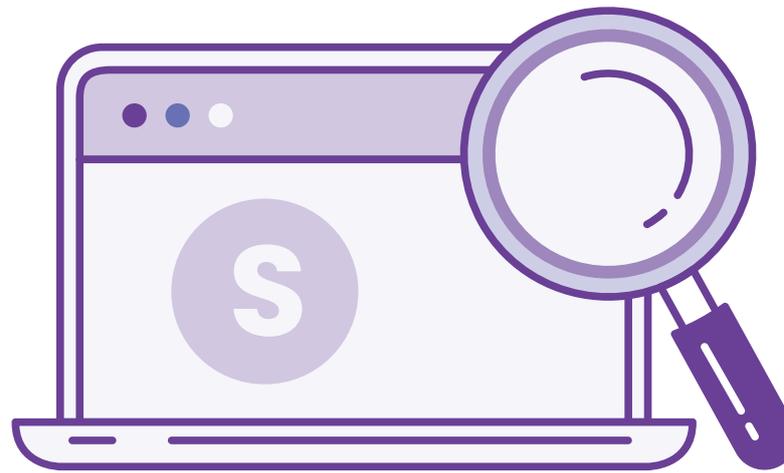
**Institutionalizing a platform for regular interface with youth and the government across relevant ministries**

# WHERE WILL YOUTH KE BOL WORK?

The initiative will engage youth both digitally and in their communities in selected states:

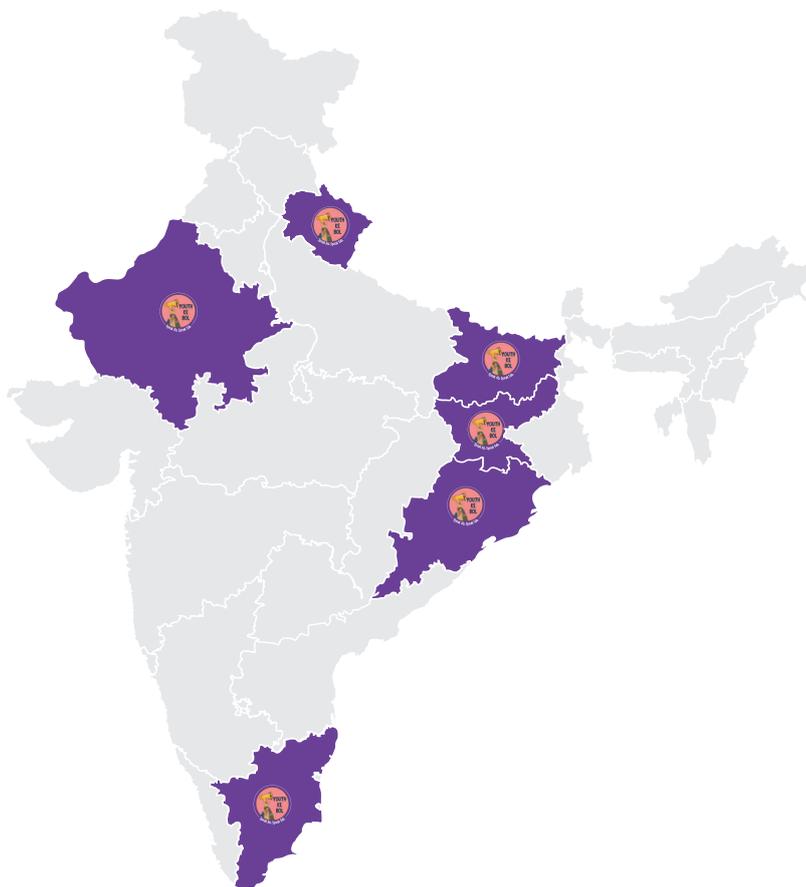
## Meeting young people where

**they are:** On their native digital platforms, using social media like Josh, WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter to engage young people pan- India. Youth Ke Bol will amplify youth created content, build online safe spaces for conversation on contraception, gender equity and aspirations, engage influencers and hear from young people through campaigns and digital listening sessions.



## In their communities:

Through state-based chapters where they youth champions will be trained and will engage their peers and lead local level dialogue, change and campaigns.



- Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh
- Alwar, Rajasthan
- Munger, Bihar
- Pakur, Jharkhand
- Ganjam, Odisha
- Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Special thanks to all the partners and Youth Advisory Group Members of Youth Ke Bol for their support and participation.

To find out more, log on to  
<https://10to19community.in/youth-ke-bol/>  
Follow us on  **YOSH** &  @youthkebol