

BAL SANSAR SANSTHA

‘Taiyari’ Advocacy Tool-Kit

An advocacy facility kit to communicate with the
key stakeholders on the issues of adolescents

Compiled by Dr. Priyamvada Singh

9/20/2012

“तैयारी” परियोजना

(बाल संसार संस्था एवं यूनिसेफ का साझा प्रयास)

चुनौतियों को अवसर में बदलने की तैयारी

स्वास्ती, बी – 88, सरस्वती मार्ग, बजाज नगर, जयपुर, 302015

राजस्थान, भारत, ईमेल : bsansarindia@yahoo.co.in]

फोन : 0141-2710996, फैक्स : 0141-2710996,

वेब साईट : www.balsansarindia.com

Bal Sansar

तैयारी परियोजना
(चुनौतियों को अवसरों में बदलने की तैयारी)
Advocacy Tool-Kit For 'Taiyari'

1. Advocacy General Tips for Advocacy

Why Advocacy: Advocacy is an effective tool to stand for an issue, take a position and generate support from the likeminded and the other people/agencies that all matter in the way to success of achieving the envisaged results. The act of advocacy help in strengthen the point one wish to make and generate needed support from the people /groups/agencies that all need to come together to succeed. The advocacy helps in pooling of the resources that are needed to get one's voice heard.

Plan on following points:

- ✓ Advocacy for what (list your issues, support areas and the help you are looking for etc.)
- ✓ Advocacy with whom (list your stakeholders, their contact details)
- ✓ How to do Advocacy (plan your arguments, supporting evidences and the material checklist, success stories from the other areas)

Target your efforts. Survey the stakeholders who will be involved in approving, funding and implementing your program and the activities, and decide who you will approach, and for what and in what order. Start with firm supporters and move on to those who are moderately progressive or undecided in their views. You may want to begin with easy to reach and members of a friendly group, such as the Women's group. Be certain your own group members know well about the programme and issues.

Some points to follow: The team that is taking advocacy initiative should:

Be humble and gracious: Always begin by thanking the stakeholder for providing the opportunity to hear your ideas, opinions, etc. Even if, stakeholder is not giving positive or encouraging response to you, a sincere "thank you" will be greatly appreciated and build a base for future dialogue.

Be professional: Be professional in both dress and manner; don't say negative things about the other stakeholders, public figures, any of the community members and /or about their views that they have shared with you.

Be focused: Stick with one issue per visit, call or letter. Information about more than one topic will only confuse the message and dilute your point.

Do your homework: As part of your preparation, collect information on the existing adolescent programme, current issues, challenges they face, possible solutions, the organizations that work on these issues, and in your area. Frame your presentation for maximum effectiveness based on your knowledge about your area, other stakeholders' views. Different arguments are compelling for different people; use the most persuasive argument for this person. It might help to role play what you want to say at the meeting, and practice responses to possible comments.

Make a personal connection: No matter how insignificant you may feel it is, if you have friends, relatives and/or colleagues in common, let the stakeholder know.

Consider yourself an information source: stakeholders have limited time and interest in any one issue. They can't be as informed as they'd like to be on all the issues—or on the ones that concern you. **You** can use this opportunity to fill in the information gap. Encourage the stakeholder to ask questions about the program or the issues.

Tell the truth: There is no faster way to lose your credibility than to give false or misleading information to a stakeholder.

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Know who else is on your side: It is helpful for a stakeholder to know what the other stakeholders, groups, individuals, state agencies and/ PRIs or legislators think on the issue and whether they are working with you on an issue. Providing this information also illustrates that your group represents many. Bring district federation/coalition members and young people with on lobbying efforts. It is also important to keep in touch with your allies so that advocacy efforts are coordinated and relevant information is shared.

Know the opposition: Anticipate who the opposition will be, both organizations and individuals. The ability to anticipate criticism and defend your position will make a difference.

Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something. If a stakeholder wants information you don't have, or asks something you don't know, tell them. Then, offer to get the information they are looking for, and **DO IT!**

Be specific in what you ask for. If you want a support, information, answers to a question, signature on a petition; whatever it is make sure you ask directly and get an answer.

Follow up: It is very important to find out if the stakeholder did what they said or promised; or they would be doing it now. In case of senior / high profile stakeholders, send a thank you post-card after your meeting/ conversation, restating your issue, support need and your stand. It is also very important that you thank the legislator for a supportive vote, or ask for an explanation of an unsupportive vote.

Don't burn bridges. It is easy to get emotional over issues you feel strongly about. That's fine, but be sure that you leave your relationship with the stakeholder on good enough terms that you can return to them on that or another issue. Don't get into a heated argument with a stakeholder, and never threaten them. Your strongest opponent on one issue may be a great proponent on another! Keep on trying next times.

2. Understanding Adolescence for Advocacy

*We as adults often tend to see adolescents either as children or young adults.
The transitory but crucial phase of passage from childhood to adulthood goes unrecognized.
Adolescent population is a positive and vibrant force to nurture and preserve and this necessitates
a better understanding on 'growing-up' concerns.*

Adolescents

- Adolescents are persons between the age group of 10-19 years
- Growth phases can be demarcated as
 - ✓ early adolescence (10-13 years),
 - ✓ middle adolescence (14-16 years) and
 - ✓ late adolescence (17-19 years)

Adolescence is marked by

- ✓ Rapid physical, psychological and social maturation
- ✓ A need to extend relationships beyond the immediate family
- ✓ A sense of idealism, curiosity and adventure
- ✓ Willingness to take greater risks and experiment

2.1. Concerns of Adolescents

2.1.1. Psychological Concerns

Developing an identity- Self – awareness helps adolescents understand themselves and establish

- ✓ Their personal identity. Lack of information and skills prevent them from effectively exploring their potential and establishing a positive image.

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- ✓ Adolescent girls are brought up with several stereotype gender roles. Boys build their 'egos' to assume masculine roles. "Suffering in silence" is seen as a virtue among women and girls.

Managing Emotions

- ✓ Adolescents have frequent mood changes reflecting feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, fear, shame, guilt, and love.
- ✓ Very often, they are unable to understand the emotional turmoil.
- ✓ Sex hormones secreted during puberty affect changes in sexual and emotional behaviour.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge regarding bodily and emotional change cause stress.
- ✓ They do not have a supportive environment in order to share their concerns with others.
- ✓ Counseling facilities are not available.

Building Relationships

- ✓ As a part of growing up, adolescents redefine their relationships with parents, peers and members of the opposite sex.
- ✓ Adults have high expectations from them and do not understand their feelings.
- ✓ Adults do not respect their right to choose with dignity and participate in decision- making processes.
- ✓ Adolescents need social skills for building positive and healthy relationships with others including peer of opposite sex. They need to understand the importance of mutual respect and socially defined boundaries of every relationship

Resisting Peer Pressure

- ✓ Adolescents find it difficult to resist peer pressure. Some of them may yield to these pressures and take on to experimentation at greater risk.
- ✓ Aggressive self conduct; Unsafe sexual behaviour and Drug use involve greater risks with regard to physical and mental health
- ✓ The experiment with smoking and milder drugs often leads to switching over to hard drugs and addiction in later stage.
- ✓ The risk of contracting HIV and getting involved in anti-social behaviour are serious consequences of drug abuse.

2.1.2. Health Concerns

Understanding the process of growing up

- ✓ Body image and rate of growth in relation to peers is a major concern of young adolescents
- ✓ Misconceptions about menstruation, masturbation and nocturnal emissions cause stress.
- ✓ Social norms and inability to share their concerns with others make it even more stressful.

Acquiring Information, Education and Services on Reproductive and Sexual Health

- ✓ Exposure to media and mixed messages from the fast changing world have left adolescents with many unanswered questions
- ✓ The widening gap in communication between adolescents and parents especially on ARSH is a matter of great concern
- ✓ Teachers still feel inhibited to discuss issues frankly, sensitively and interestingly
- ✓ Services providers are judgmental and do not ensure confidentiality
- ✓ Adolescents seek information from their peer group who are also ill informed and some fall prey to quakes
- ✓ Fear and hesitation prevent them from seeking knowledge on preventive methods and medical help if suffering with RTIs and STIs.

Communicating and Negotiating safer sexual practices

- ✓ Sexually active adolescents face greater health risks
- ✓ Their knowledge of contraceptive and use of condom to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is limited

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- ✓ They have poor access to contraceptives and condom
- ✓ They have poor skills to communicate, negotiate and assert
- ✓ These increase vulnerability to STIs / HIV infection
- ✓ The power relation in a sexual relationship makes it difficult for female adolescents to negotiate for condom use.
- ✓ Adolescent female are more susceptible to such infections due to biological structure; lower status within gender relationship; lack of financial power
- ✓ Girls may also face mental and emotional problems related to too early sexual initiation
- ✓ For unmarried mothers, there is social stigma, leading to horrifying consequences.

Poor health

- ✓ Nutritional intake among adolescents especially girls is still a matter of concern.
- ✓ Several families do not yet recognize food intake needs of a girl.
- ✓ Girls are not served adequate/ nutritious food in comparison to male members/ siblings in the family etc.
- ✓ Besides, over nutrition and other lifestyle diseases like obesity; diabetes are emerging fast as major health problems among adolescents. mental health

3 Adolescence and Social practices

Avoiding Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy

- ✓ Adolescents, both girls and boys are forced into early marriage and have • very little say in selecting their marriage partners.
- ✓ Early marriage has far reaching consequences in terms of their development, fertility rate and reproductive health.
- ✓ Marriage curtails education and alters their choice of careers.
- ✓ Cultural norms may encourage early child bearing, posing risks to both infants and mother. If girls who are not fully developed become pregnant, they can experience damage to their reproductive tracts, delayed or obstructed labour, ruptures in the birth canal and increased risks of maternal mortality.
- ✓ Teenage parents lack experience, skills and resources needed to raise their children

Younger Adolescents are more vulnerable than the older Adolescents

- ✓ They are different cognitively and emotionally.
- ✓ They may lack the ability to use abstract thought to project their actions
- ✓ They have unclear understanding of consequences of their behaviour.
- ✓ Younger adolescents may not readily associate emotional issues with puberty and are often unable to express their feelings

Younger adolescents often have different concerns about SRH

- ✓ Mostly concerned about issues of puberty and body image and developing interest in relationship with opposite sex
- ✓ Some may be especially concerned with masturbation.
- ✓ Myths regarding body growth and physiological change adolescents' rate of development in relation to their peers

Adolescents may be more vulnerable to sexual coercion

- ✓ Lack of knowledge prevent children clearly differentiate between love; care and abuse and often they don't know how to express their discomfort.
- ✓ They have lower level of confidence and communication skills to voice their concern and seek protection
- ✓ Abusers being known and or from within the family add to their inhibitions

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- ✓ Young girls are more likely to regret first sex, suggesting that they may have been coerced.
- ✓ In many regions, trafficking of girls is an increasing concern.
- ✓ Evidence suggests that older boys and men intentionally seek younger partners whom they think they are not HIV positive.
- ✓ Sexual abuse in both boys and girls is linked to increased chances of multiple sexual partners and non-use of contraception during adolescence.

- 53.2 % of children have reported facing one or more forms of sexual abuse
- In 50% of cases, the abusers were either known or in the position of trust and responsibility and most children do not report the matter to anyone
- Adolescent boys are equally at risk

4. Benefits of Adolescent Education:

4.1. An 'Adolescent' will have

- ✓ enhanced perception about oneself; self-confidence and self-esteem
- ✓ strong skills to think rationally and critically, negotiate, assert, and make informed decisions at crossroads of life
- ✓ knowledge on physical, mental and emotional changes
- ✓ understanding on importance of abstinence till physical and mental maturity is attained
- ✓ knowledge on HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- ✓ better understanding on the risks involved in substance abuse
- ✓ enhanced level of confidence and communication skills to voice ones' concern; to seek protection and freedom from exploitation of any kind

4.2. A Parent will have

- ✓ better understanding on needs and concerns of their adolescent child especially with regard to Adolescent Health (ARSH)
- ✓ better comfort level to initiate a dialogue with child on matters pertaining to ARSH
- ✓ a supportive environment to discuss and workout solutions for specific concern related to their child

4.3. A Teacher and Educator will have

- ✓ a structured content to talk on ARSH with comfort and confidence
- ✓ opportunities to enhance understanding and professional skills to deal with inappropriate behaviour by students (that is usual upshot of adolescence) at times
- ✓ opportunities to enhance understanding and skills to effectively address the adolescents in special needs.

5. Working Together to Protect the Health and Well-being of Adolescents

At the Macro level we can contribute in:

- ✓ Building positive relationships with adolescents;
- ✓ Opening channels of communication (two-way) with adolescents on their needs and concerns especially with regard to difficult subjects like Reproductive and Sexual Health, issues being faced by them while growing up
- ✓ Strengthening linkages with other systems and enable concerted effort for adolescent development.

Let's weave a safety net for our adolescents to flourish without fear and discrimination

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5.1. Parents

The ability to effectively navigate the unpredictable passage from childhood to adolescence is highly dependent on the presence of relations—positive relationships with peers, adults, and institutions that provide a safety net to support healthy development. These relations serve as a foundation upon which young people enter adulthood. Families that provide love, nurture and care equally to their children ensure healthier development for all children.

We as 'Responsible Parents' can...

- ✓ appreciate the significance of the period of adolescence, its problems and challenges
- ✓ express our respect, love and care equally to all children irrespective of their gender and sexuality
- ✓ help them learn basic values to live by
- ✓ encourage decision-making skills among adolescents by providing them with age-appropriate opportunities.
- ✓ find out about their friends and help them identify and make friends with those who have a positive influence on them.
- ✓ refrain from thrusting goals on them; rather help them to channelize their energies in constructive ways.
- ✓ talk to them on their sexual and reproductive health needs and concerns;
- ✓ be aware of and understand childrens' inquisitiveness about love, life and relationships
- ✓ offer correct, age-appropriate and scientific information and counselling in a comfortable setting as and when required: it is important to communicate the importance of emotional and physical changes that they are experiencing; relationships; sexual abstinence; marriage; spacing of children; accessing healthcare.
- ✓ it is important to understand that parents own behaviour has determining impact on adolescent children.
- ✓ For parents teaching is same as living.

With regard to 'Taiyari' Programme, Parents may wish to –

- keep track of teachings and activities of their ward in the 'Taiyari samooh'. (Find out what is being taught and discussed, who is teaching it, and what your children think about it.)
- help children to find reading material that offer accurate information on sexuality and reproductive health issues, risk reduction education etc.
- contact the right person (either Taiyari team or Taiyari Samooh Leader) to talk to the child if it is uncomfortable for parents to handle communication with the child on matters pertaining to growing up
- facilitate referral services to adolescents in case of requirement

5.2. Teachers

Teachers are the most important determinant of success of Adolescence Education Programme. Teachers/ educationists can help in creating an enabling environment for integration of AEP in school system and implementation in a proper way. Besides, teachers are also responsible for explaining the content of AEP effectively and sensitively.

We as 'Teachers' can...

- ✓ Express our respect, and value for adolescents. Let them know that teachers trust them
- ✓ Never be judgmental and refrain from forcing personal values while interacting with adolescents (preaching proves counterproductive)
- ✓ Create a supportive school environment: the human factor is personified in the teacher.
- ✓ Work towards integrating gender and rights perspective in the school system
- ✓ Contribute to development of their self-esteem and positive body image.
- ✓ Help adolescents to become sexually responsible adults by changing negative attitudes and perceptions.

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- ✓ Promote sexual and reproductive health seeking behaviour; breaking down the taboo attached with it.
- ✓ Protect them from sexual exploitation or sexual abuse.

With regard to AEP and ARSH teachers can

- ✓ Be convinced about the need and urgency of education about Adolescent Reproductive and sexual health (ARSH)
- ✓ Equip ourselves well for engaging students in educational activities on ARSH
- ✓ Encourage students to identify their personal, family, community, and religious values on sexual health and respect values that differ from their own.
- ✓ Discuss issues and concerns in the context of socio-cultural settings, reinforcing positive social values and clarifying negative social values in the context of changing situations.
- ✓ Influence a student's ability to question gender stereotypes and prevailing myths on reproductive health and sexuality
- ✓ Organize public events. Invite guest speakers to your school. Organize inter-school debates to open dialogue on the subject.
- ✓ Facilitate opportunities for adolescents to voice their concerns

5.3. *Opinion leaders / Community Leaders*

Opinion/community leaders have a important role in changing people's attitude and opinion. They are natural advocates for reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) concerns of adolescents. These leaders can nurture a supportive community environment for adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights. Their endorsement to ARSH is a big support to individuals and agencies working for adolescent health.

We as an 'Opinion/Community leaders' can ...

- ✓ Endorse the cause of adolescent health at any every available opportunity/opportunity
- ✓ Initiate a positive dialogue on adolescent concerns and Rights
- ✓ Represent the cause of adolescent to elected representatives of our area and other relevant authorities especially health and education authorities
- ✓ Provide protection to adolescents from unlawful punishments
- ✓ Provide space and opportunities to adolescents to present their concerns to elders without fear and hesitation.
- ✓ Help government and civil societies to organize IEC camps and interactive sessions on adolescent health; social evils like early marriages in the area
- ✓ Support media to produce in-depth news stories, articles and features on issues for adolescents particularly on days like the World AIDS Day, International Youth Day and Women's Day.
- ✓ Talk about the importance of AEP/ARSH at public gatherings/meetings
- ✓ Create a demand for AEP/ARSH in schools as well as for adolescents in out-of- school environment
- ✓ Create a demand for adolescent friendly health services
- ✓ Facilitate the work of AEP/ARSH team and NGO workers
- ✓ Facilitate smooth implementation of adolescent health intervention programmes at the community level

5.4. *Government Officials*

Government Officials are the backbone for designing and implementation of development Policies and

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Programmes at all levels ranging from Central to State, and blocks . They are the major stakeholder in breaking myths and barriers pertaining to ARSH and adolescent education in the society.

We as Government officials/ civil servants can...

- ✓ Enhance and push for positive policy changes and decisions on matters pertaining to adolescents
- ✓ Integrate Gender and Rights perspective in all policies and programmes
- ✓ Help in bringing and maintaining Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health center-stage
- ✓ Sensitize decision makers and elected representatives for pro adolescent /pro-youth approach keeping in tune with globalization and changing perceptions and expected demands by young people as they take on electoral responsibilities in near future

With regard to Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) and Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Programme (ARSH), Government servants and Bureaucrats can –

- ✓ Help in breaking barriers by talking on AEP and ARSH at conferences, seminars and other occasions
- ✓ Advocate for the integration of AEP in education system at national, State and district levels.
- ✓ Ensure speedy implementation of AEP and ARSH

5.5. Service Providers

Service providers can bring about measurable improvement in the health status of the adolescents. They are considered most knowledgeable person and trusted source of information with regard to reproductive and sexual health matters. They can help immensely in reducing the barriers in utilization of RSH services by adolescents.

As a Service Provider we can ...

- ✓ Make reproductive and sexual health services adolescent friendly
- ✓ Involve local adolescents/young people in planning to encourage ownership
- ✓ Promote and disseminate information on available services for adolescents at the CHC/PHC/district hospital
- ✓ Make procedures easier and designate days and timings suitable to adolescents
- ✓ Be non-judgmental
- ✓ Be conscious of our language and conduct to avoid biasness with regard to sex, gender, caste/religion
- ✓ Assure trust and confidentiality
- ✓ Maintain a record of adolescents seeking Information and services
- ✓ Make available range of services- preventive, curative and counselling
- ✓ Provide necessary support to those complaining sexual abuse and harassment
- ✓ Mobilize community leaders and parents to reach information, education and counselling to every adolescent in the area responsibilities in near future.

With regard to Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) service providers can –

- ✓ Establish linkages with the schools to complement the educational work
- ✓ Offer help for counselling if required by the school system in some special cases
- ✓ Take help of school system to organize adolescent health camps
- ✓ Be available for teachers and parents for extra support in communicating with adolescents.

5.6. Elected Representative

With several progressive policies and programmes for adolescents and young people in place, there are still opportunities to streamline the strategies to effect implementation at each level of system. Adolescents representing 22% of India's population today is going to decide country's future course of progress and development.

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As 'Peoples' Representative' in the Government, we can...

- ✓ Continue efforts towards effective policy program dialogue and legislations
- ✓ Endorse adolescent needs and concerns publicly
- ✓ Play a positive role in breaking social taboos
- ✓ Address traditional practices that are harmful for adolescent growth and development like early marriages, female feticide, dowry, child labour etc.
- ✓ Promote need to bring about change in peoples' attitude to empower young people by providing equal opportunities for education and recreation irrespective of age, sex, gender and class
- ✓ Take proactive role in providing protection to adolescents from community/family punishments and facilitate counselling/ medico-legal assistance to adolescents in need.
- ✓ Your supportive action will send the message fast and clear.
- ✓ Raise adolescent health issues in public forum and encourage positive discussions and debate on the issue
- ✓ Incorporate Gender and Rights perspective in our addresses/speeches
- ✓ Ensure adolescent health concerns are incorporated into educational and health programmes and projects
- ✓ Advocate for additional resources to take up issues on adolescent health in Education/ Health budgets

With regard to Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) and Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Programme (ARSH), elected representatives can –

- ✓ Help in breaking barriers by talking on AEP and ARSH
- ✓ Advocate and Facilitate integration of AEP at school system.
- ✓ Oversee speedy implementation of adolescent education programme and ARSH at the National/State/ District/ Panchayat levels.

5.7. Media

- ✓ Media has always been instrumental in positioning debates on development issues and voicing concerns of people especially those of social, economic and legal justice.
- ✓ Media commands respect from all sections of society for being credible and just. With people's exposure to at least one medium – T.V, Radio or Print;
- ✓ media has a major role to play with regard to adolescent reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) and need of appropriate education and services. However, media also being a major stakeholder in commercialization and globalization, wherein children and adolescents are exposed to varied messages on sexuality; media has the responsibility to impart correct information and dispel misconceptions.

As a 'Media Representative' we can...

- ✓ Play a constructive role in breaking myths and prejudices that are prevalent in the society on adolescent sexual and reproductive health
- ✓ Integrate Gender and Rights perspective in all programmes that involve adolescent and young people
- ✓ Promote Sexual and Reproductive health Rights of adolescents and children
- ✓ Mould peoples' attitude and perceptions with regard to adolescents and their needs
- ✓ Encourage positive and meaningful discussions on ARSH
- ✓ Dedicate specific time/space for adolescent issues
- ✓ Provide space and opportunity for adolescents to voice their concern
- ✓ Partner in carrying public service campaigns on adolescent sexual and reproductive health in media

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With regard to Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) and Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Programme (ARSH), Media can –

- ✓ Help in breaking barriers on discussion of topic related to sexuality
- ✓ Advocate for the need of adolescent education on SRH through special programmes aimed at various stakeholders including elected representatives, teachers, service providers, parents etc.
- ✓ Communicate rationale for addressing needs and concerns of adolescents on reproductive and sexual health
- ✓ Keep track of integration and implementation of AEP in schools
- ✓ Complement efforts by teachers and parents by columns/programmes dedicated to address adolescent Concerns
- ✓ Establish linkages with Schools/Teachers and organize talk shows on adolescent reproductive and sexual health
- ✓ Provide common platform for all stakeholders to discuss adolescent reproductive and sexual health needs and concerns face to face.

5.8. *Adolescents*

As a vibrant adolescent and ‘Member of Taiyari Samooh’ we can...

- ✓ Decide to open-up, share, discuss
- ✓ Have courage to say no to any form of Violence, Exploitation, Abuse, Harassment
- ✓ Learn skills to deal with self generated and or peer pressures, stresses
- ✓ Be productive, generate positive atmosphere within and around
- ✓ Make contributions to bring positive change within and in surroundings
- ✓ Be responsible and accountable in all what we do / in all our acts

Acknowledgement to the Source for Content:

1. www.advocatesforyouth.org
2. National study on child abuse-2007, Department of Women and Child, DWCD
3. nacoonline.org/upload/NACOinAction/Advocacy%20Kit.pdf