A NOTE ON ADOLESCENT FRIENDLY HEALTH CLINICS

One of the key components of RSKS is the provision of counselling services in AFHCS through sub-health centres (SHCs), primary health centres (PHCs), community health centres (CHCs) and district hospitals (DHS). The study conducted as part of the Access Project reports the following key points that require attention in the implementation of the same.

HUMAN RESOURCE

There has been a deferment in the appointment of the adolescent health counsellors in North East and North West districts of Delhi at the primary and tertiary level facilities. Appointment of the counsellors in Delhi and other high priority areas requires urgent attention.

SEPARATE AFHCS COUNSELLORS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

The RSKS operational framework mandates appointment of one male and one female counsellor at the DHs and CHCs. However, in both the districts in Delhi, there was only one common adolescent health centre and counsellor for both boys and girls. In Varanasi, the district hospital had a separate AFHC for adolescent boys and girls. This was found to be a good indicator for provision of friendly services. However, since Varanasi is not a high priority district, AFHCs have not been set up in the CHCs/PHCs.

LOCATION OF THE AFHCS

Young people may find difficulty in locating the AFHC within the facility premises to access the counselling services. It is, therefore, important to situate the AFHCs strategically and visualise it more for walk-in patients. If one common AFHC is situated in the gynaecology department, gynaecologists who were interviewed opined that only girls will be able to access it. Setting up one AFHC in the paediatrics and one in the gynaecology department is important.

INCREASING THE UPTAKE OF SRH COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR WALK-IN PATIENTS

Most of the young patients visiting the AFHCs are referred for counselling by the gynaecologist or paediatrician. Only 8-10% of the patients are walk-in patients. This was true for the ICTC counsellors as well. This suggests that there is a high possibility of stagnation in the footfall of walk-in patients. It is important to take steps in popularising AFHCS to ensure an increase in the footfall at all levels.

FUNCTIONAL DAYS AND TIMINGS OF THE FACILITY

The AFHCs in Delhi are functional on Saturdays from 12 noon to 2 pm in PHCs. The functional timings in tertiary facilities is 2 pm to 4 pm (after school hours) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, though it was observed that this was not always being followed in all the facilities.

The AFHCs in Varanasi are functional on all days during the OPD hours (during school hours).

It is recommended that AFHCs be made functional during OPD hours and after OPD hours, to make it accessible for referred, walk-in, school going and non-school going adolescents.

HELPLINE NUMBER

The RSKS assigned helpline phone number, 104 for adolescents and young persons was found to be invalid and non-functional. Revamping the helpline to provide information and counselling as part of the programme will strengthen its outreach.