



# **Life Skills to Adolescent Girls and Young Women**

*transforming the lives of adolescent girls & young women*

This project is concerned about the Adolescent Girls and Young Women hailing from the dalit community. It is a practice among the dalit community that a woman has to confine herself to look into household activities and has no freedom to come out of the house. She is a dependent entity in a house dominated by male members; as a young child, SHE lives under the protection of her father or guardians; as a wife, she lives under the protection of her husband and acts as his partner, advisor and helper; as a mother she nurtures her children and shapes their destiny. In theory, women have many privileges and enjoy an exalted status as an aspect of goddess. But in practice, most women lead miserable lives as servants to their husbands, mother-in-laws and father-in-laws. Parents normally do not give much importance to the Girl Child. She is considered as a burden in the family because they have to give dowry at the time of marriage and in many families, the entire expense of marriage is forced to be borne by the girl's family. Therefore, the parents feel that it is useless to send the girl child to school. In most cases, she is helped to study up to 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Hardly, 2 percent of girl children are sent to college education.

Major reasons cited for the girl children dropping out from school are . . .

- absolute poverty,
- traditional norms and practices that the girl child need to be given for marriage as soon as she attains puberty,
- practice of child labour to reduce the burden of the family,
- external force from the society to give her in marriage and
- belief that a girl child will not bring wealth to the family.

With a view to curb the practice of child marriage and to provide a platform for the dalit adolescent girls and young women adequate opportunity to become assertive and self-

standing, an action plan has been drafted and the same was approved by Missio, Austria. Following is a short account of the dimensions of the intervention.

**Target Adolescent Girls:** In the present intervention, annually 100 Adolescent Girls and Young Women from the dalit community are admitted and they are provided with life skills education along with communication and computer application skills. Another 400 adolescent girls, both from the school-going or the non-school-going, are provided with social analytical and assertive skills through phased out training programmes.

**Focus of the Project:** The project has several dimensions; however, one can explicitly see that there are basically three elements in this project, namely,

- i. **Social Analytical and Assertive Skills:** The life skills programme takes place over the course of six months, with adolescent girls and young women aged 16 to 21 years coming together twice a week, to learn about their rights, duties and health, including sexual and reproductive health. Areas of training covered are personality development, leadership skills, stress management, problem-solving strategies, conflict resolution, etiquette, and interview and presentation skills.
- ii. **Communication Skills:** In the context of the developments that are taking place within the region, national and international-levels, learning English language has become a must for the people around the world. Hence, the Adolescent Girls and the Young Women are provided with excellent communication skills both in spoken as well as in written skills.
- iii. **Computer Application Skills:** Computer literacy has become the way of life in every discipline. In the labour market too, girls are highly preferred over boys in data entry as they have proved to be more committed. Hence, computer application skills are provided to equip them fit to be employed and thus increase their self-esteem and family income.

**Gratitude to the Partner:** St. Mary Euphrosia, our Mother Founder of the 'Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd' rightly said that "Gratitude is the Memory of the Heart", as it is a spontaneous echo of the expression from the heart. The Sisters and the Mission Partners of the Good Shepherd whole-heartedly express their gratitude to Missio, Austria and those who have contributed their might in improving their self-esteem, protecting the human rights of dalit adolescent girls; safeguarding them from the perils of child marriage, domestic violence, protecting them from other possible abuses; promoting their rights to development.