

Adolescent and Community Transformation (ACT)
Annual Report 2021 (January to December'2021)
Supported by: LAMB Health-UK

Summary:

This report covers the project's progress from January 2021 to December 2021.

The project is working to improve mental health (MH), psycho-social well-being as well as sexual reproductive health (SRH) including gender-based violence (GBV), girls and women rights, and child protection for adolescents and vulnerable communities, decreasing the incidence of child marriage.

The project activities are based around 580 groups of approximately 20 adolescents, aiming to empower adolescents through life skill sessions such as self-decision making, coping strategies, increasing awareness on adolescent reproductive health (ARH), sexual reproductive health (SRH), child marriage, gender-based violence (GBV), standing against a different form of abuses so that adolescents have access to sufficient information, caring and counseling supports, health care services, and equal opportunities to continue their education as well. As a result, adolescents are becoming agents of change, and are now conscious of decisions such as education continuation, when and who to marry, and access to local health services. For example many more married adolescents are attending to discuss family planning methods at their local union health and family welfare center (UHandFWC). (Data Source: Change Stories, KII and FGD)

Boys and men's groups have developed a code of conduct to reduce the different forms of abuse of girls, enhance couple communication, and collaborative support in decision-making for example when to have children. It is noticeable that adolescents are now more likely to share their problems with parents, aunties, peers, relatives, teachers, and health service providers and raise voices against child marriage. (Data source: Change Stories, Health Service Register and FGD). 405



Aunties, one for each of the girls groups, were trained in attentive listening so that if the girl was experiencing any kind of problem there was someone who she would be able to talk to. In this last year over 17,000 visits to an aunty were recorded!

The project team involved families, teachers and community leaders so that they too could learn about new ways of acting and support the adolescents. Involving local community and religious leaders, marriage registrars, govt. officials, local govt. institutions (LGIs), school management committees (SMCs), and policymakers has helped to ensure quality health services (accessible to teenagers), sustainability of the Aunties Bench, wedding buster groups and support for the adolescent group sessions. Meetings informing adults about child protection (CP) and gender-based violence (GBV) have helped change attitudes for the adolescents. The good relationships established with the local leaders have enabled the Adolescent Facilitators to use rooms as offices at the Union Parishad, and two adolescent friendly health service corners have been established at community clinics. Community leaders have supported the adolescent groups, providing sanitary napkins, education and sports materials as well as ensuring a supportive environment that contributes to mental health development.

LAMB is currently developing its Mental health programme and the A.C.T. project is a significant catalyst for finding ways to further mental wellbeing in the community.

Major Achievements during 2021:

- The Project Team along with Adolescent Facilitators (AFs) supported the Upazila Health Department to perform the Covid vaccination program, and received appreciation by the Government.
- The knowledge level of adolescents and their parents on sexual reproductive health (SRH) and mental health (MH), child marriage, gender-based violence, and girls and women rights increased. They are empowered with decision-making skills and coping strategies in this concern.



Awareness of the adolescents on health care and self-respect increased. Behavioral changes are noticeable as adolescent comfortably receive health care service from the service points, and problem-sharing with parents, teachers, and peers also increased than the previous.

- The photo is of Rabbani who had been a very non-compliant unhappy teenager until attending his boys' group.

- 144 wedding buster groups have been formed and authorized by Union Parishad Chairman that work on stopping child marriage, eve-teasing, and different forms of abuse.
- Two adolescent-friendly health service centers have been established for the adolescents to provide non-judgmental services through the project's advocacy.
- Aunties are involved in the process of social transformation such as counseling support to adolescent girls, awareness-raising to parents of adolescents regarding child marriage, dowry, girls and women rights, and abuse issues.
- 89 vulnerable adolescent girls who had dropped out from school have been re-admitted.
- 113 married adolescents out of 561 continued attending their groups helped by the encouragement from their communities.
- Community Committees and adolescent groups were able to stop 57 child marriages with the support of the local govt. and wedding buster groups.
- 19 adolescent girls from the groups stopped their child marriage by coping skills and support of peers.
- 2166 adolescents received counseling from adolescent-friendly health service corner referred by Auntie, Peer Educators, Adolescent Facilitators, and Community leaders.
- 17386 adolescents (service count) girls received counseling on different issues from trained Aunties at the community level.
- By the advocacy of project, 3 Community Groups of Community Clinics (CCs) and 8 UH and FWC-MC was reformed, which are continuing their Bi-monthly meeting where they discuss on improving the quality of the health services.
- 182 adolescents and their families received different types of support during the COVID-19 situation through the project's advocacy and networking.

- 36 Adolescent Facilitators received the training from Upazila Health Department to support the COVID-19 vaccination program.
- 17 Adolescent Groups received mats for sitting on from community leaders, local govt. bodies, and elite persons in communities so that they can comfortably conduct the group sessions.



Photo of the booklet used by the groups containing the first 16 sessions.

- To raise awareness on SRH issues, adolescent groups took initiatives to distribute sanitary napkins among vulnerable adolescents with the support of community leaders and elite persons. As a result, UH and FWC distributed 65 packets of the sanitary pad to vulnerable adolescent girls.
- Adolescent Groups took the initiative to plant Palmyras trees on the roadside with the support of community leaders.
- With the help of project staff 69 adolescent girls were connected to different income generating activities organized by other NGOs.

Case study/Stories of change:

The Significance of the Life Skill Sessions

Purnima lives at Paderkola village under Golapgani Union with her mother and elder sister now. They used to live in another district with her parents. Her father had died when Purnima was just 7 years old. Then they came to her mother's house.

After the death of her father, the family were fully dependent on her uncle (her mother's brother), and Purnima and her elder sister's choices were very limited. Their mother, Merina Besra, works in the paddy field as a day-laborer, trying to support her girls and enable them to continue their



studies. Purnima was very aware of her mother's hard work and difficulties and it stressed her so she sat around thinking, feeling low and not mixing with her peers. She thought a lot but because of her young age, could do very little.

"I used to be alone and blame myself for this situation.' said Prunima, member of one the girl adolescent groups.

Purnima reads in class 6 now. She has attended several life skills sessions with her group and is practicing what she has learnt in her daily life. As well as

continuing her studies, she is now helping her mother to carry out her daily housework. Her

teachers have seen a new girl. She has lot of friends now in the school and village. Purnima knows now how to take care of herself and is increasing her confidence and self esteem.

“I know myself well now; I have to survive in my community as a human-being. I have a dream which I want to complete after finishing my studies” said Purnima. Her transformation has encouraged others to participate in the group sessions.



Consent_Purnima.pdf

Change Story-2 Willingness helps Julekha to continue her education

Julekha Khatun, age 15, studies in class eight. She has four brothers and one sister. She is youngest one among the siblings in the family. Her father Amjarul Hossain is unable to work due to sickness for a long time. Her brothers got married and live separately. Julekha's mother works in another house to meet their daily needs, but most of the days she does not have that work. Due to this situation, Julekha faced a financial crisis to pay the annual examination fees.

“I had no work that time. How could I manage to pay the examination fee of Julekha?” asked her mother.

Hence, her mother had to borrow money from a neighbour to pay the examination fees.

Julekha is a peer educator of an adolescent group. She received life skill training on 15 different topics from the project every month including mental and sexual reproductive health. After completing the trainings, she started conducting group sessions in the community. All group members love Julekha for her good facilitation and support about health and other related information. During the reporting period, LAMB ACT Project planned to provide tuition fee as education support to those who are at risk of drop-out from school, Julekha was selected as a beneficiary for the support to continue her studies.

“I am very thankful to LAMB for the support. This support is very helpful for me and my family” said Julekha, Peer Educator of the girl adolescent group.

Julekha received tuition fee as education support from the project and pays borrowed-money which taken by her mother from neighbours.

Julekha is an example for her peers, because she committed not to getting married at a young age. She wants to continue her studies as well. Her parents are happy and feel proud of her right decision.



Consent form of
Julekha-Mahmudpur.p



A Girls football tournament with teams from different schools was organised. Also debating clubs and art competitions, all aiming to increase the girls' self confidence and respect.

Finances:

The disruption due to Covid in year 1 meant that quite a lot of expenditure budgeted for year 1 was moved to year 2. By the end of year 2 actual expenditure over the two years was in line with the budget over two years.

Expenditure in year 2 was in line with the revised budget, and there were no significant variances in any area of expenditure. LAMB continue to be prompt in reporting quarterly against budget.

	2020	2021	2022	Total
<i>Grant to LAMB</i>	98000	75000	77646	250646
<i>Expenditure</i>				
Project Activities	19432	26429		45861
Field				
Staff	20097	25497		45594
Management Staff	29069	33421		62490
Monitoring & Evaluation	3704	1360		5064
Office support	3780	2609		6389
Equipment	1860	1518		3378
	<u>77942</u>	<u>90834</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>168776</u>

2022 grant includes interest on monies held on deposit before being sent to LAMB

This report has been prepared by LAMB Health for the information of the donor and Stewardship. February 2022