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NEPAL

SUCCESS STORY

Empowering youth and bringing hope

USAID Adolescent and Reproductive Health program supported youth groups empower, protect and inform young Nepalis



Srimahakal Youth Club Chairperson, Sanju Kumari Yadav, leading change and empowering youth. Photo by: USAID Adolescent and Reproductive Health, 2024.

The youth club in Haripurba Surlahi is improving their district by addressing youth and adolescent issues, like child marriage and reproductive health.

With help from the Srimahakal Youth Club, Khushbudha, an adolescent, in Madhesh Province, avoided a forced marriage, continued her studies and aspire to a brighter future.

The girl was forced to leave school and was being pressured to marry, due to her family's economic hardships. Her future seemed bleak but she found support with Sanju Kumari Yadav, the Srimahakal Youth Club chairperson. Sanju mentored the girl, and with the backing of the local ward chairperson, persuaded her mother to allow her to go back to school and not marry.

The Srimahakal Youth Club of Sarlahi District in Madhesh Province, supported by the United States Agency for International Development Adolescent Reproductive Health project, symbolizes optimism and empowerment for youth. The club focuses on addressing issues affecting adolescents and youth throughout the district.

Sanju dreams of a future where child marriage is eradicated from her community. Despite facing personal threats and backlash, her resolve remains unwavering.

"Yes, it's a very ambitious dream," she says, "but I know it's achievable if our youth club keeps fighting and continues getting the same support as we are getting now."

The group, with 30 members, boasts membership of young men and women over 16 years old. They advocate for an end to child marriage, increase youth-focused health care, and increase information about reproductive rights.

Club members visit local health facilities to assess how “adolescent-friendly” they are. By visiting the health centers, youth club members have heightened awareness, among health care providers, about adolescent reproductive health and rights. One direct result of their efforts is that youth representatives now attend the health facility operations and management committee (HFOMC) meetings alongside disabled and elderly community members.

The club also provides young people with knowledge about their reproductive health and rights, enabling them to make informed decisions about their future. Previously voiceless and unaware, the youth now speak out assertively, equipped with the support and direction they need to navigate critical life choices.

As we celebrate International Youth Day, Sanju’s story reminds us of the incredible potential of empowered youth to shape a brighter, more equitable future.

USAID Adolescent Reproductive Health is a five-year program that partners with the Government Of Nepal, key stakeholders and youth to support adolescents in reaching their full potential by choosing and practicing healthy reproductive behaviors. The activity targets marginalized groups in Madhesh, Lumbini and Karnali provinces. USAID Adolescent Reproductive Health supports the GoN to expand the demand, supply and use of quality, adolescent-responsive family planning and reproductive health services and products through a systems strengthening approach.