

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

Ms. Priyanka Chopra interacts with adolescents during #FairStartdiscourse

“If a girl is given a chance she can make a mark for herself in life”. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Priyanka Chopra said this during a discourse on #Fair Start on July 5, 2016 in Delhi and Haryana. Priyanka who strongly supports the cause of giving equal opportunity to all children, addressed over 100 adolescents and over 80 media from Delhi and Haryana, highlighting the need to give a Fair Start to every child. District journalists and adolescent girls from Haryana also had a chance to interact with Priyanka through digital conferencing.

The event brought together adolescents from top eight schools from Delhi with support from Dr Jitendra Nagpal, renowned Psychiatrist from Expressions India providing them a huge platform to voice their concerns and opinions on equity issues. A 14-year-old girl from Springdale school in Delhi, who shared the dais with Priyanka and UNICEF India representative Louis Georges Arsenault, shared her point of view, saying that "we need to connect to less privileged. When we connect to the less privileged, then I think we start caring of what they are going through. When we start to care, then we start to empower them."

Adolescent girls from Faridabad representing Amar Ujala Foundation also took part in the Fair Start discussion, which gave them opportunity to raise gender disparity issues. Tamanna, a 14-year-old girl from Amar Ujala sharing her apprehension asked, “Why many girls have to stop their studies before completing school, while their brothers continued with it. What was the way out to deal with such situations?” In response Ms Priyanka suggested changing mind-sets through awareness is key to bringing positive change in people’s attitude for giving girls equal opportunity in life apart from strict enforcement of legislation, ensuring access to education for girls and generating opportunities for their empowerment.

Engaging adolescents through Expressions India focusing on building life skills and value education, will give a huge boost to the Fair Start initiative, by taking the message to peers in school as well as other sections of society thus helping in garnering support for gender parity and equity.

The event provided district journalists an opportunity to raise issues such as skewed child sex ratio across states including Haryana. As per census 2011, child sex ratio of Haryana is 846 girls per 1000 boys; IMR is 47 per 1000 live births and glaring gap exists in male-female literacy rate at 18.6%.

Priyanka expressed, to overcome such challenges it was important that women supported and inspired each other and mothers taught their sons to respect women. In her overall message to the participants Priyanka said, “Each girl has potential and

every person can contribute in their own small way to ensure deprived girls received equal opportunity to grow to their fullest in life.”

The Fair Start campaign was unveiled by UNICEF India recently in the backdrop of the global advocacy efforts on Equity for Children. It focusses on persisting inequities that large group of children in India face, affecting their survival, growth and development. The #FairStart film developed by UNICEF gives an insight into the lives of thousands of children from various background, who are full of potential but less likely to grow up healthy and safe, less likely to attend school, less likely to learn, and more likely to be married as children.

According to UNICEF, currently, 6.1 million children in India are out- of -school; around 10 million children are engaged in work in India; close to 3500 children die every day before reaching age 5; 42 per cent of tribal children in India are stunted in their growth and development; and almost half the population of India, about 564 million people still practice open defecation. Girls in India deserve an equal chance in life too, but on an average 2.22 million girls marry early every year in India, and 23% girls between 15-19 years of age experience physical or sexual violence.

The #Fair Start campaign aims to create large scale awareness and bring about positive change in lives of marginalised children especially adolescent girls.



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