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PRESS RELEASE

First-of-its-Kind Poll Asks Indian Youths about Their Health Priorities

New Delhi, October 31, 2019: At an event today in New Delhi, the Centre for Catalyzing Change (C3) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) released the findings of a ground-breaking YouthBol (“voice of youth”) poll.

Over a 10-month period, more than 100,000 10-24-year-olds from across India were asked to identify what they consider the most important issues related to their health and well-being. The poll, conducted both in the field and online, was designed to give policymakers an understanding of what youth in India want when it comes to health-related policies and programs

The event highlighted some of the key findings of the poll. In particular, 36 percent of the respondents said that health and well-being was their top priority, demonstrating that today’s young people believe that health goes beyond illness, disease, and treatment, to encompass factors like education, job opportunities, environment, and socio-economic conditions.

The second biggest priority identified was the need for better facilities at schools and in communities, with 26 percent of respondents asking for improvements in access to computers, libraries, food, playgrounds, roads, health centers, clean toilets, and clean air and water.

Speaking at the event, which brought together representatives of government, civil society, and media, Dr. Aparajita Gogoi, C3 Executive Director, explained why a poll like this is so important, “India has a huge population of young people. This 35-crore strong segment can have immense power in determining the future of this country. India’s youth need to have a say in designing the health policies and schemes that are primarily meant for them. We must ensure that youth voices are included in the process of designing policies, programs and schemes that impact them and help shape their lives. YouthBol is an attempt to enable this.”

Substance abuse prevention was another key issue, with respondents stressing the need for information and services to deal with substance abuse; bans on sales of alcohol and tobacco near schools and colleges; helplines for substance abuse issues; and better access to good quality and free rehabilitation services. Many young women ranked access to information and care on menstruation, menstrual pain management, and menstrual hygiene products at the top of their wish-list. They called for a better understanding of and responsiveness to this issue from adults.

For the oldest age group (20-24 years), particularly married respondents, information on and access to contraceptive methods and family planning services emerged as a key priority. Mental health-related information and services was also a priority theme, with young people needing information on how to cope with academic pressure and stress, peer-pressure, and bullying. They also want better access to non-judgemental, confidential, and affordable mental health services.

USAID's Health Office Representative, Dr. Jiban Baishya spoke at the event, emphasizing the need for policy makers to take the next step and use the results of the poll. "In this room we have development partners, foundations, civil society organizations, and government representatives in addition to the youth themselves. Each one of us has a critical role to play in expanding access to and the quality of youth focused services. As you listen today, think about how your department or organization can partner with other groups in the room to take India's youth to the next level."

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Centre for Catalyzing Change (C3) (www.c3india.org), formerly known as Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), has been working in India since 1987. Over the years, it has emerged as one of the country's key change-making organizations focused on improving the condition of girls, women and youth in the country. At the core of C3's work and philosophy is the belief that gender equality is essential for development and democracy. For more on YouthBol and C3, please visit the website: www.c3india.org <http://www.c3india.org/youthbolfindings>

USAID is the world's premier international development agency and a catalytic actor driving development results. USAID partners with the Government of India and the private sector to end preventable child and maternal deaths, achieve an AIDS-free generation, and champion a TB-free India. For more information, please visit: www.USAID.gov/India. The Campaign was supported by the USAID's Maternal Child Survival Plan Project.