

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH: A CASE STUDY OF THE JUANGS OF ORISSA

By

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Adolescence is the age group between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence typically begins with puberty in most cultures when physical and deep emotional changes take place and completes often with motherhood. Child bearing in early age due to early marriage and premarital relation often leads to health hazards which last long. The present micro study in the above context has attempted to explore the health condition of adolescent girls among the Juangs, one of the primitive tribes of Orison State. The study broadly describes the socio-cultural institutions and practices that regulate / expose the teen to sex and sexuality and the health hazards the girls encounter. It also covers the perceptions and practices on adolescence, sex and sexuality, nature, causes and consequences of teen pregnancy and the role of parents, kin, peers, community healers, community workers and others.

As the topic is of a sensitive nature it was difficult to conduct interviews directly with the girls even those who were no more in adolescence. However, care was taken to collect information from key respondents like Anganwadi Workers, Traditional Healers, Local Health Workers (ASHA), the *Selanki and Kangerki*. In addition a purposive sample of 62 girls was selected and information was gathered through the *Selanki* and Anganwadi Workers. It was observed that the social environment has a tremendous impact on the life of the tribals. The tribal customs, traditions and practices have undergone change with the advent of modern values and exposure to market forces and the influence of the urban areas. Often the innocent tribal teen girls are seduced and made pregnant and deserted creating tensions at the family and societal level. Inequities in the society and the absence of adequate health care are also contributing to the woes of the tribal community.