A Bond Towards Healthy Youth

Regional Initiative for Safe Sexual Health by Today's Adolescents, formally known as “Project RISHTA” is a consortium project on Adolescents’ Reproductive and Sexual Health, which aims to improve the sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing of adolescents in Saraikela Kharsawan district of Jharkhand, by educating and enabling them in making informed decisions and choices.

The target groups in the project are primarily adolescents in the age group of 12 to 24 years, married and unmarried who may be either school going, school dropouts or non-school going. Tata Steel provided leadership and vocational training opportunities to young people in the program area. **The first two phases of this project covered 661 villages and 34 semi-urban slums and reached out to more than 40,000 adolescents.**

Major activities under the project include setting up of youth resource centres (YRCs), strengthening YRCs to engage with young people and communities on health and reproductive issues, training YRC members, peer educators and mentors on Reproductive Health issues, providing leadership and vocational training opportunities to young people in the programme area and conducting behaviour change communication campaigns using street theatre (Nukkad Natak), puppet shows, chau dance and more...

The journey was not without challenges, especially since broaching the sensitive subject of sexual health is something that communities may find difficult to understand and accept. But the project has been immensely successful in bringing about awareness, thereby positioning RISHTA as a replicable example for other Tata group companies as well as the corporate world, motivating peers to invest in sexual and reproductive health of youth as part of their CSR programmes.