

About

Saathi Sanga Manka Kura

About SSMK

Understanding Nepali youth

With little or no access to reliable information and few people to openly-talk to, young people in Nepal often find it highly challenging to learn life skills that are necessary to negotiate relationships, continue education, plan a career, or to stay safe from HIV and sexually transmitted infections. Isolated, confused and often depressed, millions of young Nepali youth seek counsel from peers or friends.

‘Saathi Sanga Manka Kura’ or ‘Chatting with my best friend’:

‘Saathi Sanga Manka Kura’ or ‘Chatting with my best friend’ is a radio program being designed and developed by young people for the young people in Nepal. Initiated in the year 2001, the radio program, the centerpiece of UNICEF Nepal, was the result of the KAP survey (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice) conducted throughout Nepal within 1,400 respondents and other qualitative studies. Today the radio program is institutionalized in Equal Access Nepal and NGO working in the field of communication development; SSMK has been producing and broadcasting weekly 45 minutes long issue based episodes for the past 10 years.

The program in its 10 years history of radio broadcasting has garnered immense popularity as its success is evident through the existence of the 6 million loyal listeners, 1,200-audience mail and a more than 1,500-2,000 text messages for a single episode, and more than a thousand spontaneously formed listener club throughout the country.

With the content focus aimed at imparting life skills among young people; the program revolves around issues ranging from adolescence and puberty, sexual and reproductive health, issues relating to young people and transitional period, adopting safe behaviors by resisting peer pressure, staying safe from drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, opportunities and study and a wide variety of other topics which directly and indirectly affect the youngsters in Nepal.

The radio program aims to equip young people with lifeskills that enable them to make sound decision on matters related to their lives, empowering them to deal with their everyday problem and to tackle peer-pressure and stigmatization.

Engaging the community through listeners' clubs

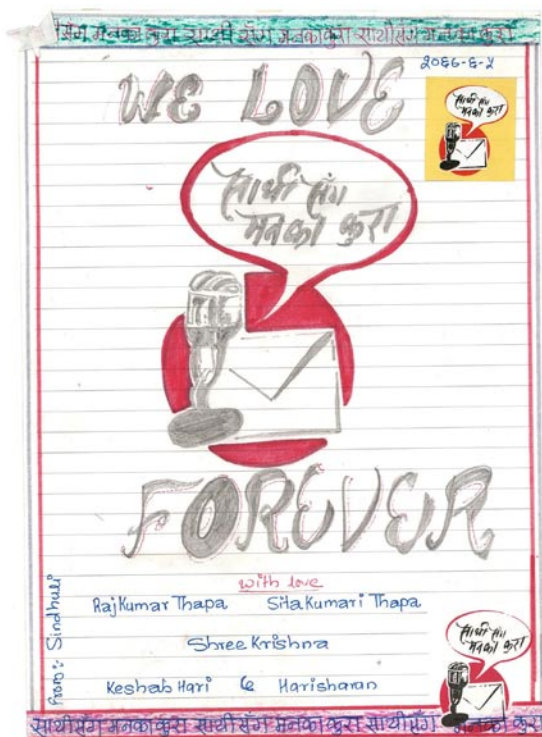
The radio show's relevance and appeal has spawned a network of over 1,000 listeners' clubs (data as of May, 2007) in nearly all the districts of the country. In collaboration with local organizations and village development committees, these listeners' clubs organize their own activities such as training programs, interactions, HIV and AIDS, on gender and caste discrimination etc. Listener club

members have also initiated their own monthly Newsletter based on their own home ground issues in order to cater information to the general masses. The SSMK production team has also been assisting the outreach activities of their listener's clubs, with support from UNICEF. Members of these clubs are playing active roles in engaging their communities and influencing long-term decision-making related to issues that matter to youth.

Outreach activities to support listeners club

Outreach has been playing supportive role to achieve the target set by the radio program through radio-centered activities at community level like facilitated discussion, regular feedbacks/ letters through listeners and volunteer activities for making the program more interactive. The listeners clubs work in coordination with the youth hubs in the five development regions.

Besides listening to the radio, the club members also organize collective voluntary activities within their communities. They also refer friends and families to seek appropriate services as raised by the radio program.



Program Information

- The recent VARG () survey indicates that 87 percent out of 60000 respondents listen to SSMK regularly.
- A broadcast audience survey (BAS 2008, AC Nielsen) revealed SSMK to have a regular listenership of over 6 million young people and that it is the third most popular radio program following national news and a song based program.
- SSMK is the most popular program among young listeners, with nearly three-fourths of men and just over two-thirds to women of the age group 15-19 listening to this program. (Source : Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 2006 – done by Ministry of Health and Population, Population Division, Government of Nepal).
- The radio program receives around 800 -1000 letters and 200-250 emails and 2000-2500 mobile text messages every month from the young people of Nepal.
- Each listener who writes in to the program receives an individual response from the production team, with a specific template response addressing the problem/concern of the letter writers and an appropriate life skills booklet.
- Responses to letters are designed keeping in view UNICEF's life skills curriculum and as per the advice from various subject matter experts.
In November 2007, SSMK was also honored with the Global Junior Challenge Award by the Italian president Giorgio Napolitano at the presidential palace in Rome.
- SSMK has also won the South Asian Regional 2008 International children day for broadcasting (ICDB) award.
- The program broadcasts through the national radio station - Radio Nepal, Satellite channel and more than 40 local FM stations throughout the country. The program is also considering expanding its reach to audiences overseas.

SSMK provides free life skills booklets to its audiences as part of raising increased awareness on youth's related matters. Annually it distributes a number of such life skills booklets to its audiences as per their request and till date above 10,000 life skills booklets have been distributed to audiences from various places of Nepal. The letter requesting a life skill booklet are categorized under 'About booklets' and those letter responses acknowledging the receipt of the booklet are categorized under 'Response to booklets'. In most cases, providing thanks for the booklet, changes brought about by reading the booklets and requesting another life skill booklets are categorized under "Response to booklets". In fact, the 'About booklets' and 'Response to booklets' are sub-categories of broad category 'Program'. There were total of 7,780 responses under the category 'Program' and among them 4,885 (62.8%) were regarding the booklet consisting of 2,649 (54.2%) responses on 'About booklets' and 2,236 (45.8%) responses on 'Responses on booklet'. This distinctively testify that 84.4% of youth requesting booklets in fact response back saying one thing or the other about themselves or about the booklet. As usual, the respondents on these program sub-categories are predominated by male (55%).



Vent free: Young concerns and problems!

"I am mentally traumatized and scared friends and I do not know whom to approach. My own brother's friend who is also my employee raped me. I was working late that day and suddenly he took advantage and despite my request, he abused my soul. I am in the brick of committing suicide as I feel ashamed of myself, Friends, tell me was it my fault that he took advantage of me? If I tell my brother about this incident, will he believe me? Will I be victimized again? Please tell me how I can escape from this demeaning feeling!"

– A 19 years old girl from Kathmandu

"I am very scared and have no one to talk to. My Uncle has been molesting me for years, and now I cannot stand it anymore. But he tells me that if I disclose this with my parents, they will not believe me and that everyone will think I am a 'bad' girl. Please help me, what should I do?"

- Troubled girl, Dang

"The armed group captured my land and property during the conflict period but even after the peace accord they have not stopped tormenting me and my family, the reason I do not believe in their ideology! But now I am going to take stand, I am going to take arms in order to regain my self-respect and in order to lead a life of dignity"

- A 17 years old boy from Palpa

".... my girlfriend has threatened to commit suicide if I don't marry her. Although I have promised to marry her, I am very apprehensive that the society will treat me badly and hate me for being involved with a HIV positive person"

- a boy from Pokhara

Global connections:

The official website of SSMK (www.ssmk.org) was launched on 22nd January 2007 with the objective of disseminating news, views and opinions regarding the radio program to its e-savvy listeners. The website is designed to suit the present day needs and trend. The special youth friendly contents and segments of the website aims create a global community where listeners can openly share their, views, and opinions about contemporary issues and make friends. Listeners staying abroad can easily listen to the SSMK program through the website. The radio archive system in the website is a media library, which enables web users to download SSMK web contents and special podcasts.

Keeping track of the changing trends of modern communication SSMK radio program also has its own fan page in the popular social networking site Facebook. The SSMK Facebook fan page informs the registered members about updates and happenings in the radio program. The Facebook page also enables listeners to directly contact their favorite radio host; this has further more smoothed listener's connection with the radio program.

On November 2009, UNICEF Nepal collaborated with SSMK radio program to develop the UNICEF Nepal website and the 'Voices of Youth' web page specially designed for the young people of Nepal. SSMK radio program plays a vital role in promoting the website through the radio waves and is responsible for updating and designing of contents. The 'Freedom Express' debate forum in the webpage channelized by SSMK radio program incorporates listener's views for the debate forum through the 'Toll free SMS service' introduced by UNICEF Nepal. The youth friendly webpage is very popular amid young e-savvy listeners.

Audience Profile

The SSMK booklet was developed using audience responses received to date since SSMK radio program first hit the airwave of Nepal back in 2002. The chapter herein portrays a profile of these audiences based on their personal characteristics, type of responses or queries and timeline trend.

SSMK audience responses are systematically maintained by EAN in a database management system with a friendly user's interface and easier reports generating options. Prior to 2007, SSMK database system contained only eight broad subject categories. Later, two more categories of 'Conflict' and 'Listener's Club' were added to accommodate the increased load of the responses on these subject matters.

In earlier days, normal trend of highest letter responses were received in category 'Program' followed by 'Personal' and 'Love' with negligible responses in category 'Sex'. However, sudden surge of letter responses in category 'Sex' during 2nd quarter (April-June) of the Year 2011 created a history in SSMK letter trend. Finally, the category 'Program' was completely overshadowed by category 'Sex'. The trend seems to continue to keep momentum as youth of the country and the society alike are becoming more and more less sex shy.

The graph below presents the letter responses by year and subject categories:

Letter Responses by Year and Subject Categories

Broad Category	2005 and Before	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Conflict	-----	-----	0.9%	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%
Health	4.1%	4.9%	4.2%	4.0%	1.8%	2.4%	2.9%
Listeners' Club	-----	-----	1.3%	2.2%	0.7%	1.4%	2.1%
Love	22.6%	19.5%	14.5%	11.2%	8.2%	6.8%	4.4%
Marriage	9.1%	6.9%	6.1%	5.6%	4.1%	3.2%	1.7%
Miscellaneous	5.5%	6.4%	6.1%	6.7%	5.9%	4.1%	3.1%
Personal	23.6%	22.1%	26.7%	26.3%	20.6%	19.4%	10.3%
Program	23.6%	28.2%	27.0%	30.6%	49.6%	57.9%	39.6%
Sex	2.4%	3.6%	2.8%	4.7%	3.1%	3.1%	32.3%
Social	9.1%	8.3%	10.4%	8.1%	5.9%	1.3%	3.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



SSMK Audience Feedback Mechanism



Research provides a strong mechanism for information need of SSMK program throughout its project cycle. EAN undertakes researches for gaining insight on gaps and needs of critical information in the target audience, pre-test of radio drama, collecting audience feedback and impact assessment of the project. It explores, utilizes and develops mechanism for fostering research-based program development.

Assessing Communication for Social Change (AC4SC) project initiated with joint collaboration of Equal Access and two Australian Universities provides mechanism for fostering participatory approach. First phase of the initiative provided useful tools for qualitative approach to strengthen research, monitoring and evaluation. It helped to foster researches for potential issues of interventions, checks quality



through critical listening and feedback session (CLFS) and impacts stories are collected through most significant change techniques (MSC). Acknowledging the importance, at present, the second phase of AC4SC project is being implemented by EAN independently to boost its rigorous M&E system.

SSMK do rely on periodic field visits for monitoring and survey as sources of information about the program. Different participatory tools of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) used as per the suitability help to assess program performance and impact. The mechanism helps to collect, collate, proceed and analyze data throughout the project cycle to produce periodic qualitative reports. EAN has set-up a monitoring mechanism for broadcast monitoring to ensure its programs reach to audience regularly.

The findings of the study are shared in the form of reports internally within the program, outreach, M&E and management team and externally with related stakeholders. This provides insight to program design as per the aspiration of listeners in need of critical information. SSMK program addresses the study outcomes while

preparing radio program and aired to meet the need of its audience. Every cycle completes with information on lesson learnt and the information provides basis for leading the program towards excellence. The information provides basis for SSMK radio program development and broadcast to reach its audience.

As the radio drama gets aired, immense number of audience responses to the program in the form of letters, emails and SMS are received. Those responses from listeners mainly talk about program they have earlier listened to and include important feedbacks, words of appreciations, forward their problems, confusion and seek for better suggestions to resolve their hurdle. Program team reads those responses thoroughly, highlights important text, categorize and maintain filing of the data. Database team enters the important and highlighted information of the responses into database using pre-designed software. Database system facilitates with provision of getting quick access, retrieval to stored information of responses through software like Easy Access. This particular software provides the user with both qualitative and quantitative information. M&E team uses the information to interpret, analyze and draw insights to produce reports. Ongoing researches output and collected feedback provides valuable information for decision-making process in SSMK program development.

The continuous research and feedback mechanism helps to engage stakeholders within the loop of program development and improvement and thus helping to lead EAN towards its goal- Inform Educate and Inspire for positive change.



Database for SSMK

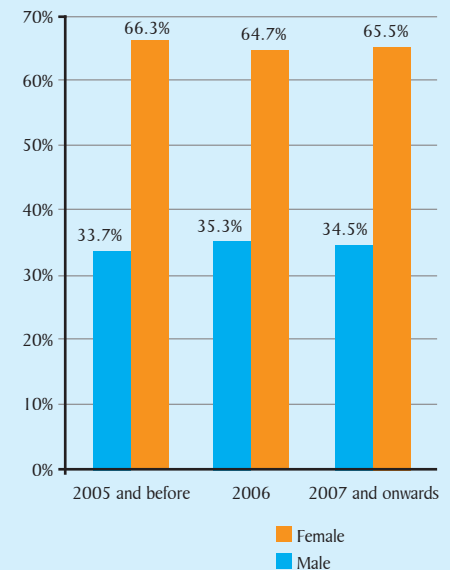
- Letter Database
- Email Database
- SMS Database
- Listeners Club Database
- AC4SC Database

Letter Database

- Letter database was initiated from Year 2005 and modified in Year 2007
- Recorded count of letters in database till the end of year 2011 is 32,273.
- Oldest letter recorded in database was received on 12th December 2002 from Dolpa, Dunai from male listener
- It was categorized under Drugs/Substance used
- मेरो आमा ३०,३५ वर्षको हुनुहुन्छ र तमाखु , चिलिम खानुहुन्छ अब यसबाट छुटाउन के गर्नुपर्ला ?
- Month June as maximum letter receiving month as during this month SLC result is published.

The graph below present's letter received throughout the period from different sex groups:

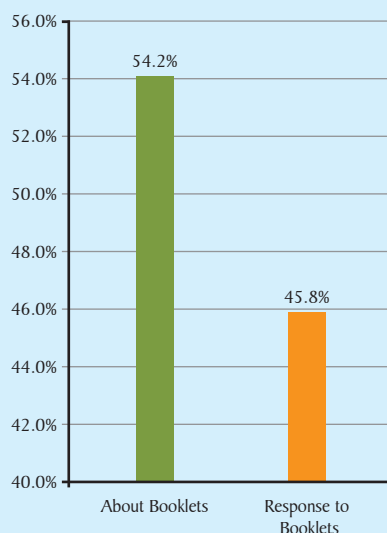
Graph #2: Letter Responses by Gender



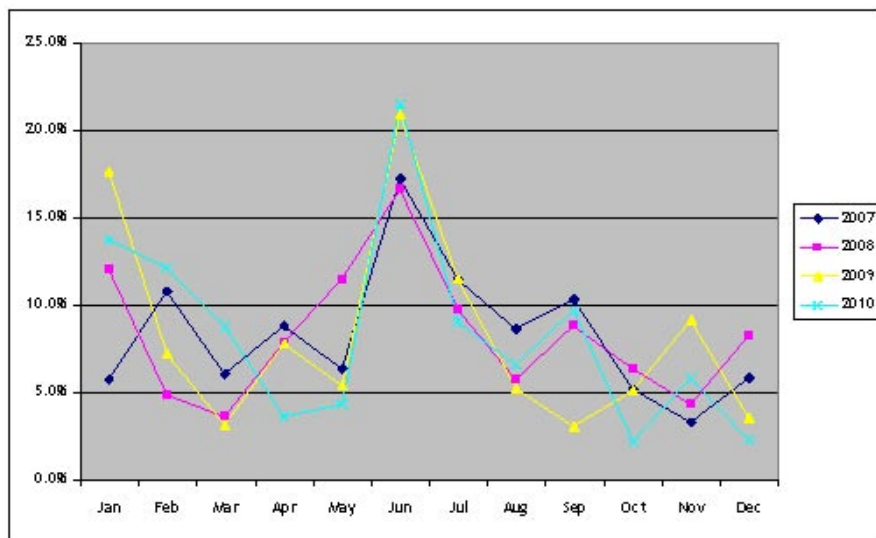
The above graph readily demonstrates that male always exceeded female respondents. Positively, the gap seems to be gradually narrowing down between the two groups. In some quarters, female respondents surpassing the males are also nevertheless evident. This obviously indicates that there is a growing trend among Nepalese girls getting more and more access to radio and information.

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Graph #2: About Booklets and Response to Booklets



There were total of 7,780 responses under the category 'Program' and among them 4,885 (62.8%) were



Graph #8: Letter Responses Received by Month and Year

Graph above represent the trend of monthly letter responses during four consecutive years, and it showed that month June as peculiar month for receiving highest number of letter responses. The category 'Study and Career' under broad category 'Personal' were found to get second highest of the letter responses after broad category 'Program'. Since free time after SLC and decrease load shedding period as well as tentative month for publishing SLC result was found as influencing factors for the listeners to send their responses during this month. The listeners shows their concern about SLC exam through their responses like how to pass, how to score good mark and how shall they plan after giving SLC and passing SLC, what shall they study further.

"I have appeared in SLC examination. I have made up my mind to study CMA (Community Medical Assistant). I have heard that if we passed entrance exam conducted by CTVT, study could be subsidized. Would you please let me know how much expense is needed to study CMA?"

-- Query from listener from Pyutar, Lalitpur I

"I have appeared in SLC examination. I am in dilemma which subject shall I choose after passing SLC So please write me back suggesting which subject to choose."

-- Query from listener from Khochiwang, Pyuthan 2

Email Database

- Email database was initiated from Year 2010
- There are 906 email recorded in database till date
- Only 37% of email senders were found to mention their districts, even some emails received were from other countries like USA and Switzerland, but the senders were Nepalese and were aware of SSMK radio program beforehand.
- Like letter responses, majority of email responses were under category 'About the Program'.

SMS Database

- SMS Database was initiated from Year 2010. There are altogether 11,427 till the end of year 2011
- Among them 6,527 (57%) were invalid SMS Poll answers which were presently considered as SMS for Program.
- During two years time, 12 mobile numbers were found to send SMS frequently, recorded 10 to 25 times.
- Total numbers of distinct mobile numbers were 8,861. Among mobile number sending SMS, 80% belonged to NTC and 20% belonged to NCell.

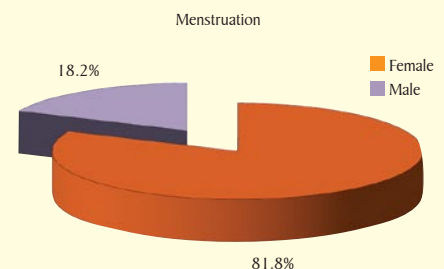
Listeners' Clubs Database

- Listeners' Clubs database was initiated from Year 2005 and modified in Year 2007.
- Earlier there was no provision of registration process, so the listeners clubs so formed at different places as informed by listeners were recorded in database.
- After starting the registration process during 2007, new database was designed and listeners' clubs were recorded into database as per their filled registration form.
- There are 977 registered SSMK listeners' clubs and 364 non-registered listeners' clubs.
- Recent follow up with the registered SSMK listeners' clubs showed only 98 listeners clubs were found active.

Menstruation

In SSMK letter responses database system 'Menstruation' is sub-categorized under the broad category 'Sex'. Obviously, more female listeners tend to found sending letters concerning about menstruation than male listeners:

Graph #3: Menstruation Queries by Gender



Generally female listeners were found inquiring about their health problems associated with menstruation including 'Chaupadi' a custom of complete forced isolation and prohibition of certain diary products and food items during menstruation. Whereas, male listeners were found inquisitive to learn about menstruation issues and torment imposed traditionally to their mothers and sisters by the society during their menstruation cycle and delivery period. Male members of a family often are forced to cook meals and take care of regular household chores during this period.

नेपाल स्वास्थ्य
संस्था - २०५१
ESTD - २००४

समाज कल्याण परिषद
SOCIAL WELFARE COUNCIL
राष्ट्रिय स्वास्थ्य कोष
National Health Fund
साम्बन्ध कार्यक्रम - गरीब
सुनु



Assessing Communication for Social Change (AC4SC) Database

- AC4SC database was initiated from Year 2009
- There are 694 pieces of information recorded in database; among them 155 were MSC stories.
- Among 155 MSC stories, 109 MSC stories were related to SSMK.

Health

Letters on Disability:

“Sometimes I wonder whether being blind makes me incompetent to gain success in life. But whenever I listen to SSMK radio program, I am forced to challenge my negative feeling as listening to the radio host speak, I realize that my disability is not a curse but an opportunity, that if we eradicate this negative feeling that disability makes us weak”

– 14 years old girl from Kailali.

“My father always used to beat me and used to tell me that I was a burden to my family and no one would marry me because of my blindness. One day as I was listening to the radio program Saathi Sanga Manka Kura I got a chance to listen to this success story of a blind girl who had topped higher secondary exams. I talked to my father and mother and requested them to send me to school and even convinced my father that I was not a curse but if given the right treatment in home I would surely make them proud of me”

– 17 years old girl from Dhankuta.

Most Significant Changes on Disability :

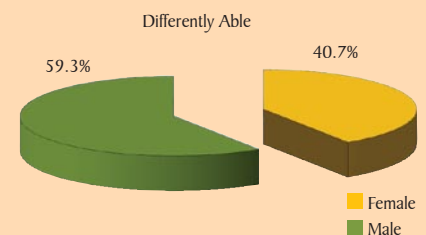
Community Researcher at Dadheldhura has found a story of SSMK Differently Abled Young Listeners (DAYL) which worth to be presented.

A listener named Indra Pant once happened to listen to SSMK program episode related to importance of studies in one’s life. He liked the concept of the program and then started listening the program. The other day the program aired a drama related to visually impair which was focused on the ability of the differently able people being able to lead his life independently. This program inspired and so he started joining school. Now he has completed his Intermediate in Education. He is also a member of organization of differently able group which works for the welfare of differently young people. In this way SSMK helped him change his attitude towards blind people like him and also developed self confidence to lead his life independently. 3

Letters on Disability

A provision of information related with the differently able person in SSMK database system was included ever since it was used under the broad category ‘Health’. This subcategory was used chiefly because SSMK radio program occasionally addresses the differently able people’s issues and concerns. The subcategory encompasses responses and queries directed by the differently able youth related to their problems including available job and training opportunities for them. Nevertheless, normal youth also often writes appreciating the radio program to learn about the plight of differently able people that change their views towards them. These short of responses are also included in this subcategory. The graph below presents the responses received to date on the subcategory ‘Differently Able’:

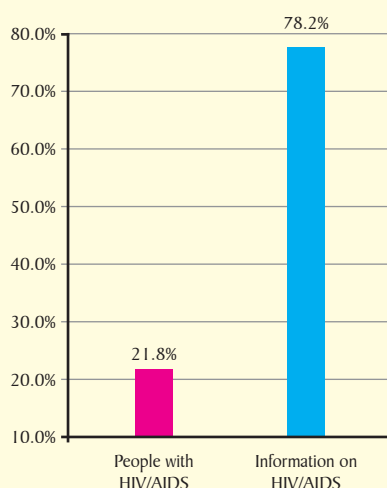
Graph #4: Letter Responses on Differently Able



Among 167 letter responses received so far on differently able, 59.3% were from male listeners and 40.7% from female listeners

Under the broad category 'Health', two subcategories titled 'Information on HIV/AIDS' and 'People Living with HIV/AIDS' are included in the SSMK letter database system. The graph below presents the letter received to date under these two subcategories:

Graph #5: Letter Responses on HIV/AIDS



Among the total of 147 letter responses received under 'Information on HIV/AIDS', 72.8% were from male listeners and 27.2% were from female listeners. Similarly, among the total of 41 letter responses received under the 'People living with HIV/AIDS', 87.8% from male listeners and 12.2% were from female listeners. Among total 143 letter responses related HIV/AIDS, 21.8% were under 'Information on HIV/AIDS' while 78.2% were under 'Information on HIV/AIDS'.

Email on Mental Health Problem:

A really serious email by a 27 year old listener under sub-category "Mental Health Problems and Psychological Problems" where the listener has confess of being involved in child molestation when he was in Nepal, but now he is abroad.

"I used to see porn films on TV in my friend's home and I practiced sex with 3/4 years old child, a daughter of neighbor. I persuaded her with chocolates and I even let my friends have sex with her and watch the scene. I was very different than others from that day I used to just think of sex whenever I see any girl, especially when I see young girl. I tried to abstain sex since I was in Nepal. Nowadays I could not stop going to sex parlor weekly. I tried to have control on my feeling but something forces me to feel like that way. I already had a check up .Every time I feel like I am viscous."

Most Significant Changes on Life Skill :

Community Researcher at Makwanpur has presented a story of 20 years old woman who got great inspiration from SSMK to upgrade her life style.

Sushila Aryal who is a regular listener of the SSMK program from the past 2 years. According to her, the program has enabled her to gain information related to women's reproductive health as well as different life skills. The program has enhanced her to overcome her introvert nature and develop capability in working in a group. She is now engaged in "Purano Makwanpur Bikash Sansthan" and provides different life skill and income generating training to the women and also provides adult literacy classes to women at her community.4

HIV/AIDS

Email:

Another email from listener with HIV under category "People living with HIV/AIDS" where the listener named himself as bad boy and his story goes like this

"I am a youth but right now I have been expelled both from my school and home because I was found HIV positive. What is my fault? While having sex with sex worker, I had used condom but the condom ruptured and I got HIV infected. How can I face my friends and family members? I am facing very worst circumstance. "

Letter:

".... my girlfriend has threatened to commit suicide if I don't marry her. Although I have promised to marry her, I am very apprehensive that the society will treat me badly and hate me for being involved with a HIV positive person"

- a boy from Pokhara

There is another letter by female listener from Homtang, Bhojpur aged 20 year, who have already engaged in most at risk behavior that is having unsafe sex with her boy friend. Her story goes like this-

"I have love affair with a boy living in my village for 4 years. Even once I had sex with him. Now he is abroad. After a month of having sex, I feel like itching at vagina and I also noticed skin infection around vagina. I have heard that these are symptoms of HIV infection. Is that true? If yes what shall I do? I am too worried."5

Impact Letters

Hello friends,
How are you ?

To tell you the truth I am a disabled person and like other friends I also used to be frustrated with life especially with my condition but after listening to Saathi Sanga Man Ka Kura I realized that these problems were not permanent and all the problems had a solution but what was required was confidence therefore I braced up and today I am very confident.

I have been flanked by the love and support from everyone and I am now preparing to give my Higher secondary examination because I know even I can do best ! and today I believe that I can be a voice to represent other friends like me and this is my life's motto.

All thanks to you !

Female listener from Bhojpur

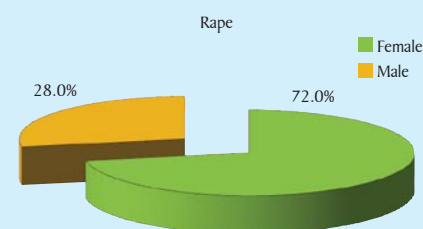
I was into drugs from a very small age due to the influence of my friends. But one day as I was listening to 'Saathi Sanga Man Ka Kura' I found the drama similar to my situation, the drama portrayed the scenario where being into drugs could effect one's social ties: one's family, friends etc. I was in class 10 and I did not know what was right and what was wrong but SSMK helped me get to the right track. I have given up my bad habit and today I feel grateful I took that decision.

Female listener from Manjabung, Mechi

Sexual reproductive health and rights

The broad category 'Sex' includes a subcategory where plight of rape victims and related matters are classified as 'Rape'. The graph below presents letter responses received to date under this subcategory 'Rape':

Graph #6: Letter Responses on Rape



The overall count of letter responses on subcategory 'Rape' was negligible; still it provides grave importance in part of listeners' courage to report their repulsive stories and disheartening accounts of incidents to SSMK team. Among 25 letters responses received to date, 72% were from female listeners while 28% were from male listeners.



I have been listening to this program from a very long time. This program has made a lot of impact on my life. People in the Terai region are very shy to talk about anything related with sex. Even the teachers in school used to skip such lessons where they had to teach about sex related topics. Such behavior has changed due to the program.

(No address)

This program has indebted me in an unforgettable way, because it has provided me with courage, energy, and zeal to fight with different difficulties that we have to face in life. My life changed in a significant way, as I went on listening to this program. I have developed skills of public speaking and explaining things properly to people and though I have great desire to continue my studies, pressures on me were high due to the invaluable suggestions given by this program along with the support of my family and friends, I was able to pass S.L.C I will remember this program till the end of my life.

Female Listener from Dhankuta

The way you have tried to spread awareness about the issues like HIV/ AIDS, caste discrimination etc through the means of radio drama has really help change the view point of the villagers. People have become more aware of issues like HIV and we believe that this program must have influenced people in other places in the same way.

Male listener from Ridi Bazar, Gulmi

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

Wet dreams:

Dear friends,

I am 16 years old and I hail from a middle class family . I am tormented by a problem and I believe you are the only one who can solve it.

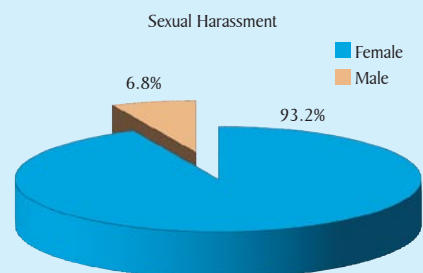
Friends, nowadays in my dreams I keep on seeing people getting involved in sexual act I don't know why this is happening to me and I am even surprised because till date I have not had sex with anyone.

I did talk to my friends about this and they suggested me to take a bath before going to sleep. I did give heed to their advise but friends the same ordeal continued. Whenever I have such dreams my trousers get wet and it disgusts me. I inquired about this to my elder brother but he told me that it was a sign that I would be impotent and would not be able to sexually satisfy my future wife. This has paved way for further confusion and fear inside me. Friends, am I impotent and are these dreams a symbol that I wouldn't have children in the future ?

Sexual Harassment

Innocent children and adolescent girls are usually prone to abuses related to cases of rapes and sexual harassments where they are easily lured with gifts, promises and in some cases threats. The subcategory 'Sexual Harassment' under the broad category 'Sex' received to date following trend of letter responses or queries:

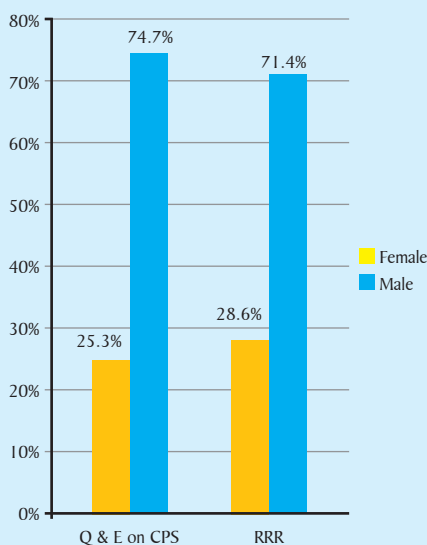
Graph #7: Letter Responses on Sexual Harassments



The subcategory sexual harassment received total count of 44 letters to date, almost all letter responses (93.2%) were from female and only 6.8% were from male.

The subcategories titled 'Queries and Experiences on Changing Political Scenario (Q&E on CPS)' and 'Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnee Soldiers & Migrants (RRR)' are classified under broad category 'Conflict'. The graph below presents letter responses received to date on the broad category 'Conflict':

Graph #8: Letter Responses on Conflict



Among 83 letter responses received under category Q&E on CPS, 74.7% were from male and 25.3% from female. Among 7 letter responses received under category 'RRR', 71.4% were from male and 28.6% were from female. A few letter responses received on these subcategories directly indicate the lesser interest of youth in politics, especially the female.

A 16 years old boy from Kapilvastu

Dear Friends,

How are you?

I am a regular listener of Saathi Sanga Man Ka Kura and I like this program very much. Friends I am writing to you to seek your advice on a certain matter. Though I am mentally and physically fit I feel that my penis is short compared to my other friends. Whenever my friends talk about their penis size I am gripped with a feeling of shame and discomfort. Friends, do you think I have a small penis because I masturbate regularly? I am even ashamed to disclose this fact to my girl friend as I don't want to be ashamed in front of her. Friends please suggest me how can I make my penis long? as this problem is affecting my studies and my mental state as well.

18 years old boy from, Khotang

Dear friend,

How are you?

I am a regular listener of your program and the frank discussions and lively banter of yours really has encouraged me to write to you.

Friends, I am very shy person and for a introvert person like me it's indeed very hard to converse with my friends about sex. I have not had sex with anyone till date but a certain rumor has triggered deep down fear inside me.

Friends, there is a rumor that the condom that we use for protection during sex get's stuck in the females Vagina. This rumor has plugged fear inside me. I even do not know the proper way to use a condom and there isn't any proper hospital in our village in order to get information on sexual and reproductive health. Lack of proper information, booklets, magazines and newspaper of sexual reproductive health are also the main reason for the spread of such rumors which creates further confusion and fear in youths like us. Therefore, Saathi Sanga Man Ka Kura is the only channel for us to update ourselves of sexual and reproductive health. So friends I am counting on you to verify whether the rumor is true or not!

A 18 years old boy from Solukhumbu

One of email sender has expressed his desire to have sex and he has written 6"Friends! I am very tempted to have sex. With whom shall I have sex? I have girl friend but she denies having sex. Why only boys of my age feel like that why not girl? How can I fulfill my desire, please ask with doctor for me."

Impact of the radio program on listeners

“SSMK! We want to know about gays. How people become gays? What difficulties do they have to face? We have strong belief that your team will make us clear. Your program is very nice and I wish you a success.”

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment (Disability)

Dear friends,

Every time I go to collect firewood in the nearby forest the guys usually open their chain and display their most sensitive organs. I have also faced such behavior from my own school teacher which has caused me further embarrassment. I even stopped going to school for several months. But is this the only option. Friends isn't there any punishment for such people?

13 years old girl from Sarlahi

Dear friends,

I don't know if this is right but one of my teacher really acts in a very unusual way which has caused me great embarrassment in class. One day he kissed me I was utterly shocked and kept silent. I was mentally traumatized by this incident; I even questioned my character 'Did the teacher behave with me in such an unusual manner simply because I was frank?'. Friends, will the teacher take my silence as an approval for future misconduct.

14 years old girl from Jitpur

“I have been living in my brother-in-laws house for the past one year for my mental treatment. One day as I was about to sleep my brother-in-law entered my room and started touching my private parts. I was completely shocked and could not even protest ! I can't even tell my sister about this as she would blame me like others. What should I do ?” – 16 years old girl from Bhairwa.

Here goes the similar email which makes everyone associated with SSMK feel proud. In the month of April, there was an email under category 'Sexual Harassment', it was written by a female listener from Chitwan. She had made a plea-

Hi friends! I am 14 years old and I am a regular listener of your popular radio program. Today I want to share with you a serious problem which really is making my life miserable. Friends, my best friend lives across the street and we are very close- just like 'soul-sisters', we really get along well and I regularly go to her place. But her father whom I address to as 'uncle' behaves with me in a very peculiar manner. He usually hugs me, touches my check and often strokes me in a very unusual manner, which I do not like. I know that I am being constantly sexually abused but I don't have the guts to confront him. Simply because, I am afraid that



he might deny the charge and if this thing gets out then people might blame me, because our society is very narrow minded. I want to talk about this behavior with my friend but I don't know how she would react to this! I can't even tell this to my own mother! Friends, I feel trapped and I don't know what to do - Help me! SSMK team aired her problem in letter session putting her name anonymous. During that session, she was suggested with different life skills like self awareness, critical thinking and decision making.

A month later, there was another email by her. She replied:

Dear SSMK Team,

I am the same girl who wrote to you about the sexual harassment that I had been facing from my best friend's father. Thank you so much, for reading out my problem on the program! It has indeed given me the confidence to confront my views to that person and I will surely take a stand to stop this cycle of harassment.

I have also planned to talk to my best friend about the unruly behavior that her father displays towards me. I know that I don't have to fear anyone and no one can wrong me. I really agree with you friends when you said that "It's me who matter the most and I should never feel guilty for the things I have not done!"

I have found a true friend in you and I am blessed to have such loving and understanding friends like the SSMK team.

With Love, Your friend from Chitwan

Word of appreciation from listeners who accepted and practiced the matter suggested by SSMK team to sort their problems is always great accomplishment to SSMK team and Equal Access Nepal. The SSMK team looks forward to receive more such challenging and embedded problems from its listeners so they could reach them and help them out.

Menstruation and Hygiene

Hello friends,

How are you ?

I am a regular listener of Saathi Sanga Man Ka Kura and I really like this program a lot. I credit SSMK for the knowledge I gained about various aspects while growing up. Friends today I want to recite an incident which changed the thinking pattern of my parents. It was Tihar (The festival of lights) and I was so excited because I could perform Puja to my brother but my mother objected simply because I was going through my regular menstruation period. My mom considered performing religious activities during menstruation period a sin. I knew that she was wrong so I objected and told her it was simply a myth as told by the radio program; My brother supported me and later my mother gave in and I could happily perform Puja to my dear brother.

Thanks a bunch friends for bringing positive change to my life as this change has made me embrace an open and rational approach towards many things.

Thank you

Yours faithfully,

14 years old girl from

Menstruation (Disability)

"We have to face a lot of problem during our menstruation periods. We feel embarrassed to demand for menstruation kits as our hostel warden is a guy ! We cannot even talk freely about menstruation and as we are blind we sometimes just sit quiet even when the bleeding gets worst. Due to which we are also subjected to harassment from guys". 15 years old girl from Pokhara (Amar singh blind school)

A month later, there was another email by her. She replied-

Dear SSMK team,

I am the same girl who wrote to you about the sexual harassment that I had been facing from my best friend's father. Thank you so much, for reading out my problem on the program! It has indeed given me the confidence to confront my views to that person and I will surely take a stand to stop this cycle of harassment.

I have also planned to talk to my best friend about the unruly behavior that her father displays towards me. I know that I don't have to fear anyone and no one can wrong me. I really agree with you friends when you said that "It's me who mattered the most and I should never feel guilty for the things I have not done!"

I have found a true friend in you and I am blessed to have such loving and understanding friends like the SSMK team.

With Love, Your friend from Chitwan8

Teen Pregnancy?

Dear Friends,

My mistakes have posed a serious threat to my future. I don't know whom to approach therefore, I am writing to you. I live with my aunt in the city, she is my age and she is also my classmate. My uncle is in the UK and will be returning back this Dashain. Friends, My aunt and I have had physical relation in the past and this trend further continued after my uncle left for abroad. We used to have sex more than twice a day but today I am shocked to hear that she is pregnant with my child ! We went for an abortion but the doctor clearly stated that an abortion cannot be performed. What should we do now ??

If this secret of ours is revealed then both of us need to face the society's wrath and what about our family ? what would they think of us? Dashain is near and it's a compulsion for family members to meet but both of us also fear that our secret will

have serious consequences, please show us the way friends ! What should we do?
Our future is in your hand?
A friend from Palpa

Youth in Transitional Phase

“SSMK! My son is returnee Maoist combatant. There is no provision for his future and for that what shall I do and where shall I go? Please let me know.”⁹

Young people write to SSMK about ‘Peace and reconciliation’ !

Dear friends,

It’s natural to dream and everyone dreams big ! I too had so many dreams but today as I write I feel that one decision that I took has crashed all the dreams that I dreamt of.

I followed my instinct and blindly joined the then People’s liberation Army. As I became a part of the war I slowly started regretting joining the rebel army as I craved to go back to my village and continue my studies again. Therefore, I decided to leave the rebel army and go back to my village. But back home the situation had changed; the villagers threw jibes and sneered at me and everywhere I went I could see pensive hatred in the villagers eyes simply because I was once a ‘Maoist combatant’. But the villagers jibes and hatred is nothing compared to the hatred my own father and my brother; as in their eyes I am nothing but a disgrace.

I am helpless friends ! I do not have any job and due to my low economic condition I can’t even go abroad to work. So please tell me friends what should I do I can’t live in the shadow of hatred for long.

[\(Letter from a friend from Kavrepalanchowk\)](#)

Namaste friends,

How are you ?

Friends, I want to share a problem with you. I joined the People’s Liberation Army in the year 2005 but later I was disqualified due to my small age. Today, I am back to my village and am living with my family. I have even started going to school again and my school friends have welcomed me with open arms. But my school teachers look at me with suspicion. They treat me differently from others and their behavior really pinches me.

How can I solve this problem friends ?

[\(Letter from a friend from Kapilvastu\)](#)



Dear Friend,

I joined the 'People's liberation army' in the year 2004 and I whole heartedly rendered my services to the ten years long armed conflict in our country. But friends, I had to leave the cantonment camp because of reasons I do not want to disclose. Now that I am at home my family tells me not to go to join the Maoist army but I am in dilemma; I do not know what to do ! I still want to continue being a Guerilla soldier simply because I believe in the Maoist ideology and I believe that we can indeed be free.

Another thing that bugs me is that I am illiterate and if I opt for a life outside the camp then I will not get any opportunity. Therefore, Judging the parameters of my wishes and family pressure ! What should I do ? Should I stay home ? Or should I go to the cantonment camp again ?

[\(A letter from a friend Lalitpur\)](#)

Hello friends,

How are you ?

I was recruited in the Chula Chuli first division camp of the People's Liberation army and there I met 'Sangita'. I was madly in love with her and I even confronted the feelings that I had in store for her. But Sangita displayed her reservation for people belonging to the party. Therefore friends, I left the Maoist army just for her.

But friends, today she seems unperturbed of my presence and even does not reply to the letters that I send her this has further frustrated me and I feel worst.

I am even gripped by a psychological terror as every time I walk in the road I fear that my fellow friends for the People's liberation army will kidnap me and drag me to the camps again.

[\(A letter from a friend from Kashi\)](#)

Dear Friends,

I joined People's Liberation Army without even considering the consequences and I stayed there for about a week. But later they said that I was immature and was returned back to my home.

But one thing has started haunting me 'What if we have a conflict situation again ? what if I am forcibly taken away ? This thought constantly haunts me and with this I feel like abandoning my studies and run away. Friends how can I solve my problem !

[\(A letter from a friend from Tehrathum\)](#)

Dear friends,

Nowadays I feel that my future is very bleak and I cannot have a bright future studying here. Everywhere you go you see political instability, irregular classes, Strikes and other activities hinders our education. Isn't this a serious attack on our dreams of getting good education ?

[\(A letter from a friend from Sunsari\)](#)

Dear friends,

Our country was in conflict at that time and the situation of chaos is still fresh in my mind. How hard I try I simply can't forget the situation then and this thought has always haunted me; I am mentally traumatized and this has also affected my education as I hardly can concentrate in my studies because the picture of conflict is still fresh in my eyes.

[\(A letter from a friend from Sunsari\)](#)

Dear Friends,

Life has been like a vicious circle of problems for me. I understand that as a human being I am entitled to face various obstacles but today I am writing to you because I am in the brick of survival.

During the conflict period a group of youngsters belonging to the Maoist party looted my house and stripped us from our entire belonging. They even took the 'three lakh fifty thousand rupees' being sent by my brother from abroad for my father's treatment, as my father is suffering from a mental disease. But still we did not give up, though my family's financial situation was crumbling I took stand and even left my studies to support my family. But today, the Maoist party has even captured our irrigational land ! when asked for a reason they said I supported a different party therefore I was bound to be punished!

Tell me something friends, Just because I support a different party? Just because I don't support someone's ideology? Does that make me less human ?? When will the politicians learn that their hypocrisy is killing innocent lives ?? We talk about a new Nepal, a new constitution and new hopes but if you witness the pain and anger that we feel at present everyone will know how the politicians have been manipulating our minds because the situation in my village is dreadful ! We want peace and for that I have thought to take on arms ! I will fight because that's how I will get my right ? the power of gun has always been regarded as an immediate change maker so that's what I will do !

Friends, I will get my independence by fighting those who believe in autocracy ! Therefore friends, tell me how long will it take for common people like us to really witness peace ? When will we be entitled to witness the change these politicians speak of?

[\(Letter from a friend from Palpa\)](#)

Listeners' Club Activities

Initiation from listeners associated with listeners club has mobilized different activities which in other hand have enhanced the good environment and unity among community people. Listener from Dumredharapani, Khotang has stated that his club has organized speech competition on health and cleanliness IO. Similarly a listener from Kharigaira, Dailekh associated with Shree Nava Durga Yuva club has written- "In our community, about 65% of people were illiterate. So we are encouraging activities like digging well for drinking water, launching campaign on saving forest and forestation. Likewise we are encouraging the people to construct the road and toilets. We are discouraging the bad habits of taking alcohol and playing cards. Our latest activity would be to conduct cultural program to aware about communicable disease like diarrhea and to aware about cleanliness." 11

Monitoring and evaluating Outreach Activities

During August, outreach activity highlighting importance of zinc tablet at different places of districts like Dadeldhura and Kailali were conducted. Street drama was staged and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted to find peoples' knowledge and understanding on zinc tablet and to garner their views on common practices for diarrhea prevention. Initially people were hesitating to watch street drama but later they were convinced and they watched it. They found the drama very interesting and effective medium to know about zinc tablet. Before training, people were found to share their practice for diarrhea prevention. Those practices were traditional like feeding with liquid rice starch, even some were found to have misconception that the person with diarrhea should not be given water and some were even found to practice witchcraft treatment.

After the drama these people were found to comprehend such ill practice and misconception. They came to understand the importance of zinc tablets, even they were provided with zinc tablet.

Above picture of street drama which was depicting the ill practice of witch craft to treat diarrhea. In the drama lady artist (in the middle sitting in the floor) was acting as mother of child she was holding dummy as a child. A child was suffering from diarrhea and the mother took her child to witch doctor for treatment. So the drama story was to aware people about such taboo and follows the proper way of treatment like using zinc tablets.



Street Drama at Dadheldhura

Top Ten letter Responses dedicated to SSMK program and Team (Voted by EAN members)

Letter 1 :

I like this program very much and I feel that this program has brought a lot of changes in society. The program has brought a change in my friend as well. The change came due to the drama aired last week, she feels encouraged. Her self-confidence has increased after listening to the drama. Like the character from the drama called Neelam, my friend Saru is also visually impaired. Previously, she used to feel very depressed and de-motivated due to her disability and would not listen to me though however I tried to console her. Even when I used to give her examples of exemplary figures like Helen Keller, she never used to be convinced. But when she listened to the ups and downs of the life of the character Neelam in SSMK drama, her frustrations have disappeared. She has built confidence now and says that she wants to contribute for the betterment of other visually impaired people like herself. I would like to thank the SSMK team for bringing that change in my friend. (Received Date : 18th June 2010)

Devika Chamling Rai
Durme-3, Sirubani, Udaypur.

Letter 2 :

Dear friends, due to the influence of your program, my life has changed and I am receiving a lot of love from my family. Earlier, my father used to discourage me to study and used to tell me that I have no use studying as I am a girl. But when I started listening to this program, I talked with my father properly about the importance of my studies. And I also made him listen to SSMK, after which, he encouraged me to go to the school and study. And I was able to join school after that. I wonder how my life would have been if not for this program! (Received Date : 30 July 2009)

Nira Sambahamfe
Ranigau-I, Panchthar
Mehi

Letter 3 :

Saathi Sanga Manka Kura is a very nice radio program. If I ever miss to listen to this program I feel like I missed a very important thing.

I am 18 years old and I am studying in intermediate level. When I was 15 years old I had a crush on a girl and I also wrote her a letter to propose her. I was feeling that she like me too, but she rejected me harshly and tore the letter. I felt devastated, I was feeling like my world has turned dark and didn't even feel like living. At that very time, I listened to SSMK, and then I learned about how to control my emotions and

take charge of my life. After listening to the program, the dark clouds of my heart started disappearing. I thought that if she does not appreciate my love then I should forget her, and started focusing on other things instead. I prioritized my studies and passed SLC exam. Then I realized that the feeling of love at that time was not more important to me than my studies, which will help me become independent. This realization came only because of SSMK. I learned to control my emotions and solve my problems due to SSMK, Thank you. (Received on 27th Feb 2007)

Rudra Bahadur Fagami
Parbat-4, Dhaulagiri

Letter 4 :

I live in a village which is 2 kilometers walk away from the headquarters of Shyanjha district (western Nepal). My village is quite backward where people believe in traditional things and are superstitious. There was a lot of exploitation and people were really into substance abuse. But when this program started airing in our area, there came a drastic change in the behavior of a lot of people in the community. These days, young people, children, old people; everyone takes out an hour's time every Saturday to listen to the program. As this program has helped our whole community to change for better, we all wish for the progress of the program. (Received Date : 7th May 2006)

Mahendra Chettri
Pauwe Gauda-2, Ginchaur
Shyanjha

Letter 5 :

I have been listening to SSMK from the past 1-2 years. The program is really popular among the youths in my village.

Before some time, my grandmother used to scold me when I listened to SSMK saying that the program is vulgar. But now days, she herself enjoys listening to the program and has become a regular listener. She also recommends other people to listen to SSMK. She says that she really likes the drama aired in the program and also information about different diseases.

And I feel that, the issue of life- skills that you talk in the program is really very important and relevant for the Nepali youths. Though I have learned a lot about life-skills from the program, I would like to know more, I hope you will provide me more information.

Rameshwor Paudel
Manu-4, Khatithok
Besi, Tanahu

Letter 6 :

I really liked the drama about HIV that was aired last time. I agree with the host of the program, that both, girl or a boy should do blood test for HIV before getting married. And I think that blood test should not create an environment of distrust among the partners instead, it garners respect and trust. This will ensure the future happiness and a trustful environment in the marital life. I appreciate you talking about such issue. (Received Date : 24th June 2005)

Mina Raskoti

Juthapauwa-1, Sundhara Gau

Palpa

Letter 7 :

I learned a lot from last week's episode. The problem that was raised in that program was same as mine, and listening to it helped me solve my own problem, which made me feel that I can make a contribution to make positive changes in my community. As the program last week was a children's special program, it made me think seriously about the issue. I realized that, we should not scold the children; as such behavior may make a bad impact on them. This was the thing that I had never thought before. (Received Date : 30th Jan 2007)

Naradhawj "Prakhar"

Jogmai-5, Ilam.

Letter 8 :

SSMK is a very popular radio and I like it very much. I finish all my works beforehand so as to listen SSMK on time. When you people fight on the program, sometimes, I get scared that you might not come to host the program next week. While listening to the problems that are send by other friends and your solution of the program, many of my problems have already been solved. Many friends write about the problem with their studies, love life, family problem...then I realize that everyone faces similar kind of problems. (Received Date : 11 August 2006)

Sarita Mainali

Patharkot-9, Dapkali

Sarlahi

Letter 9 :

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for replying be back for the problem that I had send to you. I am very glad to get the letter, stickers, calendar, booklets that you have send me.

And I really appreciate the suggestions that you have given me to solve my problem. I feel like I did not understand many things earlier and now after reading your suggestion my eyes have opened. I will not get married until I complete my studies

and stand on my own feet. I have also convinced my parents about not getting married so soon, after getting suggestion from you. I read out the letter send by you to my parents and so they also understand now. I really could understand so much through the letter and also felt your love towards me. I used to feel that there is no one with whom I can share such problems, but now you have become my friend with whom I can share my heart's feelings. (Received Date : 28th September 2006)

Preeti Kunwar
Waling-10, Thana
Shyanja

Letter 10 :

Friends, I have received the reply to my letter along with the solution to my problem and life-skills booklets. I would like to thank you very much for solving my problem. This program has really inspired me a lot. I have learned about life-skills like self-awareness and maintaining inter-personal relationship from the program and also from the booklets that you send me.

I am very after receiving the letter from you because due to the suggestion provided in it I was able to solve my problem. As I wrote to you previously, that I am having problem with my family members and we always have fights. As suggested by you, I tried to find out the root cause of the problem and also analyzed my own behavior. Then I came to realize that, it was not only my parent's but my mistake as well. I realized that I was not giving proper time to my family and also not expressing myself properly. When I realized that that there are many shortcomings on my end, I worked on improving myself. I started spending more time with my parents and sharing my feeling with them. I used to feel scared of my father, but when I gathered courage and spoke my thoughts clearly, even he was very happy. Now a days, we don't have any such fights in our family, and there is a cordial environment; all thanks to you. If it was not for the support that you provided, I would still be in the same problem. (Received on 30th May 2006)

Bhagwati Rana Magar
Hardineta-8, Dadiwakot
Gulmi, Lumbini.

(Footnotes)

1 Email IDNo-EK442 under category About the program

2 SMS IDNo-8965 under category Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnee Soldiers & Migrants (RRR)

3 Letter IDNo-S171 under category Social Issue- Sanitation

4 Letter IDNo-K172 under category Social Issue- Sanitation