

FACING CONSTRAINTS AND SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

CHILD MARRIAGES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Begumpet, Hyderabad

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Report copies available from
director@cess.ac.in
mahitahyd2002@yahoo.com



CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Nizamiah Observatory Campus, Begumpet, Hyderabad - 500 016, Telangana, India

Phones: 040-23416610-13, 23402789, 23416780, Fax: 040-23406808

E-mail: post@cess.ac.in, Website: www.cess.ac.in

Foreword

Child marriage is a cultural practice deeply embedded into the societal norms. The implications of child marriages are enormous and impacting the health, social and economic wellbeing of the girl children. In addition, it is correlating with high rates of sexual violence and abuse.

Along with Governments at Centre and State, several non-governmental organizations, and activists have committed to end child marriages. Indian government also has taken several initiatives to end child marriages. Recently, the ramifications of child marriage have begun to garner international attention among policymakers and governments. Through research, meetings, and publications, the Centre for Economic and Social Studies has also worked to shed light on this challenging issue from a policy perspective.

With generous support from the Plan International and Mahita, a team from Centre for Economic and Social Studies has conducted a study in selected districts of Andhra Pradesh and deepened our understanding of child marriage in this report. *“Facing Constraints and Seizing Opportunities: Child Marriages in Andhra Pradesh,”* takes a close look at the social, economic, and cultural factors contributing to the practice of child marriages and suggested few advocacy level conclusions and policy implications.

S. GALAB

Director, Centre for Economic and Social Studies

Hyderabad

June 2018

Foresword

Child marriage is one of the manifestations of gender based violence against girls and is a barrier to social and economic development. Although, in the last decade, there has been a significant decline in the prevalence of child marriage in India, few districts of Andhra Pradesh, such as Kurnool, East Godavari, Krishna, Visakhapatnam and Anantapuramu, continue to be above the national average.

While the state government of Andhra Pradesh has taken positive and progressive steps to improve the situation for girls through its innovative development schemes aimed at delaying the age of marriage among girls, there is an urgent need for concerted efforts of all relevant actors to implement the policies and programs aimed at promoting equal rights and opportunities for girls and young women in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

Since 2016, Plan India in partnership with Mahita, under the 'Girls Advocacy Alliance' program in Andhra Pradesh, is working on addressing child marriage through promotion of secondary education for girls and job oriented vocational training for young women by dialoguing with stakeholders including the state government, Civil Society Organizations, Religious and Community Leaders, young girls and the private sector.

It is in this context that Plan India and Mahita commissioned a rapid sample study with the Centre for Economic and Social Studies [CESS], to understand the magnitude of child marriage and areas requiring attention of all stakeholders. This report "Facing Constraints and Seizing Opportunities– Child Marriages in Andhra Pradesh" presents the factors contributing to child marriages, the perceptions of stakeholders on child marriages and recommendations for consideration by the government of Andhra Pradesh to improve situation for girls.

Plan India thanks the Government of Andhra Pradesh, religious and community leaders, Civil Society Organizations and other individuals who shared their knowledge, perspectives and experiences in the course of the study. Plan India also acknowledges and deeply appreciates the effort of CESS in bringing out this report. We also recognize contribution of Mahita in leading this study with CESS.

Plan India believes that the findings and recommendations of this study will direct efforts of the Government of Andhra Pradesh, Communities, CSOs and the Private Sector in providing equal rights and opportunities for girls and young women in Andhra Pradesh.

Mohammed Asif
Director, Program Implementation
Plan India

Foreword

Mahita has been working in the state of Telangana for more than two decades; since then, Mahita emerged as leading grassroots child rights organization in the state of Telangana. Through the years, we have had wide accessibility to communities, government stakeholders, NGOs, INGOs, academic institutions and the larger civil society institutions working in the development sector.

Girls Advocacy Alliance Program was initiated in 2016 both the Telugu states (Telangana and Andhra Pradesh) by Plan India- Mahita to address the gender based violence in the form of child marriages and trafficking while promoting secondary education and job oriented vocational training. The research study, “Facing Constraints and Seizing Opportunities: Child Marriages in Andhra Pradesh” will be crucial in steering the collective efforts in the state of Andhra Pradesh to address the issue of child marriages in the state. We believe that this research will emerge as a guide to our collective effort in achieving ‘Equal Rights and Opportunities for Girls and Young Women’ in both the states.

We are truly grateful to Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad for their efforts in bringing out the study. Our heartfelt thanks to Prof S Galab for guiding the design of the entire research study. We acknowledge the months long efforts of Prof. Vijay and Prof.Prudhvikar towards this quality research study.

We are forever indebted to Plan India for their guidance, encouragement and support in our combined undertaking towards this research study. We are forever indebted to Mr. Asif Mohammed, Director- Program Implementation for his valuable direction to our team especially during the course of the research study.

We express our thanks to Ms. Anita Kumar – Senior Program Manager, Plan India for having conceptualized this study. We are thankful for the consistent and valuable inputs from Mr. Tushar Aanchal – Child Protection Specialist, Mr. Madhu Sagili- Programme Manager- Child Protection and Dr. Shalini Prabhata R- Program Manager- Girls Advocacy Alliance. Special thanks to the Lead Partners and NGOs of the Programme in the Districts for their great support extended. Thanks to the entire Girls Advocacy Alliance Team at Mahita, for their commitment and support during the course of the Research Study.

We are sure that the combined constancy and purpose demonstrated by all of us will surely contribute to the realization of ‘Equal Rights and Opportunities for girls and young women’ in the state of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Ramesh Sekhar Reddy.P
Program Director

Contents

Content	Page
Acknowledgements	7
Abbreviations	8
Executive Summary	9
Section 1: Introduction	17
Section 2: Review of Literature	32
Section 3: Key Findings	45
Section 4: Challenges in Enforcing the POCM, 2006	66
Section 5: Summary and Recommendations	70
Section 6: Tools for Data Collection	76

Acknowledgements

This report is based on the research conducted by Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) with inputs from a wide range of literature available on child marriages. It is a part of the joint initiative of Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA), which is aimed at contributing to equal rights and opportunities for girls and young women and inclusive economic growth in ten countries in Asia and Africa. GAA also focusses on the elimination of violence and economic exclusion of girls and young women, as policy priorities.

The study team from CESS would like to thank the core funders Plan India and Mahita, the collaborating partners in Andhra Pradesh.

Prof. S. Galab, Director, CESS and, and Ms. Anita Kumar, Senior Programme Manager-South, Plan India have conceptualised this report. The lead authors of the report are Prof. S. Vijay Kumar and Dr. P. Prudhvikar Reddy, with analytical support from Dr. P. Usha.

Dr. Shalini Prabhata from Plan India, Mr. Ramesh Reddy, Programme Director, and Ms. Rubina Philip, Manager – Child Protection from Mahita, reviewed numerous drafts and made important inputs.

An initial version of the report was discussed at a couple of internal review meetings in CESS. Participants of these meetings have made many important contributions to the framing and shaping of the report to suit the needs of GAA in Andhra Pradesh.

Mr. Srihari contributed to the data management and analysis. The New Concept contributed to the copyediting of the final report.

A core research team has engaged in data collection and the key respondents are from Department of Women Development and Child Welfare, Senior officials from District Revenue Departments, *mandal* level functionaries from Police, ICDS, and Revenue Departments, *Zilla Samakhya* leaders, representatives from NGOs, civil society, print media, medical practitioners and advocates. At the village level, parents, *panchayat* members, religious leaders, community/caste leaders, school teachers, ICDS workers and health department workers were also cooperated with the research team during the process of data collection.

Abbreviations

ABAD	<i>Apni Beti Apna Dhan</i>
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwifery
AWW	<i>Anganwadi Worker</i>
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CDPO	Child Development Project Officer
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CESS	Centre for Economic and Social Studies
CMRA	Child Marriage Restraint Act
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DCS	Division for Child Studies
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GP	<i>Gram Panchayat</i>
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PCMA	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act
PRI	<i>Panchayat Raj</i> Institution
SHG	Self Help Group
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.
USAIDS	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

Executive Summary

This report is an output of a rapid field study conducted by the Centre for Economic and Social Studies between October 2017 and January 2018 in selected districts of Andhra Pradesh. This report aims to provide Girls Advocacy Alliance with insights and evidence from the field that they can use to shape their policy level advocacy, make philanthropic investments and design programmes focussing on empowering girls and community and ending child marriage. With this roadmap, we believe GAA can make a difference while addressing the issue of child marriages in Andhra Pradesh.

Context:

India is now seeing a transitional period, with the prevalence of child marriage¹ declining from 47 percent girls married before age 18, in 2005-2006 to 27 percent in 2015-2016². While the change is similar with all states showing a declining trend, the prevalence of child marriage continues to be high in some districts. In Andhra Pradesh where, according to NFHS 4, 33 percent of women aged 20-24, were married before the age of 18 years (26.8 percent in urban and 35.7 percent in rural). Similarly, 11.8 percent of the men age 25-29 years married before the age 21 years.

The factors that are contributing to child marriages are complex and interrelated. Understanding the key driving factors is more important to address the issue at policy level. In this process, this study is a part of Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA), a joint initiative of Plan Netherlands, Defence for Children - ECPAT Netherlands and Terre des Hommes Netherlands, which is aimed at contributing to equal rights and opportunities for girls and young women and inclusive economic growth in ten countries in Asia and Africa, with focus on the elimination of violence and economic exclusion of girls and young women, economic exclusion as policy priorities. In India this initiative is led by Plan India in collaboration with Mahita across 6 districts in Telangana and 3 districts in Andhra Pradesh, and Terre des Hommes Netherlands along with Tharuni and Help are implementing the program in 3 districts in TS and 3 districts in Andhra Pradesh.

Centre for Economic and Social Studies, one of the leading research organisations (Indian Council of Social Science Research Institute, Government of India) has executed this rapid study in Andhra Pradesh between October 2017 and May 2018.

¹ According to India Law, child marriage is a marriage where either the woman is below age 18 or the man is below age 21.

² United Nations in India, <http://in.one.un.org/un-press-release/25-million-child-marriages-prevented-last-decade-due-accelerated-progress-according-new-unicef-estimates/>

The core objectives of the study are -

1. Identify the influencers or factors of child marriage within families and communities in the selected districts where child marriages are high and assess the impact of child marriages on child brides;
2. Explore the challenges in enforcing the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006; and
3. Draw positive role models from Administration, CSO's, Religious leaders, Elected Representatives, Communities, Media and Youth networks to address CM (Case Studies) and provide recommendations for advocacy and policy implications based on experiences from Religious leaders, Government officials, Elected representatives, PRI's, Teachers, and Community leaders.

Sample Framework –

The study has drawn its sample from Kurnool, Anantapur, Prakasam, Krishna, and Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh where child marriages are predominantly high. From each sample district, after discussing with the senior staff of Women Development and Child Welfare Department, 35 key informants³ were selected for interview. Using key informant interview schedule, information has been collected from 175 selected key informants at village, *mandal* and district level. Besides, 20 FGD (Focus Group Discussions) were conducted with selected stakeholders⁴ at village level.

Research Methodology –

Using mixed methodology, this study has adopted semi-structured interview schedule to collect information from the selected key informants. In addition, to supplement the information collected during the key respondent interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with the help of structured checklists. Along with FGDs, few case studies were also collected during the study.

³ At Gram Panchayat: Panchayat Secretary, Serpanch, Anganwadi worker, School headmaster/Teacher, Community Leader, SHG member were the KIs. Similarly, at Mandal level: ICDS Supervisor, CDPO, MDO/MRO, Police Sub-inspector and Mandal Samakya Leader; at District level: RDO/Joint Collector, Chairperson CWC, NGO/Chile-Line representative, concerned staff in WDCW department and Zilla Samakya Leaders are the key informants interviewed.

⁴ Parents, representatives of Gram Panchayat, School teachers, Religious leaders, Caste council members/Community leaders, Health and ICDS functionaries, Representatives of SHGs and Youth Clubs.

Results –

Synthesised analysis of the study has brought 25 driving factors into the picture. For the purpose of logical analytics, these 25 driving factors were further classified into four categories – (i) Traditions, social norms and beliefs, (ii) Poverty, (iii) Access to secondary education and (iv) Social pressure. Each of these 25 factors connected to child marriage cannot be examined in isolation. Because each one influences the other factor and is driven by the caste religion, poverty, migration and socioeconomic conditions.

In Andhra Pradesh, it is evident that traditions and social norms, economic insecurity, lack of access to secondary education and social pressure are the primary drivers of child marriages.

In order to protect the ancestral property, strengthen the kinships as well as political power, most of the families prefer the consanguineous marriages. In this context, age of the girl is not much important and the only criteria are biological maturity of the girl. Another factor is pressure from grandparents, which also forces the parents to perform child marriages. In fact, for few communities, for example, in the fishing community, performing child marriage is a routine and customary practice. There are certain social norms, for instance, parents prefer to get their girls married off before their sons. Similarly, the death of a family member must precede a girl's marriage. In such a scenario, the age of the girl is not taken into consideration. There is a belief among the rural communities that the 'higher the education, the higher the dowry'. Due to this, few parents prefer to marry off their girls' as and when they get a suitable bridegroom and they do not want to send their girl children for higher levels of education. If the family has more number of girl children, irrespective of their young age, parents opt for child marriages and want to be free from responsibilities. These are the key driving factors classified under traditions, social norms and beliefs.

The cycle of intergenerational poverty is also contributing to child marriages. Families with economic insecurity (because of no or less dependable income/assets) prefer child marriages. For example, in Anantapur district, where drought is more common, parents from poor families migrate to nearby districts in Karnataka state for livelihoods. In such families, to avoid the risks associated with leaving the young girls behind with grandparents, parents opt for child marriages. If both the parents are illiterate, in general, their awareness levels are low, and they cannot understand the consequences of child marriages. Hence, child marriages are common among such families. This factor is again linked to poverty.

Access to secondary education is another important issue behind the prevalence of child marriages. In specific geographical areas, where secondary education is not accessible, parents do not want to keep girl children for long in the family. Instead of engaging girl children into other household and livelihood activities, parents prefer to get their girl children married. This is also to avoid male harassment within the school, or when girls are commuting to school or workplace. Lack of transportation to reach secondary schooling, lack of or poor sanitation facilities in secondary schools are also driving factors behind child marriages. Sometimes, academic failure of a girl child, negatively influences her aspirations regarding higher education. In such circumstances, she is more likely to drop out of school and alternatively, parents prepare for her marriage.

Sometimes, forces the parents to marry off their children at an early age in order to avoid facing caste councils and punishments. In few cases it appears that social and electronic media also influence both young boys and girls to fall in love and elope. In general, child marriage is a common practice among the families headed by women (single parent families). In addition to poverty, pressure from the community, elders and caste leaders force the single parents to encourage and support child marriage of girl.

A number of factors are now known to contribute to the practice of child marriage, including the civil registration system, the lack of legislative framework and enforcement mechanisms, and the existence of traditional and religious laws that support the practice. An effective implementable legal framework, which is supported by financial resources and enforcement mechanisms, provides a protective framework that ensures a girl's right to decide when and whom to marry. It also provides an enabling and supportive environment that will help to guide advocates and activists to mobilise communities to end child marriage.

A summary of the present study highlights that girls from the poorest and socially disadvantaged backgrounds run the risk of dropping out of school or just stopping education at primary level. Government's initiative to support girls from such categories need to have an implementable plan for potential results.

Recommendations

From the above discussion, one can understand the processes, which operate at the more remote, societal level; structural factors and social norms, interact with more immediate factors, such as household contexts (poverty, migration, culture, beliefs and social norms) and girls' individual development (access to secondary education), and

challenges in enforcing law, thereby leaving the girl child predisposed to the risk of early marriage. keeps the girls at risk. It is therefore in this context, that advocacy with key stakeholders is important. Factors contributing to child marriages at different levels in different life courses need to be taken into consideration.

The implications for policy below, include discussion of possible ways to alleviate and counter some of the societal factors that exacerbate gendered disadvantages during adolescence, and measures to help build the capacity of individuals and families to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

From this study, the following few advocacy points have emerged: –

1. Grandparents and parents were found to have a significantly higher say in deciding upon the child marriages. Sometimes religious leaders, and community leaders also play an influential role. Advocacy needs to start from this point by sensitising them on various consequences of child marriages as well as laws and legal implications associated with child marriages in Andhra Pradesh.
2. The authorities need to invest in accessible, girl-friendly and high-quality secondary education to assist and encourage girls to stay in school for longer. Quality of teaching and quality of school environment is more important.
3. Improved access to economic opportunities for young women, so that staying in school and delaying marriage are more worthwhile for girls and their families.
4. Strong and comprehensive social protection systems and support for the poorest households- since poverty is the major factor pushing many families to opt for child marriages.
5. Conditional cash transfers – one of the best options to support the poor families to keep their girl children longer in schools, and support the family in adverse economic conditions.
6. Effective interventions with communities and families (including boys and men) to address social norms and to reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence.
7. Encouraging female role models so that girls and their families can envisage positive alternatives to child marriage

At the policy level, the following key policy points need to be considered-

Law and enforcement mechanism alone cannot help in stopping child marriages. Such practice is often supported by religious leaders, community leaders, caste councils and elders (patriarchal superiors) in the family. Along with strengthening the enforcement mechanism, it is more important to strengthen specific entitlements to address poverty, social norms, traditions and social pressures, which are major factors pushing parents towards child marriages. Following are the policy level factors to be considered:

1. Improve access to quality education and other vocational opportunities. It is essential to increase the number of KGBVs considering the positive impact of this programme in retention and improvement of girl child education. Promote schools as learning environment for girls. Along with this, increase the educational opportunities through scholarships.
2. Extend free and compulsory education up to the age of 18 years, particularly considering the fact that every drop out child is at a high risk of early marriages.
3. Skill development is one of the most important factors for the well-being of adolescent girls. Such initiatives will help in stopping child marriages.
4. Initiate programmes to enable community mobilisation and outreach to change social norms and attitudes of the community. Raising community awareness is crucial in bringing attitudinal change among parents, caste leaders and religious leaders. Involving and improving the capacities of PRIs, community leaders and religious leaders makes a difference towards prevention of child marriages at grass root level. It also imparts strength to the enforcement mechanism.
5. In order to collect data on child marriages, initiate research to create awareness about programmes and interventions. Improvement in systematic data collection, compilation and analysis is important to strengthen the data bank on child marriages. It is also important to initiate evaluations on a regular basis to inform the policymakers.
6. Develop monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring outcomes.
7. Improve systematic coordination, communication and monitoring among those involved in the implementation.
8. CMPOs and Police must be involved for developing state level intervention strategies, effective implementation of PCMA and delivery of services that pre-empt the incidence of child marriages.

9. Develop mechanisms of sharing responsibility of preventing child marriages among different functionaries/structures (PRIs, ULBs, School, PHC, AWC, VO etc.) at the community level and build their motivation and capacities to effectively deliver the desired results.
10. Bring about a convergence between enforcement mechanism and organisations working towards ending child marriages and ensure the well-being of girl children. In this context, interdisciplinary coordination with specific responsibilities needs to be laid down.
11. To enforce PCMA 2006 and related laws and policies that can discourage child marriage. The effective implementation of this Act can adopt and enforce state specific rules, improve the capacity of the enforcement machinery, it is important to raise the community level awareness about the Act. .

Specific Policy Implications

There are quite a few specific driving factors that are prevailing in the districts. Such factors have to be considered when advocacy planning takes place and action plans are formulated. For example –

1. Consanguineous marriages to protect ancestral property and consolidating and strengthening kinship are more common across all sample districts in Andhra Pradesh. To justify such practice, parents and community present religious justification and try to pass it off as a customary practice which must be followed. All upper castes are practicing consanguineous marriages and sometimes child marriages are taking place under this umbrella. This needs special focus.
2. It evident that socially disadvantaged communities for example Scheduled Castes are performing child marriages under religious belief and opting for devoting young girls to village deities, which ultimately leads to child marriage. This practice is known as the '*devadas*' practice; (locally called as *mathamas/jogins*) a system still in practice in remote parts of Kurnool and Anantapur district.
3. In Anantapur district, poor families who are under the debt trap, are searching for wealthy families from neighbouring Karnataka state that can offer reverse dowry (locally known as *Kanyasulakam*) during marriage. Irrespective of the age of the girl, parents are performing child marriages if they get good

match from better-off families. Drought is a major cause for parents to opt for such practices and due to drought poor families migrate to other states. During such period, parents are keen to ensure better security and food for their girl children at their in-laws family. Such system is also evident in Krishna district. In this context, it is important to focus on providing social security mechanisms, such as conditional cash transfers.

4. Social norms and beliefs are also encouraging child marriages. For instance, biological maturity of the girl is the sign for marriage in most of the socially disadvantaged communities, such as fisherman community in Visakhapatnam, Yadav/Golla and Kuraba caste groups are also following such practice. These communities celebrate en-masse child marriages during public festivals like *jatharas* where caste councils play a very strong role, commanding the families under social norm umbrella. In this context, separate action plan is required where both enforcement mechanism and awareness campaigns have to work together.

In conclusion, a specific policy and programmatic actions are needed to stop child marriage and its far-reaching adverse consequences. It is important for parents and communities at large to change their attitudes to the issue of early marriage and rather extend opportunities for childhood learning and education by keeping girls in school for more number of years. The role of Government and civil society organisations is important to address this issue. They work closely together, design action plan that is implementable and aims to address different driving factors of child marriages.

Section 1

Introduction

International conventions prohibit child marriage and define eighteen as the age of adulthood. These laws are based on the argument that children and adolescents are not mature enough to make choices about marriage, and that marrying too young can lead to lasting emotional, physical, and psychological harm. Moreover, development experts say child marriage stunts girls' educational opportunities and income-earning prospects, and perpetuate poverty in communities worldwide, inhibiting progress toward national and global development goals and threatening stability. Delaying the age of marriage and investing in girl's futures, they say, can have a multiplier effect that benefits the communities at large⁵.

Child marriage is a traditional practice that is embedded into the social life of many communities and continues to harm the lives and stunts the futures of millions of girls around the world. Research shows that child marriage results in reduced schooling, impacts health, limiting a girl's economic potential, correlated with high rates of sexual violence and abuse, and with higher rates of maternal and infant mortality⁶.

Child marriage transcends regional and cultural boundaries. Across developing countries, an estimated one in three girls is married before turning eighteen, and one in nine before fifteen. Analysts project that if current trends continue, 142 million girls will marry before adulthood within this decade. The practice persists to varying degrees around the globe. The highest prevalence rates, commonly measured by the percentage of women aged twenty to twenty-four who report being married before eighteen, are found in South Asia and West and Central Africa, where an estimated two out of five girls are married as children. However, in terms of absolute numbers, India surpasses other countries by a wide margin; about 40 percent of all child marriages take place there⁷.

⁵ Council on Foreign Relations – CFR Info Guide on Child Marriages https://www.cfr.org/interactives/child-marriage?cid=otr_marketing_use-child_marriage_Infoguide%2523!/#/

⁶ Ibid ⁷ Ibid

Surveys of child brides conducted by the United Nations and many non-governmental agencies paint a broad demographic portrait of young married girls:

- Girls from rural areas are twice as likely to marry as children as those from urban areas.
- Child brides are most likely to be from poor families. Across many countries, young married girls are most often from the poorest quintile of the income bracket.
- Married girls are generally less educated, either for lack of opportunity or the curtailment of their schooling by early marriage.

In some countries, disparities in the prevalence of child marriage also lie along religious, ethnic, or regional lines⁸.

Prevalence

Child marriage is a violation of human rights; but is all too common – says UNICEF. Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights. Many factors come into play to place a girl at risk of child marriage; these including poverty, family honour, social norms, customary or religious laws that condone the practice, an inadequate legislative framework and the state of a country's civil registration system and the perception that marriage will provide 'protection'. Child marriage often compromises a girl's development by resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupting her schooling, limiting her opportunities for career and vocational advancement and placing her at an increased risk of domestic violence. Child marriage also affects boys, but to a lesser degree than they affect girls¹⁰.

Several government and non-government interventions have worked towards preventing child marriages in India. The data trends shown by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) indicate a fall of approximately 9 percentage points in child marriage, nationally between 1993 and 2006¹¹. The mean age at marriage has increased from 19.3 years in 1990 to 21.2 in 2011¹², and falling rates of child marriage can be seen across the whole country. Nevertheless, the volume of child marriages taking

⁸ Ibid ⁹ UNICEF Data: Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women (2018) <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/#>

¹⁰ Ibid ¹¹ UNICEF (2011b) The Situation of Children in India: A Prole, New Delhi: UNICEF

¹² Census of India (2011) Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2011, Report 1 of 2013, New Delhi: Government of India

place each year remains extraordinarily high and declining prevalence rates should not distract attention from what is still a substantial problem. The Indian population is increasing year after year and so rapid declines in prevalence rates are not necessarily recognisable when viewed in terms of absolute numbers. Indeed, by far the largest numbers of child marriages take place in India compared to any other country in the world¹³.

The incidence of child marriage is inequitably spread geographically and across different social groups, impacted by factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, caste, religion and education. There is a stark difference, for instance, in the prevalence of child marriage between girls and boys, with 19 percent of girls aged 15–17 and only 7 percent of boys aged 15–20 married at the time of NFHS-3, in 2005-06¹⁴. This is still a large number of boys and they are not immune to many of the risks, which accompany child marriage, including those entailing limitations to education and livelihood opportunities. However, girls commonly experience greater risk because of the link between child marriage and early pregnancy and child-bearing, as well as through increased vulnerability of these young brides to abuse in the marital household¹⁵.

Child marriage has long been associated with early child-bearing and similar statistical trend in the teenage birth rate as in rates of child marriage¹⁶. The pregnancy rate among girls under 18, has declined by 21 percent between 1998 and 2006 according to the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data. Yet the number of women aged 20–24 who will have given birth before the age of 18 is projected to increase by 1 million between 2010 and 2030¹⁷. Since pregnancy often follows marriage, it is the same girls who are at greatest risk of both. In 2005-06, rural girls were found to be twice as likely as urban girls to have given birth by the age of 18, 'less educated young women, those belonging to the most economically disadvantaged households and those belonging to Scheduled Tribes [were] more likely than others to have given birth before they were 18 years of age'¹⁸.

¹³ JennifreeRoest (2016) Child Marriages and Early Child-bearing in India: Risk Factors and Policy Implications. Young Lives Policy Paper 10, <https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/www.younglives.org.uk/files/YL-PolicyPaper-10-Sep16.pdf>

¹⁴ Parasuraman, Sulabha, SunitaKishor, Shri Kant Singh and Y. Vaidehi (2009) A Prole of Youth in India, National Family Health Survey (NFHS- 3), India, 2005-06, Mumbai and Calverton, MD: International Institute for Population Sciences and ICF Macro

¹⁵ JennifreeRoest (2016) Child Marriages and Early Child-bearing in India: Risk Factors and Policy Implications. Young Lives Policy Paper 10,

¹⁶ Ibid ¹⁷ Edilberto, Loaiza and Liang Mengjia (2013) Adolescent Pregnancy: A Review of the Evidence, New York: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

¹⁸ Santhya, K.G. and Shireen J. Jejeebhoy (2012) 'The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Young People in India: A Review of the Situation', New Delhi: Population Council

Similarly, it is the girls who are least educated, poorest, from rural areas and from marginalised social groups who are most likely to get married by 18. The median age at marriage for girls from marginalised social groups was found to be two years earlier than for those belonging to other social groups – 16.5 among girls from the Scheduled Castes, 16.7 for those among Scheduled Tribes and 16.8 for those among Other Backward Classes, as opposed to 18.7 among other, less marginalised groups – according to NFHS data from 2005-06¹⁹.

Census data of the year 2011 reveals substantial variance in rates of child marriage between states; the percentage of females ‘effectively married’ before 18 was at its lowest, at 0.3 percent, in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir, and at its highest, at 7.8 percent, in West Bengal. United Andhra Pradesh had the ninth-highest number of people who were married as children in 2011, though the percentage of those effectively married before 18 was only marginally higher than the national average, at 4 percent²⁰.

Differences in prevalence between states are smaller in many cases than between urban and rural sites within the same state. NFHS-4 data from 2015-16 reports that in Andhra Pradesh 33 percent of women aged 20–24 were married before the age of 18. Similarly, 15.8 percent of men aged 25-29 years married before 21 years.²¹

Table 1 shows these disparities, alongside similar trends observed in the figures for early child-bearing.

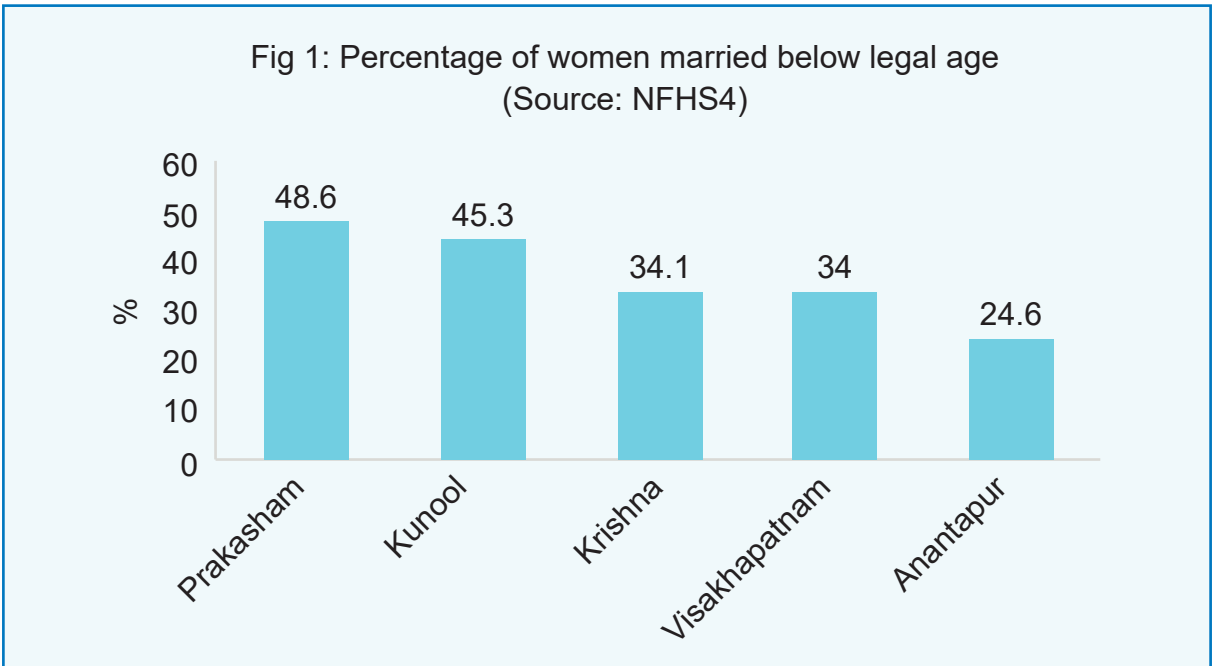
Table 1: State-level data on prevalence of child marriage in urban and rural areas of Andhra Pradesh			
Indicator	Total	Urban	Rural
Women aged 20–24 years married before age 18 years (%)	33.0	26.8	35.7
Men age 25-29 years married before age 21 years (%)	15.8	9.3	18.9
Women aged 15–19 years who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey (%)	11.8	8.8	13.2
<i>Source:</i> NFHS 4 (2015-16)			

¹⁹ UNICEF (2012) Child Marriage in India: An Analysis of Available Data (2012), New Delhi: UNICEF

²⁰ Census of India (2011) Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2011, Report 1 of 2013, New Delhi: Government of India

²¹ IIPS (2016a) ‘National Family Health Survey-4, 2015-16, State Fact Sheet: Andhra Pradesh & Telangana’, Mumbai: International Institute for Population Sciences and Government of India

Within Andhra Pradesh, NFHS 4 data says that highest percentage of women below legal age of marriage²² is from rural areas of Prakasam (46.6%), Kurnool (44.5%), Krishna (35.9%), Visakhapatnam (35.5%), and Anantapur (26.8%) districts (**Fig 1**).



Legislations

India has ratified international human rights conventions – Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Besides, it has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). India’s national legislative framework has contained a law prescribing a minimum age of marriage since 1929. The Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) (also known as the ‘Sarda Act’) originally prohibited the marriage of girls below the age of 15 and boys below the age of 18, though by 1978, this had been increased to 18 for girls and 21 for boys²³.

There were challenges associated with the CMRA, including that it was ‘considered to be ineffectual and its implementation weak’, resulting in only a small number of

²² Child marriage can be defined as a marriage solemnised between two people where the female is below the age of 18 years, and the male is below the age of 21 years.

²³ JennifreeRoest (2016) Child Marriages and Early Child-bearing in India: Risk Factors and Policy Implications. Young Lives Policy Paper 10, <https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/www.younglives.org.uk/files/YL-PolicyPaper-10-Sep16.pdf>

prosecutions each year²⁴. Considering the concerns of the Muslim population, resulted in its supersession by the Muslim Personal Law Application Act of 1937, which allowed for parental or guardian consent for Muslim marriages with no minimum age limit²⁵.

It was in 2006, that the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) replaced the CMRA, which prohibits child marriages, but also allows for the annulment of any such marriage, with petitions accepted up to two years after the child reaches his/her majority (i.e. up to 20 years old for girls and 23 years old for boys). The Act also augments the punishment for any adult male who enters into marriage with a child, increasing the sentencing options to up to two years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 1 lakh. Similar sentences are prescribed for those who perform, conduct, direct, abet or solemnise a child marriage. However, the law retains the same definition of child marriage – for girls under 18 and for boys below 21 – and implementation has again been described as weak, with only 280 and 222 cases registered nationally, in 2014 and 2013 respectively²⁶.

Registration of marriage has been made compulsory under different Acts– The Christian Marriage Act of 1872, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1936, and the Special Marriage Act of 1954, has brought a mandate of registration of marriages. Even though this was relaxed for Hindu marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, it was in 2006, the Supreme Court directed all State Governments to create and implement rules regarding the compulsory registration of all marriages, regardless of religion, in order to improve the enforcement of the prohibition on child marriage. The Supreme Court's landmark ruling criminalising sex with a minor even within marriage forms part of a solid legal framework²⁸.

National policies

There are few national policies that are aimed at reducing child marriage and early child-bearing. The summaries of these policies are as follows (**Table 2**)²⁹ –

²⁴ UNICEF (2011a) 'Desk Review of Child Marriage', <http://www.khubmarriage18.org/sites/default/files/18.pdf> (accessed 13 July 2016)

²⁵ *Ibid* ²⁶ *Ibid* ²⁷ MWCD (Ministry of Women and Child Development) (2011) *India: Third and Fourth Combined Periodic Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, New Delhi: Government of India

²⁸ A two Judge Bench of Supreme Court held that sexual intercourse with minor (below 18 years) wife is rape. "we are left with absolutely no other option but to harmonise the system of laws relating to children and require Exception 2 to Section 375 o... Read more at: <http://www.livelaw.in/breaking-sex-minor-wife-rape-police-can-register-case-wifes-complaint-sc-reads-exception-2-s-375-ipc/>

²⁹ Jennifer Roest (2016) *Child Marriages and Early Child-bearing in India: Risk Factors and Policy Implications*. Young Lives Policy Paper 10

Table 2: National policies (relevant to child marriages in India)

Policy	Relevance to child marriage/early child-bearing
National Population Policy, 2000	Aims to achieve 100 percent registration of births, deaths, marriage and pregnancies by 2010.
National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001	Conceived to introduce interventions and special programmes to encourage delaying the age of marriage so that by 2010 child marriage is eliminated.
The National Youth Policy, 2003, and the more recent National Youth Policy, 2014	Emphasises the multiple needs of the young and identifies 11 priority areas and multi-pronged actions with special strategies to address the needs of adolescents in a holistic manner.
National Plan of Action for Children, 2005	Aims to achieve 100 percent registration of births, deaths, marriages and pregnancies by 2010, elimination of child marriages by 2010, and stopping the sale of children and all forms of child trafficking, including for marriage.
India's Eleventh and Twelfth Five-Year Plans	The Eleventh Five-Year Plan included a focus on the 'compulsory registration of marriages and verification of age at the time of marriage', and the Twelfth proposed a Girl Child Specific District Plan of Action towards 'advancing rights of the Girl Child with measurable outcomes on increased CSR [child sex ratio] and age at marriage', particularly for districts with a low CSR and a high incidence of child marriages.
Draft National Strategy Document on the Prevention of Child Marriage (2013)	Identifies strategic areas of intervention, including law enforcement, access to quality education and other opportunities, changing mindsets and social norms, the empowerment of adolescents, knowledge and data management and the development of monitor able indicators.
<i>Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao</i> Scheme (2015)	Aims to improve the Child Sex Ratio in 100 Gender Critical Districts, the imbalance of which exacerbates the buying of young brides in some states. It also aims to address the 'patriarchal mindset' to ensure gender equality for girls, as well as to increase access to education and improve the participation of girls at 'all levels of social, economic and political leadership'.

Table 2: National policies (relevant to child marriages in India)

Policy	Relevance to child marriage/early child-bearing
Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2015)	Identifies increasing the participation of women in the labor force as key to improving the economic growth of the country. Includes provisions regarding the delivery of skills training to out-of-school children, adolescent girls, housewives and rural young people.
Other laws that include provisions relating to child marriage and/or to adolescent sexual and reproductive health include Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act) of 2000 and its subsequent Amendment Act of 2006; the Indian Penal Code (and Amendment of 2013); the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005; the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 (and Amendment of 2002); the Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse Act, 2013; the National Commission for Women Act, 1990; the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA); and the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.	

Significance of Present Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the driving factors influencing child marriages in Andhra Pradesh and also to know the suggestions of different stakeholders. Ultimately, the results of the study will help in drafting the advocacy plan. Mahita, one of the leading non-governmental organisations working on child rights, is going to use the outputs of this study and design advocacy plan in collaboration with Plan India.

Core Objectives

- i. Identify the influencers or factors of child marriage³⁰ within families and communities in the selected districts where child marriages are high,
 - a. Assess the impact of child marriages on child brides (Eg. physical and mental health, socioeconomic etc.),
- ii. Explore the challenges in enforcing the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.
 - b. Draw positive role models from Administration, CSO's, Religious leaders, Elected Representatives, Communities, Media and Youth networks to address CM. (Case Studies),

³⁰This report uses the term "Child Marriage" adopting PCMA 2006 definition – "child means a person who, if a male, has not completed twenty-one years of age, and if a female, has not completed eighteen years of age"

- iii. Provide recommendations for advocacy and policy implications.
 - b. Recommendations based on experiences from religious leaders, government officials, elected representatives, PRI's, teachers, and community leaders.

Research Design

Going with the objectives, present study focused on obtaining in-depth, qualitative information on the underlying social, cultural and economic factors that are influencing and sustaining the practice of child marriage in the selected districts of Andhra Pradesh. The qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate because of the variety of questions used under investigation. By collecting data from different contexts and different respondent groups, the research was designed to acquire a cumulative view and information that is as valid, reliable and objective as possible.

The appropriateness and relevance of this approach was monitored throughout the research process, right from training of the researchers, subsequent collection of primary data at village, *mandal* and district levels. Data collection was also facilitated by the preliminary data analysis to confirm that tools and recording formats were functioning well and implemented appropriately.

Literature review: Various archival material such as government and NGO assessments, reports, ethnographic and other academic research, project needs assessments and evaluations were reviewed at the initial stages of the study to understand child marriage related factors, manifestations, interpretations and interventions, across the countries where child marriages are prominent issue. The synthesised review has been presented in this section of the report.

Key Informant Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person by the researchers at the village, mandal and district level with key informants. Each interview has taken approximately 2 hours.

Focus Group Discussions: Following the interviews of the key respondents, FGDs were conducted with selected members of the communities where data was collected using checklists. Each FGD has taken approximately 2 to 3 hours.

Tools Development

Soon after analysing the literature, semi-structured questionnaires and checklists were drafted and tested in the field. Based on feedback, it was improved to a large extent and presented in a couple of internal meetings as well as to the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). On TAGs approval, field teams started data collection in the selected districts. Data collection was guided by Standard Operating Procedures. In this context, a team of trained researchers was recruited and oriented on the tools and SOPs.

Research Location

Based on discussions with the senior staff in line with the available information on child marriages from Women Development and Child Welfare Department at the district level, selection of the districts, *mandal* and villages were drawn. Accordingly, five districts were selected for the study from Andhra Pradesh -Kurnool, Anantapur, Prakasam, Krishna, and Visakhapatnam (See **Table 3**).

S. No	District	Mandal	Village
1	Kurnool	1. Yemmiganoor	1. Sooganur 2. Kotekallu
		2. Betamcherla	1. Bugganapalli 2. Hussenapuram
2	Anantapur	1. Rayadurgam	1. Gollaladoddi 2. Gonabavi
		2. Lepakshi	1. Menepalli 2. Sirivaram
3	Prakasam	1. Podili	1. Kambhalapadu 2. Mallavaram
		2. Konakanamitla	1. RegumaniPalle 2. GotlaGutta

Table 3: Geographical locations (District, Mandal and Villages Covered)

S. No	District	Mandal	Village
4	Krishna	1. Vijayawada urban	1. New Raja RajeswariPeta 2. Prakasam Nagar
		2. Nagayalanka	1. Nagayalanka 2. Talagadadeevi
5	Visakapatnam	1. Kasim Kota	1. Kasim Kota 2. Kothapalli
		2. Beemilipatnam	1. Amanam 2. R. Thallavalasa

From each district two *mandals* (again where number of child marriages were observed) and from each *mandal* two villages were covered during the study. The selection *mandals* and villages was done in consultation with District Women and Child Welfare Department in each district.

The process of sample selection:

Step 1: Key informant interviews with key stakeholders in selected districts with district level officials and NGOs/Civil Society Representatives including media. Along with required information on influencing factors behind child marriages, data has been collected about *mandals* (including villages) where child marriages occurred in the past 2 to 3 years.

Step 2: Based on the information available from step 1, two high priority *mandals* (with high prevalence of child marriages) were selected for one-on-one interviews with *mandal* level officials. During this stage, villages with history of child marriage were listed out.

Step 3: With available data, two villages were selected for FGDs with parents, community leaders, religious leaders and with other key appropriate stakeholders.

Data/information collected through one-on-one interviews and FGDs was analysed and formatted into the interpretation matrix.

Sample covered during the study

As explained earlier, this study has interviewed 175 key informants at various stages (district, *mandal* and village level). Similarly, 20 FGDs were conducted with selected stakeholders (**Table 4**).

Table 4: Sample Frame

S. No	District	District level Key Respondent interviews (5X1=5)	Mandal Level Key Respondent Interviews (2X5=10)	Village level Key Respondent interviews (4X5=20)	Total	Village level FGDs (4X1=4)
1	Kurnool	5	10	20	35	4
2	Ananthapur	5	10	20	35	4
3	Prakasam	5	10	20	35	4
4	Krishna	5	10	20	35	4
5	Visakhapatnam	5	10	20	35	4
	Total	25	50	100	175	20
	In %	14 %	29 %	57 %	100%	

Study Methods

A total of 100 one-on-one interviews were conducted with key informants across five districts. Of this 57 percent at village level, 29 percent at *mandal* level and rest 14 percent at district were conducted. In addition, 20 participatory Focus Group Discussions were also conducted in five districts. In spite of possible efforts to bring representatives from households, a few turned up. This is mainly because of sensitivity of the topic and most of the households declined to respond.

List of Key Informants

Given the importance of key objectives and study requirements, it has been decided to meet the following persons and conduct key respondent interviews as well as FGDs (Table 5).

Table 5: List of Key Informants and Active Participants			
S.No	Geographical classification	Respondents & Number	Tools used during the interviews
1	Village (n.20)	Panchayat Secretary (n.20) Anganwadi Worker (n.20) School Headmaster (n.20) Community Leader (n.20) SHG representative (n.20)	Questionnaire & FGDs
2	<i>Mandal</i> (n.10))	ICDS Supervisor (n.10) CDPO (n.10) MDO/MRO (n.10) Police Sub-Inspector (n.10) <i>Mandal</i> <i>Samakhya</i> Leader (n. 10)	Questionnaire

Table 5: List of Key Informants and Active Participants

S.No	Geographical classification	Respondents & Number	Tools used during the interviews
3	District (n.5)	RDO/Joint Collector (n.5) CWC chairman (n.5) Leader – <i>Zilla Samakhya</i> (n.5) NGO representative (n.5) (Child line) Media representative (n.5) Senior staff of WD&CW (n.5) Advocate (n.3) Medical Practitioner (n.2)	Questionnaire
4	FGDs (4 FGDs per district)	Parents, Community leaders, Religious leaders, School teachers, ANMs AWWs <i>Panchayat</i> representatives Panchayat representatives	Checklist
	Districts	Total number of FGDs	Total number of active participants
	Kurnool	4	34
	Anantapur	4	36
	Prakasam	4	30
	Krishna	4	40
	Visakhapatnam	4	34
	Total	20	176

Limitations

The representatives conducting this study have not met with the families where child marriages were performed. Similarly, no interviews were conducted with the children who got married before 18 years of age. This is mainly because of the time and budget constraints. However, representatives conducting the study tried their best and collected few case studies from stakeholders.

How this report is organised

This report presents a summary of the empirical evidence on driving factors surrounding child marriage in selected districts of Andhra Pradesh -using data drawn from interviews of key informants and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). It also provides a glimpse into the synthesised review of literature to understand what are the best practices to address the issue of child marriages. In a larger part of the literature, synthesis has been drawn from Gayle and Lynn report on *Child Brides, Global Consequences – How to end Child Marriages*³¹.

Section 1: Briefly describes the context, prevalence, legislations, national policies and facts and figures related to child marriages. It also explains the research methods and sample frame chosen for the study.

Section 2: Summarises the literature, specifically on strategies to end child marriages. Roughly 47 documents, including research reports, policy briefs, and data from Indian Census has been analysed and synthesised. This description will give a summary of various strategies followed in different countries, including in India to address the issue of child marriages.

Section 3: This is the core section, with analytics to know the driving factors behind child marriages in selected districts of Andhra Pradesh. Analysis in this section is drawn from the interviews of key respondents, as well as from FGDs.

Section 4: Focus of the challenges, as informed by the key stakeholders (implementers) in enforcing the POCM Act, 2006.

Section 5: Concludes the findings and recommends the next steps.

Section 6: Includes the tools used in the study.

³¹ Gayle Tzemach Lemmon Lynn S. ElHarake (2014) *Child Brides, Global Consequences - How to End Child Marriage*, Council on Foreign Relations.

Section 2

Review of Literature

Many scholars and national and international organisation have conducted research to find out the factors and drivers of child marriages and later consequences. This report has made an attempt to synthesise focussed literature on the strategies for ending child marriages. This will help to understand different strategies and an advocacy note can be drafted on the basis of the outcomes of this study.

Strategies for Ending Child Marriage

There are few strategies that are adopted in different countries, including in India to end the menace of child marriages. Of these, promoting girls' education, economically empowering girls, shifting social norms, changing behaviour of community and its perceptions, involving religious and culture leaders, working with men and boys, and strengthening the legal framework are cited as best working examples. This section focussed on these strategies and mostly reviewed the literature from different sources, including large volumes of content from documents from Council on Foreign relations and the summary is as follows:

Promoting girls' education

The message from UN Secretary-General Ban, during the International Day of the Girl Child, highlighting 'education' as one of the most effective paths to curbing early marriage. Ban stated, "*Education for girls is one of the best strategies for protecting girls against child marriage. When they are able to stay in school and avoid being married early, girls can build a foundation for a better life for themselves and their families*³²."

Several studies have examined the link between education and child marriage. For example, study of several West African countries using data from the 1990s and a recent study using data from 2006, from Nigeria, revealed that child marriage accounts

³² Ibid .

for 15 to 20 percent of school dropouts. Studies in Bangladesh concluded that each additional year of delay in age of marriage boosted schooling by 0.22 years and the likelihood of literacy by 5.6 percentage points³³.

Though further research is needed to understand the relationship between child marriage and secondary education more completely, what is clear is that education increases economic opportunities for women. According to data from the World Bank, each additional year of education beyond the average, boosts women's wages by 10 to 20 percent. Often marriage marks the end of schooling for young brides. Literature indicates that girls with no education are three times more likely to marry or enter into a union before their eighteenth birthday than those who graduate from secondary school or higher education³⁴.

Similarly, girls who complete only primary school are twice as likely to marry before their eighteenth birthday as their peers who obtain a secondary or higher degree. In every region assessed in the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) 2012 *Marrying Too Young* report, child marriage rates were higher for girls who did not reach secondary education levels³⁵. The disparity was greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, where 66 percent of women with no education were married before age eighteen, compared to only 13 percent of those with secondary or higher education³⁶.

In many cases, staying in school is a consequence of parents' decision to postpone age of marriage³⁷. That decision also had a positive spillover: First, when the girl was in school, she was more likely to be viewed by her parents as a child and thus not ready for marriage. Second, schooling allowed girls to meet others similarly interested in education and acquire social networks and skills that helped them to better communicate and negotiate their needs and desires.³⁸

³³ Minh Cong Nguyen and Quentin Wodon, (2008) "Child Marriage and Education: A Major Challenge," http://www.ungei.org/les/Child_Marriage_Edu_Note.pdf.

³⁴ UNFPA, "Marrying Too Young"; World Health Organization, "Child Marriages: 39,000 Every Day."

³⁵ Save the Children, (2004) *State of the World's Mothers*, 2004.

³⁶ UNFPA, "Marrying Too Young"; World Health Organization, "Child Marriages: 39,000 Every Day."

³⁷ Ibid, pp. 34–35. Data gathered from seventy-eight developing countries in which a Demographic and Health Survey or Multiple Indicators Clusters Survey was undertaken over the period from 2000 to 2011. These countries represent close to 60 percent of the population of all developing countries. UNFPA, "Marrying Too Young," pp. 34–35. Data gathered from seventy-eight developing countries in which a Demographic and Health Survey or Multiple Indicators Clusters Survey was undertaken over the period from 2000 to 2011. These countries represent close to 60 percent of the population of all developing countries.

³⁸ Gayle Tzemach Lemmon & Lynn S. ElHarake (2014) *Child Brides, Global Consequences – How to end Child Marriages*, Council on Foreign Relations.

³⁹ Ibid

The correlation between access to girls' education and reduced child marriage rates can be seen through the *Berhane Hewan* programme in Ethiopia⁴⁰. Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. Launched with a pilot programme in 2004, the *Berhane Hewan* programme uses local strategies that protect young girls aged ten to nineteen from early and forced marriage in the Amhara region, where nearly half the girls are married before they turn eighteen⁴¹. The programme also targets adolescent girls in the same age group who are already married or in unions⁴².

The programme was pilot tested in Mosebo village in the Amhara region from 2004 to 2006, with a cohort from Enamirt village serving as the control group. Along with community outreach and awareness efforts, the *Berhane Hewan* pilot focussed on encouraging girls to stay in school. The programme offered options for girls in three different circumstances. Those who were still in school received materials, such as pens, notebooks, and reading material, which supported their continued education. Those who had already left school but expressed interest in reenrolling received the same materials. And girls who had never attended school were placed in mentor-led groups that provided them with non-formal education, livelihood skills, and reproductive health education⁴³.

Prior to the programme's launch, only 71 percent of all girls between the ages of ten and fourteen in the *Berhane Hewan* experimental group in Mosebo had ever been to school. By the end of 2006, 97 percent of girls in this cohort were attending school. Illiteracy also declined. About 45 percent of adolescent girls in Mosebo could not read at the start of the programme, but that number fell to 21 percent, by 2006. Additionally, average years of education rose. There was also significant improvement in the timing of marriage for children exposed to the programme and who fell in the ten and fourteen-year age bracket. These girls were 90 percent less likely to be married before age 15 years, compared to their peers in the control group in Enamirt⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ Annabel Eruklar, "Early Marriage, Marital Relations and Intimate Partner Violence in Ethiopia," *Guttmacher Institute*, volume 39, number 1, March 2013, <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3900613.html>.

⁴¹ The *BerhaneHewan* program is a joint initiative by the Ethiopia Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Amhara Regional Bureau of Youth and Sport.

⁴² UNFPA, "Marrying Too Young," p. 25.

⁴³ Gayle & Lynns, Off cited

⁴⁴ Eruklar and Karei, "Evaluation of *BerhaneHewan*," p. 14.

⁴⁵ ICRW, "Child Marriage and Poverty," 2006, <http://www.icrw.org/les/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Poverty.pdf>.

⁴⁶ UNFPA, "Marrying Too Young," p. 35.

Economically empowering girls and women

Research shows that child marriage is concentrated in the world's poorest countries, and those countries with the lowest gross domestic product per capita usually have the highest child marriage rates. Studies also show that household wealth may affect child marriage rates⁴⁵. An analysis by UNFPA found that more than half of girls in the poorest quintile of households assessed were child brides, more than three times the number in the wealthiest quintile of households. The report cited a “remarkable correspondence between lower rates of child marriage and characteristics commonly associated with higher levels of development such as urban residence, secondary or higher education and wealth.⁴⁶” South Asia shows the greatest wealth disparity, with women aged between twenty and twenty-four in the poorest 20 percent, being four times more likely to be married before eighteen than those in the richest 20 percent⁴⁷.

A combination of social, traditional, and economic pressures leads parents to marry their daughters off before they reach legal age. Many parents believe that finding a husband for their daughter secures her future, especially in times of social instability or fragility⁴⁸. Daughters are sometimes also viewed as economic burdens or commodities.

Additionally, child marriages are seen as a solution for mitigating familial or political disputes, or paying off debts, and customary requirements (e.g., dowries or bride prices) can also influence parents' decisions, especially in communities where families can give a lower dowry for young brides⁴⁹. Finance-based programmes encourage families to delay marrying their daughters. Loans, scholarships, subsidies, and conditional cash transfers (CCTs) are some of the most common incentives, and many focus on keeping girls in school. Other programmes aim to give girls employment opportunities as alternatives to child marriage even beyond schooling. Incentives such as direct and unconditional cash transfers and income-generating activities can help provide girls with additional opportunities that raise their status in families and give them a say with their parents and others to influence marital decisions. A World Bank pilot programme in Malawi found that unconditional cash transfers led to reduced rates of teen pregnancy and early marriage and had the “effect of significantly delaying both⁵⁰.”

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 19. According to Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which provide much of the current country-level child marriage data.

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Sajeda Amin, “Programs to address child marriage: framing the problem,” Population Council: Promoting Healthy, Safe, and Productive Transitions to Adulthood, no. 14, January 2011, http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/TABriefs/14_ChildMarriage.pdf.

⁵⁰ World Bank Group, “Cash or Condition: Evidence from a Cash Transfer Experiment,” March 2010, p. 23, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/3988/WPS5259.txt>.

India – A Case Study on Ending Child Marriage

Child Marriage in India: South Asia has the highest rates of child marriage of any region in the world and India alone accounts for about 40 percent of the world's child brides⁵¹. As family incomes increase and more girls attend school in India, child marriage rates are going down, especially for younger girls. The rate of marriage for girls below the age of 15 is declining more than twice as rapidly as for those marrying below eighteen⁵². But the percentage of women married before their eighteenth birthday remains high⁵³.

A 2012 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report echoed UNFPA's results and found that the median age at marriage in India is inversely related to the household economic condition, with the country's poorest women marrying around five years earlier than women in the same age group in the wealthiest quintile⁵⁴. The study also showed that women who had never been to school married at least three years earlier than their counterparts who had completed primary education.

The Indian government has taken steps to prevent child marriage. The relationship between 'son preference,' education, economic status, and age at marriage, paired with the reality that laws alone do not change social norms, inspired the government of Haryana State to launch a CCT programme in 1994, called *Apni Beti, Apna Dhan* (ABAD), meaning 'our daughter, our wealth'⁵⁵.

The first of its kind in India, ABAD was a pioneer in testing the idea that a girl could be 'revalued' with the help of economic incentives and financial products funded by the state. Implemented from 1994 to 1998, among the state's most disadvantaged families, it later was succeeded by a programme called *Ladli* that was open to all parents, regardless of income.

Through a small payment at birth and a later conditional cash transfer if the daughter reached the age of eighteen unmarried, ABAD provided families with an incentive to embrace the idea of having a daughter, as well as to delay marriage by helping them

⁵¹ Anita Raj, Lotus McDougal, and Melanie L. A. Rusch, (2012) "Changes in Prevalence of Girl Child Marriage in South Asia," JAMA, 307(19): 2027–29, 2012

⁵² UNFPA, "Marrying Too Young."

⁵³ UNICEF (2012) "Child Marriage in India," December 2012, <http://www.unicef.in/documents/childmarriage.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Figure 9, p. 14

⁵⁵ See ICRW, "Evaluating the Power of Conditional Cash Transfers to Delay Marriage in India," <http://www.icrw.org/where-we-work/evaluating-power-conditional-cash-transfers-ccts-delay-marriage-india>.

to lighten other financial 'burdens' associated with having a girl child, such as the cost of wedding clothes and jewellery. The programme aimed to elevate the status of girls by reshaping perceptions of the value of daughters, traditionally viewed as burdens in Indian society, and was initially conceived as a way to change the country's skewed sex ratio.

Through ABAD, the Haryana government gave mothers five hundred rupees (about eleven U.S. dollars) upon the birth of a daughter. Additionally, the government invested around 2,500 rupees in a savings bond under the girl's name. The initial cohort of ABAD participants, enrolled in 1994, reached their eighteenth birthdays in 2012, granting the first opportunity for programme evaluators to assess the effectiveness of this programme in delaying the age of marriage.

Shifting social norms

It is important to recall that ABAD addressed only one piece of the complex social ecosystem in which girls in India, live. Between 1994 and 2014, much has changed. A push for greater awareness by the Indian government means that most families now know that the legal age of marriage in India is eighteen. In some cases, authorities intervene when underage marriage ceremonies are being conducted. In interviews with ABAD programme participants, families cited weddings that were stopped because the bride was under the legal age of eighteen as one of the factors motivating them not to marry off their daughters⁵⁶.

Technology and access to schooling are also changing norms. The Internet and cellular phone technology have connected India to the world in ways that were unheard of, only two decades ago. Access to social media, online Indian media, and global media content means modern and international influences are felt across India, including in rural regions⁵⁷.

Additionally, along with legal norms, enforcement, and technology, the trends regarding girls' education have been largely positive. The number of girls in school is rising and the gender gap in primary education has narrowed. Girls' enrollment at "both the primary and upper primary stages increased sharply" between 1990 and 2006⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Gayle & Lynn, Off cited ⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ A. K. Shiva Kumar and PreetRustagi, (2010) "Elementary Education in India: Progress, Set-backs, and Challenges," Oxfam India, September 2010, <http://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/III.%20Elementary%20Education%20in%20India-Progress,%20Setbacks,%20and%20Challenges.pdf>.

Though parents remain more interested in their sons' educations than their daughters', girls' schooling is becoming increasingly accepted and embraced in many communities. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) found that more than two-thirds of Haryana's girls now are enrolled in secondary schools, compared to less than 50 percent in 2005⁵⁹.

Yet, some recent changes have been far less promising for girls. In 2011, the Indian government census counted 830 girls (aged zero to six) for every 1,000 boys in Haryana, up from 820 a decade earlier, but still significantly lower than the 879 girls for every 1,000 boys counted in 1991⁶⁰. Gender-biased sex selection and the skewed sex ratio in Haryana have an effect on girls' lives. In some communities, the scarcity of girls actually increases the risk that they will be subjected to violence, making some families even more likely to see marriage as a refuge that will guarantee their daughters' safety. As brides of marriageable age become rarer, those few eligible girls who do remain in the community, are increasingly vulnerable to rape and trafficking. These risks also make parents less willing to send their girls to secondary schools and colleges far from their home villages⁶¹.

In India, at the national level, there have been policies that target child marriages through incentives for the families involved. National Population Policy 2004 and the National Youth Policy, 2003⁶², are suggesting few strategies to address the vulnerability of girls in the context of child marriages. For example - provision of non-formal education and vocational training, development of livelihood skills and education and awareness of sexual and reproductive health issues are important while dealing with child marriages. For example, in Rajasthan, the Mamta-Health Institute for Mother and Child started the Action Approach for the Reduction of Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy⁶³, involving youth and strengthening awareness levels on reproductive health information. This was done through the process of community mobilisation and key stakeholders⁶⁴.

On the legal front, the Human Rights Law Network began advocacy and awareness towards sensitising the masses to the prohibition on child marriage with an emphasis on legal literacy. Their efforts effectively culminated in the passage of the Prevention of Child Marriages Act, 2006⁶⁵.

⁵⁹ Gayle & Lynn, Off cited ⁶⁰ Census of India 2011, http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/prov_data_products_haryana.html; Census of India 2001, "Sex Composition of the Population," chapter 6, p. 5, http://censusindia.gov.in/Data_Products/Library/Provisional_Population.

⁶¹ Gayle & Lynns, Off cited ⁶² National Youth Policy, 2003, <http://www.youth-policy.com/Policies/IndiaNATIONALYOUTHPOLICY2003.pdf>

⁶³ http://www.mamta-himc.org/res_list.htm ⁶⁴ Human Rights Law Network http://hrln.org/beta/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=107&Itemid=150

In addition to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, the International Centre for Research on Women initiated a programme called *Apni Beti, Apni Dhan*⁶⁶ (Our Daughter, Our Wealth) in 1994, to study the reason and consequence of child marriage, this was the first of a kind Conditional Cash Transfer programmes aimed at delaying child marriages. The programme provides Rs. 500 to the mother upon the birth of a girl child to cover her post-delivery needs. The government also invests in a Rs. 2, 500 long-term bond in the girl's name which can be cashed for Rs. 25, 000 upon the age of majority; this is provided by the government only if the girl is unmarried⁶⁷.

The Institute of Health Management-Pachod (IHMP) and the ICRW implemented a Life Skills Programme in Maharashtra⁵¹ from 1997 until 2005, specifically targeting adolescent girls, to make them economically stronger, thereby delaying their marriage to after they attain majority. The Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS) implemented a Regional Initiative for Safe Sexual Health by Today's Adolescence in Jharkhand, from 2004 until 2007, focusing on behavioural change communication, incrementing capacity building and promoting awareness of sexual and reproductive health. The programme was particularly successful in delaying the marriage of girls to after majority⁶⁸.

It is against this evolving backdrop in India that the ABAD programme unfolded. With funding from USAID, which wanted to understand the role of conditional cash transfers; ICRW is now on the verge of completing its evaluation of the programme. One of the earliest findings shows that the programme has had a positive effect on girls' education. More girls who participated in the programme stayed in school than those who did not. In its recent report, ICRW stated, "The girls who were beneficiaries attained higher levels of schooling, were more likely to continue their education and less likely to drop out than non-beneficiary girls, controlling for all other factors." Even though families did not receive the cash benefit until the girl turned eighteen, "the knowledge of the protracted benefits clearly influenced their decision to invest in their daughters' education. This is evident not only from the results on schooling but also some of the supplementary findings on the time girls get to study at home and the investment in sending them to a private school⁶⁹."

⁶⁵ Red Elephant Foundation (2013) "Child Marriages in India - An insight into Law and Policy" <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/ForcedMarriage/NGO/TheRedElephantFoundation.pdf>

⁶⁶ ICRW - MOTIVATION TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE- <http://www.icrw.org/media/news/motivation-prevent-child-marriage>.

⁶⁷ ⁶⁸ Red Elephant Foundation (2013) Child Marriages in India -An insight into Law and Policy, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/ForcedMarriage/NGO/TheRedElephantFoundation.pdf>

⁶⁹ Priya Nanda, NitinDatta, and Priya Das, "Impact on Marriage: Program Assessment of Conditional Cash Transfers," ICRW, March 2014, <http://www.icrw.org/publications/impact-marriage-program-assessment-conditional-cash-transfers>.

Changing community behaviour and perception

Although laws and economic incentives can help to make child marriage less appealing for families, they cannot on their own effectively end the practice and provide greater opportunities for all girls. For that, a broader and longer-term mindset evolution around the role of the girl is critical⁷⁰.

Interventions that use community-based behaviour-change strategies can help to promote social change around the perception of girls and women, especially in countries that have yet to set a legal age of marriage⁷¹. In a review of child marriage programmes, ICRW found that interventions that use behaviour-change communications and community mobilisation help to influence traditional perceptions and practices that “encourage or condone child marriage⁷².”

These strategies acknowledge that girls rarely hold the power in their communities to decide when they should marry, and that it is thus important to work with parents and community leaders, such as religious leaders and society elders, who make decisions on the girls’ behalf. Changing attitudes about child marriage is an especially critical intervention in communities where non-state laws dominate and where religious leaders often perform the marriage ceremonies. A more comprehensive strategy will include programmes working with religious leaders and educating men and boys on why delaying age of marriage is beneficial to all. Highlighting these two strategies is not meant to discount other interventions but rather to note two groups that are influential in deciding the future of girls and women in many communities⁷³.

Involvement of religious leaders

Religion is often blamed for the prevalence of child marriage. Notably, however, the practice is not unique to any one faith; in fact, it occurs across religions and regions. For example, in India, where 40 percent of the world’s known child brides reside, child marriage is prevalent among both Muslims and Hindus. In Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, child marriage is practiced by Christians and Muslims alike. An analysis by the International Centre for Research on Women found that what is constant across countries with high child marriage rates is not adherence to one particular faith, but rather factors such as poverty and limited education opportunities for girls⁷⁴.

⁷⁰ Gayle & Lynns, Off cited ⁷¹ Gambia, Equatorial Guinea, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen remain the only four countries with no enforceable law setting the minimum age of marriage. See Vogelstein, *Ending Child Marriage*, p. 10.

⁷² ICRW, “New Insights on Preventing Child Marriage: A Global Analysis of Factors and Programs,” 2007.

⁷³ Gayle & Lynns, Off cited ⁷⁴

Child marriage might not be tied to one faith, but religious leaders still have a crucial role to play in curbing the practice -- particularly because marriages are often ratified as part of a religious ceremony. Working with religious leaders to tackle the scourge of child marriage has proven especially effective, both because these leaders are uniquely influential in their communities and because religious texts and traditions often encourage advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable, including children.

Examples of successful programmes to combat child marriage by engaging religious leaders, abound. In Ethiopia, for example, [Pathfinder International](#) partnered with local faith leaders and government officials to increase awareness about the risks and consequences of early marriage. As part of this programme, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim religious leaders committed to ending child marriage and other harmful traditional practices. In 2005 and 2006, Pathfinder estimated that this initiative prevented more than 14,000 early marriages in the Amhara and Tigray regions of Ethiopia⁷⁵.

In a 2007 review, ICRW found that religion was a significant factor associated with child marriage prevalence⁷⁶. However, there was no *single* single religion associated with the practice across countries; various religions had high rates of child marriage, depending on the country. Because people look to culture and religion to justify child marriage, religious and traditional leaders can be uniquely effective in shifting social and cultural norms away from the practice. They can leverage their networks to lobby for legal reform and use their spiritual influence to encourage followers to change views about sensitive cultural norms, including child marriage⁷⁷.

There are already plenty of religious leaders to get inspiration from, around the world. In Indonesia, female Muslim leaders [issued a fatwa](#) against child marriage and urged the government to raise the age of marriage to 18. Religious leaders in Nepal helped develop the country's national strategy to end child marriage. A few years ago, an inter-religious network also led a public campaign against child marriage. In Zimbabwe, a youth-led organisation worked with youth clubs and schools to identify the right leaders. A Yemeni organisation partnered with the Ministry of Endowment to reach Imams in the region. A community-based organisation in India met with local religious leaders, asking them to identify issues they cared about. Once you have that contact, involve religious leaders in your programme⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ Council on Foreign Relations – Child Marriages and Religion, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/child-marriage-and-religion-0>

⁷⁶ [ibid](#) ⁷⁷ [ibid](#)

⁷⁸ Julie Rialet is Research & Policy Associate at Girls Not Brides, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/can-religious-leaders-best-allies-end-child-marriage/>

Working With Men and Boys

In order to shift attitudes toward child marriage, some initiatives have sought to involve men as decision-makers and boys as future decision-makers, in awareness-raising and outreach campaigns. In many countries where child marriage remains the norm, men serve as the gatekeepers for the women in their families, with fathers, brothers, husbands, and other male figures making most household and communal decisions, often with input from religious leaders. Particularly in communities where child marriage is deeply rooted in religious and cultural traditions, these groups should be included in efforts to prevent and eliminate child marriage if the practice is to be eradicated in regions and among populations where it has proved harder to stop⁷⁹.

The USAID Vision for Action cites the critical role of men in curbing child marriage: “Interventions that involve fathers and religious and traditional leaders broaden understanding of the dangers of child marriage, and the long-term benefits of education and economic opportunities⁸⁰.” Notably, the Vision for Action also prioritises the involvement of boys: “Equally important is reaching out to boys at a young age to encourage equitable gender attitudes and norms so that they can be allies in preventing child marriage and change agents within their communities⁸¹.”

In an effort to mitigate child marriage in Yemen -one of twenty ‘hot spot’ countries -the Safe Age of Marriage programme aimed to alter social norms and community attitudes around child marriage by improving community knowledge of dangers associated with the practice, strengthening local support for extending girls’ education, and working closely with religious and community leaders⁸².

The programme trained twenty male and twenty female volunteer community educators, including religious leaders and midwives— individuals already respected in the community—to conduct outreach educational activities. For example, the community educators were responsible for organising awareness-raising sessions that employed various techniques, such as role-playing, poetry recitations, and small discussion groups, and held these in community spaces, including schools and mosques⁸³.

⁷⁹ Gayle & Lynns, off cited ⁸⁰ USAID, Ending Child Marriage & Meeting the Needs of Married Children: The USAID Vision for Action, October 2012, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACU300.pdf.

⁸¹ Ibid ⁸² UNICEF, The State of the World’s Children 2013, statistical table 9: child protection, 2013, http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/les/Table_9_Stat_Tables_SWCR2013_ENG-LISH.pdf; USAID, “‘Safe Age of Marriage’ in Yemen.”

⁸³ Gayle & Lynns, Off cited ⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Christine Hauser, “Yemen Takes a Step Toward Law Ending Child Marriage,” New York Times, January 23, 2014,

The community educators also hosted monthly health clinics to address the reproductive health challenges associated with early marriage and child-bearing, worked with schools to raise awareness of the social and health consequences associated with child marriage, and distributed printed material and disseminated radio messages on the health and social consequences of the practice⁸⁴.

After one year of the Safe Age of Marriage project, the community educators had conducted more than 1,316 outreach initiatives reaching nearly 29,000 people. The results from the final survey found that there was an 18 percent increase in awareness in the community about the benefits of delaying marriage. There is evidence that the Safe Age of Marriage project helped in reducing early marriages and reduced child marriage rates, but it is still too early to see representative results of the programme. Additionally, the Yemeni government requested that religious leaders include child marriage messages in their sermons and the community educators continued to mobilise support around girls' education. Due to its success, the programme was scaled up to include two additional districts in Yemen and increase outreach to religious leaders and policymakers to push implementation of a law that prohibits marriage for girls under seventeen. Conservative religious leaders objected to the law, first passed in 2009, and it continues to be a topic of legislative conversation. The recent National Dialogue Conference in Yemen issued a proposal for the country's new constitution to make marriage before age eighteen illegal⁸⁵.

Strengthening legal systems

A number of international frameworks define the minimum age for marriage at eighteen and most countries around the world have laws in line with these agreements. Though laws alone will not end child marriage, in some places attitudes are shifting, as illustrated by the proposal from Yemen's recent National Dialogue Conference. Enforcement, however, often lags behind the laws on the books. Additionally, criminalisation of child marriage is not always effective in preventing or eliminating the practice, since it can drive the practice further underground. Law enforcement officials and activists are also subject to violent repercussions in trying to prevent marriages, and few regulations exist to protect them from such retaliation⁸⁶.

<http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/23/yemen-takes-a-step-toward-law-ending-child-marriage>.

⁸⁶ Center for Reproductive Rights, "Child Marriage in South Asia," 2013, http://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/ChildMarriage_BriefingPaper_Web.pdf.

Yet despite the challenges, strategies for preventing and eliminating child marriages cannot be successful without clear and enforceable laws that are upheld by local governments. Child marriage laws can be incorporated into a number of other regulations implemented and enforced to protect against human rights violations, especially those guarding the rights of children and women. Such regulations include those that criminalise marital rape, gender-based violence, and violence against women; human trafficking and slavery laws; and ceremonies that require consent to marriage from both individuals⁸⁷.

Another tool available is the passage of laws mandating birth and marriage registration. Only half of children under five in developing countries are part of birth registries, with some regions such as eastern and southern Africa and South Asia seeing registration rates hovering at around a third of their populations⁸⁸. Birth registration gives a child an official and permanent identity⁸⁹. The government then has a record of the child and can track his or her age, thereby decreasing the child's vulnerability to practices that include child marriage⁹⁰. By documenting the actual age of girls, law enforcement officials would be better able to stop child marriages and girls would be more aware of their own age and whether they can legally be married⁹¹.

In Bangladesh, where child marriage prevalence is the highest in South Asia and one of the highest in the world, the government has been working with Plan International to implement online birth registration programmes⁹². In 2006, only 10 percent of Bangladesh's population had birth documents. Today, the government estimates that number has climbed to more than 75 percent of the population. Findings from Plan International show that birth registration has helped to reduce child marriage in Bangladesh as the organisation and its partners work with the government "to expedite a shift to online birth registration in its working areas so that certificates can no longer be falsified to show an underage girl as being above eighteen⁹³."

All these case studies are suggesting the ways to address the menace of child marriage. These thought-provoking learnings will help in planning advocacy with different stakeholders.

⁸⁷ Gayle & Lynns, Off cited ⁸⁸ UNICEF, "Birth Registration: Progress," January 2013, http://www.childinfo.org/birth_registration_progress.html.

⁸⁹ UNICEF, "Child Protection from Violence, Exploitation and Abuse," January 13, 2014, http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58010.html.

⁹⁰ Human Rights Council (A/HRC/19/L.24) highlights the importance of birth registration in ensuring the "promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development." Human Rights Council A/HRC/19/L.24, "Birth registration and the

right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law," adopted March 22, 2012, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session19/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx>.

Section 3

Factors Influencing Child Marriages

Key Findings

In this section, quantified data has been represented in the form of figures to have a clear understanding about driving factors. These details are classified by analysing the multiple answers that have emerged during 175 key respondent interviews and 20 FGDs held as part of the study. While describing the driving factors, logical sequencing has been followed by linking different driving factors. Together 25 driving factors have emerged. Based on the nature, these 25 driving factors are classified into four categories – (a) Traditions, Social Norms and Beliefs; (b) Poverty; (c) Access to Secondary Education and (d) Social Pressure. The details of findings are as follows:

Traditions, Social Norms and Beliefs

Customs surrounding marriage, including the desirable age and the way in which a spouse is selected, depend on a society's view of the family – its role, structure, pattern of life, and the individual and collective responsibilities of its members. The idea and function of 'family' varies across the world and is in a state of constant evolution⁹⁴.

Traditions, social norms and beliefs are one among the strongest of all the major causes of child marriage. Within this category, the key informants discussed about 12 different driving factors during the interviews (**Fig 2**). Of these, preference of 'consanguineous marriages' is the major factor, widely pointed out by 53 percent of the key informants. During the FGDs, majority of participants raised this issue as one of the key driving factors for child marriages. Nearly 60 percent of the FGDs have discussed this practice. Consanguineous marriages are customary practice in many families in Andhra Pradesh. Traditionally, consanguineous marriage system is known

⁹¹ Gayle & Lynns, Off cited ⁹² Plan, "Child Marriage in Bangladesh: Findings from a National Survey," 2013, p. 28, <http://plan-international.org/les/Asia/publications/national-survey-on-child-marriage-by-plan-bangladesh-and-icddr-b>.

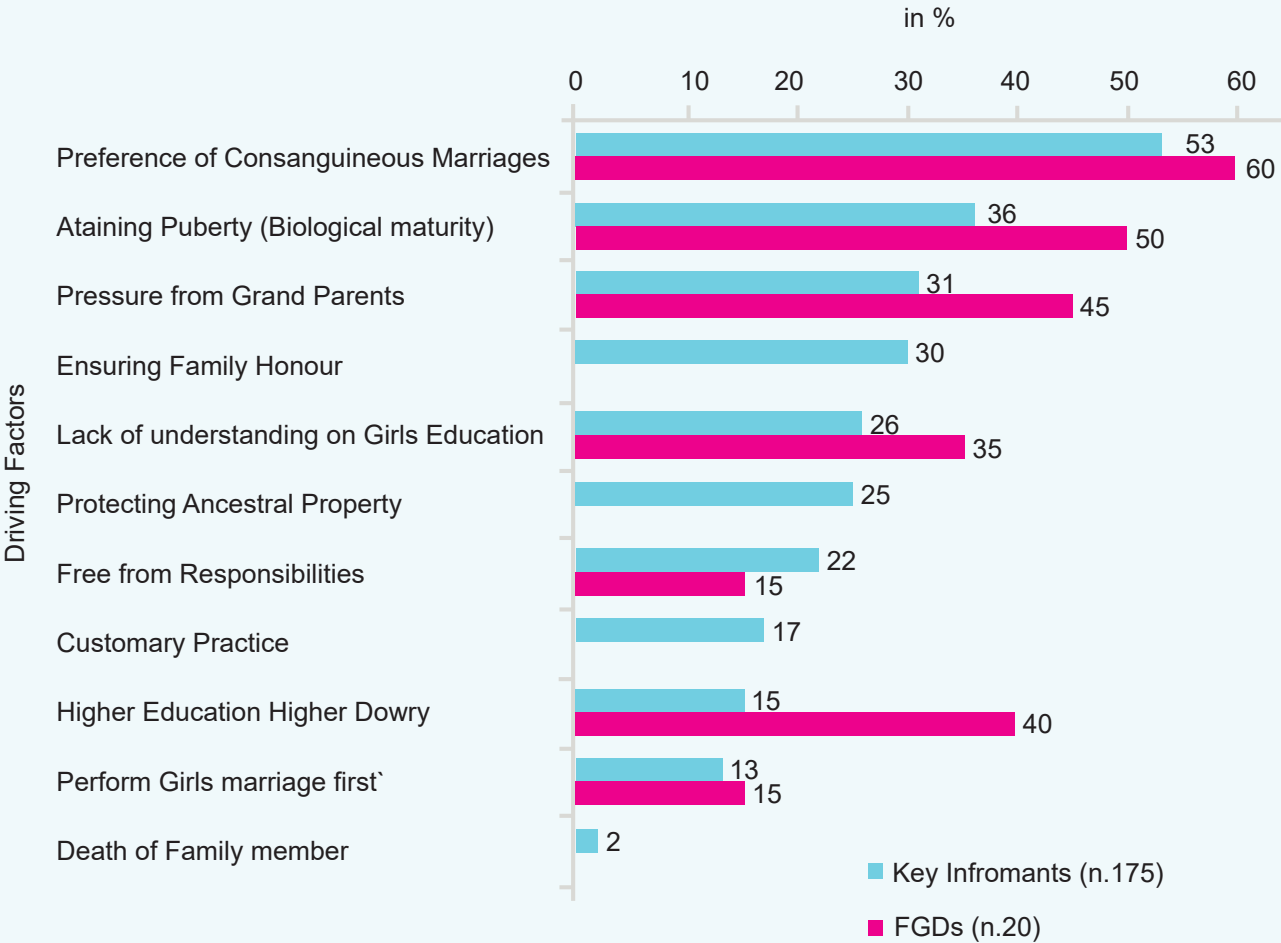
⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Boyden, Jo with UNESCO (1993), Families: Celebration and Hope in a World of Change, Gaia Books, UK.

for strengthening kinship ties between families, expanding social networks, protecting ancestral property, and ensures political strength.

Traditions and social norms play an important role in influencing economic behaviour and can shape households' decisions even in response to the same economic circumstances. For most of the families, social norm is preference of consanguineous marriages/choosing groom from close kin (maternal side relations). As mentioned earlier, 53 percent of the key informants have told that such practice is more common in rural and urban areas of Andhra Pradesh. Particularly families having agriculture land acquired by ancestors prefer consanguineous marriages to protect the ancestral properties.

Fig 2: Factors under Traditions, Social Norms and Beliefs



In general, agriculturalists tend to have higher rates of consanguineous marriage; a pattern recently interpreted within the context of extensive and intensive kinship systems⁹⁵. Individuals and families making marriage decisions face a trade-off between expanding their social networks and reinforcing existing kin ties.

The marriage of children is mostly valued as a means of consolidating economic and social relations between families (particularly maternal relations). It is also the strong wish list of elders in the family. One of the elderly respondents says: *“in general, dowry in the form of agriculture land, jewellery and cash is the customary practices among most of the families. In such a situation, families always prefer to retain their wealth within the kin group. Therefore, they opt maternal side close kin and perform consanguineous marriage, even though the girl is below 18 years”*.

While discussing this issue, one of the key respondents – a gram panchayat member said: *“such customary belief and practice was prevalent in all communities/caste groups. This is the age-old tradition to keep their economic, social and political supremacy in the region. Therefore, while performing consanguineous marriages, sometimes age of bride and bridegroom does not matter”*.

In few FGDs, particularly the community leaders and Panchayat representatives have supported consanguineous marriage system is the best to protect the landed properties. While following such system, occasionally age of the girl may not be much importance to the parents. They quoted few examples where parents have conducted their daughter’s marriages, who have not reached biological maturity. In such cases, after marriage, brides have stayed back with their parents and after attaining puberty, sent to their in-laws family.

Protecting ancestral properties is one of the customary practices among the rural as well as urban communities, those who are practicing consanguineous marriages. Nearly 25 percent key informants have discussed this as one of the driving factors behind child marriages. While continuing this practice in general, parents do not give much importance to the age of girl and perform marriage with a boy from first cousin’s family. Few of the parents are of the opinion that whatever dowry they give to their daughter should be within the control of their close kin. Hence, they do not consider the age difference between bride and bridegroom while deciding to go ahead with marriage. In few cases, the age of bride will be much less than 18 years.

⁹⁵ Mary K. Shenk et al (2016) Consanguineous Marriage, Kinship Ecology, and Market Transition, Current Anthropology, Vol 57 No S13, June 2016. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/685712>

Even if parents are not in favour of such marriages, pressure from elders, relatives and caste leaders forcing them to go ahead with such marriages where, most of time, age was not a criterion. In one-way or other, this practice will keep kin network sustainable.

Patriarchal supremacy is the key factor widely prevalent in rural areas of Andhra Pradesh. This supremacy is derived from traditions and embedded into the culture and accorded authority to elderly male members in the family and community. By and large, the grandfather has power in most of the traditional families where three generations are living together under-one roof (joint/extended families). In such families, grandfather takes decision on all family matters including marriages of his children and grandchildren. In such cases, child marriages have taken place. About 31 percent of the key informants expressed this issue.

In FGDs, pressure from grandparents was much discussed. About 45 percent of the FGDs highlighted this and during the discussions, particularly elderly members who participated in the FGDs stressed that, in spite of developments, grandparents are hold value in socialisation of young and have supremacy over the family decisions.

When such system exists, where women have no bargaining power, elders understanding about the importance of education to girls are also less. In their opinion, girls should not get higher education. For example, girls in caste groups such as *yadavas* and fishing communities, are not allowed to go for high school education. This is mainly because, parents they themselves are illiterates and are having no proper understanding about the education. Nearly 26 percent of the key informants flagged this issue. Similarly, in 35 percent of the FGDs, participants have confirmed lack of proper understanding about girl's education is the key factor behind child marriages, particularly when it comes to girl children.

If the girl has higher education, then getting equally educated boy is difficult because girl's parents have to pay more dowries, which in many cases is beyond their economic status. This is another key reason for few families opting to organise marriages for their girls at a young age, instead of sending them for higher education. Such tendency is prevailing across all districts in the state.

This is leading to another belief among the families – 'the higher the education, higher the dowry'. This is also one of the contributing factors influencing parents not to send their girl children to schools and thereby opting for child marriages. About 15 percent of the key informants discussed this issue, particularly in Anantapur, Kurnool and Visakhapatnam districts. In fact, in 40 percent of the FGDs, this was widely discussed

by the participants. Irrespective of caste, such belief is strongly influencing the parents, particularly from economically poor families.

In present-day society where such three-generation families are very negligible in number, family head in the joint family or in nuclear family ascribes patriarchal supremacy along with responsibilities. Under such circumstances, economic insecurity, pressures from maternal side kin, considering girl child as a burden to family, and dowry were taken into consideration while deciding the marriages for girls in the family.

Often decisions about sexuality, relationships and reproduction are some of the most important that rest with patriarchal families. Women and girls don't have any choice of making these decisions for themselves. In such families, marrying a girl simply transfers the control of her sexuality to others. Husbands and in-law's family, who assess a girl in terms of the physical and reproductive labour she brings to the new family, replaces her parents and other family members. They believe that a girl does not have the right to make sexual decisions.

Male dominance in the family always strongly feels that ideal age for girl's marriage is once she attains puberty. This is another driving factor discussed by 36 percent of the key informants. Present study observed such opinions particularly in the coastal districts – Prakasam, Krishna and Visakhapatnam of Andhra Pradesh.

As reported by CDPO: "prevalence of child marriage is reported among few communities is due to high preference of cultural and social values to marry off daughters before attaining puberty. Hence, socially disadvantaged communities preferring the child marriages. Nowadays, because of changed food habits, most of girls are attaining puberty at age of 10 to 14 years. Thus, irrespective of age, parents are opting early marriages to their girl children".

Biological maturity of the girl is the sign for marriage in most of the socially disadvantaged communities in Kurnool, Anantapur, Krishna, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam districts. More particularly, this is strongly influencing the parents in fishing community. About 50 percent of the FGDs talked this issue and most of the participants (particularly community leaders) supported the child marriages in line with girl's biological maturity. Few of them said this is one way of keeping family honor within the caste group.

Another belief is that if parents wish to perform eldest son's marriage, they first perform their daughter's (girl child) marriage and then plan for eldest son's marriage. Such customary practice is more common among all caste groups. Roughly 13 percent of

the key informants flagged this factor. Similar trend has come up for discussion in 15 percent of the FGDs. Under such belief, parents are ignoring the age of girl child and even other consequences of child marriage and preparing to perform child marriage. One of the respondent said: *“it is the customary practice to perform girl’s (daughter’s) marriage first, and then boy’s (son’s) marriage. Even if the girl is much younger than the boy, it is the duty of the parents to follow traditions”*.

If any one of the family members passed away, it is a custom for that family to perform their girl child’s marriage (irrespective of her age). This practice is prevalent in most of the socially disadvantaged communities in the state. If they do this, they believe that soul of a dead family member will rest in peace and all good things will come to the family as well as to the girls in the family. Quite a few key informants, that is 2 percent told about this factor.

Another belief is that sometimes parents want to marry off their daughter before her grandmother/grandfather dies. One elderly community leader said: *it is customary practice to respect the grandmother or grandfather in death bed and should respect the sentiment and perform daughter’s marriage, even if she has not reached legal age of marriage. In such cases, girl should attain puberty. Even if the girl is not matured biologically, marriage has to be performed and soon after bride attain puberty, she can be sent to her in-laws”*. Such belief is also one of the key factors behind child marriages. Such superstitions are more common among the socially backward communities (for instances, among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and in few backward caste).

In the name of traditions, few caste groups and sub-groups (for example: Fisherman, *yadava/golla* and *kuraba* communities) have strong belief on their traditional practices. For them, child marriages are age-old customary practice driven by traditions. This is the main reason, even in present period; these communities are celebrating en-masse child marriages during public festivals. Further to this, traditionally, within the family, women in such communities have low status and gender inequality leads to child marriages. *“In many communities where child marriages are common system, girl children are not valued as much as boys and are treated as burden,”*— says one of the community leaders.

Surprisingly, few community leaders (mostly elders) find no fault in child marriages. One of the community leaders said: *“once girl crosses the age of puberty, within a year her marriage should be performed. This is our tradition and customary practice and our ancestors bless the family. Hence, we prefer early child marriage”*.

Sometimes, religious justification/customary practice is also found in rural areas. It appears that, socially disadvantaged communities are performing child marriages under religious cover (Hindu religion). For instance, '*devadas*' system was prevailing in rural areas of Kurnool district. Nearly 17 percent of the key informants informed about religious/customary justifications made by the parents and community leaders for child marriages. During FGDs, participants did not discuss such issues, and this is mainly because of sensitivity associated with '*devadas*' system. Contradictory to the information during key respondent interviews, participants in FGDs, particularly *anganwadi* workers and ANMs including *panchayat* representatives have told that such system does not exist in the district.

Similar observation was made during the discussions with religious leader from Muslim community in Hyderabad city. He interpreted Quran (holy book for Muslims) and argued that: "*Islam permits child marriages upon reaching maturity, which is define as puberty. It is important to protect virginity of a girl, which is very important. One should not violate Islamic law*". Another leader said: "*many Muslim scholars agree that the age of maturity is eighteen and girl should get married at 18 years of age. However, the text of the Quran is not as clear on this issue*". In brief, gender inequality, low value to girls in the Muslim community, believing age-old traditions and religious beliefs are few factors behind child marriages.

During the discussions with community members and religious leaders, it appears that social norms and beliefs are taking upper hand influencing parents and community resulting in child marriages. For instance, in one of the interviews with community members it was told: "*it is not good to keep girls after puberty. Within a year's time parents should perform their marriages otherwise they have to face several challenges in the community*".

Much emphasis on girl's virginity is closely tied with family's honor and dignity within the caste group and community. Once a girl reaches biological maturity, parents don't want to take any chance and quickly start looking for a good match. In rural communities, particularly in socially disadvantaged (Ex: Scheduled Castes) communities in Krishna and Prakasam districts, the belief is that keeping girl in home after puberty and sending her to school or economic activities is not socially acceptable. There is likely to be pressure from community leaders and also within the family, pressure from elders and close kin groups also mounts.

This is one of the important driving factors told by 30 percent of the key informants.

In many communities, non-virgin girls are considered ruined and unsuitable for

marriage; as a result, families marry off their young daughters to ensure they remain virgins until marriage, and to maximise her child-bearing years. In this context, most of the parents are not aware of the negative consequences of early child marriages. This could be one of the reasons behind child marriages.

Unfortunately, because of the cultural emphasis on virginity, child marriage is seen as a legitimate way to protect girls in unsafe environments. One of the community members said: *“we knew it was wrong to perform marriage of girls before they reach 18 years (legal age for girls to marry), however most of the time, marriage is considered as a cover of respect and protection. By not going to school, it reduces the risk of being sexually active outside the house or being harassed while commuting.”*

“There are few occasions where parents plan to conduct their daughter’s marriages as early as possible to get them free from responsibility” – says one of the Panchayat representatives. If the family is having more girl children or is facing economic insecurity or any one of the parents is chronically ill, there is a marked preference for early marriages of their girl children. About 22 percent of the key informants have highlighted this factor. Even similar opinion is expressed by the participants in 15 percent FGDs.

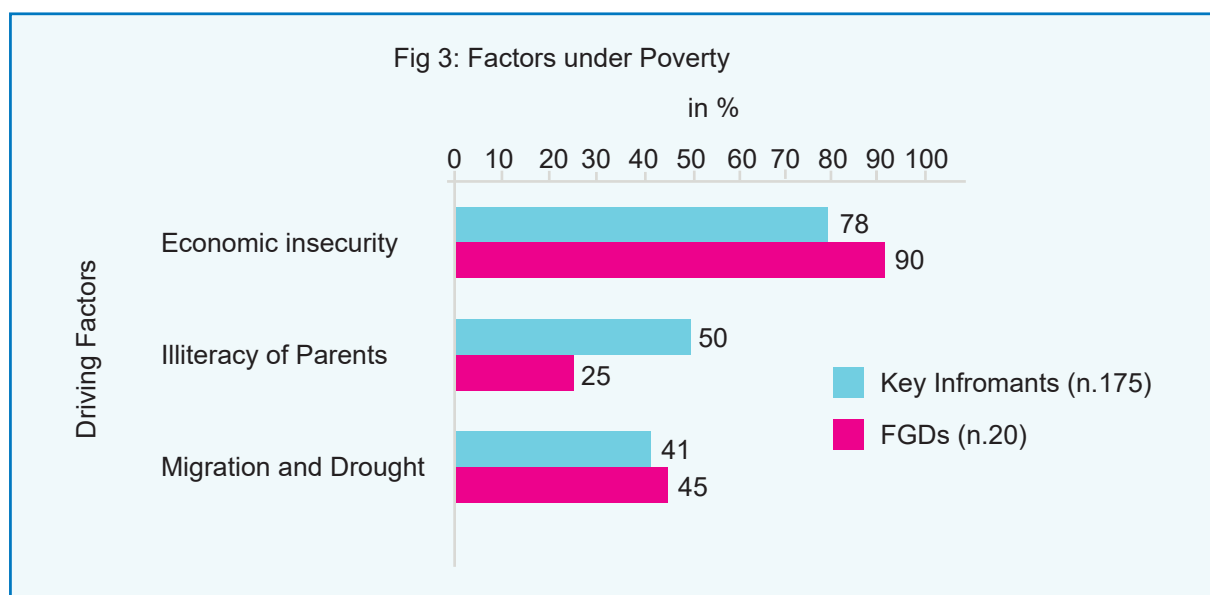
Synthesised outcomes from key informant interviews as well as information shared by the participants during FGDs, following driving factors of child marriages, under traditions, social norms and beliefs sub-category. These are important factors, to be considered for policy level advocacy:–

- Parents give top priority to consanguineous marriages where girl’s age is no issue at all. This is linked to another factor – protecting ancestral property which is an age old customary practice in all communities in Andhra Pradesh. Pressure from grandparents is another factor, which is linked with traditional patriarchal supremacy and also priority to consanguineous marriages.
- Parents, kin members and community considering girl attaining puberty/ biological maturity is the right age for marriage. This is linked to the factor - keep up the family honour within the community.
- Lack of proper understanding about the importance of girl’s education is another driving factor and is linked to the belief – ‘higher the education, higher the dowry.’
- Few beliefs, for example – before son’s marriage, girl’s marriage has to be performed, and death of the family member should precede a girls marriage are also influencing the families to opt child marriages.

Poverty

Child marriage is most common in the world's poorest countries and is often concentrated among the poorest households within those countries. It is closely linked with poverty and low levels of economic development. In families with limited resources, child marriage is often seen as a way to provide for their daughter's future. But girls who marry young are more likely to be poor and remain poor⁹⁶.

Poverty coupled with social customs, weak status of women and lack of alternative opportunities for girls (especially education) create a conducive atmosphere to marry away girls, otherwise seen as financial liabilities⁹⁷. For example, in Anantapur where drought is a more common phenomenon, irrespective of landholding size, most of the families are faced with economic insecurity. Economic insecurity⁹⁸ is the topmost driving factor of child marriages (**Fig 3**). About 78 percent of the key respondents have stated economic insecurity as the prime cause of child marriage and 90 percent of the FGDs have discussed this issue. Particularly families those which have no dependable income sources, prefer girl's marriages whenever they have sufficient money in hand. For such families, the age of the girl is not so serious an issue but the availability of money matters for them.



⁹⁶ International Center for research on Women, Child Marriages and Poverty, <https://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Poverty.pdf>

⁹⁷ <https://socialissuesindia.wordpress.com/2014/02/04/the-vicious-cycle-of-child-marriages-and-poverty/>

⁹⁸ Economic insecurity – specifically defined as: “the anxiety produced by a lack of economic safety – i.e. by an inability to obtain protection against subjectively significant potential economic losses” ..see Lars Osberg (2011) http://financedocbox.com/Retirement_Planning/71503174-Measuring-economic-insecurity-in-rich-and-poor-nations.html

In 90 percent of the FGDs, participants have reflected on how economic insecurity is forcing parents to take decision on their children's marriages. The summary of these FGDs highlighted that child marriages are taking place in poor families. This phenomenon is more common in rural families particularly living in the districts of Anantapur, Kurnool and Prakasam.

Families without assured income, or dependable livelihoods often fall into poverty. In such cases families having more number of girl children considered them burdensome thus making them more prone to vulnerability. Dowry and financial transactions that are a part of marriage in India, may also contribute to the practice of child marriages, especially in the context of poverty and vulnerability. This is one of the reasons told by many parents during our study.

In this context, one of the parents said: *“due to lack of sufficient income sources, poor families may not be able to send their girl children to school. Once girl children attain puberty and become sexually active outside marriage, it is risky to send them for economic activities because peer may harass them and try to exploit them sexually. To avoid such problems, families prefer child marriages”*.

“Parents' illiteracy is one of the main barriers to girl child education that ultimately leads to child marriages and this is a more common feature in poor families where both the parents are illiterate” – says one of the Panchayat Secretary during key Respondent interview. About 50 percent of the key respondents mentioned that illiteracy of parents is another factor promoting child marriages. Parents who are illiterate may not be able to understand the importance of educating the girl children and are also totally unaware of the adverse consequences of child marriages. This issue was discussed in 25 percent of the FGDs. One of the *panchayat* secretary said, “Drought caused severe labour displacement i.e., Migration⁹⁹. As a coping mechanism to address food insecurity during drought, families, particularly from Anantapur district, migrate to Karnataka and Maharashtra. Such families usually try to discharge their girl children from the family, while male children are considered more as assets to the family. Concerns about girls' safety and family honour are considered as important factors for parents to perform child marriages.

During the FGDs in Anantapur district, participants have told that drought is the perennial challenge for most of the families, particularly who are dependent on agriculture. One of the ICDS officials reported: *“poor families, particularly under debt trap, use child marriage as a survival strategy during the time of drought. If the girl child is ready*

⁹⁹ Anitha, M (2016) Climate, Rainfall and Drought: A Study of Andhra Pradesh, International Journal of Current Research, <https://www.journalcra.com/sites/default/files/15107.pdf>

for marriage (has attained puberty), irrespective of her age, parents are searching for wealthy families from neighbouring Karnataka state that can offer money during marriage. With such money, parents are hoping to take better care for male children in the family”.

In few cases, due to economic reasons, girl children from poor families discontinue formal education and are at risk of getting married early. Parents feel that sending girls to school does not bring any economic benefits to the family. Instead she can contribute to the family livelihood. Thus, parents consider keeping girls in the family a burden and risk, and hence parents are opting for early marriages of children.

Drought and migration is another important reason that pushes families into poverty. About 41 percent of the key informants mentioned that due to drought, most of the poor and middle-income families ‘are migrating to neighbouring districts. The length of migration could be 3 to 6 months and sometimes for as long as 10 months. Whenever such migrant families’ have money, parents try to arrange girl child marriage, without considering her age. This tendency is more predominant in Anantapur district. All key informants from Anantapur district have mentioned how economic insecurity during the drought (climatic change) is forcing parents to take such decisions. About 45 percent of the FGDs talked about this issue.

Particularly during migration, families leave their children and elderly in the village. In such circumstances, protecting girl children from peer harassment becomes a challenge. *“In the absence of parents, controlling the children is a difficult task – if biologically mature girls are in the family, parents prefer to marry them off. Such incidences are taking place where most of the girls are between 15 and 18 years”-* this is the perception of the parent who participated in the FGD in Anantapur district.

One of the *gram panchayat* representative said, *“Either parents or grandparents made the decision about children’s marriage. During the drought, most of the families have no dependable income sources. In such circumstances, for the good of the rest of the family, a daughter had to be sacrificed. She would be taken out of school and a groom was found for her; normally from a better-off family, anticipating some sort of economic and social security from groom’s family”.*

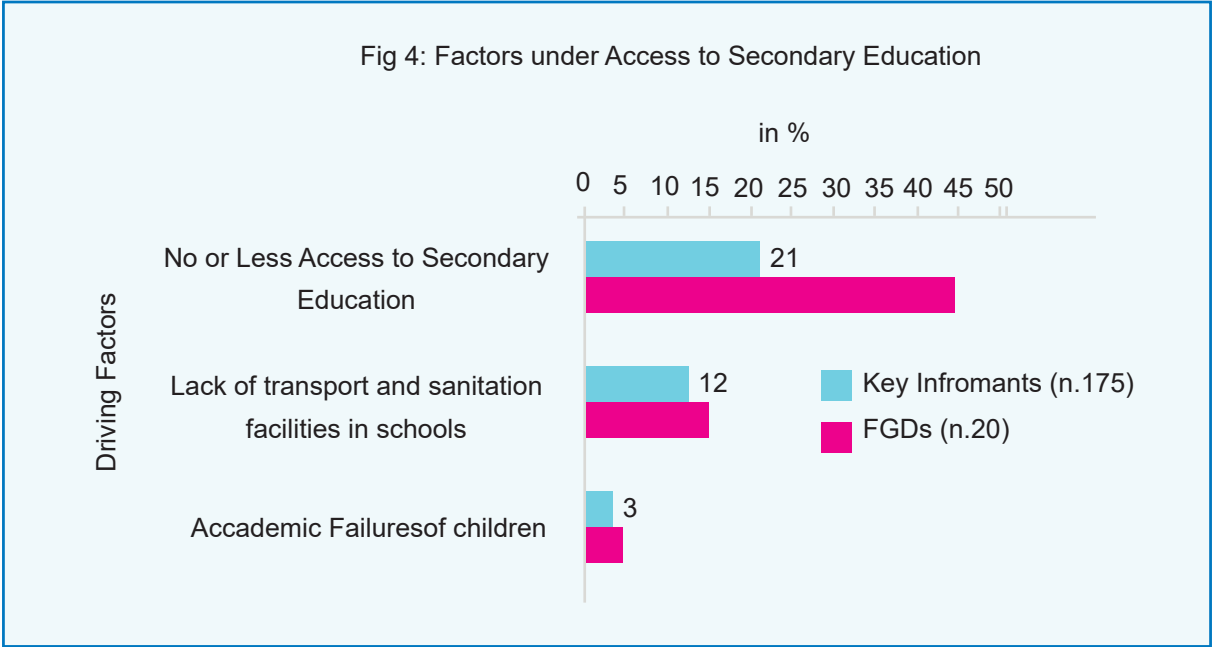
This practice is much talked by village level key informants as well as by the group during the FGDs. Preferring to seek a bridegroom from a family where economic resources are strong, anticipating economic support during and after the marriage with which they can survive. This could be one of the survival strategies when family gets into economic insecurity during drought.

To summarise, economic insecurity is one of the key driving factors for child marriages. In particular, in most of the poor families, which have no dependable income (In spite of their landholding size) and both the parents are illiterate, child marriages are taking place. Because of their ignorance or lack of awareness about the adverse consequences of child marriage, and because of being subjected to difficult circumstances, they are opting for child marriages. Drought and migration are other driving factors for child marriages

Access to Secondary Education

The relation between child marriage and girls’ education is one of the crucial factors. Parent’s expectations for when girls will marry and children’s aspirations for education are powerful predictors of child marriages. Limited or no access to secondary education and families’ prioritisation of boys’ rather than girls’ education is the key reason for many families to withdraw their girl children from school after completing primary education and then opt for early marriages.

Limited education opportunities, low quality of education, inadequate infrastructure, lack of transport and therefore concerns about safety of girls while travelling to school significantly contribute to keeping girls out of school and therefore tend to favour child marriage¹⁰⁰. Similar issues have come up during key respondent interviews and FGDs as well.



¹⁰⁰ <http://unicef.in/Whatwedo/30/Child-Marriage>

Nearly 21 percent of the key informants have revealed that access¹⁰¹ to secondary education, particularly in rural areas is much crucial factor deciding the child marriage (**Fig 4**). In the absence of access to secondary school, particularly for girls, parents are engaging them in certain responsibilities, for example fetching water, collecting fodder, and work in the farm fields – where they have to face sexual harassment/abuse from males. To avoid this, parent's choose to opt for marrying off their daughters. In 45 percent of the FGDs, participants have discussed this issue.

Even for those girls who are attending secondary schooling, safety is a major concern for parents. Lack of transport, lack of proper toilet facilities and male sexual harassment in the secondary school compels parents to withdraw their girl children from school. Nearly 12 percent of the key informants have talked about this. One of the SHG representatives told – *“girls who are biologically mature are finding it more inconvenient when school administration is not able to provide proper separate toilet facilities with running water. Parents are also uncomfortable sending their girl children to such schools. In such cases, since the girl is at home, pressure for her marriage is likely to build from relatives and elders. That leaves parents with little option but to opt for child marriage.”*

Similar type of points were raised by participants in discussions in about 15 percent of the FGDs. Particularly, in Prakasam district participants have said that harassment by male students is a major issue while girls are commute to secondary schools by train or by bus. This fear complex, forces girls not to go to school, and therefore parents are also not interested in sending their girl children to secondary school.

Sometimes academic failure of girl children results in dropping out from secondary school. Quite a few such cases were evident in Anantapur, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam districts. About 3 percent of the key informants and participants in 5 percent of the FGDs expressed this factor. *“Academic failure discourages such children from attending school and when it comes to girl children, normally parents prefer to get her marriage irrespective of her age,”* says one of the key informants.

Another opinion expressed by few parents during FGDs is that if a girl is sent for higher education, getting an equally educated groom is likely to be very difficult. This is also influencing parents not to send the girls to secondary schooling and beyond. In this context, one of the rural respondents said: *“sending girls for higher education brings many risks to the parents. First risk is higher dowry– getting equally educated or a boy with higher education entails higher financial resources. In such cases, for*

¹⁰¹ Faraway from the villages with less or no transportation facilities and lack of safety while commuting to the school from village.

resource-poor families, it is very difficult to pay higher dowry to highly educated groom. Sometimes, this will push the parents into debts and may mean losing their dependable assets. Instead, it is a better bet to stop girls from acquiring higher education. They need to know how to read and write, which is enough for their survival”.

Many family members expressed such opinions during the FGDs and most of such members are from marginalised communities whose economic resources are poor. Elders within the family and caste leaders from such communities restrict girls’ from having aspirations beyond marriage. In fact, parents they themselves are not having proper understanding about the importance of higher education for girls– say 5 percent of the key informants. It is interesting to note that most of the parents, particularly illiterates and illiterate grandparents are of the opinion, that girls need not go for higher education.

Contradictory to such perceptions, family members from higher caste groups with education and dependable resources, feel that girls should also be educated along with boys. Their aspirations on children’s education, particularly girl’s education, is high.

Irrespective of social and economic status, concerns about protection of girl’s chastity is critical to safeguard their family status and reputation within the kin and caste group. While discussing about education for girls, most of the respondents (including family members, and government officials) expressed their concern over the safety issue vis-a-vis schooling for girls. One of the women respondents said, *“after primary schooling, it is difficult to send girls to secondary school. Our concern is their safety while they travel to school and the most important concern is unhygienic toilets for girls who have attained puberty. Even after taking a lot of risk, we don’t see any tangible benefits for girls after finishing secondary education”.*

Such opinions were expressed by most of the family members. This is another factor behind low or no aspirations on girl children’s education.

In general, family members, kin and community members watch girl’s day-to-day activities when they are attending secondary/higher education. Their intention is to protect girls from violating the norms around caste and community. In this context one of the community leaders said, *“most of the girls are using mobiles and chatting with peer. Often such behaviour leads to other complications (fear of deviation from education and elopement) pushing family in deep trouble. This is also one of the factors behind girls dropping out of school”.*

The mandal and district level officials expressed such concerns. Few of the family members and community leaders, were of the opinion that girls with higher education, are more likely to get good matches as compared their less educated peers.

“Engaging parents to promote girl’s transition from primary to secondary education is very crucial”– says one of the school headmasters. He further says, “School curriculum, lack of interest in studies, unsafe atmosphere in schools, lack of understanding about usefulness of schooling, inability to cope with studies and sometimes academic failure are equally important reasons for girls discontinuing schooling. Considering such matters, many parents are influencing their girl children’s aspirations about education. It is important to sensitise and educate the parents, particularly mothers on the adverse effects of child marriages and importance of education”. Some of the NGOs and media persons also expressed similar concerns during the study.

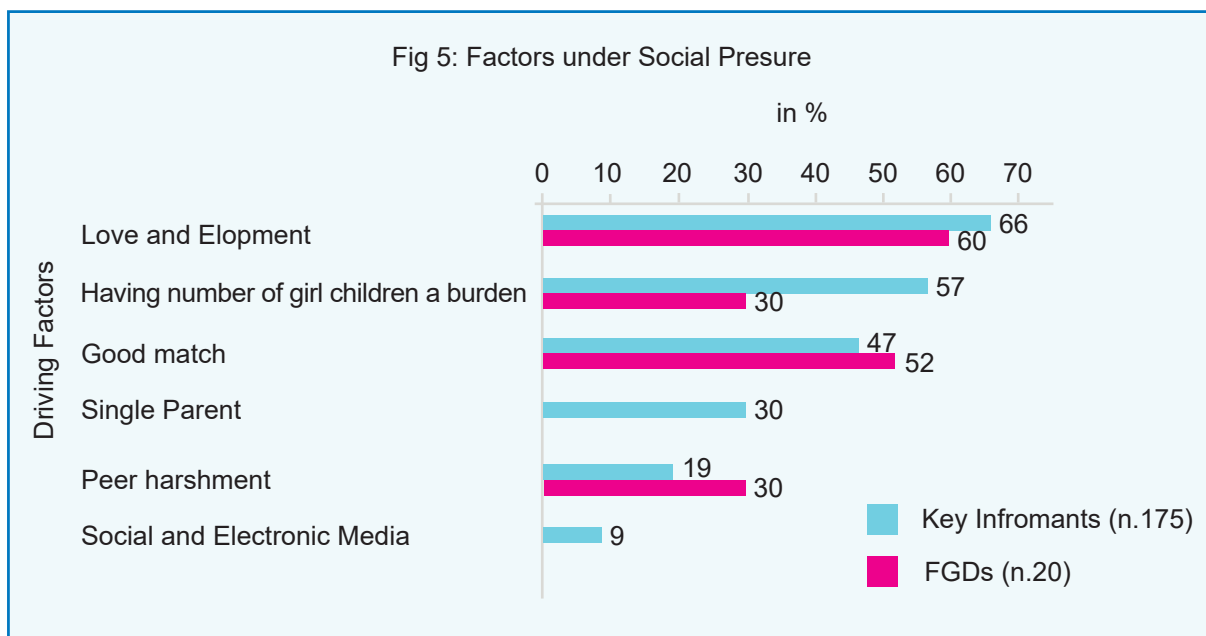
Quite a few participants stated that the lack of female teachers negatively impacts the experiences of school going girls, and this will also lead to dropping out of school and consequently early marriage. Few have commented on the quality of education and lack of opportunities which also discourage parents to send their girl children for secondary and higher education.

One of the top reasons, as told by one of the key respondents from WD & CW, girls are not sent to school after puberty is because of fears regarding sexual safety and violence in spaces outside of home. It is very critical for parents and school administration to create safe spaces for them to study, meet their peers and understand their sexual and reproductive rights. Even if a child is married before she turns 10 or 15, she remains at her parent’s home till she attains puberty.

To conclude, access and quality of secondary education are the driving factors.

Social Pressure

In addition to traditions, social norms and beliefs, poverty and poor access to secondary schools and quality of education, different forms of social pressures on parents lead to child marriages (**Fig 5**). On few occasions, for example, single parent families are likely to have more pressure from kin and community to get their girl children marry at an early age. Circumstances are forcing parents to bow to social pressure and perform child marriages



Although parents are instrumental in arranging child marriages, there are few cases where boy and girl run away secretly with the intention of getting married, usually without parental consent. Concepts of dating and love marriage are not encouraged, however in rural areas such cases are putting parents under pressure. This appears to be more common in Prakasam and Krishna districts. Nearly 66 percent of the key informants have talked about such cases are happening in the villages. When such incidences occur, parents of both boy and girl are bringing them back and to keep the family honor, conduct their marriages. In most of such cases, girl's age will be less than 18 years and the age gap between bride and groom also much higher. This was discussed in 60 percent of the FGDs.

While narrating the existence of such practices, one CDPO said –*“there are many incidences where young boys and girls are falling in love and running away from homes. This as per community violating norms and both boy and girls’ parents will be penalised by the caste council. In addition, caste council forces both the families to perform marriage to such children. Under this pressure, and also to protect their family honor, parents are conducting child marriages. In most of the cases, girl’s age will be between 12 to 15 years and boy’s age will be between 15 to 19 years. In this context, it is important to note that some of these cases can even end in honor killings, where the bride and/or the groom get murdered for having brought dishonor to their families or communities. Love, elopement and then marriage is a commonly found in fishing communities and Boya communities. Similar cases are found in socially marginalised communities in Anantapur”*.

If the family has more girl children, normally there is likely to be pressure from kin and community to get their marriages as early as possible. Such system exists in economically poor families. Nearly 57 percent of the key informants have told that poor families with more number of girl children prefer early marriages. Such cases have been recorded in all five districts. Participants in 30 percent of the FGDs confirmed this practice.

In case of getting good match (Bridegroom) for the girl, parents fix the alliance without considering girl's age. About 47 percent of the key respondents and participants in 52 percent of the FGDs have talked about this issue. Particularly in Prakasam, Krishna and Anantapur districts such system do exists. In Anantapur, poor parents are fixing their girl children's marriages with boys from Karnataka with the hope that in turn groom's family will provide social and economic protection to the bride's family during the drought.

Getting good match and performing marriage to children at right age is burdensome to single parent families. This is more so, if the woman is heading the family. In such cases, there is likely to be pressure from kin and community to arrange marriage to the children as early as possible. Whenever, they have money or if they get good opportunity, with the support of the kin they sell whatever assets they have and conduct child marriages. Such incidences are noticed in Anantapur, Kurnool and Prakasam districts. Nearly 30 percent of the key informants narrated such incidences.

It was further told that girls from single parent families, particularly if mother is the head of the family are subjected to Male/Sexual harassment in the village and also in schools. In addition, it is also difficult to manage girls' education, as it is also a burden, if the family is in economic insecurity. Social pressure on female-headed families is also one of the driving factors pushing the family towards child marriage. Single parent families are at greater risk if they have girl children – says 19 percent of the key informants and participants in 30 percent of the FGDs talked about this issue.

With advanced technology, social and electronic media is playing important role in influencing the youth in several ways. About 9 percent of the key respondents have talked about this and said influence of social and electronic media is another driving factor for child marriages. The most common opinion expressed by CDPOs, police and school headmasters - "*Children are much attracted towards mobiles and like to spend*

much time with whatsapp and sharing information etc. on regular basis. This practice is leading to adverse consequences, for example encouraging teenagers to fall in love and run away from their homes, putting parents in an embarrassing situation”.

Much was talked about social media during the study. *“One of the greatest dangers faced by young girls online today is the toxic nature of cyber-bullying. Social media provides a new platform for bullying, where peers can spew abuse (sometimes anonymously) at young child, particularly girls. This could range from making embarrassing social media posts about girl children to a personal attack of relentless messaging. We are getting complaints from parents on such issues”*– says one of the police officials.

Parents, particularly if father’s health is not good also leads to early marriage of girl children. In such families, mother and maternal side relatives take control over the family and to avoid further social and economic complications, opt for child marriages. Community representatives discussed about such cases in their area (particularly in Anantapur district).

In few socially marginal communities (Ex: fishing communities of Visakhapatnam) bride price can be paid voluntarily as a symbol of status. The common practice is that, younger the bride, and the larger the age-gap between bride and the groom, the higher the price. Such practices are also prevailing in the fishermen communities, which largely go unnoticed.

Different circumstances in the life? are putting social pressure on parents to opt for child marriages.

Reflections at Community level

At community level, particularly in rural areas, dominance of opinion leaders, community/ caste leaders and religious leaders play crucial role in mentoring and monitoring the community as well as the families within the community. By and large these people are custodians of village and impose rules and regulations.

In few communities, for instance fisherman community, leaders promote child marriages. In their opinion, girls after attaining puberty should get married with close kin. They see advantages in such practices: one is keeping the wealth (fishing boats and nets) within the close family circle, second advantage, protecting the girl from

premarital sex with outsiders and avoid unwanted pregnancies. Here the key point is that if any girl indulged in such extramarital sex, community leaders will penalize the family of the girl, which sometimes go beyond penalty, and such boy and girl will be expelled from the community.

Referring to this, one of the fisherman community leader said: *“our traditions and customs encourage child marriages just because of avoiding pre and extra-marital sex. Virginity has lot of value in our community and if any violation in any family, sea god will punish them. Sometimes we may not get good catch that impacts our business”*.

Present study also realised that if any outsider tries to say anything against child marriages, these community leaders are become violent thinking that the outsider is trying to criticising their tradition which is unpardonable.

Similar voices were heard from other community leaders. In this context, it is important to talk about the caste councils of socially marginalised communities, which are most powerful and exercising regulatory control over their caste and sub-caste groups. In our interaction with one caste council member (from SC community) said: *“due to low social status, our girls are often physically abused by the youth from other communities. Often this is leading to conflict and unrest within the villages. Though upper castes consider us as untouchables, we too have our own traditions and customs. We too believe that girl soon after attaining puberty should get married and thereby protect our community’s dignity”*.

“Once child marriages are prevalent among our caste groups, however access to present education, demonstrated effect of higher caste people’s behaviour, gradually we are coming out from our traditional practices and customary beliefs. Now girls in our castes are going for higher education and discouraging girl child marriages in the caste groups. Putting girls into schooling will address many evil practices”: says another member from the caste council in another village.

Here the key difference is, first member who responded is illiterate and 75 plus years of age. Later respondent is young in his 30s and well educated. Thus perceptions are influenced by age as well as with educational level.

In this context, it is important to note that, in villages where caste hierarchy rules the village, village elders encourage child marriages. This is more so in Anantapur and Kurnool districts where most of the villages are having such culture. Under the influence of customs, religion, caste, and importantly influence of superstitions, child marriages are more common.

Impact of Child Marriages

“Child marriage has many effects on girls’ health: increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases, cervical cancer, and death during childbirth, and obstetric fistulas. Girls’ offspring are at increased risk for premature birth and death as neonates, infants, or children”– says one of the medical practitioners’ during formal discussions. However, unfortunately none of the village level and *mandal* level key informants are aware of adverse effects of child marriages. Of 175 key informants, majority told two complications out of child marriages are – pre-matured babies, and death of pregnant girl during delivery. This indicates the need of proper sensitisation, particularly to parents is essential.

Girl child marriages affect their educational attainment negatively, thereby curtailing future opportunities for them to compete for well-paying jobs. Child marriage may also lead to higher health risks for young mothers and especially for their children. Given that the impact of child marriage on fertility and population growth, children’s health, and education and earnings tend to be the largest¹⁰².

FGDs are concluding that most of the family members are not aware of the adverse impact of child marriages, particularly girl’s marriages and even they are not aware of regulations by government. In few instances, study found that parents are treating marriages as their family affair and government has nothing to do with it.

Child marriage has a significant economic impact– says World Bank research study¹⁰³. It further says documented with evidence that child marriage has a large impact on fertility and population growth. Most importantly it has a large negative effect on educational attainment for girls and on the educational prospects of children of child brides. Overall, the impact of child marriage are large for fertility, population growth, and education as well as earnings, but somewhat smaller in other dimensions.

Further discussions with key informants, for example school headmasters, *anganwadi* workers, *mandal* Development Officers, Revenue Divisional Officer, reveals that– girls who got married early have higher chance of dropping out of school, have a low-paid job and limited decision-making power at home. There is a chance of being vulnerable to experiencing violence, abuse and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases because they have fewer skills and less negotiating power..

¹⁰² ¹⁰³ Ibid Quentin Wodon et al (2017 “Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: Global Synthesis Report” World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/530891498511398503/pdf/116829-WP-P151842-PUBLIC-EICM-Global-Conference-Edition-June-27.pdf>

“Awareness levels are very low among illiterate or semi-literate parents, particularly in rural areas. Their priority is performing girl child marriage soon after attaining puberty. They don’t pay attention nor are interested to know the consequences”–says one of the government official.

“Girls who marry early have little decision-making power within the marital home, a greater likelihood of school dropout and illiteracy, lower labor force participation and earnings, and less control over productive household assets”– says Joint Collector.

CWC chairperson says -“because girls who get married before 18 years of age, often become mothers during adolescence, they and their children are likely to experience poorer overall health and nutrition. Consequences of child marriage are felt most at the individual level; it is likely to have effects at national and global levels in the forms of lost earnings and intergenerational transmission of poverty. In short, the economic impact and cost of child marriage are likely to be very high for the girls who marry early, their children, their families, their communities, and society at large is adversely impacted”.

Section 4

Challenges in Enforcing the POCM Act, 2006

Child marriages undermine the well-being of women and their development. Considering this, government has brought few regulations, laws and enforcement mechanisms into force. In 1929, the Sarda Act or the Child Marriage Restraint Act was brought into implementation. Thereafter, in 2006, The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (POCM) brought into force. All these are based on the argument that children and adolescents are not mature enough to make their own choice about marriage.

By and large, child marriages are age-old customary practice supported by the society and religion in many communities. It has its strong roots in the history and hence, law alone cannot do much in stopping child marriages. Collective action is required at each level. This is the opinion of practitioners.

According to one of the legal expert: the law is creating confusion by declaring some marriages void and some others voidable. Marriage of a minor solemnised by use of force, fraud, deception, enticement, selling and buying or trafficking is a void marriage, while all other child marriages are voidable at the option of the parties to the marriage and hence valid marriages until they are nullified by the court. If the law does not attribute consent to a child, it must render all child marriages void, as all child marriages then become marriages that have taken place either through some form of coercion or use of fraud, trafficking and such other illegal means, or by influencing the mind of the child.

In another meeting with WD&CW team and Police officials, it was told that, in India, while the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act governs child marriage, the legal system also takes into account a gamut of personal laws. Under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, parents, guardians, religious and community leaders promoting the marriage are punishable but under the Hindu Marriage Act, the punishment applies only to the couple themselves and no penalty to parents, guardians or others.

According to Muslim Personal Law, puberty, presumed at 15 years is considered minimum age for marriage, whereas the Child Marriage Prohibition Act clearly states that all marriages before girls turn 18 and boys turn 21 are punishable under law.

Inconsistencies between the personal laws and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act has caused complications and varied judgments by different courts. Therefore, one of the Police officials said: *“there is an immediate need to override all personal laws in the case of child marriage and declare the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act supersedes all other laws”*.

Similarly, even though India has drafted many critical laws and legislations for children, the laws essentially do not always complement with each other in a real scenario because they contradict each other or have different definitions. One of the legal expert during the key informant interview has given example: *“Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act, 2012 defines any sexual act with a child below 18 years of age as an offence and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act that prohibits child marriages but makes them valid once solemnised. In which case, it is likely that minor children have no choice but to enter a sexual union once married, and sex with a child willing or unwilling becomes legal. Such contradictions need to be corrected and a uniform stance needs to be taken across all laws pertaining to children in order to protect their rights and life. Unless power to override personal and religious laws in this regard needs to be integrated into the legal framework, it is difficult to stop child marriages”*.

Political interference sometimes becomes a challenge while implementing law and child marriages are considered as normal ritual of social practice. *“In the absence of reliable data, policy-making and implementing is the challenging factor”*— says one of the journalists during the key Respondent interviews who further said, *“inadequate budget and sometimes under utilisation of available funds is also serious concern at enforcement agencies”*.

Absence of systems of birth and marriage registrations is another challenge in implementing the law.

“In most of the cases where we tried to stop the child marriages, we experienced lot of pressures from parents, community leaders and of course interference of political leaders. Parents are treating the marriage is their family affair and government is nothing to do with it” says one of police official. In such cases, according to him, it is very difficult to implement law and bring the parents into task. He further says that educating parents, community leaders are much important before bringing law into enforcement.

While narrating similar issue, one of our respondents from WD&CW said: *“Community leaders/caste councils and religious leaders have a greater role to play in ending early marriages. Because, such leaders are having potential influence on communities and have power to regulate, mentor them. Here the sentiment is attached to religious beliefs. Hence, enforcement authorities have to concentrate on such leaders in stopping child marriages”*.

The most common opinion expressed by several government officials during our interactions – change should start from family and community. Unless girls are treated equal to boys, and parents should recognise the consequences of child marriages, it is difficult to regulate it through legal actions. Community cooperation and religious leaders involvement is much crucial. Child marriages often related to poverty and financial transaction for poor family. In such cases, financial assistance through conditional cash transfers could bring better results.

Access to primary and secondary education, particularly in rural areas is crucial to increase girl’s self-reliance and delaying the age of marriage. One of the CDPO said: *“it is evident that those girls who are able to transit from primary to secondary and then to higher education are in safe zone. If we examine the cases of child marriages, majority of the girls who are the victims of child marriages are either with no education or dropouts. The unsafe school environment, fear of harassment during commuting to school and within school, and no encouragement from parents are the main factors behind girls dropping out from schooling”*.

In this context, parent’s education and aspirations are important factors to be considered. During the interviews at district level, it was told that parents who had the lowest educational aspirations for their daughters are opting for child marriages. Many communities are of the opinion that girls should not be sent to schools after puberty. It is the risk and safety issue. Hence, child marriages are encouraged.

Rising access to education and skill employment is one of the policy level implications suggested by many government officials.

During the discussions, one of the key concerns expressed by one of the Police officials during key Respondent interviews is the quality of the data/information about child marriages. According to him, *present process of data collection and updating system on child marriages is weak. For example, at the village level, anganwadi workers are collecting this data and feeding it to Child Marriage Protection Officer. The same will be shared with the director of WD&CW department. Sometimes, the data collected by*

anganwadi worker and village sarpanch does not match. This means there must be a problem in the data collection system. Hence, the data collection system must be streamlined, and a separate website is required to track the data on child marriages.

This is the weakest point impacting the enforcement of law as well as the advocacy. Use of robust evidence-based data on girls and boys schooling and child marriages is important for learning's, tracking the progress in enforcement of law and advocacy.

The next issue raised by policy officials and WD & CW department officials is the compulsory registration of marriage. Even though, in 2006, Supreme Court has made registration of marriage compulsory to protect the interest of women, at the implementation level, it is very weak.

“Which girls are most at risk?” – was the common question asked for district level officials. The most common answers are –Girls from poorer background/resource-poor households, girls in marginalised castes, dropouts or those with no access to secondary education, and girls whose parents feel duty-bound to get their daughters married off soon after puberty.

Section 5

Summary and Recommendations

While early marriage takes many different forms and has various causes, one issue is paramount. Whether it happens to a girl or a boy, early marriage is a violation of human rights¹⁰⁴.

Child marriage is increasingly being recognised as a major challenge for development, both at the national and international levels. At the family level, it is often seen as a solution to problems such as girls' safety, poverty, and cultural pressures. It has its roots strongly fixed in traditions, social norms and beliefs, which are deeply embedded in certain caste groups; thus making it extremely difficult to eradicate.

It is evident from this study that traditions and social norms, economic insecurity, lack of access to secondary education and social pressure are the primary drivers of child marriages.

To protect ancestral property, strengthen kinships as well as political powers, most of the families prefer consanguineous marriages. In this context, the age of the girl is not very important and the only criteria are biological maturity of the girl. Another factor is pressure from grandparents which also compels parents to perform child marriages. In fact, in few communities, for example in fishing community, performing child marriage is a routine and customary practice. There are certain social norms, for instance the norm of marrying daughters before sons. Similarly, the death of a family member must precede a girl's marriage. In such a scenario, the age of the girl is not taken into consideration. There is a belief among the rural communities that the higher the education, higher the dowry. Due to this, few parents prefer to marry their daughters as and when they get a suitable bridegroom and they do not want to send their girl children to attain higher levels of education. If the family is having more number of girl children, irrespective of their young age, parents opt for child marriages and want to be free from responsibilities. These are the key driving factors classified under traditions, social norms and beliefs.

¹⁰⁴ UNICEF Innocenti (2001) "Early Child Marriage – Child Spouse" Innocenti Digest, No 07, March 2001, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Italy.

The cycle of intergenerational poverty also contributes to child marriages. Families with economic insecurity (because of no or less dependable income/assets) prefer child marriages. For example, in Anantapur district, where drought is more common, parents from poor families migrate to nearby districts in Karnataka state for livelihoods. In such families, to avoid the risks associated with leaving the young girls behind with grandparents, prefer child marriages. If both the parents are illiterate, in general their awareness levels are low, and they cannot understand the consequences of child marriages. Hence, child marriages are common among such families. This factor is again linked to the poverty.

Access to secondary education is another important factor behind child marriages. In specific geographical areas where secondary education is not accessible, parents do not want to keep girl children for long in the family. Instead of engaging girl children in other household and livelihood activities, parents prefer to marry off their girl children. This is also to avoid male harassment within the school, or when girls commute to school or work place. Lack of transportation to reach secondary schooling, lack of or poor sanitation facilities in secondary schools are also driving factors behind child marriages. Sometimes, academic failure of a girl child influences her aspirations about higher education, negatively. In such circumstances, she is more likely to drop out from school and alternatively parents prepare for her marriage.

Sometimes, love and elopement of young force the parents into risk. They have to face caste councils and punishments. To avoid this, parents prefer child marriages. In few cases it appears that social and electronic media also influences both young boys and girls to fall in love and elope. In general, child marriage is a common practice among the families headed by women (single parent families). In addition to poverty, pressure from the community, elders and caste leaders force the single parent to prefer girl child marriage.

A number of factors are now known to contribute to the practice of child marriage, including the civil registration system, the lack of legislative framework and enforcement mechanisms, and the existence of traditional and religious laws that support the practice. An effective implementable legal framework, which is supported by financial resources and enforcement mechanisms, provides a protective framework that ensures a girls' rights to decide when and whom to marry. It also provides an enabling and supportive environment that will help to guide advocates and activists to mobilise communities to end child marriage.

Asocial movement against child marriages is the main course of action; school curriculum

should include strengthening the social expectations of girls and boys including their aspirations on education and marriage– as suggested by many government officials. Further, they also suggested that engagement with the community should have a framework on how to influence the age specific norms and behaviour of parents and children. Particularly adolescent girls need to be sensitised about their health and social needs and also about the risks that entail child marriage.

It is evident that secondary school enrolment and quality of education is the most powerful predictor of child marriage. It is important to bring about awareness about the policy, in both the states, yet there is clear evidence of a causal relationship between leaving school early and getting married early.

A summary of the present study highlights girls from the poorest and socially disadvantaged backgrounds have the risk of getting out of school or just stopping education at the primary level. Government's initiative to support girls from such categories need to have implementable plans that result in potential results.

Poverty, lack of access to secondary education, insecurity and social norms are the factors affecting the incidence of child marriage in Andhra Pradesh.

Recommendations

From the above discussions, one can understand the processes which operate at the more remote, societal level. Structural factors and social norms-interact with more immediate factors, such as household contexts (poverty, migration, culture, beliefs and social norms) and girls' individual development (access to secondary education), and challenges in enforcing law all have a bearing on chances of early marriage of girl children. It is therefore in this context that advocacy with key stakeholders is important. Factors behind child marriages at different levels in life, need to be taken into account.

The implications for policy below include discussion of possible ways to alleviate and counter some of the societal factors that exacerbate gendered disadvantages during adolescence, and measures to help build the capacity of individuals and families to take advantage of the opportunities available to them

From this study, the following advocacy points have emerged:

1. Grandparents and parents were found to have a significantly higher say in deciding upon the child marriages. Sometimes religious leaders, and community leaders also play influential roles. Advocacy needs to start from this point by sensitising them on the various consequences of child marriages.

2. Investment in accessible, girl-friendly and high-quality secondary education to assist girls to stay in school for longer. Quality of teaching and quality of school environment is crucially important.
3. Improved access for young women to economic opportunities, so that staying in school and delaying marriage are more worthwhile for girls and their families.
4. Strong and comprehensive social protection systems and support for the poorest households- since poverty is the major factor pushing many families to opt for child marriages.
5. Conditional cash transfers – one of the best options to support the poor families to keep their girl children longer in schools, and also support the family in adverse economic conditions.
6. Effective interventions with communities and families (including boys and men) to address social norms and to reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence.
7. Encouraging female role models so that girls and their families can envisage positive alternatives to child marriage.

At the policy level, the following key policy points need to be considered:

1. Improve access to quality education and other vocational opportunities. It is essential to increase the number of KGBVs considering the positive impact of this programme in retention and improvement of girl child education. Promote schools as learning environment for girls. Along with this, increase the educational opportunities through scholarships.
2. Extend free and compulsory education up to the age of 18 years, particularly considering the fact that every drop out child is at a highly potential risk of early marriages.
3. Skill development is one of the most important factors for the well-being of adolescent girls. Such initiatives will help in stopping child marriages.
4. Initiate programmes to enable community mobilisation and outreach to change social norms and attitudes of the community. Raising community awareness is more crucial in bringing attitudinal change among parents, caste leaders and religious leaders. Involving and improving the capacities of PRIs, community leaders and religious leaders makes the difference in stopping child marriages at grass root level as well as it gives strength to the enforcement mechanism.

5. To collect data on child marriages, initiate research to bring about awareness about programming and interventions. Improvement in systematic data collection, compilation and analysis is important to strengthen the data bank on child marriages. It is also important to initiate evaluations on a regular basis to inform the policymakers.
6. Develop monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring outcomes of advocacy plans.
7. Improve systematic coordination, communication and monitoring among those involved in the implementation.
8. Involve CMPOs and Police for developing state level intervention strategies, effective implementation of PCMA and delivery of services that pre-empt the incidence of child marriages.
9. Develop mechanisms for sharing responsibility of preventing child marriages among different functionaries/structures (PRIs, ULBs, School, PHC, AWC, VO etc.) at the community level and build their motivation and capacities to effectively deliver the desired results.
10. Bring about convergence between the enforcement mechanism and organisations working towards ending child marriages and ensure the well-being of girl children. In this context, interdisciplinary coordination with specific responsibilities need to be laid down.
11. Enforce PCMA, 2006, and related laws and policies that can discourage child marriage. The effective implementation of this Act can adopt and enforce state-specific rules on PCMA, 2006, and improving the capacity of the enforcement machinery. In addition, raising the community level awareness on the Act are important

Specific Policy Implications

There are quite a few specific driving factors that are prevailing in the districts. Such factors have to be considered during advocacy planning and proper action plan. For example: –

1. Consanguineous marriages to protect ancestral property and consolidating and strengthening kinship are more common across all sample districts in Andhra Pradesh. To justify such practice, parents and community hide behind religious justifications and also state it to be their customary practice, which

they have to obey. All upper castes practice consanguineous marriages and sometimes child marriages are taking place under this umbrella. This needs special focus.

2. It is evident that socially disadvantaged communities, for example, Scheduled Castes are performing child marriages under religious beliefs and opting for devoting young girls to village deities, which ultimately leads to child marriage. This practice is known as '*devadas*' (locally called as *mathamas/jogins*) system, which is still in practice in remote parts of Kurnool and Anantapur districts.
3. In Anantapur district, poor families who are under debt trap, are searching for wealthy families from neighbouring Karnataka state that can offer reverse dowry (locally known as *Kanyasulkam*) during marriage. Irrespective of the age of the girl, parents perform child marriages if they get a suitable match from better-off families. Drought is the major cause forcing parents to opt for such practices and due to drought, poor families migrate to other states. During such period, parents are of the opinion that their girl children are likely to get better security, better food in their in-laws' family. Such system is evident in Krishna district also. In this context, it is important to focus on providing social security mechanisms, such as conditional cash transfers.
4. Social norms and beliefs also encourage child marriages. For instance, biological maturity of the girl is the sign for marriage in most of the socially disadvantaged communities, such as the fisherman community in Visakhapatnam; the *yadava/golla* and *kuraba* caste groups are also following such practice. These communities are celebrating en masse child marriages during public festivals such as *jatharas* where caste councils play very strong role in commanding the families under social norm umbrella. In this context, a separate action plan is required where both enforcement mechanism and awareness campaigns have to work together

In conclusion, a specific policy and programmatic actions are needed to stop child marriage and its far-reaching adverse consequences. It is important for parents and community s at large to change their attitudes on early marriage and rather extend opportunities for childhood learning and education by keeping girls in school for more number of years. The role of Government and civil society organizations is important to address this issue. They to gather work closely, design action plan that is implementable and suits to address different driving factors of child marriages.

Section 6

Key Respondent Interview Schedule

A Study on Factors Leading to Child Marriages in Andhra Pradesh

Consent:

'We are exploring how people in this community think about marriage and education of girls and boys. We are talking with different stratas of stakeholders starting from PRIs to policy implementers to understand how you and others feel about these ideas/customs and whether you think there has been any change over time and why. We think your views are very important and should inform discussions around policies and programmes that aim to improve adolescents' well-being. We will be writing a report – there won't be any immediate effects but in the longer-term we would hope your views will be included.'

'The specific objectives of the study are – (1) Identify the influencers or drivers of child marriage within families and communities in the selected districts where child marriages are high, and (2) Explore the challenges in enforcing the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. The expected outputs are – “breakdown of strategies that can be used at the state, and local levels advocacy with all key stakeholders, to curb the practice of child marriage”

Can I proceed – Yes/No/Not now later (fix the date and time)

1. Identification Details		
SI.No	Particulars	
1.1	Name of the District	
1.2	Name of the <i>Mandal</i>	
1.3	Name of the village	
1.4	Profession	
1.5	Name of the Respondent	
1.6	Date of visit	
1.7	Name of the Interviewer	

Sl.No	Question	Probe
2.1	Are all the people in the village/ <i>mandal</i> /district aware of the government acts, legal age for boys and girls to marry? On the prevention of child marriages?	- PROBE for more details such as all the social groups and poor people are aware etc.
2.2	Has the <i>panchayat/mandal</i> /district taken any initiative to create awareness on this issue?	- If so, how, different methods,
2.3	Have you noticed any change in the awareness levels? If so, to what extent?	- PROBE and record
2.4	Do people in your community still practice child marriages? If so give the details with reasons for such practice?	- If so, in your view to what extent in your village/ <i>mandal</i> /district? - Is it confined to some social groups, gender, and single parent children or prevalent among all ? Give details. - Have you observed any changes in the extent of child marriages? - If so, why, how PROBE for details and record all the reasons leading to change in incidence of child marriages or otherwise
2.5	What is your role in this regard?	- PROBE and ascertain his powers and role in the prevention of child marriages?
2.6	How do you feel about your role and are you successful in your attempt in preventing the child marriages in your village/ <i>mandal</i> /district?	- PROBE for all the incidents whether successful or failure and record all the efforts made and outcome of incidents? - PROBE and ask the respondent to recollect and narrate the incidents
2.7	Can you tell about the roles and responsibilities of others at the village/ <i>mandal</i> /district level and the efforts made by them in preventing the child marriages in villages?	- Village President - Community leaders - Headmaster of the school - Members and leaders of the village level institutions etc., PROBE and record

Sl.No	Question	Probe
2.8	What are the beliefs, norms, values and pressures for child marriages in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religion, tradition, family practice, family and peer pressure, safety, gender discrimination, and daughter are taken as burden, family education. - Is there any difference between boys and girls? If so why PROBE all these and record
2.9	<p>What type of marriage contract is in practice?</p> <p>Are the marriages registered? If so, to what extent?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Civil; religious; customary - PROBE the details and record
2.10	Is polygamy prevalent in your village/ <i>mandal</i> /district? If so, to what extent	- PROBE for details with reasons for such practices
2.11	Do you observe dowry practice in the village/ <i>mandal</i> /district? If so give details.	- PROBE whether this practice changed over time? If so, since when and the reasons for such change?
2.12	Are there any incidents where child marriages taken place by abduction? If so, give reasons?	- PROBE and record
2.13	What are the challenges you have observed in the prevention of child marriages in your village/ <i>mandal</i> /district?	- PROBE for details such as: provisions in the act; cultural practices prevalent in the village; lack of institutions such as KGBV, High schools, Junior colleges, Poverty, Dowry, single parent, family problems etc.
2.14	What are the strategies to be adopted to counter the challenges?	- PROBE giving hints such as creation of Awareness on the bad consequences of child marriages, any issues not clear in the Act? And how to do etc.

Sl.No	Question	Probe
2.15	What are activities to be undertaken under each strategies listed above to arrest the child marriages?	- Such as Kalajatas for creating awareness etc. PROBE for activities for every strategy and RECORD all the details
2.16	Which are the departments responsible for every activity proposed?	- PROBE and record
2.17	Do you visualise any benefits/merits in child marriages? Explain?	- PROBE and record details
2.18	What are the risks associated with child marriages – explain?	- PROBE Health, Education, Social, Economic and Psychological
2.19	What are the main reasons for ineffectiveness of the enforcement of Child Marriage Prohibition Act?	- Community pressure, Inactiveness of police, lack of awareness PROBE and record
2.20	In your view, what more the government should do to reduce child marriages?	- PROBE and record
2.21	Your valuable suggestions to prevent early marriages	- RECORD THREE most important ones

FGD Guidelines & Checklist

A Study on Factors Leading to Child Marriages in Andhra Pradesh

Consent:

'We are exploring how people in this community think about marriage and education of girls and boys. We are talking with different stratas of stakeholders, starting from PRIs to policy implementers, to understand how you and others feel about these ideas/ customs and whether you think there has been any change over time and why. We think your views are very important and should inform discussions around policies and programmes that aim to improve well-being of adolescents'. We'll be writing a report – there won't be any immediate effects but in the longer-term we would hope your views will be included.'

'The specific objectives of the study are – (1) Identify the influencers or drivers of child marriage within families and communities in the selected districts where child marriages are high, and (2) Explore the challenges in enforcing the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

The expected outputs are – “breakdown of strategies that can be used at the state, and local levels advocacy with all key stakeholders to curb the practice of child marriage”.

Can I proceed – Yes/No/Not now later (fix the date and time)

1. Identification Details	
SI.No	Particulars
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1.3	Name of the village
1.4	Profession
1.5	Name of the Respondent
1.6	Date of visit
1.7	Name of the Interviewer

SI.No	Question	Probe
2.1	Are all the people in the village aware about the government acts, legal age for boys and girls to marry? On the prevention of child marriages?	- PROBE for more details such as all the social groups and poor people are aware etc.
2.2	Has the <i>panchayat</i> taken any initiative to create awareness on this issue?	- If so, how, different methods, Have you noticed any change on the awareness levels? If so, to what extent? PROBE and record
2.3	Do people in your community still practice child marriages? If so, give the details with reasons for such practice?	- If so, in your view to what extent in your village/ <i>mandal</i> /district? - Is it confined to some social groups, gender, and single parent children or prevalent among all ? Give details - Have you observed any changes in the extent of child marriages? - If so, why, how PROBE for details and record all the reasons leading to change in incidence of child marriages or otherwise
2.4	Can you tell about the roles and responsibilities of others at the village and the efforts made by them in preventing the child marriages in villages?	- Village President - Community leaders - Headmaster of the school - Members and leaders of the village level institutions etc., PROBE and record
2.5	What are the beliefs, norms, values and pressures for child marriages in your community?	- Religion, tradition, family practice, family and peer pressure, safety, gender discrimination, and daughter are taken as burden, family education. - Is there any difference between boys and girls? If so why PROBE all these and record

SI.No	Question	Probe
2.6	<p>What type of marriage contract is in practice?</p> <p>Are the marriages registered? If so, to what extent?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Civil; religious; customary - dowry practice, abduction marriages - PROBE the details and record
2.7	<p>What are the challenges you have observed in the prevention of child marriages in your village?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PROBE for details such as: provisions in the act; cultural practices prevalent in the village; lack of institutions such as KGBV, High schools, Junior colleges, Poverty, Dowry, single parent, family problems etc.
2.8	<p>What are the strategies to be adopted to counter the challenges?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PROBE giving hints such as creation of Awareness on the bad consequences of child marriages, any issues not clear in the Act? And how to do etc.
2.9	<p>What are activities to be undertaken under each strategy, listed above, to arrest the prevalence of child marriages?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Such as Kalajatas for creating awareness etc. PROBE for activities for every strategy and RECORD all the details
2.10	<p>Do you visualise any benefits/merits in child marriages? Explain?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PROBE and record details
2.11	<p>What are the risks associated with child marriages – explain?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PROBE Health, Education, Social, Economic and Psychological
2.12	<p>What are the main reasons for ineffectiveness of the enforcement of the Child Marriage Prohibition Act?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community pressure, inactiveness of police, lack of awareness PROBE and record
2.13	<p>In your view, what more the government should do to reduce child marriages?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PROBE and record
2.14	<p>Your valuable suggestions to prevent early marriages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RECORD THREE most important ones



1, Community Centre, Zamrudpur
Kailash Colony Extension
New Delhi 110048
India

Tel: +91 1146558484; 46558416

Email: planindia@planindia.org

 www.planindia.org

 PlanIndiaNGO

 Plan_India



MAHITA

#12-13-484/21. Street No.1,

Tarnaka, Hyderabad- 17,

T.S, India

Tel: +91-40-27641858,

Email: mahitahyd2002@yahoo.com

 www.mahita.org

 MahitaNGO