

# GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE (GAA)

News letter-2020  
(Second Quarter)



# EDITORIAL

Discrimination against women has increased. This is even more so in the present day when the Covid pandemic is rapidly expanding. The effects of coronavirus outbreaks continue to exacerbate economic impacts on the world over. Women face greater discrimination than ever before due to the gap between women and men in India, economic factors, earning salaries and wages. Women who are already discriminated against in employment, wages, education etc., are more vulnerable to financial and other issues in particular situations that have arisen due to Covid. Various studies have revealed that women are more discriminated against in the employment sector as a gender when compared to men.

## LESS THAN 25% OF LABOR FORCE

Fewer than 25% of all women in the labor force in the country are women. In comparison, women earn an average of 35% lower wages or salaries than men. The same global average gap is only 16 percent for males, while women make up 49 per cent of India's population and their contribution to the country's economic productivity is 18 per cent. Oxfam India recently reported that the country lost US \$ 216 billion in jobs and employment during the last three and four months of the pandemic outbreak. It has a more profound effect on those who are already financially weak compared to men.

## THE COUNTRY IS EVEN MORE EXTREME

The impact of the Covid pandemic on women in various forms is further exacerbated by social inequalities and discrimination in India. As a result of the outbreak of the virus, a large proportion of them are reluctant to work outside the home, increasing their weight, responsibilities and tasks. A girl is raped

every 15 minutes in the country. In addition, domestic violence complaints from women have doubled since the lockdown. In the wake of the rapidly changing technology, only 29 percent of women in the country are using the Internet.

## INDIA STANDS 112<sup>TH</sup> IN THE GENDER GAP INDEX

World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index - India ranks 112<sup>th</sup> out of 153 countries in total by 2020. Our country stands in the same position compared to different countries in the creation of equal opportunities for men. Women are becoming less important in the fields of medical, health and education for men.

Girls Advocacy Alliance, implemented by Mahita in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh has taken the initiative to do online meetings with its stakeholders due to unforeseen impact of Corona. A timely state level meeting with Department of Women Development and Children Welfare (WDCW) officials had once again brought forward the issues affecting children, girls and women at large, for which a solution is being expected in the coming days.

With education being digitised, children are now exposed to online world and cyber-attacks. In this regard, an online consultation with a cyber-expert to our youth advocates has yielded good results in protecting themselves. Not to forget that a tip off from our Youth Advocates in Adilabad has stopped a young girl from turning into a child bride. Truly, a great sign that shows the impact of GAA amongst young minds who are slowly transforming into social leaders in the society.

With this, GAA-Mahita takes the opportunity to introduce you to the list of activities that had taken place during the recent times.

Wishing you a Happy Reading!

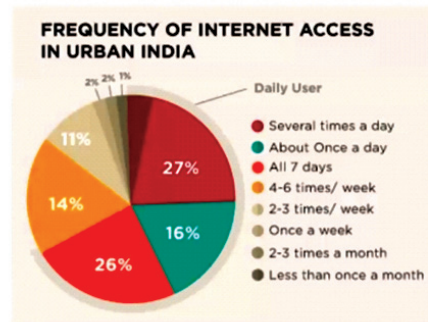
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## 1

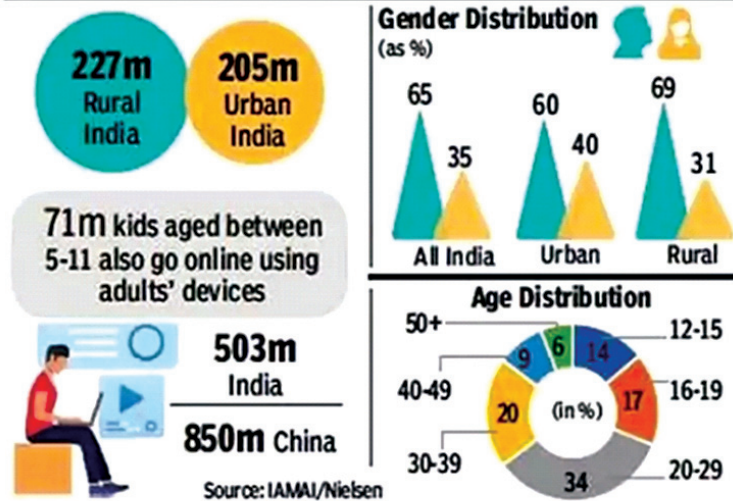
## ONLINE SAFETY AT RISK FOR GIRLS AMIDST COVID 19

Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Nielsen showed rural India had 227 million active internet users, 10% more than urban India's about 205 million



5/26/2020

## INDIA 2ND LARGEST AFTER CHINA



source: Google

With schools transforming themselves into digitalised education during lockdown period, children and youngsters are now easily prone to cyber-attacks.

Emphasizing this need, a 'Virtual training on safety for girls amidst Covid 19', was organised where cyber security expert, Mr IL NarsimhaRao alerted youth advocates about the issues and



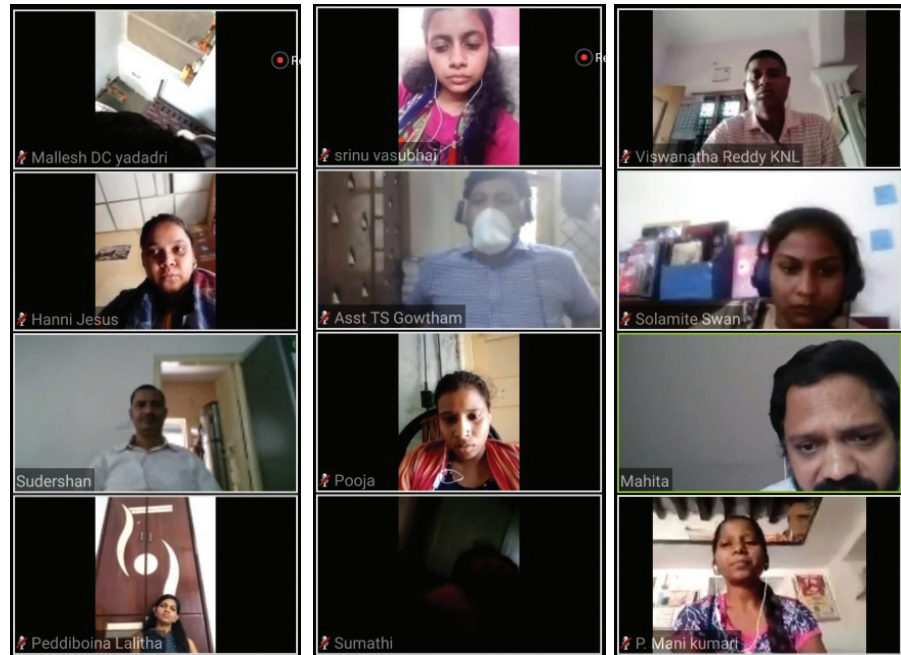
mechanisms to deal online crimes with an iron fist.

India is second after China in terms of increasing number of online users day by day. "Girls and older teens are found to be most socially active in the country", he said. Knowingly or unknowingly, they are always under the impression that they are safe online unaware of the costs associated with it, he added.

He spoke about basic Gmail settings that mostly people are unaware and also various methods of hacking and the ways we need to prevent from falling prey to online frauds. Phishing attacks, social engineering attacks, fake messages, cyber bullying, online harassment were some of the issues that were dealt. Key tips on dealing with

social media, pass words and online accounts were shared. He also shared on finding and reporting about attacks in social media. A total of 76 youth advocates from both AP and TS had participated in the meeting and made it an interactive session.

Mr David Raj P, Senior Child Protection Manager, UNICEF introduced about the problems faced by girls due to internet usage.



## 2

## VIRTUAL WORKSHOP TO DISCUSS STRATEGIES TO END CHILD MARRIAGES

Within months of the COVID- 19 lockdown, Child line India has witnessed a 50% surge in calls for protection from abuse and violence in children across the country. The pandemic has brought to light an amplified number of cases of abuse of children in the form of child sexual abuse, child marriages and post lockdown children's vulnerability to a series of violations will only increase.

Recognizing the need to respond to the situation, Mahita – Plan India and Poverty Learning Foundation (PLF) under the aegis of Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) in collaboration with Department of Women Development and Child Welfare (WDCW), Telangana state had organised an



online meeting – ‘State level virtual workshop to discuss strategies to end Child Marriages in Telangana’.

Chaired by Shri D Divya, Special Secretary and Commissioner-WDCW, TS, strategies were entailed to ensure that girls especially are protected from early marriages and how the community leaders at large with the support of government machineries and NGOs help in preventing child marriages and let continue their education in the post lockdown period.

The meeting was attended by about 300 of their officials who are in charge of responding to children at risk of being married.

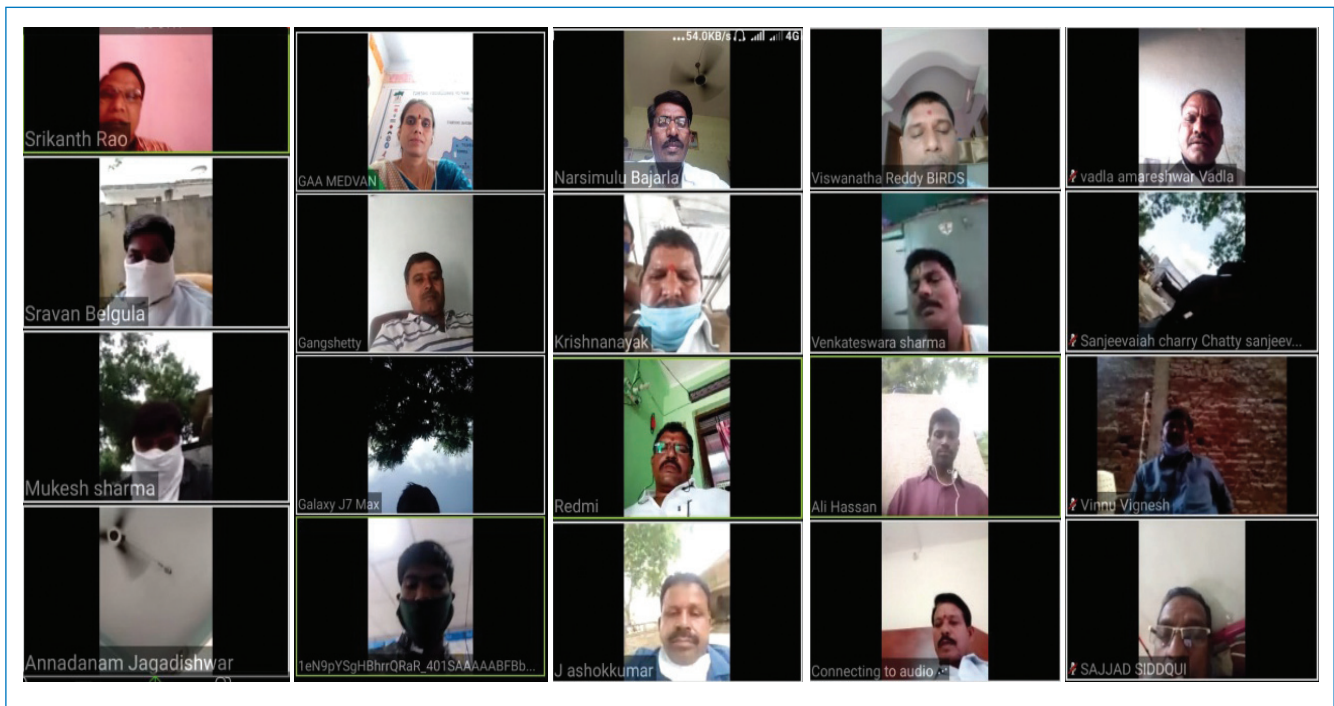
## 3

**MANY CHILDREN LACK ACCESS TO INTERNET**

Covid 19 has a direct impact on children and women, thwarting their growth in many ways, opined caste leaders hailing from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states. They stressed that the poor economic situation prevailing in the current times is forcing many parents to take adverse steps including dropping out of schools and performing child marriages.

Online education though considered to be a boon is not the same anymore, they said. Children are getting addicted to mobiles and television which will have impact including psychological problems. On the otherside, many families from rural and semi-urban areas still lack access to mobile and internet which hampers their regular education.

Responding to their concerns, the district coordinators have emphasized the need to have a hawk eye and monitor child protection issues in their ambit. They explained mechanisms and systems in addressing and preventing child marriages, child labour and drop out education among girls. Preventive measures including social distancing, sanitization, self-protection and following a healthy hygiene regime is utmost important among grass roots, they further said.



## 4

## GIRLS DEPRESSED OVER CONTINUING EDUCATION!

Girls and young women are very much depressed about continuing their education amidst Covid 19 due to heavy financial impact on their families, opined various Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from AP and TS in orientation sessions to aware them about child protection issues.

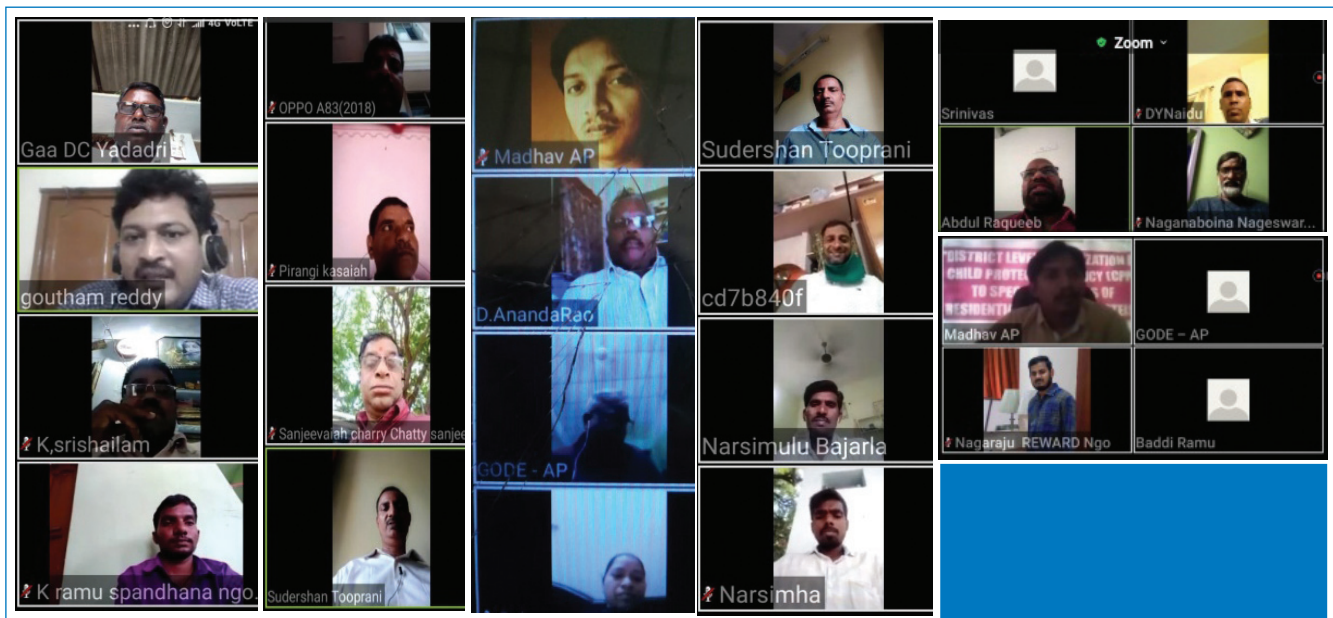


Stressing on the fact that children facing problems, the District coordinators expressed concern for CSOs to unite and identify sensitive areas within their regions and work more on social awareness activities. In Telangana, child labour is more in cotton seed crop season, hence they were asked to take help of SMILE and

There has been an increasing trend of elopement cases during lockdown especially in rural areas resulting in child marriages, which is again a complex situation to CSOs and as well the government authorities. This is leading to increased school drop outs during this academic year resulting in child labour and also child trafficking issues.

Operation Muskan to identify child labour pattern.

Several information on Covid 19 safety methods, impact of girl child education and Child Marriage Prohibition Act were discussed. They also shared about the relief activities and emphasized that some families are lacking medical assistance during lockdown period.



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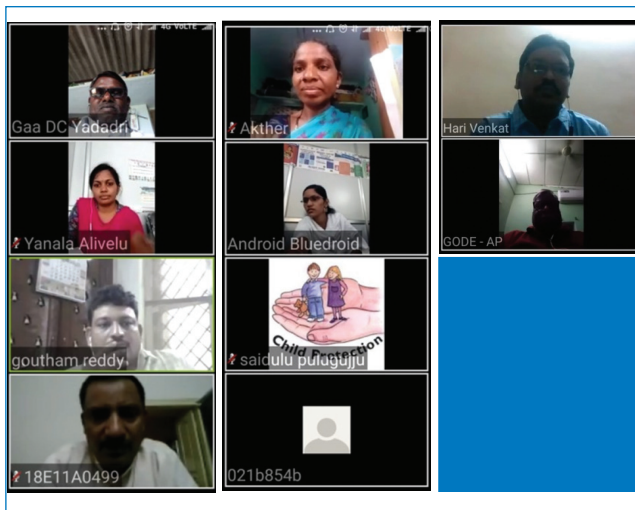
## MOBILE VAN CAMPAIGN FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Organising mobile van campaign during lockdown, due to increase in child marriages and child labour issues among the districts is need of the hour.

Ms Hemalatha, BRB Coordinator, Jogulamba Gadwal suggested NGOs to work on girl child protection and development. She also added, that there has been a continuous Village Level Child Protection Committee meetings to know the children issues followed by necessary actions.

In online sessions, government officials also said that there has to be a shelter home for boys rescued from child labour.

Mr Sudershan, GAA TS- coordinator, request government departments to focus on child marriages. Several government officials, including Child Development Protection Officer (CDPO), District Child Protection Officer (DCPO), Anganwadi supervisor, Anganwadi teacher, Child line counselor, LPO, BalRakshaBhavan (BRB) coordinators from AP and TS were part of the program.



6

## YOUTH ADVOCATES HELP STOP A CHILD MARRIAGE

An online meeting with youth advocates has turned out to be a saviour for a girl child who was prevented from turning into a child marriage victim.

Youth Advocates hailing from Adilabad shared information about a possible child marriage which was made to reach the government authorities, who took timely action and counseled parents from both sides.

In a series of online meetings organised to know the whereabouts of current situation of children during lockdown period, youth advocates of AP and TS were oriented on measures to be adopted on child protection, prevention of child labour and drop outs. Ms Sahshikala, a youth advocate from Gadwal has explained about the problems facing by the children related to their educational growth who cannot afford online educational courses.





## 7

**CHILD MARRIAGE SPIKE AMIDST LOCKDOWN**

The insecurity arising out of depleting financial resources amidst Covid 19 is forcing many girl children turn child brides silently, opined Religious leaders from AP and TS in a series of online sessions.

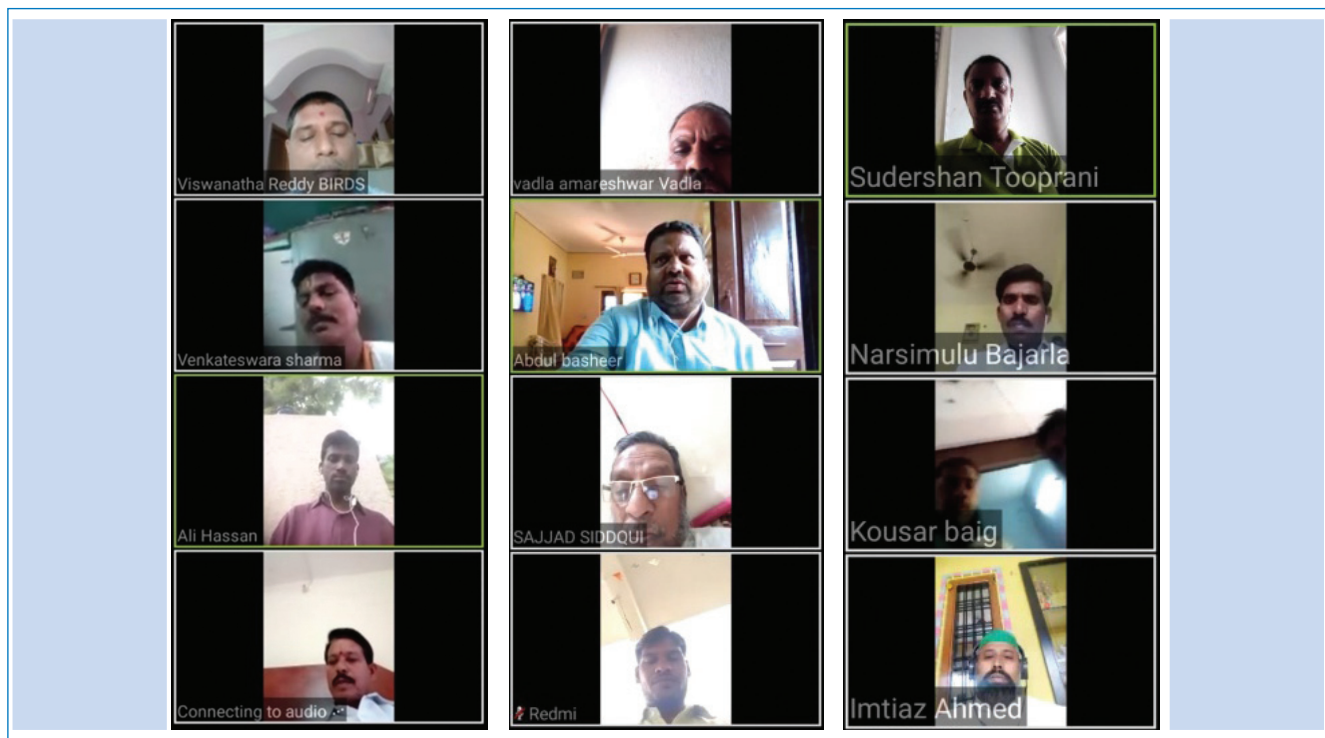
The rate of child marriages has drastically reduced when compared to last year, due to the awareness created by Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) in districts of TS and AP. However, this message has to once again reach the grass roots during lockdown period.

Mr Anand Sharma participating in the religious leaders meeting in Jogulamba Gadwal said that rate of child marriages was reduced due to the effective work of GAA program. Following which, our religious community took sincere actions and organised awareness sessions to eradicate the child marriage issue.

Mr Moiniddin suggested focusing on children's education to improve the literacy rate and also to provide proper education facility to poor people who cannot afford online educational courses.

According to The Hindu report in Andhra Pradesh, 165 were stopped.

Also they opined that girl children living at home for a long period of time are becoming victims of eve teasing, physical abuse. Several child marriages have been happening due to lock down and majority of them are not being reported, they added. Several leaders from Muslims, Hindus, Brahmin Archakasanghas were part of the meetings in both TS and AP respectively.



## NEWS LETTER-2020 (SECOND QUARTER)