

**The situation of child brides  
in the Telangana State**

Poverty Learning Foundation

(plf.org.in)

Hyderabad

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This study was assigned by Mahitha (GAA implementing lead), carried out by Poverty Learning Foundation and supported by Plan India.

The situation of child brides in the states of Telangana  
@ Mahitha and Plan India 2019

This report is for Plan India and Mahitha to design their advocacy under GAA in Telangana. Hence, readers who wish to use the findings for research purpose, are suggested to take written permission from Plan India or Mahitha (mahitahyd2002@yahoo.com) Hyderabad office.

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Disclaimer: What data speaks is reflected in the report and the statements are the views of child brides and authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the views of the Plan India, Mahitha and PLF. The text has not been edited or fact-checked to official publication standards and Plan India, Mahitha and PLF accepts no responsibility for error.

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## How to read this report

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Executive summary briefs about the critical findings on pervances of child marriages, legal provisions and policies, and consequences and aspirations of child brides. It concludes with policy implications.

Section two briefly explains the most important drivers of child marriages.

Section three highlights the prevalence of child marriages. It briefs about the status of women in the age group of 10 to 20 years and married before 18 years of age.

Section four summarizes the provisions for institutional and legal support systems to prevent child marriages.

Section five briefs the consequences of child marriages from the field level evidences. Besides, it describes the aspirations and the demands of child brides.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **CONTEXT:**

The negative effects of child marriage, at individual level and at societal level, are manifested in several ways. If one imagines the life of a girl who gets married at the age of 10 or 14 or below 18, who is neither physically nor emotionally ready to become a wife and a mother. She might get pregnant before her body has fully developed, which can result in peri and post-natal. Infant mortality and maternal mortality are the two common risks before child brides. She may be subjected to domestic violence that may affect her morale, mental and psychological life. She has to forgo career opportunities, because of school dropout, and spend her life in poverty. Lack of economic freedom, she will not be able to provide better nutrition to her infants, better education to her children and adequate care of her family. If this cycle continues, there is every possibility of her children likely to face the similar challenges as she faced. Child brides choice aims to break this cycle and give a chance to design her life.

It requires multisectoral approach to end child marriages. Government ministries, service providers, development experts, advocacy agencies, and community groups should come to gather, have a national and state level action plan, which is more critical to end child marriages, and act. It is the governments to coordinate work led by different sectors and to make sure each sector has the funding it needs to respond effectively. Then only, achieving SDGs, specifically: poverty, nutrition, health, education, economic growth and reduction of gender inequality is possible by 2030.

### **THE STUDY**

Girls Advocacy Alliance(GAA), which is focusing on combating violence against girls and young women and increasing their economic participation in developing countries, including in India. Its aim is to see every girl should get a chance to ever get a 'decent' job is minimal.

In this context, Plan India and Mahitha (Lead implementer of GAA in Telangana ), the consortium members of GAA, commissioned a short and quick study with three objectives: through secondary literature document the prevalence and status of child brides; document the current provisions for institutional and legal support extended to victims of child marriages; and through primary data, analyze the impact of child marriages from the perspective of child brides, their aspirations, and provide recommendations on prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of child brides from the perspective of child brides themselves.

Study was commissioned to the Poverty Learning Foundation (PLF), a macro level think tank working on micro and macro level issues and support the governments with proper implementation science. Using scientifically validated research methods and instruments, PLF has executed the study in Hyderabad (n. 19), Adilabad (n.19), Yadadri (n. 19), Gadwal (n. 17), Vikarabad (n. 19), and Sangareddy (n.14), between September and December 2019 and drafted this report.

This report helps in understanding the statistical trends in child marriages, how policies are working to stop them and what are the perceptions of child brides on their choices and chances to build their future.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Drivers:

In Telangana, Traditions, Social Norms and Beliefs, Poverty, Access to secondary education and Social pressure are the critical drivers encouraging child marriages over the years. These are very deep rooted drivers in the society.

### 2. Statistical trends:

Using data from Census 2011, NFHS 4 (2015-16), DLHS (3 rounds till 2013 from 2012) were computed and analysed to understand the trends and status of women in the age group of 10 to 21 who are married before 18 years of age.

According to Census 2011, in the state of Telangana, 4.94% of women aged 10 to 21 were married below the age of 18. The district with highest percentage is from Mahbubnagar (7.12%), followed by Nalgonda (7%) and Khammam (6.21%).

NFHS 4 says, 25.7% of women aged 20 to 24 were married below 18. The incidence of child marriages for girls is high in the districts of Mahbubnagar (41.3%), Nalgonda (40.9%) and Medak (36.3).

In the first round of DLHS data (2002-03), in the districts of Telangana, the top three districts with high incidence of child marriages for girls are Nalgonda, Adilabad, Mahbubnagar. In the year 2007-08, the second round of DLHS was conducted. In the districts of Telangana, the top three districts were Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda and Khammam. In the year 2012-12, the third round of DLHS was conducted in which, Medak, Warangal and Khammam emerged as top three districts in Telangana. The comparison between DLHS 2, 3 and 4 indicates the declining trends

Percentage of literate women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 is 52.57%. The percentage of illiterate women of this category is 25.53%. The percentage of literate but below primary is 3.93%. The percentage of primary but below middle is 18.56%. The percentage of middle but below metric and secondary is 8.70%. The percentage of matric or secondary but below graduate is 30.20%. The percentage of graduate and above is 0.29% only.

The percentage of total main workers amongst women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 is 48.81%. The percentage of Cultivators in women of this category is 10.34%. The percentage of agricultural laborers is 29.34%. The percentage of household industry workers is 3.16%. The percentage of Other Workers is 5.96%. The percentage of marginal workers is 13.88%. The percentage of non-workers is 37.31% only.

According to NFHS4 data on Telangana, 12.1% of women aged 15 to 19 were already mothers or pregnant at the time of survey. Khammam has highest percentage of such women at 18.9% followed by Nalgonda at 16.4% and Mahbubnagar at 16%. Seven districts are in above state average, having highest percentage of young mothers in the state

According to NFHS4 Data for Telangana, the percentage of pregnant mothers below 20 who had four or three ANC visits is 75.8%, the percentage with an ANC visit in the first trimester of pregnancy is 85%, percentage who received two or more TT injections during pregnancy is

84.1%, percentage whose last live birth was protected against neonatal tetanus is 88.4%, percentage of who were given or brought iron and folic acid tables is 89.5%, percentage who took iron and folic acid tablets for at least 100 days is 52.8%, percentage who had full ante care is only 38.3%, percentage who took intestinal parasite drug is 20.8%.

### 3. Real time data:

It is mandatory for child protection unit in the department of WD&CW to collect and update their data on child marriages and vulnerable villages across the state. Though department is putting their best efforts, most of the early marriage incidences are not coming to the notice of the department. This is one of the challenge in identifying such probable cases and preventing them. Between 2014 and 2019, data from the WD&CW department shows that highest number of child marriages have taken place in Khammam (n. 530) and lowest in Mulugu district (n. 7). There are 12 districts where more than 100 child marriages have registered and in remaining 21 districts less than 100 cases registered.

Researchers of this study found that there are several successful incidences in these districts. Local political leaders, gram panchayat representatives and community leaders are supporting the child marriages. This is one of the reasons preventing the department officials to react timely.

### 4. Safeguards:

Constitutional provisions: Child Early and Forced Marriages (CEFM), Art. 14 ensures equality before the law; Article 15 prohibits all forms of discrimination against any citizen; Article 21 ensures protection of life and personal liberty; Article 21A ensures free and compulsory education to be provided by the State to all children aged 6–14.

Under Part IV of the Indian Constitution, “Directive Principles”, Art. 39(f) states that children shall be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against moral and material abandonment. Art. 45, says that the “State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years”.

Similarly, under Part IV A of the Constitution including Art. 51 (j), envisioned Fundamental Duties for its citizens, requiring citizens to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavor and achievement, and Art. 51(k), which requires citizens who are parents or guardians to provide opportunities for education to their children or wards between the ages of 6 and 14.3.

Besides, there are certain laws prohibiting child marriages (CMPA) which is said to be active in the state. However, the reality is other way – every day in one place or other girl children are forced to get married. Poor inter-departmental coordination is the reason talked much by the researchers and activists, but none of them think on how to strengthen implementation mechanism, how to bring all levels and cadres of stakeholders together to work on this issue.

The Girl Child Protection Scheme, 'Kalyana Lakshmi' and 'Shaadi Mubarak' are important programs that has brought down the rate of child marriages in the state. However, this hasn't brought any substantial change towards the girl child, the study reported. Under the scheme, the government provides Rs 1 lakh towards marriage for women from poor families. The scheme can be availed by women who have completed 18 years of age, belong to the marginalised



communities of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities and Backward Castes, with the combined income of parents not exceeding Rs 2 lakh per annum. The primary intent of this programme is to eradicate the menace of child marriage. It is important to note that this scheme, e-governance application method has resulted in successful implementation. The scheme has so far helped in reducing child marriages in the State besides helping distressed families. Child marriages have come down since the introduction of the scheme, as parents are waiting until the time their girl child attains 18 years, which is mandatory under the scheme, for availing the benefit.

5. Consequences of child marriages – Voices from child brides:

Financial dependency, not able to access proper health care, often abuse and violence within the family and community, ill treatment by neighbours, early pregnancy, prolonged delivery, high bleeding during delivery, hypertension, stunted children, isolated social life, no scope for further education, and less freedom are the critical consequences of early marriage expressed by the child brides.

To address critical challenges, most of the child brides are looking at Gram Panchayat support in preventing child marriages, accessing development services/provisions. Similarly larger majority are demanding the health services, particularly post and pre-natal services and immunisation services, and Anganwadi services for their infants, particularly for those who are stunted (malnourished) and often falling sick. One of the critical point emerged is the proper and timely support from Anganwadi/health centre to address the anaemic conditions among adolescent girls. Majority of the child brides said that they have less or no knowledge about family planning methods and spacing the family, for which they are demanding proper support from health services. Another

6. Aspirations, & Demands from child brides perspective and Policy Implications:

However, their aspirations says that their confidence levels are high and to fulfil their aspirations they are putting critical demands to be fulfilled by the government. Data has been collected from 55 child brides from Visakhapatnam (n. 17), Krishna (n. 19) and Kurnool (n. 19) who got married between 12 and 17 years of age.

6.1 *Small family norms:* Many aspired for small family with two children, however awareness on family planning is very low. Mother in law and husbands are the decision makers in spacing the family. Demand made by them is proper counselling to their husbands and mother-in-law's on consequences of early marriage, sexual life, and birth spacing. In this context, there is a need to improve the reach out of primary health care and Anganwadi services to those girls who were married before 18 years of age.

6.2 *Economic independence:* Most of the child brides aspire for economic independence, however their educational background is not supporting them. Some of them have told that they need vocational training on job-oriented programs including soft skills. Those who are not interested to pursue further education after marriage, strongly aspire to have skill training course that will give chance to earn. It is therefore, job oriented vocational skill trainings have to be embedded into the present curriculum starting from secondary/higher education. Department of education has to rethink on how best the existing curriculum at secondary and high schools linked with vocational training courses, including soft skills. It is essential to map the local skill training centres run by the government, corporates and NGOs and link them with the existing structure of education.

- 6.3 *Scholarships to pursue higher education:* It is one of the widely talked point. Some of the child brides have said that due to financial difficulties in the family, they were forced to dropout from schools. If such support exists or accessible to them, perhaps their parents would have not thought of early marriage and forced them to drop out from school. In such cases, it is important to think about conditional cash transfers, bicycles to girls in secondary education, hygienic sanitation facilities in schools, and embedded vocational education in to secondary schools as suggested by Copenhagen Consensus in their recent report.
- 6.4 *Health life:* Majority aspired to lead healthy life, particularly to their infants. Those who had early pregnancy are demanding Anganwadi services. Those who are not pregnant also looking for Anganwadi services. Particularly this category of child brides is either malnourished or anemic. Here, primary health care has to focus more on adolescent girls (either married early or unmarried) provide proper knowledge about menstrual cycle and hygiene, importance of Iron Folic, family planning methods, pre and post-natal care and immunization.
- 6.5 *Demand for services:* Anganwadi, Panchayat, PHC and Secondary education are the most demanded services by the child brides. Particularly to Gram Panchayat their demand is to involve at right time to prevent child marriages. Those who are in urban area demanded timely support from policy as well as from legal services. Members of Gram Panchayat has to be sensitized on the socio-economic consequences of child marriages and made accountable to prevent such incidents. If they act properly, most of the child marriages can be prevented.
- 6.6 *Demand for information:* Majority of the child brides have no or low awareness about their entitlements, child marriage prevention act and other child protection measures. It is essential to include such informative syllabus from the secondary education level.

It is the issue between choice and chance of lifestyle of child birds. They have lesser voice, least exposure to education, their husbands age is also less to have a matured thinking and decisions. In such circumstances, though there is a chance, they are not able to make choices in many issues related to their personal and family life.

To end this persistent practice, policymakers should recognize that addressing child marriage is not only a moral imperative, but it is also a cost-effective and strategic move to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 by 2030. Public-private partnerships and other collaborative mechanisms need to be designed to support efforts by civil society and the private sector to combat child marriage. Given the social norms, traditions and beliefs to the perpetuation of child marriage, programs that collaborate with political, community and religious leaders, self-help groups, and youth clubs should be a particular focus.

Government policy on child marriages should focus on three critical areas: maternal and child health, family planning, and girls' secondary education. These are either one way or other related to child marriages and survival of the victims. It is also important for policy makers to ensure that efforts should address the girls who are already married and their children.

Monitoring and Evaluation is one of the critical factor in addressing the child marriages. In this context, it is important to identify vulnerable children, vulnerable families in specific vulnerable geographical regions, collect accurate data and accordingly investments need to be planned and monitored.

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## FIRST Section

### The Context

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An 18-year-old girl killed her two-day-old son in *Shahdol* district of Madhya Pradesh during April 2013, as she feared motherhood might put an end to her dreams of studying further<sup>1</sup>. Sunita Yadav had taken her Class 12 exam on April 2 and delivered a boy three days later. When the baby disappeared from the hospital on April 7, she accused a nurse of stealing her son. But police investigation and interrogations revealed that Sunita herself had killed her baby. Such an action, however desperate, cannot be condoned. But the reality is also that millions of reluctant young brides like Sunita are being forced to bury their aspirations and juggle the roles of 'wife' and 'mother' in their teens. India has the largest number of child brides in the world, with 47% girls married under the legal age of 18, according to UNFPA<sup>2</sup>. Early marriage often has a strong physical, psychological and emotional impact on them, often cutting off any chances of education and personal growth.

For the past few decades, Government of India is trying to address the age old, culturally promoted child marriages. However, the achievement are not impressive. Despite having the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, which prevents child marriage, protect the children involved and prosecute the offenders, Census 2011 says that 33.8 million child marriages were reported for girls aged less than 18 and boys below 21 years. High variance has been noted across regions, states and between urban and rural areas in the prevalence child marriage within India<sup>3</sup>.

Where the traditions and social norms take upper hand in deciding the marriages, Telangana State registered with 1,71,083 girls below 18 years and 1,72,934 boys below 21 years got married between 2012 and 2016<sup>4</sup>. Some of the districts, for instance Krishna is having highest number of child marriages during the same reference period.

Department of Women Development and Child Welfare, State Women's Commission along with few non-government international organizations, for instance UNICEF, Plan India, and Save the Children with the support of local organizations, activists and opinion makers are making their efforts to zero down the child marriages in the state. In this context, mention should be made about Girls Advocacy Alliance, the campaign launched jointly by Plan India, Terres-des Hommes - Netherlands and Mahitha the local non-profit organizations, advocating with policy keepers, and practitioners to improve the implementation science and ensure effectiveness of legislation, public policies, programs and entitlements to elimination of gender-based violence and economic exclusion of girls and young women.

To have a framework for policy level advocacy, Mahita and Plan India thought of having a comprehensive research report by examining – the prevalence, policy and programs and aspirations of child brides. The aim of this research is to present the status of child brides, their perceptions and examine the social, economic, health, familial, and educational aspects. In this context, Poverty

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by the Times of India dated 14 April 2013. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/Teenage-mother-kills-baby-to-pursue-studies-in-MP/articleshow/19535047.cms>

<sup>2</sup> UNFPA (2012) *Marrying Too Young End Child Marriage*; <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Young Lives (2017) *A Statistical Analysis of Child Marriages in India based on 2011 Census*. <https://www.younglives-india.org/sites/www.younglives-india.org/files/2018-06/Report%20Child%20Marriage%2012th%20June%202017%20Final.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

Learning Foundation executed the research in selected districts – Hyderabad, Adilabad, Vikarabad, Gadwal, Yadadri and Sangareddy and reflected on following key objectives –

- i. *Statistical representation of prevalence and status of child brides through secondary data,*
- ii. *Current provisions for institutional and legal support extended to victims of child marriages,*
- iii. *Analyze the impact of child marriages from the perspective of child brides through primary data examining health, physical, mental, sexual, social, economic aspects, along with their aspirations, and*
- iv. *Recommend the prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of child brides from the perspective of child brides themselves.*

The research being carried out between September and December 2019.

## **Approach**

### Research Methodology

Mixed methods – both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect the data and information. The objective wise research methods and source of data is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of research framework			
Objective	Data Collection methods	Source of Data/Information	Key questions
1. Statistical representation of prevalence and status of child brides	Qualitative method - desk review of secondary source of information	Census 2011; Annual Health Survey; DLHS; NFHS; Department of Women and Child Welfare & any other sources having authentication.	State level prevalence; District level prevalence; District development and prevalence of child marriages.
2. Current provisions for institutional and legal support extended to victims of child marriages.	Qualitative method - (1) desk review of secondary source of information;	State specific Acts; ICPS; Constitutional provisions; Policies, Programs, Schemes Government Orders (No:13)	Critical analysis on strengths and weakness in existing institutional and legal mechanisms
3. Impact of CM from the perspective of child brides through primary data focusing on health, physical, mental, sexual, social, economic aspects, along with their perceptions about their future.	Quantitative method - (1) Individual Interviews with child brides.	(1) Randomly selected brides from the child marriage lists.	(1) Synthesis or relevant published literature, and (2) Key units for assessment - education; health; physical; mental/psychological; social and financial impacts on brides.

4. Recommendations on the prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of child brides from the perspective of child brides themselves.	Using the final outputs from (1) Synthesizing the outputs from the critical review of objective 1 & 2; and (2) Impact analysis from case studies and narratives - recommendations will be made on the existing policies and institutional mechanisms including the provisions for child brides to address the challenges arising out of early marriage in terms of education; health; socio-psychological and financial issues.
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Core research methods adopted in this study are – desk review; and one-to-one interviews with selected child brides. Final report presented here includes district specific prevalence rates; perceptions of child brides; and consequences of child marriages. Inadequacy and challenges in the legal systems and details about policies, programs and schemes were analysed and incorporated in the report. The report is more comprehensive to plan district focused advocacy.

### Questionnaire

To collect the information from child brides (third objective), semi-structured questionnaire has been developed. It covers all important variables – (a) profile of the informants; (b) general and specific perceptions; (c) their knowledge on policies, programs and schemes; (d) their aspirations; (e) their confidence levels; (f) challenges related to early marriage and teen age pregnancy, financial, physical and mental health. Questions also focuses on anxiety, self-control, vitality, positive well-being, general health. To quantify the responses, study used five point *Likart* scale (See Anexure 1). Based on answer, further probing was done to know more on why she agree/disagree on particular question. This has helped in quantifying the perceptions and aspirations in a more robust way.

Questions in draft questionnaire has been validated by PLF team to find out its relevance and possibility/probability of getting answers from the child brides. Based on the field level experiences and observations, draft questionnaire has been wetted out further and finalized.

### Finalizing the sample for interviews

As per the third objective, the minimum unit of sample is “child bride” (the girl got married before 18 the legal age of marriage). The selection of the informants was made in the following steps –

- First step: District wise list of child marriages was obtained from the Department of Women Development and child Welfare, Hyderabad with special permission from the Director. Segregated the registered cases (including cases which are not prevented due to various reasons/unnoticed) in line with caste and geographical areas.
- Second step: Purposive selection of child brides from the list giving equal scope to select from SC, ST, OBC and minority communities.
- Third step: Further segregation according to the age, with and without infants/children. The assumption is that these factors also influence the lifestyles of the child brides.

## **Setting the field for interviews**

A team of 15 members involved in data collection. Field investigators are handpicked by the PLF and PLF internal team has supervised the work. A day long thorough training has been given to the investigators.

After getting clarity on geographical distribution of child brides in the state, investigators with the support of ICDS team and local NGOs, approached the child brides, explained the purpose of the interview and taken their consent. Few agreed and participated till the end of the interview (average time taken for each interview is two hours), and few left in between. Investigators have respected their time and moved to other interview.

Field work has been carried out in the month of November 2019. Analysis and Interpretations were completed during the second and third weeks of December 2019. Though the research team has met several child brides, few have either unwilling to participate in research or left in between during the interview. Finally analysis was done on a total number of 108 child brides, those who have wilfully participated in the research and cooperate with the researchers.

The final district level interviews are: Hyderabad (n. 19), Adilabad (n.19), Yadadri (n. 19), Gadwal (n. 17), Vikarabad (n. 19), and Sangareddy (n.14)

## **Report Structure**

Final report will have six sections –

Executive summary

Section 1: Introduction with the context, methods and sample framework

Section 2: State Specific Drivers of Child Marriages

Section 3: Prevalence of child marriages

Section 4: Provisions for institutional and legal support extended to victims of child marriages

Section 5: Consequences of early marriage on child brides and their aspirations about future.

Section 6: Recommendations on the prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of child brides from the perspective of child brides themselves

Section 7: Annexures

## SECOND Section

### State Specific Drivers of Child Marriages

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Child, early and forced marriage is a global problem that violates girls' human rights, curtails their schooling, harms their health, and sharply constrains their futures<sup>5,6</sup>. Low status of child brides in their marital households can subject them to long hours of labour, abuse, social isolation, physical, sexual, and emotional violence, the risks related to early pregnancy, and having little say over anything that affects them<sup>7</sup>. Boys too have negative affects early marriage, however in patriarchal dominant society the power relations empower boys with greater say, and also do not suffer like girl children.

Influence of social norms on the community underpinning child marriage range across domains of the transition to adulthood, sexuality, age hierarchies, religious beliefs, gender inequality, and women's and men's respective economic roles<sup>8</sup>. An anthropological analysis of female genital cutting and early marriage in Ethiopia, for example, highlights the role these practices are perceived to play in protecting family reputation and heritage, contributing to the well-being of girls, and helping to define the transition to adulthood<sup>9</sup>. A study of child marriage among ethnic Roma immigrants in France describes the way in which describing them as 'traditional' sets them up as wrong and in conflict with the 'modern' standards of the European Union, and does not recognise internal resistance to the practice; yet it seems that anti-racism efforts then support child marriage by treating it as a practice that is essential to Roma identity<sup>10</sup>.

Much of the normative structure underpinning systems of marriage is patriarchal. Some of the norms which inherently serve to preserve a patriarchal organisation of power in society, and which also lend themselves to permitting and condoning the marriage of girls as children, include norms, beliefs and ideologies surrounding: transitions to adulthood; the social construction of sexuality; obedience to elders or filial piety; religious and cosmological understandings and expectations; the centrality of marriage for girls' life project; the economic value of men versus women; and romantic expectations<sup>11</sup>.

Empirical work has shown demographic consequences of child marriage including higher overall fertility, closer birth spacing, and less control by women of family planning and contraceptive use, and

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<sup>5</sup> UNFPA (2012) Marriage too young: End child marriage, <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Greene (2014) Ending Child Marriages in generation: What Research is Needed, Ford Foundation, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/media/1890/endingchildmarriage.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> WHO (2005) multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women, <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/24159358X/en/>

<sup>8</sup> Greene (2014) Ending Child Marriages in generation: What Research is Needed, Ford Foundation, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/media/1890/endingchildmarriage.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Boyden, J., Pankhurst, A. and Tafere, Y. (2012) 'Child protection and harmful traditional practices: female early marriage and genital modification in Ethiopia' [https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:ad065460-bef4-4578-8fd4-b22d62ac599e/download\\_file?file\\_format=pdf&safe\\_filename=OA%2B2012%2BBoyden%2Bet%2Bal%2BHarmful%2BTradditional%2BPractices.pdf&type\\_of\\_work=Journal+article](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:ad065460-bef4-4578-8fd4-b22d62ac599e/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=OA%2B2012%2BBoyden%2Bet%2Bal%2BHarmful%2BTradditional%2BPractices.pdf&type_of_work=Journal+article)

<sup>10</sup> Chaudhuri-Brill, S. (2016) 'The role of anthropology in developing the 'culture concept' in public discourse', <http://en.ceskylid.avcr.cz/media/articles/517/submission/original/517-1271-1-SM.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Greene (2014) of sited



health impacts of early childbearing include higher risk of maternal mortality, fistula and undernourishment<sup>12</sup>.

Patriarchal social norms are deeply rooted in Indian society and controls the behaviour of the individual, family and community. One of the research carried out by Centre for Economic and Social Studies<sup>13</sup> underline the beliefs, social norms and traditions are the key drivers of child marriages in Telangana State. Broadly the beliefs about the child marriage are: it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure their daughters marriage by early adulthood, women's role in the society as wives and mothers, importance of female sexual purity, and parents and elders authority over children's life trajectories. Inequality is one of the injunctive norm, which says that girl should marry young, in other words attaining biological maturity is the sign for marriage. Similarly, descriptive norm says that girls get married by the time they reach 18 years of age.

Synthesised analysis of the earlier study by CESS classified four key drivers causing early marriages – (i) Traditions, social norms and beliefs, (ii) Poverty, (iii) Access to secondary Education and (iv) Social pressure. In Telangana State, 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.

'Higher the education higher the dowry' is the strong belief among most of the poor families in Telangana State. If the girl is well-educated, getting an equally qualified boy is quite difficult. In addition, meeting the cost of higher education for girls is also one of the challenges and hence parents are opting for early marriages where the age of the girl has lesser priority.

The next important driving factor is consanguineous marriage, mainly to protect the ancestral property, strengthen the kinships as well as political power within the caste structure. In this context, age of the girl is not of much importance and the only criteria is the biological maturity of the girl. In this scenario, parents are performing child marriages under pressure from grandparents. In few communities, performing child marriage is a routine customary practice.

Social norms, for instance parents prefer to get their daughters's married before their son's marriage. Similarly, death of a family member must precede a girl's marriage. In such a scenario also, age of the girl is not taken into consideration. There is a belief among the rural communities that higher the education, higher the dowry. Due to this, few parents prefer to get their daughters married off as and when they get a good bridegroom and they don't want to send their girl children for higher 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 also contributes to child marriages. Families with economic insecurity (because of no or less dependable income/assets) prefer child marriages. For example, in Mahabubnagar district, where drought is more common, parents from poor families migrate to faraway places, for example to Maharashtra and Gujarat for livelihoods. In such families, to avoid the risks associated with leaving the young girls behind with grandparents, prefer child marriages. If both the

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<sup>12</sup> Marphatia, A.A., Ambale, G.S. and Reid, A.M. (2017) 'Women's marriage age matters for public health: A Review of the broader health and social implications in South Asia' <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2017.00269/full>

<sup>13</sup> CESS (2018) 'Facing Constraints and Seizing Opportunities: Child Marriages in Telangana State, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad.

parents are illiterate, in general their awareness levels are low, and they are unable to understand the consequences of child marriages. Hence, child marriages are common among such families. This factor is again linked to poverty.

Lack of access to secondary education is another top most important issue behind child marriages. In specific geographical areas where secondary education is not accessible, parents don't want to keep girl children unmarried for long in the family. Instead of engaging girl children into other household and livelihood activities, parents prefer to marry off girl children. This is also to avoid male harassment within the school and prevent girls from being harassed while commuting to school or their 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 girl child influences her aspirations about higher education negatively. In such circumstances, she is more likely to drop out from school and alternatively leads parents to prepare for her marriage.

Sometimes, fear of love and elopement, 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 mobilize 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.

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, thereby leaving the girl child predisposed to the risk of early marriage. 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 account.

**THIRD Section**  
**Prevalence of Early Marriages**  
**(Objective 1)**

**Introduction**

Child Marriage has been recognized as social evil and as a goal for reduction in the erstwhile Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 adopted by 193 countries including India. SDG goal number 5.3 calls for elimination of all harmful practices, such as, child, early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation. According to the 2019 SDG Dashboard, India is stagnating in its progress towards achieving SDG 5. There is 28.5% gap achieving it SDG goal 5.

The following table shows performance of various South Asian countries for SDG goal 5

<b>Country</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Pace towards achieving SDG 5 by 2030</b>
Bangladesh	Significant changes remaining	Stagnating
Bhutan	Major Challenges Remaining	Moderately increasing
<b>India</b>	<b>Major Challenges Remaining</b>	<b>Stagnating</b>
Pakistan	Major Challenges Remaining	Stagnating
Afghanistan	Major Challenges Remaining	Stagnating
Sri Lanka	Major Challenges Remaining	Stagnating
Nepal	Major Challenges Remaining	Moderately increasing

Source: 2019 SDG 2030 Dashboard

According to UNICEF, as on March 2018, India has shown a transitional period with the prevalence of child marriage declining from 47% girls married below the age of 18 in 2005-06 to 27% in 2015-16. In India, the three main sources for data on child marriages are, 1. Census 2011, 2. National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) and 3. District Level Household Survey (DLHS).

**Prevalence of Child Marriages in Telangana<sup>14</sup>**

Census

The 2011 census data was analyzed to understand the prevalence of child marriages using the data on age at marriage of ever married women aged 10 to 21 whose duration of marriage is 0-4 years. The percentage of women aged 10 to 21 who were married below 18 was calculated by using the formula<sup>15</sup>. It is to be noted that Census 2011 talks about the districts under united Telangana . After bifurcation, Telangana state divided 10 districts into 33 districts. This report has analysed the data for 10 districts in Telangana, which is available in Census 2011.

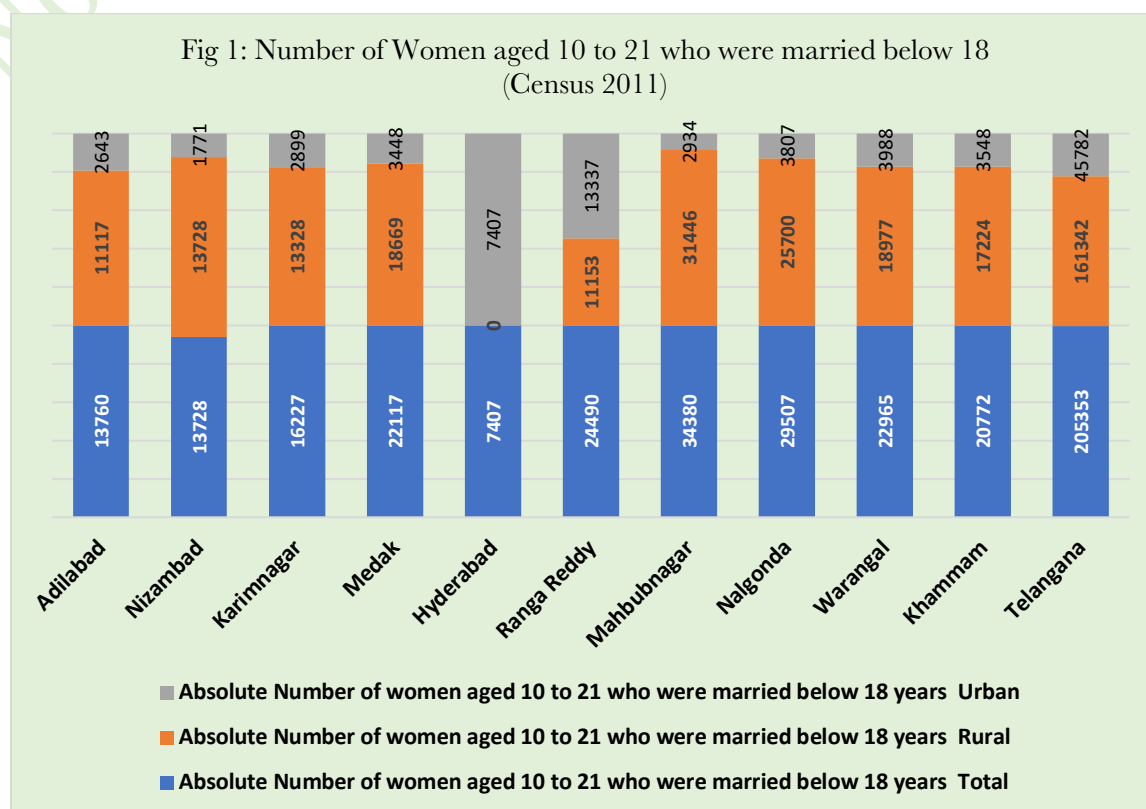
<sup>14</sup> Limitations: Data from Census 2011 has details for erstwhile districts of Telangana . Data used in this report for Telangana State is having undivided districts.

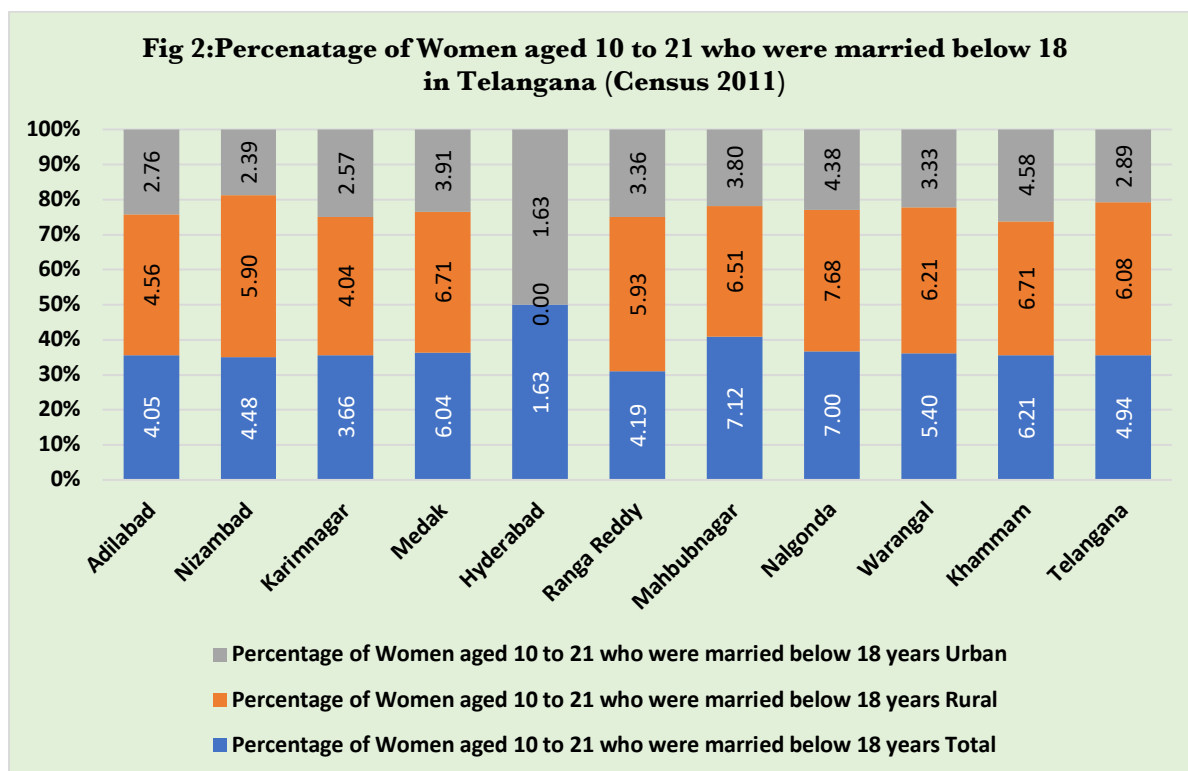
<sup>15</sup> Percentage of Women aged 10 to 21 and 15 to 26 who were married below 18 years= (Absolute Number of Women aged 10 to 21 and 15 to 21 years/Population of women aged 10 to 21 and 15 to 26) \* 100

Table 2: Statistical Representation of Women aged 10 to 21 Married Below 18

District	Absolute Number of women aged 10 to 21 who were married below 18 years	Population of Women Aged 10 to 21 years	Percentage of Women aged 10 to 21 who were married below 18 years
Adilabad	13760	339,686	4.05
Nizambad	13728	306,754	4.48
Karimnagar	16227	442,816	3.66
Medak	22117	366,448	6.04
Hyderabad	7407	454,611	1.63
Ranga Reddy	24490	584,498	4.19
Mahbubnagar	34380	483,145	7.12
Nalgonda	29507	421,580	7.00
Warangal	22965	425,327	5.40
Khammam	20772	334,242	6.21
Telangana	205353	4,159,107	4.94

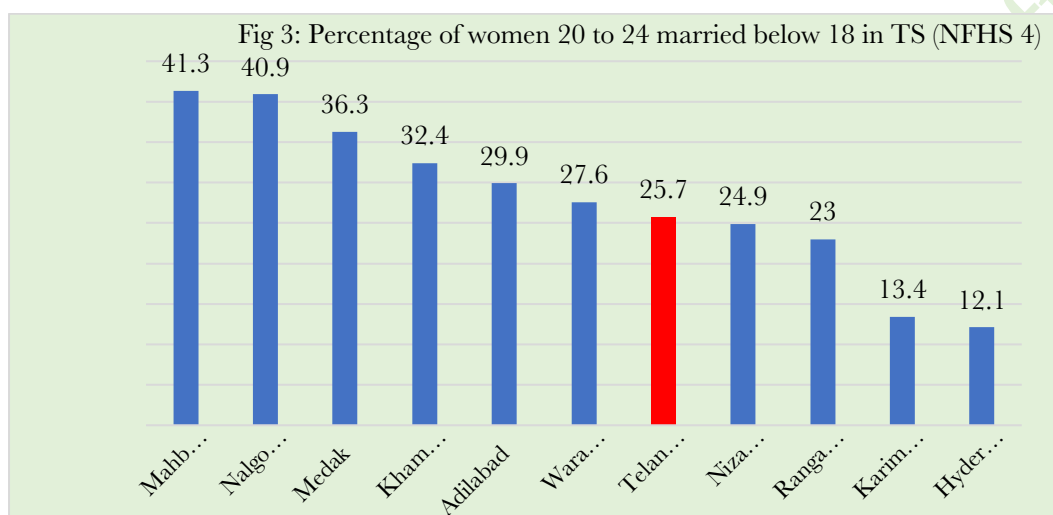
In the state of Telangana, 4.94% of women aged 10 to 21 were married below the age of 18. The district with highest percentage is from Mahbubnagar (7.12%), followed by Nalgonda (7%) and Khammam (6.21%). The figures below represent the data in absolute numbers and percentages for total, rural and urban scenarios.





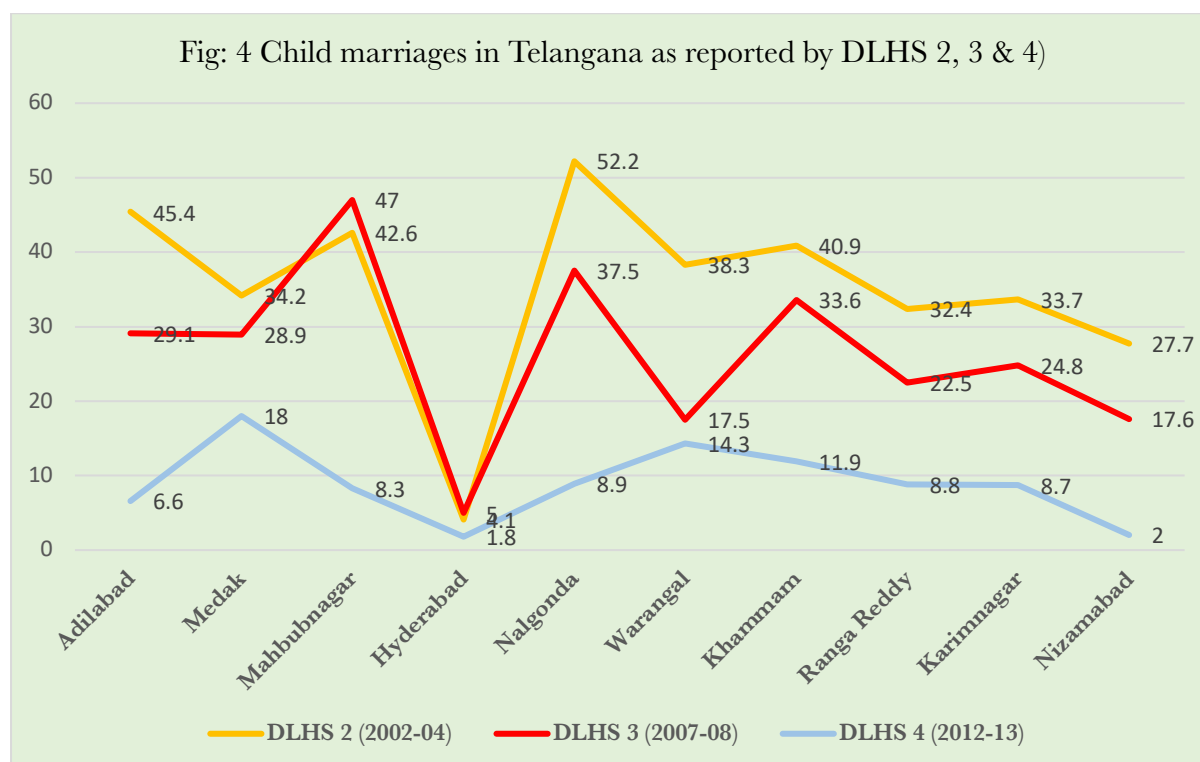
In the rural scenario, 6.08% rural women aged 10 to 21 in Telangana are married below 18. The highest is rural Nalgonda with 7.68% followed by rural Medak and Khammam at 6.71%. In the urban scenario, only 2.89% of women aged 10 to 21 are married below age of 18. Urban Khammam has highest percentage with 4.58% child marriages for women.

### NFHS Data on Prevalence of Child Marriages in Telangana



In Telangana, 25.7% of women aged 20 to 24 were married below 18. The incidence of child marriages for girls is high in the districts of Mahbubnagar (41.3%), Nalgonda (40.9%) and Medak (36.3%).

## DLHS Data on Prevalence of Child Marriages in Telangana



In the first round of DLHS data (2002-03), in the districts of Telangana, the top three districts with high incidence of child marriages for girls are Nalgonda, Adilabad, Mahbubnagar. In the year 2007-08, the second round of DLHS was conducted. In the districts of Telangana, the top three districts were Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda and Khammam. In the year 2012-12, the third round of DLHS was conducted in which, Medak, Warangal and Khammam emerged as top three districts in Telangana. The comparison between DLHS 2, 3 and 4 indicates the declining trends.

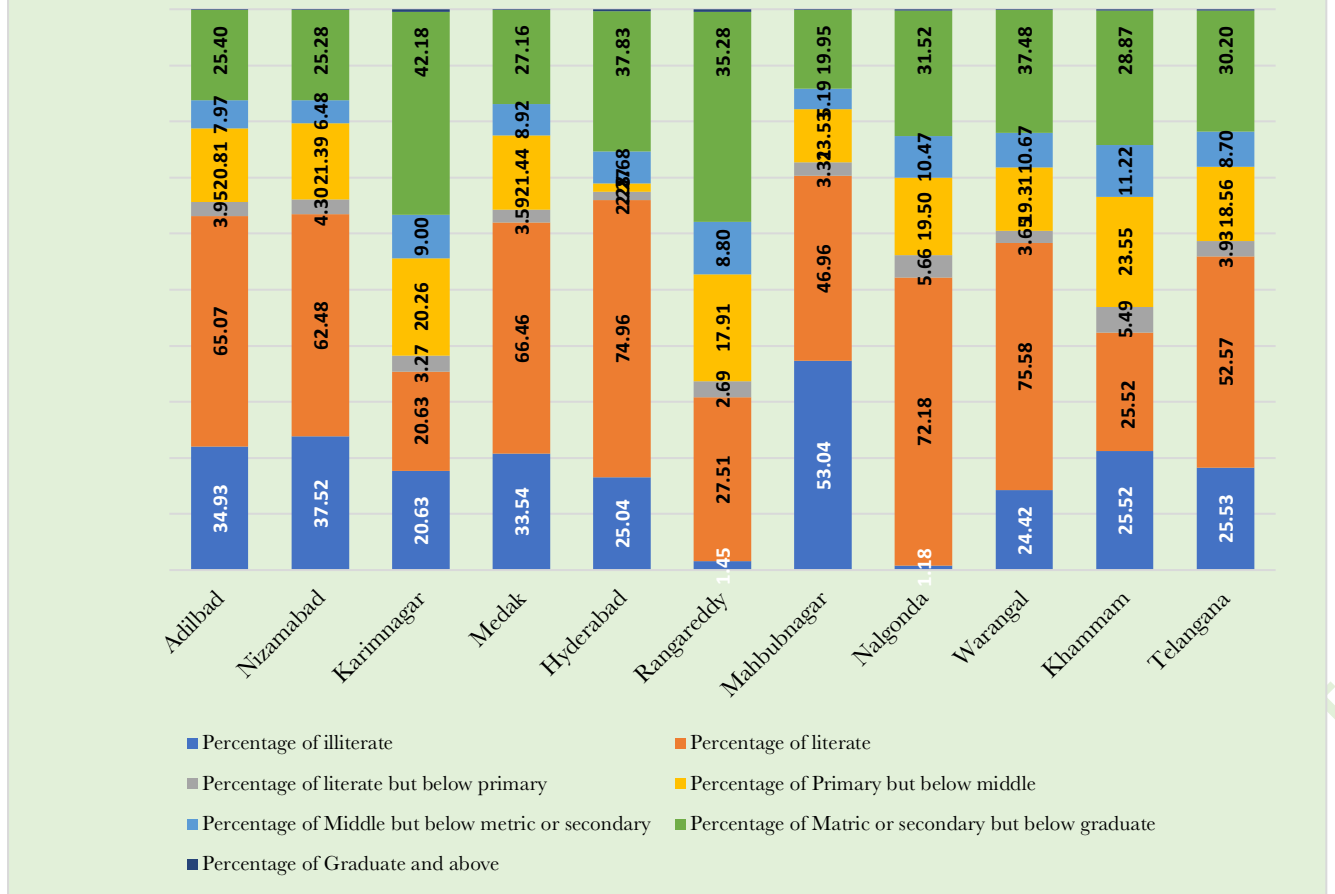
### Status of Child Brides

#### Literacy

The 2011 census data has been analyzed using age at marriage for women aged 10 to 21 based on their literacy levels. The percentage distribution of women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 by literacy levels was calculated<sup>16</sup>. The literacy levels categorised in Census are of seven types: Literates, Illiterates, Literate but below primary, Primary but below middle, Middle but below metric and secondary, Matric or secondary but below graduate and Graduate and above.

<sup>16</sup> Percentage of women aged 10 to 21 and 15 to 26 by literacy levels=(Literacy levels of absolute number of women aged 10 to 21 and 15 to 26 whose age at marriage was below 18/Absolute number of women aged 10 to 21 and 15 to 26 who were married below 18) \*100

Fig: 5 Percentage Distribution of Women Aged 10 to 21 married below 18 by Literacy Levels in Telangana (Census 2011)



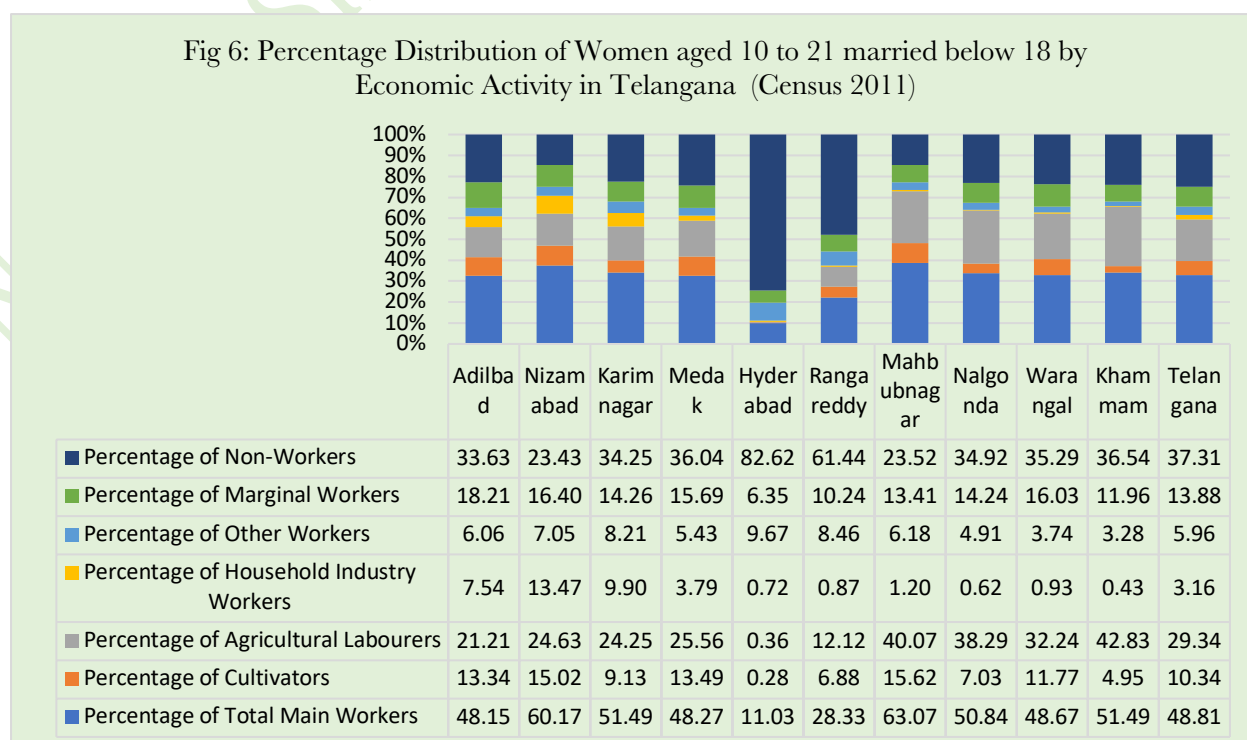
In Telangana state, the percentage of literate women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 is 52.57%. The percentage of illiterate women of this category is 25.53%. The percentage of literate but below primary is 3.93%. The percentage of primary but below middle is 18.56%. The percentage of middle but below metric and secondary is 8.70%. The percentage of matric or secondary but below graduate is 30.20%. The percentage of graduate and above is 0.29% only.

The district with highest percentage of literate women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 is in Hyderabad (74.76%) followed by Warangal (75.58%). The district with highest percentage of illiterate women of this category is in Mahbubnagar (53.04%) followed by Nizamabad (37.52%). The district with highest percentage of literate but below primary is in Nalgonda (5.66%) followed by Khammam (5.49%). The district with highest percentage of primary but below middle is in Khammam (23.55%) followed by Medak (21.44%). The district with highest percentage of middle but below metric and secondary is Khammam (11.22%) followed by Warangal (10.67%). The district with highest percentage of matric or secondary but below graduate is in Karimnagar (42.18%) followed by Hyderabad (37.83%). The district with highest percentage of graduate and above is in Hyderabad (0.55%) followed by Karimnagar (0.49%).

The district with highest percentage of literate women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 is Hyderabad at 69.16% followed by Karimnagar at 68.67%. The district with highest percentage of illiterate women of this category is Mahbubnagar at 66.36% followed by Medak at 48.41%. The district with highest percentage of literate but below primary is Khamma at 6.63% followed by Nalgonda at 6.59%. The district with highest percentage of primary but below middle Khamma at 23.55% followed by Medak at 21.44%. The district with highest percentage of middle but below metric and secondary is Karimnagar at 25.25% followed by Rangareddy at 16.87%. The district with highest percentage of matric or secondary but below graduate is Karimnagar at 25.29% followed by Khammam at 23.81%. The district with highest percentage of graduate and above is Warangal at 2.30% followed by Khamma and Adilabad at 1.86%.

### Economic Activity

The 2011 census data has been analyzed using age at marriage for women aged 10 to 21 based on their economic activity. The percentage distribution of women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 by literacy levels was calculated<sup>17</sup>. The economic activities categorised by census are of seven types: Total Main Workers, Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers, Household Industry Workers, Other Workers, Marginal Workers and Non-Workers.



In Telangana state, the percentage of total main workers amongst women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 is 48.81%. The percentage of Cultivators in women of this category is 10.34%. The percentage of agricultural laborers is 29.34%. The percentage of household industry workers is 3.16%. The

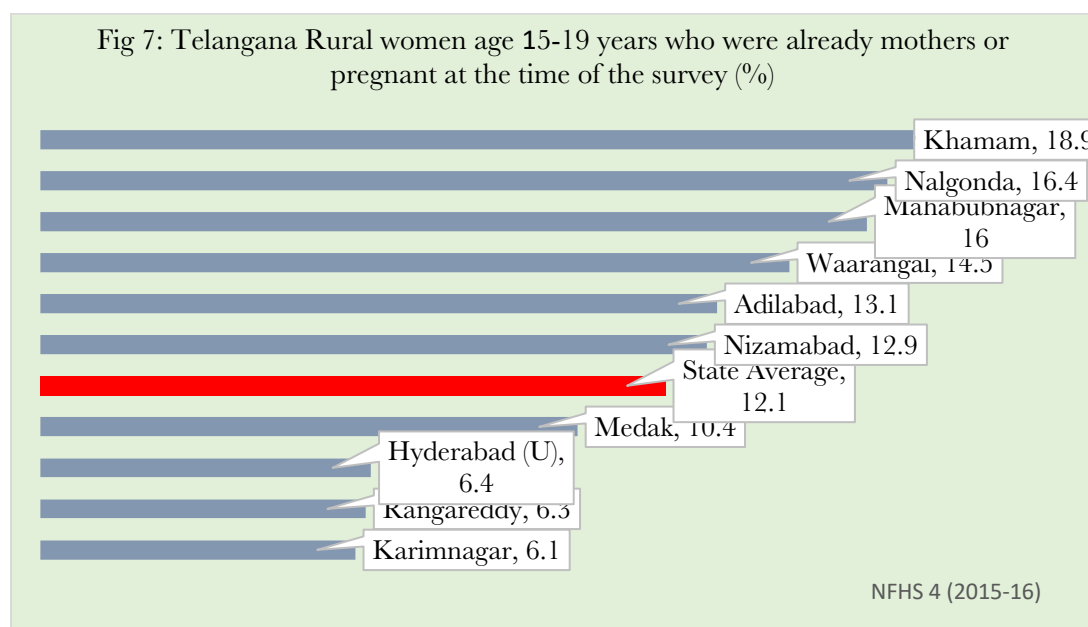
<sup>17</sup> Formula: Percentage of women aged 10 to 21 by economic activity=(Economic activity of absolute number of women aged 10 to 21 whose age at marriage was below 18/Absolute number of women aged 10 to 21 who were married below 18)\*100



percentage of Other Workers is 5.96%. The percentage of marginal workers is 13.88%. The percentage of non-workers is 37.31% only.

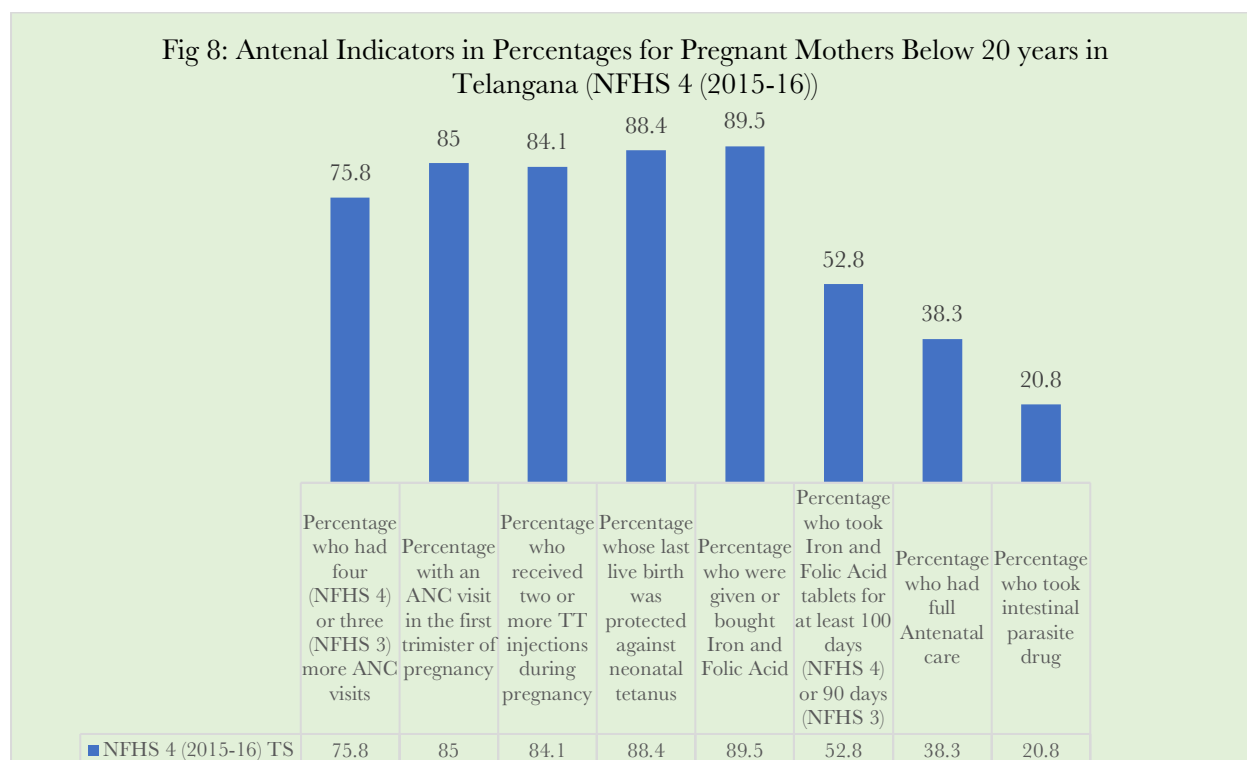
The district with highest percentage total main workers amongst women aged 10 to 21 married below 18 is in Mahbubnagar (63.07%) followed by Nizamabad (60.71%). The district with highest percentage of cultivators of this category is Mahbubnagar (15.62%) followed by Nizamabad (15.02%). The district with highest percentage of agricultural laborers is Khammam (42.83%) followed by Mahbubnagar (40.07%). The district with highest percentage of household industry workers in Nizamabad (13.47%) followed by Karimnagar (9%). The district with highest percentage of other workers is Hyderabad (9.67%) followed by Rangareddy (8.46%). The district with highest percentage of marginal workers is Adilabad (18.21%) followed by Nizamabad (16.40%). The district with highest percentage of non-workers is Hyderabad (82.62%) followed by Rangareddy (61.44%).

#### NFHS4 - Age at pregnancy and Reproductive Health Indicators



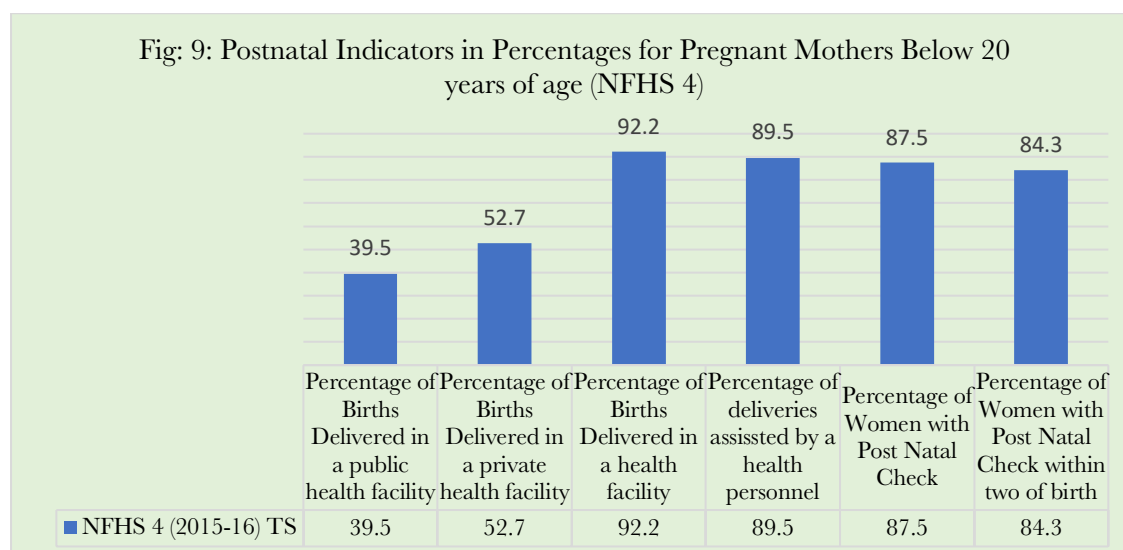
According to NFHS4 data on Telangana, 12.1% of women aged 15 to 19 were already mothers or pregnant at the time of survey. Khammam has highest percentage of such women at 18.9% followed by Nalgonda at 16.4% and Mahbubnagar at 16%. Seven districts are in above state average, having highest percentage of young mothers in the state

## Antenatal Care Indicators

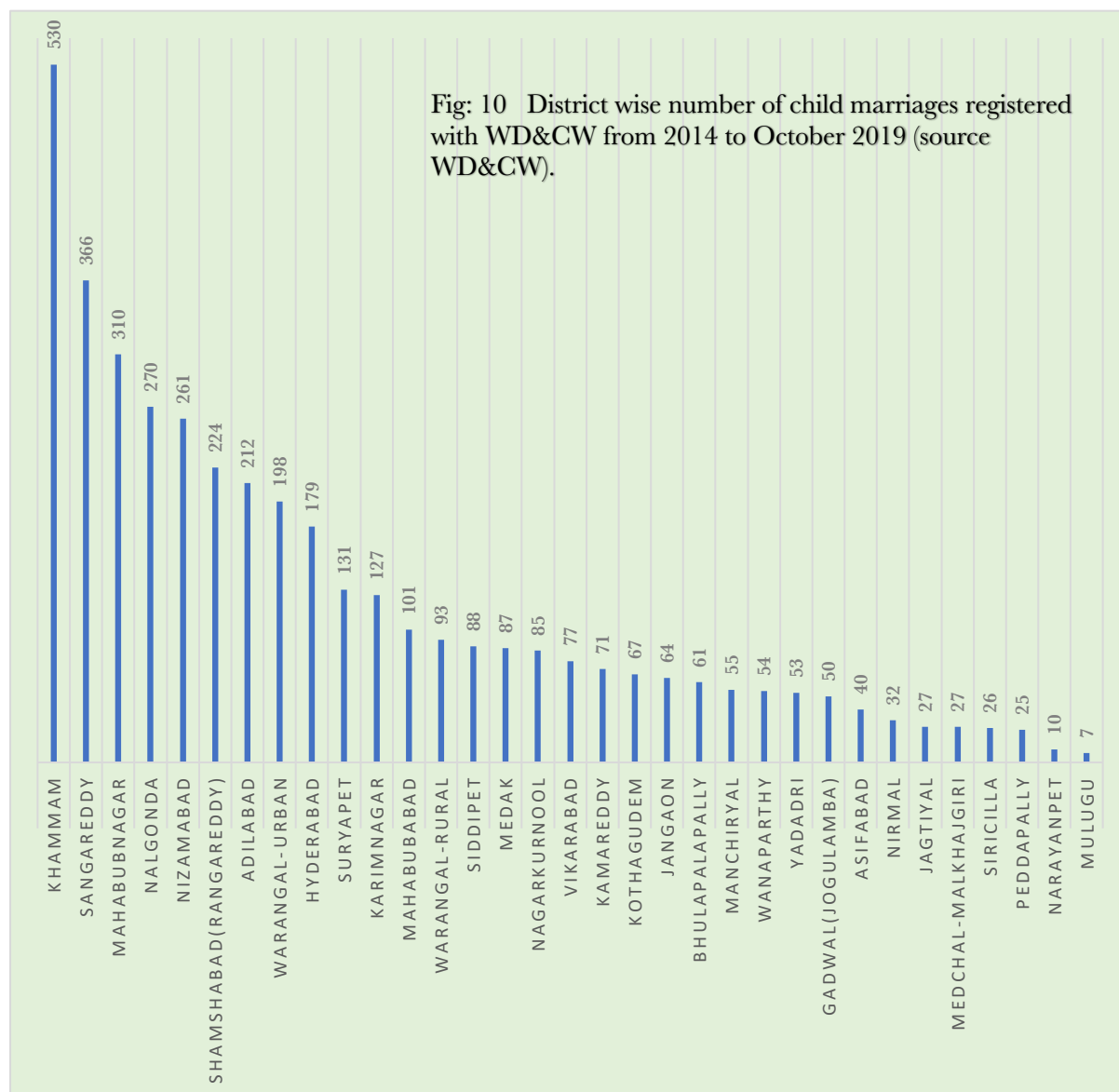


According to NFHS4 Data for Telangana, the percentage of pregnant mothers below 20 who had four or three ANC visits is 75.8%, the percentage with an ANC visit in the first trimester of pregnancy is 85%, percentage who received two or more TT injections during pregnancy is 84.1%, percentage whose last live birth was protected against neonatal tetanus is 88.4%, percentage of who were given or brought iron and folic acid tables is 89.5%, percentage who took iron and folic acid tablets for at least 100 days is 52.8%, percentage who had full ante care is only 38.3%, percentage who took intestinal parasite drug is 20.8%.

## Postnatal Care Indicators:



According to NFHS4 Data on Telangana, percentage of pregnant women below age of 20 who had delivered in a public health facility is 39.5%, percentage who delivered in a private health facility is 52.7%, percentage who delivered in a health facility is 92.2%, percentage who delivered with assistance from a health-personnel is 89.5%, percentage of women with post-natal check-up is 87.5%, percentage of women with post-natal check within two months of birth is 84.3%.



District wise child marriages registered with the child protection unit of Women Development and Child welfare unit (Fig 10) says that highest number of child marriages are recorded in Khammam (n.530) and lowest in Mulugu (n. 7) between 2014 and 2019 (till October). Besides Khammam district, Sangareddy, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Rangareddy, Adilabad, Warangal Urban, Hyderabad, Suryapet, Karimnagar and Mahabubabad recorded with more than 100 child marriages between the said period.

**FOURTH Section**  
**Current provisions for institutional and legal support**  
**extended to victims of child marriages**  
**(Objective 3)**

The international community has recognized the detrimental effects of child marriage and has put in place various legislative measure to curb this social evil. Universal Declaration on Human Rights(UDHR), Convention on the consent of marriage, minimum age of marriage, Convention on the Rights of the Child(CRC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5.3) are some of the conventions that are working towards eradicating the practice of child marriage.

Policy makers and government officials in India have been working towards reducing child marriages ever since its pre independence days. In addition to the International Legal framework<sup>18</sup> that protects the rights of child brides, the government of India has a legal framework, policies and various state provisions to end this practice. This chapter analyzes the various laws and policies around child marriages in India. The last section of this chapter outlines the schemes and provisions specific to the states of Telangana .

<b>International Legal Framework</b>	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
	Convention on the Rights of the Child
	Convention on the Consent of Marriage, Minimum age of Marriage
	Millinnium Development Goals
<b>National Legal Framework</b>	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
	Compulsory Registration of Marriage
	Legalisation on other related issues - Care and Protection of Children, Dowry, Trafficking & Domestic Violence
<b>Policies and Plans</b>	National Policy for Children 2003
	National Policy for the Empowerment of Women
	National Youth Policy
	National Plan for Children
	Eleventh Five Year Plan (provisions relating to the rights of children)

<sup>18</sup>Justice Shivaraj V. Patil Committee report on Prevention of Child Marriages in the State of Karnataka; <http://www.concernedforworkingchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/Report-on-prevention-of-child-marriages-in-Karnataka-Vol-1.pdf>

<b>Schemes and Programs</b>	National Schemes being implemented by the Concerned Ministries directly or indirectly through State Departments
	State Schemes largely implemented by the State Department of Women and Child Development and other departments
	Schemes as identified by the Supreme Court of India in PUCL Vs Union of India

### **Constitutional provisions**

On 26 November 1949, the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of India was adopted by the Constituent Assembly. The same has been entered into force on 26 January 1950. The text was consolidated in 2007, incorporating all amendments made by the Parliament up to and including the Constitution (Ninety-fourth Amendment) Act of 2006.

Part III of the Indian Constitution speaks about the Indian citizens certain fundamental rights and stipulates in Article 13(1) that “all laws in force in the territory of India immediately before the commencement of this Constitution, in so far as they are inconsistent with the provisions of this Part, shall, to the extent of such inconsistency, be void”; Art. 13(2) provides that “the State shall not make any law which takes away or abridges the rights conferred by this Part and any law made in contravention of this clause shall, to the extent of the contravention, be void”.

Constitutional provisions relevant to the issue of Child Early and Forced Marriages (CEFM), Art. 14 ensures equality before the law: “the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India”. Article 15 prohibits all forms of discrimination against any citizen “on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or any of them”. Article 21 ensures protection of life and personal liberty and states that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law. Article 21A ensures free and compulsory education to be provided by the State to all children aged 6–14.

Under Part IV of the Indian Constitution, “Directive Principles”, Art. 39(f) states that children shall be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against moral and material abandonment. Besides, under Art. 45, “the State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years”.

Along with fundamental rights, covered under Part IV A of the Constitution including Art. 51 (j), the Indian Constitution has envisioned Fundamental Duties for its citizens, requiring citizens to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavor and achievement, and Art. 51(k), which requires citizens who are parents or guardians to provide opportunities for education to their children or wards between the ages of 6 and 14.3.

Statutory law India has a common law system based on the British model; separate personal codes apply to Muslims, Christians and Hindus. The primary origins of law in India are the Constitution, customary law, case law and statutes (legislation)<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Council on Foreign relations “Child Marriages” <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/child-marriage#!/child-marriage>

In the context of the fight against CEFM, India has taken action, by introducing the Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) in 1929. When Census 1921 reported that there were 600 brides aged one year or below, the Indian political class woke up to the reality of CEFM. Hearing this, Mahatma Gandhi was said to have urged a member of the Central Legislative Council, Harbilas Sarada, to introduce a Bill restraining child marriage, which led to the introduction of the CMRA, popularly known as the Sharda Act. It was further amended in 1978 when the minimum age of marriage was fixed at 21 for boys and 18 for girls, and offences under the Act were made cognizable. The Act's provisions restrain and do not invalidate such marriages.

The Government has introduced Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) in 2006, which came into force from 1 November 2007. In principle, PCMA prohibits the child marriages and punishes those who promote it. It recognizes that girl children below 18 years of age are not mature enough for marriage and prohibits marriage of girl children below 18 years of age and boys below 21 years of age.

The PCMA declares solemnization of child marriages a cognizable and non-bailable offence and authorizes courts to issue injunctions prohibiting such marriages. Any child marriage solemnized whilst the child is taken away from his or her lawful guardian by use of enticement, force or deceitful means, or involving a child who is sold or trafficked for the purpose of marriage, is void under the law.

Section 4 of the PCMA provides that a district court may make an interim or final order directing the male contracting party to a child marriage, and – if this party is a minor – his parents or guardian, to pay maintenance to the female contracting party of any child marriage until her remarriage. The Act provides under Section 6 for the appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, who will be responsible for preventing the solemnization of child marriages within their respective jurisdictions by approaching the courts for injunctions, collecting evidence against perpetrators, creating awareness about the negative effects of child marriage, collecting relevant data, etc.

### **Customary/religious/traditional/tribal frameworks**

Due to the country's diversified culture, the existence of a multitude of local customs and various conventions, the religious and traditional customs of the Indian people are regulated by different sets of personal laws related to family affairs.

The **Muslim Personal Law**, as applicable in India, works within the framework of Quran, Hadith and Sunnah. It consolidates and clarifies the provisions of Muslim law and related procedures regarding Muslim marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody of children and inheritance. Under Muslim personal law, a marriage may be solemnized as per Sunnah, between two Muslims, if the following conditions are fulfilled: (i) both parties to the marriage are not within a prohibited relationship; (ii) the man of 21 years and the woman of 18 years of age are both capable of giving consent for an *ijab* (proposal) and *qubul* (acceptance), and for the woman such consent can be given either personally or through a *wali*; (iii) two witnesses are present; and (iv) the man has offered a proper *mahr* (dower) to the woman and such *mahr* will be paid promptly or deferred.

*Nikkah* (marriage) is defined as an agreement between a man and a woman with mutual rights and obligations, and such marriage is *Sunnat-emuakkadah* (the Prophet's tradition) if both man and woman are capable of cohabitation and the man has the capacity to provide for maintenance and marital rights to the woman. At the same time, it is also important to note under this law that the *wali* (guardian)

particularly and the legal authority can contract a marriage on behalf of a woman. However, under such circumstances, the Muslim woman (given in marriage by her father or other guardian before she attains the age of 15) is able to repudiate the marriage upon attaining the age of 18.

Similarly, the **Hindu Marriage Act of 1955**, which governs all Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs, defines the minimum age of the bride and groom at marriage as 18 and 21, respectively. However, marriages solemnized before attaining these prescribed ages are neither void nor voidable – although the wife may seek divorce if the marriage was solemnized before her 15th birthday and if she repudiated the marriage after attaining the age of 15 and before turning 18.

**The Indian Christian Marriage Act** also doesn't bar marriages among minors. The Parsi Marriage and divorce Act, 1954 holds marriage below 18 years of age for girls and 21 for boys as invalid. However it fails to define if a marriage is void from the onset or needs to be invalidated through a legal process. It also doesn't mention issues of consent and punishment.

The solemnization of child marriage is punishable by imprisonment for up to two years or fines of up to one lakh rupees anyone who knowingly performs, conducts, directs or abets any child marriage; and parents, guardians, religious leaders, and others for knowingly promoting, failing to stop or participating in child marriages. Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO) are to be appointed in every state to prohibit child marriages in accordance to the Act, with a view ensure the protection of the victims as well as prosecution of the offenders.

### **Provisions and sanctions**

The CMRA of 1929, popularly known as the Sharda Act, as amended in 1978, already prohibited child marriages for girls under 18 and boys under 21. The PCMA of 2006 was enacted to overcome the constraints of the CMRA and to establish a comprehensive mechanism to address CEFM (5). The PCMA provides for punishment of all persons involved in child marriage, including the adult male who contracts child marriage as well as individuals who perform, conduct, promote, permit or abet child marriage, including parents, guardians and/or any other person(s), association(s) or organization(s). Such persons are punishable under section 11 with imprisonment up to two years and a fine of up to one lakh rupees, although no woman is punishable with imprisonment under the Act.

Payment or acceptance of a dowry “as consideration for the marriage” is also an offence criminalized under the Dowry Prohibition (DP) Act 1961. This Act, however, does not apply to gifts given by the bride's parents (i.e. stridhan)<sup>26</sup>.

Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), relating to rape, states that “Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape”. So in dealing with sexual assault, an offence of rape within marital bonds stands only if (a) the wife has not attained the age of 12 years old (in which case the offender shall be punished either with imprisonment from seven years which may extend to life, or with imprisonment up to 10 years and a fine as per the Indian Penal Code 45 of 1860, or if (b) the wife is between 12 and 15 years of age (in which case the offender shall be punished with imprisonment up to two years, a fine or both). Marital rape is therefore criminalized not as a general offence but as a special offence within the context of CEFM.

IPC 366 focuses on kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage, etc. is a punishable offence under the Indian Penal Code. It makes the accused liable for imprisonment for 10

years. IPC 496 provides imprisonment up to 7 years for whoever marries with dishonest or fraudulent intention, knowing that the marriage is not legal.

All marriages be registered in India, says **Compulsory Registration of Marriages ACT 2006**. Every Indian citizens needs to register his or her marriage within ten days of their marriage, irrespective of religion. The Central Government has made it mandatory for all States to make registration of marriages compulsory as the states are in a better position to know the social structure and local conditions of their respective states. However, non-registration of minor's marriage does not render them automatically void.

**Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act 2015** included Children at risk of Child Marriages in 'Children in Need of Care and Protection', if the marriage is solemnized by parents, guardians etc (LBSNAA 2017). The Act provides institutional support in forms of CWCs, Children homes and Shelter Homes for prevention of child marriages as well for the protection of children who oppose such marriages. CWCs hold power to intervene and counsel parents and elders.

The **POCSO 2013**, penalises penetrative sexual assault on a child by anyone related to the child, even through marriage. In the case *Independent Thought v. Union of India*<sup>20</sup>, the SC issued a landmark judgement declaring sexual relations with a wife less than eighteen years of age with or without her consent as marital rape .

While India fully supports the efforts to prevent and eliminate CEFM and is committed to effective implementation of legal and administrative measures to tackle this issue nationally, there is also a strong understanding of the fact that the roots of the problem of CEFM lie in abject poverty, experienced by generations of people. Besides, CEFM is further perpetuated by social norms, lack of awareness and education. India encourages an holistic approach in order to address the complex mix of root causes and the environment in which such practices thrive.

In June 2014, India presented its consolidated third and fourth periodic report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the United Nations (6). The UN Committee on the Rights of Child recommended that India should ensure effective implementation of the 2006 PCMA, including by clarifying that the PCMA supersedes the different religious-based Personal Status Laws. The Committee also recommends that the State Party take the necessary measures to combat dowry, child marriage and devadasi, including by conducting awareness-raising programmes and campaigns with a view to changing attitudes, as well as counselling and reproductive education, to prevent and combat child marriages, which are harmful to the health and well-being of girls.

In July 2014, India presented its combined fourth and fifth periodic reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to the United Nations (7). The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that India should: (i) speedily enact legislation to require compulsory registration of all marriages and to consider withdrawing its declaration regarding article 16(2) of the Convention; (ii) ensure that the PCMA is implemented without exception; (iii) automatically void all child marriages and ensure that the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act applies also to child brides; (iv) strengthen efforts to raise awareness about the prohibition of child marriage and the harmful effects of the practice on the health and education of girls; and (v) effectively investigate, prosecute and punish cases of forced and early marriage.

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<sup>20</sup>Independent Thought v. Union of India & Anr., W.P. (C) 382 of 2013, S.C.C., 11 Oct. 2017



## Challenges and loopholes with the Indian laws regarding child marriages:

Legal Barriers – Available data is indicative of the fact that there is a lack of prosecution, completion of trial and conviction of those involved in the execution and performance of child marriages. Legally it is not mandated that maintenance be paid to brides in the case of ab initio marriages which are voided and in the case of trafficking. This creates an unclear path as there is no precedence for the court to adopt, and this leaves the girl child vulnerable as there is a dearth of shelters and homes willing to take them in.

PCMA vs Personal Laws - There is confusion over the importance of personal laws, which have their own standards regarding the age of marriage. These personal laws contradict the PCMA due to which there is ambiguity regarding the law. In 2017, the Supreme Court established that PCMA has primacy over personal laws but this clarification has not been disseminated effectively.

Improper implementation of the Act – Although the Act specifies that the rules pertaining to it must be drafted by the state itself and published in the State Gazette, many states have neglected in doing so. Among the states which have drafted the rules, there is also a failure to report the status of implementation of the same and data in this regard is simply not available. Many states have also failed to appoint a dedicated CPMO and simply assign the duties to an already existing administrative official, thereby decreasing their efficiency (as is the case with Telangana and Telangana State).

Prevalence of social norms – Entrenched social norms make it difficult for girls to exercise their agency in either stopping a child marriage from taking place, or leave a child marriage once it happens. They also face stigma in case they are set to undergo a child marriage and it is suddenly halted. CMPOs, police, government functionaries and other officials are all part of the same social fabric in which child marriages take place, as a result of which they believe in the same traditions and norms which drive such marriages are stronger than the law. Implementation also becomes a hindrance for them because they face flak in the hands of those who are in support of child marriages in the form of violent retaliation.

## Policy Framework

Policymakers formulated the following policies and schemes to address the needs and concerns of children in India. While most of the policies deal with the overall development of the child, there are some policies that are relevant in the context of the issue of child marriage:

Following table (3) presents brief summary on national policies relevant to child marriages.

<b>Policies</b>	<b>Relevance to child marriage/ early child-bearing</b>
National Population Policy, 2000	Aims to achieve 100 per cent 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
National AIDS Prevention and Control Policy, 2002	Aims to promote a better understanding of HIV infection and safer sex practices among the young

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 multipronged actions with specific strategies to address the needs of adolescents in a holistic manner
National Plan of Action for Children, 2005	Aims to achieve 100 per cent 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 marriage (MWCD 2013: 3).
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 mind-sets and social norms, the empowerment of adolescents, knowledge and data management and the development of monitorable indicators. The draft has yet to be finalised (MWCD 2013: 3).
Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme (2015)	Aims to improve the Child Sex Ratio in 100 Gender Critical Districts (MWCD 2014), the imbalance of which exacerbates the buying of young brides in some states (HAQ: Centre for Child Rights 2006). It also aims to address the 'patriarchal mind-set' 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' (MWCD 2014: 2).
Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2015)	Identifies increasing the participation of women in the labour 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 (Tandon forthcoming).
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.	

National Strategy Document on Prevention of Child Marriage 2013 emphasises on bringing about a change in mind-sets and social norms revolving around child marriage. It lays stress on ensuring linkages with ICPS structure and other statutory bodies to ensure detection and redressal of child marriage cases in a timely manner. Moreover, it states that married children should have non-discriminatory and equal access to health and education.

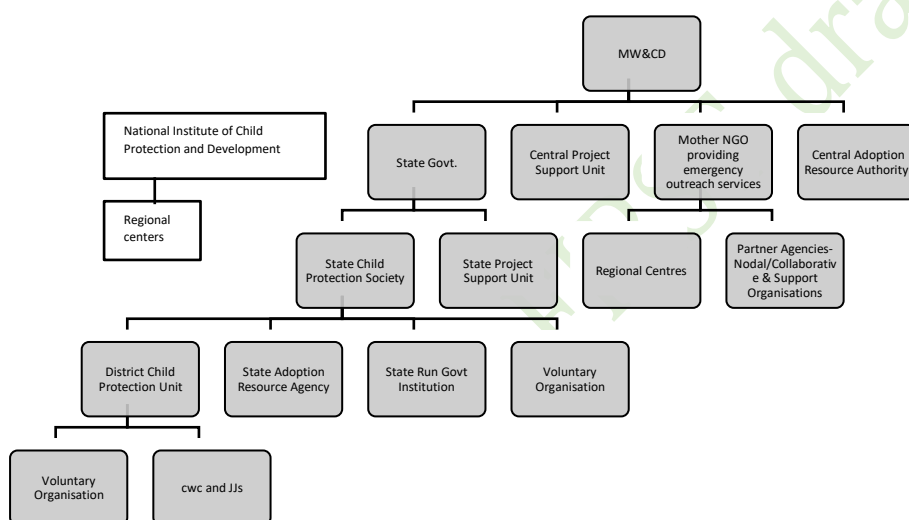
National Population Policy 2000 recommends implementation of programmes to encourage delayed marriage (after 20 not before 18) and increase child bearing age especially in the rural areas. One of the themes is – “Empowering Women for Improved Health and Nutrition” and makes a special mention on adolescents and addressing their special requirements. The policy also envisions 100% registration of marriages.

National policy for empowerment of women 2001 emphasizes on introducing intervention and special programs to impact delaying of marriage by 2010 so that it is eliminated.

The National Youth Policy 2003 aims at sensitizing adolescents on the appropriate age for marriage. The policy commits to the all-round development of all youth in the country in the age group of 13 to 35 years. The policy also emphasises on promoting good health and safe environment free of diseases. It identifies key areas of concern such as employment and family welfare.

National Plan of Action for Children 2013 deals with reducing the prevalence of child marriage by 15% by 2021, overall child protection, tracking, rescuing rehabilitation of out of school children including married children. Moreover , the State will ensure all children have equal opportunity and that no custom, traditional, cultural or religious practice is allowed to violate or restrict or prevent children from enjoying their rights.

Integrated Child Protection Scheme ICPS was launched by the National Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2009 to strengthen institution and non-institutional structures to protect children from victimization. ICPS integrates all existing child protection schemes of the Ministry under one window and proposes an increased allocation for child protection programmes in the Union Budget. The rationale is to impart institutional legitimacy to services as well build capacity and database in order to build a protection mechanism for children at community, family and individual level. There by building a robust inter-sectoral response network. ICPS focuses its activities on Children in need of care and protection; Children in conflict with law; who are alleged to have committed an offence; Children in contact with law; who have come into contact with the law as a victim, witness or under any other circumstance; Any other vulnerable child - children of migrant families, children living on the street. Figure 11 illustrates the design of ICPS and the collaborative network of bodies that it works with<sup>21</sup>.



<sup>21</sup> JJ Hand Book

## State Initiatives to Prevent Child Marriages

The following schemes and programmes are aimed at reducing child marriages and protecting victims of child marriage in Telangana

Conditional Cash Transfers: Both the governments of Telangana State, run conditional cash transfer schemes which award the bride or the family of the bride a certain lump sum at the time of her marriage, provided the bride is over the age of eighteen years at the time of her wedding. The aim of these schemes, however, is to change the societal outlook that a female child and her marriage are a burden to the family. While the schemes mandate that the girl child is above the legal age of marriage, they do not address the multi-dimensional nature of child marriage. They succeed in bringing about a change in action, but do not address the much required attitudinal change in the Indian society, in this regard.

The Girl Child Protection Scheme, 'Kalyana Lakshmi' and 'Shaadi Mubarak<sup>22</sup>' are important programs that has brought down the rate of child marriages in the state. However, this hasn't brought any substantial change towards the girl child, the study reported<sup>23</sup>. Under the scheme, the government provides Rs 1 lakh towards marriage for women from poor families. The scheme can be availed by women who have completed 18 years of age, belong to the marginalised communities of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities and Backward Castes, with the combined income of parents not exceeding Rs 2 lakh per annum. The primary intent of this programme is to eradicate the menace of child marriage.

It is important to note that this scheme, e-governance application method has resulted in successful implementation. The scheme has so far helped in reducing child marriages in the State besides helping distressed families. Child marriages have come down since the introduction of the scheme, as parents are waiting until the time their girl child attains 18 years, which is mandatory under the scheme, for availing the benefit<sup>24</sup>.

The researchers noted several instances of people resorting to forgery and fraud to avail benefits of the scheme. While some attempted to change their caste to avail the benefit, in other instances they have changed the date of birth of minor girls on their Aadhaar cards to claim that they are over 18.

The researchers also found there were several loopholes in the scheme, particularly in establishing the authenticity of Muslim women. "Due to the practice of women's seclusion or purdah, a male officer who visits the home for verification would not be allowed to enter to check her bonafide," it reads.

The involvement of several officials, including the MLA, in disbursing the amount leads to corruption, the study finds.

The researchers suggested that for both the Shaadi Mubarak and Kalyana Lakshmi schemes the government should emphasise on the legal registration of marriage and not simply rely on certificates by religious community leaders. "Since the potential beneficiaries are often non-literate and find it difficult to navigate the system, it would perhaps help them if the scheme is restructured such that

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<sup>22</sup> To alleviate financial distress of SC/ST and minority families, Government decided to sanction a one-time financial assistance of Rs. 1,00,116 at the time of marriage for brides who are residents of Telangana State. Accordingly, Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubaarak Schemes have been introduced with effect from October 2, 2014 for unmarried girls, who have completed 18 years of age at the time of marriage and whose parental income does not exceed Rs. 2 lakh per annum. Rs 47 crore and Rs 32 crore disbursed to 9,368 SC and 6,483 ST brides respectively. Another Rs 50 crore was distributed to 10,533 brides from Minority sections (<https://www.telangana.gov.in/government-initiatives>).

<sup>23</sup> TISS (2018) Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme in Telangana, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad campus

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.cgg.gov.in/it\\_project/kalyana-lakshmi-shaadi-mubarak/](https://www.cgg.gov.in/it_project/kalyana-lakshmi-shaadi-mubarak/)

applicant data is shared between government departments based on Aadhar or some other ID rather than ask them to get each document individually. This step would (a) ease the burden on the applicants, (b) make the process more transparent and (c) eliminate the intervention of middlemen,” the study says<sup>25</sup>. “Tighter administrative control to curb corruption and elimination of political approval at any stage is needed as such approval fosters a culture of political patronage,” it adds.

*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao:* For the first time since the implementation of the Centre’s ambitious programme in Telangana, Hyderabad has made ‘exemplary performance’ towards protection, welfare and education of girl children and received award at national level. The award for Hyderabad comes under the ‘Effective Community Engagement’ category. This scheme being implemented in 8 districts of Telangana – Adilabad, Mahbubnagar, Warangal Urban, Karimnagar, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Ranga Reddy, Hyderabad. It is 100% centrally sponsored scheme, targeting 11 to 14 aged out of school girls.

*Integrated Child Protection Scheme:* Under this scheme, vulnerability mapping has been done in some districts. Established Village level Child Protection Committees (VCPC) under chairmanship of the head of the Gram Panchayat. It is responsible for recommending and monitoring the implementation of child protection services at village level. The committee comprises of the sarpanch (chairman), anganwadi worker (secretary), Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), police patil, principal or teacher of a primary/secondary (government aided) school, chairperson of the School Management Committee (SMC), community representatives like parents, two members from volunteer organisations, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Mahila Mandals – and a boy and girl each as representatives of children in the 12-18 years age group.

The VCPC is also concerned with the dropout rate among girls. 75:25 funding between centre and state for all components 90:10 for all components for NGOs and centre. However, the critical gap is VCPC has no defined child marriages preventive approach.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

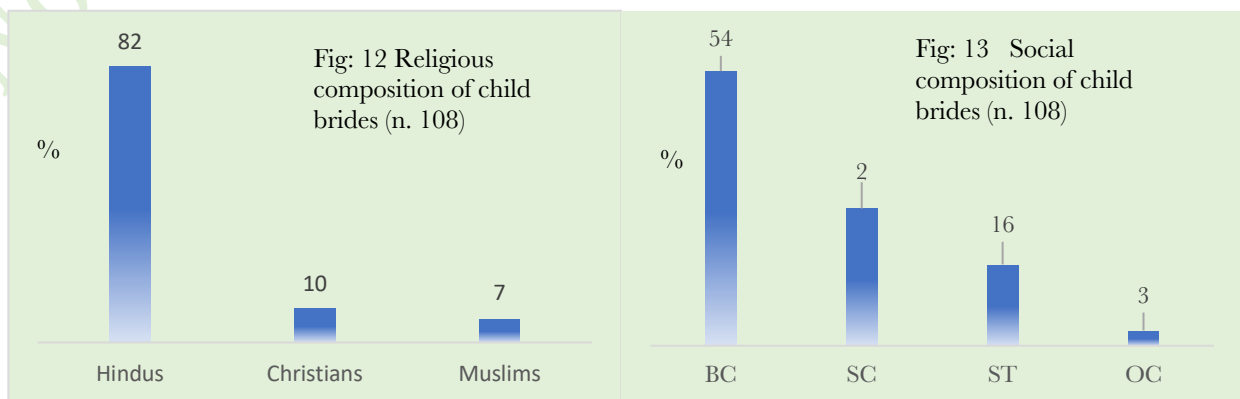
**FIFTH Section**  
**Consequences of early marriage and aspirations about future.**  
**(Objective 3)**

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Aspirations can relate to many aspects of life. Caroline Sarojini Hart argues that aspirations are future-oriented, driven by conscious and unconscious motivations and they are indicative of an individual or group's commitments towards a particular trajectory or end point<sup>26</sup>. An individual might set their aspirations in relation to what they know they can achieve or they might set aspirations more ambitiously to strive for ways of being and doing they are not sure of realizing. Some individuals might aspire in a non-specified way in terms of wanting "a better life," whereas others might strive for specific transformative social change, such as a change in the law<sup>27</sup>.

This study of 108 child brides in the age group of 15 to 24 who got married before 18 years of age, and were interviewed in Adilabad, Sangareddy, Vikarabad, Yadadri (Bhuvanagiri), Gadwal (Jogulamba), and Hyderabad found that every child bride (98 %) reported having aspirations, however, they had never shared with anyone else. It is mainly because they don't have voice or no one in the family listen to their views and aspirations. It appears that, most of the time they are afraid to tell other people about their aspirations. Child brides interviewed revealed aspirations therefore only give a partial view of an individual's "aspiration set". Unshared, aspirations may also form important elements of an individual's aspiration set. Furthermore, aspirations are shaped and constrained by many factors but this is not necessarily readily apparent.

Study tried to elicit the aspirations of child brides through probing on their viewpoints/aspirations about their education, family, children and so on. Besides, attempt has been made to document the health, psychological and social consequences of early marriages.



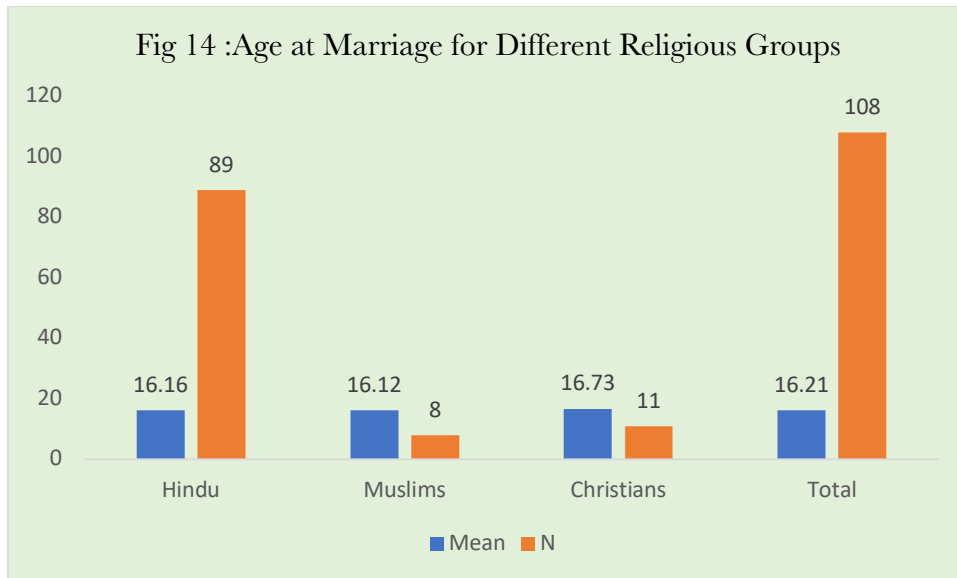
As mentioned in the forgoing discussion, 108 child brides were interviewed. Of this larger majority are Hindu (82%), and the rest are Christians (10%) and Muslims (7%). Majority of the child brides are from Backward Castes (54%) and very less from other castes (forward castes).

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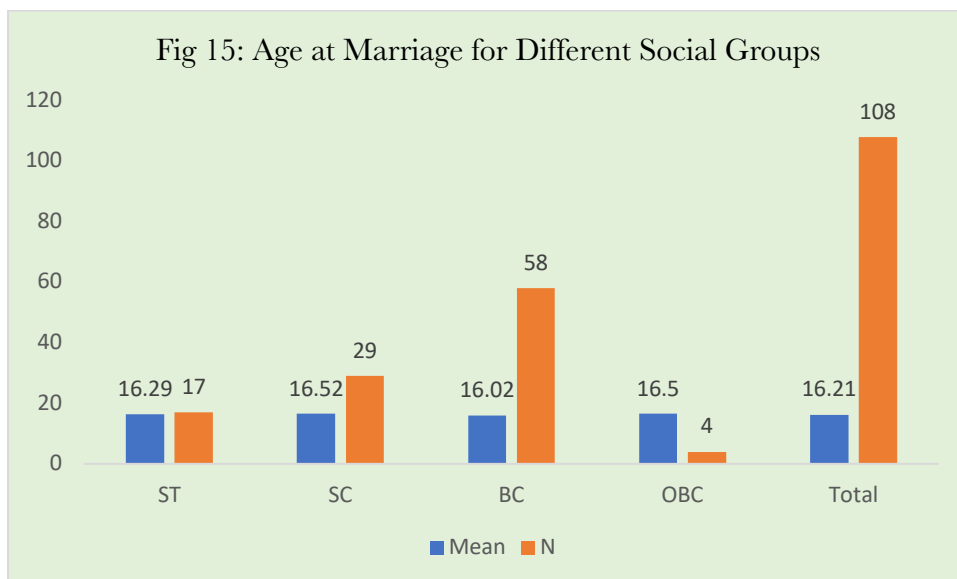
<sup>26</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19452829.2016.1199540>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

From the above fig 13 it can be inferred that majority of the respondents around 40% were married at the age of 17. Around 25% of the girls were married at the age of 16 and 6% of them were married at the age of 14. The above analysis shows us that prevalence of child marriages is high in the state with majority of the girls being married between the ages of 15-16.

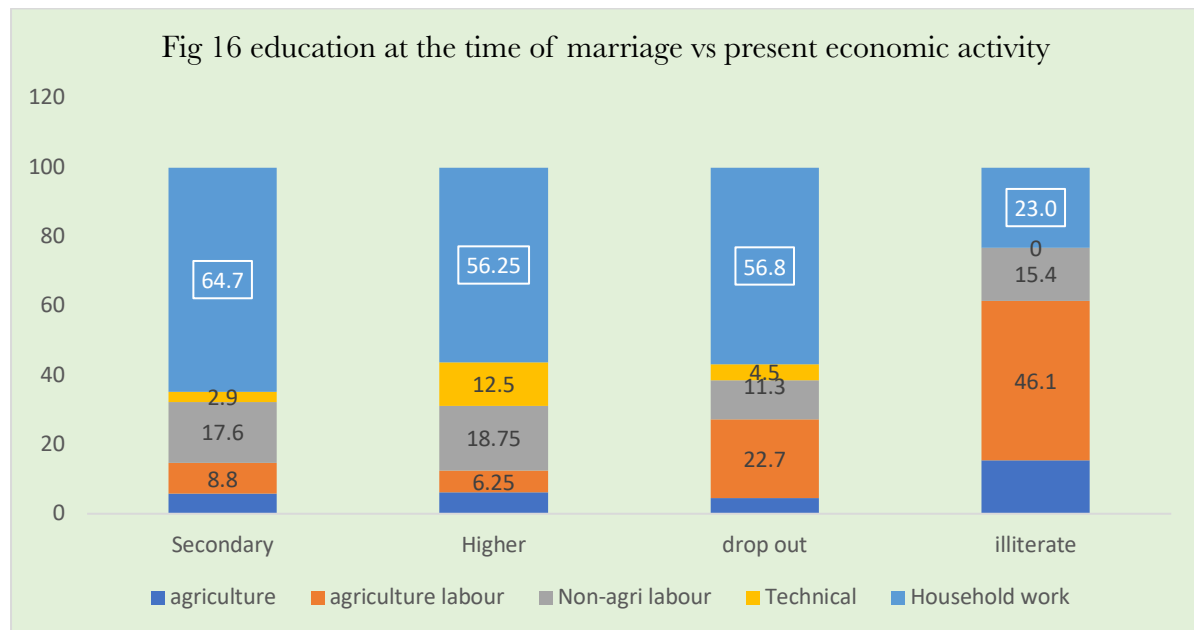


The above analysis (Fig 14) reveals the mean average age of different religious groups. The above analysis shows that the average age of marriage for Christians is higher than Hindus. However, given the limited sample size the graph shows that the average age of Hindus is higher than Muslims and Christians, hence this is not an accurate conclusion. Overall the average age of marriage is at 16.2 years.

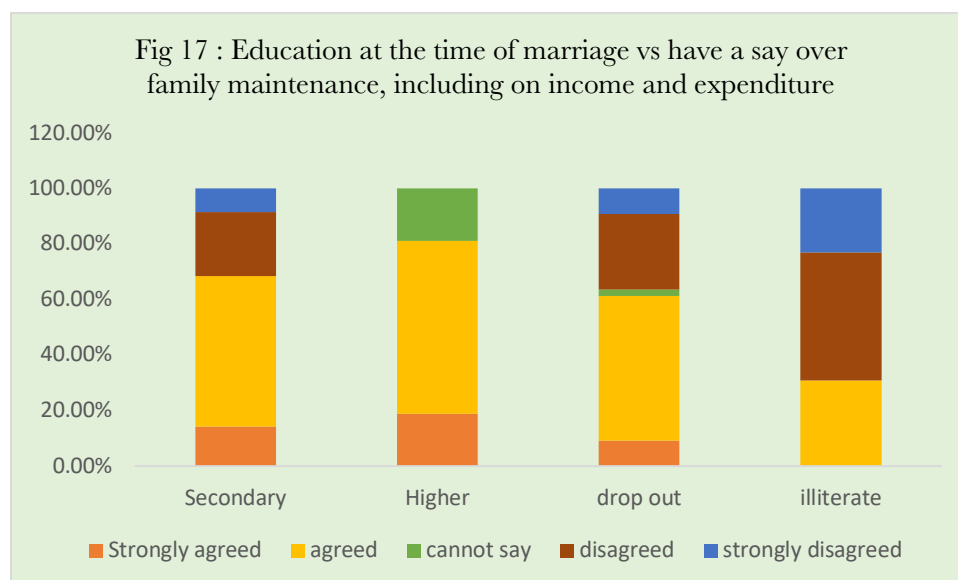


The above fig. 15 reveal the age at marriage for different social groups. The above analysis shows that the average age of SC category is at 16.52, followed by OBC at 16.5 which is higher than ST and BC

categories. However, the graphs show that the average age of BC category is higher than SC as the respondent size is less, hence it cannot be properly concluded. In total the average age of girls is at 16.21.



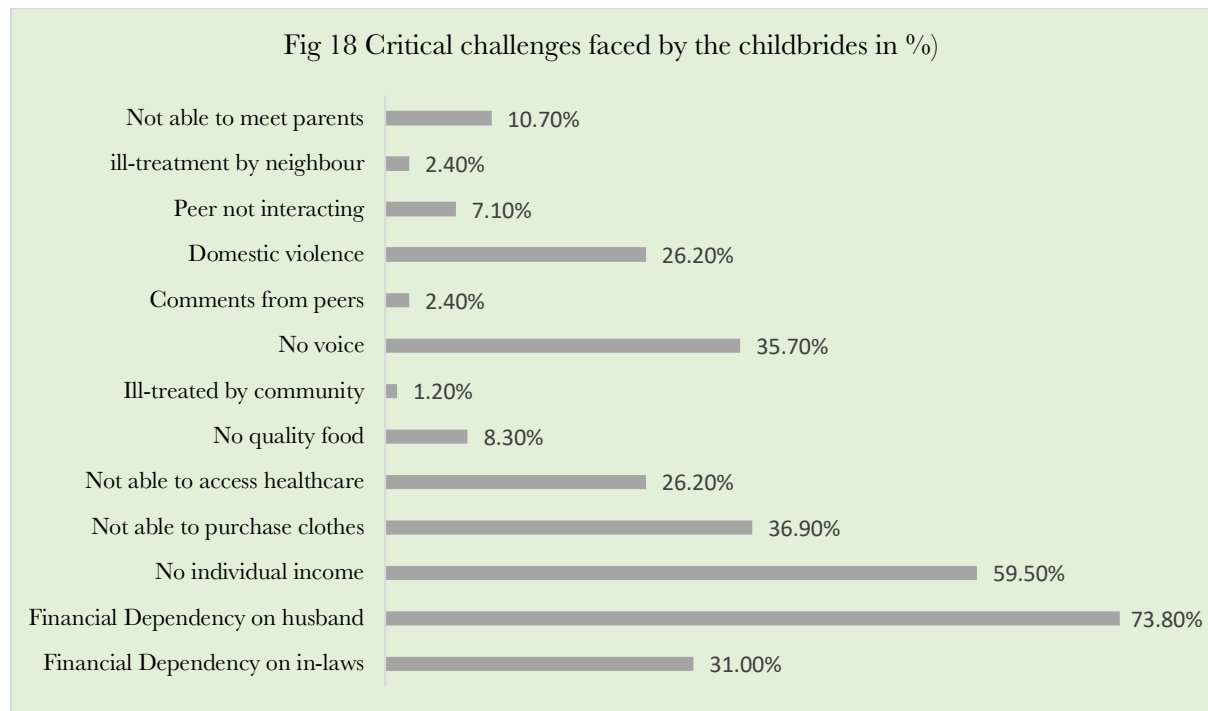
The above data in fig 16 show the education of the child brides and their current economic activity. From the above table it can be inferred that a majority of the girls from all educational groups have dropped out of school and are not engaged in remunerative employment and are house wives and agricultural labourers. Among those who completed secondary education, 64.7% are employed in household work and 56.25% of ones with higher educated are also involved in housework.



The above fig:17 show us the relation between education level of the girls and the say over family maintenance. It can be inferred that 54% of girls with secondary education agreed to having a say in family maintenance and 62.50% of higher educated girls agreed to the same. Even 52% of the dropout

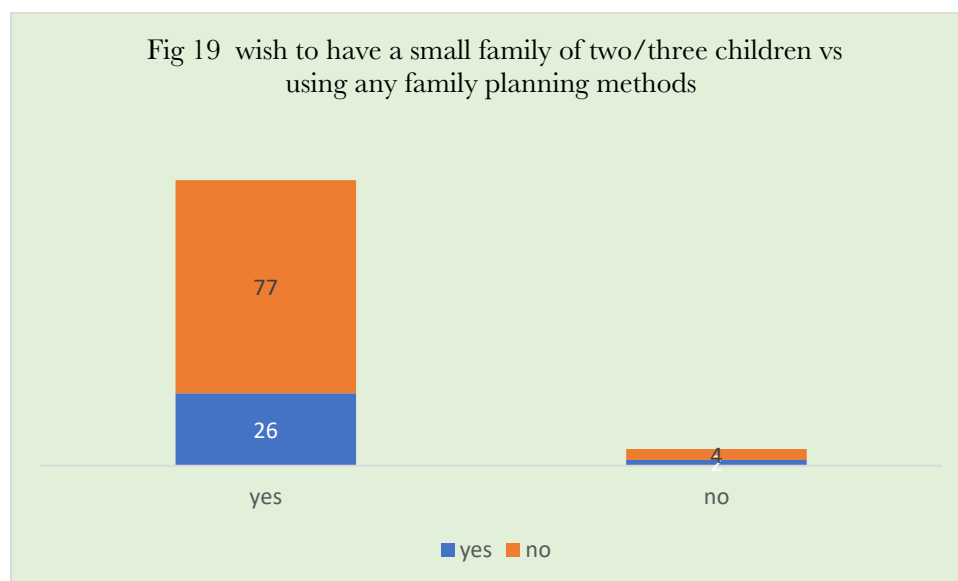


said they had voice over family income and expenditure. However 46.20% illiterates disagreed to any sort of control over family income. This trend suggest that some sort of education gives these girls a command over domestic income and expenditure.

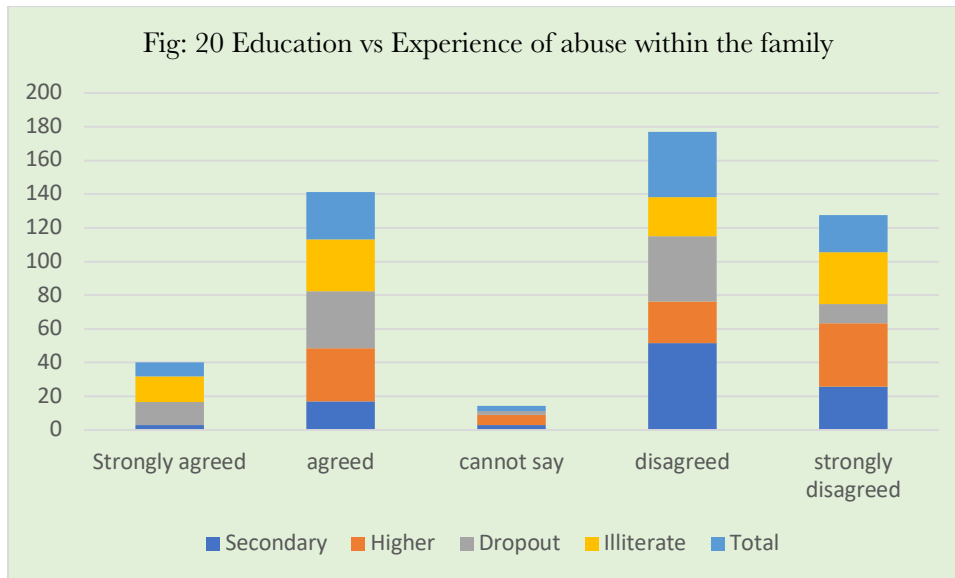


The above fig 18 shows the key problem faced by the girls' post-marriage. 73.80% of them report that the biggest problem they are facing is that they are financially dependent on their husbands followed by 59.50% of them reporting that they have no individual income. Around 35.70% report that they do not have a say in the family and 36.50% report that they do not have freedom to purchase clothes. The above table reveals various problems faced by the girls as a result of endemic poverty of these areas.

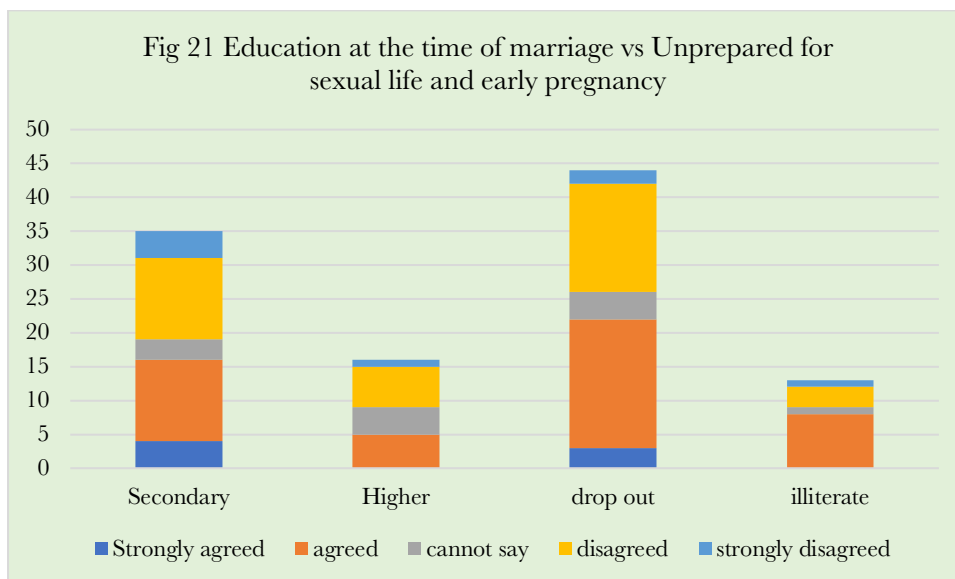
Very less number of child brides talked about the violence and abuse. They don't want to discuss it much as it is a sensitive issue.



The above fig 19 show the relation between the wish to have a small family vs the usage of family planning methods. From the above analysis it shows that 77% of child brides who wish to have a small family do not use family planning measures and only 26% use family planning techniques. This shows that there is no awareness or freedom to follow family planning measures by the child brides.

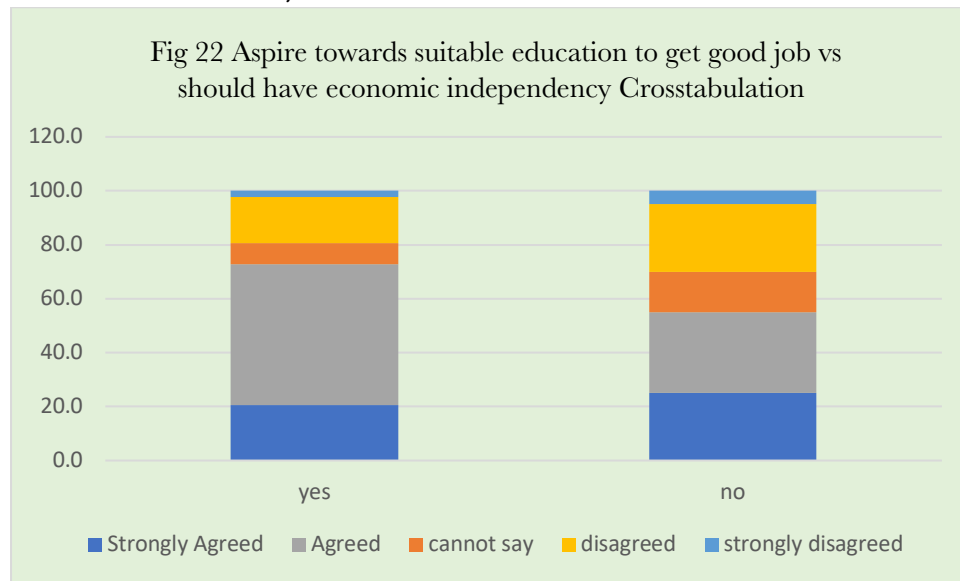


The above fig 20 show the relation between the level of education and the experience of abuse within the family. About 51.4% of those with secondary education disagreed to having faced abuse, 37.5% and 25% of those with higher education strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to the same. From the among the dropouts who 34% agreed to being abused by family about 38.6% disagreed for the same. The group with no education also exhibited unclear trend. Two factors come at play here, one on awareness of what constitutes abuse may be lack and second the district surveyed may have lesser trends of abuse due to awareness of rights.

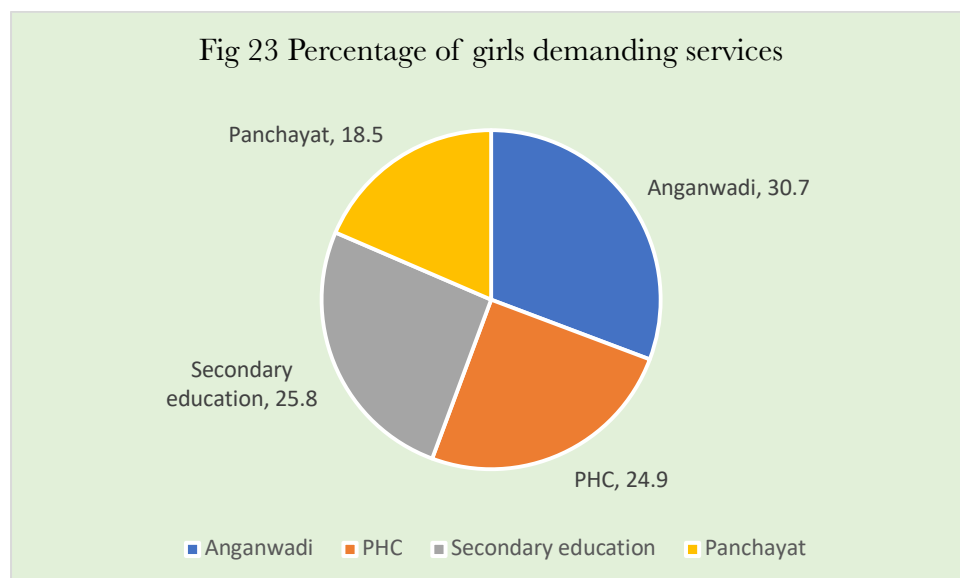


The above analysis (Fig 21) show us the relation between education at the time of marriage vs preparedness for sexual life. From the above analysis it can be inferred that those respondents who have either dropped out or are illiterate are extremely unprepared for pregnancy when compared to those

who have completed secondary or higher education. The major reason could be attributed to the level of sexual awareness they have obtained in school.

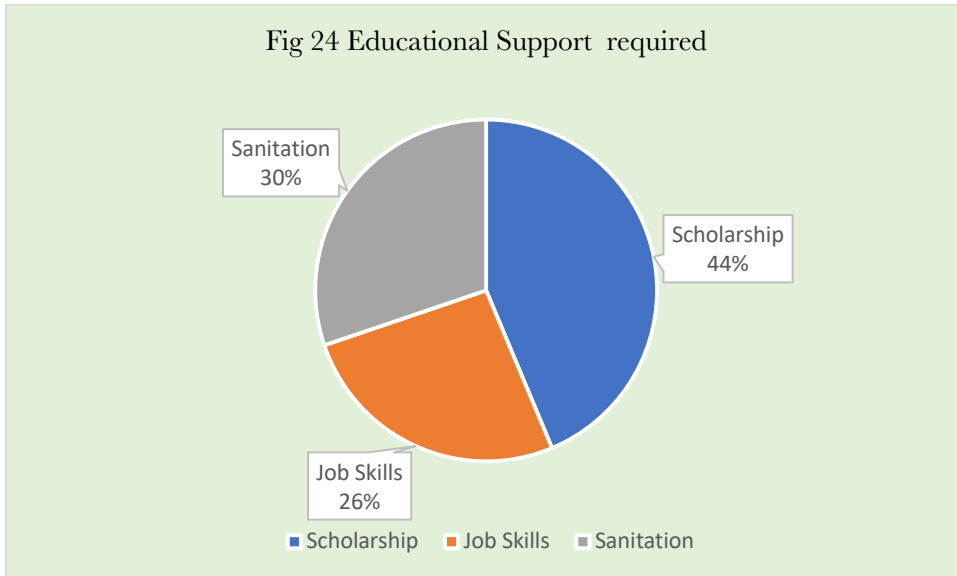


The above fig 22 show us the relation between getting a suitable education and having economic independency. It can be inferred that among those who aspire to get job via good education, 20.5% and 53% agree to having economic independence. Only 2.3% who said yes being financially independent didn't aspire for education to get a good job. Among those who said no to further education about 25% and 30% still strongly agreed and agreed respectively to being financially secure. This trend probably indicated that these girls would like to go in for some sort of vocational training instead of higher education. From the same group 25% disagreed to being financial independent, this suggests the lack of aspirations among these girls for some reasons.



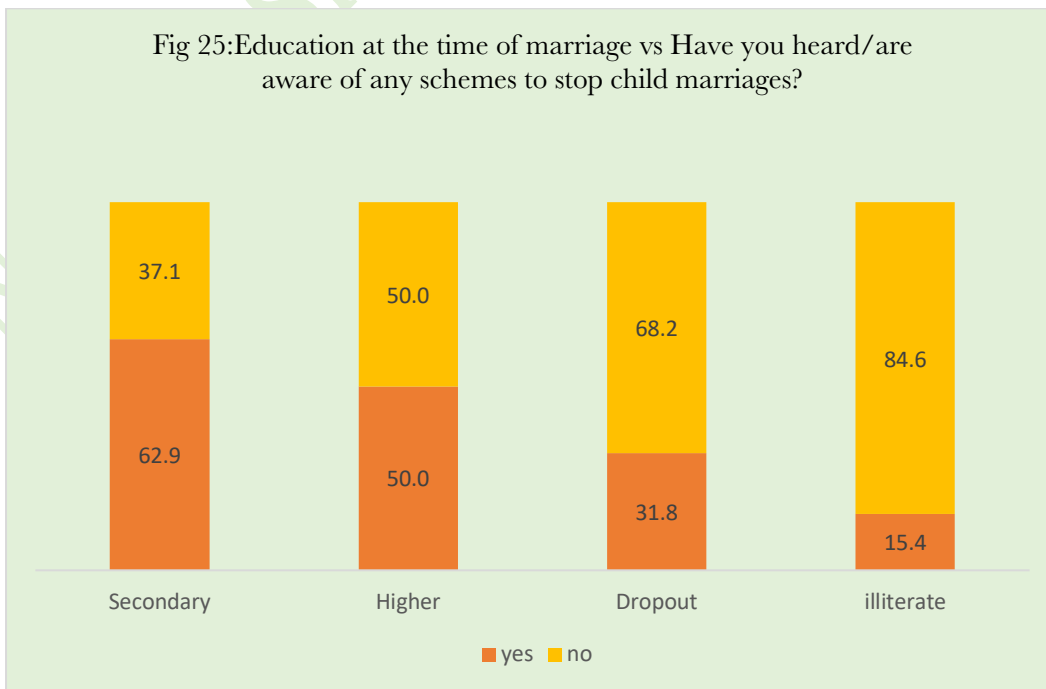
The data in fig 23 shows the demand for support of government services. About 30.7% of the girls required anganwadi services and 24.9% demanded PHCs. There was also a demand by 28.5% of the respondents for secondary education.

Fig 24 Educational Support required

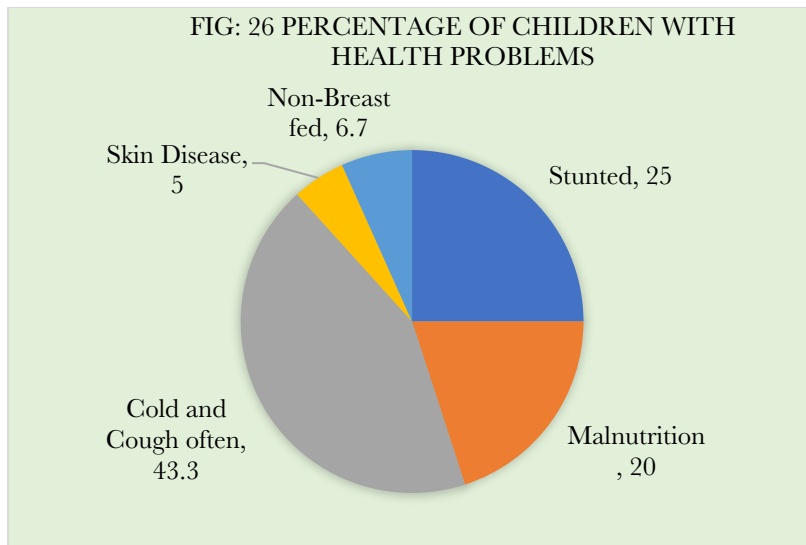


The above fig. 24 shows the support required for the participants for pursuing higher education. From the above it can be inferred that the demand for scholarship is the highest followed by provision of clean and safe sanitation facilities for the girls.

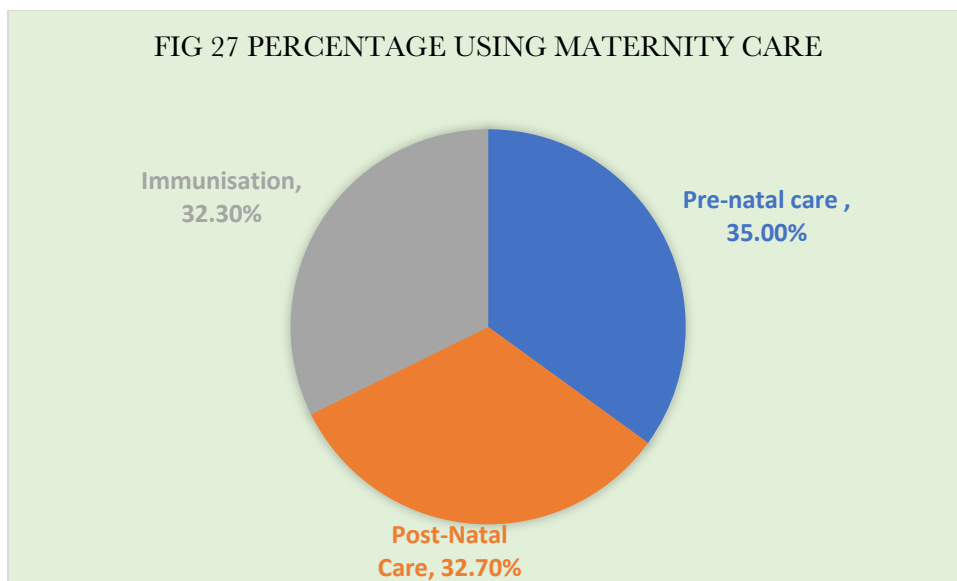
Fig 25: Education at the time of marriage vs Have you heard/are aware of any schemes to stop child marriages?



The data in fig. 25 table shows the relation between education at the time of marriage and their awareness about schemes surrounding child marriage. It can be inferred that around 62.9% of them who have completed secondary education and 50% of those who completed Higher education have awareness about schemes relating to preventing child marriages while only 31.8% of those who are drop-outs and 15.4% of those who are illiterates have awareness about child marriages. An observation of number of child brides who are aware about such schemes are 46 out of 108 , which is grossly inadequate. Since these numbers are also considerably higher for secondary and higher education literacy can be considered as an enabler for raising awareness.



The above fig 26 shows the problems faced by the first child born to the respondents. Around 61.9% of the children suffer from viral infections like cold and cough regularly. Child Brides are often physically weak and hence they bear weak children. Hence, 35.7% of them reported stunting among children born and 28.6% reported malnourished children.



The data in fig 27 says that about 35% of women access pre-natal care, and both Post-Natal Care and Immunisation is accessed by 32% of the child brides. Since most maternal health programs are designed for girls above 18 years of age, child brides are excluded from this service.

#### **CASE Studies:**

As a part of the study, few case studies were collected during the interviews.

#### **Parvathi, Veluvarthi, Yadadri Bhongir**

Parvathi (Name Changed) is a native of Veluvarthi village, Yadadri Bhongir district, Telangana. She is a daily wage laborer and spends most of her day in earning an income for the family and returns back

at home and takes care of her 3-year old who is enrolled in the local anganwadi center. Telling us her story, Parvathi says that she got married at the age of 17. She lost her father when she was a child and her mother brought her up on her widow pension and the income she earned from daily wage labor. She was in the 9<sup>th</sup> standard, when her mother told her that she cannot afford to make her study further. Her mother arranged her marriage to a man who was 10 years older to her and was unemployed. In 2015, after her marriage, her husband moved to Hyderabad in search of a job and found work at a construction site. Parvathi discontinued her studies and took up work as a daily laborer in a construction site in her native village of Veluvarthi.

In a few months she became pregnant and was advised by the doctor to undergo complete rest as her body was not prepared for pregnancy. In the same period Parvathi came to know that her husband was addicted to alcohol and stopped sending money home to the family. She moved to Hyderabad to take care of him and reduce his addiction to alcohol. Unable to manage singlehandedly, she convinced him to move back to the village, however he continued consuming alcohol and did not take care of her. Instead of supporting her he demanded money from her regularly. She had to use her secret savings to pay for the hospital expenses for her child delivery.

When she was taken to the local government hospital for delivery she started suffering complications and was transferred to the critical care unit in a government hospital in Bhongir, 30 kms away. She delivered a baby girl under C-section and the baby also suffered complications immediately after birth. The doctors advised her to admit the baby in Nilofar hospital, Hyderabad. She admitted the baby and the doctors successfully treated her. Throughout this period her husband did not even visit her and the child in hospital.

From then onwards Parvathi has become the breadwinner of the family and supports her child, husband and herself. Asked about why she didn't divorce him she says

*"I am ready to divorce my husband but my elderly mother, community and my relatives don't allow me to do so, instead, they suggested me to live with him whatever situation is".*

She says that she has suffered a lot as she got married at a young age when she was not ready to undertake the responsibilities associated with it. She says that if probably the financial situation at home was better, she would have studied further and got a good job. She says that she will encourage her daughter to study well and get a good job and only then get married. She says that even though she wants to study she does not have the time as she needs to earn for the family. Her total annual income is Rs.70,000.

Finally, she says that the government should intervene to support the victims of child marriage and requests that the government to set up a de-addiction center at every village to treat people like her husband and protect their families from such deadly habits.

### **Seetha, Pothureddy pally colony, Sangareddy**

Seetha is a native of Pothureddypally colony, Sangareddy district, Telangana. Married at the age of 12, Seetha was forced to discontinue her studies in the 8<sup>th</sup> std, by her father. Her father had arranged the marriage on the condition that the son-in-law would stay at Geetha home permanently. Growing up Seetha was always verbally abused by her father who was addicted to alcohol and never provided

enough for the family. She was surprised that her father wanted a son-in-law who would stay back at their house. But in a few days she realized that her husband was also addicted to alcohol.

At the age of 13, she became pregnant. She suffered severe health complications during pregnancy as her body was not prepared and she was underweight. Her platelets count was also low and she was advised to be hospitalized. During this period her husband also moved to Hyderabad to learn technical skills to get a better job. Her family members did not take care of her throughout the pregnancy and she did not have sufficient food and nutritional supplements. She did not know that she could approach the anganwadi center for her nutritional needs in that period. This resulted her in delivering a still born in a C-section at the local government hospital.

In a few months after the incident she came to know that her husband was addicted to alcohol and drugs and had stopped working in Hyderabad. She immediately moved to the city and brought him back home.

As her family stopped supporting her and her husband she started working as a daily wage laborer in their village. During this period, she became pregnant again. This time she was very careful in eating healthy food and taking proper nutritional supplements and regularly attended the anganwadi center in the village. The second time she gave birth to a healthy baby boy.

After having the child she decided that she will have to support her family by herself and started studying under distance education mode. She finished up to graduation and started doing part-time jobs in the village. Even though her husband and in-laws oppose her doing a job, she continues with her job and takes care of her son, who is currently in the 2<sup>nd</sup> std. Her husband is still addicted to alcohol and drugs and doesn't bother about her and the child welfare. Asked why she hasn't divorced him she says that she will not be respected in her family and the society as a single woman. She says

*"I was married at the age of 12 under the pressure of my parents and against my wishes. I missed some of the most important years of my life and it has had serious repercussions on my health, education, family, relations, social status and every aspect of life."*

She says that girls should not be married below the age of 18, as girls are not prepared physically and mentally. She says that through her work with the panchayat she will bring awareness to the villagers on prevention of child marriages.

### **Swetha, Rajuv Gruhakalpa Colony, Vikarabad**

Swetha is a native of Rajiv Gruhakalpa Colony, Vikarabad. She got married at the age of 17 to a man who was already married previously and had two children. She married him due to pressure from her parents who were very poor and could not afford to take care of her anymore. When she was in her 5<sup>th</sup> std, her mother died of a snakebite. Her father became addicted to alcohol. She was forced to discontinue school and take care of her younger siblings.

Her father received a marriage proposal for her from their relative who was already married with two kids. His wife had died after giving birth to the second child. Since her father did not have to pay dowry and a big wedding, he immediately agreed to get her married. She also did not oppose the wedding as she did not want to hurt her father.

After the marriage Swetha had to take care of the two children. Her husband used to seasonally migrate leaving her to take care of the children. She started working in a construction site due to insufficient income for the family. She soon became pregnant but could not afford to have nutritional supplements.

Only when she was into the sixth month she started attending the anganwadi center. When she couldn't work more in the construction site, she used to save a portion of food from the anganwadi center to eat at night and feed the children. Fortunately, she had a normal delivery. Now she has to take care of her 3 children. She and her husband together make an annual income of Rs.70,000.

She says that *“Married at the age of 17, I am now a mother of three children. If my father was not addicted to alcohol and had worked harder for the family, I would have studied further and got a good job. I had to undertake a lot of responsibilities at a young age which I was not ready for. If my husband was better off at least my life would have been better.”*

### **Mahalakshmi, Jogulamba Gadwal,**

Mahalakshmi is a native of Gattu, Jogulamba Gadwal district. She was married at the age of 15. Her parents were illiterate and cattle grazers. They never realized the importance of education and therefore she was never enrolled in school. When she was 15 her parents got her married to her relative who was also a cattle grazer and illiterate.

Immediately after the marriage her mother-in-law passed away. Her brother-in-law and his wife took control over the income and expenditure of the family. She and her husband were forced to do all the household work and take up daily wage labor as well. She says that they both are treated as slaves in their own house. Even the food they eat is monitored by their brother-in-law and his wife.

Mahalakshmi became pregnant twice but lost both the children due to health complications during pregnancy. In her third pregnancy she gave birth to a baby boy, who is also suffering from malnutrition. She says her husband loves her but does not speak up for her. She wishes that they move away from the house and be able to provide a better life for their child.

She says *“I got married at a very young age and did not know that it was a wrong decision. If I had been educated, I would know better about the complications involved. I wish the government and the schools educate children that child marriage shouldn't be encouraged and that girls should be educated and economically*



**SIXTH Section**  
**Recommendations from the perspective of child brides**  
**(Objective 5)**

Consequences of child marriages – Voices from child brides:

Financial dependency, not able to access proper health care, often abuse and violence within the family and community, occasionally ill-treated by neighbours, early pregnancy, prolonged delivery, high bleeding during delivery, hypertension, stunted children, isolated social life, no scope for further education, and less freedom are the critical consequences of early marriage expressed by the child brides.

To address critical challenges, most of the child brides are looking at Gram Panchayat support in preventing child marriages, accessing development services/provisions. Similarly larger majority are demanding the health services, particularly post and pre-natal services and immunisation services, and Anganwadi services for their infants, particularly for those who are stunted (malnourished) and often falling sick. One of the critical point emerged is the proper and timely support from Anganwadi/health centre to address the anaemic conditions among adolescent girls. Majority of the child brides said that they have less or no knowledge about family planning methods and spacing the family, for which they are demanding proper support from health services.

1. Aspirations, & Demands from child brides perspective and Policy Implications:

However, their aspirations says that their confidence levels are high and to fulfil their aspirations they are putting critical demands to be fulfilled by the government.

1.1 *Small family norms:* Many aspired for small family with two children, however awareness on family planning is very low. Mother in law and husbands are the decision makers in spacing the family. Demand made by them is proper counselling to their husbands and mother-in-law's on consequences of early marriage, sexual life, and birth spacing. In this context, there is a need to improve the reach out of primary health care and Anganwadi services to those girls who were married before 18 years of age.

1.2 *Economic independence:* Most of the child brides aspire for economic independence, however their educational background is not supporting them. Some of them have told that they need vocational training on job-oriented programs including soft skills. Those who are not interested to pursue further education after marriage, strongly aspire to have skill training course that will give chance to earn. It is therefore, job oriented vocational skill trainings have to be embedded into the present curriculum starting from secondary/higher education. Department of education has to rethink on how best the existing curriculum at secondary and high schools linked with vocational training courses, including soft skills. It is essential to map the local skill training centres run by the government, corporates and NGOs and link them with the existing structure of education.

- 1.3 *Scholarships to pursue higher education:* It is one of the widely talked point. Some of the child brides have said that due to financial difficulties in the family, they were forced to dropout from schools. If such support exists or accessible to them, perhaps their parents would have not thought of early marriage and forced them to drop out from school. In such cases, it is important to think about conditional cash transfers, bicycles to girls in secondary education, hygienic sanitation facilities in schools, and embedded vocational education in to secondary schools as suggested by Copenhagen Consensus in their recent report.
- 1.4 *Healthy life:* Majority aspired to lead healthy life, particularly to their infants. Those who had early pregnancy are demanding Anganwadi services. Those who are not pregnant also looking for Anganwadi services. Particularly this category of child brides is either malnourished or anemic. Here, primary health care has to focus more on adolescent girls (either married early or unmarried) provide proper knowledge about menstrual cycle and hygiene, importance of Iron Folic, family planning methods, pre and post-natal care and immunization.
- 1.5 *Demand for services:* Anganwadi, Panchayat, PHC and Secondary education are the most demanded services by the child brides. Particularly to Gram Panchayat their demand is to involve at right time to prevent child marriages. Those who are in urban area demanded timely support from policy as well as from legal services. Members of Gram Panchayat has to be sensitized on the socio-economic consequences of child marriages and made accountable to prevent such incidents. If they act properly, most of the child marriages can be prevented.
- 1.6 *Demand for information:* Majority of the child brides have no or low awareness about their entitlements, child marriage prevention act and other child protection measures. It is essential to include such informative syllabus from the secondary education level.
- 1.7 *Role of parents:* Most of the child brides' have told that, mothers should play an intermediary role between girl children and the father and council father not to opt girl's marriage. In many cases, fathers are the decision makers about their daughters. In this context, it is essential to sensitize the parents on adverse impact of child marriages. Mothers committees (Like school education committees – as told by child brides) has to be formed in each one of the vulnerable village. Link it with other core stakeholders, starting from Panchayat, School, SHGs and front line health functionaries to watch the families which are vulnerable and may opt girl child marriages. Most of the child brides strongly suggested that prevention should start from village itself.

Finally this study brings following policy points:

To end this persistent practice, policymakers should recognize that addressing child marriage is not only a moral imperative, but it is also a cost-effective and strategic move to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 by 2030. Public-private partnerships and other collaborative mechanisms need to be designed to support efforts by civil society and the private sector to combat child marriage. Given the social norms, traditions and beliefs to the perpetuation of child marriage, programs that collaborate with political, community and religious leaders, self-help groups, and youth clubs should be a particular focus.

Government policy on child marriages should focus on three critical areas: maternal and child health, family planning, and girls' secondary education. These are either one way or other related to child marriages and survival of the victims. It is also important for policy makers to ensure that efforts should address the girls who are already married and their children.

Monitoring and Evaluation is one of the critical factor in addressing the child marriages. In this context, it is important to identify vulnerable children, vulnerable families in specific vulnerable geographical regions, collect accurate data and accordingly investments need to be planned and monitored.

FIRST draft - Not for

**SEVENTH Section**  
**Annexures**

Validated tool used to interview the selected child brides in the field

Study on

**The situation of child brides in the states in Telangana**

One of the objectives of the study is to analyse the impact of child marriages from the perspective of child brides through primary data on health, physical, mental, sexual, social, economic aspects, and aspirations. It helps in advocating with policymakers to ensure “no early marriages as more” and improve the needed services for those who got married at an early age. Ensure that the information provided by her will be kept confidential and will not disclose her name and information to any third person. Whatever information collected in this interview will be used for report writing, and after three months from the date of the interview, it will be scrapped from all sources. Don't pressurize the informant to answer sensitive questions. Use the logical mode of discussions, conduct the interview in a place comfortable to her, and avoid interview in public places.

Consent to take part in research

I.....(Pseudo name) voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. I understand that data from my interview within three months after the interview will be deleted. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research. I understand that all the information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially. I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous. It will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview, which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about. I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the report, conference presentation, and published papers.

Agree | Rejected | Agree but some other time

1	ID Number					
2	District					
3	Mandal					
4	Village					
5	Town					
6	Name (pseudo)					
7	Your age at present					
8	Your husbands age					
9	Your age at marriage					
10	Year of marriage					
11	Social group (Caste)	ST	SC	BC	OBC	Others

12	Religion	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Others	
13	Present family type (In laws family)	Joint	Nuclear	Others		
14	Presently living with	In-laws	Parents	With husband separately	Others	
15	Economic status of parents family	Same as husband family	Better than husbands family	Worse than husbands family	Cannot say	
16	Your education at the time of marriage	Secondary	Higher	Dropout	Illiterate	Literate but no formal education
17	Your husbands education at the time of marriage	Secondary	Higher	Dropout	Illiterate	Literate but no formal education
18	Your present economic activity	Agriculture	Agri-labour	Non-agri labour	Technical	House hold work
19	Your husbands economic activity	Agriculture	Agri-labour	Non-agri labour	Technical	Nothing
20	Total family income per year (approx)					
21	How many children do you have?					
<b>GENERAL</b>						
	Question	Category of answer				
22	I am happy with my life	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
22.1	Probe:					
23	My voice is heard	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
23.1	Probe:					
24	I have freedom to pursue further education	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
24.1	Probe:					
25	I maintain my self-respect	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed

25.1	Probe:					
26	I often experienced abuse within the family	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
26.1	Probe:					
27	I often experienced abuse with in the community	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
27.1	Probe:					
28	I often experience verbal/physical violence from the peer and community	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
28.1	Probe:					
29	Violence against women is a common phenomenon in our community	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
29.1	Probe:					
30	I discontinued my studies even though I did not wish to	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
30.1	Probe:					
31	I dislike studies	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed

31.1	Probe:					
32	I have a say over family maintenance, including on income and expenditure	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
32.1	Probe:					
33	My movements are largely restricted/ cannot meet peers/ cannot leave house as per will	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
33.1	Probe:					
34	My parents financially benefitted from my marriage	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
34.1	Probe:					
35	I experienced family pressure to do domestic work as well as undertake economic activities	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
35.1	Probe:					
36	I experience social isolation	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
36.1	Probe:					
37	I do not have an independent identity	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed

37.1	Probe:					
38	After marriage my social status has decreased within the society	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
38.1	Probe:					
39	Choosing marriage over education is not acceptable for girls	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
39.1	Probe:					
40	I agree with girls' marriage before 18 years of age	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
40.1	Probe					
41	My stress has increased after marriage	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
41.1	Probe					
42	I am unprepared for sexual life and early pregnancy	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
43	My relation with my husband is good	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
44	My relations with In-laws is good	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
45	My relations with my parents is good	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
<b>PROGRAMS &amp; SCHEMES</b>						
46	Have you heard/are aware of any schemes to stop child marriages?					Yes/No



47	If Yes, Can you name the schemes					
48	My limited education doesn't permit me to understand the schemes to stop child marriages	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
49	I don't know about vocational skill trainings for girls	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
50	I heard about Kalyan Laxmi / bicycle scheme for girls					Yes/No
51	Government has less concern about child marriages	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
52	Which support system do you wish to access	Anganwadi	Primary health care	Secondary education	Panchayat	Others
53	There are few legislations and Government Orders to prevent child marriages. Have you heard about them?					Yes/No
54	Do you think such information has to be included in the social science subjects	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
<b>ASPIRATIONS</b>						
55	I am very interested in continuing further education					Yes/No
56	I aspire to complete	Degree	Post-Graduation	Technical (B.Tech etc)	Others	
57	If Yes, what support you wish to receive from the government	Scholarships	Job oriented Skills	Basic sanitation in schools	Others	
58	I aspire towards suitable education to get good job					Yes/No
59	I wish to become a	Teacher	Police	Engineer	Doctor	Advocate
60	I wish to have a small family of two/three children					Yes/No
61	I don't want my children to get married before 18 years for girls/21 years for boys	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed

61.1	Probe					
62	I wish to educate my girl children up to	Graduation	Post-Graduation	Technical (B.Tech etc)	Others	cannot say
63	I should have economic independency	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
63.1	Probe					
<b>CONFIDENCE</b>						
64	I can educate my children to higher degree	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
64.1	Probe					
65	If financial support systems are in place, my parents would have not opted for child marriage	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
66	Even after early marriage, my confidence might have increased if I had job	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Cannot say	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
<b>HEALTH</b>						
67	I had pregnancy related complications					Yes/No
68	What are they	Mis-carriage (Loss of baby before 20 week of pregnancy)	Induced Abortion (forced abortion)	Prolonged delivery (between 14 to 20 or more hours)	High bleeding during delivery	Hypertension
		Morning sickness (Vomiting)	High blood pressure	Low birth weight of baby	Others	
69	Have you accessed	Pre-natal care	Post-natal care	Basic immunization of children	Others	

70	If you have children, where the delivery has taken place	PHC	Govt Gen. Hospital	Private clinic	In home without medical assistance	In home with medical assistance
71	For first child					
72	For second child					
73	For third child					
74	Is it normal delivery or C-section?	Normal	C-sections	Still birth (delivery after 20th week of pregnancy of a baby who has died)		
75	First child					
76	Second child					
77	Third child					
78	Any still births?					Yes/No
79	If Yes, number of still births					
80	My children are	Stunted (low birth weight)	Weak (Malnutrition)	Often suffering with cold and cough	Skin diseases	Non-breastfed children
81	First child					
82	Second child					
83	Third child					
84	Are you using any family planning methods					Yes/No
85	Are you aware of such measures?					Yes/No
<b>Mental/Psychological/Social/Economic problems</b>						
86	Feeling loneliness	Always	Sometimes	Never	Cannot say	
87	Feeling anxiety	Always	Sometimes	Never	Cannot say	
88	Feeling neglected	Always	Sometimes	Never	Cannot say	
89	Much worried	Always	Sometimes	Never	Cannot say	
90	Nervousness	Always	Sometimes	Never	Cannot say	
91	Stress	Always	Sometimes	Never	Cannot say	
92	Feeling of disconnect from parents	Always	Sometimes	Never	Cannot say	
93	Frequent illness	Always	Sometimes	Never	Cannot say	
94	What are the key problems you are facing?	Financial dependency on in-laws	Financial dependency on husband	No individual income	Not able to purchase clothes	Not able to access health care

		Not able to have better food	Ill treatment by community	No voice	Often comments from peer	Domestic violence
		Peer not interacting	Neighbours ill treatment	Not able to meet parents (often)	Others	
<b>REHABILITATION</b>						
95	For how long you are in this home					
96	Have you received any support to avoid child marriage?					Yes/No
97	Are you getting any legal aid?					Yes/No
98	Have you counselled by the staff					Yes/No
99	Counselling to your parents					Yes/No
100	Counselling to your husband					Yes/No
101	Resumed education					Yes/No
102	Satisfied with amenities in this centre?					Yes/No
103	If No, what is your suggestions to improve					
104	Any information you would like to share with us?					
Thank you for your time!						
105	Investigator has to write the notes on his experience and key observations.					
	Name of the Investigator					
	Date of Interview					