



Prevention of Child Marriage: Impact on Girls

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Abbreviations

AGG	Adolescent Girls' Group
AJC	Additional Joint Collector
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BDO	Block Development Officer
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDPO	Child Development Project Officer
CMPC	Child Marriage Prohibition Committee
CMPO	Child Marriage Prohibition Officer
CRPF	Child Rights Protection Forums
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DCPC	District Child Protection Committees
DCPO	District Child Protection Officer
DCPU	District Child Protection Unit
DLHS	District Level Household and Facility Survey
DM	District Magistrate (Collector)
DOB	Date of Birth
GO	Government Order
GP	Gram Panchayat
HS	High School
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
ICPO	Integrated Child Protection Officer
ICPS	Integrated Child Protection Scheme
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
JJB	Juvenile Justice Board
MVF	M V Foundation
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
OBC	Other Backward Castes
OC	Officer in Charge of a Police Station
PCMA	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act
RKSK	Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram
RTE	Right to Education
SHG	Self-Help Group
SMC	School Management Committee
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan
VLCPC	Village Child Protection Committees
VO	Voluntary Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Child Marriage in India¹

Child marriage is an age old custom in India, prevalent across social groups, castes, and religions, as well in geographical regions. Although data on child marriage is a challenge as the methodology for collection varies between the District Level Household and Facility Survey (DLHS), the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), and the Census, it is apparent that the incidence of child marriages is unacceptably high.

Child marriage results in inter-generational socio-economic impacts on education, health, and empowerment. It is both a symptom of and a contributor to gender inequality.² With early marriage and additional family responsibilities, children drop out of education; they are also deprived of any scope for skill development by being denied their right of choice and by having family responsibilities beyond their age and capacity imposed upon them. Often, girls become vulnerable to early marriages in the first place because of 'lack of alternatives, constructive opportunities.'³ In particular:

Educational opportunities, which could support daughters' autonomy or employment skills, are frequently denied to girls, or the girls are withdrawn from school because of marriage. In addition, (inadequate) access to schools (especially) in rural areas, makes parents fearful of their daughters' commute and the potential for sexual assault or involvement with men. (International Center for Research on Women, 2011, p. 3)

Child marriage leads to high maternal mortality rate, premature delivery, and high mother/infant mortality and morbidity rates; high susceptibility to gender based violence and sexual abuse and trafficking; increased number of miscarriages; and low birth weight babies. Complications related to pregnancy and child birth are among the leading causes of death worldwide for adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years.⁴ To complicate matters further, 'if and when young women suffer from illness or die as a result of pregnancy and childbirth, this is rarely attributed to young age' (International Center for Research on Women, 2011, p. 3).⁵

1 This section draws upon: Renu Khanna. Impact of Strengthening Existing Systems for Prevention of Child Marriage and Children and Governance: Monitoring and Accountability. May 30, 2015. New Delhi. HAQ: Centre for Child Rights.

2 International Center for Research on Women, Delaying Marriage for Girls in India: A Formative Research to Design Interventions for Changing Norms, UNICEF, 2011. Pg. 1.

3 International Center for Research on Women, Delaying Marriage for Girls in India: A Formative Research to Design Interventions for Changing Norms, UNICEF, 2011. Pg. 3.

4 The State of the World's Children 2011, Adolescence an Age of Opportunity, UNICEF, February 2011

5 International Center for Research on Women, Delaying Marriage for Girls in India: A Formative Research to Design Interventions for Changing Norms, UNICEF, 2011. Pg. 3.

Although girls are more vulnerable and affected much more, early marriage also impacts boys, vesting them with early responsibility of fatherhood and having to take on economic responsibilities at an early age. Thus, early or child marriage is a violation of the human rights of all children/young people: It has severe health implications, and is a violation of the right to education and development; it also violates a child's right to protection — a very important aspect that has not been addressed sufficiently.

Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children. More than 1 in 3 — or some 250 million — were married before 15 years of age.⁶ It is estimated that there are 23 million child brides in India — approximately 40 per cent all child brides globally (UNICEF). The DLHS-3 (2007–2008)⁷ shows that 43 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 in India were married before 18. The states of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh have particularly alarming child marriage rates — between 45 per cent in Chhattisgarh and 68 per cent in Bihar (DLHS-3, 2007–2008). According to the National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3, 2005–2006), 47.4 per cent (i.e., nearly half) of all young women (currently between the ages of 20–24) were married before the age of 18 years. And 16 per cent of men aged 20–49 years were married by age 18 and 28 per cent by the age of 20 years (NFHS-3). NFHS-3 further reports that 58 per cent of all married women aged 15–19 years have already experienced motherhood or a current pregnancy.

Child marriage has continued despite social reform movements and legislations against it. It was as far back as 1929 when India got its first law against child marriage as a result of the social reform movement. This was known as the Sharda Act, which was renamed as the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, in the post-independence period. The Sharda Act prohibited the marriage of girls below 15 years and of boys below 18 years. In 1978, the law was amended and the permissible age for marriage raised to 18 for girls and to 21 for boys.

In 2006, the Government of India passed the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA, 2006), which was enacted by Parliament on 10 January 2007. As the title itself suggests, the amended law makes a clear commitment towards ending the practice of child marriage, moving away from mere restraint of a practice to its complete prohibition. This legislation is armed with enabling provisions to prohibit child marriages, protect and provide relief to victims, and enhance punishment for those who abet, promote, or solemnize such marriages.

However, despite legislative commitments, there has never been a directed initiative or programme across the country that addresses the phenomenon, except for cash transfer programmes such as Ladli, Balika Sammridhhi Yojana, and the like, that are intended to delay child marriage by keeping girls in school. Programmes such as the Kishori Shakti Yojana, SABLA, and the recently announced 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' are geared to raising awareness about the issue and promoting preventive action.

There have been attempts to draft a National Strategy on Prevention of Child Marriage (2013)⁸ and a National Plan of Action on Prevention of Child Marriage (2013) proposing convergent and multi-dimensional strategic interventions.⁹ But these remain at the draft stage, they never got finalised.

Several national level policies formulated since 2000 — for example, National Population Policy (2000), National Youth Policy (2003), and the National Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Strategy 2008 — have advocated delaying (i.e., raising) the permissible ages for marriage and for conceiving the first child. The Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) seeks to enable all adolescents and youth to realise

6 http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html [accessed 28 June 2015]

7 http://rchiips.org/pdf/DLHS-3_KI.pdf

8 <http://wcd.nic.in/childwelfare/Strategychildmarrige.pdf>

9 <http://wcd.nic.in/childwelfare/draftmarrige.pdf>

their full potential by making informed and responsible decisions concerning their health and well-being and by accessing the services and support they need to implement their decisions (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2014).

It is the introduction of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) in 2009–2010 which has for the first time provided an additional mechanism to address child marriage as a child protection issue. This scheme aims at creating a protective environment for children by creating child protection systems in the form of Village, Block, and District Child Protection Committees (DCPC). These committees are supposed to oversee the functioning of the scheme and laws relating to children's protection, including the child marriage protection law.

Despite all these measures, child marriages continue and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, remains unenforced in most places. Child marriages continue to be addressed as a social evil instead of as a crime. It does not help that the Right to Education (RTE) is guaranteed to children only up to the age of 14 years. Girls who finish elementary education are the 'prime targets' for child marriage.

There are several reasons for child marriages — the foremost being to have control over a girl's sexuality. There is a widespread fear of daughters getting into relationships and eloping with their boyfriends, thereby exploring and exercising their sexuality. There is also the fear of violence against the girls and the parents insist that they want to marry off their daughters in order to 'protect' them. The problem is that communities tend to see child marriage as a protection mechanism and not as a violation of child rights.

The other reasons for child marriage are culture and the practice of dowry. Parents fear that they will not be able to find a suitable match once the girl is a little older. Child marriage is often a strategy for economic survival, as families marry off their daughters at an early age to reduce their economic burden.¹⁰ Families who face financial insecurity want to send the girl away, in order to have one less mouth to feed. There is also the issue of dowry: Dowry increases once the girl gets older.

While social attitudes and financial concerns are important reasons for the continuance of child marriage, there are other reasons that contribute to its existence in India. First, despite the formulation of laws, implementation mechanisms at the state and district levels are weak and inadequate. In addition, lack of role clarity among different personnel, and the inadequate capacities of the personnel implementing the various laws and programmes, has led to the non-implementation overall.

Of course, India is not the only country that has to address the deep-rooted cultural practice of child marriage and its consequences.

The practice persists in varying degrees around the globe. The highest prevalence rates, commonly measured by the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 who report being married before age 18, are found in South Asia and West and Central Africa, where an estimated two out of every five girls are married as children. However, in terms of absolute numbers, India surpasses other countries by a wide margin.¹¹

Girls who marry before they turn 18 are less likely to remain in school and more likely to experience domestic violence. Young teenage girls are more likely to die due to complications in pregnancy and childbirth than women in their 20s; their infants are more likely to be stillborn or die in the first month of life. While data

¹⁰ http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html

¹¹ http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/child-marriage/p32096#!/?cid=otr_marketing_use-child_marriage_Infoguide#!%2F [accessed 28 June 2015].

from 47 countries show that, overall, the median age at first marriage is gradually increasing; this improvement has been limited primarily to girls of families with higher incomes.¹²

UNICEF data released in 2014 shows that although the prevalence of child marriage has decreased slightly over the past three decades, rates of progress need to be scaled up dramatically, given the population growth in the countries where this practice is most common.

In recent years there is a greater global recognition of the need to address this issue. In India, too, there are several initiatives being implemented by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) across the country and by UNICEF.

About the Project

In 2009, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi was asked by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India to draft a protocol for the implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. The Handbook on Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, available both in Hindi and English, lays down the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and the standards of care and protection that need to be followed at every stage of implementation of the law. However, HAQ felt that merely drafting a protocol and preparing a handbook was not enough. The various gaps identified in the implementation of the law had to be addressed.

Consequently, in 2012, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights began implementing a project titled 'Strengthening Existing Systems for Prevention of Child Marriage' in two states in India, Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana) and West Bengal, in partnership with local organizations MV Foundation (in Telangana) and Jabala (in West Bengal). The overall objectives of the project are: (i) to develop and demonstrate a model for addressing child marriage through the strengthening of and collaboration between existing legal and governance mechanisms; (ii) to strengthen the existing state mechanisms and institutions through training, monitoring of their functions, and holding them accountable; (iii) to establish networks with organisations engaged in similar issues, strengthen initiatives, and work towards developing a sustained mechanism to address child marriage; and (iv) advocacy for policy-level changes with regard to flaws in the existing law on child marriage and towards a strengthened implementation mechanism.

The approach of the project was directed towards changing the attitudes of all stakeholders, to get them to recognize and address child rights violations in general and child marriage in particular. The effort has been to create an inbuilt mechanism to ensure community ownership of the programme on a sustained basis. The idea was to identify and strengthen the existing systems, not set up parallel institutions or structures to the existing public institutions. It is more crucial to instead try to build the capacities of the functionaries within existing institutions, and to develop further the institution-building processes that will enable the local bodies to go beyond being brokers and contractors to becoming legitimate public representatives working towards the protection of human rights of one and all in their constituencies.

The project set out to strengthen systems in the context of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) and aimed to bring the children whose marriages had been intervened with under the protection mechanisms of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). However, since the ICPS was yet to be implemented in the states when the project began in 2012, the activities were initiated by the project partners themselves in the two states. These were subsequently linked to the ICPS mechanisms when the scheme began to be implemented.

¹² http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html [accessed 28 June 2015].

A range of activities were undertaken, such as forming or activating Adolescent Girls' Groups (AGGs), interacting with male youth groups, and sensitising the other stakeholders, like police, government officials, grass roots functionaries, political leaders, caste leaders, and religious leaders, to the issues at stake. The intention was to try to make government accountable for preventing child marriage and, correspondingly, to try to make the communities responsive to any information received regarding potential child marriages. In order to mobilize communities, a lot of IEC, (Information, Education and Communication) materials were developed and circulated during rallies, street plays, meetings, and so forth.

Project Areas

The project was implemented in three Gram Panchayats (GPs) in each of two blocks within two districts, respectively in West Bengal and in Telangana (at the time the project began, the Telangana districts were part of Andhra Pradesh).

Table 1.1 shows the Districts, Mandals/Blocks, and Panchayats based in HAQ project areas

Table 1.1 Areas of Intervention		
TELANGANA		
District	Mandal	Panchayats
Mahabubnagar	Achampet	Bommanapally, Inole, Rangapur
	Amrabad	Chitlamkunta, Kummaronipally, Maredugu
Warangal	Rayaparthi	Konduru, Ookal, Mylaram
	Thorrur	Cherlapalem Chityala, Haripirala
WEST BENGAL		
District	Block	Panchayats
Murshidabad	Hariharpara	Choa, Rukunpur, Khidirpur
	Beldanga	Debkundu, Mirzapur – 1, Bagunbari
Birbhum	Mohammad Bazaar	Bhutura, Angarguria, Mohammad Bazaar
	Rampurhat II	Bishnupur, Margram I, Margram II

Although the direct interventions related to prevention of child marriages were made within the project's designated areas, the impact of these activities were also spread over various neighbouring non-project areas, depending on wherever the requests for intervention came from.

Non-Project Areas

While various individuals and groups in the community from the project district were becoming aware of child marriage related concerns because of the meetings organized with them and the IEC material circulated, there was spill-over effect visible in non-project areas, too. The IEC material — that focused on positive messaging about girls' right to childhood, and gave information about negative effects on their health due to child marriage, and about the law — was widely circulated in the non-project villages of the district. Besides, the local media reported action taken to stop child marriages by members of the community, officials, and girls themselves. As a result, despite the fact that there was no direct intervention in these villages as part of the project, such reports and information received through the media or word of mouth, motivated many of the villagers to take the initiative to report proposed child marriages and request for action. The availability of the concerned officials' contact details in the IEC materials facilitated this reporting.

A Non-project area could be an adjoining village or habitat of the project GPs. It could be a village within a project district or block. It could be an adjoining district as well. What is significant that instead of directly intervening to stop the child marriage in non-project areas, the project teams facilitated the action by activating the existing government system. In a few areas, the teams had gone, along with government officials, to counsel the families.

About the Study

The underlying assumption behind the prohibition of child marriage is that if child marriages are prevented, the age of marriage can be raised, and girls can be retained in school longer and be protected. This would lead to empowerment of girls, and enable them to make life choices, thereby improving the status of girls and women in society as a whole.

As a result of the project's activities, steps were taken by the government functionaries, and by community members and leaders, to intervene to stop or postpone child marriages, with support from the partner NGOs.

Over the last three years, there have been interventions made to address reports received regarding a proposed child marriage. However, it was not always possible to follow-up on each case and assess the short- and long-term impact on individual girls. This was because this aspect was not part of the objective of the project, which was focussed on strengthening systems and mobilising and capacitating communities. Hence, although very important, the resources to carry out this manner of follow-up were limited.

In all, there were 261 interventions for preventing child marriages from taking place in the two states. While these are important steps in bringing about social change, the questions that remained with us were: How has our intervention affected the life of the individual child? And, following from this: What was needed to be done differently?

Ninety-six (96) cases of child marriage prevention were in West Bengal, by Jabala, while 165 interventions were made in Telangana, by M V Foundation. Of the total 261 cases of child marriage interventions, 93 in West Bengal and 155 in Telangana were cases of girls below the legal age of 18 years; and in 13 cases it was the marriages of boys below the legal age of 21 years that were stopped — as, according to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA), that is the legal age of marriage for males. However, in all the cases of under-age marriage of males which were intervened in, the prospective brides were below 18 years.

Because of the differential extent of child marriages between boys and girls, this research focusses on understanding the lives of girls post intervention to prevent marriage. The male child marriages are not included in this research. Hence the choice of the sample for this research was from 248 interventions that took place to stop marriages of girls.

Table 1.2 | Interventions in Cases of Child Marriage of Girls

S. No.	Type of Outcome	No. of Cases of Child Marriage	
		West Bengal	Telangana
1.	Postponed to over 18 years	67	93
2.	Stopped and girls still not married	25	58
3.	Others	01	04
	Total	93	155
Grand total in the two states		496	

Over the last three years there was a pattern observed during implementation of the project. The upper-caste and socio-economically strong families were not marrying off their children early — not even the priests, whether Hindu or Muslim. (Although there were some Christians in the community, there were no instances of child marriages reported among them.) It was the girls from Dalit, Tribal, or Other Backward Castes (OBC), whose families were socio-economically vulnerable, who were predominantly confronting under-age marriages.

The outcome of interventions was either stopping of the marriage or postponement of marriage, which then took place just around completion of 18 years. Therefore, we felt that intervention alone is not enough. It did not necessarily result in empowerment of girls in terms of their being able to choose their own life-partner, nor always enable them to become financially independent. Thus, there was a need to investigate what happens after the intervention.

The objective of this exploratory research was mainly to understand the situation of the girl's life after intervention. For a detailed methodology, see Annexure.

Of the 248 cases of interventions, 38 cases (15 per cent sample) were followed up and investigated, showing the following results (Table 1.3):

Table 1.3 Status of the Girls Post Intervention to Prevent Marriage					
Status of Girls Whose Marriages was Stopped			Status of Girls who were Married Despite Intervention		
Girls continuing studies (12–17 years)	Girls dropped out after intervention (14 and 15 years age group)	Girls sitting at home (14–17 years)	Girls married but continuing education in parents home (13–17 years)	Married and deserted (13–15 years)	Married and live with husband (14–17 years)
20	2	6	3	3	4
18 continued schooling on their own. 2 girls had dropped out after intervention to stop marriage. But parents were convinced to send them back to school.	One girl was not interested in school. In the second case parents did not allow her to go back to school despite all efforts. Her mobility has been restricted and she is not allowed to meet her friends	These girls were out of school and have continued to be so.	They have returned to parents to study and are still in their marriage.	Two of these three were in school but have discontinued after marriage Two have children of whom one has health problems	One has continued her studies. Others have discontinued. One at age 14 delivered a still birth baby

All the girls are in the age group of 12–17 years — the age group that is the most vulnerable to being married off. Parents start searching for a bridegroom soon after girls turn 12 or as soon as they reach puberty.

Of the 38 cases, in 28 the marriages could be prevented while in the remaining 10 the effort proved unsuccessful. What is heartening is that except in the case of 8 girls, in all the others (52 per cent) the girls have been able to continue with their education, including 2 who had dropped out before their weddings had been fixed, but who re-enrolled in their schools once the intervention to stop the marriage had occurred.

That underage marriage has long-term consequences on the lives of girls is proven by the facts that 3 of the 10 girls who were married are now deserted, that 3 of the 10 girls have already experienced pregnancy, and that 2 are mothers, including two among the three who were deserted. Of these, one had a still-born baby and the other continued to have health complications after giving birth.

What was also evident from this follow-up study was that the girls whose marriages had been prevented need some degree of emotional, moral, and financial support to be able to continue with their studies and their lives in a normal way. It is important that their families do not treat them as a burden and that their own community and the larger society does not stigmatise them. To ensure this, the families and wider communities need to be sensitised and made part of the change-making process.

CHAPTER 2

The Nature of Interventions

The project's activities over the last three years involved a concerted effort to make the community and the government functionaries more aware of (i) the illegality of child marriage; (ii) its consequences; and (iii) the actions they could take to prevent it from taking place. The normative nature of child marriage is so deep-rooted that it requires being addressed at multiple levels and ways. The use of law is seldom enough by itself. The actions and interventions have to be context and situation specific.

As a result of the interventions made by the project, the various groups at stakeholders were taken on board, and over a period of time they became vigilant regarding any potential child marriage. This resulted in the identification and increased reporting of child marriages, which, in turn, also meant more interventions for prevention — with varying degrees of success.

The interventions by the government functionaries or the community members differed according to the stage of preparation of the wedding in question and the attitude of the parents. In fact what was observed is that the government functionaries used the law as a threat to stop a marriage from taking place, and sought promises from the parents and guardians on affidavits in most cases where the functionaries were successful, rather than taking penal action.

In some cases, one visit for 'counselling'¹³ the family where there was a possibility of a child marriage, was sufficient to stop it. It resulted in stopping the process of match-making or further preparation for marriage. In other instances parents refused to stop the wedding preparations despite the preliminary visit and discussion. In such instances, a group of government officials and other representatives, sometimes accompanied by some local leaders, would visit the family for further 'counselling' or use the law to get the parents to make an undertaking to postpone or stop the wedding.

Although initially the representatives from the partner NGOs played a leading role, they gradually stopped taking the lead. However, they could still be part of the group visiting the family, upon request from the government functionaries. In fact, they would often not be part of the group, letting the government functionaries do the needful.

13 Counselling is how the NGO representatives describe their interaction with the families. It is basically a visit to a family by the representatives of an NGO and/or by government functionaries to motivate the family to cancel the wedding or at least postpone it until the female child completes 18 years of age and the male child completes 21 years of age. This includes discussing the legal implications, as well as the ill effects on health due to child marriage.

The senior block and district level officers, though occasionally visiting the families' homes, were not involved directly in counselling the family during home visits. Instead they directed the line department/grass-roots functionaries. The officers would, however, monitor and supervise the interventions over the phone.

Here is a Revenue Officer's account of the impact of this process:

Earlier we had almost no information on child marriage cases, now as the project activities are happening such information is reaching us. We are taking action against it. If intense campaign will continue for next 3 to 5 years, there will be very positive effect against child marriage. It is only due to project that the identification of child marriage has become a matter of concern. – Revenue Officer, Telangana, May 2013.

Stages of Intervention

The interventions took place at different stages of preparation of the wedding or marriage. Sometime, the nature of the intervention differed according to this, as did the final result. For purposes of understanding the stages at which the marriages were prevented, they have been divided into the following levels:

- **Level 1:** *Finding a match/discussions of marriage.* This is the stage where the possibility of match-making is initiated. It could be just a discussion within the family or the beginning of the search for a suitable match, initiated by either the family on its own or through some middle-man.
- **Level 2:** *Engagement or marriage plan 'fixed'.* By this stage the families have met and the discussion on dowry has taken place. Some part of dowry as 'down payment' in cash may have also been made to the groom's family at this stage. Often, the location and date of marriage would have been finalized, based on choice of auspicious dates.
- **Level 3:** *All preparations for the wedding completed.* This is the stage when the date of marriage is fixed. Invitation cards would have been printed and distributed as well. The venue for the marriage is known to all guests by this time.

Sources of Information

The information on potential child marriages was received by the project team from different sources: directly from the girl-bride herself; from members of the Adolescent Girls' Group (AGG); from various government functionaries; from CMPC/VLCPC members, and from many others.

As girls who are reached out in nine schools by AGG the message of intervention on child marriage reaches in wider area beyond 3 GPs. and. Stopping marriage does not bring any reward and also could result in loss of vote bank. Thus while there is wider reach there is also a vested interest. Not many come forward to give us information on potential child marriage. – Member of project team, Jabala, West Bengal

I regret that there is huge lack of awareness among teachers and other government functionaries who could give us information on potential child marriages, he had shared his experience. Officer in Charge (OC) of Police Station, Hariharpara, Murshidabad, West Bengal

This project model demonstrates the need for collaboration in the process of gathering sufficient and appropriate information about impending child marriages, which can then facilitate timely interventions as well as create a demand from within the community for action by the government.

For example, in Telangana, the presence of NGO (MVF's) volunteers and of child rights protection forums (CRPF) is equally critical for the creation of an environment where people feel confident to report. Twelve

cases of potential child marriage were informed by the MVF volunteers and nine by members of the CRPF. This kind of shared work leads to greater community awareness and action, and forces the government functionaries at the block/mandal or district levels to also intervene and act.

While a wide range of functionaries or individuals have been sources of information, the most crucial sources are perhaps the ones who have most at stake: the girls themselves and the village-level functionaries like the *Anganwadi* workers.

However, there were instances where there was more than one person reporting on a single case of child marriage (e.g., the information may have been received from both a teacher as well as from a member of the Adolescent Girls Group [AGG]). Hence, the number of marriages intervened in and the number of informers do not match — as Table 2.1 shows. For instance, the actual number of interventions in Telangana was 155; whereas there are 164 informers listed in Table 2.1 and in Figures 1.1 and 1.2.

Information Provider	Telangana	West Bengal
AWW	37	1
AGG	36	33
Male Youth	9	
Self (Girl herself)	9	4
CMPC/VLCPC	9	15
Teacher/Head Master	7	1
Village/Local volunteers	20	
SHG Member	6	1
Community	6	18
ANM	4	
Press reporter	3	1
Revenue	2	
School Management Committee	2	
Family member	2	
Police	2	
Girl's Friend	2	
CWC	2	
ASHA worker	1	1
SSA (Cluster Resource Person)	1	
Local NGO worker other than partner NGO	1	
NREGS (Field Assistant)	1	
Priest	1	
Bus conductor	1	
Political leader		1
Gram Panchayat Member		17
Total	164 (in 155 interventions)	93

Figure 1.1 | Information on Child Marriages, West Bengal

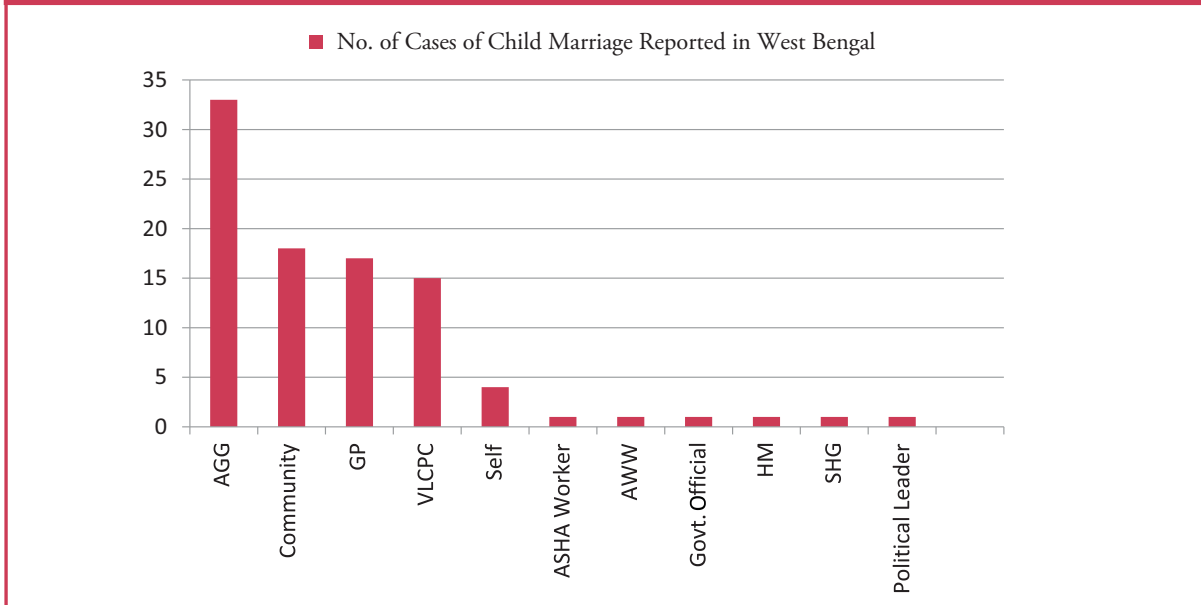
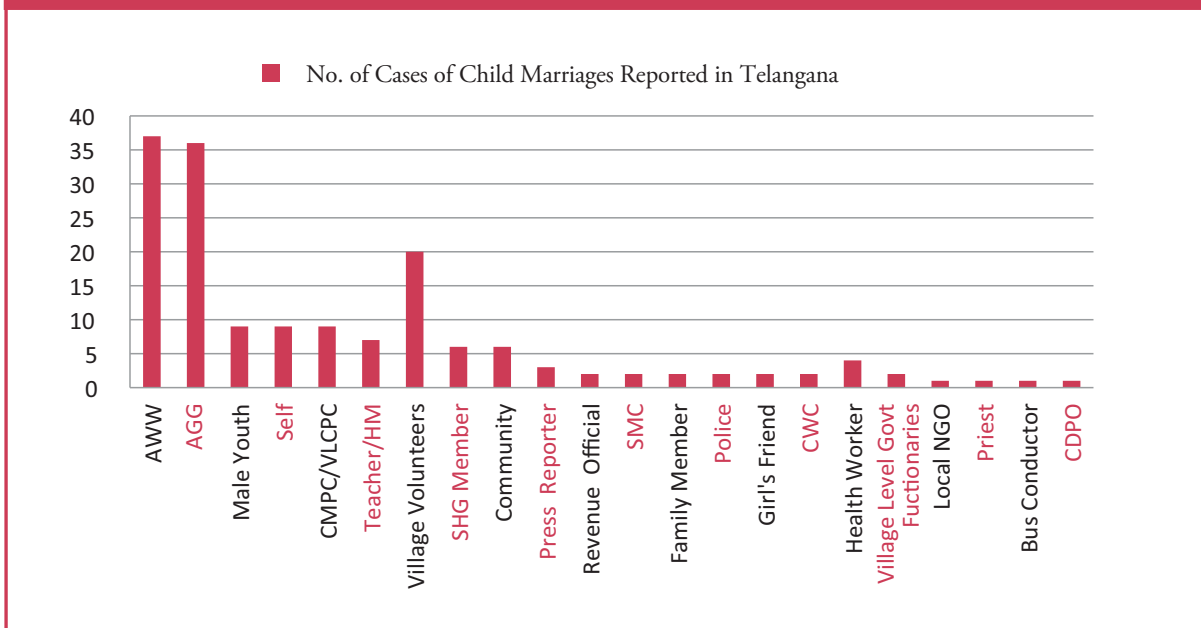


Fig. 1.2 | Information on Child Marriages, Telangana



In some instances, information reached the project team members simultaneously from more than one person, either via a phone call or in person (sometimes by both means). The information was then passed over to the concerned government officials as well as grassroots functionaries for their response.

Grassroots government functionaries and even the police, who have also been the source of information, have been key to the intervention to stop the marriage.

Information from the girls had the following pattern: Either the members of the AGG sought help to stop a marriage of one of their friends or a case they heard about; or, in a limited number of cases, the girl herself sought intervention (14 did so, in the two states combined). The information often came from friends who are member of the AGG. At times, an AGG leader chose not to remain anonymous as they lived in the

same village as the potential child bride. At other times, the girls went in a group to speak to the family members to try to convince them against the marriage.

ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA (VERBATIM)

03.06.2015

Two Minor Girls Under Threat For Preventing Their Marriage

Marina (15) and Golapi (14) the two sisters from Benadaha village, Beldanga-I, Murshidabad who revolted against their mother Mumtaz Bibi for arranging their marriages are facing threats from the Groom's families and also from neighbours and relatives who are blaming them for dragging their mother to the police station. Mother Mumtaz Bibi locked up the two girls on the day of the marriage (26.05.2015) as the girls clearly stated they want to study and are not willing for marriage as they have witnessed one of their friends died at the age of 13 while giving birth of a child. The girls broke open the door and reached police station and were able to stop their marriages. Since then they are constantly being threatened and are unable to go out of their homes. Marina who passed Secondary exam this year is willing to study further and Golapi is in Class IX. The Local Police station, Panchayat, Panchayat Samity, Jabala are all extending support. The Block Social Welfare Officer has given assurances to take all responsibilities of their education.

In one case, a girl having failed to convince her parents to not marry her off sought help from the concerned officials and the project team, saying, 'If you are not going to stop my marriage, I will commit suicide.' This is an example of how desperate the girls sometimes are about not being married off. It is critical to be able to respond to such pleas for support in a timely manner.

In another case, the girl sought help from a member of the youth group, who passed on the information to the NGO (Jabala), who in turn mobilised the block officials and the police. The marriage was stopped. To put pressure on the girl, the father of the groom offered to have the girl's date of birth changed on her date of birth (DOB) certificate if she was ready to marry. However, the girl herself was adamant. When neighbours asked about her reason for not marrying, she replied that she does not want to get married and if they wish to marry their daughters off, they should go ahead. Such use of agency is not very common. The girl's mother is still very angry and blames her.

Two of the girls from West Bengal who have successfully withstood attempts to marry them off by their families have been given Bravery Awards and one of them has been interviewed by TV Channels.

Age proof is critical evidence to any intervention. We had two cases in which there was a dispute over age after the complaint was received. In one of these cases, the girl had two DOBs, one based on primary school records, the other based on her X class (grade) examination. The latter showed the girl to be above 18 years of age, officially, hence was accepted. In the second case, even though the girl involved looked too young from all physical appearances, her DOB certificate declared that she was over 18 years of age!

A community leader told that he, being a Muslim, had acted from behind the scenes and passed on information regarding a potential child marriage of a Hindu girl, despite fear of being 'targetted' for stopping child marriage.

The fear of being 'targetted' by the community for having stopped child marriage is immense and real, hence we find a community member who is affiliated with a political party and is also Chair Person of a School Management Committee, had faced a lot of verbal abuse when he was suspected of being the person who had passed on information. This man, however, insisted that the parents of the girl should ask

the team who had intervened in the marriage. In yet another case the grassroots level functionary who had passed on information was threatened by the Yadava community. On receiving a threat call he informed a project team member. The project team member discussed the matter with the leader of the community and clarified that the informer was performing his duty. The project team also pointed out that it was not proving practical to approach the community leader directly, as there was experience of secret child marriages from their community. After intervention, some child marriages have happened without letting anyone know.

Another grassroots worker/AWW told, 'Initially I was keen to pass on information of child marriage, but later on I also felt that only I will have to intervene. I get verbally abused by the family. I also thought not to pass on information. But due to support from the project team, I still continue the work against child marriage.'

A father is so angry against the Sarpanch/Pradha of his GP, that he does not want to talk with him. He feels that only the head of the panchayat would have passed on information about his daughter's marriage. He does not perceive the NGO as responsible for the intervention. The only brother who had passed on information about his sister marriage was not ready to be interviewed. The family, to date, does not know who had passed on the information.

A girl informed her Head Mistress about the planned wedding of a 12-year old girl, a girl from her neighbourhood. The Head Mistress took this matter up with the bride's father when he went to the school to fill up a scholarship form for his daughter. Following this a team consisting of the Jabala team and some 50–60 girls from the school, went to meet with the family. They spoke to the mother. Following this visit the father was asked to report at the police station and give an undertaking that he would not proceed with his 12-year old daughter's marriage.

There are instances in which a complaint was made as a vindictive action or as 'revenge' against the girl or her family. For example, when a relative was keen to have a particular girl married with their son, and so was the boy himself. When the girl's family refused, it resulted in violence against the grandfather of the girl, and against the girl herself, from the young man and his family. The case was eventually resolved, with the boy's family issued a fine of Rs. 20,000. In further retaliation, the young man informed CHILDLINE, leading to an intervention — only to find that it was a false call. This was in Telangana. Similar cases of false informing on account of personal or familial rivalry, discord, vendetta, and the like, were reported by the team in West Bengal in at least three instances.

While we have seen active roles played by a number of stakeholders to prevent or stop child marriages, it is amazing to see the lack of active support and participation from members of mahila mandals (women's committees) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the stopping of child marriages. This is particularly a matter of concern as these groups were among the first to be taken on board as part of community mobilization. In fact many of them initiated a pledge/oath-taking ceremony, wherein the members would pledge that they would not only not marry off their own under-age daughters, but also stop others from doing so. However, when it came to practice, it was just the opposite. For example, a leader in charge of disability in the Mahila Samkhya in one of the project villages in Telangana wanted her daughter to be married at 14 years of age, despite her own bad experience of having been married at that age. And this is not a stand-alone case in Telangana. Respondents in the research said that, 'In almost 90 per cent of child marriages that were performed in Warangal district in the two project blocks, the mother is a member of some SHG or women's group'.

In West Bengal, when an effort was made to 'counsel' the family of a 15-year old girl by the project team, it was found that while it was possible to convince the father, the mother, who is a member of a SHG, was

the one not ready to stop or even postpone the marriage of her daughter. Hence, despite the team having also talked to the extended family, the brothers, and the girl herself, and all of them seemingly agreeable to stop the marriage. A few days later, the wedding took place in the village where the elder sister is married. After a year the girl was pregnant.

In another incidence, a daughter of a woman leader had to confront her own mother who had gone to stop a few child marriages in her capacity as a president of Voluntary Organization (VO), and yet was ready to marry off her own child. The girl said to her mother, 'You went to stop other child marriages; then why do you want me to marry?' The marriage was stopped through a joint intervention of several persons, but during the interview with the research team, the girl confided that her mother has continued trying to marry her off even after the intervention. 'Proposals keep coming till date,' she said.

A chairperson of the School Management Committee, who had intervened in stopping child marriages, lamented about the situation:

If the parents are educated, they make sure that their children also study more; otherwise the parents want to marry off their children early in the manner in which they themselves have married. We have health and other problems as result of under-age marriages. I try to explain to the parents about the impact of early pregnancy and related various problems that the girls have to face, such as that of adjusting with her partner, since often both are immature. I also emphasise and try to impress upon them that this situation can be avoided. If a girl marries at younger age, her entire life gets affected. Therefore parents must think about their daughters.

He added,

It feels good if I am able to postpone the marriage of a girl. In my experience, if the intervention is successful, the girls marriages could be postponed till they are at least 20 years old, and if they are still studying further, their marriage could be delayed some more.

The responsibility of informing about potential child marriages and even initiating action to stop them vests largely with the village-level officials and community leaders, making them direct targets of anger from the family and sometimes even the community. The marriages are really crucial for the families, as it is amply clear through this research. It is equally clear that the project teams and others had taken a great risk in stopping these marriages. Although, efforts were made to hide the identity of the persons responsible for reporting child marriage, given how small and tightly knit the communities are, this was not always possible. As a result, it was found in the course of the interviews that irrespective of the outcome of the intervention to stop the child marriage, there is often anger expressed by the girls' families against this person. One of the most obvious targets is the AWW or the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM). They themselves are so powerless that this additional role makes them even more vulnerable. Protection of key informants thus becomes a very important area to address in any child marriage prevention initiative.

Responses to Interventions to Stop Child Marriages

Although the predictable outcome of interventions made over this 3-year period was that over time fewer number of child marriages occurred within project area, it must be noted that, like all social evils when targeted, it tends to go underground or become invisible. This does not mean it has been eradicated. Also, due to increased vigilance, there were cases of under-age marriages taking place in secret, mostly away from the project area. At least 10 such marriages have occurred in Telangana and similarly in West Bengal.

There have been cases in which the intervention have failed. Some marriages have occurred within a week and some on the same night. It was observed that as soon as the first contact was established with the family to convince them to cancel the preparations, within a few days the parents of both the groom and the bride would stealthily go away from their residences (often in the middle of the night) and perform the wedding. In one case, the father of a bride performed the wedding in his own house under the pretext of some other ritual.

In many cases marriages have taken place soon after the girl's reaching 18 years of age. In such cases, although the marriage has been delayed to a legal age and the intervention therefore is technically a 'success', the questions concerning social attitudes, especially society's perception regarding the centrality of marriage for girls as the 'best future' and the need to control her sexuality, remain; as do questions regarding the girls capacity to make choices.

“I mobilized the family to postpone the child marriage of a girl by saying let complete her 12th grade study first, and then perform marriage.”

- A religious leader.

The specific age of the child as well as the economic status of the family concerned, are of course further factors affecting the nature of interventions.

The level of preparation for marriage has a lot of bearing on the nature of intervention as well as the outcome. For example, if the girl is over 15 years of age and the wedding preparations are already at an advanced stage — gifts purchased, grocery for meals for guests already bought, and so forth — both government functionaries as well as community members tend to be more sympathetic to the family and are hesitant to intervene. But, if a girl is younger — say, below 14 years of age — then most of the persons involved in the intervention tend to feel it is right to build pressure to stop the marriage, irrespective of the level of preparation for the wedding.

In another case, a marriage was to be performed in the morning. The Chairperson of the School Management Committee (SMC), on noticing the wedding preparations being made in a house in the village, decided to report it. As he did not want to be identified as the complainant, the Chairperson had conveyed that information to a project team member, as well as to the Head Master (HM) of the School and the Anganwadi Worker (AWW). All of them had visited the family for 'counselling'. During the day many other officials went to the family, including the Block Revenue Officer (BRO). They checked the girl's date of birth certificate (DOB) and found she was 17 years old. Under pressure from everyone, the father informed the visitors that he would cancel the wedding.

Although, the Chairperson of the SMC had not been visible in all the efforts made to stop the marriage, the family suspected that he was the one who passed on the information. The family of the girl went to his home and cursed and verbally abused him. He tried to reason with them and asked them to follow the law. He did his best to be diplomatic in order to avoid further conflict. However, the family decided not to wait until the morning of the scheduled date and performed the wedding at 2:00 am the same night. The police arrived the next morning. But since the marriage had already taken place, nothing more could be done.

In yet another case, the child marriage that happened was identified after the fact, only by means of 'signs of marriage' visible upon the girl's body (e.g., the toe-ring and the 'mangal-sutra' or the specific kind of necklace that married women wear in south India, including in Telangana).

These kinds of experiences during the course of attempts to prevent a child marriage/wedding from taking

place, show that the stopping of marriage at Level 3 is the hardest. This is because by this stage much of the wedding preparations are done and much expenditure already been made. Hence, the families have a lot more to lose than just a 'loss of face' and the breaking of a norm.

At the same time, in a few cases the poverty of the family concerned becomes a more important factor for the community, and they tend to pressurise the government official to allow the marriage. In such situations, they are not ready to consider the age of the girl whose marriage is being intervened with.

In one particular case, a girl had suffered multiple vulnerabilities since her childhood. Her mother had been deserted by her father. The family consisting of the mother and two daughters were somehow pulling through life in a very indigent state. After intervention was made to stop her marriage, the girl was married away secretly. She stayed with her husband in a different state far away. She suffered a great deal of domestic violence in this marriage. Eventually she was sent by train with some relative back to her mother's home. Here they are very badly off and don't have enough food. The girl now has to work as a domestic help. Her mother is ill and no doubt suffering from worry all the time. Meanwhile, they are still waiting for the girl's husband to get in touch and take her back. The girl herself does not want to return to the husband, she would rather work to provide income and food for her mother, her sister, and herself. Although the husband is a son of her maternal uncle, neither the uncle's family nor any other relative is providing them any support.

CHAPTER 3

Child Marriage Intervention: Impact on Girls

It is now globally recognised that child marriages have long-lasting effects on girls' education, health, and physical and emotional well-being.¹⁴ These are well documented. For example, according to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO, Sixty Fifth World Health Assembly, 16 March 2012) in 2008, there were 16 million births to mothers aged 15–19 years, representing 11 per cent of all births worldwide. About 95 per cent of these births occurred in low- and middle-income countries, and complications of early pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death.¹⁵ When a young girl is married and gives birth, the vicious cycle of poverty, poor health, curtailed education, violence, instability, disregard for rule-of-law, and legal and other discrimination often continues into the next generation, especially for any daughters she may have.¹⁶ Very recently, the United Nations Human Rights Council issued a resolution which clearly summarizes the ill-effects in stating that child marriage prevents girls from 'living their lives free of all forms of violence and that it has adverse consequences on the enjoyment of human rights, such as the right to education, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health.'¹⁷

These global findings find resonance in the present study, too. Where the marriages could be successfully stopped and the girls could continue with their schooling, they are better off in their health and also in their capacity to make further life choices. Where the marriages could not be stopped, there was evidence of further violence, early pregnancy and child birth, and long-term health consequences.

Sample Selection for the Study – A Quick Recap

The total number of interventions to stop child marriages in the two states were 261. Of these, 13 were cases where the bridegrooms were below 21, the legal age of marriage for boys in the PCMA, 2006. Their

14 Equality Now. Protecting the Girl Child. Using the Law to end Child, Early and Forced marriage. January 2014. Available at: http://www.equalitynow.org/sites/default/files/Protecting_the_Girl_Child.pdf

15 World Health Organization, Report on Early Marriage, Adolescent and Young Pregnancies, 16 March 2012, A65/13

16 Council on Foreign Relations Report, Ending Child Marriage, 1 May 2013. Available at: <http://www.cfr.org/children/ending-child-marriage/p30734>

17 Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/24/23, "Strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage: challenges, achievements, best practices and implementation gaps." Available at: http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/24/23

prospective brides were all below 18 years, some of whom were from the project area, while others were not. The remaining 248 cases were of girls below 18 years of age. Unfortunately, in most cases the bridegroom's age was not known as they are not from the project area. The 38 cases chosen for follow-up and interview (15 per cent of all intervention in the case of girls) were based on a purposive sampling method. (See Annexure for detailed methodology.)

Efforts were made to ensure that the chosen cases covered all categories of girls: those from project areas as well as non-project areas; those whose marriages were stopped and continues to be so; those whose marriages were postponed to after 18 years; and those whose marriages could not be stopped. All these interventions took place between 2012 and 2014.

Impact of Interventions on Girls

This research is to assess the long-term impact of interventions to stop marriages on the girls themselves. The data and the interviews have shown mixed results, although the overwhelming finding is that if the marriage is stopped, and girls can continue with their education, and they can be supported to do so, this can be a life changing experience for them.

The results of the follow-up in these 38 cases are shown in Table 3.1:

Girls continuing studies (12–17 years age group)	Girls dropped out after intervention (14 and 15 years)	Girls sitting at home (14–17 years age group)	Total	Girls married but continuing education in their parents' home (13–17 years age group)	Married and deserted (13–15 years age group)	Married and live with husband (14–17 years age group)	Total	Grand total
20 52.7%*	2 5.2%*	6 15.8%*	28 73.7%*	3 7.9%*	3 7.9%*	4 10.5%*	10 26.3%*	38
64.2%**	7.1%**	21.4%**		30%**	30%**	40%**		

* Percentage of total sample.
 ** Percentage of the total in that category.

What is clear from the above table is that if enough effort is made to help the girls to continue at school and ensure that the school is a safe place for them, child marriages can be delayed. The critical, often missing piece is the ongoing support to the girls after their marriages were prevented so that they can continue to live a life of 'choice' and not be stigmatised or pushed into marriage again.

IMPACT ON GIRL WHO STOPPED HER OWN MARRIAGE

It is not always easy on the girls. For example, one girl had taken the brave step of informing a local youth and sought his assistance to stop her marriage. Her mother, a widow, has never stopped abusing those who came to stop her daughter's marriage. She had no money to continue her daughter's education. She had already spent Rs. 1000 on clothes and lunch for 5 guests upon fixing the marriage.

She confessed, 'For many days after cancellation of her marriage, I kept on beating her for one reason or other. I was too angry that she had informed a youth to stop her marriage.' Even at the time of interview she was feeling helpless on account of cancellation of her daughter's marriage.

There are some other general observations as well. Often, while the girls themselves were happy that their wedding had been stopped or postponed, they continued to face the brunt of their family's anger at having lost money and pride. There were often extreme reactions from the family members, usually from one of the parents, that the girls had to deal with. In one case an uncle told the girl over the phone, 'You have brought us dishonour, take poison, and die.' At that point the father, who had gone missing for the previous 3 days, was actually present when the uncle made this remark. In another case, the father was feeling insulted due to intervention. He threatened to commit suicide but thereafter the daughter too threatened suicide if she was forced into marriage. The mother stepped in and pacified both parties. She told her husband, 'She is our child and we must fulfil her wish for education.' She had assured her daughter that the marriage would not take place. At the same time the mother was verbally very aggressive towards all the officers who had visited them for counselling. She finally quietened down when the girl told her, 'I have informed them to stop marriage.'

There was a case in which the boyfriend used the law to call a team member to intervene to stop the wedding of his girlfriend who was being married off to someone else. The marriage was stopped, as the girl was indeed under-age, but sadly at the cost of freedom for the girl. She was not allowed to take her examination as an external candidate nor has she been allowed to rejoin the hostel in which she lived. Further, a criminal case has been registered against the boyfriend. Although the girl is relieved at not having to be married forcefully, the price she and her boyfriend have had to pay is very heavy.

In yet another case intervened in by the members of the Panchayat Gender Committee, they were informed by the neighbours that the girl was beaten for three days. She was told that she had the choice to die (commit suicide) or marry the old man chosen to be her husband. When the Panchayat committee members reached the girl's home, they found her shivering and so afraid that she was not able to open her mouth to speak. The mother later said that she regretted doing this but she was so angry with her daughter for having complained and for seeking help to stop her own wedding.

In yet another case, when a team consisting of members of the Gender Committee of the Panchayat along with the AWW and teacher had gone to a family upon receiving a report of a proposed child marriage, the mother threatened, 'I will take poison in front of you and die writing a suicide note mentioning you.' It was only when the members of the Gender Committee threatened legal action that she agreed to postpone the marriage by two years, and wait till the girl turned 18.

In another case, parents could not be convinced to stop the marriage. They threatened to consume poison (commit suicide) if the marriage was stopped. The father even brought out a bottle of poison. The whole community gathered and supported the family. The caterer and the florists had also arrived. Unfortunately the wedding could not be stopped nor postponed.

At the time of this research, this young married girl had been deserted by her husband and had already become a mother. The husband, who is a neighbour, would beat her and was suspicious about her, finally deserting her. The tragedy is that the girl, despite having suffered domestic violence and desertion, was nonetheless ready to return to husband's home. She is also willing to have him stay in her parents' home. Even though the two families are neighbours, no one had come to see the new-born child.

There are five cases in West Bengal in which the girl eloped with her bridegroom after the intervention to stop the marriage took place. The couple returned to the village after getting married somewhere else, away from the village. Given that one of the major reasons cited for the continuation of child marriage is the possibility of elopement and self-choice marriage, it is surprising that at least in one case the family was aware of the plans for 'elopement' and had not objected. It seems the girl and the boy had been talking over the phone saying that they might commit suicide if they were separated and not allowed to marry. So when they both went missing, their respective families were not much worried, nor did they report the matter. In other words, they lent their tacit support to the underage marriage of their daughter. The girl soon got pregnant but had a still birth and was advised not to conceive for the next 2–3 years.

There was only one girl among all the 10 married who said that she was actually happy and healthy. Her marriage had been fixed when she was in Class IX (IXth grade). All efforts to stop the wedding proved unsuccessful. Despite being unwilling to be married, the young girl succumbed to the pressure. This was because her father had attempted to commit suicide the year before due to some land dispute, and she was worried that he might do so again. She is well placed within the marriage and is now studying in the XIth grade as an external candidate. Her husband is a post-graduate and her in-laws are very supportive for her education and in general. Such a situation is not the norm.

Yet another girl who was married off, despite efforts to stop it, said: 'I am happy now, but I have regrets that my wedding had to be conducted secretly and so it could not be performed in a grand way with many relatives and friends.' What is also interesting is that despite claiming to be happily married, she added: 'I now know all about child marriage, and that it is illegal — now I will try to stop others. I will call the BRO¹⁸ and inform him.' Her friends who are AGG leaders said, 'She might be pretending that she is happy but actually she is not. We are of her age and we know how her life has changed. Now she can't move freely.'

Three factors stand out clearly from these examples: One is the need to work with the parents to address their fear of their girls becoming unprotected and falling prey to violence. This has to be addressed both at the level of creating a more protective environment for them, as also showing the parents how unprotected they become as a result of child marriage. The second and equally important is the issue of dowry, which is yet another excuse the community uses. Equal amount of effort needs to be made to work on the implementation of the Dowry Prevention Act, and people made aware of the illegality of it. The police and the authorities cannot keep turning a blind eye on this. Third is that even when the girls had some education and some vocational training, they were not able to earn to support themselves, unless supported to do so. It is critical for them to receive this support so that they can live with dignity.

An attempt has been made to document the lives of the girls after the intervention in some detail based on the findings of the research.

18 This is a Block level official- Block Revenue Official or Mandal Revenue Official as the case may be handle.

Impact On Girls Whose Marriages Were Stopped

1. Child Marriage Stopped and Education Continued:

Of the 28 girls whose marriages were successfully stopped, 18 (64.2 per cent) have managed to continue with their education. This is indeed a very positive outcome. However, as with all social change initiatives, these are not without their share of negative effects, such as anger and resentment. Social norms that are deep-rooted can be addressed partially through the use of law (e.g., legally declaring certain practices a social evil; enacting statutes and ordinances designed to put an end to such practices) — but change of attitudes and culture more broadly involves a much longer battle. Marriage continues to be seen as the most important and essential ‘event’ in a girl’s life both by the society at large, as well as the girl herself.

Hence, it is not surprising that at least three girls were keen to get married and, along with their parents, they were simply waiting to complete 18 years of age so they could be married off.

In fact one girl who was keen to be married when her wedding was postponed by the government had an argument with the officers and the members of the Gram Panchayat, saying, ‘I have been visiting that family and I like them, who are you to stop my marriage?’ She plans to marry and then come back home to continue with her education. It is likely that by the time this report is published, this girl will be married, as may be another girl who has completed 18 years. So, while it has been possible to push back the age of marriage and thus the ages of pregnancy and childbirth — which also ensures completion of school for the girls — it is difficult to say if this intervention leads to a change in the girls’ status or to changes in attitude.

While in some cases the girls and their families took the initiative to continue their schooling, in a few cases the project team had to keep vigil to ensure that the parents did not marry off the girls. This is because even after agreeing to postpone the marriage and let the girl study until she completes 18 years, the family kept requesting the project team to allow the child marriage to be performed. Some others continued with their match-making efforts.

The constant monitoring as well as support received from the team through home visits, and continuous motivation, ensured that the girls continued to be educated, with some moving beyond school and going into college.

Table 3.2 | Child Marriage Stopped and Continuing Education

S. No.	Name of the Girl*	Status During Child Marriage Intervention	Status During Research
1.	Rojina	She was 16 years old, a student of 11th grade.	She is doing first year of graduation (Bachelor of Arts 1st year). She is looking for work. She wants Jabala to give her work as a fieldworker doing counselling. She is also interested in becoming a teacher in a government primary school.
2.	Shabnam	She was 14 years old, a student of 7th grade. Date of Information – 20.3.2014	She is going to school and in the 9th grade. She wants to become a doctor.
3.	Daisy	She was 12 years old, a student of 6th grade. Date of information – 7.8.2014	The girl is going to school and is in 6th grade. She was hiding behind her mother during the visit of the research team.

Table 3.2 | Child Marriage Stopped and Continuing Education

S. No.	Name of the Girl*	Status During Child Marriage Intervention	Status During Research
4.	Pinky	She was 16 years old, a student of 11th grade. She is a registered football player of Jabala for last few years. Date of information – 10.10.2012	Now she is 19 years old. She is studying in second year of undergraduation and is in great distress because of not being able to earn. She is still searching for work even though she has some basic computer and driving skills (both learnt from Jabala), and tailoring.
5.	Romina	She was 16 years old, a student of 9th grade. Date of information – 8.10.2014	She is studying in 9th grade and coping well despite the loss of her lover with whom she wanted to marry. She was ready to commit suicide upon the stopping of their marriage. Soon after cancellation of that marriage her lover got married to another girl.
6.	Runa	She was 14 years old and going to school. Date of information – 16.10.2014	She is studying in 8th grade.
7.	Lalia	She was 13 years old, a student of 6th grade. Date of information – 14.8.2013	She is happily studying in 7th grade and there is no discussion about her marriage anymore.
8.	Najma	She was 16 years old, was in 7th class Date of information – 29.6.2013	Going to school.
9.	Jasmine	She was 14 years old, going to school.	She is studying in 9th grade.
10.	Rinku	She was 17 years old, going to school. Date of information – 6.3.2014	She is in 10th class and going to school but her mother is waiting her to complete 18 years. She wants her to get married.
11.	Jyothi	She was 12 years old, a student of 6th grade.	She was studying in school.
12.	Anjali	She was 15 years old, a student of 9th grade.	She was eager to complete her 10th grade and then marry.
13.	Usha	She was 14 years old, a student of 9th grade.	She was studying in 10th grade.
14.	Nirmala	She was 14, a student of 9th grade.	She is studying in 10th grade. Proposals for her marriage keep coming, while the mother denied any such plan to marry off her daughter on account of debt incurred for another daughter's marriage the previous year.
15.	Suranya	She was 13 years old, a student of 8th grade.	She was going to school, but her father is keen on her marriage. He keeps requesting the project team to let him perform the marriage.
16.	Malika	She was 14 years old, as student of 9th grade.	At the time of research she was 15+ years old and studying in 10th class/grade.
17.	Surabhi	She was 15 years old, a student of 8th grade.	She was still staying with her maternal grandfather and studying in the school. She was looking for guidance to avail scholarship.
18.	Sumaira	She was 15 years old, a student of 6th grade.	She was doing nursing course.

2. Dropouts Re-enrolled in School after Marriage Stopped:

Two girls were school dropouts at the time of their wedding being fixed. It was extremely heartening to find that the intervention to prevent the marriage has actually resulted in them being re-enrolled in school and continuing their education. Table 3.3 gives the status details:

Table 3.3 Dropouts Re-enrolled in School after Marriage Stopped			
S. No.	Name of the Girl*	Status During Child Marriage Intervention	Status During Research
1.	Radha	She was 14 years old. She was studying in 9th grade but she discontinued school due to her mother's illness. Information received on: 13.3.2013.	The girl was studying in the residential school in 9th grade again.
2.	Madhu	She was 15 years, a 10th grade dropout.	She was studying in the 11th class/grade.

* Names are changed to protect identity of the girl

3. Child Marriage Stopped and Education Discontinued:

Unlike the girls above, there are two cases where the girls were in school but, following the prevention of their marriages, they are no longer in school and are not doing anything else either. In effect, the prevention of their marriage has not meant better options for them. Instead, one of the girls finds herself confined to the house and her movements restricted.

Table 3.4 gives the status of these girls in detail:

Table 3.4 Child Marriage Stopped and Education Discontinued			
S. No.	Name of the Girl*	Status During Child Marriage Intervention	Status During Research
1.	Namrata	She was 15 years old, a student of 6th grade.	The girl doesn't like to study. The father suspects that she had relationships with many boys. He wants Jabala to take charge of his daughter.
2.	Jyothi	She was 16 years old, a student of 10th grade.	A school dropout, staying at home. Not in touch with any friends, and her mobility is restricted. She is presently 17 years old and is interested in studies but not sent to school.

*Names are changed to protect identity of the girl.

4. Child Marriage Stopped and Still School Dropout:

Of the 38 girls whose marriages were stopped, 5 girls were not in school at the time of the intervention to stop their marriage. Although their marriage was successfully stopped, they continued to be out-of-school. Details regarding the 5 girls who remained dropouts are given in Table 3.5:

Table 3.5 | Child Marriage Stopped and Still School Dropout

S. No.	Name of the Girl*	Status During Child Marriage Intervention	Status During Research
1.	Lakshmi	She was 16 years old and a 6th grade dropout.	She was at home. She wanted to learn tailoring.
2.	Jyothamma	She was 16 years old and a 6th grade dropout.	She was at home. She worked as a daily wage agricultural labourer.
3.	Rani	She was 16 years old and a 3rd grade dropout.	She had a boyfriend and had moved into his home. However, after she was brought back to her parents' home she no longer has contact with her boyfriend. She says she has lost interest in marrying the boy; according to her, she had only gone there in response to her father's comments and taunts. At the time of research, she was not eating or grooming herself for few months. The research team was informed that she had become weak but is better now.
4.	Lakshmi	She was 16 years old, 8th grade dropout.	She was at home.
5.	Sridevi	She was 14 years old, and a school dropout. Marriage info received on 8.8.2014	She was at home. Efforts made to enroll her in the residential schools have failed so far.

*Names are changed to protect identity of the girl.

As the project did not have a component of vocational training, efforts were made to link girls with existing government programmes that would enable them to acquire skills. However, in the absence of consistent follow-up from the key stakeholders, not much progress has happened in this regard. It is an area that needs much greater strengthening.

Status of Girls Whose Marriages Could Not Be Prevented

Apart from four of the girls who have been able to continue with their education after their marriage, the rest have dropped out-of-school and four of them have already become pregnant and three are mothers.

1. Married and Deserted:

Desertion, increased violence, and early pregnancy and motherhood with long term health impacts are the outcomes of child marriages — that is well documented. Of the 10 girls whose marriage could not be stopped, three have been deserted by their husbands. They are the typical examples of the consequences of child marriage.

Table 3.6 details the status of the three girls who were married off and since, deserted:

Table 3.6 Married and Deserted			
S. No.	Name of the Girl*	Status During Child Marriage Intervention	Status During Research
1.	Farzana	She was 16 years old, and a school dropout in her 3rd grade. The information regarding the proposed wedding (12.08.2012) was received on the day of the wedding.	She was left at her parents' home by her husband as she was not keeping well. She has given birth to a child. Her father was worried about her being able to recover from excessive bleeding, and the treatment from a private doctor was expensive. The parents were not talking about sending her back to her in-laws' home which is nearby.
2.	Anitha	She was 16 years old and a student of 10th grade. Intervention took place in Feb 2012.	Secretly got married and continued her studies for a while. Eventually she joined her husband in the city, and discontinued her education. She suffered domestic violence and her husband deserted her. She gave birth to a baby girl at her parents' home. The in-law's family and her husband have never visited her parents' home after the baby was born. They had used 'caste panchayat' (i.e., local group of people) to settle the dispute between husband and wife. The girl's parents were desperate to unite the couple and restore the marriage. The girl was also eager to be with her husband. The girl felt that if her husband agreed to stay in her parental home, they could live happily. They were neighbours and relatives.
3.	Suraiya	She was 17 years old and a student of 10th grade. Intervention took place in Feb 2012.	This girl got married secretly. She was deserted by her husband after a lot of domestic violence and was sent back home with a relative in a train. She was hospitalized for few months after coming back to her mother's home. She was not studying now but working as a domestic help in her mother's neighbourhood. The husband's family was in contact over phone for a few months after sending her back. Now her mother was waiting for them to come and take her back. Her mother was also a deserted woman and there is no support system. The girl did not want to go to her husband's home again and would rather earn a living and look after herself, her mother and her sister.

*Names are changed to protect identity of the girl.

2. Married and Studying:

Four of the girls who are married have continued with their education. Of these, three are back at their parents' homes to continue with school. The fourth girl is living in her husband's home and is continuing her education as an 'external student,' which means she does not have to go to school regularly.

One of the three girls who attends school said she needed to hide the signs of being a married girl, for instance, she wanted to cover her bangles from the teacher's eyes. This is because she is availing the benefit of Kanyashree Prakalpa¹⁹ — a conditional cash transfer scheme for girls who are not married until 18 years of age. Table 3.7 shows the relative status of these four girls:

¹⁹ Department of Women Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal (DWD&SW) has designed the Kanyashree Prakalpa — a conditional cash transfer aimed at improving the status and well-being of the girl child in West Bengal by incentivizing schooling of all teenage girls and delaying their marriages until the age of 18, the legal age of marriage. Kanyashree Prakalpa is a West Bengal Government sponsored scheme which will be implemented henceforth in all districts of the State. http://wbkanyashree.gov.in/kp_scheme.php (retrieved on 07.06.2015).

Table 3.7 | Married and Studying

S. No.	Name of the Girl*	Status During Child Marriage Intervention	Status During Research
1.	Firdausi	She was 17 years old and a student of 9th grade.	She was studying in 10th grade. She lived with her parents and visited her in-laws only when her husband came there. He otherwise lived away for work.
2.	Aruna	She was 14 years (17.3.2000) old and a student in 9th grade. Information received – Feb 2014.	She was studying in 10th grade. She was staying at her father's home and not with her husband.
3.	Ranjitha	She was 16 years old and a student of 11th grade.	She was studying in a Teachers Training Course. She had come to her parents' home to study. She was in great difficulties to meet the expenses of education, hence was doing some informal work for Rs. 100–200 per month.
4.	Lakshmi	She was 16 years old and was studying in 9th class. Information received – 2012.	She lived with her husband and in-laws. She was preparing for the 11th grade examination as an external student and learning stitching in her free time.

One girl who is continuing her education so that she can get a government teaching job says that she does not have money to buy books. While she could negotiate with her husband's family to let her study, it was without any financial support from them. So, she lives with her parents to continue her education. But since her wedding had been stopped at Level 3 (when all preparations were complete), and had to be rearranged, which meant the expenditure had to be incurred a second time, she is hesitant to ask for money for her education. Besides, she feels that her brother who is the main earning member in the family is already burdened with many responsibilities. She sometimes takes on small tasks to pay for her education.

Early Pregnancy and Childbirth

Four of the 10 girls whose marriage could not be stopped have experienced pregnancy and childbirth at a very young age. One of them had a still birth and another has health complications. Table 3.8 gives the details of these four girls:

Table 3.8 | Pregnancy and Childbirth

S. No.	Name of the Girl*	Status During Child Marriage Intervention	Status During Research
1.	Tanvi	She was 14 years old, a student of 8th grade. Information received – March 2013.	Gave birth to a baby on the day the research team had visited her.
2.	Priyangi	She was 16 years old, and going to school. Information received – 11.9.2013.	She was 16 years old, and going to school.
3.	Jonaki	She was 16 years old, and a school dropout in 3rd grade. Information received – 2.8.2012 (date of wedding was fixed on the same day).	She was left at her parents' home by her husband as she was not keeping well. She had given birth to a child and was experiencing excessive bleeding.
4.	Anisha	She was 16 years old and a student of 10th grade. Intervention took place in Feb 2012.	Victim of domestic violence and desertion, she had delivered a baby girl.

Responses of Families

We are well aware that the practice of child marriage is a deep-rooted problem in society, related to the existing norms on gender and social behaviour. As stated in the beginning of the report, among the justifications given for this continuing practice are: (i) that dowry for younger girls is lower; (ii) that there is growing awareness of sexuality during teenage years (therefore girls need to be protected); and (iii) that greater media access among the youth may lead to inappropriate behaviour, primarily self-selection of a partner or sexual activity prior to marriage.

The reactions and responses of the families in almost all cases demonstrated the above-mentioned concerns/justifications. They showed anger at the marriage having been stopped or postponed. While some were unhappy about the intervention by ‘outsiders’ and especially by government representatives and the NGO — which they viewed as loss of pride — others said that they were now worried about how they will find another match for their daughter.

The families’ anger at loss of money was understandable, as despite knowing what they were doing was illegal, they were convinced it was the ‘right thing to do’. Some say they will marry off their girls the moment they turn 18 years.

Security of the girl was mentioned as one of the reasons for marriage when they cross 12 years of age. This could also be related to both parents going out for work, being agricultural labourers in many cases. One widowed mother said, ‘How can I go out for work and earn, even though we have difficulty to have proper food? Firstly, I am not well, and secondly, having a young girl at home, someone might come in my absence and something may go wrong.’ She was clearly indicating the possibility of her girl’s having a physical relationship with an unknown person. According to this mother:

The security of my daughter is my first concern. As I was married early, same would be good for my daughter. After growing up and having known everything she might run away with someone, which is not proper. Today’s world is not good. Because of problem of dowry and expenditure on education we wanted to be free from this burden. If MVF support us, we will let our daughter study up to 22 years. Education is expensive. I don’t remember what all I have gone through. I did not come for 2 years to my husband’s home.

Since control over sexuality and choice is the unstated, underlying reason for child marriage, the only case in which the father was happy at the marriage being stopped was where the daughter had chosen a partner for herself, and the community was putting pressure on the parents to allow them to be married. He did not like the poor bridegroom for his daughter. In this case, however, the girl herself was very unhappy at the stoppage of her wedding and for a very long time was grieving — she stopped eating or grooming herself, and was only slowly reconciling to her situation at the time of the research.

One father says angrily, ‘My daughter is interested in boys and keeps meeting someone or the other. Therefore I had fixed her marriage, which was stopped. My life is wasted now, as I was called to the Police Station to show the proof of my daughter’s age.’

However, in families in which the girls have been deserted by their husbands, or, as in the case of Jonaki mentioned in Table 3.8, where the girl is unwell after childbirth, the parents do sometimes express regret at having married off their daughters early. But this is because the particular marriage situation has not worked out.

Many parents cite poverty as their reason for marrying off their daughters early. And yet they are willing to sell off what little they have and even take loans to get their girls married as early as possible. A widow was willing to give 40 sheep as dowry. Another family had sold a plot of land and after cancellation of marriage had bought a smaller plot and some gold. Yet they are not willing to spend the same on educating their daughters.

A father who has married his 14-year old to a 33-year old man said, 'I had waited for a few months when I was told not to marry my daughter. But once she turned 14, I thought it was important to marry her off. As the bridegroom was a relative, we felt he would take good care of her. As we hear of gang rape and other such things, I wanted my daughter to be secure.' Upon being asked whether he had also learned from the media that young girls die during pregnancy, and whether or not any rape or gang-rape cases had occurred in his surroundings, this man replied: 'No such cases have happened, to my knowledge. And even if death of young mother happens, who does think about it? There are always hospitals to go to.' After marriage his daughter is going to school but she said, 'Now I have lost my freedom. Even when I am staying at my parent's home after the marriage, I am not allowed to play.'

A girl said she initially felt bad that her wedding was stopped, especially since money had been spent on preparation of marriage and its interest has to be paid. However, once she came to know that her bridegroom-to-be was already living with another woman in the city where he was staying, and that he was planning to marry her despite being already married — she was relieved. Her mother, however, remains worried about being able to marry off her daughter in the future. Incidentally, the mother herself is a government employee and she had planned the wedding and then agreed to stop it after a lot of pressure from her seniors.

Another mother, who wanted her daughter to marry around 12 years of age, strongly opposed the research team speaking to the girl, on grounds that 'she is too young'.

In one case where an AWW along with project team member had visited the family of a girl for counselling there was 3-4 hours long discussion. At some point she had said, "For the safety and security if we get all girls married, that is not the solution. Together we should think on education related support needed for girls. Some 100-120 children and people have gathered there spontaneously.

One set of parents got their only daughter married, giving the reason that this was so that she is not left alone if both die. Another set of parents said that it is important to space out the marriages to have time to gather dowry when they have two or more daughters. One Yadav family in Telangana had given away all their 30 sheep in dowry and now has become poor.

Marriage is so important for families that many would rather prevent the child's basic education, considering girls' schooling a waste. A father has categorically stated that he does not see any good in it, even though his daughter has continued her education after her marriage was stopped. He said,

Government should compensate us for stopping child marriages. I had already spent Rs. 30,000 on food and drink. I was also arranging Rs. 4.5 lakh as dowry. The bridegroom is now married to someone else, and now I will have to find another one. Bigger dowry is demanded for more educated bridegroom. What support does the government provide us after stopping a marriage? I will now have to sell my assets to marry my daughter.

This father went on to emphasize:

It would have been better if marriage was performed. The times are bad. What will I do if the girl runs away? There may be problem due to early marriage yet it is good. No one thinks about the trouble the girl may face. If marriage is delayed then the family honour is at stake.

Along similar lines, a brother of a girl who is in 2nd year of graduation, said: 'If there is no support for her tuition fees, she will have to leave her study in between.' He was, however, willing to arrange for money if a marriage proposal comes for his sister.

There are families which have spent Rs. 40,000 on their son's education and most parents manage to arrange fairly large sums of money for child marriages; yet they cite poverty as their reason for wanting to marry off their daughters early and claim they are not able to afford education for them.

According to a religious leader, Md. Zakir Hussan²⁰ — 'If a family is poor, has 2–4 daughters, and is not literate, then it opts for child marriage. If police is working on child marriage, police should also act on dowry.'

Yet another reason for child marriage is the possibility of being able to marry the girls without any dowry — or, as the community described it: proposal of 'marriage for free'. Of the 38 cases followed, at least in seven cases of child marriage was opted for as it was proposal for free. This is a dangerous trend coming up in the rural community as this is exactly the route the traffickers take, offering families a 'bride price' or marriage for free.

²⁰ He is Muslim Marriage Registrar at Immam Khidirpur Masjid, as well as President, Block level Immam Sagathan, in Hariharpara.

Conclusion

All changes bring some pain to people involved in the change; and social changes are the most challenging. Upon successful cancellation of child marriage, a girl is left behind in the same disturbed family. This generally makes the life of the girl more difficult. Efforts need to be made to minimize the discomfort families undergo, even the trauma that girls themselves go through during an intervention. It is clear from this research and field studies that if the marriages can be prevented, families supported, girls allowed to continue in education, there can be some positive changes for the future in their lives. What is required is sustained intervention from a multi-pronged approach, identifying and, to the extent possible, addressing the related issues.

It is evident that each and every intervention under the project has produced some results. Some of them will have impact in the short run while the impact of others will be visible in the long run. There is need to identify such processes that have the potential of maturing into long-term social change and push these processes towards further progress — such as the will of the girls to continue education after their weddings were prevented or those who have managed to continue education despite getting married; or cases where the girls have not moved permanently to in-laws' families and are able to articulate their choices in parental family.

There is need to create safe spaces particularly for girls who have dropped out-of-school. Safe spaces could also function as learning centres for life skills training, personhood, and personality development.

Different initiatives used under the project and different sources of information that have played an active role in bringing to light child marriages and intervention need to be broad-based and scaled up. Use of all-round strategies can have the result of mitigating the bitterness and stigma that girls and families feel when a child marriage is stopped. For the same reason, there is also a need to strengthen AAGs to play an active and activist role. There would also be a need to look at issues of protection of members of the AAGs.

Social commitment on child marriage prevention needs to be strengthened by conducting visible campaigns and increasing people's participation in them. Social pressures on girls and boys to get married early can also be contained by such campaigns. Girls' confidence can be strengthened through training

them on safety, protection of choices, safe sexual relations and on building networks that can provide support in times of crisis.

Also, there is the need to work with the parents to address their fear of girls becoming unprotected and falling prey to violence. This has to be addressed both at the level of creating a more protective environment for them and by showing the parents how unprotected the girls actually become as a result of child marriage. Close engagement with social activists and grass-roots government staff like teachers, AWWs, health workers, etc., can address concerns of parents regarding violence and insecurity. Swift support and effective legal action by the government in cases where required and where families need help can also strengthen community confidence.

This study also indicates what kind of social and economic impacts are suffered by the girls' families when child marriage is stopped. Different impacts are seen to be occurring when intervention is made at different stages of marriage. We need to understand in depth the problems faced by families due to stoppage of a child marriage and address the problem to prevent such families from being isolated from the campaigns. Interventions need to be in early stages of a marriage such as when families are looking for a suitable match and planning the marriage. This will also reduce the pain families feel when a marriage is stopped.

Equally important are the issues of dowry, gender discrimination, and trafficking and violence, thereby addressing the fear of the families and communities regarding safety of their girls. While PCMA, 2006, remains the main law to address child marriage, equal amount of effort needs to be made to work on the implementation of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, and people made aware of the illegality of it. The police and the authorities cannot keep turning a blind eye to this; as long as there is dowry, child marriage will follow.

Annexure

Methodology

The 248 intervention made were categorised into (1) the nature of intervention, and (2) a sample of 15 per cent, that is, 38 cases, which were examined in detail through interviews with girls and their families, other key persons such as teachers, panchayat members, officials who had made the intervention, and, wherever possible, members of the community. To verify the information and also to understand the process of the intervention, interviews were taken with the project team members.

One of the major criteria for selection of the sample was the willingness of families to be interviewed. Care was taken to get the written consent of the girl herself if she is now over 18 years of age, and if not, then from her guardians. Wherever there was any discomfort or hesitation on the part of the interviewees, the interview was suspended. Some of the interviewees refused to allow use of recorder or to be photographed.

Sample Selection:

A checklist of questions was prepared which was piloted in some of the villages in Telangana.

The sample was identified from the secondary data from the case records over the project period, based on the following categories:

1. Project Area (PA) Stopped Cases
2. Non-Project Area (NPA) Stopped Cases
3. Project Area (PA) Postponed Cases
4. Non-Project Area (NPA) Postponed Cases
5. Not known/Others

All the 'Stopped Cases' are those where marriages had not taken place during the time of the research till January 2015. 'Postponed' refers to the cases of marriages that took place after the intervention.

Further, effort was made to cover cases in terms of the following situations:

- Marriages before 18 – Girls who are continuing their studies and who have delayed pregnancy

- Marriages before 18 – Girls with still born or underweight babies/Unwanted Pregnancy/Abortion/Miscarriage
- Marriages after 18 – Girls who are continuing their studies
- Marriages due to love affairs – Cases of Elopement

The final 38 cases from the two states that were recorded were also based on the availability and willingness of the girls and their families.

Sample Selection, West Bengal:

In all 14 girls were interviewed in the two districts of West Bengal

S.No.	Case Type	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Interviewed Cases	% of Cases Interviewed
1.	PA* Stopped	19	07	37
2.	NPA** Stopped	06	04	67
3.	PA Postponed	57	03	06
4.	NPA Postponed	10	00	0
5.	Not Known/Others	01	00	0
Total		93	14	15

PA*= Project Area, NPA**= Non-Project Area.

Block	Beldanga-I		Hariharpara		Rampurhat-II		Mohammadbazar	
	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Cases Interviewed	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Cases Interviewed	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Cases Interviewed	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Cases Interviewed
PA Stopped	8	03	08	03	02	01	01	00
NPA Stopped	2	01	00	00	00	00	04	03
PA Postponed	23	02	13	00	06	00	15	01
NPA Postponed	4	00	03	00	00	00	03	00
Not Known/Others	0	0	00	00	01	00	00	00
Total	37	06	24	03	09	01	23	04

Sample Selection, Telangana:

In all 24 cases of child marriage interventions was followed up in Telangana (Table 3).

S.No.	Case Type	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Interviewed Cases	% of Cases Interviewed
1.	PA* Stopped	27	13	48
2.	NPA** Stopped	31	3	10
3.	PA Postponed	49	7	14
4.	NPA Postponed	44	1	2
5.	Not Known/Others	4	0	0
Total		155	24	15

PA*= Project Area, NPA**= Non-Project Area.

Table 7 gives the details of the selection of cases from the different Mandals and according to category.

Table 4 Child Marriage Intervention Cases and Sample for Interview, Telangana								
Block	Achempet		Amrabad		Thorrur		Rayaparthi	
Case type	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Cases Intervied	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Cases Intervied	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Cases Intervied	No. of Cases Intervened	No. of Cases Intervied
PA Stopped	13	6	9	6	2	0	3	1
NPA Stopped	11	0	11	0	4	2	5	1
PA Postponed	10	0	13	3	14	1	12	03
NPA Postponed	0	0	15	0	7	00	22	01
Status Not Known/ Others	0	0	01	0	1	00	02	00
Total	34	06	49	09	28	03	44	06

Community Members/Stakeholders Interviewed

Several categories of stakeholders were identified to be interviewed based on their involvement in the prevention of child marriages during the course of the project. These included Anganwadi Workers (AWW), Adolescent Girls' Groups (AGGs) members, Gender Committee of the Panchayat, caste leaders, religious leaders, police, government officers, etc. They were interviewed as per their willingness, and the interviews were conducted with the various persons either individually or in a group, depending upon their availability and the situation. Their opinions and concerns are included in the report. Some persons/groups played a role in more than one case, hence clubbing them with any particular case was not possible.

Table 5 Key Persons Interviewed	
Name of the State	Type of the Stakeholder Interviewed
West Bengal	9 (HM, Police, BDO, AWW 2, Religious leader, GP Pradha (woman), youth, AGG Leader)
Telangana	14 (VRO, SMC, teacher, Yadava Leader 2, AWW 3, Gender Committee 3, AGG Leader 3)
Total	23

Interview Tool

Initially interview guides for the child, family members, project team members, and community leader and the government officials or local-level functionaries were developed with a checklist of questions. These were piloted in the Telangana and modified where needed.

However, it was found that while the checklist of questions was useful to ensure that all areas of information were covered, it was not possible to use the questions exactly in the way they had been formulated. The checklists served as a basic framework, as per the situation and type of the case (married/not married, project area/non-project area), while the questions were modified when posed, as and where needed.

In some cases the interview was extended to assess the need of the family and discussion on possible plan for intervention.

Challenges of Research

The biggest challenge was the willingness of the families. While in some cases the weddings had been stopped, in others they had merely been postponed. Irrespective of the condition, a number of the families were unhappy at the action having been taken at all; hence many expressed their anger when the team visited them.

In the context of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006, the Date of Birth (DOB) is crucial, which is followed by the date of marriage if one needs to ascertain at what age the wedding took place. Thus, the second challenge revolved around the DOB and date of wedding in cases where it took place despite intervention.

It was found that in 59 cases, in Telangana, DOB was not available. In another 19 cases, the date of marriage was not available. At times the year and month of marriage was known, but not the specific date. Also in Telangana, where there were several non-project area interventions, getting proof of date of birth was a challenge in the non-project areas too. In the absence of these documents, the research team had to rely on whatever proof was available, which could not always be verified.

Questionnaires/interview Guides:

The following tools were tried and modified. But later on they were not used as it was not feasible to use any of the tools.

Questionnaire 1:

Interview with child whose marriage was intervened in the project area

Name of interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Village (complete postal address): _____

Place of interview: Home/ School/ any other place _____

Interview Visits: _____

S. No.	Name of Person Interviewed	Relation with a Child	Age	Date	Remark (interviewed/ refused/not available/ any other)
		Self			

Name of the child:

Sex: F: ___ M: ___ Date of Birth (DOB) of the child: _____

Proof of DOB: _____ (also attach the copy) Yes _____ No _____

Name of the father: _____ Occupation of the father: _____

Name of the mother: _____ Occupation of the mother: _____

Educational Status of the Child:

- a) Currently studying in: _____ standard
- b) Drop out from standard: _____ (since _____ year)
- c) Currently having vacation: _____
- d) Any other: _____
- e) Engaged in any other activity: _____

Family Details:

S. No.	Name	Relation with the Child	Age	Occupation	Age at Marriage	Remark

Note: Married sisters and brother of the child should be mentioned with remark on if they are staying in the same house or not and also if possible at which age they were married.

Narration by the child about intervention in his/her marriage:

1. How did you come to know about plan of your marriage? Who told you?
2. What did you feel about that news?
3. Did you want to get married? Yes : _____ No: _____
4. If yes, did you want to marry to the person who was proposed for your marriage?
5. If you did not want to marry, to whom did you convey it for the first time?
6. Were you seeking for any help in this matter?
7. Did you approach anybody else for help? Who are they? (name of the person(s) and relation with the child)
 - _____
 - _____
8. What was the help you were seeking initially? Why did you approach that person?
9. What was the response of the person(s) you had approached?
10. What action did she/he take to stop your marriage?
11. Who gave the information of your child marriage to the concern person who could stop your marriage?
12. Who is that person to whom information was passed? Why?
13. What was the response of that person?

14. Who had approached first to your family members to stop your child marriage?
15. Who all got involved in discussing with your family to stop your child marriage?
16. Who according to you was most important/effective person in stopping your marriage? Why?
17. How many time outsiders came to your home before your family agreed to stop/cancel your marriage?
18. Do you think that at that time some financial loss was born by your family due to cancellation of your marriage as some arrangement was already done?
19. If yes, how did your family have coped with that loss?
20. Soon after the decision of canceling your marriage, how was the environment at your home?
21. How did you feel when everything was over and your marriage was cancelled?

After the Intervention:

1. How do you feel now after _____ months of cancellation of your marriage?
2. Is there any change in your life since then?
3. If yes, what is that change?
4. Do you face any comments regarding that event of stopping your marriage by anyone?
5. If yes, what are those comments? Who does that comments?
6. Person: ____ Comment:
7. Person: ____ Comment:
8. What do you feel about these comments?
9. What do you do about it?
10. Accordingly to you what are the concerns/ worries of your family regarding to cancellation of your marriage?
11. What all have you been doing since then?
12. Is there anything that bothers of you because your marriage was stopped/cancelled?
13. What Jabala/MVF or others should have done to improve your life besides stopping your marriage?
14. What do you plan to do now?
15. Whom do you think we should meet to know more about the intervention in your marriage? Why? (It is the key person or someone else?)

Questionnaire 2:**Interview with the Parent/Guardian of the child:**

Name: _____ Sex: _____ Age: _____

Occupation:

Relation with the child:

Place of stay:

1. What do you feel about the intervention done by Jabala/MVF to stop/cancel the marriage of _____?
2. Is there any difficulty the family is facing since then?
3. If yes, what difficulty it is? How is the family dealing with that difficulty?
4. What do you think has happen to the life of this child after the intervention by Jabala/MVF?
5. What other support Jabala/MVF should have provided besides stopping the marriage?
6. What do you think of such work done by Jabala/MVF for other children?
7. Do you have any other thing to share regarding stopping of child marriage?

Questionnaire 3:**Interview of a community member/member of adolescent girls group:**

Name: _____ Sex: _____ Age: _____

Occupation:

Relation with the child:

Place of stay:

1. What do you feel about the intervention done by Jabala/MVF to stop/cancel the marriage of _____?
2. What was your role in the intervention?
3. Why did you intervene in this child marriage?
4. Do you think something more should be done to improve the life of the child whose marriage was stopped?
5. Who should do those things that you are suggesting?
6. Have you been intervening in child marriage beside this child _____? Name them if you recall
 - a) Before this child's marriage:
 - b) After this child's marriage:
7. Why do you intervene? Will you continue doing so? Why?
8. What do you think of such work done by Jabala/MVF for other children?
9. Do you have any other thing to share regarding stopping of child marriage?

Questionnaire 4:**Narration of Jabala/MVF on intervention (story in detail by the staff member):**

Name of the staff member who is interviewed:

Designation of the staff member:

Date:

Name of the child whose marriage was intervened:

Name of the village:

- Name of a staff member who had received information in the Jabala/MVF team:

- Date of information received on possible child marriage: _____
- How did you receive information? _____
- Date of the first intervention/approaching parents/guardian to stop child marriage: _____
- _____
- Action taken: _____
 - o Called Child Line _____
 - o Informed Police/CMPO/Panchayat member/Any other official/any other person (please specify in detail) _____

Any other information that the person may wish to share

- Any media coverage? Yes _____ No _____
 - o If yes, Name of the newspaper: _____ Date of news item: _____
 - o Title of the news item: _____

Note: To the extent possible attach each news clipping with translation in English.

Questioner -5:**Interview of a government official who is identified as important person by the child:**

Name: _____ Sex: _____ Age: _____

Designation: _____

Place of Duty: _____

1. What do you feel about the intervention done by Jabala/MVF to stop/cancel the marriage of ____?
2. What was your role in the intervention?
3. Why did you intervene in the child marriage?
4. Do you think something more should be done to improve the life of the child whose marriage was stopped?
5. Who should do those things that you are suggesting?
6. Have you been intervening in child marriage beside this child ____? Name them if you recall _____
7. Why do you intervene? Will you continue doing so? Why?
8. What do you think of such work done by Jabala/MVF for other children?
9. Do you have any other thing to share regarding stopping of child marriage?

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, formed in 1998, works towards the recognition, promotion and protection of rights of all children. It aims at contributing to the building of an environment where every child's rights are recognised and promoted without discrimination and in an integrated manner. HAQ believes that child rights and children's concerns have to be mainstreamed into all developmental planning and action and must also become a core development indicator.

To carry forward this mandate, HAQ undertakes research and documentation and is actively engaged in public education and advocacy. In India, HAQ pioneered the Budget for Children analysis in 2001. Over the years, it has developed skills for quick and incisive scanning of law and policy documents and commenting on them. It works with existing networks, builds alliances and partnerships with other actors/ stakeholders such as the bureaucrats, parliamentarians, judges and lawyers, police and media.

HAQ seeks to serve as a resource and support base for individuals and groups dealing with children at every level. It not only provides information and referral services but also undertakes training and capacity building for all those working with children or on issues concerning them, and for the children themselves.

HAQ works on children and governance, violence and abuse of children, child trafficking and juvenile justice. It provides legal support to children in need, particularly those who are victims of abuse and exploitation or are in conflict with the law.

PUBLICATIONS:

The South Asian Report - On the Child-Friendliness of Governments (2013) | International Colloquium on Juvenile Justice - A Report (2013) | Children and Governance (2012) | India-Child Rights Index. (2011) | Twenty Years of CRC- A Balance Sheet (Volumes I, II and III) (2011) | Budget for Children, set of seven publications on child budget analysis for India, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (2009) | Kandhmal's Forgotten Children: A Status report | India's Childhood in the "Pits": A Report on the Impacts of Mining on Children in India | Blind Alley: Juvenile Justice in India (2009) | National Consultation on 'Countering Challenges in Adoption: Combating Child Trafficking' (2009) | Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Children and Governance: Holding the State Accountable (2009) | Still Out of Focus: Status of India's Children (2008) | Handbook on Children's Right to adequate Housing | Combating Child Trafficking | Budget for Children, set of four publications on child budget analysis for India, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Orissa (2007) | Child Protection (A Handbook for Panchayat Members in English and Hindi) | Status of Children in India Inc. (2005) | Says a child... Who Speaks for My rights? (A series of booklets analysing parliamentary questions and debates from 2003 to 2007 in English and Hindi) | Stop Child Trafficking (A Handbook for Parliamentarians) | Children in Globalising India: Challenging our Conscience (2003) | Children Bought and Sold: We can stop It! (Booklet on Child Trafficking in Hindi and English) (2003) | Children and Right to Adequate Housing: A Guide to International Legal Resources (2002) | India's Children and the Union Budget (2001)

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