



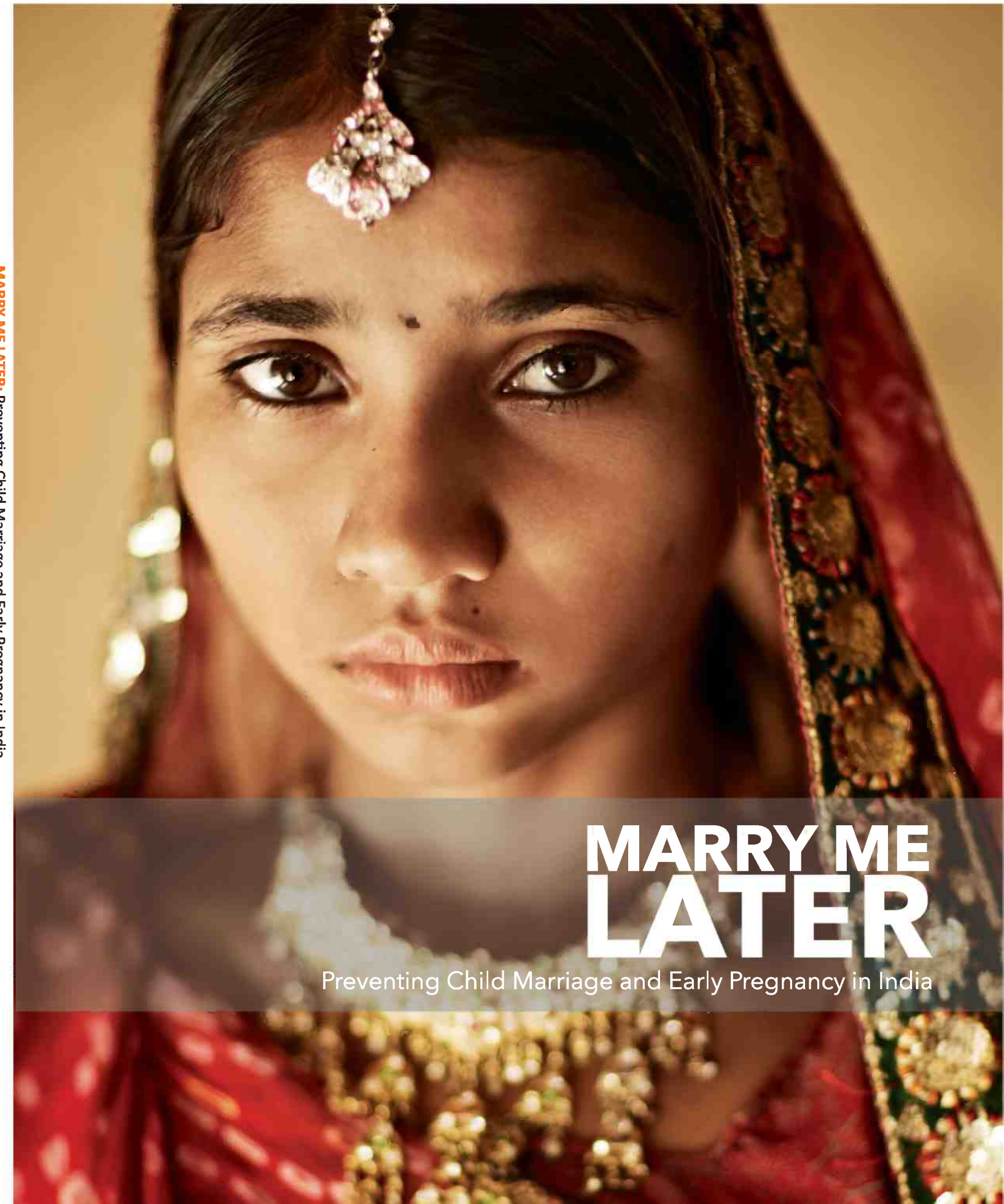
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**MARRY ME LATER:** Preventing Child Marriage and Early Pregnancy in India



# MARRY ME LATER

Preventing Child Marriage and Early Pregnancy in India



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## Kiawah Trust

The Kiawah Trust is a UK family foundation that is committed to improving the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged adolescent girls in India. The Kiawah Trust believes that educating adolescent girls from poor communities allows them to thrive, to have greater choice in their life and a louder voice in their community. This leads to healthier, more prosperous and more stable families, communities and nations.  
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Dasra is India's leading strategic philanthropy foundation. Dasra works with philanthropists and successful social entrepreneurs to bring together knowledge, funding and people as a catalyst for social change. We ensure that strategic funding and capacity building skills reach non-profit organizations and social businesses to have the greatest impact on the lives of people living in poverty.  
[www.dasra.org](http://www.dasra.org)

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## Foreword

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Child marriage caught my attention in 2010. It was my first trip to India since I had become a parent and so I began to see the world through a mother's eyes. During that visit, I spent a memorable hour in the home of a young Indian mother, who lived in the slums of Mumbai. We commiserated over our lack of sleep, laughed over our babies' antics, and shared smiles of pride, as I looked at her young son and showed her pictures of my daughter. This woman was far younger than I — perhaps not yet 20. From what I learned of her life, I surmised that she would not be able to continue her education, pursue paid work of her choice, or discover who she could be, in addition to being the caring mother she clearly had become.

It was this trip that got the Kendeda Fund thinking about the issue and whether or not we should enter this space. We did. Last year the Kendeda Fund sanctioned a multi-million dollar grant focused on ending child marriage in India. Since then I have been asked many times, "Why child marriage? Why India?" The answer for me is relatively simple. Ending child marriage — if done with the full partnership of the Indian people — will represent nothing short of a revolution for India's girls today and in generations to come. At the Kendeda Fund we felt India was a good place to focus given its enormous potential for leadership on this issue, not only within the South Asia region, but around the world.

I would like to offer a few humble thoughts, based on our experience, to the growing number of donors and activists from around the world who are stepping into this relatively new sector:

1. It is critical that we work with local communities to define not just what practices we are against but what are we for. It is not enough for us to envision a world without child marriage. Our challenge is to define a positive vision for adolescent girls.
2. Efforts to tackle child marriage should aim to tackle broader gender issues within which this practice exists. As one woman asked me, "Why will it matter if my daughter is married at 18 instead of 16, if she still has no economic opportunities, no reproductive control, and lives in fear of violence daily?"
3. We need to focus on empowering the millions of girls across India who are already child brides, in addition to a focus on prevention. They deserve every opportunity to live a full and rewarding life.

Child marriage may seem like too complex and macro a problem for us to solve. Yet we have seen examples at the community level of enduring, positive change, for and by India's girls. Various non-profits such as the ones profiled in this report are doing valuable work on the ground to prevent child marriage and build strong alternatives for girls. Yet, they suffer from a lack of capacity to document their work, evaluate their progress, structure their systems, seek more funding, and ultimately to scale. All funders — corporations, foundations, international development agencies, and individual philanthropists have a role to play in filling this gap and supporting these non-profit organizations.

I truly believe no work is more rewarding than this. Please join with us. It would be our honor to learn with and from you.

**Dena Kimball**

*Executive Director of the Kendeda Fund*

*(A private foundation and currently the largest donor to the child marriage sector in India)*



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## Acknowledgements

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*Marry Me Later* provides an analysis of the seemingly intractable problem of child marriage in India, with the principal aim of identifying high potential non-profit organizations that funders should look to support and scale. First and foremost, we would like to thank our donors – USAID, Kiawah Trust and Omidyar Network – for their vision, passion and commitment to addressing child marriage as a fundamental development concern that hinders millions of adolescent girls in India from achieving their potential.

Dasra's advisory research team would especially like to thank – Dena Kimball, Dipa Nag Chowdhury, Dr. Sunil Mehra, Jaya Sharma, K. G. Santhya, Lakshmi Sundaram, Priya Das, Priya Nanda, Rema Nanda, Shobhana Boyle, Sushmita Mukherjee, and Vanita Mukherjee – for taking time out from their busy schedules and allowing us to borrow their expertise on this issue. Dasra would also like to thank the team at Copal Partners for their timely and invaluable support in editing the report.

Dasra would like to express its gratitude to all the non-profit organizations we spoke to and visited, who are working hard, against all odds, to address the issue of child marriage in India. We thank them for giving us their precious time, sharing their thoughts and experiences, and helping us understand what is really happening on the ground. These perspectives have enabled Dasra to make this publication current, practical and action-oriented.

In the course of this research, Dasra's team met with girls with innumerable stories of resilience, courage and hope even in the face of daunting challenges. Dasra would like to thank these girls and their families for not only sharing their stories but also inspiring us.

Finally, thank you for joining us on this journey and for your interest in this report. We look to you to further the direction set by this report, by using your influence, skills, and funding to support effective non-profit organizations scale up their response, and enable millions of adolescent girls and existing child brides in India, realize their potential.

## Biggest Challenges

At 40%, India accounts for the world's largest share of child marriages globally

47% of Indian girls are married before age 18 and 22% of Indian girls have already given birth before they themselves turn 18

Girls under 15 are 5x as likely to die in child birth than women in their early 20s

The cost of lost productivity due to adolescent pregnancies in India is \$7.7 billion a year

## Biggest Opportunities

Girls that pursue secondary schooling are 70% less likely to marry as children

In just four years, a program providing life skills to adolescent girls increased the median age of marriage from 16 to 17 years

An adolescent health program providing health assessment and education to young girls increased the age of first conception from 15.8 to 18 years between 2003 and 2012

At least 30 non-profit organizations in India are concertededly focused on addressing child marriage as a core issue

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## Executive Summary

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Close to half of India's girls are married before the age of 18, and one in five is married even before she turns 15. But child marriage is more than just a statistical problem. It is a harmful traditional practice that denies children, especially girls, basic rights to a healthy life, protection from abuse and exploitation and equal opportunities for development. Years of research shows that child marriage contributes to virtually every social problem that affects India – poverty, high birth rates, malnutrition, infant mortality, illiteracy, unemployment and low life expectancy.

### The burden of child marriage

For a child who becomes a bride, life changes completely without as much as a warning. She is uprooted and separated from her family, friends and everything that is familiar to her, and sent to live with her husband and his family – strangers, essentially. Besides an education and childhood being curtailed, she is also more likely to become a victim of domestic violence; child brides are twice as likely to be beaten and thrice as likely to experience forced sex than girls married later. Traumatic initiation into sexual relationships coupled with the social pressure to reproduce places their young bodies under severe stress; adolescent girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die in child birth as women in their twenties, and those under 15 years of age are five times more likely to die. For those that survive, the chances of experiencing a still birth or newborn death is 50% higher than it is for women aged 20 to 29.

Unfortunately, deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs about the role and value of a girl, primarily as caretaker of her household and children, and also as *paraya dhan* (wealth of another), combined with the intractable problem of poverty, sustains the problem of child marriage over generations. Studies show that daughters of women who were child brides are at greater risk of being married as children themselves.

### What progress has India made?

In the past decade or so, a few leading international private foundations – notably Ford, MacArthur and Packard Foundation, and multilateral agencies such as UNFPA and UNICEF have played a key role in bringing this previously neglected issue to the forefront. In doing so, they have also encouraged the government to view child marriage as a stand-alone issue which impedes the Millennium Development Goals. Most recently, another private foundation, the Kendeda Fund has committed over \$15 million to this newly formed sector in India. Furthermore, the government has become more action-oriented in the last two decades, moving away from purely legislative reforms focused on increasing age of marriage, to introducing and strengthening practical initiatives on the ground such as conditional cash transfer schemes.

As a result of all these efforts, there is an increasing recognition that while delaying age of marriage is critical, adolescent girls also need to be empowered during these crucial years, to enable better decision making even after they turn 18. Programs aimed at educating and empowering girls are beginning to bear fruit, giving girls the confidence to say "no" to early marriage, which for many, would once have been a foregone conclusion.

### Where can efforts be better directed?

Based on Indian and international evidence, consultations with experts and views of Dasra's advisory committee which comprised Dipa Nag Chowdhury, K.G Santhya, Priya Nanda, Shobhana Boyle, Dr. Sunil Mehra, Sushmita Mukherjee, and Vanita Mukherjee, Dasra has identified four key priority areas where collective action should be focused:

- 1. Creating alternate life options for girls.** Providing girls with the 'education to employment continuum' provides them with an enabling solution, allowing them to explore alternative life choices to early marriage.
- 2. Identifying and sensitizing gatekeepers.** It is critical to engage gatekeepers who significantly influence a girl's life choices – fathers and brothers, older women in the family, religious and community leaders. Evidence shows that most cases of positive change involve a gatekeeper, whose sheer conviction to stand-their-ground enables the girl to delay her marriage.
- 3. Promoting birth and marriage registration.** 59% of all births remain unregistered in India. Birth registration is a proof of age and so plays a significant role in preventing the practice as well as ensuring that the girl child and her family can access numerous welfare schemes.
- 4. Addressing the needs of adolescent brides.** Along with preventing child marriage, it is crucial to address the unique needs of child brides so as to mitigate the negative impacts of child marriage and improve their health and well-being.

### What is most effective on-the-ground?

Two interventions stand out as the most impactful and scalable – a) facilitating access to education, which entails activities such as awareness generation of its significance and bridge courses for drop-out students; and b) the provision of vocational training, life skills and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information. These interventions give girls alternatives to early marriage and equip them with skills to make informed decisions about their future. Other important and effective interventions include those that cultivate role models as peer leaders; mobilize communities to recognize the ill-effects of child marriage; train government functionaries and frontline workers; and build the capacity of other organizations working on issues such as adolescent health, education, child rights, and livelihoods to consider child marriage prevention as a critical outcome.

Following an extensive mapping of over 300 organizations, Dasra identified 30 non-profit organizations in India that are focused on addressing the issue of child marriage. Ten of these organizations have been highlighted as those which deliver the most impactful and scalable child marriage programs, representing high potential investment options for funders and sector supporters.



	Facilitating access to education	Vocational training, life skills and SRH	Mobilizing communities	Cultivating peer leaders	Training government functionaries	Building capacity of other non-profits
AGRT						
BBA						
HAQ						
MVF						
Nishtha						
PANI						
Sahayog						
Thoughtshop						
Urmul Trust						
Vikalp Sansthan						

### Where can you make a difference?

Despite the fact that child marriage as a practice directly hinders the achievement of six of eight Millennium Development Goals, as an issue it remains grossly under-funded. Greater resources – both financial and otherwise – are needed to scale interventions that work and protect millions of girls from becoming child brides. For instance, if present trends continue, of the girls born just between 2005 and 2010, 28 million would become child brides over the next approximately 15 years. Dasra urges private donors to support non-profit organizations such as those recommended in *Marry Me Later* to build a strong momentum to stamp out a cultural practice with no relevance to this day and age.

While some progress over the past two decades has been made, there is a need to tackle the problem head-on by re-shaping patriarchal attitudes, facilitating educational opportunities for girls, delivering effective support services to child brides and empowering young girls to challenge the status quo. We must act NOW to prevent yet another generation of young girls from falling victim to harmful tradition, under the guise of celebration. Dasra's vision is that in the not too distant future, adolescent girls across the country will have garnered sufficient support, strength and resilience to say "Marry me, later".





47% of Indian girls are married before the age of 18.

### I. Too Soon: An overview of child marriage in India

*In Hindu mythology, Saraswati is the Goddess of knowledge. However, for nine year old Saraswati who lived in a small village in Rajasthan and was one of five daughters in the family, the completion of her education was a distant dream. As a primary school student, she was diligent at her studies, and wanted to grow up to become a teacher. But her parents worried about her future.*

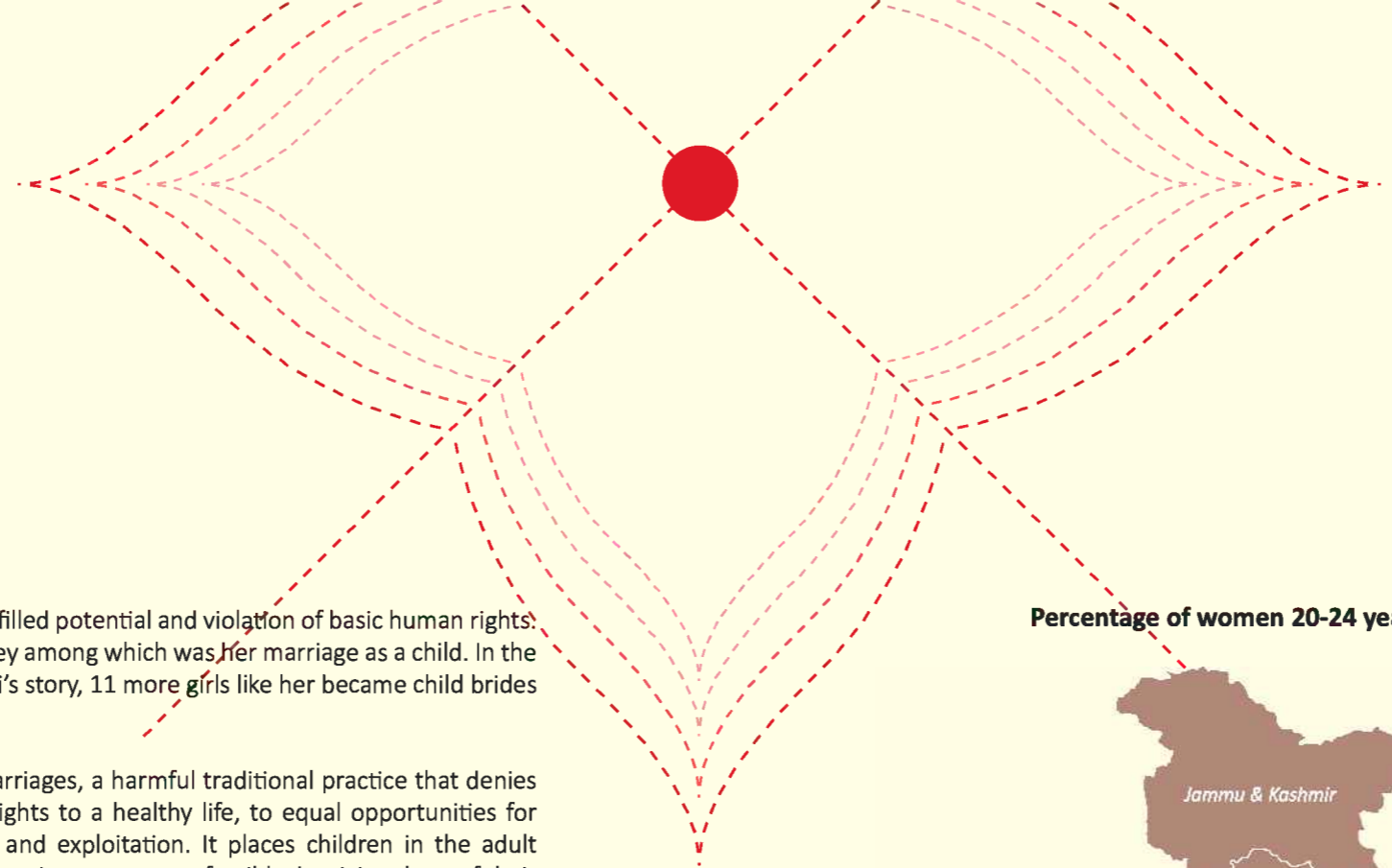
*In April 2004, on the auspicious day of Akha Teej, Saraswati's eldest sister, Asha, aged 17, was to be married to a boy from a neighboring village. Invitation cards had been sent to both families and other acquaintances. All five sisters had spent the entire week helping with the decorations, mehndi and rangoli. They were all excited because their mother and aunts dressed them in fine clothes and jewelry on the day of the wedding. By late evening, the procession from the groom's side had arrived, half drunk, at their village. All five sisters were told to sit on the stage during the wedding, with the youngest, only five years old, fast asleep on her father's shoulder. They were all married that day to boys related to the groom's family.*

*At the age of 13, after the start of her first menstrual cycle, Saraswati was sent off to her 22 year old husband's house. On her departure, her mother tearfully told her to "be a good girl". But no one, neither her own parents nor her in-laws, talked to her about sex or pregnancy. By the age of 15, Saraswati was pregnant for the second time. A year ago, her first child, conceived at the age of 14 had miscarried. She had not realized then that she was pregnant and her miscarriage had confused her. Her mother-in-law had found her crying in a pool of blood behind their hut and had had to explain the situation to her. Seven months into her second pregnancy, she developed complications and had to be rushed to the nearest health facility, two hours away. Saraswati and her child eventually never made it back home.*

Under international law, the term 'child marriage' is used to describe a legal or customary union between two people, when one or both parties are below the age of 18 years.

In India, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 defines a child as 'a person who, if a male, has not completed 21 years of age, and if a female, has not completed 18 years of age'.





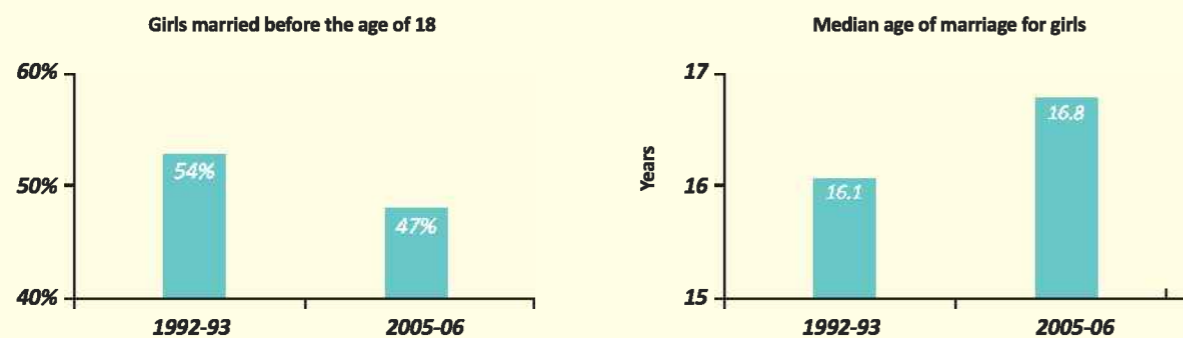
Saraswati's story is one of lost childhood, unfulfilled potential and violation of basic human rights. It is the cumulative result of multiple factors, key among which was her marriage as a child. In the minute or so it has taken you to read Saraswati's story, 11 more girls like her became child brides in India.

India accounts for 40% of the world's child marriages, a harmful traditional practice that denies children – both boys and girls – their basic rights to a healthy life, to equal opportunities for development, and to protection from abuse and exploitation. It places children in the adult institution of marriage, often without prior intimation or consent, forcibly depriving them of their childhood and imposing on them responsibilities that are beyond their age or due.<sup>1a</sup> Although boys enter into early marriage as well, the practice affects girls in greater numbers and with grave consequences for their health, education and livelihood prospects. While nearly half of all Indian girls are married before their 18th birthday, what is worse is that 22% bear children when they themselves are children.<sup>1b</sup>

### Ending child marriage in India: A work-in-progress

While child marriage in India is still extremely prevalent, some progress has been made over the last two decades:

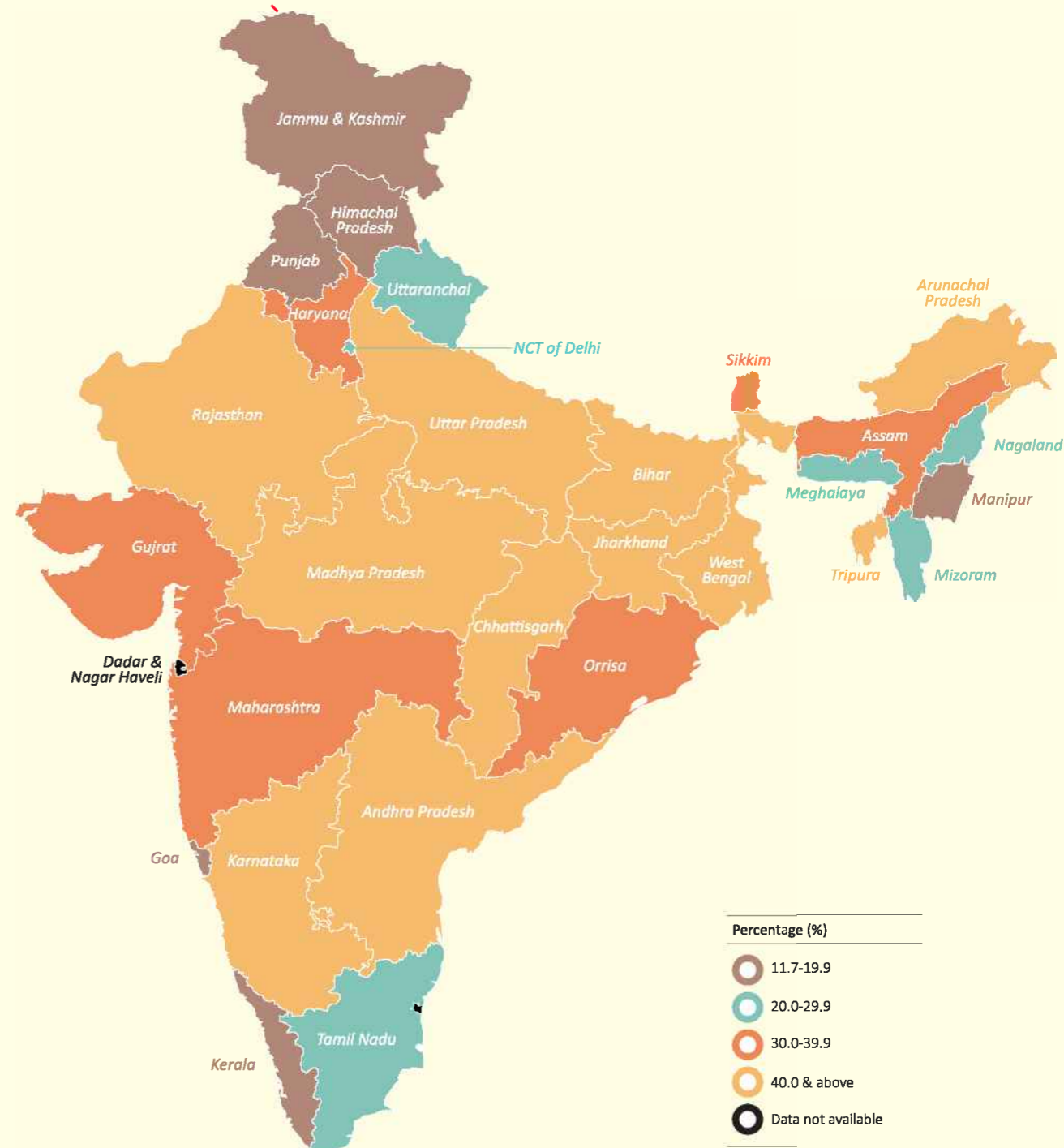
- Child marriage rates have decreased from the time of the first National Family Health Survey (1992-93) when 54% of women aged 20-24 years were married as children to 47% as per the last National Family Health Survey (2005-06).
- The median age at which girls are married has increased marginally from 16.1 years to 16.8 years in the same period.



Source: National Family Health Survey

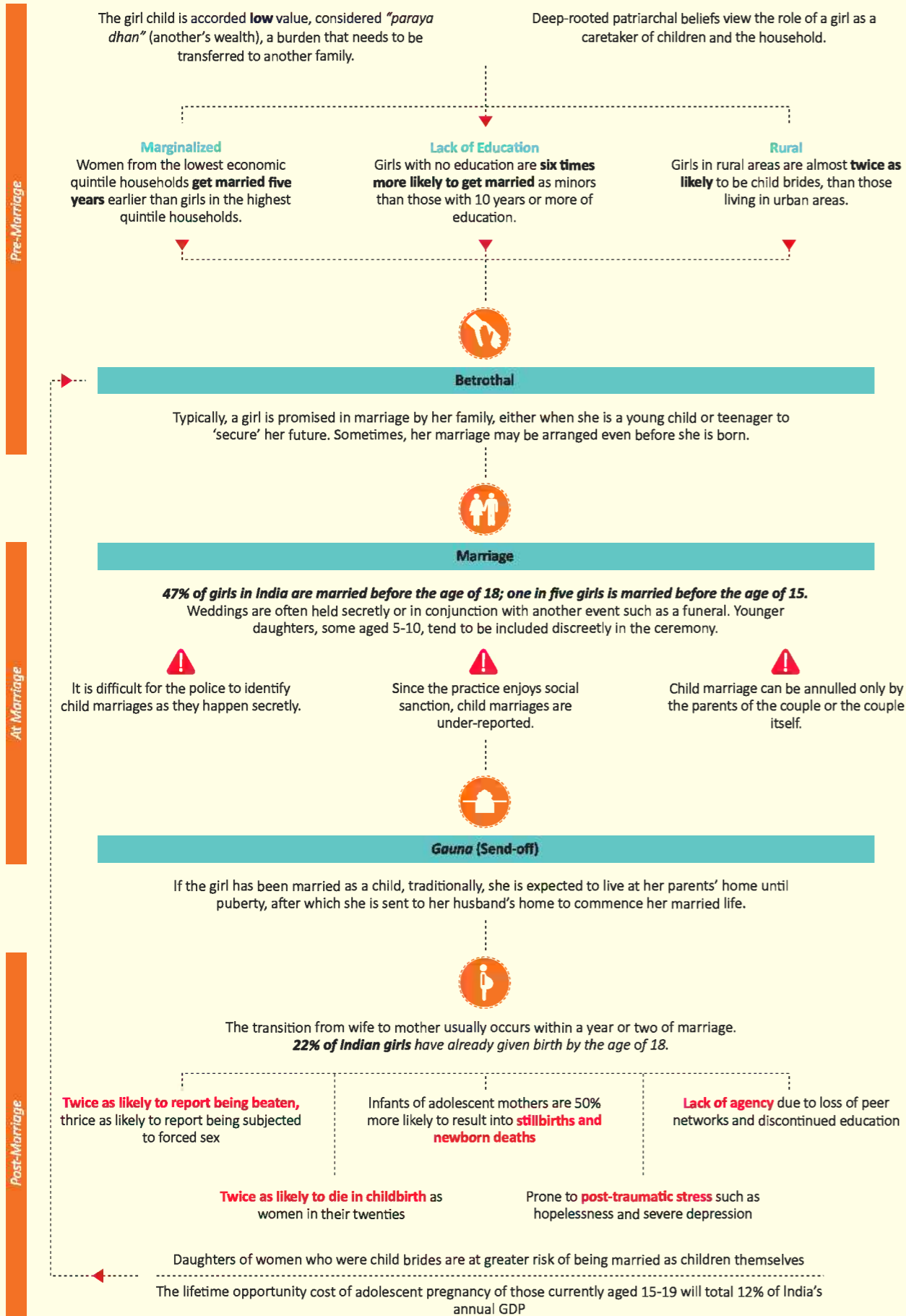
Nevertheless, the practice remains widespread. While child marriage is prevalent throughout India, in at least seven states – Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal – more than half of girls are married while legally still children. Girls are most vulnerable in the state of Bihar with nearly 70% of women in their early twenties reportedly married before the legal age.<sup>2</sup> The practice of child marriage is also more common in rural areas – around 48% of women currently married and aged 20-24 were married while aged under 18, compared to 29% in urban areas.<sup>3</sup>

Percentage of women 20-24 years old who were married or in union by age 18



Source: UNFPA database using DLHS and other household surveys

## The Big Picture: The journey of a child bride in India



### Tracing the journey of a child bride

The drivers that encourage the existence of child marriage are multiple and layered. They reflect a combination of poverty, lack of education, continued perpetration of patriarchal relations that facilitate gender inequalities, and cultural perspectives that enable the institution to persist. The practice of child marriage is driven by deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs about the role and value of girls, both within the family and in society. From an early age, a girl is conditioned to view her father, brother and future husband as a breadwinner, decision maker and head of the household. Conversely she is taught to undertake household responsibilities, support her husband unconditionally and bear sons to continue the family's lineage.

In Northern India, 'Khap Panchayats', informal but all-powerful village councils that often govern rural areas, have decreed that girls should be married as soon as they reach puberty to prevent social corruption and the influx of 'western values'.


Source: [www.huffingtonpost.com/siddharth-chatterjee/married-young-the-scourge\\_b\\_4560523.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/siddharth-chatterjee/married-young-the-scourge_b_4560523.html)

In addition to being molded in her stereotypical role, the girl child is often regarded as an economic burden. Families are forced to select which of their children they will invest in, due to lack of resources. Most often, they choose their sons, as they believe they will continue to live with them and support them in their old age. The daughter on the other hand is considered to be "*paraya dhan*" (i.e. the "wealth of another") and is expected to move to her marital home after she is married. Marrying her at an early age is a strategy for economic survival, as it ensures there is one less person to feed, clothe and educate.<sup>4</sup> The patriarchal mindset coupled with the burden of poverty results in parents placing scant value on their daughters and disregarding government laws and regulations to marry their daughters earlier than permissible.

Even when parents are prepared to delay their daughter's marriage, the lack of secondary schools in rural areas, the high risk of sexual exploitation while travelling to far-off schools, and the absence of employment opportunities for educated girls in these areas, all deter parents from investing time and money in their daughters. Equally, a girl living at home, alone, while her parents are out at work is also at risk of sexual assault. Finding themselves unable to safeguard their daughter's honor, which also determines that of the family, parents are eager to pass on her responsibility to someone else, not fully understanding the impact of this move on their daughter.

### Betrothal

Finding a suitable groom for their daughter as early as possible not only ensures the family's own survival but in their mind also secures her future. Betrothals occur at different stages depending on the customs of the state and community. They may take place before a child is born, as infants, young children or as teenagers. For example, it is quite common in Rajasthan for girls as young as five to be promised to boys their age or a few years older, while remaining completely unaware of what is happening to them. Sometimes, the girl is promised in marriage even before she is born, when two families agree to marry their yet unborn children if they turn out to be of different sexes.



Girls with no education are six times more likely to get married than those with 10 years or more of education.

Source: [www.hetv.org/india/nfhs/nfhs3/NFHS-3-India-Full-Report-Volume-1.pdf](http://www.hetv.org/india/nfhs/nfhs3/NFHS-3-India-Full-Report-Volume-1.pdf)

### Marriage

As the practice is illegal, child marriage typically takes place at night or in the early hours of the morning. Younger sisters, irrespective of their age are often married at the same ceremony as their elder sisters, to save money. Sometimes, other ceremonies such as funerals are used to formalize marriages, eliminating the cost of re-inviting and entertaining the same guests. Another method commonly applied to reduce expenses is the practice known as *atta-satta*, where a daughter is exchanged for a daughter-in-law, irrespective of her age.<sup>5</sup> According to the *mausar* ceremony, which mainly occurs in Rajasthan, upon the death of a family member, a marriage must be solemnized by the family within 13 days to transform the occasion from one of sorrow to one of joy, even if no family members are of marriageable age.<sup>6</sup> Families are only too eager to use such practices to marry a daughter early, as the younger she is, the less *dowry* or bride price they will be required to pay to the groom's family.

Dressed in finery, laden with jewelry and henna decorated hands, some child brides are too young to remain awake, instead falling asleep in their father's lap, clutching their toys while the ceremony takes place. Even when the girl is older, she generally remains unaware of the fact and significance of her marriage until the ceremony is over. Only when she is instructed to leave for her new marital home does she realize that she is married. Even then, her age and lack of agency provide little opportunity for her to question her parents' decision.

### Gauna (Send-off)

Traditionally in the northern states of India, when a girl is married as a young child she stays in her natal home till she reaches puberty. At that point, she is considered to be an adult, and therefore old enough to consummate her marriage and fulfill her marital duties. The *gauna* ceremony involves the physical transfer of the girl from her natal to her marital home and typically occurs soon after she begins menstruating. In most rural communities preserving the virginity of the girl until she begins living with her husband is sacrosanct, and is closely associated with her family's honor. A girl's sexuality is considered more as family property, than the girl's independent choice or right, to be protected and passed on to her marital family. In order to safeguard their daughter from pre-marital sex, consensual or forced – the family will thus seek to arrange her marriage early and move her to her marital home as soon as she attains puberty.

### Loss of Innocence: Life after marriage

For a child who becomes a bride, life changes completely without as much as a warning. One day she may be at home helping her mother with household chores. The next day she is told she must leave to live with her husband and his family – strangers, essentially. She is not allowed to go to school. She is separated from her friends, family and everything that is familiar to her. Along with an education and childhood being cut short, she is more likely to become a victim of domestic violence and suffer severe stress and depression. Sexual activity begins soon after marriage. Traumatic initiation into sexual relationships coupled with the social pressure on their young bodies to reproduce, particularly to produce male offspring, puts them and their children at grave risk of life-long ill health or even death. On average, a woman who has her first child before the age of 18 will go on to have seven children by the time she completes childbearing.<sup>7</sup> Having many children increases the likelihood of poor maternal, infant and child health.<sup>8</sup> In addition, large families are more difficult to feed, which reinforces the cycle of poverty, child marriage and early pregnancy.

In India one in five of all 20-24 year old women have given birth by the age of 18.<sup>9</sup> Motherhood in childhood occurs for several reasons: exposure to frequent, often forced sex; the pressure on a woman to 'prove' her fertility as soon as possible; poor awareness of family planning measures; ignorance of the effects of early pregnancy on a woman's health; and the inability to negotiate contraception use. Early pregnancies have significant consequences both for the mother – as her body is insufficiently mature to bear the physical burden of carrying a baby – and her dependent children.

“Child marriage is not only wrong, it is dangerous. It exposes a young girl to profound health risks from early pregnancy and difficult childbirth, and it exposes her baby to complications of premature birth.”

- Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF

**Maternal mortality and morbidity:** Possibly one of the worst effects of child marriage is that it results in early pregnancy and increased maternal mortality. Girls under 15 are 5 times as likely and girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die in child birth as women in their early 20s due to their emotional and physical immaturity.<sup>10</sup> High levels of anemia and malnutrition among adolescent girls in India, combined with the inability to seek and use adequate health care further compound the risk to their wellbeing.<sup>11,12</sup> According to the United Nations, complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death for girls aged 15-19 in developing countries.<sup>13</sup>

Girls under 15 are 5x as likely and girls aged 15-19 are 2x as likely to die in child birth as women in their early 20s due to their emotional and physical immaturity.

If the girl survives, she will probably experience some physical damage due to an obstructed labor. As a doctor at the Mahatma Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad said, “This 15 year old offers a classic example of what can go wrong if you have a baby too young. She has high blood pressure, and because her body is not yet fully developed, her pelvic passage is too small and the baby will get stuck. We shall have to carry out a caesarean.”<sup>14</sup> Girls unable to access medical facilities that conduct caesarian operations will often experience obstetric fistula, a debilitating condition that renders a woman incontinent, and in most cases, results in a stillbirth or the death of the baby within the first week of life.<sup>15</sup> In addition to these pregnancy related health issues, young married girls are at greater risk of infection from sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS than boys, as they are forced to give into sex with an older husband, governed by values that prohibit resistance, and are unable to access information and services that could help them protect themselves.<sup>16</sup>

**Child mortality and morbidity:** Stillbirths and newborn deaths are 50% higher among infants of adolescent mothers than among those of mothers between the ages of 20 and 29.<sup>17</sup> If the child survives, it will generally have a lower birth weight and exhibit growth retardation, due to the mother’s physical immaturity, and the fact that she is probably under-nourished.<sup>18</sup> This perpetuates a vicious cycle of malnutrition throughout adulthood and transmits physical, social and economic disadvantages from one generation to another. To make matters worse, their low household status means married girls cannot demand adequate nutrition for either their daughters or themselves. The risk of malnutrition is higher for children under the age of five years born to mothers under the age of 18, than for children born to women married after the legal age.<sup>19</sup>

**Violence and abuse:** Many parents believe that marriage will protect their daughters from sexual violence. This is an ironic expectation given that young, married girls are at greater risk of sexual and physical violence in their marital home.<sup>20</sup> A young, married girl has very low status and negotiating power, leaving her more vulnerable to abuse by her husband and other family members.<sup>21</sup> Husbands often initiate child brides into sex by force or coercion. Such children typically continue to experience frequent, non-consensual sex throughout their marriage.<sup>22</sup> A survey in Bihar and Jharkhand found that girls married before the age of 18 were three times as likely as those married later to report being forced to have sex without their consent in the preceding six months. Further, child brides were twice as likely to report being beaten, slapped or threatened by their husbands, than girls who married later.<sup>23</sup>

18 साल की लड़की  
21 साल का लड़का

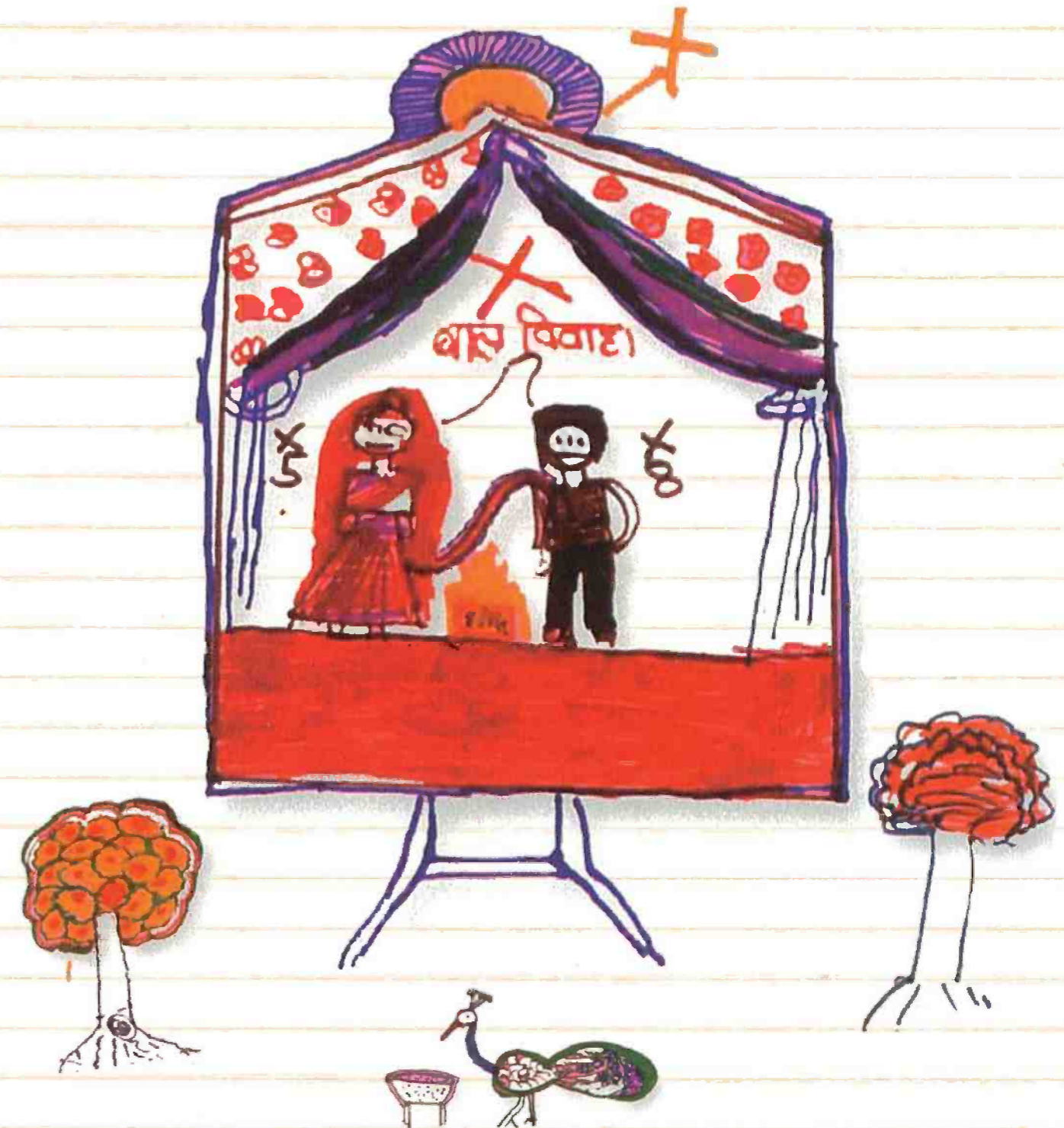


Photo credit: Urmul Trust

**Trafficked childbrides:** Rampant sex selection in certain areas of the country has led to a shortage of women of marriageable age. As a result, girls are being married at even lower ages. Unfortunately, the high demand for girls in affluent states such as Haryana, where sex selection is particularly common, has resulted in girls being trafficked for marriage from poorer states like Assam. This more recent development has exacerbated an already serious problem, as it not only involves the trafficking of girls for marriage but tends to affect younger girls who attract higher bridal prices. Trafficked child brides, usually unable to speak the language of the area to which they have been transported, can often neither escape nor report their situation to the authorities. As a result, they become easy targets for wife sharing among family members, for reselling in marriage to another, or for being further trafficked into prostitution.

**Psychological trauma:** Not surprisingly, child brides often show signs of child sexual abuse and post-traumatic stress, including feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and severe depression.<sup>24</sup> After marriage they leave their family and everything that is familiar to them. They lose their peer networks because they drop out of school, and are not allowed to leave their new homes to meet new peers or old friends. They are also denied any decision-making powers or independence and often have a low sense of self-worth. With marriage they also lose their childhood, and sometimes in a matter of months make the transition from being a child to being a married mother with adult responsibilities under the authority of a new husband and family. For most of these young brides, psychological trauma is inevitable.

**Inter-generational consequences:** Unfortunately the consequences of child marriage are not just felt over the course of a single life-time, as they are inter-generational.<sup>25</sup> Child marriage is a driver for early, multiple and complicated births. With more mouths to feed, and high medical expenses linked to early pregnancy, the financial burden on a married girl and her family increases, pushing her deeper into poverty. This increases the likelihood of a premature marriage for their daughters.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, studies show that daughters of women who were child brides are at greater risk of being married as children themselves, perpetuating cycles of poverty and disempowerment.<sup>27</sup>

**“Child marriage continues to be immersed in a vicious cycle of poverty, low educational attainment, high incidences of disease, poor sex ratios, the subordination of women, and most significantly the inter-generational cycles of all of these.”**

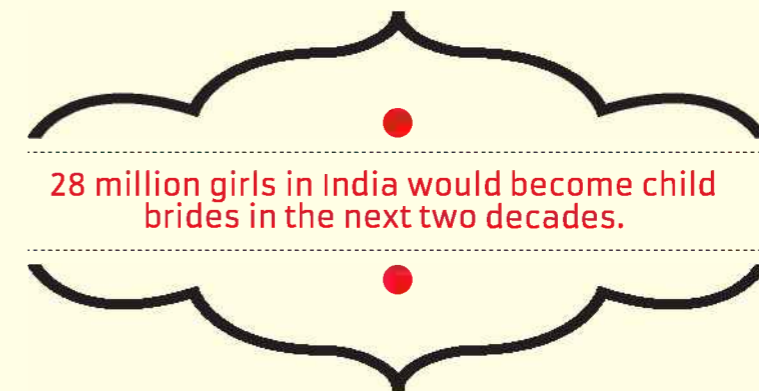
Source: [cis.uchicago.edu/sites/cis.uchicago.edu/files/resources/081118-Shulman\\_India-BackgroundReading.pdf](http://cis.uchicago.edu/sites/cis.uchicago.edu/files/resources/081118-Shulman_India-BackgroundReading.pdf)

#### The cost of inaction

*“According to decades of research, child marriages contribute to virtually every social problem that keeps India behind in women’s rights. The problems include soaring birth rates, grinding poverty and malnutrition, high illiteracy and infant mortality, and low life expectancy, especially among rural women.”<sup>28</sup>*

The evidence is clear: for girls, early marriage and pregnancy adversely affect their rights to education and health, to life opportunities and indeed, to life itself. It is time to end child marriage, simply for the sake of those who are subjected to it.

Yet, the costs of inaction extend far beyond the price paid by girls themselves. Negative consequences of early marriage impact families, communities, and the entire nation. In India alone, the cost of lost productivity due to adolescent pregnancies is \$7.7 billion a year.<sup>29</sup> The



**The cost of lost productivity due to adolescent pregnancies in India is \$7.7 billion a year.**

Source: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-10-30/news/43528697\\_1\\_adolescent-girls-pregnancy-young-girls](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-10-30/news/43528697_1_adolescent-girls-pregnancy-young-girls)

lifetime opportunity cost of adolescent pregnancy of those currently aged 15-19 will total 12% of India’s annual GDP.<sup>30</sup> What is worse is that these adverse effects are not confined to the mother; instead these extend to her children, continuing the cycle of poverty, deprivation and violation of basic human rights.

We know that the costs of inaction, in terms of unrealized rights, lost potential and development opportunities, far outweigh the expense of intervention. We also know the extent of the problem: as example, 28 million of the girls in India, born between 2005 and 2010, will become child brides by 2030.<sup>31</sup> Unless immediate measures are taken to address early marriage, it will continue to be the epicenter of numerous issues India is grappling with – sex selection, domestic violence, maternal and infant mortality, and disempowerment of women. As a nation we cannot afford to overlook the well-being and potential of these at-risk girls or the millions who are already married today. We need to act now.

#### Key takeaways

- Child marriage is an extremely widespread problem facing India today. 47% of girls aged 20-24 – amounting to 26 million girls – were married under the age of 18.<sup>32</sup> Further, 18% of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 15 years.<sup>33</sup>
- Child marriage is driven by deep-rooted beliefs about the role and value of a girl’s life. Gendered mindsets result in parents placing little value on educating their daughters, who drop out of school with limited livelihood prospects and no alternatives to early marriage. This allows stereotypical beliefs of a girl’s potential to continue unchallenged in rural areas.
- Child brides are at greater risk of sexual and physical violence in their marital home, and vulnerable to debilitating sexual and reproductive infections such as HIV. Girls under 15 are 5x as likely and girls aged 15-19 are 2x as likely to die in child birth than women in their early 20s.
- 22% of women in India aged 20-24 give birth before the age of 18 – infants of adolescent mothers are likely to be still born, remain malnourished and in case of a daughter, be married as a child thereby perpetuating poverty and disempowerment.
- Cost of inaction is significant – the lifetime opportunity cost of adolescent pregnancy of those currently aged 15-19 will total 12% of India’s annual GDP.

## My name is Selvi... and I am a driver!!

At the age of 14, Selvi was forcefully married off. Repeatedly abused by her husband, she ran away to her natal home for shelter. But her mother and family were unwilling. They beat her, taunted her and repeatedly asked her to return to her husband. All this forced Selvi to run away a second time; this time to end her life. She saw a bus speeding down her way, and wished to come under it; but just in the nick of time, she changed her mind and climbed the bus instead!

Selvi was helped by strangers, dissuaded from pursuing housework to earn a livelihood, and referred to the **Odanadi** shelter for girls. At Odanadi, Selvi was encouraged to move on from her past and trained to become a car driver. Since then, she has never looked back. From sleeping in her car to carrying chilli powder for protection, Selvi learned to manage in a male dominated field, as she drove strangers around, within and out of the city.

*She also married again; this time of her own choice. She calls it: my love marriage.*



Selvi at Dasra Philanthropy Week, 2014



Photo credit: Educate Girls

Cases of Rukhmabai and Phulmonee drew the government's attention to the issue of child marriage in the 1880's

## II. Key Players: Stakeholders involved in tackling child marriage

The issue of child marriage entered public discourse in India in the 19th century through two landmark cases that highlighted issues of women's choice and consent in marriage. These were the cases of Rukhmabai in Maharashtra and Phulmonee in Bengal.

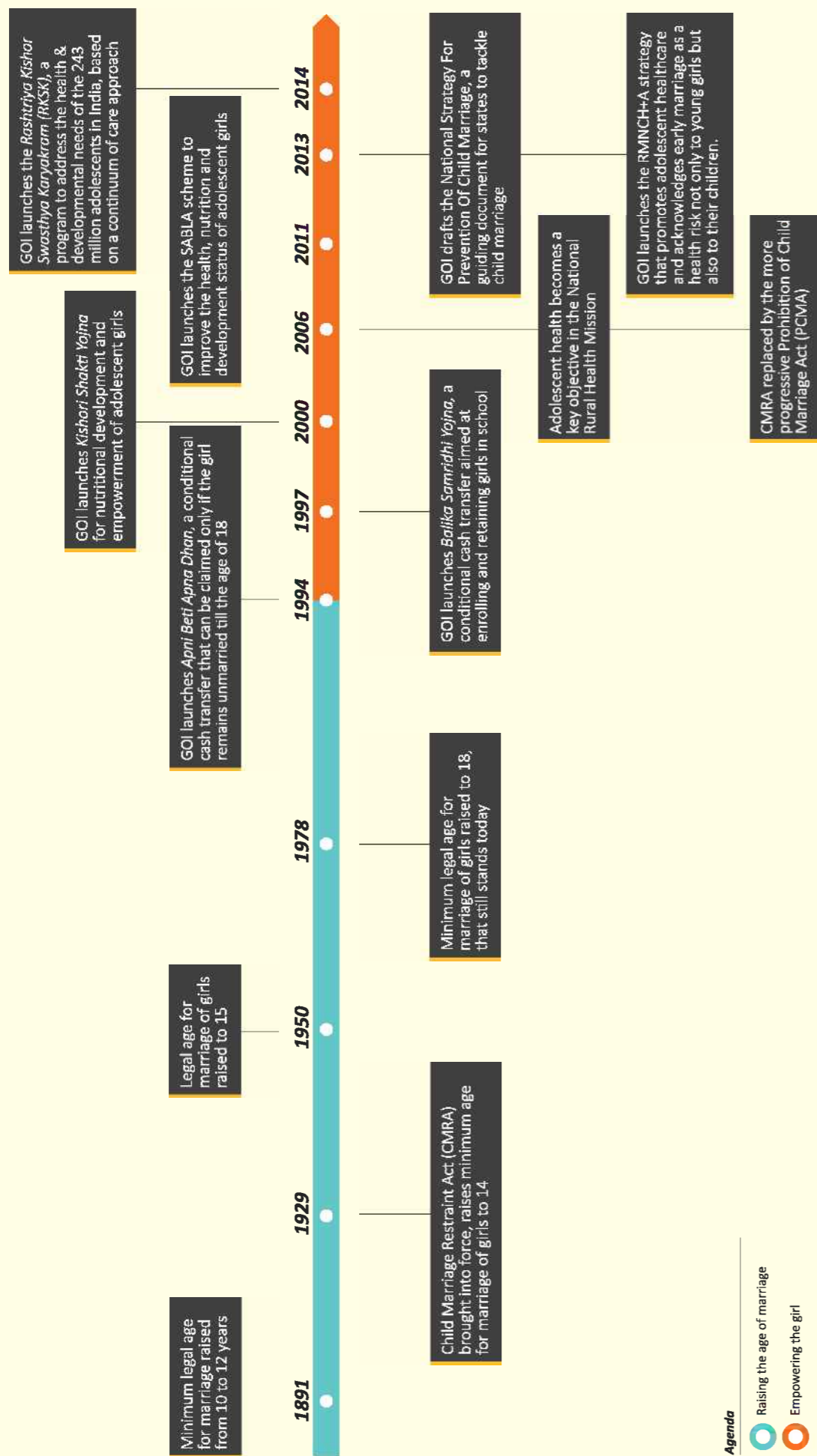
*In 1884, 22 year old Rukhmabai refused to consummate her marriage with her husband, to whom she was married at the age of 11. Retained in her natal house to complete her education, Rukhmabai soon realized the questionable character of her husband and did not wish to proceed with the marriage. He on the other hand wanted restitution of his conjugal rights, and filed a case against her demanding them. Rukhmabai defied the court's order to return to her husband, arguing that she would much rather go to jail than remain in an unwanted marriage that was solemnized at an age when she was incapable of giving consent. While the case ended in an out of court settlement, it brought to the fore previously unheard issues of women's rights and choice in marriage.*

*Rukhmabai's powerful demand for her rights was in stark contrast to the case of Phulmonee, who died of marital rape at the age of 11. This action was brought posthumously by her mother. In 1890, she filed a case against her son-in-law, Hari Maiti, demanding justice for the marital rape and death of her daughter. In arguing her case, she asked the court to consider the image of her daughter lying in blood succumbing to the injuries of forced intercourse. Since colonial laws penalized marital rape only for child brides of up to 10 years old, Hari Maiti was acquitted of marital rape and murder, and charged only with "rash acts". However, the case paved the way for the argument against the "normal" and religiously sanctioned practice of allowing intercourse with child brides, once they attained puberty. Both these cases exerted pressure on the government, which raised the legal age for marriage and consent to marry from 10 to 12, in the last decade of the century.*

Source: <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/2207/>

### The role of government

Public discussion on the cases of Rukhmabai and Phulmonee first drew the government's attention to the issue of child marriage. Subsequently, and particularly since the 1970s, the government's response to child marriage has generally involved legal reforms mainly focused on raising the age of consent and marriage. In 1994 it became a signatory to the United Nation's 'International Conference on Population and Development' Program of Action.<sup>34</sup> Subsequently, the government has made concerted efforts to introduce initiatives such as conditional cash transfers, and strengthen existing programs to help adolescent girls and their families delay marriage and pregnancies.



The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA)

The Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) of 1929 was framed and campaigned for by women’s organizations throughout India. These groups not only demanded that the legal age for marriage be raised, but also the imposition of punishments on those who break the law.<sup>35</sup> At the time, civil society played an important role in helping the government to better understand this complex issue, and to frame its own thinking and actions in the absence of any international dialogue. The CMRA was amended twice, in 1950 and 1978, increasing the minimum legal age of marriage for girls to 15 years and then finally to 18 years. Finally, in 2005 it was replaced by the more progressive Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) 2006.<sup>36</sup>

Snapshot: The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006

- The PCMA declares **child marriage a serious and non-bailable offence**. Girls below 18 years of age and boys below 21 years are considered children under the Act.
- To implement the law, each district is required to appoint a **Child Marriage Prohibition Officer (CMPO)**. CMPOs are empowered to “intervene and file petitions” before and after a child marriage takes place. They are responsible for taking the required steps to prevent the occurrence of child marriages in their district, and to ensure that those who break the law are prosecuted.
- **Courts have power to issue injunctions to prohibit child marriages** from taking place. If a marriage goes ahead it is considered null and void, as it is when a child is taken from his or her parents through illegal means, deceit, force or is sold or trafficked for marriage.
- The law **enables both grooms and brides to seek the annulment of a marriage** conducted in childhood within two years of becoming adults, or earlier, with the help of their guardians. Once a child marriage is annulled, the Act requires the provision of maintenance and accommodation for the girl by her husband and/or in-laws until she remarries. Children born of an annulled child marriage are deemed legal and their custody is decided based on the children’s best interests.
- The law decrees **imprisonment of up to two years and/or a fine of up to INR 100,000 (\$1,660)** for performing, conducting, abetting, promoting or permitting a child marriage. Those punishable include an adult male marrying a child, as well as parents and guardians, and any other person or organization (example, the police) that allows or facilitates a child marriage. Female offenders may be fined but cannot be imprisoned. **Any person can report a child marriage before or after it has occurred**, and any person with personal or reliable information of an impending child marriage can file a complaint.

Source: [http://www.unicef.org/india/Child\\_Marriage\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/india/Child_Marriage_handbook.pdf)

The new law on child marriage clearly represents a crucial milestone in the government’s response to the practice, not only due to its greater emphasis on prevention and prosecution but more importantly because of its focus on child protection. However, several operational problems exist that must be addressed if the Act is to protect children properly:

- **Over-reliance on community:** Currently, the law relies on the community to notify authorities of impending child marriages. However, community members are often strongly discouraged from taking action given the importance attached to marriage in most Indian communities, and the legal and financial repercussions for the girl’s family. The thought of subjecting a girl to the stigma of a broken marriage further reduces the motivation for community members to report an impending marriage.<sup>37a</sup>
- **Lack of CMPOs:** Only 15 out of 28 states have appointed CMPOs. Most often, the responsibility for enforcing the Act becomes that of the district collector, who does not regard its implementation as a major priority.<sup>37b</sup>



- **Police under community pressure:** Police and other officials are bribable and more commonly are subject to pressure from the community to turn a blind eye on child marriage. Where officials report a child marriage, communities have been known to retaliate with violence, intimidating those who might otherwise have notified the authorities.<sup>37c</sup>

In 2005, Shakuntala Varma, a supervisor under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), intervened to stop a child marriage, and was consequently threatened and attacked by various people resulting in her hands being severely injured.

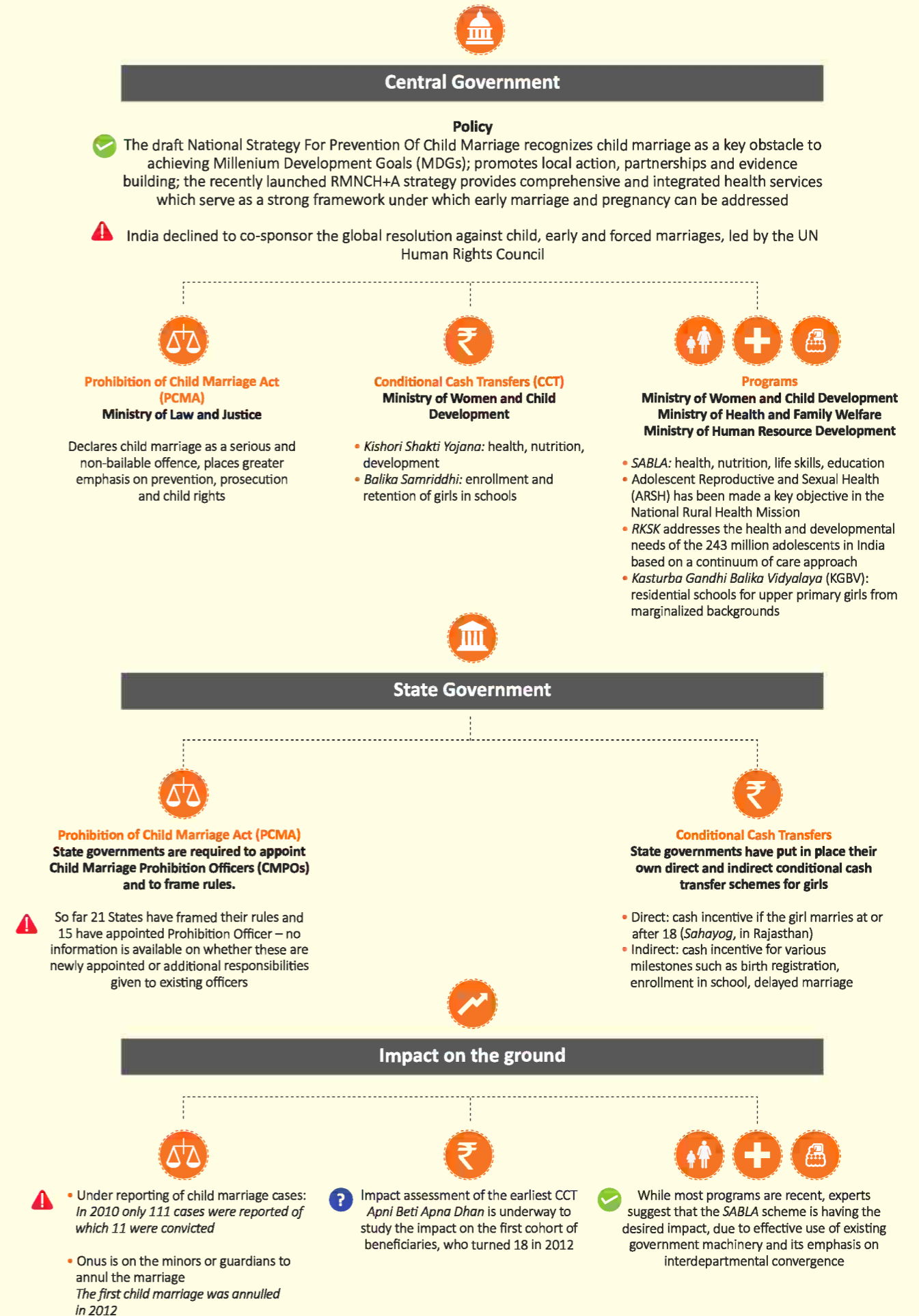
Source: [http://www.unicef.org/india/Child\\_Marriage\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/india/Child_Marriage_handbook.pdf)


- **Misplaced responsibilities:** The Act places responsibility on the minors concerned to seek the annulment of a wedding within two years of their reaching maturity, either in person or through their guardians-the very people who sanctioned their marriages in the first place. Although the first child marriage annulment in India occurred in 2012, it will be a long and difficult task to ensure that all minors are sufficiently empowered to demand the annulments of their own child marriages if they so wish.<sup>38 39</sup>



Photo credit: Sahayog India

## Deconstructing the government's efforts to tackle child marriage





Apart from updating the law to increase the legal age of marriage as well as to protect the rights of girls, the government has undertaken two separate initiatives to reinforce its commitment to girls' empowerment, education, reproductive rights, and gender equality:

- (a) Conditional cash transfer schemes
- (b) Health and development programs

#### *Conditional cash transfer schemes*

In the 1990s, the government launched various conditional cash transfer schemes (CCTs) that sought to delay early marriages. Some were directly linked to child marriage. For example, in several states where such marriages are widespread, parents are offered a cash incentive to marry their daughters after the legal age is attained. The Sahyog Scheme in Rajasthan provides families of backward castes with INR 5,000 (\$ 84) if the girl marries between the ages of 18-21, and INR 10,000 (\$167) if she marries after the age of 21. The scheme covers up to two daughters in a family.

Other CCTs such as the *Apni Beti Apna Dhan (ABAD)* scheme and the *Balika Samridhhi Yojna (BSY)* seek to address child marriage more indirectly. These seek to alter parents' behavior towards their daughters by incentivizing them to ensure their welfare throughout their entire childhood. Typically, in order to receive these cash incentives, parents must ensure births are registered, early immunization programs are completed, children are enrolled (and sometimes retained) in school, and that marriages take place only after the age of 18.

#### **Prerna**

In an attempt to encourage positive behavior change, GOI launched the conditional cash transfer scheme Prerna for BPL couples who have "broken the stereotype of early marriage, early childbirth and repeated child birth and have helped change the mindsets of the community". To avail its incentive, the girl should have married after 19 and the boy after 21 years of age. Their first child should be born only after two years of marriage. On meeting this condition, the couple receives INR 10,000 for a boy and INR 12,000 for a girl child. An additional incentive of INR 5,000 (boy child) and INR 7,000 (girl child) is provided if the couple ensures a gap of three or more years between their first two children, and if either parent voluntarily accepts a permanent method of family planning within a year of having their second child. The scheme is currently running in seven states of the country and has spent about INR 72 lakhs (USD 120,000) between 2010 and November 2013.

Source: <http://www.jsk.gov.in/PrernaStrategy.pdf>

Experts interviewed by Dasra reported that while CCTs may have a role to play in the absence of other positive interventions, they alone cannot address the problem.<sup>40</sup> Despite considerable political will supporting this model of intervention, the extent to which CCTs help delay marriage will only become apparent in the near future. An impact assessment is under way to study the first round of *Apni Beti Apna Dhan* scheme beneficiaries, who turned 18 in 2012.<sup>41</sup> Experts believe these measures will be successful, at least in the short-term, but will need to be supported by further measures designed to change behavior if they are to have any long-term impact.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Programs for health, education and empowerment of adolescent girls*

Most programs implemented by the government to address child marriage have focused on mitigating the negative health effects of this practice on young girls and their children. While some adolescent girl health programs like the *Kishori Shakti Yojna* did include an empowerment component, minimal emphasis was placed on it until the launch of the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls, known as the SABLA scheme.

Implemented through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's ICDS machinery, SABLA targets girls aged 11-18 in 200 districts of India. It focuses on improving nutrition and empowering adolescent girls. It comprises a range of activities from promoting awareness of adolescent reproductive and sexual health, nutrition and child care, to enabling girls to access opportunities for vocational training and support in returning to school. While the SABLA scheme is still fairly new, experts interviewed by Dasra felt it had succeeded in drawing girls into safe spaces for learning and exploring opportunities. In doing so, they had become more exposed to alternatives to marriage, and could access peer support necessary to stand up to their parents. Experts suggest that effective use of existing government machinery, such as ICDS, and collaboration between government departments, partly explain the successful implementation of the program.<sup>43 44 45</sup>

The government has a major role to play in addressing child marriage, given its sustainability, resources and ability to scale effective interventions. There is a growing consensus of opinion in the development sector that non-profit organizations should work alongside the government to hold it accountable, shape its thinking, and help it implement its laws and programs more effectively.

#### **The role of private foundations**

So far, international private foundations have been the most important stakeholders in the child marriage sector. By funding non-profit organizations, they have enabled the incubation of new models of intervention to tackle child marriage and have sustained and scaled successful initiatives. The four key private foundations in the child marriage sector are: the **MacArthur Foundation**, which pioneered support from private foundations for agencies dealing with child marriage in India; the **Ford Foundation**; the **Packard Foundation**; and the **Kendeda Fund**. Between 2011 and 2013, these four committed \$17.06 million to child marriage programming in India, and allocated a further \$33.16 million in multi-country grants, of which India's exact share is unknown.<sup>46</sup> These funds were directed towards a wide range of activities including research, advocacy, capacity building and technical assistance, network-building, influencing policy, monitoring and evaluation, grant-making, and promoting education and livelihoods for girls.

#### **The Kendeda Fund**

Regarding funding devoted solely to Indian projects, the Kendeda Fund, the sector's most recent entrant, has committed USD 15.3 million, representing 90% of total spending. It became involved in funding child marriage issues through its newly founded girls' rights portfolio, in August 2013.<sup>47</sup> Before committing funds to campaigning against child marriage, the Kendeda Fund financed environment sustainability issues in the US. Having only recently begun to participate in the sector's concerns, the fund has partnered with the international non-profit organization **American Jewish World Service (AJWS)** to provide grants to India. Currently, AJWS funds 18 grassroots organizations across India that work to empower girls and "hasten the end of child marriage" by addressing underlying social and economic causes. Significantly, the Kendeda Fund is one of only a few funding organizations that make unrestricted grants to small non-profit organizations.<sup>48</sup> This fact along with the amount of funds it has available, makes the Kendeda Fund a significant entrant for India's child marriage sector. Its entry not only holds potential for innovative interventions on the ground, but also for promoting institutional development of grassroots organizations.



Photo credit : Sarathi

Direction-setting is a crucial role often played by private sector funders. Among multi-country grants mentioned earlier, the Ford Foundation made the most recent and significant commitment of USD 25 million worldwide to the **Girls Not Brides (GNB)** alliance to ensure greater “visibility, resources and grounded solutions” to the problem of child marriage, while also providing “real alternatives for girls and communities.”<sup>49</sup> Since its commitment to GNB at the Clinton Global Initiative in 2011, the Ford Foundation has leveraged its relationships with the funder community, governments, and non-profit organization partners to create increasing momentum around the issue of child marriage. Its aim is to eliminate the practice within a generation.

While open to funding experimental interventions to address child marriage, private foundations also accord significant priority to their grantees’ monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes. This is often a challenge for non profits dealing especially with longitudinal change. Realizing this characteristic of their work, private foundations increasingly encourage their grantees to develop M&E systems well-suited to their pace of change, measuring progress rather than final impact. This is essential for non profits to know how they could improve, as well as to better represent their work in an increasingly competitive and growing non-profit sector.<sup>50</sup>

#### The role of multilateral and bilateral donors

To date, UNICEF and UNFPA have been the main participants in this category.

- UNICEF began to focus on child marriage with the passage of the United Nations Child Rights Convention in 1989, which mandated governments to accord a high priority to child protection issues. As part of its efforts to address child marriage, UNICEF works very closely with the government, and grassroots organizations. While providing financial support to organizations, UNICEF’s biggest contribution is the technical support it provides to governments and non-profit organizations to facilitate “a change in social norms and behaviors while also promoting institutional capacity and law enforcement.”<sup>51</sup> Pivotal to UNICEF’s strategy for addressing child marriage is its engagement with grassroots stakeholders. It attaches considerable importance to engaging community and family decision-makers, promoting education for girls, and ensuring effective behavior change communication.



#### USAID

USAID focuses on early marriage in India, within its broader focus on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual health. On the one hand it funds state level programs such as *UDAAN* in Uttarakhand and *Saloni Swasth Kishori Yojana* in Uttar Pradesh, to address the issue through behavior change communication, in-school interventions, delivery of health services for married and unmarried adolescents, as well as formation of peer networks. It also funds capacity building activities to ensure adequate execution of these programs. On the other hand, USAID is investing in evidence building by funding the evaluation of the national scheme, *Apni Beti Apna Dhan*, that seeks to delay marriage for girls across the country through conditional cash transfers. USAID is likely to become a lot more influential in the child marriage space internationally given the recent passing of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, 2013 which mandates inclusion of child marriage in its focus on international development.

Source: Personal Communication with USAID, 2014

- While UNFPA is relatively new to the child marriage sector in India, it has already become the agency responsible for managing efforts to address the problem of sex selection – yet another manifestation of the low value accorded to daughters in several parts of India. Leveraging its understanding of gender constructs, UNFPA addresses child marriage indirectly by responding to the problem’s causal factors – high vulnerability and limited opportunities. In contrast to UNICEF’s emphasis on community engagement, UNFPA is increasingly focused on upstream policy work.

There is a growing recognition among stakeholders that the underlying causes of child marriage are gendered norms and patriarchal mindsets, and that these need to be addressed if the issue is to be dealt with effectively. This has led to an increasing consensus that the community is central to change, and that it must be involved in any response to child marriage if efforts to tackle the issue are to have any lasting impact.

#### The role of international and national non-profit organizations

International non-profit organizations, such as **CARE**, **Action Aid** and **Save the Children**, play a variety of roles in the fight against child marriage. Their most significant contribution is their work in global level advocacy, to leverage long-standing networks and build new strategic alliances. Through their networks and campaigning, these organizations mobilize greater visibility and support for the issue, helping to build a sector around child marriage where responses are less fragmented and more complimentary. They also invest in research and evidence building, which in turn forms the basis for their advocacy both internationally and in specific countries. Organizations such as Action Aid and AJWS contribute to the field through sub-grants to local non-profit organizations, and by building their capacities.

National non-profit organizations work effectively with the government to develop policy frameworks, building capacity of government officials and mobilizing community support through grassroots outreach work. For example, the Indian non-profit organization **MAMTA** was consulted



to help devise the draft National Strategy for Prevention of Child Marriage, due to its experience and expertise in addressing adolescent issues. It has also recently begun capacity building initiatives with district and local government officials to tackle child marriage. **Breakthrough** ran a pilot project to mobilize community support against early marriage in three high prevalence districts of Bihar and Jharkhand. It convenes community members to discuss child marriage, and in particular, its adverse effects on their girls' rights, including their education and health. The highlight of this campaign is its focus on engaging men and boys, particularly the latter, so it can help them become agents for change and challenge traditional norms about the role and value of girls. In addition to its youth leadership program, Breakthrough also uses national mass media and street theatre to engage communities on the issue.<sup>52</sup>

**The role of academic and research institutions**

Research is critical to solving any problem effectively. Policy makers and practitioners need a rigorous understanding of the issue, its causes and impact, and recommended action strategies.<sup>53,54</sup> They also require an understanding of 'what works' in tackling child marriage and any gaps in implementation.<sup>55</sup> International institutions such as the **International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)**, **CARE**, **Plan International** and the **Population Council** all carry out research on child marriage. They use it to strengthen the evidence base and as an advocacy tool to delay marriage at national and international meetings.

In addition to generating research and evidence, academic and research institutions also offer monitoring and evaluation support to non-profit organizations and government programs that often lack the necessary in-house capacity. For example, ICRW is conducting a five-year impact analysis of the central government's *Apni Beti Apna Dhan* Scheme, which was the first to use conditional cash incentives to delay marriage in India. On the other hand, the Population Council is working with UN agencies to develop a generic framework to monitor the transformation and impact of child marriage programs. Given the multi-layered nature of the issue and the challenges involved in assessing change, this framework represents a significant contribution to the child marriage sector in India.

Although monitoring and evaluation support is provided by some academic and research institutions in India, these are neither accessible nor affordable for most non-profit organizations operating in this sector. Experts interviewed by Dasra stress the need to build this skillset in more academic institutions so that even grassroots non-profits, with small budgets, can afford quality monitoring and evaluation support, to bring more credibility to their work.<sup>56</sup>

**The role of the media**

Child marriage is a grassroots problem, most prevalent among rural and illiterate populations that often rely on verbal means to communicate knowledge and entertainment. It is therefore incumbent on local media to highlight positive role models that challenge the norm of child marriage, rather than spreading sensational news involving the elopement or rape of young unmarried girls. Exceptionally, the prime time soap opera, *Balika Vadhu*, ran counter to the media's usual coverage by not only portraying the dire effects of child marriage and the socio-economic factors that promote it, but more importantly, summarizing the lesson learnt from each episode, to ensure the message was transmitted clearly and effectively to its intended audience. Despite its strong social messaging, the soap has been a success. This clearly shows there is a huge market for positive messaging on child marriage and its underlying causes.

**Key takeaways**

- The government's response to child marriage has predominantly involved legal reforms that have focused on increasing the age of marriage. Since the mid-1990s, it has made concerted efforts to introduce initiatives such as conditional cash transfers, and to strengthen existing programs to support adolescent girls and their families in delaying marriage and pregnancies.
- Private foundations such as Ford, MacArthur, and Packard have played a vital role in promoting the issue of child marriage as a social ill, and funded non-profit organizations to address the problem on the ground. Most recently, the Kendeda Fund has been the largest source of finance, having committed USD 15.3 million to the issue of child marriage in India during 2013.
- Academic and research institutions such as ICRW and Population Council have been instrumental in providing crucial evidence of the extent of the problem and how to tackle it. This is critical in helping understand 'what works', and can be used as advocacy tools to influence policy and practice on the ground.
- The media is a powerful tool through which norms and beliefs about child marriage can be challenged. Local soap operas have done so by highlighting the harmful effects of child marriage on girls and promoting positive girl role models.

## Seizing every opportunity

A married girl at 6, a householder at 13, a mother at 15 and today, a student of General Nurse Midwifery in Bikaner city. Maghi never attended regular school although she attended a *balika shivir*\* when she was 9. Below the eligible age of 12, Maghi insisted on attending the *shivir* with her older sister; leading to a revision of the minimum eligible age for these camps. Her experience at the *shivir* not only sparked her interest in learning but also exposed her to the stories and strife of several other girls like herself. This exposure became her backbone through all the hardships she faced during her life. Soon after she was taken to her husband's house, Maghi realized that pursuing her education would be a struggle. This realization made her ill and she was sent back to her natal home to recover. Maghi clinched this opportunity to take her class 10 examination and cleared it with distinction. This was to be one of the many opportunities she seized despite knowledge of the opposition she would face. However, each success infused her with more confidence to address this opposition and convert to her side all those who once opposed her. Key amongst these converts is her husband. He once came to fetch her home when she was only 13, to bear the duties of a householder. Today, he encourages his wife to complete her education even though it means living alone in the city, away from the responsibility of their household and even their son.

\* Balika shivir: Non formal schools for girls, previously run by Urmul Trust to provide bridge courses to school drop outs.



### III. Priorities For Action: Cornerstones for addressing child marriage

In recent decades, the government, development agencies and non-profit organizations have made significant efforts to end the practice of child marriage in India. Decreasing child marriage rates indicate that these combined measures have been effective. Increased and sustained investment will only help further drive down the rates of child marriage in the country.

Given the multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon, addressing child marriage requires a comprehensive strategy targeting different issues and stakeholders, throughout the life of a minor girl, whether or not she is married. Moreover, considering the ramifications of child marriage for many development sectors, multiple entry points can be accessed to further efforts to eliminate the practice.

Based on evidence sourced from Indian and international literature, as well as through expert consultations, Dasra has identified four key priority ways of preventing child marriage and reducing its negative consequences:

1. Creating alternate life options for girls
2. Identifying and sensitizing gatekeepers
3. Promoting birth and marriage registration
4. Addressing the needs of adolescent brides



“It is useless to talk about prevention of child marriage if the girls have no alternative options for education and livelihood, and will continue to be seen as their parents’ liability and burden.”

- Panchali Saha, Child Welfare Committee, West Bengal

### Creating alternate life options for girls

48% of girls aged 20-24 in rural areas and 29% of girls in urban India marry under the age of 18.<sup>57</sup> While marriage remains pivotal to patriarchal communities across India, it is considered far more central to the lives of girls in rural communities. Limited exposure to alternative ways of thinking that challenge stereotypes and the lack of opportunities in their immediate surroundings, provide rural communities with minimal impetus to consider different alternatives for daughters.

Evidence from research and other programs suggests that **exposure to the alternative potential of daughters, outside the household**, often helps decision-makers to advocate for change.<sup>58</sup> For example, if a girl is doing well in secondary school, a mother may seek to persuade the rest of her family that she should remain in the education system, and pursue an alternative life for herself. Enabling aspirational thinking among girls and their families, as well as offering them safe spaces to explore alternative options, is increasingly being acknowledged by donors, non-profit organizations and government agencies as a powerful strategy to delay marriage.<sup>59 60a</sup>

#### Beginning with education

Both Sri Lanka and the state of Kerala in India have a relatively high age of marriage.<sup>60b</sup> They also have something else in common that has contributed to this phenomenon: both have given high priority to education. Schooling, particularly at secondary level, remains the single most important predictor of age at marriage. According to a study by ICRW, girls engaged in secondary education are 70% less likely than their uneducated counterparts to marry early.<sup>61</sup> They will also probably delay childbearing, space pregnancies, and raise healthier and better-educated children. It is therefore critical to both enroll and retain girls in school, especially post-puberty, and ensure that they are allowed to learn and grow beyond their traditional roles.

Schooling protects against marriage for at least two reasons. Simply being in school helps ensure girls continue to be regarded as children, and therefore not marriageable. Outside of the home, schools can be seen as safe spaces for girls. Consequently, as it becomes a socially acceptable alternative, school attendance helps change norms about early marriage. Additionally, schooling helps girls develop social networks and acquire skills and information. This not only exposes them to other options beyond their own households but also contributes to their ability to pursue those opportunities. Each successive year of secondary schooling increases the girl's chances of being employed, boosting her earning potential by 15-25%.<sup>62</sup>

*In developing countries, seven or more years of education delays a girl's marriage by four years. Moreover, each successive year of secondary schooling increases the girl's likelihood of being employed, boosting her earning potential by 15-25%.*

Source: [www.girlsnotbrides.org](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org)

#### School enrollment in Malawi reduces probability of early marriage and pregnancy

In Malawi, a southeastern country in Africa, the effects of a small cash transfer to parents on re-enrolment of their daughters, was significant. Not only did the enrollment increase by 2.5 times a year after the program's introduction, the probability of marriage declined by over 40% and that of pregnancy by 30%.

Source: <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/1813-9450-5089>



Photo Credit: Breakthrough

#### Leading to employment

The empowering effect on women of engagement in paid work is well documented in several studies.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, to reduce the incidence of child marriage, socially valued roles for women must expand beyond those of being a wife and mother. Broadening opportunities for women to include employment also makes it meaningful for parents to invest in a girl's education. A study conducted by the non-profit organization **MAMTA** revealed that 97% of family members surveyed – elders, parents, brothers – considered 'employment opportunities' to be the most promising strategy to delay marriage for their daughters.

**In Bangladesh, young women's entry into the export garment industry has boosted their value in the eyes of their families and potential husbands. Despite long working hours, most garment workers can negotiate some autonomy with their own families as a result of earning. Later on, their experience of financial self-reliance gives them greater confidence as wives.**

Source: [www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf)

According to a South Asian study undertaken by ICRW and Plan Asia to understand successful interventions in the child marriage sector, the promotion of vocational and skill-based training for women was thought likely to have a positive impact for both unmarried and married women. For the unmarried, it helps to delay marriage. If the girl is engaged in paid work, her family tends to delay her marriage, either because they rely on her income or because they are willing to wait until they find a husband who is 'worthy' of their daughter. For the married, it acts to mitigate some of the negative effects of child marriage, giving the girl a stronger position in the marital home, and reducing the likelihood that she will suffer domestic violence.

Clearly, the education to employment continuum does not just offer a corrective solution to preventing child marriage but an enabling one that opens many new windows of opportunity for adolescent girls, allowing them to explore and achieve their potential. While initiation of the process requires certain minimum levels of support from the community, the evident transformation of girls through the continuum acts as a strong behavior change strategy, weakening resistance by increasing demand for this alternative trajectory.

#### Identifying and sensitizing gatekeepers

Most cases of positive change in relation to marriage involve gatekeepers, whose strong convictions and ability to stand their ground enables the girl to choose an alternative to early marriage, despite household and community norms.<sup>64</sup> <sup>65</sup> Examples include a father who understands his role in protecting his daughter against the dangers of child marriage; a young man who decides to challenge his sister's marriage; a grandmother, who has experienced the negative consequences herself and decides not to let her granddaughter encounter the same; or a community leader that leads by example. It is therefore critical to identify and engage those gatekeepers who significantly influence a girl's life choices.

*Fathers and brothers:* Fathers, or other men in the family, often initiate marriage arrangements for their daughters, and take decisions regarding when and whom the daughter will marry. A recent needs assessment commissioned by **World Vision** in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, to inform the development of an intervention to engage fathers to end child marriage showed that they play a key role in ending child marriage.<sup>66</sup> Girls reported that sensitizing fathers to the health implications of child marriage and the importance of education is critical in helping them decide to delay their daughters' marriage. Moreover, according to agencies such as DFID, UNFPA and USAID, it is equally important to reach out to boys to encourage equitable gender norms from a young age.



*"I get a lot of offers and pressure to marry off my daughter but I disagree, telling them that my daughter doesn't have the capability to understand what marriage is; moreover, she has the right to decide where to marry so when she will become about 18 to 20 years then we will see."*

- Father, District Bikaner, Rajasthan

Source: [www.icrw.org/files/publications/Delaying-Marriage-for-Girls-in-India-UNICEF-ICRW.pdf](http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Delaying-Marriage-for-Girls-in-India-UNICEF-ICRW.pdf)

This conditioning should cause them to become agents of change within their communities as they grow into their decision-making roles as brothers, husbands and fathers.

**Older women:** Women must be recognized as more than victims or at-risk persons. Since they are closest to the problem, they are in a position to advance their daughters' and grand-daughters' rights and well-being. For example, in southern Senegal in West Africa, the openness of grandmothers to questioning the traditions they grew up with has been fundamental to the World Vision project's success. When it began in 2008,

girls on average married at the age of 15.6 years. By late 2010, this had increased to 17.5 years, a significant achievement.<sup>67</sup>

**Religious and community leaders:** Although a recent survey by UNICEF, on violence against children, does not directly examine the role of religion in perpetuating child marriage, it shows that the practice continues due to long standing cultural values and traditions. Religion often underlies and informs this behavior.<sup>68</sup> Existing laws are frequently poorly enforced or superseded by customary and religious laws in India. To ensure that these customs are not used as an excuse for early marriage, it is crucial to mobilize religious heads and community leaders in panchayats to oppose the practice of child marriage. For example, non-profit organization **Jan Jagran Santhan** and **Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC)** formed the Inter Religious Priest Forum (IRPF) in Bihar that brought together religious leaders from multiple faiths, to deliver messaging against trafficking and child marriage to their respective followers. Members of the forum also act as catalysts of change, regularly meeting other leaders of their respective faiths to sensitize them and build a network for reporting potential child marriages to the forum. Where sensitization has not reached or impacted, IRPF members act as a pressure group, denying ceremonial/ritualistic approval to child marriage and ensuring priests do the same. Having been acknowledged as a high potential strategy to promote behavior change within the community by UN agencies and the government, it is being adapted by several non-profit organizations within the country and the region.

The impact of social sanctions against child marriage is best demonstrated by the panchayat of the Vattamuthampatti village in Tamil Nadu. Efforts undertaken by panchayat leaders have included enforcing resolutions, engaging with parents, and empowering adolescents in schools. Their concerted efforts have led to the village being declared free of child marriage, a year after it banned the practice.<sup>69</sup>

### **Panchayats move to end child marriage in Maharashtra**

88 panchayats in the Vidarbha region of eastern Maharashtra have resolved to ban child marriage in their villages. The impact has been immediate, with 18 families cancelling the weddings of their minor daughters in the first month. The state government had launched a child rights and protection movement in the area in association with UNICEF and local non-profit organizations. The campaign to end child marriage gained momentum within this larger movement. "The number of girls married off at 15 or 16 years of age is too high. In some communities, it is a common practice even when the girl is 13 or 14 years old," said a government officer attached to the Child and Welfare department.

Millind Joshi, the *sarpanch* (head of the *panchayat*) of Tarnoli village said his *panchayat* has decided to take action if the resolution was not followed, adding, "We will be following the community closely. Violators will be booked under the provisions of the Act."

Source: [www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/mumbai/88-panchayats-move-to-end-child-marriage-in-yavatmal/article1-1015458.aspx](http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/mumbai/88-panchayats-move-to-end-child-marriage-in-yavatmal/article1-1015458.aspx)



### **Promoting birth and marriage registration**

Birth registration is a child's first fundamental right. It ensures that the child is given an identity at birth and regarded as part of society. Birth registration is vital to secure the recognition of every person before the law, to safeguard the protection of his or her rights, and to ensure that any violation of those rights does not go unpunished.

Indian law requires that all new-born children be registered within 21 days of birth. However, as per the Countdown to 2015, 59% of Indian births remain unregistered.<sup>70</sup> In the context of addressing the issue of child marriage, ensuring parents register births is important in helping to prevent the practice and ensure the girl-child and her family can access various welfare schemes.

Birth registration provides proof of age. Using such information, underage marriages can be identified and halted and those abetting them punished. In rural areas where birth certificates are often non-existent or not properly recorded, many parents resort to falsifying girls' ages. In Bangladesh, for example, stakeholders ranging from religious leaders to parents and district officials emphasize that the lack of birth registration enables the age of girls and boys about to be married to be falsified easily, while those tasked with enforcing the law can more readily turn a blind eye.<sup>71</sup>

Proof of a child's age is a prerequisite not only for the effective enforcement of legislation, but to establish its capacity to claim rights. While birth registration does not by itself guarantee education, health, protection or participation, it can help marginalized girls qualify for and avail themselves of these fundamental rights. For example, targeted government schemes require the presentation of a birth certificate as proof of age to enroll a girl-child for resulting benefits. Such schemes, including *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, guarantee free education and conditional cash transfers such as the *Ladli Yojana* and *Apni Beti Apna Dhan*, which are intended to increase the social value of the girl-child.

Apart from using birth registrations, some countries are also resorting to creative methods including using marriage registration systems to provide young people with reproductive health information. In Mexico a statement is required from a doctor or social worker indicating that a couple has discussed reproductive health matters before a marriage license can be obtained. Meanwhile, in Indonesia marriage counselors from the Islamic marriage registry system have themselves been trained as reproductive health educators.<sup>72,73</sup>

While providing legal status to a marriage, marriage registration also helps young brides to enforce their marital rights, enabling them to take their husbands to court should they want a divorce, or to obtain a court order to protect them from violence in their own home. Moreover, in the absence of proper birth registration, registering marriages provides another opportunity for girls to enter the system and be counted as eligible for services connected with child birth, family planning and other healthcare issues, and also access food and nutrition, employment and other opportunities.

*Electronic birth registration is regularly cited as an effective tool to prevent early marriage in Bangladesh, Niger and Somaliland. Women repeatedly emphasized the importance of proof of age as a means of delaying marriage, where civil law includes an age of consent.*

Source: [www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/press-reports/\\$file/Untying-the-Knot\\_report.pdf](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/press-reports/$file/Untying-the-Knot_report.pdf)

### **Mandated birth dates on wedding invitations helps to prevent child marriages in Rajasthan**

Child marriages are still widespread in the state of Rajasthan in India. To prevent them, the state government issued a directive in March 2013 requiring that the birth dates of the bride and groom be printed on the wedding invitations.

According to the government directive, all printing press owners are required to view birth certificates provided by the families of the bride and groom before printing wedding invitations. If the owner finds that either the bride or groom is not of legal age for marriage, he must decline the print order and report the proposed wedding to the respective district administration. Owners who disobey these orders will face arrest and six months imprisonment, and will also be fined INR 1,000 (\$18).

*“Press owners have been asked to submit a copy of the invitation card for each wedding taking place in the respective district administration. These wedding cards will be scanned and checked,”* the officer of the welfare department for women and children said.

The project was launched on a pilot basis in the Bharatpur district of the state in April 2013. According to the officer, *“The results were great. About 50 child marriages were prevented in the past year. Now it has been implemented across the state.”*

Source: <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/world/birthdates-on-wedding-invitations-to-prevent-child-marriages-361500.html>

*ASHISH Gram Rachna Trust (AGRT), a non-profit organization based in Maharashtra, India provides health education and assessments to adolescent girls, including child brides. Between 2003 and 2012 this program successfully delayed the age of first conception from 15.8 to 18 years amongst this group of young women.*

Source: Personal communication with ASHISH Gram Rachna Trust, 2013

compelling. Child brides have been and continue to be an underserved population in the fight to end child marriage. While the importance of preventing the practice cannot be underestimated, in countries such as India where it is culturally engrained, efforts seeking to end it often require considerable time to gain political traction and social acceptance. It is therefore crucial to simultaneously address the unique needs of child brides to mitigate the negative effects of child marriage, and to improve young women's health and well-being.

### **A national survey in India discovered that as many as 30% of women aged 15-19 wanted to delay their next birth but were not using contraception**

Source: <http://www.poline.org/node/303561>

It is a well-established fact that births to adolescent brides are often unplanned.<sup>76</sup> A study in Ahmedabad, India found that most married adolescents reported that their first pregnancy was unwanted.<sup>77</sup> Providing crucial information and contraceptive material targeted at married adolescents can fulfill this unmet need for family planning services. Emphasis on delaying child birth, child spacing, and fewer pregnancies can significantly mitigate negative health consequences such as infant and maternal mortality. Delaying the first birth also results in fewer pregnancies. In developing countries, a woman who has her first child before the age of 18 will have an average of seven children by the time she has completed childbearing.<sup>78</sup>

Moreover, connecting child brides to multi-sectoral programs such as formal or non-formal education, peer groups, and skill building activities can enable them to develop greater autonomy. Such initiatives help married adolescent girls to improve partner communication and support, participate in household decision-making, become financial contributors, and connect to other community groups, reducing their isolation and increasing their empowerment.

Reaching married adolescents can be cost efficient, may be introduced at scale, and is sometimes less controversial than initiating Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) programs for unmarried young people. **Pathfinder International's Prachar** program in Bihar established that “culturally appropriate and community-based communication programs”, that target youth and those that influence their decision-making, can significantly increase demand and use for contraception.<sup>79</sup>

### **Key takeaways**

Dasra has identified four key priority areas through which child marriage in India can be addressed and its negative impact mitigated:

- 48% of girls aged 20-24 in rural areas and 29% of girls in urban India are married before the age of 18, mainly due to the lack of alternatives to early marriage, especially in rural areas. Providing girls with the ‘education to employment continuum’ represents an enabling solution, allowing them to explore life choices other than marriage.
- It is critical to engage gatekeepers who significantly influence a girl's life choices – fathers and brothers, older women within the family, and religious and community leaders. Evidence shows that most cases of positive change regarding marriage involve gatekeepers, whose sheer determination to stand their ground enables the girl to choose an alternative to early marriage.
- 59% of all births in India remain unregistered. Birth registration is not simply proof of age. It also plays a significant role in preventing child marriages and ensures that the girl-child and her family can access welfare schemes.
- A study conducted in Ahmedabad, India, revealed that most married adolescents reported that their first pregnancy was unwanted. In addition to preventing child marriage, it is crucial to address the unique needs of child brides to mitigate the negative effects of child marriage and improve their health and well-being.



## Empowered & empowering ...through education

13-year old Mousumi Majumdar was married against her wishes. On the night of her marriage, her husband came drunk and began tugging at her clothes without sharing as much as a word. When she refused to sleep with him, Mousumi was sent back to her natal home, where she was beaten up by her own family, ridiculed by the community, and chased out of her home and neighborhood. With nowhere to go, Mousumi kept returning home in search of food and shelter. After several attempts she was finally allowed to stay on the condition that she would earn to sustain herself. Forced to become domestic help, Mousumi soon became overworked and so desperate for relief, that she consumed poison to end her life. While the attempt was unsuccessful, it led to the community backing off. Mousumi took up work as a receptionist, where she met many people, one of whom helped her resume her education. She then joined and became a regular member of a community youth group supported by **Thoughtshop Foundation**, where she felt accepted and learned about her body and rights, as a result of which she was able to interact more openly with others. An improved sense of self also empowered her to make her own life choices. She began to conduct workshops for children to develop their confidence and self-reliance through the use of games and a strong support system. Mousumi is now in her first year of college and plans to study law so that she can prevent others from going through the neglect and violation of rights that she suffered as a child.

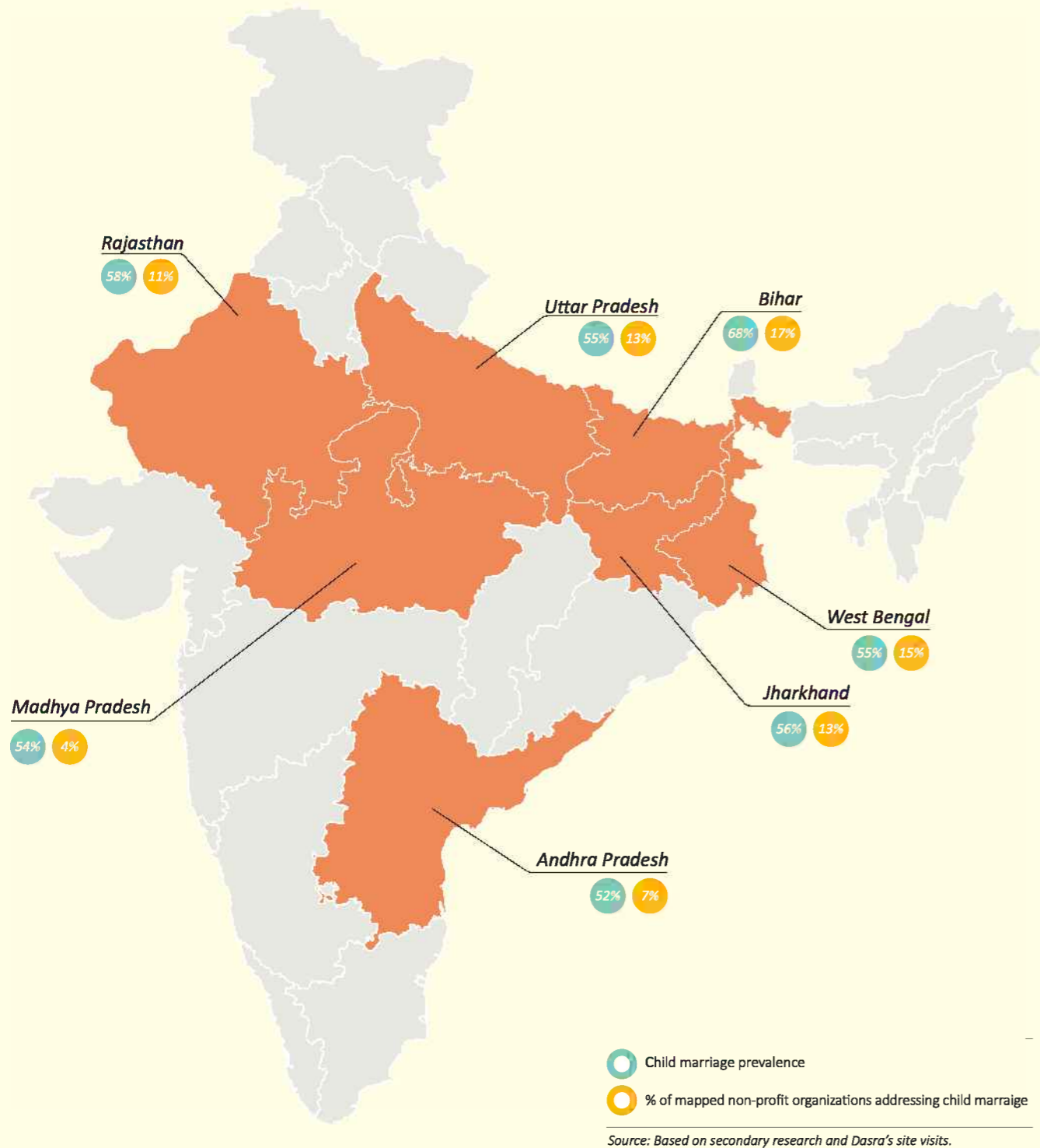


#### **IV. Painting The Picture: Key insights into sector trends**

Dasra interacted with a wide range of stakeholders – government, development agencies, impact assessment experts, academia and non-profit organizations – during the course of its research. It also mapped over 300 non-profit organizations to identify those working to address child marriage in India and better understand the interventions being undertaken and practical issues faced on the ground. This section highlights key characteristics of 30 non-profit organizations that are concertedly focused on addressing child marriage. Further, it provides insights into challenges and opportunities for non-profit organizations and funders based on expert interactions and site visits.

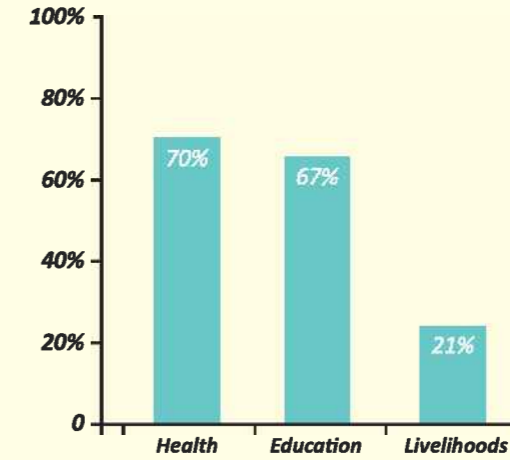
**Most non-profit programs operate in states where child marriage is most prevalent**

Fortunately states with the greatest prevalence of child marriage also record the highest incidence of non-profit programs. The map below shows highest level of activity in states such as Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. Significantly however, very few non-profit programs deal directly with child marriage in Madhya Pradesh, a state with 54% prevalence of child marriage. Consequently, funders thinking of establishing new child marriage programs should consider doing so in this state.



**Non-profit organizations must place greater emphasis on secondary education**

Ending child marriage is a long-term objective for stakeholders. Dasra's sector mapping revealed that non-profit organizations are working to achieve this objective through a range of approaches – health, education and provision of livelihoods are key among these.

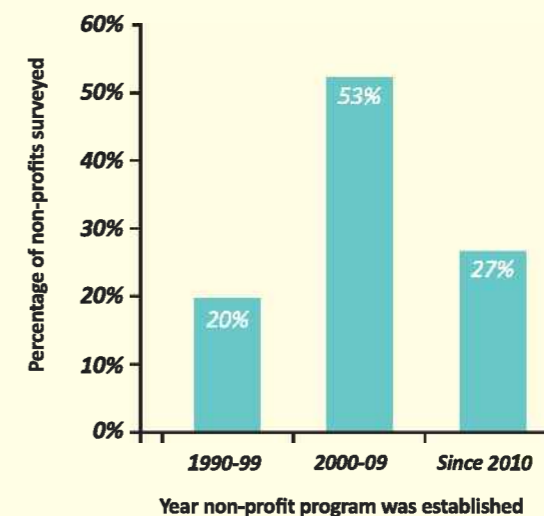


Source: Based on Dasra site visits to non-profit organisations

Child marriage programs in India have emerged largely from a reproductive health framework, which has resulted in many non-profit organizations addressing the problem from a health perspective. While education is fast catching up as a critical intervention, experts interviewed by Dasra stress the need for retaining girls in secondary school to prevent child marriages. This is the stage when most girls drop out and are married off. If retained in school and provided quality education, secondary schooling could provide girls the space to explore and the capacity to work towards their aspirations.

**80% of non-profit organizations began child marriage programs after 2000**

Although the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in 1929, the issue of child marriage has only received attention from the Indian development sector in the past 15 years. Dasra's sector mapping, as shown in the following chart, reveals that majority of programs currently addressing child marriage have been initiated since 2000. Experts interviewed by Dasra cite this fairly recent focus on the issue as the main reason for smaller budget sizes devoted to this issue. This is also why there is only limited information regarding the impact of most child marriage programs in India today.



Source: Based on Dasra site visits to non-profit organisations

**Funders and non-profit organizations must prioritize impact assessment to prove and improve**

While various approaches and interventions to delay marriage and pregnancy appear to be working, very few non-profit organizations currently assess the impact of their own activities. It is therefore difficult to determine which activity or activities are most effective on the ground. Dasra's interactions with various practitioners, funders and experts reveal a consensus regarding the need to move beyond anecdotal evidence to more concrete indicators of progress and impact, in order to understand what works and where investments should be made. As ending child marriage is a long-term goal, non-profit organizations must agree to build monitoring and evaluation costs into their budgets right at the start and develop a framework that measures their progress through time. It also means that funders need to provide necessary financing for such activities.

**“Donors do not always want to see randomized controlled trials as evidence. We may not want evidence necessarily of success but of what was learnt.”**

Dipa Nag Chaudhary, MacArthur Foundation, Dasra workshop 22-25 November, 2013

Still, many interventions are complex. Frequently, they target several issues, the evaluation of which can be expensive and time-consuming. In addition, non-profit staff members are often unfamiliar with concepts such as the theory of change, log frames, and impact indicators used by international funders. It is therefore vitally important that donors use their expertise and knowledge to help non-profit organizations build capacity to do so by co-developing plans for monitoring and evaluation that are simple, cost-effective and relevant for the organization beyond specific funding cycles.

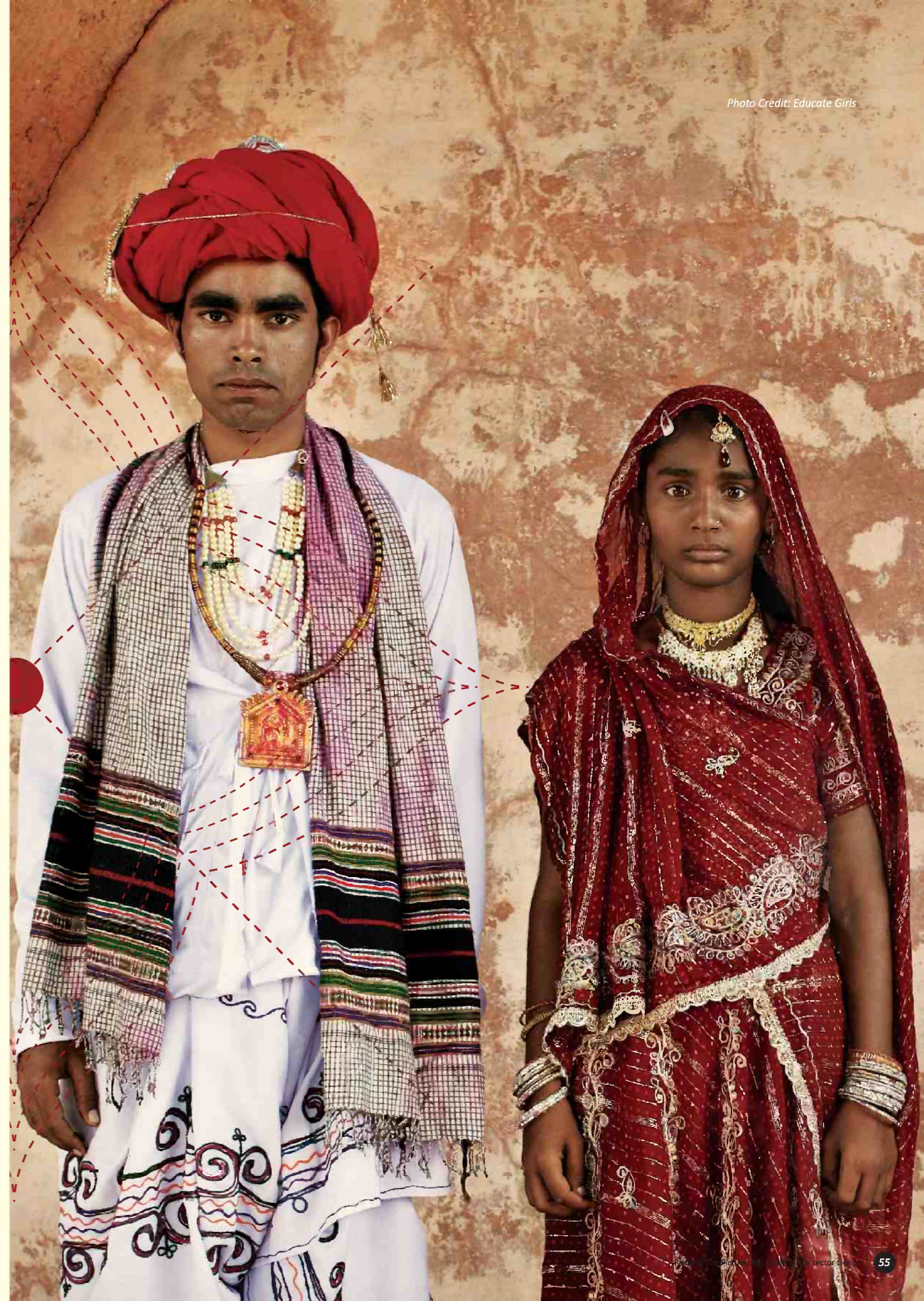
**Funding cycles must be extended – individually and collectively**

Addressing the issue of child marriage requires changes in deep-rooted attitudes and beliefs held by individuals and communities. Currently, donors investing to address the issue of child marriage in India are funding non-profit organizations for an average of 2-3 years. Considering the longitudinal nature of change, there is a growing realization among donors and non-profit organizations that such a period is too short to effect behavior change. Also, the nature of intervention requires non-profit organizations to track each girl and her life choices through adolescence and beyond, to demonstrate effectiveness. Therefore, while a donor may fund a program organized by a non-profit organization for three years, it will be difficult for that group to demonstrate concrete outcomes on marriage and delayed motherhood within that period.

**“Changes in norms and behavior require time. But funding cycles tend to be short. Just as there is a need for non-profits to collaborate in order to share best practices, funders need to collaborate to provide longer term funding to be able to evaluate and achieve real impact.”**

Priya Das, ICRW, Dasra workshop 22-25 November, 2013

Experts interviewed by Dasra recommend that funders collaborate with each other to coordinate their financing of common recipients, and in doing so extend funding cycles to a combined tenure of 10-15 years. This would enable non-profit organizations to plan strategically, and build necessary systems and processes to evaluate interventions and demonstrate impact. However, Dasra's interviews with funders revealed that while they recognize the need for long-term funding, it is challenging for them to justify continued grants to organizations without clear demonstration of progress. It is therefore crucial for non-profit organizations to document and provide evidence for interim results if they are to attract longer-term financing.



### Local networks are more effective than national networks

Non-profit organizations that attended Dasra's capacity building workshop unanimously agreed that networks are crucial in developing common communication materials, sharing best practices, and maximising the effectiveness of efforts to lobby national governments. This session, led by Lakshmi Sundaram, global coordinator of the GNB partnership, identified various challenges posed by current networks and specified steps to be undertaken by funders to make these networks more effective:

#### Challenges with current networks:

- National networks tend to be too large for constructive discussions, particularly involving such a local issue as child marriage
- A lack of strong leadership results in weak agendas, unnecessary power dynamics between member organizations, and general inefficiency
- Networks develop frameworks which seem to overpower individual organizational interventions
- Networks tend to become hierarchal with too many designations, which result in bureaucracy and inefficiency

#### Proposals to ensure networks are effective:

- Develop state/district level networks to address local challenges, which can be linked to national networks
- Ensure strong leadership, flat structures and focused agendas
- Agree on common outcomes and basic principles, despite differences in styles of intervention
- Ensure networks are flexible enough to include organizations that do not currently operate child marriage specific programs (e.g. those working in the education, health and livelihood sectors)
- Involve other stakeholders, including funders, in sector-level discussions regarding challenges and opportunities

### A reduction in child marriage is often an incidental outcome

Dasra's sector mapping exercise evaluated programs of over 300 non-profit organizations programs that address the needs of adolescent girls in India. Addressing child marriage was the primary focus and goal for at least 30 of these programs. Others either regarded it as an incidental outcome or did not recognize it as a goal or outcome at all. However, a significant share of these other organizations work to enroll and retain girls in schools, offer life skills education, provide vocational training, and raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health among adolescent girls. For instance, **Educate Girls**, a non-profit organization based in Rajasthan, works to enroll and retain girls in school. Over the past decade, the organization has been successful in enrolling thousands of out of school girls. Given that education is the strongest predictor of delayed marriage, Educate Girls has possibly averted numerous child marriages indirectly. However, the organization does account for it in its impact assessment. Similarly, programmatic evidence from global and Indian sources suggests that other interventions such as vocational training and life skills education help empower girls and their families to reject child marriage and to choose alternate life options for their girls.<sup>90</sup> Therefore organizations that initiate programs to improve educational opportunities, health or livelihoods may also help delay marriages and pregnancies among adolescent girls.



Source: Dasra workshop with 16 non-profit organizations addressing child marriage  
Illustration credit: Rishabh Sachdev

#### Key takeaways

- Most non-profit programs that directly address child marriage are being implemented where they are most needed – Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.
- While two thirds of non-profit programs are using education as an intervention to address the issue of child marriage more emphasis is needed to promote secondary education for girls in order to delay marriage and motherhood.
- A focus on the issue of child marriage in India and internationally has emerged only in the past decade. Consequently, most non-profit programs, are yet to scale and clearly demonstrate impact.
- Funding cycles are short. To achieve significant outcomes and insights, funders must individually and collectively extend funding periods.
- Evaluation of non-profit interventions is the need of the hour. Non-profit organizations must budget for monitoring and evaluation procedures when submitting funding proposals. Donors need to fund evaluation exercises and make significant efforts to build the capacity of non-profit organizations to co-develop evaluation plans and indicators.



## Striving to develop a safer society for girls

Teena (name changed) and her sister were 11 and 13 years old respectively, when they were sold into 'marriage' by their maternal grandmother. One of the 'grooms' paid a lump sum of INR 8,000 (USD 133) for the girls. These young girls were soon to find out that they had been trafficked for sex, under the pretext of marriage and that their so-called husbands were their pimps. After several months of sexual and physical abuse, the sisters escaped to their village, along with a five month old baby, who was Teena's son. The traffickers soon came to their village and took the girls back. But their mother, who had been duped into believing that her daughters were getting married, put up a strong front. Along with a few villagers, she sought help of *Mukti Caravan* (Liberation Caravan), an anti-child trafficking campaign run by **Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA)**. BBA filed a complaint with the local police and followed up with the authorities until the girls were recovered and their traffickers as well as grandmother were arrested.





Photo credit: Educate Girls

## V. Ground Realities: Non-profit interventions in the field

Non-profit organizations in India are addressing the issue of child marriage through various interventions. 10 key non-profit interventions are highlighted in this section, based on the sector mapping exercise and field research undertaken by Dasra. These initiatives include those which engage adolescent girls themselves, those that influence her (such as her family and community), and those that target law enforcement and government officials who may potentially establish an enabling environment for her to lead an empowered life. Dasra assessed these interventions to highlight those which are most critical from an investment perspective. The assessment criteria used were: a) intervention's impact on an existing or potential child bride; b) its current and inherent potential to scale.

### Linking interventions to cornerstones

Preceding sections of this report have described various key factors concerning child marriage in India and the cornerstones that are crucial for addressing these factors. The following diagram provides a link between the cornerstones (what is needed to tackle child marriage) and non-profit interventions on the ground (how these cornerstones are being manifested).

It may be observed that two of the four cornerstones – 'identifying and sensitizing gatekeepers' and 'creating alternate life options' map to various interventions on the ground. This reflects the well-established fact that those that influence a girl's life must be sensitized to her potential beyond her household responsibilities. This is largely achieved by mobilizing communities, presenting role models, promoting educational and employment opportunities, and building the capacity of government officials to engage effectively with the girls and their families.

Interestingly, while it may seem like the cornerstone 'addressing the needs of adolescent brides' is adequately addressed by non-profit organizations, in reality it is not. While non-profit organizations undertaking interventions mapped to this cornerstone allow child brides within their programs, most girls they work with are unmarried. There is a need to actively identify and engage more child brides in relevant non-profit interventions, as is done to provide legal support to child brides.

Finally, the cornerstone 'promoting birth and marriage registration' is least represented on the ground. Non-profit organizations have only recently begun to endorse registrations. This will not just help to prevent child marriages, but also increase girls' access to relevant welfare schemes.

There is a need to actively identify and engage more child brides in relevant non-profit interventions

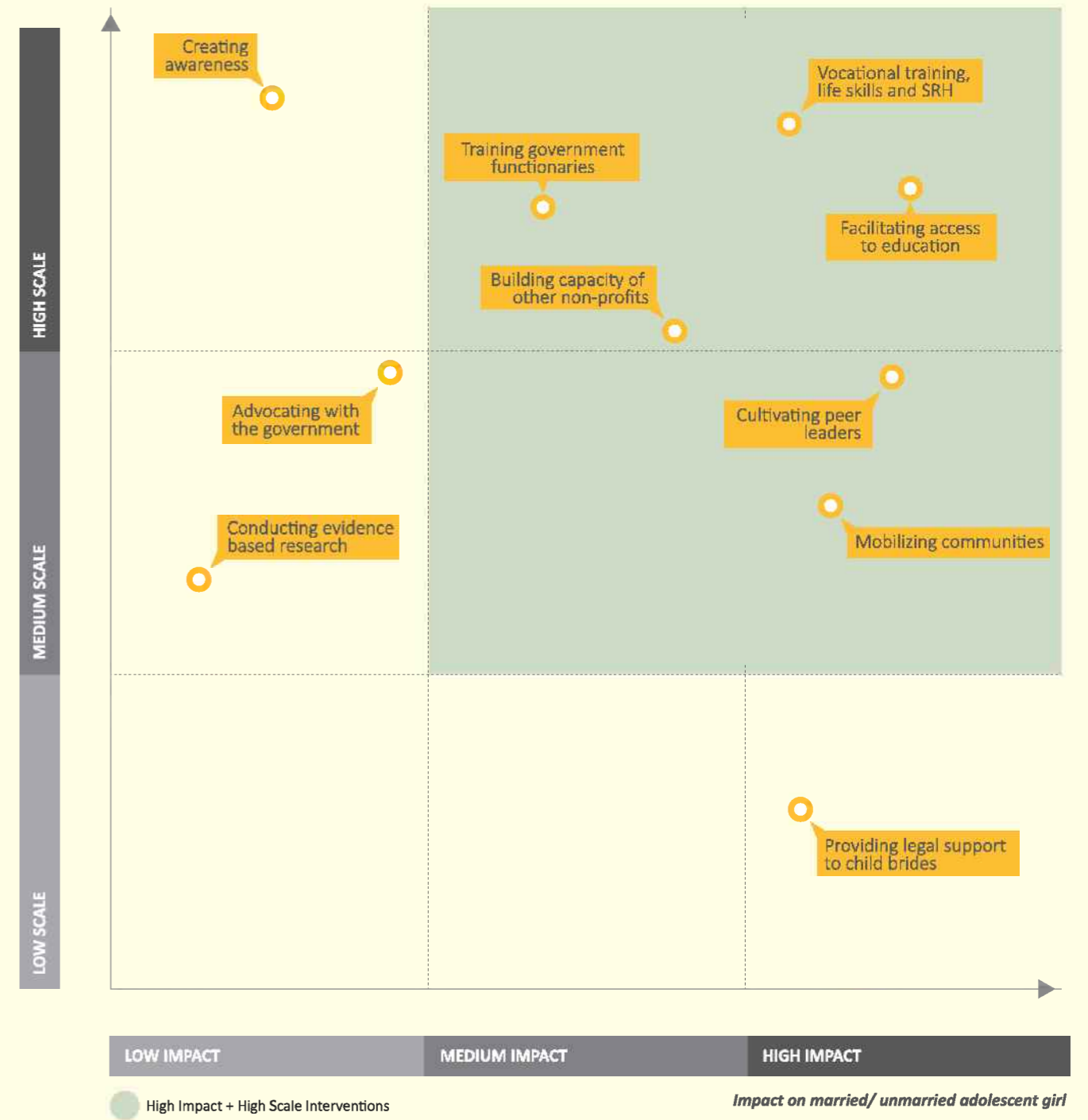
**Dasra analysis based on expert interviews, secondary research and site visits to non-profit organizations**



**Effectiveness of interventions on the ground**

All 10 shortlisted non-profit interventions, currently being implemented to tackle the issue of child marriage, align with one or more of Dasra's cornerstones as shown above. These interventions have been mapped onto the matrix below to determine their relative position based on Dasra's chosen criteria: a) impact on an existing or potential child bride; and b) current and inherent potential to scale. Sub-criteria used to define both their impact and scale are detailed in Appendix I. Mapping on the matrix has been validated by an expert advisory committee convened by Dasra, and also by representatives of 16 non-profit organizations who attended Dasra's capacity building workshop.

Following this exercise, six of the 10 shortlisted interventions are classified as 'high-impact and high-scale', i.e. those deemed to have a high or medium impact and scale on the matrix.



**Dasra analysis based on site visits and interactions with non-profits and experts. Criteria highlighted in Appendix I**



Photo credit : Nishtha

## High-impact, high-scale interventions

### Facilitating access to the education system

There is clearly a direct correlation between lack of education and child marriage. Research shows that being out of school puts girls at the risk of early marriage. Despite the prevalence of universal schooling in India as well as strong evidence to show that girls in school marry later, historically this strategy has been under-utilized as a means to address child marriage. However, recently more non-profit organizations in India have started to adopt this approach by providing girls with safe spaces where they can gain relevant skills and information. Non-profit organizations are improving the access of girls to the education system in the following ways:

**Demand generation:** Some regions of India report high drop-out rates for girls at both primary (grades I-IV) and upper primary (grades V-VII) levels even where schools are available. This is mainly due to the devaluation of girls and the belief that education will not aid them in their future roles as a wife or mother. Under such circumstances, it becomes necessary for non-profit organizations to ensure all parties involved are aware of the significance of education for girls, both in terms of improved life options and to become better informed wives and mothers later in life. Non-profit organizations typically achieve this objective by creating pressure groups using various stakeholders – teachers, *panchayat* leaders and children. These groups gather information on out-of-school children, conduct one-on-one meetings with relevant families, engage with school committees to improve school infrastructure, and monitor the progress of re-enrolled students to ensure they do not drop out again.

- The non-profit organization **Bachpan Bachao Andolan** mobilizes community groups and elected representative bodies of children aged 6-14 years (*bal panchayats*). These groups are trained to liaise with the *panchayat* (the local governing body) to ensure villages are child friendly and enforce universal enrollment of children in schools. This approach has been implemented in more than 350 villages affecting over 200,000 people.<sup>81</sup>

**Linking to and supporting formal education systems:** To ensure an effective transition to school, children not already being educated often require additional coaching before they are integrated into relevant grades within the formal education system. Therefore non-profit organizations provide bridge courses that follow the school syllabus. This enables girls to reach a minimum proficiency level before being re-enrolled. At times, non-profit organizations continue to provide private tuition to some of these girls even after enrollment to ensure retention and promote favorable learning outcomes.

- The West Bengal-based non-profit organization **Nishtha** uses its day care centers to conduct classes for both in- and out-of-school children, which involve mainstream academic subjects and extra-curricular activities such as computer training, music and drama. So far, this initiative has educated nearly 3,000 children.<sup>82</sup>

Provision of scholarships: Some non-profit organizations offer financial support to parents who are willing but unable to provide a higher education to their daughters due to extreme poverty. Such agencies help girls to identify and apply for courses of interest. Once they are accepted the organization helps pay the tuition fee. **Jagori Grameen** helps girls in grades 11 and 12 to identify university courses they may wish to pursue. Most prefer to undertake correspondence courses, which enable them to obtain diplomas without leaving their village or town. **Jagori Grameen** will provide up to INR 3,000 each month for the course and other educational expenses. After completing the course, most girls share their new knowledge with younger children in *Jagori Grameen*, motivating them also to study further.

### **Schooling helped Narmada delay her marriage**

At just 12 years old, Narmada's family arranged her engagement to a 45 year old man who was already married. Narmada had very little education – she mainly worked as an agricultural worker. When activists and teachers asked her how she felt, she told them that she didn't want to marry yet and that she wanted to go to school. Narmada's family said that if she did not marry, they would break off all contact with her.

Despite this pressure, Narmada left home for a bridge course camp, run by the MV Foundation, which enables children who have never received an education to catch up and join their peers in school. Narmada's family reacted furiously. Family members came to the school to vent their anger. Her older brother pressed her to marry. Narmada, however, remained steadfast in her decision. With support from the MV Foundation, Narmada excelled in school. She passed her 10th class with the highest marks in her village.

Now 18 years old, Narmada is studying for a diploma to become a medical laboratory technician. She lives in a private hostel but has resumed contact with her family who continue to raise the issue of marriage. Narmada tells them that she wants to marry but will do so later and in her own time.

Source: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/girls-voices/child-marriage-prevention-stories-from-india/>

Case Study

### **Providing vocational training, life skills & sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information**

Many non-profit organizations surveyed by Dasra provide adolescent girls with information on relevant topics and help them to build skills they need to make independent life choices for themselves and their families. Significantly, several of these non-profit organizations also leverage government resources under the SABLA scheme to implement this intervention. The SABLA scheme implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development is a comprehensive program, which aims to improve the health and vocational skills of adolescent girls. Non-profit organizations utilize government resources such as *aanganwadi* centers, which make this intervention both scalable and sustainable. Currently, these groups undertake the following approaches:

#### **Promoting employability through vocational training**

According to interviews with non-profit organizations on the ground, increasing the value of the girl child herself and the value that she can potentially bring to her family, is a particularly effective way of avoiding child marriage. Communities are more open to girls learning those skills that would more obviously help them after marriage. It is therefore common to see non-profit organizations offering courses in handicrafts, tailoring, weaving, etc. In addition, some non-profit organisations provide information on basic financial literacy, that can enable girls to become economically independent. Some non-profit organizations focus on providing vocational training to married adolescent girls as well, to enable them to contribute to their family income; thereby raising their status in their marital homes.

- **People's Action for National Integration (PANI)** trains young people between the age of 15-24 years in various skills, including mobile repairs and tailoring. This helps ensure their employability and also helps reduce the financial burden on their families. This increase in earnings has allowed daughters the agency to delay their marriages and continue education. In the geographical area in which PANI operates, this program has enabled 75% of girls to receive higher education.<sup>83</sup>

### **Providing life skills and information regarding sexual and reproductive health**

Promoting life skills and conducting reproductive health sessions for girls is also a proven strategy to effectively delay their marriage.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, in addition to vocational training, non-profit organizations also engage groups of adolescent girls to provide them with life skills and critical health information. Activities such as puppet shows, participatory games, and interactive workshops are used to build communication, negotiation, decision-making and leadership skills – all critical in promoting more effective engagement with their families and community members. Non-profit organizations also use innovative tools to deliver important sexual and reproductive health education to both unmarried and married adolescents. This includes the body and its functions, hygiene techniques, use of contraceptives, child bearing and spacing, nutrition, and sexually transmitted diseases. Providing such information and essential life skills enables girls to understand the health consequences of child marriage, and helps them to develop their ability to negotiate or demand safer choices for themselves.

- **ASHISH Gram Rachna Trust (AGRT)** works with married adolescent girls and their spouses to improve health indicators, including those involving having a first child too early, the low use of contraceptives, and the high rate of maternal morbidity. It also provides life-skills education to unmarried adolescent girls to promote their independence and self-sufficiency. The organization works together with unmarried adolescent boys to sensitize them to issues faced by girls and helps develop gender-equitable attitudes.<sup>85</sup>

### **Football and optometry – solutions for delaying child marriage?**

**Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital** in Mastichak Bihar is the largest eye hospital in Bihar. It is also part of a unique solution to child marriage. The Akhand Jyoti Football Academy recruits girls between the age of 10-16 years. Apart from learning football, they also continue with their studies, while living in the girls' hostel on the hospital campus. In return, the parents must promise the hospital that they will not marry their daughters before they are 23 years old.

The center trains the girls to become either professional footballers, or more likely optometrists. They are supported to gain a Bachelor's degree in optometry and ophthalmic techniques. After completing the course the girl is entitled to practice as an optometrist with an estimated salary of INR 250,000 per year (20 times the average per capita income of rural families in Bihar).

15 year-old Sushma Kumari was to marry last year. But her father cancelled her marriage after she became part of the Football Academy. A few months later he became an eye patient himself. When he came into the hospital he found his own daughter conducting the check-ups. It was she who tested his vision. The proud father wept. "Getting involved with the hospital is the best thing to have happened in my life", exclaims Sushma.

Source: <http://www.sportanddev.org/en/newsviews/news/?4370/1/Football-an-engagement-away-from-child-marriage>

### **Mobilizing communities to recognize the ill-effects of child marriage**

Mobilizing the community involves creating dialogue around the validity of child marriage; a deep-entrenched custom. It also involves raising awareness of the immense negative consequences such a practice may have on the lives of couples and their children. The main premise of this intervention is to communicate the fact that girls rarely have the power to make decisions regarding their own marriage. Instead the decision on when the girl marries, and to whom, lies mainly with 'gatekeepers' – her family and community elders.

Case Study

Even if the family decides not to conform to this tradition and custom, the broader community may reject and stigmatize the girl and her family for failing to meet social norms.

Community education can change social standards and create a more supportive environment for girls and families who are willing and ready to reject the custom of early marriage. This strategy is generally implemented alongside other interventions including those that provide adolescent girls with life skills. Community education helps to mitigate possibly unintended consequences of girls' participation in such programs, and also reinforces its various messages and activities.

During its due diligence exercise (process explained in Appendix II), Dasra found that community mobilization was the most frequently implemented intervention. In particular, non-profit organizations are mobilizing communities in two main ways:

**Children and youth groups:** They help groups of adolescent girls and boys to learn about their rights, the repercussions of early marriage, alternative life options and mechanisms to report child marriage. These groups in turn engage with others including the *panchayats* and police to promote change. The non-profit organization **Sahayog** has already established 100 girls' groups in 100 villages of Uttar Pradesh, each with 25 girls. Sahayog helps these groups understand their rights and empowers them to file petitions, conduct district level dialogues, and build leaders among themselves.<sup>86</sup>

**Gatekeeper groups:** They identify gatekeepers and influencers such as teachers, school committees, women's groups, and *panchayats* and help them to form groups such as child protection forums, which comprise a wide range of gatekeepers. Group members are educated about their particular roles and trained to leverage each other's strengths to end the practice of child marriage within the community. The non-profit organization **Nishtha** convenes groups of mothers and helps them persuade other family members that their daughters should remain in school. All mothers in this group deposit INR 50 per month for their daughters' education. This enables them to receive larger loans for her further education or special tuition requirements. Similarly, **Urmul Trust** identifies various groups within communities – children, men, women, *panchayats* – and sensitizes them through interactive media such as plays, sketches and songs. They also leverage the influence of open-minded community leaders to convince society at large to delay marriages. The trust runs this program in partnership with the 'Girls not Brides' campaign and has successfully established 475 such groups.<sup>87</sup>

Shanti is a 14-year-old girl from Bihar, one of the high prevalence states for child marriage. Her parents had planned for her to get married at the age of 13. However, Shanti was recruited by a child rights group and learnt about girls' participation, girls' education, early marriage and pregnancy. The youth group helped convince her parents that marriage was not the best thing for Shanti at such a young age. This enabled Shanti to escape marriage and to continue her schooling.

Source: <http://www.icrw.org/publications/asia-child-marriage-initiative-summary-research-findings-bangladesh-india-and-nepal>

#### Cultivating role models as peer leaders

The insight that another person in a situation similar to yours, has been able to successfully overcome the same obstacles you are facing, is often the best motivator for behavior change. Such individuals, often termed "positive deviants," or "role models", have the potential to influence their peers and communities, towards positive behavior change.

Non-profit organizations identify young people who have succeeded in resisting early marriage. They work with them to build their capacity to become peer leaders who can in turn help girls in similar circumstances fight back against the practice. Peer leaders use their own experiences to

mentor at-risk children in local schools and neighborhoods, and motivate them to follow their example. They also provide them with relevant information, advice and support to deal with the pressure such children experience to marry early. Peer leaders are also responsible for engaging the larger community to create an enabling and supportive environment for young people. Non-profit organizations support peer leaders to develop campaigns, and work with the *panchayat* and police to report and prevent child marriages. They also engage with parents to ensure they understand the serious harm the practice causes and to persuade them to allow their children to marry later.

Peer leaders, once established and empowered, can play a significant role in the sustainable promotion of lasting behavioral changes among youth and communities.

- **Thoughtshop Foundation's Youth Resource Cells (YRC)** Youth Resource Cells (YRC) program empowers young people to become agents of social change. It builds their capacity to address social challenges such as gender inequality, early marriages, and domestic violence at an individual, group and community level. New youth fellows and their YRCs participate in an 18-month foundation program, which is structured through workshops, residential camps, and social action community projects. Since 2007, over 100 youth fellows and 24 YRCs comprising around 1,000 youth members have been involved in this program. In turn, these groups influence over 10,000 community members.<sup>88</sup>

#### Forging resistance: Kavita leads by example

Child marriage is common in Kavita's hometown - Allahabad, India. Here, girls are forced to marry early and bear children soon afterwards. Learning about contraception, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and reproductive rights at a youth center, gave Kavita the confidence to stand up to her family.

"I told my uncle he could be jailed if he forced me to get married. I knew it was illegal", says Kavita.

Kavita now volunteers as a peer leader, mentoring girls her age and educating village parents and leaders about child marriage. She says, "I will make sure no member of my peer group is forced into child marriage – it's not happening on my watch."

Source: <http://endaidindia.org/fighting-against-child-marriage/>



Photo credit: Crea

### Training government officials and frontline workers

Various stakeholders employed by government agencies are mandated either to enforce the law or to run programs which engage adolescent girls and provide them with the tools, skills and other information necessary to resist child marriage. These stakeholders mainly include: the local police (who are responsible for identifying and preventing child marriages) and *aanganwadi* workers (AWWs), who work through the SABLA scheme to provide information regarding sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, and legal rights to girls in particular villages).

According to non-profit organizations, these stakeholders are rarely aware of their responsibilities under the law, or the legal rights of young girls, or the resources available under the various schemes in operation; in other words, they know too little to discharge their duties. To redress this situation, non-profit organizations are training such people to increase their effectiveness. Training is held regularly, and supported by follow up sessions to address ongoing concerns raised by stakeholders on the ground.

- The non-profit organization **HAQ** together with its partners, organizes training programs for police personnel including sub-inspectors and constables at village level. The modules cover various aspects of the Juvenile Justice Act, and wider child rights issues. The results of these training sessions have been encouraging – many officials have reported child marriages and provided relevant information to HAQ and its partner organizations.<sup>89</sup>

Often, training is fairly intensive, particularly for AWWs. As part of the program, non-profit organizations demonstrate processes and methods to AWWs by working directly with adolescent girls themselves. After workers observe, often over several months, how the system could be better used for the benefit of these girls, they are able to schedule sessions independently and more effectively than before.

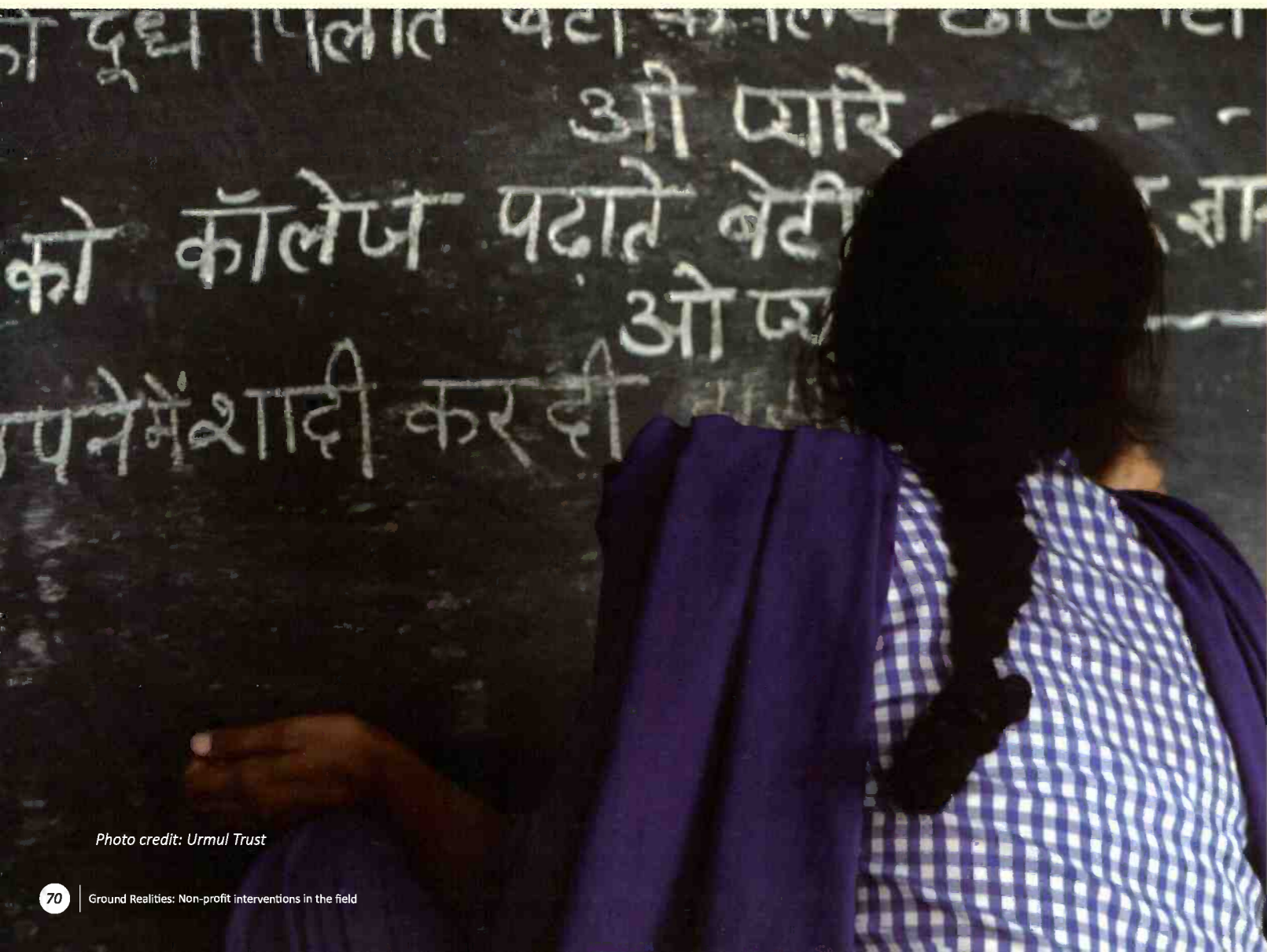
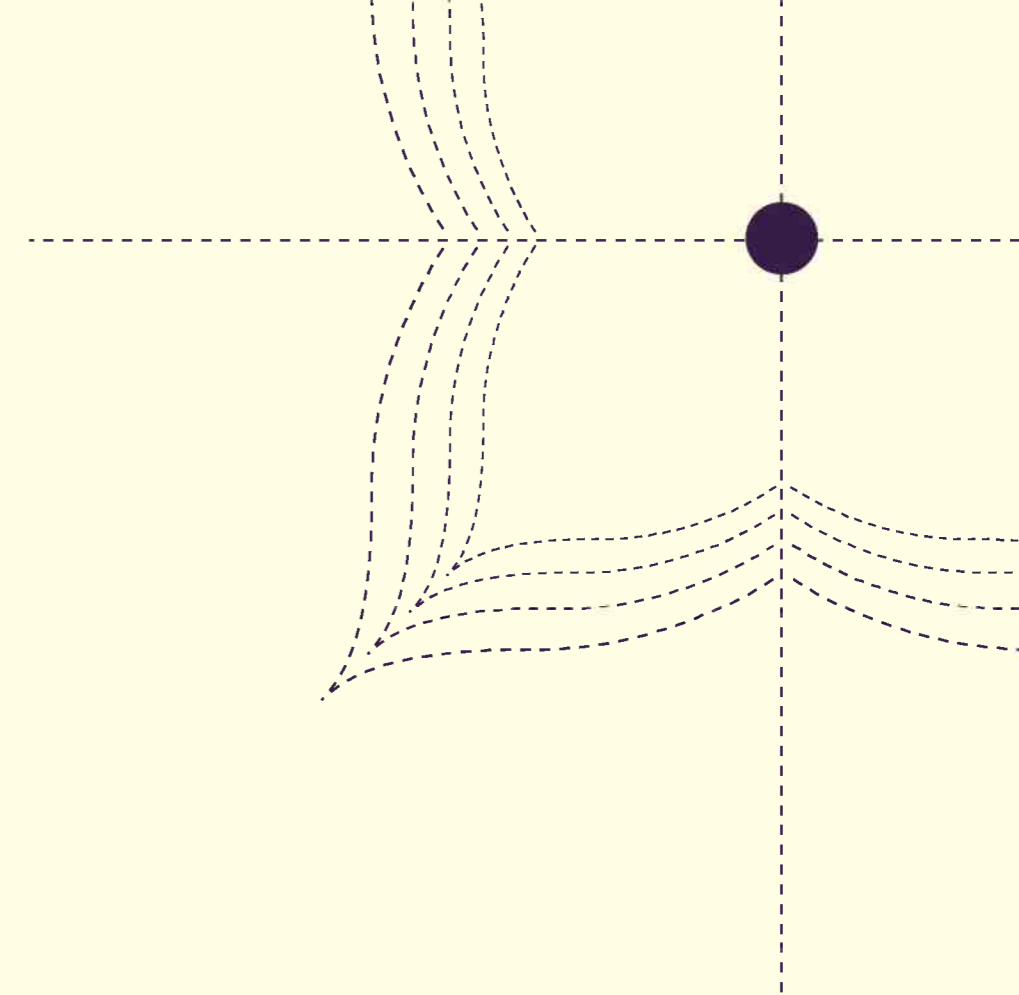


Photo credit: Urmul Trust

### Police and non-profit organizations intervene to prevent several child marriages on Akha Teej April 25, 2013

The vigilant police and active non-profit organizations proved successful in stopping several child marriages on the auspicious day of *Akha Teej*, in various parts of Rajasthan. Child marriages were prevented in Jodhpur, Ajmer, Jalore, Pisangan and Pushkar.

Non-profit organizations feel that their long-standing efforts in making people understand the ill-effects of child marriages are finally yielding results. "Generally, many such marriages take place in Luni block of Jodhpur, but with police being very active this year these have reduced drastically. We also conducted community-based workshops in almost 25 villages and organized many rallies against child marriage," said Yogesh of **Vikalp Sansthan**, a non-profit organization based in Jodhpur.

Police officials affirm that the proactive role of non-profit organizations has aided in reducing the number of child marriages. "Efforts from the NGOs, too, have been remarkable. The volunteers and youth groups posted at block levels passed on the information to the authorities, which made the whole drive very effective," said a senior police official of Jodhpur.

Source: [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-04-25/jalpur/31398313\\_1\\_child-marriages-akha-teej-latest-sample-registration-system](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-04-25/jalpur/31398313_1_child-marriages-akha-teej-latest-sample-registration-system)

### Building the capacity of non-profit organizations focused on other issues

Many health, education and child rights non-profit organizations address child marriage indirectly through their programs. For example, those working on school retention for young girls and those providing life skills to adolescents, also help address the practice of child marriage. Given their strong relationships with the communities in which they work, they are also able to change social norms and attitudes towards early marriage. However, these organizations usually lack the necessary knowledge and expertise to incorporate components into existing programs.

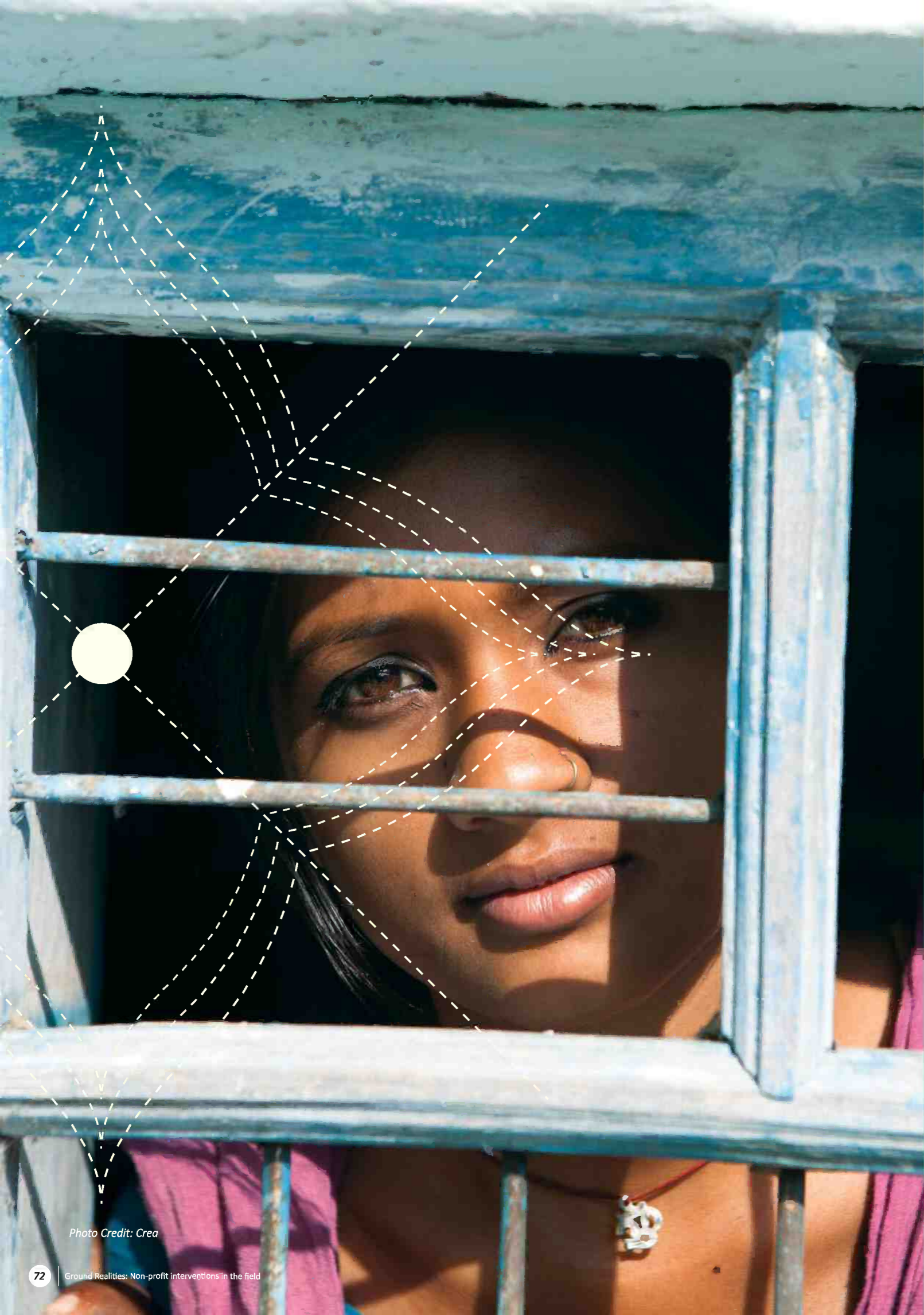


Photo Credit: Crea

Instead, non-profit organizations that possess proven expertise in dealing with child marriage are building the capacity of these local organizations to integrate child marriage messaging and techniques into their existing programs.

Apart from its scalability, this train-the-trainer model represents a win-win strategy to improve the effectiveness of organizations. The capacity building organization can exponentially increase its reach by training numerous partners, while simultaneously gaining critical field insights. These insights can then be used to advocate policies to state and national governments. The trainee organization, by acquiring additional knowledge and expertise, becomes more effective at preventing and ameliorating the effects of child marriage.

Currently non-profit organizations that build the capacity of other local non-profit organizations do so by working intensively with partners over 3-5 years. The engagement typically begins with the selection of partners that share similar ideologies. Both organizations then co-design the program and decide on timelines, progress indicators and expected outcomes. After the planning stage, trainer organizations spend significant time with their trainee partners in the field to demonstrate effective techniques and methodologies. As the trainee organization begins to undertake interventions independently, the trainer organization's role transitions to providing technical assistance when required, monitoring to evaluate impact, and disseminating lessons through trainee organizations.

- The non-profit organization **Sahayog** builds the capacity of partners to implement the SABLA scheme in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. These partner organizations in turn train AWWs to mobilize girls and provide necessary skills and information. In 2012-13, Sahayog successfully inducted over 3000 girls in *kishori samuhas* (girl groups) as mandated by the SABLA scheme, and also helped train *aanganwadi* workers to continue such work in future.<sup>90</sup>

#### Key takeaways

- Dasra identified 10 key non-profit child marriage interventions taking place in India through its sector mapping and field research. It assessed each intervention according to its impact on the ground, its scalability, and its consistency with its own cornerstones. Six interventions have been highlighted as 'high-impact and scalable' and are strongly recommended for investment.
- Two interventions were deemed to have a particularly high impact and scalability – the provision of vocational training, life skills and health information, and enabling access to education. These interventions provide girls with real alternatives to early marriage and equip them with necessary skills to make informed decisions regarding their own futures.
- Other high-impact, highly scalable interventions include cultivating role models as peer leaders, mobilizing communities, training government officials, and building the capacity of non-profit organizations working on other social issues to deliver child marriage interventions.
- Significantly, some interventions on the ground seek to promote birth and marriage registrations by working with local communities and government. However, further work is required in this area, particularly because the intervention itself is relatively simple, and can have an extremely positive effect in terms of preventing child marriage, improving law enforcement, and enabling girls to access public services.
- Non-profit interventions mainly focus on unmarried girls. There is a need to actively identify and recruit child brides into these programs as well, to mitigate the harmful effects of child marriage.



Photo Credit: Urmul Trust

## VI. Funding Options: Profiling high impact and scalable non-profits

Dasra mapped over 300 non-profit organizations across India which address issues of adolescent girls. Dasra evaluated their approach, model and interventions and identified approximately 30 organizations that seek to address child marriage. From these, 10 have been profiled in this report. Each of these organizations undertakes high impact interventions, which, with strategic philanthropic funding, can be scaled to reach more unmarried and married adolescent girls in India.

Some of the following organizations implement programs in addition to those that address child marriage. However, for the purpose of this report, Dasra has chosen to focus only on those programs that are either aimed at unmarried girls to delay marriage or married adolescents to mitigate the negative consequences of marriage. The chart below compares the most effective non-profit organizations mapped to the most high impact and high scale interventions, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

	Facilitating access to education	Vocational training, life skills and SRH	Mobilizing communities	Cultivating peer leaders	Training government functionaries	Building capacity of other non-profits
AGRT						
BBA						
HAQ						
MVF						
Nishtha						
PANI						
Sahayog						
Thoughtshop						
Urmul Trust						
Vikalp Sansthan						





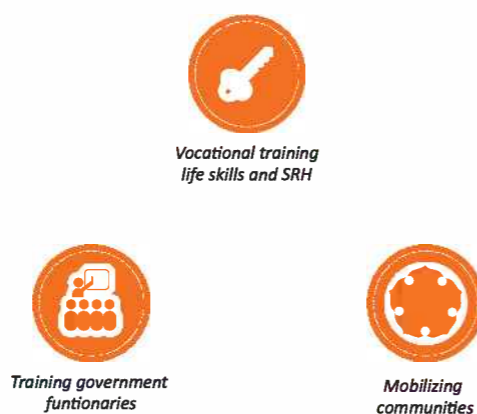
• Director: Dr. Ashok Dyalchand • Founded: 1979 • Coverage: Maharashtra  
• Total Budget: INR 3.8 Crores (\$638,000) • CM Related Budget: INR 51 Lakhs (\$85,000)

### OVERVIEW

ASHISH Gram Rachna Trust (AGRT), through its executive body 'Institute of Health Management, Pachod' (IHMP), implements programs to empower marginalized groups, particularly women, adolescent girls and children. IHMP organizes and mobilizes communities to become self-reliant and economically independent. The organization implements its programs in the economically and socially backward Marathwada region of Maharashtra and in slum communities of Pune.

The organization has considerable experience in implementing life skills (1999-2006) and health-based (2003-12) programs for adolescent girls. In 2013, IHMP launched its **Integrated Program**, a health and life-skills based approach to combat the adverse effects of child marriage. The health component, which targets married adolescent girls and their spouses, aims to improve health indices concerning low ages of first conception, inadequate use of contraceptives, and high rates of maternal morbidity, which are direct consequences of early marriage. The life skills component engages unmarried adolescent girls, to help them identify and develop their peer leadership skills and independence. Additionally, it has started engaging unmarried adolescent boys in order to encourage gender equitable attitudes through peer leaders groomed in its earlier *bal panchayat* program.

### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



The organization trains and builds the capacity of public health workers (ASHAs and ANMs) to assess health needs through household surveillance, conduct behaviour change counseling, develop health-provision plans to increase access to healthcare, and hold life-skills education sessions. Over time, IHMP mentors these workers and monitors how effectively the programs are being implemented.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

If children and adolescents are organized and mobilized, educated on key health issues, sensitized towards changing their views on patriarchal norms, and taught to become more self-reliant, then it is possible to effect sustainable and positive changes in engaged communities to the benefit of both present and future generations.

### SCALABILITY

The program's operating model of training and mentoring public health workers to effectively engage and empower adolescents is inherently scalable, as shown by the organization's record in scaling its health-based initiative from just two Primary Health Centres (PHCs) on its own, to a presence across five districts through partnerships with five NGOs. Over the next five years, IHMP plans to scale its Integrated Program to a total of 60,000 adolescent boys and girls, equally divided between rural and urban communities.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### OUTREACH

The Integrated Program has reached out to 600 adolescent girls in 2013. In 2003-12, the program's purely health-based initiatives directly impacted 12,000 married adolescent girls at pilot sites in both rural and urban areas. In 2010, the government became responsible for the program (which then covered 196 villages in one block). Subsequently, it has reached out to 10,000 adolescent girls.

#### ENDORSEMENT

IHMP has received the 'Investing in Women Award for Innovation' from ICRW for previous life-skills initiatives with adolescent girls. The organization's work has been profiled in mainstream media, including The Times of India. Its funders include MacArthur Foundation, Oxfam and Christian Aid UK.

#### LEADERSHIP

AGRT's team is led by Dr. Ashok Dyalchand, who has 36 years of experience in planning, monitoring and evaluating public health programs. Other leaders are experts in many areas including public health and medicine, monitoring and evaluation systems, social sciences and research, and drafting policy documents for government departments.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

Currently, the organization works with local government institutions at the block-level to implement its adolescent girls program, often through the District Health Office of the Government of Maharashtra. It is also collaborating with the State Government of Bihar to explore the possibility of institutionalizing its adolescent girls programs in the state.



• General Secretary: R.S. Chaurasia • Founded: 1980 • Coverage: Pan India  
• Total Budget: INR 3.7 Crores (\$596,000) • CM Budget: INR 76 Lakhs (\$122,000)

### OVERVIEW

Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) is a movement dedicated to preventing exploitation of children in India. Association for Voluntary Action (AVA) is the executive arm of BBA and campaigns throughout India for measures to protect children's rights, especially by preventing child labor and trafficking, and provides linkages to education. It opposes child marriage through:

### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



**Child-Friendly Village/Bal Mitra Gram (BMG):** This preventive model was established in 2001. It campaigns for the involvement of all community members, particularly children, in respecting and upholding children's rights. BBA staff establish working relationships with local village community groups, including children's governance bodies (*bal panchayats*) and youth and women's groups to change regressive gender discriminatory practices and promote the rights of children. To combat child labor and marriage of minors, the organization seeks to ensure all children attend school and are fully aware of their rights.

### OTHER KEY INTERVENTIONS



**Rescue, Rehabilitation and Prosecution:** BBA helps rescue and rehabilitate survivors of child trafficking, including victims of bride trafficking. It also provides legal aid to victims in order to prosecute traffickers.

**Policy:** BBA actively lobbies the government on child rights issues and uses public interest litigation to protect children, including opposing child marriages. In 2010, BBA petitioned the Supreme Court to issue comprehensive directions on child marriage.

The organization sets up a *bal panchayat*, which is an elected representative group of 10-15 children aged between 6-18 years that works with the local village governing body, the *gram panchayat*, to promote the rights of children. It meets once every two weeks, and the meetings are facilitated by the field staff for the first two years, after which the identified child leaders take over the process. Till date, none of the 49,828 children mobilized by BBA have been married before they turn 18 years.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

If children vulnerable to exploitation are identified, rescued, and rehabilitated; if offenders of child rights are prosecuted; and if children are afforded a supportive environment by being enrolled and retained in schools, and have knowledge of and the means to enforce their legal rights; then a child-friendly society will be established in which all children are free from exploitation, and benefit from improved life prospects.

### SCALABILITY

The BMG model is replicable because BBA builds the capacity of youth leaders to continue working for the community once it phases out its interventions after three years. It seeks to cover a further 200 villages over the next three years and thereby create two 'model' child marriage free districts. BBA also aims to create highly visible deterrents to bride trafficking by establishing judicial precedents through prosecution of child bride traffickers and undertakes policy initiatives to strengthen existing laws, such as Prevention of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### OUTREACH

Since 2001, BMG has been implemented in 356 villages. In 2012-13, BBA had 112 active BMGs reaching over 200,000 people. It has rescued more than 82,000 children from trafficking since 1980. In 2012-13, two victims of bride trafficking were rescued and their traffickers arrested, and seven child marriages were prevented. BBA's legal work has led to landmark judgements on child labor and trafficking, establishing important judicial precedents.

#### ENDORSEMENT

Kailash Satyarthi, the founder of BBA, has been considered for a Nobel Peace Prize and honored through many awards including the Aachener International Peace Prize. In 2013, Razia Sultan, a girl from a BMG village, became the first recipient of the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education's Youth Courage Award for Education. BBA's work has been featured in many Indian newspapers and also in international media such as BBC and Time.

#### LEADERSHIP

Educated as an engineer, Kailash Satyarthi founded BBA to fight child labor in India and has remained a passionate campaigner for children's rights ever since. Mr. R.S. Chaurasia, the general secretary, has over 50 years of experience in social work, labor rights and child labor. Roles and responsibilities are clearly divided amongst the 95 staff members, to ensure accountability and that their roles best leverage their individual skills.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

Through its nationwide network of more than 754 organisations and 80,000 people that promote child rights, BBA leverages its reach to help rescue and rehabilitate victims of child abuse and exploitation, and campaigns for a national policy to free children from exploitation. It has a strong legacy of funders. These include international organizations such as Kids Rights, which has supported BBA for eight years and Bread for the World for the past 17 years.



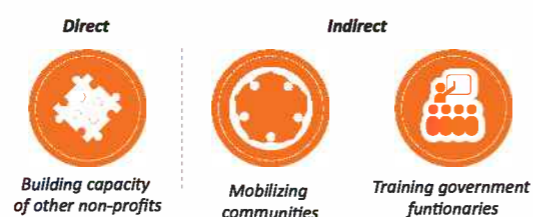
• Co-Directors: Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, Bharti Ali • Founded: 1998 • Coverage: Pan-India  
• Total Budget: INR 1.5 Crores (\$250,000) • CM Budget: INR 49 Lakhs (\$79,000)

#### OVERVIEW

HAQ focuses on the recognition, promotion and protection of child rights. It believes the exploitation of children reflects wider social ills. HAQ works on child-centric governance and child protection. To promote child-centric governance, HAQ monitors state performance and develops tools for advocacy, including 'budget for children' analyses, 'status of children' reports, parliament watch, child rights index, and public education materials. The organization provides counseling and legal aid to children in distress and addresses specific child protection issues, including juvenile justice, child trafficking, and child marriage by campaigning, training stakeholders, pursuing public interest litigations and originating action-oriented research.

**Prevention of Child Marriage** by strengthening governance and holding the state and communities accountable have been key strategies of HAQ since March 2012, in partnership with the MV Foundation in Andhra Pradesh and Jabala in West Bengal. HAQ and its partners work with government officials, police, *panchayat*, self-help groups (SHGs), adolescent girls, youth groups, religious and community leaders. They enlist support by raising awareness of the adverse effects of child marriage and also its legal implications. The organization's work is starting to benefit the community, with child marriages either prevented or postponed, and communities promising to oppose child marriage.

#### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



#### OTHER KEY INTERVENTIONS



To launch its child marriage program, HAQ selected rights-based organizations with which it had previous strong relationships. It jointly designed effective programs, and conducted consultations with key government officials and members of society. For one year, HAQ worked closely with its partners, overseeing the program and training social workers. Currently, HAQ monitors the initiative, and reports to donors through field visits and partners' reports.

#### THEORY OF CHANGE

If governance mechanisms are strengthened and child protection measures established then communities and children will be empowered to realize the rights of minors, and to combat objectionable social practices including child marriage in a sustainable way.

#### SCALABILITY

HAQ's model has proven successful with different organizations in diverse social landscapes, indicating a strong foundation and scalability. HAQ plans to conduct evidence-based research to analyze its impact, and then scale through increasing (a) penetration in existing states, and (b) number of partners.

#### QUALITY INDICATORS

##### OUTREACH

HAQ's program is building the capacity of two organizations in two states, covering 24 *gram panchayats* (GPs). It has mobilized the community by establishing groups of young girls and boys, child protection committees, and SHGs. Since its launch in March 2012, the project has prevented 62 child marriages in its own area and 31 in neighbouring non-project areas.

##### ENDORSEMENT

HAQ's analysis of the government's budget spending on child rights has been endorsed by the Government of India, and its publications have set the pretext of discussions in the houses of the parliament. The child marriage program is funded by Ford and MacArthur foundations. Other past and present funders include Terre des Homes (Germany), CORDAID, Save the Children Sweden, and CRY.

##### LEADERSHIP

HAQ was co-founded by Enakshi Thukral and Bharti Ali, both trained sociologists. Enakshi is a member of the drafting committee for National Policy on Children, Central Advisory Board on Child Labor. Bharti is a member of the Delhi Legal Services Authority, Delhi High Court Legal Services Committee. Krinna Shah, the Program Director for the child marriage program, has a child protection background and has been a child welfare committee member.

##### PARTNERSHIPS

HAQ has contributed to the formulation of laws, policies and programs, e.g. National Policy for Children; National Plan of Action; Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act; Juvenile Justice Act and Rules; 11th & 12th Five Year Plans. It has taken part in national campaigns against child labor and child trafficking. For its child marriage program, it partners with the MV Foundation in Andhra Pradesh and Jabala in West Bengal.



• Secretary Trustee: M.R. Vikram • Founded: 1981 • Coverage: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh  
• Total Budget: INR 6.1 Crores (\$1,009,000) • CM Budget: INR 5.5 Crores (\$ 917,000)

#### OVERVIEW

M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MVF) promotes the recognition and protection of child rights using a 'non-negotiable' proposition, namely 'No child must work; all children must go to school.' It believes that any child out of school is subject to some form of work and is therefore a child laborer; since early marriage prevents girls from going to school, it is also a symbol of child labor. MVF prevents child marriage by using a rights-based approach to create demand for education amongst parents of poor children, teachers, employers of children, youth groups, women's groups, elected local representatives, and state government officials. It has grown from reaching 30 children in 1991, to over 1 million children today.

MVF uses an area-based approach, which involves working with all children in a given location and persuading communities to take ownership of upholding children's rights, including enrolling and retaining children aged 5-14 in school; this year onwards MVF intends to also focus on secondary education for girls. It does this by creating and training a formal village level Child Rights Protection Forum (CRPF) consisting of panchayat members, women's self-help groups and other activists to work on child-centric issues. MVF gathers information on all out-of-school children, builds awareness, forms youth groups, mobilizes motivation centers, organizes residential bridge course camps and teacher forums, engages with school education committees to secure infrastructural improvements, and helps CRPFs consistently track and follow up on children's progress.

#### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



MVF uses its model of community mobilization for enrolling and retaining children in school to also prevent child marriages. It tracks girls, builds awareness about child marriage, mobilizes girls' groups and mothers' groups to support and cultivate peer leaders, and assists CRPFs in actively stopping child marriages. It also ensures that Child Marriage Prohibition Committees and Officers are functioning as mandated by the state.

#### THEORY OF CHANGE

If all stakeholders in a community - parents, children, teachers, elected members and government officials - are made aware of the issues involved, trained and mobilized to create demand for education, protect child rights, and enroll and retain children in school, then all children will receive quality education. If children are educated and their rights are protected, it will result in their holistic development and the progress of society.

#### SCALABILITY

MVF's scalability is rooted in its principle against creating parallel systems and instead working through existing state institutions such as schools, social welfare hostels, gram panchayats and other bodies. It has implemented its model across Andhra Pradesh and replicated it in several other states with different geographic, cultural and economic conditions, by building the capacity of government as well as other non-profit organizations.

#### QUALITY INDICATORS

##### OUTREACH

Since its inception, MVF has enrolled over 1 million children from more than 6,000 villages in school. It has stopped over 4,500 child marriages, mainstreamed 50,000 children through its residential bridge courses, worked with 1,500 *gram panchayats*, and mobilized 1,500 teachers through teachers' forums, and 8,000 youth volunteers and members of CRPF. MVF has worked in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Assam.

##### ENDORSEMENT

MVF's programs have been supported by Government of India, Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP), UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank and donors including Action Aid, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, and Axis Bank Foundation. GoAP has adopted and implemented its concepts, especially concerning residential bridge courses. MVF has received the Swaravada Award from the NTR Memorial Trust, the Yashoda Foundation and the Pragati Seva Trust.

##### LEADERSHIP

MVF's 220-strong team is led by a strong group of trustees and current secretary M.R. Vikram, an established Chartered Accountant. Its founder, Prof. Shanta Sinha has chaired the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights for two consecutive terms. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999, the 2003 Ramon Magsaysay Award, Golden Pen Award from Bauer Publishing House, Germany in 2004, and the Albert Shanker International Award.

##### PARTNERSHIPS

MVF is a partner of 'Stop Child Labour- School is the Best Place to Work' campaign, involving non-profit organizations from six European and other developing countries, which provides technical support in Central American and Africa. It builds the capacities of various non-profit organizations and state governments to implement its approach. It has partnered with 'HAQ: Centre for Child Rights' to document and help deliver its child marriage program.

• Secretary: Mina Das • Founded: 1974 • Coverage: West Bengal  
• Total Budget: INR 3.15 Crores (\$508,000) • CM Budget: INR 1.56 Crores (\$252,000)



### OVERVIEW

Nishtha is an NGO located in West Bengal, India. For the past 35 years, it has worked to improve healthcare and hygiene, and to empower women of all ages. It seeks to mobilize women through education, leadership, life skills and vocational training programs to make them economically independent.

Nishtha operates four primary interventions:

**Day Care Centre (DCC)** is set up to provide education to out-of-school girls, dropouts and child laborers with the aim of enrolling them in the formal education system. Classes following mainstream school syllabuses are held from 10 AM to 4.30 PM daily. In addition, computers and other extracurricular activities such as painting, music, dance and drama are also held to develop skills. Special training is given in reproductive health, hygiene and child protection.

**Private Tuitions** are provided to the most vulnerable and at-risk adolescent girls to ensure they stay at school.

**Vocational Training Center** is designed for young girls (age: 13-18 years) and young women who cannot be enrolled in formal schools. They are taught skills such as stitching, brush making and other handicrafts to encourage their financial independence.

**Youth and Women's Group** is a Nishtha initiated self-dependent collective of children (age: 6-11 years), adolescent boys and girls (age: 11-18 years) and women who work on issues such as child marriage, violence against women, sexual and reproductive health and women's rights.

### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



Facilitating access to education



Vocational training life skills and SRH



Mobilizing communities



Cultivating peer leaders

### OTHER KEY INTERVENTIONS



Creating awareness

Members of youth and women's groups are trained and motivated to conduct meetings in their own villages. They are equipped to take social action by raising awareness, acting as peer educators and building pressure among parents to ensure that daughters are educated. Each village group (hamlet) consists of 10-12 members and is headed by a leader. Hamlet leaders form block groups and block leaders form a federation, which supervises the activities of various groups. Leaders are elected every year by vote.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

If girls and young women are educated, trained and sensitized about social malpractices and are involved in the process of social change, then they can assume responsibility for their own lives. If women are united and assertive about their rights, then they will be empowered to help themselves and bring about a positive change in their community by defeating discriminative social malpractices.

### SCALABILITY

In the coming years, Nishtha plans to open six DCCs in Magrahat-II block in West Bengal, and run ten additional private tuition centres for 3000 girls in four blocks. It also aims to open libraries in DCCs to increase children's interest in education, establish computer learning centres, and conduct monthly health check-ups for adolescent girls, also at DCCs. Further, it intends to extend support to around 2000 vulnerable girls by paying their tuition fees and providing educational materials and clothing.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### OUTREACH

Nishtha operates in four blocks of the district named South 24 Paragnas, in West Bengal. To date, 1,564 children have been coached, 678 have been enrolled in main schools and approximately 5,000 have received private tuitions. Nishtha has also provided vocational training to 725 girls and women, and impacted an additional 5,000 through its women's groups.

#### ENDORSEMENT

Nishtha's work has been featured on Doordarshan Kolkata's Sreemoyee program and regional newspapers such as Anandabazar, Aajkaal, and The Telegraph. Nishtha was awarded the national level Apeejay Award in 2011 for the best volunteer-based organization. Their work has been funded by international agencies such as Oxfam (UK), Global Fund for Women, Global Fund for Children and Karuna Trust. Domestic funders include the R.D. Tata Trust.

#### LEADERSHIP

Nishtha's team of 135 members is headed by secretary Mina Das, who has 35 years of experience in the social sector. She is an Ashoka Fellow and holds a Masters degree in Arts and a Bachelors degree in Education. She is a member of the District Level Health Committee (Government of India) and on the governing body of six women's groups of West Bengal. Nishtha's board includes seven members considered experts in the social, education and anthropology sectors.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

Nishtha's projects have been financially assisted by various international agencies including the Development Cooperation Section and Canadian High Commission. They have received government support from the National Commission for Women, District Child Protection and District Social Welfare. They have also undertaken projects in partnership with non-profits such as Save the Children & knowledge partners including Jadavpur University.

• Secretary: Bharat Bhushan • Founded: 1986 • Coverage: Uttar Pradesh  
• Total Budget: INR 6.96 Crores (\$1,122,000) • CM Budget: 63 Lakhs (\$102,000)



### OVERVIEW

People's Action for National Integration (PANI) was founded to empower marginalized women and children to assert their rights. With this objective, it adopts a two-pronged approach to address the issue of child marriage in eastern Uttar Pradesh. It empowers children to access their rights and building the capacity of community health workers.

**Integrated Child Development:** PANI has created village, block, and district level committees of children (aged 6-18), to address issues of child rights including child marriage. Methods used include role play, puppet shows, cartoons, and films. PANI empowers children by making them aware of their rights, and by helping them to speak directly with government authorities to access essential services and advocate for these rights. It sets up a Child Protection Committee that involves stakeholders such as teachers and government functionaries to uphold child rights.

**Community Health:** As child brides are vulnerable to poor health due to sexual activity or early pregnancies, PANI, as part of its community health program, specifically seeks to raise awareness of health problems caused by child marriage. It has partnered with six organizations to create awareness about health issues and train local health workers to conduct safe deliveries resulting from early pregnancy. PANI supervises implementation of the program by partner organizations and provides technical and monitoring expertise.

### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



Facilitating access to education



Cultivating peer leaders



Mobilizing communities



Vocational training life skills and SRH

### OTHER KEY INTERVENTIONS



Creating awareness

PANI establishes children's groups called *Bal Jagriti Manch* to liaise with local government and police functionaries, and promote equal opportunity environments within local communities. These young leaders influence their peers and host anti-child marriage campaigns. To help girls who are being pressurized to marry early for dowry related reasons, PANI provides access to vocational training to help them earn and reduce the financial burden on their families.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

If integrated development with a rights-based perspective is promoted by creating active children, youth and women's groups that identify, analyze and prioritize child rights issues and initiate targeted activities at the grassroots levels, then a sustained and holistically developed society, with gender equality and recognition of the rights of children, will be created.

### SCALABILITY

PANI's programs are scalable through partnerships with local non-profit organizations. It operates strong systems to monitor and evaluate its programs; the leaders of each program provide daily updates while quarterly reviews assess progress and discuss future recommendations. PANI plans sustainable programs through a three-stage implementation: phase-in, implementation, and phase-out once intended indicators have been achieved. Going forward, the organization plans to expand its operations to the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### OUTREACH

Through its Integrated Child Development program, PANI has involved over 170,000 women and 150,000 children over the past 17 years in community-based organizations (CBOs) in 11 districts of Uttar Pradesh. During the past year alone, the Community Health program has impacted over 60,000 women and more than 70,000 children by empowering and educating local committees about health issues in six blocks in four districts.

#### ENDORSEMENT

PANI has received accolades from the Christian Children Fund's Board of Directors for its work with children, and has also been recognized by CARE and the Uttar Pradesh government for its efforts to improve maternal health. Its work has featured in leading publications such as The Hindu and Times of India. PANI's work on child marriage is currently funded by Child Fund India, Plan India, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, and UNICEF.

#### LEADERSHIP

Bharat Bhushan has served as PANI's chief secretary for the past 27 years. He believes strongly in volunteerism and the civil society movement based on Gandhian principles. Before PANI, he worked with his parents on integrated development in Bihar. Mr. Bhushan is supported by a strong executive core management group that incorporates many years of experience and grassroots commitment to improving the lives of women and children throughout India.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

PANI is involved in many state, national, and international associations including the Uttar Pradesh Voluntary Action Network, Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development, Voluntary Action Network of India, and International Task Force for Rural Poor. PANI also founded the Supporting Association for Thematic and Holistic Initiatives in 1992, which includes 346 grassroots organizations in Uttar Pradesh.

• Coordinator: Jashodhara Dasgupta • Founded: 1992 • Coverage: Uttar Pradesh  
• Total Budget: INR 1.6 Crores (\$258,000) • CM Budget: INR 50 Lakhs (\$81,000)



### OVERVIEW

Sahayog is a rights-based organization that promotes women's health, gender equity, and youth sexual and reproductive health, with a focus on poor and socially marginalized groups in rural areas. It provides technical and financial support for its local partners to implement its community empowerment programs, and uses findings from communities to influence policy at all levels. It also serves as a resource group providing information on health and rights for women and youth.

Sahayog's **Tarang** program focuses on empowering adolescent girls by facilitating implementation of the government's pilot SABLA scheme. SABLA is a comprehensive program for girls aged 11-18, which aims to increase school enrolment, improve health and nutrition, upgrade life and vocational skills, raise awareness on issues such as sexual and reproductive health, and provide counseling through *aanganwadi* centers.

Tarang mobilizes government resources under the SABLA scheme to make adolescent girls more aware of gender, health and rights issues, conducts capacity building workshops for girl leaders to increase their participation in monitoring and advocacy of their rights, and drives campaigns to create a more supportive environment in their communities, to empower them to delay their marriages, complete their education and develop their own livelihoods.

### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



Vocational training life skills and SRH



Cultivating peer leaders



Training government functionaries



Building capacity of other non-profits

### OTHER KEY INTERVENTIONS



Conducting evidence based research

Tarang facilitators mobilize adolescent girls to enrol in schools, and also to form groups of 20-25 to meet at *aanganwadi* centers twice each month. Within groups, girls monitor their SABLA entitlements and discuss gender and health issues using materials provided by Sahayog. Girls also conduct community campaigns, learn to file petitions, and engage with government officials to advocate for their rights.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

If socially marginalized women and girls are made aware of their rights and entitlements, and are empowered to campaign for and monitor the enforcement of both, then policy makers will be better informed regarding their status, and government programs will be more effectively implemented. As a result, these groups will have greater influence on policies that affect their lives and be able to access services more easily.

### SCALABILITY

Tarang is a scalable program primarily because it leverages government infrastructure and is implemented by local partners. Currently, five partners implement it in five districts, each covering 20 villages. Sahayog can deepen its engagement with existing partners and expand Tarang to more villages in these districts. It can also expand Tarang to more districts by leveraging partnerships under its other programs, or by adding new partners. Over the next three years, Sahayog plans to expand its coverage from 100 to 140 villages in five districts.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### OUTREACH

In 2012-13, Tarang facilitators mobilized 3,071 adolescent girls into *Kishori Samoohs* (girls groups), over 250 of which participated in capacity building workshops and played leadership roles within their groups. More than 5,000 girls took part in the *Mere Sapne Meri Udaan* campaign, which increased the awareness of girls' rights within communities. In addition, 470 girls took part in a district dialogue with key officials and stakeholders.

#### ENDORSEMENT

Sahayog is supported by established funders such as Ford Foundation (which funds the Tarang program), OXFAM Trust, Global Fund for Women, and MacArthur Foundation. Its past funders include AJWS, UN Women, and Department for International Development (DFID). **As the organization has no individual donors, it does not possess an 80-G certificate.**

#### LEADERSHIP

Sahayog's team of 16 is headed by Jashodhara Dasgupta, who has over 27 years of experience in the women's health and rights sector, and is a MacArthur Fellow (1995-98). She is a steering committee member of several civil society platforms, including the National Alliance for Maternal Health and Human Rights (India), and serves on various government committees. Sahayog's 7-member board is overseen by a governing body of 22 members.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

Sahayog has 11 community-based partners who implement its programs. It also has several national and global partners such as the Women's Health and Rights Advocacy Partnership (WHRAP), and is Secretariat of the National Alliance on Maternal Health and Human Rights (NAMHHR). SAHAYOG liaises with many organizations that also undertake SABLA related work funded by Ford Foundation.

• President: Mira Kakkar • Founded: 1993 • Coverage: West Bengal  
• Total Budget: INR 57 Lakhs (\$92,000) • CM Budget: INR 25 Lakhs (\$40,000)



### OVERVIEW

Thoughtshop Foundation (TF) is a social communications organization that develops innovative tools and behaviour change communication strategies to facilitate social change at the grassroots, on issues such as adolescent reproductive health, gender equity, and child rights.

TF's **Youth Resource Cells (YRC)** program was started in 2007 to empower young people to become agents of social change. The model entails selecting youth fellows and training them to simultaneously build the capacity of community-based youth groups to address social challenges such as gender inequality, early marriages, and domestic violence at an individual, group and community level.

TF's program curriculum allows for holistic personal development of individuals; it helps them explore issues of identity, choices and goals, gain awareness of gender equity and adolescent sexual and reproductive health, and develop a sense of belonging and responsibility towards their communities. Its interactive participatory methodology promotes peer education, which helps increase participation and ownership of youth, develops strong leaders and role models, and builds youth resource cells with distinct identities and values. These YRCs become self-sustaining support groups for community members, play the role of a watchdog, and act as change makers to build awareness and take collective action within their communities.

### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



Mobilizing communities



Vocational training life skills and SRH



Cultivating peer leaders

### OTHER KEY INTERVENTIONS



Creating awareness

New youth fellows and their YRCs participate in an 18-month foundation program, which includes workshops, residential camps, and community projects that use participatory games, teaching aids, and other interactive tools. Older YRCs are taken through advanced six-month modules such as peer counseling and gender based issues, to help them continue to drive positive social change in their communities.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

If young people are encouraged to become partners in the process of social change rather than solely beneficiaries, then they would be empowered to achieve their potential and develop ownership and responsibility for themselves, their peers and their communities, which in turn can effect positive and sustainable social change.

### SCALABILITY

The YRC model is scalable because it focuses on peer education. It employs a 'train-the-trainer' model, developing simplified tools and a structured curriculum to educate group leaders, who simultaneously train their group members to form independent youth groups. Since 2011, TF has replicated the YRC program for Indienhilfe, a German non-profit organization, in five remote districts. Its ability to adapt the program curriculum, design and delivery as needed, shows its potential to operate through partnerships under diverse community conditions.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### OUTREACH

Since 2007, over 100 youth fellows and 24 YRCs comprising around 1,000 youth members have been involved with TF's youth program. After completing the foundation course, these groups continue to engage their communities, reaching over 10,000 community members. Over 20 youth trainers and facilitators from these YRCs have trained youth leaders of partner organizations. TF's tools are also used by thousands of grassroots organizations worldwide.

#### ENDORSEMENT

TF's tools are used by well-known institutions such as Oxfam GB, CARE India, and USAID. Oxfam GB has been a significant partner since 2003 and has integrated TF's approach and learning into several projects; it selected TF to develop the campaign materials for the *We Can End Violence against Women* campaign implemented across South Asia by over 2000 partners. TF's YRC program has been supported by the Sir Ratan Tata Trust since 2009.

#### LEADERSHIP

TF's founder and president, Mira Kakkar, has over 20 years of experience in behavior change communications. Its project directors, Himalini Varma and Santayan Sengupta, are graduates of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, and are skilled at developing innovative tools and systems for the social sector. The organization's core four-person team is supported by 12 youth trainers and facilitators, who lead all program activities.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

TF has many partners, due to its expertise in developing communication materials and training youngsters on issues such as gender equity, and adolescent and reproductive health. It has worked with CINI to develop content, with Youthreach to train youth leaders, and with UNICEF on its *My Childhood My Right* campaign against child marriage in West Bengal. It partners with Indienhilfe to implement the YRC program in its districts.

• Secretary: Arvind Ojha • Founded: 1986 • Coverage: : Western Rajasthan  
• Total Budget: INR 2 Crores (\$324,000) • CM Budget: INR 24 Lakhs (\$39,000)



### OVERVIEW

URMUL Trust (UT), along with its family of satellite organizations, develops community-driven programs, sustains and strengthens these programs, and hands them over to a given community. The URMUL family's key focus areas include health and livelihoods, with an emphasis on the rights of women and children. It has targeted the issue of child marriage through the lens of education, sensitization and community mobilization.

**Girls Not Brides: Thar Extension Program (TEP)**, inception in June 2013, and implemented by the parent organization (UT), adopts a community training and sensitization approach. Stakeholders are sorted into groups and are educated about child marriage and its health-based, legal, and social ramifications. The program is in effect in 60 villages across two districts, and was preceded by similar initiatives in other districts where the URMUL family operates. The TEP program borrows one key component of the *Dignity of the Girl Child* program (actively implemented by URMUL between 2005 and 2009), namely the use of creative pedagogy including puppet shows and skits, in order to make communities relate to and empathize with victims of child marriages.

UT's previous initiative in education, the *Balika Shivir* program (1997-2012; subsequently adopted by the State Government), equipped girls with life-skills and the agency to speak up for themselves, highlighting the power of education in increasing the age of marriage, thus inspiring key tenets of the TEP program.

### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



Vocational training life skills and SRH



Mobilizing communities



Cultivating peer leaders

UT's level of community entrenchment positively impacts the efficacy of its interventions. In its engagements with the community, UT focuses on role models from both within and outside the community to encourage positive change. In addition to sensitizing communities about the medical and legal consequences of child marriage, the trainings organized by UT emphasize the importance of education.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

If local leadership and key community groups are mobilized, trained, educated and sensitized about the ills of social malpractices such as child marriage, and communicate messages about the same to their communities, then the constituents of these communities shall witness a marked improvement in the quality of their lives.

### SCALABILITY

The organization's initiatives under the Girls Not Brides program involve weekly engagement, training and sensitization of diverse community groups. To maximize the efficacy of these initiatives, the organization and its trainers need to be significantly entrenched in the areas of operation, in order to encourage an organic process of change. URMUL is looking to build the capacity of other organizations in different geographies to implement similar programs by sharing its methodologies and IECs to help them eradicate child marriage.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### OUTREACH

475 different interest groups have been formed across two districts in the TEP program. This includes girls' groups, mixed groups of girls and boys, women's groups and *panchayati raj* institution groups, among others. Previously, the *Balika Shivir* program reached out to over 11,000 girls and succeeded in empowering them, and in increasing their ages of marriage by up to five years in several instances.

#### ENDORSEMENT

The central government has appointed the secretary of URMUL Trust to monitor the efficacy and working of government schemes aimed at alleviating poverty across India. Amongst the organization's funders are Action Aid, Save the Children, Oxfam, USAID, Plan International and UNICEF. URMUL Trust was one of the first organizations to be called upon by 'The Elders' to constitute the Girls Not Brides Partnership.

#### LEADERSHIP

The family of organizations practices a decentralized, democratic form of decision-making. The trust is presently headed by Arvind Ojha, who has been with the organization since 1987. UT's board is unique in that it has several ex-officio members, including the district collector of Bikaner. The presence of senior bureaucrats in its board lends the organization legitimacy when it negotiates with the government in its policy advocacy initiatives.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

UT is a part of numerous partnerships including the Girls Not Brides partnership, consisting of over 300 organizations battling child marriage worldwide. It has strong working partnerships with the Government of India and is currently entrusted with implementing the Integrated Child Development Services in the Kolayat Block of Bikaner district. It also has an IT-based vocational training partnership with the Rajasthan Knowledge Commission.

• Founder Secretary: Usha Choudhary • Founded: 2002 • Coverage: Rajasthan  
• Total Budget: INR 50 Lakhs (\$80,000) • CM Budget: INR 28 Lakhs (\$45,000)



### OVERVIEW

Vikalp Sansthan was founded in 2002, to create a society free of violence and discrimination against women and girls. The organization approaches the issue of child marriage by focusing on gender-based violence, based on the finding of the National Family Health Survey that girls married at an early age are more vulnerable to domestic violence.

#### *Aapni Dikari Ro Haq* (Our Daughter's Right)

This program began in 2005 and currently operates in the districts of Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jalore and Barmer in western and southern Rajasthan.

Awareness is raised interactively through street plays and rallies. The organization also conducts targeted workshops for adolescent girls, boys, the youth and parents, to discuss group specific issues.

Sensitization takes the form of one-on-one interactions and workshops with stakeholders and key opinion formers, including members of *panchayati raj*, caste leaders, teachers, *anganwadi* workers, *saathis* and local government officials.

Research and advocacy includes conducting comprehensive mapping exercises of child marriage trends in Rajasthan, and lobbying state and local governments to boost efforts to combat child marriage.

### HIGH IMPACT INTERVENTIONS



Training government functionaries



Mobilizing communities



Cultivating peer leaders

### OTHER KEY INTERVENTIONS



Conducting evidence based research



Advocating with the government

Vikalp Sansthan identifies youth to attend its workshops and engages them to act as volunteers. As volunteers are drawn from the community in which the program operates, they clearly understand local issues and concerns. The volunteers organize mass awareness programs and sensitize local stakeholders, with whom they establish sound relationships through one-on-one interaction and dialogue.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

If all members and stakeholders in a community, including parents, children, frontline workers and government functionaries are mobilized, trained and sensitized to the scourge of gender based violence and child marriage, then women will be able to achieve their full potential as safe, empowered and equal members of society.

### SCALABILITY

Using volunteers from local communities to mobilize, and build relationships and trust ensures inherent scalability in Vikalp's model. Going forward, acknowledging the importance of education in the fight against child marriage, Vikalp Sansthan plans to integrate educational activities into its program by mainstreaming camps for high school dropouts and life skills development workshops. The organization also intends to increase its advocacy, by working closely with local government officials to ensure the effective enforcement of laws against child marriage.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### OUTREACH

*Our Daughter's Right* operates in 226 villages in four districts of Rajasthan. Since its inception, Vikalp Sansthan's awareness initiatives have affected the lives of over 200,000 people. Additionally, 4,700 stakeholders have received sensitization and capacity building training. Vikalp Sansthan has also persuaded 32 panchayats to pass resolutions establishing child marriage free regions.

#### ENDORSEMENT

Vikalp Sansthan's work across Rajasthan has been reported by many respected media organizations, including The Guardian, NDTV, Korean National Television and Femina magazine. Since it began, the organization has been supported by strong institutional funders such as Oxfam India, UNICEF and Action Aid. Vikalp Sansthan's involvement at the highest level of policy making is supported by the Government of Rajasthan's Department of Women and Child Development.

#### LEADERSHIP

Vikalp Sansthan is led by Usha Choudhary, a prominent women's activist. Usha has over 10 years of experience working on issues related to violence against women, and has won several awards including the L'Oreal Paris Femina Women Award. The organization consists of a 17-strong management and operations team, and a volunteer task force of 400 youth who play a vital grassroots role in the organization's awareness and sensitization activities.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

Vikalp Sansthan participates in numerous networks and partnerships including Girls Not Brides, *We Can End All Violence Against Women* Campaign, *One Billion Rising*, FEM (Forum for Engaging Men) and the *Asian Girls* Campaign. In addition, it provides the Rajasthan partners of Terre des Homes with gender-based training. Vikalp Sansthan has also collaborated with the Rajasthan police to provide sensitization workshops for police officers.

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## Recommendations and Conclusion

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An adolescent girl stands at the threshold of adulthood. In that period, much is decided. If her life follows the path of patriarchal norms and poverty, she marries too young. As an abused wife, an adolescent mother, and an uneducated citizen, she loses the chance to fulfill her human potential. And each instance of child marriage, multiplied by millions of girls, contributes to a much larger downward spiral for the nation.

While a girl's life is fundamentally shaped by those closest to her, decisions within her domestic circle are influenced by the actions of various stakeholders. Actors such as the government, international agencies, law enforcement agencies, judiciary, non-profit organizations and media have the potential to stimulate families and communities to alter the trajectory of early marriage and pregnancy for girls. While India is progressing towards the goal to end child marriage, the current scale and impact of the issue necessitates efforts to be intensified at all levels across stakeholder groups.

### Recommendations for building the eco-system

#### **Promote cross-sectorial initiatives such as SABLA**

While SABLA is an initiative to empower adolescent girls by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), it is implemented through an existing structure under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Even though the scheme is fairly new, it has met with significant success. Effective use of existing government machinery and collaboration between government departments explain the successful implementation of the SABLA program. Considering that various ministries – Health and Family Welfare, Human Resource Development, and Women and Child Development – have a stake in this issue, there is a need to have more of such cross-departmental initiatives among them to create optimum impact in a cost-efficient manner.

#### **Build local networks**

Child marriage is essentially a local issue. According to non-profit organizations, current national networks tend to be too hierarchical and large for constructive discussions. Therefore, there is a need to develop state or district level networks with flat structures to address local challenges. These networks need to be flexible enough to include organizations that do not currently operate child marriage specific programs such as those working in the education, health and livelihood sectors. These must also involve other stakeholders, including funders and local government, so as to understand different perspectives and conduct sector-level discussions regarding challenges and opportunities.

### Recommendations for funders

#### **Prioritize impact assessment to prove and improve**

While certain approaches to delay marriage and pregnancy seem to be working, there is a need for the sector to move beyond anecdotal evidence to more concrete indicators of impact, in order to understand what works and where future investments should be directed. It is important for donors to fund non-profit organizations to conduct regular evaluation and impact assessment exercises so as to gain insights and accordingly plan their future funding. They also need to use their expertise to build capacity of non-profit organizations by co-developing plans for monitoring and evaluation that are simple, cost-effective and relevant for the organization beyond specific funding cycles.

#### **Extend funding cycles – individually and collectively**

Funders and donors need to collaborate to ensure longer term commitments of at least 10-15 years to non-profit organizations. This will enable non-profit organizations to plan strategically, and build necessary systems and processes to evaluate interventions and demonstrate impact. Funders should also explore the option of collaborating with each other so as to coordinate their financing of common recipients, and in doing so extend funding cycles and help non-profit organizations to develop and expand.

### Recommendations for non-profit organizations

#### **Place greater emphasis on education-based interventions**

Schooling, particularly at secondary level, remains the single most important predictor of age at marriage. Despite concrete evidence from India as well as other countries, only 21% of non-profit organizations use it as an approach to prevent the practice of child marriage. While organizations approaching the issue from a child rights or reproductive perspective are undoubtedly achieving impact, there is a need to promote the education approach and the importance of keeping girls in school, particularly secondary school, due its proven potential to reduce the incidence of child marriages.

#### **Demonstrate interim outcomes for further funding**

While there is a need for funders to extend funding cycles, it is challenging for them to justify continued grants to organizations without clear demonstration of progress. It is therefore crucial for non-profit organizations to document and provide concrete evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, for interim results if they are to attract, or continue to attract longer-term financing. This will also promote accountability, transparency and longer term relationships between funders and non-profit organizations.

#### **Identify and include child brides**

Child brides have been and continue to be an underserved population in the fight to end child marriage. While the importance of preventing the practice cannot be underestimated, in countries such as India where it is culturally engrained, efforts seeking to end it often require considerable time to gain political traction and social acceptance. It is therefore crucial to identify this isolated population and include it in development programs at the policy as well as delivery level so as to mitigate the negative effects of child marriage.

### Conclusion

Marry Me Later draws on Dasra's own research as well as a wide range of international and national studies on child marriage to say that it is possible for an adolescent girl to have an alternate trajectory to early marriage and pregnancy. The report provides evidence of how millions of girls are able to lead healthier, more productive and fulfilling lives for themselves and their families if they marry later. It further highlights 10 promising non-profit organizations that are doing commendable work and should be funded so that they can empower more communities in India to end this harmful practice.

However, reports do not change the world, champions do. Dasra urges strategic funders and philanthropists to leverage this report to become champions, to lend their voice and influence, and to support non-profit organizations that are striving to protect the rights of existing child brides and the 57 million girls at risk of child marriage in the coming decade in India. Because investing in delayed marriage and pregnancy for girls is not only the smart thing but also the right thing to do.

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## Appendix I

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### Criteria used to define 'impact' and 'scale'

#### Defining impact

**Proximity to end beneficiary:** Measures that involve direct contact with a potential or actual child bride (example, legal support) may more directly benefit individuals than indirect activities, such as advocacy or building the capacity of government officials.

**Duration of engagement:** Interventions that involve engagement with beneficiaries over a longer period may potentially have a greater impact on their lives and situations than a one-off short-term involvement.

**Evidence of effectiveness:** While interventions may be effective on paper, the ground reality may be very different. For example, evidence based research may ideally be useful to identify gaps and successful interventions. However, at present, research is being undertaken by isolated organizations on only a small scale. Moreover, generally this research is not being used to direct strategy and future funding, diminishing its effectiveness.

**Ability to empower the end beneficiary:** Interventions which empower the victim can have a longer lasting effect on end beneficiaries.

#### Defining scale

**The evident availability of required resources:** This includes human and financial resources. For example, provision of legal aid to child brides necessitates skilled advocates and an often protracted trial. Such an intervention, although impactful, is not conducive to scale. On the other hand, relatively few resources are required to train community members or government workers to deliver a service, making it an inherently more scalable intervention.

**Gestation period:** The "gestation period" is the time required to realize impact once a program has started. For example, compared to a powerful and well-publicized public awareness campaign, it takes longer for evidence-based research to provide benefits to the victim, due to the need to gather data, analyze information, lobby government, secure acceptance of change, and implement legislation. Consequently, it is less scalable.

**Partnerships leveraged:** This refers to the use of partnerships and other organizations to target more people. For example, interventions that train or build the capacity of other organizations have potential to benefit more people in a shorter period than those that directly implement the program in communities. They are also less expensive to deliver and will therefore be more scalable.

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## Appendix II

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### Non-profit mapping methodology

Dasra's non-profit mapping included site visits to view programs on the ground and interact with beneficiaries; detailed interviews with managers of non-profit organizations; phone interviews; and desk research.

Operationally, the following due diligence procedures were followed:

**Initial Mapping:** Firstly, Dasra mapped the sector by collating a comprehensive list of non-profit organizations addressing issues related to adolescent girls based on internet research, interviews with participants in Dasra Social Impact (Dasra's Executive Education Program) and referrals from sector experts. Initial mapping yielded a list of over 300 non-profit organizations across India.

**On-Call Interviews:** Secondly, Dasra identified non-profit organizations that allocate significant resources to programs addressing child marriage. A total of 88 were selected for on-call interviews, based on telephone conversations with program/organizational heads. The interviews discussed:

- Activities, direct and indirect, related to prevention of child marriage
- Proportion of total non-profit budget allocated to opposing child marriage
- Outreach of child marriage programs since their inception and over the previous year (2012–13)
- Extent of diversification by program area
- Team size of organization and child marriage program

Additional information gathered includes, when the non-profit organizations and child marriage programs were established, their theories of change, geographical coverage, operational models, and interventions implemented. Based on the information provided, Dasra selected 17 non-profit organizations to visit.

**Site Visits:** Thirdly, Dasra met with managers and field staff of the short-listed non-profit organizations, viewing their operational models first hand, and securing a clear understanding of how effectively their theories of change translated into action on the ground. It spent 2-3 days with each non-profit organization, acquiring detailed information concerning the organization in general and its program to address child marriage in particular. Information sought also included: evolution of the program, its model, management structure, program financials, outreach and outcomes achieved. This stage was used to identify the non-profit organizations to be highlighted in this report and recommended for funding. The criteria used to compile the final shortlist were as follows:

- Program structure and documentation
- Management team
- Growth over the previous three years (2011-13)
- Future scaling plans
- Proven outcomes/impact
- Current partnerships (government, academia, international and local non-profit organizations)
- External endorsements (historical and current funders, and prestigious awards)

After evaluating these criteria, Dasra identified and profiled 10 established non-profit organizations (see Chapter VI) that implement high impact and highly scalable programs addressing child marriage in India.

**Workshop:** As part of its research, Dasra invited all organizations visited, to participate in a capacity building workshop.<sup>91</sup> This was attended by 17 participants from 16 non-profit organizations. Using a curriculum and a facilitation methodology from Dasra's globally recognized Dasra Social Impact Executive Education program, the workshop helped to strengthen these organizations' strategic thinking, supporting improvements in their assessment methodology, operational planning, and communications with donors and stakeholders. The workshop also provided an opportunity for Dasra to present its research findings and framework to the leading non-profit experts in the child marriage sector. Their input has been included in this report.

## Appendix III

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Lakshmi Sundaram	Girls Not Brides
Meena Narula	Plan India
Priya Nanda	ICRW
Priya Das	ICRW
Rashmi Singh	CARE
Rema Nanda	Karuna Fund
Richard Bale	Consul General for Canada
Safeena Hussain	Educate Girls
Shireen Jejeebhoy	Population Council
Shobhana Boyle	UNFPA
Sonali Khan	Breakthrough
Dr. Sunil Mehra	MAMTA
Sushmita Mukherjee	Restless Development
Vanita Mukherjee	Ford Foundation

### Non-profit organizations visited

Ashish Gram Rachna Trust (AGRT)	www.ihmp.org
Association for Social and Health Advancement (ASHA)	www.ashaindia.in
Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA)	www.bba.org.in
Banglanatak	www.banglanatak.com
Chotanagpur Sanskritik Sangh (CSS)	www.css.org.in
HAQ	www.haqcrc.org
Jagori Grameen	www.jagorigrameen.org
Jan Jagran Sansthan (JSS)	www.atsecbihar.org
Life Education and Development Support (LEADS)	www.leadsindiajh.org
Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MVF)	www.mvfindia.in
Nishtha	www.nishthausa.org
People's Action for National Integration (PANI)	www.paniindia.org
Sahayog	www.sahayogindia.org

Shiv Shiksha Samiti Ronali	www.sssr.org.in
Thoughtshop Foundation	www.thoughtshopfoundation.org
Urmul Trust	www.urmul.org
Vikalp Sansthan	www.vikalporg.in

### Other non-profit organizations with a focus on child marriage

Asmita	www.asmitacollective.in
Badlao Foundation	www.badlao.org.in
Bal Mahila Kalyan	www.balmahilakalyan.org
Breakthrough Trust	www.breakthrough.tv
CARPED	www.carped.org
Centre for Health and Social Justice	www.chsj.org
Chapra Social and Economic Welfare Association	www.chaprasewa.hpage.co.in/home
Child in Need Institute (CINI)	www.cini-india.org
Empower People	www.empowerpeople.org.in
Gram Vikas Trust Bharuch	www.gvtgujarat.org.in
Institute for Integrated Society Development	
Izad	www.izadpatna.org
Jabala	www.jabala.org
Jan Kalyan Maha Samiti	www.jkms.org.in
MAMTA	www.mamta-himc.org
Manthan Kotri	www.manthankotri.in
Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK)	www.nbjk.org
Samarpan Sewa Samiti	www.sssvaranasi.org
Shohratgarh Environmental Society (SES)	www.sesindia.org



## Appendix IV

### Acronyms

ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
ATSEC	Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children
AWW	Aanganwadi Worker
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BSY	Balika Samridhi Yojna
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CMRA	Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929)
GOI	Government of India
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IDA	International Development Agency
IRPF	Inter-Religious Priest Forum
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
MOHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
PCMA	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
RKSK	Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram
RMNCH+A	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health+Adolescents
SHG	Self-help Group
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
YRC	Youth Resource Cell

### Glossary

- **Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs)** are community health workers instituted by India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as part of its National Rural Health Mission.
- **Aanganwadi Worker (AWW)** is a health worker chosen from the community and given four of months training in health, nutrition and child-care. She is in-charge of an aanganwadi or daycare centre for children, which covers a population of 1,000.
- **Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs)** are financial incentives that are transferred to a beneficiary, provided he/ she meets certain conditions.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** is a primary social welfare scheme started by the Indian government to tackle malnutrition and health problems in children (under 6), pregnant and lactating mothers, and adolescent girls.
- **Panchayat** is a self-government at the village or small town level in India.
- **SABLA** is a centrally sponsored scheme for the empowerment and health of adolescent girls in India.
- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** are eight international development goals to be achieved by 2015, by close to 200 countries that committed to these goals.
- **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)** is an initiative undertaken by the Government of India to address the health needs of underserved rural areas in the country.

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