

**Strengthening Existing  
Systems for the  
Prevention of Child  
Marriage**

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## Preface

Child Marriage is a human rights violation that does not consist of the violation of any one right, but several, that continue through the lives of the children that have been affected, often leaving long lasting effects that carry forward into their adult lives.

Children miss out on fundamental rights, such as right to play, right to an education, and girls become exposed to unplanned and early pregnancies. Girls being married to men several years older than them are also put at risk for physical and sexual abuse. Abandonment of girls married at a young age by their husbands is not uncommon. Unskilled and unprepared, they are left to fend for themselves most often with several children they may have had at a young age. Although there are boys too who bear the burden of under-age marriage and its consequences, it is mostly for girls that child marriage becomes the beginning of a cycle of violation of rights.

The practice of child marriage is so deep-rooted and entrenched in the social fabric that it is not just difficult, but most times almost impossible to prevent it despite laws and programmes. However, the efforts need to carry on, recognising that social change is slow and tedious and often happens in almost invisible ways.

Since 2012 HAQ: Centre for Child Rights has been implementing a project on *Preventing Child Marriage through Strengthening Systems* in partnership with Jabala in West Bengal and MV Foundation in Telengana. The overall objective of the programme is to develop and demonstrate a model for addressing child marriage through the strengthening and collaboration between, the existing legal and governance mechanisms; strengthening of the existing state mechanisms and institutions through training, monitoring of their functions, and holding them accountable; establishing networks with organisations engaged in similar issues to strengthen initiatives and working towards developing a sustained mechanism to address child marriage; and advocacy for policy level changes with regards to flaw in the existing law on child marriage and towards a strengthened implementation mechanism.

It has been a pleasure to work with the MV Foundation team. They have not only put their heart and soul into working to prevent child marriage, but they have demonstrated that working closely with the governance system is critical

to the implementation of the law in letter and spirit. They have demonstrated that the law can be used in several ways to motivate and mobilise people that can slowly lead to long term change.

This is the process documentation of the HAQ-MVF initiative over three years (2012-2015). We are grateful to Priya Krishnaswamy who has undertaken this documentation for us, and the MVF team in the districts, led by AVM Swamy, that has supported her in doing so.

**Enakshi Ganguly Thukral**

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## Glossary

AGG	Adolescent Girls' Group
AJC	Additional Joint Collector
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDPO	Child Development Project Officer
CI	Circle Inspector
CMPC	Child Marriage Prohibition Committee
CMPO	Child Marriage Prohibition Officer
CRPF	Child Rights Protection Forum
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DCPO	District Child Protection Officer
DCPU	District Child Protection Unit
DEO	District Education Officer
DM	District Magistrate (Collector)
DRDA	District Rural Development Authority
DSP	District Superintendent of Police
GC-DO	Girl Child Development Officer
GO	Government Order
HS	High School
HO	Head Office
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
ICPO	Integrated Child Protection Officer
ICPS	Integrated Child Protection Scheme
IEC	Information, Education, Communication
IKP	Indira Kranthi Patham
ITDA	Integrated Tribal Development Agency
JJB	Juvenile Justice Board
KGBV	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
MEO	Mandal Education Officer

MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MMS	Mandal Mahila Samakhya
MPDO	Mandal Parishad Development Officer
MPTC	Mandal Parishad Territorial Counsel
MRP	Mandal Resource Person
MVF	Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
PC-ICDS	Project Coordinator, Integrated Child Development Scheme
PCMA	Prevention of Child Marriage Act
PD	Project Director
PHC	Primary Health Center
PHO	Primary Health Officer
PNC	Post-Natal Care
PO-SSA	Project Officer, Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan
RDO	Revenue Division Officer
SHG	Self-Help Group
SI	Sub-Inspector
SMC	School Management Committee
SSAPO	Gender Coordinator
UPS	Upper Primary School
VO	Village Organization
VRO	Village Revenue Officer
VRA	Village Revenue Assistant
WCD	Women and Child Development
JJ Act	Juvenile Justice Act
JJ board	Juvenile Justice Board

## 1. Introduction

The project, “**Strengthening Existing Systems for the Prevention of Child Marriage: A Violation of Young People’s Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**”, was implemented in Telangana and earlier Andhra Pradesh as joint initiative of M V Foundation and HAQ: Centre for Child Rights. , The timeline of the project was January 2012 to December 2014. This report is, therefore, a project-end report, to study the process, mechanism, challenges and lessons learnt based on secondary sources from MVF’s quarterly reports, newspaper cuttings, diaries of field staff, pamphlets, baseline surveys and statistics, and field visits and interviews in the project area as well as of others directly concerned with the programme. (See Annexure 1 for a list of persons interviewed.)

The overall aim of the project was to work towards the prevention of child marriage and develop and demonstrate a model for addressing child marriage through the strengthening and collaboration between existing legal and governance mechanisms. It was also to strengthen the existing state mechanisms/structures/institutions through training and monitoring of their functions, and by holding them accountable. Further, it was to advocate for policy level changes and implementation flaws in the existing law on child marriage, and to strengthen the implementation mechanism.

## 2. Context of the Programme

It is far more difficult for a girl from poor, marginalized sections of society to complete her school education at least up to class 10 as compared to boys in contemporary India. The pervasive norm that discriminates against girls and they are subjected to all kinds of violence within the family in a society governed by patriarchal values. The existing atmosphere does not pay attention to them, and they are denied their entitlements to food and nutrition, education, participation and expression, and agency.

Indeed, having been denied access to education, which is so foundational to the paths that they will traverse for the rest of their life, these girls are forced into

the labour force and caught in a cycle of poverty and dependence where they are always reckoning and calculating to get out of hunger and penury. Lack of education also reinforces their fears in the face of an increasingly unsafe and insecure environment, and of early marriage, which brings with it adult responsibilities, a heightened risk of physical and sexual abuse, child bearing, ill-health and under-nutrition. There is a culture of silence as far as gender discrimination and the abuse of girls is concerned at the local level. This has a profound impact on girls, their psychology, their dignity and their freedom.

In terms of policies and laws in India, there has been a gradual shift towards a rights-based approach vis-à-vis the protection of children. India is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Govt. of India amended the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act of 2000 to bring it in line with India's obligations under the UNCRC. Children in the 6-14 year age group have a right to education under the 'Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Act 2009'. Older children in the 14-18 years age group are not covered under the RTE Act.

Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) 2006, 18 years is the permissible age of marriage for girls, and 21 years for boys. A child marriage is void if the child is taken away from its lawful guardian by enticement, force or use of deceitful means, or is sold or trafficked for the purpose of marriage. The Courts have the power to issue injunctions to prevent child marriages from taking place<sup>1</sup>. The solemnization of child marriages is a cognizable and non-bailable offence. Yet, the Act has limitations because it fails to declare all child marriages illegal. The law makes child marriages voidable only when children or guardians seek annulment of the marriage. In this sense, it presumes that the child is able to exercise her agency to say 'no' to child marriage, and that there are appropriate support systems and institutions to enable a child to defy marriage and also to rehabilitate her. In reality, it is unlikely that the guardian will take the initiative and risk of terminating a marriage. Also, the provisions of the PCMA are diluted by the personal laws in the country. For example, the Muslim personal law lays down the age of puberty as the age of marriage.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.unicef.org/india/Child\\_Marriage\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/india/Child_Marriage_handbook.pdf)

The Act provides for the institution of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) in every state to prevent child marriages and ensure protection of the victims as well as prosecution of the offenders.

However, the laws and policies are actually implemented only when there is public action in support of girls, preventing child marriage and supporting their aspirations for education, and a State response to demands made on it.

### **3. MVF's Approach to Protection of Children**

MVF's approach is directed towards changing the attitudes of all stakeholders and getting them to take the responsibility of bringing about equality and justice for all children. There is an inbuilt mechanism of community ownership of the programme on a sustained basis. MVF built a social norm in support of children's right to education and against all forms of child labour. It did not set up parallel institutions or structures to the existing public institutions. Instead, there is a crucial element of building the capacities of the functionaries of the institutions, as well as strengthening institution-building processes enabling the local bodies to go beyond being brokers and contractors to becoming legitimate public representatives working towards the protection of human rights of one and all in their constituencies.

MVF tracks each child including girls in the process of getting every child into school. Thus, over two decades, more than a million children have abandoned work and been enrolled into formal schools. Issues such as bonded labour, child trafficking, child marriages, and violence on children were resolved through community support. As the girls knew that they could seek shelter in MVF's Residential Bridge Course Camps (RBCs), they too gained strength to say 'No' to marriage and to join schools. Over 8,000 girls were thus rescued from child marriages. In the RBCs girls shared their experiences of abuse, violence and discrimination with their peers. The group exercise of opening up resulted in many of them overcoming their anxieties, fears, sense of loneliness and hopelessness, even as they found friends and child defenders with a strong sense of solidarity against the injustice that had been meted out to them.

At the same time MVF felt that there was a need to focus attention on girls and build a sustained campaign against child marriages. Information on laws, policies and institutions for girl children needed to be disseminated further, both among girls as well as society, for a long-term change in the attitudes of gender discrimination and patriarchy in society. HAQ identified MVF as a partner in this area and enabled it to take this agenda forward.

This is a process documentation of how concerned local officials and community-based institutions were facilitated by MVF to stand by girls in support of their rights and against early marriages. The emphasis has been on moral and ethical appeals, without resorting to polarizing society on the basis of gender. This document is about the process of winning over the hearts and minds of people, both in government and society, for the sake of girls, and their present and future wellbeing. It is a process document about an environment that is being created out of a vacuum, where girls would take the historic step to say ‘no’ to marriage and move forward, paving the way for future generations of girls in their society.

#### 4. Project Design and Area of Operation

MVF’s interventions have been conducted in 3 Gram Panchayats in 2 identified Mandals of Warangal and Mahbubnagar districts in Telangana as follows:

**Table1 – Project Area**

<b>Warangal District:</b>	<b>Mahbubnagar District:</b>
1. Rayaparthi Mandal	1. Amrabad Mandal
Panchayats – Mylaram, Ookal and Kondur	Panchayats – Maradugu, Chitlamkunta and Kummaronipally
2. Thorrur Mandal	2. Achampet Mandal
Panchayats – Chityal, Charlapalem and Haripirala	Panchayats – Bommanapally, Rangapur and Inole



It is perceived that early marriages are due to escalating dowries for older girls who have higher levels of education, social pressure to marry off young daughters, lack of safety and security for girls if they remained unmarried, and compulsions of tradition to marry off a girl, especially when a good match is presented to them. If the marriage of the first child is delayed, all the other children get older, and since the dowry for older girls is higher, it creates fear in the parents. Further, at times when the mother dies, the father remarries, and wants freedom, so he marries off the children. Since most of the reasons for child marriage are in the realm of attitudes in a framework of patriarchy and gender discrimination and not so much due to structural factors of political economy, the strategy for prevention of child marriage has been to change existing mindsets and patterns of doing things. It is also felt that a sustained programme focusing on girls for at least a decade would bring about changes in the structural factors as well.

As the prevalence of child marriages has been mostly in the SC, ST, Yadava, and Lambada communities, who are mainly impoverished non-literates, the focus of work has been among these communities. Of the 88 child marriages identified, 54 were stopped in the project area. Due to the influence of the program, even in neighboring non-project areas, 68 child marriages were identified and 39 were stopped. As seen in Table 2, there was a dramatic increase in the number of child marriages that were identified and proportionately greater successes in the stopping of child marriages in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the project.

**Table 2 –Details of Child Marriages Identified, Stopped and Could Not be Stopped in MVF project and Non -project areas from 2012- May 2014**

Year	Area	Particulars	Warangal		Mahbubnagar		TOTAL
			Thorrur	Rayaparthi	Ambrabad	Achampet	
2012	Project Area	Identified	2	12	1	5	20
		Stopped	1	1	0	4	6
		Could not be stopped	1	11	1	1	14
	Non-Project Area	Identified	1	8	3	5	17
		Stopped	1	4	0	5	10
		Could not be stopped	0	4	3	0	7
2013	Project Area	Identified	11	0	19	6	36
		Stopped	6	0	15	5	26
		Could not be stopped	5	0	4	1	10
	Non-Project Area	Identified	6	15	16	1	38
		Stopped	2	6	9	1	18
		Could not be stopped	4	9	7	0	20
2014	Project Area	Identified	4	3	5	20	32
		Stopped	2	3	3	14	22
		Could not be stopped	2	0	2	6	10
	Non-Project Area	Identified	4	0	3	6	13
		Stopped	3	0	2	6	11
		Could not be stopped	1	0	1	0	2

During the two years, MVF contacted a wide range of stakeholders, and has been constantly trying to engage with them on the issue of girls and discrimination. In some villages, all stakeholders have come together and are charged with a vision of getting every girl out of a child marriage situation. Although there is a presence of at least one of the stakeholders, especially the youth groups and SHGs, in every village, it is also true that not all villages are on the same level of consciousness vis-à-vis child marriage.

#### 4.1. Role of MV Foundation

The current anti-child marriage project was implemented by MVF and its 12volunteers in partnership with HAQ at the field level from 2012-2014. MVF organizers and volunteers were given orientation by HAQ for 3 days in Hyderabad in March 2012on the Prevention of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006, and the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act of 2000, which was amended in 2006.

With the help of youth groups and other members of the villages and schools, MVF conducted 2 baseline surveys in 2012 and 2013 in both Warangal and Mahbubnagar districts on the prevalence of child marriage. It took advantage of networks and contacts that it had developed when it was working in the area of child labour and later in 2010 for just one year with the IKP & DRDA in Amrabad Mandal of Mahbubnagar district. The child defenders who had honed their networking, human and social skills began their persuasion of wide-ranging and powerful stakeholders, including political parties and an unresponsive government, that child marriage is a social ill that needs to be abolished. They worked with unending patience and persuasion and were constantly on the move, facing odds and challenges, to reverse such practices. They were able to systematize the progress curve and inclusive approach that this project entailed.

Initially, the government did not have any data, but admitted that there was a high incidence of child marriage. Marriages were also not being registered. The MVF organizers got vague oral figures from people and the government. Communities told them that no one was working against child marriage. Everybody who was approached in the government refused to accept responsibility for action against child marriages. Most government officials were not even aware of the issue. When pressed, the district officials shunted the responsibility onto teachers, anganwadi workers, and other government functionaries. None of the government officials approached by the MVF were aware of GO#13, which had been issued on 30 March 2012.

GO # 13 contains the rules for implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriages Act (PCMA) 2006, and was issued on 3 March 2012.The rules

ordered the appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) for the whole state of Andhra Pradesh under the aegis of the District Collector. It also mandated the appointment of the Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs), covering 3-5 mandals each, Tehsildars and ICDS supervisors at the mandal level, and the Panchayat Secretaries/VROs as Child Marriage Prohibition Officers. They were to be responsible for the implementation of all aspects of the Act, with the powers of a police officer, and also powers of investigation and summoning of parties and witnesses, recording of statements, and booking of cases against individuals and parties concerned. They are also responsible for furnishing timely reports to the superior officers. Since GO # 13 had not been widely publicized, most government officials saw it for the first time in the hands of the MVF volunteers. Only the ICDS showed some knowledge of the situation, accepted that child marriage came under the purview of their department and showed concern.

#### **4.2. Role of HAQ: Centre for Child Rights**

As a partner offering technical support, HAQ and its functionaries played an important role. Through their regular visits to the field and interaction with all the stakeholders, they provided valuable feedback to MVF. They engaged with officials during their visits and, as they came from Delhi, the programme received attention from the government, facilitating greater support for the programme in this manner.

The strategies of the project were developed in consultation with HAQ initially and as the project evolved their feedback was useful to continue the project.

HAQ's support was also useful in the inputs they gave in conducting the baseline survey and in enabling documentation by MVF. For the baseline survey, the formats provided were elaborate, with questions addressed to all stakeholders such as headmasters, VROs, clergy, doctors, ICDS personnel, the police, youth groups, members of Gram Panchayats, and Tehsildars. This enabled clarification of their respective roles in addressing the issue, and responding to this questionnaire itself was an exercise in sensitizing them to

their roles. It also helped MVF in following up with the stakeholders. HAQ had developed formats for systematic reporting of the work done based on field visits and interaction with the project team. That has made documentation one of the important aspects of the project, adding to already existing documentation of the project activities.

At the same time, HAQ facilitated sharing of experiences of similar programmes, which helped in cross learning and also gave a sense of solidarity with others. MVF also gained from the insights that emerged in the meetings that were held in Delhi for reviewing the progress of work of HAQ's other partner NGO in the country. This also gave MVF the confidence and energy to do more. HAQ kept several other like-minded NGOs informed about the issue of child marriage, and involved MVF in such interactions.

## 5. Processes

### 5.1 Baseline Survey

HAQ provided MVF volunteers with survey tools in the form of a questionnaire for the Gram Panchayat, Mandal and District levels. The MVF team first conducted a survey of girls - their socio-economic circumstances, education levels, existing systems, structures and laws to protect children, and the linkages of these to prevent child marriage.

The survey also included mapping of individuals at the Panchayat level such as Sarpanchs, Special Officers, Head Teachers, Panchayati Secretaries, Village Revenue Officers (VROs), Anganwadi teachers, doctors, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Mahila Sanghas (Women's groups), Yuvajana Sanghas (Youth Groups), Caste Elders, clergy of all communities and Sakshara Bharati (Adult Education) officers in the villages.

At the Mandal level, MVF interviewed the following regarding their respective roles in the areas of prevention and prohibition of child marriage:

- Tehsildar
- MPDO

- SI – Sub-Inspector of Police
- Doctors
- MEO
- Sub Registrar
- CDPOs& Supervisors of the ICDS department
- MMS
- Circle Inspector

At the District level, they interviewed:

- PC ICDS
- DM & HO
- DEO
- Child Welfare Committee (CWC) under the JJ Act
- JJ board under the ICPS, DCPU
- PO-SSA
- GCDO
- ICPS, DCPU & Unit

A total of 129 individuals participated in the baseline survey. MVF spent 2-3 days at the Mandal level, and about a week in the villages conducting the survey.

Upon further investigation, they found that of the 464 marriages that had been performed in the project area in 2010-12, 193 were child marriages. MVF realized that child marriage was taken casually, and considered the norm. In fact, the term ‘child marriage’ was not used at all. All marriage ceremonies were simply clubbed under the term ‘marriage’. Nobody in the government considered it necessary to take any kind of action, as they did not see it as a problem, either.

## **5.2 Strengthening state systems for interventions**

This section gives an overview of the existing government programmes for girls in the state of Telangana. It describes how various layers of the government from the state to the district, mandal, panchayat and the village level have been

engaged in the programme. In the process of MVF's intervention, it became clear that there is a far greater and more vibrant engagement with finding solutions at the micro level due to the problem being so immediate and the pressures of the girls becoming visible. However, as one goes up the hierarchy, institutionalizing responses remains a challenge.

The government machinery in India is a sprawling juggernaut that is located across the dusty, mofussil interiors of the country, covering hundreds of miles and a multiplicity of departments. The real challenge has always been to transform indifferent and uncaring government officials into protectors and defenders of child rights and get them to see that it is, in fact, mandated by law that child marriage be abolished. Often, concerned officials would be out of office or not available. However, the MVF organizers, having faith in the possibility of transforming the system due to the success of their earlier work in abolishing child labour, understood the perseverance and patience that it takes to reach each officer and make him or her invested in the movement. When the higher ups who had vision and purpose were motivated to put their weight behind the fight against child marriage, the machinery of the department under them had no choice but to fall into line.

MVF identified the layers of stakeholders in the government who were responsible for prevention of child marriages under the Act, from the village level upwards. This included functionaries of ICDS, Revenue Department, the Police, Women & Child Development department, CWC and so on. In the beginning, it was found that these officials were unaware of their own role and responsibilities. The challenge was in getting them to own up to their responsibility, be sensitive to the girl child, and take an active part in the eradication of child marriage. MVF then prepared the community to interact with these functionaries, and work out long-term internal solutions to the issue of child marriage. At the same time MVF also contacted the officials directly to prepare them to respond positively to the people's petitions. This dialog and discussion between the community and the government would, it was felt, result in the process of institution-building. Consequently, after relentless effort, Government officials were also involved in the campaigns, and

disseminated relevant information about the available schemes and programmes for girl children to the people.

MVF also listed several available government schemes for girls like the Girl Child Protection Scheme, Bangaru talli, Shaadi Mubarak and Kalyana Lakshmi, all targeted at different communities. In their discussion with officials as to why the problem of child marriage continues despite these schemes and programmes, the following reasons were given:

1. Less dowry is demanded for younger girls.
2. Parents wish to be rid of their responsibilities towards their daughters as soon as possible.
3. There is a fear of love alliances, premarital physical relations, elopement and loss of virginity.
4. Issues of caste, class, personal identity, tradition and patriarchy are deep rooted problems.
5. There is a great fear of sexual violence after which nobody would marry the girls.
6. The law against child marriages has several loopholes, the main one being that it does not nullify child marriage once it is solemnized unless the child or her guardian appeals to the magistrate to nullify the same, which is impractical as it would result in the family of the child being stigmatized for breach of contract. Alternatively, the girl child can opt out of the marriage herself by filing for divorce upon attaining majority status at the age of 18, which is also a cumbersome and traumatic process.

In its programme to stop child marriage, MVF had to deal with such rationalizations, which had been internalized by the poor for generations. The challenge was to change the mindsets of those in authority as well as the community to change the social norm in support of girl children and their right to equality and dignity.



### 5.3 State level workshops and consultations

The first state-level meeting to tackle the issue of child marriage was held on July 12 2012 in Hyderabad and was attended by representatives from HAQ and MVF. This provided the framework for the programme. They also contacted senior officials of the department of Women and Child Development (WCD) as well as UNICEF to introduce the programme to them and seek their support. Following this, MVF met the Commissioner for WCD and gave a representation to him to hold convergence meetings at the state level of departments of Panchayat Raj, police, WCD, and health departments. This was forwarded to the Chief Secretary and after that there has not been any action on the matter from the state.

MVF followed up with another representation asking the WCD to issue a circular once again regarding designation of officers as CMPOs at the district and mandal levels. The WCD issued the circular, marking a copy to MVF. At the same time, MVF requested the state level officers to conduct an orientation workshop for all the CMPOs and nodal officers on PCMA because they were totally unaware of their roles and responsibilities. Since it was considered impractical to bring them all together at the state level, zonal orientation programmes were conducted covering 5 zones in the state. Further, MVF constantly meets the Child Protection Officer at the state level and periodically reports their activities at the field level to the official. They seek her support to issue directions to the district level officials. Consequently, a circular was issued asking them to cooperate and take initiative in building a campaign against child marriages in partnership with MVF's programme, and motivating all the district officials to use the programme as a model for replication in the entire state.

In the beginning, the arduous process of motivating government officials and identifying the magnitude of the problem did not always yield results. For instance, a petition submitted by MVF on behalf of the CRPF to the Collector, Warangal, seeking data on the number of child marriages identified and stopped was passed down to the concerned CDPO official who, after some time, simply gave the CRPF back the same data that MVF had originally given them, saying

that was the only data available as they had none of their own. However, slowly, things began to change.

To illustrate, Rayaparthi village used to have a very high incidence of child marriage. In 2012, the office of the MPDO collaborated with MVF to hold meetings in 3 villages during which it was pointed out that too many parents find spouses for their children within their own families. For instance, a girl is often married to her father's sister's son. This incest was creating genetic problems, mental retardation, and so on, in the next generation, and therefore had to be stopped. The campaign also included disseminating information about government initiatives and several schemes for the protection of girl children.

There has been a good response from the government and police in Rayaparthi village, where MVF is working. They declared that if girls appealed for help against child marriages, they would get government and police aid. Officials also said that if the girl did not or could not approach them directly, they would still find a way out, as the CMPO is authorized to proceed if the girl is a minor.

## **6. Interface with the Government**

As mentioned above, one of the major components of the programme was to involve all the relevant departments and functionaries in the government at the District level. This meant not only contacting each officer individually but also facilitating convergence meetings amongst them and also with the community.

## 6.1 District and Mandal-Level Processes



There is a diverse cross-section of government departments that deal directly with children. At the District level, the Collector, PD-ICDS, DM & HO, DEO, PO-SSA, GCDO, ICPOs, CWC, JJB, AJC& PD-DRDA are the concerned officials. At the Departmental level, the Police, Education department, Women and Child Welfare officials, Revenue, Health and Rural Development (DRDA) and ITDA officials are accountable for the protection of children's rights. MVF contacted each of these officials individually several times and gradually succeeded in involving almost every one of them in the process of preventing child marriage. Thereafter, MVF persuaded the District Collectors of Warangal and Mahbubnagar to hold convergence meetings with all the department heads regarding their roles and responsibilities in stopping child marriage. Other institutions such as Child Line, Sakshara Bharati coordinators, and the District Legal Services Authority were also involved.

The government kick started and followed up on action by issuing circulars to constitute CMPCs, to call review meetings which demonstrate convergence of all stake holders, to strategize, etc.

## Abstract of the Circulars Issued

S. No	Issuing Officer	Mandal (Block)/Division/District	No of Circulars
1	RDO	Nagar Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar	5
2	Tehasildar	Achampeta, Mahaboobnagar	10
3	Panchayath Secretaries	Project GPs in Achampeta	8
4	TFCR		1
5	RDO	Nagar Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar (Amrabad)	5
6	Tehasildar	Amrabad	9
7	TFCR	(Amrabad)	1
8	VRO		1
District Total (Mahaboobnagar)			40
9	Tehasildar	Rayaparthi, Warangal	5
10	CI & SI	Rayaparthi,	2
11	Tehasildar	Thorrur, Warangal	7
12	CI & SI	Thorrur	3
District Total (Warangal)			17
Total for two districts			57

### Convincing the Government to act on Child Marriage issues

#### D. Lingaiah, District Coordinator, Warangal District:

“After our survey and analysis in March 2012, we took GO#13 to the Mandal Tehsildar, and brought up the issue of child marriage. ‘Nobody in the government is taking responsibility, but per this government order, you’re all responsible’, we told him. ‘Therefore, you need to create awareness in government officials.’ The Tehsildar refused to meet us, citing work overload with land and revenue problems, and kept asking us to come later. However, we persisted until he finally met us. We then introduced the MV Foundation, described our work in the areas of child labour and universal education and brought up the topic of child marriage. He said that there was no precedent or notification from the zilla about the problem. However, based upon GO#13, he agreed to hold a meeting with Mandal-level teams about the child marriage baseline survey and asked us to draft a circular outlining the problem and asking for a meeting. The MVF volunteers drafted the circular and distributed

it to everyone. The Tehsildar only signed the circular, and made the necessary phone calls asking government officials to attend.

“Two hundred government officials from all over the mandal attended this first area-based awareness meeting. They were astonished at the data we presented. It was a powerful beginning to the project.”

It must be noted that some officials extended themselves and went beyond their brief to support the programme. Now, they hold district level officers’ meetings and divisional level convergence meetings every 6 months.

### K. Chandrashekhar Reddy, PD-DRDA, Mahbubnagar town

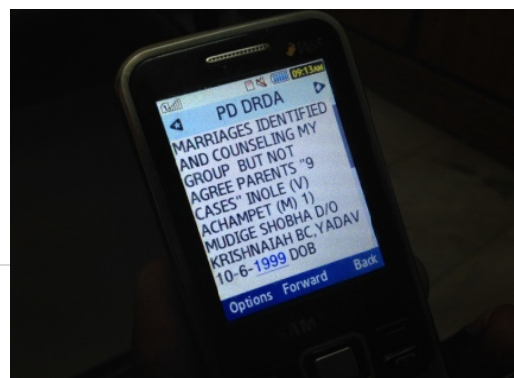


“The western part of Mahbubnagar is extremely prone to child marriage and the *jogini* (ritual prostitution) culture due to a high density of the ST community here, especially the Lambada community, in which the marriage of minors, both boys and girls, is a traditional cultural practice.

Illiteracy is also high in communities like the Kurma, Golla and Yadavas. There was sporadic anti-child marriage activity by some NGOs here before 2012, but it wasn't institutionalized. They did what they could. MVF, on the other hand, is very systematic, and has institutionalized its activities. I've attended their convergence meetings, which included gender committees, clergy and the government. I find their approach is excellent, and the outcomes of their initiatives have been very good. Anti-child marriage activities couldn't have been done without them. When they give us information about child marriages, they've worked very hard to get it. We can't afford not to act on that information, so we move immediately on it.

**SMS from MVF District in charge, Mahbubnagar, to the PD-DRDA, informing him of 9 cases of child marriage**

“MVF's work should be replicated, because it's a good model. The government can't do anything alone, as our priorities keep



changing. But MVF also needs support. We in the government try to sensitize the people against child marriage, for which convergence is necessary. We created *kala jatas* (night-time skits) in which we involved the police, etc.

“Early childhood education is needed to stamp out this practice, so we’ve also created 180 community-run schools in tribal areas, where they use the play way method of teaching. I’m not happy with the quality of education in government schools, so we’ve identified anganwadi workers and teachers for higher training to improve the quality of education, but the girl child dropout rate from school is very high, and literacy is low. We created a wing of 52 NRSCs in 2013 in 7 mandals, in which 4,200 children are studying. Five villages in every mandal have these institutions to address the low literacy levels here. We conducted a survey of 64,000 girls in the age groups of +12, +14 and +16 years, and found that about 14,500 girls had never been enrolled in school. There are, however, girl child schemes and protection laws, so we paid the fees for 1,200 girls to study in Open 10th standard. We also created a wing to give them training and education for 4 months, with the result that 1,053 girls cleared the exam. 450 of them are now trying to get into Open Inter. We’re also imparting vocational skills to 67 girls who have completed their 10th standard, intermediate and degree courses. They’re given a 3-month residential training in computers as well as personality development, grooming lessons and hygiene training for 3 days every month. They will later be placed in malls, etc.

“Girls have approached the DRDA for help on child marriage and sexual harassment. We address the problem at once, and have sensitized everyone including headmasters. We follow up each case for about a week. We need to counsel parents about child marriage, because there is a fear that they may commit suicide. In 2010, when I was working in Medak district, a girl stood first in school in the 10th standard, so we felicitated her. Then, we heard that she had stopped studying, so I sent people to find out why. We heard that she was being married off after standard 10. We counseled her parents and the boy’s parents, and took a written undertaking from them that they would not perform child marriage. So she continued to study, and got married during her undergraduate course, after she turned 18.

“Education is the only long-term solution to the problem of child marriage. One generation below 20 years of age needs full-time formal education for transformation to occur.”

The response and concurrence of senior district officials like the Additional Joint Collector in Mahbubnagar gives an official stamp to the programme and gets accepted by the rest of officialdom. He has been crucial in sending a message to the entire system at the district level that the issue of child marriage has to be taken seriously.

Rajaram, Additional Joint Collector (AJC), Mahbubnagar



“I’ve been aware of MVF since my work in Ranga Reddy district. When I was the Additional State project director of the SSA, I spent 1½ years in Hyderabad and visited all the 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh, so I was already aware and socially motivated by the time I met MVF. I’ve even admitted girls to their Residential Bridge Course

camp in Aloor 20-25 years ago. Much later, I attended their Justice for Children meeting and the NCPCR meeting in New Delhi. We did 2 programmes together – a shoe distribution function, and a school management committee members’ training programme. We fully support MVF’s anti-child marriage efforts. It is the need of the hour. Child marriage is still prevalent in these parts due to illiteracy, but there are also health issues among the tribals. The mortality rate has shot up in the last ten years as men are addicted to illicit liquor, so families become insecure and want to marry off their minor daughters to protect them from predators. Here, boys and girls rarely study beyond junior college. Instead, they sit at home and watch TV, which changes their culture, and leads to harassment of girls by boys. Mass marriages are a commonplace occurrence among the weaker sections of society and disadvantaged groups like the Chenchus, tribals and Lambadas, and these marriages include minor girls. Our MROs and MPDOs are trying to discourage the practice by inculcating the spirit of wanting to protect children. They respond at once to our requests, and themselves take steps to prevent child marriage. We use the occasion of Bathkamma, a festival unique to Telangana that takes place in October, to promote literacy among the people, wean them away from addictions, and make them aware of economically viable programmes. Since it’s a classless game, the disadvantaged classes see how the upper classes live, without practicing child marriage and so on. We want to encourage upwardly mobile aspirations and change traditional practices that are harmful.

“Things have begun to change. One year ago, some 8th-12th standard girls from Balmoor mandal called us and asked for help since their parents were arranging their marriages. I told the Tehsildar, and we stopped them. In Lingal mandal, a 14-year old girl studying in the 9th standard got my phone number and called me, saying that her parents had asked her to attend celebrations in a relative’s home, but were actually planning to get her married. She, however, wanted to continue her studies, so I called the Tehsildar and the Special Officer of the KGBV, and asked her principal to bring her from home to the KGBV. The MRO convinced her parents not to marry her off, so she’s now studying and has protection.

“We need to improve the education system. Teachers are the instruments of the government but they don't want to be held accountable or do their job. We also need to create a hygienic atmosphere for girls in schools. They have neither toilets nor running water. That responsibility lies with local bodies. There is a conflict between departments that needs to be sorted out. Now, the education department has no funds to take care of running water in the schools. In order to address the dropout rate, we need to replace the exam system, which creates stress, with continuous comprehensive evaluation throughout the year. We also need to increase the scope of anganwadis. Currently they operate from 9.30-10 am to 2-3 pm, which is not enough. Timings need to be extended, so that parents can work comfortably till 5 pm.

“Women work more than the men here, because of the NREGA and the one rupee-per-kilo rice scheme. Men spend their money on illicit liquor, and even take the women’s earnings for their addiction. However, things are changing due to the PD-DRDA and the Mahila Sanghas. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have a 50% reservation quota for women in elected public office, but empowerment needs to happen. Women should be made aware of their inner strength, learn to convert weaknesses into opportunities, and use the available power. Controlling the system is in the hands of the women.”

## **6.2 Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)**

Although the Child Marriage Prevention Act was already in existence and GO#13 came out in March 2012, there was a high incidence of child marriage in Warangal and Mahbubnagar districts before 2012. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was set up in 1984, but there was no focus on child marriages. Anganwadi workers, who work under the purview of the ICDS and are all women, did not want to broach the issue with villagers as it



stirred up heated emotions, and could degenerate quickly into a situation that was dangerous to them. If these workers complained to their superiors, there were told to deal with the problem on their own. The government system was not co-operative in the least.

In order to support and strengthen the anganwadi workers, the MVF organizers began to hold regular meetings with them. For the first time, senior government officials at the District level met and motivated 270 anganwadi workers of Achampet and Amrabad mandals in a training and orientation programme on child marriage held at Achampet. Reassured by so much support, the anganwadi workers began to cooperate. In Warangal district, in association with MVF, annual meetings were convened in Rangapur and Ookal villages to educate girls aged 11-18 years on child marriage, anemia and nutrition.

Every 2-3 months, MVF holds a Primary Health Center-level meeting with ANMs and ASHA workers and doctors, involves them in children's meetings and gets information from them about any child marriages being arranged. Counseling services have been made available through ANMs in a systematic fashion in Ookal. The ICDS also conducted general meetings with NGOs and so on at the anganwadis on the second Saturday of every month. A convergence meeting was held with the MRO, ICDS, doctors, and Education, Revenue, Health, police and IKP departments to discuss the issue of child marriage.



ICDS officials meet with MVF volunteers,  
Achampet, Mahbubnagar, 2014

There are 20 ICDS projects here now. Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) are in 19 of those projects. They play a crucial role under GO # 13 in stopping child marriages. At the mandal level, Mandal Revenue Officers (MROs) and ICDS supervisors have CMPO powers. At the

Gram Panchayat level, Village Revenue Officers (VROs) and the Panchayat Secretary also have CMPO powers. Villages have Child Marriage Prevention Committees (CMPCs), of which the anganwadi worker is the convener, and the chairperson is the Sarpanch. The ICDS also created a committee at the mandal level.

Once the ICDS gets information about child marriage from the anganwadi worker or anyone else, they pass it along the chain of communication. The anganwadi worker goes first to counsel the parents about the problems of child marriage. If that doesn't work, then the ICDS and the Sub-Inspector (SI) of police intervene as part of the CMPC, and rescue the girl. That creates fear and is very effective. This entire process has been strengthened and facilitated under the current programme by MVF. Consequently, the ICDS has been able to take responsibility in an institutionalized fashion to stop child marriages.

In Bomanapally, the ICDS stopped a child marriage in 2012. Now, the girl is studying in 10th standard. In another case in 2013 in the same village, they stopped the marriage of a girl who was only in the 7th standard. The parents paid a dowry, and organized the wedding within 2 days. Since time was of the essence, the ICDS called all the government officers and went to the girl's house. The villagers gathered to see what was happening, and it became a huge case. The parents threatened to commit suicide, so the SI countered by threatening to slap a case against them for attempting to kill themselves, as that, too, is a punishable offence. The parents then called off the marriage, but 4-5 months later, they went quietly to the temple and had the marriage solemnized. After that, the family didn't come home for a few months. Now, the girl is pregnant and in the 7th standard. In Rangapur village, too, the ICDS stopped a child marriage, but the parents went away, performed the marriage, and never returned to the village. They got police protection because of family connections. The ICDS in Achampet has stopped 40 child marriages since December 2011. People are afraid of the Revenue Department and government officials, as child marriage can result in the canceling of ration cards.

State home, Women & Child Welfare Office, Mahbubnagar district



There is still a lot to be done. For instance, some girls who had, with courage, approached the CWC and ICDS in Mahbubnagar for support against their marriages found themselves waiting for months for these bodies to take appropriate action. The girls languished in the shelter homes along with older

women and commercial sex workers without being sent to school. In one of the cases in 2013 in Mahbubnagar district, a girl escaped one night with some sex workers

and had to be found and brought back by MVF to the Child Welfare Commission (CWC). MVF met the CWC several times thereafter, asking them to take an immediate decision regarding her future. Consequently, the girl was admitted into a Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) and is now studying in the 9<sup>th</sup> standard.

ICDS Officials, Rayaparthi Block, Warangal



ICDS officials-meeting on child marriage



Official notice against child marriage

“MLAs and political party leaders are a major obstacle. They threaten activists, saying, ‘We’ll see how you work here from tomorrow’. But we get a good

response from the SI and government officials, and people are afraid of their involvement in cases of child marriage.

“We can’t do this work alone, it’s simply too dangerous, so we inform MVF and go in a group with other government officials so that nobody knows exactly who gave the information about the child marriage. MVF informs the Collector, and that takes the child marriage out of the power of the political leaders. The system is okay, and parents also don't want to perform child marriage either, but they submit to social pressure.

“We maintain lists of adolescent girls, enter marriage details and keep track of the girls who are leaving as well as those who are coming here to settle due to marriage. However, records and tracking are good only in areas where MVF is working. Sometimes, minor girls come to us and say that their marriages are being fixed and ask us to stop them, but parents resent their daughters for resisting and informing us. Anganwadi workers are immediately suspected as the informants, and threatened and beaten for giving information, so they are protected by anonymity.

“Now, births are being registered because people want to take advantage of government schemes for girls. Consequently, there is much less child marriage here. Parents are afraid. They are not arrested, but are taken to the police station and spoken to. Just the sight of the SI is enough to create fear.

“Wall writings that carry the phone numbers of government officials and helplines that minors can call for assistance are read by boys and girls who use these messages well. If MVF stops working here, child marriages will start again. It is the only NGO that is working here against child marriage.”

**As stated in the focus group discussions with ICDS Officials, Achampet Block, Mahbubnagar**

### 6.3 Anganwadi Centres

Anganwadi Centres are responsible for contacting all adolescent girls in the village and giving them health and nutrition supplements in addition to empowering them with information about their reproductive health care, early marriages and the risks involved in premature pregnancies, and the need to go to schools. Girls in the age group of 11-18 years are tracked center-wise every month, and school follow-ups are conducted twice a month. Women, too, came to the centers and so it was felt that these centers offered a legitimate space for both adolescent girls to come together and bring visibility to their problems.

In the anganwadi centers, MVF organizers give training in leadership, health, hygiene and education to the children's groups, known as Kishore Balika Sanghas every 6 months. They have also linked Open 10th standard and Open Intermediate College with government schemes for girls. Simultaneously, MVF continues to help anganwadi workers by giving them information to identify, and track instances of child marriage, both in their area of operations as well as other mandals outside the project area. Anganwadi workers then counsel the girls.



meetings.

Regular review meetings at all levels have proved to be the core strength and strategy that yield best results. Therefore, meetings were held with Anganwadis center-wise, and MVF simultaneously interacted with girls in the different catchment areas, after which it was ensured that girls started to attend the

Orientation of anganwadi workers of the whole project area by the police on PCMA, Achampet mandal

Swaroopa - anganwadi worker, Ookal village, Thorrur Mandal, Warangal district:

“Once, I suspected that my neighbor was getting her underage daughter married off. I informed MVF, and together we contacted the police who asked me to verify the girl’s age on her school certificate. So I went to my neighbor, voiced my concern and asked to see her daughter’s 10th standard certificate. Although she was very angry, she showed it to me, so we were satisfied that the girl was not a minor, but really was 18 years old. I reported back to the police that the girl was an adult, and the marriage took place. Earlier, we used to be terrified of the police, but now, we work together as partners to protect children and their rights.”

T. Padma, anganwadi worker, Warangal district:

“There used to be a high rate of child marriage here. Five to six years ago, 40 out of every 100 marriages conducted was of minors. Obviously, this has a lot of harmful effects. Since our job is to reduce the infant and maternal mortality rates, we realized that we would have to do something to eliminate child marriage, which has a high mortality rate. The government, too, was considering action when MVF came here. We met with them, and exchanged ideas. They assured us that if there were any problems on the ground, they would report them to the higher officials. Together, we began to address the issue. We created awareness among the girls who came to us. We demonstrated the difference between children born to adult women and underage girls. Underage mothers invariably have unhealthy, sickly, weak children. We would weigh the babies of both age groups of mothers and show them the difference. We also showed them the difference in IQ levels of 2 sons born to the same mother, the first when she was still a minor, and the second when she was an adult. Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) also come and talk to the girls, to reinforce the message against early marriages.”

**6.4 Child Welfare Committee (CWC)**

The Child Welfare Committee is a statutory body that consists of a Chairperson and 4 members. The CWC in Mahbubnagar has been associated with MVF for a long time. Before the 2012 anti-child marriage act, there used to be a high prevalence of child marriages, which have become visible after the

organization of statutory boards such as the CWC. MVF informs the CWC of every case of child marriage identified for rehabilitation. Until the Child Line in Mahbubnagar district was constituted, MVF's help was sought by the CWC to counsel children. Now, it has become independent and proactive, so that MVF is being informed about their follow up actions on cases reported by MVF. The CWC in Mahbubnagar has now become more responsive. Warangal district CWC has been active and responds to cases referred to it.

[Chairperson, CWC, Mahbubnagar](#)

“Mahbubnagar has the highest rate of MMR – 58% - because of child marriage, the main reason for which is school dropouts. Villages often don't have a high school, so girls stop studying, and are then married off. Social security is a major problem. There's also a great negative impact of TV serials and the media, which reinforce unwholesome gender stereotypes and regressive thinking. We can't punish parents after they perform child marriage, but we protect the child and take the parents to court. We once got a call at 4 am from MVF saying that a child marriage was about to happen. We called the police at once, and 2 teams went to both the boy's and girl's homes, stopped the marriage and reported back to us by 5 am. I reported another case of child marriage to the AJC directly, and within 3 hours, the government officials and parents were present before the CWC. In the past 4 years, we've received no information about child marriages from anyone except MVF. There should be more activity around schools as girls tell their classmates if anything is happening to them, and it is also the right place to make them aware of the legal marriage age as well as their rights. Their mothers are also members of the Self Help Groups (SHGs), which wield a lot of power in the villages, so working with them will create a great impact.”



## 6.5 Child Line (1098)



Display of Child Line number



Meeting of the Child Line team

1098, the child helpline, was set up by the government in 2013 to receive calls regarding child rights and related issues. The team consists of 7 members, a counselor, and a coordinator.

MVF reports every case of child marriage to Child Line. When Child Line receives information about a child marriage, they inform the CWC, the Tehsildar/Mandal Revenue Officers (MROs), and other concerned authorities at once. If the location is nearby, they go there with the ICDS department.

### Chandrasekhar, Director, Child Line and ex-Chairperson, CWC

“Teachers usually call us regarding child marriage. When we intervene, people stop the marriages they are conducting, but want to know the name of the person who informed us. We maintain absolute confidentiality, but suspicion always falls on the anganwadi worker first. Now people are aware of the anti-child marriage laws, and are scared of the police.



Political party leaders, however, protect child marriage in order to maintain their vote banks. The primary cause of child marriage is the dowry system. Parents pay less for a younger girl than for an older one. Although the system is illegal in India now, everybody still does it. If the dowry system is ended, child marriages will also stop automatically. Higher



education for all is absolutely necessary since children are then not available at home for marriage. Convergence between all government departments is critical.”

## 6.6 Police

It has been unanimously agreed in all discussions that the most effective force to stop child marriages is the police department. They are not only mandated under the Prevention of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), but also exercise great authority and power vested in them to uphold the law, and people are compelled to abide by them. Initially the police did not recognize the problem of child marriage as a serious issue or a violation of human rights. MVF’s process of contacting and convincing them regarding their role and importance made it easy for the entire project to be grounded effectively. Yet, it is unfortunate that the involvement of the police depended so much on each individual officer and his commitment to the issue that soon after his transfer, MVF had to invest in sensitizing the new police Sub-Inspector. In other words, there has not been an institutionalization of police response to complaints on child marriage, and it is felt that it requires internalization of the seriousness of the issue by the officials at the state level.

**Chandra Mohan Rao, SHO/SI, Siddhapur police station, Mahbubnagar District**



“This is a backward zilla, very poor, and a drought prone area with lots of migration and a high level of illiteracy. I’d never heard of MVF before I was posted here on January 26, 2014. I met Sreenivas of MVF, and we’re partners in fighting child marriage now. If we’re told of a child marriage, we go and meet the parents in their homes and counsel them

that it’s best to perform the wedding after the girl is 18, and that early marriages are illegal. For instance, once, armed with information from Sreenivas Rao of MVF, I went to Raichedi village, counseled the parents and stopped a child marriage from occurring. We’ve also gone to the ST

community in thandas, and stopped early marriages, which are highly prevalent among them.

People who contemplate child marriage are now afraid of us. They don't do it here; maybe they do it outside my region. However, we haven't booked anyone yet. MVF, the village Sarpanch, anganwadi workers and the health and revenue departments counsel students in schools about child marriage. It would be difficult to get information without MVF, since they are the only ones who tell us when it's happening. To improve the situation, government teachers, the VRO, VRA, Sarpanch, MPTC, and Ward members need to keep us informed – not only NGOs.”

[Bharath Suman, Police Sub-Inspector, Rayaparthi village, Thorrur Mandal, Warangal](#)



“In my childhood in Adilabad district there was a lot of child marriage. The law against it came out in 2006, but actual implementation began only in 2012. Before I came here in 2011, I stopped a child marriage on the pandal in Kondur village. The girl belonged to the Yadava community and was 17 ½ years old. Her family asked me what my problem was, since she was only 6 months short of being an adult. I said that even if she was only 1 day short of 18, it would still be child marriage, and I would stop it. They hated me for that (*laughs*).

“I've only been here for the last 10 months. I didn't know about MVF before I came here, and I didn't know much about child marriage until I met MVF. They conduct programmes enthusiastically and with so much involvement with public figures and social and political leaders. MVF mooted an all-party meeting, where we threatened leaders of political parties not to pressure NGOs or political parties and not to support child marriage. They all agreed because now, they're aware of the law, and afraid of strict action. We conducted meetings with caste elders, priests, videographers,

photographers, brass band musicians, tent house owners, printers, Sarpanchs, MPTCS and ward members to spread the message against child marriage.

With the cooperation of the ICPS, we conducted awareness programmes for anganwadi workers. The relationship between the public and me has improved dramatically after the police have taken up the issue of child marriage. Priests, especially, ask for guidance about child marriages. Girls have taken the courage to call and complain of eve teasing, illicit liquor consumption and so on. I send a constable at once, and book cases against the men. This has created increased confidence in girls, and the general public.

We don't bring children to the police station, we don't wear uniforms on home visits, only mufti, and, as per the Supreme Court judgment, we don't use handcuffs either. Due to our work here, during department review meetings, my reputation got a boost with my superiors and I got such a good name with the SP sir. Our work was publicly appreciated in a meeting with the Collector. This inspired the police in other areas also to conduct rallies and spread awareness against child marriage. The child marriage situation is much better now. I've been able to do so much with the cooperation of MVF. ”

### **6.7 Involvement of Gram Panchayats**

The Gram Panchayats are crucial statutory bodies with enormous authority in the village, and are a key partner in social movements such as stopping child marriages. It is through the Gram Panchayats that remote villages that are otherwise accessible only through a tenuous travel and communication network, and steeped in age-old traditions of patriarchy and the subjugation of girl children, can be connected to the mainstream.

Elections to the Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh were held only in 2013 as they were frozen for 4 years due to litigation. During the Gram Panchayat election campaign, MVF convened meetings of all the contesting candidates, placed the status of children in their respective constituencies before them, and discussed the data on child marriages. After the elections, the elected members were reminded of the commitments they had made during the elections, and urged to honor them. All the Sarpanchs were given orientation on a one-on-one basis regarding their responsibilities to monitor the status of children as well as

institutions such as anganwadi centers and schools in the constituency. They were also told about their duties under the PCMA. Subsequently, all of them were brought together under one platform and given training on child rights and the prevention of child marriage. MVF then held convergence meetings at the mandal level in the villages where members of the Gram Panchayats met the MRO and police SI. This proved to be very effective, as they were empowered to deal with the community as well as the government functionaries in their area. They were motivated about their responsibilities to track every child in their constituency and ascertain if they were in school.



**Meeting of the Gram Panchayat with stake holders, Haripirala village**

Following this interaction, the Gram Panchayats made it clear that only those who were proven to be adults by the date of birth on their school certificates would be allowed to get married. In the project area, the Sarpanch as the chairperson of the CMPC reviews each institution in the village. The Gram Panchayats also summon the school headmasters, anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, ANMs and all other local functionaries in their jurisdiction to examine the status of children, and their role in the prevention of child marriages.

There was resistance to the Gram Panchayats initially, as they began to question and hold accountable other institutions in the village such as the anganwadi. Now this has been institutionalized, and the Gram Panchayats review the status of children on a regular basis in the presence of all the

functionaries. Children at risk of dropping out of schools and girls at risk of being married at an early age are identified and their families counseled. In the process, the Panchayats listen to their grievances about the lack of infrastructure and other supplies, and take these issues up with the Mandal level officials. They also convene gram sabha meetings in the villages on issues relating to children, with special focus on child marriages and girls' education.



Villagers and a lady Sarpanch vow not to perform child marriage, Chitiyala village, 2014

In many villages, ward members conduct weekly Friday meetings. At the monthly Gram Panchayat meetings, regular tracking of children is done and action is taken to prevent child marriage. Every Panchayat in the project area is now working to track each child, school drop-outs, and reasons for this, and conducts home visits with the committee in case of absenteeism as this leads to either child labour or child marriage. The Sarpanch and other members also talk to school headmasters about girls, their rights, the right age to get married, and the consequences of early marriage. Further, they have made marriage registration compulsory. Marriage registration books are donated to the Gram Panchayats by the MRO & MPDO and distributed at all meetings. In Achampet, Gram Sabha meetings are held where the status of government benefits and schemes is discussed if they condone child marriage. Sarpanchs of all Gram Panchayats meet at the mandal level to conduct regular review meetings with government officials and demand accountability from them.





It is found that all Gram Panchayats display anti-child marriage messages on boards. One Sarpanch has decided that his village will be child marriage-free, so he put up a board prohibiting the practice. They have also displayed the full PCMA Act in the Gram Panchayat office. This has resulted in wide dissemination of the Act. Sometimes, emboldened by the positive response from the police, they use police interventions when they come to know of a child marriage, and cannot stop it by any other means.

MVF's enquiries and discussions helped the Gram Panchayat to reinforce the issue of prevention of early marriage. Even now, the Gram Panchayats seek guidance from MVF before they convene their meetings on the agenda and way forward. There has been a visible change now because of the campaigns and consensus building. For instance, there is no child marriage any more in Haripirala village in Warangal district.

**V. Malliah - Ex-Sarpanch, Haripirala village, Thorrur mandal, Warangal District**



“I was the Sarpanch of Haripirala village from 2008-2011. Thereafter, I was a Special Officer in the village. MVF came here in 2012, and brought up the subject of early marriage. Convinced by their arguments, and the provision of the law, I went around the village and worked as an activist against child marriage. We conducted several public meetings, held rallies and smaller group meetings to broach the issue. Since then, people have been prohibited from performing such marriages. We’ve stopped child marriages

even at the eleventh hour. Now, anganwadi workers, women's groups, political groups and youth groups militate against child marriage. Rallies create general awareness but group meetings are more effective. We conduct meetings regularly and continuously, and due to this new awareness of their rights, even children are refusing to get married now."

Osman, Sarpanch, Rayaparthi Village

"Six years ago, 50% of all marriages were child marriages. Since then, due to the efforts of MVF, the police department, MRO, and other officials have been involved in stopping the practice, so there are very few child marriages taking place now. We get information about a child marriage from CRPF communities, call the police and stop the weddings even on the *pandals*, if necessary. We threatened the clergy of all religions that they would be imprisoned and told them that we would have their licenses revoked if they performed child marriages. In my village, we warn teachers to keep an eye out for the children and monitor what's happening with them. I questioned the Mandal Revenue Officer about why not enough action is taken vis-à-vis child marriage, and why parents who marry off their minor daughters are not punished. There was no response. We used tom-toms to spread the message from the Gram Panchayat, but the most effective deterrent was the fear of jail. Every Gram Panchayat has posters with handcuffs and photos of the committee members whom they can approach. We have put many parents in police stations until they agree not to marry off their minor children. If they lie and perform the marriage anyway, we've caught them and put them in jail. We also discuss consequences of child marriage such as maternal and infant mortality, and violence on girls. As a result of all this, there has been a 70-80% reduction in instances of child marriage. There is a much lower incidence now even among the STs and Yadava communities, who are traditionally prone to child marriage."

## 6.8 Schools and Teachers

### TFCR meeting on child marriage, Chitiyala village



When children drop out of schools, it is inevitable that they are absorbed into the workforce and, in the case of girls, married off. Therefore, schools are vital institutions that provide safety and shelter to all children, including girls. These are public spaces where children

play, have friends, and share many experiences of family and growing up. They are spaces to learn and discover oneself, spaces to find a noon meal, spaces where a child can make demands on the system for entitlements. MVF contacted schoolteachers and headmasters and spoke to each one of them on child rights and the responsibility of schoolteachers to protect children. Those teachers who felt responsible and were willing to reach out to children were federated to form the Teachers' Forum for Child Rights (TFCR). Soon it became prestigious for the peer group of all teachers to be involved in the TFCR.

The headmasters of several schools counseled their students on child marriage legislation. MVF also held regular meetings with the school headmasters at the mandal level to share experiences of how they form the school girl committees, get information on child marriages, contact police and other authorities, counsel parents and give whole-hearted support to girl children. Teachers have thus become vigilant. They have begun to take on the responsibility of stopping early marriages, and check if dropouts among the girls are due to marriage. If they learn of a child marriage being fixed, they give the information to various groups. They hold review meetings with the girls.

For instance, in the Konduru and Mylaram panchayats, headmasters prevented one case of child marriage each through community support. Further, four children from Inole panchayat, two from Ookal and the two from Konduru and Mylaram returned to school after their marriages. The headmaster in Ookal noted that, although the married children are attending school regularly,



they are not as active and enthusiastic as the others, but continuing to study after marriage is very significant as it requires negotiations with the child's parents as well as her in-laws. Another teacher in Mahbubnagar had three girls drop out of school. When she went to their homes in the thanda, she discovered it was due to their impending marriages. She reported it, and all the weddings were stopped. Head teachers of the schools in Inole and Bomanapally have been cautioning parents against the health implications of child marriage and counseling them to protect their girls from marriage.



#### Orientation of schoolgirls on child rights, Chitiyala village, Thorrur mandal

With the support of schools and teachers, schoolgirls' committees have been formed in every school. Children have been told about the PCMA and given strength to inform the schoolteachers should they come to know of any child marriage. They have been introduced to the SI, and doctors, and given orientation and exposure.

MVF also conducts village school management committee (SMC) meetings every two months to discuss children's issues like dropouts, child marriages, etc. The SMCs provide information to MVF, and counseling and support to the children.



Phone numbers of concerned officers – CMPO, SI, CI, MEO, etc - displayed in school

**R. Yakaiah, TFCR District convener, Chinnavangara, Warangal district**



R. Yakaiah used the metaphor of young lemons to dissuade a bonded agricultural labourer from marrying off his minor daughter

“I used to have a student in the 7th standard. I heard from an anganwadi worker that her marriage had been fixed and was about to take place, so we went to the girl’s home. Her father was a bonded labourer, and her mother was a casual labourer.

They had three daughters of whom my student was the eldest. The father wanted to be absolved of his responsibility. Also, the alliance was with the father’s sister’s family, so family relationships were at stake. When I asked, the father informed me that the marriage was to take place one month later. I didn't say anything, but it occurred to me that there was a lemon tree in the courtyard. It was summer time. I asked the father to give me some lemons. He went to the tree, inspected it and returned empty-handed. I insisted that I wanted some lemons, and this time, I even offered to pay for them. Again, the father went to the lemon tree, inspected it, and again, he returned empty-handed. ‘I can see the lemons’, I said to him. ‘Don't you want to give me any?’ Apologetically, he replied that the lemons needed to ripen before he could pluck them. They were too small to produce any juice, he said. So I asked him, ‘When you’re so reluctant to pluck the lemons prematurely, how can you bear to marry off an

underage child?’ He understood the point I was making at once. He apologized, and told me he wasn't aware of what he was doing, but he was in a fix. He'd already performed the engagement ceremony, and had borrowed Rs.10,000 from a moneylender, which he'd paid to the boy's family as dowry, so we went and spoke to the boy's family. His parents, however, didn't agree. We tried to counsel them, but when they refused, we were forced to complain to the SI. The police called the couple and their parents to the police station and pointed out that the families could not perform the wedding as the girl was underage and it was illegal. Finally, the boy and his parents agreed to cancel the wedding, and return the dowry. The SI then pointed out that they had tried to engineer an illegal act, and as compensation, should pay Rs. 1,000 extra to the girl's family. So the boy's parents paid the girl's parents Rs. 11,000, and the matter was resolved. The girl's now studying in the 9th standard. We know



enough not to pluck buds before they flower. We don't put calves into the fields to pull the heavy ploughs. But we don't give our little girls even a fraction of the care and respect that we give our beasts. However, I'm confident that child marriage can be abolished completely – one marriage at a time.”

Villagers listening to Yakaiah's story of the lemons

## 6.9 Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) /Committees (CMPCs)

CMPC meeting, Haripirala village, Warangal district



Until MVF began its anti-child marriage programme in 2012, there was no CMPO at all. The CMPO was activated by the MVF, who had to negotiate with District officials to release a circular under the PCMA for constitution of the CMPC. It is only subsequently that CPMC committees were formed at the village level with all the

relevant government officials – Tehsildar, CMPOs, MEO, doctors, CDPO, APOs, Velugu APM, Sakshara Bharati coordinator, Agriculture AO, VRO and the local police. The CMPOs were shown the circular and informed that they

were designated to prevent child marriages. The official circular reached the officers only one year later. At the divisional level, the CDPO, DSP, RDO, CMPO, and the Tribal Welfare Officer were involved. At the village level, the CMPO includes the Sarpanch, ANM, ASHA worker, local NGO, schoolteachers, lady ward member, caste elders and Sakshara Bharati members. Training was imparted to the CMPCs in one-day workshops, and they were informed about the Act, provisions in the Act and their role vis-à-vis the Act.

Although CMPO posts had been filled, people had no knowledge of it as there were no activities. It was all on paper. Now, there is a monthly CMPC review meeting of all departments where children's issues like school dropouts are discussed, child marriages identified, action taken based on that information, parents and children counseled, and information given to the CMPO for action. Child rights and child protection in general are discussed. The CMPC is now functioning independently.

VRO, Chitiyala village, Thorrur Mandal, Warangal District

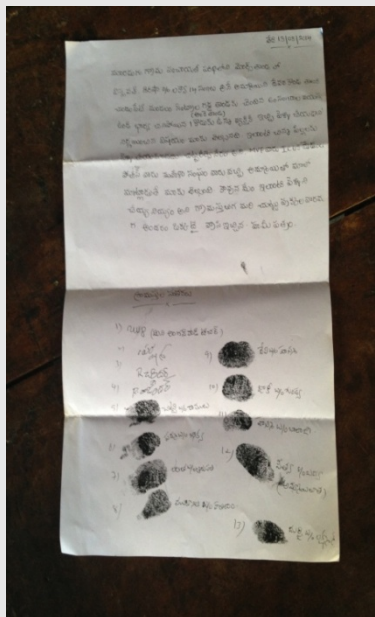
“The CMPC existed before 2012, but it wasn't very active. Sreenivas and Lingaiah of MVF came to the High School here and identified the CMPC committee. Now, every Friday, we have a Gram Panchayat meeting. The Sarpanch, anganwadi workers, headmasters etc. are on the Child Marriage Prevention Committee. We discuss what is happening in the village. Headmasters and teachers keep us informed of what is going on in schools. Our information network includes anganwadis, too. If we hear of an impending child marriage, we call the girl for counseling, and tell her about the loss of education opportunities, loss of health, social problems and the fact that it is illegal. Usually, the girls listen to us. If they don't, we call the MRO, police and MVF, go to the girls' homes, counsel the parents and find solutions to their problems. When we counsel a girl or create a furore with the police, Tehsildar, teachers, government officials, etc., at someone's house, it has a huge impact on other girls. We've booked cases against fathers when we hear that they are planning to marry off their minor daughters. We also stop the wedding. There were several cases of child marriage before 2012. Now there aren't any more.”

## 7. Mapping of all Community partners

MVF networked constantly with community partners and local institutions as well as the government in an attempt to build consensus around the prohibition of child marriage. This included girls, clergy, persons directly involved in the marriage function, Adults and Girls' groups, youth groups, Mahila Sanghas, Child Rights Protection Forums (CRPF), political parties, and other NGOs and CBOs.

Further, the groups were prepared to draft and submit petitions demanding information, accountability and services from the government.

Declaration from Devarakonda village  
to stop child marriage, August 2014



*“In our village of Devarakonda, it was proposed to marry off a 14-year old girl to an already married older man as his second wife. However, we have been informed by the MVF, ICDS madam, police and women’s groups that it is illegal to marry off minor girls. Therefore, our village unanimously declares and pledges not to allow any marriage of girls before they are 18 years of age.*

*“Signed,  
“The Villagers”*



### 7.1 Adults and Girls' Groups

As the anganwadi centers became the fulcrum of activities to prevent child marriages, they were utilized to meet adult women together with girls, and thus Adults and Girls' Groups (AGGs) were formed. These groups were made aware of the

PCMA, children's rights, the Juvenile Justice Act, women's role in society, the difference in status of boys and girls, the need for collective action, regular meetings, constant vigilance and corrective action.

#### Adults and Girls Group, Thorrur, Warangal

Adolescent girls were also taken to meet the Tehsildar, PHO, and MPDO, and to visit police stations. At this exposure visit, they saw the lock-up cell, learned about FIRs, met with the police personnel, and understood the duties and responsibilities of the police. The idea of the exposure visit was to dissipate the girls' fear of the police and the police station, and to encourage them to report any instances of child marriage and/or violence that they came across. The girls asked the SI if they would be taken seriously if they lodged a complaint, and if they had to give their names, etc., or if the complaint could be lodged anonymously. The SI assured them that their anonymity would be preserved. The girls could not believe that this kind of access was really theirs.

#### Rani Rudramadevi Group:

#### Monthly meeting of the Rani Rudramadevi AGG, Thorrur mandal, Warangal district

"We meet regularly on the 15th of every month to discuss child marriage and other issues concerning girls. We talk of our rights, and strategize ways to get girls who have dropped out of school to rejoin. Our parents want us to work and then marry us off when we're still minors. When we refuse, they get drunk and beat and abuse us to get us to agree. We discuss the issue of child marriage



and this awareness has created the greatest change in us. Now, we act as watchdogs and give information of any child marriages we hear about to MVF, our teachers, the MRO, police and even the media.”

## 7.2 Mahila Sanghas and Women’s groups

Almost every village in Mahbubnagar and Warangal have Mahila Sanghas, or women’s Self Help Groups (SHGs), formed by the government or by NGOs. MVF contacted these groups, who usually meet to discuss savings and credit and disperse soon after the accounts are settled, to take up the agenda of girl children and their education, and to work against early child marriages. Those who showed interest were introduced to the anganwadi centers to be part of the AGGs and get more exposure, as well as to become links to the government system. Over time, they have become very important allies in preventing child marriages.

Initially, the women were not aware that there were government-appointed CMPOs. MVF introduced them to the various functionaries so that when the issue of child marriage came up, there was a convergence between the villagers, government officials and the police – the strategy that proved to work best at the village level. The successful stories of child marriages being stopped through the actions of SHGs sent out a powerful message to other women to participate in the campaign against child marriage.

Girls, too, gave women the courage to stop early marriage. They saw the experiences of their peers who had been married off, as did their parents. They realized that, being so young, the girls suffered problems with their in-laws. Married girls would come home for Dassera and other festivals and meet up with old classmates who were still studying and discussing how to build their careers, while the married girls came with their babies and were ashamed to approach their old friends. These young wives could neither be a part of the girls’ groups nor of the older women’s groups. Consequently, other parents realized the problems with child marriage, and began to reconsider their decision to marry off their minor daughters.



The women's groups were also encouraged by the SI's assurances that the AGGs' complaints would be taken seriously. When the women informed the police, the police would come even at midnight to stop a marriage. This went a long way in building the women's confidence that they had support, and emboldened them to bring the issue of

child marriage to the notice of the concerned authorities.

It must be realized that the act of taking a stand against child marriage is unusual and risky. The women moved out of submissive, non-threatening positions into one of direct confrontation with patriarchy and injustice. Although they did not always succeed in stopping child marriages, they were charged with a moral force and a vision for their daughters' futures. Determined that the next generation should have a better life than their own, they drew enormous strength from being part of a group and taking collective action, and this gave them the courage to withstand the pressures of tradition. This cause is so personal and close to women, having been child brides themselves and suffered terribly in unequal marriages that they can relate to. Even though some women continue to uphold traditions and are unable to question the situation, others bring a certain weight of personal experience that moves the hearts of other mothers.

[Sreenivas, Coordinator, Indira Kranthi Patham - Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district](#)



“The IKP works on social issues – child labour, child marriage, gender issues and so on. Implementation is carried out by the DRDA. We find out issues at the grassroots level and have full-length discussions with the cooperation of the SHGs, Mahila Mandal Samakhyas, and so on. If we hear of a child marriage from the VO, assistant VO, SHG members, or any individual, we send the committee leaders and staff to the village, and also intimate the



concerned government departments. Then, we find out the girl's age. If she's a minor, we counsel the parents about brain and body maturity, pregnancy, MMR, IMR, the baby's health and the illegality of such marriages. As a result of these activities, we've managed to stop 11-12 child marriages since we began partnering with MVF in 2012. We take written undertakings that parents will not perform child marriages. If we feel that they still might, we inform the SI and ask him to keep an eye on them. We give a monthly report to the DRDA. I've personally worked on child marriage earlier, in 2010, and have used that experience here. In Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district, SHGs donated 2,000 pamphlets and distributed them. We also put up flexis at places of pilgrimage, organized jatras, conducted convergence meetings with the MPDO, MRO, ICDS, & IKP to raise awareness against child marriage, and held rallies to educate the people."

Fatima - Gender Committee member, Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district



"There was a high incidence of child marriages here before 2012. For instance, in Marsu thanda in August 2012, a 70-year old man, who had been widowed twice, was engaged to marry a 12-year old girl. Her parents worked in agriculture as casual labour, so her maternal grandparents had arranged the match. We went to them with the anganwadi worker. The

grandparents said that the girl didn't want to study, so they had arranged her marriage. We asked them what would become of the girl if the groom, who was in his 70s, were to die. The girl's parents said that they were poor, and had 2 more children to provide for. We said that we would educate the girl and give her a vocational skill. We told them that they could get the benefit of the Kalyana Lakshmi scheme and get 51,000 rupees from the government when she turned 18, if she wasn't already married. After that, they would be free to arrange her marriage. That's how we stopped that marriage.

In another instance, in March 2014, a family in Ungaronpally village had arranged to marry off their minor daughter. The CDPO, ICDS supervisor, Assistant Project Manager, IKP (DRDA) and the Gender committee heard about it and went to the girl's house. The engagement ceremony was in process. The house was full of guests, and massive amounts of food were being prepared to feed everyone. We went to the

neighbors and asked what was going on. They said a boy and girl within the same family were getting married. The family had hidden the girl in a friend's house. When the CDPO asked for the girl, her parents said she was in Andhra. So we asked how they could perform the engagement ceremony if the girl wasn't there, but they insisted it wasn't an engagement. We asked for the girl's phone number, but they said they didn't have it. The whole thing was very fishy. We warned them not to perform child marriage. They agreed, and signed a written agreement to that effect. But then, we found the girl in the friend's house and asked her if she wanted to get married. Her family pressured her to say she did, but we threatened legal action against both the families, and the marriage was stopped. When we stop child marriages, the parents get very upset and abuse us roundly for interfering in their private matters. They ask if we will take the responsibility if their daughter runs away with someone else. They beat us, and ask that, if they postpone their daughter's marriage by 4-5 years, will we take the responsibility for finding her a good match later? They even threaten to commit suicide and blame us in their suicide notes."

**Farzana - Gender Committee member, Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district**



"When I was 14, my mother and uncle married me to Khwaja who would drink and beat me up. He wouldn't even give me food to eat; he only fed himself. This went on for 13 years. Then, he left me and went to live in Achampet. Suddenly, one day, he came back when we were out, entered the house and stole our documents. We

reported the matter to the elders of the Muslim community. In retaliation, he returned again one month later and set our house on fire while we were asleep inside. Luckily, our neighbors saw the flames and raised an alarm. The village complained to the police, and the SI came and arrested him, but the community elders organized his release 6 months ago. Since I was married off as a child, I know the consequences of child marriage, and work against it now. What happened to me should never happen to anyone else. I have a 7-year old daughter. I feel disadvantaged because I'm not educated, so I will educate her for as long as she wants."

### Saidamma, Women's Group, Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district



“I was married off 16 years ago at the age of 12. I'm 28 now. I have two children, a girl and a boy. The first was born when I was only 13. My husband got married again, because we didn't give him a dowry. We went to court, but he refused to take us back, so I live with my mother and we both work in the fields as agricultural labour. When I tell people my story and motivate them against child marriage, they

listen to us.”

### Women's self help group, Ookal village, Warangal district, 2014



“The population of Ookal village is approximately 3,000 people. We have 2 women's groups here, Sai Baba and Siri. Each group has 31 self help groups, consisting of 12-15 members each, totaling 800 members in all. Four years ago, there was a high incidence of child marriage here – 16 were performed in 2012 alone. At the time, there was no movement against child marriages. It was the norm, and nobody

would listen to us when we tried to dissuade them from practicing it. They would say they were doing it due to family circumstances, and ask us who we were to interfere in their personal matters. We first met Sreenivas of MVF when he came to attend a VO meeting. He would come to every monthly meeting and raise the issues of child marriage and girls' empowerment. We started to discuss the problem, counsel people and stop child marriages from happening. We tried to convince people by explaining the legal and health implications of child marriages. With support from teachers, the CMPC, and anganwadi workers, we confronted the problem successfully. Now, there are no early marriages at all. At first, we were very scared. Why wouldn't we be? We didn't want fights with the community. It can get very dangerous. But now, we're even using our mobile phones to network, share information and contact the concerned authorities when we hear of a child marriage being arranged. This provides

us with speed, connectivity and anonymity, which safeguard us in the village, since it is not always safe to be seen to be disturbing the *status quo*.

“In 2012, Damara Shetty Jyothi was a minor whose marriage had been fixed. Her father had passed away, and she only had a mother. Due to her precarious family circumstances and the burden on her widowed mother, even people who were vehemently opposed to child marriage took a neutral stand in this particular case, so Jyothi was married off and now has a young son. However, due to the actions we took and our counseling, at least she continued to study, and is now in 2nd year Intermediate. This was among the last child marriages in our village, and it created a *furore*. Since then, we’ve had no more early marriages here.”

**As narrated in the focus group discussion with members of SHGs**

### 7.3 Girls’ Committees

Girls were empowered by the atmosphere of support that they received from a variety of sources that had been activated by the effort to prevent child marriages. This included anganwadi centers, women’s groups, AGGs, youth groups, panchayats, local officials and the police. Over a period of time, MVF also oriented doctors, police and ANMs about the PCMA on a one-on-one basis.

Once they were ready, the girls were introduced to doctors from primary health care centers, the SI and the ANM to understand the consequences of child marriage. The SI and other officials shared their phone numbers with the girls, encouraging them to lodge complaints if they faced problems or came across instances of child marriage. By involving the functionaries in this manner, it reinforced their commitment to the prevention of child marriages.



**Mass meeting of adolescent girls, Thorrur mandal**

This support gave young girls the courage to be innovative in their resistance to child marriage. They could take such a private, family issue into the public domain by preparing and distributing pamphlets with information from the internet, through child-to-child motivation, by contacting the police, utilizing government help lines and child lines, and giving information about child marriages before they were performed. It is not that they were always successful. Some child marriages were performed in stealth despite the intervention of the girls, but at least it gave them an avenue of imagination to reshape their circumstances, and agency to refuse to be married.

#### **Tirupatamma fought with her mother to stop her marriage**

In 2013, in Chitlankunta village, Amrabad mandal, a women's group leader stopped 2-



3 child marriages in her community, but organized the marriage of her own minor daughter, Tirupatamma. Empowered by discussions and awareness, Tirupatamma questioned her, and pointed out the double standards in her actions. Consequently, her mother stopped her marriage and continued to educate her. Now, Tirupatamma is studying in the 10th standard, and planning

to continue her education and get a job.



**Anusha used the entire chain of communication to call off her wedding at the last minute**



In 2013, Anusha’s parents, who were originally from Chitlankunta village, were working in Hyderabad in a construction company, and fixed her marriage with a boy of the same district who was also working with them. Anusha was informed only after the marriage had been fixed and the date was too close for her

to do anything to resist. Yet, the youth of her village and Anusha called up MV Foundation’s Mandal coordinator, who in turn alerted government officials at once. Consequently, members of the Revenue department, ICDS, Police, Women groups’ leaders and CRPF met her parents, and the marriage was called off after the SI warned them that he would take action if they married Anusha off. Anusha is now in the 10<sup>th</sup> standard, and plans to study further and get a job.

**Mamatha, Jhansi Laxmibai group, Thorrur mandal, Warangal district**



**Mamatha, of the Jhansi Laxmibai group, recounts the story of her older sister**

“Our group was created by MVF in 2012, and we were made aware of child marriage, its consequences, and our rights as minor girls. Then, in 2013 when I was in the 9<sup>th</sup> class, my parents fixed the marriage of my elder sister who was then in the 10<sup>th</sup> standard. We tried to stop the wedding by phoning Sreenivas sir of MVF, informing our schoolteachers, calling the 1098 helpline number, and informing the media. My classmates and I

created a pamphlet about the consequences of child marriage and distributed it to all the homes in the village to create awareness. Ultimately, we went to the police and the CWC. Due to all this pressure, our parents surrendered and stopped the marriage. But one year later, my sister was taken away to another

village, and the marriage was performed clandestinely. We couldn't do anything to stop it then. The same thing happened to a girl in my own class. She was married off by citing false age certificates. Even though we involved the police, they could do nothing in the face of the false certificates, and she was married off. All of us informed the police SI as well as MVF, but again, we couldn't stop the marriage.”

#### 7.4 Priests and clergy



##### **Hindu priest tells women that he will not solemnize child marriage, Rayaparthi mandal**

The first filter against child marriage is the clergy. At first, clergy of all religions resisted the movement against child marriages, citing loss of income. They felt that there were so many Acts, and wondered why only this one was being implemented. MVF facilitated a meeting of the government officials with the clergy who were told that child marriage is illegal and that they were liable to be punished if they supported it. They were also asked to check birth certificates, or age proof certificates, and to meet both the boy and girl first, in person, to make sure they were not underage. They had to ask for bona fide certificates, ration cards etc, to ensure this, or they would go to jail. Soon, they also began to display boards against child marriage. If a prospective bride or groom is underage, they inform the MVF at once. MVF then passes the message on to the concerned authorities. Now, the clergy really cooperates with MVF, and partners with them in the truest sense of the word. Hindu

clergy put up posters near temples, asking people who want to arrange a marriage to first provide a date of birth certificate.



Banner against child marriage at pilgrimage center, contributed by the police, Amrabad mandal

It is not only Hindu clergy who are contacted. Muslim and Christian religious heads were also contacted and won over to partner in the programme.

### Radicalizing the clergy

#### Srikumar Sharma, Hindu Purohit, Amrabad



Hindu priest Srikumar Sharma with the notice outside his house asking for age proof certificates before he will solemnize a wedding, Amrabad mandal, 2014

“I once went to conduct a marriage and found that the bride was only 12 years old so I refused to perform the ceremony and came home. Earlier, leaders of



political parties would put a lot of pressure on me to perform child marriages, mainly to protect their vote bank, and threaten to close down my business if I didn't cooperate. This made me very nervous, because it's a question of my livelihood, but I insisted that I was happy to conduct any marriage provided I had age proof that the couple had attained adulthood. 'I don't care who you are, I won't perform child marriage', I said. Then, in 2013, I met Venkatesh of MVF. He told me about child marriage, and I said I was already against it, so we became partners. This gave me a lot of courage and support. Then I put up a notice outside my house saying I will not solemnize any child marriages. I tell people, 'I won't say this to each one of you who comes here. Please read the sign outside and if you're okay with it, then you may enter. 'I insist on attaching photos to each age-proof certificate. If school certificates are not available, I ask for a Gram Panchayat certificate, Aadhar card, ration card or any other proof of majority.'



**Srikumar Sharma shows age proof certificates with photos of the bride and groom**

“Grooms come to me and say, ‘We’re employed, surely we must be adults’, but the girl could be a minor, so I insist on seeing an age proof certificate for both parties. Even police constables pressure me to give them muhurats without age proof certificates, but I refuse them too. I don't care; I need an age proof certificate, or I don't step in.

“Ten minutes ago, a man came to me and asked me to check a couple of *kundalis* (horoscopes) for compatibility. I asked for age proof certificates first, before I would start the process. He refused and left. I get suspicious when people are in a hurry, that’s why I insisted. He became nervous; he’s from Padara, not a local from here. Last year, an entire family came to me drunk and asked when the Prevention of Child Marriage Act had come into force. I told them it had been in force since 2012, and that they could check on the government website. ‘There are ads on TV also to that effect. If you don’t believe me, I can call the government officials – Tehsildar, SI, etc. If they give me permission *in writing*, I will conduct the marriage. I want a paper with the MRO’s stamp and signature. It’s not personal’, I said, ‘but we must respect the law.’ Earlier, there was a lot of child marriage here, but it’s much better now. If parents argue with me, I call Venkatesh from MVF and say that if he agrees, I will perform the marriage. I put the onus on him.”

### 7.5 Persons Directly Involved in the Marriage Function

MVF identified stakeholders who are crucial in making arrangements for and solemnizing child marriages, but are usually ignored in the campaign against it. They adopted a meticulous and systematic approach of identifying these stakeholders and winning them over as allies, as they were also seen as potentially effective partners in stopping child marriages. Some of them were members of the washer men community who traditionally distribute the invites; the function hall owners who rent out their premises for all marriages; tent house owners and decorators who provide the materials for beautification of the wedding premises; brass band musicians who are often caste Elders of certain communities; and the cooks who provide marriage feasts. Therefore, convincing them not to participate in a child marriage, even if it meant loss of business, was a huge task, which the MVF volunteers undertook with diligence. Their involvement helped in preventing many a child marriage.

Caste Elders play a crucial role in matchmaking and negotiating the dowries and gifts that are to be exchanged. No marriage is complete without the participation of all these people. These stakeholders were brought together utilizing the Act against child marriages, which was used relentlessly to spread

awareness, instill fear in those with vested interests in early marriages, and convince everyone to stamp out the practice. The guests invited to the marriage were also approached and asked not to attend, as, per the law, they would be seen as aiding and abetting child marriage, which had been declared illegal. Some of them agreed.

Thus, although MVF's intervention was only in six Gram Panchayats in the districts of Warangal and Mahbubnagar, the impact of the programme was slowly felt in the whole area as the information began to spread due to the involvement of this diverse set of stakeholders.

Kotha Sreenivas Rao, MVF District-in-charge, Mahbubnagar

“At first, the caste leaders opposed our work in the prevention of child marriage, but we took Mandal-level government officers to meet them and tell them that child marriage is illegal, so if they supported it, they were also culpable. We asked them to check age proof certificates before fixing marriages. At first, we got a mixed response to this, but now, there has been an 80-90% improvement in their attitudes. They give us information about child marriages and also counsel families in the village that it is illegal and that they are therefore unable to support early marriages.

Caste Elders- Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district:



**Meeting with caste, community and religious elders**

“Venkatesh of MVF met us in 2012 and told us about the PCMA. We are also in charge of the tent house and the brass band. When parents approach us for their child's wedding, we ask if s/he is an adult, and for age proof certificates. If we come across child marriages, we counsel the minors and their parents about the illegality of such marriages, their health consequences for child brides, and so on. There's been a marked improvement in the situation since MVF began work here.”

## 7.6 Youth groups



Police orienting youth groups on PCMA, Chitlankunta village, Amrabad mandal

MVF identified several youth groups in the project area, and made alliances with those who were open to change. They spoke to the presidents of the youth clubs, found out what programmes they

conducted and whether everyone attended them. The groups conducted sports events, cultural activities, and celebrated festivals like Ganesh Chauthi, but had not really done any work on social issues. MVF met each youth group separately, and spoke of child rights, child marriage, child sexual abuse, the problems of early marriage and the destruction it causes to both mother and child. They pointed out that higher classes educate their children and marry them only when they are in their '20s. Why, they asked, should there be such a difference between the castes and classes? Ultimately, the youth were inspired to campaign and volunteer their time to work against child marriage.

When child marriages were fixed in Haripirala village in Thorrur Mandal of Warangal district between 2012 -2014, the local youth tried to counsel the parents against performing the weddings. When some parents refused to listen, the Dreams Youth Club, left with no choice, passed on the information to MVF, who passed it on to the concerned authorities. Consequently, the police came and stopped the marriages. The main parties were arrested, taken away, and counseled. This had a huge impact on the village. It created tremendous fear in the minds of the people. Consequently, there has been a 90% decrease in instances of child marriage in Haripirala village.

### Dreams Youth Club, Haripirala village, Thorrur Mandal, Warangal District

The Dreams Youth Group consists of 32 members, all boys, most of who are still studying in undergraduate and post-graduate courses.



### Members of the Dreams Youth Club:

“Thorrur Mandal has a major Gram Panchayat. Most of the inhabitants are casual labourers. We had been wanting, and actively working towards, change in Haripirala village. Then, in 2012, Sreenivas of MVF came and met us. He talked of preventing child marriage. We discussed the rules and regulations around the issue. First, we consulted the VRO, MRO and the Police Sub Inspector. The police gave us a very positive response, so we took on the responsibility of informing MVF of any instances of child marriage that came to our notice. We stopped early marriages in our village, and also provided counselling to the families about the health implications of such marriages. However, we can’t really do anything directly due to the social ecosystem and politics of the village. A significant cause of early marriage here is the lack of toilets in the local school. The girls have no access to toilets during school hours, which are from 9 am to 2 pm, with the result that they prefer not to go to school at all. When they stay home, parents look to marry them off. Therefore, on MVF’s suggestion, we wrote a petition to the village Sarpanch, asking for toilets in the girls’ school, which were built. Prior to 2012, there used to be 10-15 child marriages a year in Haripirala village. Of the 15 child marriages, 10 would end in separation or divorce. The couples, too young to

realize what was happening, would get married and live together, but then the boys would be sent away for higher studies or to work. The girls, too, would want to study, but wouldn't be allowed to. This separation and absence created a lot of tension in the families and the marriages, resulting in divorce. We cite these examples of people we all know to dissuade others from performing child marriages, and ask them to think of the long-term happiness of their children. Political parties encourage child marriage to protect their vote banks. Often, it's a caste thing. A family belonging to a particular caste or community fixes the marriage of a minor child. Knowing the legal situation, they then approach a political leader of their own community with bribes and pleas for support in performing the wedding. In order to protect their vote banks, these politicians use their clout with the police and other departments to ensure that they turn a blind eye and the marriages are performed. The politicians don't see the child as a child; they don't care about child rights. They only want to stay in power as long as they can.

“This no longer happens in our village so much, as there are many student leaders and organizations here that will not allow it. If we get to hear of such a marriage, we first approach the village policeman. If he doesn't respond, we go directly to the police station. If there is still no action, we approach friends in the police and government departments. If all else fails, we approach the media. Then, the child marriages are definitely stopped. Things have changed drastically in our village. There are no child marriages at all now. But we face a lot of pressure from our parents and political leaders regarding our activities. They go to our parents and complain about us. Then our parents ask us why we're interfering in other people's affairs, as though we're not responsible for what happens here. We defy them and say we'll continue to do it because we owe it to ourselves. But there's no recognition for what we do. Opinion-makers and other influential persons in the villages boycott us. Despite this, we have resolved in our group that none of us will get married until we are financially settled, and of legal age. We will also not marry girls below the age of 18. Change must start with us.”





Youth group orientation by MVF district coordinator, Rangapur village, Achampet

When youth groups oppose early marriage, girls feel empowered and supported. When their marriages are fixed, they first approach their parents to ask them not to marry them off.

They assure their parents that they will study, stand on their own feet, and take care of themselves. If, however, parents are unconvinced, or refuse to listen, the girls know that they have the support of the youth groups in the village.

The youth took an active role in conducting rallies and marches. They also did 40-minute street plays in village after village at their own expense. One couple in Chitlamkunta village called off their minor daughter's marriage after they saw such a play. The youth groups have thus discovered their role as major catalysts of change and progress, and as watchdogs for the community.

### **7.7 Child Rights Protection Forums (CRPF)**

The Child Rights Protection Forum was first constituted by MVF to volunteer time for the cause of child rights even while they were engaged in their own occupations. They are from all communities and come together, putting aside all differences, for the cause of children.

MV Foundation utilized this social capital and institution to take forward the agenda of the prevention of early marriages and engage with the government to press it to take immediate action. To this end, the CRPF holds regular meetings with all government officials, and follow up with the police to intervene and stop child marriages. This creates a huge impact on others.

The CRPF also counsels parents who are contemplating child marriage, and convinces them that their daughter's future will be put to hazard by early marriage. They raise awareness of health issues in underage mothers and their children. They assure parents that once their daughter attains 18 years of age

and is given an education, she will have greater independence, agency, and weight in the marriage.

On many occasions, the CRPF has faced trouble due to their uncompromising stand against child marriage. They have been abused and threatened, and there has even been violence against them. When 2-3 members of the CRPF first opposed child marriages, the community thought that they had a vested interest, or stood to gain financially by stopping the practice, and boycotted them. For instance, in Ookal village, where there used to be a high incidence of child marriage, Manohar of the CRPF, a videographer took a stand against it. He was boycotted and was no longer hired by the villagers, causing a serious loss of income. However, he did not succumb to the pressure. Now, when everybody objects to child marriage in Ookal, Manohar has been vindicated and gained respect.

#### Nasaraiah – CRPF- Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district



“The PCMA existed before 2012, but the general public was unaware of it as the government was lax in publicizing the Act. Even we didn't know about it, and would attend child marriages ourselves. Early marriages decreased only in 2012, when MVF came in. We became aware that it was illegal after their orientation programmes, but since there was no system in

place, people weren't afraid of being punished for it. When the movement against child marriage started to gain momentum, all kinds of people across the board put pressure on government officials here to get MVF to stop their activities. We retaliated and refused to attend the weddings of minors even as guests, and warned the clergy of all religions to check age proof certificates before performing a marriage ceremony. Now, it's become difficult even for prominent persons who have contacts with the police to conduct child marriages. People are afraid that if they do, MVF will come and stop it.

“All we need is implementation of the law. Nodal officers like the MRO, Collector, SI, and RDO have not done anything at all. Given this abdication of responsibility by the government, MVF does everything. Even when we run after the officers, they don't



know a thing about the Act. *They* should take the initiative and involve us. Instead, it's the other way around. *We* do everything, and then run after them to grace us with their attention.

“There are too many loopholes in the government. For instance, there is a fundamental right to education policy, and education is the obvious way to stop child marriage, but the government school system is terrible. Infrastructure, schools, teachers and so on are neither adequate nor good. So whom should we punish, the parents or the government? We need to reform the system from the village up. This is our responsibility.”

[Anjaneyulu - CRPF - Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district:](#)

“There is a lot of resistance from people to the anti-child marriage movement. The Act exists, but there is no implementation on the ground. The government also abused and threatened us, asking why we were bothering them and disturbing them with this. We need improvements in the bureaucracy and political wings. There is a deep lack of political will to change things. We need to pressure politicians from the village level itself. In 2001, we had lakhs of out-of-school children. Now, there is a remarkable change. Similarly, the PCMA will give us results, too. We've worked only in 2 mandals, but the impact has been felt all over.”

[Kadem Buchaiah - CRPF, Amrabad](#)



“When we began to work against child marriage, we held meetings here in Achampet and asked people if we were wrong in speaking up for child rights. This created tension and arguments, but we persisted. The convergence of all government departments and village-level officials empowered us. We convinced the police to address girls and youth, and try to build consciousness among them to stop child

marriage. We checked with elected representatives of Gram Panchayats to follow up on child marriages because they had signed undertakings against the practice before elections. There has been a marked improvement in areas where MVF works to prevent child marriage.

“The villagers here now know that people and institutions will stop child marriage. Since nothing is happening in villages where there is no MVF, even in the same *taluka*, some parents have gone away to perform early marriages. But MVF is catalyzing change in other places, too. It would be even more effective if there was a full-fledged programme. With just 2-3 volunteers, and no resources, MVF has achieved so much.

“We need to scale up to the *taluka* level and other mandals now.”

#### Mangalapally Ramchander, CRPF, Zilla Co-convenor

“Despite the JJ Act, children below the age of 18 are not seen as children. I’ve stopped 25 child marriages so far with the co-operation of the MRO, police, anganwadi workers and MVF. Even after signing an undertaking that they would not perform child marriage, 22 of those families conducted the weddings clandestinely. We asked that the police and revenue departments should be sued, and a case filed against them for aiding and abetting early marriage.

“We postponed one child marriage and stopped another in 2012. Anitha’s parents in Haripirala village didn't want to educate her, so we approached the head of a private school who agreed to waive the tuition fee and let her study free in the school. She studied there for 1½ years, after which her parents married her off when she was in the 9th standard. In the second instance, when we called a meeting in Thorrur High School to raise awareness about child marriage among adults and girls, fifteen hundred girls attended. After the meeting, a minor girl called Manjula stood up and said that her parents had just fixed her wedding. The college principal and I went to her *thaanda*, spoke to her parents, discussed the consequences of child marriage, and the fact that it is against the law. They understood and called off the wedding. Now, Manjula is studying at a higher level to be a Staff Nurse. Change is possible.”

#### All Party Men’s group, Ookal village, Thorrur Mandal, Warangal District

“There are 50 CRPF members in Ookal. Before 2012, we were not aware of child marriage prevention officials. Child marriages were common. Nobody reacted to them at all, but because of MVF, it has become a serious issue here. We’re ready to go to any lengths to stop child marriage and protect children and their rights. If necessary, we won’t step down even from confrontation.

“Earlier, there were about 45 child marriages a year. Now, it’s much less, because people know that the news is bound to spread, and are afraid of investing money in a

child marriage and then losing it all if the ceremony is stopped. We're all on the lookout, village elders, CRPF members, and so on. We show people examples of early marriage leading to divorce. We also get support from the Students' Federation in Ookal village. From asking us who we were to interfere, now parents show the school certificates before they perform the weddings. In 2013, all 150 village elders met at the Gram Panchayat Hall and took an oath not to allow child marriage, and the picture was made public on Facebook. The village receives support from the MRO and other government officials who come *en masse* to stop any child marriage that is taking place. It has officially become illegal, and the people are aware of this. We took 4 cases of child marriage to the police who united with the village elders, MahilaSanghas and the CRPF to stop them.

“All of us belong to different political parties here – TDP, Congress, BJP, independent, etc. We fight each other during election time, but we fight as one to protect the rights of children. Children have no voice. They need support and a space to fight for their rights. Girls' agency is very important in this fight. The days are gone when girls had to do as they were told. We need to create more space for them to vocalize their needs, especially for education.”

**As narrated by All Party Men's group, Ookal village, Thorrur Mandal, Warangal District**

## 7.8 Political Parties

### Meeting of the police SI with political leaders, Rayaparthi mandal



Political parties are a powerful force to contend with. They are rooted in caste affiliations, and see their constituents as a vote bank that will keep them in power. Therefore, they have to yield to the pressure from their communities off and on.

Initially, political parties' exerted pressure on MVF to turn a blind eye to child marriages, saying that they would 'manage' higher ups in the party. MVF said that children were above party politics, and contacted higher ups in government and in the political parties to ascertain their stand on child

marriage. The higher ups assured MVF that they would not support it, as it was illegal.

MVF then called all the concerned government officials, and discussed everybody's accountability per the law. The CI played a crucial role in supporting MVF's stand, so eventually the political parties withdrew their support to child marriage.

Now, they have cohered around the issue of child rights. This has given immense strength to MVF's anti-child marriage activities.

**Nagaraju, BJP -Amrabad mandal, Mahbubnagar district:**

“We didn't know anything about MVF before 2012. We came to some meetings conducted by them and learnt about the PCMA. Then we were convinced, and spread the message to other areas. Parents see girl children as a burden here. We need to raise awareness among youngsters to fight for their rights. We have to honor the PCMA. We're ready to do this through MVF and other NGOs. Boys don't listen to us about eve teasing, which is a big deterrent in girls' education as it increases parents' eagerness to get them married and get rid of their responsibilities.

**7.9 Network with other NGOs and CBOs**

Partnership with local NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) helped in building a ground swell of support for advocating the cause of girls and prevention of child marriages. Associations and clubs of the well to do were also approached and their involvement sought in the programme. This resulted in their active participation among the middle classes.

**Sreenivas, Vice-MPP, Elected Representative & NGO President, E Sree**

“After MVF came here in 2012, we called for a meeting of all 12 NGOs in our area, in which we focused on orphans and child marriage. We decided, with the help of the police, to work towards the prevention of early marriages, and started to identify such cases. We held an all-party meeting on 6/8/14 and all of us agreed to stop any child marriage happening anywhere for any reason, and to counsel families about the

consequences of child marriage, that children of underage mothers are invariably unhealthy and weak, and that the mothers are also weakened, and age prematurely. Often, the mother's uterus is removed altogether. Children, too, lose their right to education, employment, and all human rights due to early marriage.

"Now, when parents consider marrying off their underage children, there is fear that NGOs, the police, and other officials will come and stop the marriage. Consequently, we've not seen any cases of child marriage since August 2014. The police provide immediate co-operation and counseling when we inform them of any cases. The government response is also okay. In order to completely eliminate child marriage, we need to explain to people that women must be treated with respect, and as equals."

**T. Lakshminarasimha Rao, Regional Chairman Region 7, Lions' Club International, and Principal, Sharada High School, Thorrur**



"The Lions' Club has a district level programme on Save the Girl Child to create awareness about girls who are discriminated against by their parents. The Lions' Club now has a large rural network also, which we use to work with MVF to spread awareness against child marriage. While we can only raise awareness, MVF can go to the grassroots where child marriage is actually taking place. We've been waiting for such an organization, so that we can join hands and take the movement forward. In 2014, we sponsored 15-20 flexis against child marriage to be put up in public spaces, held mass rallies in Thorrur with the Police SI & CI, and called for meetings with anganwadi workers, adults and girls, and the ICDS Supervisors.



**Lions' Club, Thorrur Mandal, sponsored flexis to spread the message against child marriage**

“The Lions’ Club Governor and other office bearers took part in spreading awareness on the issue and the Lions’ Club Hall is given free of cost to MVF to hold its public meetings. Future actions include building citizen responsibility to provide financial support to the movement against early marriage, and spreading awareness through rallies, seminars, etc. We also plan to enter junior colleges with an awareness drive. When we get to know of a child marriage, we contact the police and government officials. The police generally respond well. It’s very important for women to participate in the drive against child marriage, and for girls to be aware of how to protect themselves. It’s critical that they should object to being married off as minors.”



## 8. Campaigns and Public Awareness



Collage of wall writings prepared by HAQ on the campaign

The focus of all public awareness activities was to create an environment that would give confidence to the girl to defy child marriage. The activities

therefore had to be multiple and complex, involving all the stakeholders and institutions. The issue of girls and their entitlements, child marriage and gender discrimination had to become a talking point everywhere in the project area. Therefore, MVF took up campaigns and public awareness programmes in which youth, CRPF, SHGs and priests volunteered not only their time but also funded the campaign. Wall writings, distribution of pamphlets, street plays, and contacting opinion makers and caste elders were all taken up by them. Given this atmosphere, girls could assert their right not to be victimized through early marriage.



Pledge of priests against child marriage, banners contributed by priest, Amrabad mandal



Release of pamphlet on PCMA by the SI, Thorrur mandal



Release of pamphlet on PCMA by mandal level officials, Amrabad mandal



ICDS poster on PCMA



## **8.1 Involving Girl Students**

The most important stakeholder in the fight against child marriage is the girl child. Her battle to grow into her own potential is waged on several fronts every single day, and it is critical that she be empowered to challenge traditional mindsets on her own.

MVF realized that regular meetings were needed to discuss the situation in schools and their link to the institution of child marriage. Meetings were held with girls in all primary, middle and high schools, junior colleges (classes 11 and 12), girls' hostels, degree colleges, and KGBVs on their rights and the issue of child marriage.

The issue of lack of toilets and its link to girls dropping out of schools and eventually getting married came up in the meetings with girls. In 2013, girls then took up a postcard campaign where they could write about lack of toilet facilities to the authorities. Since budgets had already been allocated for that year, it was being considered for the next financial year, but it became the authorities' responsibility. By participating in such activities a sense of ownership and empowerment developed among the girls. They were given confidence that they had support from the people, the government and the law. This reassured girls, who, before that, were too afraid to talk or protest.

In Warangal, nearly 1,000 girls attended an orientation meeting with police officers and the MVF Mandal team where the government pledged to support the girls. The Headmaster and SMC too participated in the meeting.

All along, girls had no space to discuss early marriage. Due to such an intensive campaign they're finding a space to oppose the practice. Some minor girls have even found the courage to fight their parents when their marriages are fixed.

## **8.2 Involvement of Political leaders**

Political leaders are important opinion-makers and policy-makers, wielding great authority in the community. Each one was approached to partner with MVF in the battle against child marriage, and many leaders and MLAs sponsored posters against child marriage with their signature, cutting across

party lines to join hands to protect children. This sent out a powerful message to the community, and reinforced the social aspect of political leadership in the project area.

### **8.3 Rallies, Marches and Institution Building**

Several youth groups organized rallies against child marriage that went with drums from village to village. They took part in wall writing, displaying of posters and banners in all villages, distribution of campaign materials and putting up of flexi banners. Posters and banners also carried numbers of the officials to whom complaints could be made. This included phone numbers of Child Line (1098) and police (100), and also emails IDs and mobile numbers of the Collector, PD-DRDA, PD-ICPS, DCPO, CWC, AJC and SSA-PO (Gender coordinator).

The rally in each village concluded with a public meeting in which there were songs, street plays, and slogans against early child marriages. The entire village reverberated with the atmosphere of protecting girls at that moment. This was followed up the next day with door- to-door visits touching every home, and several parents signed agreement bonds not to perform early marriages. Caste elders, too, were asked to give statements in the meetings, thus giving legitimacy to the programme.

Before the marriage season starts, the clergy of all religions, photographers, videographers, band musicians, tent house owners, cooks, printers, et al, are warned not to perform or support child marriage lest they be punished per the law.

The local news papers cover rallies and meetings, thus creating a ground swell of support for the cause.

To ensure that the rallies and awareness programmes are consolidated and the mood thus created does not dissipate they are followed up by processes of institution building. Several committees have been formed at the village and mandal levels: Youth committees, Women's committees, CMPC, Adults & Girls, CRPF, School children committees. Orientation and training is provided

for each group individually, and they are facilitated to meet regularly to review the status of girls in their areas.

### 8.4 Media

All instances of campaign and advocacy against child marriage have been widely covered by the local press. They also broke news of child marriages that were stopped, and mentioned the role of priests, police, local officials and others who were influential in stopping child marriages. The media also played a role in creating an environment against child marriage and thus making it difficult for any parent to perform the marriage openly.



Newspaper coverage of Night Street play, Chitlamkunta village, Amrabad mandal

**తహశీల్దార్ చొరవతో నిలిచిన బాల్యవివాహం**



**రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లిలో రాష్ట్రానికి ఇప్పుడు తహశీల్దార్**

అల్లూరికి తహశీల్దార్ అధికారం చేపట్టిన తర్వాత రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లిలో కేసులు పెరిగిపోయాయి. తహశీల్దార్ అధికారం వచ్చిన తర్వాత రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లిలో కేసులు పెరిగిపోయాయి. తహశీల్దార్ అధికారం వచ్చిన తర్వాత రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లిలో కేసులు పెరిగిపోయాయి. తహశీల్దార్ అధికారం వచ్చిన తర్వాత రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లిలో కేసులు పెరిగిపోయాయి.

**బాల్యవివాహాలతో భవిష్యత్తు నాశనం**



**తహశీల్దార్ తో సమావేశమైన స్వచ్ఛంద సంస్థ ప్రతినిధులు**

రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లి తహశీల్దార్ అధికారం వచ్చిన తర్వాత రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లిలో కేసులు పెరిగిపోయాయి. తహశీల్దార్ అధికారం వచ్చిన తర్వాత రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లిలో కేసులు పెరిగిపోయాయి. తహశీల్దార్ అధికారం వచ్చిన తర్వాత రాజ్ కల్లంపల్లిలో కేసులు పెరిగిపోయాయి.

News coverage of child marriages stopped due to intervention of Tehsildars of Amrabad and Warangal districts

**Sreenivasulu, Eenadu:**

“There is a Marriage Registration Act, but nobody enforces it. If they did, there would be far less child marriage. The media does what it can to spread the message to the people. The problem is really implementation. Child marriage has been the traditional practice, and people aren’t really aware of the attendant problems. Women here have a slightly lower status than men, but they go to work and earn, so they are slowly getting more say in family matters.”

## 9. Training and orientation



**MVF training adolescent girls, Rayaparthi mandal**

All stakeholders at the field level were given training on the law and policies regarding child rights with specific reference to the PCMA. Since they are not used to being lectured to, the pedagogy included discussions and seeking their opinions before they were told the legal positions. Also, the functionaries in the government such as the police, ICDS, CDPO, MDO, Tehsildars, and members of PCMA were invited to talk to the stake holders during the trainings on their respective areas of expertise. They also shared their telephone numbers in case of emergency. This was a very useful method wherein direct contact was established with the officers that gave stake holders confidence to support girls. Further, the commitment of the officers was also reinforced due to such interactions.

Given the complete lack of awareness of GO # 13 among government officials before 2012, it became necessary to hold briefings within the relevant government departments to sensitize the officers. To this end, the MVF organizers conducted several orientation meetings focusing on the issue of child marriage. Focused 2-3 day trainings that examined a variety of situations were also conducted for the officials. Additionally, MVF organizers trained elected representatives of the Panchayats to detect and prevent early marriage in their villages. Finally, round table conferences were held with trade unions on the issue of child marriage.

## 10. Challenges

The protocols for prevention and stopping of child marriages per the PCMA are still not institutionalized. The constant transfer of government and police officials after sensitizing them is an ongoing problem, making it difficult to institutionalize government responses to the situation. However, the advantage is that these officials then spread the word against child marriage in their new postings, and invite MVF to come and start working there, but there is still a lot of dependence for information and even follow up action on non-government actors and institutions.

Most parents are constantly being motivated by MVF and the government that child marriage is detrimental to all and particularly to the child, but some parents only pretend to be convinced and then perform the child marriage stealthily elsewhere, away from the village, sometime later. Also, there is no guarantee that the girl child will be rescued and rehabilitated by the system once the marriage is officially stopped.

For example, in 2013 in Chitiyala village of Thorrur Mandal, 17-year old Anusha's marriage was fixed. The anganwadi workers called her and attempted counseling. They also called her parents and pointed out that child marriage was illegal, that her education would be stopped and that if she became a mother, her health would suffer. Anusha's parents responded with anger, left the village one night and got her married by stealth. However, since Anusha

insisted on continuing with her education, she returned to school without a *mangalsutra* or any signs of marriage. Nobody realized that she was married until she became pregnant. Her husband accused Anusha of infidelity, and disowned her. All at once, she was no longer socially accepted in the village. She approached the Panchayat for redressal, and deposited one lakh rupees with them to resolve the dispute. The boy was forced to deposit a similar amount. The Panchayat called a meeting, and the case is going on.

This risk of stigmatization, uncertainty and lack of community as well as institutional support are challenges that the girl has to withstand till she gets justice.

At times, child marriages can be stopped in the project area, but when the marriage parties shift the venue outside it, there is little that can be done. Sometimes, MVF volunteers get information via the vast network that they have established and call the government officials and the police of the other area who start an investigation and attempt to stop the child marriage. It is a question of chance whether they will be successful.

The persistence of patriarchy and gender discrimination continues to be a challenge, and highly inimical to the movement against child marriage.

The government education system still leaves a lot to be desired. There are far too few post-elementary schools around the villages, and girls are forced to walk long distances or depend on public transport, which is very unpredictable. There is also the question of eve teasing and stalking. There are no toilets in schools, or any sensitivity to girls and their problems.

All these challenges relating to schools make it difficult for the girls to continue in education. Therefore, until these problems are solved, child marriage is seen as inevitable.

Despite all these challenges, however, it has been seen time and again that if the girl decides that she does not want to get married and wants to pursue her education, many of these challenges can be overcome. While there are

structural issues that need to be addressed, it is not necessary to wait for these profound issues to be resolved, if a child's marriage is to be stopped.

## 11. Conclusion

Child marriage is a terribly contentious issue. Parents and communities see it as a private matter and resent outside interference. Confronting them can be volatile and dangerous. MVF persevered and utilized its early experience in conflict resolution and consensus building to create a social norm that no child may be married off. It is not easy, but they have proved that it is do-able. They have succeeded in taking child marriage out of the ambit of the family, and turned it into a violation of human rights. There have, of course, been instances of child marriages, but they had to be performed quietly outside the project area. Although, in one sense, this may not seem like progress, the fact that people can no longer perform child marriage openly is itself a marker of change in social norms and fear of the law.

Perhaps the most significant marker of progress, however, is that the MVF has managed, in a very short span of time, to transform the thinking and functioning of every official, public institution and individual in the community so that they are now ardent defenders of the rights and safety of girl children. Further, the system is slowly but surely becoming accountable to girls.

It has been seen that there are five factors that are necessary to protect girl children and ensure that they enjoy their right to childhood and education.

First, there has to be a concerted effort to change the social norm in favor of girls against gender discrimination and patriarchy. This requires the participation and involvement of a multiplicity of stakeholders through campaigns and public awareness, and by creating an environment that treats girls as equals.

Second, the process of campaign-building has to result in a process of setting up local institutions such as Child Rights Protection Forums, schoolgirls'



committees, and Adolescent Girls' Groups, and also building the capacities of other institutions such as women's groups and youth groups to sustain the programme and also petition the officials concerned to fill the gaps in the system.

Third, the system, too, including the Gram Panchayats, has to be simultaneously prepared to respond to the demands made on it in a timely fashion, giving justice to girls just so that the tempo of the movement is not lost, and faith in the government is built.

Fourth, the system should consider civil society as an equal partner, with each having a defined as well as an indispensable role in eradicating child marriage.

Finally, all actions must result in the girl child taking courage to say no to tradition and culture, and being able to defy structures of power and authority in the family and society to reject child marriage, and pursue education. It is only then that new traditions and cultures can be established with emphasis on equality, rights and social justice.



Going beyond the project area - Formation of village CMPC in non-project area

## 12. ANNEXURES

### 12.1 ANNEXURE 1 -Names of people interviewed for this report

#### 1. Dreams Youth Group, Haripirala village, Thorrur Mandal, Warangal District - 12/10/14

1. K. Madhu – completed D.Ed, now preparing for D.Sc
2. Dasari Lingamurthy – completed B.Sc, now preparing for the Groups exam
3. B. Murali – completed B.A, now preparing for the police (constable) exam
4. B. Venkatesh – completed B.Sc, now preparing for the Railways exam
5. B. Munesh – B.Com completed, now preparing for the Groups exam
6. D. Venkanna – MBA completed, now preparing for the Groups exam
7. P. Madhukar – B.Sc completed, now preparing for the Groups exam
8. K. Venkanna - farmer

#### 2. Ambedkar YojanaSangham, Haripirala village, Thorrur Mandal, Warangal District - 12/10/14

1. Sreenivas - Advisor
2. Ramesh – B.A, D.Ed completed
3. Naresh – B.Sc Mathematics completed
4. Venkatesh – Intermediate vocational, Medical Lab Technician completed
5. Mahesh – Intermediate 1<sup>st</sup> year, MLT
6. Ajay – Intermediate Arts, HEC
7. Venkatesh – Intermediate 1<sup>st</sup> year, MPC
8. Rahul – 9<sup>th</sup> standard
9. Murali – B.Tech completed
10. Navshala – B.A completed, works with an NGO
11. Mahesh – 10<sup>th</sup> standard

**3. Adolescent Girls' Groups, Haripirala village, Thorrur mandal, Warangal District - 12/10/14**

1. Jhansi Laxmibai Group – 20 members
2. Rani Rudramadevi Group – 20 members
3. Mother Teresa Group – 20 members

**4. AMRABAD, MAHBUBNAGAR DISTRICT -MEETING WITH CASTE ELDERS, CRPF, EENADU, GENDER COMMITTEE - 17/10/14**

1. Fatima – Gender Committee member
2. Farzana – gender committee member
3. Venkatesh – MVF
4. Sreenivas – MVF
5. Anjaneyulu – MVF
6. Sreenivasulu – Eenadu print
7. Venkataiah – Barbers' assoc mandal president, band musician & caste elder
8. Narsaiah – MPTC (elected rep) Amrabad mandal, & CRPF
9. Anjaneyulu – CRPF
10. MD Rabbani – CRPF Mandal convenor
11. Niranjana – BSP mandal president
12. Ramaswamy – BSP taluka in charge
13. Srinivasa Rao – MVF
14. Swamy – MVF
15. Sreenivas – APM, IKP under DRDA
16. Mallesh – MMS accountant
17. G. Nagaraju – BJP District member
18. Kamala – MMS secretary
19. Saidamma – Social Action committee point person

**5. ICDS, Achampet Block, Mahbubnagar - 17/10/14**

1. Kamala - Hajipur sector
2. Bhagyamma – Siddhapur Sector, Achampet
3. Vijayamma – Inole sector, Achampet

4. Kamalabai – Padara sector
5. Satyakumari – Chitlamkunta sector, Amrabad
6. Amrutha – Amrabad sector, Amrabad
7. Bipasha – Mannanur sector, Amrabad
8. Yamma - MVF

**6. Parvatalu, (TDP) MPP & ex-CRPF**

**7. ICDS, Mahbubnagar - 18/10/14**

1. Narmadha – DCPU
2. Nagalakshmi – JJB member

**8. CWC, Mahbubnagar - 18/10/14**

1. Sridhar, Chairperson
2. K. Vijayalakshmi, member
3. K. Madhuri Mohan, member

009 3

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH  
REVENUE DIVISIONAL OFFICE :: NAGARKURNOOL**

**Lr. No. D / CM / 2012**

**Dt. 29.10.2012**

**From**  
**Sri. D. Madhusudhan Naik, M.A.,**  
Revenue Divisional Officer,  
Nagarkurnool.

**To**  
The Tahsildars,  
Lingal, Balmoor, Uppununthala.

Sir,


Sub:- Prohibition of Child Marriages – Nagarkurnool Division – Formation  
of Mandal Level Committee – fix – up date & intimate - Reg.

Ref:- Representation of M.V. Foundation, Dt. 2.09.2012.

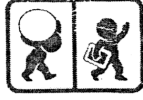


I invite your attention to the ref. cited where in M.V. Foundation, Deap  
Mahabubnagar has submitted a representation for formation of Mandal Level  
committee for prohibition of Child Marriages in your Jurisdiction and fix – up date  
intimate in this offices as early as possible.

Yours faithfully

  
Revenue Divisional Officer  
Nagarkurnool.

*Handwritten initials*  
29/10



MVF



## తాహ్శీల్దార్ కార్యాలయం

తేదీ.....01/08/12

సర్కులర్

తోరూరు

లేఖ నెంబరు,3.2012

శ్రీమతి,శ్రీ.....గారికి.

విషయం,,1)బాల్యవివాహ నిషేధచట్టం2006ను తప్పనిసరి అమలు చేయుట గురించి,శిక్షలగురించి,

2)తప్పనిసరి వివాహ నమెదు చట్టం2002,ప్రతి పంచాయతీలో అమలు గురించి,

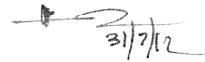
పైవిషయానుసారంతమరికి తెలియజేయునది,ఏమనగా. మన తోరూరు మండలంలో బాల్యవివాహాలు ఏక్కువగా జరుగుచున్నవి.బాల్యవివాహాలు యదేచ్ఛగా జరుగుటకు,వివిధవ్యక్తుల ప్రత్యక్ష పరోక్ష సహకారం (చట్టంపై అవగాహణ లేక) అందించడంవల్ల బాల్యవివాహాలు జరుగుచున్నవి

కావున బాల్యవివాహాల నిర్మూలణలో బాగంగా తోరూరు మండలపరిషత్తు కార్యాలయంలో ది.6.8.12నాడు ఉదయం,గం11-00ని,ల,కు సమావేశం కలదు, కావునా , కులపెద్దలు,గ్రామైఖ్యసంఘాలలీడర్స్ పురోహితులు,ఫాస్టర్లు,బెండ్రవారు,ముస్లింమతగురువులు, బ్యాండువారు,టెంటోజ్ యజమానులు,ఫోటో వీడియోగ్రాఫర్లు,ప్రింటింగ్ ప్రెస్, వి.ఆర్.ఓలు,సెక్రటరీలు,అంగన్ వాడీ కార్యకర్తలు హాజరుకాగలరని,ఆదేశించవలెననిది.

స్థలం,మండలపరిషత్ కార్యాలయం,

సమయం,ఉదయం గం.11-00లకు

**Tahsildar**  
THORRUR MANDAL  
Warangal Dist.(A.P)

  
31/7/12

మండల తహ్శీల్దార్ కార్యాలయం

తోరూరు

## హెచ్చరిక

ఇందుమూలంగా అయ్యగార్లకు, ఫాస్టర్లకు, ఖాదీసాబ్లకు, ఫోటో, వీడియో బ్యాండు, టెంట్ మొదలగు వారికి రెవీన్యూ వారి హెచ్చరిక

### 2006 బాల్యవివాహనిర్మూలన చట్టం ప్రకారం

18సంవత్సరాలు నిండని అమ్మాయికి 21సంవత్సరాలు నిండని అబ్బాయికి వివాహముహూర్తాలు( లగ్నపత్రిక)లు పెట్టకండి అలా పెట్టినట్లయితే 1సంవత్సరం జైలుశిక్ష 1లక్ష రూపాయలువరకు జరిమాన విధించబడును లేదా రెండు విధించబడును కాబట్టి వయస్సు నిర్ధారన పత్రాలు ఉంటేనే వివాహానికి ముహూర్తం పెట్టండి లేనిచో తిరస్కరించండి మాకు సమాచారం అందించండి

నోట్; వయస్సునిర్ధారన పత్రం చదువుకున్న సర్టిఫికేట్స్ లేదా గవర్నమెంట్ సివిల్ సర్జన్ ఇచ్చే వయస్సు నిర్ధారన పత్రం మాత్రమే చెల్లబడును

ఇటు  
బైరెడ్డి సమ్మిరెడ్డి గి/2  
TAHSILDAR  
RAYAPARTHY MANDAL  
WARANGAL DISTRICT  
ఫోన్ నంబర్: 9160609659



ఆంధ్ర ప్రదేశ్ ప్రభుత్వము

తహసీల్దార్ వారి కార్యాలయము :: అచ్చంపేట

నెం.సి/1356/2012,

తేది : 10.05.2013.

అత్యవసర సర్క్యులర్

<<<>>>

శ్రీయుత ..... గారికి

ఇందుమూలంగా అచ్చంపేట మండలంనందలి అందరు మండల స్థాయి అధికార్లకు, సబ్-ఇన్స్ పెక్టర్, అచ్చంపేట / సిద్దాపూర్, మండల పరిషత్ అభివృద్ధి అధికారి, మండల విద్యాధికారి, ఎ.పి.ఎం. (ఐ.కే.పి), ఎ.పి.ఓ (ఎం.జి.ఎన్.ఆర్.ఈ.జి.ఎస్), వైద్యాధికారులు, గ్రామ రెవెన్యూ అధికార్లకు, పంచాయతి కార్యదర్శులకు, ప్రాజెక్ట్ అధికారి (ఐ.సి.డి.ఎస్) పరిధి నందలి సీ.డి.పి.ఓ, సూపర్వైజర్స్, సాక్షర భారతి మండల కో-ఆర్డినేటర్, అన్ని దేవాలయాల పూజారులకు, చర్చి పాస్టర్లకు మరియు ఖాజీలకు తెలియపర్చునది, బాల్య వివాహాల నిర్మూలనలో భాగంగా తహసీల్దార్ కార్యాలయం, అచ్చంపేట నందు తేది: 23.05.2013 నాడు మధ్యాహ్నం గం: 3:30 నుండి సాయంత్రం గం: 5.00 ల వరకు సెంటర్ ఫర్ చైల్డ్ రైట్స్, న్యూడిల్లి మరియు స్వచ్ఛంద సంస్థ ప్రతినిధులు, షిశ్చిమ బెంగాల్ గారలు మండల స్థాయి అధికారులతో ముఖాముఖి కార్యక్రమం నిర్వహించబడును. కావున తమరు విధిగా ఇట్టి కార్యక్రమం నందు పాల్గొని విజయవంతం చేయుటకు అదేశించనైనది.

తహసీల్దార్,

బాల్య వివాహ నిషేధ అధికారి,  
అచ్చంపేట (మం).

దీని ప్రతి:

అచ్చంపేట మండలంనందలి అందరు మండల స్థాయి అధికార్లకు,

గ్రామ రెవెన్యూ అధికార్లకు,

పంచాయతి కార్యదర్శులకు,

సీ.డి.పి.ఓ (ఐ.సి.డి.ఎస్), సూపర్వైజర్స్,

అన్ని దేవాలయాల పూజారులకు, చర్చి పాస్టర్లకు మరియు ఖాజీలకు,



తేది 29-6-2017.

అయితలు

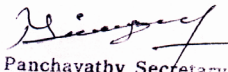
గౌరవ

విషయము:- బాల్య వివాహాల నిర్మూలన  
కమిటీ సమావేశము వెళ్ళా  
టు అసలు గురించి

అయిత

పై విషయమును గురించి గ్రామ  
పంచాయతీలాది బాల్యవివాహాల నిర్మూలన కమిటీ  
వెళ్ళాటు మరియు ఆగిన సమావేశాలు, సలహాలు, నిర్ణయాల  
వేయటం పై అభిప్రాయాలు వివరించినారు  
కావున ఆమరు తేది 3-7-2017, రాజు ఉదయం  
9-00 గంటలకు గ్రామ పంచాయతీ కార్యాలయము  
కుండా సమావేశము వెళ్ళాటు చేయవలసి.

కావున ఆమరు సకాలమునకు  
ఈ శుభం కాగలరని ఆమరిని కోరుచున్నాము.

  
Panchayath Secretary  
G.P. INALE  
Mdl. Achampet, Dt. M'Nagar.



తేది : 27-11-2012

**తహసీల్దార్ కార్యాలయం అమ్రాబాద్**

శ్రీయుత \_\_\_\_\_ గారికి తెలియజేయునది ఏమనగా !

విషయము :- వివాహనమోదు లిజిస్ట్రేషన్, (2002) బాల్యవివాహ నిర్మూలన గోడవత్తిక, పురోహితుల బ్యానర్ విడుదల సందర్భంగా.

మీ శాఖ పరిధిలో గ్రామ స్థాయిలో పనిచేసే ప్రతి సిబ్బంది ఈ కార్యక్రమంలో తప్పక హాజరు కావాలని బాల్యవివాహనిర్మూలన మరియు ప్రతి వివాహం గ్రామపంచాయితీ కార్యాలయములో లిజిస్ట్రేషన్ అయ్యే విధంగా భార్య తీసుకోవాలని, భాగస్వామ్యం కావాలని ఆదేశించినది.

ఈ కార్యక్రమానికి ముఖ్య అతిథులు

ముఖ్య అతిథి - శ్రీ. మధుసూధన్ నాయక్ గారు,

R.D.O నాగర్ కర్నూల్

గౌరవ అతిథి - శ్రీ E.G అశోక్ కుమార్ గారు,

D.S.P నాగర్ కర్నూల్

ప్రత్యేక అహ్వానితులు - శ్రీ R. వెంకట్ రెడ్డి గారు,

M.V.Foundation జాతీయ సమన్వయకర్త.

ఈ కార్యక్రమంలో తప్పక ఆసక్తికరమైనదిగా పాల్గొని పాల్గొనగలగండి.

తేది : 04.12.2012

సమయం : 10-30 గం||లకు

స్థలం : మార్కెట్ యార్డ్

చుం : అమ్రాబాద్.

ఇట్లు  
జి.పి. పాల్  
తహసీల్దార్  
AMRABAD M.D.  
అమ్రాబాద్ (చుం)  
Amrabad Nagar Dist

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

ABSTRACT

Department for Women Children Disabled & Sr. Citizens- Telangana Compulsory Registration of marriages Act, 2002- Appointments of Registrar General of marriages, District Registrar of marriages and Marriage Officers- Orders-Issued

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DEPARTMENT FOR WOMEN CHILDREN, DISABLED & SR. CITIZENS

G.O.MS.No. 20.

Date:31-12-2014.

Read :-

G.O.Ms.No.16, Dept., for WCD&SC, dt:23.12.2014.

**ORDER:**

The following notification will be published in the Telangana Gazette dt:31.12.2014.

**NOTIFICATION**

In exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-Section (1) of Section 4, Sub section 1 of Section 5 and Sub section 1 of Section 6 of the Telangana Compulsory Registration of Marriages Act, 2002 (Act No.15 of 2002), the Government of Telangana hereby appoints the following Officers as follows:-

- 1) Commissioner and Inspector General of Registrar and Stamps as Registrar General of marriages.
- 2) District Collector as District Registrar of Marriages of the concerned district.
- 3) Gram Panchayat Secretaries as Marriage Officers in concerned Gram Panchayats.
- 4) Commissioner as Marriage Officers in Municipal Corporation/ Municipalities/ Nagar Panchayats.

(BY ORDER AND IN THE NAME OF GOVERNOR OF TELANGANA)

POONAM MALAKONDAIAH  
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT

To  
The Commissioner and Inspector General of Registration and Stamps,  
Hyderabad  
The Commissioner, Printing, Stationery and Stores Purchase,  
Hyderabad with a request to publish in the next Gazette and to supply  
(100) copies.  
The Commissioner Municipalities,  
The Commissioner, Panchayat Raj & Rural Development,  
All Departments of Secretariat,  
All Heads of Departments.  
All District Collectors  
Copy to Law (A) Department.  
SF/SCs.

// FORWARDED:: BY ORDER//

SECTION SECTION