

CHILD MARRIAGE: WHAT WHY AND HOW

Ready reckoner to initiate child marriage
interventions by CSO partners

7

Product 7 in Adolescent Empowerment Toolbox: A ready reckoner for child marriage field interventions by CSO partners, which includes facts and figures; issue analysis; causes and impact; possible intervention strategies based on theory of change.

Acknowledgements

Child Marriage – Why, What, How? - has been created by Breakthrough www.breakthrough.tv for UNICEF www.unicef.org as part of production of the Adolescent Empowerment Toolbox.

It has benefited from the efforts and voices of many people and organizations. This includes many researchers, workshop participants, members of non-governmental organizations, academics, community-based organisations, and activists.

Our heart-felt thanks to Sunita Menon for conceptualizing and creating the framework, Aparajita Mukherjee for writing the document, Dora Giusti and Rudrajit Das from UNICEF for their editorial guidance and extensive contribution in shaping the toolkit. We would like to express our profound gratitude for their deep commitment and contribution.

We hope that this resource book will inspire a generation of new leaders in their community to halt violence and exploitation in their homes, neighbourhoods and community.

CHILD MARRIAGE: WHAT WHY AND HOW

Ready Reckoner for Initiating Child Marriage Intervention for CSO Partners

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
CHILD MARRIAGE: WHAT WHY AND HOW	3
Ready Reckoner for Initiating Child Marriage Intervention for CSO Partners	3
CHILD MARRIAGE: WHAT WHY AND HOW	4
Ready Reckoner for Initiating Child Marriage Intervention for CSO Partners	4
'Why' the Ready Reckoner on Child Marriage?	4
Who can use the Reckoner?	4
SECTION I - Child Marriage: Setting the Context.....	4
SECTION II - Child Marriage: What does the data show?.....	5
SECTION III - Child Marriage: What are the Causes and its Impact?.....	7
SECTION IV - Child Marriage: What has been done to address the issue?	8
SECTION V - Child Marriage: How can interventions be made effective - Developing a Working Strategy based on Theory of Change	12
Annexure – Theory of Change on Addressing Child Marriage* with Assumptions.....	17

List of Figures

Figure 1: Programmes and Schemes to Address Child Marriage by Govt. of India	10
Figure 2: Visual Representation of Theory of Change used to prepare the Theory of Change in Addressing Child Marriage.....	13

List of Tables

Table 1: District Level Variation in Prevalence of Child Marriage across High Incidence States	6
Table 2: Significant Features of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA)	9
Table 3: Mapping the 'Theory of Change in Addressing Child Marriage' with Programme Implementation Tool-kit Products	14

CHILD MARRIAGE: WHAT WHY AND HOW

Ready Reckoner for Initiating Child Marriage Intervention for CSO Partners

‘Why’ the Ready Reckoner on Child Marriage?

Child Marriage is a serious issue across the world, especially in South Asia as nearly half the numbers of girls who get married are childrenⁱ. In India, though the mean age at marriage for girls has shown a marginal increase, child marriage continues to be a serious issue. According to the District Level Household Survey (2007-08) ⁱⁱ, nearly 43% women in the age group 20-24 reported that they got married before the age of 18. Globally, the percentage share of India in child brides is high at 40%ⁱⁱⁱ. Though child marriage impacts both boys and girls; it impacts girls with higher incidence and more intensity.

Over the years, many organizations, researchers and donors have developed, implemented and, to a lesser extent, evaluated programs to delay or prevent child marriage and mitigate its harmful effects on the lives of girls and their families. Concentrated in specific sectors (health, education) and emphasizing specific approaches to working with girls (life skills, awareness raising), these programs bear important lessons for all interventions that seek to prevent, delay, and mitigate child marriage. In addition to the programs, the availability of national level data in the form of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)^{iv} and the District Level Household Survey (DLHS)^v offer current data (and its interpretations) which provides insights to frame the issue and understand national trends.

The purpose of the ready reckoner is to provide implementers with current data/ information on child marriage, its causes and impact and the range of interventions that have been implemented in India to address the issue. It also provides key considerations for implementers while planning and executing interventions. The utility of the document lies in its synthesis of a complex social issue and in being a ‘go to document’ to understand child marriage and plan interventions to address its complexity.

Who can use the Reckoner?

The reckoner can be used by Non-Govt. Organisations, Civil Society Organisations and Community Based Organisations representatives in planning strategies, key entry points and activities to address child marriage in their intervention areas. The reckoner is divided into 5 sections: Section I provides an introduction to the issue by setting the context; Section II provides specific data pertaining to India which signifies the prevalence and complexity of the issue. Section III analyses the factors that underlie child marriage, its causes and consequences while Section IV provides a summary of interventions (policy and programmatic) in India that have been implemented to address the issue. Section V as the concluding section provides recommendations/possible entry points which can be effectively used by implementers to plan and execute interventions on child marriage based on a ‘Theory of Change’.

SECTION I - Child Marriage: Setting the Context

Child Marriage is a worldwide phenomenon but is most prevalent in Africa and Southern Asia and although its practice has decreased somewhat in recent decades, it remains common in, although not only confined to, rural areas and among the most poverty stricken groups of people^{vi}. Despite domestic laws and international accords banning child marriage, the tradition persists in communities. Prevention and elimination programmes which are providing alternatives to marriage such as, by keeping girls in school, providing them with cash transfers and/or regulating birth and marriage registrations etc. are unable to curb the menace.

India has the largest population of adolescents in the world and faces critical challenges in meeting their basic survival and development needs. Adolescent girls are an especially vulnerable group who face discrimination with respect to fulfilment of fundamental rights to health, nutrition, education and protection. The state of adolescent girls in the country can be gauged by the fact that 47% are underweight and 56% are anaemic^{vii} and many of them are devoid of elementary or secondary education. In many parts of the country, girls tend to be perceived as a 'burden' and from a very young age are 'conditioned' for marriage. The perception of women's role in society, the value given to girls, structural and economic factors combined with social and religious practices around marriage- all interact as determinants of child marriage. The consequences of child marriage for girls are multifarious including child pregnancies, inter-generational transfer of nutritional deprivation, limited opportunities for education and economic empowerment leading to an adverse impact on psychological well-being. In addition, there is increasing evidence to suggest that girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence than their peers who marry later^{viii}.

On September 25, 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed an important resolution (see http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/24/L.34/Rev.1) to strengthen efforts to prevent and eliminate early, child and forced marriage, thereby, recognizing all the three issues collectively which not only violate human rights but also act as violence propagators. It may also be safely inferred that approaches to eliminate child marriage, forced marriage and child marriage can be designed to be very similar in nature. In this document early and child marriage has been used interchangeably and consistently.

Legislation to stop the practice of child marriage has been in existence for over eighty years in India, but with limited effect. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) was passed in 2006 to address the issue, but local enforcement still remains a challenge. A number of programmes and schemes implemented by the Government and civil society organisations attempt to prevent child marriage. Though these efforts have been

noteworthy, given the magnitude of the problem and its impact on girls and their life opportunities, there is much to be desired and much more that needs to be done.

Efforts to end this practice need to be continued, strengthened and focused. Two interrelated reasons form the central rationales to work towards ending the practice of child marriage: one by upholding the rights of girls; and two by achieving health and development goals. Investing in developing social and economic assets for girls, ensuring they have access to education and health services, and ensuring that they can postpone their marriage until 18 years may translate into greater dignity for women. It also means healthier families and higher levels of gender equality. This in turn makes for stronger societies and more vibrant economies. Hence, investment in delayed marriage for girls signifies investment in development for everyone^{ix}.

SECTION II - Child Marriage: What does the data show?

One of the key indicators used globally to measure the incidence of child marriage is the percentage of currently married women in the age group of 20-24 years who were married before the legal age of 18 years. As far as India is concerned, the data from three rounds of NFHS portrays a declining trend, yet the rate of decline has been very slow- less than one percentage points per year. As per the DLHS 2007-08 data, the percentage of women getting married below 18 years continues to be very high in major states of India. 48% of currently married women in the age group of 20-24 years (who got married before 18 years of age) reside in rural areas and 29.4% in urban areasⁱⁱ. Although the gap between urban and rural areas has almost halved from 30.2 percentage points in 1992-1993 (NFHS) to 18.6 percentage points in 2007-2008 (DLHS), currently married women in rural areas are twice more likely to be child brides than their urban counterparts.

State specific data in India shows that the north-eastern state of Bihar has the highest incidence of child marriage at 68% while Himachal Pradesh has the lowest incidence at around 9%. The east-west corridor spanning six states—including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal have the highest incidence of child marriage ranging from 53.8% to 68.2% (See Table 1). In each of these States, at least one in two currently married women in age group 20-24 years happens to be a child bride¹.

Table 1: District Level Variation in Prevalence of Child Marriage across High Incidence States

State	% of women aged 20-24 married before age 18	% of districts above state average
Bihar	68.2	54.1
Jharkhand	55.7	50.0
Madhya Pradesh	53.8	51.1
Rajasthan	57.6	56.3
Uttar Pradesh	54.9	44.3
West Bengal	54.8	52.6

Source: District level variation in high incidence states, DLHS 2007-2008

The median age at marriage across key social groups also indicate disparities. Both boys and girls from marginalised social groups tend to marry two years earlier than those that belong to other groups. The median age at marriage for scheduled castes (16.5 years), scheduled tribes (16.7 years) and other backward castes (16.8 years) groups is significantly lower than the median age at marriage for other general social groups (18.7 years)². In addition, the data further reveals that the median age at marriage is inversely related to the household economic condition. Women in age group 25-29 years belonging to households in the lowest income quintile get married at least five years earlier than women in the same age group in households belonging to the highest quintile. The economic situation of the family is a significant influencer as parents with limited economic resources may see marriage as a solution to reduce family costs, to pay lower dowry, to save on education, health etc³.

Available data also indicates a strong correlation between education and child marriage providing a key entry point for interventions that seek to address the issue. Around 72% of females (in the age group of 20-24 married before 18) and 56% males (in the age group of 20-25 married before 21) had not received any education. Only 13% females and 16% males who got married before the legal age had completed at least 10 years of education. Women with no education are six times more likely to get married than those with 10 years or more of education. Therefore, the data convincingly suggests that education may act as a strong deterrent against child marriage⁴.

Key Points to Remember!

- Though child marriage is a global phenomena, it is concentrated in Africa and South Asia with India accounting for 40% of child marriages worldwide;
- Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal have the highest incidence of child marriage within the country. Patterns around marriage, patriarchy and gender norms are possible determinants of the geographical distribution;
- Out of the total number of women in age group 20-24 years in India, more than 23 million continue to be child brides;
- Though child marriage affects both boys and girls, it impacts girls more – adolescent girls being a particularly vulnerable group;
- The incidence of child marriage is more in rural than urban areas;
- Boys and girls from marginalised social groups are more vulnerable and tend to marry two years earlier than those that belong to other groups;
- Girls from poorer households get married at least 5 years earlier than their counterparts from high income households; and
- Women with no education are six times more likely to get married than those with 10 years or more of education.

SECTION III - Child Marriage: What are the Causes and its Impact?

Child marriage is not only a violation of human rights but it also undermines progress towards basic development goals. Evidence suggests that child marriage perpetuates the cycle of poverty, under-nutrition and illiteracy thereby affecting India's progress and development^x.

The practice of child marriage is rooted in unequal gender norms, characteristic of a patriarchal society. The underlying **causes** of child marriage can be summarized as the following:

- Prevailing **unequal gender norms and gender practices** place low value in women's role and contribution to society, which lead to the continued practice of child marriage. Women are seen mainly to have a reproductive and domestic role, and therefore not worth 'investing in' in terms of education and other opportunities. There is limited incentive to keep daughters unmarried for long because of the perception that girls are a burden to the household. This is based on the long held practice of daughters ceasing to be members of their family on marriage (often referred to as '*paraya dhan*') and thus do not contribute financially to the household.
- Patriarchal values translate into **controlling women's and girl's reproductive and sexual rights**. The fear of family 'dishonour' through sexual assault on a daughter or an elopement often contributes to seeing child marriage as a means to 'protect' the girl's chastity and consequently the family's honour.
- **Poverty** or the financial condition of a family is also a key determinant. Evidence shows that girls in the poorest households marry as child as 15 years of age, and at least five years earlier than women in the wealthiest households.
- The system of **dowry** continues to perpetuate child marriage in spite of it being legally prohibited. As the dowry amount increases with the girl's age and education, parents, especially from poorer households, tend to marry their daughters off as children. For instance, in some states, due to the high cost of wedding ceremonies, families marry all their daughters off in a common marriage ceremony, regardless of age.
- **Skewed sex ratio** has translated into fewer girls in communities. The shortage of women may reinforce gendered female roles such as reproduction, domestic work, and care work. Women would have little agency of their own and could indeed suffer a deterioration in their equity prospects. It is equally possible that as female security gets compromised with an excess of men vying for them, parents may withdraw unmarried girls from school or higher education, or restrict them from taking up employment before marriage. As safeguarding the virginity of a woman before marriage remains important in India, child marriage may be seen as the solution. Thus many of the gains made by women in recent decades may be in danger of being reversed. Several scholars argue that scarcity in women may indeed be at greater risk^{xi}.

Child Marriage constitutes a violation of human rights and severely limits their life options and choices. The existence of legislation prohibiting child marriage over more than two decades illustrates child that laws alone cannot address an issue which is embedded in social customs and traditions. It is imperative to change unequal gender norms that perpetuate such customs and practices. Changing the attitude and beliefs of communities that uphold such norms and beliefs is critical in addressing the issue. The **impact** of child marriage on children, particularly girls, is manifold.

- Girls who marry as children are physically, mentally and emotionally not ready for child care and motherhood. Child marriage is associated with health-related risks for both the mother and baby during **teenage pregnancies**. In India, one in six girls aged between 15 and 19 years old begin child bearing. One baby in two born to women younger than 20 years dies at birth, compared to about one in three in women between 20 and 39 years old^{xii}. They are also more likely to experience delivery related complications compared to those in the 30–34 age group.

- **Children of young mothers are less healthy.** Children under five years of age born to mothers married before 18 years of age run a higher risk of under-nutrition. Frequently, these **young mothers suffer from poor nutrition** themselvesⁱⁱⁱ.
- The indicators on the freedom of movement of women^{xiii} outside home indicate **limited mobility options** available to women but especially to younger married girls (15-19 years). Adolescent brides have limited mobility particularly to public places. One in six girls can venture outside village/community alone whilst one in five girls is able to visit health facilities alone. Only one in three girls goes alone to the market^{xiv}.
- Child brides also are more likely to be exposed to **domestic violence, abuse** and **HIV/AIDS**. Nearly 13 per cent of married women aged 15 to 19 years experience **sexual violence** by their husbands compared to 10 per cent of women aged 30 to 39 yearsⁱⁱⁱ.
- Younger women have **less decision making power** at home. In case of major household purchases, only one in four girls (15-19 years) is able to contribute in decision making as compared to one in two older women (15-49 years). One in three girls (15-19 years) contributes towards deciding on purchase of daily household needs or visit to family/relatives as compared to three in five in the case of older women (15-49 years). Only two in five girls (15-19 years) are able to participate in the decision of seeking health care for self as compared to three in five women (15-49 years). Across all the decision making categories, girls in the age group 15-19 years contributed least in the decision making process^{xv}.
- Many girls who are married off as children are forced to **drop out of school**. Drop-out rates seem to be associated with trends in child marriage. In India, one student in two drops out before completing Grade 10 with the rate significantly higher among scheduled castes and tribes, where child marriage is more common^{xvi}.

Beyond the immediate implications highlighted above, child marriage denies girls the opportunity to fully develop their potential as healthy, productive and empowered citizens. The cumulative effects of reduced school attainment, maternal morbidities and mortality, and the long-term impact of child marriage and child-bearing on children are serious and need immediate attention. The matter becomes more serious when the child brides are forced to produce sons than children leading to repeated pregnancies and child births.

Key points to remember!

- Child marriage is embedded in unequal gender norms and patriarchal values that place low value on girls and women and undermine their value and contribution to society;
- Social values and beliefs, low status of women and girls, the prevailing system of dowry and economic constraints of families are key triggers to child marriage;
- Child marriage is a violation of human rights and has an adverse impact on the health, wellbeing and life choices of girls. Children of young mothers are less healthy; young mothers themselves suffer from nutritional deficiency thus resulting in intergenerational transfer of nutritional deprivation;
- Child brides are more likely to be exposed to domestic violence, sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS; and
- Younger women have fewer skills, less decision-making power at home and limited mobility to public places. They are also economically vulnerable and have the least access to financial resources compared to older married women.

SECTION IV - Child Marriage: What has been done to address the issue?

A combination of policy measures; government programmes and schemes and community led interventions by civil society have been used to address the issue of child marriage. India has ratified the international conventions, the **Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) and the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, both of which have relevance to child marriage.

The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 prohibits the giving and taking of dowry; **Right to Education Act 2009** mandates compulsory schooling for all children in the age of 6-14 years.

Key National Frameworks

National Policy for Children, 2013:

With the Ministry of Women and Child Development as the nodal Ministry, the policy seeks to strengthen the overall child protection framework and provides for tracking, rescuing and rehabilitating out of school children, including married children and ensuring them access to their right to education.

National Strategy on Child Marriage:

The strategy which is in the process of being formulated reflects the commitment of the Government of India to curb child marriage. It suggests ensuring linkages with the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) structures and statutory bodies to ensure detection and prompt referral of cases that require care and protection. One of the strategic directions is in cases where children have already been married; they should not be discriminated when accessing services such as health, nutrition, education and employment programmes. Other strategic directions include stricter law enforcement at the central and state level, improving access to quality education and other opportunities, changing mindsets and norms through media and stakeholder participatory methods, empowering adolescents through creating safe spaces for them, forming groups and developing their life skills, providing for better knowledge and data to increase evidence based interventions and finally, develop indicators for such interventions which can be monitored.

National Plan of Action on Prevention of Child Marriage:

The National Plan of Action on Prevention of Child Marriage which is in the process of being finalized proposes strategic interventions to be implemented using a convergent model. The long term goal is in making girls and boys in India free from child marriage and realise their full potential and live a life of dignity. The plan covers seven objectives and specific strategies, each of which is important in its own right but which also complement and reinforce one another to address the issue of child marriage.

In terms of legislation, the age of marriage is regulated through two Acts:

1. **The Hindu Marriage Act (1955)** or the **Special Marriage Act (1954)**. To be eligible for marriage, the minimum age limit is 21 for males and 18 for females.

2. The **Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (CMRA)** was one of the first pieces of legislation aimed at preventing the incidence of child marriage. A new **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA)** was brought in to bring about significant changes in the earlier law. The **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA)** defines child

marriage as marriage in which either the girl or the boy is underage, i.e., the girl is under 18 years of age or the boy is younger than 21 years.

Table 2: Significant Features of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA)

Enforcement	Punishment	Restitution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All offences to be cognisable and non-bailable - Appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) with power to prevent and prosecute the solemnisation of child marriages and create awareness - District Magistrate can stop and prevent mass child marriages by issuing injunctions and notifications, through CMPOs and can take preventive measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rigorous imprisonment of up to two years or with a fine up to 100,000 rupees or both for male contracting party - Similar punishment for anyone who performs, conducts, directs or abets any child marriage. This includes anyone who promotes, permits or negligently fails to prevent the solemnisation of such a marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance and residence for the girl until her remarriage from the male contracting party or his parents - Annulment can be sought with District Courts within a period of two years after the child who was a party to the marriage has attained majority^{xvii} - Appropriate orders for custody of any child born out of the marriage

Source: Briefing Paper Series: Innovations, Lessons and Good Practices. Community based interventions on Child Marriage, UNICEF 2011

However, loopholes in the law, poor implementation and poor conviction rates have plagued implementation. Moreover, social norms have overruled legal norms. Law enforcement officers are often unable to resist long held traditions as they are part of the very same community. The weak enforcement of the Dowry Prohibition Act, (deterrence to practice of dowry) and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act has resulted in few prosecutions. Enforcement is often dependent on frontline workers who are part of the local community and may not be willing to report on neighbours^{xviii}.

In addition to the legal and policy initiatives, the Government of India has launched and implemented several programmes and schemes to address child marriage at the national level. Some of the key government programmes/schemes include:

Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) - provision of preventive, promotive, curative and counselling services
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Programme for Education of Girls for Elementary Level (NPEGEL) - special provisions for education of under-privileged girls • Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan - a government flagship programme aimed at providing quality elementary education with a special focus on girls' education and strengthening school infrastructure • Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), 2007: a component of SSA that sets up residential schools at upper primary level for girls belonging mainly to scheduled caste and tribe groups, other backward castes and minorities in hard-to-reach areas.
Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) 2009 – care and rehabilitation services including emergency outreach, institutional and non-institutional support.
Women and Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kishori Shakti Yojana - addresses development, nutrition, health and education needs of girls in the age group of 11-18 years • Support to Training and Employment Programme – enhancing economic opportunities through training in various sectors • Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA) - providing nutrition, vocational training, life skills and access to government programmes

Figure 1: Programmes and Schemes to Address Child Marriage by Govt. of India

Source: Briefing Paper Series: Innovations, Lessons and Good Practices. Community based interventions on Child Marriage, UNICEF 2011

Apart from these national level initiatives, there are various government schemes at the state level that support girls by providing cash incentives. These schemes support marriages above the legal age when conducted singly (e.g. *Kunwarbainu Mameru* in Gujarat or *Mukhya Mantri Ladli Lakshmi Yojana* in Jharkhand) or in groups (e.g. *Saat Phera Samooh Lagna*, Gujarat). The criteria and process for applying under these schemes and programmes are outlined by the local government.

Several civil society organizations supported by various donors have also been at the forefront of efforts to address child marriage by undertaking community level interventions. In Maharashtra, UNICEF works with communities especially women and adolescent girls along with local school authorities to change perception of key stakeholders at the village level in order to address the issue of child marriage in partnership with HALO Foundation. In Rajasthan, it has partnered with the state government to create awareness on the harmful effects of marrying girls at an early age by helping develop messages and

materials for the initiative. In Bihar, UNICEF supports girls' education as one of the major areas of intervention. It also supports efforts to build the capacity of local faith-based leaders and *kathavachaks* (story tellers) on child marriage and creating a fleet of *yuvacharyas* (young scholars) to act as door messengers at the village level. In Assam, UNICEF partnered with associations of tea estates' management namely, the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association (ABITA) and the Bharatiya Cha Parishad (BCP) that control a large part of tea estates in the states part of its efforts to reach out to the marginalised communities employed on-site. Through these partnerships, it broadened its mandate to include the agenda of child marriage and also made efforts to sustain change and ground it in community structures by helping create Child Protection Committees. These committees comprise of important stakeholders: representatives from tea estate management; self help groups and government health and education staff members responsible for monitoring cases of child marriage and taking appropriate action against it.

Review of programmes and interventions in India suggest that a multi layered programme that addresses key stakeholders at various levels makes for an effective intervention^{xix}. UNICEF has been pursuing the issue of child marriage across different states in partnership with the state governments as well as other agencies. The key elements of UNICEF's overall interventions include:

- a) **Changing norms and behaviours:** This is a central component of the strategy which is mainly implemented at the community level. It aims at influencing attitudes and behaviours to reach collective consensus and action to delay and prevent child marriage. It is proven that in the case of child marriage, individuals' (in this case parents') decisions to marry a daughter are highly influenced by the existing norms and practices in the community and the fear of being excluded if they break with long standing community traditions. This component of the strategy relies on intensive community-based advocacy and support to community leaders so that they can influence collective opinion, community dialogue and mobilization of the entire community through community mobilisers (NGOs, frontline workers, teachers, youth volunteers).
- b) **Empowering girls:** Interventions to empower girls aim at building their confidence, self-efficacy and decision making skills in all dimensions of life. Girls' groups are the main space and channel for life skills development, dissemination of knowledge and development of self-esteem. It is within these groups that girls acquire the courage to become role models in changing social norms and resisting to their own marriage and their peers'. Special attention is placed on girls, given their vulnerability and the little respect they have in society, but boys are becoming an increasingly more important target. In particular, fostering of inter-gender dialogue is an area that will receive more attention in the future.
- c) **Strengthening implementation of laws and policies:** Strengthening systems as well as the role of the duty bearers in preventing and addressing child marriage occurs at levels. This includes capacity building of child protection functionaries, police, women and child development officials, and Child Marriage Prohibition Officers. Linkages with the protection structures and support to planning processes and state and district levels are also taking place.
- d) **Ensuring continued and quality education for girls:** Only one in two girls complete secondary school in India. Girls tend to drop out of school after grade VIII and that is usually when they marry. Ensuring girls are in school will contribute to the delaying child marriage. Some of the interventions include: campaigning and advocacy for elementary and secondary school attendance, linkages with bridge schools for inclusion drop out girls, advocacy for safe schools and safe transport to school. Life skills development, dealing with gender issues and child marriage within schools are also promoted.
- e) **Fostering social protection:** One of the main determinants of child marriage is poverty. Identifying vulnerable families (e.g. more than one daughter, school drop-outs, illiteracy, presence of child labour, previous child marriages) and connecting them to existing social protection mechanisms

may contribute to delaying child marriage, particularly if efforts contribute to the girls' education. Existing schemes have proven not to be too effective in their outreach. However, research has shown that they do contribute to enhancing the value of girls within families. Support to different levels of Government needs to be channelled for these schemes to become effective tools to raise the value of girls and promote their empowerment.

- f) **Creating linkages with other services:** While anaemia, maternal and child mortality are positively influenced by child marriage, the linkages between health and nutrition services to prevent child marriage need to be strengthened. These services become an important entry point to address vulnerability of child marriage in addition to ensuring well-being of married girls. One of the ways in achieving this is active inclusion of Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) representatives such as ASHA-Accredited Social Health Activists, AWW-Anganwadi Worker and ANM-Auxiliary Nurse Mid-wife

The interventions are being aimed largely through Communication, Capacity Building and Change Retention. These interventions are being planned in a format that has been tabulated as under:

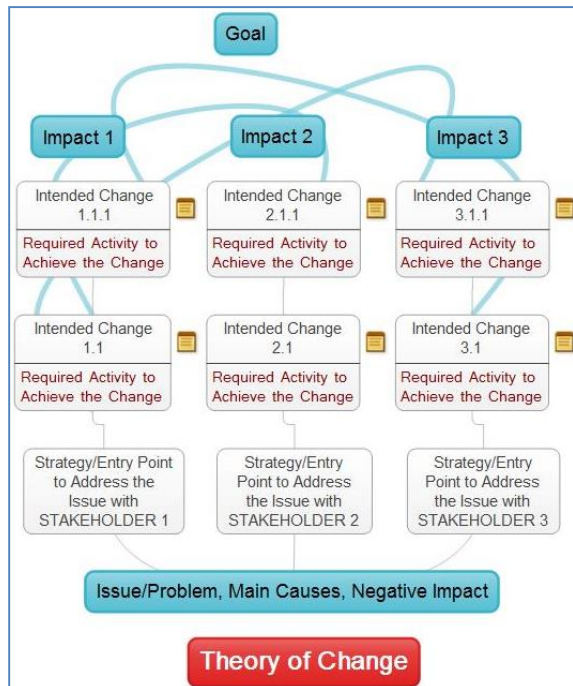
1. **Mass Media** at state /district level – To mould public opinion in order to create an enabling environment as well as influence behaviour change among primary audiences i.e. adolescents and parents
2. **Advocacy** – To ensure that 'structural issues' are addressed- stronger implementation of the laws and welfare schemes
3. **Community Mobilization & Mid-Media** Activities – To promote collective action towards resolution of the issue at the community level
4. **Interpersonal Communication** at Household / School / Community Levels – To support children, parents and other relevant stakeholders in their attempts towards adoption, practice and maintenance of positive behaviours

Key points to remember!

- 'Investing in girls' is a key strategy to consider while planning interventions on child marriage
- Changes in gender norms, an enabling policy and legal frameworks as well as positioning child marriage as a key development issue are critical areas of action for programme implementers
- It is important to address child marriage directly and hence have specific objectives and outcomes related to the practice in programme design

SECTION V - Child Marriage: How can interventions be made effective - Developing a Working Strategy based on Theory of Change

Based on the key programmatic framework considerations, a working strategy can be developed which includes the important stakeholders, the required change in their behaviour and perceptions along with the appropriate activities which enable the change to happen. A 'Theory of Change' provides a convenient working model for planning the working strategy. It is an explicit presentation of the assumptions about how changes are expected to happen within any particular context and in relation to a particular intervention. A theory of change maps out which actors have to do what in order to achieve and sustain a vision of success, and identifies the major linkages between them.



A schematic representation of ‘Theory of Change: Addressing Child Marriage’ has been provided in the Annexure. Figure 2 explains how the theory is organised to address the issue/problem, which is kept at the base of the schematic diagram.

- As a first step, ‘strategies’ and ‘entry points’ are identified to work with the stakeholders based on certain ‘assumptions’.
- Next, series of ‘intended change’ are drawn out which lead to the ‘Impacts’. It is interesting to note how one change leads to the other.
- Simultaneously, ‘activities’ are established in support of the ‘intended change’ in the stakeholders.
- If these ‘activities’ are carried out, the ‘intended change’ unfolds as desired, provided the ‘assumptions’ hold valid at each level.
- It is also interesting to note that there are ‘linkages’ between certain ‘intended changes’ where they are inter-dependent.

Figure 2: Visual Representation of Theory of Change used to prepare the Theory of Change in Addressing Child Marriage

To illustrate the above explanation, CSO partners choose to work with Front-line Workers^{xx} (See extreme right of the Theory of Change Diagram in Annexure) because they are well-connected in the community and also mandated to share information on child marriage to the community; they are capable of training and sensitising the community.

- The first levels of ‘intended change’ are in terms of them becoming aware of the gender discrimination and identify it within their community by connecting to the issue personally.
- To make this possible, the CSO partners need to perform Awareness Building of FLWs (Activity 1) and Training of FLWs (Activity 2).
- The next level of ‘intended change’ is FLWs generating discussion with the community and ensuring birth registration at the community level. Discussions may lead to specific needs in training of young girls and boys.
- In order to support their efforts in training adolescents, CSO partners need to provide them with training content(Activity 3) and talking-points to FLWs for discussion of the issue with parents (Activity 4).
- The highest level of envisaged change is in the form of them sustaining the earlier changes and proactively reporting matters to a Child Marriage committee/forum such as *gram sabhas*, School Management Committee (SMC) meetings etc.
- These changes will ‘impact’ in the form of increased safety and security of girls in the community leading to increased mobility and participation by them, which contributes in the final desired ‘goal’ – ‘Reduction in Child Marriage of Girls Aged below 18 Years’.

Similarly, the following list of key activities has emerged on the basis of the ‘Theory of Change’ after analyzing all the strategies/entry points. These have been mapped with the child marriage toolkit component (See Table 3) provided through the UNICEF commissioned project.

Table 3: Mapping the ‘Theory of Change in Addressing Child Marriage’ with Programme Implementation Tool-kit Products

	Activity Reference from ‘Theory of Change’	Product Reference in the Tool-kit^{xxi}
#1	Awareness Building of Frontline Workers (AWW, ANM, ASHA Workers)	Product 2G- Media and Community Mobilisation Tools Product 2H-Advocacy Kit PRODUCT 3: Law and Policy Support for Fighting Child Marriage
#2	Training of Front Line Workers	Product 2E- CM Training Kit for Community Based Organisations, Frontline Workers and Teachers
#3	Providing Training-kits to Front Line Workers to train boys and girls	Product 2B-Training Kit for Adolescent Boys Product 2C-Training Kit for Adolescent Girls
#4	Providing Talking-points to Front Line Workers to discuss the issue with parents	Product 2D- Resource Book with talking points under CM Program Implementation with stakeholders
#5	Awareness Building of Community Based Organisations/Self Help Groups	Product 2G- Media and Community Mobilisation Tools Product 2H-Advocacy Kit PRODUCT 3: Law and Policy Support for Fighting Child Marriage
#6	Training of Community Based Organisations/Self Help Groups	Product 2E- CM Training Kit for Community Based Organisations, Frontline Workers and Teachers
#7	Training of Community Based Organisations/Self Help Groups in forming and mobilising adolescent/youth groups	PRODUCT 4: Adolescent/Youth Engagement Tool-kit
#8	Providing Talking-points to Community Based Organisations/Self Help Groups for discussion of the issue with girls/boys	Product 2D- Resource Book with talking points under CM Program Implementation with stakeholders
#9	Providing Training-kits to Community Based Organisations/Self Help Groups for training boys and girls	Product 2B-Training Kit for Adolescent Boys Product 2C-Training Kit for Adolescent Girls
#10	Awareness building and sensitisation of Panchayati Raj Institution members through discussions and community mobilisation	Product 2G- Media and Community Mobilisation Tools Product 2H-Advocacy Kit PRODUCT 3: Law and Policy Support for Fighting Child Marriage
#11	Ensuring the inclusion of child marriage issues during the PRI meetings	Product 2F- Program Monitoring and Evaluation Kit
#12	Reinforcing the child marriage agenda with Police and Child Marriage Protection Officers	Product 2D- Resource Book with talking points under CM Program Implementation with stakeholders Product 2H-Advocacy Kit PRODUCT 3: Law and Policy Support for Fighting Child Marriage

	Activity Reference from ‘Theory of Change’	Product Reference in the Tool-kit^{xxi}
#13	Training of adolescents on gender roles, human rights, violence etc.	Product 2B-Training Kit for Adolescent Boys Product 2C-Training Kit for Adolescent Girls
#14	Community mobilisation and media activities to raise awareness	Product 2G- Media and Community Mobilisation Tools
#15	Training and empowering adolescents to work in groups to address the issue of child marriage	PRODUCT 4: Adolescent/Youth Engagement Tool-kit
#16	Training of teachers on gender issues to address child marriage and related problems.	Product 2E- CM Training Kit for Community Based Organisations, Frontline Workers and Teachers
#17	Providing talking points to the teachers in working with other stakeholders	Product 2D- Resource Book with talking points under CM Program Implementation with stakeholders
#18	Training of teachers in forming and mobilising adolescent/youth groups	PRODUCT 4: Adolescent/Youth Engagement Tool-kit
#19	Community mobilisation and interpersonal interactions with parents and family members on the issue of child marriage.	Product 2D- Resource Book with talking points under CM Program Implementation with stakeholders Product 2G- Media and Community Mobilisation Tools Product 2H-Advocacy Kit PRODUCT 3: Law and Policy Support for Fighting Child Marriage
#20	Media/Press briefings on the importance of highlighting issues related to child marriage.	Product 2H-Advocacy Kit

Key Challenges for Programme Interventions on Child Marriage

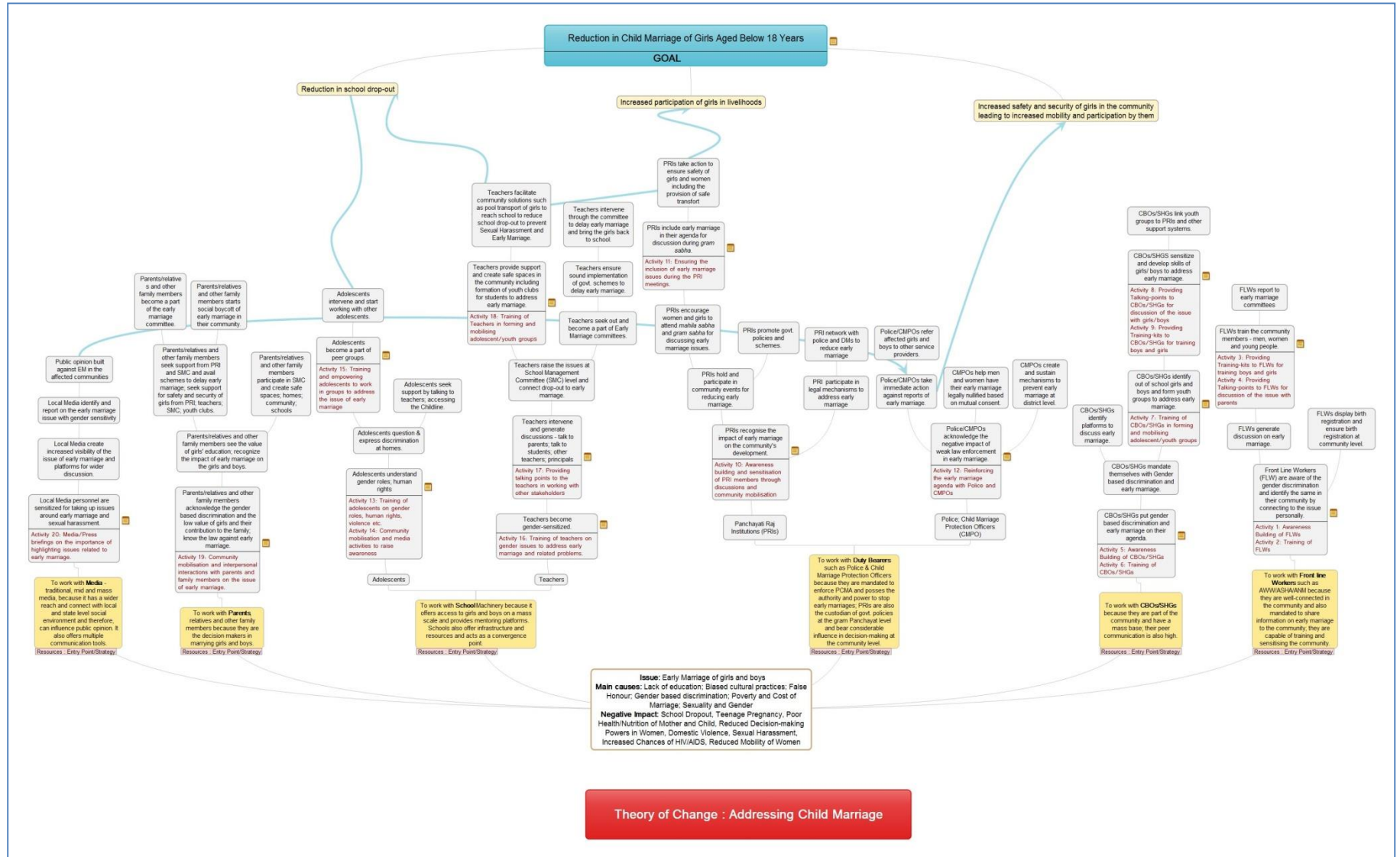
- Child marriage enjoys wide social sanction, is upheld by customary laws and thus difficult to alter. It can often be resisted by families, community and religious leaders. Instances of backlash from the community are not unheard of. Thus ‘preparing’ the community to accept this change is critical.
- Though there are legislative safeguards against child marriage, implementations of laws have been poor. Lack of political will and low budgetary allocations against legislations and resistance of office bearers to implement laws have been key impediment.
- There is low awareness amongst the community on the protective mechanisms provided under the law against child marriage particularly amongst the marginalized and rural communities who are more vulnerable to the practice.
- Few child marriage programs have been evaluated well, and many promising programs haven’t been evaluated at all. A number of programs whose primary goal is to provide education or livelihoods training do not measure child marriage as an outcome. Evaluation challenges include the fact that the programmatic timeframe is sharply limited, making it hard to know whether girls did indeed remain unmarried until age 18, and what the impact of that delay is on their lives. Once girls marry, they often leave their communities, making it very difficult to see the potential contributions the programs have made to their married lives or to their communities.
- Programme interventions have not directly addressed child marriage. For most programs, child marriage has been a goal entwined with achieving other health, welfare, or empowerment outcomes for adolescents and youth. It is important for programmes to list and plan specific objectives, outcomes and activities to address child marriage and help in scaling up by mainstreaming the issue across other themes and creating linkages across services.

- Behavioural change interventions require time and are labour intensive. They are often limited in scope and therefore scaling up and effective reduction of Child Marriage remains a challenge.

Key points to remember!

- Based on the key programmatic framework considerations, a working strategy can be developed which includes the important stakeholders, the required change in their behaviour and perceptions along with the appropriate activities which enable the change to happen.
- A 'Theory of Change' provides a convenient working model for planning the working strategy. It is an explicit presentation of the assumptions about how changes are expected to happen within any particular context and in relation to a particular intervention. A theory of change maps out which actors have to do what in order to achieve and sustain a vision of success, and identifies the major linkages between them.
- Activities in child marriage interventions can also be identified on the basis of a 'Theory of Change' which helps in designing an appropriate tool-kit in implementing child marriage interventions by CSO partners.
- Though there are several challenges associated with implementing programmes to address early marriage, there is increasing evidence to suggest that programmes which 'invest in girls' and empower them have lasting impact and are key determinants for delaying age at marriage

Annexure – Theory of Change on Addressing Child Marriage* with Assumptions



*Refer to Tool-kit Product 2A – Poster of ‘Theory of Change in Addressing Child Marriage’ for a better view.

Assumptions in preparing the Theory of Change on Addressing Child Marriage:

1. Adolescent girls and boys are not gender-sensitised at present
2. Teachers are able to influence the community on child marriage issues
3. Teachers are not gender-sensitised at present
4. Teachers are not aware of their own ability to influence the community
5. Teachers can become interested in influencing the community
6. The school machinery – infrastructure, people and networks such as SMCs can provide support and create spaces for adolescent students in addressing child marriage
7. Majority of high-impact school-based interventions in child marriage are possible through government schools due to two reasons. Firstly, child marriages have highest prevalence in rural areas, which have insignificant percentage of private schools. Secondly, adolescent girls are mostly sent to government schools where education is inexpensive because their families do not want to invest heavily on their future
8. Frontline workers are well-connected within their communities
9. Frontline workers are usually the first ones to have prior information on child marriages
10. Frontline workers are mandated to share information regarding child marriage with their community
11. Frontline workers have low levels of gender sensitisation
12. Frontline workers are part of the same community and low on social ladder when compared to PRI (Panchayati Raj Institutions) representatives and religious leaders
13. Frontline workers are women following set norms of the community
14. Frontline workers are capable of training/sensitising adolescents, men and women in the community
15. PRI (Panchayati Raj Institutions) representatives are mandated with power and authority at the community level (by the Indian govt.) thereby bearing considerable influence in community decision making
16. PRI members are the custodian of govt. policies at the *Gram Panchayat* level
17. Community based organisations (CBO) and Self-help groups (SHG) do not prioritise child marriage issues in their agenda
18. CBOs and SHGs are capable of influencing the community through peer-to-peer communication
19. Parents and family members of adolescents getting married child fear for safety and security of girl children after they attain puberty
20. Parents and family members of adolescents getting married child are poor and lowly educated
21. Parents and family members of adolescents getting married child possess low value for girl child
22. Parents and family members of adolescents getting married are pressurised to follow the 'norms' related to child marriage such as getting their children married on auspicious days, getting girls married before puberty etc.
23. Parents and family members feel responsible to get their girls married child
24. Police and Child Marriage Protection Officers (CMPO) are mandated to take action against any occurrence of child marriage in the community
25. Powers of police in taking action against occurrences of child marriage are subject to formal reporting of the incident by other stakeholders
26. There is negligible convergence among various child marriage preventive mechanisms at the district level

References:

-
- ⁱ Progress of Children, UNICEF 2007
- ⁱⁱ District Level Household and Facility Survey 2007-08 - Fact Sheets - India
- ⁱⁱⁱ End Child Marriage Today, UNICEF, New Delhi, 2013
- ^{iv} NFHS is a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households in 29 States of India. Three rounds of the survey have been conducted so far since the first survey in 1992-1993 followed by two more rounds in 1998-1999 and 2005-2006 respectively. The fourth round of NFHS will be released in 2014-15. The survey provides national and state information for India on fertility, infant and child mortality, the practice of family planning, maternal and child health, reproductive health, nutrition, anaemia, utilization and quality of health, family planning services and HIV/SIDs.
- ^v DLHS is a household survey covering all States and Union Territories of the country to generate national, state and district level information on the reproductive and child health and utilization of services provided by government health facilities. Three rounds of the survey have been conducted so far since the first round in 1998-1999, followed by two more rounds in 2002-2004 and more recently in 2007-2008 respectively. The fourth round of DLHS (2012-13) has been released for 9 states <https://nrhm-mis.nic.in/SitePages/DLHS-4.aspx>
- ^{vi} State of World Population 2005, UNFPA
- ^{vii} State of the World's Children 2011, Adolescence – An Age of Opportunity, UNICEF
- ^{viii} Child Marriage: A Harmful Tradition, UNICEF, 2005
- ^{ix} Margaret E Greene, Ending Child Marriage: What research is needed, Greenetworks, January 2014
- ^x End Child Marriage, Change Perceptions and Beliefs, UNICEF 2013
- ^{xi} Leela Dube, Misadventures in Amniocentesis, Economic & Political Weekly, 18 (8), 1983
- ^{xii} Child childhood mortality rates by mother's age at birth, NFHS 2005-2006
- ^{xiii} Freedom of movement includes movement to three different places—the market, the health facility, and to places outside the village or community
- ^{xiv} Percentage of married women allowed to visit public places alone, NFHS 2005-2006
- ^{xv} Percentage of married women involved in household decision making, NFHS 2005-2006
- ^{xvi} School drop-out rate Grade 1 to X by sex, social groups, SES MoHRD 2007-2008
- ^{xvii} Adolescent brides have to wait till they reach 18 years of age to apply for annulment. Also, adolescent mothers cannot apply for maintenance for living and raising their children from minor husbands. In such cases, the onus of applying for annulment and raising children becomes the responsibility of adolescent girls.
- ^{xviii} End Child Marriage: Change perceptions and beliefs, UNICEF 2013
- ^{xix} Knot Ready: Lessons from India on delaying age for Marriage, ICRW, 2008
- ^{xx} FLWs - such as ASHA-Accredited Social Health Activists, AWW-Anganwadi Worker and ANM-Auxiliary Nurse Mid-wife
- ^{xxi} More detailed Product Descriptions are available on the cover page of the Child Marriage Intervention Tool-kit