

# TOWARDS JUSTICE

## ENDING CHILD MARRIAGES

Report by

**I**NDIA  
**C**HILD  
**P**ROTECTION





# TOWARDS JUSTICE

ENDING CHILD MARRIAGES

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## Executive Summary

Every minute, 3 girls get married in India, and yet in 2022, only 3 cases were registered every day. As per Census 2011 data, every day, a staggering 4,442 girls (below 18 years) were getting married. This translates into 185 minor girls getting married every hour and 3 of them getting married every minute.

The India Child Protection research team has undertaken the present exercise on primary data collection and analysis to document the effectiveness of the government's actions and interventions in addressing child marriage, encompassing their implementation, impact, and potential strategies for complete eradication. This study used a multi-faceted approach, combining primary data gathered at the village level through engagement with key stakeholders, including Panchayati Raj Institution functionaries, and NGO activists involved in child protection initiatives. Secondary data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) and the Crime in India Reports published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) from 2018 to 2022 were analysed, along with an extensive literature review to enhance understanding of the barriers to child marriage elimination efforts and their impact on children, particularly girls. The primary data was collected from a sample of 1,132 random villages across 20 districts of Assam, encompassing a total population of 21 lakhs and a child population of 8 lakhs.

The salient findings of the study are as follows: -

- **81 percent reduction in the instances of child marriage between 2021-22 and 2023-24.** In absolute numbers, the incidence of child marriages in the study villages has declined from 3,225 cases in 2021-22 to 627 cases in 2023-24.
- **In 30 percent of the villages surveyed in Assam, child marriage has been completely eradicated. Additionally, 40 percent of villages reported a significant decline in the occurrence of child marriage.**
- **98 percent of the respondents believed that the Assam government's strict law enforcement initiatives in 2023 had a substantial and striking influence on the reduction of child marriages within their communities.** The overwhelming majority of respondents acknowledged the effectiveness of stringent enforcement measures in curbing child marriage.
- **In 12 districts, out of 20, over 90 percent of respondents believe that taking legal action such as arresting individuals and filing FIRs in cases related to child marriage can effectively address the occurrence of such cases.** Overall, the same percentage for all 20 districts stands at 72 percent. This community validation reinforces the need for sustained and rigorous prosecution strategies to address and eliminate child marriage completely.
- Across India, **161 civil society organisations in 265 districts throughout 17 states and union territories successfully prevented 14,137 child marriages in 2023-2024 by using legal interventions and prevented 59,364 child marriages with the help of panchayats<sup>1</sup>.** Besides this effort, the honourable high court of Rajasthan, in one of its judgements, held panchayats accountable for child marriage, which resulted in a significant decline in child marriage cases reported on Akshaya Tiritiya.

<sup>1</sup> Access to Justice for Children Programme.

- **The total number of child marriage cases registered during the last five years (3,863) is less than the number of girl child marriages taking place in a single day (4,442). On average, only one case of child marriage per district was registered for prosecution in 2022.**

Data (NCRB) shows that out of 63,513 children of kidnapping and abduction who were recovered in 2022, 15,748 (25%) were kidnapped and abducted for the purpose of either ‘marriage’ or ‘illicit intercourse’. **Of this, 15,142 children recovered in 2022 were kidnapped solely for the purpose of marriage.**

- **In 2022, 13,981 children were victimised for the offence of kidnapping and abduction of a minor girl to compel her marriage (Sec 366 IPC), compared to 11,236 in 2020. This highlights a 24 percent increase in the number of minor girls being kidnapped or abducted for the purpose of marriage during 2020-22.**
- **In the year 2022, out of the total 3,563 child marriage cases listed for trial in courts under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, a mere 181 cases were successfully concluded in terms of trial completion.** This slow disposal rate has resulted in a persistently high pendency rate, which stands at 94 percent. **Despite the fact that there are only 3,365 cases pending, with the current rate of disposal, the country may take 19 years to clear the backlogs as of 2022.**
- The conviction rate in cases filed under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act is an area of concern, given its disheartening statistics. **In 2022, a mere 11 percent of these cases resulted in convictions, contrasting sharply with the overall conviction rate of 34 percent for all crimes committed against children during that year.** This highlights the need for thorough and rigorous investigation and court trials in child marriage cases. This will serve as a deterrent, signalling to communities that child marriage is a serious offense with tangible legal consequences.

### **Key Recommendations**

- Fast track special courts to be created to clear the backlog of child marriage cases
- In situations where parents, guardians, or panchayats have provided an undertaking, the punishment should be doubled and treated as equivalent to criminal conspiracy for rape.
- A specific provision should be made for the rehabilitation of victims and survivors of child marriage, treating them on par with survivors of child sexual abuse.
- A special scheme should be introduced focusing on skill development and economic stability for women who choose to leave child marriages.
- Central Portal run by Ministry of Home Affairs to report child marriage with an urgent **“Rapid Action Response Protocol”**

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**Chapter-1**  
**Introduction**

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Millions of women and girls globally endure the harsh realities of gender-based violence, a phenomenon deeply rooted in unequal power dynamics that perpetuate their subjugation. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women underscores this issue, identifying various forms of violence, including child marriage, female genital mutilation, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and wartime assault.

Among these, child marriage is particularly egregious, representing a severe violation of human rights that predominantly affects girls. This practice is internationally recognized as a significant abuse and is explicitly addressed in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.3, which aims to eradicate child, early, and forced marriage by 2030<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, the urgency of this issue is reflected in the commitments of 93 governments to SDG target 5.3 and the development of national action plans in 43 countries to end child marriage<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, education is a crucial protective factor against child marriage. Evidence shows that the incidence of child marriage is 66 percent lower among girls who complete secondary education and 80 percent lower among those who pursue higher education<sup>4</sup>. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated school dropout rates, thereby increasing the risk that girls who leave school will not return. Girls who drop out of school are significantly more likely to marry early, with 87 percent of married adolescent girls not attending school<sup>5</sup>.

Despite global efforts, child marriage remains prevalent, affecting one in five girls worldwide and posing severe risks to their health and well-being. Notably, child brides are more likely to become teenage mothers, and complications during pregnancy are the leading cause of mortality among adolescent girls.

In India, where the legal age for marriage is 18 for females and 21 for males, the 2011 Census revealed that there were 12.1 million married children, including 5.1 million girls<sup>6</sup>. Further, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) (2019-21) indicates a decrease in the prevalence of child marriage from 26.8 percent in 2015-16 to 23.3 percent in 2019-21, although significant interstate and intrastate variations persist<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, NFHS-4 (2015-16) reported that more than half (52%) of married adolescent girls became mothers at an early age, 43 percent faced controlling behavior by their spouses, and one in five experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence within their marriages<sup>6</sup>.

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2 United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations

3 UNICEF. (2020). *Ending Child Marriage: A Profile of Progress in India*. New York: UNICEF.

4 UNICEF. (2019). *Evidence Review: Child Marriage interventions and research from 2020 to 2022*.

5 UNICEF: End Child Marriage: Country Profile 2022

6 Government of India. (2011). *Census of India 2011*. Retrieved from [censusindia.gov.in](https://censusindia.gov.in)

7 Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2021). *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-21*.

India's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals includes the elimination of all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage (Goal 5, SDGs)<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006, represents a significant step towards this goal. Furthermore, a landmark Supreme Court judgment in *Independent Thought vs. Union of India* (Writ Petition [Civil] No. 382 of 2013) ruled that sexual intercourse by an adult male with his minor wife constitutes rape, thereby seeking to protect the interests of married underage girls and discourage the practice of child marriage<sup>8</sup>.

## Study Objectives

The broad objective of the present study is to enquire into the government's actions and interventions in India to address child marriage, particularly their implementation, impact, and potential strategies for its complete eradication.

- To analyse and comprehend the measures taken by the government in India to eradicate child marriages, focusing on the implementation and effectiveness of prosecution efforts.
- To ascertain the impact of prosecution at scale in Assam, aiming to prevent child marriages.
- To ascertain the extent of trafficking of minor girls for the purpose of marriage.
- To propose effective strategies to combat child marriage across India and contribute to the goal of its complete elimination.

## Study Methodology

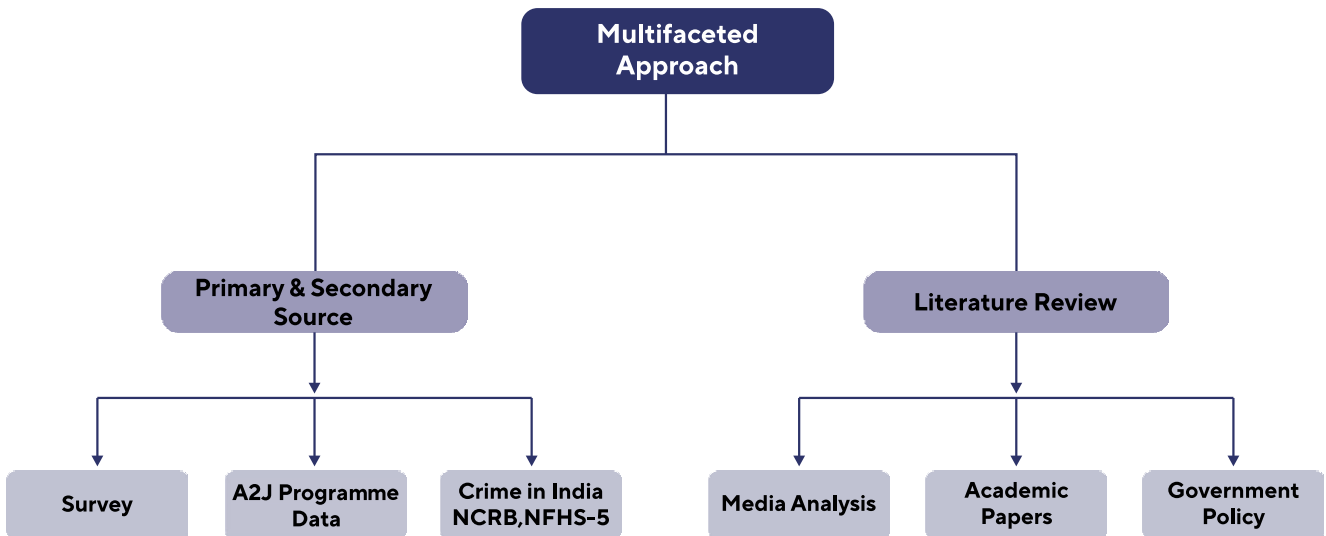
The present study employed a multi-faceted approach by using both primary and secondary data sources to fulfil its objectives.

The secondary data sources consisted of the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) and the Crime in India Reports published by the National Crime Records Bureau from the year 2018 to 2022. To complement the secondary data, primary data was collected at the village level in Assam. The primary data collection involved engaging with key stakeholders such as village heads, Panchayati Raj Institution functionaries, and NGO officials actively involved in child protection initiatives within the villages. This approach aimed to gather first-hand information and insights from individuals closely connected to the issue of child marriage at the grassroots level.

Comprehensive literature review was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the prevailing child marriage situation in India. The study also incorporated data from the Access to Justice for Children program (A2J) to understand the efforts and effectiveness of targeted interventions in eliminating child marriages in India.

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8 Supreme Court of India. (2017). *Independent Thought vs. Union of India, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 382 of 2013*



## Limitations

- Since the number of sample villages covered in the selected districts is not homogeneous, the findings of the study may not accurately represent the entire population of villages in the district.
- The purposive selection of villages for the study may introduce bias, as the chosen villages may not be true representatives of the entire district.
- The non-inclusion of all districts or the omission of certain districts may introduce selection bias, as the excluded districts may have unique attributes that are not adequately represented in the study.



शिशु विवाह मुक्त भारत  
CHILD MARRIAGE FREE INDIA  
शिशु सुरक्षा, सुरक्षित भारत | SAFE CHILDHOOD, SAFE INDIA

इसो मत  
बच्चों की शादी  
करो मत



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**Chapter-2**

**Legal Context of  
Child Marriage in India**

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In India, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 prohibits the marriage of girls below the age of 18 years and boys below the age of 21 years. An earlier Child Marriage Restraint Act passed in 1929 had set a minimum legal age for marriage for girls at 14 years and for boys at 18 years which was amended to 18 years for girls, and 21 years for boys in 1978. In 2008, Law Commission recommended to make the legal age of marriage for boys and girls uniform at 18 years as they did not find any rational basis for the age disparity in marriage. However, the recommendation was not followed through.

**In 2021, Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill was introduced in Indian Parliament to increase the minimum age of marriage for females from 18 to 21 years (at par with males)** in response to the recommendations of a task force set up by Central Government that assessed the correlation of age of marriage and motherhood with health, well-being, and nutritional status of mother and child, during pregnancy, birth and thereafter taking into consideration key parameters such as Infant Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Rate, Total Fertility Rate, Sex Ratio at Birth, Child Sex Ratio. The Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports in December 2021 for further discussion.

This further started a debate about the pros and cons of using legislative measures to reduce child marriage and the possibility of law curtailing the freedom of choice for adult women, being misused against consenting adults wanting to marry, and a possible increase in sex-selective practices such as female infanticide, as daughters are often considered a liability in Indian context, and increasing the legal age of marriage by another three years would mean increased perceived burden for the families<sup>9</sup>.

The Government enacted PCMA in order to curb child marriages and to take punitive actions against those associated with child marriages. Section 16 of PCMA authorises the State Government to appoint for the whole State, or such part there of as may be specified, an officer or officers to be known as the **'Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO)'** having jurisdiction over the area or areas specified in the notification<sup>10</sup>. This section also specifies the functions to be discharged by CMPOs, which also include preventing solemnisation of child marriages by taking such action as they may deem fit; to collect evidence for the effective prosecution of persons contravening the provisions of the Act; to advise the individuals or counsel the residents of the locality not to indulge in promoting, helping, aiding or allowing the solemnisation of child marriages; to create awareness about the ill effects of child marriages; and to sensitize the community on the issue of child marriages.

'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibilities to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens, investigation and prosecution of crime against women and children including **prohibition of child marriages**, rest with the respective State Governments. Nevertheless, the Central Government undertakes awareness drives, media campaigns and outreach programs and issues advisories to the States/ UTs from time to

9 Child marriage and the mental health of adolescent girls: a longitudinal cohort study from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, India, The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia 2023;8: 100102 Published online, November 2022

10 PIB Ministry of Women and Child Development: State wise data on Child Marriages in India

time to highlight evil effects of this practice. The Ministry has also written to all States/ UTs to increase the number of CMPOs, as presence of Statutory Officer at local levels would result in even more effective public engagement on the subject and prevention of solemnisation of child marriage<sup>11</sup>.

However, currently, only 20 states and union territories have appointed CMPOs from a total of 36 states and union territories. Even where CMPOs have been appointed, in many states, rather than providing a dedicated officer, child marriage prevention is added as an extra duty to an existing officer's already broad portfolio. Moreover, the PCMA does not punish CMPOs for negligence of duty. This leads to a lack of accountability and erects barriers in accessing law. And when they do prosecute and prevent child marriages, CMPOs face retaliation from communities, making it complicated and risky to carry out duties. Additionally, the officers are not appropriately trained and are ill-equipped to deal with children with sensitivity. **A study analysing child marriage cases filed across the country from 2008 to 2017 states that only 7 percent of the cases was initiated by a CMPO<sup>12</sup>.** Sometimes, CMPOs redirect complaints to other designated officers under other laws, such as protection officers under the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) or Juvenile Justice Act [JJA], who in-turn send them back to the CMPOs. This lack of coordination and bureaucratic barriers further impairs the effective implementation of PCMA.

## Other Legal Provisions related to Child Marriages in India

### Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS)

The Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (formerly known as IPC) addresses the issue of child marriage with several sections, such as Sections 81, 82, 87 and 96. There is a new Section 69 that states engaging in sexual intercourse with a woman through deceitful means or false promises of marriage is punishable with imprisonment for up to ten years and a fine. Other sections cover offenses related to marriage, including deceitful cohabitation, kidnapping or abduction for marriage, procurement of a child for illicit intercourse, and fraudulent marriage ceremonies.

### Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

POCSO criminalises sexual intercourse with a person below 18 years of age, regardless of consent or marital status<sup>13</sup>. Section 3 of the POCSO Act lays out what is penetrative sexual assault and its punishment, while Section 5 describes the aggravated penetrative sexual assault and its punishment. Therefore, a man who has sexual intercourse with his minor wife is committing an offence and is liable to be punished.

### The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 sets the minimum age of marriage at 21 for males and 18 for females, and provides for annulment of child marriage by either party within two years of attaining majority<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Child and Early Marriage in India, Issue Brief, 2021, Arushi Raj, Social and Policy Research Foundation, accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Law and Justice (2012). *The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012*. <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/POCSO%20Act%2C%202012.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> *ChildLine India. Handbook on The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006*. <https://www.childlineindia.org/pdf/Child-Marriage-handbook.pdf>

### **The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937**

The Muslim Personal Law does not specify a minimum age of marriage for Muslims but allows a girl who has attained puberty to repudiate her marriage before attaining majority<sup>15</sup>.

### **The Indian Christian Marriage Act (ICMA), 1872**

ICMA sets the minimum age of marriage at 21 for males and 18 for females, and requires parental consent for minors<sup>16</sup>.

Besides these, the other initiatives include the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) component under the umbrella scheme 'Mission Shakti', implemented by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), wherein creation of awareness on matters pertaining to gender equality and discouraging child marriage is an important focus area. Various national, government and non-government, and international organisations also undertake awareness programmes and consultations with stakeholders from time to time in this regard.

## **High Court Judgements Pertaining to Secular Laws and Personal Laws**

One of the major issues with law implementation is the conflicting and ambiguous interpretation of the law. As of now, there is no clarity as to whether secular laws (PCMA, POCSO) override Personal Laws, including Muslim Personal Law in matters relating to marriage of girls below 18 years. Some court judgments consider the POCSO Act as a special legislation which can override personal laws. However, other judgments have held the contrary view<sup>17</sup>. Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law says that Muslim personal law will govern the question of marriage when the parties are Muslims. However, Section 42A of the POCSO Act stipulates that in case any of the provision of the act is inconsistent with any other law, the POCSO Act would prevail as it overrides any other law then in force.

The Kerala High Court in [Khaledur Rahman v State of Kerala](#) holds that marriage is not a reason to ignore the applicability of the POCSO Act. In this case the Muslim girl below the age of 18 years was impregnated by her husband. The girl was a native of West Bengal and was brought to Kerala after marriage. There were allegations that the girl was abducted from West Bengal by the husband. The court therefore concluded that the POCSO Act, being a special law, would prevail over the personal law, and the marriage would not be considered legally valid.

The Delhi High Court in case of [Fija v State Govt of NCT of Delhi](#) granted protection to the petitioners (minor girl and her husband) from the girl's family as they had legally married under their personal law and engaged in consensual sexual intercourse with each other. The Karnataka High Court while considering a similar situation in [Mohammad Waseem Ahamad v State](#) found that it was an arranged marriage, validly performed according to Muslim traditions. The girl who was a minor during the marriage had become pregnant while being a minor. A joint affidavit, showing the settlement of the dispute by the husband and the wife, led to the court holding that continuing the criminal proceedings would

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15 *ibid*

16 *ibid*

17 <https://lawwatch.in/child-marriage-muslim-personal-law/>

have been an abuse of the process of law as the victim may turn hostile during the trial. Hence, charges under the Indian Penal Code, the POCSO Act and the PCMA against the husband and his family were quashed.

On the other hand, the Madhya Pradesh High Court, in [Mohd. Ansar v The State of Madhya Pradesh](#), denied relief to an accused under the POCSO Act who sought the concession of bail on the ground that the victim was a Muslim girl, who, though minor, had attained the age of puberty and the consent given by her is valid in law.

A recent judgment of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in the case of Javed vs State of Haryana and Others held that the marriage of a Muslim girl could be governed by Muslim personal law and if a girl above the age of 15 years, on her own willingness, marries a person of her choice, the marriage would not be void under the PCMA<sup>18,19,20</sup>. However, this issue is also pending before the Supreme Court, where the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has challenged a similar order of the same high court<sup>4</sup>. The Supreme Court in January 2023 has also stated that the judgment of the Punjab and Haryana High Court would not be taken as a binding precedent<sup>21</sup>.

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18 ibid

19 <https://theprint.in/judiciary/marriage-of-15-yr-muslim-girl-not-void-under-prohibition-of-child-marriage-act-says-high-court/1187128/>

20 <https://www.lawyersclubindia.com/judiciary/minor-muslim-girl-over-15-years-of-age-free-to-marry-person-of-her-choice-marriage-not-void-under-child-marriage-prohibition-act-6276.asp>

21 <https://lawwatch.in/child-marriage-muslim-personal-law/>

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**Chapter-3**

**Case Registration and  
Prosecution under  
Prohibition of Child  
Marriage Act (PCMA)**

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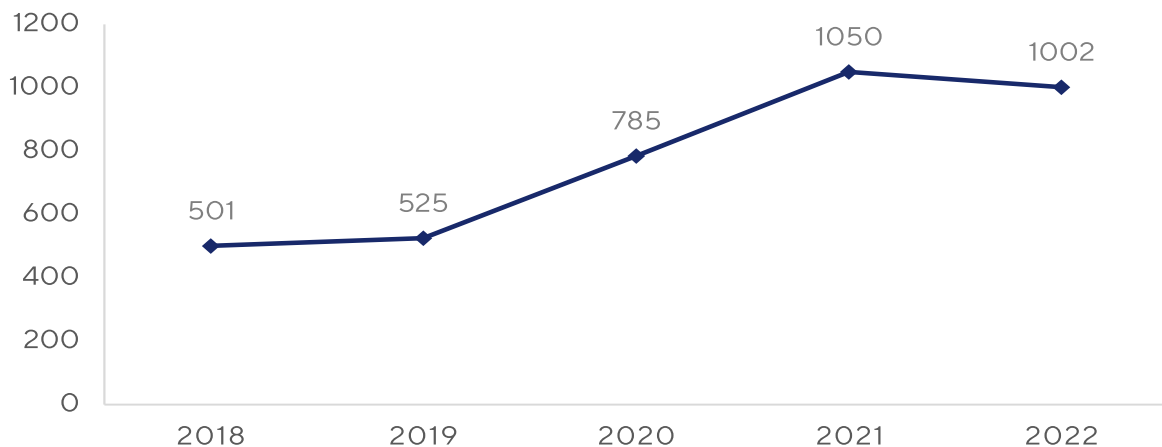
Prosecution in cases of child marriage is crucial for safeguarding the rights and well-being of children. Child marriage perpetuates a cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and poor health outcomes, denying young girls and boys their right to education, health, and a fulfilling childhood. Legal action not only deters perpetrators but also sends a clear message that such practices are unacceptable and punishable.

By prosecuting those involved in arranging or conducting child marriages, societies can enforce laws that protect children from exploitation, ensure their development, and promote gender equality. This approach is essential in fostering environments where every child can grow up safe, educated, and empowered to reach their full potential.

## Registration of Cases under PCMA

The data from 2018 to 2022 highlights several key trends and patterns in the police disposal of cases of child marriage, emphasising persistent challenges in timely investigation and case resolution. The number of cases registered each year has shown a significant upward trend. As per the Crime in India report published by NCRB, cases of child marriage registered between 2018 and 2022 increased by 100 percent<sup>22</sup>. The consistent rise over the last five years, especially the substantial jump in 2020, suggests an increasing awareness and reporting of child marriage cases.

**Figure 1. Total number of cases of Child Marriage in India 2018-2022**



Source: National Crime Record Bureau, Crime in India Report 2018-2022

## Court Disposal of Cases under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act

On the other hand, the data on court disposals under PCMA from 2018 to 2022 reveals significant trends and challenges in the judicial handling of these cases. The number of cases sent for trial has shown a consistent increase over the years.

<sup>22</sup> NCRB, Crime in India report, 2018-2022.

However, NCRB data reveals that in 2018, 368 cases were sent for trial, a figure that surged to its peak at 809 cases by 2021 before slightly decreasing to 802 in 2022. The total number of child marriage cases listed for trial in courts increased by 60 percent (from 1,423 in 2018 to 3,563 in 2022).

A critical issue highlighted by this trend is the significant contribution of pending cases carried forward from previous years to the total cases for trial. This backlog not only indicates delays in case resolution but also poses several drawbacks. It prolongs the legal process for victims of child marriage, potentially subjecting them to prolonged vulnerability and denying them timely justice and protection. The accumulation of pending cases strains judicial resources and undermines public confidence in the efficacy of legal interventions. Addressing this backlog is imperative to ensure swift and effective judicial responses to child marriage cases, thereby safeguarding the rights and well-being of children across India.

**Table 1. Court Disposal of cases under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act**

	<b>Court Disposal of cases under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act</b>				
	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Cases Sent for Trial during the year	368	361	505	809	802
Total cases for trial*	1,423	1,640	2,092	2,865	3,563
Cases in which Trials were Completed	80	100	36	103	181
Cases Pending Trial at End of the Year	1,343	1,534	2,056	2,761	3,365

\*Including cases pending trial from previous year and cases sent for trial during the year

Source: National Crime Record Bureau, Crime in India Report 2018-2022

## **Completion of Trials and Convictions**

The data pertaining to the convictions in cases under the PCMA over the last five years reveals that the conviction rate is fluctuating and low. In 2022, 11 percent of cases ended with a conviction. The case pendency rate is also high, at 94 percent. This indicates that only a small fraction of cases proceeds to the completion of trials compared to the total number of cases initiated for trial. Low completion rates underscore systemic inefficiencies and obstacles within the judiciary, likely stemming from procedural complexities, resource limitations, and perhaps a lack of specialised handling for cases under this specific legislation.

**Table 2. Conviction in cases under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act over the last five years**

	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Conviction Rate	23.8	12	16.7	9.7	11
Pendency Rate	94.4	93.5	98.3	96.4	94.4
Total Crimes against Children Pendency Rate	90.1	90.4	95	94.2	92.1

Source: National Crime Record Bureau, Crime in India Report 2018-2022

Estimates carried out in the study suggest that even though there are just 3,365 cases that are pending, by the end of 2022, the nation may need 19 years to clear the backlog at the current pace of disposal.



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**Chapter-4**

**Kidnapping of Minor  
Girls and Women for  
Marriage**

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The purpose of a crime, especially in trafficking and kidnapping and abduction, can be learnt/known only after the rescue of the victims. The Crime in India reports present the purpose of trafficking and kidnapping and abduction for the victims who were recovered alive during the calendar year. Of the total rescued victims, the number of women and children kidnapped to compel them for marriage against their will (Sec 366 of IPC) is presented below.

Section 87 of the BNS (Section 366 of IPC) deals with the kidnapping of women for two specific purposes, i.e. (a) Marriage and (b) Illicit Intercourse. Data from NCRB suggests that out of 95,224 women victims (63,513 children & 31,711 adults) of kidnapping and abduction who were recovered in 2022, 32,774 (34%) were kidnapped and abducted for the purpose of either 'Marriage' or 'Illicit Intercourse'. Analysis of data further reveals that of the total women kidnapped and abducted for the purpose of 'Marriage' or 'Illicit Intercourse', 94 percent of them reported marriage as the purpose of their kidnapping. The said percentage is 95 percent among minor girl victims and 96 percent among adult women victims.

Further the NCRB Data reveals that in 2022, out of the 32,774 women recovered, 31,235 women were kidnapped solely for the purpose of marriage. Not surprisingly, more than half (51%) of these victims were minor girls.

**Table 3. Victims who were Kidnapped & Abducted for forced marriage and recovered alive in 2022**

S.No.	Purpose	Women Victims Recovered Alive					
		Minor Victims (Below 18 yrs.)		Adult Victims (18 yrs. and above)		Total Women Victims	
		No. of Victims	% Distribution	No. of Victims	% Distribution	No. of Victims	% Distribution
1	For Marriage	16,093	94.5%	15,142	96.2%	31,235	95.3%
2	For Illicit Intercourse	933	5.5%	606	3.8%	1,539	4.7%
<b>Total</b>		<b>17,026</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15,748</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32,774</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: National Crime Record Bureau, Crime in India Report 2018-2022

Compared to 11,236 in 2020, 13,981 children were victimised in 2022 for the offence of kidnapping and abduction of a minor girl to compel her marriage (Sec. 366 IPC). This highlights a 24 percent increase in the number of minor girls being kidnapped or abducted for the purpose of marriage during 2020-22.





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**Chapter-5**

**Factors Influencing  
Child Marriage**

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Child marriage is a complex issue influenced by various interconnected factors in India. Some of the key causes contributing to the persistence of child marriage are described below:

1. **Fear regarding safety of minor daughters:** The fear of safety for girls plays a significant role in driving child marriage practices. Although a number of variables, including poverty, cultural norms, gender inequality, and a lack of access to education, contribute to the prevalence of child marriage, the fear of safety, particularly for the protection of girls, is a major factor in the continuation of child marriage practice. Parents, especially those from marginalised communities, believe that marrying off their daughters at a young age will protect them from potential violence, sexual harassment, or assault. Also, in many societies, child marriage is seen as a way to control a girl's sexuality. Family members worry that if their daughter does not get married, she will have extramarital affairs or indulge in sexual activity, which would be embarrassing for the whole family.
2. **Gender Inequality and Patriarchy:** Deep-rooted gender inequalities and patriarchal norms play a significant role in child marriage<sup>23</sup>. In many communities, girls are considered a burden, and their value is often linked to marriage and dowry. Male children are often seen as assets, while daughters are viewed as liabilities, leading to the preference for early marriage to transfer the responsibility to the husband's family.
3. **Poverty and Economic Factors:** Poverty and economic instability are significant drivers of child marriage<sup>24</sup>. Families living in poverty may see child marriage as a means to reduce the financial burden by marrying off their daughters at an early age. According to World Bank Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data, across countries, girls from wealthier families tend to marry at later ages, supporting the hypothesis that poverty and economic survival are drivers of early marriage. Some families may also view child marriage as a way to secure their daughter's future and protect her from economic hardship<sup>25</sup>.
4. **Lack of Education:** Limited access to quality education and low literacy rates contribute to the prevalence of child marriage<sup>26</sup>. When girls are not educated, families may perceive marriage as the only viable option for their daughters' future. Lack of awareness about the importance of education and the potential benefits it can bring also perpetuates the cycle of child marriage<sup>27</sup>.
5. **Limited Legal Enforcement:** Despite legal provisions against child marriage, enforcement and implementation of these laws remain inadequate<sup>28</sup>. In some cases, traditional and informal justice systems may take precedence over formal legal systems, making it challenging to address child marriage effectively.

23 Nirantar. (2015). Early and Child Marriage in India: A Landscape Analysis, <http://www.nirantar.net/uploads/files/EM%20Report%20-%20English%20%5BSummary%5D.pdf>.

24 ICRW. (2006). Child Marriage and Poverty, <https://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Poverty.pdf>.

25 Nour, N. M. (2009). Child marriage: A silent health and human rights issue. *Reviews in Obstetrics and Gynecology*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2672998/>.

26 Brahmapurkar, K.P. (2017). Gender equality in India hit by illiteracy, child marriages and violence: a hurdle for sustainable development. In *The Pan African Medical Journal*, 28(178). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5847257/>.

27 HAQ. (n.d.). Child Marriage in India: Achievements, Gaps and Challenges, Response to Questions for OHCHR Report on Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriages for Twenty-sixth Session of the Human Rights Council.

28 Girls Not Brides. (2022). The Status of Child Marriage in India: A Guide for NGOs and CSOs on Using the Law to End Child Marriages in India, [https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/1783/Child\\_marriage\\_in\\_India\\_law\\_guide\\_and\\_directory.pdf](https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/1783/Child_marriage_in_India_law_guide_and_directory.pdf).

**6. Socio – Cultural Determinants:** Traditional customs and cultural norms, deeply ingrained in society, often promote child marriage<sup>29</sup>. Factors such as preserving family honour, upholding caste or community traditions, and maintaining social status can influence families to marry their daughters at a young age. Dowry practices, where the bride’s family provides a significant sum of money or assets to the groom’s family, also play a role in perpetuating child marriage. Community and societal pressures contribute to child marriage. The fear of social stigma, concerns about a girl’s reputation, and the pressure to conform to prevailing social norms can influence families to marry their daughters early<sup>30</sup>. Lack of community support for delaying marriage and the belief that early marriage is the right path for girls further reinforce this practice.

Addressing child marriage requires a multifaceted approach that addresses these causes comprehensively, including empowering girls through education, raising awareness, promoting gender equality, strengthening legal enforcement, and addressing the underlying socio-economic factors that perpetuate this harmful practice.

## Consequences of Child Marriage

Child marriages in India have far-reaching consequences for the physical, psychological, and social well-being of girls. The available literature highlights several negative outcomes associated with child marriage.

### Health Risks:

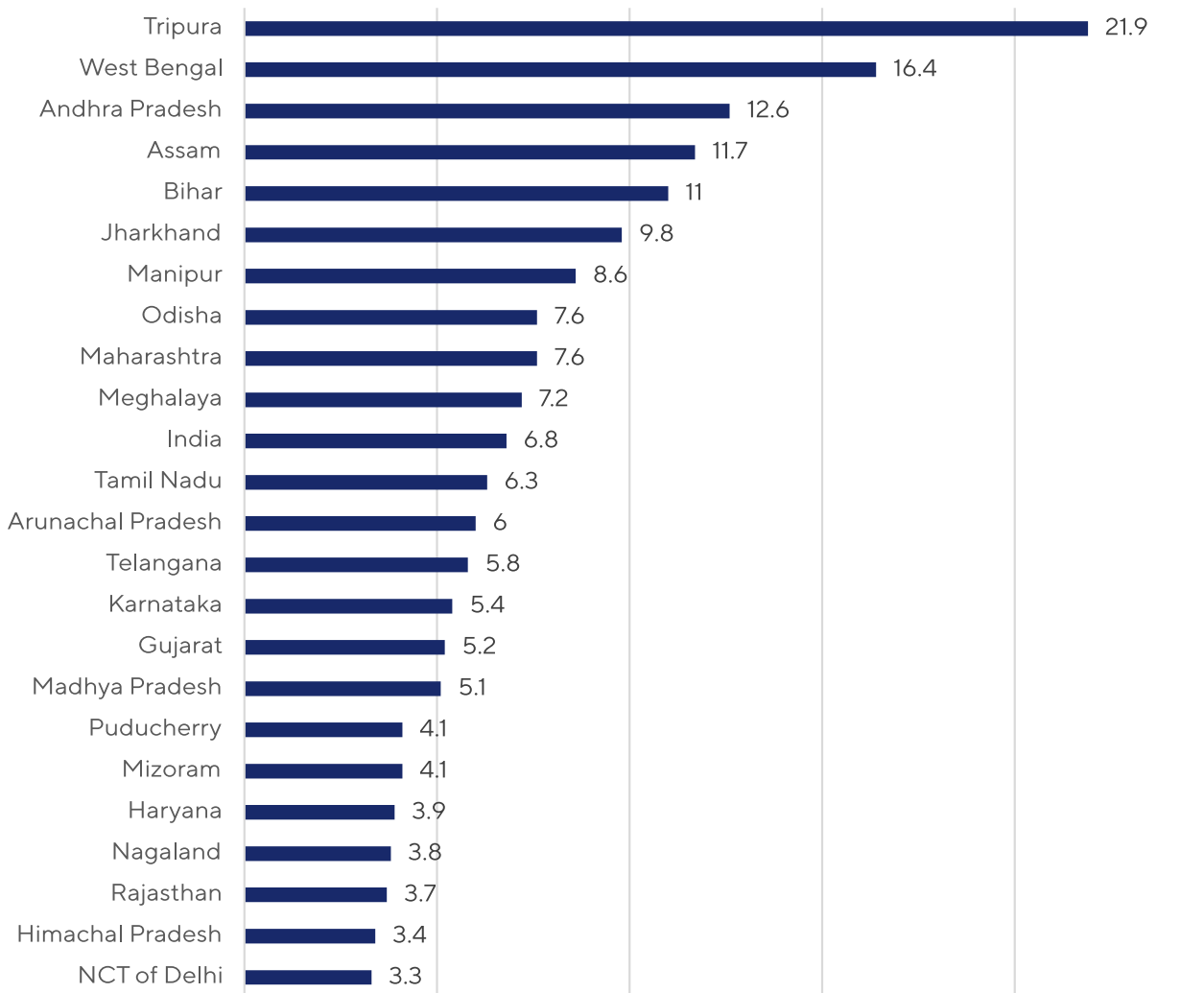
**Early pregnancies:** Child brides are more likely to experience early and unplanned pregnancies, which pose significant health risks due to their young age and inadequate access to maternal healthcare. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth, including higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, are common among child brides. The risk of maternal mortality is highest for girls below 15 years old and complications in pregnancy and childbirth are highest in girls aged 10-19<sup>31</sup>.

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29 Poddar, P. (2021, September 27). Prevalence of child marriages as a part of customs in India. *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/some-thoughts/prevalence-of-child-marriages-as-a-part-of-customs-in-india-37796/>.

30 Seth, R., Bose, V., Qaiyum, Y., Chandrashekhar, R., Kansal, S., Taneja, I. and Seth, T. (2018). Social determinants of child marriage in rural India. In *The Ochsner Journal*, 18(4), pp. 390-394. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6292470/>.

31 World Health Organization. (2023, February 22). *Maternal Mortality*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>.

**Figure 2. Females aged 15-19 years who were already mothers or pregnant (%)**

**Source:** National family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021), Govt. of India

**Malnutrition:** Early marriage often leads to limited access to proper nutrition, both before and during pregnancy. This can contribute to malnutrition and stunted growth for both the mother and her child<sup>32</sup>.

**Reproductive health issues:** Child brides face increased vulnerability to reproductive health problems, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), cervical cancer, and obstetric fistula<sup>33, 34</sup>. Lack of knowledge and access to reproductive health services further exacerbate these risks.

32 Efevbera, Y., Bhabha, J., Farmer P. and Fink, G. (2019). Girl child marriage, socioeconomic status, and undernutrition: evidence from 35 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *BMC Medicine*, 17. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6407221/>.

33 Nour, N. M. (2009). Child marriage: A silent health and human rights issue. *Reviews in Obstetrics and Gynecology*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2672998/>.

34 Fan, S. and Koiski, A. (2022). The health consequences of child marriage: a systematic review of the evidence. In *BMC Public Health*, 22. <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-12707-x>.

**Educational Barriers:**

Child marriage disrupts a girl’s education and reduces her opportunities for personal and professional development. Early marriage often leads to early school dropout, depriving girls of the chance to complete their education<sup>35</sup>. Limited education perpetuates the cycle of poverty and hinders their ability to secure better livelihoods in the future<sup>36</sup>.

**Table 4. Consequences of Child Marriage**

The Harmful Consequences of Child Marriage		
<p><b>HEALTH</b></p> <p>Child marriage violates girls’ sexual and reproductive rights and leads to poor health outcomes. The risk of maternal mortality is highest for girls below 15 years of age and complications in pregnancy and childbirth are highest in girls aged 10-19<sup>37</sup>. Early marriage of girls increases the risk of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pre-matured delivery</li> <li>- Maternal death</li> <li>- Infant death</li> <li>- Child death</li> <li>- Undernourished mother and child</li> </ul>	<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <p>Once married, girls are also unlikely to remain in or return to school. Child marriages reduce the likelihood of girls’ secondary school completion by four to six percentage points. Attainment of mere basic schooling or a low level education is one of the major hindrances to achieving women’s empowerment.</p> <p>A poorly educated girl child in the household will not be able to protect herself and her children. Studies have already shown that mothers’ education and empowerment play a crucial role in ensuring the protection of their children.</p>	<p><b>PROTECTION AND SECURITY</b></p> <p>It is usually inevitable that child marriage will lead to child sexual abuse. Violence and abuse have a severe impact on a child’s psychological state, which adversely impacts their social relationships, confidence and growth.</p> <p>In several cases, children are also abducted and trafficked for the purpose of marriage. Child victims of such crimes face a greater level of violence and abuse.</p> <p>Such adverse impacts of child marriage may last throughout the lifespan of the survivor.</p>

35 ICRW and The World Bank. (2017). *Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: Global Synthesis Brief*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/454581498512494655/pdf/116832-BRI-P151842-PUBLIC-EICM-Brief-GlobalSynthesis-PrintReady.pdf>.

36 Ibid.

37 World Health Organization. (2019). *Maternal Mortality*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality-on-22nd-September-2022>.

### **Social and Psychological Consequences:**

**Limited agency and decision-making power:** Child brides often have limited agency and control over their lives. They may lack the ability to make choices about their education, career, and personal development. They may be subject to control and decision-making by their spouses and in-laws<sup>38</sup>.

**Domestic violence and abuse:** Child brides are more vulnerable to domestic violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, within their marital relationships. They may lack the support systems and resources to escape or address these abusive situations. According to a study by ICRW-World Bank, child brides are twice as likely to report being beaten, slapped or threatened by their husbands as girls who marry later<sup>39</sup>.

**Mental health issues:** The stress, isolation, and lack of autonomy associated with child marriage can contribute to mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem<sup>40</sup>.

### **Intergenerational Impact:**

Child marriage perpetuates the cycle of poverty and reinforces intergenerational patterns of disadvantage<sup>41</sup>. Children born to child brides are more likely to face health and educational challenges, continuing the cycle of poverty and limited opportunities.

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38 Abera, M., Nega, A., Tefera, Y. and Gelagay, A. A. (2020). Early marriage and women's empowerment: the case of child brides in Amhara National Regional Estate, Ethiopia. In *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 20(30). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7734808/>.

39 ICRW. (n.d.). *Child marriage and domestic violence*. <https://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Domestic-Violence.pdf>.

40 Burgess, R. A., Jeffery, M., Odero, S. A., Rose-Clark, K. and Devakumar, D. (2022). Overlooked and unaddressed: A narrative review of mental health consequences of child marriages. In *PLOS Global Public Health*, 2(1).

41 Betar, T. (2012, November 27). Child marriage perpetuates cycle of poverty for young people. *Deseret News*. <https://www.deseret.com/2012/11/27/20510324/child-marriage-perpetuates-cycle-of-poverty-for-young-people>





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**Chapter-6**

**Initiatives Taken by State  
Governments Across  
Country to Prevent Child  
Marriages**

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In recent times, various state governments have taken stringent steps to curb the menace of child marriage. Some of them are quite strict like Assam and Bihar while others have taken the initiative to create awareness as their main step.

**Assam:** Assam has been the strictest. On January 23, 2023, Assam's chief minister announced that the state government would launch a state-wide drive against child marriage under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) and the POCSO Act, because marrying a minor girl is not only against the law, but it also breaches the fundamental rights of a girl child and is quite dangerous to her health. In early February, a crackdown on child marriage was imposed, which by its second week resulted in 3,015 arrests. This drive had resulted in registration of 5,225 FIRs in total under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO). The Chief Minister announced that the police will retrospectively arrest those involved in child marriage in the last seven years. This found resonance with the NCPCR supporting that the action taken by Assam government against child marriages should be followed by other states as well.

**Bihar:** The Bihar government issued a directive saying that if child marriage is reported from a village, the 'mukhiya' (village head) concerned will be held responsible for the illegal act. The government will also initiate proceedings for the removal of the 'mukhiya' and ward members of the panchayat concerned, said the directive issued by the Panchayati Raj Department<sup>42</sup>.

**Jammu and Kashmir:** The government of the Jammu and Kashmir government has drafted an Act for the prohibition of child marriages through which child marriage prohibition officers will be appointed and people informing about the wedding of minors will be suitably awarded. The Act will be known as "Jammu and Kashmir Prohibition of Child Marriage Rules, 2023 under The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (Centre Act 6 of 2007). The Lieutenant Governor has empowered a number of officials in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of Section 19 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. Under new rules, child marriage prohibition officers have been designated to keep track of the weddings of minors<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, they have been asked to file a petition for annulling these weddings in district courts<sup>44</sup>.

42 NewsDesk. (2022, July 28). Village heads to be held responsible for child marriages in Bihar. *Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/patna/village-heads-to-be-held-responsible-for-child-marriages-in-bihar-8057709/>

43 Javeed, A. (2023, January 21). Govt brings new Act to stop Child Marriages in J&K. *Kashmir Observer*. <https://kashmirobservers.net/2023/01/21/govt-brings-new-act-to-stop-child-marriages-in-jk/>.

44 Hassan, F. (2023, January 19). Child marriage prohibition rules notified: J&K to annul wedding of minors; complicit priests to be prosecuted, informers to be rewarded. *The Kashmir Monitor*. <https://www.thekashmirmonitor.net/child-marriage-prohibition-rules-notified-jk-to-annul-weddings-of-minors-complicit-priests-to-be-prosecuted-informers-to-be-awarded/>.

**Karnataka:** While marriage registration is not mandatory in Karnataka, the government is empowering Panchayat Development Officers (PDO) to register marriages so that record-keeping is easier and hassle-free. This helps in maintaining a comprehensive database. Moreover, since the PDOs are closer and known to the villagers, it is easier for them to build awareness around it as well. This resulted in 2000 cases of child marriages being stopped in the state in 2021<sup>45</sup>.

**Maharashtra:** In Maharashtra in a case before the Bombay High Court listed the steps being taken by the government to fight against child marriages<sup>46</sup>. The Maharashtra government issued a notice for stricter implementation of rules, inter-department liaison and officers' training. A notice was published by state women and child development department on October 21, 2022, laying out steps to prevent child marriages called the Maharashtra Prohibition of Child Marriage Rules, 2022. If a child is absent from school for more than 15 days, school authorities need to find out the reason and inform the Child Marriage Protection officer. The officers in turn need to keep a check on school dropouts and encourage gram sabhas to pass a resolution against child marriage<sup>47</sup>.

Since the rise seen in child marriages during the pandemic, a group of grassroots workers, advocates, village sarpanch, policy makers and child welfare officers from Maharashtra, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh came together to develop an action plan for joint efforts towards curbing child marriages. Strengthening of village child protection committees is the main focus of the plan. There are also plans to allocate 10 percent of the state budget towards schemes directly related to child protection and to sensitise wedding service providers like priests, caterers, decorators, music bands and others for generating awareness.<sup>48</sup>

**Odisha:** The Odisha government's Advika – Every girl is unique scheme launched since October 2020. Through this scheme, village-level child protection committees are meeting regularly with the villagers, generating awareness about the harms of child marriages, encouraging villagers to take oaths against child marriages and sensitizing religious leaders and priests. Ganjam, the first district to be declare child marriage free made Aadhar cards mandatory for marriages to take place which made child marriages very difficult to be performed. Gajapati district has been declared child marriage free. Subarnapur came up with its own model of awareness generation and focusing on reducing school dropouts. The government plans to bring Odisha's child marriage data in the NFHS to 10 percent by 2024 and nil by 2030<sup>49</sup>. Deogarh district has shown the most efficient and effective way towards completely eliminating the practice of child marriage constitution and functioning of committees and task forces at various levels, declaring a day for children throughout the district which will focus on recording the number

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45 NewsDesk. (2022, May 3). A step that could help curb child marriages. Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/second-edit/a-step-that-could-help-curb-child-marriages-1105917.html>.

46 Dodhiya, K.A.Y. (2022, April 18). Bombay HC to state: List steps taken to prohibit child marriages in Maharashtra. *Hindustan Times*. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/bombay-hc-to-state-list-steps-taken-to-prohibit-child-marriages-in-maharashtra-101650294382881.html>.

47 Nambiar, N. (2022, November 1). WCD chief's emphasis on new rules to check child marriage. *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/wcd-chiefs-emphasis-on-new-rules-to-check-child-marriage/articleshow/95218571.cms>.

48 Das, M. (2023, April 2). To stop child marriage, Maharashtra and Gujarat eye village budgets, rope in priests and caterers. *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/to-stop-child-marriage-maharashtra-gujarat-eye-village-budgets-rope-in-priests-caterers/articleshow/99185624.cms>.

49 Pradhan, A. and Mohanty, H. (2023, February 17). Taking multi-pronged steps to check child marriages in Odisha: Govt. *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/taking-multi-pronged-steps-to-check-child-marriages-in-odisha-govt/article-show/97996568.cms>.

and reviewing the status of all children and adolescents, strengthening child advocacy through child representatives, initiating defence training for young girls to build self-confidence through a scheme called Birangana and through Suraksha Kavach – an app for tracking and protection of children<sup>50</sup>.

**Rajasthan:** Grappling with high prevalence of child marriage, the government of Rajasthan has been working to end child marriages through multi-pronged strategy. It has created an action plan to create a safe and healthy environment through a four-level ecological model of development that promotes a holistic approach which recognises not only the risk factors, but also the norms, beliefs and social and economic systems that create and sustain the conditions where child marriage thrives. The framework also recognises the respective roles that different stakeholders play to create a protective environment for children<sup>51</sup>.

**Uttarakhand:** Other states have taken rather lenient steps like the Uttarakhand government has empanelled an expert committee to examine ways for the implementation of a uniform civil code, including a review of laws governing marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, adoption and other personal laws<sup>52</sup>. This will further work towards curbing child marriages as has been seen in Karnataka.

**West Bengal:** The West Bengal government is in the process of forming child-friendly ‘sanghas’ (clusters), comprising members of self-help groups, to curb child marriage and teenage pregnancy in the state, which is the highest in the country. To stop these twin menaces, the state government has planned to form 110 child-friendly ‘sanghas’ in 87 blocks in all 23 districts of the state<sup>53</sup>. A four key district action plan against child marriage including introduction of menstrual hygiene tracker for adolescents and introduction of financial literacy module<sup>54</sup> has been drafted. Launched almost 10 years ago in October 2013, the Kanyashree Prakalpa in the state is a social protection scheme that provides conditional cash transfers and a range of non-cash interventions to prevent child marriages of young girls and to encourage them continue their education.

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50 Khandelwal, M. (2022, August 11). An all-out war against child marriage in Deogarh. Indian Masterminds. <https://indianmasterminds.com/features/change-makers/an-all-out-war-against-child-marriage-in-deogarh/>.

51 Government of Rajasthan. (2017). State Strategy and Action Plan for Prevention of Child Marriage: Towards creating a child marriage free Rajasthan.

52 Hebbar, N. (2022, May 27). Uttarakhand sets up expert panel for universal civil code implementation. The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/uttarakhand-sets-up-expert-panel-for-uniform-civil-code-implementation/article65467740.ece>

53 NewsDesk. (2022, September 10). WB govt, UNICEF rope in SHGs to stop child marriage, teenage pregnancy. Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/wb-govt-unicef-shgs-stop-child-marriage-teenage-pregnancy-8142675/>

54 Banerjee, A. (2022, June 3). Hygiene tracker, financial literacy module on cards as West Bengal joins Unicef for curb child marriage. Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/hygiene-tracker-financial-literacy-module-on-cards-as-west-bengal-joins-unicef-to-curb-child-marriage/articleshow/91983705.cms>.



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**Chapter-7**

**Access to Justice for  
Children Programme**

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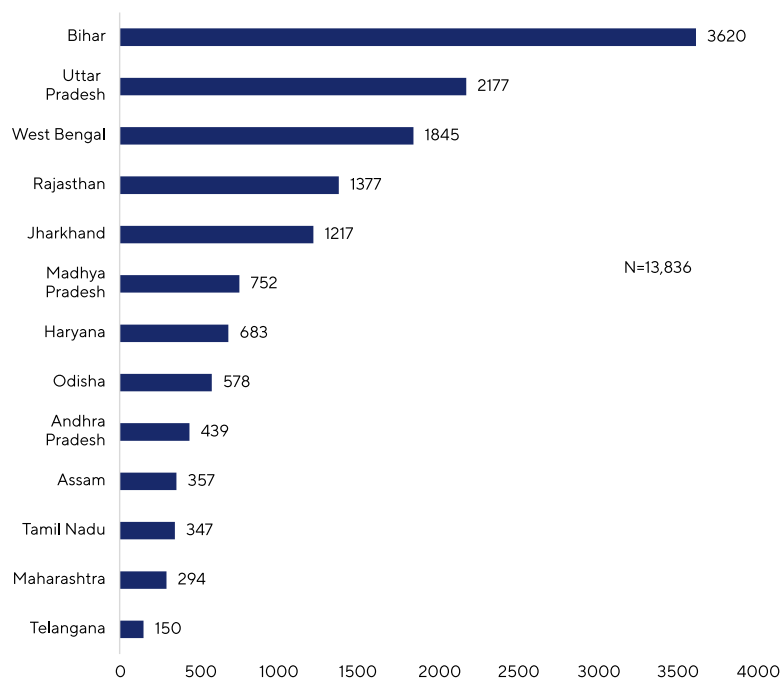




Access to Justice for Children programme was led by civil society organisations. The Program aimed at i) creating deterrence for crimes against children by ensuring perpetrators are held accountable under the criminal justice systems, ii) child victims of crimes have access to and receive rehabilitation services, including legal and mental health services to ensure their reintegration into mainstream society, and iii) generating awareness on child protection issues at scale. Incubated since August 2021, the programme was scaled up in May 2023. To bring about the behaviour change required to have a lasting and sustainable impact on child protection, the programme during this phase has been working to ensure implementation of current policies, schemes, and laws in three thematic areas. This phase of the Access to Justice for Children Programme was operational in 265 districts spread across 17 States and UTs. Access to Justice for Children is implemented in partnership with 161 civil society organisations. A further scale-up phase has been initiated to target more than 400 districts across the country, since May 2024 with 176 partner organisations.

Child Marriage Free India (CMFI) a nationwide campaign under the Access to Justice for Children programme led by women activists, village leaders, and partner organisations, was launched to address the issue of child marriage at the village level in 2022. CMFI is working to attain the tipping point of child marriage aimed at reducing it to 5.5 percent by 2030 from the current national prevalence rate of 23.3 percent<sup>55</sup>. This is calculated as the point beyond which child marriages will organically become redundant in Indian society.

**Figure 3. Legal interventions initiated in Child Marriage cases under Access to Justice Programme**



**Note:** Child marriage incidences in the database that lacked corroborating documentation were not considered for this graphic (*details of 301 cases of 14,137 are not considered for this graphic*).

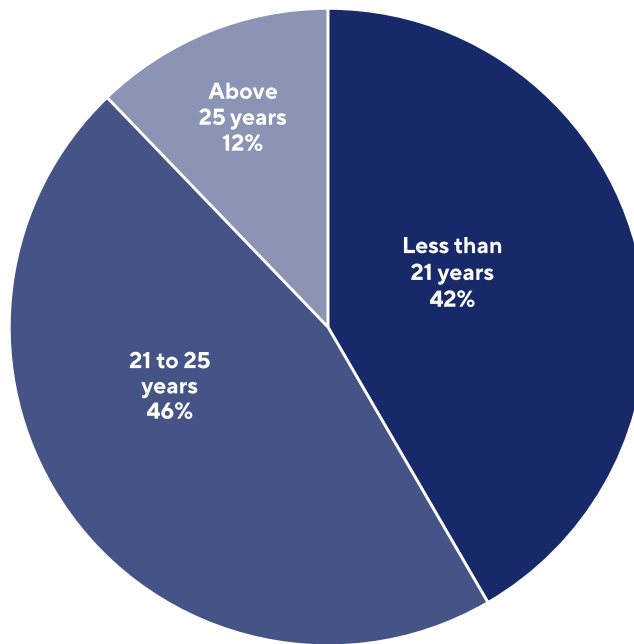
55 Ribhu B. (2023) When Children have Children: Tipping Point to End Child Marriages. Prabhat Prakashan. New Delhi.

The Child Marriage Free India (CMFI) campaign in 2023-24 has successfully prevented 73,501 child marriages. Of these, 14,137 cases were prevented through legal interventions such as the filing of FIR's, GD entries, injunctions issued by courts, orders issued by the CWC (Bench of Magistrates) and undertakings taken in the presence of government officials/police/PRI members. In the rest of the cases (59,364), marriages were stopped with the help of village panchayats.

### Age profile of Child Marriage

A sample of 2436 child marriage successfully stopped by NGOs was analysed to ascertain the age profile of bridegroom and the girl child. Findings suggest in 42 percent of the cases the boys were also a victim of child marriage and in 58 percent cases the boy was over 21 years of age. In almost two thirds of cases the victims were going to be married to boys above 21 years, where the age difference was over 3 years. In 12 percent cases the same was over 7 years with the groom being over 25 years and above. This clearly establishes that majority cases of child marriages are instances of exploiting the vulnerability of the girl child with older men taking advantage of their position of authority and the vulnerability of these girls.

**Figure 4. Age Distribution of Partners of Girls Married Below 18 Years of Age**



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**Chapter-8**

**Child Marriage Situation  
in Villages of Assam**

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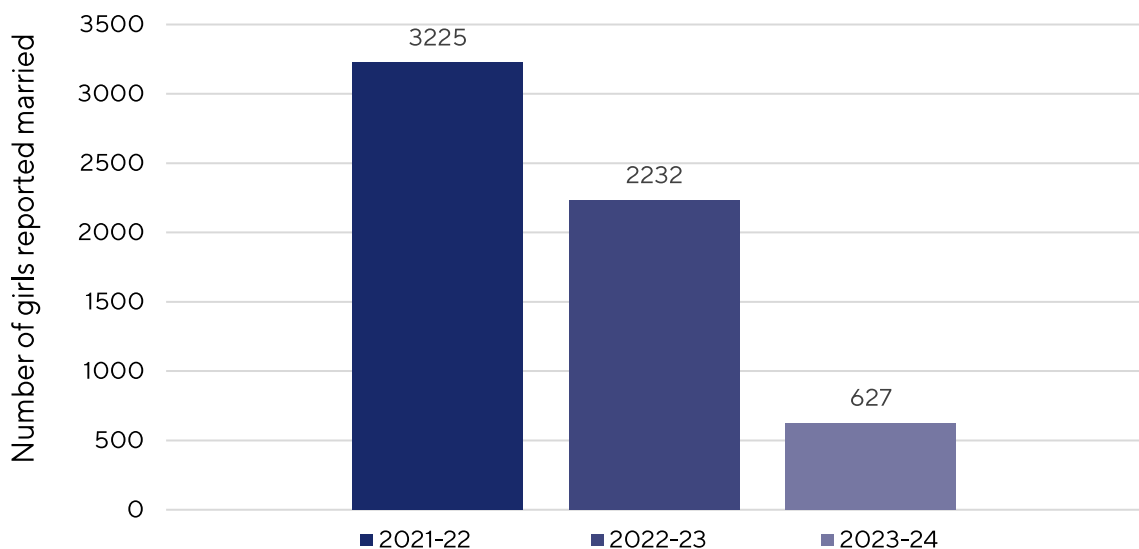
In response to the persistent issue of child marriage, various state governments have implemented diverse measures. Notably, Assam has taken stringent actions under PCMA and the POCSO Act.

On January 23, 2023, the Chief Minister of Assam announced a state-wide campaign against child marriage, emphasizing that it violates fundamental rights and poses serious health risks to minor girls. By early February, **this initiative resulted in 3,015 arrests**, including retrospective actions against individuals involved in child marriages over the past seven years, even if the spouses are now adults with children. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) endorsed these measures, urging other states to follow Assam’s example in combatting child marriages.

As a part of this present study the research team at India Child Protection conducted a survey across 20 districts and 1,132 villages in Assam, involving 1,132 community members, to assess their perceptions and views on child marriage in their respective villages as well as to understand the impact of prosecution on cases of child marriage post the initiative taken by the CM of Assam in 2023. **Result shows that since 2021-2024 there has been a significant (81%) drop in the cases of child marriage.** The stringent enforcement actions and the clear message of zero tolerance for child marriage likely contributed to the substantial reduction in reported cases by creating a strong deterrent effect.

Overall, the data reflects a promising trend towards the reduction of child marriages. It emphasises the critical role of legislative measures, community awareness programs, and strict enforcement in addressing and mitigating the issue. Continued efforts in these areas are essential to sustain and further this positive trajectory, ultimately aiming for the complete eradication of child marriage.

**Figure 5. Number of girls reported married before turning 18 years (2021-24)**

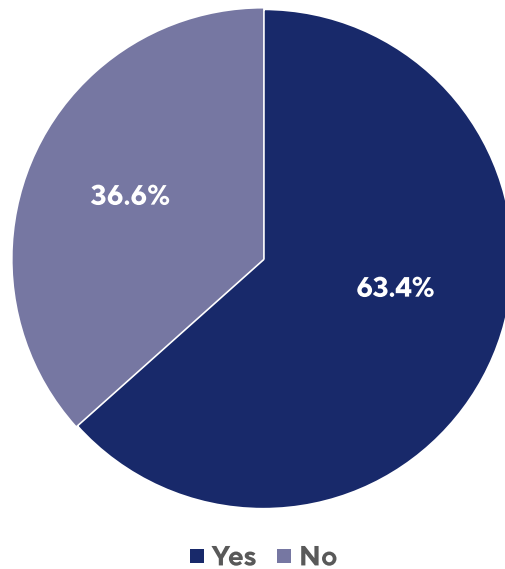


**Table 5. District wise percent change in the number of girls reported marriage from 2021-2024**

Districts	Number of girls reported married before turning 18 (child marriages) 2021-22	Number of girls reported married before turning 18 (child marriages) 2022-23	Number of girls reported married before turning 18 (child marriages) 2023-24	Percent change 2021-22 to 2023-24
Baksa	50	60	30	-40%
Cachar	69	17	10	-86%
Chirang	59	19	6	-90%
Darrang	824	619	23	-97%
Dhubri	452	281	99	-78%
Dibrugarh	26	2	5	-81%
Goalpara	13	40	14	8%
Golaghat	36	45	20	-44%
Hailakandi	188	140	18	-90%
Jorhat	36	15	0	-100%
Kamrup	382	280	95	-75%
Kamrup Metro	0	2	0	0%
Lakhimpur	23	16	12	-48%
Majuli	68	68	26	-62%
Marigaon	5	11	1	-80%
Nagaon	16	5	0	-100%
Nalbari	44	35	18	-59%
Sonitpur	809	499	199	-75%
Udalguri	76	46	13	-83%
West Karbi Anglong	49	32	38	-22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3225</b>	<b>2232</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>-81%</b>

During the survey, respondents were specifically queried about the prevalence of child marriage within their respective villages prior to 2023, a time frame that acts as a benchmark against which the impacts of the state government's intervention on child marriage can be assessed. The results of the analysis reveal that a majority, nearly two-thirds (63%), of the respondents acknowledged the existence of child marriage as a pressing issue in their village.

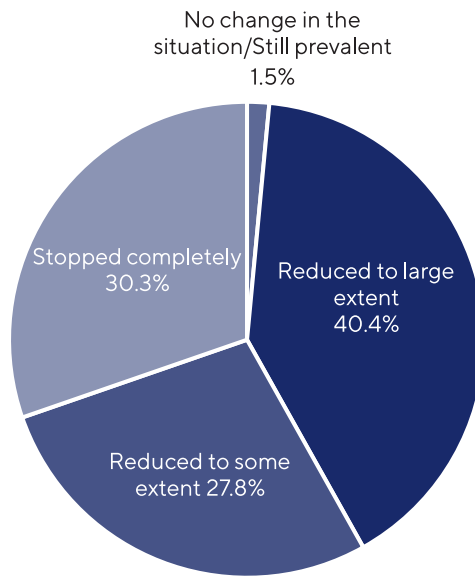
**Figure 6. Prevalence of child marriage in villages prior to 2023**



Regardless of the respondents' perception of child marriage as a problem within their village, all respondents were asked regarding the present status of child marriage in their villages. Among them, **40 percent reported witnessing a significant reduction in child marriages**. An additional 28 percent felt that there has been a reduction to some extent, while **30 percent believed that child marriage has been completely halted**. Less than two percent of the respondents believed that there has been no change in child marriage while 28 percent believed that there has been some change. The responses indicate a positive trend towards the reduction of child marriage, with most respondents observing at least some decline. The fact that 30 percent of respondents believe child marriage has been completely halted suggests that recent legislative and enforcement measures, such as those implemented in Assam, are having a tangible impact on communities. This underscores the importance of continued efforts and vigilance to sustain and further these gains in the fight against child marriage.



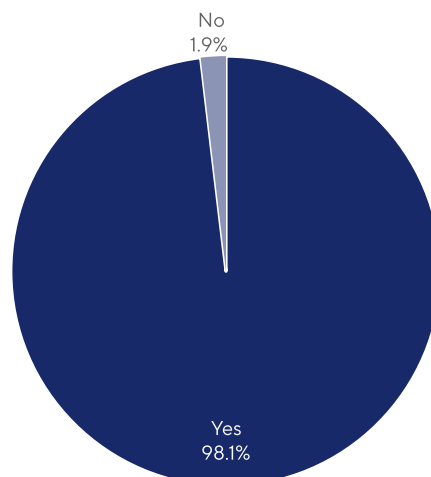
**Figure 7. Percentage share of current situation of child marriage in the village**

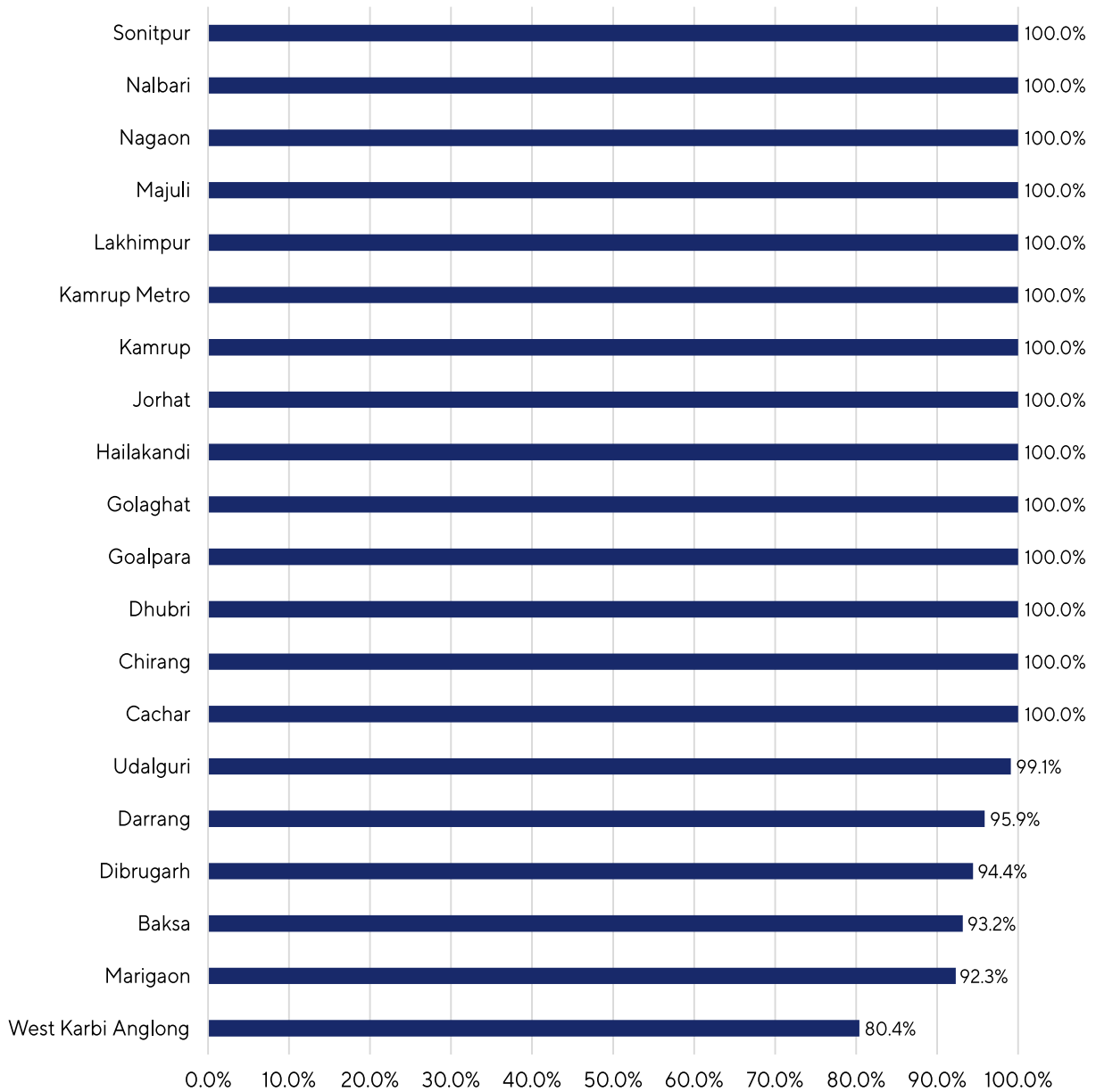


Further during the survey, respondents were asked whether the steps taken by the Assam Government against child marriage in 2023 were impactful in reducing the number of child marriages in their villages. The figure below depicts community perceptions of the government's efforts to prevent child marriage. Out of all the replies from 20 districts, **almost all respondents (98%) believe that the state government's 2023 actions against child marriage had a significant impact on the decline in the number of child marriages in their villages.**

The overwhelming majority of respondents acknowledging the impact of the Assam Government's 2023 actions highlights the effectiveness of stringent enforcement measures in curbing child marriage. This community validation reinforces the need for sustained and rigorous intervention strategies to address and eliminate child marriage comprehensively. The positive perception also suggests that such governmental initiatives can serve as a model for other regions facing similar challenges.

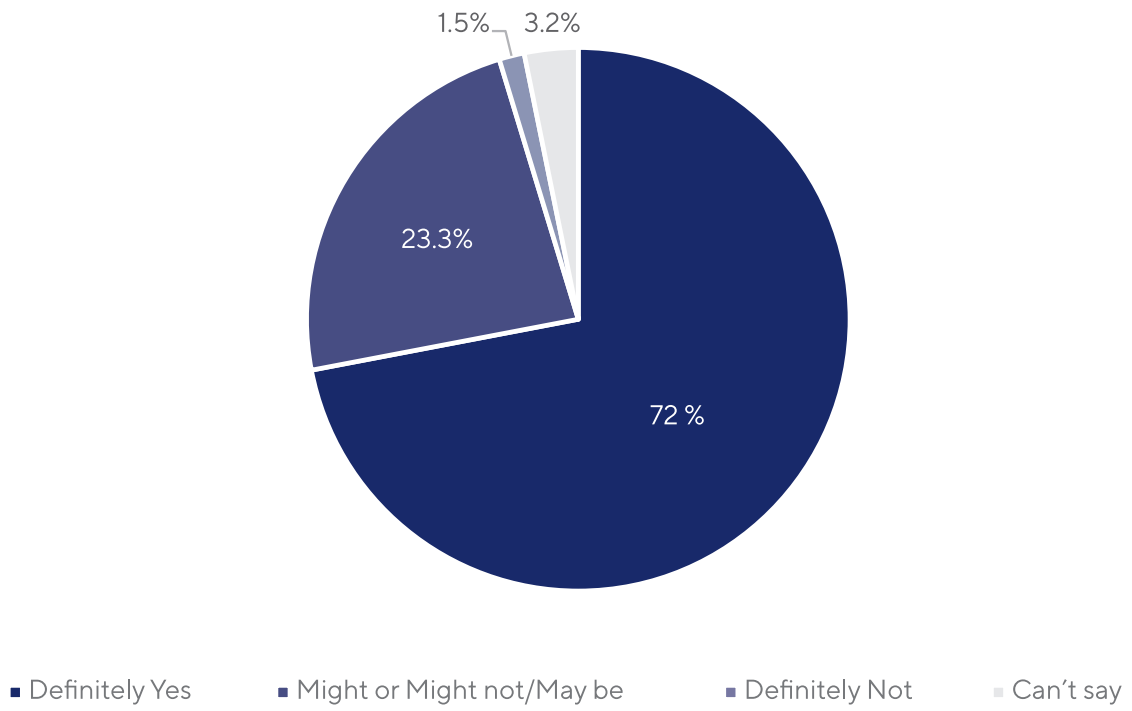
**Figure 8. Community response to government action against child marriage**



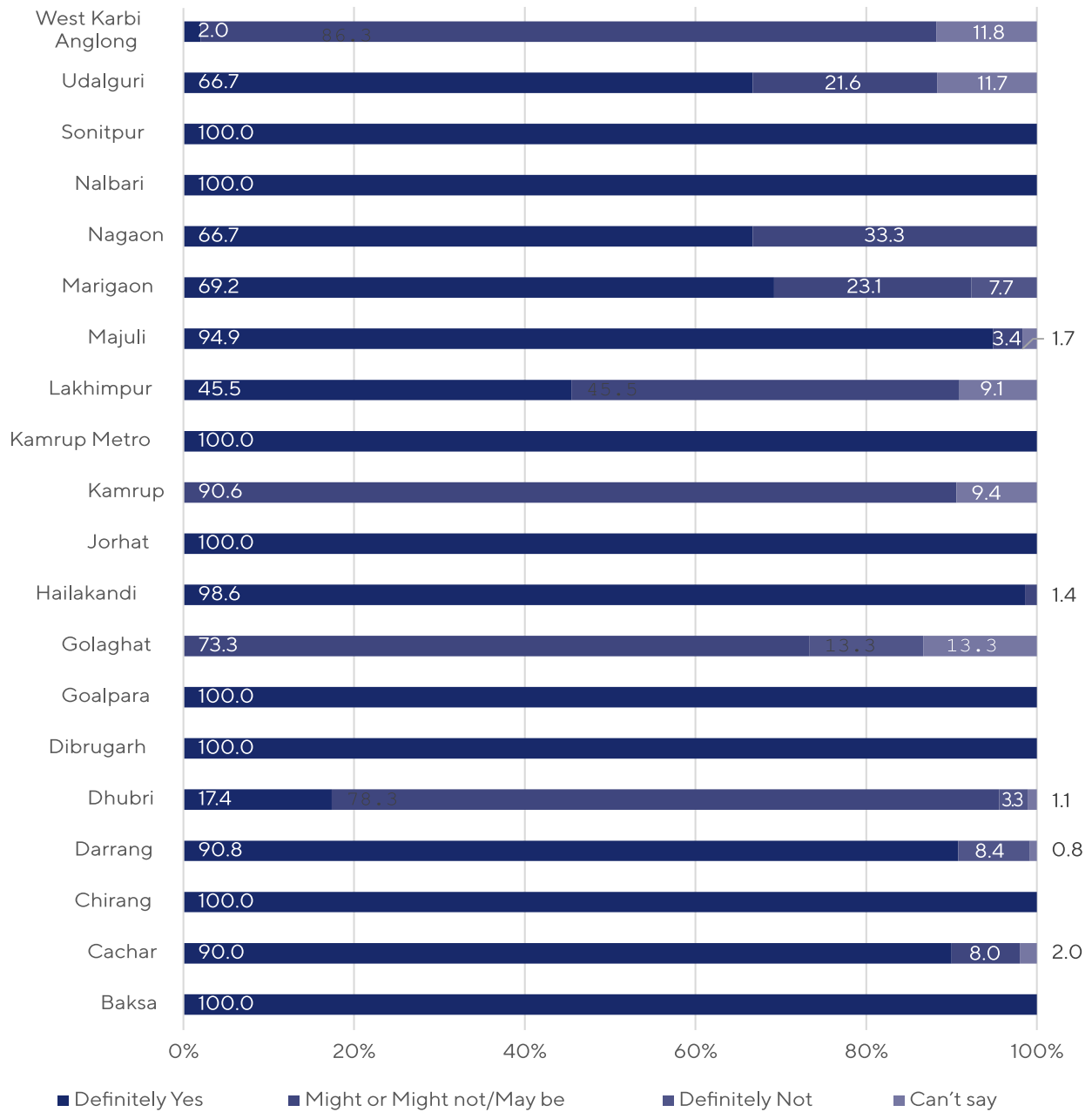
**Figure 8a. District wise community response to government action against child marriage**

During the survey, respondents were asked whether arresting people and filing FIRs (police complaints) in cases of child marriage will help in reduction of child marriages in village. The table below presents that almost **72 percent of the respondents believes that arresting people and filing FIRs (police complaints) in cases of child marriage is likely to reduce the cases of child marriage** with almost 12 districts stating more than 90 percent. Respondents from some of the districts such as Kamrup, West Karbi Anglong and Golaghat states that police complaints are less likely to reduce the cases of child marriage. And almost one-fourth of the respondents believes that police action might or might not be helpful in reducing the cases of child marriage.

**Figure 9. Importance of Prosecution in Ending Child Marriages**



**Figure 9a. District wise importance of Prosecution in Ending Child Marriages**



The data suggests strong support for legal interventions, such as arrests and filing FIRs, in combating child marriage, particularly in districts where over 90 percent of respondents see them as effective. This endorsement highlights the community’s recognition of the deterrent effect of stringent enforcement measures. However, the mixed responses from districts like Kamrup, West Karbi Anglong, and Golaghat indicate that the effectiveness of these measures may vary based on local contexts and perceptions. The significant portion of respondents who are uncertain about the impact of police actions underscores the need for a multifaceted approach, combining legal enforcement with awareness and educational campaigns to effectively eradicate child marriage.



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**Chapter-9**

**Strategies to Eradicate  
Child Marriage**

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The PICKET strategy serves as a roadmap for the actions that different stakeholders can take to influence the decision to end child marriage in India. The PICKET strategy was proposed by Ribhu (2023)<sup>56</sup>, brings decades of work on policies, investments, convergence, knowledge, ecosystems, and technology, with the government and law enforcement agencies, judiciary, community members, civil society groups (including intergovernmental and philanthropic organisations), businesses and child victims of abuse and marriage and their families. The strategy underlines the priority and urgency required to catalyse the elimination of child marriage in the country and proposes, at scale, what is required to be done.

- P.** Advocate for the effective implementation and enforcement of existing laws and policies that prohibit child marriage, including strict penalties for offenders of the law. Make PCMA, 2006 as a special act overpowering all personal laws on matters relating to child marriage. File complaint with the police under appropriate legal provisions and punish the perpetrators to send a strong signal in the society that marrying children is illegal and there is no impunity for violating the law. Motivate law enforcement agencies to take appropriate steps and prompt action against each reported case. Promote birth and marriage registration systems to establish legal proof of age, ensuring that marriages involving minors are easily identified and prevented. Collaborate with local governments and community leaders to raise awareness about the importance of registration.
- I.** Establish robust institutions to effectively respond to child marriage cases. This involves strengthening child protection agencies, women's commissions, and specialized units dedicated to combating child marriage. Establish community-based committees to intervene and prevent child marriage, particularly in rural areas where the practice is prevalent. Collaborate with local NGOs and civil society organisations to reach out to communities and prevent child marriages through awareness-raising and advocating for policy change. They should also ensure that survivors of child marriage have access to legal aid and counselling.
- C.** Provide comprehensive sexuality education in schools, including information on the negative consequences of child marriage, gender equality, and reproductive health rights. Conduct awareness campaigns in communities, targeting parents, religious leaders, and community influencers, to challenge social norms that perpetuate child marriage. Provide training to teachers, healthcare professionals, police, and community leaders on identifying and reporting cases of child marriage. Train them in providing support and protective services to child brides and grooms, including counselling and access to legal aid. Empower girls and young women to become agents of change within their communities through mentoring and leadership programmes.

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56 *ibid*



- K.** Invest in research to gather accurate and up-to-date data on the prevalence, causes, and consequences of child marriage in different regions of India. Use this data to inform policies, interventions, and prevention strategies, targeting high-risk areas. Document best practices and lessons learned in preventing child marriage in different communities and share the information through various platforms. Develop and distribute educational materials, including brochures, posters, and audio-visual resources, to educate communities about the harmful effects of child marriage. Use various channels, such as schools, community centres, and media, to disseminate this knowledge widely.
  
- E.** Provide incentives for families to keep girls in school, such as cash transfers, scholarships, and microfinance. Promote skill development programs and vocational training to empower girls and boys with employable skills, enhancing their economic prospects and improving the perceived value of the investment in their education. Promote investments in girls' and women's education and economic advancement to combat poverty and increase social mobility. Promote economic independence and empowerment as alternatives to early marriage.
  
- T.** Use digital platforms and devices to deliver information, education, services, and support to girls at risk of or affected by child marriage. This could include mobile phones, social media, online platforms, apps, games, e-learning modules, etc. that provide girls with access to health care, legal aid, counselling, peer networks, etc. Ensure the privacy and safety of users through secure and confidential platforms. Leverage technology and data analytics to identify high-risk areas and patterns of child marriage. Monitor social media platforms and websites for online discussions and advertisements related to child marriage, enabling swift intervention.

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**Chapter-10**  
**Conclusions &**  
**Recommendations**

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Despite legal prohibitions and efforts to eradicate this practice, child marriages continue to persist across states due to a complex interplay of cultural, social, economic, and religious factors. Estimates suggest that every day, more than 4,000 girls (below the age of 18) are getting married in India. It is, however, highly unfortunate that, despite such a staggering number of child marriages, the total number of child marriage cases registered under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) is extremely low. The latest crime in India report suggests that on average only 3 cases of child marriage were registered in 2022, which is nothing as compared to the staggering number of child marriage incidences in the country.

The investigation and prosecution of child marriage cases are critical components in the fight against this pervasive and harmful practice. Firstly, thorough and timely investigations serve as a deterrent, signalling to communities that child marriage is a serious offense with tangible legal consequences. When perpetrators are held accountable, it sends a clear message that child marriage will not be tolerated and that the law will protect vulnerable children from exploitation.

Secondly, effective prosecution is essential to provide justice and support to the victims. Child marriage often leads to severe physical, psychological, and emotional harm for the affected children. A robust legal response ensures that victims receive the necessary protection, support services. Furthermore, prosecuting child marriage cases helps in dismantling the systemic issues that perpetuate this practice. By holding individuals and, in some cases, communities accountable, the legal system can challenge and change the societal norms and practices that sustain child marriage. This contributes to broader social change, encouraging communities to adopt practices that respect and uphold children's rights. The data from 2018 to 2022 clearly demonstrates that delays and backlogs in investigations severely undermine these efforts. The low number of completed investigations relative to the number of new cases registered each year highlights systemic inefficiencies that must be addressed. Strengthening investigative processes and ensuring timely prosecutions are essential steps in reducing the incidence of child marriage and protecting the rights of children. Therefore, it is imperative that we prioritise the improvement of investigative and prosecutorial mechanisms in child marriage cases. By doing so, it can be ensured that the justice system serves as an effective tool for eradicating child marriage and safeguarding the future of vulnerable children.

## Recommendations

It is the primary responsibility of any protection mechanism to ensure that the most vulnerable members, in particular, the children are safe and free from harm. The recalcitrant and outrageous practice of child marriage is the abject failure of a just society. It is the corrosion of the child protection systems, the justice delivery mechanisms, and the education and health structures.

These recommendations are brought out through a process of rigorous data collection and analysis, and real-world experiences of the frontline activists, support persons, lawyers, child protection officers, law enforcement officials, district administrations and grassroots organisations enmeshed in the child protection ecosystem. These action points are based on the grounded experience and results from more than 160 organisations committed and working to end child marriages in India by 2030.

***Since data from Assam has shown a significant reduction in the incidence of child marriage, the experience of Assam needs to be replicated across India, especially in the 322 districts where the child marriage prevalence is over 20 percent.***

The following recommendations are drawn from the data collected from the villages of Assam that identify legal interventions and reforms that are necessary in support of a tipping scale that makes child marriages redundant.

- Fast track special courts should be created to clear backlog of child marriage cases
- As there has been a significant increase in the awareness amongst people through the pledges been taken across the country on the initiatives of the state government, such experiences towards a child marriage free India should continue
- Selected NGO, Child welfare committee and PRI bodies to be also recognised as Child Marriage Prohibition Officer

In addition to the above recommendations, the following suggestions are provided to ensure the efficient delivery of justice and the eradication of child marriage in India. These measures aim to strengthen legal enforcement and support mechanisms to protect children from such practices.

### **1. Strengthened Policies and implementation of the Law**

- Enhanced punishment for priests, caterers, wedding bands and other institutions
- In cases where an undertaking has been given by parents/guardians/panchayats the punishment should be doubled and should be treated at par with criminal conspiracy for rape
- As long as personal laws prevail, the judicial interpretations might sanction child marriages and not curb them. *Making the Prohibition of Child Marriages Act 2006, a special act would supersede the personal laws, creating the much needed just and universal child protection system that treats all children equally and have homogeneous benchmarks for justice delivery and redressal.*

- Create rehabilitation framework for children who wish to annul their marriages, including alternative institutional care and scholarships. with the provision of a stipend or fellowship as necessary.
- The current laws to be amended to include the following:
  - a. Attempt to marry a child to be made a criminal offence
  - b. Trafficking for the purpose of marriage to be made a separate offense
  - c. Enhance criminal justice and include mandatory reporting to challenge cases of child marriage
  - d. Nation-wide campaign to make registration of child marriage mandatory. Hold panchayats and municipalities accountable for preventing child marriages and for maintaining and registering all marriages at the village and municipal levels.

### **Rehabilitation of victims of child marriage**

- Specific provision for rehabilitation of victims/survivors of child marriage to be treated at par with the survivors of child sexual abuse
- Special scheme on skill development and economic stability for women victims of child marriage if they opt out of child marriage

## **2 Strong, invested and motivated Institutions**

- The centrality of the Child Marriage Prohibition Officers for prohibiting and preventing child marriages is crucial, and therefore, across all districts in India, the CMPOs must be notified. Along with their notifications, special capacity building drives will support their skills and motivation.
- Investing in child protection institutions, and education and healthcare systems build layers of systems and institutions working to prevent and protect children from abuse and exploitation and provide legal and mental health support for girls in child marriages.
- Infrastructure to support girls at imminent risks of marriages, like institutional alternative care and residential educational facilities are urgently needed to stop their marriages, abuse and exploitation, and provide them with resilient alternatives.
- Incentives in the form of conditional cash transfers have shown impact in communities to keep girls in schools delaying marriage decisions. Universalization of these to at-risk families has the potential to stop child marriages, and trafficking and abuse of girls for both labour and sexual exploitation.
- Institutionalisation Juvenile Justice Fund constituted under Section 105 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, by State Governments and utilisation of Fund for providing scholarships to girls who are at imminent risk of marriage/whose marriages are annulled.
- Linking social welfare schemes with undertaking by parents for not getting their daughters married before they attain legal age of marriage.

### **3. Capacity building, convergence and continuity of services and community participation**

- Promoting the capacity and agency of children, particularly girls is the basic for changing social norms to address the multi-faceted forms of gender inequality and providing the required lift to vulnerable communities for lasting impact.
- Providing comprehensive sexuality education in schools, including information on the negative consequences of child marriage, gender equality, and reproductive health rights, targets both the agency and capacity of children to resist child marriages, and the opportunity to accelerate efforts to empower women and girls to change gender norms in community settings.
- Convergence and continuity of services for vulnerable and at-risk communities, and inter-departmental cooperation and coordination of schemes and programmes for girl child education, prohibits and prevents child marriages, bolstering a safety net for children and their families. The continuous interventions in at-risk communities over extended periods of time ensures long-term outcomes for the children and their families, dismantling the root-causes of child marriages.
- Awareness campaigns and community participation, targeting parents, teachers, religious leaders, healthcare workers, and community influencers, challenges established social and gender norms that perpetuate child marriage, and underscores the importance of engaging men and boys in interventions that seek to facilitate broad changes.

### **4. Enhancing Knowledge-driven decisions and implementation**

- Investments in research and studies to gather accurate and real-time data on prevalence and interventions that show impact and change on the ground in communities.
- Increased use to data and evidence-driven decision making on policies and programmes will contribute to the growing multi-dimensional knowledge base on child protection and gender equality.
- Documenting good practices across all aspect of policy change, interventions, researches, capacity building, use of technology and others, gives significant insights on outcomes and impact on ground.

### **5. Free and Quality Education for All, and Livelihoods**

- Greater recognition and importance of education for all children, especially girls education as a justification for delaying girls' marriage cannot be overemphasised. The singular significance of education to support children's rights and child protection, needs amending the Right to Free and Compulsory Education, 2009 to provide free education till age 18 years (up to Grade 12) for all children. This pivotal change can accelerate the tipping point on ending child marriages in India.
- With education, skills and livelihoods training for young people will build young peoples' financial independence, create employable skills and lift the economic prospects of families, creating a buffer against the economic incentives of child marriages.

## 6. Technology

- Central Portal run by Ministry of Home Affairs to report child marriage with an urgent “Rapid Action Response Protocol”.
- Using technology for awareness campaigns, supporting and monitoring programme interventions, augmenting education and skills outreach, are some of the known methods. Others including the use of machine learning and artificial intelligence needs explorations in support of child protection and creating a safe and harm-free ecosystem for children.
- Implementation of a technology-driven monitoring system to track daily attendance and prevent dropouts among school-going girls up to the 12th grade. Frame policies, enabling real-time attendance data analysis and intervention when irregularities occur.

These recommendations prime the discourse and emphasize the urgency in action to end child marriage. They are posited as starting points to drive the justice delivery mechanism to make child marriages, and thereby, child rapes under the garb of child marriages, a crime that finds no tolerance in society.





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# Annexure

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## List of High Child Marriage Prevalence Districts

(Child Marriage prevalence  $\geq 20\%$  as per NFHS-5 Estimates)

Sl. No.	State	District	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-4	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-5	All India Dist. Rank of Child Marriage Prevalence
1	Andhra Pradesh	Anantapur	29.0	37.3	78
2		Chittoor	26.6	28.1	178
3		East Godavari	31.6	26.0	219
4		Guntur (Bapatla)	38.9	35.4	95
5		Krishna (NTR)	31.4	25.3	226
6		Kurnool	43.5	36.9	85
7		Prakasam	46.1	37.3	79
8		Sri Potti Sriramulu Nellore	38.7	23.8	252
9		Srikakulam	23.5	25.4	222
10		Visakhapatnam (Anakapalli)	29.2	25.4	223
11		Vizianagaram	29.6	33.7	111
12		West Godavari	30.1	22.1	277
13		Y.S.R.	28.2	25.6	220
14	Arunachal Pradesh	Anjaw	26.4	21.8	283
15		Dibang Valley	19.1	20.7	308
16		East Kameng	34.6	26.5	212
17		Kra Daadi	#N/A	24.8	240
18		Lohit	31.9	20.0	321
19		Namsai	#N/A	26.7	208
20		Papum Pare	#N/A	25.4	224
21	Upper Subansiri	31.1	26.7	209	
22	Assam	Baksa	27.4	24.9	237
23		Barpeta	43.2	40.1	60
24		Biswanath	#N/A	25.3	227
25		Bongaigaon	41.5	41.7	55
26		Cachar (Silchar)	16.9	29.9	156
27		Charaideo	#N/A	22.6	272
28		Chirang	32.4	30.9	142
29		Darrang	37.4	42.8	43
30		Dhemaji	36.2	32.0	132
31		Dhubri	46.2	50.8	13
32		Dibrugarh	26.9	23.0	262
33		Goalpara	35.8	41.8	53
34		Golaghat	27.7	20.7	309
35		Hailakandi	22.9	32.9	119
36		Hojai	#N/A	30.9	143
37		Jorhat	20.7	24.9	238
38		Kamrup	31.0	21.9	278
39		Kamrup Metropolitan	21.7	21.9	279
40		Karbi Anglong	25.7	26.1	218
41		Karimganj	31.0	27.7	192
42		Kokrajhar	40.9	36.2	90
43		Lakhimpur	24.9	36.3	89
44		Majuli	#N/A	25.5	221
45		Morigaon	46.0	39.1	69
46		Nagaon	35.6	42.6	46
47		Nalbari	25.2	28.1	179
48		Sivasagar	28.2	27.9	188
49		Sonitpur	23.8	24.0	249

Sl. No.	State	District	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-4	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-5	All India Dist. Rank of Child Marriage Prevalence
50	Assam	South Salmara Mancach	#N/A	44.7	38
51		Udalguri	28.6	32.0	133
52		West Karbi Anglong	#N/A	21.3	293
53	Bihar	Araria	48.9	52.0	6
54		Arwal	41.5	37.5	76
55		Aurangabad	34.2	27.3	199
56		Banka	48.0	49.4	19
57		Begusarai	57.9	49.5	18
58		Bhagalpur	29.7	42.4	50
59		Bhojpur	34.9	31.2	140
60		Buxar	37.5	30.8	145
61		Darbhanga	44.3	45.1	35
62		Gaya	54.4	42.8	44
63		Gopalganj	30.8	28.0	185
64		Jamui	60.2	51.9	8
65		Jehanabad	42.6	41.6	56
66		Kaimur (Bhabua)	37.7	27.1	200
67		Katihar	39.2	49.4	20
68		Khagaria	50.4	44.9	36
69		Kishanganj	25.4	36.6	86
70		Lakhisarai	48.7	56.1	2
71		Madhepura	58.6	52.0	7
72		Madhubani	42.7	39.2	66
73		Munger	36.9	34.7	103
74		Muzaffarpur	36.5	32.9	120
75		Nalanda	44.6	42.0	51
76		Nawada	53.1	43.3	41
77		Pashchim Champaran	44.0	39.1	70
78		Patna	29.1	26.6	211
79		Purba Champaran	44.1	49.2	21
80		Purnia	39.0	51.2	11
81		Rohtas	38.3	30.3	151
82		Saharsa	42.7	51.0	12
83		Samastipur	52.3	49.8	17
84		Saran	30.0	26.2	217
85		Sheikhpura	50.8	46.1	30
86	Sheohar	51.1	34.6	104	
87	Sitamarhi	51.3	46.8	27	
88	Siwan	24.7	21.3	294	
89	Supaul	60.8	55.9	3	
90	Vaishali	47.8	44.9	37	
91	Chhattisgarh	Balrampur	41.5	24.6	244
92		Jashpur	31.8	21.9	280
93		Koriya	#N/A	22.9	264
94		Mungeli	#N/A	20.5	312
95		Surajpur	#N/A	34.3	106

Sl. No.	State	District	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-4	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-5	All India Dist. Rank of Child Marriage Prevalence
96	Gujarat	Anand	27.4	28.0	186
97		Aravali	#N/A	27.0	203
98		Banas Kantha	#N/A	37.3	80
99		Chhota Udaipur	#N/A	27.5	196
100		Dohad	32.8	29.9	157
101		Gandhinagar	50.4	32.6	122
102		Kheda	41.7	49.2	22
103		Mahesana	32.6	32.3	127
104		Mahisagar	#N/A	30.7	147
105		Narmada	33.1	29.5	163
106		Gujarat	Panch Mahals	#N/A	34.1
107	Patan		35.0	35.4	96
108	Sabar Kantha		#N/A	27.0	204
109	Tapi		17.2	25.3	228
110	The Dangs		37.6	30.2	154
111	Vadodara		24.0	22.8	267
112	Haryana	Gurgaon	36.5	20.7	310
113		Mewat	40.0	28.7	169
114		Palwal	29.1	23.8	253
115	Himachal Pradesh	Kinnaur	22.5	27.9	189
116	Jharkhand	Bokaro	30.6	26.3	215
117		Chatra	49.0	31.7	136
118		Deoghar	52.3	49.2	23
119		Dhanbad	29.9	28.3	172
120		Dumka	47.4	43.1	42
121		Garhwa	58.8	31.3	137
122		Giridih	52.6	45.6	33
123		Godda	63.5	48.5	25
124		Gumla	24.0	20.9	301
125		Hazaribagh	40.8	38.6	73
126		Jamtara	43.9	50.5	14
127		Khunti	27.8	21.7	285
128		Kodarma	50.4	42.5	48
129		Latehar	37.1	32.2	128
130		Lohardaga	28.5	21.9	281
131		Pakur	41.1	43.4	40
132		Palamu	39.9	35.4	97
133		Pashchimi Singhbhum	21.3	24.4	245
134		Ramgarh	27.7	25.1	231
135		Ranchi	27.8	20.9	302
136	Sahibganj	37.7	39.9	61	

Sl. No.	State	District	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-4	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-5	All India Dist. Rank of Child Marriage Prevalence
137	Karnataka	Bagalkot	32.2	38.7	72
138		Belgaum	35.7	32.8	121
139		Bellary	29.2	22.2	276
140		Bijapur	17.3	39.2	67
141		Chikkaballapura	20.1	27.1	201
142		Chitradurga	20.2	20.7	311
143		Gadag	25.1	27.7	193
144		Gulbarga	27.0	29.8	158
145		Kolar	19.4	26.7	210
146		Koppal	35.9	27.1	202
147		Raichur	26.3	21.9	282
148		Tumkur	17.1	24.8	241
149		Yadgir	29.6	33.2	117
150		Madhya Pradesh	Agar Malwa	#N/A	35.6
151	Alirajpur		37.9	30.7	148
152	Ashoknagar		35.4	29.7	159
153	Barwani		43.1	29.6	160
154	Bhind		33.4	25.1	232
155	Chhatarpur		47.3	39.2	68
156	Damoh		40.0	28.6	170
157	Datia		38.8	27.7	194
158	Dewas		37.4	28.1	180
159	Dhar		32.4	26.5	213
160	Dindori		37.2	21.1	298
161	Madhya Pradesh	Guna	36.3	28.1	181
162		Indore	23.4	21.7	286
163		Jhabua	54.5	36.5	88
164		Mandsaur	54.0	34.8	102
165		Morena	27.9	27.8	191
166		Neemuch	37.6	29.3	165
167		Panna	30.6	22.8	268
168		Rajgarh	47.8	46.0	31
169		Ratlam	47.8	31.3	138
170		Rewa	37.3	28.2	175
171		Sagar	38.1	21.4	290
172		Sehore	37.3	21.7	287
173		Shahdol	40.1	27.5	197
174		Shajapur	47.2	24.4	246
175		Sheopur	37.5	39.5	64
176		Shivpuri	36.9	32.5	125
177		Sidhi	44.5	23.0	263
178		Singrauli	38.4	24.7	243
179	Tikamgarh	49.5	32.6	123	
180	Ujjain	45.5	33.4	115	
181	Umari	37.0	21.2	296	
182	Vidisha	45.9	22.8	269	

Sl. No.	State	District	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-4	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-5	All India Dist. Rank of Child Marriage Prevalence
183	Maharashtra	Ahmadnagar	39.0	26.9	206
184		Aurangabad	34.2	35.8	91
185		Bid	51.3	43.7	39
186		Buldana	37.7	24.1	247
187		Dhule	34.0	40.5	58
188		Hingoli	41.2	37.1	82
189		Jalgaon	34.2	28.0	187
190		Jalna	49.9	35.0	99
191		Kolhapur	30.9	21.0	300
192		Latur	37.1	31.0	141
193		Nanded	43.1	32.2	129
194		Nandurbar	22.9	24.0	250
195		Nashik	32.0	29.6	161
196		Osmanabad	31.1	36.6	87
197		Parbhani	44.5	48.0	26
198		Pune	24.5	24.0	251
199		Sangli	27.0	27.0	205
200		Solapur	35.6	40.3	59
201		Washim	26.9	27.7	195
202		Manipur	Bishnupur	14.7	20.9
203	Chandel		18.6	22.3	274
204	Meghalaya	East Jantia Hills	#N/A	25.3	229
205		Ribhoi	20.6	20.3	315
206		South West Khasi Hill	#N/A	21.6	288
207		West Khasi Hills	24.0	30.3	152
208	Nagaland	Kiphire	16.8	22.5	273
209	Nagar Haveli And Daman & Diu	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	27.5	30.0	155
210		Daman	30.5	22.8	270
211	Odisha	Anugul	22.0	25.0	234
212		Baleshwar	25.9	26.4	214
213		Baudh	23.4	25.3	230
214		Dhenkanal	25.4	23.7	254
215		Gajapati	25.3	28.1	182
216		Ganjam	29.8	22.3	275
217	Odisha	Kandhamal	22.1	20.0	322
218		Kendujhar	27.6	29.0	166
219		Koraput	34.7	35.5	94
220		Malkangiri	39.3	32.4	126
221		Mayurbhanj	35.0	31.3	139
222		Nabarangapur	37.9	39.4	65
223		Nayagarh	31.3	35.7	92
224		Rayagada	34.4	33.2	118



Sl. No.	State	District	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-4	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-5	All India Dist. Rank of Child Marriage Prevalence	
225	Rajasthan	Ajmer	35.0	20.2	318	
226		Alwar	40.8	32.2	130	
227		Banswara	28.3	25.0	235	
228		Baran	33.7	26.8	207	
229		Barmer	46.7	20.2	319	
230		Bharatpur	37.3	33.5	113	
231		Bhilwara	57.2	41.8	54	
232		Bikaner	33.4	33.3	116	
233		Bundi	35.1	34.1	109	
234		Chittaurgarh	53.6	42.6	47	
235		Churu	36.4	27.9	190	
236		Dausa	40.1	26.3	216	
237		Dhaulpur	35.4	29.6	162	
238		Jaipur	29.5	23.1	261	
239		Jaisalmer	48.4	28.9	168	
240		Jalor	32.4	23.3	258	
241		Jhalawar	36.3	37.8	75	
242		Jodhpur	34.7	28.1	183	
243		Karauli	49.8	33.5	114	
244		Nagaur	42.2	28.2	176	
245		Pratapgarh	41.2	30.9	144	
246		Rajsamand	44.5	27.5	198	
247		Sawai Madhopur	47.7	35.4	98	
248		Tonk	47.3	37.2	81	
249		Tamil Nadu	Dindigul	20.3	20.5	313
250			Krishnagiri	23.5	20.3	316
251			Perambalur	14.0	21.4	291
252			Salem	19.5	23.7	255
253	Telangana	Adilabad	29.9	21.4	292	
254		Bhadradi Kothagudem	#N/A	20.8	305	
255		Jagitial	#N/A	28.4	171	
256		Jangoan	#N/A	20.3	317	
257		Jayashankar Bhupalapa	#N/A	24.9	239	
258		Jogulamba Gadwal	#N/A	34.6	105	
259		Kamareddy	#N/A	30.8	146	
260		Khammam	32.4	35.0	100	
261		Komaram Bheem Asifaba	#N/A	25.0	236	
262		Mahabubabad	#N/A	28.3	173	
263		Mahabubnagar	#N/A	23.4	257	
264		Medak	36.3	31.8	134	
265		Nagarkurnool	#N/A	32.1	131	
266		Nalgonda	40.9	28.2	177	
267		Nirmal	#N/A	23.3	259	
268		Nizamabad	24.9	23.7	256	
269		Ranga Reddy	#N/A	29.0	167	
270		Sangareddy	#N/A	30.6	149	
271		Suryapet	#N/A	29.5	164	
272		Vikarabad	#N/A	39.8	63	

Sl. No.	State	District	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-4	Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 years_NFHS-5	All India Dist. Rank of Child Marriage Prevalence
273	Telangana	Wanaparthy	#N/A	32.6	124
274		Warangal Rural	#N/A	22.9	265
275		Warangal Urban	#N/A	22.7	271
276		Yadadri Bhuvanagiri	#N/A	21.6	289
277	Tripura	Dhalai	34.4	38.9	71
278		Gomati	#N/A	42.8	45
279		Khowai	#N/A	28.3	174
280		North Tripura	36.7	34.2	107
281		Sepahijala	#N/A	51.9	9
282		South Tripura	35.5	46.2	29
283		Unakoti	#N/A	38.0	74
284		West Tripura	30.6	37.1	83
285	Uttar Pradesh	Bahraich	40.9	37.5	77
286		Balrampur	41.5	35.0	101
287		Bara Banki	21.5	20.4	314
288		Budaun	35.7	22.9	266
289		Chitrakoot	31.1	21.8	284
290		Etah	27.1	20.1	320
291		Firozabad	22.2	24.8	242
292		Gonda	48.6	25.4	225
293		Jhansi	22.2	25.1	233
294		Kanshiram Nagar	21.0	23.2	260
295		Lalitpur	49.3	42.5	49
296		Mahamaya Nagar	29.5	28.1	184
297		Mahoba	25.9	20.8	306
298		Mahrajganj	48.2	24.1	248
299		Mathura	25.4	21.3	295
300		Sambhal	#N/A	21.1	299
301		Shahjahanpur	30.2	20.9	304
302		Shrawasti	67.9	51.9	10
303		Siddharthnagar	#N/A	33.9	110
304		Sitapur	32.8	20.8	307
305	West Bengal	Bankura	39.0	45.7	32
306		Birbhum	51.3	49.9	16
307		Dakshin Dinajpur	45.1	45.6	34
308		Darjiling (Kalimpong)	21.9	21.2	297
309		Haora	25.6	30.4	150
310		Hugli	31.9	40.8	57
311		Koch Bihar	41.8	46.7	28
312		Maldah	56.8	49.1	24
313		Murshidabad	53.5	55.4	5
314		Nadia	43.1	39.9	62
315		North Twenty Four Par	36.5	33.6	112
316		Paschim Barddhaman	#N/A	31.8	135
317		Paschim Medinipur	52.6	55.7	4
318		Purba Barddhaman	#N/A	50.4	15
319		Purba Medinipur	44.0	57.6	1
320		Puruliya	43.7	37.0	84
321		South Twenty Four Par	48.8	41.9	52
322		Uttar Dinajpur	39.7	30.3	153









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