

REPORT OF THE CHILD MARRIAGE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights in partnership
with Jabala Action Research Organisation

2017 TO 2019

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FOREWORD

In 2012, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights ventured into a child marriage prevention initiative which was a cross over between our Children and Governance and Child Protection programmes because it combined strengthening governance systems while protecting children and adolescents from child marriages.

We decided to adopt this approach because HAQ's strength lies in working on children and governance and child protection. The focus and strength of this initiative lay in its systems approach to preventing a social evil. The key strategy was to focus on the governance system and work towards the strengthening of the existing state mechanisms, structures and institutions through training and monitoring of their functions, holding them accountable in implementation of the law on child marriage. Simultaneously, the project focused on, sensitizing, supporting and mobilizing the communities, through women's self-help groups, religious leaders and youth groups to take action to prevent child marriages. Creating and empowering adolescent girls' groups was yet another important thrust of the project.

This approach enabled communities to not just mobilise support from the concerned officials, but also hold them accountable for their inaction. The purpose was to bring together duty bearers and community to form a mechanism that responded to and prevented child marriage. At the same time, because of our work on child protection, we found that it was important to not just position child marriage as a bad social and cultural phenomenon, but also as a violation of right to protection of children, especially girls, making them even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, as studies have shown. Hence it was important to stress on the fact that child marriage was an offence- liable to criminal action and thus the need for effective implementation of the law.

In the first phase HAQ partnered with MV Foundation in Telangana and Jabala Action Research Organisation (Jabala) in West Bengal. Without their presence and direct intervention in the communities this would not have been possible. MVF and Jabala teams in the districts were the back bone of this initiative. We have to also acknowledge Krinna Shah's deep involvement in the project in this phase. It was supported jointly by The Ford Foundation and MacArthur Foundation. HAQ is very grateful to Vanita Nayak Mukherjee and Dipa Nag Choudhury for their support and guidance.

Renu Khanna, who has undertaken the present evaluation, had also evaluated it in 2014 and represented the project in the form of a model, which was very helpful. She also helped to identify some gaps and thrust areas which enabled us to design the second phase of the project. This included addressing the other issues that impact on child marriage, without which there could be no change.

The second phase began in 2015. While the interventions in West Bengal in partnership with Jabala continued to be supported by The Ford Foundation and MacArthur Foundation, a new partnership with Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti was initiated in Ajmer District of Rajasthan with support from the American Jewish World Services (AJWS). Indira Pancholi joined in for coordinating the project. The learnings from phase 1 were included in the designing of this phase.

While phase 1 laid the foundation, phase 2 enabled us to deepen our engagement and also identify new challenges.

Because we wanted to be sure that our interventions in stopping child marriages should not have had a negative impact on the lives of the girls, in 2016, we published a follow up study on the girls whose marriages had been intervened in, successfully or unsuccessfully. It was a relief to find that the project interventions had not made the girls more vulnerable. In fact, the lives of those whose weddings could not be stopped despite all efforts, had suffered greatly. Very few had been able to negotiate a safe and happy life.

While law is an enabler, law can also create its own problems, as we saw. This is when we designed the Triple S Model for addressing child marriage, shared and evaluated by Renu Khanna in this report. This model is a result of multiple experiments and discussions between us and the partners. The final naming of the model is Indira's.

In this phase the concentration has not been so much on the number of child marriages that could be stopped, instead on creating an ecosystem in which child marriages and other such violations can be addressed. These have been described in the report.

What has been amazing is the cross learning across three teams (HAQ, MVF and Jabala in Phase 1 and HAQ, Jabala and MJAS in Phase 2). While MVF after three years was able to carry forward and take to scale the interventions on the ground on its own, Jabala is doing so now. In this too, HAQ's role as technical support and enabler has enriched HAQ in many ways.

In the last few years of implementing the project we have learnt that if child marriage is to be tackled, a holistic approach is required. It cannot be the only issue with which we can enter the community. It has to be located within the larger issues concerning patriarchy, social structures and norms, rights of children and the need for protecting children from abuse and exploitation.

Simultaneously, just as communities have to be convinced that child marriage cannot be a measure to protect girls from abuse, safe spaces have to be created for them in schools and in communities. For this we must work to amend the right to education law to include children beyond 14 years of age, as it currently stands. At the same time, it must be ensured that girls are not just enrolled, but also retained in school, and schools are free from abuse. It is equally important to work on implementing the law against sex selective abortion, dowry and trafficking. Simultaneously, health concerns have to be addressed.

In sharing our model of addressing child marriage and our learnings and challenges through this evaluation report, we hope we can contribute to the ongoing debates and discussions on this issue.

We fully recognise that the work HAQ and its partners have been doing is but one in thousand other efforts across the country on this issue. We also recognise that we have to be prepared that change will be slow - after all, we are dealing with a centuries old practice and while we need to be hopeful, we must also be realistic that it will take time. There are also new challenges that changing times throw up.

But we are optimists. So we must keep pushing with our fingers and digging with our nails- slowly chipping away to bring change

Enakshi Ganguly

Co-Founder and Former Director

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document is a report of a participatory review of a child marriage and adolescent empowerment project being implemented by HAQ:Centre for Child Rights (HAQ) and its two partners Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti (MJAS) in Rajasthan, and Jabala Action Research Organisation (Jabala) in West Bengal.

I had the privilege of studying the earlier phase of this work in West Bengal and Telengana and was gratified at how seriously the earlier recommendations had been considered and implemented by HAQ and the Jabala teams. It was exciting to see how the work - and the team - had matured in West Bengal and how the work had evolved at the field level with the new partner MJAS. And the special quality and passion that MJAS brings to the partnership.

I would like to thank the HAQ team for the opportunity to go back to the field areas and see the maturing of the efforts. My thanks are also for the Jabala and MJAS teams for the privilege of studying their efforts closely and learning from their different contexts and their approaches. And thanks also to the community groups that I met in the course of the review – the football teams, girls and boys groups, mothers' groups, religious leaders and the officers and functionaries of the child protection machinery in the districts and blocks.

This report has an introductory section which includes details about the project and the methodology of this review. The findings section uses content from the two organisational reports, to summarise the major findings and offers some recommendations. Each organisation is urged to use its own report for the findings and recommendations along with the introductory section.

My best wishes for the three partner teams for their ongoing struggles for gender justice and children's rights.

Renu Khanna

July 3 2019

CONTEXT

WEST BENGAL

According to Census 2011, West Bengal's population was 9.13 crore. The sex ratio is 950 females per 1000 males and has risen from 934 per 1000 males in 2001. Female literacy stands at 71% while, male literacy is 82%. Approximately 70% of West Bengal's population lives in rural regions where female literacy drops down to 62%.

The problem of Child Marriage is acute in West Bengal. According to UNICEF, 27% girls are married before they turn 18, in India. Bihar, West Bengal and Rajasthan record the highest prevalence of Child Marriage with close to 40% prevalence. According to the National Crimes Record Bureau (2012), a total of 88 arrests related to child marriage were made in 2008-2012 in West Bengal, the highest in the country.

Child Marriage stands at **61.04%** in Murshidabad and **58.03%** in Birbhum, the two highest in the state.

Within West Bengal, HAQ and Jabala decided to work in Murshidabad and Birbhum which record the highest numbers of Child Marriages in the state. (In the next section, we provide a detailed rationale for selection of the blocks in these districts).

Table 1 Demographic Details - Birbhum and Murshidabad

District	Population	Growth Rate	Sex Ratio	Literacy	Child Marriage rate
Murshidabad	7,102,430	21.07	957	67.53	61.04%
Birbhum	3,502,387	16.15	956	70.9	58.03%

The Sachar Committee Report (2006) of the Government of India, classified Murshidabad as one of the most backward districts of India. It ranks 17th out of 19 districts in the state. It is also a high trafficking-prone area, due to its border with Bangladesh. Additionally, national calamities make young adults and children even more vulnerable to trafficking.

In Murshidabad in the selected Jiaganj Block, most people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Child labour is very high in the block. Women, men and even children engage in Beedi binding. Due to lack of alternative livelihood options, high rates of unsafe migration also take place. Murshidabad Jiaganj is a Muslim-majority Block with 54% Muslims and 46% Hindu.

Hariharpara Block has been identified as a child marriage prone block by various government and non-government agencies. Hariharpara is a highly Muslim-majority block. 81% of the population is Muslim and 19% is Hindu. Most people depend on agriculture for livelihoods and are also involved in the silk weaving industry.

Birbhum, too is listed as one of the 250 backward blocks by the government. The district has a vibrant minority and tribal community. It is the home to Rabindranath Tagore and his Shantinekatan. But, child marriage among other social and cultural backwardness is still present in the district.

According to Census 2011, Mohammad Bazar Block has 40% child marriages. Muslims make up 31% of the population and Hindus make up 67% of the population. Mohammad Bazar also has a huge Adivasi (tribal) population, where child marriages prevail.

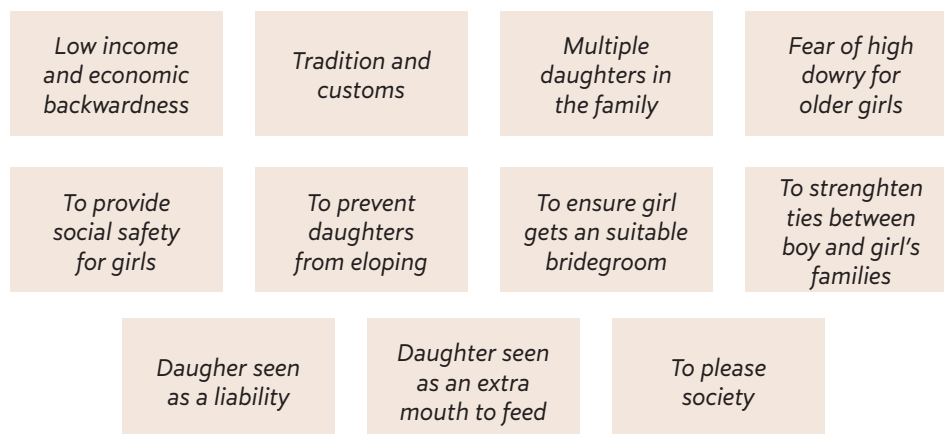
Rampurhat II Block has a Muslim population of 40% and 20% tribal population. Their main occupation is agriculture. Migration is very common in Rampurhat II, where adults go to work in places like Surat or Mumbai and, adolescent girls migrate to get married or find work outside. According to Census 2011, there was 60% child marriages in Rampurhat II.

Table 2 Literacy Rate in Project Blocks

Name of the Blocks	Total	Male	Female
Hariharpara	69.20%	69.97%	68.39%
Murshidabad Jiaganj Block	69.20%	72.82%	65.16%
Mohammad Bazaar	65.18%	72.26%	68.25%
Rampurhat II Block	70.77%	77.14%	63.73%

Literacy rate in all four blocks is 70% or below. Except for Hariharpara, in every block literacy rates of women are 5-8% lower than that of men.

Murshidabad and Birbhum are prone to high rates of Child Marriage due to following reasons:



Source: Strengthening Existing System to Prevent Child Marriage: A Report 2017, Jabala

Jabala notes in its 2017 report that Child Marriage is not always due to parental pressure. Sometimes, the girl (or boy) decides to get married to gain control of her or his sexuality and mobility. These children believe that getting married is a means to ensure a life of freedom and fulfilment of their goals and desires.

There are also various levels of administration who are now working to deter and combat Child Marriage. The Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) has been put in place and Childline (helpline for any child rights violation, abuse, etc.) is functional in the state.

The ICPS (2006) aims to ensure an environment of safety and protection for children, for them to develop and flourish. The scheme aims to reduce risks of vulnerable children. The objectives are:

1. To institutionalize essential services and strengthen structures
2. To enhance capacities of all systems and persons involved in delivery
3. To create database and knowledge base for child protection services
4. To strengthen child protection at family and community level
5. To coordinate and network with government and non-government institutions
6. To raise public awareness about child rights, child vulnerability and child protection services.

The District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Block Social Welfare Officer (BSWO) who is the Child Marriage Prevention Officer (CMPO) at the block level, Self Help Groups (SHGs) under the Social Welfare Department are directly responsible for combatting child marriage in Murshidabad and Birbhum.

To combat Child Marriage, the West Bengal Government has implemented the KanyashreePrakalpa (Cash Transfer Scheme). Under this scheme an unmarried girl receives monetary support every year for her education and then receives a lumpsum amount if she remains unmarried till turns 18. Recently, West Bengal implemented another cash transfer scheme called RupashreePrakalpa. This provides cash to girls above the age of 18 for their marriage. Thus, there is no programme or effort to change mindsets about marriage specifically. Instead, the schemes attempt to merely postpone marriages through cash transfers.

Additionally, Sabala and Kishori Shakti Yojana Prakalpa have been established to empower young girls. The government also identifies survivors of child marriage, who have stopped their marriages themselves and facilitates them with Birangana or Bravery awards to highlight and recognize their courage and confidence.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Based on the Goals stated in the two project proposals (See Introduction in this report) the Jabala team stated the Goals, Objectives and Expected Outcomes of the project for themselves as follows (see Strengthening Existing System to prevent Child marriage: A Report 2017).

Goals

1. Prevent Child Marriage by strengthening existing mechanisms which in turn will act as a Safety Net at the grassroots level and a pillar of protection for children. This system will ensure development through effective implementation of welfare schemes that are already in place.
2. Empowering adolescent by improving overall health and education status, to address their own sexuality, reproductive health issues, claim their rights and give only informed consent.

Objectives

1. Demonstrating a model for addressing child marriage through strengthening and collaboration between existing legal and governance mechanisms.
2. Strengthening the existing state mechanisms through training and monitoring of their functions and holding them accountable.
3. Networking and collaborating with organizations engaged in similar issues to strengthen initiatives and working towards a sustained mechanism to address child marriage.
4. Advocacy for policy level changes and implementation flaw in the existing law on child marriage and strengthening of implementation mechanism

Expected outcomes of the Project

- Effective implementation of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- Ensuring Linkages and coordination at different levels to ensure prevention of child marriages.
- Developing children led campaign against child marriage
- Advocating for their demands of right to protection, education and health.

- Identification of gaps in policy, program and law through advocacy with government.
- A model for undertaking similar multi-pronged programs in endemic districts identified by the state governments.
- Developing indicators for measuring impact of the program.
- Reporting and Documentation of the project interventions and their impact.

Project villages, activities and inputs

Rationale for choice of locations: While Murshidabad was a district in which HAQ's partner organisation Jabala has had a long engagement, and is therefore well-known and accepted, the interventions in Birbhum were initiated for the first time in 2012 when Phase 1 of the project started.

Over the last 4 and a half years, HAQ and Jabala have worked in the Hariharpara and Beldanga Blocks of Murshidabad. When the project began, it was decided to introduce the new initiative in areas where there is already some acceptance from the community. This was especially important since Birbhum was completely new to the project and to Jabala.

The evaluation of Phase 1 showed that more results were visible in Murshidabad than in Birbhum. But it was difficult to attribute all results only to project initiatives as Jabala has other activities going on in Murshidabad. As an important expected outcome from this project was to see if this model is replicable, it was decided, that the lessons learnt from the HAQ-Jabala initiative on child marriage prevention be tested in a new area. This would enable the assessment of whether this model is scalable. **With this in mind, MJ (Murshidabad – Jiagunj) block was selected and Hariharpara block was retained as reference scale to measure impacts.**

However, this did not mean a complete exit from Beldanga. It was envisaged that the efforts put in so far in the Block would be sustained by:

- Regular follow up and technical support by the project team by clubbing it with other running programmes in the block
- Monitor and support the convergence with local government that had already been established, whereby the government would continue to intervene in the child marriage.
- Anwasha (Adolescent) Clinic Counsellors would be identified who could act as motivators and a support system.

This phasing out of Beldanga with some handholding, was expected to demonstrate if this model can work and be sustained without the intense implementation initiatives by the project team.

Table 3 shows the districts, blocks and panchayats that HAQ-Jabala decided to work in.

Table 3 Details of the Project Area

Sl. No	District	Block	Panchayat	
1	Murshidabad	Hariharpara	Choa Gram Panchayat	
2			Khidirpur Gram Panchayat	
3			Rukunpur Gram Panchayat	
4		M J Block	Nutangram Gram Panchayat	
5			Tentulia Gram Panchayat	
6			Prasadpur Gram Panchayat	
7		Beldanga-I (Phase out Block)	Debkundu Gram Panchayat	
8			Begunbari Gram Panchayat	
9			Mirzapur-I Gram Panchayat	
10		Birbhum	Rampurhat-II	Margram-I Gram Panchayat
11				Margram-II Gram Panchayat
12				Bishnupur Gram Panchayat
13			Mahammad Bazar	Angargaria Gram Panchayat
14				Mahammad Bazar Gram Panchayat
15				Bhutura Gram Panchayat

As mentioned above, Beldanga I is the phase out block because Jabala has been working in this block since 2003. In 2016 it was decided to phase out of this block for this project because it was becoming difficult to evaluate the contribution of this project given that so many of Jabala's interventions and projects are being implemented here. In the new MJ Block only Child Marriage Project is being implemented. And Rukunpur and Nutangram are the two child friendly panchayats designated by UNICEF.

There are a total 39 Panchayats consisting of 515 Gram Sansads in the selected Blocks. The project covers roughly one third of the Panchayats and Sansads in the selected blocks - 12 Panchayats consisting of 199 Gram Sansads.

Table 4 Details of Panchayats and Sansads

Name of the Blocks	Total Panchayats	Project Covered	Total Sansad	Sanasad Covered
Hariharpara	10	3	181	66
Murshidabad Jiaganj Block	8	3	153	62
Mohammad Razar	12	3	86	30
Rampurhat II Block	9	3	95	41
Total	39	12	515	199

Before the project was implemented, HAQ and Jabala teams worked on a detailed plan. Since the formation of boys and youth groups was new to the project, as was working with mothers and fathers, a detailed listing of villages and groups was undertaken. This laid the foundation for the interventions being reviewed.

Coverage beyond the project Area: While the direct interventions (programme) take place in the above-mentioned project areas, interventions related to child marriage are spread beyond the specified project area, wherever the team sees the need to intervene. In 2017, there were interventions in 9 child marriage cases out of a total 47 cases, in non-project areas as a result of the HAQ-Jabala initiative.

Interventions at the block and district level result in going beyond the limited project area. The Information Education Communication (IEC) material on Child Marriage produced through this project, is widely circulated at the Block, Gram Panchayat and Village level. This constant knowledge sharing and networking has results in partners and stakeholders who inform the team about possible child marriages, even outside the intervention area, including students from the schools where the team works.

Jabala's approach in this project is to strengthen adolescents, youth, vulnerable families on one hand, and sensitize community stakeholders including government officials to act as a high-functioning support system for the adolescent and vulnerable families, on the other hand.

In the first phase the project focused on creating networks with various government agencies, academic institutions and community level stakeholders to ensure accountability of the child protection systems. In the second phase the project emphasised strengthening the system, effective community mobilization, empowering girls, advocacy and reporting and documentation.

Specific activities undertaken were as follows:

1. **Empowering Adolescent Girls Groups (AGGs)** through training and workshops about gender, health, sexual health, reproductive health, education, etc.
2. **Bringing men into the conversation** (fathers, brothers, male youth, etc.)
3. **Sensitization meetings with government officials, religious functionaries, PRI members, self-help group members, teachers, students, community members, etc.**
4. **Awareness campaigns** through rallies, special days' celebrations, street plays, marathons, dance performances.

DISCUSSION OF ACTIVITIES AND INPUTS ACCORDING TO THE TRIPLE S MODEL

1. **Capacity Building and Skilling**

Based on the recommendations of the last evaluation, capacity building has been an important activity within the Jabala team as well as with girls' and boys' groups and the different stakeholder groups.

The need for capacity building of the team was identified at the designing stage of the phase 2 of the project. It was recognised that while the team was very good at mobilising adolescents and communities and engaging with the government officials and panchayat members, their capacity to use legal and rights frameworks as well as their documentation skills, and a gender perspective, were gaps that required to be filled. Also attrition in the project team meant that ongoing capacity building of the team was required. The topics included

- personal leadership and growth - increasing analytical skills, giving and taking feedback, planning and monitoring of activities
- perspective building
- use of law, filing of cases,
- accessing different government programmes and schemes,
- developing case intervention strategy.

Some of the methods for building the team's capacities apart from formal training workshops are as follows:

- Monthly review meetings with the Project Team
- Fortnightly meetings in Berhampore office with the Murshidabad Team
- Weekly meetings in Md. Bazaar office with the Birbhum Team
- Ongoing discussions and debates on Kanyashree, Rupashree, Laws, Schemes, Rights, Other Social Issues

The capacity building was planned by the HAQ-Jabala team. While HAQ initiated some of the trainings/ capacity building sessions, the others were organised by Jabala based on the needs that had been identified.

Table 5 shows the capacity building through HAQ's inputs and Table 6 with external resource people. This data is available for only 2018.

Table 5 Reviews, Trainings and Handholding Sessions with HAQ

Date	Topic	HAQ Representative	Jabala Representative	Venue
31.01.2018-02.02.2018	- Review of Work - Training on SaathSaath Module (Gender)	Indira Pancholi Karuna Phillip (MJAS) Padma Joshi (MJAS)	Biplob Mondal, Nandita Paul, Hriday Singha, Tofazzel Hossein, Deblina Chakraborty, Sara Khan, Ferdousi Begum, Sarjina Biswas, Pinki Khatun, KanizFatema, BaishakhiDhibar, Ajmira Khatun, Mita Das, Narjima Khatun	Berhampore, Murshidabad
19.04.2018-22.04.2018	- Review of Previous Year's Work Reporting Structures - Village-wise Activity Mapping - Importance of Case Studies & Narratives - Exercise on Identifying Laws, Schemes - Process Documentations	EnakshiGanguly Indira Pancholi	Biplob Mondal, Nandita Paul, Hriday Singha, Tofazzel Hossein, Deblina Chakraborty, Sara Khan, Ferdousi Begum, Sarjina Biswas, Pinki Khatun, KanizFatema, BaishakhiDhibar, Ajmira Khatun, Mita Das, Narjima Khatun	Suri & Md. Bazaar, Birbhum

Table 6 External Trainings for the Jabala Team Members

Date	Topic	Resource Person	Participants	Venue
09.03.2018-10.03.2018	- Linking Jabala's Strategy, Mission & Vision to Jabala's Ground Level Work - Creating Communication Material for various Stakeholders	Dr. Pujan Das, D. Litt. 25+ years' experience in Documentation & Research	Biplob Mondal, Nandita Paul, Hriday Singha, Tofazzel Hossein, Deblina Chakraborty, Sara Khan	Seva Kendra, Kolkata

Date	Topic	Resource Person	Participants	Venue
11.06.2018- 12.06.2018	- Process Documentation - Theory of Change - Report Writing & Formats - Writing a Case Study - Monitoring & Evaluation	Ms. Ronita Chattopadhyay 14 years' experience in development domain- expertise in process documentation, research & knowledge sharing	Biplob Mondal, Nandita Paul, Hriday Singha, Tofazzel Hossein, Deblina Chakraborty, Sara Khan	Seva Kendra, Kolkata
13.06.2018	- Communication, Visibility through Different Mediums - SWOT Analysis	Dr. Pujan Das, D. Litt. 25+ years' experience in Documentation & Research	Biplob Mondal, Nandita Paul, Hriday Singha, Tofazzel Hossein, Deblina Chakraborty, Sara Khan	Seva Kendra, Kolkata

The Annual Report 2018 also shows that considerable capacity building has been done with

- Adolescent boys and girls - In 2018, 168 training sessions were organised where 2322 adolescent girls participated. For boys, 43 sessions were organised and 563 boys participated.
- Selected community members and youth to act as support system for the adolescent girls – through 14 programmes, 214 youth were engaged on the issue of child marriage and rights violations.
- Government officials and functionaries - 4 meetings were conducted with 112 participants including ICDS Workers, AWW, ASHAs, ANMs, Health Supervisors, etc. Also two trainings with a total of 72 Civic Volunteers and 58 Police Officers across the two districts were conducted in 2018 alone.
- Block level meeting in MJ Block, Murshidabad district which included 72 senior level officials religious functionaries, some adolescent boys and girls and their mothers.
- Legal training for all important stakeholders including three workshops for the team, on legal issues around child marriage.
- Since the project team did not have any experience, they were trained for handling case work.

Annual Report 2018-19 mentions 'As a result of capacity building the project team's knowledge and skills are strengthened, and they are now strongly participating in meetings and workshops. They have better capacities to deal with issues that come at the local level. Their skills of documentation and data management have been strengthened resulting in good field diaries and other forms of documentation. Other positive results of the capacity building of the project team is seen in better cohesion and inter-personal relations; strong mechanisms of mutual learning in the team; greater enjoyment expressed by them regarding their work and better team retention in the project. No staff of the project dropped out this year'.

The team also reported during the evaluation meeting that there are many more discussions amongst them. As a result, they have learnt how to act on the SOPs to prevent child marriage. They have also learnt that they have to be adolescent girl centred, identify their issues and agendas and develop action plans to help the girls achieve what they want. And that they have to focus on how parents support can be increased.

During the evaluation, we asked team members of all the three partners, their perceptions of results of the capacity building efforts. Table 7 gives the findings.

Table 7 Jabala team perceptions of the results of capacity building efforts

(Marked on a scale of 0 to 5 where 0 denotes Not at all and 5 denotes To the fullest extent)

	Question	0 not at all	1	2	3	4	5 To the fullest extent
1	To what extent has your perspective on social accountability deepened?	-	-	-	-	7	1
2	To what extent has your perspective on Rights developed?	-	-	-	2	2	4
3	To what extent has your perspective on strategic planning developed?	-	-	-	1	3	4
5	To what extent are you able to make action plans based on the strategic analysis?	-	1	-	4	2	1
6	To what extent are you able to make indicators for your work?	-	-	1	4	2	1
7	To what extent have you improved your documentation skills?	-	-	-	3	3	2
8	To what extent have you improved your analytical skills?	-	-	3	2	2	1
9	To what extent have you improved your facilitation skills?	-	-	2	2	2	2
10	To what extent have you improved your networking skills?	-	2	-	3	2	1
	To what extent have you improved your presentation skills?						

Table 7 shows that JABALA team members feel that their perspective has deepened to a very high extent in the project period, as also their understanding of rights and their strategic vision. Working with Indicators and their presentation skills appear to be the weakest areas according to the team scores, followed by documentation, facilitation and networking skills.

Recommendation: This table and the team members' responses should be discussed in the next team meeting for greater clarity and a training plan developed based on the discussions.

2. Safe Spaces

Jabala team reports that the girls raised the issue of lack of 'safe space' where they could sit, talk and laugh freely, ask questions to each other and just be themselves. While project offices in the different blocks served as physical safe spaces, Adolescent Girls' Groups, their meetings, English Coaching classes, the Theatre Group, all proved to be great 'safe spaces' for girls. The idea of Safe Space discussed with girls and boys in various meetings. Safe spaces for them meant the freedom to play and express themselves. The Jabala team attempted to create the environment where girls could talk, sing, dance, paint. In their safe space, the boys too expressed that although they have the privileges of being males, they also face age and caste, class discrimination and control over their activities because of societal and family expectations.

An indication of the 'safe space' is that almost 80% girls reported to be regular in meetings., creating strong bonds between them, and support structures for girls who may need them.

3. Social and Legal Interventions

This entire project is about social interventions – working with mothers and fathers, teachers, panchayat, religious and caste leaders – to change mindsets about children's and adolescents' rights, about gender justice, about citizenship. There are several social issues and specific cases where the project team has intervened. The project team members along with AGG leaders stood strong with the community of Bishnupur, Rampurhat, Birbhum when they called for the demolishing of an illegal alcohol shop. They worked with the women and girls to inform the law enforcement authorities to ensure that the shop was relocated elsewhere.

In the legal arena the Jabala team felt that they could do with more knowledge and skills. And during this project period arranged for legal training for themselves.

Case work was another weak area identified by them and they attempted to strengthen this too.

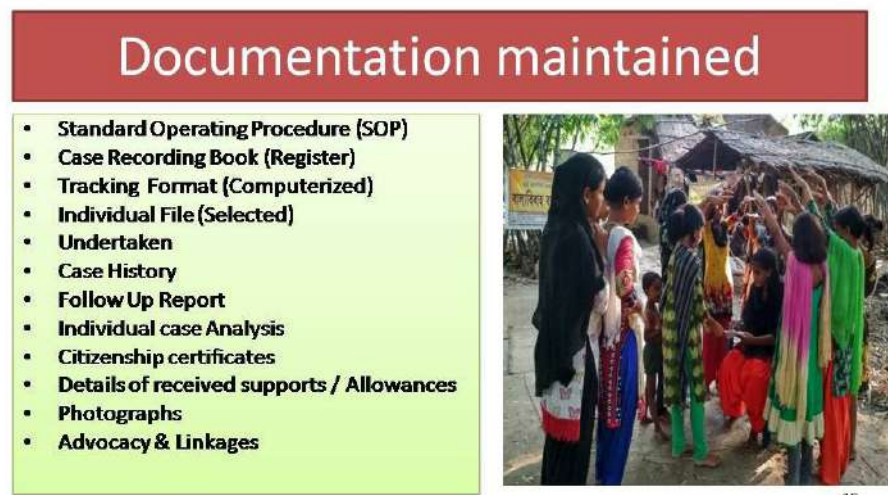
4. Documentation and Knowledge Generation

There have been attempts to do a lot of documentation and knowledge generation by the Jabala team in this phase of the project. They have attempted to keep systematic records of the AGG and ABG groups and monitored their progress. Standard Operating Protocols (SOP) were drawn up for handling child marriage cases and these were used for training of various government functionaries and others. SOPs were also drawn up for training the different block teams on how to work with Adolescent Girls' Groups (see Figure 2 below), how to select and work with Peer Leaders. Stakeholder analysis has been done in at the block and panchayat levels, with different stakeholders being graded as Excellent, Good, Average, Fair or Poor. Case studies have been documented.

But there is always the last mile issue of analysis and effective presentation of all the data that is gathered. For example, while the stakeholder analysis gives a baseline picture, and the team recognises that this can be a dynamic situation, we don't yet have any analysis of the movement of various stakeholders from Fair to Good or Excellent. Or of how Peer Leaders and Adolescents' Groups have developed over the project period. Or what the various data presented in attractive graphs actually means to team members – this has not been used analytically in the reports submitted for the evaluation.

Also, from the documentation provided to this reviewer, it is not possible to compare the achievements and outcomes of the project in the 'old' (Hariharpada) and 'new' (Jiaganj) areas (to assess the scalability of the model), as was envisaged at the time of design and selection of the project areas. It is also not clear from the project documents/proposals, on what exact parameters/criteria/data, it was envisaged that the scalability would be assessed.

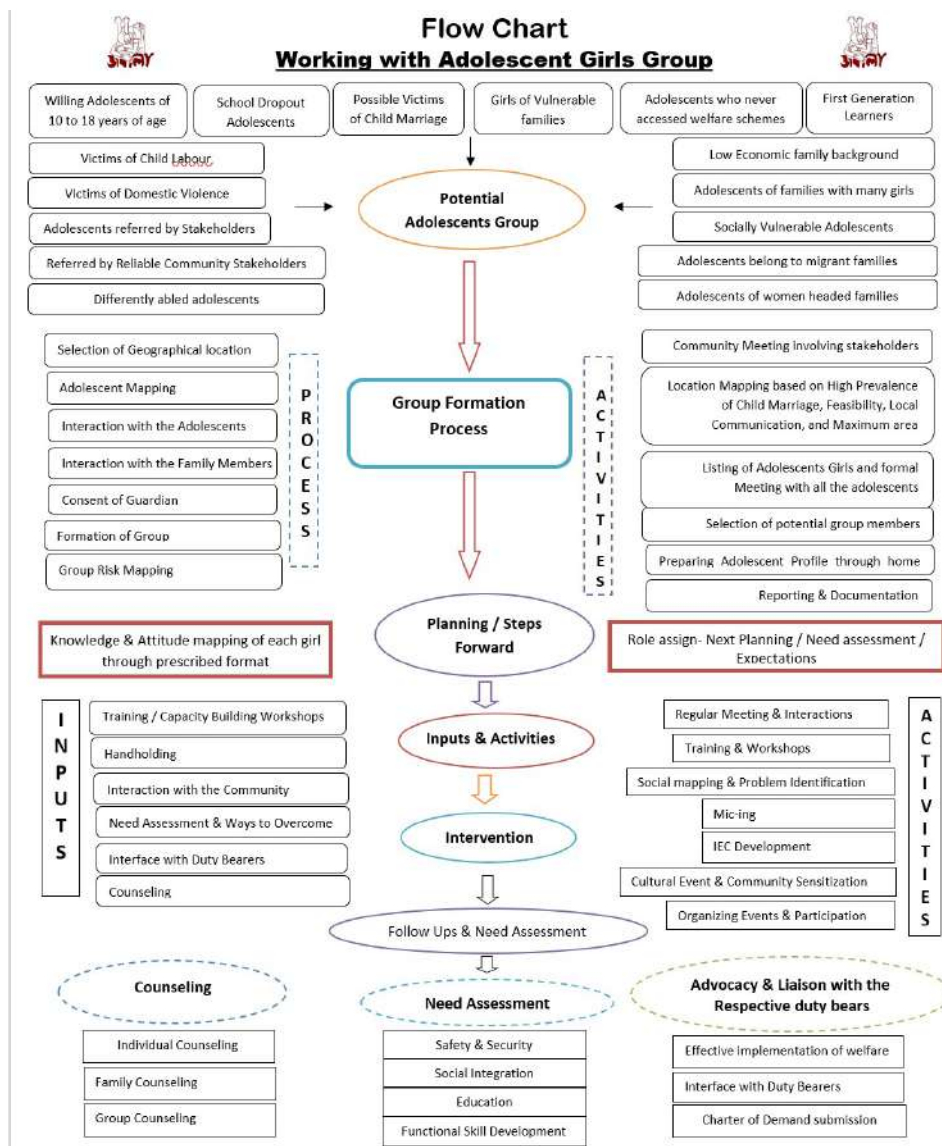
Figure 1 Documentation Maintained



In terms of 'knowledge generation' team members narrated their learnings during the evaluation workshops. They said much more needs to be discussed on the following issues:

- Age of marriage as an issue itself – the common understanding is that the legal age of marriage at 18 years is fine for girls. But what about their aspirations? Their desires to stand on their own feet economically? Or the fact that marriage is the natural destiny for all girls?
- Premarital sex as a determinant of child marriage
- The fact that child marriage is not always out of societal and parental compulsion. It can be a choice that young people can make, especially if they feel controlled in relation to their mobility and sexuality.

However, to translate into 'knowledge generation', much more analysis and synthesis of their field level experiences is required.



RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 REALISATION OF RIGHTS BY GIRLS AND BOYS

Several inputs have gone into the boys and girls to enable them to be aware of their rights. The Jabala team has used a combination of the SABLA training module along with the Saath- Saath module developed by Avehi-Abacus, and the Young Leadership development module developed by Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti (MJAS). Sixteen sessions, on a range of subjects, have been identified from these modules to be included in the training of AGGs and ABGs.

All AGG members are being trained on use of banking services, savings and budgeting. This is because the Kanyashree scheme is widely implemented and there is direct transfer money to the girls own bank account, making it important for girls to learn how to prioritise expenditure and manage their own money. Jabala team feels that this is particularly important because the girls are found to be using the Kanyashree and Rupashree money to pay their own dowry and they get married soon after they receive the Rupashree money as soon as they turn 18.

Adolescents' Theatre Groups have been formed in different blocks. This is an effective medium to communicate messages directly to the community by girls itself. Overall total of 32 shows were conducted by different theatre groups in the project area in 2018-19.

Girls' Education

The West Bengal government has a scheme called Kanyashree Joddha to empower girls to stop their own child marriage. And girls identified as having stopped their own marriage are given cash awards ranging between Rs. 5000 and Rs. 10,000 as well as trophies and other incentives. During 2017-19, 242 girls from amongst the Adolescent Girls Group (AGG) members and Kanyashree beneficiaries, were selected as Kanyashree Joddha. They become part of the government team to stop child marriages. They talked to the victims of child marriage to understand their situation; they identify their needs, give information on government schemes and counsel the victims on the adverse effects of child marriage.

In 2018, eight drop out girls were re-enrolled into schools, three child marriage survivors appeared for Class 10 examinations in Hariharpara, four girls from Hariharpara Block independently approached the block to discuss problems with receiving benefits of the Kanyashree scheme.

Empowerment of Girls

There are several examples of empowerment of girls. In a huge achievement for the girls, 21 of them got press card issued to them by the local newspapers' association. They now cover news from their areas and send this to mainstream newspapers.

Sixteen girls were identified as resource persons for their districts - eight in each district – and take sessions in schools, attend meetings and workshops organised by the government and other agencies. Sixty four peer leaders – two in each group – organise meetings in their villages, conduct various activities and document all processes. This gives the girls ownership and control over processes and problems the groups face. When girls are not allowed to attend meetings, group members and peer leaders meet girls' parents and share the meeting proceedings and request them to send their daughter to the meeting.

Members of Adolescent Girls Group (AGG) and Adolescent Boys Groups (ABG) are encouraged by the Jabala team to get their identity documents - Aadhar cards and birth certificates. They also support other children to acquire these and keep them safely. In Md Bazaar, AGG leaders introduced such girls to the Block Officer who then arranged to have date of birth certificates issued to the girls.

Girls in Hariharpara did social mapping in their villages and identified houses with no sanitation facilities. They gave this list to the BDO and more than 100 toilets were made as a result of this initiative.

Participation in meetings and trainings, increase in information, working in teams, participation in activities outside village, has led to increase in confidence in girls. Increasing number of girls are now claiming their rights and entitlements.



Case Study 1

In Bishnupur, Rampurhat-II Block, Birbhum, a Panchayat Member objected to the girls convening their meeting at their regular venue, the temple compound. He said that the girls would pollute the religious space because of their “dirty” periods. The girls did not back down. They told him that they were doing nothing wrong. It is a merely meeting, talking and sharing in that space which they felt was open and liberating. Seeing the determination of the girls, the Panchayat Pradhan promised them a space in the school. Once again the girls stood fast. They are still working hard to re-claim their previous space. This incident also led to a great discussion and debate about menstruation, purity – impurity and the taboos surrounding periods.

Source

Annual report April 18 -March 31 2019



Case Study -2

In Birbhum district, book lists were not being issued to students of classes 11 and 12 as long as two months into the school term. Many girls didn't know what books to buy and were discouraged to go to school. As a group they went to the Block Education Officer and HeadMasters/ Mistresses of various schools to demand that the book lists are provided soon.

Source

Annual report April 18 – March 31 2019



Case Study -3

When I was 12, my mother forced me to get married. No one spoke to me about my marriage or with whom I was getting married. I was to be wed to a local Madrasa School Teacher. He was 28 years of age, far older than me.

My father is a taxi driver who stays in Delhi. He only visits us twice a year, on special occasions or in case of an emergency. I live with my mother and two younger brothers. My mother reasoned with me and told me that our house needed a male guardian, who can take care of all of us, since my father is away. She is unable to handle things on her own. The Madrasa teacher assured my mother that he would take up all the responsibilities of the family and household. My mother was very happy. My mother was also fearful of me eloping. We had recently heard of many cases where young girls were eloping with their so called “boyfriends”. My mother worried, “what if my daughter did the same?” She never asked me about my opinion; my feelings. I was too young to understand the consequences of an early marriage. I tried; I said NO! But, I had no choice. No one heard my voice or cries

of protest. I had to accept her decision in the end. She was my mother after all.

My father had to sell everything for me. He sold our own house (the last piece of owned land). He needed the money to pay my dowry. For nearly a month, my life was hell. I didn't know what to do. I felt like my life was coming to an end. I was running out options. Was I really going to get married to someone who was more than double my age?

Finally, I decided to share my situation with my school teacher. My teacher immediately contacted a local NGO, the police and Block Administration of Murshidabad- Jiaganj. I was lucky to have such a supportive teacher. With so many people by my side, I felt a new sense of confidence. I returned home and firmly told my mother "I don't want to get married now". But, there was no changing her mind. She told me that if we called off the wedding so close to the wedding date, it would ruin the family's name. But, I wasn't going to budge either. I stuck with my decision. I was adamant. The next day, a team of officials from the Block and NGO came to my house and had a long discussion with my mother and other family members. They explained to her the consequences and illegality of a child marriage. Finally, the marriage was stopped by force.

My mother was upset with me for a few months. She barely spoke to me. Today, I am trying to rebuild my life and relationship with my mother. I am an active group member of Jabala's Adolescent Girls Group. We do social mapping, mobilize other girls and talk to them about the illegality and dire consequences of child marriage, especially on a girl. I love taking part in plays and am also a community reporter. I keep track of local news and noteworthy incidents in my village, that are often ignored by newspapers. I want to complete my studies and go to college. I hope I can truly change my mother's mindset about Child Marriage some day.

Source

Case Study submitted by Jabala

The state government is recognising young people like the one above, who are saying 'no' to child marriage or breaking free of cultural expectations and joining the football teams, by awarding them the Birangana awards and cash rewards. Twelve girls from Jabala's field area were given this award.

In the evaluation workshop, it was reported that senior AGG members are continuing their education, going to college. Their aspirations are increasing – they want to be nurses and engineers. While profiles of each AGG member is being maintained by the Jabala team, no compilation or analysis was available.

The work with the Adolescent Boys is also bearing some fruit, as can be seen from the following quote.

“The primary school in our village (Parsadpur) does not operate well but the village elders say nothing. The school opens at 11am and closes at 12. Therefore, children don’t go to school at all, even though one hundred are enrolled. That is how our foundation is weakened. Even after completing fifth class we cannot even read two lines. We are thinking that we will go to the block office and raise our voice. Senior group will lead us and we the junior group will be at the back. We have made all preparations, only few things are left”.

“We are enjoying learning new things and are using the opportunity to think. One of our friend’s sister was married last year and now she is pregnant and is with her parents. She is now 16-year-old. We feel bad as other girls of her age are going to school and she is pregnant. If such a thing happens to any of our sisters in the village we will tell our sisters to refuse to marry and we will also talk to our fathers. If, even then, they don’t agree, we will seek outlegal action”

Source

Annual Report April 2018 – March 31 2019

Boys are now refusing to get into child marriages because they do not want to become targets of the official machinery who come around preventing child marriages. And also because they want the girls to get the benefits of Rupashri and Kanyashri schemes. Panchayats withholding government programmes and schemes also serves as a disincentive for the boys.

OUTCOME 2 INCREASED SUPPORT IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY

In this phase, some new community and other stakeholders were added to the project initiative – village resource persons to conduct social audits of panchayat funds, Hindu religious leaders, civic volunteers (after training at the local police station they follow up on cases of reported child marriage), Masjid functionaries in addition to the Muslim religious leaders only.

Several positive outcomes are being noted at the level of the community in the project areas.

- The general public is now fully aware that child marriages are prohibited. They know about the law.
- Participation of women in Panchayat meetings as well as Block level meetings has increased because of Jabala’s sensitisation of mothers’ groups and SHGs.
- Civic volunteers are ensuring safety of girls in public spaces – eg.Going for tuitions etc.
- A joint convention on Child Marriage with Hindu priests and Imams-Moizzidin was organised in MJ Block- a first of its kind in the area. Open discussion was held and commitment to stop child marriage was strengthened. As a result, now, religious leaders are being called by Block organisations and are being integrated into the convergent response system.
- Panchayats continued to use their resources for wall writing and other messaging for the communities. They organised regular meetings to create a dialogue between all the stake holders to assess the processes for prevention of child marriage and ensuring access to child rights and entitlements, including discussion around the maximum utilization of the available resources with each of them.

- In three cases in MJ Block (where the project began only in 2015-16), PRI members stopped child marriages with support from the project team. Also, a possible case of trafficking, camouflaged as marriage, was stopped in MJ Block, and the young girl is now going to school regularly.
- As result of the capacity building and sensitisation of service providers, many who used to be reluctant to act earlier, there is increased reporting of child marriages. ASHA and Anganwadi workers from the project area now are more likely to share and report child marriage cases in both the districts. Their names are kept confidential to maintain their safety and overcome any risks.

A Community coming together to Stop a Child Marriage

Mani Mahali lives with her younger brother and mother in Angergoria, Md. Bazaar, Birbhum. Her father had been suffering from cancer for a very long time and could not look after the family in any way. Thus, Mani spent most of her days with her uncle (Mama) where his family took care of her and educated her. She studied till the 4th grade here. But, soon Mani's mother called her back home. She needed help with household chores and income. Mina dropped out of school and started helping her mother to earn some extra income.

Mani's mother works as a daily labourer making baskets. Together, mother and daughter earn not more than INR 2000 per month. Somehow, they were taking care of household expenses with this meagre income. Their economic situation was so bad that their local ICDS worker would often come and give them the left over food from her centre.

Mani's father finally succumbed to his disease and died in 2016. Mani's mother saw no other way and decided to marry her daughter off. The same ICDS worker got in touch with Jabala and informed them about the upcoming wedding. We visited Mani's house with local community leaders, the ICDS worker and Panchayat members. Mani's mother told us that she can't take care of her anymore. There is not enough money for the 3 of them in the house. Her mother said, "she is still young, and the dowry is low. I don't know whether I will be able to get her married when she gets older." Jabala's community workers explained to her mother the disadvantages of getting Mani married so young. Mani said she was not ready to get married. She told us she keeps quiet in front of her mother, agrees with everything she says.

Mani was also not receiving any money from the Kanyashree scheme because she wasn't enrolled in school and will not receive Rupashree money for the same reason. We convinced the mother against the marriage and promised to enrol her into school.

Mani will start school from the next academic session and she has also been enrolled in the Jabala Football Team at Birbhum.

Mani is still unmarried and there is no more talk of her marriage. A Gram Panchayat member lives right next to her house and constantly checks up on her well-being. The ICDS Worker too follows up on the case. We also have a school teacher who is constantly in touch with her to ensure that her mother doesn't go the marriage route yet. Thus, Jabala and a willing team of Community Members have ensured this young girl doesn't get married before 18 and is enrolled in school.

Source

Case Study submitted by Jabala team

OUTCOME 3 RESPONSIVE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR INTERVENTIONS

The Annual Report 2018-19 indicates that inter-Departmental and inter-agency Convergence is beginning to happen. District Child Protection Committees (or Units) are now functional in both district, they have their separate office space, independent appointments of DCPOs, full-fledged staff and separate budget allocation available.

Child Marriage Prevention Committees were set up in the project villages in the first phase, and in 2014 – 2015 these were merged with the governments' mandated Village Level Child Protection Committees as part of Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). District Child Protection Units (DCPU) are constituted in the two districts under the project. Jabala has been training the VLCPCs on invitation of the DCPU based on the learnings from the project.

According to the Annual Report 2018-19, it appears that some degree of budget allocation for prevention of child marriage by the Government is now happening. The Panchayats are also allocating money for child protection from their own revenue collection. Additionally, Panchayats also make a special provision for toilets and housing to survivors' families as a reward or incentive.

The school awareness programme has resulted in increasing commitment towards child protection issues within the schools. Child sexual abuse prevention committees as well as those to address Sexual Harassment have been set up in various schools. Members of Jabala team who are part of this project are appointed as external members.

Based on this convergence model and the joint action plans, the Jabala team intervened in a total of 90 cases in the project areas in two years - in 2017-18 42 cases and in 2018-19 48 cases. (Annual report 2018-19)

A WhatsApp group has been formed to facilitate quick action and to keep everybody informed and connected. Officials accept that as a result of this, information is received by all concerned quickly and action plans are made. And this has made prevention of child marriage effective.

There is greater ownership of the issue and the agenda by the government machinery. The banners for all public functions carry the names of the government departments along with Jabala's logo.

There is a perception among the District Officers that there have been many improvements. For example, the DSWO told us Kanyashree enrolment has increased. Child marriages have decreased, even if they have not stopped completely. Earlier we did not get any information. Now there are so many changes – VLCPCs, VCPCs are active, awareness has increased. There are 5 Childlines... people know that there will be two years' imprisonment and Rs 2 lakh fine if they do a child marriage. So definitely child marriages have decreased.'

This DSWO also felt that the Child Protection Committees need to be strengthened through monthly meetings. Block officers should monitor 12 to 15 gram panchayats because it is difficult for the district to monitor and strengthen the CPCs.

During the evaluation, in a meeting with them, the Qazis also felt that child marriages have decreased by about 80 percent in the last few years. According to them now only about 20 to 30 percent child marriages remain.

It appears that social norms are changing. The Mothers' Meeting in Kumorpur Nutanpalli revealed that mothers' aspirations for their daughters are high. They want them to have careers and professions. They want them to have their own identity. They do not want them to be dependent on anyone else. They want them to get married after 22-23 and to boys of their own choice.

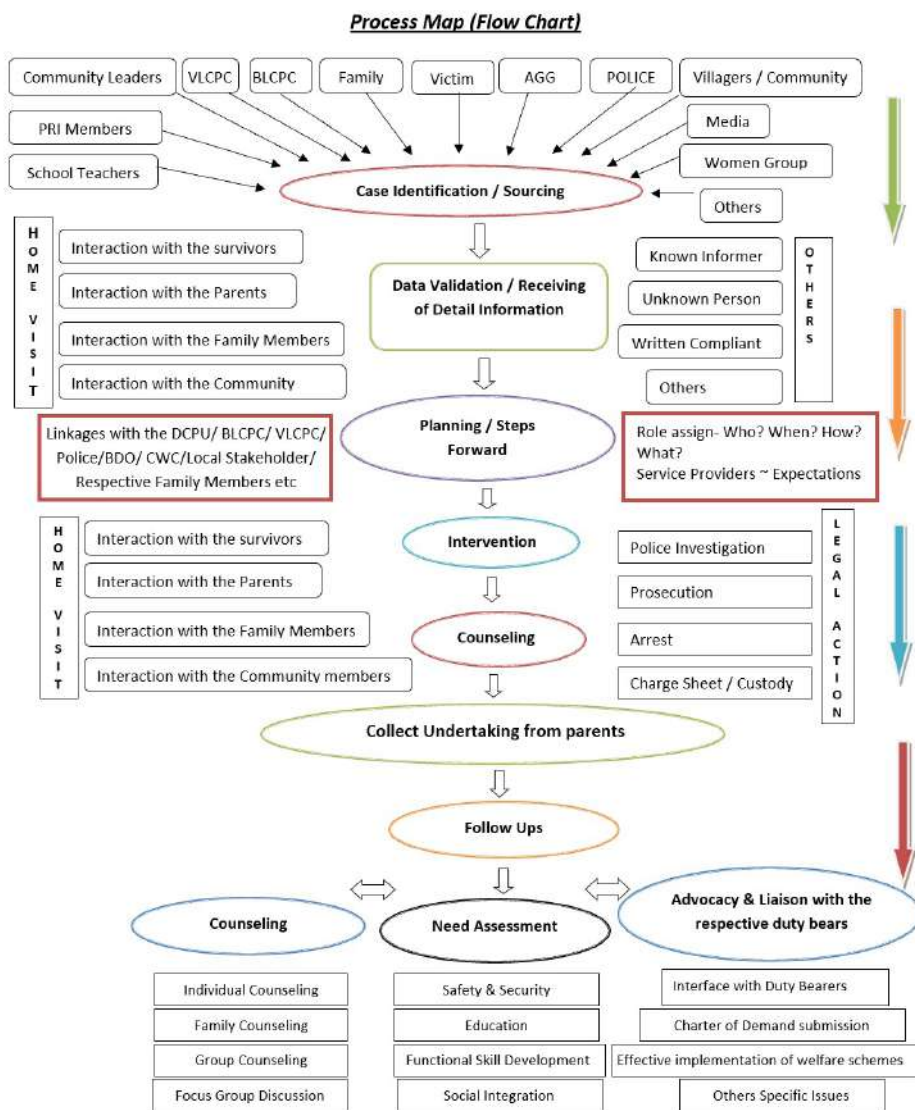
OTHER OUTCOMES – SKILLED FACILITATION, WIDER IMPACT, LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

There have been some wider impacts of Jabala's work as reported in the evaluation of this project.

Based on the experience of Phase 1 of the prevention of child marriage project, Jabala has been recognised as a pioneering organisation in stopping child marriages in Murshidabad District.

After a state level consultation in 2017 on reducing child marriage; the State Government introduced the concept of "child marriage free gram panchayat". As part of this initiative, initially two-gram panchayats from Murshidabad district - Rukunpur in Hariharpara block and Nutangram in Murshidabad-Jiaganj Block, were selected to pilot a model of this intervention. Jabala was asked to contribute indicators for a child friendly panchayat. Based on the Triple S Model and the recommendations of the earlier evaluation, the Jabala Team prepared a 'convergence model of implementation' with check list and SoPs on "child marriage free gram panchayat", stakeholders mapping; roles and duties of different departments, case intervention process etc. These were adopted and implemented by government. See Figure ... below for the SOPs.

Adolescent girls from Murshidabad and Birbhum were invited to Kolkata by SCPCR and UNICEF as experts. They were invited to present their views on what a Child Friendly Panchayat means.



CHALLENGES FACED AND STRATEGIES THAT WORKED

CHALLENGES

Many challenges have been mentioned both in the documentation and in the evaluation workshops and field visits. The Annual Report 2018-19 states the following challenges.

In this phase of the project, Jabala has included interventions with Hindu priests also in addition to the earlier work with the Muslim religious leaders. Both Hindu and Muslim religious functionaries are now playing a positive role in addressing child marriage by asking for age proof before agreeing to solemnise a marriage. However, while they are now convinced of child marriage as a health concerns of mother and child and reject early pregnancies, they are yet to be convinced about higher education of girls, their right to work outside the home and above all, freedom for girls.

Despite many successes during the last two years, some marriages keep happening without attracting much public attention. Girls are sometimes taken away to the homes of relatives in far off villages and married off.

One depressing development for the Jabala team, mentioned in the Evaluation workshop, was the fact that 34 of the 84 Kanyashree Jodhas eventually got married before they were 18! One such case was of Shabana's – she was a real leader. AGG meetings would be held in her home, she was recognised by the state government, but at the age of 14 years, she got married of her own choice! A complex interplay of social and economic circumstances forced her to take such a step.

Child marriage is a political issue. While politicians publicly denounce child marriage, when called upon to actually intervene in their constituencies they turn the blind eye. At the Block and District level too, there is not a uniform support for the issue. Support is person dependent. Some officers may conscientiousness in preventing child marriage, others may turn the blind eye.

The health workers flagged a new challenge. Due to the age of consent under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offence (POCSO) Act 2012 being 18, all sexual activity below it is criminalised. With the Supreme Court Order declaring sex with an underage wife also an offence under the POCSO Act 2012, health workers are afraid to help any under-age girl seeking abortion, given the requirement for mandatory reporting under the law. The health workers therefore do not want to take the risk of supporting under age pregnant girls, without reporting the pregnancy/ sexual activity to the police. Girls who get pregnant thus see a quiet marriage as the only option- even if it is a child marriage. Even if married, they cannot 'legally' seek abortion without the husband being criminalised. In effect, a law that was meant to protect them has ended up forcing them into early marriage or early motherhood!

The engagement with the boys, and ensuring that they remain engaged and part of the adolescent boys' groups has proved to be a challenge, particularly among the older boys. Part of the reason for this is the economic compulsions on the older boys to go out and earn. This is slowly being overcome, with more boys now showing interest and regularity in their participation. Dropout rates are increasing among boys as a result of increasing child labour.

Girls' aspirations are increasing. They are dreaming of freedom and opportunities. When faced with the situation of suffocating families and repressive social norms, more and more girls are now running away – any boy who offers the opportunity to escape, will do!

Kanyashree Jodhas are becoming very vulnerable because they are perceived as 'informers'. Their safety is becoming a concern now.

STRATEGIES THAT WORKED

Jabala has been working to build girls football teams since 2006. When this project began, this initiative was limited to Murshidabad. Since the starting of the child marriage prevention work in Birbhum started, Jabala introduced football in the two project blocks.

The Jabala team state that the Football Team has been the most powerful strategy for empowerment, assertiveness building of girls. This initiative is called 'Football for Freedom' and was conceived as a way to empower adolescent girls including survivors of social violence through sports. The game helps participants not only to gain fitness but also acts as an instrument of empowerment. Jabala chose Football as a tool for empowerment, as it is a body-contact game and is seen as an aggressive game that is mostly played by boys. Many of these girls who have restrictions at home even in terms of their clothing, come out to play to display their confidence and skill levels.

In 2017-18, 58 girls from both districts were playing regularly and participating in tournaments. Some achievements listed in the reports submitted by Jabala were as follows:

1. Adolescent girls of Mohammad Bazar participated in the “SampritiKiraProtijogita” and won 3 prizes
2. Birbhum’s team participated in a football match organized by the District administration and won the runner’s up trophy.
3. Jabala Birbhum Football Team received Rs. 25000 from Birbhum Police as prize money
4. Adolescent Girls Football Teams participated in various Block and District Level Football Matches (Jangal Mahal Cup, 2017).
5. The Block Level Administration sponsored material for the team at Hariharpara.

From various accounts, it appears that Social Mapping has also been a powerful strategy or tool. Social Mapping was done by Adolescent Group Members to identify families of adolescent girls, who did not have any of the following:

- Toilets
- Kanyashree benefits
- Households with many girls
- Indira awaas yojana
- School dropouts

And also to mark out the homes of the ASHA, PANCHAYAT location, the sub centre location and so on.

Apart from Social Mapping other participatory methods and games held the attention of the adolescent girls and boys. And these are important to include in the repertoire of strategies for working with young people.

TEAM’S PERCEPTION OF THE PARTNERSHIP WITH HAQ

During the evaluation, we asked Jabala team members to answer the following questions:

1. How does this project on Child Marriage fit into Jabala’s overall mandate and programmes? Has it contributed in any way? What have been the gaps?
2. What has been Jabala’s experience of the partnership with HAQ? How would Jabala like any future partnership to be? If at all? Your own specific expectations?

The responses are given below.

All the seven team members who responded stated that the Child Marriage project fitted very well into Jabala’s mandate.

‘Jabala works on empowerment of children as well as adolescents so that they can face challenges in life. Jabala’s vision lays stress on self -reliance of children. Jabala believes that every child should be free from all types of discrimination and exploitation. As child marriage is violation of rights of children, I believe that the programme on prevention of child marriage in line with Jabala’s vision.’

‘The work fits with Jabala’s mandate It encourages adolescents to become aware of their social and legal rights and to claim them.’

'Jabala's mandate is to ensure every child and youth are given knowledge and claim their rights. Jabala envisions a time where this intervention is no longer needed – when the systems, community and adolescents are strengthened and knowledgeable enough to function without or intervention- an ecosystem where people are held accountable. The child marriage project works exactly on these beliefs and principles.'

Several contributions of the project were listed by the respondents. More than one felt that the project contributed by providing the 'Self, Society, System Framework' to look at Adolescent Rights. More than one noted the resultant increase in confidence of the adolescents, although they could also see that there still much more to be done. Some responses were as follows:

'Self confidence among the adolescent girls has definitely increased and they are able to identify discuss their issues. They are availing benefits from the government programmes.'

'In many ways we have built a space for girls and boys to come forward and helped impart knowledge. In many ways we need to expand this and work better with adolescents.'

'We are able to help build the self-confidence of children but there are times when we are not able to provide the necessary linkages. The girls have got married even after the wedding has been stopped. '

'We worked to strengthen and make the government accountable –creating a space for Jabala at the district, block, panchayat, state to try to change policy and identify issues of advocacy.'

'The project has given us a voice on the issue at the state and all other levels'

'We reached larger communities and worked with variety of stake holders. Thus strengthening our base to do more work in the future.'

In response to question 1 listed above, some gaps in the project implementation, according to the Jabala team members have been:

'We identify the problem of child marriage but failed to provide the community with proper and overall alternatives.'

'We failed to provide life skills to adolescents.'

'The lack of continuity and constant presence of girls in the sessions hinders the understanding and overall development.'

Feedback on the partnership with HAQ was very heartening as well as honest. All the respondents valued the partnership with HAQ. They feel that over the time they have worked together, coordination and tuning into a common wavelength has improved. All respondents expressed the desire for the partnership to be continued.

'It was good to work with HAQ because there were no defined rules. We could search for solutions based on the situation. Not just child marriage, there is scope to work on other related issues as well. '

'Experience with HAQ is good and looking forward to work on child marriage in Birbhum. Child Marriage is a vital issue and needs to be addressed. While working with HAQ for 5 years we have developed a coordination. This coordination is important factor to achieve the plans and objectives. As we have formed a tuning between us, I think it will be helpful to carry forward the work.'

'HAQ has served as a knowledge partner and helped our team building capacities. In many ways sometimes their role has been seen as that of an evaluator over the years. But in recent years we have been working as partners to solve issues and identify action points.'

'Experience with HAQ was good. Both the organisations believe in a co-learning process. The most important thing that HAQ emphasised was the importance of discussion within the team and the community. This has led to an increase in self-clarity.'

'I want to continue with the work in partnership with HAQ because it has helped me to open up to new ways of understanding social change. I have developed a deeper understanding on some subjects which has made it easier to work in the field. We now discuss issues/ subjects amongst ourselves- e.g. gender etc. '

While there is a desire for a future relationship with HAQ, there are pointers for improvements required.

'Future Partnership is necessary for deepening work with adolescent girls and boys. Work on advocacy at state and national levels; publications and research. '

'Visibility of Jabala in the project continues to be a challenge in terms of publications, reports, case studies.'

'We are eagerly waiting for future partnership. But there was a issue of mutual respect and identity- this needs to be resolved in a proper way. Some guidelines may be developed –dos and don'ts and non-negotiables needs to be structured. But we have to find ways for further partnership – valued partnership is to be developed. '

Building and sustaining partnerships, it appears, is an iterative process. Perceptions of team members may be very different from the facts and they need to be periodically revisited, articulated and clarified. Perceptions vary depending on a number of factors – duration of being with the organisation, where one is placed in the organisation (hierarchy, location and so on). This report and the above perceptions provide an opportunity for further dialogue and clarification. And for building and strengthening partnerships.

ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

As stated in an earlier section, Jabala had set the goals of 'Prevent Child Marriage by strengthening existing mechanisms' and 'empowering adolescents' for itself within the larger and similar objectives that were defined for the donors by the partnership. From the field visits, interactions with the team and the document review it appears that the project has picked up steam during the last two years.

Interviews with different stakeholders in the field indicate that there is now high awareness of the PCMA in the community – they know that child marriages are not legal.

There is a strong and universal perception that child marriages have indeed decreased in the last two years. The ICPS and PCMA structures are in place at least at the district and block levels. The village level committees are functional. Thus institutionalization has happened in West Bengal to a large extent.

There is a systemic ownership of the child marriage prevention agenda – it does not remain only Jabala’s mission. Information on imminent child marriages comes in through Childline and informers and not necessarily the Jabala team.

Child marriages are reducing significantly according to several stakeholders interviewed. It would be good if this is backed by data that show declining trends. Educational indicators are showing improvements.

We were told that drop outs are decreasing and retention is high in schools (again some data would be desirable).

Kanyashree and Rupashree schemes are thought to contribute to increasing girls’ education in West Bengal.

Multistakeholder teams are now going in to stop or delay the child marriages – once again, the onus is not only on the Jabala team. Follow-up support is being provided in various ways to the girls and families who are delaying marriages. And largely through the official machinery and the panchayats.

Empowerment of adolescent girls - and boys also to some extent - is evident. Collectivisation of girls has been successful. They experience solidarity and in fact are attracted by it. It has been difficult to collectivise boys because of their livelihood and earning issues. But some inroads have certainly been made. The boys whom we met during our field visits value the inputs and exposure provided by the Jabala field teams and recommend that the work with the boys be expanded into other areas so that their own strength grows.

Boys and girls are being able to analyse their rights related issues, and take action on them, both within homes and with the block and district officers. They are now leading campaigns on child rights and prevention of child marriage. Many are being recognized by the authorities and being appointed Kanyashree Jodhas. The uptake of Kanyashree has definitely increased although no hard data is available.

At the community level there is action happening. New stakeholders have been added and many interventions are directed towards them. The religious leaders, both Muslim and Hindu, are becoming conscious of the precarity of their roles and how the PCMA is adversely affecting their professions and incomes and eroding the power associated with their status. Other stakeholders are also coming forward to take action against child marriage. Mothers, especially, are welcoming the opportunities for the girls to study further through the Kanyashree support. They want a different life for their daughters.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES THAT WORKED

The efforts within the team to encourage discussions and debates on various issues have helped broaden mindsets and sharpen analysis. Regular review sessions and meetings have been a good way to bring all team members on the same page and increase their confidence.

The Football for Freedom is a very powerful strategy for empowerment of girls and for breaking social norms. There is a huge demand for more football teams. Football has also opened the doors for girls to play other games like Kabbaddi.

Similarly, the Theatre Groups in different blocks have been putting out their issues in entertaining yet impactful ways.

Social mapping has been yet another powerful strategy of involving the adolescents in participatory activities, in analysis and in acting on their findings. Many groups of girls and boys have taken their findings to the block officers and been successful in getting their demands met.

During the field visits the boys we met were suggesting interesting strategies. Debates on controversial issues can be used. There is also a need to move to the issues that form the everyday life experience of these children – they spoke to us about the pressure of tuitions, the fact that teachers are not present in schools, or that they make them do their personal chores and run their errands. The strategy of being adolescent/child centred and responsive to their issues, rather than going with a set and limited agenda, is what is being emphasised here.

SUSTAINABILITY

Several things point to high likelihood of sustainability of the efforts.

First and foremost the investment in the adolescents – the peer leaders, resource persons, group members will go a long way in bringing about generational changes. The kinds of inputs being provided and the resultant changes in mindsets and skill sets, will be with these adolescents for ever.

Hopefully, the citizenship training will inculcate in them the desire to be change agents and champions for gender equality and rights, wherever they go. The investments also in conscientizing the wide range of stakeholders to child rights issues and to gender equality and prevention of child marriage, will also be another pillar for sustainability. Through these stakeholders we may hope to see progress in the changes in social and gender norms.

The fact that the DSWO and DCPO have been strongly articulating the issues and their efforts is another indication of the sustainability although we must recognise that much of this is person centred and with transfers and new officers coming in, the NGO teams have to begin all over again. The fact that politicians use issues to their advantage and are several times very populist, is a deterrent to sustainability.

TEAM'S CAPACITIES

This evaluation process indicates that the Jabala team has made considerable progress in their perspectives, analysis and skills. The State Coordinator demonstrates greater receptivity and openness, and greater reflexivity. Team development and capacity building has happened to some extent. Older team members show definite improvement in their confidence levels, their analysis of the different situations that they face and an increase in commitment and ownership of the agenda. Their presentation skills have improved. Newer team members are definitely putting in a lot of hard work and appear to be motivated but need more guidance in the field. Regular visits by the State Coordinator do not appear to be even across districts and blocks and this shows up in the performance and abilities of team members who do not receive field guidance and support – they try very hard but their effectiveness is compromised.

While a lot of training input has been given to the team members, I am not able to comment on the range or quality of the contents.

PARTNERSHIPS - WITH HAQ, JABALA AND OTHERS

It looks like there are several positive features of the partnership between HAQ, MJAS and Jabala. There is some degree of complementarity between the three organisations and the possibility of learning from each other. While Jabala's strength appears to be working with the official machinery, MJAS 's strength is to work with great passion and commitment with the community. HAQ provides the strategic direction and the opportunities for visibilising the collective work and taking it to higher levels of abstraction, conceptualisation and 'putting it out there'.

Jabala seems to have benefitted from the collective training workshops on gender, on SaathSaath and the citizenship building modules. The exposure trips to the Rajasthan project areas seem to have been a highlight for the team. Many team members expressed that they look forward to field visits by the HAQ team and feel very supported during these visits. The biggest contribution of the partnership for the Jabala team is the opportunities to deepen their perspectives and get new inputs.

Jabala team members have also expressed some lacunae in the partnership and while they hope that the partnership will be continued and expanded to cover other issues, they also hope that the identified lacunae can be resolved.

In West Bengal it looks like there is potential for Jabala to collaborate with other organisations and create a stronger alliance for child rights and prevention of child marriage.

DOCUMENTATION

The Jabala team has been trying very hard to improve its documentation and the results can be seen. Detailed records are kept of profiles of girls, inputs into the ABG and AGG, grading of groups and stakeholders, photographs and the baseline KAP. The SOPs produced are very impressive. Considerable thought has gone into listing the Activities and the Purpose of each activity. However, as mentioned earlier, compilation and analysis of each of these pieces of documentation is lacking.

The team still do not have results of the Baseline KAP, we don't know how many AGGs were 'good' and how many were weak at various points in time. So Outputs based on the detailed documentation are not available in a timely fashion. SOPs need a little more detailing. Reports need to be better organised.

Data on education indicators – how many dropouts over each year, how many children re enrolled into schools each year, how many Kanyashree beneficiaries each year - and on child marriage indicators - how many child marriages prevented or delayed over each year – are not available in tables to enable analysis of trends, and thereby assess the impact of the project.

The documentation and data systems do not provide any light on the comparison between the 'old' blocks where Jabala has invested considerably and the 'new' block where the scalability of the model was to have been tested.

EMERGING ISSUES

Some of the issues emerging from this evaluation are as follows:

- The role of Kanyashree Jodhas and their increasing vulnerability as informers. While it is great to have adolescents recognised as leaders and champions for the issue, how ethical is it to put them in positions of vulnerability? What do programme implementers need to do to ensure that human rights defenders are protected and have a support system? After discussions these measures need to be put in place,
- Deploying religious leaders in the project of gender justice when the feminist critique of all religions is that they are the epitome of patriarchy and that religious leaders wield a lot of power over women. And in fact perpetuate patriarchal control over women. It may be good to discuss this tactical engagement with the team so that they are aware of the larger contradictions, but understand the short term use of this strategy.
- There is a need to come out with a nuanced position on conditional cash transfer schemes like the Kanyashree and Rupashree. Rupashree is after all reinforcing the notion of marriage as an institution and an inevitable destiny for all women, reinforcing ‘biology as the destiny’ for women. And the added complication of Rupashree being perceived as a convenient dowry if the girl marries after she is 18. Self determination by girls about ‘marriage or no marriage?’, if ‘yes to marriage, then when?’ and the position around acceptable age at marriage not as the legal age, but beyond the legal age and when the girl feels she would like to marry after attaining some degree of independence, has to be advocated for. Rupashree like schemes have to be transformed – rather than linked to marriage, they need to promote career options for girls, reward girls who want to pursue careers.
- There is the related issue of the right to choose. Many young girls are choosing to get married to boys of their choice before they are 18. This is being perceived by the young people as the right to choose. The reasons for early marriages as decided by young girls are the control that they experience in their parental homes and in society. These aspects need to be addressed through appropriate sustained social interventions. There is also the reason of ‘love, romance and sexual rights and freedom’ for choosing early marriage. This needs to be addressed through comprehensive sexuality education.
- From all accounts, VLCPCs appear to be a critical institution and need to be functional and strong. Jabala has an important role to play at this level – strengthening of the VLCPCs and monitoring them continuously. Block and District functionaries need to be supported to ensure that the VLCPCs are doing their job. Indicators need to be developed for this and advocated for by Jabala.
- And finally, while the law is very important and is necessary, it is not sufficient. The PCMA, as other laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act, threatens and criminalises violators and drives child marriages underground. Along with the law, social interventions are very important. Appropriate budgetary provisions for social interventions and the requisite official machinery, are required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Jabala team can further refine their work by:

1. Enhancing their data analysis and presentation skills
2. Increased field support and guidance to all the block teams
3. Strengthening work with Adolescent boys and girls around the existing topics of Citizenship, Gender, Rights, Health, Violence against Women. And also adding on a Social Accountability lens to include all government schemes meant for them – for example, the Right to Education Act, the Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram, ICDS, School Health. All of these and others in addition to the Rupashree and Kanyashree Prokalpa.
4. Strengthen their own support to frontline workers like ASHAs, AWWs and ANMs.
5. Strengthen VLCPCs through training and ongoing support and ensure monitoring of VLCPCs and links with the Panchayats, Block and District offices.
6. Spend about 20 percent of their time and energy on campaigns and events with stakeholders. Encourage them to plan and do the campaigns with only hand holding support from the Jabala team.

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights was founded in 1998. It was registered under the Societies Registration Act, in June 1999. The recognition, protection and promotion of three rights form the cornerstone of HAQ's work. They are: Right to Survival, Right to Childhood and Right to Equal Opportunity.

HAQ's strength lies in its capacity to straddle micro and macro issues impacting children, undertake research and documentation to generate new knowledge and evidence, bring hands on experience into policy advocacy nationally as well as internationally, and strengthen governance for children by holding the duty bearers accountable.

For HAQ, ensuring accountability is not only about monitoring performance but also about strengthening the existing systems through building capacity of key stakeholders to generate a timely and effective response and empowering the rights holders (children) to understand and seek their citizenship rights.

Recognising the seriousness of the implications of child marriage on children as also the country's development and progress, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights is currently implementing a project on prevention of child marriage through the strengthening of existing systems in West Bengal and Rajasthan. HAQ works in partnership with Jabala in West Bengal and Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti (MJAS) in Rajasthan.

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