
No CHILD BRIDES

A PROPOSAL TO END/REDUCE CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA



**SUBMITTED BY
Child Survival India**



A. Narrative Proposal

Child Survival India, strives to improve the quality of life of residents of the low income urban and rural communities with its interventions in the fields of Maternal and Child health care, Women Empowerment, HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care and Adolescent/ Child education

1. Organization information (mission, brief history, last fiscal year budget and current year budget)		
Name of Agency, contact person, address, contact numbers, and email.	<p>Child Survival India</p> <p>Mailing address & Base office (Operations): Multipurpose Community Center, Village Khera Khurd, Delhi-110082</p> <p>Administrative Office: B-121, Basement, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019</p>	<p>Deepa Bajaj (CEO)</p> <p>deepab@childsurvial-india.org</p>
Brief History	<p>Child Survival India (CSI) is a non-profit society that was established in April 1991 with an aim to reach out to the marginalized and vulnerable sections of community find new avenues and alternatives of development. Initially the organization started as a child focused organization. However over the years, through community feedback and grass root experiences, there has been a change in the approach and strategic focus. It is a young organization with members who have extensive and long track records of experience in public health from all over India.</p> <p>CSI, since its inception, strides to capacitate and empower women, children and adolescents from marginalized communities because the organization believes that “people have the power to bring change, to make a difference and create hope for life”. CSI strives to improve the quality of life of residents of the low-income urban and rural communities with its interventions in the fields of Maternal and Child Health Care, Women Empowerment, HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care, Adolescent/Child Education, Child Rights Protection and Education.</p> <p>CSI has been supported by national and international agencies such as: State & National Government departments like Directorate of Health Services, State AIDS Control Society, Mission Convergence, Delhi commission for Women, International agencies like Save The Children Fund (India), International HIV/AIDS Alliance, HLPPT, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Sahayak Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, American India Foundation, Corporate groups like Johnson & Johnson, Castrol India, Target Sourcing Services, Hilton New Delhi and Individual donors</p>	
Legal Status (NGO/CBO/Producer Co./ Section-25 Co./Pvt/Other-Please specify	Registered under the SOCIETIES REGISTRATION ACT, 1860 as a National Level Body	
Registration No. & Date of Registration	S21828/dt.12.04.1991	

The Problem Statement:

Child marriage—marrying before the legal age at 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys—is **still widespread in India**. **Child marriage is** a major social concern and a **violation of children's rights** – whether it happens to a girl or a boy – as it denies the basic rights to health, nutrition, education, freedom from violence, abuse and exploitation and deprives the child of his/her childhood.

Child marriage affects both boys and girls but impacts girls with higher incidence and more intensity. As Per the latest District Level Health Survey (DLHS) (2007-2008) data, around 48% of currently married women in age group 20-24 years got married before age 18 in rural areas compared to 29% in urban areas. There has been a decline in the incidence of child marriage nationally and in nearly all states (from 54% in 1992-3 to 43% in 2007-8), but the pace of change remains slow.

A multiple set of factors contributes to the continuation of the practice of child marriage in India:

- Unmarried girls are considered a liability to family honor. Child marriage is a way to ensure chastity and virginity of the bride, thus avoiding potential dishonor of the family.
- Dowry perpetuates child marriage as it encourages parents to marry off their girls early to avoid an increase in the dowry amount.
- Girls are considered an economic burden for their family of origin and a “*paraya dhan*” or property that belongs to the marital family. Hence, the tendency is to marry girls as early as possible and reduce investment in their daughters.
- Investing in girls’ education is not considered worthy as girls will be moving to the groom’s household and will be employed in household chores.
- With the aim of reducing the costs of wedding ceremonies parents often marry off their children early seizing the opportunity of collective/community marriage ceremonies³, marrying off all girls/daughters in one ceremony .
- Impunity, weak law enforcement and limited knowledge of the law by society perpetuate child marriage
- Skewed sex ratio in some states has led to trafficking of girls in the name of marriage.

The **consequences of Child marriages for girls are especially dire**, as they are usually *compelled into early childbearing and social isolation. Child brides will frequently drop out of school and be exposed to higher risk of domestic violence and abuse, increased economic dependence, denial of decision-making power, inequality at home, which further perpetuates discrimination and low status of girls/women. As soon as a girl gets married, her childhood abruptly ends and her health and future prospects fall into jeopardy.*

Child marriage constitutes an obstacle to nearly every development goal:

Millennium Development Goals

- ✓ **Eradicate Poverty and Hunger (Goal 1):** poverty is both a cause and consequence of child marriage;
- ✓ **Achieve Universal Primary Education (Goal 2):** Girls are compelled to drop out of school in order to get married;
- ✓ **Promote Gender Equality (Goal 3):** Girls face economic and cultural pressure to drop out of school, and face social isolation;
- ✓ **Reduce Child Mortality (Goal 4):** Babies born to adolescent mother have higher risk of dying;
- ✓ **Improve Maternal Health (Goal 5):** Pregnancy at a young age jeopardizes the health of young mothers; 5
- ✓ **Protection from Violence (Millennium Declaration):** Girls may be exposed to violence when married at a young age into the groom's household with little decision-making power

Our past interventions on the issue:

Child Survival India through its existing interventions on health, child rights protection & education and women empowerment has been trying to address this issue.

Our health programs have a continuum of care approach starting from adolescence and moving on to pregnancy ,post natal care ,care of newborn and children thus we conduct reproductive and sexual health and life skills workshops with adolescents . The focus is on delaying age of marriage and age of first pregnancy.

Our programs on Child Rights protection see a case of child marriage as a case of Child Rights violation and try to create an enabling environment in the community for same and initiate dialogue with parents and teachers.

Our Mahila Panchayat program creates awareness in the community on legal age of marriage and the law against it.

Our proposed solution to reduce Child Marriages in rural areas:

CSI is now starting a comprehensive program that will be based on following strategies that can help to reduce child Marriages:

- ✓ Empower girls with information, skills and support networks
- ✓ Educate and Rally parents and community
- ✓ Enhance Girls' access to high quality education
- ✓ Interface with government and police on better enforcement of existing laws to protect girl rights and also to encourage supportive policies and schemes.

- ✓ Link girls with schemes and programs that train them in income –generating skills so that they can add value to their life and to their family

a. Empower girls with information, skills and support networks :

We are conducting 3 day workshops for adolescent girls (11-19 yrs) every quarter for a year in a village .Thus we will have 9 days of interface, spread out across 12 months, in one village .This is important as we are talking about changes in attitudes and practices that are long set and will take time to change. Also, if we do just one single 3 day workshop , the girls would not be able to form the relationship of trust and confidentiality that they need to form with the facilitator so as to gain by experiential learning.

These workshops bring girls together to learn basic skills like how to communicate and negotiate with others, how to stay healthy during reproductive years, how to work together to solve problems and how to earn and manage money thus making them more knowledgeable and self confident .Also meeting peers and knowing the available support mechanism can help alleviate the social isolation and helplessness many girls feel. Together all these gains enable girls to speak up, advocate for themselves, make better decisions and aspire to alternatives to early marriage.

Our workshops thus not just talk about “ Child marriage” but attempt to transform the village girls into empowered adolescents with self esteem and self confidence and expanded choices, capabilities and decision making ability related to education, marriage, fertility, reproductive and sexual health ,livelihood and interpersonal relationships.

Our attempt in these camps is that girls reflect and learn to question and speak up about the existing conditions.

“NO CHILD BRIDES” MODULE covers FOLLOWING TOPICS;

QUARTER ONE

- Me, Myself and My body
- Self Esteem and Understanding my value
- Gender : Gender norms, roles and stereotypes, Relationships
- Communication skills : assertive communication / active listening skills/saying No
- Think out of box-self expression
- What is child marriage

QUARTER TWO

- Pubertal changes and menstrual hygiene
- Emotional pressure and Social pressure at Puberty
- Traditional practices and girls health
- Conflict resolving and negotiation skills

- Marriage : age of marriage, choosing a partner, Husband wife relationship
- Young Women's leadership

QUARTER THREE

- Health, food and nutrition
- Reproduction
- Safe motherhood
- Planned parenthood
- My planning for myself
- I am not ready to be a child bride!

We conduct 3 -4 hours of session every day and the sessions are interactive and use participative methodologies like role plays, brainstorming, songs, storytelling, experience sharing, developing comics, slogans, drawing etc. so that girls open up, express themselves and share their issues in open.

b. Educate and Rally parents and community:

Families and community elders in the villages are still the key people who decide when and whom a girl marries. In the patriarchal culture prevalent in large part of our country, most of the times the elderly women also don't have so much of say in it.

It is very important to engage the parents and other elders as we cannot achieve any change on the issue of "Child Marriage" without influencing their attitude.

We sensitize the parents and community elders —through meetings, information campaigns, role plays, video shows, talk shows etc.—about how child marriage impacts a girl's health and future. This is done simultaneously when the camps for the girls are being organized in the villages. With new knowledge and insights, their attitudes and behaviors towards child marriage can shift and they are more likely to challenge rather than embrace traditional expectations of girls.

c. Enhance Girls' access to quality education :

When girls are in school, they are less likely to be seen as ready for marriage by their families and community.

Girls with no education are more likely to get married before the age of 18yrs than girls with secondary or higher education. Thus if girls are provided with support and facilitative atmosphere to enroll and remain in school, it can help delay marriage.

We also do school surveys/audits to see that schools are safe and girl friendly and coordinate with authorities to ensure the same. Also we encourage girls to enroll in National institute of Open schooling (NIOS) to continue their education, in case they have dropped out of school.

This is important as school allows girls to develop supportive social networks and also imparts them skills and knowledge to better advocate for themselves and their future.

d. Interface with government and police on better enforcement of existing laws to protect girl rights and also to encourage supportive policies and schemes.

The Government of India has adopted the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act(PCMA) in 2006, replacing the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929. Complementarily, the Compulsory Registration of Marriages Act, 2006, The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 reinforce India's legal framework against child marriage.

Following the adoption of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 State Governments/Union Territories are required to appoint Child Marriage Prohibition Officers and to frame Rules. So far all States have not framed their Rules and/or have appointed Prohibition Officers.

Prosecution and convictions of persons perpetrating child marriage is a pending challenge. In 2010 only 111 cases were reported under the PCMA and only 11 were convicted (National Crime Records Bureau).

We also plan to interact with the officials of state & district Commission of protection of child rights (SCPCR) and the police officials and conduct one district and block level interaction to sensitize government officials and if possible run a state campaign (with the support of HAVAS worldwide) to publicize the law and reward the officials for prosecution and conviction of guilty.

e. Link girls with schemes and programs that train them in income –generating skills so that they can add value to their life and to their family

If a girl gains an income generating skill then she can yield economic relief for her struggling family. This way she would add value to her life and to her family too and is more likely to be seen as an asset then a liability.

We are identifying existing skill training schemes and programs for girls in the vicinity of the target village before we go there for the workshop . This helps us to collect all the necessary information about enrollment procedures, fee etc and develop linkages with them and equip us to convince girls and their parents to enroll the girls in such programs.

At the end of our first workshop in the village, we hus motivate all eligible girls to enroll in such income –generating skill programs .Gaining these skills would improve their self confidence and self esteem. Most important, the economic self reliance will give confidence to her to speak up in major decisions affecting her life, including marriage – when and with whom.

Thus we have a comprehensive program to bring a change in the deep seated social problem.

This would have ripple effect on the other things like maternal and child health status, status of women and girls and participation of women in decision making.

We are thus taking the entire village as unit of intervention and would cover 25 villages each in two districts of Haryana—namely Sirsa & Fatehabad.

CSI has started a new “Child Rights” intervention in 163 villages of Haryana and would be superimposing this intervention also in Haryana as we already have foot print in that area .

Budget

Life skills training for adolescent girls to prepare them to SAY NO TO CHILD MARRIAGE

Budget for one training of 3 days (series of three trainings to be conducted in every village in a year)

Sno	Item	Amount in INR	Amount in USD for one training (approx)	Amount in USD for three trainings (approx)
Budget for one training for three days				
1	Resource person (02) @INR 1000 per day	1000x2x3=3000	55	165
2	Accommodation (2)	600x2x3 =3600	65	195
3	Conveyance, local travel and communication (2)	800x2x3=4800	85	255
4	Educational material, print and stationery etc	1500	30	90
5	Refreshment for participants	700x3=2100	40	120
	Total	15,000.00	275	825
	Three trainings in one year in one village	45,000	-	825 USD
	Budget for series of 3 trainings in 50 villages covering 1500 young girls	22,50,000.00	-	41250 USD