

A project of HAQ Centre for Child Rights, in partnership with MV Foundation in Andhra Pradesh and JABALA Action Research Group in West Bengal. Supported by Ford Foundation and McArthur Foundation.

**STRENGTHENING  
EXISTING SYSTEMS FOR  
PREVENTION OF CHILD  
MARRIAGE:  
MONITORING AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY**

*A Mid-project review by Leher.*

**LEHER**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AGG	Adolescent Girls Group
AP	Andhra Pradesh
ASHA	Acredited Social Health Activist
AWW	Anganwadi Worker
BC	Block Coordinator
BRO	Block Revenue Officer (Tehsildar)
CMPC	Child Marriage Prohibition Committee
CMpra	Child Marriage Prohibition and Regulation Act, 2006
CPIM	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CRPF	Child Rights Protection Forum
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DC	District Coordinator
DCPO	District Child Protection Officer
DCPU	District Child Protection Unit
DEO	District Education Officer
DM	District Magistrate
GP	Gram Panchayat
HAQ	HAQ: Centre for Child Rights
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
JABALA	Jabala Action and Research Centre
MVF	MV Foundation
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGO	Non Government Organization
PS	Panchayat Samiti
RDO	Revenue Development Officer
RG	Religious Leaders Group
RI	Religious Leaders Individual
SC	State Coordinator
SC	Scheduled Castes
SHG	Self Help Group
SI	School Inspector
SP	Superintendent of Police
ST	Scheduled Tribe
VLCP	Village Level Child Protection Committee
VO	Village Level Organization of SHG
WB	West Bengal
YG	Youth Group

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are approximately 23 million child brides in India<sup>1</sup>. Child marriage robs girls of every opportunity to thrive - childhood, choice, health and education. According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-III 2005-2006, 47.4 per cent i.e. nearly half of all young women (currently between the ages of, 20-24) were married before the age of 18 years. The situation is even more acute in rural areas and the incidence of child marriage varies across states. While the country is growing at an average of eight per cent a year, child marriage is decreasing at less than one percentage point a year. This has enormous consequences not only on children as individuals but also on families, communities and the nation as a whole.

The implementation of the Child Marriage Prohibition and Regulation Act, 2006, remains unenforced in many places. Unreconciled differences with religious personal laws and the child marriage law in India, social norms and cultural practices that govern families and marriage, and political unwillingness to address rights of women and children, have contributed to the current status of child marriage in India. Despite all legal interventions and enough data generated to show the serious health implications, especially for girls, child marriage has continued to be looked upon as a social evil instead of crime or as a violation of children's right to health and advancement.

With belief that collaboration between legal and governance systems can put forth a sustained mechanism for the prevention of child marriage, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights (HAQ) in partnership with MV Foundation in AP and Jabala Action Research Group in WB, supported by Ford Foundation and McArthur Foundation initiated a community based child marriage prevention program in two districts each of AP and WB in 2012.

In the selected districts of each state the implementing partners are responsible for community based interventions at the village, block level, and for liaison and networking with the administration at the village, block and district level. Key components of the program include setting up of committees for the prevention of child marriage at the village, block and district level, setting up or strengthening of adolescent girls groups, engaging with youth groups, and religious leaders and capacity building duty bearers at the village, block and district level to respond to and prevent child marriages. HAQ is responsible for monitoring of the project in the states, and for use of the learnings from the field to develop a nationally replicable model of community based intervention for prevention of child marriage. HAQ advocates against child marriage at high level policy forums at the national and international level.

The three year project has reached its mid-point, and an evaluation has been conducted to assess the progress achieved against the objectives and projected outcomes, and to put forward areas where measures towards course correction could be set in place. Leher was appointed to undertake the mid-cycle evaluation of the project. The analysis and feedback presented below is based on review of documentation, field visits, and interaction with stakeholders, beneficiaries and the project teams.

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<sup>1</sup>Unicef, Child Marriage in India, An analysis of available data

## 2. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the project is to work towards prevention of child marriage to improve the overall health status of adolescents by empowering them to address their own sexuality and reproductive health issues, and to be able to make informed decisions.

- Develop and demonstrate a model for addressing child marriage through the strengthening of and collaboration between existing legal and governance mechanisms.
- Strengthening of the existing state mechanisms/structures/institutions through training and monitoring of their functions, and holding them accountable
- Networking and collaborating with organizations engaged in similar issues to strengthen initiatives and working towards developing a sustained mechanism to address child marriage
- Advocating for policy level changes and strengthening the implementation mechanism of existing law on child marriage.

## 3. PROGRAM COMPONENTS-A GLANCE

The child marriage prevention program focuses primarily within districts weaving together duty bearers and community to form a mechanism that responds to and prevents child marriage. The program aims to take up learning and findings from the field for further advocacy at the state and national level.

The project is implemented in 2 states, namely, AP and WB. In each state the project covers 2 districts. Within each district 2 blocks are covered. In each block 3 GP are reached. Program components include a set of interventions at the village, block, district, state and national level. A spread sheet indicating the exact coverage of the program across AP and WB is enclosed at Annexure 1 and 2 respectively.

**Table 1- Coverage**

Details	Andhra Pradesh	West Bengal	Total
Districts	2	2	4
Blocks	4	4	8
GP	12	12	24

### 3.1. Programs within a district

#### 3.1.1. District Headquarter level

##### 3.1.1.1. Setting up district level child protection/marriage prohibition committees at the district level<sup>2</sup>

- To monitor the status of children at the district level
- The district committee/task force would have regular meetings (quarterly) to review the activities of the block committees/task force and the gram panchayats, and provide support where needed.
- The district committee/task force would conduct meetings with the conveners of the block task forces and review the status of child marriages in the entire district. Based on this review and feedback future activities would be planned.
- One of the important tasks of the district committee/task force would be to prepare a yearly report on the indicators developed on the basis of the rapid assessment.

#### 3.1.2. Block level interventions

##### 3.1.2.1. Setting up of block level child protection/ marriage prohibition committees<sup>3</sup>. The role of these committees is to:

- Take up the responsibility of coordinating and monitoring all the activities related to the program at the village level, providing necessary support wherever necessary.
- Periodic review of activities related to children, with a special focus on child marriages.
- Collect information on all marriages conducted from the Village Secretaries and conduct a review of whether any child marriages were conducted during this period.
- Take action on the cases of proposed child marriages that have been reported to them, either through the gram panchayats or directly.
- Regularly send reports on the status of children in the block, including information on child marriage to the district.

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<sup>2</sup> District Level Child Protection/Child Marriage Prohibition Committee: Constituted under the leadership of the District Magistrate/District Collector and the Superintendent of Police (SP), with all the other concerned officials such as the District Education Officer (DEO), ICDS-Project Director, some representatives of the civil society such as the ZillaParishad/Panchayat Chairman, NGO members etc.

<sup>3</sup> Block Level Child Protection/Child Marriage Prohibition Committee: All the officials who are responsible for implementing various programmes directed towards protecting children's health and protection rights like Block Development Officer (BDO), School Inspector (SI), ICDS-CDPO and the Medical Officer. The task force would also include members from the community, Mahila group leaders, youth representative etc.

### 3.1.2.2. Liaison with block level administration for the following:

The partners liaise with the administration to obtain the following:

- Block level orientation/coordination meetings of key stakeholders of child marriage program involved at the village level
- Circulars/notices etc. to stakeholders at the village level to obtain their support to the program
- Support for development and production of awareness material

### 3.1.3. Programs at the village level:

The bulk of the project intervention is focused at the village level. The objective is to develop a mechanism of duty bearers, and citizens that responds to and prevents child marriage. It includes the following:

#### 3.1.3.1. Setting up and facilitation of child protection/marriage committees<sup>4</sup> at the village level:

The role of the committees is as under:

- Maintain a data base of children in the village
- Ensure registration of marriages
- Ensure registration of births
- Ensure all children are in school and can access school
- Intervene and act to stop/postpone child marriage on receiving complaints
- Follow-up on cases of child marriages

#### 3.1.3.2. Facilitation of Adolescent Girls Groups (AGG):

The purpose of facilitation of dialogue with the AGG is to:

- Empower girls to make informed decisions about their own marriages
- Enable them to complain against child marriage
- Awareness of the response system

#### 3.1.3.3. Engagement with village level groups, committees, duty bearers and individuals who can play an influential role in prevention of child marriage:

Self Help Groups (SHG), SHG federations, religious groups, individual religious leaders, political groups/leaders, village elders and duty bearers including the teachers, ASHA, AWW, panchayat members etc.

#### 3.1.4. Awareness on child marriage through rallies, public events and gatherings, development of IEC material, wall painting:

Creative material is developed by the partners, and resources to produce the same are mobilized through government department budgets. Partners are meant to use platforms

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<sup>4</sup> Village Level Child Protection/Marriage Prohibition Committee: Members of the protection committees included the AnganWadi Worker (AWW), Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Auxiliary Nurse and Mid-wife (ANM), school teacher, head master, Self Help Group (SHG) members, religious leaders, political leaders, panchayat secretary, village elders, village administrative officer, youth group members, NGO and SHG federation members

provided by rallies and public events to dialogue with communities on the issue of child marriage.

**3.1.5. Advocacy at the state and national level**

Policy advocacy is one of the main activities of HAQ. For this HAQ works on policy as part of government's working groups by giving its recommendations to the government on its own or by networking with other advocates etc. Therefore, as part of HAQ's ongoing work, the findings and learnings from the villages, blocks and districts are to be used for policy advocacy with concerned persons at the state and national level.



## 4. PROJECT AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND ROLES

Figure 1 - Program Management Structure

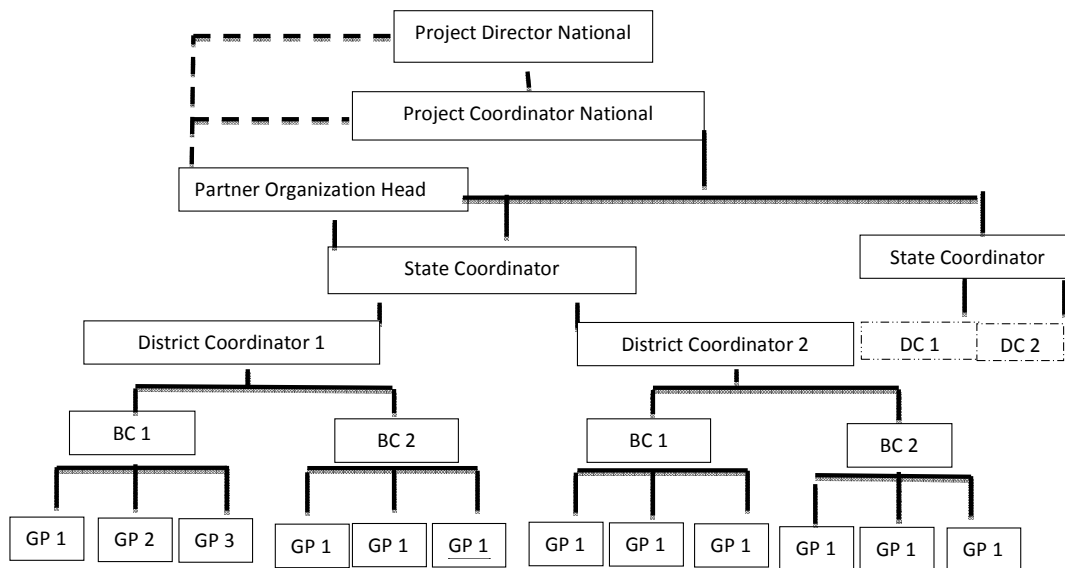


Figure No. 1 above describes the management structure of the program. The program is facilitated nationally by HAQ located in Delhi. The team of HAQ comprises one of the Directors of HAQ, who fulfils the role of Project Director and a senior team member who works full time as the National Project Coordinator. The 2 state teams report to the National Project Coordinator who in turn reports to the National Project Director. The state teams comprise of a State Coordinator to whom the district teams report. In each state 2 District Coordinators report directly to the State Coordinator. The State Coordinator reports administratively to his/her line manager in the partner organization and programmatically to the National Project Coordinator in HAQ. The line manager of the State Coordinator is expected to mentor the child marriage team, take forward issues and concerns of the program in the organization, stay in contact and coordinate with HAQ, and participate in program reviews. The district teams comprise of a District Coordinator to whom 2 Block Coordinators report. Each Block Coordinator is responsible for programs in 3 GPs<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The structure has been presented based on the evaluator's understanding from conversations and review of documentation.

A slight variation was found in the 2 states where the State Coordinator in WB is also the head of the organization, whereas in AP the State Coordinator is a middle management team member who reports to his line manager who is senior management team member of the organization.

#### Role of HAQ

HAQ plays the role of the nodal agency for the child marriage project. It is responsible for the overall implementation of the project, reporting and monitoring of the implementing partners. It provides technical support to the partners on the issue of child marriage, and also uses the learnings of the project to undertake advocacy at the state, national and international level. There is a full time national project coordinator based in HAQ, the Director of HAQ gives 25% of her time towards oversight of the project, project review and reporting to the funders. HAQ has developed the program design and plans in consultation with the partners. HAQ receives quarterly reports from the partners in the field and provides input and feedback to them based on the reports. HAQ undertakes capacity and perspective building of its partners. It is undertakes 6 monthly monitoring visits to the partners. The project director and the national coordinator also interact with and work in coordination with the heads of the partner organizations. HAQ carries forward the work and learning from the project on a number of advocacy platforms. The role of HAQ and its efforts in advocating for against child marriage may be seen in Annexure 3.

#### Role of the implementing partners (Jabala in WB and MV Foundation in AP)

The partners are responsible for the implementation of all aspects of the program at the state, district, block and village. They are also responsible for advocacy at the district and state level. Each partner organization on both states has a time team of 7 members to implement and manage different aspects of the project.

- **State Coordinator (SC):** The State Coordinator works full time and is in charge of management of the project in both districts. The SC undertakes bi-monthly review meeting with the project teams at the partner headquarters. The person is also responsible for reporting, liaison and advocacy at the state government and has to undertake 2 visits a month to the field to attend the bi-weekly district level reviews. The SC has to support the DC and lead liaison and advocacy efforts at the district level.
- **District Coordinator (DC):** Under each state coordinator a DC is in charge project implementation of each district. The role includes supervision of both the block coordinators, liaison with the district and block level administration, review and planning of the program. The DC undertakes a fortnightly review and planning with the BC. S/he is also responsible for all the reporting at the district level. The DC supports the block coordinators in interventions to stop child marriage. S/he supports the BCs in block level meetings of stakeholders. The DC also offers technical support to the district administration on issues related to child marriage.
- **Block Coordinators (BC):** The BC are responsible for program implementation in the 3 GP within the block under their charge. This includes formation and facilitation of child protection committees at the GP and block level, AGG, youth groups, meetings with religious leaders, SHG, etc. The BC is mandated with attending as many meetings as possible at the village level. S/he is responsible for documentation of activities in the GP and at the block level.

## 5. METHODOLOGY OF THE MID-CYCLE EVALUATION

The mid-cycle review was undertaken by Leher<sup>6</sup>. It involved the following steps:

### 5.1. Pre-evaluation briefing:

The Leher team had 2 briefing sessions with members of the HAQ team in Delhi wherein the Leher team was briefed about the project, and a plan was formulated for conducting the evaluation. It was decided and agreed that the evaluators would visit each district and block and cover at least one GP within each block of the project area, and conduct interactions with as many stakeholders of the program as possible.

### 5.2. Review of Project related documentation:

The HAQ team handed over relevant project related documentation to the Leher for review prior to the visit and in the field. The review of documentation aided the Leher team in understanding the nature of the project and arrive at key questions and discussion points to be raised with various stakeholders during the review.

### 5.3. Field visits to projects in both states:

Field visits to project areas in both states were conducted. Interviews and group discussions were conducted with stakeholders of the program. The evaluators held discussions with the project teams and verified documentation available in the field. Details related to the field visits may be seen in table 2 below.

### 5.4. De-brief with HAQ and partner organizations:

A half day debriefing meeting post field visits was conducted with the HAQ and partner teams together in Delhi where the evaluating team shared feedback with the HAQ team and its partners. Partners got an opportunity to flag issues and provide clarifications to the Leher team of evaluators.

### 5.5. Collation of findings of the report and report submission:

The Leher team compiled its findings into a draft report and had discussions with HAQ. Detail discussions were carried out with HAQ, more information was sought from the field and the final report was prepared.

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<sup>6</sup> A child rights organization based in Delhi.

Table 2- Details of field visits Conducted

State	District	Block	GP visited	Interviews/group discussions held
Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad	--	--	Joint Director, Women and Child Development, State Government of AP.
	Warangal	Rayaparthi	Ookal	School Head Master, CMPC, AGG (1) , SHG (1), group of village elders (1)
		Thorrur	Chityala	CMPC, youth group (2), AGG (2), Anganwadi supervisors (3), Police Sub Inspector at Block HQ, Project team at office of MVF in Block HQ.
	Mahbubnagar	Amrabad	Chitlamgunta	CMPC , Purohit, Block Revenue officer at Block HQ, Political leaders, and media persons, CRPF members, and temple committee members at block HQ, District Collector at District HQ, CWC member, Childline team, and DCPU at District HQ, Assistant Joint District Collector at District HQ
		Achampeta	Inole	Temple Endowment Department at Umamaheshwaram temple in Achampeta Block
West Bengal	Kolkata	---	---	Director, Social Welfare, State Government of WB, Consultant (UNICEF) to the Directorate on heading the division on anti-trafficking & child marriage; Deputy Director, Social Welfare, Nodal Officer for ICPS. Jabala team in Kolkata, Biplab, Programme Head, Jabala
	Murshidabad	Hariharpara	CHOA	Jabala Team at Bhramapore, Murshidabad, DSWO/CMPO, Regional Director, NYK, CWC, Chairperson & 1 Member, BDO, OC, Pradhan, Humaipur, a neighbouring project area where awareness had been conducted, influential community leaders at ChandradeepMela including former Chairperson, Panchayat Samiti, Ex-Pradhan Choa GP, businessman, media personnel. CIC of Jabala, girls football team which is also the AGG, CMPC Members, Rukunpur Panchayat (pradhan, Secretary, Opp leader), Headmaster & teachers of MSK, restored child in school & family setting 3, Maulvis 18-20, Secretary of Block Level Religious Group, 2 members from the CHOA CMPC.
			Rukunpur	
		Beldanga-1	Debkundu	Youth group, Marriage Registrar, principal, Teacher, AGG, Panchayat Members (Pradhan, Secy, Health Officer ), PS , BWO, BDO
	Birbhum	Mohammad Bazar	Anguria	Meeting at DCPCS-(DCPO, Officer Institutional & Non-Institutional Care –former also ex chairperson CWC)AGG, VLCPC Rajyadharpur, BDO, media personnel, ICDS Supervisor, a single Purohit
			Mohammad Bazar	Visit to Police Thana and Officer, SHG
	Rampurhut-II	Margram-I	Religious leaders (7), Marriage Registrar, CMPC, AGG, Margram GP Members (Pradhan, Exec Secy), ASHA Supervisor, PS (Sabhapati + 5 Karmadakshas )	

## 6. OBSERVATIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM

This section provides observations and insights relevant to the project as a whole. Detailed feedback across the key program components for each state is covered in the state reports for AP and WB in sections 7 and 8 of this report.

### 6.1. Coverage of the program across the 2 states

Based on review of documentation and the field visits, activities core to the program during the first half of the project period at the GP level village level were identified as formation and/or facilitation of the CMPC/VLCPC, facilitation of discussions with AGG, youth groups, facilitation of discussions with groups of and individual religious leaders, and others in positions to influence opinion. Other components of the program include advocacy, awareness and capacity building.

Table 3-Population of GP<sup>7</sup>

State	Name of GP	Population
Andhra Pradesh	Ookal (Warangal, Rayaparthy Mandal)	5000
	Chityala (Warangal, Thorrur Mandal)	2800
	Chitlamkunta (Mahbubnagar, Amravadi Mandal)	3644
West Bengal	Choa (Murshidabad, Hariharpara Block)	29116
	Rukunpur (Murshidabad, Hariharpara Block)	29763
	Debkundu (Murshidabad, Beldanga Block)	22944
	Bhutura (Birbhum, Mohammad Bazar Block)	13059

In AP it was found that the CMPC were set up at the GP, while in WB it was decided to set up the VLCPC at the sansad (ward) level. The reason for this is that the population of each GP is much higher in WB than in AP (see Table 3). In AP all CMPC (12) have been set up at the GP level. As may be seen in Table 4 below less than 40% of VLCPC have been set up at the sansad level in WB.

Table 4- Reach of key activities within the project area in West Bengal

District	Total No. Sansad/village	No. Sansad/village reached	CMPC/VLPC
Birbhum	77	16	16
Murshidabad	120	22	22

<sup>7</sup>Population of GP was found available in the baseline survey report of WB. These are figures of The GP population was not available in the baseline survey in AP. The evaluator got these figures from the CMPC members interacted with during the field visit. Hence, these figures may be considered to be approximate. They could not be verified.

In both states the project has made head way in interventions at the block and village level. However, it is praiseworthy that the partners have been able to achieve this much in a year and a half since project initiation. They have been able to mobilize support from the administration and the duty bearers for the formation and of block and village level committees, facilitation of adolescent girls groups, and youth groups and have contacted a large number of religious leaders/priests.

The evaluators have the following suggestions to offer:

- In AP since population is lower and feedback from the partner working in the field indicates that CMPC at the GP level are adequate to reach out to all the children, they do not require to set up CMPC at the village/ward level. While a further study is recommended to ascertain the reach of the program in the community, it is also recommended that the partners take on additional activities to deepen their engagement with the communities (discussed in section 7 of this report).
- In WB further, review and study is required to determine strategies to up-scale the program to cover the entire project area over the rest of the project period. Since resources and time are limited within the project, it may not be feasible to set up all VLCPC in every Sansad. HAQ and the partner should discuss the issue further and arrive at a conclusion about achieving a certain critical mass in the districts of WB. It may be prudent to take a decision not to set up the VLCPC in every Sansad as it will take away time and energy from the other components of the program.
- As for the other components including the AGG, youth groups and religious leaders, HAQ and partners would need to arrive at a minimum standard of coverage (there needs to be a rationale towards how many groups to be set up, reaching out to what percentage of children, youth, religious groups, political leaders etc.).

## 6.2. Taking on yet uninitiated components of the program

### 6.2.1. Advocacy at the district and state level:

At the district level, state and at the national level the advocacy with concerned departments needs to be systematized. For example, the district level committees must be set up. A stated output of the project was setting up a mechanism for reporting and review of information from the village and block level to the district level and further up to the state level. It would need to be developed in the next phase of the project. Post the state consultations at the time of initiation of the project, partners remain in contact with the state government, provide technical support, and also contribute on some advisory committees/working groups<sup>8</sup>. This however appeared to the evaluators to be rather ad hoc. There needs to be clarity on how partners take up the issue of child marriage at various platforms. HAQ and its partners need an in-depth discussion and agreements on what specific activities and issues need to be taken up at the district and state level, the role and expectation of HAQ in support of partners especially at the state level needs to be spelt out.

### 6.2.2. Establishing accountability among stakeholders and systematizing programs:

A key objective of the project is to establish accountability amongst stakeholders. While the implementing team has done a commendable job at mobilizing stakeholders at the village level, they now need to be made to function more independently. HAQ and partners need to develop a set of activities that can be undertaken towards increasing accountability of stakeholders as well as aimed at making systems function more independently. In all locations visited by the evaluators the stakeholders seemed dependent on the partner organization staff for all activities they undertook.

The evaluators learned that at the time of stopping a child marriage, all stakeholders converge in support. The time has now come to establish role clarity which will enable independent functioning. Establishing role clarity of various stakeholders at the village level, and their capacity building should be taken up.

Establishing accountability among stakeholders is also linked to the level of concern and priority that ordinary members of the community accord to the issue of child marriage. Stakeholders will be more accountable when the community demands it of them. Addressing ordinary members of the community is discussed below in this section of the report.

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<sup>8</sup> In AP MVF has served as resource persons for Regional Consultations on child marriage in the state. They have provided input for awareness material developed by the state government on child marriage. In WB the SC is an invitee to the State Level Child Protection Committee and is part of the sub-committee entrusted with drafting guidelines for implementation of ICPS.

### 6.2.3. Engaging ordinary members<sup>9</sup> of the community -towards attitude change

In the year and a half since the inception of the program, the implementing partners have focused on mobilizing the system. They have also mobilized community members through platforms provided by adolescent girls groups, SHG, and youth groups. It was observed that in areas covered by the project the system is more or less prepared. However, from conversations with SHG, AGG and youth groups in AP especially, it was found that girls are still viewed as a burden, and that their status in the family is low. People need to change their attitudes towards girl children, and child marriage. It is only when the community wants to protect its girls that it will demand protection from the State.

For example, at the village and block level, there are a number of public events which take place which could offer themselves as platforms for engaging with the community in a neutral setting<sup>10</sup>. Persons in position to influence communities with whom relationship have already been established can be used as ambassadors and spokespersons to address the community on the issue of child marriage. The evaluators recommend that the teams need to identify all major public community events at the village and block level and plans for using these strategically to engage with communities on the issue of child marriage.

It is recommended that the project now adds focus to engaging ordinary members of communities. There needs to be more thought and planning focused on how neutral platforms provided by schools (PTA, and SMC), community events, and festivals, could also be used to create awareness about child marriage, and engage community members in dialogue.

### 6.2.4. Engaging with young boys:

The evaluators observed that boys are left out completely from the program. It is critical to engage with them and influence their attitudes at an early age. Going forward it is recommended that the program must incorporate activities to influence school going boys. Looking at feasibility and resources a number of ideas could be explored which include contacting boys in schools and doing workshops with them, bringing in brothers of the girl members of AGG into the groups, or using youth groups to bring young boys together.

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<sup>9</sup> Ordinary members of the community--mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandparents, uncles, aunts and friends.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in WB the evaluator chanced upon a visit to the Chandradeep Mela held at the Choa on the police grounds. It was observed that this mela has very high daily attendance of local members of the communities around and the opportunity of engaging with them could have been very strategically exploited.



#### 6.2.5. **CounsellingCounseling and case follow-up:**

During visits into the field made by the evaluators it was found that all stakeholders interacted with spoke of their role in [eounsellingcounseling](#) families which led ultimately to the prevention of marriage. [CounsellingCounseling](#) is a specialized technical input. Not everyone can be a [eounsellorcounselor](#) and a gap in the [eounsellingcounseling](#) input does exist.

The evaluators observed that the project teams spoke of interventions where child marriage was postponed. This was often in the case of girls who were around 17 and where they succeeded in getting the parents to hold the marriage till the girl completed 18 years of age. However, they were not able to clarify whether at 18 years of age the girls were married to the same boy or to another person. While the project team undertakes follow-up of cases through home visits and visits to school to ensure that the child has not dropped out, there is a need to strengthen case follow-up. Girls and their families also need long term support to ensure that the child is safe and cared for at home post stopping/postponing her marriage.

It is recommend that:

- HAQ and its partners would need to look at how such an input can be brought in through partnerships with other organizations as the project may not have the resources to provide for [eounsellingcounseling](#) in every case.
- It is also recommended that long-term case follow-up be taken up in the case of a small sample of cases in each GP, to study what the effect of stopping/postponing a child marriage is on the child-to understand whether the experience has left her traumatized, to understand the support she and her family require, to examine the attitude of her family towards her, if her future prospects have changed for the better. Such learning would be of immense help in developing a model intervention to prevent child marriage.

#### 6.2.6. **Reaching especially vulnerable communities within the project area:**

Within the project area, in across both states discussions with CMPC members brought out that there are certain SC, ST and OBC and the Muslim communities<sup>11</sup> that are more vulnerable and to display higher incidences of child marriage. Currently, the outreach strategies in the program to reach and communicate to people are a one size fits all. Awareness comprises mostly public messages through wall paintings, pamphlets and in some cases street plays. It is recommended that the partner organizations think of strategies be developed to communicate and reach out to specific communities.

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<sup>11</sup>Lambadas, and Jadhavs in Andhra Pradesh; Adivasis, Bhagdi, Bhandari in WB; Muslim community in both states.

#### **6.2.7. Legal intervention in cases of child marriage:**

Across both states it was observed that most child marriages are stopped through negotiation with the families. From discussions with the teams of the partner organizations and at HAQ, the evaluators have understood that this model of intervention did not envisage legal intervention when it was initiated. However, the evaluators observed that there are a few cases where counselling and negotiation does not work and parents end up leaving the village to conduct marriages elsewhere. There have also been a small number of serious cases where the girl may have been abused in her marital home, or where marriage was a guise for selling the child in prostitution (read the case details on Sonia Khatun in the WB state report in section 8).

It is recommended that:

- HAQ and its partners may reflect on whether in some cases it may strengthen the program and the influence of the program on the community if legal intervention were to be taken up for certain cases. This is recommended if the family is willing to take legal action.
- Since the project may not have persons with the required skills or the necessary financial resources, it is recommended that linkages may be explored with organizations in the area who provide legal intervention.

#### **6.2.8. Embedding child marriage intervention within the child protection system:**

As has been stated earlier, a key objective of the prevention of child marriage project focuses on establishing that child marriage is also a child rights and child protection issue. It was however, observed that in both states this project and the child protection system run on parallel tracks<sup>12</sup>. Just like the teams have established good functional collaboration between the ICDS, health, police and education functionaries present at the village level they now need to invest in integrating the program with the child protection system. Since there are no child protection functionaries present at the village level, the integration spoken of is envisaged at the block and district level where the BDO and the DC/DM/ZillaParishad Chairperson are charged with child protection<sup>13</sup>.

Based on interactions with some officers of the child protection system (DCPOs and CWC members, and the District Collector), the evaluators were of the opinion that the child protection system is in need of a lot of strengthening in both states<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Cases are not reported to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), the partners have reported that they do not receive the required cooperation from their local Childline service, have not made any formal attempt to resolve the issues with Childline, they have not established any functional relationship with the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) the nodal body for implementing the ICPS at the district level.

<sup>13</sup> In ICPS the BDO is the Chair of the block level child protection committee, the DM/DC/ZillaParishad Chairperson is the head of the district level child protection committee and the District Child Protection Unit.

<sup>14</sup> CWC members do not have access to funds to enable them to travel, all staff in DCPUs have not been appointed, administrative issues with DCPUs including not having access to funds to enable them to travel limit their reach. It was also found that in AP the DCPU is located under the Director of ICDS, so the staff do

Some recommendations for the partners include:

- Identification of specific areas of support required from the child protection system. Some of these could include seeking the assistance of Childline teams in conducting awareness and training related activities, reporting of cases of child marriage to the CWC, filing reports on child marriage cases intervened with the DCPO for follow-up, mobilizing resources from the DCPU for awareness and training.
- Advocating with the District Collector to ensure that the DCPU takes up child marriage as an issue.
- Providing orientation to the DCPO, Childline staff and the CWC members on child marriage.

Some recommendations for HAQ include:

- To steer the advocacy and support the partners to reach out to stakeholders of the child protection system at the state and district level.
- To hold structured discussions with the District Collectors, CWC members, DCPO and the Childline partners during their visits to the field and held structured discussions on areas of support and collaboration needed.
- To hold a strategy session with partners to identify and prioritize specific areas of collaboration in each state.
- To the government and others the need to empower and strengthen the position of structures and officials of the child protection system as part of state and national level advocacy.

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not have access to the District Collector who is the head of the DCPU according to ICPS. In West Bengal, and true of AP too, the DCPO being contract staff and not a signatory to the bank account, is dependent on the Social Welfare Officer (SWO) to get funds released and proposals approved. This hinders the pace of work.

### 6.2.9. Capacity building of the implementing team, as well as the stakeholders in the program:

Capacity building has been outlined as a key component of the project. From interactions with the field teams it was observed that both partners have undertaken training in some form. A number of block level training of AGG, CMPC/VLCPC, religious leaders have taken place. However, from discussions it appeared to the evaluators that these meetings serve as platforms for orientation of stakeholders to the issue and also help strengthen relationships with them. The sensitization take place through one-on-one interactions at the GP level with the various stakeholders. Despite the 10 day training of VLCPC members in WB, there was no tangible difference in capacities of VLCPC members across both states. The only major difference was noticed was in how much more responsive, articulate, and sensitive CMPC members in AP who were part of MVF's CRPF<sup>15</sup> network.

A lot of capacity building of stakeholders and the field team was perceived as a need, especially since a key message of this program is positioning child marriage is a child rights and more specifically a child protection concern. In order to be able to work more effectively, and to communicate more effectively with stakeholders the field teams also need capacity building.

The evaluators recommend that capacity building must be invested in in the second half of the project cycle both at the level of the partner teams as well as with key stakeholders in the community.

- Areas that could be explored capacity building include documentation, planning, project management, aspects of child rights, child protection, child protection systems, gender, legal intervention, training the field staff to be trainers, communication skills, etc.
- HAQ would have to play a key role in developing a strategy, plan and tools for the same.

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<sup>15</sup> CRPF: A registered society, CRPF is a network of activists nurtured and supported by MVF all its project areas in AP and in other states in the country. MVF trains them on child rights monitoring and intervention and convenes at least one annual meeting at the district level and at the state level. CRPF activists have participated in social audits, and research. They also take up cases of child rights violations. None of these members are paid.

#### **6.2.10. Articulating key messages of the program:**

In the past year and a half, the partners have mobilized stakeholders in communities and created a concern about the issue of child marriage. However, in positioning child marriage as a child rights and protection violation, the ideological premise, and messages going out to communities and stakeholders need to be carefully articulated. The evaluators noticed a difference in messaging across the 2 states in the nature and quality of messages that were being communicated to the public mainly through wall paintings, pamphlets and hoardings<sup>16</sup>. Going forward, it is recommended that the key messages of the program need to be defined and brought out clearly in the communications that go out to communities both in face to face interactions as well as the public awareness and IEC material that is developed. These messages must also be incorporated into training content.

#### **6.2.11. Using the media more strategically:**

In both states it was observed that the partner organizations had established relationships with the print media and that they did receive support in coverage of stories<sup>17</sup>. However, the evaluating team felt that the media definitely has the capacity to undertake much more than just giving coverage to stories of child marriage in print. It is recommended that the program needs to develop a strong media advocacy strategy. For example, using local television channels- interactive shows with community/ phone-ins could ensure greater scale-up of awareness and prevention than the house to house campaigns etc. HAQ and its partners need to strategize on how to get their main groups such as religious leaders/AGG/VLCPC/youth Clubs to act as spokespersons. Training and sensitization of the media must be part of such a strategy.

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<sup>16</sup> In AP the messages mostly focus on child marriage being illegal, and on the negative impact of early pregnancy on the health of under-age mothers, while in WB messages incorporate rights of girls and notions of childhood.

<sup>17</sup> In WB the evaluator met with a number of influential media personnel who had connections to a number of influential persons as well as political leaders. In AP the evaluator met with a number of journalists to regularly write on the issue of child marriage.

#### 6.2.12. Scaling up the program to look at other aspects of prevention:

The project is titled 'Prevention of Child Marriage'. However, from observations in the field during the evaluation, the evaluators gathered that so far the implementing partners look at prevention of child marriage as a set of activities to stop or postpone a marriage. This understanding of prevention drives the interactions with stakeholders and the community. To this extent they have achieved a whole lot in a short time in terms of establishing relationships with the administration, and earning the trust and support from stakeholders and community members at the field level and a number of child marriages have been stopped/postponed. As the program matures the project team would need to expand their view of prevention to look at it as a set of actions and attitudes that would lead to protection of children. HAQ would have to be instrumental role in providing them with insights, and building their capacities to take on the same.

#### 6.2.13. Project Management

The evaluator's feedback on project management is based on discussions with HAQ and the partner organizations, observations in the field and review of certain documentation. The evaluating team states at the outset that this was programmatic review and financials were not reviewed as part of this evaluation exercise. The following observations and suggestions are put forth for HAQ and its partners to consider:

- **Relationship between HAQ and the partner organizations:**The partner NGOs view the program as a partnership, where program design has been developed by HAQ in consultation with them with their agreement. They view HAQ as the organization which liaises with the donor, and who will advocate and communicate with policy makers and the public at large on the issue of child marriage. They do not perceive that HAQ has a monitoring role vis-a-vis themselves.

HAQ has provided an outline to the program and has left it to the partners to adapt to their local context and to take on and undertake activities as they deem fit and possible. HAQ perceives this program to be a field lab wherein they seek to demonstrate that a model where governance mechanisms and communities can come together to prevent child marriages. Thus their approach so far has been to allow a lot of flexibility and adaptation of the program to the local context to enable evolution and development of a model intervention.

The evaluators appreciate that HAQ has perceived the relationship as an equal partnership and has given the partners a large amount of flexibility in the first half of the project implementation cycle. It has enabled both HAQ and its partners to understand what is feasible and what does not work in the field. It

is recommended that moving forward HAQ and partners need to formalize the partnership. The partners would need to know and accept HAQ's role in monitoring the program. For example, the annual plans need to be signed-off by HAQ. Review of program conducted by HAQ would then need to be based on a mutually agreed upon plan.

**Comment [S1]:** It is important that HAQ is a facilitating equal partner and does not play a monitoring role. In fact it is just not feasible to monitor or remote control a program that is based on a model of decentralised process of decision making. All layers of the organisation are to be facilitating decisions and risks undertaken at the ground while simultaneously leaning from the experiences and develop a praxis based on such interaction.

- **Development of indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the program:** At the time of project initiation HAQ outlined a set of outcomes that it would work to achieve through this project. At the district level some of these included better implementation of the law, youth and adolescent lead campaigns against child marriage, trained personnel equipped to implement the CMPRA, strengthened agency in adolescent girls, better prospects for adolescent girls to continue their education and develop skills, and the macro level the project outcomes include amendment in existing law and policy, and development of a scalable model for prevention of child marriage, The project has now taken shape in the field. It is the time to set in place a planning and evaluation matrix which ensure that the project works towards achieving the outcomes that it aims to achieve. Indicators for input, measurement of success, would need to be developed by HAQ in consultation with it partners and should form the basis for planning reporting and monitoring of the project.
- **Goal setting and deliverables for individual team members:** Discussion with the team and review of documentation brought out that the SC, DC, BC and the HAQ team are not always able to complete the tasks or undertake activities that they plan. For example, the evaluators found that the SC does not manage to undertake all the visits to the field as mandated. A lot of the state and district level advocacy remains uninitiated. The evaluators got the impression that a lot of time could be saved and better utilized if the teams worked more systematically. It is recommended that along with a plan of activities for programs each project staff must also have a set of deliverables, and an individual set of goals to be achieved.
- **Partner Budgets:** With regards to budgets the partners have stated that the budgets for programs related costs that include travel, training etc. are very limited. It is recommended that if possible a review of budget be undertaken to determine if more funds could be allocated towards program related costs.
- **Rationalization of program coverage:** The evaluators recommend that a review of program coverage be undertaken and that rationalization of programs and activities be undertaken to ensure maximum spread of the various program components to reach maximum sections of the population in each GP. Point 6.1

**Comment [S2]:** This sounds good on paper but not practical at all. It is time consuming and does not take into consideration local contingencies. Further it binds the local functionary to stick to the stated deliverables and it may perhaps lose out on creativity that is required. I find it very bureaucratic and unimaginative.

of this section of the report and each state report contains a detailed section on program coverage.

- **Process of feedback from HAQ to partners:** It is also recommended that HAQ brings in more structure into its process of monitoring and feedback to partners.
  - HAQ is the repository of all information related to the project. It receives quarterly reports from the partners. It is recommended that HAQ should undertake analysis of the reports, collation of data, including its own work done in advocacy, and present it back to the partners with feedback so that they are able to take a more objective view of the work they are doing and make changes.
  - There needs to be a process for raising alarms and escalating matters between HAQ and the partner organizations. This is recommended especially since feedback was received from HAQ that partners do not respond or follow-up on feedback given by them.
  - There needs to be more structuring of the monitoring visits that HAQ conducts to the partner NGOs. These must also incorporate sessions with the project team to review plans and activities as well as some amount of training. These visits must have formal feedback reports which reach the partners.
  - It is recommended that the role of monitoring of the project must rest with the National Coordinator. The Project Director should play a supervisory and advisory role and may accompany the National Coordinator for some parts of the monitoring visit. The Project Director should intervene in monitoring when matters are escalated by the National Coordinator.
- **Technical support to partner organizations:** In the latter part of the project cycle, the program would also include scaling up advocacy at the district and state level, undertaking capacity building etc. Thus it is recommended that HAQ would provide partners more technical support, and perspective building to prepare them for the task ahead.
- **Partnership issues:** From discussions the evaluators sensed a few issues with the partnership in AP. It was gathered that the problem was that the state team was not receiving adequate mentoring from the senior management representative, and also the project seemed to not be receiving adequate priority within the partner organization. It is recommended that HAQ and MVF have a discussion and resolve the issues to ensure that adequately informed senior leadership within the organization provides the support mentoring required by the team.

**Comment [S3]:** There is a need to discuss the roles and responsibilities of all the partners in the framework of 'interdependence as equal partners'. The word monitoring is very threatening and intimidating. Instead of 'feedback' reports there should be 'review reports' that emerge from mutual consultations and agreement with the project partners.

**Comment [S4]:** Regular review meetings to resolve issues and clarify is necessary. Actually matters cannot be allowed to escalate at all.

**Comment [S5]:** It is clarified that MVF senior staff provides full support to the program in accordance with its internal organisational principles. For eg. 1. There are bi-monthly meetings held at the MVF headquarters with all the staff members. In these meetings the senior staff is present to review and plan the next course of action. 2. MVF has quarterly meetings with its core staff to review all its projects. Findings from these projects are shared with other project coordinators. In all such meetings senior staff is compulsorily present. 3. Senior staff participate in the advocacy meetings with the State level officials such as the Commissioner for Women and Child Development. In such meetings there are discussions on policies relating to child marriage, based on the field experiences. There is also an input provided regarding the need for convergence of all departments and their respective secretaries. 4. Senior staff take part in District level meetings held with all stakeholders that have congregated in large numbers. They also address mass meetings at the District level on child marriages. Finally the Project Coordinator of this program is also a senior staff having two decades of experience on issues relating to child rights. He worked in Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and engaged with State government in all these States. His experience is invaluable and MVF considers him as one of its senior core-staff.



## 7. STATE REPORT: ANDHRA PRADESH

### 7.1. Background

Andhra Pradesh is the fourth largest state in the country accounting for 8.37% of the country's area. With a population of 8.47 Cr as on 1st March 2011, the state accounts for 7.16% of the country's population making it the 5th most populous state. The state has major river systems like the Godavari, Krishna, Pennar, Vamsadhara and 36 other rivulets making it the rice bowl of India. It is one of the largest producers of cash crops. The state credits its self with rapid economic growth, and also for having developed into an IT hub.<sup>18</sup>

However, the state's HDI rank is 28. Child sex ratio is fell from 961 in 2001 census to 943 females per 1000 males in the 2011 census<sup>19</sup>. The adult literacy is 67.02%<sup>20</sup>. 119 mandals have been declared drought hit, and more than 2500 farmers committed suicide in 2012<sup>21</sup>.

The state was selected for implementation of the project because of high incidence of child marriage. In most districts of AP more than 50% of women in the age group of 18-24 were married before 18 years of age. Both districts selected for implementation of the child marriage prevention project, Warangal and Mahbubnagar, feature on planning commissions list of 170 most backward districts in the country. 50.7% and 58.7% women in the age group 18-24 were married before the age of 18, in Warangal and Mahbubnagar respectively (DLFHS III).

Recently, the Government of India took a decision to split the state of AP into 2, AP and Telangana. The state is about to witness this split which will result in the formation a new government and a number of other changes which will impact the implementation of the project.

At the state level the learning and findings of this project would be used to advocate for better implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, to develop a mechanism that supports young girls who decide not to marry, and provides them options that would enable them to continue their education, and to dialogue and campaign publicly against child marriage.

**Comment [S6]:** and also show the inadequacies in the Act

<sup>18</sup><https://www.nabard.org/andhra/english/>

<sup>19</sup>[https://www.unfpa.org/gender/docs/sexselection/indiapublishedpapers/UNFPA\\_Publication-39866.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/gender/docs/sexselection/indiapublishedpapers/UNFPA_Publication-39866.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Census 2011

<sup>21</sup>[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-12-09/news/44989050\\_1\\_rehabilitation-package-dowry-dispute-andhra-pradesh](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-12-09/news/44989050_1_rehabilitation-package-dowry-dispute-andhra-pradesh)

In districts the objective of the program is to weave together a protective network of duty bearers, community members including children in order to prevent child marriage. Key program activities at the, district and sub-district level include: setting up of child protection committees at the village, block and district level; setting up/facilitation of adolescent girls and youth groups at the village level; facilitation of discussions with religious leaders, groups, priests of different faiths and other individuals and groups in positions of authority and influence; liaison with the state, district and block level administration, awareness and communication on the issue of child marriage. This section of the report discusses and provides feedback on each set of activities of the program in the State of AP.

## 7.2. Project Coverage

Table 5 - Project Coverage

Name of District	Name of Block	Name of GP
Mahbubnagar	Amrabad	Chitlamkunta
		Maradugu
		Kummaronipally
	Achampeta	Inole
		Bommanapally
		Rangapur
Warangal	Rayarparthy	Ookal
		Konduru
		Mailaram
	Thorrur	Chityala
		Cherlapalem
		Haripirala

### 7.3. Observations and recommendations of key program activities at the district and sub-district level

#### 7.3.1. Reach of the program:

Figure 2 - Project coverage at a glance for AP

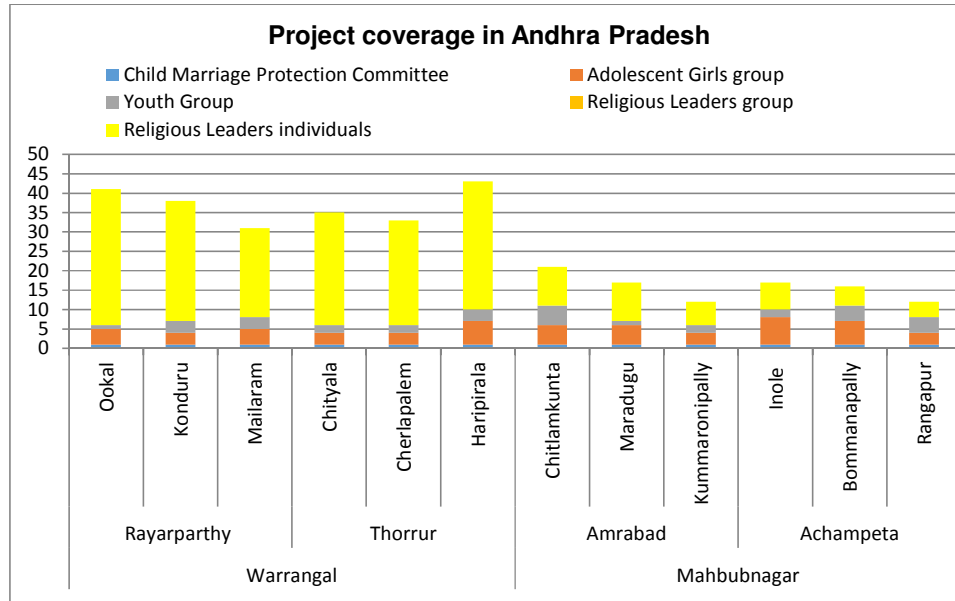


Figure 2 indicates that there are more AGG in Mahbubnagar than in Warangal. Religious leaders contacted are higher in Warangal than in Mahbubnagar. Youth groups range mostly from 1-3 in number per GP.

Table 6 - Project Coverage in numbers Mahbubnagar

Name of Block	Name of Gram Panchayat	No. of groups formed/ contacted					Wards in GP	
		CMPC	AGG	YG	RG	RI	Total no	Reached
Amrabad	Chitlamkunta	1	5	5		10	12	12
	Maradugu	1	5	1		10	10	10
	Kummaronipally	1	3	2		6	10	10
Achampeta	Inole	1	7	2		7	12	12
	Bommanapally	1	6	4		5	12	12
	Rangapur	1	3	4		4	10	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>

Figure 3 - Details of project coverage for Mahbubnagar

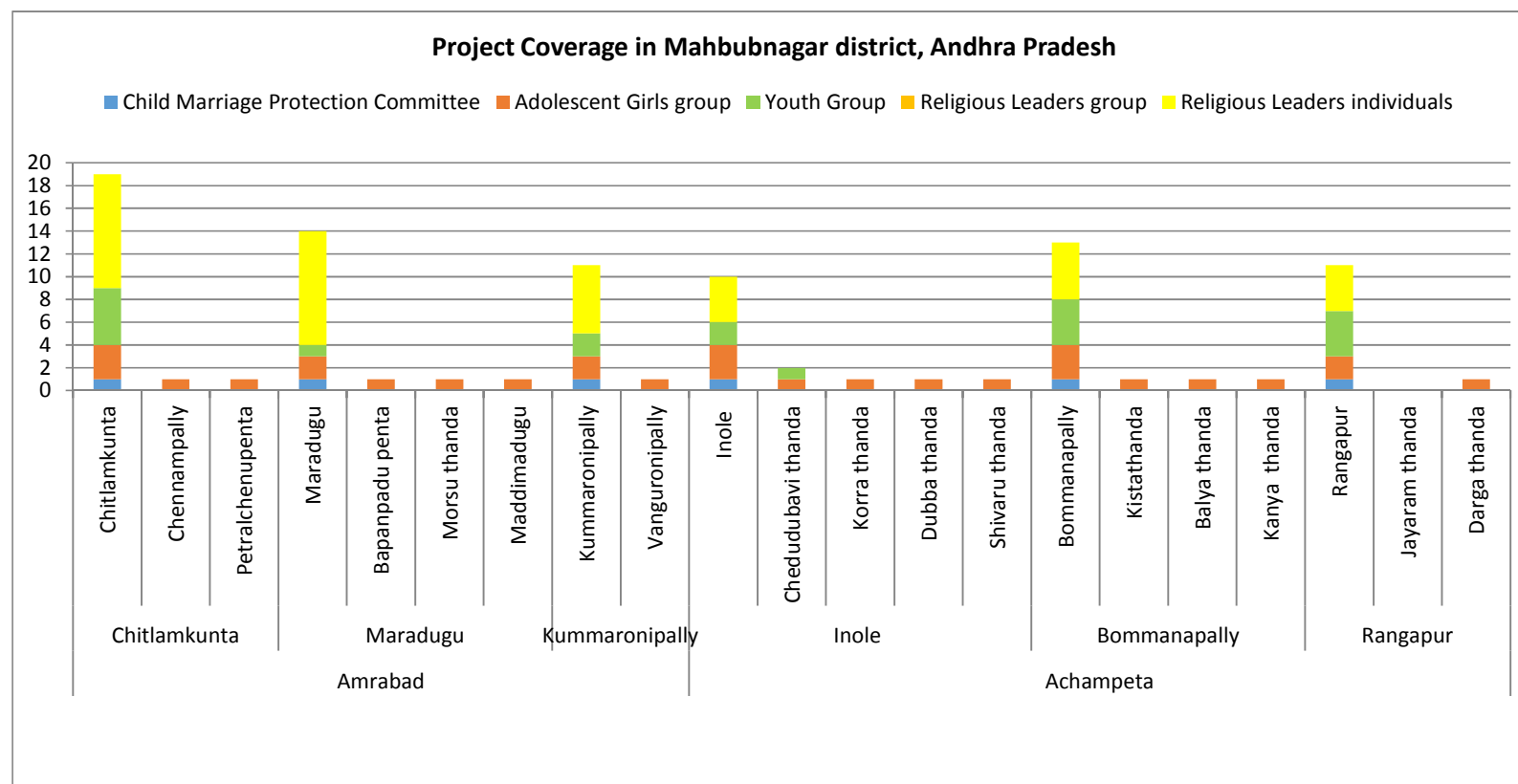


Figure 3 tells us that in Mahbubnagar religious leaders have been contacted only at the GP level. Religious leaders contacted, AGG and youth groups are concentrated at the GP villages. Religious groups have not been contacted.

Table 7-Project coverage in numbers for Warangal district

Name of Block	Name of Gram Panchayat	No. of groups formed/ contacted					Wards in GP	
		CMPC	AGG	YG	RG	RI	Total no	Reached
Rayarparthy	Ookal	1	4	1		35	10	10
	Konduru	1	3	3		31	12	12
	Mailaram	1	4	3		23	12	12
Thorrur	Chityala	1	3	2		29	10	10
	Cherlapalem	1	3	2		27	12	12
	Haripirala	1	6	3		33	14	14
<b>Total</b>		6	23	14		178	70	70

Figure 4- Project coverage details for Warangal

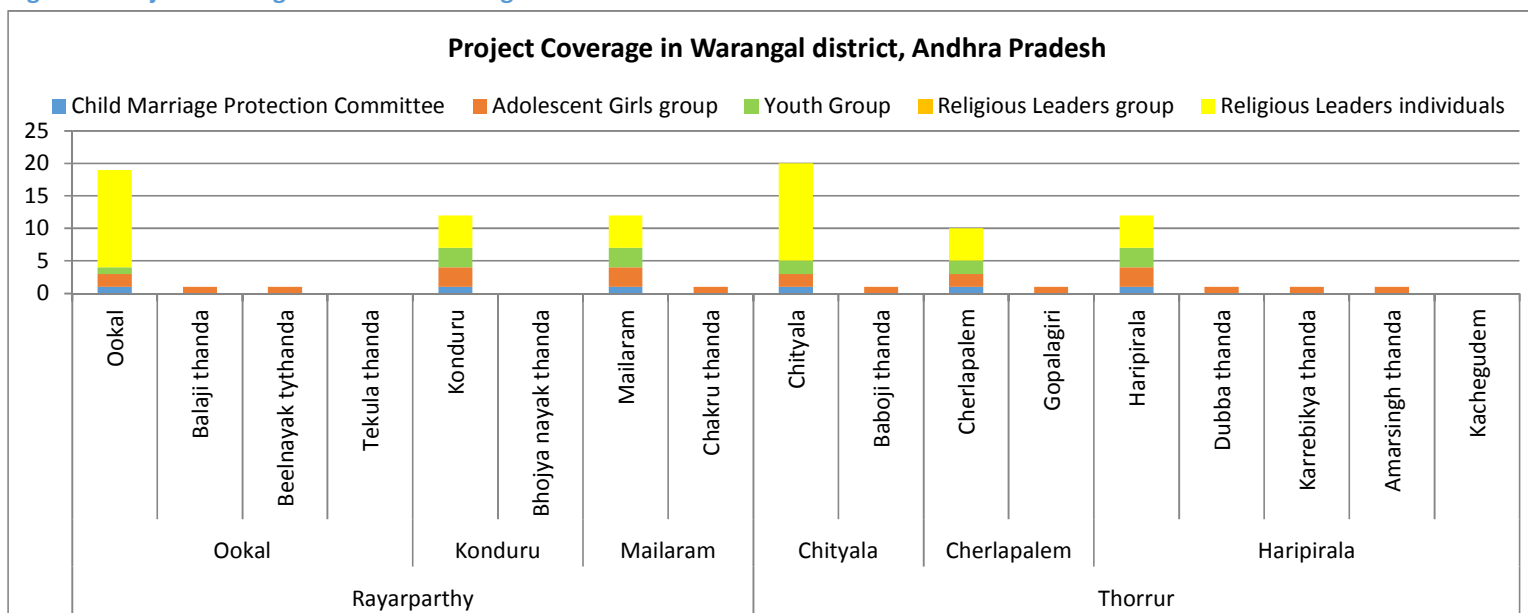


Figure 4 indicates that in Warangal, religious leaders contacted, AGG and youth groups are concentrated at the GP villages. Religious groups have not been contacted

Figure 5- Comparative data for AP for years 2012 and 2013 marriages stopped plotted against marriages that could not be stopped.

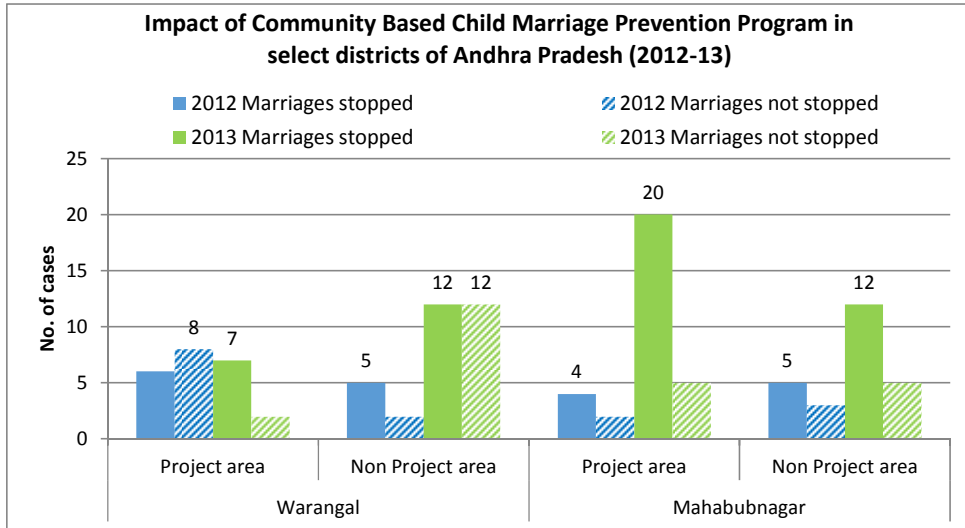


Figure 5 indicates that in 2013 for both Warangal and Mahabubnagar the child marriages that could be stopped higher in number than those that the CMPC were unable to stop. In Mahabubnagar the number of child marriages reported were higher. In Warangal the marriages reported and intervened outside the project area were higher than those within the project area.

Figure 6- Details of stake holder meetings inception till May 2013

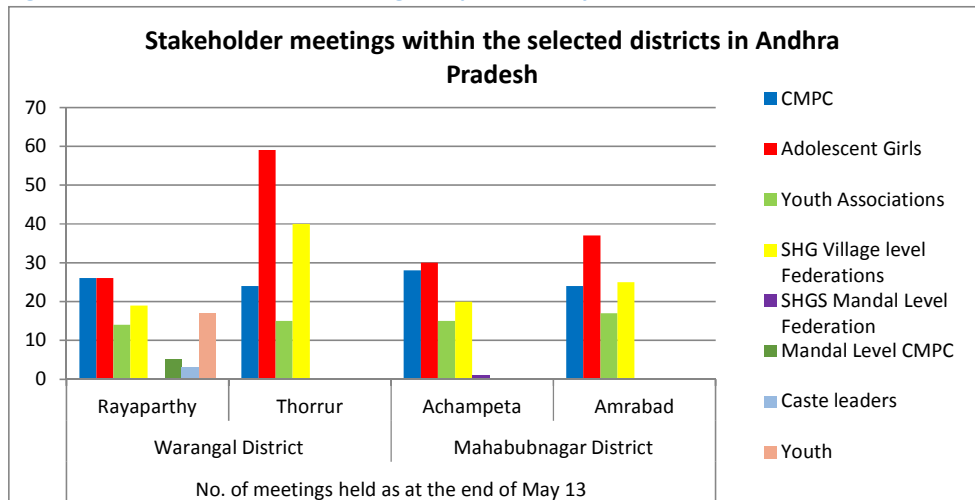


Figure 5 indicates the number of meetings that have been conducted with various stakeholders at the village level. Since religious leaders are contacted individually they do not figure in this representation. Caste groups, and youth individuals have been contacted only in Rayarparthy block, in Warangal.

### 7.3.1.1. Observations and recommendations of the evaluator with regards to coverage and reach:

7.3.1.1.1. A summary of all project coverage details is enclosed at Annexure 1. In the 2 districts, the project area covers 2 blocks in each district, 3 GP in each in each block and a total of 66 wards in Mahbubnagar and 70 wards in Warangal. Annexure 1 brings out the number of villages covered within the project area across the GPs are 17 in Mahbubnagar and 21 in Warangal. The partner also states in Annexure 1 that all the wards of the GP have been reached by the program. The partner is of the opinion that GP level CMPC are adequate to reach the entire population of the GP.

7.3.1.1.2. Figures 2 and 3 indicate that many of the program components (AGG, youth groups, religious leaders) are implemented at the village where the GP is located. This may perhaps be because the GP village is the hub around which most of the activities are centered.

7.3.1.1.3. Since most AGG have been formed at the GP village, it perhaps indicates that AGG are formed in schools.

7.3.1.1.4. Religious leaders have also been reached out to only as individuals not as groups. This has been discussed below in this section of the report.

7.3.1.1.5. Figure 5 plots the number of child marriages stopped against the number of child marriages that could not be stopped. Going forward this must be tracked and be looked at as an indicator of the success of the program. The aim should be for the number of marriages stopped to be substantially higher than the number of marriages that could not be stopped.

7.3.1.1.6. The evaluator recommends doing a study of the reach of different components of the program to the communities to determine the exact extent of the reach. Such a study must:

- Determine whether the CMPC are reaching out to all wards and habitations
- Ascertain whether the program is reaching to an adequate proportion of the population of adolescent girls, youth, and religious leaders.
- Find out how many AGG are formed in the community and whether it is feasible to have more AGG based in the community which could also include children who are out of school.

7.3.1.1.7. Since the population of the GP are not that high and the partner has previous work experience in the district it is likely that the organization shares a good rapport with the community. The evaluator is under the impression that the partner can take on more challenging activities to increase the depth of engagement and dialogue with the community.

**Comment [S7]:** The MVF has also activated the AGGs at the anganwadi centres in which there are out of school girls.

**Comment [S8]:** The study should have a larger scope. This sounds more like a monitoring device.

**Comment [S9]:** There has to be a contextualizing of 'reach out'. Reach out signifies different strategies in different areas. To elaborate when there is already a culture of stopping child marriages through a GP, and when there is no need to even prevent child marriages 'reach out' means different when compared to such areas where there is a need to establish a norm that child marriages are totally unacceptable.

### 7.3.1.2. Village Level Interventions

#### 7.3.1.2.1. Child Marriage Prohibition Committees (CMPC):

CMPC committees at the village, block and district level are set up as response, prevention and monitoring mechanisms for child marriage. In AP, the state government has framed rules for the implementation of provisions of the Prohibition Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) (GO MS No. 13) which stipulate the formation of child marriage prohibition committees (CMPC) at the village block and district level.

- **Composition of VLCPC:** In AP the child protection committees are formed in keeping with the guidelines for formation under the ICPS<sup>22</sup> at the panchayat level. The Sarpanch is the chairperson of the committee. In 2 out of 3 villages visited MVF was the only NGO represented on the CMPC/VLCPC. Childline 1098 representatives were not invited to be members of the CMPC.
- **Facilitation of the VLCPC meetings:** In AP it was noted that the same stakeholders meet on a monthly basis. They may not meet as the child protection committee per se. However, the BC attends all these meetings and ensures that child marriage related issues are raised in the agenda and also makes records of these meetings, which are maintained in a minute's register which is stored in the panchayat office.
- **Observations based on interactions with CMPC members:**
  - All CMPC are set up at the GP level. All 6 GP have functional CMPC.
  - All members of the CMPC are alert and vigilant about obtaining information about child marriages being planned at all times. All CMPC members were found to be aware of the cases of child marriage in their villages that the CMPC had intervened in.
  - Most of the CMPC members especially the AWW, ASHA, ANM, teachers, VO members are motivated to work on the issue of child marriage. It was observed that they actively promoted awareness, monitoring, and discussions on child marriage routinely in their normal course of work take it up in their routine functions.
  - The support and recognition from the administration in terms of the GO MS No. 13, the additional circulars issued by the block level administration and the meetings they have attended at the block level provide strength to the CMPC as they take on discussions around the difficult issue of child marriage.

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<sup>22</sup> Every village shall have a Child Protection Committee under the Chairpersonship of the village level elected representative (Head of the Gram Panchayat) to recommend and monitor the implementation of child protection services at the village level. The committee shall include two child representatives, a member of the DCPS, anganwadi workers, school teachers, auxiliary nurse midwives, as well as respected village members and civil society representatives.



- MVF stated that they have had training for the CMPC members at the block level but it appears to the evaluator that these seemed to be large meetings at the block level, convened by the BRO, where an orientation was provided to the CMPC members on what their roles are. The CMPC members in fact stated that they have not been trained and that they would benefit from training.
- The CMPC are very dependent on the MVF staff for their functioning whether to steer their monthly meetings or to intervene and stop cases of child marriages. They are also appreciative of the role of MV Foundation in bringing awareness on child marriage.
- A ripple effect has been seen in areas outside the project area and partner organization staff have been contacted for assistance in prevention of child marriage. Evidence of this may be seen in Figure 5 which shows that cases have also been received from non-project areas.
- All CMPC members reported good cooperation from the block level administration.
- A good practice worth mentioning is that the CMPC in Ookal village lobbied with the administration and was successful in obtaining a bus service (and bus passes for children at Rs.20/- per annum), enabling children to come from other villages to the local school and more importantly enabling older girls to travel out of the village to college (Class 11). Families are thus happy to allow children to continue their education and are not now in a hurry to get them married. Having accessible higher education facilities to the communities does have an impact on reduction of underage marriage.

Table 8 below summarizes conversations and interactions that the Evaluator had with CMPC members at the village level. It provides an understanding of the nature and extent of interventions of the CMPC and its members on the issue of child marriage.

**Table 8**

Ookal	Chitiyala	Chitlamkunta
<p>The members stated that the number of child marriages in their village have reduced (unverified). They stated that the CMPC has to be vigilant at all times as parents still try to get their daughters married. CMPC with support from duty bearers and community has been able to successfully intervene and stop child marriages. The CMPC members converge at the family and counsel and support parents to stop/postpone the marriage.</p> <p>“The husband-to-be of a class 8 student came to school to get the AADHAR number from the girl. I observed the young man and questioned him. He admitted that he was soon going to be marrying the girl. It was then found out that there were 3 more girls who were going to be married from the same school. I informed the CMPC, AWW, and we intervened and successfully prevented the marriages. The girls are all in school.” - A teacher, member CMPC, related a case of how they prevented a child marriage.</p>	<p>The CMPC formed almost 2 years ago. According to the members 14 cases of child marriage were reported in the first year. In the second year 4 cases of child marriage were reported 3 marriages could not be stopped. 1 was postponed and the girl is in school. The attitudes of parents is changing. They are becoming more supportive. The CMPC undertakes counselling of parents and children in cases of child marriage. The village revenue officer (VRO) stated that they are ready to give support for education of the child. He mentioned the recently introduced Bangarthally scheme provides about 2.55laks rupees to the girl over the years of her education until she is 18. The CMPC members stated their commitment to making their village child marriage free. The incidence of child marriage is noted to be higher among certain communities ie. Yadav and Lambada.</p>	<p>The CMPC members stated that pre-project initiation there were about 12-20 marriages a year in the village. In 2013, 12 marriages were identified 9 were stopped 3 marriages took place. Some individual members coherently described work against child marriage undertaken in his/her own statutory capacity.</p> <p>The previous VO president has sponsored Rs.2000/- worth pamphlets. Child Marriage is an agenda item in all VO meetings at the Mandal level and District level. AWW undertake counselling of girls and families where marriages are going to take place. CMPC members stated that adolescent girls groups still being formalized in the village. The ANM stated that they focus on health aspects of child marriage. They cover the topic with girls during their school visits, and during their community outreach work.</p>

- **Feedback and recommendations for strengthening the effectiveness of CMPC:**
  - a. **Need for role clarity and distinction among CMPC members:** While at the time of child marriage all members converge to counsel the family and the child. There does not seem to be any role clarity. As a result of which, aspects of intervention get left out creating a dependence on the block coordinators to hold these interventions together. As the program matures, it is recommended that roles and functions of specific members should be spelt out clearly. The counselling input gap would need to be addressed. HAQ and MVF would have to look at developing partnerships with local organizations who be brought in to provide this input.

b. **Changing attitudes of community towards girl children:** Discussions with CMPC members brought out that in convincing families to stop/postpone child marriages, the messages that go out to the community are mostly about the negative impact of pregnancy on the health of an under-age mother, and child, the long-term economic loss of stopping a girl's education, and the illegality of child marriage. Discussions at meetings with the various stakeholders brought out that in their maternal homes, girls are seen as a financial burden on parents, and younger brides cost parents less in dowry. At their marital home they become an economic asset as they work both within and outside the home. Since child protection committee members are persons who have the capacity to influence the community it is recommended that moving forward in AP dialogue on the importance of childhood and the rights of girls must get incorporated into conversations and messages going into communities. The committees need to proactively dialogue with the community and work with their people to bring about attitudinal change.

c. **Reaching communities where incidence of child marriage is higher:** While all CMPC members stated that incidence of child marriage is higher in certain communities, for example the Yadav, Lambada and Muslim communities, the program did not offer any specific strategic strategies for addressing these high risk communities. It is recommended that the partner organizations develop plans for addressing these high risk communities.

d. **Capacity building of CMPC:** In AP child protection committee members stated that they have not received any training, though the circulars verified that 2 trainings have taken place at the block level. From discussion with the partner organization it appeared that the partner staff do undertake training but it is not planned or documented. In the initial phase of the program training and capacity building did not received adequate attention. It is recommended that both CMPC members as well as the MVF team receive training as the program moves forward. The evaluators recommend that training should include TOT for the MVF team, child rights, child protection, gender, project management, communication skills among other things.

**Comment [S10]:** MVF 's strategies that have evolved over 3 decades has largely depended on creating a social norm in favor of children's rights against child labour and child marriage. In focusing only on high risk communities MVF in its practice has found that it has isolated these communities from rest of the society, Further the support the child would require from the entire village would not be forthcoming. In this endeavor of building support for children especially those who are at high risk, MVF talks to all the stakeholders cutting across all communities and classes and attempts to involve all of them to support every child. This would ofcourse include 'high risk' communities and children. This strategy of inclusion and non-discrimination has paid rich dividends to MVF's work.

7.3.1.2.2. **Facilitation of AGG:** The child marriage prevention program seeks out adolescent girls and youth and facilitates processes with them towards developing them into peer educators and change makers. Through the program adolescent girls groups and youth groups are set up or strengthened in places where they are already in existence. 52 AGG have been set up across the project area. The evaluator visited 3 adolescent girls groups (AGG) in the district of Warangal. It was not possible to meet the adolescent girls group in Mahbubnagar. Observations and recommendations from discussions with the AGG:

- In Ookal the group said that they met twice a month when the records were presented for verification it was observed that the group met once a month on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday. No records of meetings were found in the register after September 2013. And from March-September 2013 the records were found to be very sketchy.
- Both groups visited are structured and have a president and a secretary. Across the groups visited it was seen that the girls groups have been formed, coordinated by the AWW under the Sabla Scheme, and are located in the school.
- The project block coordinator attends all their meetings. The groups discuss child marriage in all meetings.
- From time to time, the AWW and the village health workers provide them with information on reproductive health. They also talk to them about the impact of child marriage and early pregnancy on their health.
- MVF organizes a function every Republic Day where the adolescent girls groups hoist the flag in the village. Influential persons from the district are invited to address them. This boosts the girls' confidence.
- The groups have had an exposure visit to the block police station, where they met with the police officers in-charge of their villages. The adolescent girls groups have had two trainings at the block level.
- The girls across both groups feel that belonging to the adolescent girls group gives them confidence and strength. They feel courageous and strong enough to stand up to their parents if they try and to them married before they turn 18 years. They stated that they are in a better position to negotiate for themselves as a result of being a member of this group. They have complained in cases of child marriage and have joined efforts at the village to stop child marriage. They have counselled their peers, they also get information on child marriage from their friends and from over hearing conversations in the community.
- All 3 AGG visited reported cases and report their complaints to the AWW, teacher and to Childline 1098.
- In AP the focus of discussions of child marriage is mostly on child marriage and reproductive health. MVF does not really bring in rights, and agency of girl children into their conversations with them. AGG must have annual plans which ensure that they organize themselves and take up more activities as independent groups and campaigns on issues that affect them, not restricting themselves to child marriage.

#### Voices of members of AGG

"One of my classmates in Class 7 was married. She soon divorced and returned back home. She is not in school. I don't know what is going to happen with her. Another of my friends got married in Class 7 and now has a baby boy" --Member adolescent girls group, Ookal, village

"Despite all best efforts from the community, one of our friends, was married. Her parents were stopped. They threatened to kill themselves. They finally went away to another village and got her married. She was a leader in our girls group."

--Member adolescent girls group, Chitiyala village


**Comment [S11]:** Girls are encouraged to exercise agency without which no child marriage can be stopped. In other words every act of prevention of child marriage or stopping of child marriage is dependent on the girl and her preparedness to defy authority and power structures. Yet, it is only wise and safe for the girls that it is not explicitly articulated but implied in all actions. In all its AGG group discussions MVF has insisted on giving them confidence to take a decision against child marriage without putting them to risk. And such a strategy has worked. In fact in organising them into groups on hard issues they would be inviting opposition and thus this would make it impossible for them to get out of the quagmire of tradition and culture. Groups therefore are to be built to give children a confidence and self esteem. It is anticipated that in doing so children do resolve to fight.

- The evaluator recommends that the AGG in AP need to be infused with energy, life and creativity. They should take up more campaigns and activities on issues that affect them. They must be given training on gender issues, and child rights and agency.
- Since it appears that most AGG are located in schools it is recommended that the partner organization must explore how many non-school going adolescent are getting left out and ensure that adequate numbers of AGG are set up in the community outside of school.

**7.3.1.2.3. Formation and functioning of youth groups:** Youth are mostly males in their late teens extending up to 35 years. In AP all youth groups pre-existed before the child marriage program. There are 33 youth groups in the program area. Youth groups may or may not have political affiliations. Some members have political affiliations.

Broadly, in AP, their activities include organizing public celebrations around festivals, Independence Day and Republic Day, and sports related activities. They also sometimes take up awareness activities on social issues, and activities related to cleaning their village. Through the child marriage project, the partner NGO use the platform provided by the youth groups, to conduct awareness about the issue of child marriage and to mobilize the support of the groups in stopping of marriages.

**Youth group in Chitlankunta**



**Consequences of early marriage:** Early marriage causes girls to lose their freedom and dignity. It is bad for their health. The age difference between the brides and the grooms creates problems in their relationships. If the husband dies, lifelong the girl is a widow. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is higher in child mothers, babies are born with deficiencies, more prone to have disabilities.

**Reasons for early marriage:** Fear of their daughters getting into relationships and eloping with their boyfriends, and that it would spoil her chance at finding a husband later, families face financial insecurity so want to send their girls away, as the girl gets older the dowry increases, girls are a financial burden on parents because of marriage related costs

In AP the work with youth groups is strengthened due to the presence of MVF's CRPF network in the project area. The evaluator visited 2 youth groups one each in the districts of Warrangal and Mahbubnagar where discussions were conducted at length with members of the groups.

- **Observations based on field visits and interaction with members of youth groups:**
  - MV Foundation meets with the youth group members once a month and more frequently during the wedding season.
  - As a group they stand strongly against child marriage and when asked were also of the view that child marriage would definitely not continue into the next generation.
  - A member of one of the groups (Chitiyala village, Thorrur block, Warrangal) shared that he stood up against a case of child marriage in his own family. Both groups have reported cases of child marriage and participated in interventions to stop marriages.
  - They acknowledged the role played by MVF in sensitizing them and supporting them on the issue.
  - In one of the groups visited (Chitlamkunta village, Mahbubnagar) youth from the Lamabada community shared some problems specific to themselves. These young men were all educated and in their early twenties. Most of them were unemployed. They said due to the fact that theirs is a scheduled tribe their village comes under governor's rule, and are not able to access a number of benefits made available to youth of the general population.
  - Both groups visited mentioned that they do not actively address other social issues.
  - Women are left out of youth groups. Women are addressed only through the platform provided by the SHGs.
  - In AP there has been an interaction of youth groups at the block level.
  
- **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that youth groups must play a more strategic role in promotion of child marriage in their routine activities, and child marriage can be taken up by youth groups in all the public events that they organize. Youth groups can also take up other social issues in their communities like alcoholism and domestic violence. They could also engage and work with SHGs on these issues.

**7.3.1.2.4. Engaging religious leaders:** The child marriage project also invests significant efforts in convincing religious leaders/priests to not solemnize marriages of individuals who are under 18 years of age. Work is done with individuals as well as religious committees at the village, block, and district level. However, the work done with groups was not documented by the partner (in Annexure 1). Some observations and recommendations with regards to working with religious leaders are outlined as under:

- In AP while the partner stated that it works with Hindu, Muslim and Christian priests, according to the evaluator it seemed that most efforts at the village seem to be focused on individual Hindu priests.
- The temple boards and committees have sponsored awareness generation hoardings outside temples, and pamphlets which carry information about child marriage.
- In AP the a good practice has been instituted where in the priest has to take the school certificate, birth certificate, and if both are not available and age declaration document which is signed by the Sarpanch and MRO from the family in order to give

**Comment [S12]:** It is clarified that the area of activity has a large population of Hindus and therefore the Hindu priests have been contacted. Further the 'qazis' do not exist at the village /panchayat level but are available only at the mandal level. They have been contacted. MVF agrees that all of them are important and would not exclude any religious order.

the moharrat (auspicious time for solemnizing the marriage) for the marriage. The evaluator saw a file at one of the Purohits visited.

The evaluator acknowledged the work of the partner organization in reaching out to a large number of priests. However, it is recommended that a study is done to see if priests of all religions represented in the population are adequately contacted by the program. Figure 3 and 4 above show that most religious leaders have been contacted at the GP villages only. Hence, a review is recommended to see if the religious priests in other villages in the project area are being left out. It also needs to be explored how monitoring of the priests can be conducted, and if there are available platforms from where groups of religious priests can be contacted, it would make work with religious priests monitor able and more effective.

**Comment [S13]:** Nobody has been left out in the project area.

#### 7.3.1.3. Interventions at the Block level:

The evaluator was informed that all 4 block level CMPC were formed in AP covering the project area. These committees meet on a quarterly basis. The evaluators were not able to observe a meeting take place. In AP as per the GO MS No.13, the Block Revenue Officer (BRO) also known as the Tehsildar is the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer (CMPO) is the convener of the block level child protection committee. The BRO is a first class magistrate. At total of 26 circulars have been passed during the project period, mostly from the Revenue Development Officer (RDO) and the Tehsildar. The Tehsildar is the most critical stakeholder whose plays a key role in ensuring that the system is prepared and responsive. Outlined below is a summary of an interview with a BRO inMahbubnagar.

##### AMRABAD MANDAL, MAHBUBNAGAR

The BRO was appointed 3 months ago. He has stopped 3 marriages since his appointment. He stated that Amravadmandal is very backward. The population mostly consists of SC/ST/BC and Yadavs. According to him, low literacy, abject poverty, too many children per family contribute to higher incidences of child marriage. Parents marry their girls to reduce the financial burden on them. Mostly marriages take place within the family to the maternal uncle. He acknowledged the cooperation and support received form MVF. The BRO prefers counselling as a strategy and to not take the matter to the police unless necessary.

*"I am deeply touched by this program. I make it my priority to work on this issue because it is my community and these are my people." --BRO Amrabad Block, Mahbubnagar.*

**7.3.1.4. District level child protection committees:**These committees have not yet been initiated in any of the districts. However, the project teams work in collaboration with officials at the district level and have successfully been able to get a number of circulars related to prevention of child marriage issued. The evaluator met one DC in the district of Mahbubnagar. He was highly proactive and fully clued on to the issue of child marriage and the needs of the people of his district. He also spoke highly of [MVFFV](#) and its team. However, he was not aware of ICPS, or that there is a DCPU in his district of which he is the chairperson. It is recommended that the partner NGOs need to take up advocacy at the district level in a more systematized manner and also include setting up of taskforces under ICPS as the program moves forward.

**7.3.1.5. State level child protection committees:**These committees have not been initiated. There were state level consultations at the time of initiation of the program. And while the partner NGOs stay in contact with the state government, lend them support and also submit reports to them from time to time, they need to systematize these interactions and set an agenda and plan for it. State level task forces must be set up as per the ICPS. If they already exist the partner NGOs need to be part of these task forces and ensure that child marriage as an issue is adequately addressed.



## 8. STATE REPORT: WEST BENGAL

### 8.1. Background

West Bengal with a population of around 83 million account for 7.6 per cent of the country's population. It is the fourth most populous state in India, and ranks first in terms of population density at 904 persons per sq.km. The state's geographical area of 89,000 sq.kms. covers 2.7 per cent of the country's geographical area. The State has 19 districts. The states rank for HDI is 20 and GDI is 26. The mean age at marriage for females is 18.5 years of age (census 2001). 54.8% of women in the age group of 18-24 years were married before the completion of 18 years of age (DLHS 2007-2008).

West Bengal was selected as one of the 2 states for implementation of the child marriage project because the incidence of child marriage in the state is amongst the highest in the country. The project is implemented in two districts of West Bengal. Initially, the districts of Malda and Murshidabad were selected for implementation. However, realizing that there were other organizations also doing intensive work on child marriage in Malda, a decision was taken between HAQ and the partner organization, Jabala, to finalize Murshidabad and Birbhum as the districts for implementation. Birbhum and Murshidabad rank 14 and 15 respectively on HDI out of 18 districts in the state of West Bengal. Both districts have a high rate of child marriage 61.08 for Murshidabad, and 58.03 for Birbhum (DLHS 2007-08). Murshidabad shares a long and porous border with Bangladesh which makes its young population especially children and women vulnerable to human trafficking.

It is also pertinent to note that in 2011 West Bengal witnessed a major change in state politics with the Trinamool Congress dislodging the CPIM after 3 decades of rule in the state. It resulted in a lot of changes in the field causing transfers of officers, which in turn had an impact on the implementation of the project.

At the state level the learning and findings of this project would be used to advocate for better implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, to develop a mechanism that supports young girls who decide not to marry, and provides them options that would enable them to continue their education, and to dialogue and campaign publicly against child marriage. In the districts the objective of the program is to weave together a protective network of duty bearers, community members including children in order to prevent child marriage. Key program activities at the, district and sub-district level include: setting up of child protection committees at the village level, the block level, and at the district level; setting up/facilitation of adolescent girls and youth groups at the village level, facilitation of discussions with religious leaders, groups, priests of different faiths and other individuals and groups in positions of authority and influence; liaison with the state, district and block level administration, awareness and communication on the issue of child marriage. This section of the report discusses and provides feedback on each set of activities of the program.

## 8.2. Project Coverage

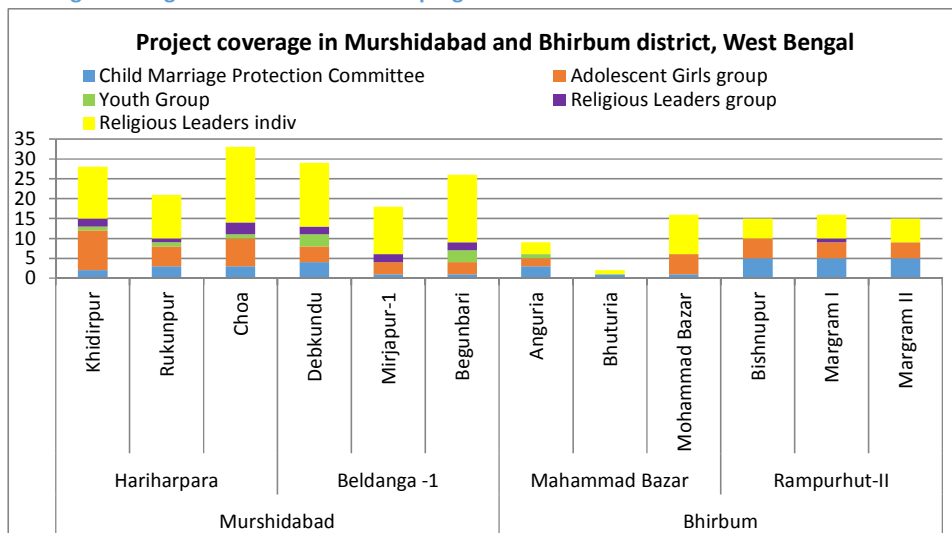
Table 9- Project Coverage Area West Bengal

Name of District	Name of Block	Name of GP
Birbhum	Mahammad Bazar	Bhutura
		Angarguria
		Mahammad Bazar
	Rampurhut II	Bishnupur
		Margram I
		Margram II
Murshidabad	Hariharpara	Khidirpur
		Rukunpur
		Choa
	Beldanga-I	Debkundu
		Mirjapur
		Begunbari

## 8.3. Observations and recommendations of key program activities at the district and sub-district level:

### 8.3.1. Reach of the program at a glance:

Figure 7- A glance at the reach of the program across both districts

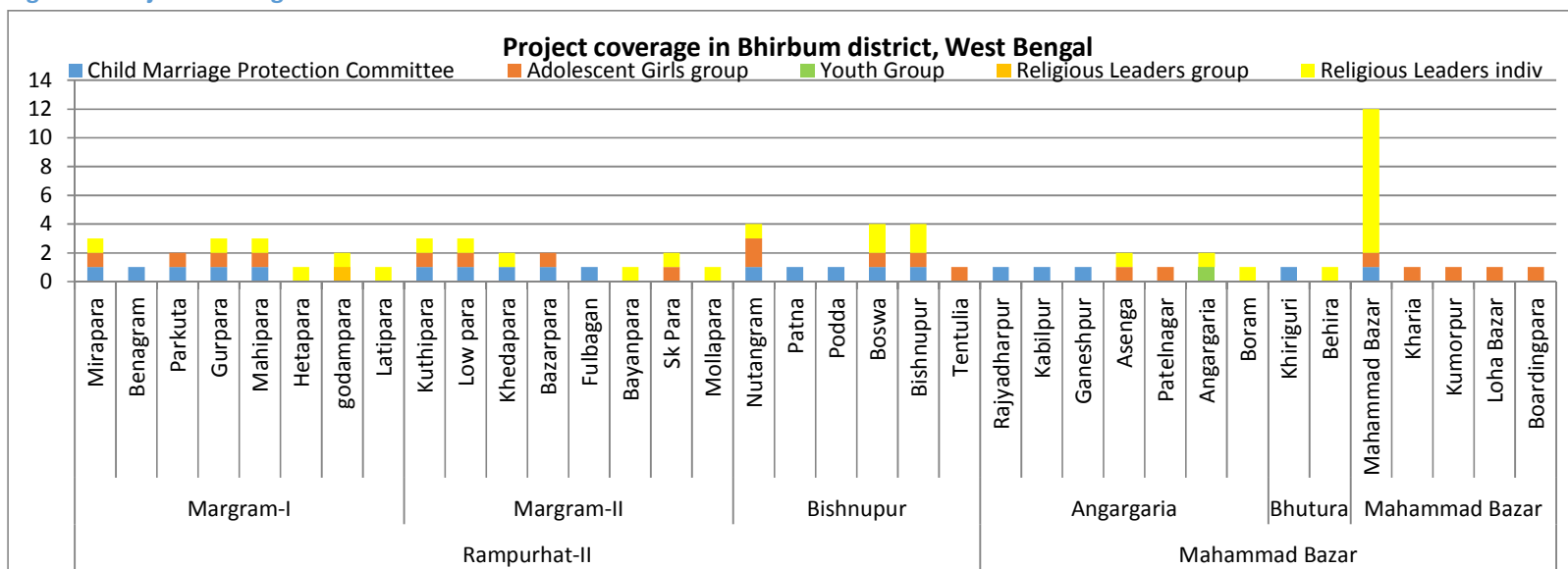


From Figure 7 it can be observed that the program has covered more ground across all activities in Murshidabad. This is owing to a few factors: programs in Birbhum started later and also that Jabala has had prior work experience in Murshidabad and has reaped benefits from its existing relationships and credibility established in the district.

Table 10 - Birbhum project coverage in numbers

Name of district	Name of Block	Name of Gram Panchayat	No. of groups formed/contacted					Sansad/Wards in GP	
			CMPC	AGG	YG	RL group	RL indiv	Total No.	Reached
Bhirbhum	Mahammad Bazar	Anguria	3	2	1	0	3	9	9
		Bhuturia	1	0	0	0	1	9	9
		Mahammad Bazar	1	5	0	0	10	12	10
	Rampurhut - II	Bishnupur	5	5	0	0	5	19	19
		Margram I	5	4	0	1	6	11	11
		Margram II	5	4	0	0	6	11	11
<b>Total</b>			20	20	1	1	31	71	69

Figure 8- Project Coverage in Birbhum



Religious leaders have been contacted in almost every sandad. There is a single youth group in the whole district. A single religious group contacted/formed in the district. The number of individual religious leaders contacted is the highest.

Table 11- Murshidabad Project Coverage in numbers

Name of district	Name of Block	Name of GP	No. of groups formed/contacted					Sansad/Wards in GP	
			CMPC	AGG	YG	RL group	RL indiv	Total No.	Reached
Murshidabad	Hariharpar	Khidipur	2	10	1	2	13	22	18
		Rukunpur	3	5	1	1	11	21	16
		Choa	3	7	1	3	19	22	22
	Beldanga -1	Debkundu	4	4	3	2	16	26	26
		Mirzapur-1	1	3	0	2	12	11	11
		Begunbari	1	3	3	2	17	22	22
<b>Total</b>			<b>14</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>115</b>

Figure 9-Project Coverage in Murshidabad

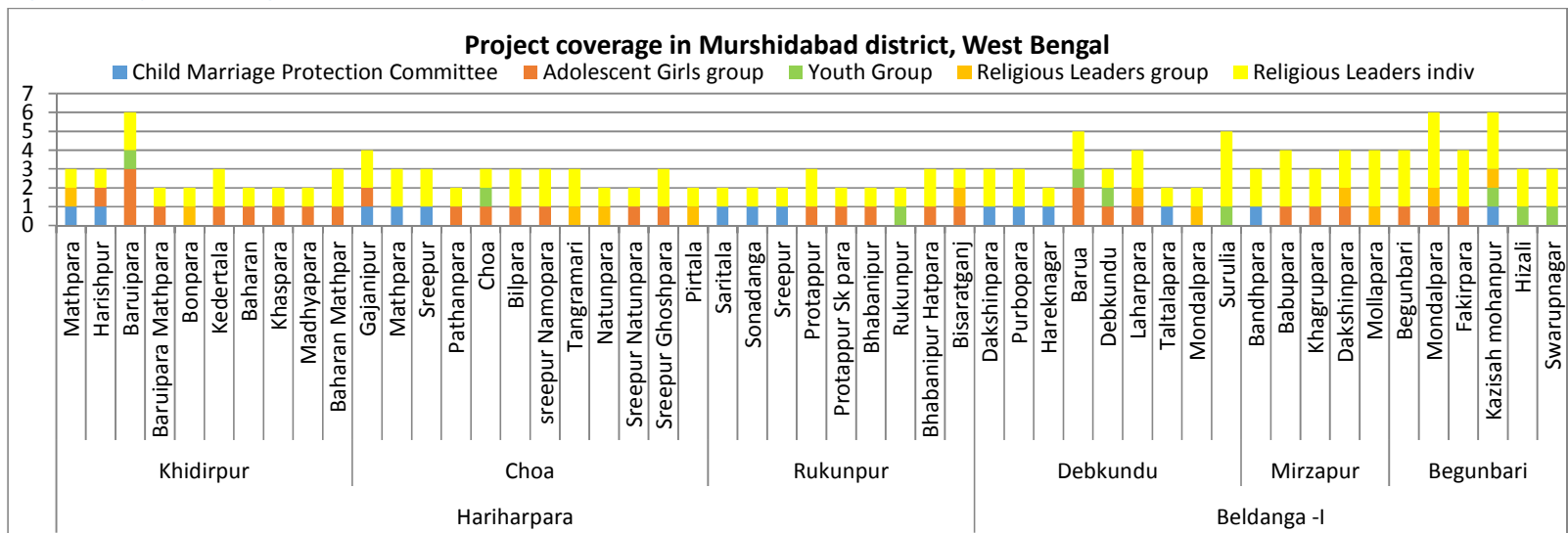
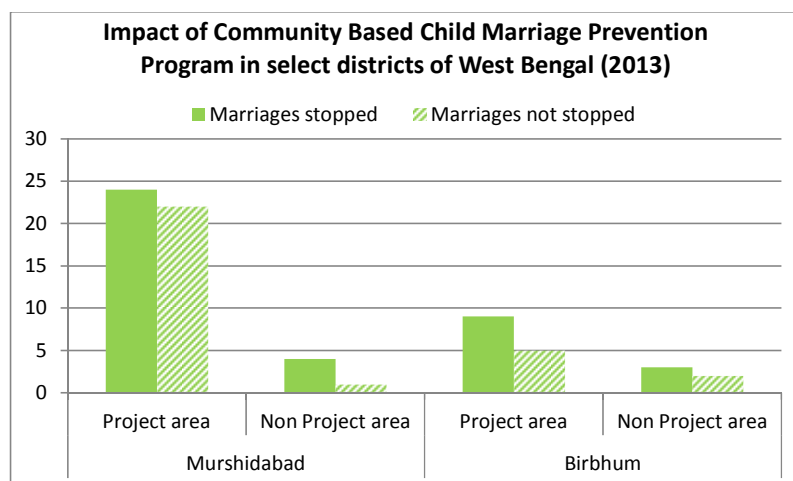


Figure 9 above plots the project coverage within the GP at the Sansad level. There are between 1-3 youth groups in each GP. AGG numbers vary between 3-10 in each GP. Religious leaders have been reached out in every ward. Religious groups have been reached out to in almost 2 wards in both blocks. Number of individual religious leaders is the highest.

Figure 10- Comparative data for West Bengal for 2013 marriages stopped plotted against marriages that could not be stopped



Based on Figure 10 above, it is observed that in 2013, there was no substantial difference between the number of child marriages stopped and those that could not be stopped.

#### 8.3.1.1. The evaluators have the following recommendations to make:

8.3.1.1.1. As is seen in Figure1, program implementation in Murshidabad was found to be ahead of that in Birbhum. It is ~~recommended~~ recommended that the project team invests time in nurturing relationships with stakeholders and community members in Birbhum, and expanding activities of the program there.

8.3.1.1.2. As may be seen in Table No.2 and Table No.3 above, 20 and 14 CMPC<sup>23</sup> have been set up in Birbhum and Murshidabad respectively, where the total number of sansads are 71 and 120. Only a fraction of the sansads have been covered by the child protection committees. With regards to AGG and youth groups there is no rationale for the numbers across the villages. In Birbhum each GP has between 2 and 4 AGG, while in Murshidabad it is between 3 and 10 per GP. Youth groups are substantially lower in both districts Birbhum has 1 and Murshidabad has 9 youth groups. Religious groups contacted are far fewer than the number of religious leaders contacted. In the in the details of project coverage provided in Annexure 2, the partner states that it has reached almost all the sansads by setting up of child protection committees and other activities of the program. The basis for declaring that program coverage has reached almost all sansads within the GP was not found to be explained. The evaluator recommends that Jabala needs to determine logical basis for the coverage of the program. To do this a study of various factors that include population, area, and services available would need to be undertaken, along with consideration resources of money and time.

<sup>23</sup> CMPC=VLPC

8.3.1.1.3. From Figure 10 it can be seen that in 2013, the partner organization and the network of VLCPC are able to stop about a little more than half the cases of child marriage reported. Going forward this must be made an indicator of the success of the program and the number of marriages stopped must be substantially higher than the number of marriages that could not be stopped.

### 8.3.1.2. Village Level Interventions

8.3.1.2.1. **Village level child protection committees (VLCPC):** Child protection committees at the village, block and district level are set up as response, prevention and monitoring mechanisms for child marriage. In WB the formation of VLCPC have taken place at the GP level and at the Sansad (ward) level.

- **Composition of VLCPC:** In WB the child protection committees are formed in keeping with the guidelines for formation under the ICPS<sup>24</sup> at the panchayat level as well at the sansad (ward) level. The Sarpanch is the chairperson of the committee at the panchayat level. However, the panchayat secretary takes most of the responsibility to steer the activities. The panchayat representative (at the sansad level), or a local leader is the chairperson of the committee at the sansad level. From visits to the VLCPC it was observed that apart from a few social workers, there are no NGOs represented on the VLCPC. This despite the fact that it is common knowledge that there are a number of credible NGOs working in both districts. The local Childline representatives on both districts were not invited to be part of the VLCPC.
- **Facilitation of the VLCPC meetings:** The block level coordinators are not able to attend all the monthly meetings of the VLCPC in the sansads. They attend the initial meetings, provide a hand out which spells out the role of the VLCPC. The partner organization also conducts a 10 day training of members over a 3 month period. There was no information on exactly how many such trainings have been completed. They attend all the GP level VLCPC meetings. Registers for taking minutes are maintained. The evaluator did not have the opportunity to visit and interact with VLCPC in Murshidabad.

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<sup>24</sup>Every village shall have a Child Protection Committee under the Chairpersonship of the village level elected representative (Head of the Gram Panchayat) to recommend and monitor the implementation of child protection services at the village level. The committee shall include two child representatives, a member of the DCPS, anganwadi workers, school teachers, auxiliary nurse midwives, as well as respected village members and civil society representatives.

- **General observations:** From discussion with VLCPC members in Birbhum, the evaluator was able to make the following observations:
  - The VLCPC are initially set up at the GP level and then they are extended to the sansad level.
  - The support and recognition from the administration at the block level provide strength to the VLCPC as they take on discussions around the difficult issue of child marriage.
  - The partner organization provides the VLCPC orientation on their role through training and a hand out outlining their roles and responsibility.
  - The VLCPC are dependent on the partner organization staff to intervene to stop/postpone cases of child marriage.
  - Different communities for example the Muslim community or the adivasi community discussed below present different challenges and would require different approaches for reaching out to them.
  - Community members see the need for a long term association with the partner organization.
  - A ripple effect has been seen in areas outside the project area and partner organization staff have been contacted for assistance in prevention of child marriage. This may be seen in Figure 10.
  - VLCPC members recognize and appreciate the role of the partner organization in bringing them together to address the issue of child marriage.

Outlined below is a glimpse of conversations between the evaluator and 2 VLCPCs visited in Birbhum demonstrating the extent of involvement of CMPC members with the issue.

**Table 12**

Bhirkhum, Rampurhaat II, GP-Margram-1	Birkhum, Mohamad Bazaar, GP-Angarguria
<p>The VLCPC was formed at the GP level. At the first meeting it was decided that VLCPC would also be formed at the sandad level. A timeline for the same was set at the GP level. It was decided that the sansad representative of the panchayat would head the sansad level CPC. Committees were then formed at the sansad level. The active support from the BDO and Officer in-charge (police) made it easy to get the committees formed. Jabala provides a handout on the roles and responsibilities of VLCPC and conducts a training of 10 days over 3 months.</p> <p>“I am willing to do awareness about child marriage at with 190 self help groups (SHG). But you outsiders come in and start lots of things and leave a mess for us to deal with. You must stick with us” –SHG sangha member.</p>	<p>According to the members 4 meetings have been held since inception. They observed that this locality was Adivasi dominated. Most children in school are 1<sup>st</sup> generation learners. Marriage itself is not such a significant event. Girls start living with their in-laws. Marriages are solemnized only if the parties involved have the money required for the same.</p> <p>The last case intervened by this VLCPC was the case of SumiDey D/O KhokonDey. The VLCPC got to know about the marriage through some people in the community. The District Coordinator was contacted. She went with some of the VLCPC members to meet the family. Later they got news that the marriage pandal was being set up. They made a second visit but the family was still adamant and refused to stop the marriage. It was then that the BDO &amp; police station was informed. The police had to come to stop the marriage. The girl was counseled by the Anwasha Counselor. She had dropped out in Class VII and has recently been readmitted to school. This case was also highlighted in the media.</p>

- **Feedback and recommendations on functioning of VLCPC:**
  - a. It may be said that the efforts of the partner organization in setting up of the VLCPC have yielded positive results. It was found that key members of the VLCPC including the ASHA, AWW, teacher were aware of their roles and of each case of child marriage that was prevented by the committee. All members take forward conducting awareness about child marriage in their statutory functions and roles. They are found to be constantly alert and vigilant about picking up information about marriages being planned in the community. Across all the committees the panchayat secretary played the key role in steering the activities of the VLCPC.
  - b. As mentioned in the earlier section of the report, the exact reach of the VLCPC need to be studied further. Currently, the coverage appears to be ad-hoc. When there is no sansad VLCPC, populous villages, it needs to be examined whether the GP level VLCPC is adequate to cover all habitations in the village. If found to be inadequate the extent to which they can be scaled up and a strategy for scaling them up would need to be determined.
  - c. The evaluators were not able to find out exactly how may VLCPC have received the training provided by the partner organization mentioned above. The training schedule was shared with the evaluators and it mentioned that resource persons are brought in to conduct the training. It is recommended that the training module is reviewed and that it be found out exactly how many VLCPC have been trained.
  - d. From discussions and review of documentation it was observed that at the time of a child marriage though the whole VLCPC converges at the family where the marriage is to take place, the VLCPC is still dependent on the partner organization staff to negotiate, with the family and coordinate with all of them, escalate the matter to duty bearers at the block or district level. It is recommended that roles are assigned to the various members of the VLCPC and that they be encouraged to function more independently.
  - e. Going forward it is also recommended that programs for boys be initiated at the village level as they seem to be left out. It is recommended that the partner organization and the VLCPC take up programs to influence the community at large. Both these recommendations have been discussed at length in Chapter VI points 4 and 3 respectively of this evaluation report.

**8.3.1.2.2. Facilitation of AGG:** The AGG groups have been formed at the sansad level. 20 have been formed in Birbhum and 32 in Mushidabad. Some observations shared by the evaluator based on the field visits conducted:

- Most of these groups are formed in schools and use the school infrastructure for their meetings. The teachers and heads of the school are supportive to AGG and extend support in prevention/stopping marriages.
- The children interacted with state that they feel very proud to be associated with Jabala. They discuss child marriage and other social protection issues at their meetings.



- On being asked how their brothers felt about them being part of the AGG a number of them expressed that their brothers were keen to learn what took place in their meetings. The evaluator sensed that that being part of the AGG not only empowered the girl but also brought fresh perspective into her family. They began to see her differently.
- The children in the groups seemed empowered and charged. Since working with adolescent girls is an area of core expertise of Jabala the organization has been in a position to contribute a lot to the functioning of the AGG.
- Jabala has been able to link AGG to the Anwasha<sup>25</sup> counsellors and also bring in their own counsellors for counselling of girl survivors of child marriage. Jabala has also been able to share learnings and transfer knowledge from one project area to another.
- Jabala follows the Sabala<sup>26</sup> training module for the AGG after making minor changes. It is recommended that an annual parents meeting of AGG members could held to provide parents support and confidence to stand up for their daughters.
- The evaluators recommend that going forward the Jabala team needs to further consolidate two aspects with regards to the AGG. Firstly, it is recommended that there needs to be a rationale for the number of the AGG groups formed and the reach of the same in keeping with the population of adolescent girls in the villages. Maximum population of adolescent girls would need to be covered. Secondly, the AGG must have annual plans which ensure that they organize themselves and take up more activities as independent groups and campaigns on issues that affect them, not restricting themselves to child marriage. A good practice outlining how Jabala



**Good Practice: Formation of professional soccer team of adolescent girls**

Jabala nurtured a group of adolescent girls to come together to form a soccer team. They have a professional coach, a team uniform (jersey, shorts, socks and shoes). The team has played many matches at the inter and intra district level. The girls by their own admission felt the exposure had widened their horizons and boosted their confidence. This football team nurtured by Jabala, in Mousidabad consists of many survivors of child marriage. Jabala has tried establishing a similar team in the block of Beldanga. Many of the older girls have gone to college and are scattered. They have problems gathering them at one place. Currently Beldanga has about 5 girls in the team. The food ball team was initiated in prior to the child marriage project in Moushidabad but has been integrated with it. It is a replicable practice.

*“A contact sport like football, is especially relevant in understanding and accepting their bodies as adolescents.”—Baitali G, Director, Jabala Action Research Group*

<sup>25</sup>Anwasha Clinics: Clinics run by the State Government that provide services around reproductive health of women and adolescent girls.

<sup>26</sup> Centrally sponsored scheme of the Government of India that for adolescent girls.

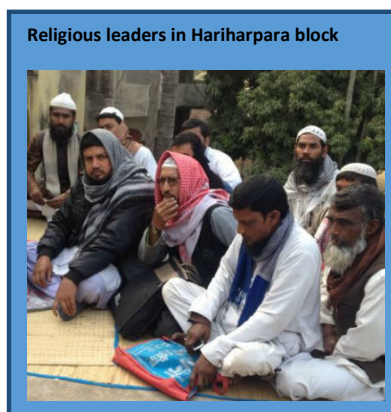
has initiated a soccer team from among adolescent girls in another project has been highlighted above.

**8.3.1.2.3. Formation and functioning of youth groups:** Youth are mostly males in their late teens extending up to 35 years. Youth groups are groups which are already in existence, the child marriage prevention input is incorporated into these groups. Some youth groups may have political affiliations. Some members have political affiliations. Broadly their activities include organizing public celebrations around festivals, Independence Day and Republic Day, and sports related activities. They also sometimes take up awareness activities on social issues, and activities related to cleaning their village. In WB the evaluator was able to visit 1 youth group. In Birbhum there is 1 youth group while in Murshidabad there are 9. The evaluator was under the impression that in WB not much attention is currently invested in facilitation of youth groups. It is recommended that the partner organization focuses on developing an agenda for working with youth groups, and also decides on the population of youth to be reached out to at the village level, which would then help them determine the number of youth groups to be set up and a strategy to achieve the same. Outlined on the right side is a summary of interaction undertaken with a youth group in Murshidabad district Beldanga-1 Block, GP Debkundu:

The youth group was formed in 1978-1980. The evaluator met almost 20 of the members. The youth group operates from a space which is at the juncture of the main market. It is a trading hub and is well connected both by road and rail lines. Most of the members are businessmen. They devote their time and contribute money to activities. Their main job began as providing security to the traders who come at night with their wares and often park themselves and wares on the footpath. The traders give the group a small token payment for the security service they provide. The local police station depends on them for help with security. They have been working with Jabala for many years in their anti-trafficking program and now provide support to the child marriage project. Often they intervene in cases of elopement/trafficking at night. Jabala representative stated it would not have been possible to intervene in many cases without the help of this group. They have in some instances come on motor cycles at 2 in the morning to restore a girl who had run away.

**8.3.1.2.4. Engaging religious leaders:** Key partners in preventing child marriages are the religious leaders, religious groups, and priests of different faiths. As may be seen in Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 2 and 3 above, a substantial number of religious leaders have been contacted. The evaluator has inferred that in WB majority of the work is done with Muslim priests as much of the project area is inhabited by the Muslim community where child marriage is a serious issue. The work with the Muslim leaders however, is more complicated in nature as the Muslim personal laws do not strictly disallow child marriage. Keeping this reality in mind, the partner organization has devised a less controversial strategy for prevention of child marriage, by convincing the Maulvis to promote marriage of girls only after completion of Class XII. They are more amenable to this. Some observations from the field visit are outlined below where the evaluator visited in Hariharpara block and interacted with 20 Maulvis representing 10 GPs:

- The Maulvis stated that they are comfortable promoting that marriage must take place after girls have completed class 12.
- In the project area the team has been successful in getting the priests to mention the age of the child at the time of the Kabilnama.
- They make announcements against early marriage on their public address system in Fridays. The block level meeting in the presence of the BDO and knowledge that they have the support of the administration has made them more confident to stand up against early marriage. Earlier, when they stood up against child marriage, members of the community threatened to throw them out.
- They also stated that in their mosque area they try to prevent child marriage but there are other risk factors as it is known that for Rs.500/- the marriage registrar can be convinced to perform a marriage.
- The district coordinator has spent a lot of time working and nurturing this group of Maulvis.



The evaluator also visited and interacted with a Muslim Marriage Registrar in Beldanga-1 block. He showed the evaluator the marriage register which had numerous columns to be filled. The ones where age of the bride and groom were to be recorded were found to be empty. The evaluator was however under the impression that under age marriages were taking place. He also stated that he cannot manage marriages in the whole block and outsources work to other registrars. It did not appear that that the partner organization team had been able to make a very significant inroad with the marriage registrar.

Acknowledging the efforts invested in nurturing Muslim religious groups, the evaluators recommends that going forward, the partner organization develops a plan for determining how many religious groups there are in the project area and how many can be reached out to in a phased manner. While a large number of individuals have been contacted it is not feasible

to monitor and follow-up on them. A plan would also need to be developed to address and follow-up with the marriage registrars in a more systematic manner.

**8.3.1.3. Block level interventions-** Formation and facilitation of block level child protection committees (BLCPC): The evaluators were informed that in WB, block level child protection committees were formed in all 4 blocks of the project area and that they meet on a quarterly basis. The role of the BLCPC is to monitor progress of the program against child marriage at the village level, provide support to the program at the GP level, to ensure that child marriages are prevented, to address non-performance of duty bearers. In the Block Sabhapati is the president and the Block Development Officer (BDO) is the convener of the committee.

The evaluator was not able to observe a meeting take place but was able to interact with 3 BDOs. The BDO plays a critical role in facilitation, ensuring coordination amongst officers, convening meetings of officers, and other stakeholders, awareness issuing circulars and orders which outline action to be taken by the local duty bearers at the GP and ward level. The BDO intervenes in cases of children marriage if necessary. A number of circulars have been issued by block level officers who are members of the BLCPC. A good practice worth sharing was observed by evaluators. The BLCPC have celebrated the bravery of child marriage survivors by felicitating them with bravery awards. This is a powerful method of building the confidence in the community by letting them know that the administration will extend support to those to stand up against child marriage.

**Case shared by BDO of Hariharpara block**  
He mentioned the case of Sonia Khatun. Sonia was married at 17 through a contact of a neighbor to a man in Kashmir. She realized soon that the husband & father-in-law were keen to offer her for prostitution. She managed to run away and reach a local police station. The police contacted her husband and he was made to take an undertaking to send her back to Murshidabad. He did send her back within a few days. The money exchanged in at the time of marriage were returned to her family. Sonia is currently been readmitted to Vidyaniketan and BDO gave Rs.2000 towards her education support.

The block administration had undertaken major awareness and communication through wall paintings across the all the villages. Due to the new government in the state, frequent transfers of staff take place, resulting in slowing down in the pace of the program.

The project team has invested substantial time and efforts in advocacy with the block level functionaries. A summary of meetings conducted district wise may be seen below in Table 13 and Table 14 below:

**Table 13-Block level stakeholders reached Birbhum**

Stake Holder Reached 2013, Birbhum	No of Meetings	
	Rampurhat-II	Mohammad Bazar
Block Development Officer	5	14
Jt. Block Development Officer	2	7
Panchayat Samity Sabhapati	7	5
Block Welfare Officer	9	17
Women Development Officer	7	7
Child Development & Protection Officer	4	9
Block Medical Officer Health	2	3
School Inspector	2	2
Officer In charge Local Police Station	7	6

**Table 14- Block level stakeholder meetings Murshidabad**

Stake Holder Reached , Murshidabad	No of Meetings	
	Hariharpara	Beldanga-I
Block Development Officer	14	12
Jt. Block Development Officer	3	2
Panchayat SamitySabhapati	07	03
Block Welfare Officer	10	07
Child Development & Protection Officer	02	02
Block Medical Officer Health	02	03
School Inspector	01	
Officer In charge Local Police Station	25	19

The evaluators recommend that going forward the BLCPC meetings must be systematized and must take place with regularity. Rather than take up individual issues with departments all issues must be placed before the BLCPC, from where actions to be taken must be passed on to individual departments. The project team need to identify a clear agenda for the BLCPC. The BLCPC must be recognized by the administration as the BLCPC to be set up under ICPS which means their scope must be widened to include all child protection issues. The partner organization needs to work toward institutionalization of practices, for example training of VLCPC members, block level meetings of AGG, religious members must be put into a calendar and should take place periodically. A plan for issuing certain circulars would be required periodically must be put into place. The BLCPC must also be pushed to scale the program independent of the partner NGO to other GP within the block.

**8.3.1.4. District level interventions—formation of child protection committees at the district level (DLCPC):**The evaluator did not have the opportunity to meet with any DM during the field visit. The DLCPC have not been initiated as yet. However, the project teams work in collaboration with officials at the district level and have successfully been able to get a number of circulars related to prevention of child marriage issued. A glimpse of the number of meetings held with various stakeholders at the district level can be seen in Table No. 15 and Table No. 16 below:

**Table 15-District level stakeholders reached Birbhum 2013**

Stake Holder Reached Birbhum	No of meetings
District Magistrates	05
District Social Welfare Officer	06
District Program Officer	04
Chief Medical Officer Health	02
District Child Protection Officer	04
ASP & DIB (Nodal Officer - Anti-trafficking)	01
Sub Divisional Officer	03

**Table 16- District stakeholders reached Murshidabad**

Stake Holder Reached	No of meetings
District Magistrates	03
District Social Welfare Officer	07
District Program Officer	06
Chief Medical Officer Health	02
District Child Protection Officer	02
Superintendent of Police	02
Juvenile Police officer	05
District Information & Cultural Officer	02
Sub Divisional Officer	03
Chairman Child Protection Committee	02

The evaluator recommends that the partner organization sets up or integrates the functions of the committees at the district level with DLCPC to be set up under ICPS. As mentioned in Chapter VI Point 8 of this report the partner organization would need to invest a lot of effort into strengthening the implementation of the child protection system under the ICPS at the district level. Only then would a systematized mechanism evolve where VLCPC would feed into the BLCPC which would further feed into the DLCPC.

**8.3.1.5. State Level Intervention:** A state level consultation was conducted at the time of initiation of the program. A number of meetings were conducted with key officials at the state government level. These include Principal Secretary, Government of West Bengal, Secretary, department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Secretary Department of Health, IG Police, and others. While the partner NGO has had meaningful discussions with the officers, there is a need to systemize these interactions and set an agenda and plan for it. State level Child Protection Committee (SCPC) has been formulated in WB under ICPS. The partner organization is a member on the SCPS sub-committee entrusted with drafting the guidelines for implementation of ICPS. However, how exactly the issue of child marriage is being taken forward in the committee would need to be further understood. It is recommended that HAQ and the partner organization would jointly need to develop an action plan for advocacy at the state government level. HAQ should also steer some of these discussions.

## 9. CONCLUSION

HAQ and its partner organizations have achieved a lot in the initial year and a half. Such a model of community outreach and strengthening of systems has made a significant contribution to the prevention of child marriage in the districts it covers. As the project moves forward and matures, detailed planning, structured review and monitoring, along with strengthened capacities of the project team and the stakeholders in the communities, and documentation of knowledge and learning would contribute significantly to ensuring that such a model can be replicated and offer learning to the wider community.

The team of evaluators of Leher offer their gratitude and thanks to the teams of MVF, Jabala and HAQ for their cooperation, support and willingness to contribute information to this process of review.

**This evaluation conducted by Leher. Kajol Menon and Nicole Menezes from Leher conducted the evaluation and documented the report. Leher is a child rights organization working to make child protection a shared responsibility.**

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