



# WHAT WORKS FOR ADOLESCENTS' EMPOWERMENT

*A Learning Review*

Research Report

Funded by



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### **Suggested Citation**

Nanda, S., Sharma, S., Anand, S., Pal, P., Nandi, S. 2020. *What Works for Adolescents' Empowerment: A Learning Review*. New Delhi: International Center for Research on Women.

### **Cover Photo**

Girls indulge in humor during an adolescent girls' group gathering in Gujarat, India. A scene from the film, *Parwaaz | Flight* (2019), produced by ICRW Asia and directed by Mixed Media Productions.

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Girls engage in discussions on awareness campaigns and playacting as part of adolescent girls' group sessions in West Bengal, India. Scenes from *Parwaaz | Flight* (2019), produced by ICRW Asia and directed by Mixed Media Productions.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Learning Review on What Works for Adolescents' Empowerment was undertaken with support from Ford Foundation to draw strategic learnings from a decade of programming for adolescent girls. This study involved months of conversations with all research partners, who supported the process, contextualization and meaning making of complex phenomena.

We are deeply grateful to all participants, who voluntarily and patiently participated in the study. We thank our support staff in all study districts, who adjusted through multiple plan changes and long days of fieldwork.

We thank senior team members from all participant organizations for their insights and support throughout the process.

We are also grateful for facilitation of fieldwork by Karuna Phillip and her team at MJAS, Ajmer; Sangeeta Maurya at SAHAYOG and Gayatri Pratap Singh at Vimarsh, Nainital; Arnab Karar and Abhishek at CINI, Murshidabad; Seema Shah and Arundhati Sridhar at ANANDI, Devgadhi Baria; Manushi Parikh at SAHAJ, Vadodara; and Harish at SARTHI, Surendranagar; Reena Sinha at Breakthrough, Hazaribagh; Anoop Kumar at Jagori Rural, Dharamshala; and Praveer Goyal at MAMTA, Jaipur.

We also thank experts from Women's Fund Asia; Centre for Reproductive Rights, Kathmandu; Women Power Connect; Centre for Catalyzing Change; The YP Foundation and CREA, who took out the time to interact with us and helped us shape the study.

We thank Vanita Mukherjee, who facilitated this grant, for her vision and support and Aparna Uppaluri, Ford Foundation, for her guidance and reflections throughout the process.

We acknowledge with gratitude our colleagues at ICRW Asia – Ravi Verma for his conceptual inputs; Subhalakshmi Nandi for her crucial insights and Sakshi Garg for program assistance.

We also acknowledge the contributions of Priyanka Banerjee, Prabhleen Tuteja and Hemlata Verma during the conceptualization and design of the study. We would like to thank Aishwarya Sahay for her contributions to desk research and transcriptions.

We are grateful to Shreya Seth (West Bengal), Parigna Talati and Minaxi Shukla (Gujarat) for language interpretation during fieldwork, and translation and transcription of interviews in Bangla and Gujarati. We also thank Mamata Hossain and Aditi Mukherjee for translation and transcription of interviews in Hindi.

We are thankful to Archana Dwivedi, Nirantar Trust, for her review of this report.

We thank all participants of the Experts Convening (held on February 12, 2020) for their reflections, which have added richness to the analysis of findings.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of several organizations and institutes, for their free source publications and knowledge products, which have helped in conceptualizing the analysis.

*Research Team Members*

*Srishty Anand, Sharmishtha Nanda, Poulomi Pal and Sneha Sharma*

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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AEP	Adolescence Education Program
AGAJ	Aware Girls Action for Justice
AJWS	American Jewish World Service
ANANDI	Area Network and Development Initiatives
ASHA	Accredited social health activist
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
CEFM	Child Early and Forced Marriage
CINI	Child in Need Institute
CRR	Center for Reproductive Rights
DDU-GKY	Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
ECFM	Early Child and Forced Marriage
ECM	Early and Child Marriage
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
NEG-FIRE	New Education Group – Foundation for Innovation and Research in Education
GAGE	Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEAS	Global Early Adolescence Study
HAQ-CRC	HAQ-Centre for Child Rights
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IIPS	International Institute for Population Sciences
KII	Key Informant Interview
MAMTA-HIMC	MAMTA-Health Institute for Mother and Child
MJAS	Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti
MOHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MP	Madhya Pradesh
NESPYM	North East Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

NYKS	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan
PCMA	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act
POCSO	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences
PYD	Positive youth development
RKSK	Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram
RMNCH	Reproductive, Maternal, neonatal, and child health
RMNCHA	Reproductive, Maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RSEAG-SABLA	Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls-SABLA
SAARTHI	Social Action for Rural and Tribal In-Habitants of India
SAG	Scheme for Adolescent Girls
SAHAJ	Society for Health Alternatives
SAHAYOG	Society for Participatory Rural Development
SAIEVAC	South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
SWATI	Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative
UK	Uttarakhand
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UP	Uttar Pradesh
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WCD	Women and Child Development
WFA	Women's Fund Asia
WGCD	Women and Girls at the Center of Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WPC	Women Power Connect

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# INTRODUCTION



Global consensus is well established on the need to understand the nuances of adolescent experiences to design programs, policies and institutions that are responsive to their concerns and enable healthy, productive transitions to adulthood. However, laws and policies are formulated in a manner that do not account for the needs of adolescents with respect to education, work, sexual and reproductive health, and act as barriers to healthy transition.<sup>1</sup> Adolescence is marked by profound physical, psychological and emotional changes as well as emergence of new opportunities and vulnerabilities. It is also marked by processes of socialization that support the consolidation of gendered norms and identities. (John, N. A., et al., 2017)

In this context, programming for adolescent girls and women has increasingly focused on empowerment approaches. The two main alternative roots of influence with respect to the “empowerment philosophy” today appear to be the work of Paolo Freire and the feminist movement. The actual term “empowerment” was first commonly used in association with the women’s movement, within a discourse of feminism that drew on the influence of popular education and focused on the role of the individual in politics.<sup>2</sup> While there are multiple frameworks that detail processes, desired outcomes and underlying philosophy of empowerment, they broadly adopt either an “agency” approach or a “structure” approach. The debate is reflected in the choice of interventions and activities to bring about empowerment.

Feminists have analyzed systemic disempowerment

of women as a product of unequal power relations between men and women, manifested in asymmetries in the gender division of productive and reproductive labor, paid and unpaid work, material resources, social recognition and the distribution of authority and decision-making power (Kohli, 2015) (Hilberman, 1981). While this is clearly a critical element in any explanation, it does not, on its own, help understand why some but not all men are perpetrators of certain mechanisms of control, such as violence (Heise 1998). It also falls short of explaining why gender inequity varies within the same country so that some communities are characterized by higher levels of equity than others, and why some groups of women are more affected by violence than others (Kabeer, 2014).

In order to address these gaps, scholars have used theories of gender and culture scripts (Desai & Andrist, 2010) and decoding of how social and gender norms interplay (Marcus et al., 2015) with a wide intersection of community, caste, religion, class and other differentials. Further, in unpacking effective pathways to empowerment the interconnections between various social, economic and political stressors need more reflection. This will enable better identification of gaps in policy and programming for empowerment. (Chopra & Muller, 2016)

The current study adopts an understanding that empowerment is both a process and an outcome, whereby existing power relations are challenged by continuous efforts to build agency, develop equal relations and responsive structures as essential pathways to empowerment. We also stress on the

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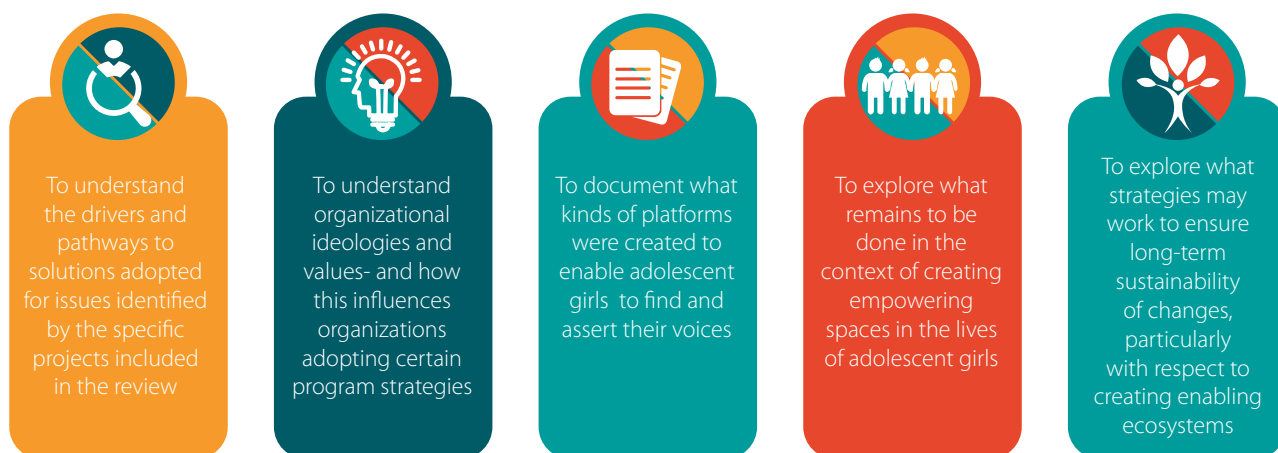
<sup>1</sup> Please refer to Annexure 1 for the List of Policies and Schemes for Adolescents in India.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE, 2006), the current use of the term “empowerment” actually appeared for the first time in the book *Black Empowerment* by Salomon (1976), where it was used to describe a social work methodology with marginalized African-American communities.

critical relationship of organizational ideologies with resulting strategies, spaces and solutions.

It is in this context, **International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)**, with the support of the **Ford Foundation** undertook a review focused on two thematic areas of programming: early and child marriage (ECM); and support to Rajiv Gandhi Scheme

for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG), also known as the SABLA program. The review focused on programs that began in or after 2008, and covered initiatives that were active till 2019. The objective of the review was to learn what are the key drivers and barriers to programmatic approaches in empowering adolescents, including the following specific objectives:

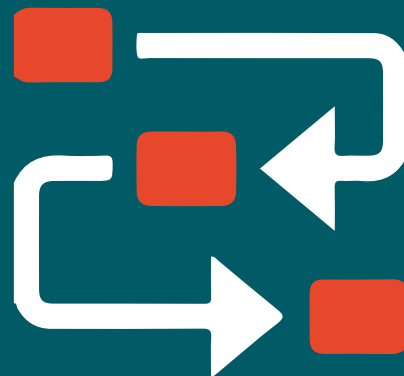


Conceptually, we view the process of programming for empowerment from the perspective of breaking down rigid and conventional norms around static creation and performance of “gender” throughout the lives of women and men. While there exists rich scholarship on studying gender, and multiple perspectives therein, it is a complex task to translate theoretical knowledge into simpler tools for research, especially one for a program review. For this review, we have used established theoretical understanding on gender performance which suggests that “many domains of women’s lives that are generally considered to be private or personal are shaped by powerful ideologies, and women frequently have only a limited repertoire of behaviors from which they can choose” (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The notion of scripts that frame actors’ day-to-day behavior and yet are constantly modified as actors face competing demands (Desai & Andrist, 2010) provides a very fresh entry point for us to understand the performance of gender, from programmatic viewpoints. In the context of empowerment programming, the questions of choice, voice and power layer with this daily performance and display of gender.

## Thematic areas addressed by the review

The current review focuses on two kinds of programs, funded by the Ford Foundation, with specific thematic focus on a) providing support as civil society partners to the implementation of the SABLA scheme and b) addressing the issue of child marriages including, but not limited to, providing support on implementation of the Prevention of Child Marriage Act. We provide a brief overview of both the thematic areas as endnotes. While conducting the review, the discussions with different program teams highlighted that these organizations often worked beyond their thematic areas and the larger mandate of the programs was to address the needs of adolescent girls. It was with this preliminary understanding that we located our learning review in the landscape of adolescent empowerment, and not just on the thematic focus of the programs. This also does more justice to the larger vision of the review.

# METHODOLOGY



The learning review was conducted in five phases, using participatory, feminist research principles that gave intended respondents a say in shaping questions as well as findings. The selection of organizations included in the review was in consultation with Ford Foundation, based on their grantee portfolios in the two thematic areas. The list of organizations (henceforth referred to as research partners) is provided on the next page. The five phases were completed over a period of 24 months.

## PHASE 1: Desk research

- This was specific to the literature published by research partners included in the review. (List of documents attached as Annexure 2).
- We approached our research partners requesting them to share documents specific to their work on ECM and/or on the SABLA scheme, which were considered most important by the teams, for inclusion in the review.
- We reviewed a total of 20 documents and synthesized information to arrive at a preliminary understanding of the content, spread, audience and design of the selected programs to inform our research design.

## PHASE 2: Formative Meetings

We interviewed key representative from each of the chosen programs to gather missing information and

understand the organizational ideology, management structures, nature of programming, program duration, phases, evolution of program designs, etc.

- Based on our enhanced understanding, we finalized the scope of our research.
- We compiled all information from phases 1 and 2 to arrive at the final primary research design for qualitative fieldwork.

## PHASE 3: Review of literature

In order to design our primary research on assumptions drawn from a larger body of work, we looked at important global, regional and national discourses, and the larger landscape of programming to align our research questions to contribute to knowledge creation and to prevent duplication.

- This phase was not clubbed with the desk review (phase 1) since the research team wanted to review literature that was pertinent to the scope of the research, which was clarified once we conducted the desk review, to better understand the scope of the grants.
- The review of literature focused on India and South Asia with respect to child marriage and various other domains of adolescent empowerment; such as access to SRHR services, livelihood options, gender trainings, out-of-school education, etc., especially those published during 2009-2019.



Desk Research



Formative Meetings



Review of Literature



Qualitative Fieldwork

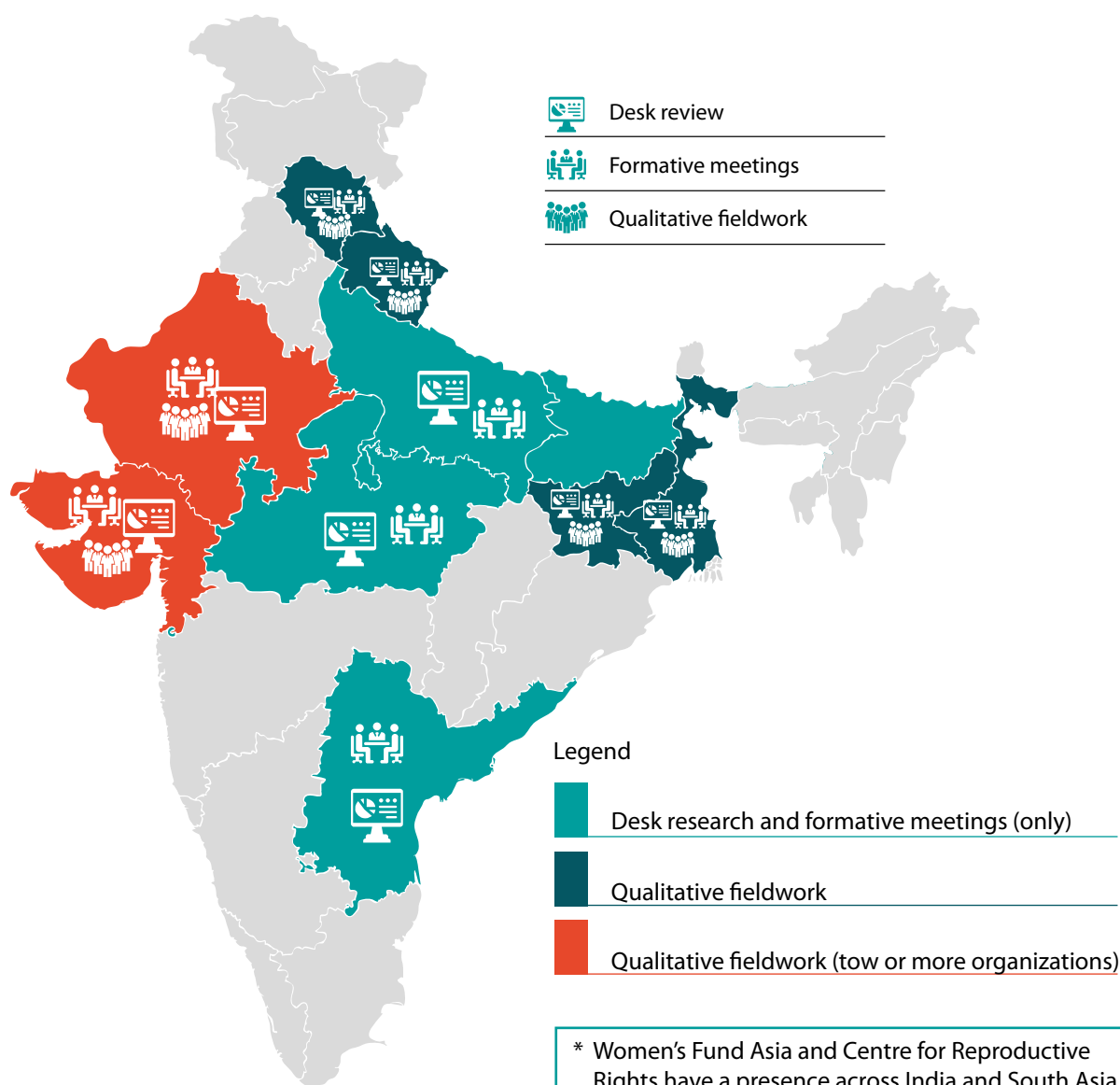


Data Synthesis and  
consultation

## Organizations Reviewed in the Study

Child, Early and Forced Marriage
Breakthrough India
HAQ Child Rights Centre (HAQ CRC)
MAMTA-Health Institute for Mother and Child (MAMTA – HIMC)
Area Network and Development Initiatives (ANANDI)
Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR)
Women's Fund Asia (WFA)
Women Power Connect (WPC)

Strengthening SABLA Implementation
Sahayog: Society for Participatory Rural Development (Sahayog)
Child in Need Institute (CINI)
SAHAJ Society for Health Alternatives (SAHAJ)
Jagori Rural
Centre for Catalyzing Change (C3)





- We also looked at key knowledge products from Girls Not Brides, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), American Jewish World Service (AJWS), Ford Foundation, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Women and Girls at the Center of Development (WGCD), UNICEF, Gender and Adolescent Global Evidence (GAGE), Positive Youth Development (PYD), Global Early Adolescent Study (GEAS) and other global learning platforms.

## PHASE 4: Qualitative Fieldwork

We identified programs suitable for qualitative research data collection in the final phase of the review. We conducted fieldwork with eight research partners, which often included interacting with their implementation partners. While some of these partners had multiple intervention sites, the research team only selected one intervention site per research partner. This was done to prevent overburdening staff from partner organizations with responsibility for coordinating and facilitating the team in conducting primary research. Annexure 3 provides a list of research partners and their respective implementation partners.

- This selection of sites was based on the following criteria:
  - Status of grants (the selected grants were either ongoing or the project had completed no earlier than March 2017)
  - Nature of grants (some did not have a field site per se, such as advocacy programs)
  - Availability of key program stakeholders<sup>3</sup>
  - Comfort of program teams to facilitate fieldwork for the research team<sup>4</sup>
- Training and data collection
  - The research protocol was reviewed and approved by ICRW's Institutional Review Board,

and Sigma Research and Consulting's ethical review board.

- The qualitative data collection was led by a small team of experienced qualitative researchers from ICRW, with language interpreters recruited locally where needed.
- FGDs were undertaken by teams of two researchers, including a note taker and an experienced facilitator.
- IDIs and KIs were undertaken by one researcher with one note taker.
- All tools were developed in line with the key areas of interest and pretested before starting of the data collection.
- Primary data collection was conducted in six states and consisted of:
  - 10 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with adolescent girls and boys
  - 10 FGDs with parents, frontline workers, and stakeholders in the community.
  - 23 in depth interviews (IDIs) with program staff and field level implementation teams and
  - 18 key informant interviews (KIs) with program managers and experts working on the adolescent programming.
- A breakup of these numbers for each organization and state is given in the Annexure 4.

## PHASE 5: Analysis, Synthesis and Consultations

In the last phase of the review, we analyzed all the primary data collected as well as key program documents shared by our research partners, using a grounded theory approach.<sup>5</sup> The coding process was primarily inductive.

- All the qualitative activities were transcribed and translated into English prior to analysis

<sup>3</sup> Programs which had finished implementation could not always retain leads/managers beyond the program period. In some such cases we only conducted key informant interviews with the most suitable staff member recommended by the organization but not fieldwork at program sites

<sup>4</sup> Out of 13, 1 organization had disbanded at the time of the review, 3 had completed their implementation or did not have an implementation grant with a physical site and 9 qualified for fieldwork. 1 program which fulfilled all the criteria for fieldwork did not facilitate fieldwork for our review due to other reasons hence we conducted primary data collection activities at 8 sites.

<sup>5</sup> Grounded theory is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research (Glaser & Strauss, 2009).



### Coding Process

The team conducted inductive coding of:

Transcripts generated from ~60 narratives in FGDs, IDIs and KIs

20 secondary research documents provided by the research partners



### Thematization of the data

During the coding process 750 codes were generated.

The codes were then condensed and categorized into 51 themes that fed into our overall findings.



### Finalizing the findings

The findings were finalized based on the review of internal team, key experts from ICRW and external experts.

- Coding was conducted for all the transcripts as well as key programmatic documents.
- As a first step, the coding process included two independent coders going through 10 percent of all transcripts to arrive at a preliminary set of codes that was discussed and agreed upon by all members of the research team and to be used as a framework for coding the rest of the documents.
- We generated about 750 raw codes to build into code “nodes” that allowed organization of the data and finally arranged these into themes or “families” to draw out the most important learnings.
- The code families generated in the process are attached as Annexure 5

The findings were finalized after a robust review process. As a first step, they were reviewed by senior experts within ICRW (who were not part of the study) and external experts. Lastly, the findings were finalized based on a consultation with a larger group of experts. (Please refer to Annexure 6 and Annexure 7)

## Researchers' position

Self-reflexivity is an important matter to consider in feminist research and it is with this understanding that we state our position as researchers engaged in the process of this learning review. A team of four researchers were primarily engaged in the process of contacting the respective research partners, scheduling data collection activities, conducting interviews and discussions, making meaning of the narratives through consultative process to ensure that the analysis

represents the voice of the organizations. We come with social science research training and are employed in our professional capacities by the International Center for Research on Women, Asia, in New Delhi. We belong to various states in India and bring to the table our own experiences of growing in smaller cities in India and of navigating lives as migrant women in various cities and contexts over the years. Drawing from Rose, we believe that *“knowledge is fully generated in distinct conditions and that those conditions somehow frame the knowledge production itself and this applies to researchers' own situated positionings as well (Rose, 1997).”* We are fully aware of our social privileges in terms of our education and economic backgrounds and our own life experiences being largely different from the respondents in the study. Bounded by our ethical statutes and our own trainings, during the research process we prioritized the timings, availabilities, schedules and comfort of the research partners who facilitated this journey as well as respondents with whom we interacted. In some cases, we did not conduct data collection where the project had multiple program sites although it would have strengthened the insights, as we were highly aware of the time implications our visit would have on the organization staff, who would inadvertently have to accompany and facilitate the research activities. We should clarify that in the process of this review, we placed complete trust in our research partners to facilitate the research team's interactions, particularly those with adolescent girls. We believe that it is imperative in the process of feminist research to give and receive knowledge freely, which positivist schools of thought may point as “contamination” or “bias”. In this case, our idea was

to involve research partners right from the beginning, advising us on whom to speak with, to ensure full transparency with respect to the purpose and process of the research.

We ensured that participants understood consent (in their own language, using translated scripts as well as an interpreter hired by us in non-Hindi speaking states), clauses of privacy, confidentiality, risks, benefits and withdrawal from participation in research before beginning any activity. Fully cognizant of the hierarchy and power differentials that exist between the researcher and the researched in such arrangements, we consulted the organization staff about the contents of interviews and discussions beforehand to assess any potential risks of backlash or discomfort, prior to conducting any activities. We spent enough time in understanding an overview of the social and cultural contexts in which the programs were embedded, before interacting with respondents, especially adolescent girls. In situations where respondents were not comfortable, we refrained from having organizational staff prod them for responses. In space constrained situations where inevitable presence of organizational staff created any hesitation on part of the respondents to share, we requested them for privacy.

As researchers working on complex issues with gender and power dynamics as focal pillars of our worldview, but also inhabiting a shared ecosystem of harmful gender norms and wider socio political dynamics, we acknowledge that experiencing the same structures is different for different people and we hope we were able to practice the sensitivity that this research demanded in this context.

## Limitations

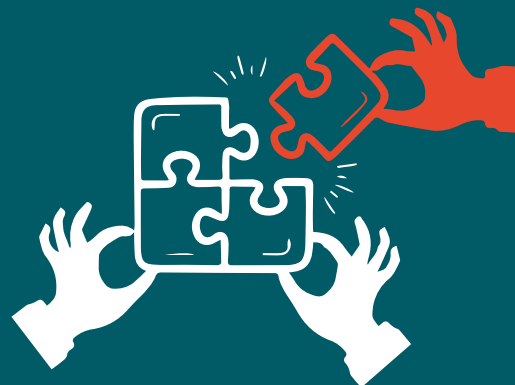
The review is limited in its scope and approach in the following ways:

- Several methodological and procedural challenges were encountered in the process of gathering information from many of the research partners.

Some research partners did not provide an exhaustive collection of materials; a few research partners were unresponsive; some materials were available only in local languages while some in English; smaller and low resourced organizations had less capacity to respond to information requests; in some cases thorough documentation or systematically collected evidence was not available at all, particularly in the case of older programs.

- This research is not exhaustive nor illustrative of the totality of the programs and organizations working across the country. Nevertheless, it yields important findings that can be built upon and strengthened in future work in this area. Some of the limitations encountered helped build the recommendations section and can shed important light on what else is needed for donors, program implementers and researchers, among others.
- We started with a pre decided list of organizations and projects and our analysis is based on this restricted sample. The fact that these projects included a wide variety of strategies and also covered a number of states, is a big advantage that we have been able to leverage upon.
- The review does not focus on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the programs themselves, neither includes an analysis of how programs invested resources in measuring certain outcomes, so our analysis is based purely on understanding the idea of empowerment as unpacked and expressed by the various stakeholders who were part of the respondent pool.
- The review focuses on documenting learnings from the research partners and advancing strategies that work. Based on this objective, the review did not consider the implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) and does not delve on the experiences of the research partners with respect to PCMA.

# LEARNINGS



## Section 1: Background and context of the projects included in the review

A total of twelve research partners, spread across ten states of India, were part of the review. Of these, eight were selected for primary fieldwork. The adolescent population in these states is reflective of the proportion of adolescents in India (one-third of the total population). Within this demographic of persons aged 10-19 (World Health Organisation, 2014) (Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, GoI, 2017)<sup>6</sup>, girls represent a particularly vulnerable group, owing to the socio-cultural, economic, political and gender disparities prevalent in the country. Adolescent girls face multiple layers of discrimination, which adversely impact their access to nutrition, education, skill-building, as well as their work-force (Nanda et al., 2013). Gendered norms in these areas often push girls into a life where they have limited negotiation and decision-making power and are unable to reach their full potential. Specifically, challenges such as restrictions on mobility, lack of schooling or dropping out of school, early marriage and violence are pervasive, adversely impacting the overall health and well-being of the large chunk of adolescent girls in India, which is reflected in all the locations where we conducted this review. Adolescent girls in these communities are also more likely to be married off early, with many of them married off before attaining the legal adult age of 18 and have little or no say in the decision of their marriage. While there are similarities

that exist in this cohort of adolescents that the research partners engaged, it is imperative to point out that adolescent girls as a group are not homogeneous. The partners work across different regions, with different age groups, religions, castes and class, and these intersections are often the basis of designing programs for differential needs of adolescent girls. The norms related to adolescence, around menstruation, mobility, marriage in these 10 states also vary owing to the geographical and contextual differences<sup>7</sup>, but despite the variations these norms are often the source of gender discrimination across practices. Several different norms can also contribute to upholding a practice. For example, norms concerning girls' education, freedom of movement and parents' decision-making authority, as well as norms specifically related to marriage, contribute to the practice of child marriage (Marcus et al., 2015). Identifying the relative importance of norms and other drivers of a practice is crucial in developing effective change strategies. For example, Uttarakhand itself has a lower percentage for child marriages when compared to Rajasthan, but religious norms around the rigid menstrual practices, force girls into a social isolation, shame and guilt.

The interventions we studied in-depth address one or more of such practices and norms, within their overarching thematic focus areas. Please refer to Annexure 8 for some of the key normative barriers in the states these interventions were implemented.

<sup>6</sup> WHO and the Census of India generally qualify adolescence as 10-19 years of age, with the terms "late adolescence" being used to refer to 15-19 years and "early adolescence" to 10-14 years.

<sup>7</sup> See a detailed note documenting some of these practices as Annexure 8.



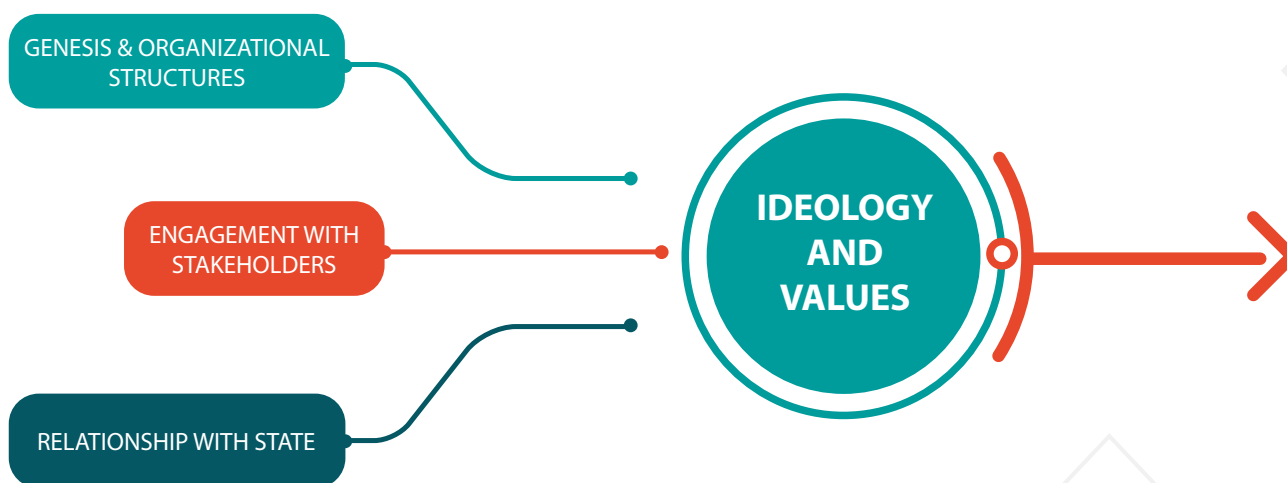
## Section 2: Organizational ideology and values- How they influence program strategies

In order to make meaning of various programmatic approaches and strategies and how they are influenced by the overarching ecosystem of the implementing organizations, the review deemed it crucial to dive deep into the ideological framework of the organizations. We looked into literature for understanding how researchers, scholars and practitioners unpack “ideology” as it is a complex concept and may imbibe multiple viewpoints. Different streams of knowledge have defined ideology in various ways. A description that resonated well with our analysis was “ideology relates to ideas or frameworks of ideas, on the one hand, and to beliefs and beliefs systems or worldviews, on the other hand. Both ideas and beliefs are essential for the understanding of ideology and its impact on theory and practice: they drive the development of knowledge and influence business practice” (Haase & Raufflet, 2017). We also used other keywords such as values and perspectives to find pertinent literature on the issue. Schwartz, from the field of applied psychology observes, “*Organizational values can be defined as beliefs about socially or personally desirable end states or actions that are explicitly*

*or implicitly shared by members of an organization... organizational values transcend single situations and are relatively stable over time*” (Schwartz, 1999).

With a broad conceptual understanding that organizational vision, ideologies, values, and perspectives ultimately denote a set of norms and shared understanding that guide the decisions and actions of the organizations, we proceeded to understand how particular strategies in the context of adolescents' empowerment are influenced by this collective understanding of various stakeholders representing the organization (from senior leaders, founders, managers, technical resource persons, field coordinators to peer leaders etc.).

For the purpose of our analysis, we undertook a profiling of all the organizations on the following parameters in order to break down their ideological framework.<sup>8</sup> We also supplemented this understanding through key informant interviews with various organizational stakeholders, as well as during other research activities with program staff and adolescents. In this respect, we present some of our learnings in order to unpack organizational ideology and values in the following conceptual framework:



<sup>8</sup> The profiling was based on the information available on organizational websites, annual reports (wherever available) and interviews with key informants from organization.

- **By genesis and organizational structures:** *How did these organizations come into being? Were they movement or campaign based, or did they start with direct service delivery focus for specific populations?*

Our analysis throws light on the fact that the stories of organizations' origins has a significant influence on their trajectories, including the organizational structures, reporting mechanisms, sources of funding, issue areas of focus, program methodologies, networks, alliances and thematic areas of operation. For instance, organizations that originated during and as part of the women's movement<sup>9</sup> in India, have greater chances of having adopted community-owned women's leadership as a programming approach to create buy-in within their areas of operation and work on issues that are locally decided. In contrast, organizations that have emerged out of needs established by a global health movement, for instance, are typically larger and are funded by large bilateral donors often since their inception, which in turn influences the kind of work they would undertake and issues they would focus on.

Closely linked to their genesis are the kind of organizational structures and stakeholder engagement frameworks that are adopted by organizations, elaborated in the following paragraphs:

- **By operational and leadership structures:** we also find that certain organizations have more structured operations, typically in a bigger geographic area, with greater emphasis on regulatory and "managerial" mechanisms, clear reporting structures, boards, stringent tenures, contractual processes, appraisals, benefit packages etc. while certain types of organizations owing to their size, geographical scope and/or conventional processes are not very structured or well-resourced

on these aspects. it is not surprising that as civil society organizations 'scale up' to deliver they adopt business-like practices of management and governance ( Maira, 2019) to achieve the kind of efficiency that is demanded by scaling up. Typically, the latter is also, in all cases, led by a single or a couple of persons of influence who are most likely to be founder members of these organizations who believed in a local cause and converted the ethos of a social movement<sup>10</sup> into an organization. This pattern is also in general representative of Indian developmental organizations , but in our review there are distinct examples of bigger, more structured organizations which are not necessarily led by founder members. These differences could also exist owing to the kind of funding sources the various organizations are attached to, and what the former demands or deems fit to fund.<sup>11</sup>

- **By engagement beyond primary group of focus:** profiling was also based on the stakeholders that they engage with and the issues being addressed, as self-identified by these organizations. With a shared understanding that all the projects being reviewed are primarily focused on adolescent girls, we looked at the other key stakeholders being engaged by the projects, as well as beyond the projects included in our review, to understand the organizational viewpoint. In our analysis, contrary to the apparent understanding with which we started, we find that in their own statements, organizations display a wide variety of stakeholders with whom they involve in their programs, ranging from children, adolescents, women, women's groups, local governance representatives, teachers, health functionaries, to media, politicians, bureaucrats, academics, private actors such as local businesses, experts, trainers and so on. Similarly, organizations most often than not, engage with multiple issues (within as well as outside of the

<sup>9</sup> Women's movements (used in the plural), also referred interchangeably with feminist politics, comprises organizations and associations led by women, networks, ideas and practices that espouse feminist values and goals <http://www.isec.ac.in/WP%20-%20161.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> In post-colonial India, the rise of the concept of a welfare state and its subsequent fall leading to a plethora of social movements is well documented in literature. The incompleteness of the post - colonial state's welfare components provided the context for widespread disenchantment in the Indian state. This was reflected in the protest movements of workers, women and the youth of the mid - 1960s and later, in the post emergency era.

<sup>11</sup> According to Mencher, one of the main problems that lie with external funding is that funding agencies can demand NGOs to "tailor-make" proposals to reflect their own objectives rather than the needs of the local people. Many NGOs tend to succumb to this demand by prioritizing to themselves the need to first raise the awareness of and empowering the local people before embarking on the programs that they originally had in mind for the locals. The flipside is that some NGOs can also lose sight of their priorities in relation to the local people whose situation they meant initially to change. Mencher also notes that donors prefer to fund NGOs whose areas of interest don't result in upsetting the political leadership by confronting fundamental shortcomings that the state has not yet been able to satisfactorily overcome.

For instance, HAQ, which works within a child rights framework, for “strengthening systems for implementation of laws, restorative care provision” adopts an approach to resolving instances of child marriage within the communities where they work, with active engagement of Khap Panchayat members, child protection officers, child welfare committees and the police. At the same time, Breakthrough India adopts a more indirect approach to addressing child marriages by conducting mass media campaigns and using street theatre as a medium to raise awareness on harmful gender norms and issues with the practice of child marriage and works directly only with adolescent girls.

projects in this review), and what other issues they engage with often influences their work projects.

- **By strategic approach:** We also tried to understand the worldview organizations adopt for operationalizing their work. During our analysis we tried to comprehend their approach by means of their primary networks and alliances in the field and the nature of their engagement with the government, in their activities and dissemination efforts. Looking in-depth at the spaces occupied by organizations participating in our review, we came up with two categorizations, which create a spectrum through which various organizations may choose to situate themselves:
- **Creating state accountability by influencing demand creation:** this approach emphasizes on enabling individuals and communities through trainings, campaigns and other awareness generation and skill enhancement activities to demand their dues from the system. In the process, they also build citizenship capacities among people to demand accountability from the state by navigating the complex hierarchies of governance structures, often utilizing collective strengths. In this approach, organizations primarily work with the communities and establish relationships with the government by virtue of engaging with certain functionaries as and when needed or engaging with functionaries who are most relevant to

the purview of their geographical and thematic interests. They are also more likely to engage in a “case work” model of work, which focuses on the day to day problems of living and coping (Mathew, 1992), with detailed intervention capacity in individual situations and crises. This also applies to grant making organizations or those focused on advocacy of rights-based agenda (as some of the organizations included in our review).

For instance, ANANDI works closely with communities, and girls and women to empower them to raise voices against violence and connects them with services and authorities who have a duty to deliver services or take cognizance of violations and act upon them. Although in the domain of child and early marriages, ANANDI's work also focusses on decriminalizing unions where adolescents come together by choice.

At the same time, CINI works closely with bilateral agencies as well as the government to leverage on their reach and resources to bring about opportunities for change from within the larger system. This is done in various ways, from providing technical support and guidance for creation of inclusive policies to demonstrating implementation models that may work well in particular contexts, using their expertise and relationship of decades of working closely with communities.

- **Systems strengthening:** While systems strengthening cannot be devoid of creating states accountability, we use it here to differentiate the essential approach to programming by organizations which align with this approach. Typically, organizations involved in “systems strengthening” have a closer relationship with government actors and leverage their buy-in to work with various frontline, block-level, district level and state level functionaries in order to effectively reach out to communities. This is also sometimes done as a technical partner to the government to support rolling out state schemes, sometimes as civil society functionaries in expert roles and sometimes as facilitators for the government in

areas where the organizations have a stronghold. These organizations are more likely to work as facilitators in situations of individual crises and may or may not have the capacity to adopt a case work methodology for solving issues.

Scholars have also stated that research on NGOs has been limited when it comes both to the experiences of social movements and the 'solidarity NGOs' that support them, the latter which tend to be smaller, less formal, and more politically radical than most NGOs involved in international development (Andrews, 2014). Networks and funding organizations may choose to function in a certain way, while they may still have strong ties with social movements and civil society politics and/or the state, depending on their ideological positioning and specific strategies adopted within it. Hence, we hypothesize that similar to theories relating aid effectiveness and ideological orientation of the recipient government (not political regimes or type of government but political ideology) (Tawiah et al., 2019) and leadership styles and organizational cultures (Banks et al., 2015), organizational ideology

has a significant impact on the resultant programmatic strategies in social development programs that aim at transformative change.

It is critical to be mindful of these dynamics, while trying to decode what works and how; in the context of a deeply emotional and political issues such as the empowerment of adolescent girls. Evaluations and reviews often typically focus on the projects at hand, stated objectives and achieved results within a given framework. While it is important to measure with clear benchmarks, contextual analyses of the ideology of the organizations implementing programs is non-negotiable in truly understanding pathways to success for programming and achieving meaningful impact. In summary, how the organizations have rooted or their genesis stories and the strategic direction adopted by them in the process of growth are the most significant determinants on what we understand as their "ideological framework" and in essence, drive their approach to issues that they seek to address.

### Section 3: Mapping and measurements for adolescent empowerment programs

Measurement of empowerment and in general, inherent concepts such as choice, consent, agency and power have long been conscientious issues within the research community (Batliwala & Pittman, 2010; Bishop & Bowman, 2014; Kabeer, 1999). While recognizing the hierarchy of what is considered evidence and the evolution of feminist methodologies (Galdas, 2017; Murthy, 2018; Podems, 2010) to capture women's voices about their realities more effectively, developmental actors still face the conflict of using certain epistemologies, frameworks and methodologies in order to cater to mainstream ideas of measurement. In the present review, as stated earlier, we focused on learning from implementation experiences as opposed to measuring certain outcomes. In the process we used qualitative methodologies and tried to include the organizations in shaping the learnings as far as possible.

One of the critical learnings that emerges from this experience is the lack of space for organizations' own experiences in producing knowledge that is bottom up, effectively representing voices of the

people they work with and amplifying this to the wider community of practitioners and researchers. Some of the key issues encountered in the process is requirement of project reporting templates to capture numbers, donor requirements to produce metrics, resource intensive processes to conduct qualitative data collection activities, lack of resources to coach frontline implementation staff in research and measurement methods, including translating expertise into local languages and lack of resources to include adolescents (in the case of programs in this review) meaningfully in the process. While in some cases we found exemplary efforts to this end, such as in Vimarsh in Uttarakhand, where the program monitoring sheets were developed in consultation and active engagement of adolescent girls and were also being implemented by them within the Tarang project and instances where adolescent girls' groups were involved in social mapping, vulnerability mapping exercises; in most cases projects did not have enough resources to invest in such methodologies.

We also find that in a broader environment where evidence of success is drawn from change showcased in clearly measurable terms, concepts such as empowerment are relegated to the background



due to their complexity in being measured with the usual approaches as well as due to the lack of seriousness with which narrative data is perceived. In an article titled *Qualitative Research Methods: When To Use Them And How To Judge Them* (Hammarberg et al., 2016), authors point, "In quantitative circles, qualitative research is commonly viewed with suspicion and considered lightweight because it involves small samples which may not be representative of the broader population, it is seen as not objective, and the results are assessed as biased by the researchers' own experiences or opinions." While the article discusses relevance of both quantitative and qualitative traditions in details, it makes an important point on how qualitative methods are perceived by a wider community of scientists. This is all to say that in contexts where this review was conducted, programs carry great depth of knowledge of contextual challenges, negotiations and innovation to circumvent particularly complex problems and are able to generate knowledge

in multiple ways, that mainstream measurement techniques neither recognize nor facilitate.

In this context, we conclude that donors, researchers and practitioners need more spaces to discuss the relevance and utility of certain methodologies for certain purposes. Encouraging ground up, participatory approaches to capture complex constructs such as empowerment and its inherent components needs much work to be truly representative of and meaningful to the people whose lives are being looked at. Data collection processes that are accessible in local languages, that include contributions from local actors are essential in this process. Dissemination strategies for research outputs must build resources for sharing of findings with participants, frontline project staff who facilitate the most tedious phases of research in a language that is accessible to them.

## Section 4: Promising strategies for adolescents' empowerment

Empowerment of women and girls is defined as expansion of choice and strengthening of voice through transformation of power relations (Eerdewijk et al., 2017). For this review, our questions focused on understanding certain pathways to achieve adolescents' empowerment, as adopted by each of the organizations. We analyzed the resulting narratives using a feminist lens, that views empowerment as a continuous process of challenging structural inequities and power relations. In the following sections, we describe the key strategies that were learnt to be crucial for programming with adolescents, as opposed to single focus, unidimensional pathways that have proven to be ineffective in addressing the complex and dynamic needs of this population; but continue to be funded and implemented. We refer to these pathways as "strategies" for the purpose of this review. These include program activities, stakeholders engaged and the ways in which resources were prioritized within the programs. We recommend that the following sub sections are interpreted as parts of a bigger picture and not as standalone strategies for success.

### Organization of the findings

Each sub-section spelling out a key strategy begins

with an introduction, the number of research partners under ECM or SABLA, including the strategy in their program and a notable example from the organizations which utilized the particular strategy. This is followed by key findings and ends with specific approaches that seem to have worked, have potential for improvement and have not worked well. Our analysis shows that while some of the sub-strategies might have been incorporated effectively in the projects, there are areas that still need more thinking while designing a program for adolescent empowerment. We are using the symbols shown below to highlight the things that have worked and those that leave scope for further exploration and research.

In our analysis of the strategies, we have also made an effort to link the influence of organizational values and perspectives in the selection of specific strategies.

### Key messages



Strategies that have worked well in implementation



Strategies that have not been implemented effectively



Strategies that leave much scope to be incorporated well

## Strategy 1. Designing Convergent and Ecological Approaches

NUMBER OF RESEARCH  
PARTNERS WHO  
IMPLEMENTED THIS  
STRATEGY





Evidence around adolescent programming has well established the need to engage with influencers in the lives of adolescents, beyond creating safe spaces and investing in strategies that are solely directed at adolescent girls. The broad context of the programs implemented includes girls from communities in diverse geographical and resource poor settings, with low reach of governance and lack of services. Combined with structural inadequacies, harmful gender norms mean that adolescent girls from these

settings lack decision-making opportunities at multiple levels, for most of the important life events and over their entire life cycle. The criticality of an ecological framework<sup>12</sup> for adolescent girls' empowerment is highly established in this context (The ACQUIRE Project, 2008). While ecological approaches stress on pathways to engage with various layers in an adolescent girl's environment, engagement that brings the various actors together through convergent approaches is what this section of learnings focusses on.

Organizations have adapted different models of convergence to mobilize and bring together state line departments, stakeholders from the community, resources (donor funding, existing schemes and programs) and objectives (reducing child marriage, improving health, provide vocational training to enable economic participation).

## Organizational ideology and values and their effect on implementation of convergence models

<b>Insights</b> 	<b>Example</b> 
<p>Organizations that have an explicit agenda to engage with the state (for strengthening of certain government programs or otherwise) are more likely to adopt this approach to programming. Moreover, some organizations which focus on building state accountability may actively stay away from convergent approaches, in certain circumstances, or engaging with the state in explicitly collaborative endeavors. However, they are likely to use strategies that ensure the state duty bearers are discharging their duties effectively by focusing on demand generation and building awareness.</p>	<p>For example, MAMTA-HIMC, implemented convergence approaches to strengthen collective response of the government to end child marriage through district level functionaries. They brought together different departments that are not directly dealing with child marriage, but this practice directly or indirectly effects the issue in focus for the respective departments. Bringing different functionaries helped bringing in together resources and translated into a targeted effort to raise awareness, strengthening collective response of the block and village level functionaries (frontline workers).</p> <p>Similarly, in Jharkhand, Centre for Catalyzing Change, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with Jharkhand's Health and Women and Child Development Departments to implement a both Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) and SABLA through creating a convergent model in one district of Jharkhand.</p>

<sup>12</sup> Gender transformative programs often take an ecological approach -- that is, they aim to change multiple forces of a person's environment (e.g., schools, workplaces, families, health centers, media, government, etc.) that may be perpetuating harmful gender norms

The common principle in adapting models of convergence by any organization is to ensure a systematic accumulation of efforts and directing it toward the process of change in social norms. In the programs reviewed we see that at the very core of convergence lie the following:

### Convergence of departments

This refers to bringing together of multiple governmental departments which are relevant, for better coordination to influence the issue in question (in this case, the issues range from ECFM, access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, nutrition and schooling). Interdepartmental convergence enables the organizations to leverage existing allocated resources, including departmental funds, human resources and infrastructure. This allows organizations to efficiently amplify not only the resource investment on a particular issue in a geographical context, but also to expand efforts to encompass the multi sectoral needs in addressing a complex issue such as adolescent's empowerment.

Additionally, organizations supplement the gap in state's capacity in strengthening the implementation of their own schemes and policies. Once convergence is put in action, it enables conversations between different line departments at block level and can result into an increased response from block officials of health, education, youth affairs & sports, labor and Panchayati raj institutions<sup>13</sup> etc. One of the critical strategies adopted by one of the reviewed programs was to support district magistrates/chief executive officers and other district officials<sup>14</sup> in different departments to create cross-departmental coordination committees and convergence plans

(Chandra-Mouli et al., 2018) which then facilitated the cascading of convergence efforts to block and village levels.

*"So, mapping schemes and integrating with different departments are important, for example distributing of booklets from district administration to all departments, are efforts that should be replicated. Particularly booklets on health, education or child marriage issue etc. from information and public relation department should reach to all other responsible departments. the education department should incorporate the issue of child marriage in their calendar along with existing issue like health, cleanliness or dowry. Schools need to have compulsory session on child marriage with full report."*

- KII with Programme Staff, MJAS, Rajasthan

Another example for convergence is well demonstrated by one of the organizations included in the review- Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR). CRR is a global organization with its Asia regional headquarters in Kathmandu (Nepal) and works to bring together regional policy makers, legal advocates and on ground activists to take up accountability measures through research, litigation and advocacy work for several causes that impede access to reproductive rights, including child marriage. In India it has coordinated efforts as part of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) and with national partners<sup>15</sup> to bring forward critical analysis and build advocacy efforts on child marriage, safe abortion, consensual relationships between minors and so on-

*"Impunity for child marriage persists due to poor enforcement of laws, gaps and weaknesses in the legal framework to end child marriage, and barriers to access*

<sup>13</sup> In India, the Panchayati Raj generally refers to the system of local self-government in India introduced by a constitutional amendment in 1992, although it is based upon the traditional panchayat system of the Indian subcontinent. Panchayati Raj now functions as a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of local administration. The system has three levels: Gram Panchayat (village level), Mandal Parishad or Block Samiti or Panchayat Samiti (block level), and Zila Parishad (district level).

<sup>14</sup> The 2006 Prohibition of Child Marriage Act also obliges NGOs and panchayati raj members to support the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer (CMPO) and District Magistrate in carrying out their duties, which helped to drive the agenda at these levels. However, as pointed out by the Supreme Court in the 2017 landmark judgement in the case of Independent Thought vs Union of India, the recruitment and availability of CMPOs is highly lacking across the states.

<sup>15</sup> These partners include World Vision India, North East Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses – Guwahati (NESP YM), Daanish Foundation, Centre for Law & Policy Research, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, National Human Rights Commission, National Commission For Women to name a few.

*to justice faced by women and girls seeking remedies for child marriage. Child marriage in India is also linked to low awareness of the law and consequences of violations, limited capacity and willingness of officials to report child marriages, and limited trust in institutions enforcing child marriage laws."*

*- Centre for Reproductive Rights, Ending Impunity for Child Marriage in India, 2018*

### **Convergence of stakeholders**

Community stakeholders: The benefits of engaging with the proximal influencers and decision makers in the ecosystem of adolescent girls, has been established by existing body of evidence (UNICEF & ICRW, 2017). These influencers typically include parents, grandparents, teachers, community leaders such as elected panchayat members, and religious leaders who are considered persons of influence in the community. Each of these stakeholders play an important role and influence the decision-making process in a girl's life either directly or indirectly. For instance, working with mothers helps build a safe and open relationship in the household, where girls could discuss their issues, since mothers have also gone through this phase, they might also relate to the issues. A strong mother-daughter relationship can help face several adolescent issues and have a healthy transition into adulthood. A project coordinator from one of the research partners talks about it in the IDI with her.

*"Even then they (girls) go home and talk about it, it is usually with the mothers, not fathers. So, mothers are encouraging that yes you should have this information (menstruation and hygiene), it is good they are teaching this."*

*- IDI with program staff, MJAS Rajasthan*

But working with just mothers does not yield the same effect as working with both parents, it was seen that girls could still not negotiate and assert their rights in several areas of their lives since decision-making power in the family lies with the male household head, mostly fathers in this case. It was through this that the need to work with fathers emerged. However, engaging fathers has been a struggle across projects as they are not easily available at home and go out for paid work, and lack interest in being part of activities that involve discussing the wellbeing of their children.

However, working with brothers to help them realize the discrimination that exists and support their sisters when they are questioning these discriminatory practices seems to be a successful effort. This was observed in one of our KIIs with the program manager

*"The most important initiative taken by Jagori was breaking gender differences and according to me this was our main focus area which we succeed in achieving it, in our sessions we taught girls to talk to their brothers on small things, we educated them on gender equality, in cricket tournament girls were seen supported by their brothers."*

*- KII with Program Staff, Jagori Rural, Himachal Pradesh*

Another strong finding from the projects has been on inclusion of elected representatives in the project activities. This not only provides the organization a buy-in from these influencers, but also ensures that it creates an accountability in case of several action steps that need to be taken create an enabling environment for these young girls.

*"The video van program was quite large, where 700-800 people participated, and the task became easy as we had distributed the work within panchayat member and ward members."*

*- IDI with Program Staff, Breakthrough, Jharkhand*

In many cases, organizations have been working with religious leaders to implement the clause of the child marriage law. The religious leaders now ask for age certificate before agreeing to marry the couples. Engaging with religious leaders and utilizing their influence in the community to disperse key project information, to help reaching out to the community on key issues has also helped the organizations. For instance, an organization has engaged with different religious leaders for awareness on child marriage

*"Malda is a neighboring district with maximum Muslim population so in this case for a campaign on early marriage we preferred involving religious leader who are Maulana, Maulvi, Muslim marriage registrar and for Hindu marriages we involved Hindu marriage registrar, purohit, pandal association secretary for more effective awareness."*

*- IDI with Program Staff, CINI, West Bengal*



Bringing these stakeholders together on the same platform has multiple advantages. First, it saves the separate efforts needed to engage with each one of them, with their differing agendas and concerns. Secondly, it helps organizations quickly identify who are the opposers and who are the supporters and devise mechanisms to work with the group to achieve consensus on working with the issue. Often, a key community influencer could be a private supporter but public opposer of a certain issue in question and vice versa. By bringing differing opinions together on the same platform, this conflict is dealt with effectively. Creation of such convergence groups also aids in building collective accountability of the key decision makers in the community.

For instance, in one of the interviews a respondent narrated the issue in one of project villages in Jharkhand where many adolescent girls were receiving unwanted phone calls from unknown boys. In such a case, it is often beyond the capacity of a single girls' parent to deal with this kind of harassment on their own. The respondent further comments that,

*"The multi stakeholder approach is best to resolve such issues. We told girls that [they can] raise their voice in unwanted circumstances, but we also engaged mothers and aunties through mahila samuh [women's groups], fathers, brothers, uncles and gram Pradhan [village head] through convergence group to help us to resolve the issue."*  
- IDI with Program Staff, Breakthrough, Jharkhand

### Convergence of programs

Almost all the organizations included in the review have converged several issues and at times project resources from multiple donors to achieve effective outcomes. Irrespective of the larger thematic area of the projects, organizations have understood the broader needs of adolescents and formulated strategies to include it in their objectives.

Organizations working on SABLA, apart from focusing on the mandate of SABLA have also at times focused on the context specific needs of adolescents in their areas of operation. For example, one such convergence was strongly observed in the case of West Bengal,

where the organization was able to link schemes on preventing child marriage and SABLA [SAG–Kanyashree Prakaalpa Convergence Program (CINI, 2019)] in Murshidabad district in West Bengal. The objective of convergence of such schemes is also to provide a platform for confluence of various other outreach services/ schemes such as health services, education services/schemes, etc. In addition to efforts of integrating programs the organization also took steps toward linking these to other service delivery points like Anwesha clinic. (Roy & Garai, 2018) for counselling of girls and ensure distribution of sanitary napkins.

*"[we handle these issues] From both [perspectives: programmatically and as a social issue], it not only affects health but somewhere education is also getting affected, it also hampers nutrition, but you know CINI's strategy is convergence so in this child friendly community strategy the approach is based area wise, for example in Murshidabad where they are getting funds from Ford Foundation for health program, we try to convince other donors for education and child protection programs to bring a comprehensive development change in that community on adolescents..."*  
- KII with Program Staff, CINI, West Bengal

Another way of achieving programmatic convergence is to converge efforts of organizations in a respective geographical and/or thematic area. To illustrate-

*"... there was a general feeling that conversations around intersection between gender, sexuality and rights were carried out in largely academic circles in a language like English which was not accessible to a lot of community-based organizations. One of the key programs that CREA initiated was IBTADA which is a network of community-based organizations that are women led. Idea was to get these organizations together and instituting Gender, Sexuality and Rights Institute in Hindi. CREA translated a lot of material to Hindi to increase their access to these issues. So, IBTADA was the space where CREA was connecting with the smaller organizations from places like Bihar, U.P., Chhattisgarh, M.P., and Assam."*  
- KII with Program Manager, CREA

## Key Messages



Pooling in project resources from multiple donors and at times clubbing thematic areas to achieve effective outcomes



Convergence efforts with the support of strong leadership at district level has a cascading effect in block and village level



Holding frequent meetings with different stakeholders (parents, community members, religious leaders) to discuss the issues and actions taken, ensured accountability on key decision makers.



Joint advocacy meetings with a variety of stakeholders such as government officials at all levels, local elected representatives, key influencers in the community



Absence of political will at the state or national level, effects the efforts in addressing an issue at the block level since it is not an issue in the mandate

The key organizations, alliances and networks working on masculinities and gender equality base their work firmly on feminist analysis, acknowledging that it is women who are mainly disadvantaged by gender inequality the world over. At the same time, while men must give up power if equality is to be achieved, they have much to gain in breaking out of the 'man box'. While some organizations included in the review actively voice their support to work with men and boys, others fear that it will divert resources and spotlight from much-needed work with women and girls and runs the risk of playing into a "men's rights" agenda.

Typically, adolescent girls, being both young and female, are expected to comply with decisions made by male adults of the household, and often have less room to challenge or follow an alternative path than their brothers (Marcus et al., 2015). For boys, in early to mid-adolescence (between the ages of 13 and 17, according to one study), the social and peer pressure to conform to normative attitudes and behaviors is at its peak, as critical reflection is still underdeveloped (Kato-Wallace et al., 2016).

## Strategy 2- Unpacking Masculinities

NUMBER OF RESEARCH  
PARTNERS WHO  
IMPLEMENTED THIS  
STRATEGY



*Effectively engaging men and boys involves moving beyond the instrumental approach that views boys only as perpetrators or passive actors in programming for girls. Men and boys form an important part in the girls' lives and working with them means understanding why their status is of bring in boys' and men's role as providers, for which they are socialized very early in their life, and what these statuses mean for men. By providing opportunities for boys and men to critically reflect on harmful aspects of masculinity, space needs to be created for them to build open, intimate, consensual, and caring relationships with others.*

In the context of girl centered programming that involves working with boys and men, in our review we sought to understand the role of boys and men in these programs. None of the programs in the review focused on "redefining masculinities"<sup>16</sup> in this context but were instrumental at best. However, all of them did engage with men and boys. This engagement is from the perspective of creating spaces for girls, with supportive buy-ins from men of decision-making influence in their lives.

*"We were talking about the youth (boys and men), so they are related (to the girls) in some way or other as they are brothers or cousins or peers. The issue had come out from the women also, that you are creating an understanding for us (women and girls) but what about our (male) family members, because they are the ones perpetuating violence and their understanding is not being built. So that is why we are working with the youth."*

*- IDI with Program Staff, Vimarsh, Uttarakhand.*

<sup>16</sup> By incorporating a feminist analysis and meaning making of gender norms, to shift norms and power dynamics for the betterment for all, rather than being a zero-sum game between boys and men and girls and women.

## Organizational ideology and values and their effect on engaging with men and boys

Insights 	Example 
<p>Many organizations which were borne out of the feminist movement have focused on furthering women and girl's empowerment and used resources effectively to concentrate on building agency, efficacy and awareness for women. As a conscious position, they may not invest programmatically on boys and men to prevent division of resources. Other organizations, which may not have a stated ideological position on working with women only, have started to engage with boys and men in recent years. However, in the last decade, focus has increasingly shifted to including boys and/or men in programs in various forms (whether by engaging them in gender transformative programs as participants or as "champions" for women's rights). The basic idea for this shift is rooted in the principle that the burden of change has to be equally shared by men and boys, after decades of focus on women and girls. We see this trend reflected by some organizations within our review as well.</p>	<p>Breakthrough India implements their curriculum "Taaron ki Toli" in the school and reaches out to both girls and boys simultaneously. The curriculum uses games, activities and stories to ensure discussion around gender-based discrimination and explore and understand ways in which these forms of discrimination around them could be prevented – at homes and in their communities. Girls and boys come together to learn about ways in which they can support each other and raise their voices to protest against and prevent gender-based discrimination around them. They decide a joint agenda and organize rallies and community meetings with identified stakeholders, including father's groups, locally elected representatives, teachers etc. to talk about issues in the community, pertained to gender based discrimination.</p> <p>Women's Fund Asia, a feminist grant making organization, on the other hand, firmly states, "Women's Fund Asia is a regional women's fund, committed to supporting women and trans* people led interventions to enhance and strengthen access to women's and trans* people's human rights. We envision a peaceful and egalitarian region in which women's and trans* people's participation, leadership and enjoyment of all their human rights is ensured and secure. As a women's fund, our key mandate is to influence philanthropy toward women's human rights, as opposed to charitable giving or giving for mainstreaming gender"(Women's Fund Asia, n.d.)</p>

In this approach, interactions/interventions with men does not necessarily involve working on their attitudes and behaviors, which are derived from and governed by rigid notions of masculinity with little room for change. Most programs use a curriculum driven approach, but these curricula are almost exclusively transacted with girls and boys are part of a "light touch" interaction through some sessions and activities or mostly as observers. There is little resource investment to engage boys in the same "reflective" learning processes as with girls. Engagement with boys is mostly in terms of creating "champions for girls" rather than

developing equitable gender attitudes. There are many possible reasons for this, including resource constraints to engage with a new cohort in addition to girls, time constraints to meaningfully engage with boys, lack of experience of working with boys, lack of technical capacity to deal with unintended consequences of working with boys and girls in the same community, as cited by some of the respondents.

Boys need support to handle the burden of expectations of patriarchy, given the right kind of space, it is easier to understand their viewpoint on

regressive norms and in turn, also assist in defying harmful norms for girls as well as for themselves. For instance, given an opportunity, often unmarried adolescent boys state a preference to marry later, when they become self-reliant (Greene et al., 2015).

Evidence (Thomas, 2007; Greene et al., 2015) suggests that adolescent boys and young men are consistently perceived as irresponsible and good-for-nothing, as vagabonds who only want to have fun which further reinforces this stereotype of “boys being boys” and while condoning certain behaviors, also imposes expectations on young boys to behave in certain ways and this was also reflected in the discussions with research participants and highlighted the limited understanding of programming with boys.

However, it is encouraging to see that most programs openly shared their limited understanding of engaging with boys and also preliminary successes on being able to make small changes beginning with the most basic gender attitudes on household division of labor, teasing in public spaces, controlling mobility and education of sisters and so on.

*“A lot of boys’ mothers came and asked what we do in the meetings because they see a lot of change in their son, he has started working a lot at home, jhaadu [brooming], cleaning utensils; the boys say ‘this is my job as well’ so we (the mothers) are getting a lot of help because of it... (pauses) they [adolescents boys] even will do things like just keeping the house clean, keeping slippers organized, take care of little things which are considered more feminine”.*

–KII with Program Staff, MJAS, Rajasthan

For programming to redefine masculinities, designs need to focus beyond individuals only. The work needs distribution across various layers of the “ecosystem” in which men and women operate as individuals, but also as units of a larger structure. Most importantly, engaging men with an understanding of their public identities, as office bearers, community leaders and so on, in addition to their private identities as fathers, fathers-in-law, brothers, uncles, grandparents and so on is critical.

Additionally, studies on measuring collective impact of programming with boys in adolescent empowerment interventions are far and few, which could be strengthened further in newer program designs.

*“After working with the girls for about six months to a year, some boys approached me. They would often question me and ask what their fault was, because the project was only limited to the SABLA girls. They expressed their desire to work for development and then told me that they faced problems too.”*

–IDI with Program Staff, CINI, West Bengal

### Key Messages



Including boys as part of the ecosystem of girls, in community events, campaigns, creating avenues for dialogue and strategizing for safety, engaging as participants in girl’s trainings.



Engaging school going boys in the school space has yielded positive results in reducing harmful behaviors over a sustained period of engagement.



Community leaders, panchayat members, religious influencers, teachers and other role models also need engagement as “men who are associates of change” and not just as people who uphold norms and influence attitudes and behaviors



Recognizing that age is an important mediator for receptivity of interventions and hence, strategies need to be differential for “boys” and “men”. Gender transformative strategies are known to be most effective at younger ages and get more difficult to create buy-in with age.



Engaging with prospective grooms, child grooms, brothers and peers in and out of school: mostly adolescent boys, in different capacities within the same community: they are the most important constituency to engage with through gender transformative curricula so that they get enough time to reflect and iterate on the processes enabled by such content.



Fathers and fathers-in-law- have significant decision-making authority but often bear the burden of upholding norms for the family and are unable to make decisions in the best interest of their children, both boys and girls. engaging with them to understand their decision-making trajectory is crucial to facilitate real change in the “family”.



A “safe space” generally means a girl-only space. This is an important component since public spaces are often inhabited largely by men. *“For many girls in the developing world, the opportunity to move freely in the community becomes limited at the onset of puberty”*(Baldwin, 2011). While not necessarily codified in a specific way, there are functional curfews for women in many parts of the world which limit their access to and opportunities for building social networks. The key elements of safe space of women and girls has been documented and identified as a ‘safe physical space, a mentor, and a friendship or social network for the girls’ (Baldwin, 2011). Multiple studies have documented the emergence and existence of safe spaces as a mechanism for collectivization of girls(American Jewish World Service, 2014).

### Strategy 3. Building Safe and Collective Spaces

NUMBER OF RESEARCH  
PARTNERS WHO  
IMPLEMENTED THIS  
STRATEGY



### Organizational ideology and values, and its effect on creation of safe and collective spaces

Insights 	Example 
<p>The idea of “safe spaces” has existed for long in women’s movements, as solidarity groups and spaces free of judgement and discrimination. Hence, the operationalization of a “safe space” varies significantly within organizations. Organizations that create girls/ women’s groups due to programmatic guidelines (such as in SABLA) take time to enable the groups to mature from inorganically created collectives of girls to spaces where there is trust and solidarity; in essence being a “safe space”. For organizations working with feminist ideologies, these spaces often exist organically in their way of engaging with girls and women, irrespective of programmatic requirements. It is also reflected in the kind of strategies adopted by programs. For instance, organizations borne out of a public health movement working on an issue such as early and child marriages may not use “safe spaces” as a critical program strategy. They may, however, still conduct group sessions with girls, women and other stakeholders with an aim for knowledge, skills and awareness generation. The critical difference that is observed is in the content discussed, the way discussions take place and follow up (or lack of it) to certain issues emerging during the sessions.</p>	<p>CINI worked with the government to strengthen the implementation of the SABLA scheme. To bring together the girls in a group which is mandate in the scheme, CINI used Anganwadi centers as spaces for collectivizing the girls. Anganwadi centers are a state sanctioned space with the presence of Anganwadi workers, a trusted local amongst the community, this helped girls to negotiate with the parents for permission. These physical spaces were also marked with solidarity and collective strength of girls coming together and helped girls build a non-judgmental peer network.</p>



In this light, two important insights emerge from this review.

First is the creation of safe and inclusive spaces for adolescent girls. For girls to be able to internalize that they have agency; make decisions to express their voice and make choices directly influencing their life, access to and utilization of such spaces is critical. These spaces could be physical or abstract (existing in relation to the presence or absence of some people). In an abstract sense, "safe spaces" exist through solidarity networks such as reliable relationships or friendships with peers in the community, alliances with dependable and non-judgmental adults (often the community workers from the organizations we reviewed) and also a shared understanding of resources that could be harnessed in the situation of a crisis (such as violence at home or being forced to drop out of school or harassment in public places).

*"The main reason behind this strategy was creating a friendly space for them so that they can come and share their problems instead of facing some awkwardness while talking to any older person. Young people some time do not open up to someone who is acting like an adult, you need to create space like non patronizing, non-threatening where they can feel comfortable and for that there is need of many people who are highly technically and emotionally skilled, who can take care of these challenging task."*

*–IDI with Project Coordinator, ANANDI, Gujarat*

Secondly, these spaces are marked by a sense of collective strength, openness and privacy at the same time, freedom from prejudice, confidentiality and trust among the members. Many studies (Berkman & Syme, 1979) have stressed on the importance of social networks for young girls.

*"The tech center we have talked about [elsewhere], is a space where girls are able to speak what is on their mind... we talk in the group. Or if they [girls] want to speak and confide in me personally, on one on one level, about their boyfriends or love etc., they talk about those things also very clearly with me. They feel that the conversation will not go into right or wrong or the morality of what they did, so they feel it is their space with no judgments and are able to talk openly (pauses) and girls do not suppress talking*

*about their sexuality just because they are girls, if they find that comfort they talk about it very openly."*

*– IDI with project director, MJAS Rajasthan*

Adolescent girls are less likely than boys to have robust friendship networks, someplace they can go if they need a place to stay, a friend from whom they can borrow money if in need, or resources that can protect them if they are in danger at home (Muthengi & Erulkar, 2011). At times, these spaces also become spaces to engage with boys in the community, which are otherwise completely absent from the girls' lives (American Jewish World Service, 2014).

These are also spaces to carry out the most critical programmatic activities (trainings workshops, games, discussions, sessions on rights and legal entitlements and life skills etc.) and transact the day to day dialogues and ideation with adolescents, in all of the programs where the intervention needed direct engagement with adolescents.

These spaces are covert at times and exist within the community, in public knowledge, as a health center, training center, skilling class, language class and so on. But what they really do, most of all, is provide adolescents a space to share, ideate, learn, dialogue, confide, network and be free of the constant moral policing.

*"The program also enabled creation of a safe spaces for girls to articulate their aspirations around employment and lead to an organic shift in the thinking of the programmers to provide alternatives to girls (if not marriage, then what?) around viable options for skill building by disseminating information about vocational skill training options available around them".*

*– KII with Program Team, The Y P Foundation*

This is extremely important so that their inner lives are in the knowledge of a trusted adult who can support them in crises and also mentor them to make informed choices. A study conducted by ICRW on comprehensive needs of adolescents establishes this as a critical element in programming for adolescents, "Staff observed that it was only because communities "trusted" their presence that they were willing to let their daughters participate in the program. This enables them

*to talk about not just livelihoods but also other “sensitive” issues as well like health, sexuality, marriage and so on, which otherwise may be seen as unsuitable or taboo.* (Nanda et al., 2013).

In many cases the creation of safe spaces has been able to garner state sanction and /or community sanction which works to its advantage, as the setting also provides a state backed legitimacy to these conversations often with the participation of stakeholders such as the Anganwadi worker or ASHAs. Engagement activities with adult women in the community can also be a space where these programs create a felt need amongst these women for engaging with their daughter or girls in the community.

Creation of these spaces is incumbent upon the skills and motivation of the last mile workers of the projects and for each of our research partners, it stands true without fail to say that the strength and intensity of the interventions have been heavily dependent on how strong their cadre of community workers is and to what extent have they been able to inculcate a feeling of trust and dependability with the girls' groups and other important stakeholders in the community or in short, what quality of safe spaces have they been able to create.

### Key Messages



Safe spaces are marked by solidarity networks that are free of judgements and give the girls an opportunity to open and share their problems/emotions.



Use of state sanctioned spaces ensures buy-in from the community for girls to be able to access these places.



Use of these spaces to give girls access to programmatic activities such as trainings, access to livelihood trainings, schemes etc.



Sustainability of these spaces is more likely when this strategy aligns with organizational mandates rather than only being a “project based” strategy.



At times smaller organizations struggle with sustaining these spaces due to heavy dependence on external funding which may be short term, despite having a commitment to the strategy.

### Strategy 4. Promoting Sports for Empowerment

NUMBER OF RESEARCH  
PARTNERS WHO  
IMPLEMENTED THIS  
STRATEGY



Research in the sociology of sport suggests that sport can be an invigorating and a personally empowering experience for girls and women (Nelson, 1994; Taub and Blinde, 1993; Young and White, 1995). The evidence from the learning review suggests that sports as an approach has been used to promote multiple dimensions of agency building for girls from contexts with rigid gender norms. To understand how sports has been effective, it is important to understand what are the critical situations that exist in the lives of these girls that is being challenged through sports.

Previous evidence has shown that development initiatives implemented through sports are effective in enhancing life skills, mental health and physical health. (Danish et al., 2005) Playing a sport, can change the way an adolescent girl sees herself. It can make her feel physically stronger, more competent, and more in control of her life as an independent individual. This is important because social life often is organized in ways that lead girls and women to see themselves as weak, dependent and powerless (Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Over the last two decades, the number of “Sports for Development” initiatives have increased globally. Participation in sports help young people to develop interpersonal networks and a sense of identity, learn negotiation skills and teamwork and seek out new opportunities for learning and growth. Sports is an important venue for learning about gender roles and relationships. In communities where public spaces are seen as dangerous and off-limits for girls, participation in organized sports can be an important tool for giving girls an opportunity for social connection, as well as developing their confidence and important skills like teamwork and negotiation (Bankar et al., 2018).

## Organizational ideology and values and their effect on implementation of sports for development

Insights 	Example 
<p>Sports for development, has been adopted by some organizations as an approach that adds on to their existing interventions, some have adopted it to be used for its disruptive potential and shaped their interventions around sports. In our review, we found very few organizations working with sports as a strategy. Sports for girls, is utilized by organizations as a unique opportunity to position girls as active agents of change in their own lives, by claiming public spaces, wearing atypical clothing, increasing mobility, visibility and so on. However, not many organizations are able to leverage upon this strategy as it needs considerably larger resources than some of the other strategies, to implement and sustain. Interestingly though, the chances of sustenance are higher where this is used as an add-on strategy, along with other, primary intervention activities rather than where sports is the primary strategy for intervention. In the latter case, the activities stop as soon as external agents (organizations) withdraw from the community.</p>	<p>HAQ CRC with the support of their field partners in Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti, Rajasthan and Jabala Action Research, West Bengal has been running a very successful initiative 'Football for freedom, unity and solidarity'. Sports has been proven to be a strong strategy in delaying age at marriage since it enables girls to be self-confident, be comfortable with their bodies and increases their capacity to negotiate the restrictions imposed on them by the family and community. It increases their chances for being able to access further education, skilling and paid work as well. Football has also given an important gateway to initiate several discussions around caste and bodily integrity, that are generally considered taboo in these contexts.</p>

To elucidate how sports has been effective, it is important to understand what are the challenges that exist in the lives of these girls and how is sports helps in negotiating these challenges. The girls have restricted mobility and their need for 'safety' from harassment/violence overrides all the other aspects of their lives. Their access to economic, education and other opportunities is limited, the value of girls in these communities is limited to them being a 'good daughter, wife and mother'. In our FGDs, we find girls vocally notice how restrictions that apply to them are not similarly applied to their brothers or other boys in the community.

*"Boys don't do anything as such, they just get up in the morning, play, they don't even attend college, roam around, go for parties and come home late by midnight and still family doesn't say anything to them"*  
 – Adolescent girl, FGD Respondent, Vimarsh, Uttarakhand

Interventions incorporating sports have been effective in challenging some of these restrictions and have

provided the girls a chance to see their lives grow beyond these limitations. Specifically, we see that sports challenges the following:

### Challenging restrictions on mobility for girls

Girls in these contexts face severe restrictions on the mobility of these girls. Opportunities for them to go out of their homes are limited, the notion of "safety" from harassment, violence, eve teasing further pushes these girls into their homes. Girls do notice how restrictions that apply to them are not similarly applied to their brothers or other boys in the community.

*"A girl shouldn't behave the way a boy does. The Boys can roam around as per their wish whereas a girl cannot do it. A girl is not even allowed to go out of the house alone. The Boys can go out without the permission of his parents. Girls are not allowed to do this. Boys can go alone but a girl cannot go alone because somebody might kidnap her and take her away. We never complain about teasing also, because this has become normal. When I go to the college,*

*a lot of boys stand at the bus stop and whistle and pull my scarf. But we handle them ourselves by scolding them or by hurling abuses at them. If we complain about this to our parents, then they will stop our education, so we don't tell them."*

*- IDI with Peer leader, SAARTHI, Gujarat*

But with sports initiatives girls' have a reason to go out and it especially helps if the games played are team events. Young girls are able to form networks and groups of friends within the village and it also helps them negotiate permission to go out and play. The girls move out of their 'safe demarcated' areas and play in grounds which wouldn't have been possible for them previously. They are also able to challenge their curfews and, in some instances, also participate in games outside their villages. Sports aids in negotiating these restrictions with the family.

*"In the last three years, Jagori has organized Girls Cricket tournament. The main objective of the tournament was to break gender stereotypes, bring girls out on the playgrounds and enhance their confidence. Most girls got a chance to play on the ground for the first time in their life. The male members of youth collectives played a significant role. Prior to the tournament, 10 young boys provided regular coaching to the girls. As a result, in total 50 young girls actively participated in the cricket tournament thus successfully breaking gender stereotypes. The tournament has developed and bonded relationship between boys and girls."*

*-IDI with Program Staff, Jagori Rural, Himachal Pradesh*

### Challenging behavioral, bodily and clothing stereotypes

Popular discourse associates women's safety with the modesty of her clothing, with *burkhas* and *salwar kameez* designed to hide the female body from public view. As custodians of family honor, girls are socialized to fear not only potential violence in public spaces but also the threat of public censure that will impact her 'reputation' (Phadke, 2005).

The discussions with project staff revealed that for girls to be able to play sports they have to challenge several stereotypes imposed by culturally accepted norms of clothing, movement, posture and interactions in the public space.

Being involved in sports has given the girls' a reason to challenge some of this, for instance, they are able to negotiate with their parents on deciding what to wear. It is pre-requisite for girls to wear appropriate clothing such as T-shirts/ pants to play so that they feel comfortable, and it ensures better movement and involvement in the game. Girls who participate in sports have also relayed how it has affected the way they behave and their skills around decision-making, which is not something taught to girls at home or otherwise. These girls are more likely to show competitiveness, assertiveness on field which are the behaviors that are mostly monitored in girls.

*"The game itself breaks a lot of barriers, when girls play football that in itself breaks a lot of bodily stereotypes etc. Like they were also telling that what life changes have happened, the confidence to speak up, take action, make decisions spontaneously, time management, have focus on one particular thing, all these changes have happened because of it."*

*- IDI with Program Staff, MJAS, Rajasthan*

### Accessing public spaces

Collective bargaining and action are central to both questioning and contesting gender relations. Mentors and coaches in these programs contest mobility restrictions; taking risks as a group, with collective agency an important step toward greater individual agency in day-to-day social interactions (Bankar et al., 2018) During our conversations with the girls, it was amply demonstrated the team sports help girls come together. With the support of organizations, they access spaces that they weren't allowed to access previously, such as playgrounds but also at certain times of the day and certain durations, wearing previously unallowable clothing in full public view and so on.

*"When in Hasyavas (village), nobody was playing because the ground was not fine, had grass and other plants. So, when (organization) got that fixed, the girls started playing there. But then the boys came in between and tried to remove them from the field saying that they want to play cricket. But the girls also spoke up and said no, this is our time; we will play for two hours and then you can come and play. So, the boys started to come earlier and say that girls' play time is up. But even (if) it's a minute less than 6pm, the girls refuse and say that there is still time. All these*

boys are like their brothers, that's how they are able to negotiate with them"

– IDI with Field Coordinator, MJAS, Rajasthan.

Sports as a strategy was not part of many organizations included in the review, but a few which have experimented successfully see exponential results in terms of being able to enhance certain individual and collective resources such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, collective agency, mobility and access public spaces.

### Key Messages



Playing team sports for girls to be able to form networks with other girls' and collectively negotiate their mobility.



Making it imperative to wear clothing that is appropriate to play sports, to challenge clothing restrictions without negative labelling.



Reclaiming public spaces that are mostly dominated by boys and men is an important aspect of sports for girls



Forming teams for sports like football, that require a level of competitiveness, quick decision making and active leadership skills which help break "feminine" behavioral stereotypes.



### Strategy 5. Deepening Agency

NUMBER OF RESEARCH  
PARTNERS WHO  
IMPLEMENTED THIS  
STRATEGY



Data from National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015-16 shows that the age at marriage has gone up from 17 to 19 years for girls this indicates a shift from child marriage to early marriage (UNFPA, 2019). Moving from child marriage to early marriage is also necessary to incorporate the complexity of adolescence into the discourse. Children are usually viewed as disempowered lacking the capacities to take important decisions because of their young age. While adolescence is characterized as an age when individuals first start to exercise their agency (Nirantar Trust, 2015). Agency is widely regarded as reflecting the essence of empowerment itself and bridging the gap between an individuals' desire to bring change and the action taken to bring this change (Edmeades et al., 2018). In most situations, adolescents exercise their agency to challenge oppressive structures and norms like child, forced and early marriage.

### Organizational ideology and values and their effect on building the understanding around choice and consent

Insights 	Example 
<p>In our review, we find explicit data from one program addressing this in the context of early and child marriages, but most do not engage with the lack of choice for girls as a stated goal. In course of the group sessions with girls, organizations that conducted sessions on topics such as gender, power, rights, violence, engage with the nuances of consent to some extent, but "choice" as a concept may or may not be addressed depending on the framework with which the organizations work. We find that organizations that directly work on systems strengthening by collaborating with government programs and schemes have limited opportunities to work with these ideas.</p>	<p>ANANDI has been implementing the young women's safety and security program which is based on the learnings from their study on criminalization of choice. Their work shows how in the recent year's girls have asserted their agency by getting into romantic relationships based on their choice and some cases eloping in hope of a better life; but this choice is almost always criminalized by the laws such as POCSO and PCMA. The program focusses on creating an environment for girls where they can express their desires around sexuality and relationships and have access to information and services for healthy exploration of positive sexual and emotional intimacies.</p>



The reason for high prevalence of ECFM is attributed to poverty, but control on sexuality and 'safety' of girls from sexual violence, which is a critical contributor to ECFM, has been side-lined in mainstream policy and discourse. The projects on addressing child marriage historically focused on health implications on women and girls. But the discussion around sexuality of girls, their choice in marriage and further their consent in marriage have still not been dealt with effectively. Control of women and girls' lives by families and communities, particularly the control of their sexual and reproductive lives (Nirantar Trust, 2015) is central in the idea of traditional marriages. In general, the child marriage discourse has emphasized the importance of the inappropriately early age at which girls and some boys are marrying, but without highlighting the issue of evolving capacities of adolescents to exert their choices, provide their consent and thereby exercise their own agency in matters concerning them directly (Greene, 2014).

Girls who are married before the age of 18 face several problems when compared to their counterparts who are older. At 18 years or less, these girls have low educational attainment, they grow up in circumstances which restricts their mobility, their aspirations and their opportunities for the future. They are not allowed to participate in any decision-making process in the household, they are also suppressed from expressing their opinions and are expected to be a "good girl". This also implies that girls are not given space to negotiate and change the terms of decisions such as marriage. (Girls Not Brides, n.d.) A participant shares how generally decisions around marriage are taken, with no or little say of the bride and the groom in this decision.

*"If someone is coming to see the girl then the family doesn't let the girl meet them and they fix the marriage/engagement without asking her. So, girls are never allowed to do anything they want."*

– KII with Program Staff, MJAS, Rajasthan

*"By any means parents manage to get their daughter married... mostly dowry is fixed before marriage for girls. If any girl is left out then she faces several kinds of remarks and humiliation from neighbors and relatives. If the girl remains unmarried after completing her matriculation,*

*people start talking negatively about her, which is a burden for the girls as well as the parents"*

– FGD with adolescent girls, Jharkhand

The focus of projects working on addressing the issue of child marriage has been limited to 'delaying' child marriage to the legal age of marriage. A critique of this strategy is to understand what is the difference in a girls' life when she is 17 compared to just when she turns 18. Does turning 18 ensure she is mature enough to now support herself, her family and handle the responsibilities of motherhood which is again an inevitable reality in girls' lives? In recent times, there has been a shift in the programming language to bring in the discourse of agency, choice and voice of girls when talking about marriage especially child marriage.

It is also important to note that these concepts are often distant in the day to day lives of adolescent girls and challenging for organizations to engage with in a context where persons under 18 are legally considered children, as such, they are not accepted as having adequate capacity in legal terms, to make decisions. In this scenario, operationalization of strategies for building agency has to be carefully designed.

### Sexuality and desire in the discourse of marriage

In the context of India, we see that all the decisions taken by parents' regard to the 'safety' of girls is governed by the control on their sexuality. Decisions about sexuality, sexual relationships and reproduction are some of the most important that an individual can make, and determine many other aspects of a person's life, including their living arrangements, their access to resources, and their roles inside the family and outside it; yet ECFM prevents millions of women and girls from making these decisions for themselves (Nirantar Trust, 2015). Female sexuality shapes family honor in the eyes of parents and communities: virginity for the unwed, and faithful, monogamous childbearing for the married. The commodification of girls' sexuality is part of upholding this honor since a girl's virginity and reproductive capacity are exchanged between families (Parikh, 2012).

*"Parents want to keep girls away from any type of conduct that may lead to abuse or harassment and don't want them to get into love affairs as these will influence their chances of getting marriage proposals."*

– KII with Program Staff, MAMTA-HIMC, Rajasthan

These girls live a life where there are no spaces express their desires and lack any individual amongst the immediate familial relations who would be open to listening to them. It is worth noting that girls' realities with respect to their understanding as well as societal understanding of their sexuality changes with age and this further complicates the matter for organizations to deal with.

Findings from the review also show that girls get into relationships with boys primarily because they are being listened to, and receive attention, both of which they lack in their household relationships. They often get into relationships both romantic and sexual before marriage by choice. However, a complete lack of understanding of adolescent agency and sexual desire, coupled with a law that deems the age of consent to be synchronous with the age of marriage, leads to complicated criminalization processes (Joshi & Andharia, n.d.).

Absence of any conversations with young people around issues of consent, contraception and safe sex and safe relationships, also makes girls' vulnerable to violence, even within relationships entered by choice. Since girls know marriage is inevitable, they shape their desires for the kind of groom that would be able to support them in the future. But for the girls' to be able to express or share their desire for the kind of partner they want is much more difficult than saying 'no' to their parent's choice.

### **Peer leadership, feminist trainings and enabling agency**

As discussed in some of the preceding sections, work on transformative change is long and at times intergenerational. In addition, these are mediated by a long process of engagement in unpacking and linking gender perspectives to the lives of women and girls. Often organizations enable this through feminist trainings.

*"When I was studying, my aunt was associated with this organization. She told me that here camp/workshops are organized, and they must do this kind of work. You come and see it once. Then I thought that I will join this organization to solve the problems faced by girls. Then looking at this we solved the problems of many people. Some girls do not tell certain things to their mother but tell to the Umang workers."*

– FGD with Umang Fellows, ANANDI, Gujarat

Time and again, respondents in the review cited examples of success where work with mothers or communities at large at a point of time in the past enabled them to deepen their presence and engage meaningfully with adolescents. The same applies to investing project resources in developing capacities for young people as peer leaders.

*"Bringing boys who had earlier been trained as peer leaders in girls' group initially, created a positive effect. Initially when nurse distributed Iron and folic acid tablet girls avoided taking that, however after some sessions with peer leaders these girls were more receptive as they related to a younger person more. The peer leaders also met nurses and other medical officers for keeping a check in HB count of girls. Many times, ICDS staff complained of male peer leaders in their office but they convinced ICDS staff that the girls are from their village and the Anganwadi belong to all of us so, they finally accepted. After involving boys, the girls started taking pills on time, accompanying them during Mamta sessions and Kishori divas and took care of returning girls home safely, which was a big boost to negotiating for girls' mobility. Slowly people in villages started believing us which was easier for us in taking sessions at venues where adolescents from two districts were called for training which was not possible before as girls were not allowed to go outside."*

– IDI with Program Staff, SAHAJ, Gujarat.

Our review also posited a question on alternatives to marriage, which went largely unanswered. Understandably, in a context where the centrality of marriage is a given, this points us back to the lack of possibilities in girls as well as boys' lives (to a lesser extent), to experience healthy exploration of positive sexual experiences and emotional intimacies without the responsibility of marriage at very young ages.

*"Choice is not there (in marriages that are fixed) and to avoid things a lot of times girls started expressing their relationships with other partners of choice"*

– KII with Program Staff, ANANDI, Gujarat

Organizations, often under pressures to deliver within short time frames, lack in addressing norms to create agency and choices and tend to focus on skills and information to negotiate decisions around marriage and education in a short time frame. While this has intrinsic benefits and is well intentioned, it does not contribute to meaningful change.

### Key messages



Issues of agency, choice and consent are difficult to unpack and manage in gender normative contexts given the realities of girls' lives, the socio-legal norms and sensitivity of the issue in communities.



Investing in girls' agency building and training them on comprehensive sexuality education has a positive relationship with increased choice leading to informed decision-making.



Investing in making safe spaces for young people to discuss about their desires and emotions, also helps in 'destigmatizing' some emotions that they have been taught to think wrong or unacceptable.



Talking about consent with young men (and older men) and acknowledging both young men and women have sexual desires and have decision making capacity to be physically intimate with their partners.



Linking them to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, which are crucial for ensuring that women and girls are able to make informed and healthy decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

### Strategy 6. Addressing the Fear of Everyday Violence

NUMBER OF RESEARCH  
PARTNERS WHO  
IMPLEMENTED





*Fear of violence is immense for parents, communities and girls at large, leading to explicit and implicit justifications of control in the lives of girls and women. Violence, in this context, emerges as a policing mechanism, to establish, perpetuate and reinforce gender orders and roles in society, and punish any perceived transgression using force and coercion.*

The phrase "gender-based violence" helps locate such violence firmly within the predominant discourses surrounding gender roles in society and traces it to the socialization processes that firmly establish the norms and definitions of what it means to be a man or a woman (UNESCAP, 2003). It is linked to existing gender stereotypes and discriminatory norms that legitimize and perpetuate this violence (Edström et al., 2015).

A fear of what may happen to girls results in shame and 'dishonor' for the family. The fear manifests into control over the daily lives of girls which persists in multiple forms: dictating what they should wear, how they should walk, who they should speak to, when and where they should be visible and how they should moderate their visibility.

One of the primary reasons why the centrality of marriage has remained intact in the lives of young girls, as well as boys, is because it is seen as a protective and policing measure which has double benefits: it provides a blanket of safety to preserve the "honor" of girls (and by virtue of that, of the family and the community she belongs to) and it safeguards the reputation of the young boys who are otherwise looked at as irresponsible and useless (and in turn, again safeguards the reputation of the family).

## Organizational ideology and values and its effect on understanding violence in adolescent programming

<b>Insights</b> 	<b>Example</b> 
<p>Unless stated, most organizations steer away from issues around violence due to lack of resources and capacity to manage the complications. Our analysis point to this being a critical gap while working with adolescent girls. In terms of programming experiences in the current review, we did not find an in-depth understanding of adolescent girls' daily negotiations of violence and the everydayness of their experiences which largely determines their major life decisions around education, work, intimate relationships and marriage. Programs did tailor their session timings, locations and other logistics to accommodate these negotiations, but it wasn't clear how this fed into their implementation designs and content transactions.</p>	<p>Sahayog with the help of their field partner Vimarsh implemented their program Tarang in Nainital to strengthen SABLA implementation. In the project areas, the partner had an established rapport with women in the community since they had long worked on issues of violence against women. For the work with adolescent girls, they leveraged on the existing relationship with women and included them in the activities with the girls. This ensured that the girls received the desired support from their community, but also helped in creating an enabling environment and avoiding community backlash for girls while negotiating on norms since they had already created a demand amongst the mothers for a need for such changes when it came to their daughters.</p>

*"There is a lot of distance between our center and field work so we conduct the trainings of girls within the village; at present the place where we are located is not safe for girls after 7 pm outside because there is always a fear of sexual harassment... in case anything wrong happens then Kishori [adolescent girl] cannot say it to anybody, and we also have 3-4 cases in a month on sexual abuse, child marriage and early pregnancy of 12-13 years old girls because she keeps hiding about the assaults and further the situation becomes worse."*

– KII with Program Staff, Jagori Rural, Himachal Pradesh

In a different study conducted by the authors (ICRW & NEG-FIRE, 2019), particularly to understand the perspectives of parents and teachers on GBV, a parent notably remarked, "Girls get married early. There is always a fear that a boy might tease or harass a girl. Out of this fear, parents get their daughters married early. People in the village talk. There is a fear of the girl acquiring a bad reputation if people start talking about her. So, it is better to get her married. *"Jaldi isko apni jagah pe kardo, taaki izzat bache, laaj bacche"* (put her in her place soon, so that her honor is intact and your honor is retained). In the current review, we find that programs addressed, at times, instances of violence or discussed strategies for mitigation once a risk has been assessed due to an incident.

*"We approached school principal and shop keepers for making roads safer for school girls because while going to school these girls cross a few shops where boys are always around, and make comments... [so] we conducted awareness sessions with both boys and girls by talking to boys about the need to makes roads feel safer for girls and women in the community."*

– KII with Program Staff, Breakthrough, Jharkhand

In this case the road to school and to the highway for travelling to nearby destinations needed to be made safer for girls as they were unable to move freely due to a fear of eve-teasing. With the mediation of technology, the nature of interactions between girls and boys is changing and has also opened more avenues for vulnerabilities, apart from giving them a space to express more freely.

However, having said that, fear of impending violence in public areas, bus stops and roads have emerged as one of the most potent barriers to achieving success for programs as well as for girls themselves to be able to negotiate beyond a point for delaying marriage, choosing whom to marry, continuing education and engaging in economic opportunities outside of the home. (UN Women, 2017)

In cases where some girls have exercised agency and made non-conventional choices (e.g. negotiating for continuing her education after marriage); they have been accompanied by a curtailment of opportunities for other girls in her group/community because parents feared that they may question, and contest established gender norms and may experience further violence and in effect bring shame and dishonor to families as a result of this. There is a clear need to understand the unintended negative consequences of empowerment or 'backlash' which often translate into forms of violence. Without integrating this understanding and ways to address backlash, into the program and policy design, programs may continue to put the target population at risk and may not achieve the desired impact. This is more significant and truer for programs (like all those included in this review) where girls are at the center of change and are encouraged into autonomous decision making.

Links between violence against women and violence in childhood are visible in some of the programs, as well as the effects of intergenerational programming in the same communities. Our data, however, points toward an articulation of violence is that of an impending act that may occur. Traditionally, 'victim/perpetrator' equation is generally understood post-facto, in the event of occurrence of an incidence or an act of violence. But we observe that even in the absence of an event, the fear of violence remains and determines several decisions in girls' lives including, but not limited to, the possibility of their engaging as active agents in the economy and society. This sense of violence as part of the daily life, to differing degrees, becomes routinely included in their day to day decision making around dressing, choice of transport, time of commute, selection of institutions for education/training, decision to study further based on the location of schools/colleges and choice of work (if at all) among other things.

### Key messages



Daily negotiations owing to the fear of violence, that impact all the decisions in the lives of the girls, has not been considered while designing of the program and activities.



There are linkages between violence in childhood programming and violence against women programming. But these linkages haven't been researched upon in greater depth to develop a full understanding.



Backlash as a consequence of the program activities is now a key consideration in the programs. But there is a need to talk about the backlash faced by the staff from the community and how it impacts the overall implementation.

### Strategy 7. Prioritizing Girls' Aspirations

NUMBER OF RESEARCH  
PARTNERS WHO  
IMPLEMENTED





*Education has been one of the preventive strategies to end the practice of child marriage. (Girls Not Brides, n.d.) Enrolling girls in school is vital to the realization of rights but it is not limited to their enrolment, school should be a medium for girls to grow in a safe and learning space. Life skills, financial literacy skills to achieve their aspirations in work and life in the future, are necessary skills that should taught to girls for empowering them in tackling real life situations. The schools should be a space where they are taught skills that can support them in the future(UNICEF, 2019).*

Our data has shown that the girls almost consistently expressed the desire to be educated and view it as a tool to improve their lives in multiple ways. The medium of school becomes a tool to assert other aspirations of work, mobility and also marriage. The relationship between increase in age at marriage and increase in school attendance has been widely established through research and evaluation (Mehra et al., 2018). One of the FGD participant talks about how they see the role of education in their life: "Education is an asset; nobody can take it away. Now, we demand for continuing studies even after marriage."

– FGD with Adolescent Girls, Breakthrough, Jharkhand



## Organizational ideology and values and their effect on approaches around building aspirations of girls

<b>Insights</b> 	<b>Example</b> 
<p>We observe that many organizations do not engage on issues of continuing education and linking to employability as they are constrained by their thematic focus. Organizations which have an objective to work on economic empowerment and or livelihoods are more likely to systematically engage on educational and employment aspirations. Some of them, while working with girls over a longer period, have realized the criticality of these concerns in their lives and have gone beyond their mandate to undertake advocacy efforts for both, continuing education as well as readying them for employability. In the current set of programs included in this review, many of the organizations especially those supporting the SABLA implementation, have invested in creating curricula/linking girls' groups to trainings that have implications on their economic empowerment. However, this remained a low priority for programs given the multiplicity of focus areas.</p>	<p>The YP Foundation's Butterfly project in Rajasthan enabled girls to articulate their aspirations around employment using multiple tools, including digital platforms and led to an organic shift in the thinking of the programs to provide alternatives to girls (if not marriage) around viable options for skill building by disseminating information about vocational skill training options available around them. They also pursued this line of thinking by working with organizations/initiatives providing livelihood options for women, to link up their program cohorts for opportunities.</p>

Previous evidence indicated how education and marriage are mutually exclusive life stages of a girl's life, and marriage often means an end to a girl's formal education (Girls Not Brides, n.d.). However, discussions with girls show that there is a change in this trend and girls are beginning to demand for continuing their studies even after marriage. Bringing these two together is still not as widely accepted and is hence anything that brings the two together, goes against the grain. The 'demand' of continuing education is symptomatic of the extent to which they can negotiate in a situation where marriage is an inevitable reality.

While there are several structural barriers such as lack of accessibility to school and lack of safe transport that act as a deterrent, but the effect multiplies when it is seen that education would not lead to economic gain. The girls do express their desire to be able to take up paid work, but lack of infrastructural support and deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms ensures that this problem persists, and the family and community

members reinforce the norms around marriage. For instance, an adolescent girl talked about this in a focus group discussion:

*"Girls who finish school education are the 'prime targets' for child marriage. . . Only for 1 year after turning 18, can a girl stay at home without reproached for being married [as] people start talking hundreds of negative things; Mostly neighbors make false rumors if any girl goes to Barkagaon [nearest town] for studies, they influence negatively [and] as a result parents decide to get them married as early as possible."*

– FGD with Adolescent Girls, Breakthrough, Jharkhand

Lack of opportunities to convert higher secondary education into employment also acts as a deterrent to continuing school after secondary level. This often coincides with the girls transitioning into an age when they are 'marriageable adults' (Lee-Rife et al., 2012) and all incentives to [even subsidized] education come to cease. This is also seen in the case of the

conditional cash transfer scheme, Kanyashree Prakalpa (Government of West Bengal)<sup>17</sup>, which is instrumental in delaying the age at marriage but does not improve the bargaining position of adolescent girls in terms negotiation over resources, unless this education is a means for her participation in the labor force (Borker et al., 2018).

To address the concerns and provide girls an opportunity to be able to realize their aspirations, partner organization provided vocational training. Computer course was one of the commonly talked of training course. In all cases, the technical learning is accompanied with life skills. These “life skills,” are “a comprehensive set of universal cognitive and noncognitive skills and abilities, connecting behavior, attitudes, and knowledge” (International Youth Foundation, 2014). In one of the discussions during the study, this was pronounced as follows,

*“The biggest concern of parents is what sort of environment they will get in the place they go to work(if they do), whether it will be safe so like even in computer centers there is a nine-month course where we train them in all sphere- how to negotiate, their self- confidence, how to keep a trust (pauses) keep trust,... because nowadays there is so much scam of “behelena-phuslana” [coaxing and luring] even while getting into relations due to age, one must be careful. I also myself conduct self-defense training”*

– IDI with Program Staff, MJAS Rajasthan

This excerpt is an opening into what are the perceived forms of safety concerns that, according to program team, the adolescent girls must be trained to ward off. This is connected to how mobility and autonomy of adolescent girls is restricted, and it is strongly associated with their physical safety and ‘purity’ which

would affect their chances of getting married. There are concerns around how the adolescent girls may exercise their independence if they go for trainings and work, that may result in them getting into relationships to explore their emerging sexuality and ultimately eloping.

In all parts of the world, women and girls are disproportionately burdened by unpaid care work and it affects the kind of paid work they can take up. It can be surmised that the life of the adolescent girl, in many cases, is saturated with one form of work-unpaid work in their respective household. Whether an income generating paid work can offset this social role of girls and allow access to the paid work opportunity remains unclear. The evidence does indicate that the situation is aggravated given the lack of avenues of vocational training, apprenticeship or skilling centers in the vicinity. This lack shrinks the agency of women because she is unable to pursue the economic roles. This also leads to the reiteration of ‘descriptive’ gender norms (Eagly & Karau, 2002)<sup>18</sup> of what adolescent girls and women should be doing and how they should be behaving, i.e., marriage as soon as girls are of “marriageable age”, participation in unpaid and care work at home, proscription of education and so on. There is also an intergeneration impact whereas in light of lack of opportunities in the labor market influences the perception of community and family members negatively. The aspirations for their girl child are lowered on different accounts. This negatively affects not only their formal education but also health and well-being (Duflo, 2012).

It is not enough that the girls have the willingness and the opportunity to be trained and to work. For unmarried girls, the permission of parents and for married girls, that of in-laws and/ or husband must

<sup>17</sup> Department of Women Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal (DWD&SW) has designed the Kanyashree Prakalpa - a conditional cash transfer scheme with the aim of improving the status and well-being of the girl child in West Bengal by incentivizing schooling of all teenage girls and delaying their marriages until the age of 18, the legal age of marriage. Kanyashree Prakalpa is a West Bengal Government sponsored scheme which will be implemented henceforth in all districts of the State. URL: [https://wbkanyashree.gov.in/kp\\_scheme.php](https://wbkanyashree.gov.in/kp_scheme.php)

<sup>18</sup> ‘According to social role theory, descriptive norms are consensual expectations about what members of social group generally do in terms of their social and gender roles. For example, gender stereotype that follow from observations of people in sex-typical roles- men’s occupancy of breadwinner and higher status roles and women’s occupancy of homemaker and lower status roles’

be sought, reflecting multiple points of decision-making. The perception around the kind of roles (health workers, teachers) which are type-casted 'fit' for girls and women are also a condition to getting permission to work. The research revealed some ways of negotiations which the girls take to convenience family and in-laws by sharing their incomes ["in-laws will allow for jobs if they get part of our salary", "in-laws will not allow studying without completing daily household work"], or ensuring that the marriage is conditional on her right to continue to work. There are many cases where training and education does not imply that she would be engaged in paid work (Wodon et al., 2017) because of inaccessible market opportunities. In response to these demands from the adolescent girls, some organizations organized 'career mela' (career fairs) or career counselling sessions within the "kishori mela".

To conclude, adolescent girls who are aspiring to work have several deterrent structures that emerge from socio-cultural perspective that impact their economic agency. There is a wide gap between the aspiration of parents and community and that of their daughters and adolescent girls as well opportunities in the market.

### Key Messages



Adolescent programming needs to account for bridging the gap between education and labor market. This can be a catalyst in improving gender gap and hence empower girls.



Education should include sexuality education for all, this would help girls to go out and benefit from opportunities available and not miss out because of the fear of safety.



Addressing structural barriers in different location needs a systematic the state bodies and government to address those.



Several adolescent girls were burdened with housework, in addition to school and participation in various trainings, sedimenting the site of their "labor" within the household. The programs should intervene to deconstruct the gender and social roles of adolescent and women. This can also be a medium of engaging with boys and men.



Engaging girls in livelihood and vocational training like computer skills, career mela, driving, sewing and other skills like sports (karate and kabaddi) through building this into the agenda of the programs in a systematic manner.

# WAY FORWARD



While there is a growing body of literature available on efforts for empowering change, it is largely agreed that these are complex to measure and document. In this review, we set out to move away from traditional approaches to measure and evaluate change and focused on drawing critical learnings instead. We aimed at understanding nuances of ideological influences on practical aspects of programming for

adolescents' empowerment, pathways to solutions from locally embedded groups and organizations and to explore what remains to be done in the context of creating empowering spaces for adolescent girls. In the process, we documented platforms created for girls to assert their voices and mechanisms that were kickstarted for long term change.

## Key challenges



Shifting, rigid, gender segregated norms for girls and boys around mobility, education, unpaid care work, paid work, marriage and child bearing: has implications on access to resources and agency to make choices



Low programmatic engagement with gatekeepers of norms, leading to stagnant, short term program outcomes



Fear of violence is immense for parents, communities and girls at large, leading to explicit and implicit justifications of control in the lives of girls and women

Programs constantly juggle with the danger of stereotype: as welfare agencies, as agents of provocation, as agents of the government, as too unconventional: which influence community acceptability and reach of programs to multiple stakeholders



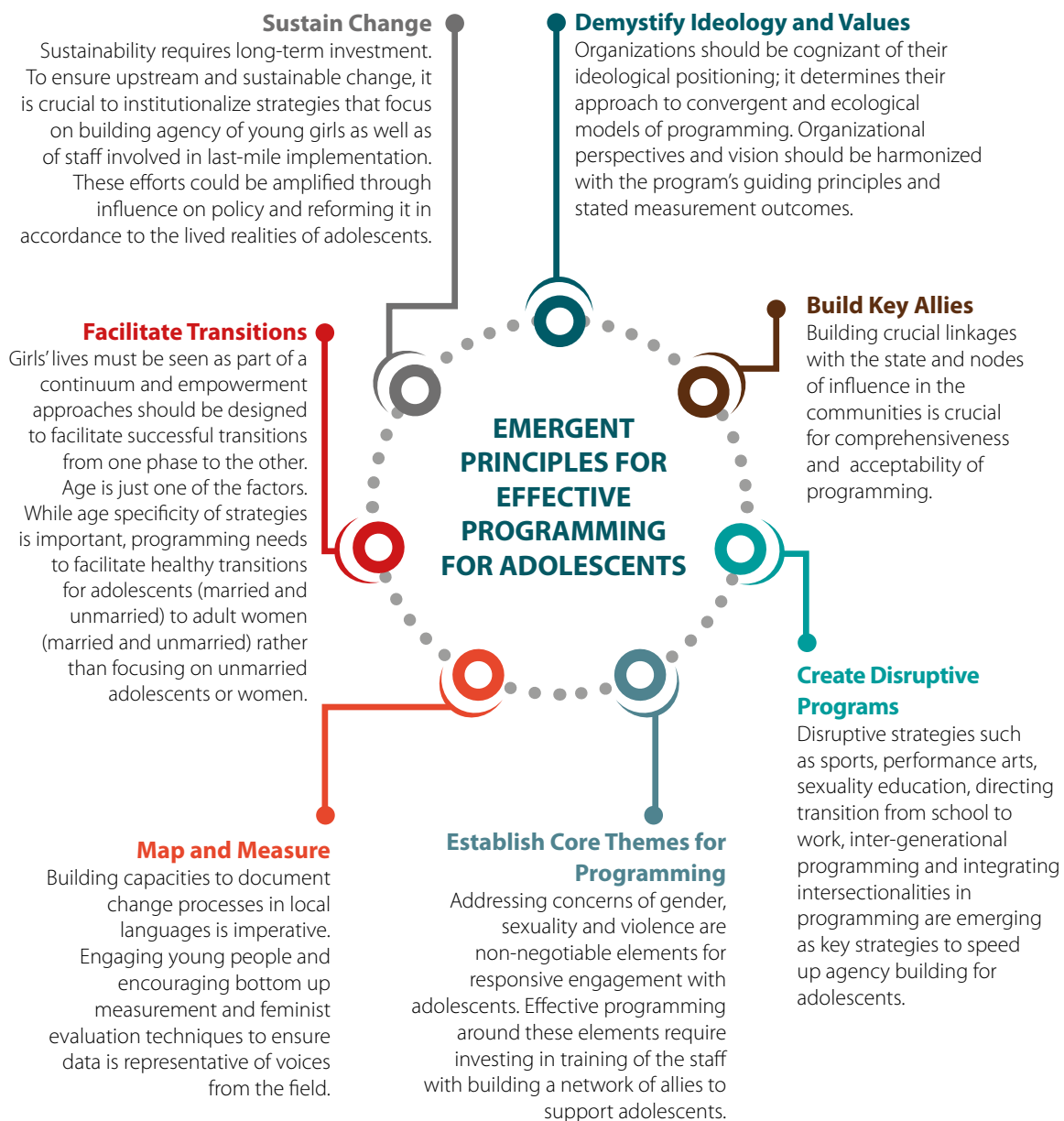
Use of single-entry points as a strategy does not respond to mutually dependent social realities in the lives of girls



Our analysis points out to various strategies with a central idea that programs must now focus on long term change with consistent attention on bridging the funding and implementation barriers of age; by preventing division of programs into catering for "children", "adolescents", "women", etc., thereby creating artificial cut-offs in the organic nature of human transition from one phase of life to the next and harming the very process which they intend to facilitate. Further, we find that irrespective of their ideological and strategic approaches, programs for girls must encompass the idea of building agency. By agency, we mean working with structures: building policy accountability and raising voices in an ecosystem where harmful norms are perpetuated and

nurtured. We also mean that agency building work should be carefully articulated otherwise it runs the risk of burdening an individual with responsibilities for change and makes it easier to absolve systems and structures of their accountabilities.

In a nutshell, we propose the following principles for amplifying the work on empowerment of adolescents that link back to the questions we started the review with. We encourage readers of this report to understand these principles as desirable when designing and implementing programs for adolescents, irrespective of the thematic focus of a program. The figure provides a brief description for each of the



principles, which are arranged in a circular fashion to acknowledge that these are not linear and will not be achievable in a sequential manner, in practice.

We hope that this report contributes to the consolidation of a diverse body of programming experiences and the development of a holistic conceptual framework for understanding barriers, their antecedents and consequences particularly for empowering adolescents in the truest sense, where their voices find an enabling environment to be heard and asserted as and when they decide to.

As young women's bodies become sites of contestation between various forces in the social, economic and

political domains, expression of choice for girls and making their voices heard becomes increasingly difficult to achieve. In this context, better linkages between research and practice as well as two-way knowledge flow between the two is essential to strengthen efforts for adolescents' empowerment. Our research is pointing to a deeper understanding of the interlinkages between lack of sexual autonomy and norms around gender-based violence, opportunities and risks mediated by expanding digital spaces and many other nuances that remain to be discovered from within the vast field of implementation knowledge to understand effective approaches for policy making, programming and research for adolescents' empowerment.



## Emerging opportunities for future research and practice

- 1 What is the influence of intergenerational effects [or lack thereof] programming on violence, especially those perpetrated by harmful gender norms?
- 2 How can empowerment programs unpack the idea of empowerment further to enable stronger advocacy for better policy and systems?
- 3 What could be some effective ways to create context relevant role models for young people?  
Need for more role models from the community, to be able to negotiate with families.
- 4 What are the policy and implementation gaps of services and schemes on SRHR, livelihoods, education and relationship issues?
- 5 How do we deepen the current understanding of digital spaces and the nature and extent of adolescents' engagement with digital platforms?
- 6 What research methodologies can be designed to enable inclusion of adolescents in the process of knowledge creation more effectively?
- 7 What are some of the critical elements of influence of organizational values and ideology on program implementation strategies?
- 8 What are the interlinkages between lack of sexual autonomy and norms around gender-based violence?
- 9 How can programs enable better linkages between aspirations for education and aspirations for work, especially for girls?

## END NOTES

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The Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RSEAG) SABLA was a centrally sponsored program of the Government of India, initiated in April 2011, replacing the erstwhile Kishori Shakti Yojana (Indian Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF | Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2017) and merging it with the Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG) and piloted in 200 districts in India. The program targeted 11-18-year-old girls, both in and out-of-school, to provide comprehensive services that include life skills, health and nutrition, reproductive and sexual health, mainstreaming out-of-school girls into formal and non-formal education. The aims of the scheme were as follows: enable adolescent girls for self-development and empowerment; improve their nutrition and health status; promote awareness about health, hygiene, nutrition, adolescent reproductive and sexual health and family and child care; upgrade home-based skills, life skills and integrate with the National Skill Development program for vocational skills; mainstream out-of-school adolescent girls into formal/non-formal education; provide information/guidance about existing public services such as Primary Health Center (PHC), Community Health Center (CHC), Post Office, Bank, Police Station etc. The SABLA initiative offered a potential platform to address current gaps in programming for adolescent girls on a country-wide scale. Notably the scheme explicitly stated that state governments may identify and work directly with NGOs and CBOs to impart related services. The scheme document stated, “State Governments/UTs may involve Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), NGOs, CBOs, other institutions for the successful implementation of the scheme. NGOs/CBOs and other Institutions will be identified for imparting Nutrition and Health Education, Life skill education, Guidance on Family Welfare, ARSH, Child Care Practices and Home Management, training of sakhi/saheli and training of trainers. These will be selected in consultation with Project Officers based on the accessibility and availability of these organizations *At field level. The MNGOs and other organizations already working on similar interventions with Programmes of other departments like health, NACO, Youth Affairs, Rural Development, etc. may be utilized for RGSEAG. There will be flexibility to ensure that local level decisions may be taken.*” As such, several organizations got an opportunity to directly engage in the providing technical as well as implementation support to the scheme. Ford Foundation supported many of these organizations to provide services under the mandate of SABLA and supplemented their partnership efforts with the government. The review covers five such organizations.

The other set of programs focused on addressing early and child marriages. According to the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “child marriage” is a marriage in which at least one of the parties is a child. “Early marriage” refers to marriages involving a person aged below 18, but can also refer to marriages where both spouses are 18 or older but other factors make them unready to consent to marriage, such as their level of physical, emotional, sexual and psychosocial development, or a lack of information regarding the person’s life options. While both early and child marriage stresses on the age at marriage, without highlighting consent, the term forced marriage encompasses all marriages where one or both the parties have not expressed their free and full consent to marry. For the purpose of this review we have used the terminology as Early, Child and Forced Marriage since it would encompass all marriages where there have been lack of consent, either due to age, legal maturity or due to lack of any information that deprives from giving informed consent.

In India, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) defines “Child marriage” as a marriage where either of the contracting parties is a “child,” defined as 21 years of age for a male and 18 years for a female and finds its roots in traditions and is often enforced by the gendered norms and customary laws that justify marrying of girls when they reach puberty. Coupled with extreme poverty and rigid value attachment to “sexual purity” for girls, early and child marriages perpetuate the cycle of gendered disadvantages for girls forced into a life sans choice around education, employment, healthy sexual and romantic companionship and growth. This is rampant in India and 27%

girls are married before the age of 18 (UNICEF,2017). International development efforts have increasingly focused on addressing this issue with multiple regional and national efforts; notably in South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa, with a focus to build greater and consolidated efforts in these regions, including convergent strategies across porous trafficking borders and region specific cultural enablers of ECFM. In this context, there have been regional convergence efforts such as the Regional Action Plan to End Child Marriage in South Asia, developed by the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) in 2014, South Asian Coordinating Group (SACG) on Action against Violence against Children, ESCAP Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, Asia Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), Asia Child Marriage Initiative, Girls Not Brides, ECPAT and Improving adolescents' lives in South Asia to name a few.

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# ANNEXURES

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## ANNEXURE 1

### LIST OF ADOLESCENT POLICIES IN INDIA

#### **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act – 2006**

Enacted by the Government, PCMA prohibits solemnization of child marriages. The Act defines a child in case of a male who has not completed 21 years of age and a female who has not completed 18 years of age. If either, or both the contracting parties is a child as per this definition, the marriage is voidable and punishable (for anyone who performs, conducts, abets and directs the marriage including parents of whom the child is a responsibility).

#### **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act – 2012**

The Act provides protection to all children less than 18 years of age from the offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography. The Act provides for stringent punishments, which have been graded as per the gravity of the offence which include fines and imprisonment decided by the Court.

#### **The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 – Amendment Bill 2012**

The Act of 1986 prohibited the engagement of children (until 14 years) in certain types of hazardous occupations and regulated the conditions of work for children in other occupations. The Amendment Bill, 2012 prohibits the employment of children below 14 years in all occupations and prohibits employment of adolescents (14-18 years) in hazardous occupations.

#### **National Population Policy – 2000**

Recognised for the first time that adolescents constitute an under-served group with special sexual and reproductive health needs, and thus, advocates special programmatic attention to addressing this population. Primary recommendations include: access to sexual and reproductive health information,

counselling services that are affordable and accessible and delay age of marriage.

#### **National Youth Policy – 2003**

Addressing needs of those aged 13-35 years but recognizes adolescents (13-19 years) as a special group requiring different strategies than those appropriate for young adults. Primary focuses include: services and information to enhance safe sexual behaviours, raise age at marriage, information on STI's, establishment of adolescent clinics and Youth Health Associations at grassroots levels. Commitment to redress gender imbalances among young people in terms of age at marriage, nutritional status and life skills building.

#### **National Scheme for Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education – 2008**

Central Government Sponsored Scheme where a fixed amount is deposited as fixed deposit in the name of eligible unmarried girls. The amount along with interest can be withdrawn by girls only on attaining the age of 18 and passing X Standard Examination.

#### **National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship – 2015**

The reformulated National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2015, was accompanied by the National Skill Development Mission aiming to skill or upgrade the skills of 150 million people by 2022. An umbrella initiative coordinating with a number of agencies toward building livelihood skills and linking trainees with employment opportunities. Training offered in a range of skills to those aged 18 and above.

#### **Adolescence Education Program – 2005**

Implemented by Ministry of Human Resource Development and institutionalized in three formal school systems among students of class 9. Major

content areas of the program including focus on physical changes during adolescence, enhancing self-esteem, maintaining positive and responsible relationships, challenging discrimination and raising awareness about gender and sexuality, pregnancy prevention and prevention of HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. Program trained a master pool of trainers that orient teachers from participating schools who then transact AEP to school students.

### **Scheme for Adolescent Girls – 2017**

Earlier known as the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls or SABLA scheme, the Scheme for Adolescent Girls implemented by Ministry of Women and Child Development aimed at breaking inter-generational life cycle of nutritional and gender disadvantage and providing supportive environment for self-development. The target group covers out of school adolescent girls aged 11-14 years, first implemented in 205 districts in the country. Later, the program expanded to an additional 303 districts in 2017-18. Focus: improve nutrition and health status; awareness of health and hygiene; support transition back to formal schooling or bridge learning; information on existing public services and upgrading home and life skills.

### **Kishori Shakti Yojana – 2017**

The scheme targets girls between the age of 11-18 years and focuses on improving nutritional, health and development status; promoting awareness on health, hygiene, nutrition and family care; and linking girls to opportunities for learning life skills, including going back to school. Covers a total of 6118 blocks in the country and fosters convergence with other sectoral programs to address interrelated needs of adolescent girls and women to bring about holistic development.

### **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA) – 2010**

SABLA replaced the erstwhile *Kishori Shakti Yojana* in the 200 districts where the program was introduced – to empower adolescent girls aged 11-18 years by improving their nutritional health status and addressing their multi-dimensional problems.

The SABLA scheme that provides adolescent girls a package of interventions including literacy and numeracy skills training, life skills education, vocational skills training, guidance on public resources, health check-ups and referral services and nutritional supplementation. The program establishes girls' groups in existing Anganwadi centres where out-of-school and in-school meet regularly.

### **Sukanya Samridhi Account – 2015**

In 2015, the Prime Minister launched a new small savings scheme for improving welfare of girl children in India and encouraging education. An account can be opened for a girl child (until she is 10 years of age), and a partial withdrawal can be made on the account balance only after the girl child is 18 years of age and only for the purpose of financing her higher education. The account remains operative for 12 years from the date of opening the account or till after the marriage of the girl.

### **Dhanlakshmi Scheme – 2008**

Launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in eleven selected backward blocks of seven states to change the perception of society toward girls as financial liabilities. The scheme provides conditional cash transfers to the family of the girl child for ensuring her survival and better life chances. The staggered cash transfers are provided upon registration of birth, progress and completion of immunization, enrolment and retention of girl child in school till 8th standard etc. Finally, an amount of one lakh rupees is given to the girl if she remains unmarried till the age of 18. The scheme applies to all girl children irrespective of socio-economic status and number of girl children in the family.

### **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) – 2001-02**

Government of India's comprehensive and integrated flagship program launched in partnership with State Governments and Local Self-Governments to attain Universal Elementary Education across the country. The program aims at providing useful and relevant universal elementary education for children (6-14 years) with a special focus on girls' education and children with special needs, improve quality of learning, school



retention rates and reduce gender and social gaps. The focus is also on opening new schools in remote areas while strengthening existing school infrastructure in others. Going by the 2011 census, the SSA potentially serves 234 million children; with includes 133 million young adolescents aged 10-14 years.

### ***Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) – 2009***

The RMSA scheme serves adolescents in secondary school between the ages of 15 and 19 aiming to increase enrolment rate to 90% at secondary and 75% at higher secondary levels. This is done by ensuring a secondary school is within reasonable distance of every home, improving the quality of education at all secondary schools, removing gender, socio-economic and disability barriers all toward providing universal access to secondary-level education and enhancing retention. The scheme focuses on facilitating education of girls from educationally backward groups through community mobilization, boarding and transport facilities, safety measures and sanitation, accommodation and allowance for female teachers and more.

### ***Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) – 1987-88***

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports implements various schemes that pay special attention to providing opportunities for the holistic development of the youth including the NYKS. The NYKS is one of the largest grassroots level youth organisation in the world, establishing a network of youth clubs with a membership of some 8.5 million distributes in over 300,000 clubs in 623 districts. With support from the United Nation Population Fund, teen clubs were established especially for adolescent leadership and citizenship building. This programme encompasses activities such as life skills education, counselling and career guidance and residential camps as a means to acquire basic education and life skills for those that are outside the formal education system.

### ***Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) – 2014***

The DDU-GKY was implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2014 as part of the National Rural

Livelihood Mission. The scheme focuses on developing skills and providing employment to poor rural families, notably those aged between 15-35 years. The programme which aims to reach over 55 million poor rural youth is currently operating in 21 states and union territories and has thus far, trained 270,000 persons and placed 134,000 in jobs.

### ***Reproductive, Maternal, New-born Child plus Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) – 2013***

Launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the RMNCH+A strategy is built upon the continuum of care concept and is holistic in design, encompassing all interventions aimed at beneficiaries under a broad umbrella. The plus within the strategy focuses on the inclusion of adolescence as a distinct life stage within the overall strategy – linking maternal and child health to reproductive health, family planning, adolescent health, HIV, gender and other issues. It seeks to strengthen existing health systems, increase effectiveness of investments and interventions based on geographical needs assessments, monitoring and accountability of services and partnerships with ministries, departments, development partners, civil society and other stakeholders.

### ***Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) – 2014***

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, as part of the larger RMNCH+A approach launched RKSK – a health program for all adolescents, girls and boys, married and unmarried between the ages of 10-19 years. The program targets adolescent nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, attitudes toward violence, substance abuse, among other issues. The intention is to provide information and counselling, sources of supplies and services and legal facilities so adolescents can make informed and responsible decisions related to health and well-being. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare collaborated with UNFPA to develop a National Adolescent Health Strategy guiding the implementation of this program, which is implemented through community-based interventions, peer education facilities, various kinds of health and nutrition camps and awareness generation.

## ANNEXURE 2

### LIST OF DOCUMENTS FROM RESEARCH PARTNERS UTILIZED FOR DESK RESEARCH

#### List of project documents (ECM)

No.	Title	Source	Year
1	Early Marriage: Formative Research	Breakthrough	2013
2	Breakthrough's Work in Early Marriage	Breakthrough	2014
3	ANANDI-Annual Reporting to Ford Foundation	ANANDI	2017
4	Child Marriage: Briefing Paper	Centre for Reproductive Rights	2013
5	Ending Impunity for Child Marriage	Centre for Reproductive Rights	2018
6	HAQ Child Marriage Mid- Term Evaluation Report	HAQ-CRC	2014
7	Prevention of Child Marriage: Impact on Girls	HAQ-CRC	2016
8	Strengthening Existing Systems for Prevention of Child Marriage	HAQ-CRC	2014
9	Biennial Report (2015-17)	MAMTA_HIMC	2017
10	Post-Hoc Evaluation of an Intervention in Jamui and Sawai Madhopur	MAMTA- HIMC	2018
11	Empowering Girls: Endline Project Report	Women Power Connect	2015

#### List of project documents (SABLA)

No.	Title	Source	Year
1.	SABLA District Level Report for Jharkhand	C3	2012
2.	Swanirbhar: Building Agency & Skills	C3	2011
3.	Strengthening Implementation of SABLA Scheme Project Description	CINI	2012
4.	SABLA Narrative Report	Jagori	2015
5.	AGAJ Aware Girls Action for Justice	Jagori	2012
6.	It's My Body: Sexual and Reproductive RigWhts	CREA	2014
7.	TARANG: An Initiative to Support SABLA By Sahayog, An Evaluation Report	SAHAYOG	2013
8.	Adolescent as Citizens & Change Agents	SAHAJ	2016
9.	Exploration of implementation of SABLA in Gujarat	SAHAJ	2011

## ANNEXURE 3

### BRIEF SNAPSHOT OF THE GRANTS REVIEWED

#### Grants on Early Child and Forced Marriages

Name of Research Partners	Breakthrough	HAQ	MAMTA-HIMC	ANANDI	Center for Reproductive Rights	Women's fund Asia	Women Power Connect
Objectives	The project has the long-term goal of facilitating an environment conducive to reduction and prevention of early marriage using multimedia campaigns, Community mobilization, and leadership development.	Assessing the implementation of PCMA in the cases of child marriage. Strengthening of the legal systems and ensuring accountability of these systems to reduce child marriage and provide sustainability.	The project aimed to test feasibility of inter-ministerial convergence at the district level to address the problem of child marriage. The first grant was given to assess the mechanism of convergence in the district	The young women's safety and security program a solidarity-based model where safe spaces would be created to ensure dialogue between adolescent girls and young women in the community - as support structures to enable the development of early warning systems in cases of early child marriage, elopement, kidnapping etc.	A regional initiative to expand the discourse on child marriage in South Asia and develop legal strategies that promote the recognition and prioritization of child marriage as a human rights issue	Grant making, to organizations focused on training and technical assistance to promote adolescents' and young women's right to bodily integrity and decision making with respect to early and forced marriages	Advocacy, community mobilization, networking and alliance building to promote implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act
Geographies	Gaya in Bihar Hazaribagh and Ranchi in Jharkhand	Ajmer, Rajasthan, Birbhum and Murshidabad in West Bengal and Warangal and Mahbubnagar, Andhra Pradesh	Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan and Jamui in Bihar	Panchmahals and Dahod districts of Gujarat	South Asia	Sri Lanka and India	Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh

Name of Research Partners	Breakthrough	HAQ	MAMTA-HIMC	ANANDI	Center for Reproductive Rights	Women's fund Asia	Women Power Connect
Field Implementation Partners	NA	Mahila Jan Adhikar Samito (Raj), Jabala Action Research (W.B.), MV Foundation (A.P.) (3)	NA	NA	Danish Foundation (Delhi), World Vision India (Delhi), North East Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses (NESPYM) (Assam)		Chetna Vikas and Badlao Foundation (Jharkhand), Mahila Chetna Manch (MP), Gramin Evam Nagar Vikas Parishadh (Bihar)
Target Groups	Adolescents, (14-18), Community and Stakeholders at block and district level	Adolescents and Community including religious leaders, legal system	Stakeholders in the ministries (Police, Social Welfare, WCD, Health and Education)	Adolescent girls (14-18), Community members, Panchayats, legal system (through case work), Mahila Sangathans.	Government stakeholders	Adolescents and Young Adults	Female Adolescents - Caste minority
Duration of the grant	2011-2018	2012-2019	2013-2019	2013-2018	2013-2015	2013-2018	2012-2015

## Grants on SABLA

Name of the organization	Sahayog Society for Participatory Rural Development	Child in Need Institute	SAHAJ	Jagori Rural	Centre for Catalyzing Change
Objective	Strengthen and expand the SABLA program along with expanding the scope of SRHR to include questions on gender, discrimination, by capacity building of young girls from within the community.	Strengthen the SABLA scheme and address existing gaps at the state level, the district level and the block level covering Anganwadi centers to ensure processes through which adolescent girls become a part of decision-making platforms	Increase awareness of government programs and services for adolescents & create a leadership/ citizenship model for adolescents from a gender & rights perspective.	To build the capacity of the teenage girls, develop & strengthen girls' leadership skills & help the government incorporate gender in the SABLA scheme for empowering rural teenage girls	To consolidate learning, enhance government capacities for effective implementation of SABLA and SWANIRBHAR programs for adolescent girls' empowerment and life and livelihood skills in three states
Geographies	4 districts in Uttar Pradesh and 1 district in Uttarakhand	8 districts in West Bengal	Vadodara and Surendranagar, Gujarat	Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand India	Jharkhand, Delhi and Bihar
Field Implementation Partners	Vimarsh (UK), Bundelkhand Development Foundation (UP), Gramya Sansthan (UP), Dehat Sansthan (UP)	NA	SAARTHI (Gujarat), and SWATI (Gujarat)	NA	NA
Target Population	Adolescent girls	Adolescent girls and government stakeholders	Adolescent girls and boys.	Rural Adolescent girls	Adolescent girls with a focus on those from caste minorities.
Duration of the grant	2011-2017	2011-2018	2013-2019	2011-2017	2013-2018



## ANNEXURE 4

### BREAKUP OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES PER FIELD SITE

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Research Partners and States	IDIs	KIIs	FGDs (Adolescents and other stakeholders)
HAQ Center for Child Rights (Rajasthan)	1	2	1
Sahayog (Uttarakhand)	1	2	3
MAMTA-HIMC(Rajasthan)	1	2	1
CINI (West Bengal)	3	3	2
ANANDI (Gujarat)	3	2	3
SAHAJ (Gujarat)	7	2	3
Breakthrough (Jharkhand)	4	2	2
Jagori Rural (Himachal Pradesh)	3	2	2

## ANNEXURE 5

### LIST OF CODE FAMILIES

This list presents the condensed codes (families) that were generated during the coding process.

The team coded all the transcripts as well as key programmatic documents through an inductive coding process, where the codes were based on the what the data showed. Based on initial coding of 10 percent of all transcripts and documents, the coders arrived at a preliminary set of codes that was discussed and agreed upon by all members of the research team and was used as a framework for coding the rest of the documents.

The coders generated about 750 raw codes, based on the patterns in the codes the team categorized the codes into larger sets called families. After an initial categorization, the coders further condensed the categories and came up with 40 families. Some of these families such as 'project activities' comprises of several smaller categories like activities with adolescents, activities with stakeholders etc. In case of more information on the codes, please contact the research team.

SL. No	Code Families	Number of Codes
1.	About the organization	37
2.	About the SABLA scheme	18
3.	Challenges faced by the project	32
4.	Changes occurred because of the project	23
5.	Discussion around Choice and Consent in Marriage	5
6.	Contextual issues	65
7.	Discussions around Laws and Policies	10
8.	Education as an enabler	10
9.	Entry Point for the project	15
10.	Reasons for ECM	9
11.	Human resources in the project's: their roles and journey	35
12.	Inter-generational linkages	2
13.	Internal monitoring mechanisms	11
14.	Issues of adolescents	58
15.	Legal/case work activities	25
16.	Methods used for monitoring	9
17.	Mid-course corrections in the project	5
18.	Norms for adolescents in field sites	45
19.	Partnership Ford and Research partners	10
20.	Partnership Research Partners and Implementation Partners	5
21.	Partnerships/Alliances/ Networks	8
22.	Perceptions around value of education	6
23.	Project activities	82

SL. No	Code Families	Number of Codes
24.	Project description and information	40
25.	Project Target Groups	2
26.	Project Objective	9
27.	Stakeholders in the projects	35
28.	State action & schemes to prevent child marriage	15
29.	Stories for Change	5
30.	Strategies for convergence	10
31.	Strategies for creating an enabling environment	16
32.	Strategies for Engagement through modules & curriculum	7
33.	Strategies for Engagement through sports	4
34.	Strategies related to creating safe spaces	9
35.	Strategies identified as effective strategy	11
36.	Sustainability and scalability of the project	10
37.	Training: Modules and methods	8
38.	Trainings Conducted (Staff, State actor and Community members)	23
39.	Unpacking the issue of ECM	15
40.	Working toward enhanced girls' agency	6

## ANNEXURE 6

### LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

Name	Organization	Position
Manak Matiyani	The YP Foundation	Director
Joshy Joyce	Breakthrough	M&E Director
Sanjana Gaiind	CREA	Director, programs & Innovation- public education
Indira Pancholi	HAQ Center for Child Rights	Consultant and Director, Child Marriage Prevention Program
Sonali Regmi	Center for Reproductive Rights	Country Director, Nepal
Sunil Mehra	MAMTA-Health Institute for Mother and Child	Director
Paula Das	Sahayog Society for Participatory Rural Development (Sahayog)	Assistant Coordinator
Parul Sethi	Women Power Connect	Program Associate
Anisha Chugh	Women's Fund Asia	Program Manager
Karuna Phillip	Mahila Jan Adhikar Samiti	Manager
Praveer Goyal	Mamta	State Manager
Dr. Indrani Bhattacharya	CINI	Deputy Director
Neeta Adhikari	ANANDI	Founder
Sangeeta	SAHAJ	Director
Alok Bharti	Breakthrough	State Coordinator
Dr. Ravi Verma	International Centre for Research On Women	Regional Director
Hemlata Verma	International Centre for Research On Women	Technical Specialist
Dr. Nasreen Jamal	International Centre for Research on Women	Chief of Projects, UMANG, Jharkhand

## ANNEXURE 7

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (EXPERTS CONVENING ON LEARNING REVIEW ON WHAT WORKS FOR ADOLESCENTS EMPOWERMENT)

SL No.	NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION
1.	Aparna Uppaluri	Program Officer	Ford Foundation
2.	Amita Pitre	Lead Specialist, Gender Justice	Oxfam India
3.	Archana Dwivedi	Director	Nirantar Resource Centre
4.	Dhirendra Pratap Singh	Chief Executive Officer	Milaan Foundation
5.	Indrani Bhattacharya	Deputy Director	CINI
6.	Julie Thekkudan	Independent Consultant	Independent Consultant
7.	Malavika Pavamani	Director of Fundraising	Pravah
8.	Manushi Seth	Coordinator	SAHAJ
9.	Nisha Dhawan	Country Director	EMpower
10.	Priyanka Sreenath	Deputy Director, RMNCHA	MAMTA-HIMC
11.	Renu Khanna	Founding Trustee	SAHAJ
12.	Rhea Chawla	Coordinator, SRHR	The YP Foundation
13.	Rupsa Mallik	Director Programs and Innovation	CREA
14.	Samar Verma	Program Officer	Ford Foundation
15.	Santwana Adhikari	Project Manager	CINI
16.	Shobana Boyle	National Program Officer-Gender	UNFPA
17.	Suman Bharti	Coordinator, Technical Support Unit	ANANDI
18.	Vanita Mukherjee	Independent Consultant	Independent Consultant
19.	Y.K. Sandhya	Assistant Coordinator	Sahayog India
20.	Ketaki V. Nagaraju	Communications Coordinator	ICRW
21.	Kuhika Seth	Senior Research Associate	ICRW
22.	Nalini V. Khurana	Research Associate, UMANG	ICRW
23.	Poulomi Pal	Technical Specialist and Research Team Member	ICRW
24.	Prerna Kumar	Senior Technical Specialist and PI Plan-IT Girls	ICRW
25.	Ravi Verma	Regional Director, Asia	ICRW
26.	Sapna Kedia	Technical Specialist	ICRW
27.	Sharmishtha Nanda	Technical Specialist and Research Team Member	ICRW
28.	Sneha Sharma	Senior Research Associate and Team Member	ICRW
29.	Srishty Anand	Senior Research Associate and Team Member	ICRW
30.	Subhalakshmi Nandi	Directory, Policy and Advocacy	ICRW



## ANNEXURE 8

# A BRIEF NOTE ON STATE SPECIFIC GENDER NORMS AND BARRIERS FOR ADOLESCENT EMPOWERMENT AS NARRATED BY RESPONDENTS

This note is to briefly capture specific norms that adolescent girls spoke about in the states where we conducted primary research, in relation to what affects their lives the most. The note does not provide a comprehensive view of norms that may exist in the state otherwise, but only a snapshot of the most dominating ones.

### 1. Uttarakhand

In Uttarakhand the rigid traditional norms equally oppress the girls, taboos around menstruation affect the girls' both physical and mentally. They are made to stay in a cow shed till the period of their menstruation and are not allowed to be around other family members, eat or drink with them or use the same utensils as other family members. There is little to no concern about their hygiene conditions putting them at a higher risk of infection. There are several other restrictions that girls and women face, and because of Uttarakhand being a land of temples, with major Hindu pilgrimages being in the state, the religious beliefs of the people in state are stronger and all these taboos are one of the manifestations of it.

### 2. Rajasthan

This state has been one of the lowest on gender empowerment index in the country. For the past decade, there has been a major investment in the state to end child marriage. The girls here are married at as young as toddlers, while there has been a delay in the average age of "gauna" but this just shows the shift in age. There has been no change in taking into consideration the choice of these girls, these girls still do not see an alternative to marriage and are mostly married and sent off to their in laws home by the age of 18. There are many more practices such as "aata sata", where the brother and sister from only

family get married to sister and brother from another family respectively. Also, in some cases sisters from one family are married off together in another family, this is done to ensure that in the marital home, a girl will find some support in form of her sister. There are several such practices around marriage that ensures that girls and women don't get to exercise any choice in their life decisions.

### 3. Gujarat

The projects under the review were being implemented in Surendranagar, Dahod and Panchmahals. These districts are characterized by a high tribal population. In this area, we see that in a marriage while the girl might be of legal age (18 or above), it is the boy who is younger than the girl. The grooms in this case do not understand the responsibilities that marriage entails. The girls are expected to contribute to the household both within and outside, it is also expected that the girls will take care of the boy. In most cases later when the boy gets older, he often gets attracted to someone younger and the situation gets complex. It's the first wife who is at an extremely vulnerable position vis a vis her husband and in-laws and often does not have any support system to fall back upon. Secondly, in these areas we also saw a lot of instances of runaway marriages by young boys and girls

### 4. Jharkhand

In Jharkhand's Hazaribagh district, the discussions with the girls were largely focused on how they don't have equal rights as their brothers or other boys in the community. They feel this especially since they are not allowed to study further than 12th standard, or even those who do study till their graduation do that without the aspiration of employment. Sexual

harassment or fear of sexual harassment while accessing an institution of education is one of the major reasons why these girls drop in between. The other issue that the girls raised prominently was around dowry, an adolescent girl from Jharkhand also shared that *"I feel that if the problem of dowry ends the value of girls will increase and this will solve every other problem"*. Dowry has been attributed to be one of the major causes for child marriage in Jharkhand, since younger the girls less is the dowry. The amount of money also increases with the level of education a girl attains, with girls being viewed as a liability and their contribution in the household being limited. The incentive of less dowry ensures that this practices such as child marriage continue.

## 5. West Bengal

In West Bengal, the review focused on Murshidabad district, which has a significant Muslim population and is also a bordering district. The challenges of this district were different from other places included in the review by virtue of these two specific characteristics of the location. Muslim cultural practices and rituals just as Hindu practices are highly gender normative as well as religion influenced. Issues such as triple talaq that is visible public debates now have heavily influenced women's conditions within the community. Moreover, existence of madrasas as an educational channel often leads to differential education for children belonging to Muslim families and may or may not lead them to opportunities available to their counterparts from other communities due to structural inadequacies for inclusion. In this scenario, the marginalization of girls is further enhanced. In Murshidabad, fear of trafficking across borders is also high as many poor families have

fallen trap to trafficking mafia. This fear amplifies control over girls' mobility, access and opportunities beyond their villages to pursue higher education and work opportunities.


## 6. Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh like its neighboring state Uttarakhand is a land of pilgrim for the Hindus and has a significant majority of Hindu population including in the tribal districts. With better socio-economic indicators for development, the state has been performing better on a lot of parameters such as economic participation of women, more women participating in household decisions, or progress in women's health etc. However, religious norms itself exercise huge social control on the women and influence their overall wellbeing. Multiplicity of festivals where girls and women are supposed to participate, events and rituals where girl's natal families have to share gifts, all along her marital life and so on are some non-negotiable social expectations. The high hilly terrain of the state adds to the existing problems that women face around access and mobility. Lack of accessible roads makes it extremely difficult for girls to continue their education. Due to lack of safety measures, parents are skeptical in sending their girls to schools/ colleges far off, although the rate of dropouts in Himachal Pradesh is lesser. The reporting of crimes against women is also extremely low because of the shame and guilt that comes along with it. Caste issues are very prominent in Himachal Pradesh due to an overwhelming Hindu population and existing notions of social segregation that are held on to very strongly. This adds to women's marginalization in many ways.



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