

LET THEM FLY

A Multi-Agency Response to Child Marriages in Haryana

**Trupti Jhaveri Panchal
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**Resource Centre for Interventions on
Violence Against Women
TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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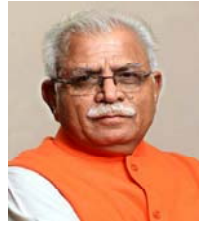


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Foreword

by

Ms. Amneet P. Kumar

Director, Women and Child Development
Department, Government of Haryana

Special Cell for women and children is an initiative of the Department of Women and Child and Home Department, to eradicate Violence against Women and prevent Child Marriages. The Protection-cum-Prohibition Officers (PPOs) have been appointed at each Special Cell under Section 8 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and Section 16 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. The mandate of Special Cell is to take steps to stop the child Marriages and provide help/ relief to victim of domestic violence by active coordination at district level.

This study is based on the interventions by Protection-cum-Prohibition Officers in the period of January 2009 to December 2011 and helps us to understand the impact of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 in Haryana. From 2009 to 2011, 597 complaints of child marriages and 13406 complaints of Domestic Violence were registered with the Protection cum Prohibition Officers. 241 complaints were resolved through counselling.

I believe this study will prove useful and inspiring to Haryana as well as other States in strategizing new ways to address the persistent problem of child marriage.

I would like to acknowledge the Resource Centre for Intervention on Violence against Women (RCI-VAW), Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai which undertook this study. They were also technical resource partners in establishing the Special Cells for Women and Children.

(Smt. Amneet P. Kumar)

Preface

Government of Haryana began implementing Special Cells for Women and Children at police stations in 2008. These Special Cells have the mandate to implement the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 (PCMA) and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) has been involved as the technical partner in this endeavour right from the beginning on account of its experience of 30 years in running Special Cells in the state of Maharashtra to provide a multi-agency co-ordinated response to women survivors of violence.

Four years into the implementation of the scheme, Haryana State government acknowledged the need for an assessment of the implementation of the PCMA through the Special Cells. Resource Centre for Interventions on Violence against Women (RCI-VAW) is a TISS initiative that provides advocacy, training and research services to the Special Cells. It undertook this task of studying the work of the Special Cells in Haryana.

This report focuses on the work of the Protection-cum-Prohibition Officers (PPOs) related to child marriage – prohibition as well as intervention with affected families and children. It involves data collection across the state looking at the records of the PPOs but more significantly capturing the voices of the young people whose marriages were prevented through the planned action of the PPOs. The effort involved in identifying these young people who were brave enough to speak out mirrors in a small way the difficulties that PPOs face in implementing this legislation.

This report is one of the first to study this issue in the state of Haryana. It documents practices related to child marriages in the state as well as explores reasons underlying local communities' continued support for these harmful practices. Through a pro-woman perspective we attempt to understand these issues and make recommendations to enhance the work of the PPOs. We are extremely happy to share this report with you and hope it will influence your understanding of child marriage and the sensitivities involved in intervening on this issue.

Trupti Jhaveri Panchal
Vinita Ajgaonkar

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We would like to record our gratitude to all those people who have made this study possible.

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To Prof. Anjali Dave and Prof. Devi Prasad, for holding our hand throughout the project, for supporting us when we stumbled and guiding us when we got lost.

List of Acronyms

- CMPO - Child Marriage Prohibition Officer
- CMRA - Child Marriage Restraint Act
- DHS - Demographic and Health Surveys
- DLHS - District Level Household and Facility Survey
- ICRW - International Center for Research on Women
- NCRB - National Crime Records Bureau
- NIPCCD - National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development
- PCMA - Prohibition of Child Marriage Act
- PWDVA - Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act
- PPO - Protection-cum-Prohibition Officer
- TISS - Tata Institute of Social Sciences
- UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
- UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

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Executive Summary

The Prohibition of Child Marriages Act (PCMA), 2006 came into effect on 1 November, 2007 replacing the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929. PCMA is a social re-engineering mechanism which mandates State Governments to establish structures such as Child Marriage Prohibition Officers who are empowered to prevent child marriages.

After reviewing the two pilot Special Cells for Women and Children initiated in June 2007 in Jind and Ambala districts (with financial support from UNDP and technical assistance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences), the State Government of Haryana incorporated these Special Cells as a government programme. Today each of the 21 districts in Haryana state operates a Special Cell within District Police Headquarters. Special Cells recognize child marriage as a form of violence against women. Therefore, each Special Cell has one Protection-cum-Prohibition Officer (PPO) — one of whose key responsibility is to prevent child marriages. Between 2009 and 2011, PPOs intervened in more than four hundred cases of child marriages. The current report is a review of the implementation of the act in Haryana through the PPOs.

Objectives of the Review

- Identify the factors leading to persistence of child marriages in Haryana

- Examine the role of Protection-cum-Prohibition Officers in preventing child marriages in Haryana
- Identify the support expected from the different stakeholders to prevent child marriages, and study the support that is actually given.
- Gain an understanding of the support needed by the children rescued from child marriage
- Suggest relevant changes to the legislature to make it more effective.

A mixed methods approach was employed with three different types of data:

1. Special Cells case records of child marriage from January 2009 to December 2011. Records of all districts were included, except then newly-created Palwal district which at the time of data collection had no recorded cases (n=472)
2. In-depth interviews with PPOs at all districts except then newly-created Palwal district (n=20)
3. In-depth interviews with children rescued from child marriages and/or their families (n=20). Cases were chosen from Special Cells records through non-random convenience sampling and included 17 girls and 3 boys. In 12 cases, the child as well one parent was interviewed while in 6 cases only the parent consented to speak to the interviewers. Only in one case was the child alone interviewed.

While interviewing the children and parents the researchers encountered much resistance. Though it would have been better to have a larger sample here, this was not practically feasible. In some instances of interviewing the child, parents insisted on being present and this may have influenced the responses of the child.

Findings

- From 2009 to 2011, 472 cases of child marriages were registered with the PPOs — with a doubling of cases over each year. This indicates the increased reporting of such cases as a likely effect of growing awareness of the legislation. However, this is unlikely to reflect the totality of cases in the state.
- Cases of child marriage more than doubled in the April-June quarter. This is the period when Akha Teej, considered very auspicious for marriages is celebrated, and when the harvesting season is over and people attend to non-agrarian priorities.
- Sirsa district bordering Rajasthan registers the maximum number of cases (17.2%).
- An overwhelming majority of cases reported are of girls. Girls aged 15 to 17 years comprise the majority of child marriage cases registered (53%). But the youngest cases registered are of girls aged 7 years.
- While Hindu households account for the vast majority of cases registered (94.1%) there are also some 2.3% cases reported from Muslim households.
- Parents report marrying off girl children “when the girl starts looking grown up (*thadi ho gai*).”
- Security of young girls is a major concern. Parents look at marriage as the only way they can protect girls from sexual harassment. Early marriage tends to interrupt education of girls. Information about education was available in little more than half the case records (55%) and this shows that most child brides tend to drop out from school after class 7 with just a small number acquiring secondary education. This was confirmed in the interviews with parents and rescued children. Here, the reasons mirrored those for early marriage - concern about security of the girls. Further, both PPOs and the rescued

girls themselves pointed out that often secondary school is not available close to the homes of the girls and while travelling longer distances to access secondary education, girls are often subjected to sexual harassment.

- Families also fear self-arranged alliances that are love marriages (about a third of parents). So they feel child marriages are justified. It also appears — from the interviews of PPOs — that in a large number of child marriages, marriage is forced on the girl because she eloped or had an affair.
- Some parents cited economic compulsions to justify child marriages where 2 siblings such as a brother and a sister may be married off at the same time. The stated justification is that this saves the cost of marriage. But even though the researchers asked about alternative ways to reduce costs of marriage such as registered marriages, the interviewees did not find these culturally acceptable. PPOs who were interviewed reported that they did not find this a sufficient reason. They instead felt that parents and family members were keen to push their children into early marriages as a way to get rid of their familial responsibility.
- Some parents justified their support of early marriages by saying that a marriage was not immediately consummated. Rather they would only send the girl to the in-laws place when she was physically mature – custom called *gauna*
- Finally, PPOs reported that there is increasing difficulty in finding a wife which compels people to arrange a child marriage. According to some parents, this difficulty has strengthened the practice of *atta-satta*, where the daughter of one family is given in marriage to another family only when that family is willing to give their daughter in marriage to the first family. Age of the girl is a factor that is often ignored in this transaction.

- Interviews showed that children were not consulted when deciding to marry them off early. Some children were not even aware that such plans had been framed.
- PPOs generally respond to complaints of child marriages when they are filed though they also act on media reports. The major challenges here are compulsion to intervene at the last minute, difficulties in age verification and a hostile reaction of community.
- It was noted that one perverse reason for reporting child marriage was when boys from landholding families, who were sexually exploiting girls working in their farms, would report their victims' marriage in order to be able to continue with their abuse.
- PPOs reported reaching marriage *mandaps* (venues) at the eleventh hour and being compelled to intervene while rituals are in progress. They reported facing deep hostility from community members and requiring the support of police personnel.
- PPOs spoke in detail about difficulty in age verification: Families often only register the birth of male children and not those of female children. Sometimes they arrange false certificates. The ossification test to determine age does not pinpoint the exact age but indicates an age span of two years, which becomes a problem when the girl is short of attaining majority by a year or two.
- Though many PPOs suggested that it is important to move beyond a complaint-based model and instead use community structures that could track child marriages such as the sarpanch, there was also doubt expressed over the genuine desire of the sarpanch to undertake this role. It was also suggested that the village chowkidaar who keeps track of all births and deaths in that village should do the same for all marriages.

- Following intervention by a PPO, child brides whose marriages were halted reportedly need the following kinds of supports: Educational support leading to financial self sufficiency, Emotional support and counselling, Counselling for parents and Shelter homes.
- In all 20 cases where a child marriage was prevented, it was noted that families experienced financial repercussions of cancelling the marriage. Majority of families also experienced social humiliation when the child's marriage was prohibited. To deal with the snide comments and gossip from neighbours, help was reportedly sought from the panchayat. Besides the panchayat, community mediation by PPOs also appeared to be effective.
- Many parents stated that they are not aware of PCMA – thus indicating a need for a legal literacy and awareness-building through the media.
- Other suggestions for support to children whose marriage has been prevented include: Promoting access to education, financial assistance for education, promoting an atmosphere of security for girls and compulsory registration of birth
- Given the sensitive nature of the work and the immense pressure from the community, PPOs need to receive continued support from the police. Besides this some PPOs mentioned the need for additional support from social workers.
- Finally acknowledging the need for a multi-systemic response, some PPOs suggested sensitization programmes for the judiciary, police personnel and panchayat members.

SECTION 1:

Introduction

Introduction

Child marriage can be defined in many ways in relation to the age of majority and at betrothal. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 defines child marriage as a marriage in which either of the contracting parties is a child. Further, a child is defined as a person who, if male, has not completed twenty-one years of age and, if female, has not completed eighteen years of age (Section 2 a PCM Act, 2006)¹.

Though legally child marriage is a marriage in which either the girl, or a boy or both are children; in reality it affects girls disproportionately. Based on the analysis of global household survey data, UNICEF (2009) reported that a vast majority of children subjected to marriage are girls². Not only that, the practice has far more dire implications for health, education, autonomy and well being of girls than boys³.

Child Marriage as Violence Against Women

The institution of marriage is criticized as being a patriarchal structure, where women are exploited in the interest of men. Women are placed in the role of a “wife” which is subservient to and

¹ Prohibition of Child marriage Act. Retrieved from wcd.nic.in/cma2006.pdf

² UNICEF (2009) Progress for children: A report card on child protection. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/publications/index_50921.html

³ Sagade, J. (2005) *Child Marriage in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

dominated by the “husband”⁴. Marriage reinforces gendered division of labour, with women being burdened with most of the domestic chores, irrespective of their employment outside the home. Traditional marriage imposes an obligation on the wife to be sexually available for her husband on demand and she has no control over her sexuality⁵. Marriage diminishes ties of the woman with her relatives, neighbours, and friends. It is said to encourage abuse, as abusive practices are maintained and exacerbated by ideologies of ownership and entitlement and the well-being of women is undermined by a powerful symbolic act of subordination⁶.

If, as E.V. Ramaswamy Periyar said, marriage condemns a woman to control and servitude⁷, child marriage condemns a girl absolutely. Girls are often married to men older than them, without their consent or even against their wishes. Their health is destroyed as their bodies are not ready for the sexual relationship that follows and for the child bearing that comes as result of the relationship. Their childhood is destroyed with the burden of the domestic chores, they are deprived of educational opportunities and hence opportunities for gainful employment, financial independence, decision making and freedom of choice. Due to their young age, they have little or no power of negotiation in their new home and are vulnerable to all kinds of domestic abuse.

Sagade (2005) argues that child marriage violates a number of human rights of young girls that are enlisted in various international human rights conventions as well as are inscribed in the Indian constitution; such as right to non-discrimination on account of gender, right to liberty and security, right to education and development, right to

⁴ Weadock, B. (2004 August) Disciplining Marriage: Gender, Power and Resistance. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Hilton San Francisco & Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel, San Francisco, CA.

⁵ Barnett, H. A. (1998) *Introduction to Feminist Jurisprudence*. London: Cavendish Publishing.

⁶ Chambers, C. (2010) *Feminism, liberalism and marriage*. Retrieved from <http://ebookbrowse.net/feminism-liberalism-and-marriage-doc-d16304541>.

⁷ Geetha, V. (2009). Theorizing Feminism. In Maitreyi Krishnaraj (Ed.) *Gender* Kolkata: Stree.

health and right to life⁸. Child marriage is thus a form of violence against women, and hence needs to be eliminated.

Tracing Roots of Child Marriage in India

The theory that the institution of marriage developed as an instrument to control female sexuality has been put forth by many scholars. According to Friedrich Engels marriage as an institution emerged as human beings changed their nomadic existence to that of agrarian householders; began to accumulate wealth and developed the notion of private property. Men wanted to own women and control their sexuality, so that they could ensure passing of their wealth to their own seed⁹. Taking this argument forward in an Indian context, Periyar observed that after a man had successfully established his right to private property, he took woman as a wife into the household. This enabled him both to enlist her services to protect his property and supply him with progeny as well as to lay exclusive sexual claims to her person¹⁰.

Marriage alone is not enough to ensure patrilineality of succession. To ensure passing of property from father to his offspring, paternity of the husband has to be undeniably ensured, and since motherhood is a certainty and fatherhood a matter of conjuncture women's sexuality has to be ruthlessly controlled throughout their lives. Women must remain virgins at marriage and monogamous thereafter, because it is only through the rule of elimination that the husband's paternity over his sons can be proved beyond doubt¹¹. Chastity of women thus became of paramount importance, and it seems that not only marriage but the practice of marriage as soon as the girl became

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹ Gupte, M. (2013), Feminism and routine interventions. In Bhate, Deosthli, P., Rege, S., Praksh, P (Eds.), *Feminist Counselling and Domestic Violence in India*, New Delhi: Routledge.

sexually active or even before that gained acceptance along with many other social customs to restrict a woman's sexuality.

Child marriage received religious sanction in India as both Hindu and Muslim religious scriptures which prescribed complete utilization of a woman's fertility period endorsed the practice of early marriages¹². In medieval India, an era marked by political turmoil and military conquests, the obsession of the society with the concept of female virginity and chastity resulted in it being the symbol of the status and honour of the family. Since the practice of child marriage placed the virginity of a young girl above any suspicion and relieved her parents of the responsibility of its protection, it received cultural sanction.

In India, the themes of gender, class and caste are also irrevocably intertwined. Taking this reality into account, Uma Chakravarti argued that after the consolidation of a hierarchical caste and property order, women came to be regarded as gateways – literally points of entrance to the caste system. Women's sexuality had to be carefully guarded to prevent a lower caste person from having sexual access to women of the higher castes in order to preserve upper caste purity. This required that women's sexuality had to be channelled into legitimate motherhood within a tightly controlled structure of reproduction which ensured not only patrilineal succession (by restricting mating only with one man) but also caste purity (by mating only with prescribed partners)¹³. Marrying girls as early as possible eliminated any possibility of transgression.

Prem Chowdhury's research in Haryana also supports this theory and further argues that the custom of marrying both girls and boys as early as possible sustained as it helped in preserving another characteristic feature of the Indian society, the joint family system.

¹² Bhadra, M. (2000) Changing age at marriage of girls in India. *International Journal of Anthropology*, 15(1-2) 33-50.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

According to her, ensuring caste endogamy is essential to ensure perpetuation of caste system. Ensuring village exogamy is imperative to minimize the danger of girls challenging patrilineal inheritance. Not allowing boys and girls to select their own life partner is important to curb their independence which might undermine the authority of senior family members and might presage the break-up of joint family system¹⁴. Sooner the children are wed, less likely are they to exert their autonomy in choosing their own life partner. Thus the practice of child marriages which minimizes the threat to patrilineal succession, caste system as well as the joint family system thrived in Indian society.

Efforts to Prohibit Child Marriage

Efforts to prohibit child marriage were being made even before Independence. The social reform movement gained momentum in India in the Nineteenth century and efforts to eradicate social problems through legislative measures began to be made. One of the earliest reforms introduced was the Age of Consent Act of 1860, which stipulated a minimum age of 10 years for sexual intercourse in order to prevent infant marriages.

The Rukhmabai case in Maharashtra in 1884 and the Phulmonee case in Bengal in 1890 brought the issue of Child Marriage into the limelight. Eleven year old Phulmonee died because of forced intercourse with her thirty five year old husband. Rukhmabai, who was married at the age of 11 but who continued to reside at her natal home and study till the age of 22, thanks to her enlightened stepfather, refused to consummate her marriage when her husband filed a case for restitution of conjugal rights, arguing that she cannot be compelled to be tied in a marriage conducted at an age when she was incapable of giving her consent. These cases and the

¹⁴ Chowdhary, P. (1997) Enforcing cultural codes: Gender and violence in Northern India, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 32(19), 1019-1028.

public debate that ensued pushed the colonial government to raise the age of consent for marriage of girls to twelve¹⁵.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) popularly known as the Sarda Act was passed in 1929. It prohibited child marriages of girls below the age of 14 years and of boys below the age 18 years. This law applied to all citizens of India. The act was amended in 1940 to raise the age of marriage of girls to 15 years. In 1978, the law was amended further to make it more effective and raise the minimum age of marriage by three years, i.e., from 15 to 18 years for girls and from 18 to 21 years for boys. However, CMRA was found to have many shortcomings. The Act aimed only at restraining the solemnisation of child marriages in the country and not its prevention or prohibition. The procedures laid down under this law to act against the solemnization of child marriages were very cumbersome and time consuming. It did not identify the authorities responsible for preventing child marriages.

To overcome the shortcomings of Child Marriage Restraint Act, the Government of India enacted the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA), which received the assent of the President of India on 10 January, 2007. The Act came into effect from 1 November, 2007.

Estimated Incidence of Child Marriage in India

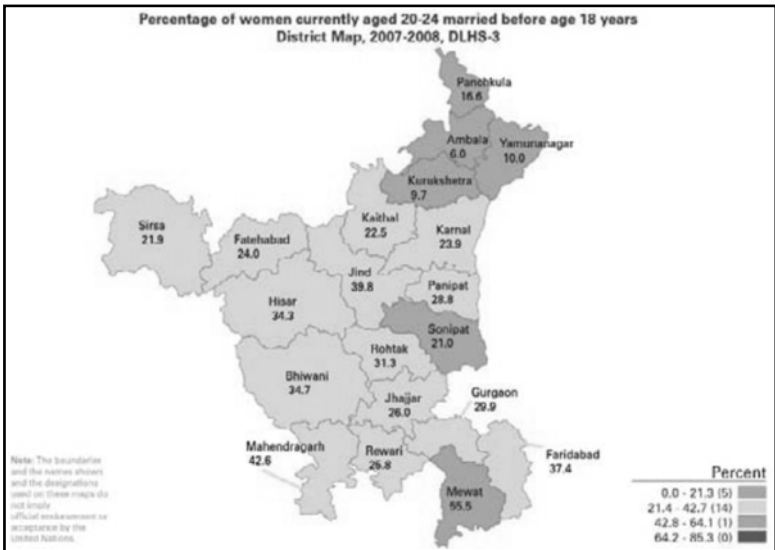
In spite of these efforts, the practice of child marriage continues in India due to the religious and cultural sanctions as well as the peculiar social and economic conditions of our society. National Family Health Survey 3 (2005-6) which collected information on health issues from a nationally representative sample of 109,041 households reported that more than half of the women in India are married before the legal minimum age of 18¹⁶. The DLHS Haryana (07-08) showed that 15.9%

¹⁵ Goswami, R. (2010) *Child marriage in India: Mapping the trajectory of legal reforms*. Retrieved from sanhati.com/excerpted/2207

¹⁶ NFHS 3 (2005-2006) *Summary of Findings Retrieved from hetv.org/India/nfhs/index.html*

of the girls in the state were married before the age of 18¹⁷. According to NFHS-3 (2005-06) among women aged 20-49, the median age at first marriage is 17.2 years. By contrast, men in the same age group get married at a median age of 23.4 years¹⁸.

There are however regional variations¹⁹ which exist because of the different configurations of socioeconomic factors in each region. As per the estimate of DLHS-3 (2007-08), the incidence of child marriage is highest in Bihar, where the 68.2% of the women in the age group of 20 to 24 were married before the age of 18. In Rajasthan the percentage is 57.6%. The incidence of child marriage in the state of Haryana is comparatively lower at 28%. Yet, this research is located in the state of Haryana for reasons that are elaborated in the following sections.



¹⁷ International Institute of Population Studies (2010) *District Level Household Facility Survey (DLHS-3) 2007-08: India, Haryana*. Mumbai: IIPS.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹ UNICEF(2011) *Information Sheet* Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/india/Child_Marriage_Fact_Sheet_Nov2011_final.pdf

Profile of Haryana

The region now known as Haryana is supposed to be the birth place of the Hindu religion. Generations of invaders have used it as a corridor to Delhi. During British rule, the area was part of the North Western Provinces till 1832, and later became a part of Punjab. After Independence, because of the demand for unilingual states from Hindus and Sikhs, Haryana came into being as a separate state in 1966.

Haryana is bordered by Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to the north and by Rajasthan to the west and south. The river Yamuna defines its eastern border with Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. Haryana also surrounds the country's capital Delhi on three sides, forming the northern, western and southern borders of Delhi. Hindus constitute about 90% of the state's population, while Muslims and Sikhs are concentrated in a few south-eastern and northern districts respectively. Jats (a farming caste) is the dominant landholding caste. Although roughly 75 percent of the population in its 21 districts is rural, cities have been growing rapidly as commercial, industrial, and agricultural marketing centres.

In terms of economic growth, Haryana is one of the progressive states of India. Because of the fertile soil in its vast Indo-Gangetic plains it has traditionally been an agrarian state. Haryana, as much as neighbouring Punjab, benefited hugely from the successful Green Revolution. This, coupled with the fact that 60% of its land has benefited from various irrigation projects, has resulted in a great deal of prosperity for its rural economy. It also developed a sound industrial base due to its abundance of resources, extensive network of railways and roadways and good connectivity. The proximity to Delhi has further boosted the state's economy. A large area of the state is included in the National Capital Region. Cities such as Gurgaon and Faridabad have emerged as major hubs of IT and software industry²⁰. It has one of the highest per capita incomes

²⁰ <http://www.mapsofindia.com/haryana/>

of the country and the incidence of poverty is relatively low²¹ The population below poverty line is 8.74% in Haryana as compared to 26.10% in the whole of India²².

However, the social and gender profiles of Haryana are not as attractive as its economic advance. This is a region of India in which socio-cultural movements have been conspicuous by their absence. Consequently, it is the women in Haryana who suffer acutely from the problems created by both social underdevelopment and economic prosperity²³. The overall sex ratio of Haryana is one of the poorest in India, at 877 females per one 1000 males²⁴. Not only are women in Haryana fewer today as compared to men but their numbers may become even lesser in the coming years because the child (0-6 years of age) sex ratio is even more adverse to females at 830 girls per 1000 boys²⁵. Literacy rate for females is 66.77 per cent while that for males is 85.4 per cent²⁶. The census commissioner suggests that the child sex ratio may be falling due to neglect of the girl child resulting in their higher mortality rates, female infanticide and sex selective female abortions²⁷. Haryana is notorious for the numerous incidents of honour killings in which an extra-judicial caste body such as *khap panchayat* orders the punishment (that includes killing) of young couples marrying against their families' or community's wishes²⁸.

²¹ Rajput, P. (n.d.) A Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in Haryana New Delhi, National Commission for Women. Retrieved from ebookbrowse.com/gender-profile-haryana-pdf-d104560891

²² Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (2011) Haryana State Report Retrieved from mohfw.nic.in/NRHM/Documents/Non_High_Focus.../Haryana_Report.pdf

²³ Yadav, B. (2001) Haryana's setting daughters. *Economic and political weekly*, 36 (45)

²⁴ Census of India (2011) retrieved from censusindia.gov.in/2011census/censusinfodashboard/.../profiles/.../IND006_Haryana.pdf

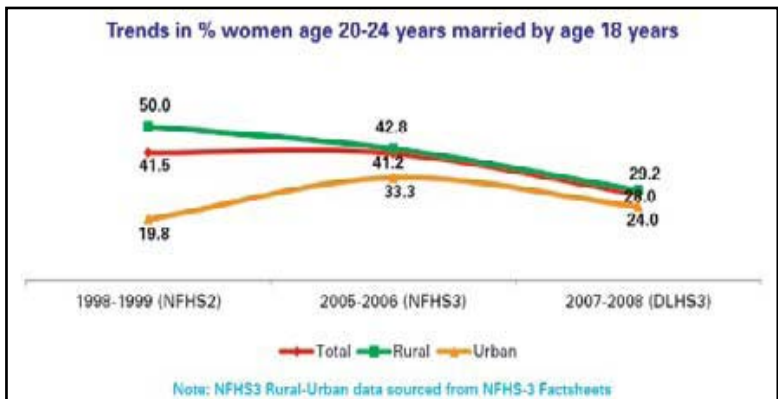
²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁸ *Reuters* (2008) *Haryana Village proud after double honor killings* Retrieved from reuters.com/article/2008/05/16/idINIndia-33604820080516

The state is constantly in the news for crimes against women. As per the NCRB statistics the rate of crimes against women in Haryana during 2011 was 21.7 as compared to the all India figure of 18.9²⁹. As per this statistic, 733 women were raped in the state in 2011, an average of over 60 rapes per month³⁰. According to the media reports, in order to curb incidents of sexual assault *khap panchayats* in Haryana mooted the idea to reduce the marriageable age of boys and girls to sixteen,³¹ this, in a state already having a considerable rate of child marriages. As per the District Level Household and Facility Survey (DLHS) conducted in 2007-8, 28% of currently married women in the state in the age group of 20-24 years were married before the age of 18.³² The real numbers may be much higher, if we take into account the difficulties associated with enumeration.



Special Cells for Women and Children

To address the issues of violence against women and of child marriages, UNDP approached TISS to set up the Special Cell for

²⁹ National Crime Report Bureau (2011) *Crime Against Women in India* Retrieved from ncrb.nic.in/CD-CII2011/cii-2011/chapter%205.pdf

³⁰ National Crime Report Bureau (2011) *Crime in India* Retrieved from ncrb.nic.in/CD-CII2011/statistics 2011.pdf

³¹ *Mumbai mirror*, Oct 11, 2012.

³² *Ibid.*, 17.

Women and Children in Haryana. The Special Cell for Women and Children is an initiative of TISS, which through strategic collaboration with the Police Department, aims at integrating social services with the police system to provide a coordinated, coherent and in-depth response to the issue of violence against women. The Special Cells were started in June 2007 in two districts of Haryana (Jind and Ambala) on a pilot basis. In November 2008, it was incorporated as a programme of the Govt. of Haryana. The Special Cells are located within District Police Headquarters and create a space for women who face violence, assisting them in accessing the law. The Special Cells recognize child marriage as a form of violence against women. Combining provisions under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), the social workers at the Special Cell are authorised to work as Protection-cum-Prohibition Officers (PPO). There is one PPO in each of the 21 districts of Haryana.

Provisions of PCMA (2006)

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) of 2006 has retained some of the features of the earlier act though there are significant departures as well. As in the previous Act, the definition of child remains the same in the new law, i.e., a child is a male under 21 years of age and a female under 18 years of age. The salient features of PCMA are as follows:

1. **Appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers:** The Act provides for the appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO) by the State Governments and gives powers to these officers to prevent and prosecute solemnization of child marriages, and to create awareness on the issue. Additionally, District Magistrates are also deemed to be Child Marriage Prohibition Officer to prevent solemnization of mass child marriages on certain days such as *Akshaya Thrithiya*.

2. **Reporting of Child Marriages:** Any person can report an incident of child marriage before or after it has been solemnized to the nearest police station, the CMPO or a judicial magistrate of First Class or a Metropolitan Magistrate.
3. **Injunction:** The Courts have the power to issue injunctions prohibiting child marriages from taking place. However, the injunction order can only be given after the Court has issued a written notice and adequate opportunity to the concerned parties to show cause against the issue of the injunction. This gives an opportunity to the contracting parties to understand that their action is illegal and the court has taken note of it, and gives them time to call off the child marriage. This can also help to minimize use of force by prohibition officers or district magistrates at the venue where the solemnization of child marriage is taking place. However, the Act also provides that in case of any urgency, the Court shall have the power to issue an interim injunction without giving any notice under this section and allows *ex-parte* injunctions as well. The punishment for disobeying the injunction is imprisonment that may extend to two years or with fine, which may extend to rupees one lakh or both.
4. **Void Marriage:** Child marriages are declared null and void if the injunction prohibiting a child marriage from taking place is violated/contravened or, if the child is taken away from their lawful guardian by enticement, force or use of deceitful means or, is sold or trafficked for the purpose of marriage.
5. **Prosecution:** The PCMA provides for punishment for any male over 18 years of age with rigorous imprisonment of up to 2 years or with a fine up to 1 lakh rupees or both. Similar punishment is prescribed for anyone who performs, conducts, directs or abets or negligently fails to prevent any child marriage. However, no woman can be punished with imprisonment. All offences are cognizable and non-bailable.

6. **Voidable Marriage:** Child marriages are voidable at the option of the contracting party who was a child at the time of the marriage. The petition to declare the marriage void has to be filed within two years of the child attaining majority.
7. **Protection to Children Rescued from Child Marriages:** The Act mandates the return of all valuables, money, ornaments, and gifts in marriage on declaration of the nullity order by the Court. It provides for the maintenance and residence for the minor girl till her remarriage by her husband or his parents. The act also gives legal status to all children born from child marriages and makes provision for their custody and maintenance. It provides for all support and aid including medical aid, legal aid, counselling and rehabilitation support to the children rescued from child marriages.

Rationale for the Study

From 2009 to 2011, (or four years after the introduction of PCMA and the appointment of PPOs) more than four hundred cases of child marriages were reported under this act. It was felt that a review of the impact of the act at this stage would help in understanding what needed to be done to augment and strengthen it. The role played by key stakeholders such as the PPOs, the police, the court and the caste panchayats and the convergence required from them in successfully implementing the act also needed to be documented which would help to identify training needs and the potential for improvement. The factors leading to persistence of child marriages needed to be understood in order to strengthen policies and programs for prevention of child marriages in the state. The impact of the prohibition of the child marriage on the children rescued from the child marriage and their families also needed to be studied to ensure proper follow up services. A need was therefore felt to undertake a research study on child marriage in Haryana.

Child Marriages and their Consequences: A Literature Review

Many research studies have tried to study the socio-cultural and economic factors associated with this practice and its consequences. Very few such studies have been done in India. It is of relevance to briefly review the recent literature on child marriages.

Factors Associated with Child Marriage: Many studies have enlisted factors associated with child marriage. While some of them have specified these factors as reasons for child marriage, others have merely pointed out the co relationship between the existence of these factors and prevalence of the custom of child marriage.

Social Norms: A study by Santhya, *et al.* (2006), in the districts of Rajasthan found a range of factors related to child marriage such as pressure to abide by societal norms, gender norms that view female sexuality as something that must be controlled, and gender norms that limit effective access to education for girls³³. A study by NIPCCD (2008) using qualitative data collected from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh found family traditions, customs and beliefs, community pressure and the bride price to be the reasons for child marriage. Families practicing child marriage tended to follow traditions blindly. Strong caste ties limiting the availability of suitable marriage partners and the influence of religious scriptures making it obligatory for families to get a girl child married led to early marriage³⁴. A qualitative study by Ghosh (2011), in the Malda district of West Bengal identified poverty as the major reason for child marriages, but a closer scrutiny revealed that patriarchal values and institutions influenced the pattern greatly³⁵.

³³ Santhya, K.G, Haberland, Nicole and Singh, Ajay Kumar. (2006). *She knew only when the garland was put around her neck: findings from an exploratory study on early marriage in Rajasthan*. New Delhi: Population Council.

³⁴ NIPCCD, New Delhi (2008). *A study on child marriage in India: Situational analysis in three states*. New Delhi: NIPCCD.

³⁵ Ghosh, B. (2011). Early Marriage of Girls in Contemporary Bengal: A Field View. *Social Change* 41(1) 41–61 Retrieved from <http://socialchange.sagepub.com>

Economic Compulsions: Utilizing household survey data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) UNICEF (2005) revealed that the occurrence of child marriages was more in the lower economic strata³⁶. Santhya, *et al.* (2006)³⁷ found the economic burden of marriage in a high poverty setting as one of the reasons for child marriages. A study by ICRW (2007), using DHS data, found strong association between child marriage and the economic status of the household³⁸. Pairvi (2009) carried out a qualitative research study based on the responses of various stakeholders in Madhya Pradesh. The findings indicated that social practices such as dowry and low economic strata were the factors leading to child marriages³⁹. In a study conducted by ICRW (2011) in districts of Rajasthan and Bihar, economic considerations were found to motivate child marriages⁴⁰. Families practicing child marriage were found to be large and economically weak by the study by the Centre for Social Research in India (2012)⁴¹.

Inconsistent Implementation / Lack of Awareness of Law / Government Schemes: According to Santhya, *et al.* (2006)⁴², there was inconsistent implementation of laws, policies and programmes and lack of awareness of schemes that provided positive incentives for delaying marriage. According to the study by NIPCCD, (2008) though there was awareness about the law against child marriages, the practice persisted due to lack of enforcement and political

³⁶ UNICEF (2005) *Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A statistical exploration*. UNICEF, New York http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_26024.html

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁸ ICRW (2007) *New Insights On Preventing Child Marriage: A Global Analysis Of Factors and Programs International Center For Research On Women*, Report prepared for USAID, Washington. Retrieved from www.icrw.org/node/27

³⁹ Pairvi (2009) *Child marriages in Madhya Pradesh: An Incessant Infringement of Rights*. New Delhi: Pairvi.

⁴⁰ International Center for Research on Women (2011) *Delaying marriage for girls in India: A formative research to design interventions for changing norms*. UNICEF, New Delhi

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 33.

will⁴³. As per the study by Pairvi (2009), any individual or agency – governmental or non-governmental—trying to enforce laws was seen as an enemy of the community⁴⁴. Government schemes to discourage child marriage were found to lack outreach in the study by ICRW (2011)⁴⁵.

Rural/Urban Residence: UNICEF (2005) found that the incidence of child marriages was more in rural areas⁴⁶.

Low Level of Female Literacy: Sagade (2005)⁴⁷ and Yadav (2006)⁴⁸, after analyzing NFHS-2 1998-99 data, found higher levels of literacy and gender development scores of a region being negatively associated with the incidence of child marriage in that region. A strong association between child marriages and education of the girls was also found in the study by ICRW (2007)⁴⁹ as well as by Pairvi (2009)⁵⁰. According the study by the Center for Social Research in India (2012) families practicing child marriage tended to have little or no formal education⁵¹.

Concern about Safety of Girls: This was mentioned as reason for child marriage in the study by NIPCCD (2008)⁵². Stress on the protection of a girl's virginity and the lack of security for girls were mentioned as factors leading to child marriages in the study by Pairvi (2009)⁵³.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁸ Yadav, K. P. (2006) Child marriage In India New Delhi: Madhya.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*,39

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*,40

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 36

⁵² *Ibid.*,34

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 40

Caste-Community Background: A strong relationship between child marriages and caste-community background was revealed in the study by Ghosh (2011)⁵⁴. However, the study by ICRW (2011) found that the problem of child marriage persisted across caste and class groups⁵⁵.

Thus, economic considerations, patriarchal values, emphasis on controlling female sexuality, concern about safety of girls, traditions and beliefs, and societal pressure result in a high incidence of child marriages. Residence in rural area and poor education levels of parents as well as the child are also associated with child marriages. Inconsistent implementation of laws, policies and programmes and lack of awareness of state schemes providing positive incentives to delay marriage contribute to the phenomenon. The studies do not show conclusive results about the relationship of caste and child marriages.

Consequences of Child Marriage: There are severe negative implications of child marriage on the health status, education, decision making and well being of girls.

Health: UNICEF (2005) reported a significant relationship between child marriage and high fertility⁵⁶. ICRW (2006) conducted a baseline survey in Bihar and Jharkhand which found that early marriage poses serious obstacles to the health and well being of young girls. More than half of the girls aged between 14 and 24 years of age were married at an average age of 16 years, 93% of the married girls had at least one child, with the first child being born on an average of 18 to 24 months after marriage⁵⁷.

Barua and Kurz (2001) drew results from a study of married adolescent girls in Maharashtra to report that the girls were

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 35

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 41

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁷ International Center for research on women (2006). *The early marriage trap in India: Trading in the childhood, health and life choices of girls*. New Delhi: ICRW.

expected to conceive in the first year of marriage. They suffered silently with regard to Reproductive Tract Infections. Husbands made the decisions about seeking care and mothers-in-law had influence over these decisions. The girls had neither the decision-making power nor the influence⁵⁸.

A study by Raj, *et al.* (2009), using data from the NFHS-3 (2005-2006), revealed that child marriage was significantly associated with no contraceptive use before the first childbirth, high fertility (three or more births), a repeat childbirth in less than 24 months, multiple unwanted pregnancies, pregnancy termination, and female sterilisation⁵⁹. As per the report of UNICEF (2009), adolescent pregnancy and motherhood are a probable consequence of child marriage and these entail significant risks both for the mother and her baby. Working with data from the third round of the National Family Health Survey (2005-6), Singh, Rai and Singh (2012), found that utilisation of maternal and child health care services among married adolescent women in India was far from satisfactory. Only 10% utilized antenatal care services, about 50% adopted safe delivery services and only about 41% of the children of adolescent mothers received full immunization⁶⁰. Raj, *et al.* (2010), also analysed data from National Family Health Survey (2005-6) and reported that the risk of malnutrition was higher in young children born to mothers who were married as minors than in those born to women married at a majority age⁶¹.

⁵⁸ Barua and Kurz (2001) Reproductive health seeking by the married adolescent girls in Maharashtra, India. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 9 (17), 53-64.

⁵⁹ Raj, D. A., Saggurti, N., Balaiah, D. and Silverman, J. G. (2009). Prevalence of child marriage and its effect on fertility and fertility-control outcomes of young women in India: A cross-sectional, observational study. *The Lancet*, 373 (9678), 1883-1889.

⁶⁰ Singh, L., Rai, R.K. and Singh, P.K. (2012). Assessing the utilization of maternal and child health care among married adolescent women: Evidence from India, *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 44(1), pp 1-26 <http://journals.cambridge.org/abstracts002193201100472>

⁶¹ Raj, A., Saggurti, N., Winter, M., Labonte, A., Decker, M.R., Balaiah, D. and Silverman, J.G.(2010). The effect of maternal child marriage on morbidity and mortality of children under 5 in India: cross sectional study of a nationally representative sample. *BMJ*. 2010; 340: b4258.

Education: Jenssen and Thornton (2003) analysing data from the DHS of India, Benin, Columbia and Turkey found a strong correlation between a woman's age at marriage and the amount of education she receives. Uniformly across countries, early marriage was associated with lower educational attainment⁶². The study by ICRW (2006) also revealed that the elders in the households of girls who marry early were less likely to take their wishes into account regarding schooling opportunities when compared to girls who marry later. Only 1.5 % married girls between 14 to 15 years were enrolled in school while 40% of the unmarried girls in the same age range were in school⁶³. As per the study by UNICEF (2009), the development of young girls subjected to marriage was compromised, and their formal education was likely to be abandoned⁶⁴.

Domestic Violence: According to Jenssen and Thornton (2003), women who marry early were more likely to marry older men, they had less decision making powers and were more likely to experience domestic violence.⁶⁵ The study by UNICEF (2005) reported that the proportion of women married before the age of 18 increased in relation to the age difference between the woman and her partner. Domestic violence and sexual abuse was more common among women who had been married as children. India had the highest levels of domestic violence among women married by 18. They also believed that in some cases, a man was justified in beating his wife⁶⁶. Speizer and Pearson (2010), after analysing NFHS-3 data from Bihar and Rajasthan, found that women aged 20 to 24, who married before the age of 18, were more likely to have experienced domestic violence than their counterparts who married later⁶⁷.

⁶² Jenssen, R. and Thornton, R. (2003). Early female marriage in the developing world. *Gender and Development*, 11(2), 9-19.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁷ Speizer, I.L. and Pearson, E. (2010). Association between early marriage and intimate partner violence in India: a focus on youth from Bihar and Rajasthan. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 26(10), 1963-81.

Thus, marriage provides legal and societal sanction for engaging in sexual activity, though the bodies of young brides are not physically ready for it. Early pregnancy, which inevitably follows, poses great risk to the health of the young mother as well as that of the new born child. High fertility associated with early marriages translates into a higher rate of population growth. Disruption of education can be a consequence of child marriage as well as being a factor leading to child marriage. Lack of education limits the opportunity of young girls to be economically independent and their ability to make informed choices. The relative youth and powerlessness of girls, who were married as children, makes them more vulnerable to domestic violence.

As can be seen from the literature review, existing research on child marriage in India is not extensive and no studies have been done on the issue of child marriage in the state of Haryana. Implementation of the PCMA has not been studied empirically and no scholarly effort has been done to understand the impact of PCMA and of difficulties associated with its implementation. Therefore, research of the issue of child marriages in Haryana is needed in order to strengthen policies and programs for prevention of this particular type of violence against women in the state.

SECTION 2:

Objectives of the Study and Methodology

Aim

The study aims to understand the various factors which are critical in preventing child marriages by examining the cases in which the PPOs have intervened; to study the specific and particular use of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 in preventing child marriages in Haryana; and to identify the needs of girls whose child marriage was prevented, for providing better follow-up services.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the factors leading to persistence of child marriages in Haryana;
2. To examine the role of Protection-cum-Prohibition Officers in prohibiting child marriages in Haryana;
3. To identify the support expected from the different stakeholders to prevent child marriages, and study the support that is actually given;
4. To gain an understanding of the support needed by the children rescued from child marriage; and
5. To suggest relevant changes to the legislature to make it more effective.

Research Design and Data Collection

This is an exploratory study. It uses both qualitative and quantitative methodology. The following three sets of data were used to understand the issue of child marriages in Haryana:

1. Records of cases of child marriage prevented by the PPOs that are maintained in the offices of the Special Cell were studied to gain an understanding of the demographic profile of the children rescued from child marriages, factors that lead to child marriages and the different kinds of interventions carried out. A partially structured questionnaire was used to collect this information. (n=472)
2. With the help of an interview schedule discussions were carried out with PPOs to gain a deeper understanding of their role played in preventing child marriages as well as the challenges they faced and the strategies they employed.
3. Interviews with the children rescued from child marriages and their families were conducted with the help of an interview schedule to understand their experiences and current needs.

Sampling: The sampling methods for these different data sets were as follows:

1. The PCMA was being implemented in Haryana from 17th November 2008. However, most of the PPOs assumed their duties only by January 2009. The data collection for this study was done in May 2012. The first set of data was obtained from the records of child marriage complaints registered with the PPOs from January 2009 to December 2011. The data were collected from twenty of the twenty one districts of Haryana. Only Palwal district, which was a newly formed district of Haryana and at the time of data collection had no recorded cases of child marriage was excluded from the study.

2. For the second set of data interviews were conducted with PPOs from all the districts except Palwal. Each district has one PPO. Thus twenty PPOs were interviewed.
3. From the records of child marriage cases handled by the PPOs from January 2009 to December 2011, twenty cases were chosen for the interviews. A convenience sampling method was used for the selection. Of the twenty cases seventeen were girls while three were boys. In twelve cases the parents as well as the child were interviewed while in six cases only the parents consented to speak to the interviewers. In one case only the child was interviewed.

Data Analysis: The first set of data (office records) was coded and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive analysis and bivariate tables were used in the analysis. Data sets 2 and 3 were qualitative in nature and were obtained through interviews, which were recorded and transcribed. Descriptive analysis is used for the second set of data as well. Within-case and cross-case analyses are used for the third set of data.

Operational Definitions and Abbreviations

Child: In India, according to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 a ‘child’ means a person who, if a male, has not completed twenty-one years of age, and if a female, has not completed eighteen years of age (Section 2 b). This is the definition of child that is applied in this study because it concerns the cases that were dealt with under PCMA.

Child Marriage: Though there are many definitions of child marriage based on the age of majority and the age of betrothal, this research considers a child marriage to be one as defined under PCMA, wherein ‘Child Marriage’ means a marriage to which either of the contracting parties is a child (Section 2 b).

PPO: For convenience, Protection-cum-Prohibition Officer is referred to as PPO.

PCMA: Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006) is referred to as PCMA (2006)

Limitations of the Study

It is a very traumatic experience for the families as well as the child when an impending marriage is prevented. The usual reaction to the PPOs and all the systems associated with the PPOs is of hostility and suspicion. Given these circumstances, it was very difficult to get the families' consent for the interview. Since the cases of child marriage were from remote or inaccessible villages, geographical distance was also an impediment in reaching out to a large number of families. Therefore, the sample size could not be made larger and only convenience sampling method could be used to make the selection for the interviews.

Even when the families consented to be interviewed, it required a considerable amount of skill and effort to make them revisit and share the experience of the prohibition of marriage because of the residual anger and pain. They were also fearful that some further action might be initiated against them. The responses of most of them were very cautious.

It was especially difficult to have a dialogue with the girls. The information sought from them was of a very personal nature and sensitive such as reasons for marriage and feelings after the marriage was prohibited. It was very difficult for the girls to talk about such matters. Considering the trauma caused by the experience, their reticence was understandable. The girls were also intimidated by their parents. In some cases, it was the parents who spoke to the interviewers and their daughters were not allowed to be interviewed. In other cases parents insisted on being present during the interviews, which inhibited the child from opening up.

The information gathered through the interviews, therefore, could not be as in-depth as the researchers had hoped for.

Interviews were conducted in Hindi. Although all the participants understood the language, some of the women could reply only in Haryanvi. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and translated into English. A certain diminishing of the richness of the data due translation could not be avoided. Some technical hurdles were also experienced due to which the recorded files were corrupted and hence, unusable.

There were large gaps in the information about the cases of child marriage that are available in the records maintained in the offices of the PPOs. This was partly due to the present recording format, which is used to record cases of domestic violence as well as child marriage. This format does not require the recording of many details relevant child marriage cases. (The present study seeks to rectify this with a proposal for a different format for recording child marriage cases.) Also, the antagonism that a PPO encounters when she goes to a village to prevent a child marriage makes it impossible for her to always gather all relevant details of the cases. Sometimes, the PPO is faced with a situation where concerned families run away at her approach. On other occasions, they stubbornly refused to divulge any information. A general apathy to documentation has also contributed to the problem of lack of proper recording of relevant information. This turned out to be one of the limitations of the study whenever secondary data was the only source of information.

Research Ethics

Informed Consent: Two sets of interviews were conducted for this study:

1. With the PPOs: The PPOs were invited to participate in the study. Prior to the interview they were explained the purpose of the study, its relevance as well as the research proposal. They

also were assured that the discussion in the interviews would be confidential and their identity would not be revealed; and that the contents of the interview would not affect their employment position. In addition, their consent was also sought for audio recording the interviews.

2. Interviews with the rescued children and/or their families: Here, data collection involved interviews with the children who were rescued from child marriage and their families. Since the children as well as their parents or guardians were involved in the interview process, three different kinds of consent were necessary:
 - Consent of the parent or guardian to interview the child
 - Consent of the parent or guardian to be interviewed
 - Consent of the child

Initial contact with the family of the child was made through the PPO, who got in touch with the families and explained the nature and purpose of the study being conducted. Those parents or families who consented were requested to visit the PPO's office for the interview.

Prior to the interview, the purpose of the study and its relevance was explained to the participants. In addition, their oral consent was also taken. Written consent could not be taken as the participants were wary of signing on any document. The participants were also explained the following so that they could feel comfortable with being interviewed:

- The participant is at liberty to refuse the interview.
- The participant could withdraw consent at any point during the interview process
- The participant could ask any questions to the researcher for their own clarity.
- The identity of the participant would be kept confidential and would not be shared with anyone who was not part of the research team.

Informed consent was also sought for the recording of the interviews. The respondents were assured that the tapes would be deleted immediately on transcription. Only those who consented to participate were interviewed. Recordings of the interviews were done only with the prior permission of the participants. Anonymity of the participants was ensured to maintain confidentiality.

SECTION 3:

Reporting of Child Marriage and Demographic Profile of Child Marriage Survivors

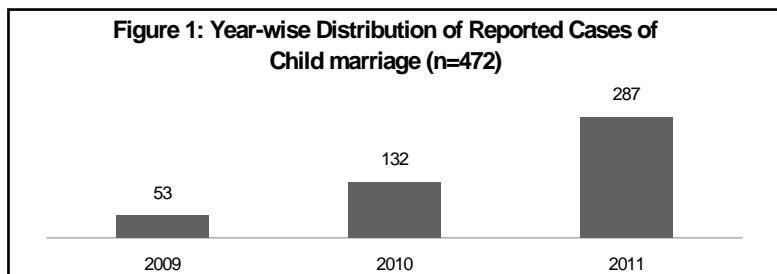
The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act has been in force in Haryana since 17th November 2008. As reported in Section 2 (Objectives and Methodology), the present research aimed to study the implementation and particular use of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in Haryana. For that, records of cases of child marriage maintained in all the districts of Haryana except Palwal from Jan 2009 to Dec. 2011 were analyzed. The analysis of these office data revealed trends in the reporting of child marriage cases, which are presented in this chapter.

As a part of the study interviews were conducted with children whose marriages were prevented under this act and with their family members. A total of twenty cases were studied, out of which 3 were boys while the remaining 17 were girls. In twelve cases both the parent and the child were interviewed, in 7 cases only the parents while in one case only the girl was interviewed. These interviews, along with the secondary data analysis, yielded information about the demographic profile of these children as well as their families, which is also presented in this chapter.

Reporting of Child Marriages

Year-wise Distribution of the Cases: A total of 472 cases of child marriages were registered with the PPOs during the period of study. The following graph gives year-wise break-up of the registered cases.

It can be seen that there is a steady and significant yearly increase in the number of cases of child marriages. From 2009 to 2011, the number of cases more than doubled with each passing year. It should be noted that this does not necessarily mean an increase in the incidence of child marriage cases, but an increase in the *reporting* of such cases, a likely effect of growing public awareness of the law. The increase may also be seen as an indicator of the effectiveness of the PPOs work.

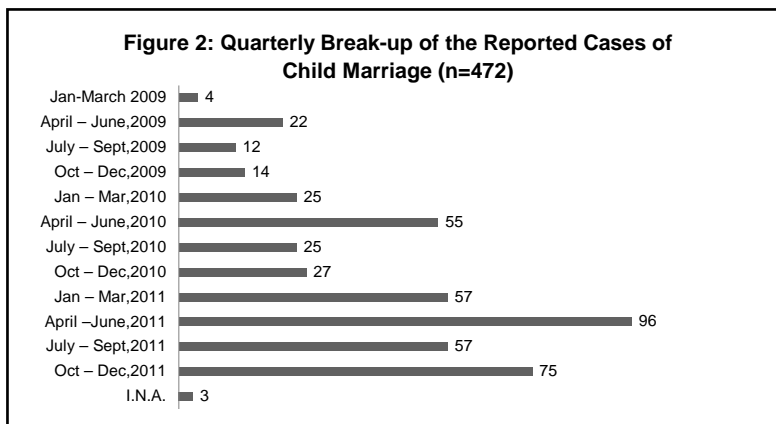


In the three years, PPOs have carried out awareness campaigns and were supported by media coverage of the child marriages that the PPOs helped to prevent. Most importantly, as the data from the interviews of the PPOs showed, a single instance of a child marriage prevented in one village generates enough publicity in that village, raising awareness about PCMA, its implications and the work done by the PPOs. Subsequently, more people came forward to report such cases. Hence, the figures shown in the graph are consistent with the observations made by all the PPOs that the reporting of the child marriage cases increased because of growing awareness.

However, the reporting of child marriages was not uniform throughout the year, as is shown by the following graph which gives quarter-wise break-up of cases of child marriage.

It is apparent that there is a greater incidence of child marriage cases in the April-June quarter. In fact, the number of cases reported is more than double of those recorded in each of the other quarters. This

may be because in the mostly agrarian state of Haryana, the harvesting season is over by the end of April and people are free to take care of other household responsibilities. Akshaya Tritiya, also known as Akha Teej also falls during this period. Recognized as a holy day by the Hindus, Akha Teej falls on the third Tithi (Lunar day) of Bright Half (Shukla Paksha) of the pan-Indian month of Vaishakha (roughly corresponding to April-May)⁶⁸. It is considered an especially auspicious day for weddings. In their interviews the PPOs had mentioned that their case load is especially high during this period. The data from this graph seem to justify their demand for extra support in terms of vehicle and personnel during this period.

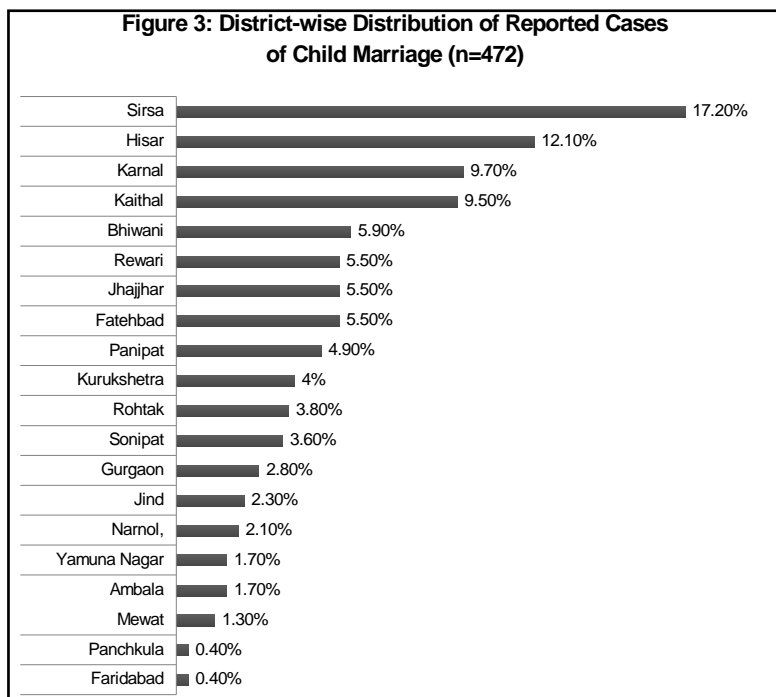


District-wise Incidence of Child Marriages: The number of child marriage cases recorded in different districts is influenced by the socio-demographic characteristics of each district. The following graph shows district wise incidence of the recorded cases.

Sirsa had the maximum number of registered cases (17.2%). Interview of the PPOs revealed that Sirsa has a large border with Rajasthan. Therefore, due to the free movement of people, it is inevitable that traditions and customs of the people living in Sirsa will be influenced by those in Rajasthan, where there is high

⁶⁸ <http://en.wiki.org/Wikipedia/Hinduism>

prevalence of child marriages. According to a report on India by UNICEF (2011), after Bihar, Rajasthan is the state with the highest incidence of child marriages⁶⁹. The incidence of child marriages is, therefore, likely to be very high in the neighbouring district of Sirsa.



The districts of Faridabad, Panchkula, Ambala and Yamunanagar (0.4%, 0.4%, 1.7% and 1.7% respectively) reported far fewer cases of child marriage. Faridabad is heavily industrialized and is the most urbanized district in Haryana⁷⁰. It can be argued that families in urban areas are exposed to modern values that encourage later marriage and are less likely to be influenced by kin who claim a say

⁶⁹ UNICEF(2011) *Child marriage fact sheet*. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/india/Child_Marriage_Fact_Sheet_Nov2011_final.pdf

⁷⁰ *Preparation of Sub Regional Plan for Haryana Sub-Region of NCR-2021:Interim Report* Retrieved from www.tcp_haryana.gov.in/ncrpb/4.chapter4.pdf

in deciding the timing of marriage (Samara and Singh, 1997, quoted in Mensch, *et al.*, 2005)⁷¹.

A study by UNICEF (2005) of child marriages as well as the findings of NFHS-3 (2005-6) showed that women who marry early are more likely to come from rural areas than from urban places^{72,73}. Ambala, Panchkula and Yamunanagar are the districts with the highest female literacy rate⁷⁴. Previous research findings indicate that the incidence of child marriage varies inversely with the level of development in the locality, literacy levels and industrial development. These are associated with increased age at marriage (Sagade, 2005⁷⁵; Yadav, 2006⁷⁶). Ambala, Panchkula and Yamunanagar border Punjab where child marriages are not so prevalent⁷⁷. Child marriages are, therefore, less likely to occur in these districts.

These arguments do not, however, explain the very low rate of child marriages reported in Mewat, which is one of the least developed districts of Haryana having a low female literacy rate and a predominantly rural, agricultural population⁷⁸. A possible explanation may be found in the observation made by the PPOs that the number of cases being reported is far less than the actual incidence of child marriages in the district.

To conclude, the reporting of child marriage cases has gone up from 53 in 2009 to 287 in 2011. The reporting is not uniform throughout the

⁷¹ Mensch, B., Singh, S., Casterline, J. (2005). *Trends in the Timing of First Marriage among Men and Women in the Developing World*. Population Council, Working Paper no 202 Retrieved from <http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/wp/202.pdf>

⁷² UNICEF (2005), *Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A statistical exploration*. UNICEF: New York http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_26024.html

⁷³ NFHS 3 (2005-2006) *Summary of Findings* Retrieved from hetv.org/India/ankhs/index.html

⁷⁴ censusindia.gov.in/2011census/censusinfodashboard/.../IND006_Har.

⁷⁵ Sagade, J. (2005) *Child Marriage in India*. New Delhi, Oxford University press.

⁷⁶ Yadav, K.P. (2006), *Child Marriage in India*, New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers and Distributors.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

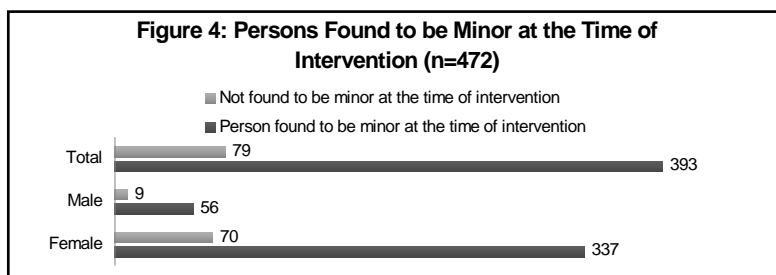
⁷⁸ Agriculture department (n.d.) *Haryana Comprehensive Agriculture Development Plan, District Mewat*, agriharyana.nic.in/RKVY/C-DAPs/C-DAP,%20Mewat.doc

year. Child marriage cases are more in the quarter of April to June, the quarter in which the harvest season is concluded and which is host to the most auspicious wedding day for the Hindus (Akshya Teej) justifying the demand of the PPOs for extra support in terms of vehicle and personnel during this period. The reporting is not uniform throughout the state. The district Sirsa adjacent to Rajasthan shows the highest number of reported cases of child marriages (17.2%). The heavily industrialized district of Faridabad (.4%) and the districts with higher female literacy rates such as Panchkula, Ambala, and Yamuna Nagar (.4%, 1.7%, and 1.7%) show the least number of reported cases of child marriage. The socioeconomically backward district of Mewat is surprisingly one of the districts showing very low level of reported cases of child marriages (1.3%).

Demographic Profile of the Survivors of Child Marriage

In this study an effort was made to understand the kind of families that got their children married before the legally prescribed age and the profile of the children who were being married.

Confirmed Cases of the Bride or Groom being Minors: As the PPOs explained in their interviews once a report of a child marriage is received, the first step in the intervention process is to verify the age of the bride and groom to confirm authenticity of the complaint. The marriage can be stopped only if bride, groom or both are minors. Figure 4 shows the number of cases of the total in which it was confirmed that the one or both parties were minors.



The figure shows that a large majority of the reported cases were confirmed to be child marriages (393). It does not, however, automatically mean that the remaining 79 were not child marriages. These may also include cases in which the bride and groom were minors when they married, but had reached majority by the time the case came to the notice of the PPO. One PPO recalled cases of domestic violence in which it was found that the women had been married before they had completed eighteen years of age. Two PPOs mentioned in their interviews that, in a few instances, the girls as well as boys, on reaching majority approached the PPOs to nullify their marriages solemnized when they were still minors. It does happen that sometimes a report of child marriage is lodged with the PPOs when neither the bride nor the groom is a minor. It seems however that the incidence of such misleading reports would be less than 16%.

Gender: Figure 4 also shows the gender division in the reported cases child marriages. PCMA provides for prevention of marriage of minors, both male as well as female. UNICEF (2009) reports that a vast majority of children married off as minors are girls⁷⁹. According to the report of NFHS-3 (2005-6), more than half of Indian women in the age range of 20 to 49 are married before the legal minimum age of 18. In contrast, men in the same age group get married at a median age of 23.4 years⁸⁰. Although the DLHS report of 2007-8 shows that 27.4% boys were married before the age of 21 and 15.9% of girls married before the age of 18 in Haryana⁸¹, Figure 4 shows that the majority of the cases of reported child marriages were of girls being married off as minors (71.4%). This finding agrees with the observations of the PPOs that were recorded in this study, and also with the demographic profile of those rescued from child marriage emerging from the family and

⁷⁹ UNICEF (2009) *Progress for children A report card on child protection*. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/publications/index_50921.html

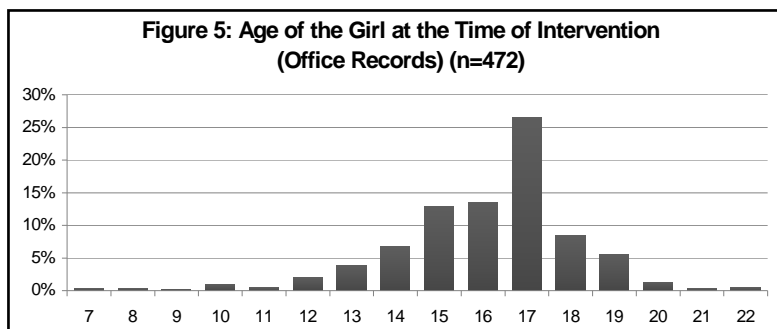
⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 74

⁸¹ International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), (2010). *District Level Household and Facility Survey (DLHS-3), 2007-08: India. Haryana: Mumbai: IIPS.*

child interviews. Out of the 20 cases studied in these interviews three were boys (15%) and the rest of the 17 were girls (85%).

The study by UNICEF (2009) also found that the rate of child marriages involving boys in India and Nepal is 10 % or higher⁸². The findings from this study— that 11.9% of the children were minors boys—is in consonance with UNICEF’s findings. The difficulty of finding a suitable match for a boy due to low female sex ratio, the practice of *atta-satta* (the system of exchanging a daughter for a daughter-in-law) and the economic compulsions that force parents to marry off siblings in one wedding ceremony, were the explanations offered by the PPOs, which are discussed later in this report.

Age: Though it is shown in Figure 4 that a majority of the cases reported to the PPOs were of minors getting married, the detailed information about the age of the girls when the complaint of child marriage was received is presented in the following figure.



UNICEF (2009) also reported that children in Nepal, India and Pakistan may be betrothed or even married before they are 10 years of age⁸³. Figure 5 shows that girls as young as 7 years of age were being married off. The tipping point, i.e., the age at which the frequency of child marriages first increases significantly in a given country, was found to be 13 in a study done in the states of Bihar,

⁸² *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 80.

Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan (ICRW 2007)⁸⁴. The tipping point age in this study is found to be 17 (26.5%). A majority of the girls married as a child are from the age group of 15 to 17 years (53%).

This finding corresponds to the data obtained through the interviews of families and children in this study, which is depicted in the figure below:

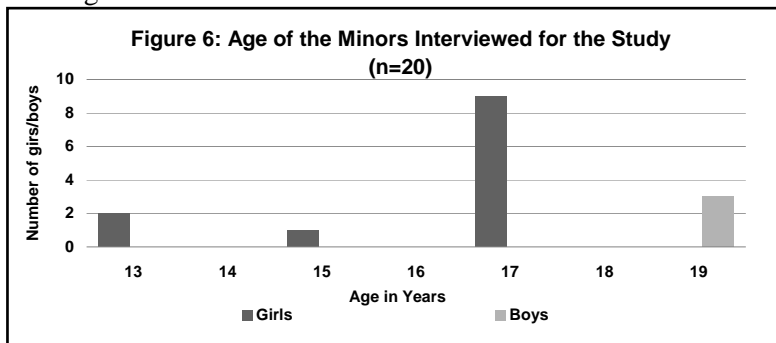


Figure 6 shows that a majority of the girls interviewed for the study (52.94%) were of 16 years of age. One of the parents interviewed for the study said,

“When the girl starts looking grown up (thadi ho gai) which she usually does by the age of 16 years, she is married off.”

Fifteen to seventeen is the most vulnerable phase in the life for a girl because she has sufficiently developed physically to be made a target of unwanted sexual advances. This is also the stage when she has not yet developed the courage and the confidence to protect herself from such advances. In Haryana, a place characterized by a high rate of crime against women⁸⁵, security of young girls is a major concern for the parents. This has been amply brought out from the interviews of

⁸⁴ ICRW (2007) *New Insights On Preventing Child Marriage: A Global Analysis Of Factors and Programs* International Center For Research On Women, Report prepared for USAID, Washington. Retrieved from www.icrw.org/node/276

⁸⁵ National Crime Report Bureau (2011) *Crime Against Women in India*. Retrieved from ncrb.nic.in/CD-CII2011/cii-2011/chapter%205pdf

the families of children rescued from child marriages as well as from the interviews of the PPOs. It also emerged from the primary data that parents look at marriage as the only way of protecting the girls from sexual harassment and therefore may tend to marry the girls off when they reach this age group.

This is also the age when a girl is more likely to form romantic attachments. As discussed in detail in the next chapter, self arranged alliances are perceived as a threat to the perpetuation of caste system, joint family system as well as patrilineal succession of property, especially of agricultural land⁸⁶. It therefore becomes imperative to marry a girl before she is old enough to assert her choice and exercise her right to choose her life partner.

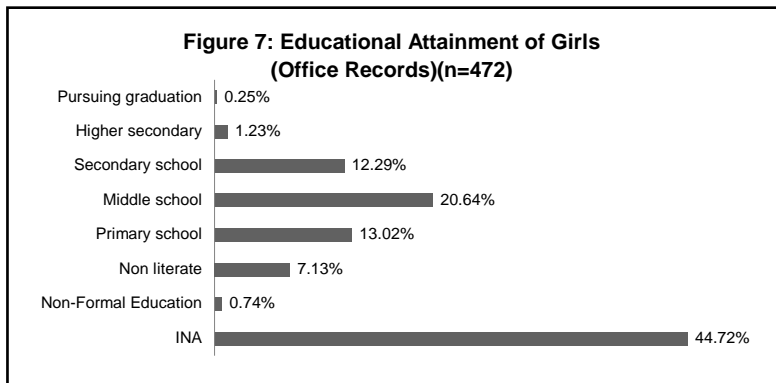
As shown in Figure 6 two of the girls (11.76%) were married at 13 years of age. One of them was not sent to her matrimonial house at that time (*gauna nahi hua tha*). This, according to the PPOs, happens in a number of cases and is used to justify child marriages. In the case of the other girl who was 13 years of age, the father was insistent that he was only getting his daughter engaged, and not married, when the function was interrupted.

All the three boys whose marriage was stopped were 19 years of age. Two of them were being married due to the compulsions of *Atta-satta*. The third boy had a sister who was being married and the boy was being married at the same time in order to save marriage expenses. The parents were unable to postpone the marriage of the girl, and the boy was being married even though he was underage.

Education: Previous research showed strong correlation between a woman's age at marriage and the amount of education she receives. Uniformly across countries, early marriage is associated with lower

⁸⁶ Chowdhary, P. (1997) Enforcing cultural codes: Gender and violence in Northern India *Economic and Political Weekly*. 32 (19), 1019-1028.

educational attainment (Jensen and Thornton, 2003⁸⁷; ICRW, 2006⁸⁸; UNICEF, 2009⁸⁹; ICRW, 2007⁹⁰). Figure 7 gives information about the educational status of the girls whose marriages were reported to the PPOs.



Although such data was not available in nearly half (44.72%) of the cases, the data presented in the figure indicates that girls begin to drop out after middle school (class 7). Very few girls were able to get an education beyond secondary school, i.e., Class 10 (1.54%); a majority of them dropped out of school by then. Fewer girls reached the higher secondary school level and beyond. Similar findings were reported in studies carried out by ICRW (2010) in Bihar and Rajasthan⁹¹.

Findings reported in the interviews with children and families and shown in the following figure are in keeping with these findings from the secondary data.

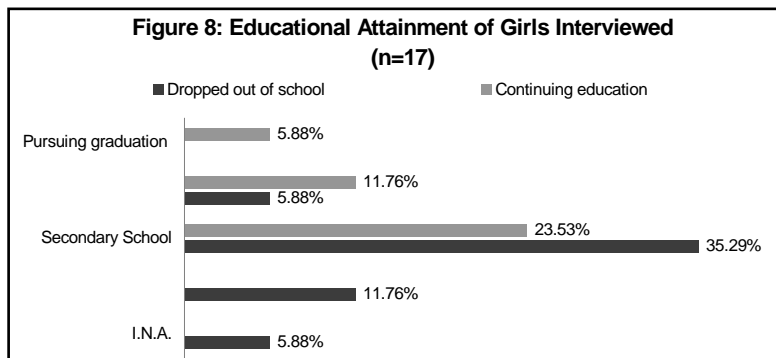
⁸⁷ Jensen, R. and Thornton, R. (2003). Early female marriage in the developing world. *Gender and Development*, 11(2), 9-19

⁸⁸ International Center for Research on Women (2006). *The early marriage trap in India: Trading in the childhood, health and life choices of girls*. New Delhi: ICRW

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹¹ International Center for Research on Women (2011) *Delaying marriage for girls in India: A formative research to design interventions for changing norms*. UNICEF:New Delhi.



In the interviews it was reported that more than half of the girls had dropped out of school at the time of their marriage (58.82%). The reasons varied, and the themes of patriarchal attitudes, concern about security of the girls, fear of the family of self arranged alliances kept echoing through them.

Some dropped out at the time of their marriage and did not resume their studies afterwards. Some had dropped out earlier because they were not interested in or not good at studies. Some said that they had no time as they were expected to share household responsibilities. However in many instances the family was responsible for discontinuing the girl's education.

One family forced the girl to quit because she was having an affair with a boy of her school. In another case, the girl's grandmother admitted to forcing her granddaughter to drop out of school citing lack of monetary resources as the reason. One girl who had a strong desire to study further, was not being allowed to do so because, "*Daddy kahate hai ki zamana bahut kharab hai* (My father says that society is very bad)" These attitudes are in keeping with research findings that leaving school early can be a consequence of early marriage, or the same underlying conditions (cultural norms, low socio-economic status) that determine the timing of the marriage can be responsible for girls being pulled out of school (Mencsh, 2005)⁹².

⁹² *Ibid.*, 72.

Consistent with the findings from the office records, Figure 8 also shows that more than a third of the girls (6) had dropped out of secondary school. The PPOs pointed out in the interviews that girls tend to drop out of secondary school because the village schools provide only primary education. To study further, girls have to travel long distances to attend secondary school and are targets for sexual harassment on the way to or from school. This was confirmed by a respondent, when she told the interviewer,

“The school in our village is only till 8th. I had to travel to a nearby village when I reached 9th. When I went to the 10th class, my mother used to come to drop me and to pick me up from school. Now she is not allowing me to study further.”

In general, the education profile of the respondents is consistent with the observation made by one of the PPOs that cases of child marriages are more from families where education is not given any importance.

Families seemed to expect the girls to learn domestic skills without any aim of achieving financial self sufficiency. Five of the girls who were not going to school were learning tailoring or planning to. This seemed to be acceptable to the parents. *“Apne kapde to sil legi.* (She can stitch her own clothes)” was the rationale. One girl had done a beautician’s course, but was not allowed to pursue it as a profession. *“My father is not allowing me to open a beauty parlour. He does not let me go to other people's houses. When my friends come home for beauty treatment, he says rude words to them. Galiyan deta hai* (He abuses them)” she said. Two of the girls were working on the farm, while one could see no other option but do domestic work.

41.8% of the girls however had resumed their studies after their marriages were prevented, or annulled. 23.53% of them were studying in secondary school. One girl was preparing for her higher secondary certificate examination forms from an open school. One

was studying for her BA degree after her marriage as a thirteen year old was annulled through her own initiative and efforts. Another girl said with a lot of courage,

"I had not done 12th when my marriage was stopped. Today I have cleared my 12th. I will study further and build my career; I will also be able to help somebody,"

Of the boys, two had completed their twelfth and were doing a technical vocational course and the third was working as a harvester.

Religion: The office data show that an overwhelming majority of the complaints had come from Hindu households (94.1%). This is only to be expected as Haryana is a predominantly Hindu state⁹³. Only 2.3% cases were reported from the Muslim community. However, the PPOs mentioned in their interviews that child marriages occurred in the community in much larger numbers, but they were not reported.

Caste and Ethnicity: The child marriage fact sheet published by UNICEF (2011) mentions that girls belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are likely to marry at an earlier age than girls from other communities⁹⁴. Ghosh (2011) also found a strong relationship between child marriage and caste and community background⁹⁵. Certain castes like the Gujjars, according to the PPOs, have higher incidence of child marriage. The following figure gives information about the caste/ethnicity of the reported cases of child marriages.

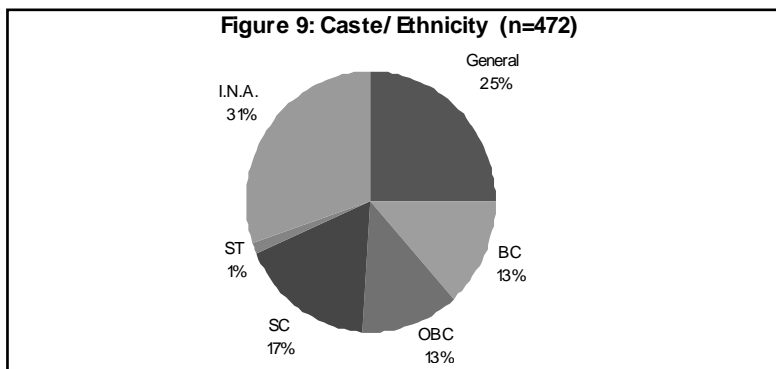
Although information about caste was available in less than two-thirds of the cases in the office records, data obtained from this study does not seem to support the commonly held belief that

⁹³ <http://www.indiaonlinepages.com/population/hindu-population-in-india.html>

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁹⁵ Ghosh, B. (2011). Early marriage of girls in contemporary Bengal: A field view *Social Change*, 41(1).<http://sch.sagepub.com/content/41/1/41>

certain castes have a higher tendency to marry their children as minors. The Figure 9 shows that the percentage of child marriages being reported from the general castes was slightly more than that reported from any other category (25.0%). The findings from the present study indicate universality of this social practice Child marriages were reported from all castes. However, there were more child marriages (11.9%) reported from the Jat community than from any other caste group.

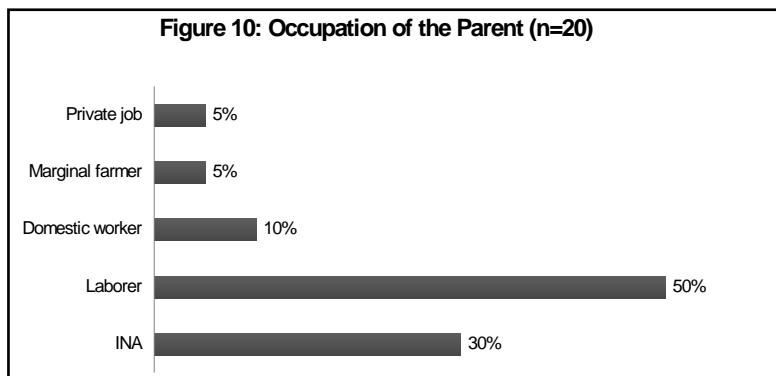


Nature of Family Household: This study also made an attempt to understand whether the nature of family household had any relation to the age at marriage. It was found from the office data that a majority (60.8%) of the reported child marriages were from nuclear families. A few (12.5%) of the reported cases were from joint families; 8.5% were from single parent families while 1.3% were orphan children brought up in extended families. Three cases of 'other households' included households where the girl was living with a step parent, or with maternal relatives or was almost regarded as an orphan: the father had died and the mother was mentally unwell.

Family Background: Past research shows that child marriages are more common in households from the lower economic strata (UNICEF, 2005⁹⁶; Santhya, *et al.*, 2006⁹⁷; ICRW, 2007⁹⁸; NIPCCD,

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

2008⁹⁹). Data gathered from interviews with PPOs also brought forth a similar observation. Information about the occupation of the parents of survivors of child marriages who were interviewed in this study is given in Figure 10 which gives an indication of the socio-economic status of the families.



The office records did not have information regarding occupation of the parent. The information was not actively sought in the interviews with the children and their family members, but was incidentally revealed in some of the interviews. As Figure 10 shows, the available data from the interviews show that half of the respondents (10) belonged to families of farm labourers. In a few cases (2) the girl was being brought up by a widowed mother who was earning a living as a domestic worker, while in one case the parent was a marginal farmer. Thus barring an odd exception of a parent who was holding a private job a majority of the parents were pursuing occupations which brought in very low economic returns.

⁹⁷ Santhya, K.G, Haberland, Nicole and Singh, Ajay Kumar (2006). 'She knew only when the garland was put around her neck': findings from an exploratory study on early marriage in Rajasthan. New Delhi: Population Council.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹⁹ NIPCCD, New Delhi (2008). *A study on child marriage in India: situational analysis in three states*. New Delhi: NIPCCD.

Choice in Marriage: The children interviewed for the study were asked if they had had a say in the plans for their marriages made by their families, and if their opinion was heeded.

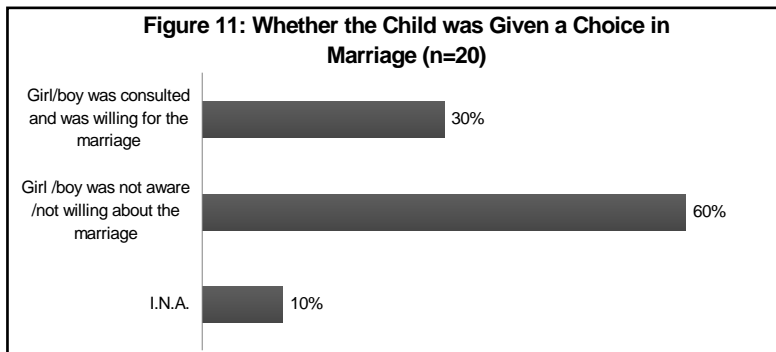


Figure 11 shows that it is often the case (12) that the children did not have any choice when the decisions regarding their marriage were being made. In about a quarter of such cases the children were not consulted, or were not even aware that they were going to be married. The parents found the very idea of taking their children's opinion into account extremely surprising. “Why should he be asked (*Usko kya poochna hai?!)*”, exclaimed one of the parents when he was asked if his son was consulted before his wedding was arranged. Over two-thirds (9) of the respondents were not willing for the marriage either because they wanted to continue with their education or wanted another partner of their choice. In all cases, they were cajoled or coerced into accepting the alliance chosen by the parents. Only one third of the children had entered into the marriage willingly (6).

To sum up, as per the findings of the analysis of the office records, the number of girls getting married as a minor far exceeded the number of boys getting married at an early age (71.40%). A majority of these girls were from the age group of 15 to 17 (53%). The tipping point age, i.e., the age at which the frequency of child marriage first increases significantly appeared to be 17 (26.5%). The available data on the educational status of girls indicated that they began to drop out

of school after middle school, i.e., class 7th. Very few girls were able to get an education beyond secondary school, i.e., Class 10 (1.54%). Most of the complaints of child marriages were reported from Hindu households (94.1%) and nuclear families (60.8%). As per the available data, more child marriages were being reported from the general castes than from any other category (25.4%), although this practice was found to be present in all castes. The demographic profile of a child marriage survivor emerging from interviews with children rescued from child marriages and their families showed the child to be a girl of 16 years of age who had dropped out in the secondary school, belonged to the low socioeconomic strata of society with parents working as farm labourers, and was being married against her wishes.

Summary: Analysis of the secondary data showed that the reporting of child marriage cases had more than doubled from 53 in 2009 to 287 in 2011. The reporting was not uniform throughout the year. Child marriage cases were more in the trimester of April to June, the trimester which is host to the most auspicious wedding day for the Hindus (Akha Teej) justifying the demand of the PPOs for extra support in terms of vehicle and personnel during this period. The reporting was not uniform throughout the state, the district Sirsa, adjacent to Rajasthan showed the highest number of reported cases of child marriages (17.2%). The heavily industrialized district of Faridabad (.4%) and the districts with higher female literacy rates such as Panchkula, Ambala, and Yamuna Nagar (.4%, 1.7%, and 1.7%) showed the least number of reported cases of child marriage. The district Mewat showed very less number of cases of child marriages (1.3%), probably because very few members of the community came forward to report such incidents.

SECTION 4:

Reasons for Child Marriage

“When I started my work as PPO, I was expecting my first child. When I gave birth to a baby girl, people told me that it was the punishment for the 'paap' I had accumulated from stopping child marriages.”

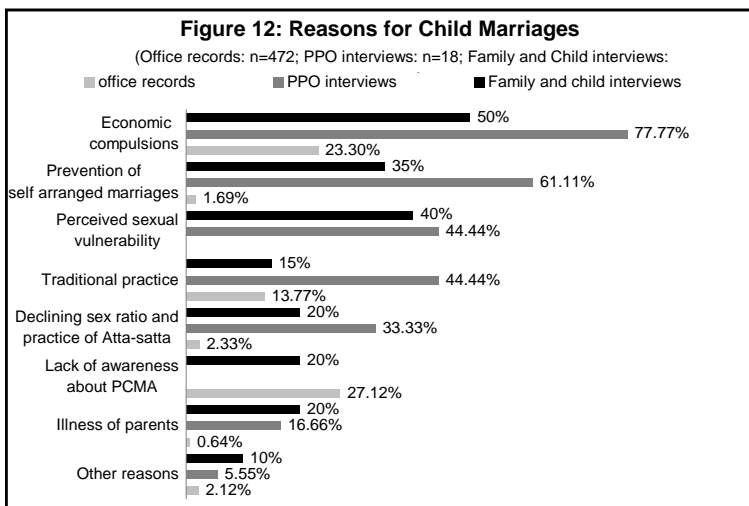
This remark by one of the PPOs interviewed for this study is a reflection of the abhorrence with which a girl child's birth is perceived in Haryana as much as the hostility with which a PPO's work is viewed. The reasons for child marriage in Haryana seem to be rooted in this attitude towards the girl child.

The study made an attempt to understand the reasons that prompt families to marry their offsprings before they attain adulthood. Though the records of the reported cases of child marriages which were the source of the secondary data in this study, did not always mention the reasons for the marriage, the PPOs in their interviews recounted their observations of the factors responsible for this issue. During the interviews with the children whose marriages were prevented under this act and with their parents, the reasons for such marriages were probed. The following graph depicts the factors responsible for child marriage as understood from all these three data sources. More than one of these responses were mentioned in different cases as the reasons behind child marriages.

Economic Compulsions of the Family

Given the socioeconomic background of the interviewees, it was no surprise that economic compulsions emerged as the most often

cited reason for child marriages. This was found from the data from the family and child interviews (50% or 10) as well as from the interviews of the PPOs (77.77% or 14). It was the second most often cited reason as per the office records (23.30%). Many studies such as UNICEF (2005)¹⁰⁰, Santhya, *et al.* (2006)¹⁰¹, ICRW (2007)¹⁰², NIPCCD (2008)¹⁰³, and ICRW (2011)¹⁰⁴.



All the trappings of a socially acceptable wedding ceremony in Haryana (a tent, decorations, D.J., food, clothes, etc.) requires a lot of money. Even though these expenses are borne mainly by the girl's

¹⁰⁰ UNICEF (2005) *Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A statistical exploration*. UNICEF, New York. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_26024.html

¹⁰¹ Santhya, K.G, Haberland, Nicole and Singh, Ajay Kumar (2006). *'She knew only when the garland was put around her neck': findings from an exploratory study on early marriage in Rajasthan*. New Delhi: Population Council.

¹⁰² ICRW (2007) *New Insights On Preventing Child Marriage: A Global Analysis Of Factors and Programs* International Center For Research On Women, Report prepared for USAID, Washington. Retrieved from www.icrw.org/node/276

¹⁰³ NIPCCD, New Delhi (2008). *A study on child marriage in India: situational analysis in three states*. New Delhi: NIPCCD.

¹⁰⁴ International Center for Research on Women (2011) *Delaying marriage for girls in India: A formative research to design interventions for changing norms*. UNICEF, New Delhi.

family, the groom's family also has to incur considerable expenditure. Even if a marriage is held in a temple or a gurudwara (as was the case with one of the respondents), the groom and the relatives have to be fed, which itself is an expensive affair. Marrying off siblings together is an acceptable method of saving costs. As put forth by a parent

"We are poor people. When there is a wedding in our family, if there are two children, we think that both the weddings should take place together to save expenditure (Ek hi kharche mein dono shadiyan ho jaye)."

However, in this process the younger of the siblings might be well below the age of marriage.

In a few cases, the families get the minor girl married and perform the 'gauna' ceremony later. The minor daughter is married, but remains with her natal family until she is considered old enough to be sent to her husband's home. However, *"This is still wrong because the child, when she is married, is too young to make a decision about her future."*

When the interviewer asked a parent why they did not go in for a registered marriage to reduce expenses, the reply was "Here it is called 'love marriage'. We cannot do that!"

Two PPOs (11.11%), however, expressed their reservations about only economic compulsions forcing people to marry their daughters early. As one PPO said

"Poverty is not the main reason for child marriage. The marriage expenses of these people are not so exorbitant. Of course some money is saved when siblings are married off together, but the main reason is the thinking by the parents that our responsibility should be over as soon as possible."

In this context, it may be pertinent to recall the findings of a qualitative study by Ghosh (2011) in Malda district of North

Bengal. Poverty was identified as the major reason for child marriages, but closer scrutiny revealed that parents who were well-placed economically also followed the practice, which was influenced by patriarchal values such as the notions of family honour as linked to a girl's chastity and caste endogamy.

Prevention of Self-arranged Alliance

As per Chowdhary (1997)¹⁰⁵, ensuring caste endogamy is essential to ensure perpetuation of caste system. As marriage provides the structural link-up between kinship and caste, a closer surveillance is accorded to the marital alliances. Secondly, selection of a one's life partner shows an independence which in the local perception presages a disruption of family ties or break-up of the joint family system and a loss of authority suffered by senior members of the family. Thirdly, in case a woman makes an alliance within the village, and since theoretically all people in a village are related, such a decision introduces a rank outsider into the family who can and may claim the property on behalf of his wife. Location of a married daughter within the natal village also spells danger to patrilinear inheritance as it facilitates and could lead to assumption of land inherited by her. The tightening of restrictions on marriage practice emphasizing village exogamy and caste endogamy is to negate the progressive fallout of the inheritance enablement law on female population.

Data from the present study support the argument that family exercises strict control on the choice of a life partner. This is achieved by keeping girls under strict control. Preventing a girl from entering into a self arranged alliance is made a matter of honour. A girl is married off early to prevent her from disgracing the family honour. More than one third of the respondents of family and child interviews have mentioned this as a reason for child marriages (35% or 7). A majority of the PPOs had observed it to be

¹⁰⁵ Chowdhary, P. (1997). Enforcing cultural codes: Gender and violence in Northern India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 32(19), 1019-1028.

the reason for early marriages (61.11% or 11) though it was mentioned in a very few cases in the office data (1.69%).

“A girl is the epitome of family honour. If she is underage and makes some mistake, she will only be blamed. If she is of age and gets married (of her own free will), the government protects her. In order to protect his honour, a person should marry off his daughter in time” Such opinions were expressed by the parents interviewed for this study. Members of the younger generation also seem to share this view. One of the boys interviewed for this study said, *“If we do not get a girl married before 18 and if she commits any mistake (gets married by choice), then her parents will not be able to face the society.”*

It also appears — from the interviews of PPOs—that in a large number of child marriages, marriage is forced on the girl because she eloped or had an affair. A PPO had this example to share:

“We had a case where a girl's boyfriend had complained. The boyfriend was from the same village; in Haryana such marriages are not allowed. The family got the girl married off in Rajasthan, to protect its honour. I had to explain to the boy that he will not be allowed to live if he persisted in tracking the girl down.”

Even when the girl is not actually in a relationship, gossip about an affair or a rumour is reason enough for her parents to panic and arrange the girl's marriage.

“It is the culture in Haryana that the girl has to pay for everything. If the girl sets her heart on someone, even if she is seen talking to someone... they feel the remedy for this is to kill her or to get her married off to somebody. After marriage she may face hundreds of problems, but they are not concerned.”

Parents are extremely apprehensive of even the possibility of girls choosing their marriage partners. One PPO remarked,

“If there is a case of an affair or an elopement in the village, in the next marriage season you will find that all the girls in the village who have attained puberty are being married off.”

Perceived Sexual Vulnerability of the Girl Child

The fear about sexual vulnerability of the girl child was very strongly apparent in many of the child and family interviews (8). Maintaining sexual purity of the girl till she gets married is seen as the responsibility of the family and is made a matter of family honour. For this reason, parents feel compelled to marry their daughters early. This factor was brought out in the previous research (Santhya, *et al.*, 2006¹⁰⁶, NIPCCD, 2008¹⁰⁷). Many of the PPOs had also mentioned this reason in their interviews (8), though it was not so evident in the office records.

“When a poor person's daughter reaches puberty, he has hundred enemies” quoted one of the parents. Parents fear leaving their daughters alone at home when they go out to work because of the threat of sexual harassment. *“Both of us (husband and wife), go to work. We hear that a girl has been caught here (yahaan pakad li), killed there (vahaan mar di). Because of this compulsion, (majboori), we decided to get the younger daughter married along with the elder one. Then we would both eat in peace.”*

At all times, the concern for family honour overrides fear for the girl's safety, and is the factor that drives the parents to marry her at an early age. As one parent said, *“Somebody who has an enmity with you may enter the house knowing that the girl is alone. The girl's reputation will be spoilt along with the parents'.”*

This sentiment has been handed down several generations. The father is considered responsible for the girl's safety (and chastity)

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

for as long as she is unmarried. It is understandable that he would want to pass the responsibility to someone else as soon as possible. This compulsion makes parents ignore the fact that marriage does not ensure their daughters' safety and well-being. To quote from an interview,

Interviewer: Other than financial status, what do you think are the reasons for child marriage?

Mother: It happens because of insecurity. Parents feel afraid to leave the girl alone when they go to work. So they marry their daughters.

Interviewer: But she can also be alone in her marital home.

Mother: That will be their responsibility, not ours.

This sentiment is echoed in the other interviews not only of the parents, but also their children. One girl who was feeling oppressed by the continuing harassment looked at an early marriage as the only means of escape,

"Boys stand in front of your house, they whistle, they pass comments. There is no toilet in the house. I have to go out. They say anything. (Kuch bhi kahate hai). I am always scared. That is why my brothers thought...in fact it was I who asked them to get me married. If anything happens and the police come, we will lose our respectability. It is better that I am sent off with honour (Ijjat ke saath)."

The girl however did admit that married women were also not safe from such harassment. "They pass comments on the married girls also. (*Bahuon ko bhi tane marte hai.*)"

The interviews with the PPOs expose the multitude of ways in which a girl child is sexually harassed or exploited in Haryana.

Sexual favours are demanded from girls working as farm hands in villages by boys from landholding families. A girl is not considered safe if she is sent to school. The village schools are normally till class 8. The girls have to travel by bus to a distant school if they want to study further. I have myself seen how sexual harassment happens in these buses. Naturally the girls are forced to drop out as the parents do not want them to study further because they are not safe. If the girl is not sent to work on the farm, if she is kept at home, she is still not safe as both parents have to go to work in order to feed the family. *An underage girl left alone at home is seen as an easy prey. Even at night, in her own home, a girl is vulnerable. There are many poor families. The hooligans specially have an eye on the girls from poor families. They have very small houses; there is not enough space to sleep inside the house. They have to sleep outside during summers. If you go and see in these colonies, [it will be obvious] that these girls from such families cannot be safe. So parents feel that this is the answer. Get her married so that she is no longer our responsibility.*

The girl's chastity is seen as a symbol of a family's status and honour. Violating it is a means of extracting revenge in cases of family vendetta. One PPO described the case of a village where a gang war was going on. Many family members on both sides were killed. One of the families wanted to get a minor girl married as they were afraid that she would be made the target of sexual violence.

Though child marriage is seen as a way of protecting a girl from sexual abuse, ironically, far from protecting her, the marriage of a minor exposes her to sexual exploitation from the male members of the marital family as well. To quote one PPO, "In Haryana, a girl is not safe even from her father-in-law or her brother-in-law. The father-in-law controls all property, so a son does not dare speak against him because he is afraid of being disinherited, the mother-in-law is powerless, and the girl becomes victim to rape by family members. There was a case of a girl who was married off at the age of 17-18, her husband couldn't say anything, and she was raped by

her father-in-law. The girl openly accused him (her father-in-law) of violating her.”

Traditional Practices in the Community

The custom of child marriage might have emerged or might have continued because of certain reasons, but, as some PPOs pointed out, it was so deep rooted and wide spread in certain communities that it had become a traditional practice, a reason in itself for further child marriages. This accounted for a sizable number of child marriages, in the office data (13.77%), in the data from family and child interviews (3) as well as in the data from PPO interviews (8).

Earlier studies also reported traditional beliefs and practices as one of the reasons for early marriages (NIPCCD, 2008¹⁰⁸).

As recounted by the PPOs, amongst certain castes, such as Gujjars and Ahirs, there is a tradition of marrying girls off early. In the Yadav community, there is a custom of getting the other sisters married off at the time of the marriage of the eldest sister. Even Gujjar boys are married off early. A PPO quoted a Gujjar woman as saying, “*hum to bachchon ki thali mein shadi karte hain*” (we get our children married when they are babies; they have to be carried in plates). Many Muslims believe that a girl is an adult when she starts menstruating. According to them, the parents who do not get her married even after that are guilty of a crime equal to murder.

Besides practices specific to certain castes or communities, there are local customs that perpetuate child marriages. One PPO from a district bordering Rajasthan observed that child marriages in her district were due to the influence of customs prevalent in Rajasthan. Residents who have lived in these areas for a long time have absorbed such practices irrespective of their castes or religion.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

Because of the prevalent tradition, there is always pressure on the parents to get the girl married. As one parent said, *“After the girl has turned 16 or 17, the neighbours start telling you to stop her from going to the market, and to get her married.”* One girl was married off at 13 years because of the pressure from her grandparents. The fact that her parents could not oppose her grandparents, and that they readily agreed for annulment of the marriage after the grandparents died speaks a lot about patriarchy in Haryana. If the family is economically weak, then other well off relatives can pressurize it to get the girl married to a groom of their choice as had happened in one of the cases. Another case shows that a widow (or a single parent) with meagre resources at her disposal cannot refuse an alliance suggested for her daughter by members of the community because she is dependent on their financial help for the wedding.

Declining Sex Ratio in the State and the Practice of *Atta-satta*

As mentioned earlier, at 877 females per 1000 males, the Haryana has one of the lowest overall sex ratios in India¹⁰⁹. The PPOs reported that the increasing difficulty in finding a wife is compelling people to arrange a child marriage (6). The connection between child marriage and low sex ratio is illustrated in the following case of the marriage of a minor boy

“The boy was 19, but the girl was above 18 years of age. The father of the boy was aware that his son was below the legal marriageable age. But he was having difficulty in finding a bride for his son and so wanted to get his son married whenever a suitable match could be found. The family was upset when the marriage was prohibited. They were also apprehensive that the girl's family would get her married elsewhere and their son would find it very hard to get a wife.”

¹⁰⁹ Census of India (2011)censusindia.gov.in/2011census/censusinfodashboard/.../profiles/.../IND006_Haryana.pdf

Another PPO elaborated on this point. She said, “*The (boy’s) family feels that the number of girls is declining. We don’t have any property or land. [Especially if] the boy is of the kind that is not too bright or interested in studies, he will not be able to find a suitable match. Thus it is better that he is married off as early as possible.*”

Low sex ratio has strengthened the system of “*atta-satta*” in many castes. One of the parents who was getting his underage son married because of the system of *atta-satta*, described it as a “social compulsion (*samaajik majboori*).” In *atta-satta*, the daughter of one family is given in marriage to another family, only when the other family agrees to give their daughter in marriage to the first family. Sometimes three parties are involved in this exchange. The daughter of one family goes to another, the daughter of that family goes to a third, and the daughter of the third family is given in marriage to the first family.

In this system, boys can get married only if there is a girl in the family whom they can give in marriage to a boy in the bride’s family. If no girl is available within the family, a suitable girl has to be arranged from another family. In such transactions, the age of the child is one factor that is not considered as important. In their interviews, the respondents mentioned ‘*atta-satta*’ as a significant reason for child marriages and acknowledged the low sex ratio in Haryana to be the cause behind this practice (4). The corresponding percentage as determined from the office data is 2.33%.

Family’s Ignorance of the Law

In the office records, ignorance of the law was the reason most often cited for child marriages (27.12%). PPOs during their interviews however felt that it might be just an excuse given by the families (3). One PPO has narrated her experience,

“We got a complaint that three minor children were being married together in one village. This was going to happen in a former sarpanch’s family. We applied for an injunction order. I went to the venue with the SHO. The family was summoned to the court. They pleaded ignorance of the law, and promised to cancel the marriage.”

Though hardly any of the family members of children whose marriage was prevented under the law mentioned unawareness of the law as the primary reason for child marriage, it was evident from the interviews that there was a lack of clarity about the legal repercussions of marrying an underage child and about the exact legally marriageable age (4). One of the parents of an underage boy whose child marriage was prevented kept on insisting throughout the interview that they were unjustly wronged, *“Hamara bachcha to balig hai (our boy is an adult).”* This confusion can possibly have occurred as the legal age for adulthood for both boys as well as girls is 18, though the marriageable age for boys is 21 and not 18 as in case of girls.

One parent was very vehement in his complaint that the government’s efforts to spread awareness about the law were inadequate.

Father: *We came to know about the law only when the police arrived to stop the marriage. There were no boards put up to publicize the law. Sometimes advertisements were shown on TV which say that a boy below 21 and a girl below 18 should not be married, but the legal repercussions for such an act were never mentioned.*

Interviewer: *You were not aware of the law?*

Father: *How many people have been informed by you, Madam? How many advertisements has TISS put up? How many ads has government given? You are saying that the law has been in existence for the last three years. What efforts has the government done to spread awareness in these years?*

There were some parents (6) who had tried to get their underage child married in spite of being aware of the law. This supports the point brought out from the interviews of the PPOs that awareness efforts should aim not only at giving information about the law, but changing the mindset of the society that sees a girl child as a burden, and as a responsibility to be passed off at the first opportunity.

It may be mentioned here that when the respondents were asked whether a child marriage took place in the village after the marriage in their family was prevented, most of them replied in the negative (15). This substantiates the claim made by the PPOs that preventing a child marriage is the best way of creating awareness about PCMA and curbing the practice of child marriage.

Illness of Parents

Sometimes families feel pressurized to get their children married and 'settled' because of illness of a family member, even though the children are underage. This had been brought out by the data from family and child interviews 4), from PPO interviews (3). One PPO spoke about such a case where the father of the boy had cancer. But the girl, with whom the marriage was arranged, was underage and the marriage had to be prohibited. One of the respondents of family and child interviews, who was educated and aware and who was herself married at the proper age of 23 years, was involved in getting her underage sister married to her underage brother in law only because her father in law was terminally ill and wanted to see his son married before his demise.

Other Reasons

Though no PPO corroborated this in her interview, the office data showed some instances where an underage girl had been married in return for money or land (1.06%). A family member of one of the

children rescued from a child marriage interviewed for this study had also alleged that the girl was being married off by her mother for the purpose of child trafficking.

One PPO (5.5%) and the office data (0.62%) mentioned instances where girls wanted to get married by choice and were not willing to wait till the legal age of marriage. It is no surprise that girls brought up in the restrictive and repressive atmosphere in a patriarchal society, deprived of the opportunities of education and independence, and encouraged by the portrayal by the media of a happy ever after life with a self chosen partner, start looking upon marriage to a partner of their choice as a way of escape from an oppressive household. When they think that they have found such a partner, they want to get married as soon as possible, because of the very real fear that their family would never allow a self arranged marriage and would marry them to someone else at the first opportunity.

In the office data, in a few of the cases, kidnapping and sexual assault were mentioned as reasons for getting a girl married before she was legally of age. It must however be borne in mind that these could be the cases where a minor girl elopes with a self chosen partner and the girl's family registers a complaint of kidnapping and rape against the boy. This reason did not find a mention in the other two data sources.

Summary: To sum up, the PPOs as well as the families and children who were interviewed for this study reported economic compulsions that force parents to save on marriage expenditure by marrying siblings together be the major reason for child marriages (77.77% and 50%) along with prevention of self arranged marriages (61.61% and 40%) and perceived sexual vulnerability of the girl child (44.44% and 35%). Traditional practices, the practice of *attasatta*, lack of awareness of the law and societal pressure including pressure from unwell family members were also mentioned as reasons for early marriages. Though information from the office

data regarding reasons for child marriages was far from complete, it appeared that unawareness of the law was the reason most commonly given by the families for marrying their underage children (27.12%).

SECTION 5:

Intervention by the PPOs

Even when an act is formulated and the machinery to put it into operation is designed with the best of intentions, the challenges associated with it are realized only when it is being implemented, and by the people entrusted with its implementation. At the same time, drawing from their own experiences, the strategies to overcome these challenges can also be devised by these very people. This chapter describes the experiences of the PPOs regarding the intervention done under this act as well as the challenges faced and the strategies used during the process of intervention. The PPOs are also entrusted with the responsibility of creating awareness about the act. The present chapter records this aspect of their work. The experience of the PPOs of working with the police and the judiciary in implementing the act is described here. The support required by the girl after her marriage has been prohibited and the support required by the PPOs for better implementation of the act are also outlined in this chapter. Most of this information is obtained from the interviews of the PPOs and is supplemented by the information available from the office data, which however is very meagre, as hardly any records were maintained regarding the actual intervention.

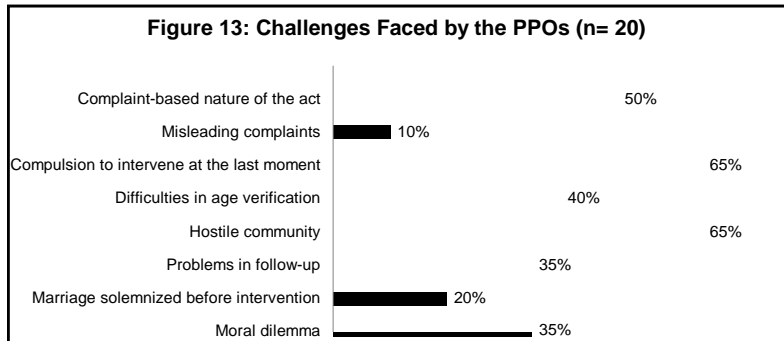
Procedure Followed by the PPOs

When a report is made to the office of the PPO regarding an impending child marriage in the district, the PPO first tries to verify

if the persons getting married are actually underage. She visits the village and verifies the age and mediates with the family and the community, and also explains the provisions of PCMA. The objective is to convince everyone concerned about illegality of child marriages and persuade them to postpone the wedding. Some PPOs go with an injunction order from the court prohibiting the marriage, some obtain the order later only if they feel the necessity, and others rely on written assurances given by the concerned families that the marriage would not take place till the child is of age. The process is far from smooth, and the PPOs have to negotiate many challenges in the course of their work

Challenges Faced by the PPOs and Strategies Used

The following figure depicts the challenges faced by the PPOs in this process.

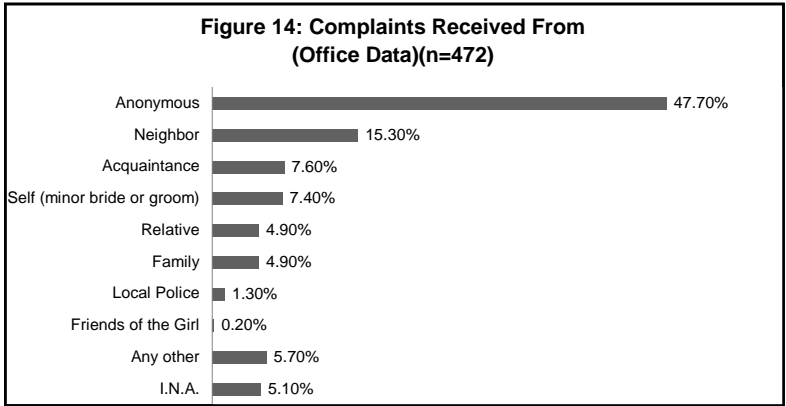


These challenges warrant a brief explanation.

Complaint-based Nature of the Act: PCMA is complaint-based although, PPOs have on occasion acted on media reports or when they came to know about a child marriage through public gossip. But generally, the PPO, who works from her office at the district headquarters, cannot be expected to know about a child marriage being arranged or solemnized in a distant village unless the fact is

reported to her. A majority of the PPOs agree that very few of the cases of child marriage get reported and the complaint dependency limits their work (10).

The following figure depicts information obtained through the office data about the sources of the reports or complaints of child marriages.



It can be seen from Figure 14 that in almost half the cases (47.7%) the complaint was lodged through anonymous calls or letters. The office data also reported that in a majority of the cases, direct reports were made to the PPO through a phone call (51%) or a letter (43%) which allows a person to remain anonymous. Very rarely reports were made in person, through a visit to a PPO's office (4%).

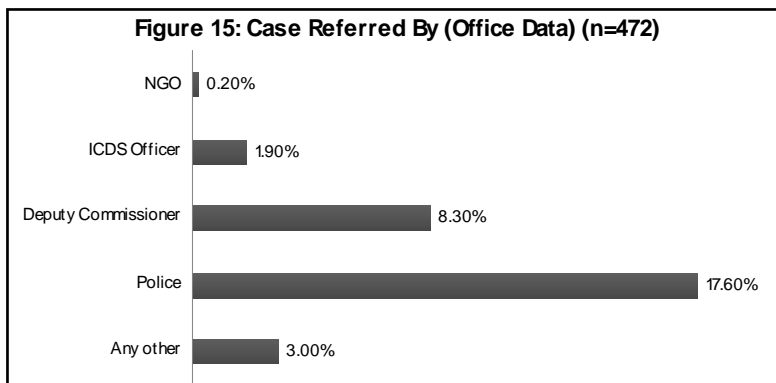
The experience of the PPOs has been that the anonymous complainants are usually neighbours or acquaintances who bear a grudge against the family (10). Since interruption or prohibition of an impending wedding on legal grounds translates into a grave social insult as well as economic loss to the family, such complaints are made as a way of revenge against the family. Relatives or family members may also report a child marriage out of spite (6). If a family rejects a proposal from one family and fixes marriage elsewhere, the first family may complain (1). Girls who want to choose their marriage partner may themselves lodge complaints if their families

forcibly try to get them married to another person (3) or their boyfriends may do so (4).

A perverse reason for preventing child marriage was also revealed. Boys from landholding families, who were sexually exploiting girls working in their farms, would report their victims' marriage in order to be able to continue with their abuse (1).

As per the office data, in some cases the neighbours and acquaintances had identified themselves (15.3% and 7.6%) while registering the complaint. Relatives or family members themselves (4.9% each) had complained against the marriage because the girl had eloped and married, or if the alliance was arranged by some other members of the family without their approval. Very few girls (7.4%) seemed to have come forward to make a complaint. The local police had reported cases of child marriage which came to their attention.

Sometimes complainants approach the PPOs directly. At other times they may approach police, other government, organizations or NGOs and then are referred to the PPO.



The office data depicted in Figure 16 show that sometimes cases were referred by the police (17.6%) or in a few instances by the DC (8.3%). NGOs did not seem to be playing a role either in making direct complaints or in sending referrals (.2%).

Suggestions for an Alternative: Suggestions were invited from the PPOs for alternatives to the complaint-based nature of their interventions. The most feasible suggestion appeared to be to make the village sarpanch responsible for reporting child marriages (3). As one PPO said,

“Normally, every village has a chowkidaar who keeps a record of all births and deaths in that village. He should keep a record of all the marriages also. The sarpanch can ascertain the age of the parties and inform us of any irregularities. Every month the sarpanch should report to the DC’s office and give information about the marriages that happened in the village. He can be made answerable for the child marriages that take place in his village and be punished for his negligence.”

It was also suggested that other panchayat members should be made to keep a watch on child marriages. In the cities, the elected members of Nagar Parishad (Municipal Council) should be made responsible and accountable. Another PPO suggested that there should be greater interactions with the sarpanches and he (or she) should be given incentives for stopping child marriages.

Another suggestion was the formation of a committee at village level comprising the sarpanch, panch and anganwadi worker. The Government should make the committee responsible for reporting cases of not only child marriage, but also of domestic violence, suicides, sex trafficking, 498A, etc., to the concerned authorities. The liability for non-compliance should be fixed with the sarpanch, panch, anganwadi workers and the 'Pradhan' of the village *Mahila Mandal* (Women’s Forum).

Doubts were expressed about the effectiveness of such changes because the common feeling was that “the members of panchayat, including the sarpanch, were not found to be very aware or supportive.” The case of three underage girls from the village

sarpanch's family being married off is an example. According to one PPO,

“Sarpanches had been told to report child marriages earlier also. But the sarpanch is often under pressure from the villagers and the families conducting child marriages. Often, these people are friends or relatives or the sarpanch may not want his chances of re-election to be affected. He belongs to the village and has to live among people who do not see anything objectionable in a child marriage. Ignoring the issue is the most convenient option for him.”

It was also felt that greater awareness was necessary so more child marriages would be reported. One PPO ascribed the increased reporting of child marriage cases in her district to the publicity given to the issue by the media. Another PPO suggested closer liaison with NGOs.

Misleading Complaints: As mentioned earlier, most reports of child marriage are received anonymously. Even when the identity of the complainant is known, PPOs go to great lengths to keep it secret. This is done to ensure that potential complainants are free of the fear of repercussions. However, this practice renders the system open to abuse. People giving misleading information, or “false reporting’ as it is called, is not unknown. The motives are usually dislike for the girl or her family (2). A report of child marriage is made and on reaching the venue the PPO may find that there is no marriage taking place as reported or those persons getting married are legally adults. The resulting wastage of time and resources has made a few PPOs view it as an obstacle to their work (2).

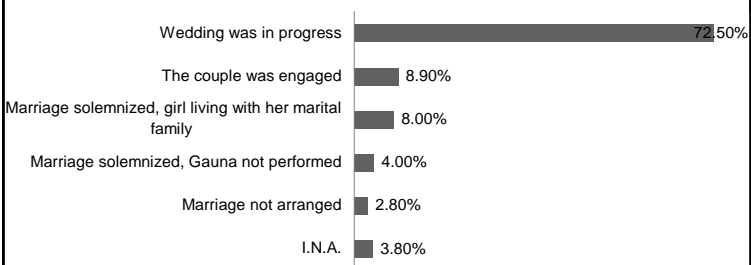
Penalty for Misleading Complaints: One PPO has narrated a case where the girl's mother, a widow, who had left her daughters with her parents and remarried, was upset that she was not consulted when her daughter's uncle fixed the girl's marriage. She lodged a complaint of child marriage. When the PPO visited the village to

meet the girl, she was shown proof that the girl had attained majority. The girl also told the PPO that she had consented to the marriage. This PPO was of the opinion such deliberate acts of misreporting should be punished.

The same PPO also conceded that sometimes the complainant might not be sure about the girl's age. In such cases, the fear of penalty may actually deter people from reporting. She narrated another case. *“Someone had sent an email about an impending child marriage. This person sent another email after 6 hours saying that he had made a mistake and hence, no action should be taken by us. Thinking that the person had sent the second email under pressure, we went to the place. By then, the marriage had already taken place. On verification, we found that the girl was a major. The girl was very short and thin, and did not look like an adult. She also did not have a father. The complainant later apologized. He had thought that the family was selling the (minor) girl.”* The case underscored the PPOs’ opinion that the circumstances of each case must be taken into account before deciding on the penalty.

Compulsion to Intervene at the Last Moment: The time at which intervention takes place affects the process of intervention as well as its effect on the family and the child. The marital status of the child at the time of intervention was recorded in the office records and is shown in the following figure.

Figure 16: Stage At Which Intervention Was Done (Office Records) (n=472)



It is apparent from the figure that in a large majority of the cases the intervention was done when the wedding was in progress (72.50%).

In a very few cases (8.9%) the impending child marriage was reported immediately after the engagement ceremony and the PPOs were able to intervene well in time. In some cases (11.6%) marriage was already solemnized before the case was reported to the PPO, or before the intervention could take place. In more than half of these cases 'Gauna' was also performed, i.e., the girl was sent to her marital home. The graph shows that there were some instances when the information given to the PPO was inaccurate; there was no marriage taking place as reported (2.8%)

According to the PPOs, reports of child marriage are invariably received so late that they have no option other than to stop the wedding at the venue. Since most of the complaints are done out of spite, the timing of the complaint is deliberate, so that the family would face maximum humiliation and loss in public. A majority of the PPOs say that when they receive information about a child marriage at the last moment, it is an awkward situation for the family as well as the PPO (13). The venue for the wedding may be in a remote village and reaching the place in time may itself be a difficult task, especially in view of the fact that the PPO does not have an independent use of a vehicle. Sometimes on an auspicious day, e.g., Akshay Tritiya, many marriages are scheduled on the same day, and again reaching all the venues becomes an impossibility for the PPO.

At such times the PPOs are forced to take help of the local police by asking them to go to the venue. However, as one PPO said, "60% of the times I reach the venue before the police. Even if the police do reach the venue first, they usually chitchat with the villagers, and wait for me to start the proceedings." There is no time to take an injunction order, which is a further handicap for the PPO. One PPO said "Sometimes I give a statement in my application for injunction that the marriage may not stop in spite of our

intervention and hence, an injunction order is needed. Then I collect the order later.”

When the PPO manages to reach the venue, she is often compelled to intervene and stop the wedding when the rituals are in progress.

“Stopping a wedding at that point of time, when the venue is set, guests have already assembled, food has been prepared, band is playing and may be half the rituals are over, is extremely traumatic for the family. Disrupting wedding rituals is considered an exceptionally bad omen. The family, which has already spent a small fortune on the wedding, is in no mood to listen to reason. It cannot accept the humiliation that has occurred in front of all its relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. There is anguish over the ambiguity about the marital status of the girl and anxiety about her future. All this translates into tremendous hostility towards the PPO. Counselling such a family is a herculean task.”

This narration was echoed in family and child interviews.

To their credit, the PPOs try their best to handle the situation with sensitivity, but it does not have any effect. To quote a PPO, *“Once we got to know about a wedding just two hours in advance. I requested the SP to send two of his personnel in plain clothes to find out if the complaint was genuine. They had to be in civil clothes otherwise the reaction of the family would be hostile. It was important to be sensitive to their feelings. When we reached the venue, the Baraat had already arrived. The girl did not have a mother. So I explained the matter to the grandmother, who fainted.”*

Given the sensitivity of the issue, PPOs prefer to intervene a few days before the marriage actually takes place. It saves the family costs and gives them the time to cancel or postpone a marriage. Then the family is more amenable to reason. Finding an alternative to acting only on complaints seems to be the most feasible answer for this problem.

Difficulty in Age Verification: As mentioned earlier, all the complaints that come to the PPO have to be verified by obtaining age proof, before engaging in any other intervention except in cases where there is no marriage taking place as reported. A large number of PPOs admitted facing problems at this stage (40%).

Absence of Age Proofs: The office records indicated that in a very few cases (7.84%) the birth certificate was available as the proof of the age of the girl. According to a PPO, Families do register the birth of a son, as they are aware that he may need the birth certificate later for his further education or employment. But they may not bother to register the birth of a girl. Therefore birth certificates are often not available. Even when they are available, families are unwilling to show them. If possible, the PPOs have to obtain birth records from local civil hospital or the village anganwadi worker.

School leaving certificate was obtained as an age proof in 37.92% of the cases as per the office data. The office records showed that in some cases ration card was accepted as age proof document (6.99%). The PPOs however are of the opinion that the ration card is not an acceptable age proof, because when it is issued, no strict checking or conscientious recording is done.

According to the office data, sometimes age of the girl was mentioned in the written complaint (13.56%). Often, after a successful mediation with the family, the family members accepted in writing that the child was a minor (31.99%). In the absence of any other age proof document PPOs have accepted it as an age indicator to start further intervention process.

In the absence of any age document, some PPOs ask the family to give an affidavit, which sometimes is endorsed by the village panchayat members. Two PPOs narrated cases where they had to calculate the age of a younger child as age proof was available only for one of the older children.

Lack of Time: When the intervention takes place at the last minute, the task of age verification becomes even more difficult. As one PPO says,

“In a house where a wedding is taking place, you cannot expect anyone to produce a birth certificate. Nor is it possible to call the anganwadi worker at 8.30 in the night. And if I want to order a 'medical' for the girl, how do I do it?”

Ossification Test: Ossification test to determine age was done in a few cases (7.41%) as shown in the office data. The problem with the ossification test is that it does not pinpoint the exact age, but indicates an age span of two years.

“If the test says that the age of the girl is 16 to 18 or 17 to 19 years, there is a problem. We have to submit the ossification test report to the court and accept the court's decision. In a majority of the cases the court decides the girl to be a major”.

False Certificates: It is widely believed, and supported by a PPO, that in Haryana documents showing a false age can be procured at a price. One PPO narrated a case where the girl was actually a major, but the family had got another certificate made, showing a later date of birth for the purpose of her school admission. Secondary data also revealed instances of more than one birth certificate showing different dates of birth for the same person.

Hostile Community: Community reactions to the PPOs work were hostile, as reported by a large majority of the PPOs (13).

“When we go to prevent a child marriage, all the villagers turn out of the houses and gather when they see our police van approaching”. “The atmosphere is tense with a huge mob that has gathered around our vehicle and not letting us pass, there is lot of

crying and wailing, people threatening suicide. We are also at physical risk.” “A lot of people, neighbours, relatives, gather at the venue and try to pressurize me to let the marriage take place”

The PPOs have the following options for dealing with the situation.

Involving the Police: The PPOs do not enter a village to stop a wedding without police support. “Otherwise we may get lynched”, said a PPO. One PPO shared her experience of stopping a child marriage when she was nine months pregnant. “The crowd gathered around me, one woman grabbed me, they were pushing me... My assistants rescued and took me away. Just then the SHO came. Then the crowd became subdued. The presence of SHO intimidates people.” “Usually, the SHO is familiar with the villagers; he knows how to handle them. I always inform the SP if I am going to stop a child marriage as it has the potential to develop into a law and order problem.” said another PPO.

Involving the Sarpanch: Involving the sarpanch of the villages is another strategy used by some PPOs (3). As one PPO explained how complex it can become, “I go to stop a child marriage, and when a big mob gathers, the family actually is in a helpless position. The influential people from the community, the panch, then take charge. We sit with them and counsel them.” Another PPO shared, “First, we speak to the sarpanch and ask him to accompany us. The sarpanch is often reluctant to speak to the families directly, as he maintains that it is their personal matter. But I take him along to ensure peace in the village, and also to ensure that people at least listen to us.” Mediation with the community is recorded as an intervention strategy even in the secondary data (16.10%)

Mediation with the Family: The experience of most PPOs (19) has been that the cooperation of the family cannot be secured without mediation. At such times patience and politeness are essential to overcome hostility of the community. PCMA is explained to the

families and they are told about the provisions the law has regarding penalty for child marriage. The physical and psychological repercussions of marrying a girl early are also explained to the family. The need to educate girls is also stressed.

Sometimes, PPOs also inform the families about various government schemes that provide assistance to girls for their education and even marriage. One PPO shared that she makes an effort to project PCMA in a positive manner to people. “The government is looking after your daughter (*Aap ki beti ka khayal kiya ja raha hai*)”. Efforts are also made to ensure that the alliance is not broken off. In the words of one PPO,

I tell them that I have not come to break a relationship. There will be no Jaymala and no Fera. Apart from that, you may entertain the guests in whatever way you choose. Consider the function as a form of Sagai (Engagement). The marriage will take place when the girl completes 18 years of age. That time there is no need to spend any money. The bride and groom can do the Fera and Jayamala, and then the girl can be taken to her new home.

Injunction Order: Opinion was divided on the necessity of injunction orders. Just over a third of the PPOs said that they preferred injunction orders (35%). One of PPOs justified this approach saying,

“It is necessary to take an injunction order in every case. If you just do counselling, there is no guarantee that the marriage will not be performed later. The family can take the child to another place in another district, and get her married there. In Haryana, you can procure documents showing false age. Families, after giving assurance letters, may do that and slap a case of mental harassment on the PPO. If an injunction order is taken you can lodge an FIR. Then, the family is also scared of reprisal. If there is a child marriage in a village, and if we go with an injunction order, it acts as a deterrent and there will not be another child marriage in that village.”

The secondary data showed that even where child marriage was proven after verification, the PPOs did not try to obtain an injunction order except in a very few cases (3). The injunction order was not taken because sometimes, when the complaint was made at the eleventh hour, there was no time to take an injunction order (1). Some of them had experienced that the court was unwilling to give the order (5). Some PPOs said that they asked the court for an injunction order only if they felt that in spite of counselling, the family would get the girl married (4).

Assurance Letters: A majority of PPOs (13) ask for a written assurance from the family that they will not go ahead with the marriage of their minor children. The office records also revealed that getting assurance letters from the family formed a major strategy of the intervention (59.96%). The sarpanch of the village or the other prominent members of the local community may also be made co-signatories to such undertakings.

The office records mention a case where an assurance is taken from the family that the suspected complainant would not be harassed by them.

Follow-up: There is no system or a standard procedure that requires follow-up of cases in which a wedding was prevented. There always is the possibility that the family would try to get the girl married somehow. In the absence of clear laid down procedures, the PPOs track and follow up such cases informally to the extent possible (17). One way is to inquire about past cases whenever the PPOs are visiting the village again or a nearby area in connection with another case (2). Sometimes the enquiry is made through telephone (2).

On occasion, the sarpanch and the anganwadi workers are given the responsibility of keeping the PPO informed, especially if they feel that the family might try to marry off the girl (3). At other times, the police are asked to keep an eye on the girl and her family (2). One

PPO said that she asks the complainant to keep her informed about the family and the girl. If one of the families belongs to another district, the PPO of that district is asked to keep track of the family (1). When the girl has herself complained, she informs the PPO if there is another attempt to marry her off. One PPO also said that some of the families themselves meet her when they are in town to attend court or for financial help (2).

However, these efforts are random and there is no assurance that every case would be tracked and followed up with. According to some PPOs (7), apart from ensuring that there will be no further attempts to marry the girl off as a minor, it is almost impossible to keep any other follow up with the girl because of the lack of time, resources and the fact that the family refuses to entertain the PPO. As explained by one of the PPOs,

“The family is totally uncooperative. They look upon us as enemies. They say that you have caused us enough annoyance by prohibiting the marriage, now why have you come again? Follow up becomes very difficult for us. If we phone them, the telephone is switched off or their phone number has changed. If we go or ask the anganwadi worker to meet the girl, the family gathers around her, they do not let her talk. There is no system that can ensure that we can communicate with the girl.”

Marriage Solemnized before Intervention: As reported earlier, sometimes it transpires that before a PPO can intervene in a case the wedding has already taken place (2). In such an eventuality, the PCMA has made provision of nullity.

Nullity: As per the office data, very few families opt for nullity (2.97%). According to the PPOs, this is so because of the stigma attached to nullity. Even when the girl does not want to continue with the marriage, she is under a lot of pressure from the family, community, and society not to get the marriage annulled. Very few of the PPOs have admitted to handling a sizable number of nullity

cases (3). Most of these appear to be cases where the girl married as a child was subjected to domestic violence and hence did not want to continue with the marriage. In an unusual case, the girl was already married and wanted to study further. When her in-laws started pressurizing her family for *gauna* or *bidai*, she applied for nullity.

The PCMA tries to provide relief to boys as well as girls who are married as children. The PPOs opine that such provisions however sometimes work against the interest of the girl (2).

PCMA seeks to provide relief to boys as well as girls who were married as children. The PPOs opine that such provisions however sometimes work against the interest of the girl (2). One PPO explains, *“People do not know about nullity. Sometimes I hesitate to tell them about it because, now, the boys have started to use it. They were married as minors; now they have children but they no longer like their wives. Some lawyers have even approached me saying that they want to file for nullity on behalf of the boy.”* This is illustrated in the following case:

Two sisters married to two brothers had complained to the PPO about physical violence from their husbands and in-laws because of dowry demands. Both parties approached the Special Cell to resolve their issues, but the talks failed. Finally, the PPO informed the women about the provisions in PWDVA. However, before a decision could be taken to file cases under PWDVA, both the brothers filed for nullity under PCMA 2006, on the ground that they were minors at the time of marriage.

Engaging Police Help: The office records show that in some cases when it was found that the marriage was already solemnized, the case was referred to the police for further action (18.85%).

Moral Dilemma: Some of the PPOs have admitted to facing a moral dilemma while doing their duty (7) in stopping child

marriages. A few of them reportedly felt remorse in preventing marriages where the marriage was being solemnized because either of the parents was critically ill. In cases of destitution where the child is orphaned, or the family is extremely poor or led by a single parent, prohibition of the marriage is a major financial loss. Sometimes PPOs face dilemma in dealing with such cases.

However, as one PPO said, “you cannot let a girl's life be ruined because of economic reasons.” Another PPO said very firmly, “There are many types of dilemmas. There is pressure on us from political leaders, local leaders, society, caste, culture, etc. But in spite of that, I am focused and always function according to law.”

In some cases the dilemma is not so easily solved. In a case shared by the PPO,

“The family was the poorest of the poor. When we went to stop the marriage, the Baraat had already arrived. The villagers were of the opinion that the family didn't even have enough to eat and it would be a crime to stop the wedding. After a long meeting, a solution was found. A major girl from the extended family was married off to the same groom. The Baraat did not go back empty handed. However I felt that though we had succeeded in preventing a crime against one girl, we had committed one against another, because the girl who was married that day was totally unprepared for it, and was suddenly pushed into marriage.”

To summarize, of the several challenges the PPOs have to face during the course of their work, the biggest and most frequent (65%) one was having to stop a marriage that is in progress and face a hostile community at the wedding venue. The complaint based nature of the act (50%) also meant having to deal with misleading information (10%). Facing problems in verifying age (40%) and in keeping follow up of the cases (36.84%), the stigma attached to and the misuse of the provision of nullity (20%) and the

moral dilemma that they have to face because of the nature of their work (35%) were some other challenges mentioned by the PPOs.

Help of police was taken in all the cases by the PPOs. Mediation with the family and the influential members of the community was done (95%) to counter the hostile crowds and other effects of last minute intervention. Though some PPOs took an injunction order to prohibit child marriages (35%), many relied upon written assurances taken from the families (65%). An informal follow up of the survivors of child marriages (85%) was kept using available resources such as police and community members.

Making the village sarpanch responsible for reporting child marriages (33.33%) was the most frequently suggested alternative for the complaint based nature of the act.

Working with other Stakeholders

Experience of Working with the Police: Close coordination with the police and their cooperation is essential for the PPOs to function effectively. One third of the PPOs (33.33%) expressed complete satisfaction with the support given by the police. A majority though has expressed reservations (Table 1).

Table 1: PPOs' Experiences with the Police (n=12)

Good cooperation from police	6
Police lack of awareness about PCMA	2
Police lack of awareness about their role	4
Patriarchal mindset of the police	4
Police hampered by lack of manpower	1
Protection of self interest by the police	1

Table 1 shows that the police lack awareness about PCMA and the PPOs' role. Child marriage cases that are reported to the police often do not get referred to the PPOs. Many police personnel still

believe that if a girl is happy with the marriage, the marriage is valid and should continue even if the girl is a minor.

The police also seem to lack awareness and motivation regarding the role they are expected to play. PPOs have complained that sometimes the police personnel that accompany them do not take active part in the proceedings. They just act as unconcerned onlookers. One PPO observed that, *“Police do not feel that this is an important work. They feel only intervention in crimes such as murder, theft, and robbery is important. They feel they are being unnecessarily involved in such kind of work.”*

It is evident that the police share the attitudes and beliefs of the community of which they are a part. They have no awareness of the negative consequences of child marriages. As one PPO said, *“The police try to justify child marriages and demoralize us.”* Other PPOs also had similar experiences. *“Sometimes, the police advise the people (indirectly, of course) to leave their jurisdiction, and get the girl married somewhere else. Villagers ask what they should do if their daughters were to run away one day. To this, the police would say that marriage is the only solution to prevent such a thing from happening. For added emphasis, they would even say that that they would do the same thing.”* One PPO gave an illustration of how police connive with the villagers in conducting child marriages.

“Once I had gone to stop a child marriage, and I received a report that a marriage was going to take place within an hour in a village which was about 10 km. away. It was not possible for me to reach there in time, so I asked the police to go. Later, I found out that that the police went to the village, warned the family about me, and advised them to hasten the proceedings and solemnize the marriage before my arrival!”

One PPO also said that the police in her district were keen on cooperating, but were constrained by staff shortages. There were just four to five personnel in each police station. One PPO

experienced that. *“They co-operate as long as it doesn't affect their self-interests. If they have any kind of interest (financial, personal, etc.) in the matter, they will make sure that my work will come to nothing.”*

Experience of Working with the Court: PPOs have to work in close coordination with the judiciary. The following table summarizes the experience of the PPOs while working with the court.

Table 2: Experience of the PPOs Regarding Working with the Judiciary (n=18)

Good support received from the court	6
Court's lack of knowledge of PCMA	2
When in doubt, the court rules that the girl is a major	2
Reluctance in giving injunction orders	7
Time consuming procedures	5
Insistence on providing evidence	2
Stay order given by high court	2

Only a third of the PPOs (6) found the judges to be cooperative, a few of whom even went out of their way to help. *“I have got an injunction order even at night.”* said one PPO. Another PPO narrated her experience, *“The judge typed the order herself instead of getting someone else to do it as there was no time.”*

Such cooperation is not always forthcoming. In some cases (2), it is because of lack of understanding of the law. One PPO found from experience that judges sometimes do not have enough knowledge about the law.

There is also the absence of will to implement the law. Apparently, as one PPO put it, *“judges are also part of society and have the same mindset.”* One PPO said that, *“Sometimes the courts take the stand that if the girl is 17 and 1/2 years old, there is no problem, let the marriage take place.”* If ossification tests place the girl's age at

16 to 18 years, the courts tend to pronounce the girl as a major, and allow the marriage to take place (2).

Many PPOs (7) have also experienced that judges are reluctant to give injunction orders. They advise the PPOs to take written assurances from the families. Even though there is a provision for interim injunction before verifying the age of a girl who is about to be married, which can be revoked if the girl is found to be a major, one PPO was chided by the judge when she took an interim injunction order and the girl was later found to be a major. *“The judge told me that I should verify the age first and only then take an injunction order.”*

Court procedures are found to be very time consuming (5). *“The court does not understand the urgency of the situation. Getting a simple order from the court may take 3-4 days.”* said one PPO. *“I find it exasperating and humiliating when I have to waste a day just to get an order.”* was another PPO’s reaction.

Sometimes (2), a court demands evidence that is impossible to produce. *“We stop a child marriage with an injunction order. But the family goes ahead with the wedding. When we want to file an FIR, the police refuse to do so. They demand evidence because the court demands it. They want photographs of the couple garlanding each other, or taking the pheras. This is something that we cannot arrange because we were not there when the wedding actually took place. In one case, we recorded the voice of the girl who admitted that her marriage did take place, her parents also admitted that they conducted the marriage, but the family got anticipatory bail and no action was taken. We were made to look like fools. After all our efforts went in vain.”* This was the outburst of one PPO.

A few PPOs (2) also reported cases in which families got stay orders from the High Court when they intervened to stop a child marriage. In one such case, a girl of 16 was married to a groom who was 35 years old. *“It was an Arya Samaj wedding. The family had got a stay*

order from the High Court. I prepared a report, gave it to court. The girl's father, who had earlier admitted to having conducted the wedding, changed his statement in court. The court asked us to furnish details of the High Court order. The High Court order was taken on the basis of the ration card. The case is still pending.”

To conclude, police support was found to be essential by the PPOs for implementation of PCMA, however, a majority (70.58%) said that there was scope for improvement in the support currently provided by the police. They expected the police to be better informed about the act (11.11%), and play a more active role in its implementation (22.22%) than they did at present. The patriarchal mindset of the police which made them sympathetic to the families conducting child marriages was found to be an obstacle in the effective implementation of the act by many PPOs (22.22%).

Though a one third of the respondents (33.33%) were satisfied with the support extended by the judiciary, a sizable number had experienced reluctance on part of the judiciary to give injunction orders (38.89%). According to the experience of a few PPOs (11.11%), judges tended to declare a girl to have attained majority when there was a doubt. Court procedures were found to be time consuming (27.38%) while some PPOs reported that the judiciary did not have sufficient knowledge about PCMA (11.11%). The evidence demanded by judges to decide on conviction in cases of child marriage was found to be impossible to produce (11.11%).

Support Required by the Girl after Prohibition of Marriage

“When girls approach us, they are not even able to talk. They do not want the marriage, but cannot say so openly. They may lie to us about their age to show their families that they are with them and not with the authorities. The girl needs support at this stage. She needs to feel secure. If we can reassure her, ensure that there will be no threat to her life, and that her education will not be discontinued, she will have the courage to oppose her marriage.”

The PPOs were unanimous in their agreement that just prohibiting the marriage of a minor girl was not enough. Efforts should be made for her empowerment. They also agreed unanimously that at that point of time, they were unable to ensure this. The essential support that the girls need, according to the PPOs, is listed in the following table.

Table 3: Support required by the girls whose marriage is prevented under PCMA (n=19)

Educational support leading to financial self sufficiency	17
Emotional support and counselling	7
Counselling for parents	4
Shelter homes	2
Social support	1
Medical support	1
Entertainment	1

Most PPOs (17) stressed the need to provide educational support to the girl, with the aim of making her economically self-reliant, especially in cases where poverty was the major reason for child marriage. It was felt by the PPOs that financial help should be given by the government for this purpose, and that ICDS has the resources required to provide such help. Non-formal education or vocational education can be imparted to the girls who are made to leave school and stay at home. In the opinion of one PPO, education is required not only to secure financial independence, but because, “when they are educated they will be able to think for themselves.” Another PPO felt that, “When the girl completes her education and finds employment, her standing in society rises.”

Many PPOs (7) expressed the necessity of providing emotional support to the girls, and at the same time regretted their inability to do so. “The girl needs counselling but we are unable to provide that since we are already overburdened with other responsibilities.”

According to some PPOs (4) there should be post-intervention counselling for the parents as well. *“When a child marriage is stopped, the girl is stigmatized by her family and community. She faces harassment. She is told that it is due to her bad luck or her deeds that such a thing has happened. The girl’s family and community have to be counselled that it is not her fault. It is not possible for the PPO to do this kind of counselling, she does not have the time.”* said one PPO.

The physical and mental harassment can be so bad as to be life threatening. A few PPOs (2) therefore mentioned the need to have residential institution or a shelter home where children rescued from child marriages can stay as the girls may not be secure even in their natal home.

The need to provide social support, even outlets for entertainment, to the children rescued from child marriages was recognized by the PPOs. One PPO has narrated the case of a child marriage that was consummated. The girl became pregnant and required medical support.

In a nutshell, the need to provide follow-up support to the children rescued from child marriages as well as their families. This included support for continuing their education so that the girls can become financially self-sufficient (89.47%) and emotional support and counselling to the child marriage survivors (42.10%) as well as their families (21.05%). The need to provide referrals to shelter homes (10.52%); and medical support (5.55%) was also recognized.

Efforts to Increase Awareness

Most PPOs acknowledged the need to have greater awareness about PCMA and all of them claimed to be making some efforts towards this end. Table 4 shows the various ways in which the PPOs try to increase awareness of the seriousness of the problem of child marriages

Table 4: Efforts made by the PPOs for Increasing Awareness (n=16)

Awareness programs in schools	5
Village meetings	4
Meetings with <i>anganwadi</i> workers	3
Distribution of pamphlets	2
Training police personnel	1
Meetings with sarpanch/members of panchayat	1
Publicity in the media	1
Involving NGO in awareness campaigns	1
Programs in <i>lok adalat</i>	1

As per the table, some of the PPOs (5) reported conducting awareness programs in schools and colleges which were not restricted to just giving information about PCMA. “*We do pre-marital counselling programs in schools. We talk about the responsibilities involved, problems that may occur, where to get help.*” Some (4) had conducted weekly awareness programs or held camps in different villages. Lectures were organized for *Anganwadi* workers, panchayat members, and other local bodies such as the health department and the ADC office (3). One PPO had organized a training program for the police personnel. Involving NGO in awareness campaigns and programs in *lok adalat* were some other approaches. According to a PPO, reporting of child marriages increased in her district after media gave publicity to the child marriage cases handled by her.

It was, however, felt that in order to prevent child marriages, concentrated efforts were required to change perception towards women (3). Some PPOs (5) suggested using media such as television, documentaries, articles in the newspapers and information flashes on local T.V. networks etc. on a wider scale to create awareness. One PPO also suggested an SMS campaign, another suggested organizing street plays. It was felt that the government machinery, including ICDS, should be involved in the

awareness drive (3). It was found that awareness programs were needed in places where women were working in large numbers (2).

One PPO had a different viewpoint to share.

“It is not that people are not aware, they are aware of the law. But they do not want to follow it. Similarly, everybody knows and agrees that child marriage should not be conducted, but when it comes to girls in their own family, they want to get them married early. We have seen that incidents of child marriage happen even in the villages where awareness programs have been conducted. The attitude of the people is not changing. It will take a very long time [to change that].”

Some PPOs (4) were of the opinion that preventing a child marriage was the most effective method of increasing awareness about PCMA.

“In a village, if a child marriage is stopped, there will not be another one. There are just one or two instances when we had to go to the same village twice to stop a Child Marriage. When we stop a marriage, other people in the village feel that it could happen to them also. Once fear of the law is set in their minds, more people will come forward to report child marriages, or even try to prevent them.”

To sum up, the need to increase awareness about PCMA was recognized by most, however, different combinations of approaches were used by the PPOs to achieve that end. Awareness programs in the community (60%) and in schools (33.33%), distribution of pamphlets (13.33%), training police personnel (6.66%), publicity in the media (6.66%) and involving NGOs in awareness campaigns (6.66%) were some of the methods that PPOs used to create and increase awareness. Extensive use of the media (33.33%) and using the government machinery, including the ICDS (20%), were suggested as other methods to expedite the process of building awareness.

Support Needed by the PPOs

Several suggestions were made by the PPOs which they felt, if implemented, would contribute towards increasing their effectiveness.

Table 5: Suggestions to increase the effectiveness of the work done by the PPOs (n=20)

Changes in staff structure and a strong support team	11
Independent vehicle	10
Police support	9
Sensitization program for stakeholders	7
Procedural guidelines	5
Guidelines for organizers of mass marriages	2
Separate courts to handle cases of crime against women	2
Greater authority	1
Reduced workload	1

Changes in Staffing Structure and Support Team: In Haryana, a PPO is empowered to implement the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, as well as the Protection of Women under Domestic Violence Act. A PPO functions both as a Prohibition Officer as well as a Protection Officer. Presently, each district has one PPO who is assisted by a staff of two persons. Many PPOs (11) found this to be inadequate, especially in view of the dual responsibility entrusted to them.

Even this support-staff was not available at all times. One PPO complained, *“My staff is sent on other duties as and when there is a need. Last week there was a case of child marriage and my staff was on election duty. I need full-time, permanent staff. When a vehicle is made available, there is no driver”*. Another PPO said that, *“There should be a system for implementing the law. There should be a child marriage prohibition officer with supporting staff. Only then can the law be effectively implemented.”*

A strong need was felt for a support team. A few PPOs (3) acknowledged the need to have trained social workers and counsellors to help them. *“We need a vigilant team that will keep us informed about ground realities.”* said one PPO. The support team must also be trained, said another PPO.

Two PPOs suggested appointment of an advocate for a cluster of districts to handle child marriage cases. The PPOs felt that, with increase in the number of child marriage cases, eventually every district can have a separate advocate. If there is one government-appointed lawyer handling child marriage cases in court, records of such cases would be more easily accessible and the outcomes may be more favourable.

Independent Vehicle: Police vehicles that were supposed to be made available as required by the PPOs were not always available at the time and for the duration required. Given that the PPOs often have very little time to act and, often, have to travel long distances to reach a wedding venue, this is a serious impediment to their work. Not surprisingly, a large number of PPOs (10) emphatically voiced the need for a separate vehicle. *“I have to travel for awareness programs on my personal two-wheeler. To stop a child marriage we cannot go in a personal vehicle. You need a police vehicle to ensure your safety, as you have to face hostile people; you have to return from a village at night. We don't get it at times. Get it late at times. At least during the wedding season, there should be a vehicle and driver available at all times.”* *“There are also times when we get a vehicle for a restricted time. That is of no use because our interventions cannot be time-bound. Convincing the villagers (or local community) takes time. A separate vehicle for use by PPOs is a necessity.”*

Police Support: Police support was acknowledged to be indispensable by all the PPOs to control an agitated and hostile community. Apart from that, many PPOs (9) wanted the police to

support them in a number of ways. “Police should intervene before the arrival of PPO. We take a lot of time to reach a venue. In one day, there can be many cases.” said one PPO. “The police can also help as interpreters because we do not always understand or speak the local dialect”, expressed another. “Police should help in executing orders. The SHO should be made to execute the orders, especially in cases where the injunction order is violated.” said one PPO. “The local police should keep a check on the marriages happening in their area and inform PPOs about child marriages.” said another.

Sensitization Programs for Stakeholders: The police, judiciary and members of panchayats are part of the same society that promotes child marriages. It is not surprising that they often share the same attitudes and viewpoints. These attitudes pose challenges to the PPOs, which has been described earlier in this chapter. Many PPOs (7) strongly feel the need for programs that will increase stakeholder sensitivity to the issue of child marriages, and what each group is expected to do. One PPO suggested having common awareness programs for PPOs, judiciary and the police so as to build greater rapport among them.

Procedural Guidelines: A significant proportion (5) of the PPOs found the guidelines to be ambiguous. They suggested that the PPOs must follow a standard operating procedure that will ensure uniform response and actions. The need for proper documentation of the work done by the PPOs was also brought out. The need for regular follow up was also highlighted. It was suggested that “when a case is registered, there should be a follow-up report after six months.” Guidelines were also required for filing of cases for nullity to lodge FIR.

Regulation of Mass Marriages: A few PPOs (2) insisted that mass marriages should not be allowed without prior intimation to the authorities. The organizers of mass marriages should be compelled

to register the marriages they plan to conduct, and the PPOs should be informed about such plans.

Separate Judiciary: A PPO opined that one judge must be appointed to exclusively deal with child marriage cases in the courts. Another PPO suggested that there should be a separate panel of judges to handle cases related to crime against women.

More Authority: According to one PPO, “This post [of the PPO] should be vested with more powers. We do not have the power to lodge an FIR; we have to go through the police or the court. When we call parents to meet us, they can now simply refuse to come. We should be given enough power that the parents cannot refuse our summons. Women should feel safe when they come to us. They should feel reassured of our ability to help.”

A number of suggestions were made by the PPOs to increase their effectiveness., which included the need for additional staff, particularly the services of a social worker and a counsellor (11), separate vehicles for PPOs (10), increase in police support (9), sensitization programs for stakeholders (7), clear procedural guidelines (5), rules and guidelines for organizers of mass marriages (2), separate courts to handle cases of crimes against women (2), greater authority to the PPO (1) and reduced workload (1) were some of the other suggestions that were made at the interviews.

Summary: Due to information being received at the eleventh hour, the long distances that PPOs had to cover, and inadequate vehicle support, PPOs often reached the venues late and had to prohibit marriages when the wedding was in progress. This was identified by them as their biggest challenge (65%). Facing a hostile community at the wedding venue was a part of that challenge. The complaint-based nature of the act (50%), having to deal with misleading reports (10%), problems in verifying age (40%) and in keeping a follow-up of the cases (35%), the stigma attached to and the misuse of the provision of nullity (20%) and the moral dilemma

(35%) that they had to face because of the nature of their work were other challenges mentioned by the PPOs.

In the absence of clear guidelines, PPOs have evolved several strategies and approaches to meet these challenges. Help of police was taken in all the cases, the influential members of the community were involved (15%) and mediation with the family was done (95%) to pacify hostile crowds and manage the other effects of last minute intervention. Some PPOs (35%) preferred to take an injunction order to prohibit child marriages, but most (65%) relied on written assurances given by the families. Follow-up on prohibited marriages (85%) was done informally — mostly through police and community members. Making the village sarpanch responsible for reporting child marriages (33.33%) was a suggestion received from most PPOs as alternative to complaint-based actions.

More than a third of the PPOs (35.29%) expressed complete satisfaction with the support given by the police. But the majority (70.58%) expressed reservations about police support. According to the PPOs, police lack awareness about PCMA (11.11%) and their expected role in its implementation (22.22%). The patriarchal mindset of the police makes them sympathetic to the families that marry off their underage daughters, so much so that they even connive and help to conceal the fact.

Support given by the courts was found to be satisfactory by one third of the respondents (33.33%) though a sizable number had experienced reluctance on part of the judiciary to give injunction orders (38.89%). A few PPOs (11.11%) reported that judges tend to declare a girl to have attained majority when there was a doubt. Time-consuming court procedures (27.38%) and the judiciary's insufficient knowledge about PCMA (11.11%) were some of the other problems mentioned by the PPOs. The evidence demanded by judges to decide on conviction in cases of child marriage was found to be impossible to produce (11.11%).

Nearly all PPOs recognized the need to provide follow-up support to the children rescued from child marriages as well as their families. Support for continuing their education so that the girls can become financially self-sufficient was seen as most essential by most of the respondents (89.47%). According to some PPOs, emotional support and counselling to the child marriage survivors (42.10%) as well as their families (21.05%) was also necessary. Shelter homes (10.52%), social support (5.55%), medical support (5.55%) and entertainment (5.55%) were some other follow-up services thought to be required.

Most of the PPOs also acknowledged the need to increase awareness about PCMA. Awareness programs in the community (60%) and in schools (33.33%), distribution of pamphlets (13.33%), training police personnel (6.66%), publicity in the media (6.66%) and involving NGOs in awareness campaigns (6.66%) were some of the methods that PPOs used to create and increase awareness. The PPOs suggested extensive use of the media (33.33%) and using the government machinery, including the ICDS (20%), to expedite the process of building awareness.

A number of suggestions were made by the PPOs to increase their effectiveness. Many PPOs expressed the need for additional staff, particularly the services of a social worker and a counsellor. Separate vehicles for PPOs (50%), increase in police support (45%), sensitization programs for stake holders (35%), clear procedural guidelines (25%), rules and guidelines for organizers of mass marriages (10%), separate courts to handle cases of crimes against women (10%), greater authority to the PPO (5%) and reduced workload (5%) were some of the other suggestions that were made at the interviews.

SECTION 6:

Consequences of Prohibition of Child Marriage

When a child marriage is stopped, emotional trauma, social humiliation and financial losses have to be faced by the child as well as the family, which cannot be easily forgotten. Researchers encountered a large residue of hostility when families who had experienced prohibition of child marriages were approached for interviews for this study. Families were especially reluctant to let their girls speak to the interviewers. It was with considerable difficulty that the researchers could gather 20 cases for interviews. Out of these 17 were cases of girls who were being married before they were 18 and three cases were of boys being married before the age of 21. In twelve out of these twenty cases both parents and children were interviewed, in seven cases only the parents had consented to speak to the interviewers while in one case only the girl whose marriage was prohibited under PCMA was interviewed. The results are reported in this section.

Financial Consequences

Financial repercussions are felt most keenly by the families when a child marriage is prohibited. Monetary losses were reported by all families irrespective of whether it was the son or daughter whose marriage was stopped. As one respondent said, “*Shaadi mein kharcha to hota hi hai, chahe ladki ho ya ladka* (a wedding involves expenses for the bride’s as well as the groom’s side)”. Such losses were especially hard to bear for families that were

marrying their underage children due to economic compulsions. Instead of saving on expenses as intended, the family ended up losing the money spent on wedding arrangements.

Families were most traumatized when the interventions occurred at the last moment because then they had to bear the maximum financial loss. Nearly always, by the time the PPO arrives on the scene, the wedding preparations are complete. Payments are made for the tent, decorations, tickets, band, D.J., etc., and cannot be recovered. The food goes waste. As one of the respondents described the scene,

“Tents were being put up, and the food was being cooked. The tents had to be taken down, and the cooking was stopped. We could not even return the groceries that we had purchased. It was our loss and somebody else's gain.”

Even the guests, who come from far, have to bear the loss of money that was spent on travel and other arrangements. This point was raised by the PPOs as well, who said that this was one of the reasons why they preferred to intervene well before the wedding. But in most cases, as reported by the PPOs, their hands are tied as the complaints come in only at the last moment. Even though the motives of the complainants are suspect, their information must be acted on.

The parents in this study, who were mostly from lower economic class, working as labourers or small farmers, estimated their losses from Rs 90,000 to 20, 0000. The thought of incurring this kind of expenditure again, for another wedding when the child would be of age, had driven the families to despair. As one parent said,

“A middle-class person somehow saves and puts together the money for his daughter's wedding. Now, I will not be able to make so much [money] in a short time so that I can again spend on another wedding [preparations].”

For others, the money was borrowed on interest. The amount had to be repaid and again borrowed, when required. *“Even borrowing*

[an amount as low as] ten thousand rupees with interest, your heart pains.” said the grandmother of one of the girls interviewed for the study.

Many of the PPOs are sensitive to this problem, and many of them suggest a registered marriage or a very simple wedding where the groom would come only with 2-3 relatives to complete the marriage rituals when the child would be of age. This solution however works when the other party agrees to wait till then and does not break off the relationship. One parent said, *“Madam explained to the boy's family as well as to us, to postpone wedding till my child would be of age, and later on do a court marriage. Then we shouldn't have to collect people and spend money. We considered our situation, since it was not possible for us to spend so much money again, we accepted the solution.”*

Social Consequences

The large majority of respondents experienced social humiliation when the child's marriage was prohibited. *“Our reputation has gone to dust (Hamari ijat to mitti mein mil gai)”* was the sentiment expressed by most parents. *“The neighbours think that we have murdered someone. There is nobody more despicable than us.”* Such was the reaction of the community towards these families.

As in case of financial loss, the loss of prestige is maximum when the wedding is prohibited at the last moment. *“The whole village has gathered at the wedding venue and all the relatives are present. If police arrive at that time it is a terrible social disgrace. After that, what is left of your reputation?”* said one. *“The relatives come from different places. When they go back and tell that no marriage took place, they will also have to face loss of prestige.”*

To deal with the snide comments and gossip from neighbours, help was reportedly sought from the panchayat. The panchayat explained to the villagers that the marriage was cancelled because

the girl was a minor and anyone trying to marry off a minor would face similar action. Mediation with the community done by the PPO seems to be effective in stopping malicious gossip. One parent, when asked about the reaction of the village community, replied, *“They did not say anything. Not to me, nor to the other party. When respectable people (bade log) tell you something, you have to listen.”*

The social repercussions of the prohibition of marriage were also determined by the state of alliance (*rishhta*) after intervention. The Table 6 gives information about the state of the alliances post-intervention.

Table 6: State of Alliance after the Child Marriage was prohibited (n=20)

Alliance broken	10
Alliance survived, marriage postponed	6
Married, filed for/obtained nullity	4

The families were able to bear the humiliation if the alliance was not broken and the other party agreed to wait till the child was of age (6). However, if the alliance was broken, which seems to have happened more often, the families were very anxious about the girl's future (10).

“If another proposal comes for her from outside, some villager may secretly inform that party that the girl was about to get married, but her wedding was cancelled. Those people will think that there must be something wrong with the girl. They will not think that police stopped the marriage as the girl was minor. God knows what taunts the girl will have to listen to.”

In marriages arranged through *atta-satta*, a girl is married to a boy only when the boy has a sister/cousin who could be given as a bride

to a boy in the girl's family. When one of these marriages takes place as decided, but the other marriage is prohibited, then finding another alliance becomes difficult not only for the girl, but also for the boy. The case of one of the boys interviewed for the study illustrates this point. His marriage, arranged through *atta-satta* was prohibited as he was underage, and the alliance was broken. However, his sister, who was to be given in exchange for his bride, was of a legally marriageable age, and so was her designated groom. The couple therefore was married as decided. The boy said that he would find it hard to get a wife, as the family did not have another girl to offer in exchange for her.

When the marriage has already taken place through *atta-satta*, if one of them is annulled, the other alliance may also get affected. In one case, when a child marriage was annulled, the girl's sister in law, who was married to the girl's brother in an *atta-satta* arrangement, left her marital home and went back to her natal family.

Desperate measures are sometimes taken by the family to avoid social humiliation and protect family honour, sometimes with unforeseen consequences, as described in the following case. The case illustrates how girls are viewed only as commodities and not human beings with emotions:

The girl had two sisters and one brother. Her widowed mother was working as a domestic worker. The girl was staying with her aunt, i.e. her mother's sister since she was a little girl. The aunt's family arranged the marriage of the girl when she was 16 years of age without consulting her mother or other relatives. The girl's uncle (father's brother) complained to the PPO. The PPO explained to the family that as per PCMA the girl, being underage, could not be married. The aunt's husband however refused to send the groom's family back empty handed (baraat khali nahein bhejana chahate the). The elder sister of the girl who was above 18 years of age was then married in her place. When asked if the consent of either girl was sought before the marriage, the family chose not to answer.

The elder sister stayed in her marital house for barely two days, and then was sent back by her in laws, with the argument that they had selected the younger sister (chhoti ko pasand kiya tha) and will not accept a substitute. The elder sister is staying with the natal family for the past one and a half years. She is working in a soda factory, while the girl is working in on a farm.

A few families (3) reported receiving support from their community. In one of these cases the parent was insistent that it was his daughter's engagement and not the wedding that was being celebrated and the PPO's intervention was unwarranted. In the other cases, the family member who had arranged the marriage of the minor child had died or was absconding at the time of the interview. The community did not seem to hold the rest of the family responsible for the marriage.

Emotional Consequences

Effect on the Families: *“When we were told that the wedding cannot take place, it was as if multiple deaths have taken place in the house”* This was the reaction that one of the parents recounted. It captures the emotional impact felt by a family when a child marriage is prohibited, especially at the last moment.

Emotional trauma was experienced by most of the parents (88.23%) when their children's marriage was prohibited. The financial loss as well the loss of social prestige had pushed these families into depression. *“I could not get up from the bed for 15 days. I could not eat anything. I could have died of a heart attack, I was so upset”*, said the grandmother of one of the girls. There was also anxiety about the future of their child. One parent said, *“I was so tense that I thought my brain would burst”*. The anger of the family members against the PPO instrumental in stopping the marriage and also against the government responsible for the law was palpable in the interviews.

According to the information given by the PPO a girl from a middle class, politically connected family was being married because she was friendly with a boy, though neither the father nor the girl confirmed this. The boyfriend made a complaint to the PPO and the marriage was prohibited a day prior to the wedding. The family tried to use its connections to pressurize the PPO to allow the marriage to take place. When that failed, it tried to override the existing age document and demanded an ossification test, probably with the knowledge that the two year age span indicated by the test could be used to go ahead with the wedding.

The PPO did not allow that but the family succeeded in not letting her file for an injunction order. The father claimed that though he was aware of the age at which girls are considered legally marriageable, he was not aware that marriage of underage children could be prevented under the law. He was vociferous in blaming the government for not making enough efforts to spread awareness about the law. There was anger and despair over the financial loss and the social humiliation faced by the family as well as anxiety about finding a new alliance for the girl as the previous alliance was broken. The girl though depressed, was putting up a brave front saying that she would study further, build her career and wants to be in a position to help others (Is kabil ban jaun ki doosaron ki madad kar sakun).

Only two families were able to avoid such emotional turmoil. Such cases were those in which marriage was arranged without their consent or approval by a family member (absent at interview).

One family tried to put up a brave front and see the positive side. “We say that at least our sister has not done anything shameful. We were stopped by the police because we were doing a wrong thing. This could prove to be a blessing for us. My sister will study further; maybe she will get a job that will enhance our reputation (*hamara naam roshan hoga*).” However, this was an exception.

Effects on the Girl: Preventing a marriage had varying effects on the girl.

A few of the girls reported to be happy about the intervention of the PPO (5). Some of these girls were already married as minors, had experienced domestic violence and were now determined to have their marriages annulled. In one case the girl was allegedly being married off for sex trafficking and the marriage was prevented due to efforts of other family members. One of the girls was married at a very young age but was not sent to her marital home, and had herself later sought to end the marriage, as is illustrated in the following case study

The girl was married along with her elder first cousin as it was customary in her community to marry a younger daughter along with the elder one. Though the cousin was 18 years of age the girl was only 13. The marriage took place at the insistence of her grandfather. Though the girl's parents were not keen on it, they could not oppose the wishes of the head of the household. After marriage the girl was not sent to her marital home (Gauna nahin hua tha) immediately. When she was in the 10th std., her family decided to send her there (Bidai honewali thi). However, the girl was very keen to study further and was apprehensive that she will not be allowed to do so if she was sent to her in laws' house. She did not want to be confined to her home doing just the household chores. That time through a friend of hers the girl came to know about PCMA and its provisions. By then the grandfather had died. She managed to persuade her parents to meet the PPO of the district and file a case for nullity. Initially there was some resistance from the marital family, but not from the boy with whom she was married, and whom she had not met before or after the marriage. The opposition wore down once the case was filed especially as the girl had not asked for maintenance. Now the marriage is annulled, the girl is currently pursuing her graduation studies, wants to become a lecturer and educate others about evils of child marriage. She says that when she gets married, it will be "on her own terms (Apni marji se)". She acknowledges that

all this has been possible only because of the support from her parents, the PPO and the lawyer assigned for the case, and also from teachers, friends, neighbours and the larger community. Some of her peers from the village had also got married as minors but they did not seek nullity, they now have children of their own and are immersed in household responsibilities. The difference between their life and hers, according to her, is that “she has a desire to become something, and they do not (Unki ichhayein mar gayi hai).”

In some instances, the girls were too young to understand the implications (2) of a prohibited marriage. One girl, when asked if she felt bad that her marriage was prevented, replied, “Not much, only a little bit!” The following excerpt from an interview with a 13 year old girl clearly brings out the innocence and helplessness of the minor girls and also underscores the fact that children are not ready for a married life at such a tender age.

Interviewer: Did you understand what was happening with you?

Girl: I don't know.

Interviewer: Did your father tell you that you were engaged?

Girl: Yes, he did.

Interviewer: Were you happy, unhappy or you did not understand?

Girl: Did not understand.

Interviewer: Did you understand why later your mother was crying; your father was angry?

Girl: No, I did not understand.

A majority (10) of the girls, however, were severely traumatized. The experience had left them depressed. One girl said, “*Even now I feel very bad. When I go for the wedding of any relatives and friends, I can't help thinking that I was in a similar situation. This should have happened to me also, but did not.*” These girls also

worried about the social reaction. “When an impending wedding is stopped, for a girl there is no greater loss of reputation (*Shaadi hote hote ruk gayee. Ek ladki ke liye aur kya badnaami ho sakti hai?*).”

They were worried about the reaction of their friends and were also envious of them. “*I am scared to talk to my friends because they might ask about what happened. My friends roam around like free birds; they did not have to face this trauma in their lives. My life has changed. They can't even imagine how it has changed.*” The girls blamed themselves and felt guilty about the ordeal their parents were going through. One parent described the emotional state of his daughter, “*The child is also a part of the family, and she knows what the other members are going through. When such a thing happens, the child feels guilty. The child knows that the money for the wedding was arranged with a lot of effort and difficulty (kya jugaad lagaya tha). Where would he be able to arrange the money from again?*” In some of the girls, the emotional trauma manifested as physical sickness and/or weight loss. They regarded themselves as a burden on the family. A few respondents, including a boy, admitted that they were so depressed that they often thought of suicide.

The girl who was the most emotionally disturbed was one whose marriage was arranged to break her relationship with another boy. The case was as follows:

The girl had lost her parents in an accident when she was seven years old and was being brought up by her paternal uncle and his wife, who was also her mother's sister. The girl was studying in class 12, when she developed romantic attachment with a boy who was not from her caste. The family wanted her to get married elsewhere. The girl was kept confined to the house, but she climbed the compound wall, and went to the court crying, when a passer-by enquired about the reason, and told her to approach the PPO. The girl complained to the PPO about her impending

marriage. The marriage was prohibited. Since then the girl is not allowed to step out of the house. The family, smarting from the social humiliation, constantly subjects her to verbal taunts and has even resorted to physical abuse. She is not allowed to go to school as the family does not want her to resume ties with her boyfriend. They have made it clear that the girl will have to get married as per their wish (Shaadi ham Jahan kahenge vahi karni padegi). The girl wants to complete high school, do a teaching course and become economically independent. She wants to marry her boyfriend provided he also studies and gets a job, and if his family is willing to accept her. At present she finds herself alone and helpless and sees no way of to fulfil her desire. Despairing of her situation, she has already attempted suicide.

Some girls emerged stronger from the experience as evident from the following excerpt.

Interviewer: What are your plans for future?

Girl: I will stay at home and get some vocational training (*Kaam seekhungi*). When I get older I will get myself married (*Shaadi karava loongi*).

Interviewer: How much older?

Girl: 20 years.

Interviewer: Then you will get married?

Girl: First I will get myself engaged (*Sagai karwaungi*), and then after 3-4 months I will get married. Now I want to get married according to my choice, not as per the choice of my family

The discussion in this section may be summed up as: Financial losses of an aborted marriage hurt the families the most. Socially, it was a humiliating experience for them. The child as well as the family members went through great emotional turmoil, with depression over the financial losses, shame of the social ridicule, anxiety about future, and anger at the government machinery implementing the law.

Support Expected by Girls/Families

The respondents identified their support needs as follows:

Emotional Support and Counselling: It is obvious that emotional support and counselling are essential components of follow up support. The parents also recognized this and voiced the need for such services. *“Girls take things to their heart. They have to be told that this was not the right time. (Abhi vaqt nahin tha)”*. Counselling is essential for the survivors as well as their families to help them cope with the trauma. In addition, the parents have to be counselled to provide much needed support to their children. The importance of parental support was emphasized by one girl who pursued her studies and doing her graduation after annulment of her marriage, *“If my parents had not supported me, I would not have been able to do it all alone.”*

The fact is that such a service is not being provided. Even in case of the girl who attempted suicide because of continuous harassment, there was a complete lack of follow-up and counselling for the girl and her family. Most PPOs admitted to their inability to address this need.

Financial assistance to families: Some parents expected to be given financial assistance when their daughters would eventually be married. There was no awareness among the respondents that schemes did exist that provided for the education or marriage of a girl child. Such information could be provided by PPOs. Families could also be helped to benefit from other government schemes for which they might be eligible as was done in one case where the mother was helped by the PPO to get her widow’s pension sanctioned.

The girl, a school dropout, was from very low socioeconomic strata, had a widowed mother and was living in an isolated house which had no compound. She had two brothers who were studying and two sisters who were already married. The mother

was worried about leaving the daughter alone at home when she went out for work and hence decided to get her married. The mother's brother-in-law arranged the alliance and the whole village contributed toward the marriage expenses. The girl and the mother saw the groom only at the time of the wedding. The girl was 15 years of age while the groom was 30 years of age and had a limp. A villager reported marriage to the PPO, but by the time the PPO came the marriage was solemnized and the girl was sent to her marital home. She was called back immediately. The groom and his family were apparently too scared to protest. Initially the girl's mother was upset that the money spent on the wedding had gone waste, but later reconciled to the fact when the PPO assured to support the girl to be financially independent, and helped her to get her widow's pension sanctioned.

Assistance for Further Education: One of the girls, who was being prevented from studying further by her family members, felt girls in her situation might find it helpful if financial assistance was made available for further studies.

Prevention of Violence Against Women: One of the girls hit the nail on the head when she stated,

"When a girl walks on the street, she is scared of harassment. Somebody might pass comment, somebody might pull her stole. Girls need protection at such times also. When 12, 13 year old girls are raped, what about them? Just stopping a girl's marriage will not ensure her wellbeing. Her safety has to be ensured."

Summary: Financial losses were felt most by the families when a child marriage was prevented, especially at the last moment. Socially it was a very humiliating experience for them, which became a little bearable if the marriage alliance survived and the marriage was merely postponed. However, the chances of this happening were found to be less (35%) than the chances of the alliance being broken (40%). Barring instances of girls too young to understand the meaning of marriage and the implications of

prohibiting a marriage, and those who were married as minors and sought nullity, the child as well as the family members went through great emotional turmoil. There was depression about the financial losses, the shame of being publicly ridiculed, anxiety over the future, and anger at government. The need for counselling and emotional support to the survivors of child marriages was apparent from the interviews. Financial assistance for the girls to both enable them to continue their studies and at the time of their marriage at the appropriate time was also an expressed need.

SECTION 7:

Summary of Findings

A summary of the salient findings of this study is as follows:

Reporting of Child Marriages: Analysis of office records showed that reported cases of child marriage more than doubled from 53 in 2009 to 287 in 2011. The reporting numbers were not uniform throughout the year. The number of child marriage cases was the highest in the period April to June during which, the most auspicious wedding day for the Hindus (Akha Teej) is celebrated. The increased case load during this time was the justification given by the PPOs for increased manpower and logistical support.

Sirsa, which borders Rajasthan, had the highest number of reported cases of child marriages (17.2%). The heavily industrialized district of Faridabad (0.4%) and districts with higher female literacy rates such as Panchkula, Ambala, and Yamuna Nagar (0.4%, 1.7%, and 1.7% respectively) had the least number of reported cases. Mewat had less reported cases also (1.3%). A likely reason is that very few members of the community came forward to report such incidents.

In almost half the cases (47.7%) the complaint was lodged through anonymous calls or letters. Direct reports were made to PPOs through phone calls (45.6%) or letters (38.6%) which protected the identity of the complainant. NGOs did not seem to be playing a role either in making direct complaints or in sending referrals to PPOs for further action (0.2%).

Profile of Children Rescued from Child Marriage: Office records also clearly showed that child marriage is a gender-related phenomenon, with girls (71.40%) being affected far more than boys. Though girls as young as 7 years of age were also being married, a majority of the minor girls were in the age group of 15 to 17 (53%). The tipping point age, i.e., age at which the frequency of child marriage first increases noticeably appeared to be 17 years (26.5%). Although data on educational status of girls was not available in nearly half (44.72%) the cases, available data did indicate that dropping out of school begins after middle school (Class 7). Very few girls (1.54%) were able to get an education beyond secondary school, i.e., Class 10.

The demographic profile of the children that emerged from the primary data corresponded with the findings from office records. Typically, the girl is 16 years of age, a drop out from secondary school, and from the low socio-economic strata of society. Her parents work as farm labourers. It was also clear that the girl was being married against her wishes.

Office records also showed that most of the complaints of child marriages were reported from Hindu households (94.1%). The practice was found to be present in all castes. A majority (60.8%) of the child marriages reported were from nuclear families.

Reasons for Child Marriage: The PPOs as well as the families and children who were interviewed for this study reported that economic compulsions forcing parents to save on marriage expenditure by marrying siblings together as the major reason for child marriages. Preventing girls from marrying on their own and the perception that a minor unmarried girl is sexually vulnerable also emerged as major reasons for child marriage from these data sources. Traditional practices, the practice of *Atta-satta*, lack of awareness of the law and societal pressure including pressure from unwell family members were also mentioned as reasons for early marriages.

Though office records did not give complete information regarding reasons for child marriages, it appeared that lack of awareness of the law was the most commonly given reason (27.12%) by the families for marrying their underage children

Intervention: There were large gaps in information from the office records on the problems faced during interventions. Interviews with the PPOs gave a clearer picture of the problems they faced while performing their duties and the strategies they used to face them.

Due to last minute reporting, long travel distances and inadequate vehicle support, PPOs often reached the venue while the wedding ceremony was underway and had to force the function to stop. This was listed by them as their biggest challenge. This often meant that they had to endure angry reactions from the families, guests and the community. The complaint-based nature of the act, having to waste time and resources in dealing with misleading complaints and problems in verifying age were other major challenges. The PPOs also had to keep track of and follow up on cases, deal with the stigma attached to the provision for annulment of a marriage and its misuse. They also had to deal with moral dilemmas that often arise due to the nature of their work.

The strategies evolved to combat the challenges were employed by the PPOs. Police help was taken in all the cases. Influential community members were involved and mediation with the family was done to counter hostile reaction and other effects of last minute interventions. Some PPOs preferred to take an injunction order to prohibit child marriages, but many relied on the written assurances obtained from the families. Available resources such as police and community members were used to informally follow up on the children rescued from early marriages.

Making the village sarpanch responsible for reporting child marriages was the most frequently suggested alternative to acting only on complaints.

Experience of Working with the Stakeholders: Over a third of the PPOs expressed satisfaction with the support they got from the police. But the majority expressed certain reservations. According to the PPOs, police lacked awareness about PCMA and their role. The patriarchal mindset of the police made them sympathetic to the families marrying their underage daughters, sometimes even conniving with them to ensure that the marriage is solemnized.

A third of the PPOs were satisfied with the courts' responses. But another third of PPOs experienced reluctance on part of the judiciary to give injunction order. Some PPOs also reported that when there was a doubt about the majority status of a girl, the courts tended to rule her to be a major. Time consuming court procedures and the judges' lack of knowledge about PCMA were some of other problems faced by the PPOs. At times evidence demanded by courts for a conviction verdict was found to be impossible to produce.

Awareness Building: Most PPOs acknowledged the need to increase awareness of PCMA. The PPOs use a combination of various methods for raising awareness are community programs such as, school lectures, public distribution of pamphlets, training of police personnel, media publicity and co-opting NGOs in awareness campaigns. PPOs also suggested more extensive use of the media and better use of government resources and machinery, including the ICDS, for building awareness.

Effect of Prevention of Child Marriage on the Concerned Parties: As reported by the child respondents and/or their parents the severe financial loss caused by a prohibited marriage was the most immediate impact, and more so if the marriage was called off at the last moment. Equally hurtful and long-lasting is the public humiliation suffered by them, which became slightly less unbearable if the alliance was intact and the marriage treated as postponed.

In the majority of the cases, families underwent great emotional turmoil. The common feelings were depression at financial loss,

shame over the public ridicule they suffered, anger with the government and anxiety about the future. The only exceptions were the cases where the girls were too young to understand what happened and those who were minors when they married but sought annulment on their own. This underlines the importance and necessity of providing emotional support and counselling to the child survivors and their families. Suitable financial assistance must also be made available for the girls' education and to meet their marriage expenses when the occasion arises.

Follow-up and Support for the Children whose Marriages were Prohibited: Almost all the PPOs who were interviewed in this study recognized the need for follow-up on the cases to support both the children and their families. It is essential that the girls are helped to get an education that will enable their financial self-sufficiency. This feeling was shared by most of the PPOs. Some also wanted emotional support and counselling for the children and their families. Shelter homes, social support, medical support and entertainment were other follow-up services that they thought were necessary.

Suggestions to Increase the Effectiveness of the PPOs: The PPOs also made several suggestions which, if implemented, would increase their effectiveness. The need for additional staff was expressed by most. Other important suggestions were separate vehicles, better police support, sensitization programs for stakeholders, standard operating procedures and guidelines, rules and guidelines for the organizers of mass marriages. The PPOs also wanted a separate judiciary to handle cases of crime against women.

SECTION 8:

The Way Forward

The Mahabharata, believed by many to have been written in Haryana, tells the story of the many headed serpent Kalia who could not be vanquished by simply cutting off one of its heads because another one would immediately sprout in its place. The serpent was subjugated only when Krishna, assuming the weight of the universe, danced on all its heads simultaneously. This metaphor is an apt representation of the problem of child marriage in Haryana and the concerted strategies needed to counter this problem.

Child marriage is not an isolated phenomenon which can be tackled with the help of one single law. It is but one of the heads of the many headed serpent, the serpent of patriarchal attitude of the society.

All the data sources of this study give an insight into the deeply rooted patriarchy in the state, which give rise to various issues that contribute to the problem of child marriage. The son preference leading to low sex ratio has kept practices such as *atta-satta* alive. Denial of education and employment skills to girls makes marriage the only source of livelihood for them. The pressure on parents to spend extravagantly at the time of their daughters' wedding makes them view their daughters as an economic burden to be discharged at an earliest opportunity. The very much palpable fear of molestation and sexual harassment of women results in more restrictions being placed on girls and pushes them into early and unwanted marriages. As discussed earlier maintaining control over

the girl's choice of life partner becomes essential for maintaining the status quo in society—the system of patrilineal succession, caste system and the joint family system. Child marriage then becomes an effective way to deny a girl the right of choice in marriage.

Unless an aggressive effort is made to counter these issues the problem of child marriage cannot be vanquished.

Convergence of efforts to bring about a change in attitude:

Changing age old and deep-rooted societal attitudes is a herculean task. This cannot be achieved by —nor can it be entrusted to —a single agency. It is only through combined, persistent and widespread efforts of the government machinery, NGOs who are working for women and children, community-based organizations and the media that such a change can be hoped to be achieved.

Gender awareness in schools and colleges: It is comparatively easier to change attitudes and beliefs when they are still in the formative stage and have not yet hardened with age. Adolescent boys and girls in schools and colleges could be targeted to bring about an awareness of gender as a social construct and the causes, methods as well as the consequences of subjugation of women by the society.

Use of the media to bring about a change in the mindset: Street plays, poster campaigns, documentaries on television, SMS campaigns, radio shows, articles in newspapers can be used to mobilize public opinion against sex selective abortions, dowry, extravagant expenditure on weddings, and for education and skill building for girls. The social view brought out in the present study that daughters are liabilities and drain family resources needs to be addressed on priority by using various methods of mass communication.

Legal literacy: Lack of information about the provisions of PCMA was mentioned as one of the reasons for early marriages in this

study. Therefore, it is important to ensure wide dissemination of information about the PCMA and related laws such as PWDVA, Prohibition of dowry act, etc., with all the means available: pamphlets, advertisements in newspapers, television and radio, public lectures, etc.

Promoting access to education: This study as well as previous studies on the topic have indicated a positive correlation between the educational status of girls and their age at marriage. Increased education and skill building that can provide girls with increased livelihood options should be a priority in any effort to curtail child marriages. The child marriage survivors interviewed in this study mentioned that they had to drop out of school as they had to travel considerable distances from their homes. Providing reliable and safe transport facilities or hostel facilities for girls at the district level will encourage the girls to use the educational facilities that are made available to them.

Financial assistance for education: More scholarships and schemes to promote vocational skills among girls are required. This need is deserving of particular attention since it was found that, when family resources low, education for girls was given a low priority.

Awareness about existing state schemes: There are several schemes that provide financial assistance for the education and marriage of the girl child. However, during the course of the study, it was found that awareness about such schemes was very low. Measures could be taken to rectify this situation.

Promoting an atmosphere of security for girls: One of the reasons for child marriages that was cited often was the sexual vulnerability of girls. Although this is a flawed view and must be corrected, cognizance should also be taken of the fact that women and girls are not considered to be living in a safe environment. Such fears are a hindrance to their education and suitable employment opportunities for girls and directly as well as indirectly curtail their

opportunities for growth. Stricter laws against sexual molestation and harassment of women and enforcement of existing laws are essential to promote an atmosphere of safety and security for girls.

Compulsory registration of birth: Verifying age of minors is a difficult task for the PPOs. Birth certificates were rarely available and age records maintained in schools were not reliable. Ossification test results give age with a margin of accuracy of two years and hence, could not be accepted as conclusive proof especially when age of the child was not much less than eighteen. Universal and compulsory registration of birth which could establish a child's age easily and beyond any doubt is therefore a necessity.

Making Panchayat Members responsible for reporting child marriages: Actions to prevent (or stop) marriages under PCMA are initiated only on complaints. It is very likely, which was also indicated in the study, that all incidences of child marriage are not reported. Therefore, it was suggested by the PPOs that the responsibility for reporting child marriages should be fixed on local bodies such as panchayats.

Compulsory registration of marriages: This would help in curbing the practice of child marriages through automatic detection of such marriages.

Follow up of children whose marriages have been prohibited: There is need for regular tracking and follow-up. This would ensure that there no attempts to marry off the children till they attain majority. The need to provide them the requisite support for their growth and empowerment was brought out in the study. Emotional support and counselling should be given to the children as well as their families. Networking and referral services that help them access various support services (education, medical, shelter, finance, etc.) should be provided on a needs basis.

Sensitizing the police and lower levels of judiciary: Lack of adequate awareness was observed among police personnel and the lower levels of judiciary. It needs to be stressed again that this shortcoming must be immediately addressed. Equally importantly, the patriarchal mindset of the police must change. These point to the need for periodically conducting training and consciousness raising programs for police and the lower level judiciary. If required, members of the panchayat may also be included in such training programs.

Rules and guidelines for mass marriage organizers: Pre-marriage registration of couples with age proof should be made mandatory for mass marriages. Mass marriages in a district should not be allowed without intimation to the PPO and subsequent permission.

Supporting the PPOs: The Government of Haryana has taken cognizance of the need for additional staff—specifically counsellors—as expressed by the PPOs. The demand for separate vehicles also seems justified if one takes into consideration the urgency with which they have to respond to information/complaints of child marriages, the distances they have to cover and the case load during the peak marriage season.

Procedural guideline: Clear guidelines need to be issued to the PPOs regarding the standard procedure to be followed in cases of child marriage even while allowance is made for individual variations. Procedural guidelines should be laid down to file cases of nullity as well as to lodge FIR.

Improvement in documentation: An urgent need for improvement in the quality of documentation by PPOs was apparent during the course of this study. A suggested format for recording the intake of child marriage cases is now developed. (See annexure A). However, regular inspection by a nodal agency to ensure proper documentation is essential.

Suggestions for Further Research: This study needs to be replicated in other regions of India and cross regional comparisons can be made.

The possibility of a link between child marriage and domestic violence was brought out in this study. A large majority of the PPOs (77.78%) felt that there was a linkage between child marriage and domestic violence. Some PPOs expressed their opinion that a child marriage can result in domestic violence as the girl is not mature physically and psychologically to perform the duties expected of a wife and a daughter in law, which leads to conflict in the family. Also, children are married off at a young age, when they grow up, they find themselves incompatible, then there is mental trauma or sometimes there is physical violence. One PPO has observed that “the cases of domestic violence that come to me after 15, 16 years of marriage are cases of child marriage” According to another PPO, the incidence of break up, divorce is high in child marriages. This link between child marriage and domestic violence can be explored further in future research.

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Report Received through:Visit Phone call Letter Any other (specify) _____**Name and contact information of the complainant (if available)**

Name _____

Address _____

Phone No. _____

How did the complainant come to know about the PPO?

Through referrals (specify agency) _____

Through awareness programs (specify) _____

Other people's experience (specify) _____

Any other (specify) _____

Any other accompanying complaint:DV Kidnapping Rape Elopement **Preliminary Verification****Primary verification done by-****Age verification document used:**

Birth Certificate

School Certificate

Ossification Test Report

Ration Card

Any other (Specify) _____

If Ossification Test was used, what was the age span indicated by the test, and courts' ruling on age? _____**Is the person married/being married as a child?**

Yes/No

(Please fill in rest of the information only in cases of Child Marriage.)

Demographic information

	Person Mentioned in the Complaint	Marriage Partner
Sex		
Age		
Religion		
Caste		
Educational status (Currently studying in / Dropped out of school in)		
Present occupation		
Family composition (Single woman headed / Single man headed / Nuclear / Joint)		
Socio-economic strata		
Occupation of Head in the family		
Marital status at the time of intervention		

Reason/s for Child Marriage as given by the family:

Economic compulsions Perceived vulnerability of the girl child

Prevention of self arranged marriages *atta-satta*

Bride price Unawareness of the law

Societal pressure Illness of family member

Any other (specify) _____

Reason/s for Child Marriage as understood by the PPO**Intervention by the PPO**

Type of intervention	Date
Interim injunction taken	
Mediation with the family	
Letter of Undertaking (assurance) taken from family	
Injunction obtained	
Case filed for nullity	
Case referred to the police as marriage was solemnised	
Girl sent to shelter home	
Case referred for legal help	
Any other (specify) _____	

Problems faced during intervention _____

Support received from other agencies _____

Immediate Outcome:

Child marriage prevented Not prevented NA

Outcome after referral to:

(a) Police: _____

(b) Court: _____

Support given to the survivor of child marriage

Type of Support	Details	Date
Help to access other government schemes		
Help to access medical services		
Referred for educational assistance		
Referred for occupational assistance		
Counselling family		
Counselling survivor of child marriage		
Help to access Child Welfare Committee		
Any other		

Informal follow-up done through:

Complainant	
Police	
Other Govt. Organisations	
School	
NGO	
Villagers	
Any other (specify) _____	

Give relevant details:

Follow-up information of children whose marriages were prohibited
(3 months/6 months/1 year after the initial intervention)

Date	Marital Status	Health Status	Educational Status	Intervention Required	Intervention Done	Any Other

ANNEXURE II: List of Protection-cum-Prohibition Officers (PPOs) and Contact Details of Special Cells in Haryana.

AMBALA

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Crime against Women Cell, Office of
Superintendent of Police,
Police Lines, Ambala City,
Ambala – 134 002

Ms. Arvinderjeet Kaur
9416201344

BHIWANI

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police, Mini
Secretariat (Room No. 66, 1st Floor),
Bhiwani – 125 021

Ms. Harbans Kaur
8607222475

FARIDABAD

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Mini Secretariat (Room No.505),
Faridabad – 121 007

Ms. Hema Kaushik
9210474464

FATEHABAD

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police, Mini
Secretariat,
Fatehabad – 125 050

Ms. Rekha Aggrawal
8814011719

GURGAON

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Mini Secretariat
(Room No. 306, 3rd Floor),
Gurgaon – 122 001

Ms. Meena Kumari
9968902506

HISAR

Special Cell for Women & Children,
2nd Floor (above SDM Office),
New IG Building, Mini Secretariat,
Hisar – 125 001

Ms. Babita Chaudhary
9729011052

JHAJJAR

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Thana Sadar,
Jhajjar – 124 104
Ms. Neena Khatri, DPO, Jhajjar has
additional charge
8901510800

JIND

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Old Mini Secretariat,
Jind – 126 102
Ms. Karminder, PPO, Rohtak has
additional charge
9466106100

KAITHAL

Special Cell for Women & Children,
2nd Floor New Police Line,
Kaithal – 132 027

Ms. Sunita
9813453138

KARNAL

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Mini Secretariat (Room No.25),
Karnal – 132 001

Ms. Savita Rana
9466125250

KURUKSHETRA

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Kurukshetra – 132 118

Ms. Deepshikha

9315010005

MEWAT

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police
(Mewat), Nuh – 122 107

Ms. Madhu Jain

9992367666

PANCHKULA

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Crime against Weaker Cell
(Near Yadav Bhawan), Sector 12,
Panchkula – 134 112

Ms. Sonia Sabharwal

9501144188

REWARI

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Secretariat (1st Floor),
Rewari – 123 401

Ms. Neelam Sharma

9416327237

SIRSA

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Mini Secretariat (Room No. 22),
Sirsa – 125 055

Ms. Sadhna Mittal

9812031086

YAMUNANAGAR

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Mini Secretariat
(Room No.311B, 2nd Floor),
Yamunanagar – 135 001

Ms. Rajbala, DPO, Yamunanagar has
additional charge

941665443

MAHENDRAGARH

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Mini Secretariat,
Narnaul – 123 001

Ms. Sarita

9466117028

PALWAL

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Mini Secretariat, Palwal – 121 102

Ms.Suman Choudhary

9813985280

PANIPAT

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
3rd Floor, Mini Secretariat,
Panipat – 132 103

Ms. Rajni Gupta

9729022757

ROHTAK

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
New Mini Secretariat (2nd Floor),
Rohtak – 124 001

Ms. Karminder Kaur

9466106100

SONEPAT

Special Cell for Women & Children,
Office of Superintendent of Police,
Mini Secretariat,
Sonapat – 131 001

Ms. Bhanu Gaur

9466111474

About the Authors:

Trupti Jhaveri Panchal: An alumnus of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Ms. Trupti Jhaveri Panchal has been actively involved with the issue of Violence against Women for the past 25 years. She has been instrumental in expansion and institutionalisation of the Special Cells for Women and Children in various states in the country, including in Haryana. She is currently working as Assistant Professor in the Centre for Equity for Women, Children and Families, School of Social Work in Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She is also the Faculty-in-charge of two Field Action Projects namely Resource Centre for Interventions on Violence Against Women (RCI-VAW) and Special Cell for Women and Children.

Vinita Ajgaonkar: An alumnus of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Ms. Vinita Ajgaonkar is currently working as a research officer in Resource Centre for Interventions on Violence Against Women in Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.