THE HUNGER PROJECT INDIA

AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE

Strengthening the leadership of elected women representatives to empower adolescent girls in Panchayats

Endline assessment 2015–2018

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We would like to extend our gratitude to all the partner organisations across the two Indian states of Rajasthan and Karnataka. We thank the programme teams in both states and the national office for their enthusiasm and openness to embrace related interventions on early and child marriage.

We are grateful to the adolescent girls who eagerly participated in the programme and their families who provided support to them to attend multiple meetings and workshops.

Finally, we acknowledge the grit and determination of the elected women representatives in their resolve to empower adolescent girls and for initiating discussions on early and child marriage in their communities and *panchayats*. As informed public office holders, they can lead the way towards advancing the rights of and opportunities for adolescent girls. Here in 2019, The Hunger Project, India completes two decades of work with elected women representatives, continuing to steadfastly build and strengthen their political leadership in six Indian states. We believe the programme has enabled a platform through which we can keep learning, thinking and working together.

Contents

Acknowledgements
Executive summary 1
1.Background: Conditions, catalysts and change 3
2.Empowering adolescent girls: Introduction to the partnerships between The Hunger Project, India and the American Jewish World Service 6
3.Methodology 8
3.1 Rationale 8
3.2 Assessment paradigm 8
3.3 Tool and data collection 8
3.4 Sampling 9
3.5 Analysis 10
4.Summary of findings: Pathways to empowerment 11
4.1 Value of education 12
4.2 Early and child marriage: Roots, impact and legality 15
4.3 Skills 18
4.4 Local governance systems 21
4.5 Leaders in the making 26
5.Conclusions and recommendations 27
5.1 Contribution: What has the programme achieved so far? 27
5.2 Challenges 32
5.3 Agenda for change 30
5.4 Concluding remarks 35
Annexure I Focus group discussion guide with adolescent girls 40
Annexure II: Focus group discussion guide with elected women representatives 43
Annexure III: Guide for informant interviews with implementers 45
Annexure IV: The Hunger Project, India's Child Protection Policy 47
Annexure V: Profiles of partner organisations 51

Executive summary

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals present a global call for gender equality and the end of harmful practices, such as early and child marriage. Latest statistics show that, globally, there has been a decline in the prevalence of early and child marriage, with a sharp drop in South Asia. However, India continues to have the highest number of child brides in the world, despite having one of the largest declines over the past decade, from nearly 50 per cent to 27 per cent[1] in 2018.

The Hunger Project, India and the American Jewish World Service partnered in 2015 to design a unique intervention- Strengthening the leadership of elected women representatives to empower adolescent girls, that we deployed across the states of Karnataka and Rajasthan, ultimately engaging with 2,000 adolescent girls.

We located the programme in the lowest tier of local governance in India, panchayats, or village councils. The programme anchored itself within the constitutional authority of public office holders to end early and child marriage while responding to the needs and demands of adolescent girls.

The partnership extended from The Hunger Project, India's experience of working with elected women representatives in six states and the American Jewish World Service approach of addressing root causes of early and child marriage. Our organisational aims are to empower adolescent girls by creating awareness about their rights and entitlements, lifting barriers to accessing those entitlements and ensuring that they exercise their voice and agency towards collective action.

The programme concluded its third year in mid-2018, with three more phases planned through 2021. This report assesses the achievements of the programme (from June 2015 to July 2018) and suggests an agenda for change for the future course of action. The assessment gauged the effectiveness of the programme by exploring the relationship between three factors:

- Knowledge: **Articulating rights and problems towards fulfilling them**
- Linkage: **Access to skills, information and support**
- Actions: **Practices towards improving conditions.**

The assessment led to five outcomes of merit: First, it found strong evidence of a robust programme design that incorporated the learnings from each phase. The assessment upholds that the flexibility and length of the partnership as key elements of the effective implementation, which thus makes a case for a similar approach to all donors working on issues of empowerment. The Hunger Project, India, along with the community-based organisations that implemented the programme, found ways to explore the needs and particularities of the geography where we worked and then design interventions—later adapting to add components on life skills and vocational training.

Second, the assessment observed a vital and effervescent intergenerational dialogue between the adolescent girls and the elected women representatives, which was largely based on shared experiences of gender inequality, gender-based violence, discrimination and violation of rights. Evident in the results is how the elected women representatives took charge to respond to the needs of adolescent girls and how the girls inched closer towards active citizenship. This set the tone for the next phase of the programme design.

Third, the programme implementers from the six community organisations emerged as the strongest support structures for the girls.

[1] United Nations Children's Fund, *Girls Not Brides: Child Marriage Around the World.* New York, March 2018.

Fourth, there is a deepened awareness among the adolescent girls and elected women representatives of the root causes and impacts of child marriage. Recognising the complexity of addressing early and child marriage from an empowerment lens that challenges norms, the assessment revealed a positive embrace of rights language by the girls and women representatives.

Fifth, the assessment's findings showcase the importance of strategic advocacy—the focus of placing girls' issues not just in *panchayats* but also with policy-makers in the state legislature and parliament.

On the whole, a programme of such scope definitively can bridge the gap between theory and practice by designing local solutions to the harsh realities of local contexts.

Intensive analysis of the myriad voices revealed commonalities as well as divergences in the results and strategies across the two states. These are presented as important learnings that can lead to future trajectories of change. At the same time, the assessment found several challenges that continue to undermine the voice agency and choices of adolescent girls.

The report ends with a few priorities that we urge for consideration: infusing leadership and citizenship among girls, strengthening the safe and collective learning spaces for girls, educating the larger community towards recognising the collective identity of girls, designing alternative frameworks for measuring change and exploring newer forms of livelihoods and thus skills training for adolescent girls.

An agenda for change, combined with the lessons learned so far, will only enrich and deepen the critical conversations that continue to push for bigger, systemic and sustainable change for adolescent girls in the remaining phases of the programme. It further provides a strong foundation for The Hunger Project, India's emerging organisational strategy of empowering girls within the governance framework.

1. Background
Conditions, catalysts and change

Women and girls constitute half the population in the world, thus representing half the human potential. Improving their lives will lead to catalytic changes across all sectors in a society.[2] While this logic is widely espoused, gender inequality continues with dogged persistence around the world, in varying proportions and shapes. Gender-specific constraints, layered with other intersecting discriminations, create a dense tapestry of structural barriers that perpetuate multiple forms of marginalisation through a sequential denial of rights and opportunities to girls and women.

Globally, there are 122 women aged 25–34 for every 100 men of the same age group living in extreme poverty.[3]

Women have a higher burden than men when it comes to certain forms of malnutrition: one-third of all women of reproductive age have anaemia and women have a higher prevalence of obesity than men. Millions of women are still underweight.[4]

More countries have achieved gender parity in education, but disparities exist at higher education levels, especially in low-income countries, at the expense of girls.[5]

One in five women and girls aged 15–49 reported in 2017 experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months.[6]

Globally, more than 2.7 billion women are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men. Of 189 economies assessed in 2018, 104 economies still had laws preventing women from working in specific jobs, 59 economies had no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace, and in 18 economies, husbands could legally prevent their wives from working.[7]

The 2018 Human Development Index shows India lagging behind other South Asian countries on its gender indicators.[8] Economic growth that was considered the antidote for improving conditions of girls and women has managed to further complicate the inherent gender inequalities by introducing new barriers. This continues to be the case in India, despite its gender-responsive policies and laws. Child marriage is one such manifestation—practice outlawed but socially and culturally still accepted and promoted.

During the past decade, the proportion of young women globally who were married as children decreased from 25 per cent to 21 per cent in 2018, largely driven by changes in South Asia. However, it is important to emphasise that India continues to have the highest number of child brides in the world.[9] While the global reduction in child marriage is to be celebrated, no region is on track to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal target of eliminating this harmful practice[10]. Data also shows that while fewer girls are marrying before the age of 15, rates of marriage have increased for girls aged between the ages of 15 and 18,[11] depriving them of the

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[2] UN Women, *Why Gender Equality Matters Across all SDGs—An Excerpt of Turning Promises Into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,* New York, 2018.

[3] International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018*, Washington DC, World Bank, 2018.

[4] Development Initiatives, *2018 Global Nutrition Report: Shining a light to spur action on nutrition*, Bristol, 2018.

[5] Global Education Monitoring Report Team, *Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review*, Paris, UNESCO, 2018.

[6] United Nations Children's Fund, *Violence Against Women Briefing 9*, New York, 2017.

[7] World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2018,* Washington, D.C., 2018.

[8] IndiaSpend, *Why India Cannot Achieve the Growth It Wants Without Reducing Income, Gender Inequality*, Delhi, 2019.

[9] ibid

[10] UNICEF, *Child Marriage: Latest Trends and Prospects for the Future,* New York, 2018.

[11] ibid.

ability to make independent strategic life choices.[12] This calls for a review of how we, the larger civil society, engage with the issue.

We point out three areas that should change:

First, this framework of engagement needs to begin with and consciously adopt a "resilient feminist approach" that weaves rights as central to understanding the unique position of girls within the larger cultural milieu.

Second and in line with the first, the term "early and child marriage", as reflected in a 2015 study by Nirantar Trust, should be adopted.[13] This term recognises that even young adults (aged 18–20) are under constant pressure to marry before they want to. This broadens the vulnerability index of the population to forced marriages and seeks to investigate the cracks in our structures that require plugging.

Third, pursue evidence that measures the effectiveness of local interventions that contribute towards bridging the gap between "what we know", "what we understand" and "how we address the issue". In pushing this agenda for change, the American Jewish World Service has worked in India for the past 6 years, supporting critical interventions towards confronting the root causes of early and child marriage and to give adolescent girls the power to transform their lives and the freedom to choose if, when and whom to marry. In India, American Jewish World Service supports more than 34 grantee organisations that have reached some 126,000 girls.

The Hunger Project, India has been working to strengthen the mandate of the country's 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992) since 2001, which guarantees affirmative action for women and other marginalised groups in the three-tiered *panchayati raj* system (rural local governance)[14] and enables their participation in local governance as elected leaders. The Hunger Project, India builds the capacities (agency, knowledge and leadership) of elected women representatives in the *panchayats* to effectively exercise their political leadership and to bring equitable development and social and gender justice to their communities. The Hunger Project, India's interventions stem from the belief that "correcting imbalance in political agency does result in correcting inequities in other spheres as well."[15]

Box 1: What fuelled the partnership between The Hunger Project, India and American Jewish World Service: Location in *panchayats*

The presence of a female *pradhan* (president of a *panchayat*) had a modelling effect, increasing both adolescent girls' career aspirations and educational attainment and their parents' aspirations for them, while decreasing time spent on household chores (Lori Beaman, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, Petia Topalova, "Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India", *Science*, Vol. 335, No. 6068, 2012.)

The twin objectives of the *panchayati raj* system as envisaged by the Indian Constitution are to ensure local economic development and social justice. *Panchayats* are expected to take an effective role in the planning and implementation of functions related to 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

The Hunger Project, India has worked with more than 1.8 million elected women representatives in the six states of Bihar, Karnataka,

[12] Adapted from Naila Kabeer's definition of empowerment in *Resources, Agency, Achievement: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

[13] Nirantar Trust, *Early and Child Marriage in India: A Landscape Analysis*, New York, 2015.

[14] The three tiered local governance system in rural areas also known as the Panchayati Raj system (PRI) consists of three administrative units- districts (highest tier), blocks (intermediate tier) and panchayats (lowest unit).

[15] Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. This has been enabled with partnerships and collaboration with community-based non-governmental organisations.

In 2015, American Jewish World Service and The Hunger Project, India partnered to design an intervention that incorporates a multi-pronged approach to address the vulnerabilities of young and adolescent girls facing early or child marriage, by working the constitutional authority of elected women representatives.

2. Empowering adolescent girls
Introduction to the partnership between The Hunger Project, India and the American Jewish World Service

The adolescent girls programme, **Strengthening the Leadership of Elected Women Representatives in Panchayats to Empower Adolescent Girls**, was initiated by The Hunger Project, India in mid-2015.

The programme design revolved around continuous orientation of the six partner organisations on the root causes of early and child marriage and tackling the issue from within the governance framework and building on The Hunger Project, India's core strategy of strengthening the leadership of elected women in *panchayats*. The initial conversations with partner staff involved determining the best strategies for engaging with families and seeking their permission for their daughters' participation in the programme as well as understanding the needs of the girls and weaving that into all interventions.

The interventions at the elected women representative level involved briefing them on early and child marriage; on the functioning of School Management Committees and Social Justice Committees [16]in the panchayats; on being supportive and receptive to girls' issues—encouraging a readiness to engage and dialogue with them; reaching out to the elected woman representative federations (collectives) in Karnataka (SUGRAMA) and in Rajasthan (*Panch-Sarpanch Sangathan*); and engage with multiple stakeholders, including legislators to advocate for girls' rights and local authorities towards improving service delivery and infrastructure for education, health care, safety and security.

At the adolescent girls' level, workshops were organised to sensitise them on factors that make them vulnerable to early and child marriage along with options and choices, in terms of services, schemes and opportunities they can access within the *panchayat*. Girls collectives were also formed in *panchayats* (these are called *Kishori Samuh* in Rajasthan).

Following this preparatory work, the elected women representatives and adolescent girls interacted regularly twice a month to dialogue and build a common understanding on their issues. At such meetings, local service providers, like the auxiliary nurses and midwives, the accredited social health activists and the *anganwadi*[17] workers were also invited to converse with the girls.

At the community level, jointly led campaigns were organised to raise awareness on early and child marriage and promote an enabling environment for the realisation of girls' rights.

Geographically, the initial sites of the programme were the states of Karnataka (northern districts), Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan because of the high prevalence of early and child marriage in these areas, along with other multiple challenges faced by adolescent girls—poverty, lack of opportunities and high incidence of caste-based and gender-based discrimination that heightened their vulnerability to violence. While Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were the two priority areas for AJWS, Karnataka was a negotiated entry, given The Hunger Project, India's experience of working in the state and awareness of the incidence of early and child marriage in specific north

[16] These are constitutionally mandated development committees in panchayats

[17] These are community centres for the government's Integrated Child Development Scheme, which responds to the educational and nutritional needs of children aged up to 6 years as well as pregnant and lactating mothers. *Anganwadis* also serve as a platform for providing support to out of school adolescent girls under the SABLA scheme. SABLA or Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls is a government scheme that specifically looks at nutrition and other development needs of adolescent girls, like life skills education, health check-ups and counselling.

ern regions.[18]

Over the duration of interventions, reviews of the programme led to several changes in the outreach: In 2016, Madhya Pradesh was discontinued. In 2017, Bagalkote District in Karnataka State was dropped and replaced with Kalburagi District. And in 2018, Abu Road Block in Rajasthan State was dropped. By its conclusion, the programme had engaged with more than 2,000 girls and 600 elected women representatives across 90 *panchayats* in Karnataka and Rajasthan.

State	District	Blocks
Karnataka	Bidar	Bidar
		Aurad
		Humnabad
	Gadag	Gadag
		Ron
	Kalburagi	Kalburagi
Rajasthan	Sirohi	Reodar
		Abu Road

Snapshot of strategy adopted by The Hunger Project, India

American Jewish World Service's approach: 4 As

ASPIRATIONS: Change cultural beliefs about gender roles and encourage women and girls to consider futures that previously seemed out of reach.

AGENCY: Help girls and young women develop the ability to choose and to act independently so they can take action to advance their own goals.

AVAILABILITY: Increase the availability of institutions, policies and services that enhance the ability of girls and young women to pursue jobs and education and realize their sexual health and rights.

ACCESS: Ensure girls and young women can access resources and services and work to overcome resistance from their families and communities.

Panchayats as pathways to empowerment

CAPACITIES

elected women representatives

Enhance knowledge on early and child marriage

Recognise and address specific needs of adolescent girls within the *panchayat*

Link adolescent girls to opportunities (livelihoods, education)

Create safe spaces of engagement

Advocate for policy reforms

adolescent girls

ALLIANCES

The Hunger Project, India's approach: #ElectedToLead

"If elected women representatives in panchayats are imparted the right skills, knowledge and support, then they become empowered to advocate for, and drive development in their constituencies and ensure social and gender justice for all citizens."

[18] North Karnataka suffers the most from early and child marriage, with Yadgir, Belgaaon, Bagalkote, Ballari and Kalaburgi being some of the worst-affected districts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Rationale

A baseline survey was conducted in 2015[19] with randomly sampled 640 adolescent girls and 250 elected women representatives (of the total 2,000 girls and 600 elected women representatives). This helped flag the status on knowledge, practices and prevalence related to marriage and, within it, early and child marriage; education; legal redress mechanisms; and aspirations of the girls. However, the programme's ongoing monitoring revealed limitations in the design of the survey, which the endline assessment sought to resolve.

First, the endline assessment adopted a qualitative methodology to replace the quantitative one used in the baseline survey. This helped elucidate nuanced processes of change as opposed to parochial quantitative calibration of change. Also, as the programme progressed and evolved, it was realised that a quantitative assessment will limit the documentation of the rich, oral narratives that highlight the lived experiences of girls, their personal beliefs, the articulation of their choices, their challenging of patriarchal socio-cultural norms and being stifled by them. The endline assessment also included interviews with select implementers of the programme (across the six community-based organisations). Finally, the assessment triangulates the findings with secondary programme literature. This was done to address the challenges of non-representative sampling encountered by the assessment. This also allowed us to gauge the extent to which the emerging evidence accrued to the larger outreach.

With the complexity of early and child marriage, along with the need to render insights that can help inform the future direction of the programme, the methodological tweaks for the assessment were essential.

The assessment had two objectives:
a. Determine the efficacy of the programme
b. Recommend future course of actions.

3.2 Assessment paradigm

The assessment measured the effectiveness of the programme by showcasing the interrelationship of three factors: knowledge, linkage and actions.

[19] The baseline survey was conducted across all the three states. The comparisons with the endline assessment wherever possible involved scaling the numbers down to the areas of work at the end of three years of the programme.

3.3 Tools and data collection

Primary: The data was collected from sampled respondents through focus group discussions and informant interviews. Discussion guides and interview tools were designed to cover a range of questions. The indicators were the same as in the baseline survey tool, with some additions to reflect the scope of the programme. All the tools were translated to Hindi and Kannada.

Secondary: Programme-related documents and data points that were reviewed for this assessment encompassed:

- narrative reports submitted to AJWS;
- case studies of the respondents to corroborate programme findings;
- internal programme monitoring reports;
- The Hunger Project's online global dashboard for tracking outputs.

Box 2: Profile of assessment participants

43 *panchayats*----- 6 blocks ----- 5 districts

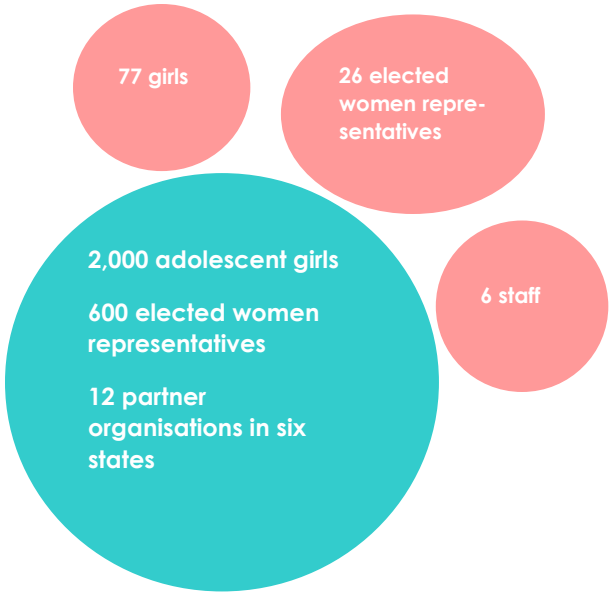
Social: More than 80 per cent of the girls and elected women representatives were from marginalised communities

Age: The older girls' ratio was higher in Rajasthan (mean age 16–17) than in Karnataka (mean age: 13–15)

Marital: Approximately, 20 per cent of the adolescent girls were married or engaged.

Education: Around 80 per cent of the adolescent girls attended school; 27 per cent of the elected women representatives had never attended school.

Experience: As much as 90 per cent of the elected women representatives were first-time entrants to politics.



5 female staff and 1 male staff interviewed. As compared with Rajasthan, staff in Karnataka were newer to The Hunger Project, India's programme. Ratio was found to be 1 staff person per 300 adolescent girls

The original plan to use external data enumerators to conduct the discussions and interviews was nixed due to their poor quality, which would have compromised the assessment. The data was collected by staff from partner organisations working with The Hunger Project, India. In Karnataka, the data was collected by other partner staff who were not part of the adolescent girls' programme. In Rajasthan, however, we also involved some staff who were directly responsible for implementing the adolescent girls' programme (some of whom were interviewed in the assessment). To address possible bias in Rajasthan as a result of the selection of partners for data collection, these individuals were responsible for areas outside their implementation. Further, a two-day intensive training for all the partner staff in both states, focusing on data collection techniques and probing mechanisms, was conducted.

3.4 Sampling

The selection of geographies and the participants adhered to following criteria.

Geographies: Across both states, one block per partner organisation was selected. Bidar, Gadag and Kalburagi blocks in Karnataka and Reodar, Sahada and Abu Road blocks in Rajasthan. Within each of these blocks, at least 40 per cent of the *panchayats* were selected.

Respondents: The inclusion criteria of adolescent girls and elected women representatives was based on their sustained participation across several interventions over the entire programme duration. Along with a primary sample list, a substitute list was provided from the same *panchayat* and caste.

- Two group discussions per block with adolescent girls (younger than 18 and older than 18). Each discussion had six to seven girls.
- One group discussion with four elected women representatives, one of whom had to be a president.
- One informant interview per organisation, with the focal person responsible for programme implementation.

3.5 Analysis

All conversations were recorded using an audio device. Transcriptions were done by an external consultant, which was followed by extensive coding for the analysis. Insightful comments from the various participants were gathered through the group discussions and interviews and appear throughout the report as examples of changes envisioned by the intervention.

Box 3: Ethical practices

During all stages of the assessment, The Hunger Project, India's child protection policy was invoked. Prior to all conversations with the adolescent girls, consent was sought.

Secure and safe locations were identified to ensure that the girls were able to speak freely.

Strict measures were taken to ensure that confidentiality of all the girls involved in the data collection was maintained. The report has not used any names of the participants.

All data collected was stored and securely saved by The Hunger Project, India and shared only with persons responsible for the data analysis. Further, we ensured that all recordings shared with the external consultant for transcription were deleted at the conclusion of the contractual engagement.

4. Summary of findings
Pathways to empowerment

The following sections demonstrate the importance of an assessment on interventions going beyond chasing targets (like number of child marriages halted) to examine how root causes are confronted.

The findings presented here delve into how the programme: a) led conversations around early and child marriage (knowledge); b) fostered an enabling external environment and support structures (linkage); and c) designed actions to empower adolescent girls.

This paradigm was achieved through continuous investment and quick adaptation to the strategies. For instance, two of the implementers who were interviewed pointed out useful tactics that they adapted to deepen programme insights: **"Case studies of children within the community as well as outside always helped during the meetings. In one such meeting, we used the case study of Malala and how she fought for the rights of girls to be educated,"** cited one of them. **"We have also invited Sneha[20] clinic counsellors to address the emotional needs of girls through our workshops, when a felt need emerged of someone being unable to cope with a huge amount of stress and societal pressures regarding marriage,"** explained the other person.

Adolescent girls engaged in group work in Rajasthan
Photo credit: The Hunger Project, India

Rigorous tracking of the participation of the adolescent girls in the three-year programme period reflects a drop-out rate of 25 per cent. This, to some extent, validates the effectiveness of the programme's design: a) the nature of interventions, b) the topics and methodology for dissemination and c) the strategies of engagement and mobilisation.

Activities like the need-based workshops[21] and the bimonthly and quarterly meetings with adolescent girls and elected women representatives created spaces that allowed them access to accurate information that dispelled myths about various issues. Since 2015, the programme has conducted more than 50 such workshops and nearly 500 such meetings to disseminate information.

The timing of the programme's roll-out proved serendipitous. *Panchayat* elections took place in 2015 in both Karnataka and Rajasthan. This resulted in a new batch of elected women representatives (primarily elected for the first time). This is also synonymous with the profile of elected women

[20] Adolescent-friendly health clinics that provide counselling and curative services at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of care on fixed days and at fixed times, with referrals arranged.
[21] Need-based workshops are one to two day trainings in which adolescent girls and elected women representatives are provided information, primarily focused on unpacking the technical and procedural aspects of the *panchayat* duties, government schemes and entitlements, rules and regulations.

representatives participating in the endline assessment (see box 2), excluding one woman who was re-elected, in Abu Road Block, Rajasthan.

With the newly elected women representatives just beginning to outline their priorities, the programme found an opening for them to consider early and child marriage in their plans. The intergenerational dialogues (between the women and the adolescents) resulted in the representatives' better understanding of the importance of promoting adolescents' rights, access to social services and entitlements and a safe environment. The interviews with the implementers underscored this process, as one person articulated: **"Elected women representatives have started incorporating the issues of the younger generation in the *panchayat*, especially raising the problems faced by adolescent girls. They keep their eyes and ears peeled for any information with regard to the girls. Their own dreams have remained unfulfilled; therefore, they are ensuring the aspirations of the girls do not get lost."**

During the group discussions, elected women representatives drew parallels with their own experience as child brides. Around 35 per cent of the elected women representatives participating in the baseline assessment had married before they were 18 years old. The majority of the female implementers who were interviewed had endured a forced, early or child marriage. As one of them remembered: **"When I was 15 years old, I was married off. I had the chance of going to college thrice, but my father barred me. When I would see my friends going to college, I pined to tag along. I felt tortured, so I understand the pain one goes through. I have a daughter. I would never let it happen to her or any other girl in my neighbourhood."**

This commonality of rights and choice denied resulted in a "personal is political" approach towards rallying around rights, choice and voice of adolescent girls in the *panchayats*. The articulation of the same became fiercer and more purposeful among the elected women representatives and female implementers.

4.1 Education: Value in itself or the means to an end?

"**Boys going to school is a norm. However, when it comes to us, the importance of education is immediately undermined,**" reminded one of the girls.

A report by the World Bank in 2017, analysing the long-term impact of early and child marriage, noted that 10–30 per cent of girls drop out of school as a consequence and that secondary school completion rates are further reduced by 4–6 percentage points.[22]

Around 70 per cent of married adolescent girls in the baseline findings had dropped out of school after being married.

When consolidating the findings from the 2015 baseline survey and the remarks of the girls during this assessment, we found a high value attributed to education. For example, at the baseline stage, more than 43 per cent of the girls stated that having an education instils a greater sense of self-confidence and independence. While this was reiterated in the endline assessment, there was also a resonating embracing of school as a space to escape domestic drudgery that falls upon girls—in addition to the freedom of mobility, the friendships and the knowledge it created.

[22] The World Bank/International Center for Research on Women, *The Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: Global Synthesis Report*, Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2017.

Box 4: What does it mean to have an education?

"If we are educated, we can convince the community of the importance of it. Other members of the family will be educated. This will end discrimination."

"We will know about our rights."

"If something goes wrong, girls who are educated can take action against it, for example, say 'no' to marriage…. boys will treat everyone, especially girls with respect."

"Education is not just for a job. Even when we work in the fields, there are financial transactions involved. We need to have knowledge of math…else people will try to cheat us."

"If there is a board, we can read it immediately. We don't have to ask anyone. Without this, people will look down up us."

In 2015, 70 per cent of the surveyed girls considered the value of education as primarily economic;[23] three years later, they could see other positives (box 4).

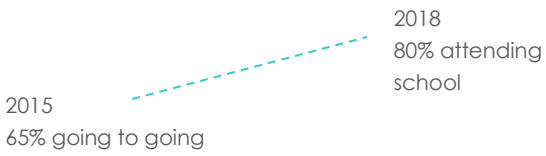
This assessment's findings indicate increasing perception (especially in Rajasthan) of education as a right in itself and not just a means to an end. That end had also shifted, and education is seen as a necessary step towards equal opportunities.

This has enabled in the girls a sense of urgency to unpack, learn and challenge the normality of systemic oppression that is gender discrimination. This shift can be attributed to the efficacy of the programme design that uses a feminist pedagogy of engagement, which prodded the adolescent girls into reflecting on the systemic denial of opportunities and rights to them.

This enhanced understanding and the vocabulary to articulate the same is significant. It puts adolescent girls in a better position to negotiate the need to continue their education, thereby delaying marriage. However, this shift in attitude is often not welcomed by the larger society. Despite the instrumental value associated with enhancing livelihood prospects, the fear of girls becoming "spoiled" or "deviant" by harbouring "new thoughts" is much bigger. The assessment recognised this dichotomy among the girls, who were stuck in the trappings of patriarchal social codes that pushes them to conform to being a "good girl" (resulting in withdrawal from the formal education system) and thus restricting their ability to realise their dreams and aspirations.

The intrinsic value of education is helping them reimagine a future in a more purposeful way, as one girl pointed out, hinting at possibilities: **"We should not study thinking we will only get a job, more important is that we will have a better future."** Through the programme, girls were unconditionally supported by the elected women representatives, who "picked up the baton" to advocate for collective and collaborative action to remove barriers to education. Internal programme monitoring has shown that since 2016, more than 300 school drop-outs across 50 panchayats in Karnataka and Rajasthan re-enrolled into the formal education system (schools, colleges and correspondence courses) with the help of elected woman representatives.

Box 5: Change in school enrolment



[23] Extreme marginalisation among adolescent girls, along social and economic lines, justifies the hope that education will help them access better livelihood opportunities. The majority of the families of the girls in the programme were dependent on non-perennial forms of economic activity. Educated adolescent girls are expected to help pull their family out of poverty.

Box 6: Expanding education opportunities

In 2016, 1,000 girls, along with elected women representatives from 10 *panchayats* in Reodar Block, submitted a petition to the district collector and the chief minister of the state requesting a college in their vicinity because the nearest one was 40 km away, with poor roads in between. The chief minister of Rajasthan forwarded the petition to the state education secretary, resulting in the establishment of the college. In 2018, a total of 90 girls have been admitted to the college.

In 2018, a petition was submitted from Sahada block's federation members to push for the sanction of the first technical college in the block.

But there has been a severe backlash against the women representatives, as one explained during the assessment: **"People in my village frowned upon me because I sent my daughter to school. They raised questions saying, if girls start going to school then who will take care of the household chores?"** The following are the initiatives undertaken to catalyse education outcomes of girls in the two states.

School enrolment and enabling access

The enrolment and re-enrolment of girls in school is strongly endorsed by the elected women representatives as part of their mandate. They reinforce the importance of educating girls in their communities and spread awareness of government education schemes that can be accessed by all, especially marginalised groups. For instance, an elected woman representative from Gadag Block in Karnataka re-enrolled 10 girls, another from Reodar block in Rajasthan constructed paved roads to facilitate school access for 19 girls.

Irregular bus service was another issue flagged by a staff member of the community organization in Gadag Block: **"We communicated this issue through a letter to the bus depot manager for all blocks. … And now all the villages have proper bus facilities."**

Elected women representatives as role models

Some women went even further: One of the youngest *panchayat* presidents in the assessment, a woman from Reodar Block in Rajasthan, enrolled herself in school during the programme period. This act sent a strong message, especially to girls who had dropped out of school but shied away from enrolling at a later age because of stigma. Following the president's example, 15 other women representatives across the programme areas re-enrolled themselves to complete their education. The multiplier effect of this: 150 girls took the initiative to re-enrol.

Advocating for better facilities and quality education in schools

The concern for maintaining school facilities remains high on elected women representatives' agenda. The lack of certain basic facilities has resulted in a sharp increase in drop-outs. For instance, in reference to sanitation and hygiene, a woman representative summarised: **"In most schools previously, there were no toilets. Girls would eventually stop going to school when they got their periods."**

A woman representative from Bidar Block installed a drinking water unit in a school that lacked any safe water dispenser. In their meetings with the women representatives' girls expressed their concern on issues related to school infrastructure, particularly toilets, and found support from them, who used their *panchayat* resources to make improvements to the facilities.

In Kalburagi Block in Karnataka, 300 girls were led by the women representatives to successfully lobby block officials for toilet facilities in their schools. In another *panchayat,* in Gadag Block, the elected women representatives and girls broke the lock on toilet rooms reserved for teachers and staff because there was no separate bathroom for girls.

The women representatives also approached each other to rally support. For instance, a woman from Sirohi Block sought alliance with the female president of her *panchayat* to upgrade a secondary school (tenth standard only) to include higher secondary opportunity (eleventh and twelfth standard), along with advocacy to re-open another school. Another woman representative mentioned an attempt to improve infrastructure: **"Thirteen computers in our school were not working despite repeated follow-up with the headmaster. I wrote an application to the block officials and further escalated the issue to the District authorities**"

Also in Sahada Block of Rajasthan, elected women representatives mentioned setting up a complaints box in schools exclusively for girls. In Karnataka, they encouraged girls' participation in sports by providing them with track suits and taking care of their travel expenses and training to play hockey.

In Bidar and Kalburagi blocks, the problem of inadequate teacher appointment in government schools was a huge concern. This issue was addressed through a district-level *samvada* (meeting of elected women representatives, girls, and local government officials), led by the partner organisations, with officials from the Education Department which led to new teacher appointments. In Gadag Block, the elected women representatives federation (SUGRAMA[24]) ensured that teachers for math, science and physical education were appointed in schools, at least prior to the exams children take to graduate. During one of their monthly meetings with their representatives, girls from a *panchayat* in Kalburagi Block attending high school complained about teachers' negligent behaviour (being constantly on the phone). This led to accelerated monitoring of the school premises by the elected women representatives.

An interface meeting between adolescent girls and government officials
Picture courtesy: The Hunger Project, India

4.2 Early and child marriage: An understanding and articulation of their root causes, impact and legality

Root causes and impact

As part of strengthening empowerment processes for adolescent girls, the programme needed to explain the complexity and cyclical nature of early and child marriage from the lens of it being a harmful practice that violates their rights. This required delving into its root causes. Three years into the programme, the following themes emerged that make explicit the structural inequalities (one of the major root causes) underpinning the prevalence of early and child marriage (see the following table).

[24] SUGRAMA is the state-level federation of 3,000 elected women representatives from *panchayats* in Karnataka.

Inequalities underpinning the harmful practice of early and child marriage	
ROOTS	IMPACT
Insecurity: The fear of elopement combined with the belief that girls are seen as carriers of the family ***"ijjat"*** (or honour, hence the need to control their mobility and sexuality). The primary cause of early and child marriage among boys is a hope of tying them down and forcing them to become responsible adults.	**Loss of childhood**: **"If a girl gets married at a young age, her childhood is snatched away—she will be pulled out of school and her dreams remain far from realisation."**
Poverty: "**When parents have three or four girls, getting them married quickly and early is seen as a way to dispose of their responsibility,**" primarily to save dowry. This offer becomes even more lucrative if the "**boy has a good job (government) and property...they [his family] will not consider the age of either groups"**. This was also reinforced by the testimonies of girls who were married in the two states. This was a common practice brought up by those in Gadag Block, signalling the plight of impoverished households where dowry money is used by the groom's family to pay off their financial debts.	**Pressure**: **"I have seen that with my mother…she was married when she was 17…she did not know how to manage in the house…."** This reflects the unpreparedness that is imposed on girls when forced to suddenly adapt to an alien environment prior to them even reaching the stage of maturity to want to take up this onerous task.
Dispensable: "**When girls mature (attain puberty) and are good looking, they are immediately considered a burden"** or "***hennu manega hunnu***" [girl is a sore of the house]. Early marriage is thus an easy solution and only possible future for girls. A girl from Bidar Block recounted her experience: **"If a girl is older and unmarried neighbours gossip,"** reinforcing that community's sanctions loom large upon the lives of girls.	**Abandonment**: The sense of abandonment weighs heavily upon girls, as one recalled: **"[After marriage], if there is a fight, the boy's family says, 'You go to your [natal] house,' and your parents say, 'You go to your [in laws] house.' We don't have a house [*koi ghar hi nahi hai*]. Where do we go?"**
Customs: Customary practices of ***atta-satta***[25] which is accepted as the immediate possibility for parents, and ***kheech***[26], prevalent in Rajasthan, were found to be common reasons. A girl married at the age of 15 from Reodar Block recounted how she was a victim of *atta-satta*: **"Along with my uncle, I also got married. My grandfather feared that if his son did not get married, it would have had a debilitating impact on the family's honour and name in the society,"** which emphasises the denial of agency to girls.	**Health:** The ramifications on health as a result of an early or child marriage were widely shared by adolescent girls and elected women representatives across the two states; early pregnancy, rendering the young mother and child physically weak. The repercussion on mental well-being was another recurrent theme.
Labour: When ageing parents are unable to work or take care of themselves, young and agile daughters-in-law become caregivers and can be used for handling household chores. The reality of the problem of this burden of labour, as caregivers, came out strongly in the assessment as well as at the baseline level. Times spent by girls, irrespective of their marital status, was divided between domestic chores and working in the field.	**Violence**: Girls fear the constant reprimands by the family, including physical and verbal abuse.

[25] A customary practice in Rajasthan whereby the parents, who cannot find their son a bride, trade their daughter for a bride.

[26] A system of forced elopement initiated by the boy in a public fair.

These insights have been critical to The Hunger Project, India's own understanding and have informed the intervention. They have also led to the following four observations:

- Poverty and customary practices (at more than 40 per cent in the baseline findings) remained strong themes of root causes of early and child marriage. However, the constant theme within both these factors was the denial of rights. It was interesting to see that while girls articulated the issue from a rights perspective, the majority of the women representatives viewed customary practices and curbing the sexuality of girls as central to the practice of early and child marriage.
- There was a strong recognition among girls and elected women representatives on the contribution of the partner organisations to expand their own understanding of early and child marriage, especially on unpacking the complex discourse around in terms of "girls also deserve equal respect and they should not be discriminated against along the lines of gender or caste," as one of the girls described. The dependence on these organisations to access any additional information on confronting or stopping early and child marriage and other related abuses of their rights was palpable.
- There was an equally strong belief that girls are more vulnerable than boys in the context of early and child marriage particularly among elected women representatives. Many more confirmed this in the endline assessment (at 90 per cent) than at the baseline (at 34 per cent)
- Through the assessment discussions, it also became clear that putting the causes and their impact in neat boundaries can be problematic. It is important to recognise and enunciate the relationship between the two.

Legality

The endline findings confirmed that elected women representatives and adolescent girls have basic knowledge on the legal age of marriage for girls and boys. The only exception to this was found among those from Bidar Block and Kalburagi Block. Conversations on the legal aspects of early and child marriage can be summarised through the following two points.

a) Knowledge and opinion on the "right" age of marriage

The assessment revealed interesting insights among elected women representatives when the question of "right" age of marriage was asked. More elected women representatives from Rajasthan considered the current legal age to be the "good age" for both. The women representatives from Karnataka, however, suggested an older age. On average, the women representatives in both states said 30 years or older for boys and a younger age for girls, at 25–28 years. The women representatives from Karnataka also elaborated that girls should not marry until after they have graduated secondary school. Only one elected woman representative, from Abu Road Block in Rajasthan, questioned the current legal age of marriage for girls and insisted it needed to be increased.

b) Legal frameworks to address early and child marriage

Adolescent girls, particularly from Karnataka, spoke about the punitive measures in place to tackle early and child marriage. Beyond the law, partner organisations staff cited, critical links forged with other child protection groups[27] to ensure greater responsiveness to all relevant issues. A programme staff person in Kalburagi District, for instance, added: **"Along with creating awareness on the issue of child marriage, we allied with Childline to stop a child marriage."**

[27] This relates to the traditionally children's rights organisations engaged in the programme in Karnataka in Gulbarga and Gadag blocks.

Practices such as these alliances help reinforce the availability of different kinds of support to girls. As one of the girls noted: "**In our books, there was information on child marriage, but I never paid attention to it. I came to know about when to call 1098[28] and its use.**"

Another girl noted: "**In one of the meetings, a lawyer was invited to provide us with the information on the penalty charged for forcing marriage upon girls or boys…. The police had also come to assure us that if anyone teases us, we can call 1098.**"

Girls also mentioned they knew of the Protection of Children Against Sexual Offices Act (2012) the most comprehensive set of legal framework in the country to protect their rights particularly safeguarding them from sexual offences and harassment. They discussed this knowledge within their household to prevent an early, forced or child marriage.

Box 7: Elected women representatives and adolescent girls address early and child marriage

Collaboration and team work: Adolescent girls from Rajasthan are collaborating with elected women representatives to ensure that that their friends are not forced into marriage. One of the girls' from Sahada Block recalled preventing nine girls from getting married.

Battling customs: Elected women representatives from the tribal dominated block of Abu Road Block realised the compounded vulnerability of girls. As a result, they conduct special meetings in their house to ensure that they do not fall prey to *kheech*.

Elected women representatives' approach to early and child marriage

Within the programme, the women representatives assumed a crucial role by taking initiatives to end the silence around the harmful practice of early and child marriage. They began, and remain, working closely with other community leaders, reminding them of their various responsibilities to protect young people. For example, in schools, they asked that teachers be vigilant about girls dropping out by monitoring the attendance registers; the teachers now disclose important information in and outside the classroom. In Ron Block in Gadag District, for example, SUGRAMA members cracked down on several cases of child marriage taking place, for which the *anganwadi* workers had provided a false age certificate for the girls.

The programme coordinator from Gadag Block summarised how elected women representatives are actively drawing attention to the profoundly negative consequences of early and child marriage among their constituencies and within their own families and among relatives: **"The seriousness with which they [elected women representatives] see this issue has taken the turn of inquiring about the ages of both bride and groom whenever they receive a marriage invitation card."**

Overall, the assessment found that the elected women representatives have become more attentive to and watchful over the practice of early and child marriage. In the process, they have also ensured a more sustainable response to the problem through their advocacy and by improving girls' accessibility to entitlements.

[28] 1098 is Childline India's 24/7 toll-free helpline number. The helpline also called Childline is for children in distress.

4.3 Life skills education and learning skills to enhance livelihoods

Life skills education

Life skills education was not included in the original programme design (2015). Its addition in 2017 came as a response to some girls expressing curiosity about their bodies and sexuality (especially in Rajasthan). The interactions with them brought out their frustrations and related stress in coping with the pressures of marriage. In Karnataka, field visits by The Hunger Project, India staff in 2016 paved the way for what became a sharper gendered focus in the programme design and delivery by offering skills building to girls who seemed to lack the confidence and agency to stand up for their individual rights and/or to contribute economically to their household. Immediate, accelerated measures needed to be integrated into the programme to respond to these demands. Fortunately, The Hunger Project, India's programme with adolescent girls in Bihar had started work on life skills education in mid-2016, with assistance from the United Nations Population Fund. The preliminary impact of their life skills training was encouraging. The Hunger Project, India learned from that experience and incorporated a life skills education component into the adolescent girls' programme in both Karnataka and Rajasthan.

Girls during a workshop
Picture courtesy: Jonathan Torgovnik/AJWS

The inclusion of life skills came at a critical moment in the programme cycle: conversations with unmarried girls had revealed that more than 20 per cent were feeling the pressure of marriage and the inability to cope with related stress. After the introduction of the life skills component, there was a fairly visible increase in the confidence levels of the girls. Many girls successfully used the learnings to negotiate with their families to continue their education, to be treated equally and to enhance their mobility outside the home. This impact came across strongly through the assessment discussions with the girls (see box 8).

Partner field staff reported that they also gained tremendously from the life skills education. They mentioned how they had used the information to

Box 8: What do you understand by life skills?

"**If we both quarrel and no one listens to each other, it is possible that a third person can take advantage of it and break our bond…it is all about building an interpersonal relationship."**

A popular game that involved blowing balloons reinforced the key learning of patience: **"Some [girls] were blowing them up fast and were bursting them. But some will slowly study and eventually get a job."**

The importance of gaining trust in their own selves came across in several conversations, including with one girl who said: **"We need to decide things as per our thinking, not on the basis of others wishes. When we want to go somewhere, people will try and dissuade us. It is important to believe in our own selves."**

Life skills have been, for most girls, a way of life that entails, as one girl said: Where we **"look at each other and bring about change."** For example, **"if friends are in going through any kind of tension we should help them so that they are free of that."**

The importance of keeping their bodies and surroundings clean and the link between health and mental peace was recalled by several girls. Most importantly, as one girl pointed out, the belief that a **"period is not bad, it is a natural process that girls like us go through,"** in itself is a recognition of the empowerment process.

Life skills were acknowledged by many of the girls as an effective tool that helps handling burgeoning pressures associated with growing up, without getting angry or emotional.

cope with the pressure and backlash from the community, especially in Karnataka. This is significant, given that usually partners' or field mobilisers' ability to reach out to the community is taken for granted by programmes that overlook the hostile environments they operate in.

Vocational skills: Beyond life skills, another crucial and relevant demand voiced by the adolescent girls related to vocational opportunities and livelihood skills training programmes (in and around their *panchayat*). Around 20 per cent of the girls engaged by the assessment were linked to various kinds of vocational training and livelihood opportunities (computer training and tailoring, for instance) through the new programme component.

The proximity of opportunities within the *panchayats* makes a difference because in the absence of something nearby, young women are forced to migrate, leading to several other challenges. For instance, in Kalburagi Block in Karnataka, a 17-year-old girl who was part of the cohort recruited by Café Coffee Day (located elsewhere) returned to her village because she could not adjust to the cultural context of a big city. This proved to be the same case for many other girls in Karnataka.

In the second phase (2016–2017), the programme in Karnataka introduced career counselling to address such cases, thus preparing the girls to handle pressures related to work environments and alien sites of work.

Box 9: Enhancing opportunities through vocational training

Since 2015, partner organisations have linked 200 adolescent girls in Karnataka and Rajasthan to private and public vocational training providers (Deen Dayal Upadhya Scheme, RUDSETI, NETCORE and the Gandhi Foundation).

- **A total of 12 girls who underwent computer training in Karnataka were hired by Café Coffee Day (a popular chain) in Bangalore and Videocon in Hyderabad.**
- **A total of 15 girls from Sonella Panchayat in Reodar Block (Rajashtan) trained in tailoring, were working on stitching school uniforms for two private and one government school.**
- **A total of 45 girls who received vocational training have been actively seeking funding support, through various means (for example, the Labour Department in Karnataka and corporate social responsibility programmes in Rajasthan) to start their own independent ventures.**
- **A 20-year-old girl from Karnataka (participating in the assessment), embroiled in an arduous divorce case, underwent training and was hired as a supervisor by the national employment programme Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. In turn, she has provided livelihood support to 30 people in her *panchayat*.**
- **Upon engagement with the programme, a 17-year-old girl from Rajasthan is pursuing her dream of becoming a police officer and preparing for the constable examination.**
- **A 16-year-old girl from Rajasthan has been engaged in one of the partner organisations' ongoing project towards improving the educational outcomes of girls.**

It is vital to keep in mind that girls are often perceived as "goods" that are dispensable and can be transacted off via marriage, thus transferring the "burden" of them to the marital family. Stuck in the middle, it's an onerous trap for young girls—either they earn something and contribute to the household income or they become an economic liability.

As a 2015 Nirantar Trust report highlighted: "Wealth has a clear correlation with the median age at first marriage. Women in the highest wealth quintile marry more than four years later than women in the lowest wealth quintile."[29]

[29] Ibid.

The programme was cognizant of this complex reality and used vocational training as an opportunity for girls to use as a bargaining tool to delay marriage and thus explore new possibilities of what they can do or could become.

Both traditional and non-traditional skills needed to be imparted to the girls without putting a value judgment on either, yet also quietly nudging and encouraging them to explore alternative livelihood options. The objective of the life skills training that emerged within the programme was to enhance their ability to advance their ambition and grab opportunities at a later stage.

"I feel like dreaming again," claimed one of the girls, a sentiment palpable in multiple conversations during the assessment. The easy and immediate association with the partner staff allowed the girls to embrace a range of information towards having a future different from what they had imagined it to be. "*Ummedon ka safar mela*", or "a fair of opportunities", was echoed by many girls. This exposed them to different careers and, more importantly, to other young women with shared backgrounds who had pursued alternative careers, such as a police woman, a doctor, a journalist and a professional athlete.

Another girl, in Bidar Block, extolled the uniqueness of the intervention for her: **"We were informed about the various opportunities that were available to girls like us that we were unaware of…. We got to know about the Unnati Foundation, where you can receive training in computers and spoken English…. We also got to know about solar power and schemes like Sukanya Samriddhi Yojna.[30]"**

The importance of vocational skills was also recognised by the women representatives. As explained by one woman in Bidar Block, who had learned some of the skills and started training the girls in her community: "**These were the skills I learned as part of grooming of a girl prior to marriage. After marriage, I had no opportunity to utilise the skills that I had learned. When the trainings were conducted, I felt that I could teach the skills that I have to the girls. Today, they have learned a new skill—purse or bag making, quilting [and making] silk thread bangles and earrings. I am very happy that as an elected woman representative, I have been able to support them in this manner, too, as well as supporting in resolving their issues."**

4.4 Leveraging local governance institutions

Given the location of the programme strategy within the governance framework, the interventions enabled a broader and constructive dialogue with multiple stakeholders in the *panchayats*:

- elected women representatives, as public office holders in the *panchayats,* and community organisations partnering with The Hunger Project, India
- local administration officials and state-level legislators
- community members (including parents)

Even more emphatically, the assessment found that the elected women representatives and the community organisations are now seen as pillars of strength for the girls. The newly forged alliance between rights holders and the duty bearers has added immense value to the general conversation:

- **Intergenerational dialogue and support:** Equipped with an understanding of the deeply rooted gender inequalities, the vulnerability of girls to early and child marriage and traditional social codes, the elected women representatives are better positioned to address early and child

[30] A government-backed savings scheme targeted at the parents of girls. The scheme encourages parents to build a fund for their future education.

marriage and its detrimental effects on the physical, psychological and emotional levels of girls. The programme uses the constitutional position and authority of the elected women representatives as public office holders to drive dialogue and change in their communities and to initiate talks on the harmful impacts of early and child marriage with adolescent girls. As a result, they have placed early and child marriage atop their agenda, supporting girls in accessing their fundamental rights and entitlements.

- **Community organisation approach and strategies:** Programme implementers who were interviewed, especially in Karnataka, acknowledged that the programme served as a departure from a purely child rights approach. Concerted efforts were made to build trust with and gain the confidence of the girls—creating safe spaces for discussions that went beyond any hint of a transactional relationship. This was obvious in a remark made by one of the girls: **"Madam [programme implementer] takes us to see places, we can roam around—who else will do this for us?"**

  The deepened relationship of girls with the women representatives and partners can be attributed to the underlying and continuous efforts made by the staff to forge a dialogue (box 10). This has created a network within the *panchayats* for girls to tap into.

Box 10: Mobilisation: Strategic motivation

The mobilisation strategy adopted by the programme hinged on a process of building an enabling environment to induce the participation of adolescent girls and motivate them to continue with the programme. The mobilisation of adolescent girls therefore used a multi-layered strategy with partner staff serving as the propellers.

Principles behind the mobilisation:

- **Fair representation from all quarters is necessary—marginalised, religious minorities, education, etc. Special emphasis was directed to the participation of adolescent girls from marginalised caste communities.**
- **Safe and secure locations were used for meetings and trainings.**
- **An agenda and objectives were shared during the mobilisation to ensure that there were no misconceptions about the programme.**
- **Participatory techniques were used to ensure that the opinions of the adolescent girls were heard.**

Stages of mobilisation: When the programme was rolled out a training of trainers with all the partner staff was conducted to articulate the mobilisation strategies.

- **Mapping of catchment area: Profile of adolescent girls was collected prior to the launch of the programme to assess the vulnerabilities. Partner staff consulted other projects and networks to locate adolescent girls.**
- **Before mobilising the adolescent girls, given the targeted nature of the programme, a series of meetings with elected women representatives were conducted to orient them on their role and the programme. Over a period of time, the women representatives took on a stronger role in locating adolescent girls and, as focal points in the *panchayats*, galvanised the support of grass-roots service providers, teachers and parents.**
- **Dialogues with parents and community members were conducted to encourage the participation of the adolescent girls through routine home visits. Special invitations were extended to mothers to attend the first meeting.**
- **Introductory meeting between adolescent girls with elected women representatives was conducted. This was led by the women representatives who had attended the formative meetings.**
- **Participation registers were maintained for all meetings for programme tracking.**
- **Social media platforms, like WhatsApp, were used to create groups with the adolescent girls to convey the logistical details for meetings and trainings.**
- **The adoption of the existing strategy of The Hunger Project, India of working with elected women representatives had a strong role for partners to build upon for tapping local authorities for the programme.**

The following section reviews the strategies and outcomes emerging as a result of these collaborations and how each stakeholder has advanced the rights of the girls by making the most of the *panchayat* resources and institutions and exploring useful links.

Making panchayats safer

CCTV initiatives: After hearing about the incidents of girls being subjected to harassment in their *panchayat,* an elected woman representative in Gadag Block in Karnataka expedited the mandated process of installing CCTV cameras to curtail such experience and to ensure a safer environment for their mobility.

Collaborating with community organisations: Adolescent girls in Sahada Block in Rajasthan approached the local partner organisation to put preventive systems in place to address issues of sexual harassment in public spaces and to facilitate a dialogue with the community on the same. In both Karnataka and Rajasthan, partner staff also helped girls with admission processes in the government-run boarding schools, adopting an "out of sight, out of mind" approach, thus significantly reducing the vulnerability of girls to the pressures of marriage.

Elected women representatives address sexual violence against girls: The partner staff in Gadag Block in Karnataka noted: **"The elected women representatives are asking more difficult questions now. They feel more responsible."** The women office holders and partner staff have ensured that the communities in *panchayats* are aware of untoward incidents against girls and discuss them openly. This development was acknowledged by several adolescent girls, one of whom explained: "**If something bad happens in the village, like child marriage, or if boys are found teasing girls, we immediately approach our ward *panch*. She, in turn, talks to other women and community members to raise awareness about such issues."**

Girls from Reodar Block in Rajasthan spoke about similar support they received from their ward members. Steps were taken by elected women representatives to sensitise school teachers and authorities towards making them more empathetic to the girls' experiences of assault and sexual harassment. The women representatives worked hard to close down the illicit liquor shops that lined the access road to school that the adolescent girls had to walk in Abu Road and Reodar blocks of Rajasthan[31] to prevent any sexual harassment of girls.

Exclusive adolescent learning spaces in panchayats

In 2016, elected women representatives from four *panchayats in* Sirohi Block initiated the formation of resource centres converting abandoned *panchayat* offices also known as common rooms (known as Kishori Sandarbh Kendra) for almost 500 adolescent girls. Encouraged by the concept, a *panchayat* president elsewhere (non-American Jewish World Service supported area) decided to build a similar centre. These resource centres are safe spaces where the girls can come together to escape domestic drudgery, study, play and engage with their peers, where they can access books and other learning materials. Cut to 2018, an official memorandum was submitted for creating these spaces for girls in Reodar and Sahada Blocks.

Monitoring public services

Regular monitoring of various services and facilities related to health, sanitation and nutrition have remained a priority for the elected women representatives. For instance, in Gadag Block in Karnataka, one representative opened a Sneha clinic to address the menstrual health issues of girls. Girls from the same block cited other examples, such as ensuring that schools have basic utensils

[31] In Reodar Block during a regional advocacy meeting, 35 adolescent girls along with six ward members demanded the need to remove liquor shops and other safety issues that stifle their mobility.

for serving government-mandated midday meals. Girls under the SABLA scheme pointed out how they were not receiving the mandated nutrition support from the *anganwadis*. Their elected women representatives took the necessary steps to rectify this.

Stakeholder engagement

***Anganwadi* workers, health service providers, auxiliary nurses and midwives and teachers:** As part of their broader responsibilities, these service providers are required to extend support to adolescent girls. However, they tend to fall behind in performing their duties. During the intervention period, rigorous discussions were organised with various service providers to sensitise and refine their understanding of the health, hygiene and educational needs of adolescent girls.

In Sahada Block in Rajasthan, for instance, the auxiliary nurses and midwives now ensure that regular health camps are conducted in schools and that they cover menstruation hygiene management. They also monitor the availability of sanitary napkins in schools. Teachers organised accommodation facilities for girls travelling for the first time outside their villages and to the capital city, Jaipur, for their government school entrance exam. In one of the high schools, girls were given the opportunity to lead the school march on the occasion of sports day—a break from tradition.

The new supportive environment found immediate acknowledgment from the girls, as one explained: "**In the *panchayat*, if we gave an application for anything, earlier it would be a long process. Now, because of them [partner organisation and elected women representatives], things move quickly…. We can also approach the authorities or facilities directly…. We know the steps now."**

Family support: Certain significant strides were made during the programme period to garner the support of family members, especially mothers, to encourage the ambitions and dreams of adolescent girls. One of the participants recalled: **"My brother would always refuse to send me to trainings, but my mother supported me and told him off: 'This is more important than money, she is getting knowledge."**

Workshops with girls resulted in a few of them managing to skilfully negotiate discriminatory norms practised within their households like burden of chores or nutrition needs. In Reodar Block in Rajasthan, mothers accompanied their daughters to required fitness regime practice sessions in open grounds to prepare for the constable exam. This directly challenged those who would have previously mocked the girls when accessing public spaces.

In Karnataka, trust building with families was extremely crucial to consolidate their approval, especially because the programme did not offer any monetary incentive to the girls for their participation. Their initial and entrenched hesitations were overcome by the partners' commitment to the girls' needs, the safe spaces created and the relatively long-term engagement. This is where the programme and, in particular, the partners' ability to read the situation towards adopting language and strategies that are non-threatening need to be recognised.

Community leaders: Exposure to and participation in multiple activities during the programme intervention resulted in greater dialogue between adolescent girls and the community leaders in some areas. As one of the girls excitedly shared: **"After being a part of the *jatha* [the *ummedon ke safar mela*, which was in a public space and open to all], the elders in our village feel there is something to be learned from us. Even though we are children, they look at us for knowledge. When we inform them of the ill effects of child marriage, they hear us and understand our point of view."**

Similarly, street plays performed by girls in Abu Road Block in Rajasthan to raise awareness about child marriage and its disastrous effects made their voices salient and represented a resolve to put an end to this practice, according to one of the girls, who reported: **"People are aware of our presence and know that we will halt a child marriage, if it happens.... Now, they have started acknowledging our potential towards contributing to the community."**

Although we found encouraging signs of community support, this aspect needs to be explored further, especially in Rajasthan, where patriarchal social codes remain deeply entrenched and internalised.

Interaction with local authorities: The local partner organisations have ensured sustained engagement with various local authorities responsible for both advancing and protecting the rights of girls. Information is continuously provided to the girls regarding relevant line departments in the local administration that can be approached for specific issues. As a strategy, these interactions proved effective because they allow girls to directly put forward and petition their demands before the relevant authorities. Box 11 highlights some of the progress towards influencing the policy discourse and creating a focus on girls within the institutional setting.

In Bidar Block in Karnataka as well, every time there is a change in officials at the local police station, the partner organisation is informed. At one point, the girls were also taken on a tour of the police station. This helped de-mystify their perception of law enforcement authorities. They expressed how it significantly reduced their fear of approaching them in the future. Vice versa, the police officials were also sensitised about the issues affecting girls and why they needed to actively respond to complaints lodged by them, especially those related to harassment in public spaces.

Box 11: Alliances

In 2015 and 2016, the directors of two partner organisations implementing the programme in Karnataka (Spoorthy and Samarasa) were nominated as members to the pivotal bodies working to protect the rights of children: the Karnataka State Child Rights Protection Commission and the Bidar District Child Protection Committee. They spearheaded focused and pertinent conversations on the issue of early and child marriage:

- **State-wide refresher trainings for Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (district level) on their roles and responsibilities, with a focus on improving the hostels run by the Social Welfare Department.**
- **A funding drive to improve the status of government schools (especially in historically backward and resource poor areas). Select alumni, who had migrated to cities, were invited back for a tour of their alma mater, following which, several of them donated to the reserves to improve the conditions of facilities.**

Implementation of the Child Marriage Prohibition Act (in Karnataka), which was amended in 2017: in the first round of deliberations, The Hunger Project, India, along with SUGRAMA, initiated a series of advocacy consultations towards demanding stricter enforcement of the amended provisions of the Act, from the local to the state levels, especially for ensuring that stakeholders like the police adhere to the amended provisions and are aware of the new roles.

In 2017 in Rajasthan, 27 adolescent girls and 10 elected women representatives participated in a two-day state-level meeting where they met and interacted with the Minister of Women and Child Development, the Deputy Commissioner of Higher Secondary Education and the Director of the State Institute of Health and Family Welfare to discuss the salient provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

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Media: Time and again, the media has been seen as a potent way to shine light on the challenges faced and solutions forwarded to redress issues of adolescent girls. Strategic engagement with the media in this programme led to 100 news articles by more than 30 local and national dailies on multiple issues, from accentuating the issue of early and child marriage to efforts geared to-

wards advocacy for stigma-free access to various services, better educational facilities and calling out to the community structures to promote and support girls' participation in society as equal citizens.

A vision for the future
Photo credit: The Hunger Project, India

Resource persons: When asked about their engagement with the programme, one girl shared: "**We feel encouraged by all the people we meet.**" It was a sentiment echoed by many other girls. Invitations to external resource people to join workshops left a significant impact on the girls because these persons brought fascinating and real examples of courage and inspiration. Such interaction provided the girls with a window into new possibilities to explore and alternative pathways that tend to break gender stereotypes of professions and vocations. For example, in Bidar Block, a woman journalist was invited to a number of forums. Explained a staff person from the partner organisation: **"She is not married… we invited her because she is strong and speaks well. She shared her experience on how she built her career…. She is an inspiration."**

4.5 Acts of leadership demonstrated by girls

One major outcome of the programme is that the participating girls acquired an immense amount of confidence and courage. This was quite visible in the way they negotiated multifaceted challenges and articulated how to resolve them. They have, in a sense, embarked on their own leadership journeys. As one elected woman representative summarised: "**Girls have the courage to question their parents' decisions about their lives. They are not resigned to the fate decided by their parents only. We remind them of the importance of having a say in these decisions."** A slice of these experiences of remarkable change has been articulated in the following quotes (see box 12) from several of the girls.

Box 12: Girls assume leadership

"When we started talking about ourselves in the *Kishori Samuh* meetings [girls' collective], I felt stronger and could talk about my periods without any fear. Previously, we would talk about periods secretly with only one special friend… Now I have *nayi soch* [modern thoughts]."

"I study and teach other children. I not only manage my own expenses, but also support my family."

"It has been five years since I broke off my engagement. People in my *samaaj* [caste] would threaten my mother that if she did anything *ultasulta* [wrong], they would make our lives intolerable… but now they have realised I cannot be stopped."

"I along with my friends have reprimanded boys when would tease us in school. We confronted them: 'How dare you call a girl *samaan* [thing or object].' They should know we are not a toy or object."

"From attending these meetings, the most important change I have felt in me is that now I have an aim. I am preparing for the Karnataka Administrative Services. My mother went through the injustice of forced marriage. I do not want the same to happen to me."

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The previous remarks from adolescent girls, elected women representatives and members of the implementing partner organisations present a robust body of evidence that justifies the critical intervention. They legitimise the strategic approach of rooting the programme within the governance framework and welcome the shape it came to assume at the end of the three years of engagement. They also reflect how the linking of elected women representatives with adolescent girls added significant value to the larger efforts of ending early and child marriage.

This section summarises the findings, challenges and continuing dilemmas. It also posits a framework for change for the next phase of the programme. It is important to emphasise here that these findings cannot be generalised to the whole programme, given the small sample size for the assessment. However, it boldly recognises the range of voices, irrespective of the statistical counts.

5.1 Contribution: What has the programme achieved

Orchestrating change through a cogent programme design

The positioning of the programme within the constitutional framework of *panchayats* is what made it unique and effective. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) led to a strident increase in the powers of the local governance system, especially for affirmative action to enhance the participation of women in political processes in India. Thus, leveraging the constitutional authority of elected women representatives, as the central piece of the strategy, was envisaged to support adolescent girls and their rights and address the harmful practice of early and child marriage. A key observation that emerged about the programme was the active interest that some of the elected women representatives took to target the issue of early and child marriage in their *panchayats*, given their own experience as child brides, which resulted in the denial of opportunities and the curbing of their freedoms when they were young women.

Elected women representatives are seen as authority figures due to their scope of jurisdiction (a ward member has direct access to at least 600 citizens, while for a president the outreach can range from 2,000 to 5,000 people). The significance of that was felt by the girls, as one of them indicated: **"They have the authority and the position to be heard. If a ward member notices girls dropping out [of school] or getting married, they can speak about it, and families will readily agree to change."**

The programme introduced an important recognition among the adolescent girls to seek accountability from the *panchayats*. Conversations in both states revealed how adolescent girls sought support from the women representatives on a variety of issues, especially related to safety and harassment. In Karnataka, this relationship was found to hinge primarily on the demand for schemes and services.

The sustained engagement with American Jewish World Service offered a unique opportunity. The engagement over the past three years enabled a better understanding of the emerging needs of girls. The time-frame and the sustained support (and trust) of American Jewish World Service, less as a donor and more as a partner and mentor, generated a vibrant learning process for all involved. The assessment found that every year, new components were introduced and reshuffled based on a cross-learning of good practices (for example, the introduction of life skills education in 2017).

This flexibility and the lack of a template proved to be crucial for The Hunger Project, India in developing the programme, improvising along the way and opening it up to new learnings and

adjustments. Particularly because we came with no prior experience of working directly with girls, it required us to channel the experience of more than 15 years of working with elected women representatives in *panchayats*. And within that, a sharp focus was directed to the root causes of early and child marriage. This process opened up possibilities to learn and adapt from practice as the programme evolved. Some secondary research was done to prepare for the initial programme design. The 2015 Nirantar Trust report, *Early and Child Marriage in India: A Landscape Analysis,* and resources from Girls Not Brides provided critical insights to The Hunger Project, India staff about the issues.

A key takeaway of the programme is the way it kept the concept of "choice" integral to the endeavour for the rights of girls. Over the past three years, the programme managed to open up conversations with girls, placing them as the centre of change. Given that for almost 65 per cent of the girls this was the first time they were engaging with a non-government programme; we can say it initiated a multiplicity of experiences.

The same applies to the partners implementing the programme. The Hunger Project, India zeroed in on organisations working in districts that reported a high incidence of early and child marriage in Karnataka and Rajasthan (Madhya Pradesh was dropped from the programme in the first year). Partners hailed from varied backgrounds—some who had never exclusively worked with adolescent girls and others who had child rights experience, including running Childline. What became key was the briefing to partners on the approach that The Hunger Project, India envisaged in working with adolescent girls to address the root causes of early and child marriage. The dialogue with The Hunger Project, India staff, local partners and girls allowed for robust infusions to make the programme relevant to the external context and the challenges faced by the girls.

Engagement with community organisations and partners to roll out the programme

The implementing organisations were not only bearers of information but, over the three years, they became ardent champions of girls' rights. A majority of the staff (mostly women) we interviewed felt that they had had important conversations with girls around discrimination, sexual harassment, anatomy and sexuality. The opposite also was found true, whereby the grass-roots partners are now seen as supportive peers and confidantes by the girls. This reinforces the importance of partnering with community organisations. Their staff as members from the community are easily reachable. This has directly impacted programme efficiency in terms of greater mobilisation.

Each staff person involved was an integral part of The Hunger Project, India's core programme with elected women representatives for many years and had been trained to have a foundational understanding of human rights and gender issues. However, the relationship they forged with adolescent girls did not come about in a linear process. The foremost focus of strengthening the capacities of the local organisations was imperative for the success of the programme.

The proximity to the field and the relationships they established had several challenges. Field workers were often approached to resolve all the issues faced by the girls, which they may not have been equipped to handle or were outside the scope of the programme. To manage the situation, the programme design provided ample room for cross-learning through regular review meetings and trainings of trainers. The partners acknowledged how interactions with The Hunger Project, India staff in other areas and discussing the challenges helped them overcome the hesitation of interacting with girls, as summarised by one of the implementers from Gadag Block: **"Earlier, when I used to meet girls, I was afraid—what if I give them the wrong answer or advice?"**

Elected leaders leading the way: Intergenerational dialogue and support

The women representatives, particularly from Gadag and Bidar blocks of Karnataka and Reodar Block of Rajasthan, emerged as one of the strongest support structures for girls. The women representatives, especially the presidents, were cited many times by the adolescent girls in their conversations during the assessment. The leadership of the representatives was evinced not only by their steps to tackle the challenges faced by girls but also their efforts to create a larger supportive environment for girls to do the same. They became positive role models. This is of particular significance because girls in the other blocks of the programme brought up the lack of support from their *panchayats* as a serious issue.

The assessment found a stronger relationship between girls and elected women representatives in Rajasthan than in Karnataka. The women representatives in Rajasthan made more effort that went beyond the strengthening of services and facilities. They reached out to the girls proactively—listening, engaging and leading discussions in meetings on a variety of issues spanning safety, backlash, mobility, rights, health and sanitation, among others. We now notice more dynamism in terms of their actions. We also noticed, however, that the women representatives from Karnataka demonstrated greater technical knowledge of government schemes. Despite the differences across the two states, the overall response to the elected women representatives leading the way only reinforces the strength of the programme design.

Creating safe learning spaces

The formation of exclusive safe spaces for adolescent girls (validated as a best practice globally) was found to be invaluable to expanding and strengthening their voice and agency. The programme built on this important idea. The reference to the monthly or bimonthly meetings as an active and useful space for interaction and sharing information came out strongly in both states. In particular, the girls' groups in Rajasthan, or Kishori Samuh (collectives), had a strong bearing on the lives of the girls. As a strategy, it worked well in terms of bringing girls together and creating a safe space for collective thinking and action. The assessment found that the girls from Sirohi Block in Rajasthan are demanding a designated spot where these meetings can be organised on a regular basis beyond the current programme areas.

The programme also redefined the meaning of "safe space" beyond these girls' groups. Based on collected data, the entire programme is now perceived as a learning ground for a positive and constructive dialogue. It has opened doors for multiple conversations and possibilities. **"We can dance, play, sing, make friends and enjoy,"** exclaimed one girl. As a first-time experience for the majority of the girls participating in the intervention, the programme gave them a broader identity and purpose. They are beginning to see themselves as agents and enforcers of change. We heard many stories of how one girl's decision to join the programme encouraged others to follow suit. Engaging with the programme and the space thus rendered freedom in their mobility, stimulated a deeper sense of confidence and enthusiasm for learning and amplified their voices.

Sense of greater ownership by the girls

The programme by virtue of its design, which relied heavily on the active participation of girls, metamorphosed in such a way that we noticed greater and collective ownership of their issues and demand for justice. "Collectivisation" gave them the added courage to stand up in solidarity and voice their opinions openly and fearlessly. Visible examples of this surfaced strongly in Rajasthan. Especially through the medium of street plays, the girls attempted to voice their issues more directly. Explained one girl: **"We go around performing plays, screaming 'stop, stop, stop child marriage.'"**

Building awareness and knowledge

The assessment clearly shows an increase in awareness levels and access to knowledge that instilled in girls a sense of self-worth and confidence to try and redirect their lives. An important reason for that would be the strategies used for knowledge enhancement. As one girl noted: "**Information is provided in a creative manner,**" keeping in mind the literacy levels and short attention span of young girls attending the programme. The coordinator from Bidar Block mentioned how this was managed through the use of innovative games and other tools to guard against boredom. For instance, through songs, girls were told about the links to various government schemes and services.

In addition, resource persons (primarily service providers in *panchayats* and local government officials) were invited to unpack the complex concepts. As one girl mentioned: "**I continued with the programme because having the chance to know the people [resource persons] will go a long way in seeking their support in the future as well.**" To enhance this experience, the trainings and workshops were coupled with events like the *ummedon ka safar mela*, a favourite with the girls because it allowed for a break from the monotony of training sessions and let them celebrate and have fun.

Many girls acknowledged that while the school curriculum had introduced them to the topic of early and child marriage or the legal age of marriage, they never paid attention**.** Interestingly, the active knowledge building helped ignite creativity. For instance, a girl from Gadag Block in Karnataka mentioned how a friend wrote a play on child marriage after receiving information through the programme. The continuous engagement with the programme has made learning democratic, practical and personal, something the formal education system, especially in rural areas, lacks. At the same time, it is re-affirmation of the thinking behind the approach the programme took in its engagement with the girls.

Challenging archaic social codes and norms

"There is discrimination in our village. We go to the village tank to fill water and people from upper castes ask us to keep a distance or the water will get polluted. If we go near it, they will abandon their pots." These words from a 16-year-old are a strong reminder of the deep social disparities in our work areas, especially for girls from marginalised communities, and thus the kind of challenges we had to confront. The programme enabled girls to become more aware in recognising the violence caused by caste and gender discrimination and to question the norms that perpetuate inequality. Words like "courage", "fearless", "confident" and "daring" are now frequently used by them to inform us of the changes they have experienced. We noted vocal expression of this attitudinal change among girls in Rajasthan (in particular, Sahada Block in Rajasthan and some from Bidar Block in Karnataka[32]).

When asked about their top learnings from the programme, the following themes emerged: **"gender equality", "rights of girls", "discussion about girls' needs" and "opportunities for girls to progress".** Girls from these regions are now actively ensuring that they are the architects of their destinies, unafraid to call out on improper male gaze. One girl from Sahada Block in Rajasthan mentioned: **"People in the community are afraid of us. They know we will not accept practices like child marriage or untouchability."** Another girl from the southern block of Bidar added: **"Just because we are girls, we should not bow down our head—we should raise our heads…we are no less."**

[32] Rajasthan had girls from an older age group, who may have had a more matured ability to digest complexities.

In Rajasthan, the assessment found an increasing trend towards the questioning of traditions and harmful practices, with girls performing street plays on "auspicious" occasions (such as Akshay Tritiya, when mass early and child marriage take place) to highlight the impact on young girls.

Discussions about their bodies

A huge success of the programme, as cited repeatedly, is building the capacities of girls to articulate their needs and concerns. They are beginning to recognise their rights about their bodies, bursting myths related to menstruation that often exclude them from many aspects of socio-cultural life and gaining a better understanding of puberty, reproductive health, etc. At a smaller level, some girls, especially in Rajasthan, talked about attraction towards boys and the keenness to attend school and coaching classes because of the mixed classrooms and the possibility of heightened interactions with the opposite sex. The programme carved out a space for meaningful conversations on these topics, which are often few and far between, especially in conservative societies, which then leaves girls in a lurch for information.

In terms of action, the newly acquired information led to girls demanding the availability of sanitary napkins in their *panchayats* in a confident manner and articulating the same to government officials during meetings. However, the discussions around sexuality were limited. They were not intrinsic to the programme design due to the limited capacities and sometimes reluctance and awkwardness of local partners to talk about it.

Recognising the value of education

The strongest takeaway for both elected women representatives and adolescent girls is the value attached to education (more so in Rajasthan because it is the fourth-lowest ranked state in literacy and the lowest in female literacy, according to the 2011 census). There was a sense of urgency in the manner in which the elected women representatives, girls and implementers talked about the absolute necessity for girls to pursue and continue their education. It was not only seen as a critical strategy to delay early or child marriage but also a gateway to unlocking girls' potential and to access opportunities previously unavailable. We saw enrolment and re-enrolment drives and improvements made to education facilities throughout the programme.

Advocating for a responsive environment

The programme's success towards advocating for changes in legal systems and improving services available for girls is evident. In both states, there were accelerated efforts to hold the state government accountable towards implementing the Child Marriage Act. Directors of our partner organisations in Karnataka were appointed to various government bodies, where they continued to hold the state government responsible; the SUGRAMA members included the demand for proper implementation of the Act in their manifesto, which was presented to various parliamentarians and legislators.

Another highlight comes from Rajasthan, where the concerted efforts to provide for the college in Reodar Block moved to a higher level of engagement. In 2018, seizing the opportunity of state elections, "girls' manifestos" were prepared from Sahada and Reodar blocks with demands for compulsory block-level colleges, toilets in schools, hostel facilities and free education for girls and then sent to political parties. Some 35 girls in Reodar further presented their issues of safety, security and mobility in a meeting with contenders for the state election. Several of the recommendations to improve the education attainment of girls found their way into the Congress Party's[33] state election manifesto.

[33] Incumbent government in Rajasthan is the Indian National Congress party.

Underlying all this was the increasing localised advocacy led by the girls (identifying their issues), in collaboration with the elected women representatives' federations—all of which point to the fact that unless key stakeholders of the change intended participate as the architects and drive this change, their advocacy will lack the persistence that is required. Including the girls and elected women representatives in the change process helped instil faith in the local governance systems and stimulate active participation.

Promoting livelihoods and skills training

Poverty traps inevitably fall harder upon girls. This is especially important because the majority of the girls engaged by the programme came from socially and economically marginalised communities and had a heightened vulnerability to early and child marriage. The assessment found the presence of this challenge, which was acknowledged in the discussions, internal reports and field monitoring visits. It supports the critical need for livelihoods and skills training. Linking girls with income-generating opportunities that empower them was found to equip them with the ability to negotiate important decisions about their life.

The component of career counselling in Karnataka and engagement with various vocational training institutes in both states shows that the programme responded to the needs prioritised by the girls, especially girls who had dropped out of school. In Karnataka in particular, this component was also a response to the expectations of families, who were keen to link their daughters to opportunities that would enhance the household income. Without this engagement, mobilisation would have been challenging. While skills-building programmes offer more conventional (gender stereotypical) skills, like tailoring for girls, there was discussion to engage with the skilling programmes run by the private sector to enrol girls into other programmes, like accountancy training, digital designing, etc. More opportunities need to be explored to make girls ready for jobs in the market that provide decent wages and non-exploitive working conditions. As the programme moves to a new phase, discussions on expectations of the girls and the realities of the job market need to be continued with the girls for their better preparedness and readiness as they take up their first jobs.

5.2 Challenges

Despite these changes, some highly transformative in nature, especially given the extremely difficult socio-cultural geographical contexts, several continual challenges that affect the trajectory of girls' lives remain in the programme areas. The following presents some observations.

- **Inevitability of marriage:** There is continual pressure upon girls to be married at a very early age or as soon as they turn 18. This sometimes was disconcerting to the team implementing the programme because they see young girls with promising prospects drop out of the programme once they turn 18 or a few months prior to that, when rituals associated with marriage begin (such as engagement).

- **Deeply embedded socio-cultural practices:** In Rajasthan, while a marginal dent was made on such practices as *kheech* or *atta-satta*, the change in norms, beliefs and practice is going to be a slow and long-winding process. What is more disturbing is the backlash against girls as they engage with technology (mobile phones) and adopt non-traditional preferences for their attire (jeans or trousers). Programmes such as what we offered need to be sustained and supported in their efforts to sensitise communities and empower elected women representatives to consolidate and mobilise their voices in responding to adolescent girls' issues.

- **Mindset towards higher education**: Although there were changes and shifts in attitudes within the community towards educating girls, the conversations during the endline assessment suggest that pursuing higher education remains a challenge for partners and girls. Control of sexuality, negating the value of education, sponsoring higher education, safety issues and a patriarchal mindset continue to influence decisions on these things. This is coupled with the fact that the quality of the most basic facilities in schools within *panchayats* remain questionable, thereby often halting girls' trajectory to pursuing higher education, even vocational training.

- **Approach of partners—rights versus service provision:** Programme implementers, along with the elected women representatives and adolescent girls, in Rajasthan were found to be more comfortable invoking "rights" language in their work. Whereas in Karnataka, access to services and facilities, specifically in terms of acquiring and enhancing vocational skills, took precedence. This was due to an understanding that it would contribute towards increasing household income. The difference is palpable, and the following analysis is based on The Hunger Project, India team's field visits and observations during the endline assessment.

  The analysis of national data[34] provided significant insights about the two states: Karnataka has experienced more rapid economic progress than Rajasthan, with a lower unemployment rate and a higher rate of women's participation in the labour force. Hence, it can be assumed that the barriers for girls and women to enter the workforce are less strict, which perhaps translates to families and girls actively seeking skills to increase opportunities for employability. Implementing partners in Karnataka used this as a strategy to mobilise girls for the programme. This approach offered a remedy to any uncertainty felt by families on the value of associating with the programme, especially for partners who were engaging with girls for the first time.

  Rajasthan's socio-cultural reality, in contrast, remains deeply feudal and patriarchal. Thus, partners felt an urgent need to prioritise discrimination and enabling access to rights and voice first.[35] Here we need to also acknowledge that, historically, this state has had a larger share of social movements and programmes towards improving access to justice and rights for women and girls. Especially in the past couple of decades, almost all districts in Rajasthan have had programmatic interventions related to women's rights and empowerment. This may explain the general readiness in community groups and NGOs to engage with the rights discourse. We found girls from Rajasthan to be more informed about the presence of community groups and NGOs and the work they were doing in the area. Karnataka, too, has had a vibrant women's movement, but in some parts the emphasis has been on economic empowerment through the formation of self-help groups. This possibly influenced programmes working on addressing early and child marriage. Finally, the presence of active child rights groups in northern Karnataka that lacked a certain gender perspective with a strong focus on vigilante justice of "stopping and reporting" child marriage. These groups, owing to years of this practice, tended to overlook the complex vulnerability factors that result in early or child marriage and have perhaps not embraced the empowerment approach in totality.

  A deeper dive is needed at a later stage to further flesh out these differences to better understand the significance of the different approaches.

[34] Analysis by IndiaSpend from 2018 using National Family Health Survey findings, Ministry of Statistics data and Ministry of Labour and Employment data for nine states.

[35] This difference needs to be explored further. From the findings it seems that girls in Rajasthan are focusing on "strategic gender needs" while in Karnataka the focus is on "practical gender needs". Usually, there is a linearity of moving from the practical to the strategic (or both simultaneously), but the assessment has presented different aspects to that logic. Additionally, the glaring pressure on girls in Karnataka to find a job and contribute to the household income, or get married to ease the economic burden of the family. In both cases, the girls seem unwanted, and they are advocating and negotiating for self-respect, dignity, acceptance and equality.

- **Demand for livelihoods:** One of the challenges specified by partners, especially in Karnataka, were the questions asked by families on how the programme would lead to greater livelihood support. This push led to a greater focus on providing livelihood skills training in the state than in Rajasthan.

- **Accountable institutions:** While access to education continues to be riddled with issues, there are also concerns for the safety for girls, especially in Rajasthan. The programme now demands a systematic analysis of how *panchayats* are responding to the needs of girl. Continuing discussions with girls to understand the sustainability of practices so far would provide crucial insights. Specifically, the location of the programme within the five-year election cycle, with a new cohort of elected women representatives and differing priorities, was crucial to reckon with. Trained local partners and adolescent girls can bridge this gap by continuing to participate in the process of change.

- **Measuring change:** Quantitative measurement techniques, while important, offer limited insights on transformative change. The programme needs to extract more visual and ethnographic accounts that critically document change. Celebration, presentation and analysis of (the smallest) departures from existing practices need to be presented as alternative methodologies of measurement.

5.3 Learnings and recommendations: Agenda for change

A. For adolescent girls—Strengthening voice and agency

Strengthening girls' political and active citizenship

Moving ahead, the programme needs to look at promoting active citizenry by facilitating conversations on constitutional principles and civic participation. This will serve as the natural progression of the programme, especially because elections are taking place in both states in 2020. Conversations on the principles of a democracy, rule of law and role of government will need to be emphasised, alongside the need to be aware and engage with local government institutions actively (like participating in *gram sabhas*).

Taking the learnings of the increased agency gained by the girls, the programme needs to continue to encourage girls to embrace practices that a) call out injustice, discrimination and prejudice; b) seek collaboration and cooperation; and c) celebrate diversity within their community. As the next logical step (in the fourth year) for girls turning 18 years (the voting age), the programme needs to unpack the role of being a citizen, especially within the context of voting: its value and exercising this essential right in a responsible manner. Added to this is the anticipation that some of these girls will participate in *panchayat* elections in the future as candidates, campaigners, voters, statutory committee members (like the School Management Committees and Anganwadi Committees) and participate in *gram sabhas* and *ward sabhas*—seeking accountability of institutions and advocating for their rights within them.

Collectivisation of girls

The Hunger Project, India has promoted and facilitated elected woman representative federations for more than 10 years across six states in India. The foundation of these federations were built on the experiences and principles of feminist collectives that have been part of the women's movement in India. Learnings from this experience paved the way for girls' collectives in the programme. However, at the start, they were just small group meetings in which girls were informed about their entitlements, the role of elected women in *panchayats* and various government skills-building programmes. Subsequently, our conversations moved to discussing gender and caste discrimination, rights, safe public spaces, violence against women and girls, especially early and

child marriage, and eventually to the subject of sexuality (in Rajasthan). The assessment found that the girls viewed these "meetings" as safe spaces where they could openly talk about issues that were important to them, topics they were curious about and even taboos.

The Hunger Project, India will continue to support and build such collectives in all its programme areas. In Karnataka, accelerated efforts will be made to transform these meeting spaces into stronger girls' collectives with a distinct identity. Efforts will also be made to infuse the collectives, across the board, with discussions on active citizenship, to encourage girls to participate in local elections as champions of democracy.

Advocating for safe public spaces

Freedom of mobility and a sense of safety and security are essential for girls to exercise their voice and to access education and other facilities in their *panchayat*. This is ruptured by the relentless male gaze that girls are subjected to in public spaces, including incidents of sexual harassment. Girls in Rajasthan were more vocal about this concern. This is not surprising, given the more conservative and patriarchal socio-cultural milieu of Rajasthan.

Hence, a programme that focuses on empowering girls must continue to go beyond the classroom and engage with the community and local leaders. Elected representatives, in particular, have a critical role in creating and ensuring safe environments within the immediate vicinity of their movement in the *panchayat*. In the next phase, one of the components should take the form of advocating for the passage of resolutions in the *gram sabhas*, pledging to promote safe public spaces for women and girls and locating resources for including this in the *panchayat* development plans towards allocations for street lights and public toilets. Awareness campaigns on public safety led by elected women representatives and girls on the same issues in *panchayats* will also be supported.

Success of the ummedon ka safar mela

For adolescent girls, opportunities in the *panchayats* are limited, as is exposure to role models and alternative life choices in the community. Girls' dreams are sometimes cut short by their own imposed limitations and the perceived ultimate destiny of marriage and child bearing. The *ummedon ka safa mela* brought girls face to face with possibilities beyond marriage. It gave them an opportunity to hear from young women who were journalists, police constables, doctors and teachers on how they overcame barriers and chased their dreams.

Keeping the success of this activity in mind, The Hunger Project, India will continue to promote and organise such learning spaces for the girls in the future. As the name suggests, it enables them to dream and explore pathways to greater choices and is critical for supporting their transition to adulthood.

Importance of imparting life skills education

A year into the programme it was realised that although it was enhancing the knowledge and information on rights and entitlements, there were still issues and questions, especially among older girls (aged 17–20 years with relatively different needs and challenges). The introduction of life skills trainings changed this, to some extent. After the training, girls were more adept at communicating effectively, managing interpersonal relationships to a greater degree and coping with stress, especially related to the pressures of marriage. They were more forthcoming in articulating their point of view at home, in the community and in dialogue with other stakeholders in the *panchayat*.

Moving forward, the intervention intends to deepen the scope of this by tackling the needs of girls vulnerable to violence and backlash caused by an early or child marriage.

B. Multi-stakeholder engagement—Seeking accountability of institutions and public office holders

Intergenerational dialogue between elected women representatives and girls

The results of the collaboration with the elected women representatives to tackle the issue of early and child marriage definitely offered the most important learnings. Many of these representatives also had to succumb to a marriage in their childhood or adolescence. There was strong identification with the lack of choice and consent and multiple vulnerabilities to violence. As a result, the representatives emerged as natural allies in what appears to be a vital and dynamic intergenerational dialogue and show of solidarity. Providing critical support to the girls, the elected women representatives exercised their constitutional authority in garnering resources to set up street lights for safer mobility, construct toilets in schools, facilitate transport for girls to and from school and build resource centres for girls. As members in the School Management Committees, they sought accountability in schools. This engagement with the elected women representatives is worth replicating by all groups working with adolescent girls, especially in rural areas. This strategy expands the accountability ceiling to local governments involved on the issue of early and child marriage, and it spotlights the vulnerability and marginalisation of girls, especially those from impoverished backgrounds and Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and ethnic minority communities.

The Hunger Project, India will continue to stimulate this intergenerational exchange in *panchayats* to end the practice of early and child marriage and to build and strengthen the requisite support structure for girls. In 2020, *panchayat* elections in both Karnataka and Rajasthan will generate a new group of women representatives stepping into office. With a change of guard, The Hunger Project, India will also ensure that a parallel dialogue is facilitated between select former and newly elected women representatives to transfer knowledge on strategies adopted, especially via federations, to address early and child marriage and safeguard girls' interests and rights. This will help ensure continuity in the approaches adopted.

Engaging diverse stakeholders from panchayats to parliament to advocate for girls' rights

To ensure and maximise collective impact, dialogue with various line departments in local government institutions is a necessary condition. Whether it is access to resources for services or the basic delivery of services in education, health care, food security and infrastructure, coordination with multiple stakeholders is key. To facilitate a collaborative process, regular meetings in *panchayats* were organised. Local media were also engaged to highlight the successes achieved by the girls' and women's collectives. The positive reporting by the media boosted the morale of the girls and at times amassed public support for campaigns led by girls (on attitudinal change to end early and child marriage, cleanliness, upgrading schools or opening a college, menstrual hygiene and public safety, among others).

During the programme period, petitions were also submitted to local parliamentarians and legislators for better resource allocation for adolescent services. Girls were particularly thrilled to have an audience with parliament and state legislators. It reaffirmed the significance of their efforts towards seeking varied opportunities and alternatives to improve their lives.

The Hunger Project, India will most certainly continue with these strategic engagements with multiple stakeholders in the next phase of the programme to sustain the advocacy efforts, especially during elections to influence political party manifestos, where elected woman representative federations will take the lead primarily. Organising a national consultation with parliamentarians can also be looked into in the future to put a spotlight on the need for greater resource allocation towards adolescent girls' health, education, livelihoods and skills building in the panchayats.

C. Other programme strategies

Focused initiatives

Going forward, it is fundamental that The Hunger Project, India designs separate programmes for school-going girls and girls who have dropped out of school to counter the shame and guilt experienced by the latter when in mixed groups. The two approaches will then respond to the differing needs. Several field visits conducted in the programme areas, especially in Rajasthan, revealed problematic dynamics that were brewing in the early stages of the programme between girls still attending school and girls no longer in school. The girls still in school were found to frown upon their out-of-school compatriots. This not only called for exploring niche programmes and alternate pathways to address the lack of confidence among the out-of-school girls but also to instil principles of inclusion among those in school. Further within this, it would be valuable to confront the age divide between girls for workshops related to life skills training and leadership. The programme needs to brainstorm on strategies that do not amalgamate differing needs (relative to the various stages of adolescence) but instead explores ways to provide focused attention to the extent possible.

Another important learning is to simplify the pedagogy for partner staff so that they can better co-relate and link complexities encountered, thereby avoiding misinterpretation of key messaging for themselves and the girls. In terms of pedagogy, the use of technology to convey information to this young group can be considered. Engagement and observation of the activities must be closely monitored by The Hunger Project, India programme and training teams to ensure that key messages are not diluted during the roll out of the components and that conceptually the programme continues to meet and promote the overall objectives.

A third crucial takeaway is the enthusiasm with which this programme was embraced by women-led organisations. Without doubt, the quality of interventions was far superior when guided by women in leadership positions and female field mobilisers. While this may seem obvious in most cases (and perhaps essentialising), it is important to underline this aspect for future partnerships on the subject, especially in rural areas. The sense of ownership, the diversity in conversations with the girls and the urgency of the issue at hand all played out in an amplified way when the interventions were led and implemented by women. A further exploration of this aspect can be planned so as to gauge and understand this unique feature emerging from the field—the commitment and superior outcomes of women-led organisations to deliver on issues of early and child marriage.

Exploring and defining alternative livelihoods

During the course of the programme's roll-out, the poor state of education and related unemployability were encountered. While the former was more pronounced in Rajasthan, in Karnataka, the latter was significant. The aspiration for a job and related supplementary income to support families was tremendous, especially because the opportunities directed towards skills building in the *panchayats* are few and constrained. In the coming years, we expect more questions to arise on this as we heard during the assessment - **"There are so many roles that girls can take up, why are we only talking about stitching? You don't even make enough money with that."**

The programme needs to sustain its current liaising with organisations and agencies that offer local employment options while responding to the gendered nature of the workforce. Building alliances with the larger civil society in both states will be important to create a critical mass for voices to be heard. This is also where advocacy with varied government departments that are at the helm of vocational scheme implementation, as well as holding the necessary clout to affect change, is necessary.

The programme needs to strengthen its mapping of career options for girls, in tandem with their education qualifications, capabilities and interests. A balance needs to be struck between emphasis on conventional livelihood options and building alternative careers, taking into consideration how the future of work is rapidly changing. The assessment found that Karnataka has progressed better towards this. Apart from conventional forms, there are girls experimenting with new livelihood opportunities, like the girls in Karnataka working with a coffee shop in a metro city or those in Rajasthan preparing for the physical examination test to join the police force.[36] These are stories in which, more than anything, girls are exercising their choice in deciding a vocation for the future. That is the biggest takeaway from the programme.

Additionally, there is a need to engage with policy-makers on the gendered nature of schemes, including their nomenclature, intended outcomes and strategies, to shed light on how stereotypes are promoted and endorsed and thus how opportunities are limited for girls. This is specifically a reflection of the fleet of schemes and entitlements centred around the marriage of girls. It is will be a worthwhile endeavour for The Hunger Project, India to make use of its command over the language of empowerment within the larger policy circle.

Tracking cases of school drop-outs

Tackling the phenomena of drop out is equally important. Two girls from Karnataka who participated in the assessment were forced to discontinue their education because of extreme poverty in the household and to take up a job. These were not isolated cases. The programme has thus come to a critical juncture whereby it needs to cast a sharp eye upon such cases. Future strategies must consider linking such girls to various skills development courses or explore what other types of support can be extended to them. Internal research on the reasons for dropping out; specific life skills trainings or meetings with girls who have dropped out can be a starting point.

Linking with residential schools

Enrolling girls into government hostels (Kasturba Gandhi residential schools), especially those experiencing the pressure of marriage, is a common strategy for combating child marriage. However, recent reports[37] noted how these government hostels have been flagrantly breaching norms of propriety in other states. It is imperative that elected women representatives and partner staff remain vigilant and ensure that the girls enrolled in these types of schools are in a safe and secure environment.

Redressal mechanisms

The assessment findings indicate that the programme in Karnataka expanded its stakeholder engagement in a much more strategic way than it did in Rajasthan. This came through in the conversations with girls who seemed to have a better understanding and awareness of the laws, such as the Protection of Children Against Sexual Offices Act, or information about how to approach the police station and other authorities. In terms of accessing a redressal mechanism, once again, girls in Karnataka spoke about exploring a range of support systems, including community leaders or service providers like the *anganwadi* workers and teachers. On the other hand, in Rajasthan, greater reliance was placed on partners and then elected women representatives. Leveraging external support, especially legal and nodal authorities, requires deeper engagement as well as understanding the nature of accountability at the level of local government in states. It is also reflective of the degree of responsiveness and willingness of the local government institutions towards issues that strike at the heart of changing and challenging social norms and that confront and call out persistent discrimination.

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[36] This aspiration of girls to join the police force in Rajasthan needs to be explored further. It may signify the need to take on patriarchal oppression and control by way of a legitimate state-sanctioned role of authority, force and power by the girls.

[37] Shuchismita Chakraborty, "Girls Hostel Check", *The Telegraph,* March 2018.

Documenting processes and practices

The programme is now at a critical juncture in terms of its time frame, with both states bracing for the *panchayat* elections. Renewed efforts will need to be made by the newly elected women representatives towards demanding redress on previous issues. To maintain continuity in the programme, the former women representatives involved with the programme will be engaged to mentor and orient the newly elected women. Modules designed for leadership workshops with girls can ensure this continuity in programme outcomes especially the demand for strengthened accountability mechanisms in panchayats.

The programme developed a good repository of documents and learnings. This is what will inform future programme design. It needs to continue documenting all the meetings, field visits and case studies. This documentation could look at charting the experiences of the programme implementers across states. A frequently-asked-questions brief for implementers should be considered.

Theory of change

Finally, from an organisational standpoint, the assessment recommends that The Hunger Project, India design a theory of change for the adolescent girls' programme—one that branches out from its core work with elected women representatives. The unique programme that brings together young rights holders and duty bearers and facilitates an intergenerational dialogue needs to be illustrated as a long-term strategy.

5.4 Concluding remarks

On the whole, the approach of embedding the programme within a governance framework and leveraging the role of elected women representatives as public office holders and duty bearers to identify, prioritise and galvanise the local community to actively engage and work towards empowering adolescent girls reflected a nuanced understanding of the distinct needs of adolescent girls, especially looking at the harmful practice of early and child marriage.

Through this assessment, we argue that elected women representatives are uniquely positioned to shape, advance and advocate for girls' empowerment. The evidence strongly demonstrates the manner in which they have amplified the voices of adolescent girls in demanding equality and justice. Equipped with the right skills, information and tools, they have and can continue to set the political agenda on ending early and child marriage. As a result, girls are slowly but surely becoming advocates not only for their rights but for extending peer support to their friends and speaking up for other girls in the community. The assessment found that participating girls are determined to stay in school; those who had dropped out are re-enrolling to complete their education and beginning to articulate in a new language. They are challenging the status quo one step at a time and rejecting social norms that act as obstacles.

The evaluation also shows that addressing the violence caused by early and child marriage will require long-term, sustainable action across sectors and stakeholders, which in turn will require committed funding support, especially in a political landscape that is aggressively pushing against women's and girls' rights. We hope that the findings and stories captured in this report will help inform The Hunger Project, India's future thinking and strategies. At the same time, we hope the lessons learned will encourage more vibrant and critical discussions. There is still much to learn and explore. The recommendations suggested here, we believe, will enable future pathways for strengthening empowerment processes.

Annexure I: Focus group discussion guide with adolescent girls

Hello, we are _____ and _____ we are here on behalf of The Hunger Project, India, New Delhi. We are collecting data for a study about the programme that The Hunger Project, India and _____ (name of the partner organisation) has been implementing in this Block with adolescent girls such as you. We want to learn more about the programme from you and how it has impacted girls such as yourself. Your participation in this study is voluntary and we hope you will agree to participate in it since your views are very important. However, you can decide not to participate as well or you may leave this discussion at any point of time. Your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you feel that you are not comfortable answering a question, please feel free to share that with us and we can move to another question. We would like to encourage you to share your opinions honestly as there are not correct or incorrect answers. We, simply speaking, want to understand your opinions so that we can work on further improving the programme. If you do not understand anything that has been explained so far or you have any additional questions related to this study/interview, please feel free to ask them right now.

Would you like to continue with this interview?

- ***If the respondents agree, please proceed.***
- ***If any of the respondents does not give their consent for the interview, please look for an alternative for each.***

PARTICIPANTS' DETAILS

Name of the District:

Name of the Block:

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6
Name (write the full name)						
Panchayat						
Age (in completed years)						
Social category (SC/ST/OBC/General)						
Marital Status (Currently married/Never been married/Abandoned/Widowed/Divorced)						
Currently studying (Yes/No)						
If no- mention 'Drop out' 'Completed school/college' , 'Never been to school/college'						
Highest educational qualification						
If attending school/or has attended , what type of facility (government/private)						

I. Value of education

1. How does having an **education help girls and boys**? *(Please probe for boys and girls separately)*
2. Are you aware of the **government and private services/schemes/programmes** formal as well as vocational that are available in *panchayats* for advancing educational opportunities for girls like you (Yes/No)? **If, yes** can you **name** some of them? *(Please probe each of the respondents who have said 'yes'. Probe on both formal as well as vocational educational opportunities).*
    a. **When and how did you hear** about these schemes/services for the first time?
    b. Have you availed any of them (Yes/No)? If, yes can you tell us which ones you did? *(Please probe on each of the schemes/services availed by each of the respondents)*

3. Apart from the aforementioned government schemes/services, are you aware of any other such programmes **offered by other organisations or bodies (private), that help advance the career of young girls such as yourself (**Yes/No)? If yes, can you name some of them? (*Probe each of the respondents who have said 'Yes*')

a. **When and how did you hear** about these schemes/services for the first time?
b. Have **you availed any of them (**Yes/No)? **If yes**, can you tell us the ones that you did? *(Please probe on each of the schemes/services availed by each of the respondents)*

Note: Question 4 will ONLY be asked to girls who are either 'Currently going to school/college' or 'Have completed school/college'

4. Could you tell us some of the things that you **like or dislike** about your school or college? (*Probe details of what they liked and did not like. Do not read out the options. Hints: quality of services like mid-day meal, behaviour of teachers, distance, unclean toilets, unsafe roads, bullying, etc)*

a. Have you ever **dropped out of school** (Yes/No)? **When** did you have to drop out of school ? (probe for the exact year when the respondent had to drop out)

i. If **yes**, can you tell us the **reasons for dropping out**? How and when did you **re-enrol** back into school/college? (*Probe to see if someone supported them in the re-enrolment process. "When' implies the year)*
ii. If **no**, has there ever been **pressure** on you to drop out of school/college? If yes, **who** did you face pressure from? *(Do not read out the options Hints: community, family, peers. others)* Can you tell us what **you did to deal** with this pressure?

Note: Question 5 will ONLY be asked to girls who have 'dropped out of school'

5. When did you **drop out of school**? (Probe for the exact year when the respondent had to drop out) What were the **reasons for dropping out**? *(Do not read out the options. Hints: quality of services like mid-day meal, behaviour of teachers, distance, unclean toilets, unsafe roads, bullying, etc)*

a. Have you tried or has anyone helped you in **re-enrolment**? If no, then has there been **any other opportunity** (*hint: vocational course for example*) that you have been linked to?

II. Child marriage

1. Is the **legal age of marriage for boys and girls** in our country the same? **If yes**, what is it for both? **If no**, what is the legal age of marriage for boys and girls? ***(Probe separately for both boys and girls. Responses need to be in years. Note: This is a knowledge question. Please note the discussions and reactions that happen between the respondents. For example, if one respondent changes the response based on the other's response please note that)***

a. **When and how** did you get to know about the legal age of marriage? *(Probe for the specific details of how and through what medium the respondents heard of it)*

Note: Question 2 will be asked to those respondents who are either currently married or abandoned or widowed.

2. At what **age** did you get married? Which year did you get married? Was it **your decision** to get marry? What were the **reasons** for you getting married?

Note: Question 3 will be asked to respondents who have 'Never been married'

3. Is there **pressure** on you to get married? If yes from **whom**? (*Please probe on all the people or entities. Hints – family, community, peer or others*) How are **you dealing with this pressure**?

a. Has there been a situation where your marriage was **almost fixed/fixed**? If yes, **how far back** was it? How **did you get out** of the situation (*In case the respondent says she sought help probe who all helped her)*?

Note: Question 4 to be asked to all the respondents

4. Are you **aware of child marriage**? *(Please probe individually)* **When and how** did you hear about it?

a. If yes, do you think girls and boys are equally **vulnerable** to child marriage? (*Ask only those who have said yes, to "are you aware of child marriage*")
b. What are the **root causes/reasons of** child marriage among boys and girls? (*Ask only those who have said yes, to "are you aware of child marriage*". *Probe separately for boys and girls)*
c. How do you think the issue of **child marriage can be stopped or addressed**? *(Please probe to understand if there are specific people or entities who can help in stopping child marriage)*
d. If you **need more information** on child marriage who all do you approach? *(Probe for all the names of such people/entities)*

III. Life skills education

1.Do you know about **life skills**? How did you **hear about it**? (*Probe for the specific details of how and through what medium the respondents heard of it)*

a. Can you tell us the things that you **learnt under life skills**? *(Probe on the various aspects of the life skills that they have learnt about)* ***Note: This is a knowledge question. Please note the discussions and reactions of all the respondents. For example, if one respondent changes the response based on the other's response please note that.)***
b. Has this **helped** you in any way (Yes/No)? **If yes**, can you **give an example** where you have used some of these life skills in **your life**? *(Please probe the respondent to say the most important incident where this has been used)*

IV. Engagement with *panchayats*

1. Are there **people or entities or facilities within your Panchayat** who can help girls such as you (Yes/No)? **If yes**, can you **name** these people or entities?

a. Among these people/facilities/entities can you tell us which ones are the **most effective**? ***(Note: Responses need to be recorded in the order of being most effective to least)***

2. Have **you approached** these people/entities for help?

a. **If yes**, **who all** have you sought help from, **when** did you seek their help and for **what** purpose? Was the reason why you approached them resolved? Were you **satisfied** with your experience for each of these people/entities? (*Probe each of the respondents)*
b. **If no**, then why have you not approached any? *(Probe each of the respondents)*

3. What else can ***panchayats* do to support** girls and their issues?

V. Engagement with the Programme

1. Have you **met each other before**? If, yes **when and how** did you meet each other? *(Note: if some of the respondents say, yes, then probe them each on this question)*

2. **How and when** did you **first** hear of the partner organisation or The Hunger Project, India? (*Please use the name of the partner organisation or the staff. If the partner organisation or The Hunger Project, India's name comes in the previous question, please link it up to this one)*

3. Have you **attended any activities/meetings** organ*ise*d by the partner organisation or The Hunger Project, India?

   a. **If, yes** could you **name these activities/meetings**? *(Do not read out the names of the activities. They could be: Interface meetings with local authorities, Bi-monthly/Quarterly meetings (Kishori manch in Rajasthan), Need-based workshops, ummedon ka safar mela, awareness campaigns)*

   b. **b.** Briefly tell us the **main things** that you learnt from these activities ***(Note: Link the learnings with ONLY activities that the respondents have named. If any of the topics on life skills/child marriage come up before, probe on the others)***

   c. Among the activities that you named **which one/s would you say you like the most and why**? *(Probe for reasons).*

   d. Apart from adolescent girls such as yourself who were the **other people** that you met/interacted with during these activities/meetings? Can you state the kind of **interaction or relationship** you have with these other people? Beyond the activities have you interacted with these people?

4.Is this the first time that you have been associated with any programme run by NGOs (Yes/No)?

   a. **If yes**, what made you decide to engage with this programme and continue your engagement? What were the **new things** that you learnt from these activities? (*Probe for each activity named by the respondents)*

   b. **If no**, what makes this **programme/activities different from your other experiences**? What were the **new things** that you learnt from this programme? (*Probe for each activity named by the respondents*)

5. Do you see any **changes in yourself after attending these activities/programme** and engaging with the partner staff from the beginning till now (Yes/No)? Can you state these changes? (*Probe for reasons with examples)*

   a. Can you tell us some **specific actions that you individually and as a group** undertook against child marriage? (If *the response to this comes in 5, skip this*.

   b. How has the partner organisation and its staff **impacted you**? (*Probe for reasons with examples. Note: if this appears in 5, then do not ask separately)*

   c. Have these activities or the programme **affected the community (***hints: community includes parents, other girls in the GP, government staff, service providers, boys etc***)** at large in your GP? (*Probe for reasons with examples for all the stakeholders)*

Annexure II: Focus group discussion guide with elected women representatives

Hello, we are _____ _____and _____we are here on behalf of The Hunger Project, India, New Delhi. We are collecting data for a study about the programme that The Hunger Project, India and _____ (name of the partner organisation) has been implementing in this Block with adolescent girls. Your participation in this study is voluntary and we hope you will agree to participate in it since your views are very important. However, you can decide not to participate as well or you may leave this discussion at any point of time. Your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you feel that you are not comfortable answering a question, please feel free to share that with us and we can move to another question. We would like to encourage you to share your opinions honestly as there are not correct or incorrect answers. We, simply speaking, want to understand your opinions so that we can work on further improving the programme. If you do not understand anything that has been explained so far or you have any additional questions related to this study/interview, please feel free to ask them right now.

Would you like to continue with this interview?

- ***If the respondents agree, please proceed.***
- ***If any of the respondents does not give their consent for the interview, please look for an alternative for each.***

PARTICIPANTS' DETAILS
Name of the District:
Name of the Block:

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4
Name				
Name of GP				
Name of Village				
Age				
Social Category				
Educational Status (number of years completed)				
Marital Status				
Current Position:				
Number of terms served in the GP:				
Type of Seat Elected From (Reserved/Unreserved):				
Was the seat contested *(Yes/No)*:				
Member of *Sugrama* (Karnataka) or Panch Sarpanch Sangathan (Rajasthan) *(Yes/No)*:				

I. *panchayats*

1. Do you see ***panchayats*** **playing a role** in protecting the **rights/entitlements of adolescent girls** or working towards **issues of adolescent girls** *(Yes/No)*? **If yes**, what kind of role does it play? (*Probe for responses from each*)
2. Are there **services and facilities/schemes** in your *panchayats* related to **health, education and others** for adolescent girls *(Yes/No)*?
    a. **If yes**, can you **name** these available services and facilities? *(Probe separately for health, education and other forms of facilities individually from each of the respondents)*
    b. Do you notice any changes in the **quality of these services and facilities** since the last couple of years (*hint: implementation of the AJWS programme: 2015 to now*)? **If yes**, can you state **some of the biggest changes** that you have seen in your Panchayat? (*Probe with examples. Hints: Quality of services can include accessibility of adolescent girls to these services/facilities, service providers' response to the needs of girls, service delivery)*
    c. **If no**, do you know the **reasons** for their non-availability? Have **demands/efforts** been made for the establishment of these services *(Yes/No)*? If, yes **what kind of efforts** have been made and by **who all**? *(Probe separately for health, education and other forms of facilities individually from each of the respondents)*

II. Child marriage

1. Is the **legal age of marriage for boys and girls** in our country the same? If yes, what is it for both? If no, what is the legal age of marriage for boys and girls? *(Probe separately for both boys and girls)* ***Note: This is a knowledge question. Please note the discussions and reactions that happen between the respondents. For example, if one respondent changes the response based on the other's response please note that)***

a. **When and how** did you get to know about the legal age of marriage? *(Probe for the specific details of time and through what medium the respondents heard of it)*

2. Do you think there is a **right time of marriage for boys and girls**? **If yes**, what is it*? (Probe separately for both boys and girls)*

3. Are you aware of **child marriage**? *(Please probe individually)* How did you hear about it?

a. If yes, do you think girls and boys are equally vulnerable to it? (*Ask only those who have said yes, to "are you aware of early and child marriage*")

b. What are the **root causes/reasons of child marriage** among boys and girls? (*Ask only those who have said yes, to "are you aware of early and child marriage*". *Probe separately for boys and girls)*

4. Is child marriage **common in your Panchayat** *(Yes/No)*? Are there particular **communities** (*caste group*) among whom the prevalence of child marriage is high *(Yes/No)*? **If yes**, **which groups** are these **why** do you think they are vulnerable to this practice? (*Note: Probe specifically for responses as per the caste groups*)

5.What according to you can be done to **address child marriage**?

a. What is **your role as Elected women representatives (elected women representatives)** in addressing child marriage? (*Note: If response to this comes in 5, skip this)*

b. In the last couple of years (*hint: implementation of the AJWS programme: 2015 to now)* can you tell us **some of the initiatives** that you have undertaken to address child marriage? (*Probe with examples. If the response to this comes in 5a, skip this question)* What are some of things that **you would like** to work on?

III. Engagement with the Programme

1.What **initiatives** have been conducted by the partner organisation or The Hunger Project, India to address child marriage in your Panchayat/block?

a. Have you **attended** these activities/interventions *(Yes/No)*? **If yes**, can you name some of them? What **all did you learn** from these activities/interventions?

b. Can you **give us some examples** as to how you have used these learnings in your **OWN LIFE (professionally and personally)? (Note: If similar response is provided by the respondents under Section II; Child marriage – question 5, skip this)**?

c. Do you see any changes in **other elected women representatives**, such as yourself who have engaged with the programme *(Yes/No)*? Can you tell us about it? (Probe specifically on their changes in the ability to work on the issue of child marriage, if it does not come up)

d. Do you see any changes in the **lives of the adolescent girls** since these activities/interventions were implemented *(Yes/No)*? If yes, **what kind of changes** do you see in them? *(Probe with examples)*

e. Do you see any **changes among the community members (***Hints: men, women, family, boys***) in Panchayat** since these activities were implemented *(Yes/No)*? If yes, **what kind of changes** do you see in them? *(Probe with examples)*

f. What are the **kinds of changes that you hope to see in the future** in the adolescent girls, community members and Panchayat with regard to child marriage?

Annexure III: Guide for informant interviews with implementers

Hello. I am _____ and I am here on behalf of The Hunger Project, India. We are collecting data for a study about the programme that The Hunger Project, India and _____ (name of the partner organisation) has been implementing in this Block with adolescent girls. As key implementors of this programme, we would like to know more about its impact and your learnings. Your participation in this study is voluntary and we hope you will agree to participate in it since your views are very important. However, you can decide not to participate as well or you may leave this discussion at any point of time. Your decision will not result in any penalty of any form. If you feel that you are not comfortable answering a question, please feel free to share that with us and we can move to another question. We would like to encourage you to share your opinions honestly as there are not correct or incorrect answers. We, simply speaking, want to understand your opinions so that we can work on further improving the programme. If you do not understand anything that has been explained so far or you have any additional questions related to this study/interview, please feel free to ask them right now.

Would you like to continue with this interview?

If the respondents agree, please proceed.
If any of the respondents does not give their consent for the interview, please look for an alternative after consulting the Team Supervisor

PARTICIPANTS' DETAILS

Date of interview	
1. Name of Organisation	
2. Sex	
3. Age	
4. Designation	
5. Years of working with the organisation	
6. Years of association with The Hunger Project, India	
7. Years of working with AJWS adolescent girls project	
8. District responsible for	
9. Block responsible for	
10. Number of GPs	
11. Number of AGs	

I. Is this the **first time** that you are working on the issue of **child marriage and with adolescent girls**? (Yes/No) *(Note: Response needs to be noted for both Child marriage and adolescent girls separately)*

a. **If yes**, what have been some of the things that **you (as an individual) learnt from this programme**? Please provide **examples** of how you have used these learnings in your work as well as personally? How has it helped you and the organisation? *(Please ensure that the respondents do not talk about this programme only but overall)*

b. **If no**, what do you see as being **the value of associating with this programme for you (as an individual) and the organisation**? *(Please ensure that the respondents do not talk about this programme only but overall)*

II. Apart from adolescent girls, who are the **other key stakeholders** that you have reached out through the programme (*Probe to ensure that the respondent takes into consideration the entire duration of the programme till now*)? **Why** did you **engage** with these stakeholders? (*Do not read out the names of the stakeholders. Hints: Elected women representatives, other Panchayat residents, Local authorities/officials and others)*

a. Among **ALL the stakeholders, including the adolescent girls**, that you have engaged with during the course of the programme, what are the **most important changes** that you have noticed in each (from the beginning of the programme to now)? ((*Probe to ensure that the respondent takes into consideration the entire duration of the programme till now*. *Note responses for each of the stakeholders that the respondent has spoken about including the adolescent girls. If the respondent mentions elected women representatives, please probe on the change in them professionally and personally*)

b. What kind of relationship/engagement exists among these various stakeholders? Have you noticed any changes in the **relationship among them** since the programme started? (*Probe to ensure that the respondent takes into consideration the entire duration of the programme till now*)

   i. If yes, what are these changes? (*Probe with examples*)

   ii. If no, what is the nature of relationship (with examples) that exists between these stakeholders? *(Probe for reasons as well as to why the relationship has not changed*)

c. Among **ALL these stakeholders** who would you say has been, **impacted the most and the least by the programme**? (*Note: If the respondent mentions elected women representatives, please probe on the change in them professionally and personally*)

III. During the course of this programme, what have been the **various activities/meetings implemented by you**?

a. For **each** of the aforementioned activities, can you state the **most important outcome/results that have emerged**. (*Probe to ensure that the respondent takes into consideration the entire duration of the programme till now*)

b. Among the various activities that have been implemented, are there **specific ones or one that, according to you have been the most effective?** If yes, how have those activities/ how has that activity been effective? (*Probe specifically to understand how the respondent defines effective and to which group*)

c. According to you which activity would you say was **most and least liked** by the adolescent girls? Can you state reasons for each? *(Note: if the response to this comes out of the previous question do not ask again)*

IV. What have been some of the **biggest accomplishments** of the organisation as well as you (as an implementor) in implementing this programme?

a. What has been some of the **biggest challenges** that you have faced in implementing the programme? Over a period of time, how have the nature of these challenges changed (if at all)? What are the kinds of strategies employed by you and organisation to resolve them?

V. Keeping in mind the nature of the programme being implemented, what would you say are/is the **overall objective/s of the programme** *(Probe to specify the objective/s as statements)*

a. How far would you say that the programme has achieved the aforementioned objectives (*Note responses to this question as 'Completely achieved', 'Partially achieved' and 'Not achieved at all' In case the respondent specifies multiple objectives, note for each objective and the reasons for each)*

b. What are some of **emerging/new issues** that need more focus in the programme and that you would like to work on in this partnership?

c. If there are some things that you would like to do **differently** within the scope of the programme what would that be?

d. Is there any other organisation that is implementing a similar programme that you really like or would like to learn about (Yes/No)? Can you tell us about it?

VI. Do you have anything else that you would like you share with us?

Annexure IV: The Hunger Project, India's Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

Children are equal citizens of the nation. The safety and protection of all children, is recognised and guaranteed in the Constitution of India through rights to equality, and non-discrimination on basis of gender, (dis) ability, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status etc, and through the ratification of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child (1989) (UNCRC), in 1992.

The UNCRC (article 19) states:

> *"State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child."*

The Hunger Project, India also recognises rights of protection of children provided by the National Policy for Children, 2012 and special laws for children, in particular:

- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015;
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act 2012; the
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006;
- Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 2016.

Clause 2.2 of the preamble of National Policy for Children, 2012 states that:

- *All children have equal rights irrespective of place of birth, sex, religion, caste, class, language, and disability, social economic, or any other status*
- *All children have the right to a loving family, a dignified life free from exploitation and that families are to be supported by a strong social safety net in caring for and nurturing their children*
- *Safety and security of all children is integral to their well-being and children are to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, violence, maltreatment and exploitation.*

2. Purpose of Policy

As an international development organisation, The Hunger Project, India (The Hunger Project, India) is committed to the recognition and protection of the rights of all children, ensuring their well-being of children and through implementation of child centred activities that are based on principles of the UNCRC and the UN Declaration of Human

Rights 1948.

These are:

- Best interest of the child
- Non -discrimination
- Freedom of expression
- Respect for child opinion in matters affecting him/her through ensuring their participation

The Hunger Project, India does not tolerate any form of child abuse, exploitation or discrimination based on gender, class, caste or ethnicity in the course of implementation of its programmes or projects, on its own or through its partnership with other organisations.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that The Hunger Project, India has procedures in place to ensure protection all rights of all children, and prevent violation of children rights by any Affiliate, Associate or Country Programme of The Hunger Project, India.

This policy will apply to all The Hunger Project, India staff and partner staff, consultants, as well as supporters and donors, vendors / service providers of The Hunger Project, India.

3. Definitions

3.1. CHILD

For the purpose of the document, any person under the physical age of 18 years would be deemed to be a Child and as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of Children and the National Policy for Children 2012.

3.2. CHILD PROTECTION

Child Protection means and includes:

- Protecting a child from any perceived risk or danger to their life, their personhood, and their childhood.
- Reducing their vulnerability to harmful situations and protecting them against social, psychological, and emotional insecurity and distress.
- Ensuring that no child falls out of the social security and safety net and those who do, receive necessary care and protection to be brought back into the safety net.
- Believing that a child is entitled to express her/his opinion and can take decisions for herself/himself and

acting accordingly.

3.3. CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse refers to all forms of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity, in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

3.4. PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse of a child is the one that results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

3.5. EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non- physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

3.6. SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse (as also defined in Section 2 of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012) is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws and social taboos of society.

Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or relationship is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to:

- The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity.
- The exploitative use of child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices.
- The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

3.7. EXPLOITATION

Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child as in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2016; child trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and other purposes (as defined under Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code). These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.

3.8. NEGLECT OR NEGLIGENT TREATMENT

Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health of physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

4. Implications of non-compliance

The Hunger Project, India will initiate appropriate disciplinary measures against any Staff member, Partner Staff, Consultant, Service Provider (listed above), found to be engaged in the following acts:

- Inducing or coercing a child to engage in sexual activity
- Exploitative activities with children including child labour or trafficking
- Use of children's photographs for pornographic or other inappropriate use
- Subjecting any child to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- Mistreating or depriving the child in any manner

This policy will be reviewed every three years to keep it in consonance with changing times.

For details see Appendix 1: *Forms of Child Abuse and Exploitation and How to Recognise Them.*

Appendix 1

Forms of Child Abuse and Exploitation and How to Recognise them

These shall be defined as any physical, emotional or sexual harm committed against a child. These need to be examined in the light of the culture of the community to prevent alienation of the community from The Hunger Project, India International staff and programmes.

There are four main categories of abuse or exploitation to be aware of:

Emotional:
This is persistent and psychological ill treatment, which results in a severe impact upon a child's behaviour and development. It will involve a denial of normal respect and may take the form of persistent personal criticism, humiliation or discrimination in the absence of any positive interest or concern. This can happen in situations when children are subject to a persistent level discrimination due to being unaccompanied, selective giving of gifts, selective recruitment (as in the case of selecting children for fundraising purposes), low status, gender, religion, ethnic background and/or bullying as a result of the unrealistic expectations of others.

Physical:
This can include any direct acts of physical injury upon a child or young person which are not the result of an accident. This can also include tasks and errands, which clearly exceed the capacity of the child to manage safely.

Sexual:
This includes all forms of sexual acts perpetrated upon a child by another person and include sexual abuse and sexual harassment. This issue is more complex when it occurs between older children of similar age groups. The essential issue is one of exploitation, which is considered to have occurred if an adult perpetrated the activity on a child and/or involved a misuse of power, services, age or authority, or the use of physical force or emotional manipulation by children of the opposite sex from a peer group. This can also include exposure or failure to prevent the exposure of children to all forms of pornography and sexual acts.

Neglect:
This relates to the persistent failure to prevent the exposure of a child to danger, or the extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, medical or physical which results in the significant impairment of the child's health or development. This can occur when a worker fails to adequately supervise the safety of children or exposes any child to extreme conditions or preventable risk of serious injury. Violation of child labour laws also needs to be considered.

How to Recognise Abuse or Exploitation?
Listed below are a number of indicators; however, they may vary by cultural and economic context. This is not exhaustive but is a guideline to help establish whether some form of child abuse or exploitation has taken place. These guidelines are published by the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS).

Emotional signs of Abuse (to be looked at in comparison to behaviour based on the culture of the community)

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression/extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Indicators of possible Physical Abuse
- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given to them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have a reasonable explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse
- Infections and/or symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases

Indicators of possible Sexual Abuse
- Any allegations made by a child concerning child abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play

- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbance, with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations

Indicators of possible Neglect (as poverty is often the cause of the following points, we need to look at it contextually and in comparison to the community average)

- Under nourishment and failure to grow
- Constant hunger, stealing or gorging food
- Untreated illnesses
- Inadequate care

Annexure V: Profile of partner organisations

KARNATAKA

I. SPOORTHY
Area of intervention: Gadag
Spoorthy, is an Education and Social Development organisation registered in Davangere District of Karnataka. It works in 15 blocks of 3 districts of Davangere Gadag and Haveri on issues of livelihoods, children's rights and protection, women empowerment as well as skill development for youth and engaging them in income generating activities. The organisation has been associated with The Hunger Project, India since August 2014.

II. SAMARASA
Area of intervention: Bidar
SAMARASA is an education and social development organisation, registered in Bidar District of Karnataka. It works in five blocks of Bidar districts on the issues of violence against women, livelihoods, housing and sanitation and programmes relating to empowerment of women. The organisation has been associated with The Hunger Project, India since April 2012.

RAJASTHAN

I.JATAN
Area of intervention: Bhilwara
Jatan is a grass-roots organisation working with the rural population of the districts of Rajsamand, Udaipur and Bhilwara. Since its establishment in 2001, Jatan has designed and implemented various initiatives geared towards improving the social and demographic indicators of the marginalised population with a special emphasis on youth groups. In the past nine years, Jatan has worked on various issues, such as women empowerment, youth development and migration. It has been associated with The Hunger Project, India since 2002.

II. Jan Chetna
Area of intervention: Sirohi
Jan Chetna, established in 1988, recognises itself as rights-based organisation. It has worked on tribal development since 1992. The organisation works around promoting cooperative societies for collection of tendu leaves, land development, livelihoods, microfinance and empowerment of elected women representatives. It also undertakes social audits and is associated with campaigns and networks around the Right to Information Act and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Jan Chetna has been associated with The Hunger Project, India since 2005.

III. SARD
Area of intervention: Sirohi
Society for All-Round Development (SARD) was established in 2000 and believes in Gandhian principles. It has been working in Sirohi and Jalore districts for the past five years. SARD focuses on empowerment of elected women representatives, education and health issues of girls, awareness on Right to Information Act and the campaign to prevent violence against women. It has been associated with The Hunger Project, India since 2010.