

## Child marriage: Causes, consequences and intervention programmes

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### Abstract

Child marriage is still widespread in India, which is home to a third of the world's child brides. About half of Indian women were married before they turned 18. Child marriage is a violation of child rights, and has a negative impact on physical growth, health, mental and emotional development, and education opportunities. Girls from poorer families, scheduled castes and tribes, and with lower education levels are more likely to marry at a younger age.

Globally more than one third of the women between the ages 20-24 are married before they reached the age of 18. Approximately 14 million adolescent girls, between the ages 15-19, give birth each year. The custom of child marriage is widespread in parts of Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America. There are many instances where only one marriage-partner is a child, usually the female, because of the importance that is placed upon her virginity, the perceived inability for her to work for money and since woman's reproductive life is considered to be shorter than that of man's. However with an increase in the advocacy of human rights, whether as women's rights or as a child's rights, the tradition of child marriage has decreased in many areas.

Child marriage is deep rooted in the matrix of culture, socioeconomic and religion. It is interdependent and entwined that result in the imprisonment of children in marriages. It was revealed that girls married under 18 years faced an elevated risk of complications in pregnancy and childbirth and contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and experience social and educational disadvantages.

Despite legislation forbidding child marriage in India (Child Marriage Restraint Act-1929) and the much more progressive Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006) and many initiatives to prevent child marriage, marrying children off at a very tender age continues to be accepted by large sections of our society. Therefore it is needless to say that an integrated approach needs to be adopted to curtail the problem of child marriage and raise the status of girls. Initiatives such as 'Apni Beti Apna Dhan' encourage families to delay marriages by providing incentives.

**Keywords:** Child marriage, scheduled castes and tribes, socioeconomic and religion, Apni Beti Apna Dhan

### Introduction

"No girl should be robbed of her childhood, her education and health, and her aspirations. Yet today millions of girls are denied their rights each year when they are married as child brides," says Michelle Bachelet, M.D., Executive Director of UN Women.

"Almost all the people know that there is a law in place against child marriage – however, it still takes place as societal norms and pressure pushes people into breaking these rules."

Child marriage is still widespread in India, which is home to a third of the world's child brides. About half of Indian women were married before they turned 18. Child marriage is a violation of child rights, and has a negative impact on physical growth, health, mental and emotional development, and education opportunities. It also affects society as a whole since child marriage reinforces a cycle of poverty and perpetuates gender discrimination, illiteracy and malnutrition as well as high infant and maternal mortality rates. Both girls and boys are affected by child marriage, but girls are affected in much larger numbers and with greater intensity. Child marriage can be seen across the country but it is far higher in rural than in urban areas. Girls from poorer families, scheduled castes and tribes, and with lower education levels are more likely to marry at a younger age.

### Definitions of Child Marriage

According to International Law a 'Child' is defined as a human being below the age of 18 years and it is a universally accepted definition of a child, accepted by United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In India, different age groups are defined in different concepts creating ambiguity.

"Juvenile" or "Child" is a person who has not completed eighteen years of age as per the CRC guidelines Section 2 (k) of the *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000*.

Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, Section 2 (ii), "Child" means a person who has not completed the age of 14 years.

Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, Section 2 (a), "Child" means a person who, if a male, Has not completed twenty one years of age, and if a female, has not completed eighteen Years of age.

Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, Section 2 (a), "Child" means a person who has Not completed the age of sixteen years.

Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 it is illegal for girls under 18 and boys under 21 to marry in India. Those convicted of involvement face up to two years in jail and fines of up to 200,000 rupees (about £2,100). However, 2014

figures from Unicef, the UN children’s agency, show that 47% of girls in India were married before they turned 18. The practice is common in rural areas.

Thus, “Child marriage is a formal marriage or informal union entered into by an individual before reaching the age of 18”. Child marriage occurs when one or both spouses are below the age of 18. While boys can be affected, the practice predominantly has an impact on girls. It is often referred to as “early and forced” marriage because, the girls, given their young age are not matured physically or mentally and can rarely make a free and informed decision about their marriage partner, the timing or the implications of this binding commitment.

In progressing India, child marriages are making an impact on the development of female gender. Despite the legislation forbidding child marriage in India (Child Marriage Restraint Act-1929) which became more proactive with Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006), child marriages are accepted by and large in the society. Although Indian law made child marriage illegal in 2007, many minor girls are still forced into marriage across the nation, placing them under great emotional stress and potentially having a long-lasting negative impact on their health. Child marriage in India has been practiced for centuries and the problem of child marriage in India remains rooted in a complex matrix of religious traditions, social practices, economic variances and deep rooted prejudices towards female gender. Regardless of its roots, child marriage constitutes a gross violation of human rights.

The manifold consequences of child marriages are: social, psychological, medical, cultural like: segregation from family and friends, limiting the child’s interactions with the community and peers, lack of opportunities for education, incapacity to manage her family due to her incompetence to understand and analyze the situation, inability to develop normally as once married she becomes a ‘child turned adult’, traumatized psychological status owing to lack of support of parents/sibling. Married girl children often face situation of bonded labour, enslavement, sexual exploitation and violence.

Because of lack of protection, child brides are often exposed to serious health risks, early pregnancy, and various Sexually Transmitted Diseases including HIV infection and they do not get medical treatment or discontinue the treatment thus leading to complications during pregnancy as well as long term effect on their health.

**Global Scenario**

Globally more than one third of the women between the ages 20-24 are married before they reached the age of 18. Approximately 14 million adolescent girls, between the ages 15-19, give birth each year. Girls in this age group are twice more likely to die during child birth than women in their twenties. Rate of child marriages is higher in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. One of the proposals under consideration is lowering the age of consent for sex from 18 to 16 years, irrespective of marriage.

According to Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA. “Child marriage is an appalling violation of human rights and robs girls of their education, health and long-term prospect”. The UNFPA has also projected that out of the 140 million girls who will be married under 18 by 2020, 50 million will be under the age of 15. The top ten nations with high child marriages according to the UNFPA are Niger (75%), Chad (68%), the Central African Republic (68%), Bangladesh (66%), Guinea (63%), Mozambique (56%), Mali (55%), Burkina Faso and South Sudan (52%) and Malawi (50%). About 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 years give birth every year, accounting for about 11 per cent of all births worldwide. The custom of child marriage is widespread in parts of Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America. There are many instances where only one marriage-partner is a child, usually the female, because of the importance that is placed upon her virginity, the perceived inability for her to work for money and since woman’s reproductive life is considered to be shorter than that of man’s. However with an increase in the advocacy of human rights, whether as women’s rights or as a child’s rights, the tradition of child marriage has decreased in many areas.

**Table 1:** Showing the Child Marriage details Country and Rank wise details

Rank	Country Name	Percentage of Girls Married Before 18 Years
1	Niger	75
2	Chad	68
3	Central African Republic	68
4	Bangladesh	66
5	Guinea	63
6	Mozambique	56
7	Mali	55
8	Burkina Faso	52
9	South Sudan	52
10	Malawi	50
11	Madagascar	48
12	Eritrea	47
13	India	47
14	Somalia	45
15	Sierra Leone	44
16	Zambia	42
17	Dominican Republic	41
18	Ethiopia	41
19	Nepal	41
20	Nicaragua	41

**Indian Scenario**

According to UN report, India has highest percentage of child

marriages (Charu Sudan Kasturi, 2013) <sup>[1]</sup>. Every second girl, in India, is married under age, the United Nations Population

Fund (UNFPA) reported in a recent assessment of global child marriage patterns that paints a worrying picture of a practice widely banned but still rampant.

According to UNICEF, 47% of girls are married by 18 years of age, and 18% are married by 15 years of age. These marriages are often performed without the consent of the girls involved in the marriage. The magnitude of girl child mortality is reflected *from the fact that every year, about 12 million girls are born in India; a third of these girls die in the first year of their life; three million, or 25 per cent, do not survive to see their fifteenth birthday.* The child mortality rate between 0-4 years for girl child is 20.6%, two percent more than that of boys (18.6%), 46.6% girls of 15-19 years face complications during delivery that are: premature labour 71.7, excessive bleeding 24.1, prolonged labour 36.1, obstructed labour 8.4, breech presentation 6.9, convulsion high blood pressure 8.6 (NRHM AP).

The enrollment figures of the girls in schools are comparatively lower than those of the boys indicating that many girls do not get enrolled in schools. 34% of girls dropout before they complete Class 5. One of the major reasons for so many girls not attending school is their workload, both within and outside the household. Daughters are often kept at home to help the family because the social and economic value of educating the girls is not recognized. Without access to education, girls are denied the knowledge and skills needed to advance their status.

Though Indian law has made child marriage illegal, the practice is still widespread across the country. The highest numbers of child marriages are seen in the rural areas of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. Though the practice of child marriage affects both boys and girls, statistics show that usually girls are forced into a child marriage than boys.

### Causes of Child Marriages

Child marriage is deep rooted in the matrix of culture, socioeconomic and religion. It is interdependent and entwined that result in the imprisonment of children in marriages. The consent of the child is difficult to assess as the child is not in a position to visualize the impact of the marriage at that young age. It is a 'Game' to them and they enjoy the ritual but regret later.

1. **Poverty:** Poor families 'sell' their children through marriage either to settle debts or to make some money and escape the cycle of poverty. Child marriage fosters poverty, as it is certain that girls who marry at young will not be properly educated or skilled to be in the placed well at workforce.
2. **'Protecting' the Girl's Sexuality:** In certain cultures, marrying a girl young is presumed that the girl's sexuality and family's honour will be "protected" as a very young girl is a virgin. The imposition of family honor on a girl's individuality, in essence robbing the girl of her honor and dignity, undermines the credibility of family honor and instead underscores the presumed protection's actual aim: to control the girl. The young are easy to 'control' and so the young girls are preferred.
3. **Custom and Tradition:** Where child marriage is prevalent there is strong social pressure on families to either confront or face ridicule, disapproval or family shame. Local perceptions regarding an ideal age of

marriage are connected with economic factors such as dowry, bride price and so on.

4. **Security:** In many cases parents resort to child marriages in order to 'secure' a good future for their daughters. Situations of insecurity owing to abuse, rape, other crimes on girls and acute poverty can prompt parents to resort to child marriage as a protective mechanism or survival strategy.
5. **Gender Discrimination:** Child marriage is a product of cultures that devalue women and girls and discriminate them. "The discrimination," according to a UNICEF report on "Child Marriage and the Law," "often manifests itself in the form of domestic violence, marital rape, and deprivation of food, lack of access to information, education, healthcare, and general impediments to mobility." These are the gender biased dynamics in the male dominated Indian families.
6. **Inadequate Implementation of Laws:** Many countries such as Pakistan have laws against child marriage. The laws are not enforced. In Afghanistan, a new law was written into the country's code enabling Shite, or Hazara, communities to impose their own form of family law—including permitting child marriage. In India the laws are not effectively implemented due to lack of proper implementation of marriage registration that ensures the age of the bride and groom.
7. **Trafficking:** Poor families are tempted to sell their girls not just into marriage, but into prostitution, as the transaction enables large sums of money to benefit the girl's family and harms the girl. There is apathy towards their girls and the money by selling their girls is used for the benefit of their sons.
8. **Dowry System:** Customs like dowry are causing burden on the family as the parents have to give a huge money, jewelers and / or land to marry their daughter. So the choice narrows to the person who takes less dowry instead of a good eligible person. Many a time, men who have lost their wives or are separated or divorced, or very old men take less dowry and so a girl who is a minor is forced to live with a matured and experienced man.
9. **Girls rebelling against the Gender Discrimination:** Parents feel that girl child is a burden due to oppressive traditional values and discriminate the girl. Now the girls are rebelling and leaving their homes in search of the love and affection and placing themselves at grave risks. So parents think that instead of taking risk with the girl, they want to place her under the protection of a man resulting in child marriages.
10. **Media Influence:** All the children are under great influence of media and aim to be something without skills. They are being attracted to the cities and do not have coping skills to deal with the stress of life in the cities and so get trapped into many problems.

### Consequences of Child Marriage

- a) **Violation of Rights of the Child:** The Convention on the Rights of the Child is designed to guarantee certain individual rights—which are denied by early marriage. Rights undermined or lost by children forced to marry early are: The right to education, The right to be protected from physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, including sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation, The

right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, The right to rest and leisure, and to participate freely in cultural life, The right to not be separated from parents against the child's will, The right to protection against all forms of exploitation affecting any aspect of the child's welfare and The right to eventual employment.

- b) **Premature Pregnancy:** The majority of young brides have limited knowledge and access to contraceptive and reproductive health services. They are exposed to early and frequent sexual relations and to multiple pregnancies and childbirth before they are physically mature and psychologically ready.
- c) **Maternal Mortality:** Girls below the age of 15 are five times more likely to die during child birth or pregnancy than a little elderly woman. Pregnancy-related deaths are the leading major cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide, and girls aged 15 years or under are five times more likely to die than those over 20.
- d) **Infant Mortality:** Mortality rates for babies born to mothers under age 20 are almost 75% higher than for children born to older mothers. The children that survive are more likely to be premature, have a low birth weight, and are more at risk for transmitting HIV/AIDS.
- e) **Health Problems:** Premature childbirth can lead to a variety of health problems for mothers, including vaginal tears, fistula and deterioration in general health. Girls with fistula are often abandoned by their husbands and ostracized by society. There are approximately 2 million girls living with fistula, and 100,000 new cases every year add to this number.
- f) **HIV/AIDS:** Married girls may be more likely to contract sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/ AIDS, than unmarried girls. Young girls are more physically susceptible to STI's, have less access to reproductive education and health services and are often powerless to demand the use of contraceptives.
- g) **Illiteracy:** Child brides are often pulled out of school and denied further education. Their children are also more likely to be illiterate. Human rights research shows that the greatest obstacles to girls' education, as identified in many government reports to human rights monitoring bodies, are child marriage, pregnancy and domestic chores.
- h) **Poverty:** Child brides - already poor - are isolated and denied education and employment opportunities, making it difficult for them to break out of the cycle of poverty. In many countries child marriage is linked with poverty. This is because it affects particularly the poorest in the population, and makes them delve in the cycles of poverty. Minor girls – as (Child) wives tend to have more children and fewer independent income options. Poverty ultimately fuels child marriage, which in turn perpetuates the feminization of poverty. This situation is also supported by country economic indicators for measuring the health of the economy: several countries with very low gross domestic products (GDPs) tend to have higher rates of child marriage.
- i) **Abuse and Violence:** Child brides are more likely to experience domestic abuse, and violence than their peers who marry later and less likely to take action against this abuse. Girls who marry early are also more likely to believe that a man is justified in beating his wife and it is

his right.

- j) **Teen Widows:** In a society that condones child marriages, it is not uncommon to find widows and divorcees under the age of 18.
- k) **Mental Health:** Violence and abuse can lead to post-traumatic stress and depression.
- l) **Isolation and Abandonment:** Child brides are often isolated from their peers and abandoned if they develop health problems like fistula.

### Challenges to Eradicating child marriage

There are many causes of child marriage in India and multiple barriers to its elimination. Poverty, weak enforcement of laws, patriarchal social norms intended to ensure family honour are significant factors that increase the risk of girl being married off while still a child. Also, girls from poor households are more likely to marry as children, since marriage becomes a solution to reduce the size of the family. The cost of marriage plays a big role in families sliding further into poverty, and these high costs contribute to girls being forced to marry when other ceremonies are taking place in the family or when older siblings are being married.

### History of Efforts

Practice of Child Marriage is rooted in the traditions long followed by the society.

- In 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswarchandra VidyaSagar, Pandita Ramabai worked for uprooting this evil practice.
- Noticing this efforts colonial government too introduced some legal measures against this practice. Marriageable age of girls was raised to 10 years by the law passed in 1860.
- Further Age of Consent Act, 1891 increased this age to 12 years.
- The Sharda Act passed in 1929 laid that, a girl below 14 and a boy below 18 cannot be married, thus preventing child marriage.

Though these laws helped improved women position, child marriage could not be uprooted completely due to prevailing socio-religious norms laid by the then society.

### UNICEF Action

UNICEF is working alongside the Government of India in its efforts to prevent child marriage, including the implementation of the convergent national strategy, which includes:

- **Law enforcement:** Capacity-building on laws, support mechanisms such as a child marriage telephone hotline.
- **Girls' empowerment:** Life skills, protection skills.
- **Community mobilization:** Working with influential leaders, oaths and pledges, counselling, folk and traditional media.
- **Promoting convergence** of sectors at all levels, in particular with education and social protection schemes and programmes.

UNICEF is also working with different and new sectors to ensure a comprehensive approach since child marriage is entrenched in structural problems such as poverty and limited education and vocational opportunities. Partnerships with civil society organizations and communities are key to supporting community mobilization efforts and mindset



changes and partnerships with the media are very important for raising awareness of child marriage.

The UNICEF Fact Sheet on Child Marriage gives a useful outline to the nature of the problem of child marriage; the legislation aimed at ridding it and the government schemes to provide incentives against child marriage; and UNICEF's role in supporting these.

### **Government strategy and action**

The national Ministry of Women and Child Development, as the nodal agency for women and children, has developed a convergent national strategy and is currently drafting a plan of action on child marriage to guide all states in the implementation of strategies to prevent the problem. Key components of the strategy and draft action plan include: law enforcement, quality education and other opportunities, changing mindsets and social norms, empowering adolescents, producing and sharing knowledge and data, and monitoring.

The Government of India is also implementing national programmes aimed at protecting and promoting the development of children, while states are supporting these initiatives through state-level schemes. However, many of the programmes focus on addressing financial vulnerability through cash transfer schemes to keep girls in school.

At the same time, there is a legal framework to prevent child marriage and protect children:

- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 makes it illegal for girls to marry under 18 years and for boys under 21 years. Child marriage can be made voidable by the child but within two years of becoming an adult.
- Child marriage is a punishable offence with a fine up to INR 100,000, or up to two years of imprisonment, or both. It is a non-cognizable and non-bailable offence.
- Dowry was prohibited in 1961 by the Dowry Prohibition Act, with a fine up to INR 15,000, or the dowry amount, whichever is higher, and imprisonment for between six months and five years.
- Other laws that may provide protection to a child bride include the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

### **Legislative measures taken in India**

Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 prescribes age for marriage as 18 for girls and 21 for boys. However the act does not talk about validity of marriages solemnized without adhering to these age restrictions.

### **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006**

This law was passed by the Indian parliament to replace the Child Marriage Restraints Act, 1929. This act criminalizes the acts of the person who performs, conducts, directs or abets any child marriage and provides for punishment with an imprisonment up to two years and fine up to 1 lakh.

This act has given a great responsibility over administrative machinery to prevent child marriages. It provides for Child Marriage Prohibition Officer (CMPO) to be appointed by State government and will work to prevent solemnizing child marriage, will create awareness about such evil practice, will collect evidence against persons involved in such offence for

their effective prosecution. However, even this act did not declare already solemnized marriage null and void. Local governing bodies like Gram Panchayats and community have major role to play in the effective implementation of this act.

India is home to the half of the child brides in the world, and unlikely to achieve Mother and Child health related Millennium development goals by 2015. As mentioned earlier early marriages hinders sexual and reproductive health of a women and likely to harm child's health born to such mother, strict measures against child marriage is the need of time, and India must take quick action in this direction.

### **International Efforts**

In Sep 2013, UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) adopted a first-ever resolution on child, early and forced marriage. The resolution was co-sponsored by 107 countries and recognizes the child marriage as human right violation. As stated by UNHRC, child, early and forced marriage has the multi-faceted impact of on the "economic, legal, health and social status of women and girls" as well as "the development of the community as a whole. This move was taken to include child marriage issue in post 2015 international developmental agenda. However, India refused to co-sponsor this historic resolution saying the definition of child marriage given in resolution is too vague.

### **International Organisations working to stop child Marriage**

Breakthrough is a global human right organization and works for women and girls. In India, Breakthrough directly worked among the communities in Jharkhand and Bihar to end prevalent the child marriage practice there.

Care is an international humanitarian organisation, which focuses on working alongside impoverished women. Part of their mandate includes directly addressing child marriage through targeting the provision of Education for girls.

Girls Not Bride is a global partnership of various NGOs from countries of Africa, South Asia, Middle East, Europe and North America. The members of the organization raise voice to call for an action against such evil practice, locally, nationally and globally.

Saarthi Trust was set up in 2012 to address the child marriage crisis facing India. Kriti Bharati, one of the trustee, provides programmes, psychological support and education to women and children. She has been working in Rajasthan to rescue children undergoing child marriage.

### **The Knowledge Hub on Child Marriage, India**

The Knowledge Hub (K.Hub) is a web-portal exclusively focused on the issue of child marriage, designed to cater to growing need for evidence-based approaches on prevention of child marriages in India and neighboring countries.

### **Vasavya mahila mandala**

(VMM) was established forty years ago with Gandhian ideology as a secular nonprofit voluntary organisation working in the rural as well as urban areas of Andhra Pradesh. VMM works to promote comprehensive social, economic and political development for women, children and youth in vulnerable situations including Child marriages, thereby empowering communities in A.P to improve their quality of life, and build a better civil society in India.

### Way Ahead

Political will and community participation are the major drivers to uproot this age old practice. First thing a government must focus on is Girls education. Government should work to provide schools with proper sanitation facility. They may also give incentives for girls to increase their enrollment in the school. Various NGOs can work with gram Panchayats must to create the awareness about the ills of early marriage, through activities such as street play, media and community dialogue using Gram Shabha as platform. The Child Marriage Prohibition Officer shall be given training and more power to prevent child marriages. So as to enforce PCMA Act provisions strictly and bring guilty to justice.

In India, women constitute approximately half of the population and also form significant part of working age population (demographic dividend). Empowered women will not only contribute in family but her contribution will also help in overall progress of the nation. End of the all types of discrimination against women and girls is the way ahead.

### Conclusion

Marriage of girls less than 18 years is a fundamental violation of their human rights including their sexual and reproductive health. It is also a threat to the prosperity and stability of countries. As per the study it was found that poverty is one of the major factors underpinning child marriage. The traditional desire to protect girls from out-of-wedlock pregnancies is also a fear factor. Further it was revealed that girls married under 18 years faced an elevated risk of complications in pregnancy and childbirth and contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and experience social and educational disadvantages. It was also observed that child marriage is physically and emotionally harmful... it violates their rights to personal freedom and growth. For both boys and girls, early marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional consequences. For girls in addition, it will almost certainly mean early pregnancy, which causes higher rates of maternal mortality, and is likely to lead to lifetime of domestic and sexual subservience. There is a need to redesign the policies and programmes related to prevention of marriage of girls under 18 and ensure that all adolescents' sexual, marital, and reproductive transitions are safe, informed, and voluntary; and to support girls who are already married. Despite legislation forbidding child marriage in India (Child Marriage Restraint Act-1929) and the much more progressive Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006) and many initiatives to prevent child marriage, marrying children off at a very tender age continues to be accepted by large sections of our society. More attention needs to be paid to the situation of children continuing to face the practice of early and forced marriages. It calls for "the synergy of the efforts of governments, law makers, civil society, media, and other relevant stakeholders including family and community" as well as increased attention at the international, national and regional level in order to develop policies and legislation to prevent early marriages". Therefore it is needless to say that an integrated approach needs to be adopted to curtail the problem of child marriage and raise the status of girls. Initiatives such as 'Apni Beti Apna Dhan', 'Beti Bachavo Beti Padhavo' encourage families to delay marriages by providing incentives. Under this scheme, a government paid bond is payable to the daughters parents of Rupees 25000

after the child's 18th birthday, if she is unmarried. These programs have been implemented with some success in state such as Haryana, where child marriages are prevalent.

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