

Soma P. Das
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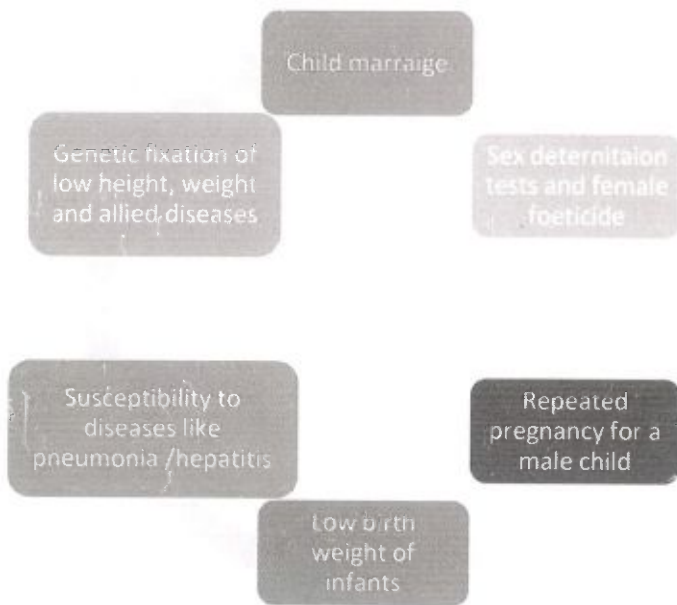
Social Mobilization through involvement of SHGs to address children's vulnerabilities in Urban West Bengal

Context:

West Bengal has an adolescent population of 18 million, which is a considerable 19.96 percent of its total population. The age group 10-14 years forms 9.3% of the total population while 15-19 forms 9.7% of the total population. Adolescent girls (aged 10-19 years; approximately 8 million in number) are 19.87 percent of the total female population of the state. In West Bengal 41.6 per cent women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18 years, next only to Bihar, while 18.3 per cent of those aged 15-19 have started childbearing, next only to Tripura at 18.6 per cent (NFHS-4 2015-16).

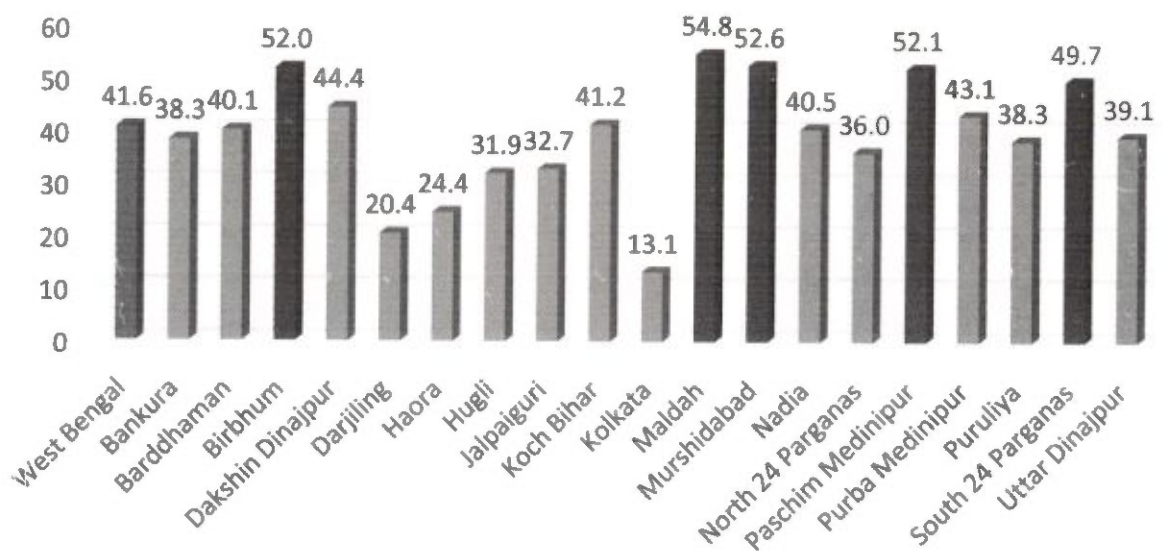
More than 6,500 children go missing every year. These missing children further contribute to a very high percentage (almost 82 per cent) of the total reported cases of selling of girls for prostitution nationally. Similarly, of the total all-India reported incidence of procurement of minor girls, almost 32.4 per cent are procured from West Bengal. Moreover, 29 per cent of all cases in India under the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA) are from West Bengal (NCRB, 2015).

Considering the fact that adolescent girls (10-19 years) are particularly vulnerable to child marriage, abuse and different forms of violence, UNICEF has been working closely with key Government departments and civil society partners in West Bengal to ensure adolescent rights are empowered through knowledge, skills and self-efficacy to take decisions and they're protected from violence, abuse and all forms of exploitation, including child marriage.



Vicious cycle of vulnerability due to child marriage

While child marriage is prevalent in all the districts, the figures show wide variations between the districts (see figure below). There are districts in the state where there's high prevalence of child marriage as compared to the state average.



Women age 20-24 years married before age 18 years (%): West Bengal district wise trend [NFHS-4]

Rationale of partnership with the State Urban Development Authority (Department of UD & MA)

West Bengal is one of the rapidly urbanizing states in India. West Bengal has undergone rapid urbanization over the past fifty years. Its urban population grew at a rate of nearly 30 per cent in the last decade. As per the Census of India 2011, nearly 32 percent of the population is living in urban areas, slightly higher than the national average. West Bengal's urban population grew almost three fold, from around 11 million in 1971 to around 29 million in 2011. Out of the total adolescent population of West Bengal, 33% live in urban areas (Census 2011).

Children in urban areas are often forced into dangerous and exploitative work instead of being able to attend school. Along with this, the challenges associated with migrant children, vulnerability to trafficking and child marriage cannot be ignored. This is particularly true of adolescent girls, many of whom are exposed to various forms of violence, including sexual abuse, which are seldom reported.

Drop out children and child labour continues to be a challenge in urban West Bengal with nearly 3.37 percent children in the age group of 5-14 years being engaged as child labour. The highest concentration of child labour in West Bengal is in the district of Kolkata (5.3 per cent). (Census of India 2011)

Child marriage and trafficking are complex forms of violence and exploitation of children. Patriarchy, low value of the girl child and poverty are some of the structural causes of these harmful practices. Child marriage involves acquiescence of the community; therefore, eliminating this practice must involve strengthening the capacity of community platforms and bodies like SHGs to respond to it, while linking vulnerable families to livelihood opportunities to address the issue of families accepting child marriage as a way out of their economic challenges. As it is rooted in social norms, it needs greater collaboration with the communities and community level structures for transforming child marriage into a socially unacceptable phenomenon. At the same time, preventing trafficking would entail active vigilantism of the community in identifying vulnerable families and spreading awareness to prevent this menace.

Community based Self Help Groups (SHGs) are one of the viable platforms along with Child Protection Committees (CPCs) which can contribute towards creating a protective environment for adolescents and address the issues of child marriage, trafficking and prevention of drop outs at the community level. SHG members can also address deeply entrenched **gender norms** and in many places have been found to mainstream drop-outs into schools and raise a voice against child marriage and their involvement would be vital in changing the dubious distinction that India holds of having the highest number of child brides in the country.

Role of SHGs in addressing child protection priorities in West Bengal:



Objectives of the partnership with SUDA

- To strengthen capacity of SHGs in creating an enabling and protective environment for adolescents in urban areas
- To prevent incidences of child marriage and trafficking through preventive and responsive action by the SHGs in their community
- To refer adolescents to vocational training/ livelihood options available under SULM and other government schemes like PMKVY
- To create linkages between SHGs and health workers, AWWs, and community based structures like Child Protection Committees (CPCs), Youth Clubs under NYKS to strengthen initiatives and work towards a holistic mechanism to address issues like child marriage, trafficking and violence

Geographical coverage

State level and 4 districts in 2019:

- I. Purulia/ Jalpaiguri
- II. South 24 Parganas
- III. Malda
- IV. Murshidabad

Broad areas of Intervention:

UNICEF & SUDA agree to work in the following areas:

I. Capacity building (ToT)- resource materials, guidebook

- Develop training kits for State level/District level SHG master trainers focusing on aspects of child rights, child protection, gender, services for adolescents
- Conduct training for the State level/District level master trainers
- Hand holding support to the master trainers through district Consultants/ resource persons

II. Inter- personal & group communication

- Awareness generation by SHG members using IEC materials, flip charts etc. for interpersonal and group communication at the field level
- Identifying vulnerable families and maintaining a data base of adolescents in the village who are out of school, engaged in labour, migrated, likely to get married etc.
- Linking vulnerable families with livelihood activities under SULM

III. Campaign- calendar based events

- Participation in public events, community meetings organized by NYKS/ NGOs/ other partners and disseminating IEC materials
- Organizing monthly/quarterly awareness campaign through wall paintings, rallies, signature campaigns etc.

IV. Convergence and coordination

- Coordination with CPCs and other structures on child protection issues
- Participation in ULB meetings, CPC meetings and raising adolescent/ protection issues
- Intervening and act to stop child marriage in convergence with other stakeholders like Childline, Police, district administration, school teachers

Implementation Framework

Sl no	Activities	Deliverables	Responsibility	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
1	Discussion and finalization of partnership between UNICEF & SUDA	Partnership between UNICEF & SUDA in place	UNICEF SUDA												
2	Developing	Training	UNICEF												

	training module for master trainers and toolkits	module developed and printed	F																	
3	Convening multi-stakeholder meeting with state and district officials	State & District level meetings held	SULM																	
4	Developing a capacity building/training plan	Training plan prepared	SULM																	
5	Conduct training for the State level/District level master trainers	One state level & 4 district level trainings held	UNICE FSULM																	
6	Conduct training for Cluster level trainers	No of cluster level trainings conducted on prevention of vulnerabilities (CM, trafficking, violence etc.)	SULM																	
7	Development of monitorable indicators for the implementation of plans of action	Monitoring tool developed	UNICE FSULM																	
8	Training and orientation of SHGs	No. of SHGs received training	SULM																	
9	Identifying	Vulnerabi	SULM																	

	vulnerable adolescents & families	lity assessment done with local stakeholders																	
10	Community mobilization efforts	No. of community mobilization events organized	SULM																

Monitoring and Reporting Framework

Planning and Review meetings at state and district levels between SUDA & UNICEF will be held regularly to track the progress as per timeline.

A system of regular monitoring and supportive supervision would be followed at the district and sub-district levels by SULM and UNICEF to periodically review and monitor the progress of activities.

The cluster representatives will regularly interact with the District officials (DM/ ADM/ Municipality Chairpersons) to apprise them about the plan and progress of activities. SULM/ SUDA will submit 6 quarterly reports to UNICEF in the prescribed format (Annexure I).

Annexure I

Reporting Format: (Ward to be the unit for all indicators and the reference period may be last 3 months)

Sl no	Indicator	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	M 8	M 9	M 10	M 11	M 12
1	Number of impending child marriage cases that have been reported by them in the ward												
2	Number of child marriage cases where action has been taken by Police/ District officials/ Childline/ NGOs/ CPCs etc. in the ward												
3	Number of child marriage/ drop out cases where action has been taken directly by the SHGs in the ward												

4	Number of public events/ campaigns held																			
5	Number of drop outs mainstreamed into education/ vocational training																			
6	Number of meetings/ awareness sessions held where SHGs have discussed issues (child marriage, trafficking, violence, education, teenage pregnancy etc.) on their own/ with CPCs																			
7	Number of vulnerable families linked with livelihood opportunities																			
8	No. of missing cases linked to Police Station (PS) by SHGs																			
9	No. of FIRs for missing children in the community filed																			
10	% of FIR copies in the possession of complainants																			
11	No. of cases (physical/ sexual abuse of children) reported by SHG members at the ward level																			
12	No. of abuse cases referred to appropriate services (health, legal aid, counseling etc.) by SHGs																			

Soma P. Das

26/3/19

Adolescent Empowerment Programme (Kolkata)

Context: Globally, UNICEF envisions Child/Adolescent Friendly Cities as the creation of systems of local governance and communities within cities which are committed to fulfilling children's rights. West Bengal has an adolescent (10-19 years) population of 18.2 million, which contributes to 20% of the total population. Out of the total adolescent population, 33% live in urban areas (Census 2011).

With the increasing realization to invest more on adolescents six wards of Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) were identified for comprehensive programme to address the needs and vulnerabilities of adolescents holistically. The Kolkata intervention started in early 2017 in order to ensure that their rights are reflected in the policies, laws, programmes and budgets of urban planning and governance initiatives within cities, thereby making them more inclusive and equitable.

Objectives:

- To empower adolescent girls and boys through life skills and information
- To build capacities of stakeholders (parents, community and service providers) for ensuring the protection and well-being of adolescents
- To strengthen delivery of services to adolescents

UNICEF's Approach: The Urban Adolescent Empowerment Program has been designed using an integrated approach to bring about positive changes in aspirations and behaviours for a critical mass of adolescent girls and boys, with the support of their families, community members, service providers and key influencers. **Convergence** and **adolescent participation** is at the core of this **multi-sectoral approach** to attain key outcomes with respect to reduction in child marriage, teenage pregnancy and improvement in educational outcomes of adolescents. Reaching out to marginalized adolescents in urban poor settlements is a significant approach, and priority has been given to those dwelling in under-served urban slums.

Using strategies of convergence, capacity building and partnerships with the government and civil society, the existing work has focussed upon the following key **priorities**:

- reduction in child marriage
- increase in school enrolment of children & adolescents
- decrease in prevalence of girls aged 15-19 who are already mothers or pregnant

Current interventions:

Formation and strengthening of adolescent groups

Community based adolescents groups and school based Kanyashree clubs have been formed in all 6 wards. Regular sessions are held with them on child rights and protection, life skills and leadership building, reproductive & sexual health and related issues. Interactive mediums like sports, dance, theatre and photography are used with the group members to reflect the issues of adolescents. Exposure visits to police station, municipality office, bank are conducted regularly to make them understand the process and function of these facilities. A girls' football team is formed and operational in ward 26.

Sensitizing parents and community members

Parents' groups have been formed in Kolkata and community members are made aware of adolescent issues through community-based campaigns. Issues of adolescents are discussed with the groups and intergenerational dialogues are facilitated.

Strengthening child protection committees

Facilitated formation of ward level child protection committees (WLCPC) in all 6 wards and ensured child participation in these committees. Training of WLCPC members conducted in collaboration with District Child Protection Unit, Kolkata and WBSCPCR. Regular meetings are conducted with the WLCPC members

Advocacy efforts

Regular meetings are conducted with different stakeholders' viz. Police, WLCPC members, school teachers, ICDS workers, Ward Councillors and community influencers. This has resulted in attitudinal changes of these stakeholders and brought in Convergence as a means to developing 'Adolescent friendly wards'.

The interface of adolescents with the Police helped establish Police as a stakeholder for approaching in times of distress. The linkage with **Kolkata Police (KP)** also resulted in access to the digital applications (Eyewatch and Bondhu Kolkata) by the adolescents, and linkages with Sukanya and Kiran Schemes (part of Community policing initiatives of KP).

Other Initiatives

- 150 adolescents were engaged on three key issues (Gender and Violence, Gender Equality, Adolescent Health) through four radio workshops in partnership with Mass Communication Dept., Jadavpur University, as part of UNICEF supported Youth Reporters' Network to facilitate adolescent participation in media
- An android based survey was conducted with 3000 adolescents and 400 adults of 5 wards viz. ward no 38,49,69,80 & 86 to understand the situation of adolescent deprivations in these wards
- In order to generate evidence, a ward-level analysis of various parameters of adolescent well-being and protection was carried out by UNICEF's technical partner, Action for Children's Environment Trust (ACE) during March 2017 to January 2018 to identify the various risks and vulnerabilities, as well as offer recommendations to inform future programming in all 6 wards of Kolkata viz ward 26,38,49,69,80 and 86
- Adolescent Photo Workshop, involving children from ward nos. 38,49,69,80 & 86 as part of ROSA's 'WE THE FUTURE' campaign was held in close collaboration with UNICEF ROSA, supporting adolescent's right to expression and to participate in decisions that affect their lives

- A Photobook, which is a compilation of the photographs taken by the adolescents of Ward 26 capturing various facets of their lives and surroundings was developed. It captures various aspects of their lives in urban settlements through their own lens

Progress in numbers

- 61 adolescent groups with 1165 members have been directly supported with life skills and leadership training
- 6 ward-level Child Protection Committees (CPCs) have been formed and strengthened
- More than 8,000 community members reached out through mid-media activities during 2018
- 15 Kanyashree Clubs with 400 members have been formed and strengthened
- 31 Out of school (OoS) adolescents were mainstreamed into schools
- 18 Parents Groups with 600 members have been formed and strengthened

Scale up strategies

Adolescent Empowerment Programme piloted in 6 urban wards in Kolkata has been shown to be effective in achieving the desired outcomes to a great extent . Lessons learned through this pilot programme helped us to come up with a possible scale up strategy to enhance the scalability of the intervention.

Multi -sectoral and convergent programming is the most central to this scale up strategy.UNICEF would involve Government and non-government partners who would generate and apply innovative tools, methods, strategies and approaches to fulfil the overall objective of AEP.

Partners	Intended activities
Department of Women and Child Development, School Education Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of CDPOs on Child Protection issues and making them aware on the legal provisions • Scale up Kanyashree club formation in schools • Improve the coverage of Kanyashree Prakalpa
Kolkata Municipal Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation of Councilors on Child protection issues • Ensure adequate child protection mechanisms are in place
SULM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote poverty alleviation schemes specifically targeting vulnerable families where children are at-risk of child labour and child marriage • Create a protective environment for adolescents at community level through active involvement of SHGs • Prevent incidences of child marriage through preventive and responsive action by the SHGs in their community • Refer adolescents to vocational training/ livelihood options available under SULM and other government schemes like PMKVY
NGO partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescent vulnerability mapping through android based apps in the slum pockets of Kolkata • Generate awareness about relevant social security schemes for adolescents, eligibility criteria and points of access • Create awareness against child marriage and its harmful effects

	<p>among general public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building of community structures (Child Protection Committees) • Disseminate information on the protection mechanisms available to the community such as the Child Welfare Police Officer, Child Welfare Committee, Ward Level Child Protection Committee, Childline etc
NYKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create awareness of vocational training opportunities and create linkages for vocational training for adolescents within slums • Make the adolescents more informed about their benefits and entitlements and help them to access these schemes • Mobilise youth and adolescents against child marriage