

The Child Marriage Research to Action Network (the CRANK) Preventing child marriage: What works at scale

CRANK research meeting 28 July 2022 – Key takeaways

Key takeaways:

- **Convergent, multisectoral and multilevel approaches are key** to large-scale programming aimed at preventing child marriage and promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours.
- **Large-scale programmes can contribute to delaying child marriage** when they improve family incomes and remove the financial incentives of marrying their children.
- **Cash alone is not enough to prevent child marriage**, interventions need to engage adolescent girls *and* boys to change norms around marrying underage girls, and connect with parents, teachers and community members to promote gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours.
- **Women's economic opportunities need to be expanded** to create an incentive for girls to complete their education rather than marry.
- **Social workers play an important part in rolling out large-scale interventions**, tracking cases of child marriage and following up with children who have been married, ensuring married children are connected with the appropriate services.
- **Programmes need to invest in enhancing the capacity of service providers**, ensuring services are adolescent-friendly and of quality, and that adolescents can access appropriate services that already exist.
- **Successful implementation of large-scale interventions requires continued investment** in programme implementation, monitoring, evaluation and evidence-based adaptations.

Dr. Rachel Yates: Introduction

- Despite progress to end child marriage over the last decade, we are not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – we need to explore new approaches to accelerate impact and address new challenges like the increasing risk of climate change, humanitarian shocks and COVID-19.
- To ensure cost-effectiveness we need to think beyond silos: how can we achieve results across multiple areas of adolescent well-being with our interventions and investments?
- As well as mainstreaming child marriage across sectors we need to address underlying harmful social norms, and effectively scale up social norms programming, which requires intensive interventions at the national and sub-national level.

Priyanka Deb, Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme, West Bengal, India

- Kanyashree Prakalpa is a government scheme with a dual strategy:
 1. A two-staged conditional cash transfer, with conditions like staying in school and remaining unmarried until age 18, where the funds go directly to the girl to ensure financial inclusion.

2. Cash plus interventions to help shift the perceptions, attitudes and aspirations of girls and their families, for a conducive environment, including through Kanyashree Clubs in schools and referrals to health check-ups through community engagement.
- Almost 8 million girls are included in the scheme in West Bengal, reducing their risk of child marriage and – should they complete school – strengthening their financial inclusion by ensuring they all have bank accounts.
 - Challenges in administrating the scheme include the diversity of the population in the state: various languages, religions and social norms, remote geographic areas, reduced access due to the pandemic, etc.
 - Implementation and monitoring mechanisms across state-district-sub-division/block-educational institutions, with constant transfer of funds back and forth, and referrals of girls to services across the different levels. Constant monitoring allows for the smooth running of the scheme.
 - Child marriage needs to be tackled in a convergent way – that is, integrating two or more distinct entities like sectors, programmes, departments, agencies, or levels of implementation to work towards a common goal¹ – and preferably through a bottom-up approach, which is why the Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme supports district action plans rather than a state action plan.
 - A major target group of interventions is adolescent girls *and* boys, because boys also need access to information and messaging to change norms around marrying underage girls.
 - Currently in the process of documenting all child marriages that take place and following up on all girls who marry as children, to ensure they have access to government services until they become adults.

Seleshe Tadesse, Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), Ethiopia

- Strong legal and policy framework against child marriage in the country, with a national costed roadmap on child marriage and female genital mutilation since 2019 and a national alliance to end these harmful practices established in 2012.
- Economic hardship and poverty are critical drivers of child marriage in most parts of the country, but it is also driven by social norms – something which is reflected in the national roadmap.
- Poverty may serve as a “push factor” in several ways: pushing girls out of their families as they cannot provide for them; providing an incentive for families to marry their daughters to receive bride price payments; creating an incentive to marry girls younger as dowry requirements tend to be lower for younger girls; creating an environment where there is a lack of alternative opportunities such as education and employment; and sometimes pushing girls to initiate marriages themselves to escape otherwise hard wage labour.
- Social protection policies do not only look at poverty at a societal level but also an individual level. Government social protection strategies are closely linked to efforts on gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women, lifting them out of poverty.

Fantahun Gobezie, PSNP, Ethiopia

¹ For more on this please see: <https://www.unicef.org/media/68221/file/GP-2020-Technical-Note-Convergent-Programming.pdf>

- Gender mainstreaming – that is, a strategy that integrates women’s and men’s concerns and experiences to ensure equal benefit – was included in the design of the fourth iteration of the PSNP, but interventions were not clearly stipulated and not successful, which became a learning for the ongoing fifth iteration.
- A learning from the cash plus programme is that it can contribute to delaying child marriage as it improves family incomes and removes the financial incentives of marrying their children.
- The role of social workers in the roll-out of the PSNP is very important, tracking cases of child marriage and following up with children involved. Links to available social services (including to prevent and respond to child marriage) is also a new specific output integrated into the fifth iteration of the PSNP, with the aim of:
 - Including child marriage cases into legal child protection systems.
 - Improving links to social and behaviour change strategies, and increase knowledge about the legal age of marriage and legal support structures available.
 - Improving justice/legal service seeking behaviours among recipients of the PSNP.
 - Providing psychosocial support and counseling by social workers through comprehensive case management.
- Some of the key messages shared refer to how child marriage negatively affects reproductive health, employment capabilities and autonomy and empowerment, and how child marriage is a criminal act.
- Some limitations of the PSNP are:
 - Ending child marriage is not a specific objective, as the programme is large across the country and has several aims
 - There is a lack of skilled social workers to roll-out the programme and the services available.
 - There is a shortage of financial resources to invest in the programme.
- The mid-term evaluation is scheduled for January 2023

Dr. Yvette Efevbera, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

- We need to learn from large-scale interventions, to enable scaling up and acceleration of investments to ensure we end child marriage. The Child Marriage Learning Partners Consortium was established to this end, to support learning from successes and failures, and to share evidence across the globe.
- We cannot wait any longer to change the trajectory of the 12 million girls who marry before their 18th birthday every year, and who deserve the opportunity to choose if, when and whom they marry.
- To this end, we can do three things:
 - Be part of creating a more gender equal and inclusive world, we can push the boundaries on how we work with and for girls and young women.
 - Ground ourselves in evidence-based approaches and measure our successes and our failures.
 - Work together for strategic action.

Q&A: Engagement of girls in all their diversity, young people and community members in the design of the programme:

- Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme, West Bengal: started out engaging girls from across the communities in focus group discussions to inform the design of the scheme, and constantly adapting content of the scheme and the programme by engaging girls. As girls graduate out of the programme they act as change agents, becoming mentors for the younger girls and staying engaged in the programme and its implementation.
- PSNP scheme, Ethiopia: Enrolment and recipient selection is a critical part of the process, where girls and different community structures – such as women development groups – are engaged in guiding the selection and inclusion process.

Q&A: Costing of the programmes

- Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme, West Bengal: The programme is based on a smaller annual incentive, paid if the girl remains in school, plus a one-off larger transfer of funds if she is still unmarried when she turns 18.
- PSNP scheme, Ethiopia: The target stipend varies across regions, and is meant to complement household incomes rather than covering all expenses. The amount is regularly assessed, and based on fluctuations in factors like food prices. The scheme is shared at the individual level, so several members of the same family/household can be eligible.

Q&A: Engaging the most at-risk girls, including girls living with disabilities

- Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme, West Bengal: In general, eligibility includes being unmarried, in Class Eight or over and aged 13 or older. Girls living with disabilities are exempt from the condition of being in at least Class Eight, as long she is 13 or older and in some type of school which is linked to the programme. The cash transfer is the only part of the two-pronged strategy currently being adapted to girls living with disabilities, although there is a process of looking at how to also adapt the cash plus part of the scheme.
- PSNP scheme, Ethiopia: The programme targets over 8 million people in the country – including people living with disabilities – who would be eligible based on the selection criteria. Social workers lead on case management, including mapping locally-available resources in different communities, to ensure that girls with unique needs can be linked to relevant and responsive services.

Webinar resources: All webinar resources are available on the [CRANK meeting page](#). These include the meeting agenda, recordings, presentations, research reports and key messages.

Resources shared by CRANK members:

- [Leveraging large scale sectoral programmes to prevent child marriage](#), UNICEF, 2022
- [Resources from Kanyashree scheme West Bengal](#)
- [Impact evaluation of the Integrated Safety Net Programme in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia: Baseline report](#), UNICEF Office of Research, Innocenti, 2020
- [Resources Child Marriage Learning Partners Consortium](#)
- [Community for understanding scale up \(CUSP\)](#)
- **Kimia Ghomeshi, Oxfam Canada:** learning series on lessons learned in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls and child, early and forced marriage in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, and Pakistan (2021-2022):

- [Influencing the influencers](#)
- [Campaigning and advocacy to end child marriage: Case studies from the Philippines and Indonesia](#)
- [Fostering survivor-centered response services](#)
- [What works to advance women's economic empowerment \(WEE\)](#)
- [Centering women's and girls' leadership to combat VAWG and CEFM](#)
- **Katy Chadwick, ActionAid UK:** [Building power together: A girl-led research project 2022](#)
- **Silinganisiwe Dzumbunu, Accelerate hub:** [Multiple impacts of Ethiopia's Health Extension Program on adolescent health and well-being: A quasi-experimental study 2002–2013](#)
- **Emily Seaman, Norwegian Church Aid -** [ENGAGE Programme](#)