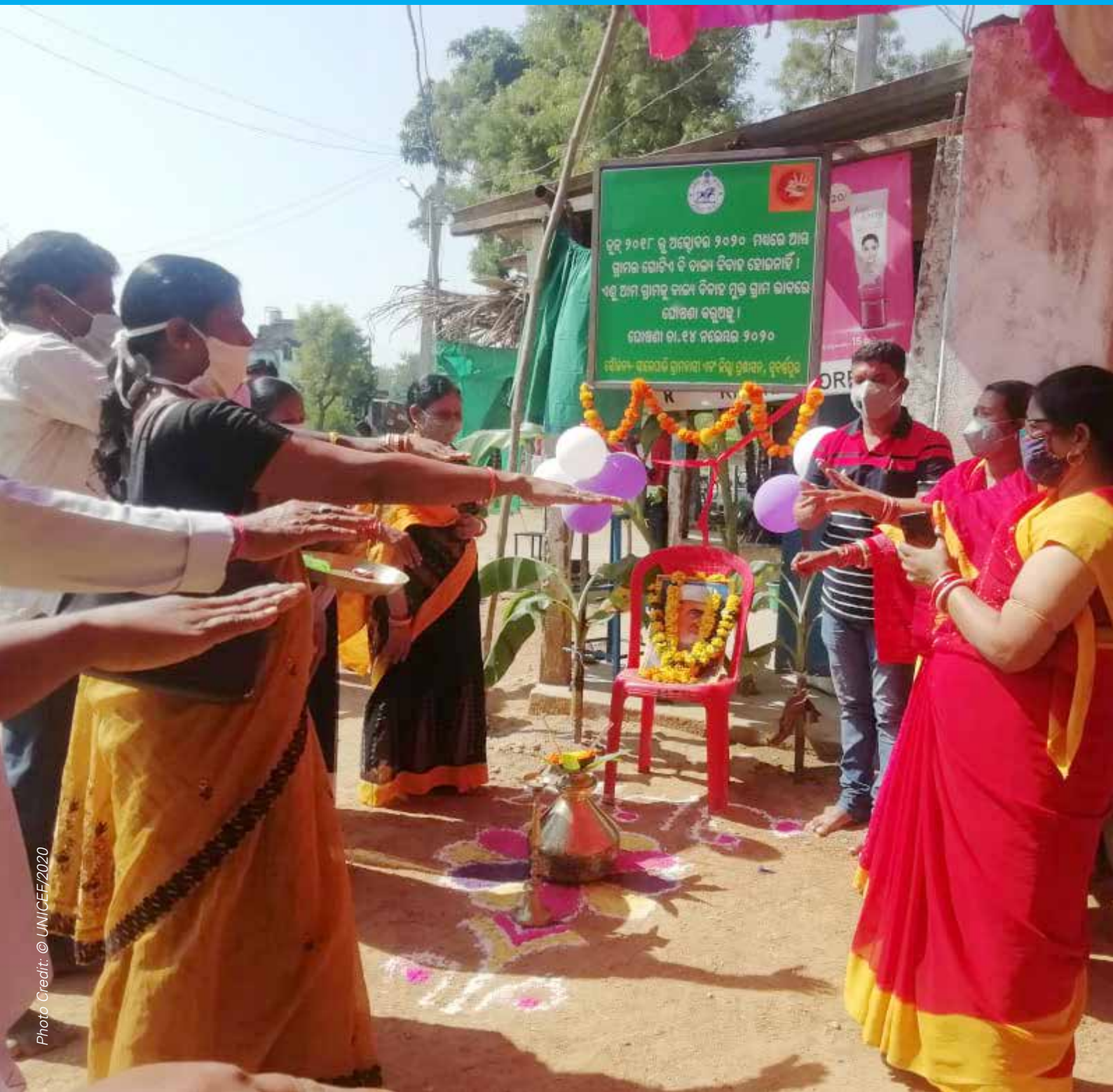


# Child Marriage-free Villages

A community-led programme to end child marriages in Subarnapur





### **Smt. Anu Garg, Principal Secretary DWCD and MS**

The state-level 'Advika – Every girl is unique' programme is a renewed commitment towards the empowerment of adolescent girls through education and life skills. Advika will be a common and coordinated platform for linking all schemes targeted at all adolescent girls of Odisha in the 10-19 years age group, across the State, in and out of school. It is the best example of the highest political commitment towards adolescent empowerment and ending child marriage and all kinds of violence.

The State Strategy Action Plan on ending child marriage rolled out in 2019 is a convergent plan of action for line departments, partner organisations including CSOs, and communities. We have formed a State Steering Committee on ending child marriage under the leadership of WCD department with membership from key line departments such as Home, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Education, Skill Development, Health, Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, and representatives from UNICEF, UNFPA, and Action Aid. System strengthening is imperative for the success of these measures. Along with ending child marriage, the state is committed towards empowering adolescents, especially our young girls, to ensure that they are safe, secure, and have access to all facilities and services.

The State of Odisha gladly recognises the commendable efforts of district administrations towards adolescent empowerment and ending child marriage. Currently, as many as 1,700 villages have been declared child marriage-free by district administrations. I extend my thanks to the district administrations and the entire team. We are committed to ensure a bright future for our adolescents and work towards achieving the SDGs.



### **Shri Aravind Agrawal, IAS, Director DWCD and MS**

Since our State and DWCD&MS are committed to and envision making Odisha child marriage-free by 2030, we are focusing on prevention mechanisms. District-level proactive interventions resulted in more child marriage cases being reported to the State. Frontline workers like AWWs, ASHAs and ANMs along with women's SHGs members are now more vigilant in their communities and many child marriages are being prevented. We have also involved religious leaders, local NGOs, CBOs, youth leaders, adolescent volunteers/collectives etc.

One of the key learnings for the department is that community ownership, working with partners as well as ownership by the local government in taking the campaign to end child marriage forward are invaluable. Secondly, system strengthening in terms of effective functioning of existing structures and mechanisms at various levels in the communities has played a crucial role. Thirdly, preventive measures are equally important to end child marriage.

Hearteningly, as many as 387 child marriages were stopped across Odisha in the COVID-19 lockdown period. Stopping child marriage requires proactive intervention, along with constant follow up with the victims. I encourage all districts to work consistently towards adolescent empowerment and weed out the practice of child marriage under the umbrella of Advika so that our youth can realise their aspirations and contribute to the welfare of our State.



## A. Policy framework for ending child marriage in Odisha

Odisha ranks 13<sup>th</sup> with respect to child marriages in the country, with an average of 21.3 per cent child marriages. Though high, this is a marked improvement from 37.2 per cent a decade ago (National Family Health Survey [NFHS-4]). However, even now, girls continue to face challenges of marrying at an early age in many districts.

Child marriages curb the physical growth of girls and hamper their mental and emotional maturity. Early motherhood puts a girl's own health in peril and severely restricts her opportunities to move ahead in life. Pregnancy at an early age is also one of the main reasons of infant and maternal mortality.

## B. State efforts to empower adolescent girls

The Government of Odisha has launched massive efforts to address the situation of child marriage in the State. It constituted a high-level Committee, under the chairpersonship of the Principal Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), to review the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 and Odisha Prohibition of Child Marriage Rules, 2009, and formulate and roll out the State Strategy to end child marriage.

DWCD and Mission Shakti (MS), Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPR), UNICEF, UNFPA and Mr. Ghasiram Panda are members of this Committee. The Odisha Prohibition of Child Marriage Rules, 2019 were resultantly formulated with specific amendments.

The Committee has wide representation, which includes Departments of Schools and Mass Education, Higher Education, ST and SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes



**21.3% child marriages in Odisha. Marked improvement from 37.2% a decade ago**

Welfare, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Home, Health and Family Welfare, Sports and Youth Services, Skill Development and Technical Education, Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disability and Law. The State also launched a multi-sectoral Strategic Action Plan (2019–24) to ensure coordinated efforts by multiple departments to eliminate child marriage. The High-level Committee tasked district administrations to develop contextualised District Action Plans (DAPs) for smooth implementation of the State Strategic Action Plan.

*'Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls' is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) formulated by the United Nations in 2015. Action towards achievement of this goal would affect the outcomes of the other SDGs. Of the nine target areas of SDG 5, Target Area 3 spells out elimination of harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.*

**The efforts being made by the Government of Odisha are in alignment with SDG 5, to eliminate child marriage from the State in a systematic and time-bound manner.**

Notable efforts by the Government of Odisha after laying this crucial groundwork for ending child marriage have been:

### Regular training of functionaries

More than 5,000 District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs), Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs), Protection Officers (POs) and District Child Protection Officers (DCPOs), One Stop Centre, CHILDLINE staff and supervisors have been trained on an ongoing basis. Even during the COVID-19 period, webinars and online training sessions have been conducted at state and district levels to continue the capacity building efforts across all 30 districts.

<sup>1</sup> Programme Manager at ActionAid



### Issuing guidelines at district, block and panchayat levels

The guidelines mandate the formation of District/Block/Panchayat Level Task Forces on Adolescent Empowerment and Ending Child Marriage. They also provide a clear outline of roles and reporting formats for the Task Forces.

### Launching Advika programme

To maximise the impact of all its schemes across adolescent girls of all ages, the State Government launched the 'Advika' programme on October 11, 2020 on the occasion of International Girl Child Day. This State-wide programme, launched in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA is envisaged as a renewed commitment towards the empowerment of adolescent girls through education and life skills. The programme will serve as a common and coordinated platform for linking all schemes targeted at adolescent girls within the State. It aims at making vibrant and adolescent friendly 'Kishori Diwas' (Saturday sessions) by imparting life skill education to deal with their day-to-day challenges and issues, and creating a space for girls to express themselves and find solutions to their problems. It provides them with the opportunity to become aware and connect with relevant social protection schemes for them and their families.

<sup>2</sup> <https://subarnapur.nic.in/demography/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://rchiips.org/nfhs/FCTS/OR/OR\\_FactSheet\\_392\\_Subarnapur.pdf](http://rchiips.org/nfhs/FCTS/OR/OR_FactSheet_392_Subarnapur.pdf)

### Tiki Mausi Kuhe!

Tiki Mausi, the mascot of DWCD, is a gregarious and empathetic protagonist. She is like a second mother to children. Tiki Mausi has extensive knowledge about issues related to women and children. She loves to talk to people and raise their awareness on key positive social behaviours and practices! The mascot ties together communication efforts around adolescent empowerment and ending child marriage.



## C. Taking forward the mandate of the State Strategic Action Plan in Subarnapur

### Tribal population and vulnerable groups in Subarnapur

Located in western Odisha, Subarnapur has a sizeable population that belongs to socially marginalised and vulnerable communities. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise nearly 25.6 per cent and 9.8 per cent of the population respectively.<sup>2</sup> While several tribal regions in the State are plagued by malnutrition and stunting, 47.5 per cent children under the age of 5 suffered from stunting and 22.3 per cent suffered from wasting. As per NFHS-4, nearly 70 per cent women were anemic.<sup>3</sup>

## Drivers of child marriage in Subarnapur

The data from Subarnapur also revealed that 22.2 per cent women in the age group of 20-24 years are married before completion of 18 years. Many parts of the district, including Tarbha, Sonapur, Ullunda and Birmaharajpur blocks are geographically located in drought-prone areas. As a result, there is a high incidence of distress migration in the region. Castes and tribes such as Kolha, Kandha, Ganda and Sahara, Bhulia, Thanapati (Mali), Kumbhara, Gula, Kansari, Betra are found to be more vulnerable to child marriage.

It has been found that girls from socially and economically marginalised communities in the district are more likely to be at risk of dropping out of school and being married before they turn 18. There are barely 26 per cent women in the district who have had more than ten years of schooling.<sup>4</sup>

## D. Child marriage-free villages, a community-led intervention

Reporting of child marriages in Subarnapur is very low. Only 54 cases were reported between 2015 and 2020. The DAP focuses on mobilising community involvement to report and prevent child marriages in villages in the district.

The district administration in Subarnapur has made systematic efforts to take the State mandate forward. A District Task Force (DTF) was formed to develop an inter-sectoral and convergent DAP by involving all the relevant stakeholders.

The DAP builds on the State Strategic Action Plan and ensures focused efforts at district, block, gram panchayat and village levels. This has supported the administration to synchronise efforts, build alignment and maximise impact.



**22.2% women in the age group of 20-24 years are married before completion of 18 years**

Ensuring the convergence of all liaisoning departments including the health and ICDS departments, the district administration conducts a range of activities including rallies, oath taking ceremonies as well as identifying adolescent champions for the campaign along with other stakeholders such as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Women Self-help Groups (WSHGs), Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs).

Participants in these district-level trainings included district level officials from all line departments including Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs), DCPOs,

### District-level monitoring mechanism

- All activities under the DAP are monitored by the District Collector.
- All line departments have the child marriage programme in their budget provision which is monitored by the district collector.
- A mechanism of interlinking departments has been set up for engaging drop out adolescent girls whose marriages have been prevented.

<sup>4</sup> rchiips.org/nfhs/FCTS/OR/OR\_FactSheet\_392\_Subarnapur.pdf



officials from Police, Health and Education departments, and block level officials. Orientation workshops were also organised for NGOs, women's groups, panchayat leaders, village-level traditional leaders, to ensure their engagement and ownership in efforts to prevent child marriage. UNICEF, in partnership with ActionAid supported the district administration in conducting these trainings. While CDPOs were given the additional charge of a CMPO, a district-wide programme was initiated in 2018 as a campaign to declare villages in Subarnapur 'child marriage-free'.

Enabling and facilitating convergence of district and community stakeholders to end child marriage in Subarnapur district, the programme hinges on community action and understanding to counter the challenge of child marriage.

### Programme approach

Recognising the need to drive change at multiple levels, the Subarnapur DAP outlines roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders and mechanisms for monitoring. The key aspects of the programme include:

- Convergence to provide context-specific solutions to end child marriage
- Sensitisation of key government officials and law enforcement officers at district and block levels during meetings
- Community awareness generation – motivating adolescents, engaging traditional leaders and stakeholders such as temple priests, marriage tent-house owners as well as parents
- Weekly village level meetings, activities and outreach towards declaring them 'child marriage-free'
- Appreciation and felicitation of champions

## What makes 'Child Marriage-free Villages' programme unique?

The 'Child Marriage-free Village' programme originated in Rugudipalli village in Subarnapur after a discussion between Gitanjali Rana, the AWW and Ghasiram Panda. The programme showed great success and the District Collector later gave support. The state then recognised the programme as a best practice and issued a letter to other districts on 12 June 2020 to take similar steps and mobilise communities to take ownership in creating an enabling environment for children, especially girls, towards ending child marriage. A silent revolution began through the concerted efforts of all Collectors and stakeholders like line departments, UN bodies such as UNICEF, UNFPA and civil society organisations like ActionAid as well as district-specific innovative campaigns led by district administrations. After receiving the letter, district administrations started identifying vulnerable pockets/villages and took initiatives to declare villages 'child marriage-free'. The movement has successfully set the stage for reducing and preventing child marriage in the state. **Now 1,635 villages across the state have been declared as 'child marriage-free villages'.**

The strategies adopted by districts included: i) strengthening institutional set up at various levels (ii) community ownership through community-based tracking system (iii) vision building and motivation of key stakeholders and inter-sectoral convergence and (iv) adolescent engagement with promotion of a child-centric advocacy platform.

- **Convergence is the stepping stone:** It is the outcome of convergence among all 12 line departments of the district administration.
- **Multi-stakeholder coordination, engagement and partnership:** It includes development partners such as ActionAid Association and UNICEF, as well as religious and community leaders.
- **Sensitisation of government stakeholders:** Community outreach included sensitisation of staff, law enforcement officers, key government officials at district, block and village level during meetings.
- **Creating awareness in the community:** The programme is aimed at enabling community participation and intervention to stop child marriages. This was carried out by motivating adolescents, engaging traditional leaders and stakeholders such as temple priests, marriage tent-house owners as well as parents.
- **Proper monitoring mechanism:** To ensure maximum outreach, weekly meetings at the village level are organised. All activities and outreach in a village are driven towards declaring it 'child marriage-free' subject to a quarterly review at the district level.
- **Developing a reporting mechanism to track and stop child marriages:** Through a number of activities meant for community outreach and identifying champions, the programme aims to develop a robust mechanism wherein the community reports planned marriages and works towards counselling parents and families to stop them.



Photo Credit: © UNICEF/2020

“Convergence meetings are being organised with line departments at the district level and the District Collector provides leadership. All line departments have taken the responsibility to account for the child marriage-free village programme in their budget provisions.”

**Asteria Kerketta**  
DSWO, Subarnapur

- District level quarterly review of all activities and meetings.

### Key activities

#### Tracking adolescent girls

A village-wise list of adolescent girls (11-18 years) and boys (14-21 years) is prepared through a household survey conducted by AWWs. The list is kept at Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) and also shared at the district level to develop a detailed database of adolescents. The database is used for monitoring programme coverage, mapping

vulnerable children and linking them to social protection schemes.

#### Organising weekly meetings at the village level

Village level meetings are conducted by the Lady Supervisor every week to share information about ongoing actions, harmonise key messages, and collectively address issues. It also serves as a platform to regularly sensitise members over issues related to adolescents and child marriage.

#### Initiating a district-wide campaign ‘Sankalp’

The district administration launched an awareness and oath-taking campaign called Sankalp in September 2019. The campaign

Sankalp means taking an oath to achieve a goal. The campaign motto is that every person must take an oath to prevent child marriage and give every girl child the opportunity to make the best use of resources available to her and choose her own path in life.



envisaged a community-led campaign to spread awareness against the ill-effects of child marriage among families and adolescents.

The district administration identified 43 'vulnerable villages' and formed a "Village level Child Marriage Prohibition Committee" in each village within a week of the identification. The Committee focuses on carrying out outreach activities as planned under the DAP, tracking and monitoring child marriages being conducted and creating awareness about legal provisions against child marriage among parents and adolescents. It also coordinates with district officials on criteria and activities to declare a village 'child marriage-free'.

Through the coordinated efforts of village heads, SHG members, ASHAs and AWWs, regular oath-taking events are organised at the village level where adolescent girls and boys are encouraged to take an oath to end the practice of child marriage. They are also sensitised on issues related to adolescent health during these activities. Parents of

### Members of the Village Committee

- CDPO as CMPO
- Lady Supervisor, ICDS
- PRI member
- Government school teacher
- AWW
- ASHA
- SHG member
- Adolescent girls

adolescent girls are encouraged to join these events.

### Community-led tracking and prevention of child marriages

Through the network of community outreach workers like SHG members, ASHAs and AWWs who conduct home visits and participate in Village Health and Sanitation Committee meetings, school teachers and adolescents, the Village Committee keeps a track of child marriages being organised in the region. Parents and adolescents are counselled about the legal provisions against





child marriage and are encouraged to cancel planned marriages.

### Driving the message home

Home visits are made by ASHAs, AWWs and SHG members to counsel parents on the ill-effects of child marriage. Folk art, wall paintings, formation of human chains, banners and hoardings and conducting rallies are some of the methods used to generate awareness and engage in community dialogue.

### Declaring villages 'child marriage-free' and celebrating success

All outreach activities under the district plan are geared towards declaring a village 'child marriage-free'. The district administration identifies vulnerable pockets and with the support of the Village Committee, works towards ensuring it meets the criteria as drafted in the programme plan.

Successful efforts in preventing child marriage are highlighted by identifying champions of positive behaviour. These champions are recognised and awarded for their efforts in larger forums and include

**"The levels of awareness have increased within the community and we have been getting prior information about child marriages being held. There is also a visible shift in giving priority to education of adolescent girls within the community,"**

**Rakesh Pradhan**

District Consultant, Child Marriage & Adolescent Empowerment

adolescents who approached community workers about their marriages as well as parents who decided to cancel the planned early marriages of their daughters. The narratives of the community and individuals are publicly shared so that they can resonate and motivate others.

## E. Celebrating successes

Of the 43 vulnerable villages identified by the district administration in Subarnapur, seven villages were declared 'child marriage-free' on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti on October 2, 2020 and 11 more subsequently. Earlier in January 2020, Rugudipalli was declared 'child marriage-free' by the district administration. Through the efforts of the CMPO and the Village Committee, these villages did not report a single child marriage in the last two years.

The criteria for a village to be declared 'child marriage-free' include:

- Formation of a village level Child Marriage Prohibition Committee
- One case of child marriage was identified and stopped in the last two years in the vulnerable pockets
- Not a single child marriage took place in these identified villages in the last two years
- List of awareness programmes/activities
- Involvement of PRI members in activities
- A team led by the District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) reviews the facts and



documents submitted by the CMPO and the Village Committee. Following the review and approval, the report is submitted to the DM and Collector-cum-Nodal Officer through the DSWO for confirming that the village is 'child marriage-free'.

## F. Catalysing change

Community workers and district staff testify that the programme has led to greater awareness about the ill-effects of early marriage. Communities are demonstrating increased commitment to support their girls' education and delay marriage. Many parents encouraged their adolescent girls to attend

**"My family was very poor and was not aware about the legal provisions against child marriage. I wanted to study further and not get married. It was only after regular visits from AWW and ASHA workers that they were convinced. My marriage was cancelled and I have undertaken a tailoring course under vocational training,"**

**Sukeshni Rana**

17-year-old adolescent girl  
Rugudipalli GP, Sonapur block

school and adolescents themselves feel motivated to continue their education.

## G. Lessons learnt

One of the key lessons learnt during programme implementation was the need for convergence of all departments and effective coordination at all levels (district, block and village) to implement the initiatives. Forming the village level committees proved effective to anchor the programme on the ground.

While the campaign has managed to make inroads into the community, initially outreach workers and the district administration struggled to gain the confidence and acceptance of parents and the community

**"It has given me confidence in my work and I feel motivated to work on preventing child marriages. It has given me courage to counsel family members who planned the marriage of their children before the legal age."**

**Sarojini Das**

SHG member  
Rugudipalli GP, Sonapur block







Photo Credit: © UNICEF/2020

at large. Initially, parents and community members did not accept the campaign due to pervasive social norms and inadequate knowledge about the negative impact of child marriage. However, regular meetings, counselling and home visits eventually empowered community members to understand the importance of sending girls to schools instead of marrying them young.

## ଠିଆନାଲକୁ ଜିଲ୍ଲାର ପ୍ରଥମ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ ଗ୍ରାମ ଘୋଷଣା

କଟକ, ୧୨/୧୦ (କଟକ) - ଉତ୍ତର ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ଠିଆନାଲ ଗ୍ରାମକୁ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ ଗ୍ରାମ ଘୋଷଣା କରାଯାଇଛି। ଏହି ଘୋଷଣା ପାଇଁ ଠିଆନାଲ ଗ୍ରାମର ସମସ୍ତ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସହଯୋଗ ଓ ସମର୍ଥନ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ଥିଲା। ଏହି ଘୋଷଣା ପାଇଁ ଠିଆନାଲ ଗ୍ରାମର ସମସ୍ତ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସହଯୋଗ ଓ ସମର୍ଥନ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ଥିଲା। ଏହି ଘୋଷଣା ପାଇଁ ଠିଆନାଲ ଗ୍ରାମର ସମସ୍ତ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସହଯୋଗ ଓ ସମର୍ଥନ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ଥିଲା।



## H. The way forward

All districts submitted the process document along with the list of villages declared as 'child marriage-free' by the district administration. In order to recognise the efforts made by district administrations towards ending child marriage, the State is gearing up to incentivise villages declared 'child marriage-free' for the year 2020-21. Besides this, the State is also preparing a State-specific standardised guideline mentioning the criteria and processes to be adhered to for districts to declare 'child marriage-free villages' and panchayats as well.

The district-wide 'child marriage-free village' campaign envisaged by district administrations to prevent child marriage has successfully engaged critical influencers, decision-makers and key stakeholders within communities to achieve tangible results and meaningful change. It has also built capacities at all levels of the administration for effective convergence between departments. The movement has successfully set the stage for reducing and preventing child marriage in the State.

# ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣପୁର ଜିଲାର ୪ ଗାଁ ହେଲା ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହମୁକ୍ତ

ସୋନପୁର, ୧୫/୧୦(ସ.ପୁ): ଶିଶୁ ବିବାହ ଅବରୋଧେ ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣପୁର ଜିଲାର ୪ ଟି ଗାଁକୁ ଚିକା ପ୍ରଶାସନ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ ଘୋଷଣା କରାଯାଇଛି । ଏହାର ସୋନପୁର ସହର ବ୍ଲକ୍ କୋଟରାଲ, ଦିନିବା ବ୍ଲକ୍ ଚାବସି, ଦୁର୍ଗାପାଲି ବ୍ଲକ୍ ସରୋଦାଲି ଓ ଚରଣା ବ୍ଲକ୍ ରଞ୍ଜପୁର ଗାଁକୁ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ ଘୋଷଣା କରାଯାଇଛି । ପୂର୍ବ ବର୍ଷ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଏହି ଗାଁଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ କୌଣସି ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହେଇ ନଥିବାରୁ ଏହି ଗାଁଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଏକାଠି ଘୋଷଣା କରାଯାଇଥିବା ଜଣାଯାଇଛି । ତେବେ କୋଟରାଲରେ ଜିଲାର ମୋତିଶା ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ପ୍ରତିରୋଧ ଚଳାଉଥିବା ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନରେ ଆୟୋଜିତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ଆକାଶ୍-୧୨୨ର ଚଳଣି ସଫଳରେ ଘୋଷଣା ପାଇ, ଚିକା ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ନିରୋଧ ଅଧିକାରୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ପ୍ରଧାନ, ଚିକା ଶିଶୁ ସୁରକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକାରୀ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକାନ୍ତ ଦାସ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହର ବୁଝାବୁଝା, ଶରୀରରେ ଏହାର ବୁଝାବୁଝା ଆଦି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ସହଯୋଗ କରିଥିଲେ । ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣପୁର ଯେ, ଚିକା ପ୍ରଶାସନ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ସହାୟ ନାମରେ ଚିକା ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ

ଅଭିଯାନ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରାଯାଇଛି । ଗାଁ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଚିକା ପ୍ରଧାନ, ଚିକା ଶିଶୁ ସୁରକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକାରୀ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକାନ୍ତ ଦାସ ଏହି ଅଭିଯାନରେ ସାମିଲ କରି ସଚେତନ କରିବା

କିଛି, ସାଧ୍ୟ ପୋଷଣ, ଯୌଷ୍ଠ ବିବାହ ଏବଂ ଉଚିତ୍ତମ ନିମିତ୍ତ ବିଷୟରେ ସାମୁହିକ ଉପଦେଶ ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ବିଭିନ୍ନ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ



ସହ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହର ଉପରୋଧ ହେଉଥିବା ଜିଲାର ମୋତିଶା ପ୍ରଶାସନ ପକ୍ଷରୁ କରି ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ

ଅଭିଯାନ କରାଯାଇଛି । ଗାଁ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଅବରୋଧେ ଜିଲାର ୨ଟି ଗାଁକୁ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ ଘୋଷଣା କରାଯାଇଥିବା ବେଳେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ୪ ଟି ଗାଁକୁ ଘୋଷଣା କରାଯାଇଛି । ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ ବିଷୟରେ ଚିକା ପ୍ରଶାସନ, ଏକାଠି ଏବଂ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କୁ ନିମିତ୍ତ ଭାବରେ ଜିଲାର ଜିଲୋଟା ମାନ୍ୟ ସଚେତନ, କୋଟରାଲ ବ୍ଲକ୍ ଓ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ଗୋଷ୍ଠିର ପାଇଁ ଚିକା, ବ୍ଲକ୍ ଓ ପଞ୍ଚାୟତଗୁଡ଼ାରେ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ରୁକ୍ଷ କରିବା ସହିତ ଚିକା ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ମୁକ୍ତ

**“While preventing child marriage, the girl’s family is typically counselled but we also need to work with the would-be groom’s family and make them understand that they cannot get their son married to an underage girl. This year, we have also roped in events managers like tent organisers, priests and caterers by sensitising them so that they say ‘no’ to those families who are opting for child marriage. The entire approach is multi-pronged and not limited to only one person or institution but all of civil society. People have started realising that child marriage is harmful and has to stop. We will also work with adolescents in a focused way so that they can also come forward and say that “Although our parents want it, we don’t!”. That’s the kind of atmosphere we are trying to create where everybody is free to come forward and talk about and prevent child marriage. Our ICDS mechanism is very active in this. CBOs and nodal officers have also been given all powers, they can stop child marriage, they can call the police and NGOs and they can directly get in touch with me, sub-collectors and other officials.”**

**Monisha Banerjee**  
District Magistrate, IAS, Subarnapur district, Odisha

## Sonepur villages declared ‘child marriage free’

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, Oct 3:** In a first, seven villages out of 43 identified as most vulnerable in terms of child marriage in this district have the prestigious tag of ‘child marriage-free village’.

In past years, the district had reported many cases of child marriages. Waking up to the alarming situation, the district administration took several initiatives to put an end to this evil practice. A movement in the name of ‘Sankalp’ is underway across the district. Under the movement, the administration is taking various steps to sensitise parents about the adverse impact of the early age marriages of their daughters.

Similarly, various programmes have been taken into hands to give the victims of child marriage a better and secured life. The administration has identified 43 villages as most vulnerable villages in terms of child marriage.

The administration’s efforts have finally paid dividends. Seven of the 43 villages have become child marriage-free villages.

On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, the district administration in association with Action Aid and UNICEF declared the villages as free from the heinous practice of marrying off children at a tender age.

The villages which have received the tag for the first time in the district are Janamura of Sonepur block, Salipali of Ulunda block, Jampali of

**ENDING A SOCIAL EVIL**

The villages which have received the tag for the first time in the district are Janamura of Sonepur block, Salipali of Ulunda block, Jampali of Binika block, Gajabandh of Durguripali block, Kheramal of Biramaharajpur block and Surajmund and Bhurad villages of Tarabha block

In past years, the district saw many cases of child marriages. Waking up to the alarming situation, the district administration took several initiatives to put an end to this evil practice. A movement in the name of ‘Sankalp’ is underway across the district with the administration sensitising parents about the adverse impact of the early age marriages of their daughters

Binika block, Gajabandh of Durguripali block, Kheramal of Biramaharajpur block and Surajmund and Bhurad villages of Tarabha block.

Due to the steps the government has been taking for the last two years, these villages have not reported even a single case of child marriage in the period.

Child marriage protection officer (CMPO) Sabita Dora, members

of the child marriage protection committees, teachers and villagers took a pledge not to allow child marriage in their village.

With a view to make all the 43 villages as free from child marriage, another initiative has been taken since July, 2020.

Under this initiative, village level ‘child marriage protection committees’ have been formed at all the villages and every week activities like rallies, meetings and pledge taking events involving girls, youths, villagers, parents and women of SHGs are being organised.

The administration in association with Action Aid and UNICEF has formed task force and taken some more steps to check child marriage in the district, it was learnt.



Department of Women & Child Development and Mission Shakti  
Government of Odisha  
Odisha State Secretariat  
Sachivalaya Marg, Unit 2, Keshari Nagar  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha 751001



UNICEF State Office for Odisha  
Plot No. 44  
Surya Nagar, Unit 7  
Bhubaneswar 751003, Odisha, India  
Tel: +91 0674 2397977, 0674 2397980