

Issues of Early Married Adolescent Girls

IMAGE – Karnataka

Initiatives for **M**arried **A**dolescent **G**irls'
Empowerment
(Action Oriented Research Programme)

Objectives of IMAGE

Overall objective

Empowering Early Married Girls towards Social and Economical Independence by Collectively Involving Govt, CSO's and Community to be responsible in addressing the needs towards sustainability.

Specific Programme Objectives

1. To facilitate available health and social security services to early married girls and prevent from gender based violence & adolescent pregnancy
1. To facilitate increased access for early married girls to secondary education and job-oriented vocational trainings

Certain pocket of villages covered in the Districts

Partner NGO	Districts	No. of Blocks covered	No. of Panchayats covered	No. of EMGs
REACH	Bagalkot	5	36	609
SEVAK	Belgaum	4	18	608
Vidyanikethan	Bidar	1	12	630
PMSR	Chamrajnagar	2	32	630
Manush	Chikballapur	1	11	600
Total		13	109	3077

Issues of EMGs from our experience

Health Issues

1. Around 49.2% of the respondents (1516 nos) reported to have children and most of these mothers are aged 15 years or younger.
2. Only 9.16% of EMGs received Antenatal care services*.
3. Out of 3077 EMGs surveyed, 31 had miscarriage/abortion and 14 faced infant mortality.
4. 49.11% of EMGs are using clothes in an unhygienic manner during menstruation.
5. Only 40% of EMGs had institutional delivery*.
6. 22 EMGs are widowed and 24 are deserted due to separation or divorce

Socio-economic issues

1. Majority of the EMGs (83.6%) do not work and are dependent on the income earned by other members of the family.
2. 4.4% are seasonal worker and 11.5% are wage labourers among the EMGs. Out of those who work, except 3, all earn income less than Rs. 5000 per month.
3. 47% have ration cards. Importantly, only 36.5% have bank accounts showing lack of access to mainstream financial services.
4. 982 girls stopped schooling because of marriage, while the remaining were already out-of-school.
5. 326 girls are still attending school (formal/ non-formal/vocational training)

Psychological, sexual and emotional issues

1. 429 EMGs have faced physical harassment by their husbands and 536 are verbally abused.
2. 286 EMGs were threatened by their husband to be abandoned or kicked out from the house.
3. Their body and mind does not reconcile to the idea of marriage and pregnancy.
4. EMGs invariably experience intense pressure to become pregnant and cannot avoid as they are not sensitised or oriented on birth control.
5. For many of these girls, marriage and resulting pregnancy is the result of sexual coercion and a lack of education.
6. Most of the girls live either with their husbands at in-laws (1691 numbers). Some do live with their parents (527 numbers), with their husbands separately (476 numbers), with husbands at their natal home (367 numbers). It is shocking to note that 5 of the girls are living alone.

Legal Issues

1. In order to protect the child from the legal complication, the medical practitioners and service providers record the age of child above 18.
2. The lack of awareness among the EMGs on the legal procedures, they fail to approach complaint mechanism and legal aid for the gender based violence and other exploitation.
3. As per the new notification in PCMA, these marriages will also be declared as void. It is likely to create further complexities for the EMGs
4. The statuses of EMGs are doubly vulnerable. If brought to the notice of the authority, as per the law of the land!!

To conclude..

Given this dis-empowered situation of the girls married early where all their rights are violated, gender equality & equity remains a dream for them!

At the national level this will be a major deterrent for attaining the SDG!