

# SUPPORT IN COVID TIMES

Stories of COVID Relief and  
Response by IMAGE



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# IMAGE and COVID support

The Initiatives for Married Adolescent Girls Empowerment (IMAGE) works towards the empowerment of married adolescent girls across 15 districts in Karnataka. These girls belong to families living in **poor socio-economic conditions**. During the **COVID pandemic such sections of society are worse affected** than the rest.

To address the issues arising out of COVID and its subsequent lockdown IMAGE provided the families in its project areas with a steady **supply of dry ration and hygiene kits**. Apart from this **awareness** on hygiene and precautionary measures were given through IEC material. Families were also linked to **government social security**. Psychosocial activities such as creative contests were also organised to motivate the girls and spread awareness.

With the lockdown, the early married girls who have worked hard to resume their education were at extreme risk of dropping out of school. To ensure this doesn't happen the project provided them with **access to digital education** by distributing E-tablets to girls with preloaded syllabus. Families were also provided with **income generation activities** to ensure economic support during the crisis.

IMAGE Movement members were also asked to be vigilant in reporting possible cases of child marriage which were on the rise during the lockdown. With the help of the girls, **many marriages were also stopped**.



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stops child exploitation

# KITCHEN GARDENING HELPS SARALA

Seventeen year old Sarala from Belagavi, Karnataka is a mother of three children. Marriage at a young age did not allow her to improve her economic situation.

Coming from a family living in poor socio-economic conditions, Sarala's family was terribly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. She was struggling to afford daily needs items, especially food.

The IMAGE project recognised that a lot of families were in a financial crunch which made it difficult for them to survive as they didn't have access to meals for basic survival. So, the IMAGE team decided to distribute kitchen gardening seeds to these families and help them nurture it.

Sarala received the kitchen garden kits and planted the kitchen garden seeds near her house. The plants grew well and produced many vegetables such as tomatoes, brinjals, pumpkins, ladyfingers, etc. She is happy that during this situation, she and her family are able to consume vegetables

## STORY



and greens while reducing their expenses.

As a mother of three children, she is delighted that her children are consuming fresh and nutritious vegetables during Covid which will help with their growth and strength.

She and her mother-in-law both work together to maintain the kitchen garden plots. The kitchen garden not only provides food security during the crisis but also ensures nutrition which helps boost the family's immunity. Furthermore, the financial burden on the family has been taken off.

She says, "IMAGE has helped me survive during a crisis. Through kitchen gardening I have learnt that we have the ability to take ourselves out from our problems."



# SOCIAL SECURITY FOR SHILPA

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During the COVID 19 pandemic, every family experienced hurdles in feeding their children. When the government urged for a lockdown in the entire state, the situation became too bad and it was difficult for people from poor socio-economic backgrounds to survive.

Shilpa's family was one such which faced hardships during the lockdown. Married at a young age, today the 17 year old Shilpa lives with her baby and husband who has a physical disability.

Her husband works in a small hotel. Before the pandemic, he was able to provide for the family with his income. But as soon as the lockdown was imposed the family was struggling financially as there was no work and no income. While providing relief to villages during lockdown, the IMAGE Team came across Shilpa's family situation and took action to support them immediately.

At first, when the field facilitators approached her husband, he ran away as he thought they would take him to hospital



for a Corona check up. After getting to know the truth, he understood and went to the district office to collect the ration kits.

The ration kits provided them with food security for two months and they were able to manage the family's sustenance in the lockdown. The team also registered them to receive the LPG under the Ujjwala scheme.

Now, the family lives happily and Shipa has started to attend the IMAGE programme with her active participation.

The Field Associates says, "Earlier, Shilpa was not willing to participate in our programme. But after our intervention and support to her family during COVID-19, there is a positive change in her and now she is more enthusiastic to fight against child marriage."



# COMING OUT OF HER CAGE

Sushmita is a nineteen-year-old mother of two children from a small village in South Karnataka. When she was 13 years old and studying in 9th standard, she fell in love with Pradeep who was a tailor from the same village. When her parents got to know about this, they arranged her marriage immediately with Pradeep as a means to protect the honour of the family.

After she got married, reality hit her hard as she had to drop out of her school and was confined to the four walls of her spouse's house. She realised that her freedom and childhood were fading away and she felt trapped.

At 16, she gave birth to a child and her life became even worse because of the added responsibility of household work and a child to look after. In 2018, she was identified and registered as an Early Married Girl (EMG) under the IMAGE project in the Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka state.

She was given awareness on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, Food and Nutrition and was also enrolled for Vocational Training courses. After learning tailoring skills,

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she purchased a sewing machine from her savings and the funds she received from IMAGE. This enabled her to earn Rs. 150- 200 per day.

During COVID -19, Sushmita's family faced a lot of challenges to manage their daily needs. The IMAGE team extended their support by providing her with raw materials needed for sewing masks. With the skills developed in the IMAGE tailoring lessons, she sewed masks for an honorarium of Rs.1500. This helped her generate the much needed income to her family during the economic crisis and distress of COVID-19.

She says, "I got married at an early age and dropped my education due to my immature decisions. The IMAGE project helped me reshape my life. The Vocational training course was very helpful and it helped me during the COVID-19 economic distress too. I was able to earn by stitching masks. Earlier I was trapped, now I am free!"



# E-TAB HELPS POOJA

Pooja is a seventeen-year-old girl who was forcefully married off when she was studying in eighth grade. She decided to not go to school due to her added responsibilities after her marriage. Soon after, she became a mother of two children and took care of household chores.

She was identified as an Early Married Girl (EMG) by IMAGE. Initially, she was not ready to disclose information about her. With frequent visits and the efforts of IMAGE staff, she began to realise the importance of education and decided to write the SSLC exam. They supported her in paying fees and provided books for the exam accordingly.

In 2020, she was scheduled to write her SSLC exam to pass her secondary education. However with the closure of schools due to the pandemic, Pooja was worried that she wouldn't be able to write her exam.

IMAGE then provided her with an E-tablet with preloaded syllabus for her SSLC exam preparation. "After receiving the E-Tab, I was able to prepare for my exam while taking care of

## STORY



my children.", she said.

She further added, "The E tab is comfortable and I feel I am sitting in the classroom in front of teachers. It was a proud moment for my family that I went to Belagavi to take the exam."

Post her result, her husband, Mr Ravichandran said, "This time she was not able to pass all exams, but I will support her to give an exam next year too and I hope she passes all subjects."

Pooja never thought she would find the need to hold a pen and paper in her hand after her marriage. With the help of IMAGE she has not only begun to value education but has also begun to work with digital tools for learning.

"I thank IMAGE for supporting me in a crisis period. The E-tab ensured that I could attempt my SSLC exam.", she said.



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# SAVING SUDHA

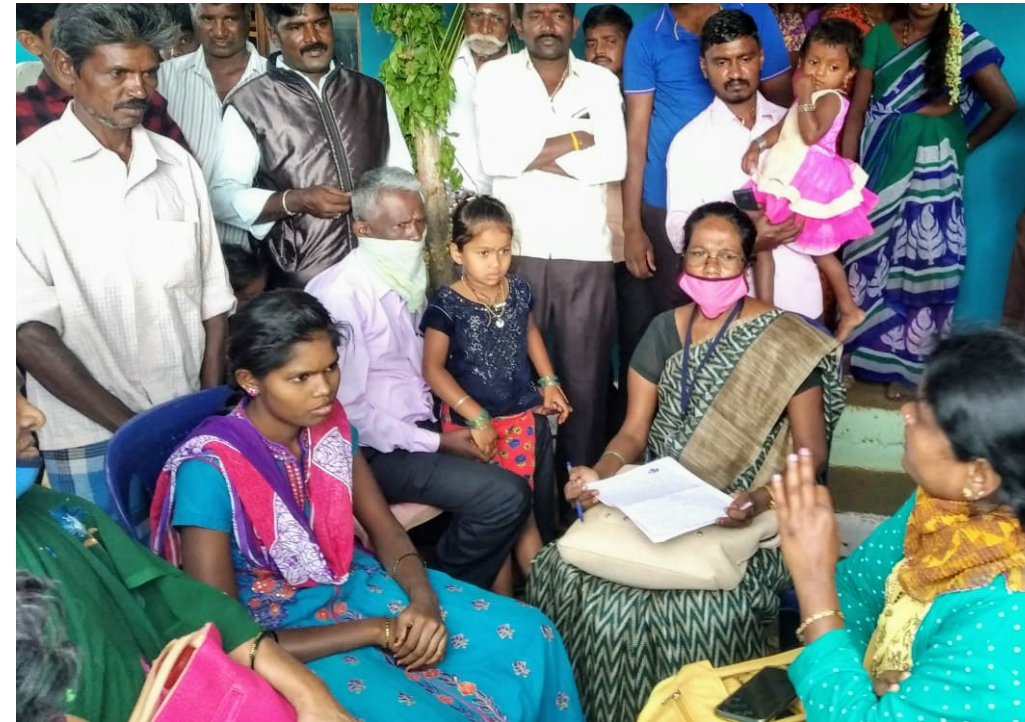
When the coronavirus pandemic hit, fifteen-year-old Sudha was scared. During the lockdown, her parents had decided to get her married to a thirty-eight-year-old divorcee.

“ I did not want to get married. I was forced as my parents had financial problems”, she said.

Sudha parents are daily wage labourers. Hailing from a poor family, Sudha was sent to work in a cotton textile mill at the age of twelve as her parents needed money to pay back the loan taken for her older sister’s wedding, who was also a child when she was married. As a result, Sudha had to drop out of school.

With the COVID-19 lockdown began, Sudha returned to her village. The family had no means to earn. When the proposal came, the family decided to perform the wedding as soon as possible as the boy’s family were willing to bear all the

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expenses. Although Sudha’s parents knew that child marriage is prohibited, they still scheduled it on June 14, 2020. They thought that they would not be caught on a Sunday during the COVID-19 lockdown and it would be an opportunity because the Child Rights Officers/ Police would not be on duty.

To their surprise, the team did arrive during the wedding. A day before the wedding, an anganwadi teacher from the village informed a project field staff from Terre des Hommes Netherlands’ implementing partner about the child marriage being planned. The field staff from People’s Movement for Self Reliance (PMSR) called the Child Helpline and the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) from the Government along with the head of the Local Panchayat (local government).

The next morning, the Police reached the wedding venue along with the officers and warned the family of the legal action that would be taken against them. The wedding was stopped and Sudha was happy as she would no longer be married as a child. She was asked to be present at the Child Welfare Committee a few days later for a follow up.

“I’m extremely relieved now”, said Sudha.



# PARTNERS

## LEAD PARTNER



## CONSORTIUM PARTNERS



ENSURING  
COVID CRISIS  
SUPPORT

