

# Child Marriage

## **What is Child Marriage?**

Child marriage refers to the union where one or both parties involved are below the age of 18. It is a harmful practice that violates the rights of children, particularly girls, and undermines their health, education, and well-being. Child marriage often deprives children of their childhood and exposes them to risks of early pregnancy, domestic violence, and limited opportunities for personal development.

## **Legal Framework:**

Laws have been enacted to address child marriage and provide legal protections for children. In India, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, prohibits the solemnization of child marriages and prescribes penalties for those involved in facilitating or promoting such marriages. Additionally, various state governments have implemented initiatives to raise awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage and promote education and empowerment for girls.

## **Recognizing Child Marriage:**

Child marriage can take place in various cultural, religious, and socioeconomic contexts. It often involves coercion, pressure, or manipulation of young girls and boys into entering into marriage before they are physically, emotionally, or mentally prepared. It's essential to

recognize the signs of child marriage and take proactive measures to prevent and address this harmful practice.

### ***Roadmap to Prevention: Combating Child Marriage***

#### **Recognition and Understanding:**

Recognize that child marriage is a violation of children's rights and a form of gender-based violence. Understand the harmful consequences of child marriage on children's health, education, and overall well-being.

#### **Documentation and Evidence Gathering:**

Document instances of child marriage in your community, including the age of the individuals involved, the circumstances of the marriage, and any associated risks or harms. Collect information on the prevalence of child marriage and its impact on children and families.

#### **Seek Support and Guidance:**

Reach out to local authorities, community leaders, and child protection agencies for support and guidance in addressing child marriage. Seek advice from NGOs, advocacy groups, and legal experts specializing in children's rights and gender equality.

#### **Reporting and Filing a Complaint:**

Report suspected cases of child marriage to the appropriate authorities, such as child protection agencies, law enforcement agencies, or child

helplines. File a formal complaint and provide all relevant information and evidence to initiate an investigation.

### **Seeking Legal Remedies:**

Advocate for the enforcement of existing laws and policies prohibiting child marriage. Support efforts to provide legal aid and assistance to children at risk of or affected by child marriage. Promote access to education, healthcare, and social services for child marriage survivors.

### **Collaboration and Cooperation:**

Collaborate with government agencies, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and community members to raise awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage and promote alternative pathways for children's development. Engage in community-based initiatives to prevent and address child marriage through education, empowerment, and advocacy.

### **Self-Care and Well-Being:**

Prioritize the well-being and safety of children at risk of or affected by child marriage. Provide access to support services, including counseling, healthcare, and shelter, to help children recover from the trauma and rebuild their lives.

### **Stay Informed and Empowered:**

Stay informed about the root causes of child marriage and the factors contributing to its perpetuation. Educate yourself and others about the

importance of protecting children's rights and promoting gender equality to prevent child marriage and empower children to fulfill their potential.

### **Advocacy and Change:**

Advocate for policy reforms, investment in education and social services, and community-based interventions to prevent and address child marriage. Raise awareness about the detrimental effects of child marriage on children's rights and advocate for comprehensive strategies to address its underlying causes.

### **Persistence and Resilience:**

Recognize that combating child marriage requires sustained effort, resilience, and solidarity. Stand up against harmful practices and discriminatory norms that perpetuate child marriage. Support children's agency and autonomy to make informed choices about their lives and futures.

### ***Summary:***

Child marriage is a harmful practice that violates children's rights and perpetuates cycles of poverty, gender inequality, and social injustice. By recognizing the signs of child marriage, advocating for legal and social change, and empowering children to realize their rights, we can prevent child marriage and create a safer, more equitable world for all children. Through collective action and community engagement, we can work towards ending child marriage and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive and fulfill their potential.

