**Call for inputs on the issues of child, early and forced marriage (for onward transmission to OHCHR)**

With reference to the received document “WHRGS/GA/RES/75167”, the inputs in response to the “Call for submission for two reports on the issue of child, early and forced marriage” as required by OHCHR are as under:

**I. A comprehensive report to the General Assembly on progress made towards ending CEFM, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:**

**General context:**

 ***1. What measures have been taken to implement the recommendations of the last report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (A/75/262)?***

With reference to the last report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (A/75/262), the key recommendations implemented are as under:

i) The minimum age for marriage in India is already 18 years as per the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

ii) There are no discriminatory provisions existing in the country that require legislative measures to be introduced for addressing such issues.

iii)The measures to promote the access to education, sexual and reproductive healthcare services include the schemes such as BetiBachao, BetiPadhao; Right to Education Act, SABLA Scheme, SwadharGreh, et cetera.

iv) Strengthening and facilitating access to protective mechanisms and services, including legal services, safe accommodation and psychological support include the Mahila Police Volunteers Scheme, the SwadharGreh Scheme, NariNiketan trust, Ujjwala Scheme, et cetera (mentioned in detail with reference to the 5th question of this report).

v) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006) ensures that the girls who are

 in informal unions enjoy the same level of protection as girls in child

 marriages.
vi)National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that 785 cases were

 registered across the country under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in

 2020.
vii) National Human Rights Commission had organized two conferences on

 Child Marriage in January and August, 2018, collaborating with the

 significant stakeholders for better track of such cases and for the dynamics

 of child marriage to be deliberated upon.

The detailed provisions are mentioned in the below mentioned answers as applicable.

***2. What legislative actions have you taken to address the root causes of child, early and forced marriage? Any examples of legislation enacted, beyond the minimum age of marriage, such as laws repealing or amending provisions that enable perpetrators of rape, sexual abuse or abduction to be exempted from prosecution and punishment by marrying their victims?***

The legislative actions taken so far to address the root causes of child, early and forced marriage are as under:

i) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:

With a view to restrain solemnization of marriage of minor children, initially, Child Marriage Restraint Act was enacted in 1929. This Act though restrains the solemnization of child marriage but did not declare them to be void or invalid. The NHRC undertook a comprehensive review of the then existing Act and in its annual report 2001-2002, recommended for comprehensive amendments. To give effect to recommendations, The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 was enacted and as per Section 3, child marriage is voidable at the option of contracting party being a child. Section 12 of the Act declares the marriage to be void in certain circumstances like marriage by force, compulsion, or deceitful means. As per the Act, ‘child’ means a person who, if a male, has not completed 21 years of age and if a female, has not completed 18 years of age.
This Act is armed with enabling provisions to prohibit child marriage, protect and provide relief to victim and enhance punishment for those who abet, promote or solemnize such marriage.

* Whoever, being a male adult above eighteen years of age, contracts a child marriage shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees or with both.
* Whoever performs, conducts or directs or abets any child marriage shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to two years and shall be liable to fine which may extend to one lakh rupees.
* On an application of the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer or on receipt of information through a complaint or otherwise from any person, a Judicial Magistrate of the first class or a Metropolitan Magistrate shall issue an injunction against any person including a member of an organisation or an association of persons prohibiting such marriage.
* The Court of the Judicial Magistrate of the first class or the Metropolitan Magistrate may also take suo motu cognizance on the basis of any reliable report or information.
* An offence punishable under this Act shall be cognizable and non-cognizable.

ii) Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:

In order to effectively address the heinous crimes of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children through less ambiguous and more stringent legal provisions, the Ministry of Women and Child Development championed the introduction of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. The Act is a comprehensive law enacted with the objective of protecting children from a slew of sexual offences like sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography while safeguarding the interests of the child at every stage of the judicial process by introducing a child-friendly mechanism for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and speedy trial of offences through special courts.

iii) Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015:

This Act deals with the law relating to juveniles in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection, by providing for proper care, protection and treatment by catering to their development needs and by adopting a child-friendly approach in the adjudication and disposition of matters in the best interest of children and for their ultimate rehabilitation through various institutions established under the Act.

iv) The Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005:

This Act provides for the constitution of a National Commission and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights and Children's Courts for providing speedy trial of offences against children or of violation of child rights and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

v) Entitlement to Legal Services:

* Children are the beneficiaries of legal services under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Act was enacted to constitute legal services authorities for providing free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.
* Under section 12 (c) of Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, a child who has to file or defend a case is entitled to legal services. Therefore, it is the duty of various State Legal Service Institutions to provide free legal aid and work towards speedy disposal of cases.
* In this background, the Scheme has been drawn up for the legal services institutions (State Legal Services Authorities, District Legal Services Authorities, Taluk Legal Services Committees, High Court Legal Services Committees, Supreme Court Legal Services Committee) to be followed while they deal with legal services to the children.
* This Scheme has been called National Legal Services Authority (Child Friendly Legal Services to Children and their Protection) Scheme, 2015.

vi) The National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC), 2016:

This outlines the importance of children, and sets out measures to ensure their rights to survival, development, protection and participation. Further, the prevention of child marriage and protection of the girl child is a prominent subject of the National Plan of Action for Children, 2016.

vii) On December 16, 2021, the Union Cabinet approved a proposal to raise the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21, based on the recommendations of a NITI Aayog task force. On December 20, the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, was introduced in the Lok Sabha. It has been sent to a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, for further deliberations and making recommendations. According to the Bill, a child is defined as “a male or female who has not completed 21 years of age”.

viii) Judicial Pronouncements

1. Lajja v. State

The Delhi High court held that the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) prevails over personal laws.

1. Independent Thought v. Union of India

In the landmark judgement; the Supreme Court of India on 11th October 2017 ruled that sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his minor wife would amount to rape for the purposes of Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. The Court has read down Exception 2 to Section 375 which reads Sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being below 15 years of age, is not rape to hold that sexual activity with a minor would constitute rape and the exception will not be applicable in cases where the wife is between the ages of 15-18.

1. P. Venkataraman v. State

The only consequence of child marriage is that persons concerned are liable for the punishment under sec18 of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and a decree of divorce is liable to be given to the parties, if they wish so.

1. T. Sivakumar v. The Inspector of Police, Thiruvallur Town Police Station, Thiruvallur District

In the judgment, a Full Bench, comprising Justices K.N. Basha, T. Sudanthiram and S. Nagamuthu, said that the adult male in a child marriage would not be the natural guardian of the female child. This was in view of the implied repealing of section 6 (c) of the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act. Earlier, the father of a minor girl filed a habeas corpus petition seeking a direction to the Tiruvallur Town police station to secure his daughter aged 17 years from the illegal custody of a person, produce her before the court and hand her over to him.

When the matter came up before a Division Bench, the minor girl appeared and filed an affidavit that she had fallen in love with a person and married him in July this year. After considering the rival submissions, the Bench directed that the girl be kept in a government's children's home.

It referred the matter to a Full Bench to decide the questions, including whether a marriage of a person with a female of less than 18 years could be said to be a valid marriage and the custody of the girl be given to the husband, and whether a minor could be said to have reached the age of discretion and, thereby, walk away from the lawful guardianship of her parents and refuse to go in their custody.

In a habeas corpus petition, while granting custody of a minor girl, the court should consider the paramount welfare including the minor girl's safety notwithstanding the legal right of the persons who sought custody.

***3. What measures have you adopted to support girls that are already married or in informal unions?***

i) Under the provision of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, the court can order for the girl to be provided a safe home to reside in and an amount in lieu of maintenance from the time of the annulment of marriage till her remarriage.

ii) Legal Service Committee provide help and various schemes exist for their welfare.

iii) UNICEF and UNFPA have joined forces through a Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, where for the first time existing strategies in areas such as health, education, child protection, nutrition and water and sanitation have been brought together to address child marriage in a holistic manner. The approach is to address child marriage through the entire lifecycle of a child especially by addressing persisting negative social norms which are key drivers for the high prevalence of child marriage in India. The programme works in partnership with governments, civil society organizations and young people themselves and adopts methods that have proven to work at scale.

***4. What actions do you take to support girls and women affected or at risk of child, early and forced marriage; especially those who have fled such a marriage or whose marriage has dissolved, and to support widowed girls or women who were married as girls?***

The girls and women affected or at risk of child, early and forced marriage, and the widowed girls or women who were married as girls can take advantage through the following schemes in order to be protected under the provisions laid down by the government:

i) To support girls and women affected or at risk of child, early and forced marriage, the Government has implemented the *Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)–‘Sabla*’, a Centrally-sponsored scheme in 205 districts selected from all the States/UTs. The scheme Sabla aims at empowering Adolescent Girls (AGs) (11-18 years) through nutrition, health care and life skills education. Nearly 100 lakh adolescent girls per annum are expected to be benefitted under the scheme.

ii) Under the Scheme *Swadhar Greh* (by Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015), shelter homes are set up in every district with capacity of 30 women with the following objectives:

a) To cater to the primary need of shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care of the women in distress and who are without any social and economic support.

b) To enable them to regain their emotional strength that gets hampered due to their encounter with unfortunate circumstances.

c) To provide them with legal aid and guidance to enable them to take steps for their readjustment in family/society.

d) To rehabilitate them economically and emotionally. e) To act as a support system that understands and meets various requirements of women in distress.

f) To enable them to start their life afresh with dignity and conviction

iii) *The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act* or Right to Education Act (RTE), is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted on 4 August 2009, which describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution.

iv) In 2015, the Indian government introduced the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP)* scheme to address concerns of gender discrimination and women empowerment in the country. The name *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*translates to ‘Save the girl child, educate the girl child’. The scheme aims to educate citizens against gender bias and improve the efficacy of welfare services for girls. It was launched with an initial funding of Rs. 100 crore (US$ 13.5 million).

v) *Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan* (Campaign against Child Marriage):

In 2005 a nationwide awareness-raising programme against child marriage was started by the National Commission for Women. It focused particularly on the states of Rajasthan, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, where such marriages were prevalent.

vi) *Dhan Laxmi Yojana:* In 2009, the MWCD introduced a pilot scheme (Dhanalakshmi) in selected backward districts of the country, as a conditional cash transfer scheme providing cash to the family of the girl child (preferably the mother) on fulfilling certain conditionalities for the girl child, such as birth registration; immunisation; enrolment retention in school; and delaying the marriage age beyond 18 years. The scheme also included a sub-component for providing insurance cover to the girl child.

State governments too have launched conditional cash transfer schemes. Rajasthan had launched the Raj Lakshmi Scheme in 1992, Haryana initiated Apni Beti, Apna Dhan – ABAD scheme (My Daughter, My Pride) in 1994. Karnataka launched the Bhagyalaxmi Scheme in 2004. In 2005 and 2006, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh too launched the Ladli Yojana and the Ladli Laxmi Yojana, respectively.

***5. What measures are in place to facilitate access by girls and women at risk and for already married girls and women to protective mechanisms and services, including legal services, safe accommodation and psychosocial support?***

The existing measures and schemes to facilitate access by girls and women at risk and for already married girls and women to protective mechanisms and services, including legal services, safe accommodation and psychosocial support are as under:

i) The Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) Scheme is in practice by the Ministry of Women and Child Development from 2016. MPVs are envisaged to act as a link between police and the community and facilitate women in distress. MPVs serve as a public-police interface in order to fight crime against women and report incidents of violence against women such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment and violence faced by women in public spaces.

ii) The Swadhar Greh Scheme was actualized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2015. The scheme envisions a supportive institutional framework for women victims of difficult circumstances so that they could lead their life with dignity and conviction. It envisages that shelter, food, clothing, and health as well as economic and social security are assured for such women. It also envisions that the special needs of these women are properly taken care of and under no circumstances they should be left unattended or abandoned which could lead to their exploitation and desolation.

The scheme includes legal services, vocational training, medical facilities and counselling.

iii) Nari Niketan Trust, a non-profit and non-governmental organization works towards the welfare of abandoned, destitute and underprivileged children. It runs an orphanage that facilitates both national and inter-country adoptions, and is a home for abandoned children in Jalandhar, Punjab. It also runs a school for underprivileged children, arranges vocational training courses, and manages Childline, an initiative for children in distress.

iv) National Repository of Information for Women (2014) - NARI portal is an initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development to provide women citizens with easy access to information on government schemes and initiatives for women.

v) The government has established the Central Victim Compensation Fund (CVCF) with an initial corpus of Rs 200 crores to assist victims of rape, acid attacks, human trafficking, which also takes place under the guise of marriage and women killed or injured in cross-border firing.

vi) Ujjwala: A Comprehensive Scheme, launched in 2016, for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-Integration of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

One of its objectives is “to provide rehabilitation services both immediate and long-term to the victims by providing basic amenities/needs such as shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment including counselling, legal aid and guidance and vocational training”.

viii) Under the Juvenile Justice Act(2015), there are provisions for four different types of homes for the children (depending upon the different provisions and needs to be addressed), namely, observation home, special home, children homes and open shelters for safe accommodation when needed.

1. The State Government shall establish and maintain in every district or a group of districts, either by itself or through voluntary or non-governmental organisations, *observation homes,* which shall be registered under section 41 of this Act, for temporary reception, care and rehabilitation of any child during the pendency of any inquiry under this Act.
2. The State Government may establish and maintain either by itself or through voluntary or non-governmental organisations, *special homes*, which shall be registered as such, in the manner as may be prescribed, in every district or a group of districts, as may be required for rehabilitation of children there by an order of the Juvenile Justice Board made under section 18.
3. The State Government may establish and maintain, in every district or group of districts, either by itself or through voluntary or non-governmental organisations, *Children’s Homes*, which shall be registered as such, for the placement of children in need of care and protection for their care, treatment, education, training, development and rehabilitation.
4. The State Government may establish and maintain, by itself or through voluntary or non-governmental organisations, as many *open shelters* as may be required, and such open shelters shall be registered as such, in the manner as may be prescribed.

***6. What progress is made in gathering data disaggregated by sex/gender, age, geographical location, socioeconomic status, disabilities, educational level and other factors, in particular on the situation of already married girls and girls in informal unions?***

In India, a census is collected every 10 years in the form of disaggregated data, containing sex/gender, age, geographical location, socioeconomic status, disabilities, educational level and other factors, (the last census done in 2011). The next census which was due in 2021 got postponed due to Covid pandemic and will be held in the current year.

As per the Census 2011, the median age of marriage for women increased from 18.2 (Census, 2001) to 19.2 years, and for boys this increased from 22.6 (Census 2001) to 23.5 years.

As per the National Family Health Survey(NFHS)-5, done during the year 2019-2021, the percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were married before age 18 years is 23.3 as compared to 26.8 as observed in NFHS-4(2015-2016). The percentage of men aged 25-29 years, married before the age of 21 years (%) is 17.7 as compared to 20.3 as observed in the previous survey report. Also, the percentage of women aged 15-19 years who were already mothers is 2 as compared to 2.2 in the previous survey report.

National Crime Research Bureau maintains the record.

***7. What research has been conducted on married girls, including widow girls and women, and whose husbands have left them to fight or seek refuge internally or across borders, or who have been detained or disappeared?***The relevant researches and efforts on this issue are laid down as:

1. NHRC, India carried out collaborative research project in this regard which is:
A research study on “Sexual Health and Reproductive Health Rights in India-Country Assessment’ conducted by SAMA Resource Group for Women and Health & Partners for Law in development (PLD), New Delhi in 2018.

As a first national inquiry, this report seeks to elaborate the priority concerns are necessary for realisation of sexual health in the context of India.
(The research study report can be accessed at <https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/sexual_health_reproductive_health_rights_SAMA_PLD_2018_01012019_1.pdf>)
Some of its recommendations are:
a. Strengthen compliance, in a time-bound manner, with international human rights standards that India has endorsed that protect, promote, and fulfill human rights and reproductive health rights in India.

b. Review standards and conventions that India has had reservations about or those that have been poorly implemented in the country.

c. Guarantee non-discrimination and access to comprehensive information on laws, policies, and programmes, as well as reproductive health care for ALL regardless of age, marital status, ethnicity, work status, caste, religion, disability, gender, etc.

d. Review compliance to international human rights instruments, goals and standards; review and incorporate recommendations towards national indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are relevant to reproductive health rights.

e. Amend all coercive, discriminatory, gender-biased, target based reproductive health related laws, policies and their implementation to ensure ethical, comprehensive and universal reproductive health care.

f. Remove all conditionality for accessing treatment from public or private healthcare facilities.

1. NHRC organized a Regional Conference on Child Marriage in January, 2018 at Bhubaneswar. The objective of this Regional Conference was to spread awareness about the menace of child marriage, which is not only against the law but also a violation of the child’s human rights. In the Conference, all the stakeholders deliberated upon the areas of vital concerns, challenges and measures to prevent child marriages. Various recommendations emerged after panel discussions that were sent to the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

The major recommendations are:

i) States should design the State Strategic Plan and Action plan to address the menace of child marriage;

ii) inclusion of child related laws in schools’ curricula,

iii) inclusion of mandatory reporting of the child marriage in the Act;

iv) establishment of dedicated children’s courts, etc.

C. Thereafter, the Commission organized a National Conference Child Marriage in August, 2018, which saw participation from 10 States. The major recommendations that emerged from the conference were:

i) to make all marriages below 16 years age to be ‘void’ and between 16-18 years to be ‘voidable’ through amendment of the  Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006;

ii) the term ‘Compulsory education’ under RTE Act, 2009 Act may be extended up to the age of 18 years and completion of Senior Secondary Education i.e. till Class 12 instead of 14 years and completion of elementary education at present;

iii) in-depth research to understand the underlying causes of social and cultural factors contributing to child marriage and develop a uniform Common Minimum Programme to combat child marriage; registration of marriages to be made compulsory, etc.

D. NHRC has issued advisories during COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Two of them, concerning the issues are:

1. *Advisory on Rights of Women*

One of the relevant recommendations is: Ensure support and care through a dedicated campaign by local authorities such as the District Child Protection Units (DCPU) to identify and support adolescents due to risk of early marriage due to pandemic.

A link to access the advisory is as under:
https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Advisory%20on%20Rights%20of%20Women.pdf

1. *Advisory for Protection of the Rights of Children*

An important recommendation is: Strengthen Community-Based Action and Oversight

“Develop mechanisms involving child protection committees and village vigilance committees, to ensure convergence of entitlements specific to COVID-19 and ensuring children's protection by tracking violations such as child trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation and child marriage. Activating and monitoring of Village Level Child Protection Committees (VLCPC) must be ensured, as also the District Child Protection Units (DCPU)”.
A link to access the advisory is as under:
https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/NHRC%20Advisory%20on%20Children.pdf

*E.* NHRC has released a book on CEDAW in 2021.The book is an analytical study of the CEDAW and the Indian Constitution, Legislations, Schemes, Policies, and Judgements. Its sixth chapter, CEDAW A. 9, 15 & 16 - ‘Marriage, Family and Legal Rights’ deals with different age of brides and bridegrooms in different legislatures, mother not being given the status of guardian, child marriage, et cetera.
The book can be accessed using the link as:
[*https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Women%E2%80%99s%20Rights%20in%20India%20complete\_compressed.pdf*](https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Women%E2%80%99s%20Rights%20in%20India%20complete_compressed.pdf)

*F.* As per JJ Act 2015, Special Juvenile Police Unit is working in the States for protection of the rights of children in need of care and protection.

Hence Child Friendly Procedures in police stations would play an important role in better delivery of services as it would ensure a child friendly environment in a police station where a child can communicate without any fear.”

***8. Please share any examples of national reports on CEFM submitted to relevant international treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review, and national voluntary reviews conducted through the high-level political forum on sustainable development?***

*HAQ: The India: Child Rights Index developed by HAQ: Centre for Child Rights* shows that the top five states with the highest GDPs rank low on child marriage and the best performing states in child marriage are Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, which are amongst the lowest GDP states of India.

Indian states with a high proportion of girls getting married below age 18 are Bihar (46 percent), West Bengal (41 percent), Rajasthan (40 percent), Jharkhand (36 percent), Uttar Pradesh (33 percent), Madhya Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Andhra Pradesh (29 percent). In these nine states more than one-fourth of the girls are married before they are 18 years old and it is more than the national average. In 16 states, less than or equal to one tenth of the girls are married below 18 years; these states are Himachal Pradesh, Lakshadweep, Goa, Chandigarh, Pondicherry, Daman and Diu, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Manipur, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Mizoram. Despite Himachal Pradesh and Kerala having high female literacy, the levels of child marriage are noticeably high. Over 45,000 child marriages, bulk of them from the Muslim community, are reported to have occurred in Kerala since 2001.

**In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:**

***9. Please share data and evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the trend of child, early and forced marriage.***

 Due to the pandemic, girls from poor families are more likely to marry before the age of 18 than girls from wealthier families. Families who are struggling economically often see the short-term ‘value’ of their daughters’ marriages as a way of lifting their own financial burden.

 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data found a sharp jump in child marriages during the Covid-hit 2020. Records show that 785 cases were registered across the country under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2020, the highest in Karnataka at 184, followed by Assam at 138, West Bengal at 98, Tamil Nadu at 77 and Telangana at 62.

 In 2019, 523 cases were registered under the act, while in 2018, 501 cases were lodged. About 50 per cent rise in the cases of child marriages has been recorded in 2020 over the previous year, which does not only mean there has been an increase in these instances but that there also has been a rise in reporting.

 Between March and June 2020, [Childline India](https://www.childlineindia.org/), an organisation helping children in distress, intervened in [5,584 child marriages](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/govt-intervened-to-stop-over-5584-child-marriage-during-coronavirus-induced-lockdown/articleshow/76661071.cms). When the lockdown eased in June and July, child marriages spiked, marking a 17% increase over the previous year.

***10. What measures are taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on girls and women survivors of CEFM and at risk? For instance, have you continued or enhanced provision of protection and support services for survivors of gender-based violence, and adapted essential health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services?***

i) Measures taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on girls and women survivors of CEFM and at risk: The NHRC assures proper implementation of such schemes by issuing Advisories and deciding complaints.

* 1. *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)*:

Under PMGKAY, the government provides 5 kg of food grain per person per month to 793.9 million beneficiaries. These recipients are covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013 and therefore also receive subsidised cereals every month. The PMGKAY was meant to provide higher quantities of food handouts during the pandemic. It was launched in March 2020 for the April-June 2020 period, but is extended until March 2022.

b. *Direct Benefit Transfer or DBT* is an attempt to change the mechanism of transferring subsidies launched by the Government of India on 1 January 2013. This program aims to transfer subsidies directly to the people through their bank accounts. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of lockdown and social distancing norms, DBT emerged as a boon in providing succour and relief to millions of citizens whose livelihood was impacted. DBT played a major role in sustaining life especially of the under-privileged segments of the society impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, helping millions in providing immediate relief in tiding over the turbulent period.

ii) NHRC has issued advisories during COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Two of
 them, concerning the issue are:

1. *Advisory on Rights of Women*

One of the relevant recommendations is: Ensure support and care through a dedicated campaign by local authorities such as the District Child Protection Units (DCPU) to identify and support adolescents due to risk of early marriage due to pandemic.
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An important recommendation is: Strengthen Community-Based Action and Oversight

Develop mechanisms involving child protection committees and village vigilance committees, to ensure convergence of entitlements specific to COVID-19 and ensuring children's protection by tracking violations such as child trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation and child marriage. Activating and monitoring of Village Level Child Protection Committees (VLCPC) must be ensured, as also the DCPU.

A link to access the advisory is as under:
<https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/NHRC%20Advisory%20on%20Children.pdf>

iii) NHRC has published a *booklet on “Child Labour and Child Marriage”*
 in 2020, in order to spread awareness about the issue.
 The contents include a detailed explanation of the Prohibition of Child
 Marriage Act, voidable and void marriages, the provision of Child
 Marriage Prohibition Officers, and the Penalties that can occur as a
 result of a child marriage.

iv) *One Stop Centre*:

Ministry of Women and [Child Development](https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/women-and-child-development/child-development-1/child-development) (MWCD) has formulated a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for setting up One Stop Centre, a sub - scheme of Umbrella Scheme for National Mission for Empowerment of women including Indira Gandhi Mattritav Sahyaog Yojana. Popularly known as Sakhi, the scheme has been implemented since 1st April 2015. These Centres are being established across the country to provide integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces in a phased manner.