

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UN- STARRED QUESTION NO. 3372
TO BE ANSWERED ON 08.08.2025

CHILD MARRIAGES

3372. SHRI ARUN BHARTI:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the measures implemented to reduce child marriages in the country since the inception of laws aimed at preventing them;
- (b) whether the Government proposes to further enhance the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks to combat child marriage, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of the role of civil society organizations in preventing child marriages along with the Government support for these initiatives;
- (d) whether any specific strategies are being implemented to raise awareness about the negative impacts of child marriage on girls' education and health; and
- (e) the manner in which the Government intend to monitor/evaluate the progress made in reducing child marriages across different States and communities?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SAVITRI THAKUR)

(a) to (e): The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) has been enacted to prevent and curb child marriages and to take punitive action against those associated with the solemnisation of child marriages. Section 16 of the PCMA authorises the State Government to appoint for the whole State, or such part thereof as may be specified, an officer or officers to be known as the 'Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO)' having jurisdiction over the area or areas specified in the notification. This section also specifies the functions to be discharged by CMPOs, which include preventing solemnisation of child marriages by taking such action as they may deem fit; to collect evidence for the effective prosecution of persons contravening the provisions of the Act; to advise the individuals or counsel the residents of

the locality not to indulge in promoting, helping, aiding or allowing the solemnisation of child marriages; to create awareness about the ill effects of child marriages; and to sensitize the community on the issue of child marriages. All these authorities function under the direct administrative control and supervision of respective State Governments and UT Administrations. Further, 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibility to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens, investigation and prosecution of crime against women and children including prohibition of child marriages, rests with the respective State Governments and UT Administrations; they are competent to deal with such offenses/criminal acts.

Since, the enactment of PCMA, the prevalence of child marriage in the country has reduced to almost half from 47 % in National Family Health Survey -III (NFHS-III) conducted in 2005-06 to 23.3% in NFHS-V conducted in 2019-21. This shows that the law has a strong effect in prevention of child marriages in the country.

The Central Government undertakes awareness drives, media campaigns and outreach programs and issues advisories to the States and UTs from time to time to highlight evil effects of this practice. The Ministry has also written to all States and UTs to increase the number of CMPOs, as presence of Statutory Officer at local levels results in even more effective public engagement on the subject and increased prevention of solemnisation of child marriage. Further, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) implements the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) component under the umbrella scheme of 'Mission Shakti', wherein creation of awareness on matters pertaining to gender equality and discouraging child marriage is an important focus area. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) also undertakes awareness programs and consultations with stakeholders from time to time in this regard. The National Legal Services Authority with its States and District arms also creates awareness about the ill-effects of child marriage. NALSA has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to its functionaries for effective prevention of child marriages in coordination with the statutory officers and other authorities. It also has a dedicated helpline 15100 which provides free legal aid to the specified sections of citizens including women and children.

In addition, Government of India has introduced Child Helpline with short code 1098, a toll-free 24X7X365 telephone emergency outreach service for children in crisis which responds with suitable interventions to call for any form of assistance which a child requires, including for prevention of child marriages, in coordination with police, CMPOs, District Child Protection Units etc. The Child Helpline has also been integrated with Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112) to provide for 24x7x365 emergency response, resources and services. In addition, the services of Women Helpline (181), which is integrated with the ERSS is also available round the clock to provide emergency and non-emergency assistance.

The Central Government launched 'Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat' campaign on 27th November 2024 which focuses on making India child marriage free. It is one of the most important imperatives to promote education, skilling, enterprise and entrepreneurship among girls and women to realise the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' through 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach, including the civil society organisations. Under the campaign, a portal '<https://stopchildmarriage.wcd.gov.in>' has been launched to support the States and UTs in raising awareness against child marriage and for effective reporting and prevention of incidences of child marriage. The portal also has facility to provide information to citizens about Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) of all States/ UTs. The portal has information of more than 28000 CMPOs which is accessible by the public.
