

Strengthening Collective Response of the Government to End Child Marriage through a District Level Convergence Approach in Jamui, Bihar and Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan, India

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Why was the MAMTA Project carried out?

- Levels of child marriage are high in India
- Bihar and Rajasthan have higher rates than the national average
- The 2012 draft National Action Plan on Prevention of Child Marriage, promoted the use of convergent and multi-dimensional approaches at national, state, and district level
- Convergence approaches to address child marriage are not used extensively and there is a dearth of knowledge and experience in operationalizing convergence processes and in assessing their effectiveness
- This Project's work, which is piloting a 'convergence approach' to catalyze state governments to translate laws and policies into action from district through to village levels, could inform the work of organizations working to end child marriage in India and around the world

The MAMTA Project

What were its objectives?

To build engage and support various departments at the district level - Education, Health, Women and Child Development/Social Welfare, Police, and Panchayati Raj – to step up their efforts and to work more collaboratively to prevent child marriage and to respond when it occurs.

Where was it implemented?

One district in Rajasthan and one district in Bihar, India

What were its strategies?

1. Hold advocacy meetings on convergence, to bring about consensus amongst all the relevant departments on addressing child marriages at the district level
2. Build the capacity of relevant officials and provide technical support to develop district action plans and management information system with department-specific components
3. Create awareness at the community level by building district level non-government organization networks, integrating child marriage into the ongoing work of network partners and conducting media sensitization workshops

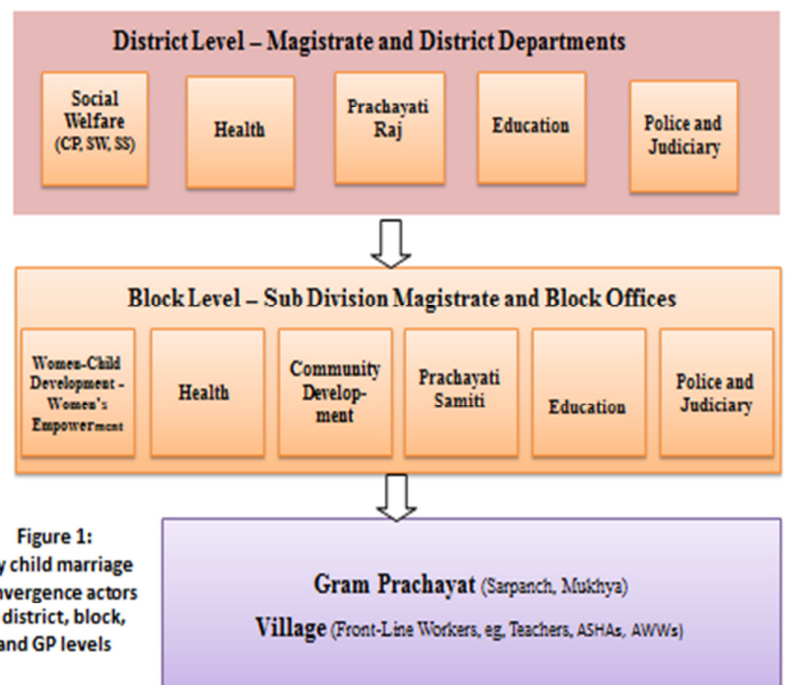


Figure 1:
Key child marriage convergence actors at district, block, and GP levels

Evaluation Objectives

1. *How has the MAMTA Project contributed to the establishment of concerted sectoral and intersectoral district-level efforts to prevent child marriage?*
2. *Did these efforts lead to more concerted actions at the block, panchayat and village levels?*
3. *What were the critical factors that contributed to these changes – at the individual and institutional levels?*

Table 1: Data collection – objectives and methods

| Objectives | Methods |
|----------------------------------|--|
| To assess Project design | Review of relevant government policy, strategy and documents |
| | Review of Project plans and reports |
| | Group discussion with MAMTA field Staff |
| To assess Project implementation | Review of Project plans and reports |
| | Group discussion with MAMTA field Staff |
| | In-depth interviews with government officials |
| | Group discussions with block officials |
| | Group discussion with nongovernment organization representatives |
| | Group discussion with media representatives |
| To assess Project monitoring | Review of Project plans and reports |
| | Group discussion with MAMTA field Staff |
| | In-depth interviews with government officials |
| | Group discussions with block officials |
| To assess Project outputs | Review of letters of support from the state governments |
| | Review of district action plans |
| | Review of Project and district reports |
| | Group discussion with MAMTA field Staff |
| | In-depth interviews with government officials |
| | Group discussions with block officials |
| | Group discussion with nongovernment organization representatives |
| | Group discussion with media representatives |
| | Survey of gram panchayat representatives |
| | Survey of frontline workers |

Table 2: Data analysis methods

| What was evaluated? | How was the analysis done? |
|------------------------|---|
| Project design | The information gathered on the rationale for and assumptions underlying the Project design, the process used and the mid-course corrections in design were collated and triangulated |
| Project implementation | The information gathered on the activities undertaken at state, district, block and gram panchayat level by MAMTA and by the other stakeholders including the government officials and functionaries with support from MAMTA were collated and triangulated |
| Project monitoring | The information gathered on the monitoring plan and implementation of the plan by MAMTA and by the relevant government departments were collated and triangulated |
| Project outputs | The information gathered on Project outputs at the state, district, block, gram panchayat and village levels in terms of reach, individual and institutional effects and actions taken by those reached, were analysed and associations with the Project implementation were explored |

Overall conclusions

1. How has the MAMTA Project contributed to the establishment of concerted sectoral and intersectoral district-level efforts to prevent child marriage?

Findings:

- In both districts, the Project contributed to raising the profile of child marriage prevention and to increasing the activities of individual departments
- The Project stimulated some informal coordination but it did not contribute to the establishment of sustained joint work or working mechanisms

2. Did these efforts lead to more concerted actions at the block, panchayat and village levels?

Findings:

- The Project's efforts at the district level led to more concerted action by block-level officials of different departments
- The stimulation and support of block-level officials contributed to amplifying the family and community mobilization work of panchayati raj institutions and frontline workers
- Tangible inter-sectoral convergence occurred at the village and progressively less at each successively higher level

3. What were the critical factors that contributed to these changes – at the individual and institutional levels?

Findings:

- The Project employed a systems approach in strengthening action on child marriage prevention, using complementary actions at state, district, block and village levels
- The Project employed a flexible approach to respond to obstacles and use opportunities as they arose
- MAMTA staff were adept as advocates, using organizational mandate arguments and emotional appeals to convince officials to take actions on child marriage issues
- Supportive leadership moved district and block departments and panchayati raj to take additional actions on child marriage
- Advocacy and technical support from MAMTA staff directed at key district officials in Jamui and Sawai Madhopur was complemented by directives from the State Government in Rajasthan, which led to greater levels of engagement and action by them and then cascaded through the system to village level
- The absence of a state mandate for monitoring of child marriage activities likely played a significant role in MAMTA not being able to convince district and block level officials to monitor child marriage activities
- Forces creating a less-than-enabling structural environment included critical challenges that bureaucracies everywhere face; competing priorities, lack of clarity of government directives, and fears of repercussions –which all contributed to some officials to not initiating

Recommendations

- Rationale:** District and block level units and officials of multiple government departments have important contributions to make to apply national policies and strategies. This is especially so in sensitive and contentious issues such as child marriage.

Recommendation: MAMTA should continue/step up its efforts in applying national policies and strategies in regards to sensitive and contentious issues such as child marriage.
- Rationale:** District and block level officials may not always be clear about what contributions they could usefully make to preventing child marriage.

Recommendation: MAMTA should set out the contributions that a short list of relevant government departments could usefully make to preventing child marriage. The approaches employed should be based on an analysis of the drivers of child marriage in the local context, evidence on effective interventions to address these drivers, and an analysis of the government apparatus at the district, block, panchayati raj and village levels.
- Rationale:** Formal and informal civil society bodies could make valuable contributions to each of these activities. However, engaging and supporting them to make useful contributions requires a sound strategy and resources.

Recommendation: In future initiatives, MAMTA should include a well-designed and resourced component to foster nongovernment organizations and other civil society bodies.
- Rationale:** State, district and block level officials may not be clear about what they are mandated to do. Even if they are clear about this, they may be convinced that they should make a contribution (i.e. they may not believe that they have a contribution to make or they may not assign this a high priority).

Recommendation: MAMTA should advocate with state, district and block level officials to step up their efforts to prevent child marriage, employing different available means of influence.
- Rationale:** Getting different sectors to work together takes effort and time.

Recommendation: MAMTA should apply a longer-term vision, employ periodic review and joint action planning/problem solving processes with concerned officials at district and block levels, and use benchmarks to assess progress.
- Rationale:** Whether a dedicated committee, a joint plan and budget and joint monitoring framework is feasible and useful is not clear from this Project's experience.

Recommendation: MAMTA should develop and test the effectiveness of different approaches to foster and sustain collaborative action.