



New Delhi

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National Analysis of Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy based on NFHS 4 (2015-2016) report released

Hon'ble Chief Guest, Shri Ambuj Sharma, Secretary General, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), released the report titled "National Analysis of Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy Based on NFHS 4 (2015-16), developed by Young Lives, in collaboration with National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

Shri Ambuj Sharma stated "One of the most important tenets of Child Rights is ensuring their basic right to good health, nutrition, education, and freedom from violence, abuse and exploitation. Child Marriage and teenage pregnancy deprives children of all these rights, denying them the opportunity to develop into fully empowered individuals. These harmful social practices is very often cited as a prime cause for high maternal and infant mortality and inter-generational cycle of malnutrition. Child Marriage also imposes certain social and decision-making roles for children who are not physically, mentally or emotionally prepared to fulfil this responsibilities. I hope that this National Analysis on Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy which is based on NFHS 4 will trigger action to address the issues of child marriage and teenage pregnancy at the state, district and national level."

Ms. Stuti Kacker, Chairperson, NCPCR, in her opening remarks said "The India Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy Report highlight some associated facts related to child marriage and teenage pregnancy amongst young adolescents aged 15-19 years. Young Lives has already begun to support district planning in high- burden state/s and I am sure that by bringing together various stakeholders we will be able to bring about the complete eradication of the practice of child marriage and teenage pregnancy."

Speaking at the launch, Dr. Renu Singh, Country Director for Young Lives India, said "It is heartening to see the decreasing prevalence of child marriage based on NFHS 4 (2015-16) compared to 2005-06. However, there continue to exist pockets where Child Marriage persists. States like Rajasthan, West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Bihar and Jharkhand still have a large number of districts which require policy attention. The fact that 32% of teenage married girls were reported giving birth between the age of 15-19 age group is a cause of concern which needs redressal".

In India, child marriage has been declining slowly over time, but the number of girls and boys getting married before their respective legal ages remain large with 12.1 million child marriages reported by Census 2011. Causes of child marriage are complex and varied based on various customs and traditions across various contexts and is deeply rooted in existing socio-cultural norms with economic and regional factors playing a significant role in determining child marriages. While it is important to note that child marriage persists amongst boys, the analysis is restricted only to prevalence of child marriage amongst girls based on NFHS-4 data (2015-16). Comparison between NFHS 3 and NFHS 4 has also been undertaken at the State level to analyse trends in reduction of child marriage while NFHS-4 which contains district level information allowed further analysis at the district level.

According to NFHS 4 data, the prevalence of child marriage amongst 15-19 and 20-24-year olds was 11.9% and 26.8% respectively for girls in India, highlighting a declining trend in child marriage. Child marriage prevalence in rural and urban India is 14.1% and 6.9% respectively for age group 15-19 and 31.5% and 17.5% respectively for rural and urban areas for age group 20-24-year olds. Prevalence of below legal age marriage for single year age from 15 to 19 years highlight that prevalence of below legal age marriage increases as girls transition through adolescence with lowest prevalence reported at age 15 (2.7%) and highest at age 19 (20.5%).

A comparison of below legal age marriage among women aged between 15-19 and 20-24 years by wealth index of the household shows that economic status of the households are negatively associated with the prevalence of child marriage across ages though significantly more child marriages were reported amongst 20-24-year-old women. It is observed that child marriage is more prevalent amongst women from bottom wealth tercile households for both age groups (16.6% and 41.5% respectively) and least prevalent amongst women from the top tercile households (5.4% and 13.4% respectively).

A panel discussion on Situation of Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in India and Sharing of Best Practices by the States was also held at the event. Ms. Manan Chaturvedi, Chairperson, Rajasthan SCPCR and Ms. S. Changkakati, Chairperson, Assam SCPCR also shared their experiences and best practices being implemented in their States for prevention of Child Marriage.

The full report can be downloaded from www.ncpcr.gov.in and www.younglives-india.org