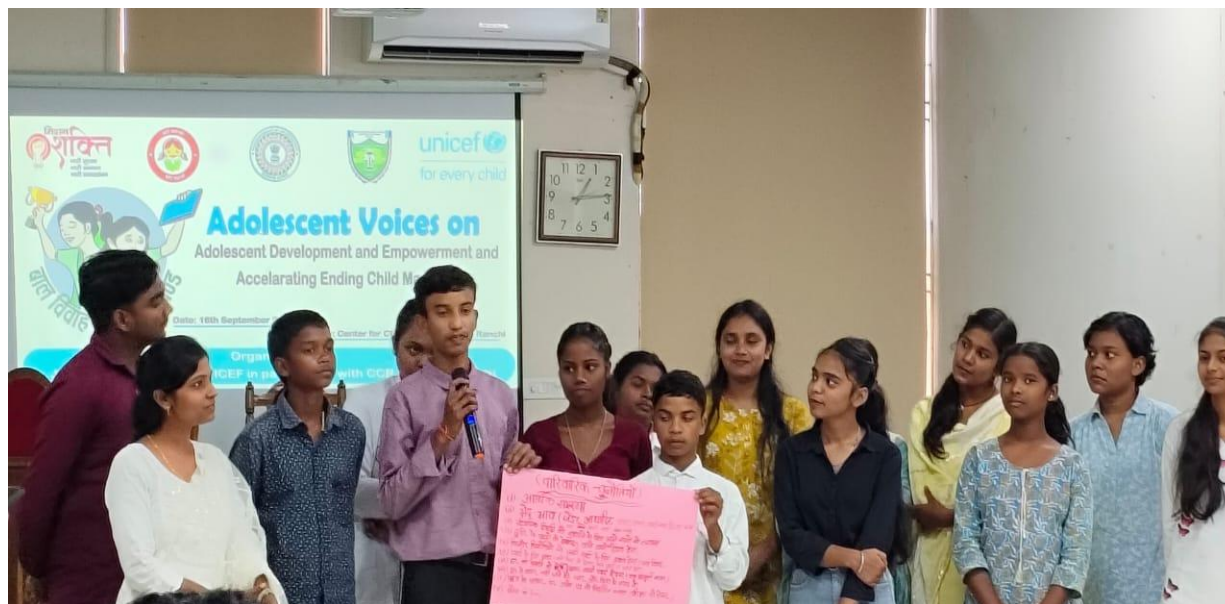


Consultation with Civil Society Organizations on Ending Child Marriage and Promoting Adolescent Development and Empowerment



A consultation meeting was held on **12 September 2025** with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working with adolescents at **Hotel Shivani International, Ranchi**. The meeting was organized by the **Jharkhand Women Development Society** in collaboration with **UNICEF**. The aim was to outline concrete strategies to reinforce the prohibition of child marriage by 2030.

This consultation was a follow-up to the earlier meeting held on **21 August 2025** with Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) and District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs). In that meeting, officials were trained to enhance their capacity in upholding the law, intervening promptly when cases of child marriage arise, and protecting children from injustice. Building on this, the new plan under discussion aims to stop child marriage through a **convergence approach** involving both government departments and civil society.

The meeting was facilitated by **Ms. Priti Srivastava (Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF)**, **Ms. Arundhati (Adolescent Empowerment Consultant, UNICEF)**, and **Ms. Priti Sinha (State Nodal Officer, Department of Social Welfare)**. The session began with introductions of the NGO professionals and their work, followed by Ms. Priti Sinha outlining the background and purpose of the meeting.

Objectives shared by Ms. Priti Sinha:

- Provide input and strategy-setting for the state action plan on child marriage.
- Map the role of CSOs in prohibiting child marriage.
- Identify alternative steps to prevent child marriage.

The program is targeted to launch with a formal **State Action Plan on 11 October 2025**, coinciding with **International Girl Child Day**.

Key Strategies Discussed:

- Work closely with local influencers.
- Share case studies of “child marriage warriors” who will be rewarded on 11 October.
- Recognize and award “child marriage-free” panchayats.

Contribution of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

CSO contributions were mapped through group activities, with groups divided as per their working areas.

Education and Skill

- Capacity building of stakeholders such as School Management Committees.
- Mapping vulnerable adolescent girls and focusing on their empowerment.
- Follow-up on the School Health and Wellness Program.
- Awareness programs in residential schools.

Sustainable Approach

- Mapping and engaging local influencers.
- Developing peer groups.

- Raising awareness on menstruation and promoting menstrual hygiene.
- Strengthening Child Welfare Committees.
- Supporting adolescent mental health and promoting skill development.

Agency Building

- Formation and strengthening of Bal Sabhas at the Panchayat level.
- Training children on life skills.
- Awareness meetings with parents and training them in parenting skills.
- Providing platforms where children can openly share their problems.
- Promoting and nurturing children's talents.
- Encouraging adolescents to continue their studies.

Social Change and Behaviour

- Developing adolescent role models.
- Ensuring continuity of activities.
- Adopting a targeted approach.
- Reaching the last mile.
- Focusing on innovation and documentation.

Concluding Remark

The meeting concluded with a plan to bring **two adolescents (one boy and one girl) from each CSO** for the next consultation on **16 September 2025**. This will ensure adolescents' voices are incorporated into the State Action Plan, which is to be finalized by the end of September. The prohibition of child marriage will be pursued through a **convergence approach**, aligned with the **SDGs (2025–2030)**.



Meeting with Adolescents

On **16 September 2025**, a meeting with adolescents was conducted at the **conference hall of the National University of Study and Research in Law (NUSRL)**. The session began with introductions, after which children were asked to share the hurdles they have faced in life and how they overcame them.

The adolescents were then divided into two groups:

- **Group 1:** Family challenges faced by adolescents.
- **Group 2:** Community challenges faced by adolescents.

Following this, five groups were formed and each was given a case study with guiding questions. After presentations, it was collectively concluded that **child marriage is the central**

issue. The facilitators then encouraged adolescents to reflect on the **impact of child marriage**, again through group discussions.

The session concluded with adolescents being provided information about **Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs)**, who are responsible for preventing child marriages. The discussions were facilitated in a **participatory and inclusive manner**.



Reflection of Participant from ASPIRE

Gangaram Bankira, a child from the **Boys' RBC, Samij, Anandpur Block, West Singhbhum**, had the opportunity to participate in this program. He belongs to **Bedaduiya village of Kuida Panchayat** and comes from a very vulnerable background.

In 2018, while studying in Class 7 at Middle School Jhilrua, his father developed a mental illness. During this time, his mother remarried, abandoning Gangaram and his brother. With no one to care for them, they moved to their grandfather's home. However, given his old age, he was unable to support their studies, and their education came to a standstill.

The turning point came when **GPCM enrolled both brothers in the Boys' RBC at Samij, Anandpur**. Gangaram was also enrolled in the Upgraded High School, Dalki (Anandpur), in Class 8. He is now in **Class 9 and continuing his studies from the RBC**.

This program provided Gangaram with his **first-ever opportunity to travel outside his block**. Arriving in Ranchi was an exciting experience for him—whether traveling by auto or observing

the city, he was full of curiosity and wonder. At the venue, he participated with great enthusiasm, despite it being his first exposure to such a program.

✨ *Gangaram's story reflects how opportunities can empower adolescents from vulnerable backgrounds to find their voice and contribute meaningfully to critical issues like ending child marriage.*