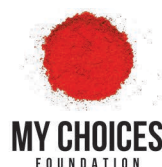


Understanding child trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in West Bengal, India

Knowledge, attitudes and practices among children,
parents and community leaders in Bardhaman,
Bankura and Birbhum

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SEEFAR



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Email research.advisory@sattva.co.in

Website <https://www.sattva.co.in/>

Project Advisors Shambhavi Srivastava, Sanghamitra Mazumdar

Research and Analysis Malvika Dwivedi, Dona Tomy, Rhea Pillai, Chavi Mittal

Field Researchers Alope Chakraborty, Arnab Mandal, Debashree Biswas, Satabdi Das,
Solomon David, Subhasis Dey

Research Production Nikita Damle, Radhika Bose

Seefar Advisory Lynette Lim, Sanghamitra Mazumdar, Shireen Issa, Simonetta Bozhinova

List of Abbreviations

ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
AHTU	Anti Human Trafficking Unit
BCC	Behaviour Change Communications
CBO/NGO	Community-Based Organisation/ Non-Governmental Organisation
CPCs	Child Protection Committees
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Material
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
CT	Child Trafficking
CVGs	Community Vigilance Groups
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
ICPF	India Child Protection Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization
KAPs	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
KII	Key Informant Interview
MCF	My Choices Foundation
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
WB	West Bengal

List of Figures

Figure 1: Data on trafficking in India with special focus on West Bengal.....	6
Figure 2: Data on impact of COVID-19 on vulnerabilities related to CT/CSEC.....	7
Figure 3: Data on impact of technology and online mediums on CT/CSEC.....	7
Figure 4: Drivers of child marriage and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions.....	10
Figure 5: Drivers of child labour (and unsafe migration) and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions.....	14
Figure 6: Drivers of school dropout (and unsafe migration) and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions.....	17
Figure 7: Drivers of harmful online practices and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions.....	20
Figure 8: Drivers of children running away from home and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions.....	23
Figure 9: Key stakeholders present within the child’s ecosystem, at the household and community levels.....	26
Figure 10: Key parameters that influence the vulnerability of children to CT and CSEC.....	27
Figure 11: Table mapping stakeholders to knowledge, attitudes and practices that need to be influenced.....	42
Figure 12: Relevant levers for behaviour change directly influencing behaviours and reinforcing key messages.....	43

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations.....	ii
List of Figures.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iii
1. Executive Summary.....	1
2. About the Study.....	3
3. Introduction.....	6
4. Key Findings from the Study.....	9
4.1. Structural, social and personal drivers that make children vulnerable to CT and CSEC.....	9
4.2. Role of key stakeholders in influencing CT/CSEC-related vulnerabilities.....	25
5. Key Recommendations.....	40
5.1. Findings from testing Operation Red Alert materials.....	40
5.2. Key recommendations for Seefar’s behaviour change programming.....	41
5.3. Recommendations for the wider child protection ecosystem.....	49

1. Executive Summary

Human trafficking, due to its multiple forms, has posed a challenge of accurate estimation. Despite this, it is estimated that of the 15 million women that are victims of sex trafficking in India each year, 40% are adolescents and children, some as young as nine years old (Dasra, 2013). According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), of the 15,379 humans trafficked in 2016 in India, 9,034 were children below the age of 18 years. Among these, 4,911 were girls and 4,123 were boys. With a total of 3,113 trafficked children, West Bengal witnessed the highest number of children trafficked of any state in India in 2016 (Paliath and Mallapur, 2019).

Seefar and My Choices Foundation (MCF) are seeking to test interventions that can help reduce the prevalence of Child Trafficking (CT) and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) among 12-18 year olds in targeted districts of West Bengal. As part of the evidence-generation phase, Seefar and Sattva Consulting undertook a study to understand the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAPs) among children, parents and community leaders towards Child Trafficking, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and vulnerabilities that place children at a higher risk of CT and CSEC. The findings from the study helped in the identification of behaviour change programmes for children, parents and community leaders aimed at preventing children from falling victim to CT and CSEC. The data collection for the study was executed between 8 to 20 October 2020.

There are commonly occurring economic and social challenges that make children vulnerable to CT and CSEC. The study found that child marriage, child labour, unsafe migration, school dropouts, runaway children and neglect and abuse are key vulnerabilities present in the study geography. These vulnerabilities are known to increase the risk of CT and CSEC. Vulnerabilities are driven by certain common structural, social and personal factors including: poverty and sub-optimal living standards; poor education systems; gender-based discriminations; social influences and expectations; limited positive influences and role models; and the lure of a better life. Understanding these structural, social and personal factors led to the identification of specific behaviours and decision-making practices that should be positively influenced to prevent CT and CSEC. Feelings of helplessness among children and parents; the focus on fulfilling immediate needs; anticipation of an improved standard of living; disregarding risks; and limited information-seeking behaviour emerged as behaviours that need to be influenced in order to reduce risk.

Additionally, the study found that the relationships children share within the ecosystem impact their life and safety within the village. This varies based on the nature of the relationship that they share with the stakeholders, the influence that these stakeholders are able to exert on the child's life and the level of trust that children have with them. Additionally, these stakeholders influence CT/CSEC-related vulnerabilities based on their own knowledge, attitudes and practices. The study found that fathers have the most significant influence on vulnerabilities such as child marriage, child labour and school drop outs. Fathers share an authoritative relationship with the children and are often the principal decision maker in the child's life. However, in spite of having such strong influence, fathers are hesitant to talk about CT/CSEC. They have intent to ensure child safety and have high influence, but their risk perceptions remain low. Mothers, on the other hand, have high intent to secure child safety and are more open to talking about CT, CSEC and related vulnerabilities; but they are limited by their lack of agency and relatively lower levels of influence. Among the community leaders, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers and teachers have varying types of relationships with the children, wherein they are found to be facilitative in certain villages and disengaged in others. Panchayat members and police officers are often disengaged with low intent in spite of high influence.

Studying the behavioural drivers of various CT/CSEC-related vulnerabilities and understanding the role and level of influence of various stakeholders formed the basis for identification of suitable recommendations that can enable prevention of CT and CSEC. Strengthening risk perception and protective instincts among parents; countering the emotional distance that exists between parents and children; promoting safe migration practices; normalising dialogue around CT/CSEC; promoting a sense of agency; promoting dialogue around sexual abuse; and promoting the idea of independent, self-sufficient girls emerged as behaviours that should be positively influenced to drive prevention of CT/CSEC. Community events; 1-1 counselling; access to a hotline number; and social media campaigns were identified as key levers for Seefar to positively influence these behaviours.

In addition to the recommendations identified for Seefar and My Choices Foundation's behaviour change programming, the study identified good practices and existing programmes that can be adopted by the larger ecosystem towards prevention of CT/CSEC. These include children's clubs that can help promote a sense of agency among children; sensitisation programmes to address existing vulnerabilities among the larger community; men-focused groups to promote dialogue; volunteer groups to provide support to women; and the formation of protection committees, among others.

2. About the Study

2.1. Background, intended outcomes and objectives

Seefar is a social enterprise that provides opportunities to vulnerable populations to advance and enhance themselves. My Choices Foundation (MCF) is a locally rooted campaign and services network, dedicated to eliminating sex trafficking in India, with vast experience in programming within the local context in West Bengal. The partnership is seeking to test interventions that can help reduce the prevalence of Child Trafficking (CT) and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) among 12-18 year olds in targeted districts in West Bengal. The three districts selected are Birbhum, Bankura, Bardhaman. They were chosen based on their vulnerability scores and concentration of actors working to reduce CSEC. The interventions assess community vulnerability to CT and CSEC and decision-making processes; develop an evidence-based approach using the most effective messages and most trusted communications channels used by the target groups; test the approach across communities over a period of six to eight months; evaluate the broader intervention to determine the most effective model; and build the capacity of local community-based organisations to enable sustainable community prevention.

As part of the evidence-generation phase, Seefar and Sattva Consulting undertook a study to understand knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAPs) among children, parents and community leaders towards CT and CSEC. The study also focuses on understanding KAPs towards specific social and economic vulnerabilities that place children at a higher risk of CT and CSEC. This includes, inter alia: child labour; child marriage; unsafe migration; dowry; school dropout; domestic abuse; and substance abuse. The study aims to grasp how the KAPs towards these vulnerabilities result in CT and CSEC. Given the paucity of child protection-related research during the COVID-19 pandemic, the study also focuses on understanding how the pandemic influences KAPs towards CT, CSEC and the related vulnerabilities. The findings from the study will be used to test community-based, behaviour change programmes that can decrease the vulnerability of children to CT and CSEC, in the three districts of West Bengal.

For this study, primary research was conducted in three districts of West Bengal; namely Bankura, Bardhaman and Birbhum. Within each district, a total of three villages were identified for the study:¹

- Bankura - Barikul, Jiarda, Krishnasinghpur
- Bardhaman - Nurkona, Rajkusum, Shrirampur
- Birbhum - Purba Siur, Kandarpapur, Bahadurganga

Through qualitative research methodology, the study used focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews to understand KAPs among 12-18 year old boys and girls; their parents; and community stakeholders, namely teachers, health workers, panchayat members and police.

¹Detailed village vulnerability index that was used to select villages is covered under Appendix C

The intended outcomes of the study are as follows:

1. To build a contextual knowledge-base on CT/CSEC in the three targeted districts in West Bengal that enables the design of a community-based intervention. The study findings can help contribute to the development of a communications strategy that will empower children, their families and their communities to recognise, prevent and respond to trafficking and CSEC.
2. To allow organisations to build an evidence base that enables targeted design of interventions across key stakeholder groups.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. **To understand CSEC-related KAPs among children, parents and community leaders across the three districts of West Bengal:**
 - 1.1. Study the attitudes and perceptions towards CT and CSEC among parents and community leaders.
 - 1.2. Study KAPs towards vulnerability factors that increase the risk to children of trafficking and CSEC (includes, inter alia: child labour; child marriage; unsafe migration; dowry; school dropout; domestic abuse; and substance abuse), among children, parents and community leaders.
 - 1.3. Study vulnerability to trafficking and CSEC facilitated through digital/online mediums.
 - 1.4. Identify decision-making patterns among at-risk children and influence of parents with respect to trafficking and CSEC.
 - 1.5. Understand the current preventive and protective measures adopted by parents and community leaders to curb child trafficking and CSEC at source.
 - 1.6. Study the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on CT, CSEC and related vulnerability factors, including the influence of COVID-19 on preventive and protective measures at source.
2. **To identify modalities, communication channels and effective messaging that can be used to positively influence KAPs towards CT/CSEC and related vulnerabilities at source:**
 - 2.1. Identify modalities that can facilitate access to children who are at risk of trafficking.
 - 2.2. Identify trusted and effective communication channels, across children, parents and community leaders, in order to influence positive behaviours towards the prevention of CT, CSEC and related vulnerabilities.
 - 2.3. Test materials for *Operation Red Alert*² to assess response of stakeholders to existing behaviour change communications (BCC) collateral, designed to enable the prevention of CT, CSEC and related vulnerabilities.

2.2. Research methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research method, with criterion sampling techniques. A vulnerability index, originally created by MCF, was used to identify high-risk districts for the study. As per findings, Birbhum and Bankura are among the top five vulnerable districts of West Bengal and Bardhaman is a district with a vulnerability score greater than the state's average score. Additionally, a village vulnerability index was created using available government data on key social and economic parameters, to generate a vulnerability score for each village within the three identified districts (Bardhaman, Bankura and Birbhum). This score was used to identify villages for data collection. For this study, primary research was conducted in three districts of West Bengal, namely Bankura, Bardhaman and Birbhum. Within each district, a total of three villages were identified for the study:³

- Bankura - Barikul, Jiarda, Krishnasinghpur
- Bardhaman - Nurkona, Rajkusum, Shrirampur
- Birbhum - Purba Siur, Kandarpapur, Bahadurganga

² A national-level mass-media and grassroots education campaign run by My Choices Foundation

³ Detailed village vulnerability index that was used to select villages is covered under Appendix C

A targeted list of research participants was created through criterion sampling. The study sample included 360 children aged 12–18 (both boys and girls), 180 parents (both men and women) and 27 community stakeholders, namely teachers, health workers, panchayat members and police. The sample numbers were determined to ensure saturation of findings, which was achieved. Data collection was done using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

Intended audience

Organisations, institutes, independent practitioners, researchers or students working on the prevention, protection and rehabilitation of CT and CSEC in West Bengal and specifically in the three study districts (Birbhum, Bardhaman and Bankura).

3. Introduction

Human trafficking, due to its multiple forms, has posed a challenge of accurate estimation. Despite this, it is estimated that of the 15 million women who are victims of sex trafficking in India each year, 40% are adolescents and children, some as young as nine years old (Dasra, 2013). According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), of the 15,379 humans trafficked in 2016 in India, 9,034 were children under 18. Among these, 4,911 were girls and 4,123 were boys. With a total of 3,113 trafficked children, West Bengal witnessed the highest number of children trafficked in India, in 2016 (Paliath and Mallapur, 2019).

West Bengal is among India's most impoverished states and is the largest source of trafficked children. It also has the highest number of missing children in the country and has well-established trafficking networks that prey on isolated communities. Low incomes, job scarcity, violence and intimidation, as well as poor information combine to make children, especially girls, vulnerable to traffickers (U.S. Department of State, 2019).



Figure 1: Data on trafficking in India with special focus on West Bengal

There are commonly occurring economic and social challenges that make children vulnerable to trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Chronic poverty, unemployment, the lure of a better life, social discrimination, domestic violence, substance abuse and sexual abuse are some factors that have been found to increase the vulnerability of children to CT and CSEC (EU and UNICEF, 2017). Neglect, lack of awareness, violent discipline, and other unsafe attitudes and practices among parents, caregivers and community leaders only further intensify the struggle against CT and CSEC (UNICEF, 2011).

Studies have found that poverty is one of the leading causes of CT and CSEC and often influences various other risk factors as well. Poverty increases the strain within households and exposes children to difficult family relationships, abuse and violence (Toast Advisory, 2019). Poverty also often leads to low levels of education and increased migration in hope of a better life, including child labour for additional income. Barriers to legal employment of children may lead to decisions to migrate illegally. Further, the absence of official evidence of a child's familial connections or age renders the child vulnerable to being sold for purposes of adoptions, labour or sexual exploitation (UNICEF, 2009). Human trafficking is also negatively skewed towards historically disadvantaged groups. This is made worse by the age-old customs and traditions that reinforce gender discrimination based on caste and ethnicity (Hameed et al., 2010).

Family environments of abuse, violence and neglect adversely affect children and render them vulnerable to CT and CSEC. Experience of physical, sexual and emotional abuse as a child results in loss of self-worth and self-esteem, social isolation, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, degradation and perceptions that one is a commodity (UNICEF, 2009). As a result of child sexual abuse, individuals may also have the desire to sell sex in order to regain some element of control over their bodies (Franchino-Olsen, 2019). Families in which there is a lack of care and support for children, which can include single-parent families, divorced or separated parents or guardians, child-headed households or families with large numbers of children, can influence the degree of vulnerability to CT and CSEC

(UNICEF, 2009). Therefore, disparities in familial relationships often make children vulnerable to trafficking.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been expected to further exacerbate various child protection-related concerns. For instance, it has been argued that the stress faced by parents is likely to manifest as abuse for children, and unemployment faced by parents is likely to push children to take up odd jobs, thereby making them vulnerable to trafficking or being subjected to commercial sexual exploitation (Swain, 2020). As per the literature, there is also an increased risk of online trafficking of children during the pandemic. The spike in internet penetration in recent years in India, combined with the unique scenario of a lockdown has been noted to have implications on CSEC, as well.

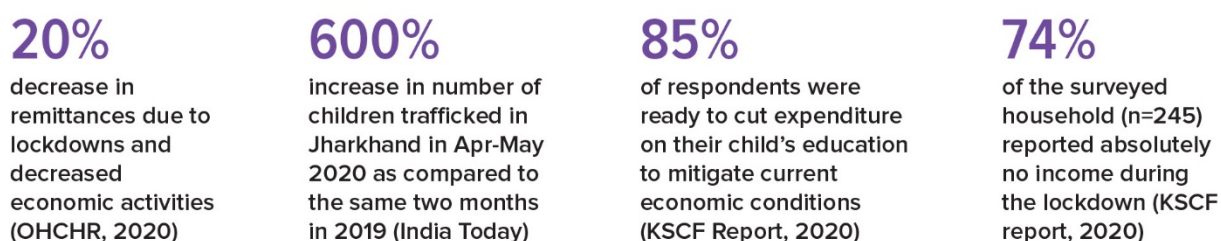


Figure 2: Data on impact of COVID-19 on vulnerabilities related to CT/CSEC

As per the report titled "Child Sexual Abuse Material In India" by India Child Protection Fund (ICPF), there has been a 200% increase in the demand for "violent" pornographic content related to children in India since the lockdown came into effect (Kannan, 2020).

Additionally, in recent years, social media has become a particularly favoured means by which traffickers attract children and youth from rural India. Their preference for trafficking children using social media stems from the exclusive access they are able to gain to their targets and the intractability of these interactions (Shekhar, 2017). These traffickers lure their victims in with false jobs, marriages or the promise of a better life (Shrestha, 2015).



Figure 3: Data on impact of technology and online mediums on CT/CSEC

There is a pressing need to address behaviours and practices that inadvertently create vulnerabilities. Lack of action taken around unsafe migration, child marriage, safe use of social media, etc. by community leaders, particularly in rural areas, may be an indication of low capacity and/or commitment towards preventing trafficking or CSEC. Often, the police lack resources to conduct an in-depth investigation if the child is trafficked from a different state. The police too, need efficient training and resources to deal with cases of trafficking (Paliath and Mallapur, 2019). Addressing this is a crucial factor in delivering successful CT/CSEC-prevention activities and achieving sustainable impact. Additionally, there is a need to understand KAPs of children and parents in order to positively influence behaviours that can reduce the vulnerability of children to CT and CSEC.

Among the numerous information campaigns in West Bengal targeting victims, perpetrators and enablers, only limited awareness raising has been achieved, with little evidence of the desired behaviour change needed to produce lasting impact. Given this, there is a pressing need to understand gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices and build the right KAPs among children, families and community leaders in order to drive prevention of CT and CSEC.

4. Key Findings from the Study

4.1. Structural, social and personal drivers that make children vulnerable to CT and CSEC

There are various factors that make children vulnerable to CT and CSEC. The study found that child marriage, child labour, unsafe migration, school dropouts, runaway children and neglect and abuse are key vulnerabilities present in the study geography. These vulnerabilities are known to increase the risk of children to trafficking and CSEC.

This section of the report conducts a root cause analysis of the vulnerabilities, with a focus on understanding the KAPs that drive these vulnerabilities. As part of the root cause analysis, each identified vulnerability was analysed at structural, social and individual levels to identify systemic drivers, social norms, behaviours, and emotions that result in the occurrence and perpetuation of vulnerability. The root cause analysis intends to throw light on specific behaviours among children, parents and community leaders that can be positively influenced to drive prevention of CT and CSEC. While behaviour change programming can seek to influence the social and individual drivers, structural drivers need to be studied for the influence they exert on behaviours and decisions that increase the vulnerability of children to CT and CSEC.

Drivers / causes of the identified behaviours/practices were further analysed through three lenses:

1. **Structural:** Structural drivers include barriers related to infrastructure and access to services. They are commonly consequences of poverty and underdevelopment; structural drivers are not related to people's willingness to change, or the social environment,
2. **Social:** Social drivers include practices that emanate from prevailing belief systems, social structures or conventions within the community. They include community dynamics around factors such as collective dialogue and actions, social norms, sanctions and meta norms that deeply condition the behaviours of all the members of a community.
3. **Individual:** Individual drivers include individual motivations, emanating from personal interests, attitude, intent, habits and set routine along with the person's objective capability to perform an action.

Using these lenses, vulnerabilities analysed in this section include child marriage, child labour and unsafe migration, school dropouts, runaway children, engaging in harmful online practices and neglect and abuse. Each of these factors are known to make children vulnerable to CT and CSEC. The root cause analysis indicated that these vulnerabilities are often driven by certain common structural, social and personal factors including poverty and sub-optimal living standards, poor education systems, gender-based discriminations, social influences and expectations, limited positive influences and role models and the lure of a better life. Further, these drivers were distilled to identify their influence on behaviours and practices. Feelings of helplessness among children and parents, the focus on fulfilling immediate needs, anticipation of improved standard of living, disregarding risks and limited information seeking behaviour emerged as behaviours that need to be positively influenced in order to reduce risk and thereby drive prevention of CT and CSEC.

Additionally, study participants indicated that tribal communities in Bardhaman and Bankura are particularly vulnerable given marginalised access to education and economic opportunities. Therefore, children from these communities are at greater risk of the vulnerabilities identified in the report (child labour, child marriage etc) and are more likely to be targeted by child trafficking agents. This has been stated extensively in Section 2 of the present report. For instance, the linkage between poverty and child marriage was perceived to be more prevalent among Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) households. Similarly, study participants shared that children from SC/ST households were more likely to

migrate for work. Discussions with study participants and on-ground field partners revealed that the Sabar tribe in Bankura; other backward classes (minority groups) such as Muda in Bardhaman; and tribes such as Santali, Sabar and Bedia in Birbhum, were among the more vulnerable groups. However, it is important to note that given the strong tendency of “othering” found among participants, the study cannot conclusively comment on the specific tribes/castes that are vulnerable. Identification of specific groups/sub-groups would require further investigation.

4.1.1. Child marriage

Child marriage is prevalent in all three districts under study, and particularly prevalent in the case of girls. While parents, children and community leaders are aware of 18 being the legal age of marriage, it is common for girls to get married at 13 or 14 years of age. There are also instances of boys getting married before they turn 18 years of age. Child marriage is also accompanied by the practice of dowry, a practice that is widely seen as a burden for poor households. Families are often lured into getting girls married to reduce the existing financial burden on the family or based on the belief that their daughter will enjoy a better quality of life post-marriage. Families also tend to favour the prospects of dowry-free marriages, which further reduce the financial burden on the family. While it was found that families rarely get their daughters married in towns/cities that are far away, it is common practice to get married in neighbouring villages. These practices are known to make children, especially girls, prone to the risk of CT and CSEC.

Linkage to CT/CSEC: An incident was shared of a girl getting married to a boy from a neighbouring village. For the first month, the parents were able to communicate with the girl frequently over the phone. When the girl’s number was found to be out of service, the parents tried all that they could to contact her but were unable to. They are still unaware of what happened to her.

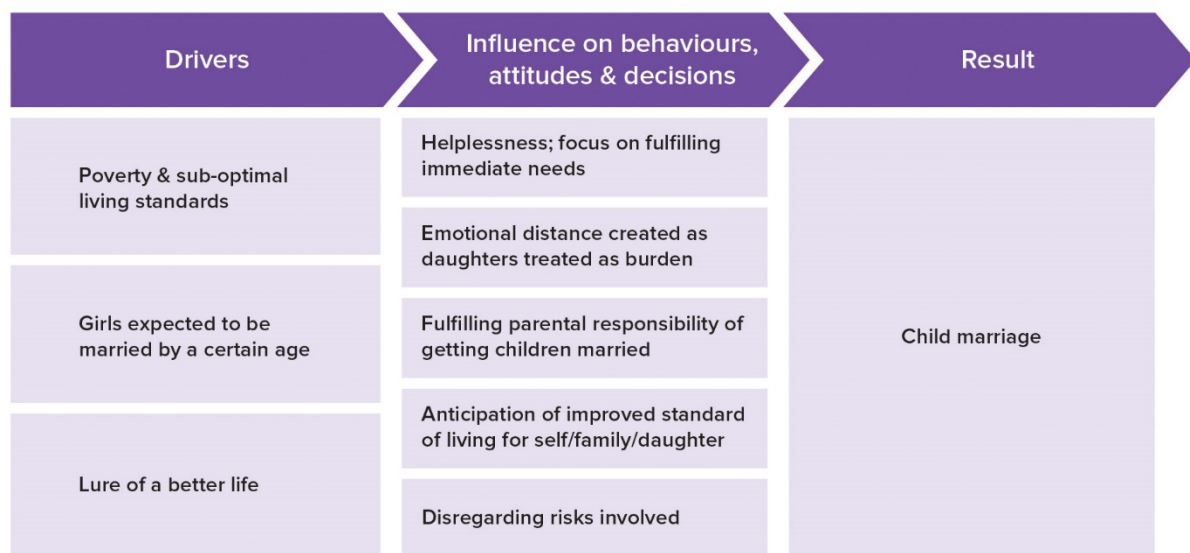


Figure 4: Drivers of child marriage and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions

Structural drivers: Poverty and sub-optimal living standards are key structural drivers of child marriage.

The social conventions that underpin a marriage, such as exchange of dowry and expenditure on the wedding ceremony (in most cases to be borne by the girl’s family) lead families to view their daughters’ marriages as a burden; this belief is exacerbated when they do not have the means to financially support them or to fulfil expenses arising from the marriage.

- Families tend to accept marriage proposals before their daughter(s) turn 18, to ease the financial burden on the household, particularly when the parents have multiple children.
 - A father who had three daughters shared that he decided to get his eldest daughter married at the age of 14 so that it would give him enough time to save money before his next daughter was ready to get married.
- There are also instances of families seeking/showing preference for marriage prospects that were dowry-free. Existing research on CT and CSEC highlights dowry-free marriage proposals as a common lure used by traffickers.
- The linkage between poverty and child marriage is reported and perceived to be more prevalent among SC/ST households, though it was not limited to SC/ST households. Parents and community leaders shared that marginalised households are more likely to practice child marriage because of a greater likelihood of financial scarcity.

“In a family with multiple children it is difficult for the father to manage family expenses. That’s why the father finds a suitable match for his daughter at an early age thinking that it will reduce the burden on the family,” shared a father.

Social drivers: While the social expectation is that girls should certainly get married by the age of 18 or 21, getting girls married before the age of 18 is widely acceptable behaviour. This is in spite of the fact that children, parents and community leaders are aware of the legal age of marriage. There is also social pressure to ensure that girls are not married later than the age of 18 or 21.

Parents feel compelled to ensure that their children are married by an age that is socially acceptable. While most parents said that they wait for their daughters to turn 18 and their sons to turn 21 before they are married, counter narratives were shared by children, community leaders and other parents, who pointed to the presence of child marriage as a social convention.

- Given that fathers are responsible for identifying husbands for their daughters, fathers feel particularly responsible for ensuring that the girls are married by a certain age. This helps ensure that the family does not experience the social stigma associated with a girl getting married later than an acceptable age.
- Another reason for child marriage among the community is the parent’s fear of reputational damage should their children elope with and get married to a person of the child’s choice or take a decision that counters the socially acceptable norms around marriage. The social stigma associated with elopement is a common reason for getting children married early, to a partner that is determined by their parents, particularly the father.
 - In other villages, however, it is widely accepted that children may get married to persons of their choice, and is even accepted since in these situations there will be lesser expectation to pay a dowry.
 - There is also the fear that if girls are not married by the age of 18 or 21, they may never get married, which would further impact the family/father’s social standing within the community.

Community leaders (panchayat, teachers and ASHA workers) emphasised that children get married after the age of 18 and in multiple cases shared that there is little or no child marriage within the districts. There appeared to be a common trend across types of community leaders to project that illegal practices did not exist and only in some cases did they share otherwise. In cases where they did talk about the presence of child marriage, they shared that it typically happens within families that are from marginalised communities owing to their financial scarcity.

Personal drivers: The lure of a better life, limited risk perceptions and limited intent and/or agency to change existing conventions emerged as individual-level drivers of child marriage.

Children are likely to get married to persons who can offer them the promise of a better life. Children, particularly girls, seek out partners who can help them escape their impoverished circumstances and/or help them enhance their standards of living through purchasing clothes or mobiles phones or providing them with money.

- There was an incident of a girl who eloped with a boy and later married him because he provided her with a mobile phone and clothes and spent his earnings on her. These were commodities that her parents were unable to provide to her.

In the case of parents, there is an underlying belief that marriage could result in the daughter leading a better life and a tendency to underplay the risks associated with child marriage. They are unlikely to link child marriage to the risk of CT/CSEC either. There is also the tendency to believe that while it may have risked child safety in other families, households or villages, it is less likely to happen with them given that they have conviction in their decision making, in spite of the limited information seeking behaviour that surrounds child marriage.

- In Bankura and Bardhaman, fathers are aware that children should not get married before 18 but are willing to make a compromise if they find a suitable marriage prospect. This results in the family getting the daughter married to someone who is either able to provide for her financially or to someone who is willing to get married without any exchange of dowry.
- Due to the financial scarcity and other social pressures, parents may be less likely to seek out information about the person's background or family and are more keen on whether he currently holds a job that can enable him to provide for the daughter financially. This limited/biased information seeking behaviour further intensifies the risk to child safety and even leads to unsafe migration in cases where children move to other villages after having gotten married.
- There are instances of mothers who want to prevent their daughters from getting married before the age of 18 or 20, but they shared that they have limited influence over the decision.

"The lockdown has affected my life very much because my parents were planning to get me married as they are unable to feed me. So they thought if I get married I can get proper food there," stated a 14 year old girl.

Influence of COVID-19 on early marriage: COVID-19 has further intensified financial scarcity within the districts. This has resulted in the perpetuation if not increase in cases of early marriage during the on-going pandemic.

Behaviours that need to be positively influenced:

Gender norms and prejudice:

- Pushing girls to get married because girls are expected to be part of a different family after a certain age.
- Not viewing girls as individuals who can become self-dependent and support their families (unlike boys).
- Emotional distancing that is built up between girls and their parents, especially fathers.

Low risk perception and behaviours related to unsafe migration:

- Believing that by getting the daughter married, the life of the daughter will improve and there will be less financial burden on the family.
- Looking at the short-term benefits of not having to pay dowry/reducing the financial burden on the family, rather than assessing long-term implications/risks of doing so.
- Believing that while these risks happen with other families/in other villages, they are less likely to happen to them.
- Underappreciating the risks associated with early marriage and trafficking, not practicing safe migration behaviours and engaging in sub-optimal information-seeking behaviour associated with early marriage.

4.1.2. Child labour and unsafe migration

Research across the three districts found that children, particularly boys above the age of 14, frequently migrate in search of work. Low risk perception, limited interest in education, poverty, lure to earn and lead a better-quality life, among other factors, often lead to children migrating with the help of contractors, agents, relatives or other individuals from within the village who have migrated previously in search of work (established networks). Children may travel within West Bengal, or outside to states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha and others to work in construction, jewellery, automotive, apparel and other industries. This practice increases the risk of CT and CSEC and in some of the villages had resulted in incidents of CT.

It was shared that the most common method of migration is through local contractors (or agents/relatives) who facilitate the movement of children to towns/cities that are within and outside West Bengal. In one village in Bankura, there is a trusted contractor, who the children contact when they want to find work outside the village. These contractors even provide the transport that children use to travel for work and could include staying away from the village for several months or even just travelling outside the village for work on a day-to-day basis. Parents and children also shared that acquaintances, friends and relatives are other sources through whom migration of children is facilitated. In Bardhaman and Bankura, boys tend to migrate and find jobs as construction workers, workshop/factory labour or farm labour. In certain cases, girls may also migrate in search of domestic work.

Linkage to CT/CSEC: An incident was shared of a contractor who visited one of the villages in Bardhaman and offered jobs in various cities to boys. When the boys were taken there, their phones were snatched away, and they were not allowed to return to their villages for a few years. During this time, they were made to work without any monetary compensation and were threatened with death if they tried to escape.

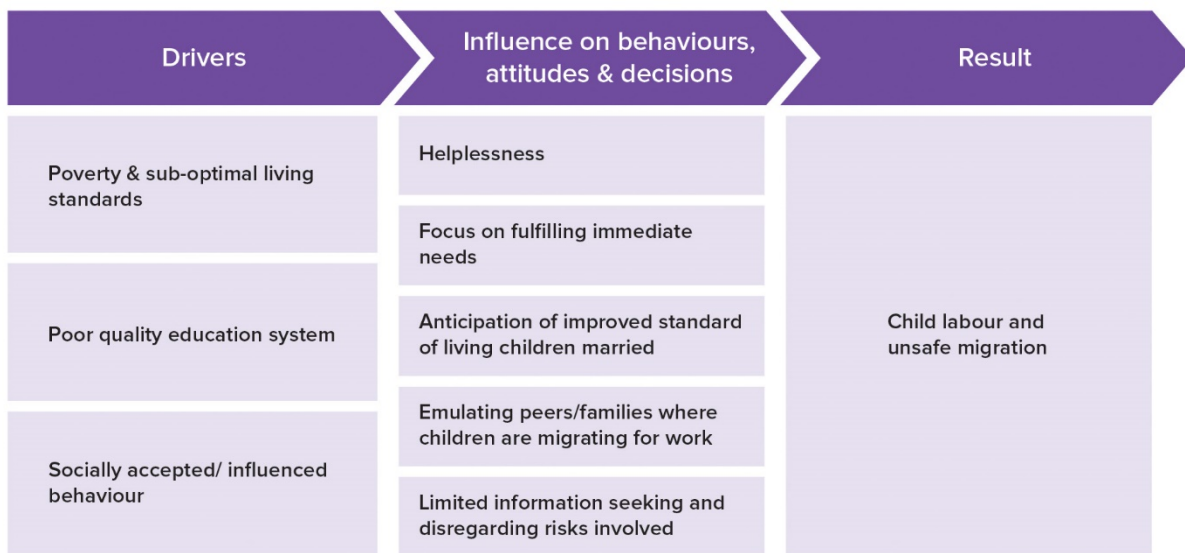


Figure 5: Drivers of child labour (and unsafe migration) and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions

Structural drivers: Poverty drives families and children to migrate in search of work.

- Boys migrating for work has been found to be the most common instance of migration among children. It is commonly accepted that once boys turn 13 or 14 years of age, they can start contributing to the family/household financially.
 - There is an inherent belief among parents (particularly fathers) that by contributing to the family, sons could alleviate the immediate financial burden within the household and improve the standard of living. This is largely because families within these villages tend to rely on agriculture, daily wage labour and other low paying jobs, making it difficult to sustain the expenses of an entire household unless multiple people are able to bring in income.
 - While it has been reported that girls may also work, the incidents of girls migrating to other towns or cities in search of work has been reported to be significantly lower when compared to boys.
- This is reported to be more common among the economically poorer households, and often also more common within (but not limited to) scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other marginalised households, often because of the linkage between marginalised communities and financial scarcity. Similarly, it was shared that girls from marginalised households are more likely to migrate in search of work.

“We work as MGNREGA⁴ labour, farm labour or harvest crops on our own small farms; it does not earn us much of an income. If our sons can help us after the age of 14 or 15, it will make things easier for the family. We understand that sending them outside for work is not entirely safe but there are no jobs within the village,” shared a group of mothers.

⁴ MGNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

Social Drivers: It is widely accepted behaviour for sons to migrate in search of work around the age of 14. Parents rely on trusted social networks and believe that this ensures the safety of the child. Children are also lured into work when they see other children earning.

Parents emphasise that they understand the dangers associated with migrating with unknown people to unknown places. Thus, they typically rely on an existing network or a trusted individual.

- However, this understanding of trust remains subjective. They rely on individuals who have been able to establish even minimum levels of trust with the family. Once they trust an individual, they do not further investigate where the child is being taken. They rely on the fact that they know the person and may not look for additional details such as the address where the child will be staying, the workplace address, emergency contact details etc. The parents cited “taking the contractor’s/relative’s number” as their way of ensuring safety of the boys.
- This has resulted in situations where the families have lost all contact with the boys either for a period of time or permanently. An incident was shared where boys were taken away to work and were not given any monetary compensation or allowed to return to their village for five years. It was shared that after these incidents took place, parents now ensure that they take the contact number of the employer and try to rely on employers who are currently employing other boys from the village.
- It is important to enable parents to nuance this understanding of trust further. The local contractors/agents typically spend some time in the village establishing a rapport with the families before they start extending work to them. Thus, parents believe that they can be trusted and seek minimal information thereafter.

“Boys go to Mumbai or Surat to work in jewellery workshops. We are not paid any money for the first two years but are given free accommodation and food. After two years, we are paid INR 5,000 per month,” shared a group of boys.

The onus of providing finances to the household was largely seen to be on the older boys, while the girls were expected to help in the fields and with household chores. Girls from poorer households (and particularly SC/ST communities) were likely to take up work within the village, but not migrate.

- Parents believed that girls should not migrate, and that if they needed to find work, they could do so within/around the village. In Bardhaman, girls belonging to the ST community worked as labour in factories that were within or just outside the village. They did not/were not allowed to travel far for work.

Children are also lured to work when they see other children from the community earning and improving their standards of living. While it may not directly amount to “peer pressure”, there is an aspiration created socially.

Among the community leaders, once again, it was found that they were unwilling to share the extent of child labour that existed within the villages. Community leaders, particularly panchayat members, teachers and police either deny the existence of the practice or refuse to comment on it at all. During the research, it was also found that this existing pressure exerted by political groups and criminal networks generates fear among the community leaders, the consequences of which could be getting transferred to another location or even losing their existing roles should they speak up about any illegal activities that are taking place within the village.

- Community leaders who were more willing to talk about the practice of child labour shared that it is prevalent within marginalised groups, owing to poverty.

“There is no incident of child labour in this village. Everybody wants their children to learn. Only a few children are engaged in child labour to support their family economically,” shared a teacher.

Personal Drivers: Parents inherently believe that the decisions related to their child migrating for work are safe and risk perceptions remain low. There is also a general feeling of helplessness as the short-term need for money trumps the long-term impact it may have on the child’s life. Children want to either support their families financially or are themselves lured by the idea of a better life that can be secured through earning an income.

- Parents believe that because they are sending their children to work through known/trusted networks, the children are less likely to find themselves in dangerous situations that may amount to trafficking or CSEC. Risk perceptions continue to remain low in spite of the fact that parents and children are aware of the dangers involved in unsafe migration.
- Further, the need for financial security often limits the information seeking behaviour among parents, who may be lured by the idea of a good job or good pay received through this trusted network.
- Parents expressed that they understood that education is important but that they did not have a choice because of their financial circumstances. A certain helplessness drove the decision to have children take up and/or migrate for work instead of completing their education.
- Among children, the lure of a better life often drives them to drop out of school and migrate for work instead. This includes the need for purchasing clothes, mobiles phones and having disposable cash. Children also cited wanting to support their families financially owing to existing scarcity.

Influence of COVID-19 on early marriage: COVID-19 has resulted in reverse migration wherein parents/family members who were working outside the village returned during the lockdown. COVID-19 has also reduced access to jobs, limited regular income (particularly income from daily labour) and has increased the financial burden on the family. This has been further intensified by the fact that children are presently not attending school. There is an increased possibility of children remaining out of school and even migrating for work as migration restarts. Several parents and children stated that they are waiting for the opportunity to travel for work, once all the travel restrictions end.

Behaviours that need to be positively influenced:

Disregarding long-term consequences and devaluing education:

- Believing that children, particularly older boys, dropping out of school is the only way for the family to escape poverty.
- Discontinuing education to meet financial needs.
- Seeking out the immediate gains to be sought from having a child work, rather than looking at the long-term consequences that it may have in the child’s life.

Low risk perceptions and unsafe migration behaviours:

- Being optimistic about trusted channels used for migration; limited information-seeking behaviour.
- Believing that while unsafe migration does risk child safety, it is less likely to happen with them since they “know who they are sending their children away with”.

4.1.3. School dropout (and child labour)

School dropouts were a common phenomenon across all three districts and higher among children over 14 years of age. Children are more likely to drop out of school around grades 6 or 7. Dropouts are not as frequent in primary school as in secondary school. While at times it is the parents who encourage their children to drop out of school to support the family financially, at other times it is a decision taken by the child. However, there are significant regional variations with regards to school dropouts. For instance, Purba Siur (Birbhum) has very low dropout. However, there were found to be high dropout rates in Krishnasinghpur and Barikul (Bankura).

Linkage to CT/CSEC: An incident was shared of a girl who was convinced by her neighbour to drop out of school. He stated that he could take her to another town/city and find her a job instead. The girl went missing and a few weeks later was rescued from a lodge where she had been kept in hiding. The parents were unsure of what may have happened if she had not been rescued and brought back to the village.

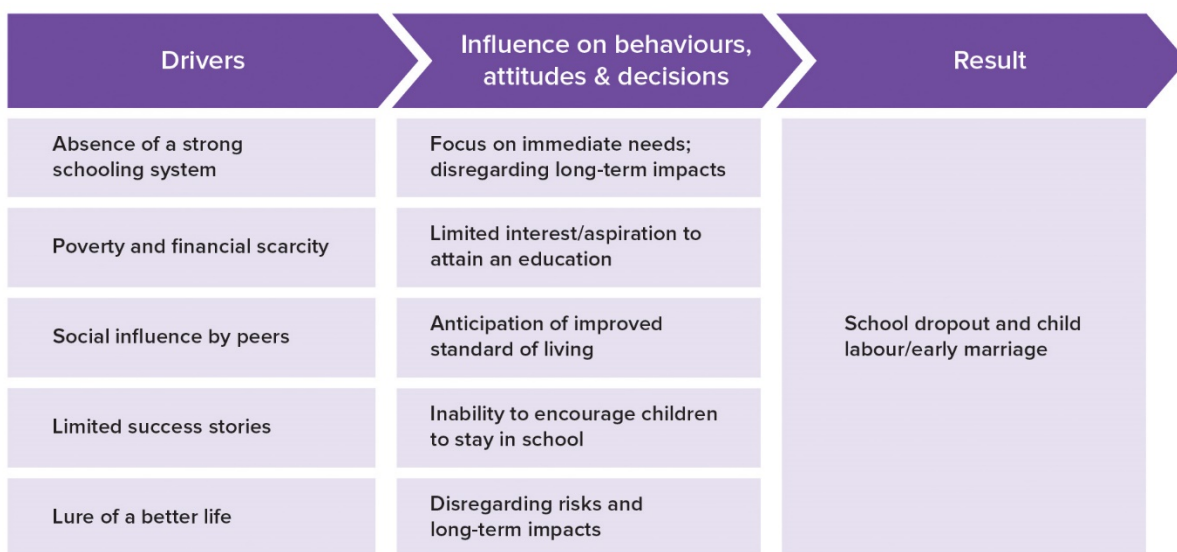


Figure 6: Drivers of school dropout (and unsafe migration) and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions

Structural Drivers: The most commonly occurring reason for children to drop out of school was to alleviate financial burden.

Children are expected to drop out of school to support their families financially.

- It is likely that both boys and girls drop out of school to earn an income and support their households financially. However, this was found to be more common among boys, who were expected to drop out and work instead. This work often involved migrating to other towns/cities.
 - There is increased pressure on the eldest son to drop out and financially assist the family.
- Within marginalised communities, particularly impoverished households, girls are also likely to drop out of school and work, primarily within the village.

“As a result of poverty, many children have to start working and are compelled to drop out of school,” shared a father.

Absence of a strong schooling system hampers the aspirations that parents and children have towards education.

Children often drop out of school because they are unable to pass their examinations and move into the next grade.

- Taking extra classes from a private tutor was a common practice followed across districts because of the sub-par quality of education provided in schools. In cases where families are unable to afford private tutors, children tend to drop out of school either because they are unable to pass their exams or because they are unable to study without the help of a private tutor.

Social Drivers: Children are often obligated to temporarily drop out of school and work towards social/family commitments, such as weddings, farm harvests or sibling care responsibilities. It is widely accepted that after the age of 14, children may drop out of school. There is also a widespread disbelief in the benefits of education.

There are instances of children who have dropped out of school to help meet expenses when an older sibling needs to get married. Children who end up working, even partially, often completely quit school.

There is widespread acceptance within the village/community that children may drop out of school at the age of 14 to support their families financially or for other reasons (such as not seeing the value in education). This is considered fairly “normal” across the villages.

Additionally, parents and children shared that they have not seen other children/adults benefit from having completed their education, since those who do complete their education do not get jobs that are significantly better.

Personal Drivers: There is a general disinterest among parents and children towards education. Lack of opportunities arising out of acquiring an education has left them less enthused about education. There is also an absence of real-life role models that can lead by example and encourage them to work towards acquiring an education. Additionally, children are lured by the idea of a better life that can be attained through earning an income.

Children drop out due to lack of interest in education and believe that they are better off working and earning an income instead.

- They don't see the value in education and often question why it has not resulted in anything significant for those who are highly educated.
- They believe that there are no relevant job/work opportunities that would be available if they completed their education. They reported how educated individuals also tended to take up low paying jobs and, thus, it is better if they quit and work instead. In these instances, education was seen as a waste of time.
- Parents also cited concerns around children “not being interested in studying” and choosing to drop out and work instead.
- Parents shared that they understand the important of education but that they cannot influence their children to continue studying if they children have decided otherwise.

There is an absence of role models that can lead by example and encourage children to acquire an education.

- Children do not have role models within the village who can inspire them to pursue their education. Those who have completed their education are not associated with high-paying jobs.

Children (particularly boys) often drop out of school in order to earn as they believe that this will help them lead a better life. Watching their peers purchase mobile phones and bikes influences them to follow a similar path. In Birbhum, for instance, the survey team came across research participants (older boys) who had left school for work so that they could purchase mobile phones for themselves.

“My father asked me to continue studying but I did not want to because I do not see the value in it,” said a girl who had recently dropped out of school.

Influence of COVID-19 on school dropouts: COVID-19 has aggravated the issue of dropouts as children are not going to school and in several cases online classes have not been happening. In cases where online classes have been taking place, not all households have mobile phones for their children to attend these classes. Parents shared that this gap is also causing children to disconnect from the idea of education. In some villages, the children have had to drop out of schools because they could not pay their tuition fees given the impact that COVID-19 has had on household income. Teachers and children believe that the dropout rate will increase because the families have become poorer during this period and children will be required to support their families financially.

Behaviours that need to be positively influenced:

Disregarding long-term consequences and devaluing education:

- Believing that boys dropping out of school to work and earn an income is the only way the family can escape poverty.
- Discontinuing education to meet financial needs.
- Seeking out the immediate gains from children working and earning rather than looking at the long-term consequences that dropping out may have on the child’s life.

Low risk perceptions and unsafe migration behaviours:

- Limited information-seeking behaviour in cases of child migration. Parents are willing to send their children to any location to work as long as someone they know has been there/currently lives there or as long as they trust the contractors/agents.
- Believing that although unsafe migration risks child safety, it is less likely to happen with them since they know who they are sending their children away with.

4.1.4. Harmful online practices

The usage of digital devices and social media has increased among the youth in the selected districts. The availability of phones at economical prices and data plans offered at affordable rates by telecom companies, have made it easier for families and children to purchase these. While most older boys have their own mobile phones, younger children and girls are likely to use the phones owned by their parents. Across age groups and gender, children tend to spend several hours a day on the internet (social media, gaming applications etc), making them vulnerable to CT and CSEC as traffickers may use these channels

to befriend them or even make false propositions related to marriage, job or education opportunities and lure them to run away from their home. This has increased the risk of CT. The usage of mobile phones during COVID-19 has only increased, with some children sharing that they spend up to eight hours online, either on social media, on gaming applications or to consume movies/music. Limited digital literacy among the parents means that they have limited information related to their children's activities online.

Children expressed that they are likely to befriend individuals online and this varied from befriending only those individuals who are from within their village to befriending individuals from neighbouring villages (or villages where they have relatives residing) to even befriending complete strangers online. A few children shared instances of friends they have made online whom they regularly communicate with through pictures, messages and phone calls. These are typically friends that they have made on social media applications (Facebook, WhatsApp) or gaming applications (Five Fire).

Linkage to CT/CSEC: An incident was shared of a boy who met a girl online. They started exchanging pictures, spoke over the phone and the girl started sending him money. The girl then visited his village under the pretext of them getting married. The boy found out that it was a fake profile all along. In another incident, girls shared that their friends who had met husbands online tended to lose all contact and no longer keep in touch.

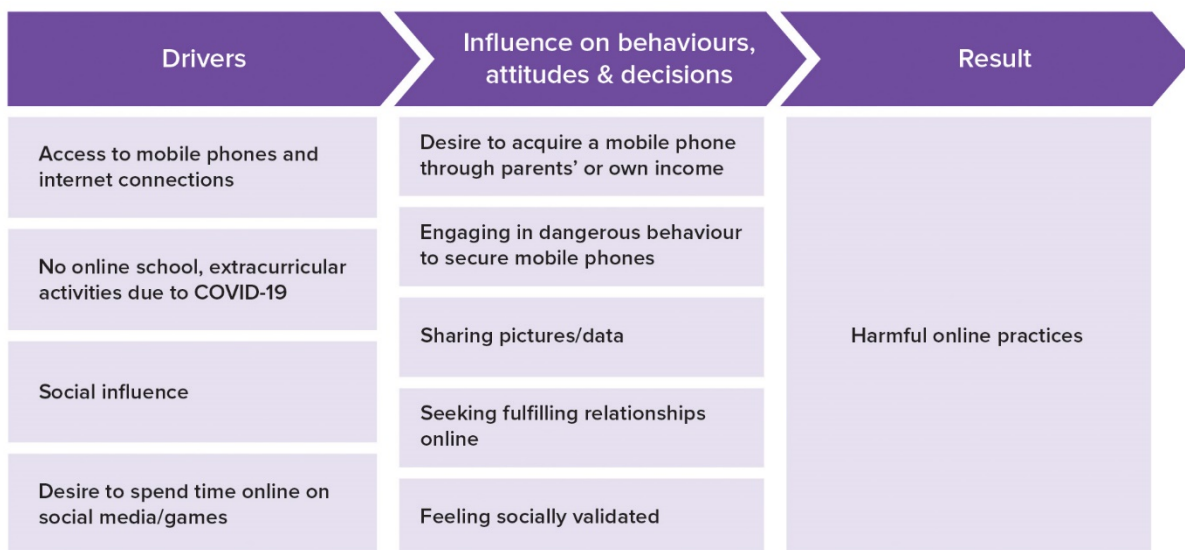


Figure 7: Drivers of harmful online practices and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions

Structural drivers: Consumption of social media/internet has relatively increased among the children since schools have been shut. Even extra-curricular activities, such as playing sports, have stopped/reduced, leaving the internet as a key source of entertainment.

- Especially in light of COVID-19, children have had an increased amount of disposable time, with schools being shut and online classes being limited/not taking place. This has resulted in children spending an increased amount of time on their mobile phones.
- Absence of local work opportunities means that children engage with online recruitment/training opportunities. In certain cases, these result in children engaging with fraudulent opportunities.

Social drivers: There is strong social influence (indirect) to possess a mobile phone and children feel socially validated upon owning a mobile phone. Parents also point out the usage/buying of mobile phones as a cause of conflict between children and parents.

- It is common practice for children to demand mobile phones. When their parents are unable to purchase mobile phones, they may engage in self-harming behaviour or seek other ways to access mobile phones, including dropping out of school and running away for work.
- In Bardhaman, an incident was shared of a girl who committed suicide when her parents were unable to purchase a mobile phone for her. Multiple parents shared that children do tend to fight with their parents to purchase a mobile phone for themselves and in some cases may even consider dropping out of school to work or running away from home so that they can earn money and buy a phone.

Personal drivers: Children shared that they enjoy using social media to post pictures of themselves, their village and share updates about their day-to-day activities. They actively seek out social media as a platform to meet new friends. Gaming applications are seen as a major source of entertainment, particularly post COVID-19.

- Children actively seek out friends online. Older boys talk about looking for profiles with beautiful display pictures to befriend. Boys also spoke about seeking out these friends to meet and engage in romantic relationships.
- Although girls said that they are more careful about whom they engage with on social media, it does seem to be the case that they too engage with strangers as several instances were pointed out across the different districts wherein girls had eloped with men they had met on Facebook or WhatsApp. This could happen through friend requests that are received/sent online.
- Typically, they specified that the friends that they make online are generally either from their village or from neighbouring towns/villages but are not necessarily limited to this.
- Children also make new friends online when they visit their relatives' houses (in neighbouring villages) and meet new people there.
- Parents are unable to monitor children's activities online and were unsure of the content that was being consumed. They are aware of the presence of unsafe/bad content and pictures that children should not be consuming and may even tell them not to. However, they are unable to actually monitor their activities online.

Children also use the internet to connect with recruiters or enrol in vocational training programmes. However, there have been instances where the children have been duped of their money.

- In Bankura, there was an incident where a girl invested money to receive technical training but the organisation closed and disappeared with her money. In Bankura, tribal children are often targeted by fraudulent companies. There have been many instances of fraudulent companies offering jobs to the children and denying them their wages. Irrespective of this, children continue looking for and pursuing jobs in the city.

"Many girls have met their husbands through Facebook. These are typically men from neighbouring villages, and not from very far away," shared a group of girls.

Influence of COVID-19 on online practices: COVID-19 and the decrease in physical activities (going to school, playing sports etc) has increased the usage of social media and gaming applications among children. The absence of online schooling for children has left them with few entertainment and engagement activities. COVID-19 has also increased the mobile usage time, as shared by the participants. The consumption of video content has also increased during the lockdown as children shared that they use YouTube and applications similar to TikTok more extensively now.

Behaviours that need to be positively influenced:

Limited information-seeking behaviour and limited knowledge of data privacy/security

- Limited information-seeking behaviour when looking for romantic relationships/friends online. Children speak of uploading good pictures of self or the village (scenery etc..) to attract strangers.
- Extending friend requests to profiles with beautiful pictures to initiate friendship/romantic relationships.
- Not verifying accounts of the people children engage with.
- Not leveraging privacy settings to ensure safety of their profile. Sharing personal information, emotional vulnerabilities with strangers or “friends” online.

Low risk perceptions

- Meeting individuals they met online. These meetings often take place in isolation.
- Engaging with unverified recruiters and training organisations online.

4.1.5. Runaway Children

Children who experience abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) in the home may run away from their homes. Other children run away due to affairs, promise of marriage or in search of a better life by hoping to find work in the city. The increased usage of mobile phones and social media has increased the vulnerability of children where they meet strangers, enter into romantic relationships and get lured to run away with the traffickers. Lack of interest in education, lack of private tutors, poor performance/failure in school also leads to children running away. The reason for children to run away in several instances was arguments around them not doing well at school, drinking or doing drugs. In such scenarios common steps taken by children would be running away to live with friends or relatives and begin work. There were a few instances of children running away and never returning (Birbhum).

Linkage to CT/CSEC: An incident was shared of a boy who met a girl online. They started exchanging pictures, spoke over the phone and the girl started sending him money. The girl then visited his village under the pretext of them getting married. The boy found out that it was a fake profile all along. In another incident, girls shared that their friends who had met husbands online tended to lose all contact and no longer keep in touch.



Figure 8: Drivers of children running away from home and influence of drivers on behaviours, attitudes and decisions

Structural drivers: Poverty leads to the lure of a better life and often results in children running away from home. This is further exacerbated by a poor quality education system.

- Children run away to seek a better life, driven by their poor financial conditions.
- The absence of a quality education pushes children to resort to having to run away in search of opportunities. This is especially the case when parents are unable to fulfil their children's requirements in terms of purchasing clothes, mobiles phones or providing cash.

Social drivers: Running away from home is a common social practice and children may be indirectly influenced by their peers to run away from home. Running away from home is also socially acceptable wherein it is believed that children are likely to run away for either work or marriage.

- In a tribal village in Bardhaman, it is a common practice for children to run away in search of work or for marriage. This is not only widely accepted by children but also parents and the wider society.
- When children see other children/adults move to cities and earn a living, they are often influenced to do the same and this can result in them running away from home.

Personal drivers: Older children running away to get married was noted to be very common within these districts. Finding romantic partners through social media has become increasingly common.

- In several instances children ran away from home to get married to their partner whom they had met online, or they were in a relationship but had not attained the legal age to get married. They elope with their partners, including partners that they may have met on the internet.
- Older children, specifically older boys may run away to work so that they can improve their standards of living by purchasing mobile phones or motorcycles.

Behaviours that need to be positively influenced:

- Running away and not sharing information with family about one's whereabouts.
- Travelling to unknown places in search of work without adequate information.

4.1.6. Neglect and abuse

Sexual abuse is rampant within certain villages in Bardhaman and Bankura. Parents and children are aware that it takes place frequently and girls are advised not to visit places within the village where such incidents are likely to occur. There are also instances of sexual abuse reported wherein fathers, relatives or known individuals have been cited as perpetrators. Additionally, alcohol and drug misuse are rampant among fathers and older boys. The overall neglect that children face increases their vulnerability to CT and CSEC. Abusive attitudes and practices directed towards women and girls both within the household and within the community make girls vulnerable to trafficking and CSEC. Experiences of physical, sexual and emotional abuse often lead to detrimental effects to a child's mental health. Histories of trauma in childhood in the form of abuse, maltreatment, or neglect heighten the vulnerabilities of children and youth to exploitation and often cause individuals to fail to recognise their experience as exploitative, making them ideal targets for traffickers.

Parents in Bardhaman reported cases of sexual abuse. One of the villages was found to have a forest close to it. The forest is frequently visited by boys and men who consume alcohol. Parents and children both shared that girls who may be walking through the forest or close to it may stand the risk of being sexually abused. It was commonly known that the forest is unsafe and parents restricted their children, particularly daughters from passing by. They mentioned that sexual abuse in the forest has happened frequently. The parents shared that if the girls try to raise an alarm, they may even be physically harmed and thus it would be safer if they did not visit those spaces. In Bardhaman, mothers and girls also shared that incidents of sexual abuse took place within the village itself and were more likely to happen with girls who were below the age of 12 or 13, since they would be less likely to scream, complain or fight off the perpetrator. Older girls were aware that they could raise an alarm by shouting or running and thus were less likely to be targeted.

Structural factors: Neglect, alcohol misuse and sexual abuse have been cited to be more common among SC/ST communities.

- Girls from SC/ST households are more prone to facing sexual violence.
- In the case of alcohol and drug abuse, children who have dropped out of school are more likely to engage in substance misuse.
- Sexual abuse is likely to happen with younger girls who are below the age of 12 or 13, since they are less likely to scream, complain or fight off the perpetrator.

Social factors: Alcohol misuse is a widely accepted social practice across the districts. Additionally, it is believed that fathers may be physically violent, and this is not questioned by families.

- Substance misuse is a widely accepted practice among men and boys. While community members are aware of the harms associated with it, they continue to be rampantly used.
- It is also accepted that fathers may get physically or verbally abusive when they drink and women and children do not have the agency to oppose such behaviour.

There is also stigma associated with sexual abuse that may increase the vulnerability of girls within the districts.

- There was an incident where a young girl was abused by a boy within the forest. The boy later asked the girl to marry him. The family agreed to let her get married because they were afraid that no one else would be willing to get married to her. They believe that the girl will not be accepted within the village and based on that fear, agreed to her getting married to the individual who was responsible for sexually abusing her.
- In another incident, a girl who was sexually abused wanted to talk to her parents about it. While her mother extended her understanding, it was difficult for her to talk to her father about it, owing to the stigma attached to being abused.
- In all cases, the onus of safety lies with the girls, who are advised to stay away from unsafe spaces and be mindful of their behaviours so that they are less likely to be targeted by perpetrators.

Influence of COVID-19 on online practices: COVID-19 was not seen to have any significant impact of abuse/neglect. Alcohol/drug consumption continues to remain rampant. Additionally, women and girls did not mention that the nature or frequency of sexual abuse has changed in any way.

Behaviours that need to be positively influenced:

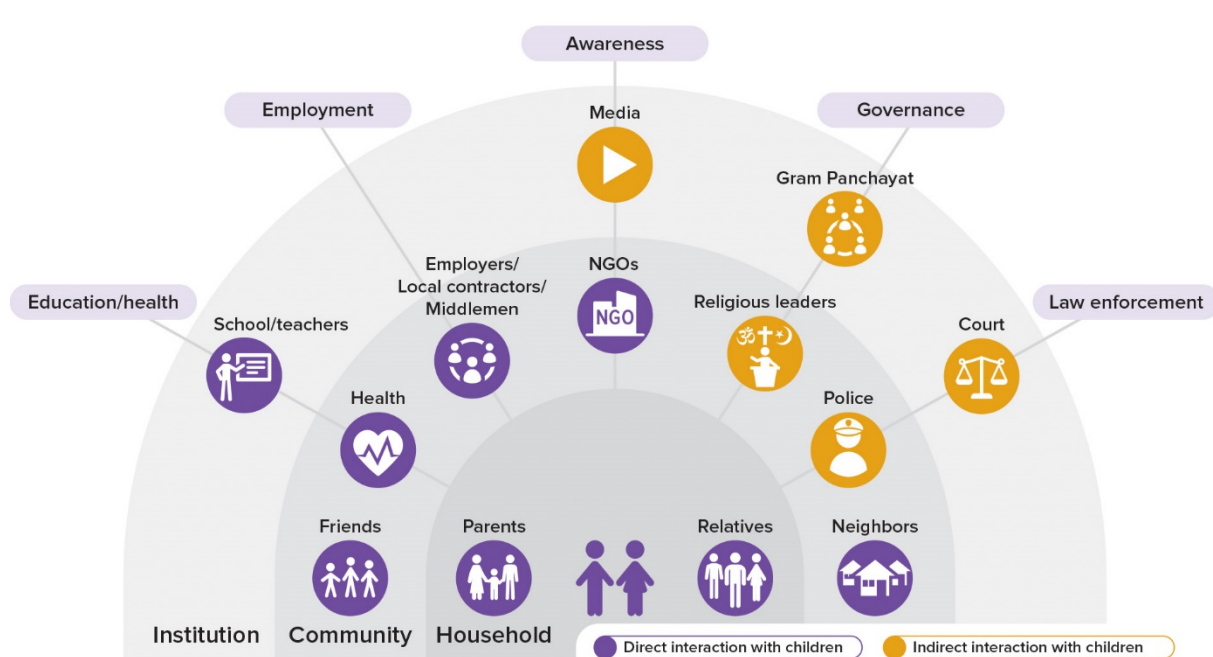
- Parents are closed to discussing incidents of sexual abuse with their daughters, even in cases where the daughters are victims.
- Gender norms and assuming that the girl is responsible for being abused.

4.2. Role of key stakeholders in influencing CT/CSEC-related vulnerabilities

The study found that vulnerabilities such as child marriage, child labour or school dropout are influenced by a variety of stakeholders within the child's life. In order to drive prevention of CT/CSEC, it is critical to understand the roles that these stakeholders play in either enabling or preventing it.

Figure 9 depicts key stakeholders and institutions present within the child's ecosystem at the community and household level. The stakeholder map was created based on findings from multiple mapping activities conducted with parents and children across the 3 districts during the course of the study. Parents, relatives, friends, neighbours, school teachers, and health workers have direct interaction and influence over the child's life. Other stakeholders such as local government authorities, police and media have also been found to play an indirect role. Given the proximity that these stakeholders share with the child's life, the study sought to analyse the role that these stakeholders play in influencing CT, CSEC and related vulnerabilities, based on their respective KAPs.

Vulnerability faced by children is enabled/prevented by key stakeholders within their ecosystem



In order to drive prevention of CT/CSEC, it is critical to understand the roles that these stakeholders play in either enabling or preventing it.

Figure 9: Key stakeholders present within the child's ecosystem, at the household and community levels

The current section of the report specifically looks at the role that fathers, mothers, children and community leaders play in influencing these vulnerabilities. First, the nature of the relationship between each stakeholder and the child was analysed. The study uses four broad categories to analyse the nature of the relationships. The stakeholder relationship framework has been built using John Heron's six-category intervention analysis as a base. The study found four different types of relationships that are shared with children:

3. **Authoritative - Disengaged:** The relationship is either autocratic in nature or disengaged, depending upon the specific situation/circumstance.
4. **Authoritative - Facilitative:** The relationship may switch between being autocratic and nurturing/facilitative.
5. **Facilitative - Supportive:** In this type of relationship, the child is likely to feel nurtured/supported in the presence of the agent. There is also a high degree of trust in this relationship.
6. **Facilitative - Disengaged:** This agent has a facilitative/supportive role in certain situations but is disengaged in others.

Additionally, the roles played by each stakeholder in either enabling or preventing CT, CSEC and related vulnerabilities have been analysed across five key parameters:

1. **Awareness:** The actor is aware of CT and CSEC and the potential ways in which CT and CSEC emanate from the different vulnerabilities present in their village.
2. **Intent:** The actor acknowledges the problem of CT and CSEC as a relevant problem to their community and expresses the desire to resolve it.

3. **Action:** The actor has engaged in actions that have directly or by means of influence controlled/curbed the instances of CT and CSEC or the related vulnerabilities within the community.
4. **Influence:** The actor has in the past/is currently or has the potential to, by virtue of his/her influence in the community, galvanise collective action.
5. **Trust:** Community members are comfortable sharing their emotions and information with this actor.



Figure 10: Key parameters that influence the vulnerability of children to CT and CSEC

The relationships children share within the ecosystem impact their life and safety within the village. This is based on the nature of the relationship that they share, the influence that these stakeholders are able to exert on the child and the level of trust that children have with them. Additionally, these stakeholders influence CT and CSEC based on their own knowledge, attitudes and practices. A child's ecosystem can potentially contribute to both perpetuating and preventing the manifestation of the specific vulnerabilities discussed in the previous section.

The study found that fathers have the most significant influence on vulnerabilities such as child marriage, child labour and school drop outs. Fathers share an authoritative-disengaged relationship with the children and are often the principal decision makers in the child's life (often taking key decisions such as, for example, whether the child should drop out of school to work or get married). However, in spite of having such strong influence, fathers are hesitant to talk about CT/CSEC. They have intent to ensure child safety and have high influence, but their risk perceptions remain low. Mothers, on the other hand, have high intent to secure child safety and are more open to talking about CT, CSEC and related vulnerabilities; but they are limited by their lack of agency and relatively lower levels of influence. Among the community leaders, ASHA workers and teachers have varying types of relationships with the children, wherein they are found to be facilitative in certain villages and disengaged in others.

4.2.1. Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders – Fathers

Nature of relationship with the child: Authoritative – Disengaged

The nature of the relationship between the child and father was found to be authoritative in certain areas within the child's life and disengaged in others. For example, while fathers are the ultimate decision makers with regards to the child's marriage, they play a limited role in preventing their children from dropping out of school.

- The study found that the role of the father often switches between being the primary decision maker in certain situations (for example, who the child will get married to) while remaining disengaged in other situations (for example, stating that they are unable to convince their children to go back to school if the child has decided to drop out).
 - For example, in Bankura district, a child was forced by his father to start working and earning an income for the household. In this situation, the child ended up selling his belongings to leave for the city since he believed that he could not change his father's decision.

- Fathers may exercise this control using verbal or physical force, as cited by children in various instances. This also makes it difficult for the children to have open dialogue/conversations with their fathers.
- While fathers were found to exert control in certain situations, in other situations they were found to remain disengaged. For example, being unable to convince their children to continue their school education. In Bardhaman, several fathers stated that if their children are uninterested in education, “there is nothing that they can do about it”.
- In the case of children coming from either social or economically marginalised communities, it was found that fathers tend to remain primarily disengaged. Here, poverty and the family’s preoccupation with economic scarcity were cited as key reasons for fathers being unable to play a more active decision-making role in the lives of their children.
- Almost all the fathers of the SC/ST community in Bardhaman drink on a regular basis. Out of INR 200 they earn as a daily labour payment, they pay only INR 20 to their family the remaining INR 180 is spent on liquor. Their drinking behaviour often leads to fights within the household. This is especially frequent in the tribal community, often on a daily basis. On some occasions, the mothers consume alcohol.



Awareness

Limited awareness/acknowledgement of the risks that lead to CT/CSEC

While fathers conceptually understand CT/CSEC it appears that they do not understand all the possible forms in which it can happen. For instance, sending their children to a state/city where someone they know (friends/relatives) knows another individual can ensure the child's safety. Similarly, sending the boys with contractors “because they have been doing this for several years” suggests a level of trust that is not necessarily verified/validated. There have also been instances where they have been opened to sending their children to distant places with individuals who originally belong to their village and are willing to “help children get jobs in the city”. There have been instances in Bankura where this has resulted in commercial sexual exploitation of girls through women who were once part of the community and were therefore trusted. In Bardhaman, fathers stated that “they have never heard about CT happening in their villages,” in spite of the fact that other stakeholders were able to share specific instances of the same. In Bankura, the fathers shared that they are not comfortable in watching television with their children because of certain scenes in the movies that they believe are not appropriate to be watched together, which reflects the hesitation from their side when it comes to discussing issues that revolve around sex, etc.

Intent

Invested in the safety of their children but decision making remains risky

Fathers do have a sense of care and concern towards the safety of their children. However, in most instances the need for greater financial security leads to engaging in vulnerabilities such as unsafe migration. There is also a general sense that this is more likely to happen in other families, households and villages. In Bankura and Bardhaman, fathers were dismissive towards CT/CSEC occurring in their own village but had shared instances of traffickers residing in other villages and later trafficking children. While fathers do care for their child’s safety, their limited risk perception and limited information seeking behaviour may restrict how they are able to act on their intent.

Action

Often driven by helplessness/inability to prevent risks

Poverty necessitates that they allow their children into potentially dangerous situations with limited bargaining power and limited information seeking behaviour. There is low understanding of potential steps that can be taken to ensure their children's safety, limited understanding of options of recourse and there is general stigma around being in such a situation (being a village/family associated with CT/CSEC is considered embarrassing/an abomination). In Bankura, the fathers shared that they have stopped many girls from going with an organisation that is known to be involved in trafficking in the village. Persons within the village are unable to take any action because they do not have any proof against them.

Influence

Reluctance to engage on the issue but capable of influencing certain critical decisions within the child's life

Across districts, fathers were the most difficult to engage with on the subject (from among stakeholders closest to the children). The unwillingness to discuss the issue made it difficult to understand their perceptions towards it. However, given the relationships that they share with their children, they are a key stakeholder that can reduce vulnerabilities of children by taking informed/safer decisions towards child labour, early marriage, school dropouts and other factors that make children vulnerable to CT and CSEC.

Trust

Children have moderate levels of trust with their fathers and may approach them when they are sad, confused or scared.

Boys and girls have shared that they approach their fathers when they need some form of guidance when they are distressed. There was an incident in Bankura where a boy was disturbing a girl. She then took this issue to her father, after which the boy stopped bothering her. Children do tend to look to their fathers, particularly when they find themselves in difficult situations, confusing situations or situations that require financial support. Given this dynamic, fathers can be leveraged as one of the most critical stakeholders in influencing child safety.

Key stakeholders – Mothers

Nature of relationship with the child: Authoritative – Facilitative

The mothers influence only the everyday decisions of the child. While mothers understand the importance of education or the problems associated with child marriage, their agency is limited to the daily activities, and they have tended to have limited agency in influencing the major life decisions of the child.

- Both boys and girls, across age groups, cited seeking comfort and guidance from their mothers when they are afraid, sad, want to share their secrets or need advice.
- Mothers also play the role of mediating discussions with the fathers, particularly when the fathers are angry or when the child wants to engage in a difficult conversation with the father (for example, if the father is less likely to listen, the child may try to reach out to the father through his/her mother).
- The authoritative role played by the mother is found to be more present in everyday decisions. For example, seeking their mothers' permission to visit certain places within the village or to visit their friends' houses.

- In Bardhaman district, for example, there are multiple instances of mothers determining whether the child can visit a certain physical space within the village or not. At the same time, there are also instances of mothers wanting to encourage their daughters to continue their education, become self-reliant and not marry early. However, in these situations, they were unable to override the decision made by either the father or the child themselves.



Awareness

Awareness regarding CT/CSEC exists among mothers across districts, though they are more likely to believe that it happens in other villages and not theirs

There is awareness regarding CT/CSEC among the mothers. In one village in Bardhaman, the mothers spoke about a forest near the village where children may get kidnapped/taken away if the parents and children are not careful. They also spoke about a specific incident wherein a group of individuals had moved into the village, spent some time living there and one night broke into a house, killed the family members and stole their kidneys. The mothers in Bardhaman also spoke of another incident where five children went missing. In another village mothers shared the incident of a girl who was taken away by a neighbour under the pretext of work but was eventually rescued. In spite of having witnessed such incidents, there is still a strong inclination to believe that CT does not take place within their villages. In Bankura, mothers shared that there is an active gang (organised criminal group) in the village that works under the disguise of an organisation. There have also been instances of masons and ice cream vendors working as traffickers in the village. Community leaders mentioned that they could not share details regarding sensitive matters because they could be at risk due to the influence of the existing racket.

Intent

Mothers have high intent to enforce change within the community

Mothers express worry over the dangers that exist and eagerly want some form of positive change to be implemented. While they are largely hesitant to talk about instances of trafficking that have taken place within their own villages, in cases where they did talk about it, they expressed worry/concern and spoke about how they want the village to become a safer place for their children. There is an overall intent to ensure safety of the children.

Action and influence

Although mothers want to drive child safety, they have limited agency

- Mothers are capable of providing guidance to their children on what is safe and what is unsafe. However, there is also a sense of helplessness that exists. This is particularly true in instances where children have to move away for work or in search of a better life. The mothers shared that although they want their children to be safe, they lack the support to do so and feel helpless in the case of CT and CSEC.
- Given the patriarchal nature of these societies, women tend to have limited say overall and are largely dependent on their husbands.

Trust

Children are extremely comfortable expressing their feelings and concerns with their mothers

Children approach their mothers when they need to be comforted. It was shared by certain households in Bankura that the children are closer to their mothers, irrespective of the gender. The children go to their fathers to fulfil their demands, but they share personal experiences with their mothers.

Key stakeholders – Healthcare workers

Nature of relationship with the child: Facilitative – Disengaged

In some districts, health workers are actively engaged with the community in spreading awareness and performing their duties. However, there are also instances where they are disengaged from the child's life.

- In certain villages, the health worker has been found to play an important role in the lives of adolescent boys and girls. This was typically the case when the health worker played an active role in providing medical support and facilitating meetings with the children on subjects related to adolescent health. The healthcare worker also seems to have a more influential role on the lives of the SC and ST community members in Bankura. The health worker has admitted that the SC/ST community is more likely to follow the advice of a health worker.
- During the lockdown, the ASHA workers ensured that those who were returning from the cities followed quarantine rules, stayed at home for 14 days and also checked them for any COVID-19 symptoms. They also visited the families regularly to ensure the families were provided with proper healthcare even during the lockdown period.
- In a tribal village in Bardhaman, it has been found that the health worker provided limited-to-no support to the families/children. Here it was found that the health worker did not visit the village frequently, did not engage with the children, and also refrained from providing support that was in line with her responsibilities.



Awareness & action

ASHA workers are aware of CT and CSEC and the ways in which it takes place but may be under pressure to not talk about it. Action taken by ASHA workers varies across districts and villages.

In certain districts, they have been imparting awareness on the topic throughout the community as part of their work. Most villages spoke positively of the ASHA worker and shared how they are proactive in the community. During COVID-19, they were pivotal to the relief and awareness efforts in some of the districts. In one village in Bankura, the health worker shared that the families don't involve them in matters like child marriage or children migrating for work. She mentioned that the mothers were against her sharing this information. However, they do share the health risks of child marriage and loss of opportunities because of dropping out of school. In Bardhaman, there were instances of participants sharing that ASHA workers did not provide the necessary resources, support or counsel, and this was particularly the case in a tribal village.

Influence and trust

The health workers have a high level of agency and influence

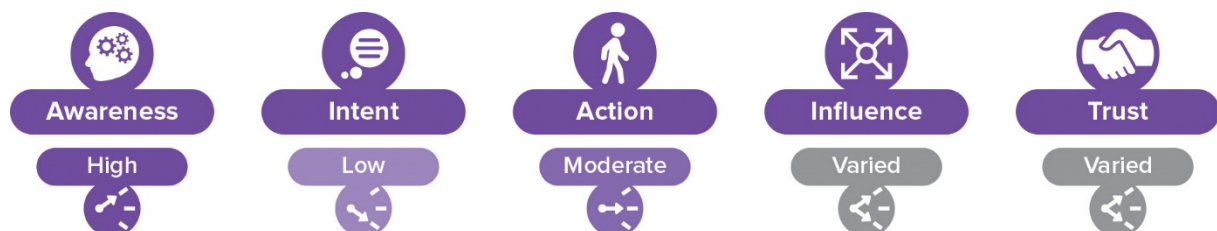
There is a high level of agency as they have high social acceptance among the communities in Birbhum. In Bardhaman, the community is unable to see the support provided by the ASHA worker. However, a caste-based angle seems to exist here. The health worker demonstrated influence in the community and has been able to influence the behaviour of the community on aspects such as sexual and reproductive health, early marriage and the importance of education. They have actively engaged with mothers and young girls. However, in some cases, ASHA workers do the bare minimum. As mentioned, this was seen in the more tribal parts of Bardhaman.

Key stakeholders – Teacher

Nature of relationship with the child: Facilitative – Disengaged

In some districts, the teachers are admired by the children, who often reach out to them for their guidance. However, there are also situations where their engagement is passive or disengaged.

- In several villages, girls tend to admire their teachers and seek their guidance on specific issues. They may also seek advice from their teachers when they are confused. In certain villages, teachers also cited conducting awareness activities/personal initiatives to reduce practices such as early marriage among children.
 - However, it was also found that there are instances of pushback within the community wherein the teacher has tried to play a proactive role in the lives of the children, but the village authorities have restricted it by force.
 - A teacher in Bardhaman shared that he was transferred twice because he tried to prevent child marriage and other dangerous practices. Teachers also feel that they do not have enough power to influence the community.
- In the case of teachers, it was found that in certain villages teachers are unable to play an active role, both within and outside the classroom. There were multiple instances of children and parents reporting that teachers frequently remained absent from school and provided limited focus on education. In certain cases, this has also resulted in children having to drop out of school.



Awareness

Awareness regarding CT/CSEC is high

Teachers are aware of CT and CSEC and the possible way in which it can happen. The teacher in Bankura raised concerns regarding the wide usage of online platforms and how it may lead to children finding themselves in dangerous situations.

Intent

Intent exists but may be hampered by external forces or in certain cases there is general apathy

In Bardhaman and Bankura, teacher apathy came up as a critical area of concern for the parents with the teachers often being found asleep in classrooms and imparting sub-par education. In other instances,

teachers shared how political forces may hamper their ability to take action and therefore, while there is intent it is limited by external factors.

While there have been instances of teachers taking initiative for the children, this has not been institutionally driven

In Bardhaman, there was an incident of a teacher who wanted to help out but stated that, “I cannot interfere or open up about what is happening here otherwise I will be transferred. I have already been transferred twice in the past due to similar reasons.” In Bankura, the teacher seemed keen on spreading awareness regarding the possible dangers that exist in society among the community members. This initiative is typically taken by the teachers at their own risk.

Action and influence

While teachers voluntarily take action in certain instances, in other villages they are either unable to or are unwilling

In Bankura, the teachers have formed groups to spread awareness regarding child marriage and the importance of completing their education. They have formed a group with unmarried children in every ICDS centre. Another teacher from the same district does social work in the community and supports poor families and children. He is capable of influencing individuals at a community level but when it comes to CT and CSEC, he mentioned that parents allow it to happen because of the existing poverty. Therefore, he feels helpless in these situations. In Bardhaman, there were largely two kinds of attitudes found among teachers. Either they felt compelled to hide what was going on in the village by constantly stating that they have “never heard of any dangers faced by the children there,” or stated that they cannot help due to a fear of being caught/transferred.

Trust

Teachers have high trust within the classroom but limited influence outside

Girls trust the advice from their teachers and consider them their role models. They approach their teachers when they are confused or need guidance with their education. The teachers also update parents regarding their child's progress. Teachers may be able to influence individuals at a community level or on educational matters but have lower agency over behaviours related to child safety. Girls trust the advice from their teachers and consider them their role models.

Key stakeholders – Panchayat

Nature of relationship with the child: Facilitative – Disengaged

The role of the panchayat varies across districts. In Bankura, the children have stated that they can approach the panchayat in case they may have any serious concerns or complaints. However, in Bardhaman, parents are concerned by the lack of support provided by the panchayat.

- Panchayat members are found to be largely absent from the child's ecosystem. Interactions between the panchayat members and the children may happen indirectly in certain instances, through the parents, relatives or other family members. This is especially the case when panchayat members are brought in for conflict resolutions. Only in Bankura, the children mentioned that they could approach the panchayat when the matter was serious.
- There are instances of children having shared that the panchayat members are not supportive, even in cases where they are approached for help.
- During the lockdown, the teachers and panchayat helped families by providing dry rations and sanitation kits. They tried to ensure that the families residing in the village were able to fend for themselves.



There are wide differences, across geographies, in the role of the Panchayat in influencing CT/CSEC

Awareness and intent

Across all districts, the panchayat leaders are unwilling to engage on the issue of CT/CSEC and acknowledge CT/CSEC as a problem of relevance to their village or express a desire to resolve it

- Although the panchayat leaders are aware of the issue of CT/CSEC in the area in general, the extent of this knowledge was unclear as in most villages the panchayat were unwilling to engage on the issue.
- In all cases, they insisted that their village has never had a case of CT /CSEC, though acknowledged that there have been instances of the same in neighbouring villages

Action

Overall, limited action taken

- In Birbhum and Bardhaman, the panchayat could not share instances where they may have undertaken targeted interventions to CT/CSEC or even the related vulnerabilities.
- However, in Bankura, the panchayat has actively helped spread awareness regarding child marriage and school dropouts through various campaigns. They have also taken measures to prevent CT, reduce migrations and protect the children in their community. They are highly influential in the community. Villagers prefer the panchayat for resolving issues such as property disputes, domestic violence or any other such issue.

Influence

Even though the panchayats across the three districts were unwilling to engage on the issue of CT and CSEC, they do exert considerable influence on their respective communities

- The panchayat is actively called upon across the three districts to resolve the day-to-day issues arising in the community. Issues include land disputes among kin, domestic violence in households, financial challenges arising during poor harvest etc.
- The communities also prefer engaging with the panchayat over the police to resolve law and order issues. Especially in matters that are deemed sensitive or instances when families fear reputational damage (when their children run away, or their daughters elope with men from other religions/castes), they seek the panchayat's intervention.

Trust

Community members believe that the panchayat does not provide the required support

- In Bardhaman, one of the mothers started crying saying that they are neglected by the panchayat and that they do not provide any information, rations or schemes to them. She mentioned that even during COVID-19 and Cyclone Amphan, the panchayat did not provide the required support.
- They go to the panchayat when there are domestic issues but not in the case of sexual abuse.

Key stakeholders – Police

Nature of relationship with the child: Facilitative – Disengaged

The children approach the police only when accompanied by their parents. While they have helped prevent child marriage and influence other critical matters, their interaction and influence over the child's life are largely limited.

- It was found that police officers do not provide the required support to children and their families. In Bardhaman, the police officer did not report the case of missing children. Children are also not allowed to engage with the police officers unless accompanied by a parent or elder. Their interaction with children remains largely limited. Only in Bankura, parents and children mentioned that they approach the police in certain critical matters including land/neighbour disputes.
- In Bankura, the police have been successful in preventing child marriage and resolving domestic conflicts.
- Children perceive police officers to be a disengaged agent in their lives. Both children and parents cited examples of the police not extending support/not registering cases of missing children.



Police have been found to have resistance in talking about issues of CT/CSEC. Where there is high ability to take action, intent varies across geographies. The communities across all three districts prefer the panchayat leader for dispute resolution over the police.

- The police in Bankura and Bardhaman are aware of CT/CSEC but there is lack of clarity on the degree of awareness. This is due to the resistance while sharing information.
- There have been instances of the police preventing child marriage, resolving domestic issues, receiving information on missing children etc. They also attempt to spread awareness within the community. However, there are also instances wherein police officers do not extend the required support. The communities across all three districts prefer the panchayat leader for dispute resolution over the police.
- In Bankura, there have been instances of the police preventing child marriage, missing children and drug consumption. They also spread awareness within the community. However, in Bardhaman, it was shared that police officers did not register/engage with a case where five children went missing.
- There is an inclination to go to the panchayat since they are seen as the “community leaders”. There are a few cases in Bankura where the conflict matters are not shared with the panchayat leader. The parents mentioned that they solve it among themselves and even if the issue reaches the panchayat, it is often too late.
- While police have high influence and authority, the trust they receive remains limited.

4.2.2. Other stakeholders

Other stakeholders – Siblings

Nature of relationship with the child: Facilitative – Supportive

- Children share a supportive relationship with their siblings, as children mentioned that they trust and confide in their siblings. It is often the case that girls are likely to feel close to their elder sisters while boys feel close to their elder brothers. Children are also likely to seek advice from their elder siblings, who they believe could be more knowledgeable than them.
- There are also multiple instances where relationships with siblings or friends influenced the aspirations of the children. For example, seeing one's elder sibling earning money and being able to improve their standard of living may influence the child to want to work or seeing a sibling perform well in education may encourage a child's education-related aspirations.

Other stakeholders – Grandparents

Nature of relationship with the child: Facilitative – Supportive

The children approach their grandparents when they are upset and need some sort of support or comfort.

- Children may reach out to their grandparents to seek their advice and comfort when they are sad or confused. Children also shared that when they are angry with their parents, they go to their grandparents to help mediate the situation. In certain situations, children may also reach out to their grandparents for financial assistance.

Other stakeholders – Friends

Nature of relationship with the child: Facilitative – Supportive

The children trust their friends and spend considerable time together. Friends influence each other's online behaviour, decision to migrate for work, consumption of alcohol, etc.

- The relationship between children and their friends is one of trust and comfort. Friends play a vital role if the child needs someone to confide in. Children also tend to spend extended periods of time with their friends, as they study, play or even find work together. This also extends to instances of virtual friendships. Their friends may also influence both every day and major life decisions without having to exert any force.
- Children also tend to find older children aspirational. This is particularly true when the older children demonstrate achievements in their own lives. This could range from having found a well-paying job to having been able to purchase good clothes and a mobile phone. The promise of a better life, as demonstrated by other children/young adults, is considered aspirational.

Other stakeholders – Contractors

Nature of relationship with the child: Facilitative – Supportive

Contractors are actively engaged in the lives of male children. They help children migrate to cities for job opportunities frequently. However, this interaction is minimal with girls as not many girls go out for work.

- The male children shared that they admire the contractor, who facilitates the process of migrating for work. It is evident that the contractor plays a vital role in the ecosystem of boys, especially boys aged 12 and above.

Other stakeholders – Political groups

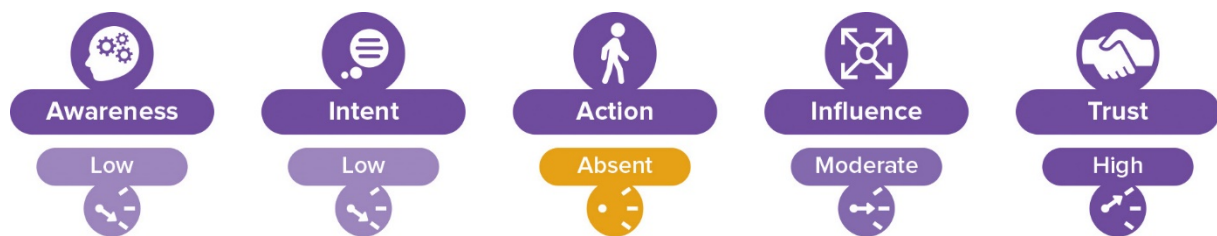
Nature of relationship with the child: Authoritative

Political leaders do not have a direct influence over the child's life. However, stakeholders within the community shared that these parties are often involved in activities related to child trafficking.

- In many villages, the healthcare workers, panchayat and teachers displayed resistance while talking about CT/CSEC. They mentioned that the political parties in these districts have immense authority within the community and their lives would be threatened if they shared any sensitive information.

4.2.3. Children's KAPs towards CT/CSEC

Girls/boys (12-15 years of age)



Awareness

Younger children have limited awareness of the various vulnerabilities that influence CT/CSEC

Younger children's understanding of CT/CSEC is limited to viewing them as instances that happen with "very young children" by way of being "snatched by strangers". Older girls reported that younger girls (12-15 years) are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse due to their lack of awareness regarding the actions of the perpetrator.

Intent

Given the limited understanding of the issue, there is also limited ability to protect oneself from CT/CSEC

While there is a general notion of "being safe," this is largely directed by influential stakeholders in their ecosystem (parents, relatives etc.). They do not understand and therefore do not feel prepared for situations /vulnerabilities that could lead them to CT/CSEC.

Action

Younger children are highly dependent on their caregivers for care and protection

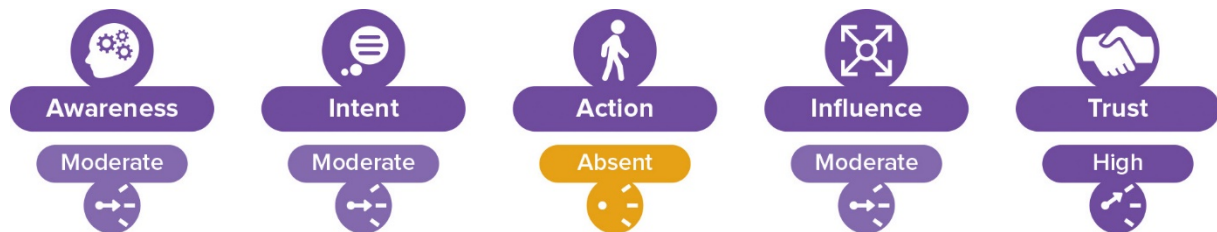
Action is largely driven by the influential stakeholders within the community. The children do not play an active role in curbing/controlling the instances of CT/CSEC or related vulnerabilities. They mention that they abide by the safety instructions given to them by their parents, such as "not talking to strangers," and "not stepping out of the house alone at night," among others.

Influence and Trust

While the younger children do exert peer influence, their lack of awareness around the issue limits their ability to influence their friends

There is trust, respect and admiration for each other. Given the strong relations between friends, children are likely to have positive influences on each other's knowledge and attitude but have limited control over creating an impact on their safety from CT and CSEC.

Girls (16-18 years of age)



Awareness

Understand CT/CSEC conceptually; may not fully understand the linkage between the vulnerabilities and CT/CSEC

Older girls appear to understand CT and CSEC conceptually. They are also aware of the ways in which different vulnerabilities can lead to CT and CSEC. In one of the FGDs, wherein the story of Swapna was shared (a girl who is moving away for work), the girls even articulated that it would be best for Swapna to not leave the village alone, owing to various dangers that may exist. For example, they said that Swapna may get kidnapped or harmed if she leaves the village alone or with an unknown person, indicating that they were aware of the existence of such vulnerabilities/dangers. The girls also shared an incident that took place in a neighbouring village wherein a man came to the village to lure a seven year old young boy with the promise of work, but the recruiter was caught by the village residents and was severely beaten up by the locals. They believed that the boy was being kidnapped in order for his organs to be stolen and they were aware of the practice of trafficking for organ farming. They also emphasised that this has stopped happening now. However, given the prevalence of marriages among young girls by way of elopement with their Facebook/WhatsApp friends they are either not completely aware of all possible vulnerabilities that lead to CT/CSEC or are perceived themselves/their village to be safer compared to the rest.

Intent

Practice of othering

There is intent to stay safe but there is also a general practice of othering wherein it is believed that other villages are possibly far more dangerous than the one that the girls were residing in. This notion of one's own village being safe was a common perception found among older girls across districts.

Actions

Beliefs and actions are contradictory in nature

There are common practices around leaving the village for work, running away to get married or getting married for a better life. While there is awareness of CT and intent to remain safe, the link between vulnerabilities and CT are not clearly acknowledged or understood.

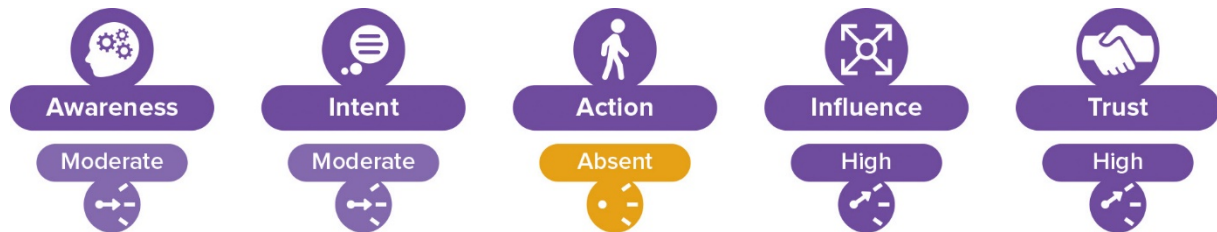
Influence and Trust

Moderate influence, high trust

There is trust, respect and admiration for each other. They have quoted that they their friends understand them well and they trust them. Given the strong relations between friends, children are likely

to have positive influences on each other's knowledge and attitude but have limited control over creating a larger positive impact.

Boys (16-18 years of age)



Awareness

Understand CT/CSEC conceptually; may not understand the linkage between the vulnerabilities and CT/CSEC

Older boys have cited that there were multiple instances (particularly pre-COVID-19), wherein agents would come to the village and offer jobs to children but parents would not let them go out of the village with “unknown people”. However, what is also common among boys is to leave the village for work with known agents/friends/relatives, who may either be present at the destination or may take them there for work. Additionally, the distinction between known persons and unknown persons is not very clear and thus creates further vulnerability.

Intent

Moderate levels of intent

There is a general understanding of the need to safeguard oneself from “strangers”. There were also incidents cited of boys going to cities to work and not returning. Yet participants continued to insist that CT itself does not exist in “their villages”. There is a general apprehension in talking about CT/CSEC.

Action

Beliefs and actions are contradictory in nature

There is an expectation among older boys (particularly after the ages of 14-15) to support the family financially. This often results in children having to leave their villages for work. There are also multiple instances wherein the promise of a better life (particularly being able to purchase articles such as mobile phones and clothes) results in children leaving the village for work without the required levels of information for safe migration.

Influence and trust

The older boys are role models to younger boys

The older boys in the village are extremely likely to move out to work in cities. They could actively influence safe migration practices. There are also high levels of trust that exist among peers. Boys can share anything with each other and often even share their secrets and emotions with their online friends.

5. Key Recommendations

5.1. Findings from testing *Operation Red Alert* materials

In order to gauge participant response to behaviour change communication materials, materials from Operation Red Alert were tested with the study participants. This consisted of videos and a comic book. Insights from testing Operation Red Alert materials provided further input into effective behaviour change communication mediums and messaging relevant to the target populations.

Insights from testing *Operation Red Alert*:

- Video content was an effective tool in catching the attention of viewers and was found to be easily understood by the participants. Both children and parents considered the videos engaging and were capable of successfully comprehending the content of the videos. In certain situations, videos allowed for participants to grasp content more easily as compared to discussions with the facilitators. In most cases, children and parents were able to identify the key messages that the video was attempting to convey, without requiring any further explanation.
 - Children expressed that through the Komal video they learnt about “good touch and bad touch”.
 - In Bardhaman, parents empathised with Komal and shared that she was too young to understand what was happening. They conveyed that if they had been in a similar situation, they would prioritise comforting Komal. They also mentioned that Komal’s parents should have been more careful about who they left her with and should have been more involved in her life. They understood that Komal was not wrong and was simply seeking a friend. In Birbhum, the mothers attentively watched the Komal video and understood the content of the video.
 - In Bankura, the girls learnt about good touch and bad touch from the Komal video and the boys in Bardhaman learnt about inappropriate touch.
 - After watching the “Bell Bajao” video, the boys shared that if they experience a similar situation, they could intervene using the same approach that the boys in the video followed.
 - The children and parents empathised with Meena and agreed that she was exploited by the individuals she was living with. The primary learning among them was that they should not trust/go away with strangers as they may be mistreated.
- Videos were found to be particularly effective when participants felt that they had “learnt something new” and were able to leave with concrete takeaways:
 - Children expressed that through the Komal video they learnt about “good touch and bad touch”. Boys in Bardhaman shared that they learnt about “inappropriate touch” and would share their learning with their friends.
 - Through the Meena video children learnt the importance of not going away with strangers.
 - The 1098 helpline was seen as an actionable finding across districts with children and parents noting down the number for future use.
 - Bell Bajao videos taught participants how to respond if they were to witness situations of domestic abuse and that they could find similar, creative ways to intervene.
- The content nudged viewers to express their own experiences/perceptions/understandings within given situations and helped facilitate “difficult conversations” between the participants and facilitators. Certain sensitive topics that they felt uncomfortable sharing, they were able to express more confidently after viewing similar situations in the videos. The content gave the

participants an opportunity to depersonalise the situation/view it objectively and then share their own perceptions/experiences relevant to the video.

- The Meena video allowed the children in Bankura to narrate a similar incident that occurred in their village. They shared the story of a fraudulent contractor that recruited 8-10 children from their village only to deprive them of their wages, food and overwork them.
- In Bankura parents spoke about an individual who came to their village and took some children with him to Gujarat. The community never heard about the whereabouts of those children thereafter.
- In Birbhum, parents shared an incident where girls went away to work as domestic help but were overworked and deprived of sufficient food.
- After viewing the Komal video, the parents in Bardhaman shared that when a girl is sexually abused, the community considers it the fault of the victim. This then damages the reputation of the girl in the village.
- Videos also allowed viewers to move away from given ‘socially desirable’ responses:
 - Example, boys were able to share that they believed that “wives should listen to their husbands,” while in other conversations they were more likely to share socially desirable responses.
- In some cases, the lack of exposure to similar content also made the viewers uncomfortable. Facilitating awareness in these sensitive domains will be critical to alter existing behaviours.
 - In Bankura, some of the girls were embarrassed to watch the Komal video on sexual abuse and would shyly look away from the screen.
- Children were interested in the comic book but took longer to understand its content as compared to the Komal, Meena and Bell Bajao videos.
 - The children needed some support from the facilitators to comprehend the contents of the comic book, particularly because it was viewed in written form and images, as compared to video content.
 - While they gradually succeeded in understanding the underlying insight, they also shared that they had not witnessed similar experiences in their village.
 - The characters in the comic book were relatable. However, the comic book engaged the participants less than the videos, owing to the longer time that the participants took to first grasp the content.

5.2. Key recommendations for Seefar’s behaviour change programming

By delayering the drivers of various CT / CSEC-related vulnerabilities (section 4.1) and understanding the role and level of influence of various stakeholders in a child’s decision-making ecosystem (section 4.2), this study has identified suitable recommendations that can enable prevention of CT and CSEC. The present section summarises key behaviours that need to be positively influenced (section 5.2.1), based on the root cause analysis done on the identified vulnerability factors (child labour, child marriage, runaway children etc. Further, based on the analysis of various stakeholder groups and the roles they play in preventing/enabling CT/CSEC, the identified behaviours have been mapped to relevant stakeholder groups (section 5.2.2). The following table highlights behaviours that need to be influenced across stakeholders:

Behaviours that should be influenced	Target stakeholders	Rationale
Strengthening risk perception and protective instincts among parents	Fathers and Mothers	Parents may undermine risks associated with certain vulnerable behaviours that promote CT/CSEC. They may take decisions without considering long term impacts.
Countering the emotional distance that exists between parents and children	Fathers and Mothers	Emotional distance between parents and children makes it easier to take decisions that are relatively unsafe for the child. Countering this can create a nurturing environment and promote child safety.
Promoting safe practices around migration, marriage and use of social media	Children, Fathers, Mothers, Community leaders	Decisions are made based on varying understandings of safety and trust. This results in limited information seeking behaviour and unsafe migratory practices. Promoting improved information seeking behaviour will drive prevention of CT, CSEC and related vulnerabilities.
Normalising dialogue around CT/CSEC within the larger community	Children, Fathers, Mothers, Community leaders	Stakeholders were hesitant while discussing CT/CSEC. While some were uncomfortable, others were worried about the consequences of discussing it. Normalising dialogue will create greater acceptance towards the issue.
Promoting a sense of agency among mothers, older children and community leaders	Children, Mothers, Community leaders	Targeted to stakeholders such as mothers and teachers, where there is high intent and therefore potential to influence prevention, but agency is presently low.
Promoting dialogue around sexual abuse	Children, Mothers, Fathers, Community leaders	There is a stigma attached to sexual abuse and parents are closed to discussing incidents of sexual abuse with their daughters, even in cases where the daughters are victims. This results in underreporting and disregarding issues of sexual abuse, thus further driving vulnerabilities among children.
Promoting the idea of independent, self-sufficient girls	Children, Mothers, Fathers, Community leaders	Discriminatory practices against girls significantly increase their vulnerability to CT and CSEC. Countering this can promote a safer environment for girls.

Figure 11: Table mapping stakeholders to knowledge, attitudes and practices that need to be influenced

5.2.1. Key recommendations: Levers for behaviour change within the three districts:

Further, each of the behaviours identified in the previous subsection have been mapped into relevant behaviour change levers that can be targeted to children, parents and community leaders. Based on the understanding of the roles and level of influence of various stakeholder groups, the levers have been detailed out specifying their relevance to each of the stakeholder groups. These levers have been identified based on findings from the FGDs and interviews as well as based on observations made while engaging with the research participants.

As outlined in figure 12 below, behaviour change levers may directly influence behaviours or reinforce them. Direct influencers are those that affect the practices or decision making of the agents. Reinforcements are those that help drive the message through cues/help build or rebuild awareness and reinforce key messages. While direct influence is critical to introduce behaviour change messages to the stakeholders, reinforcements are necessary to ensure that stakeholders are engaging with the messaging on an ongoing basis for lasting behaviour change.

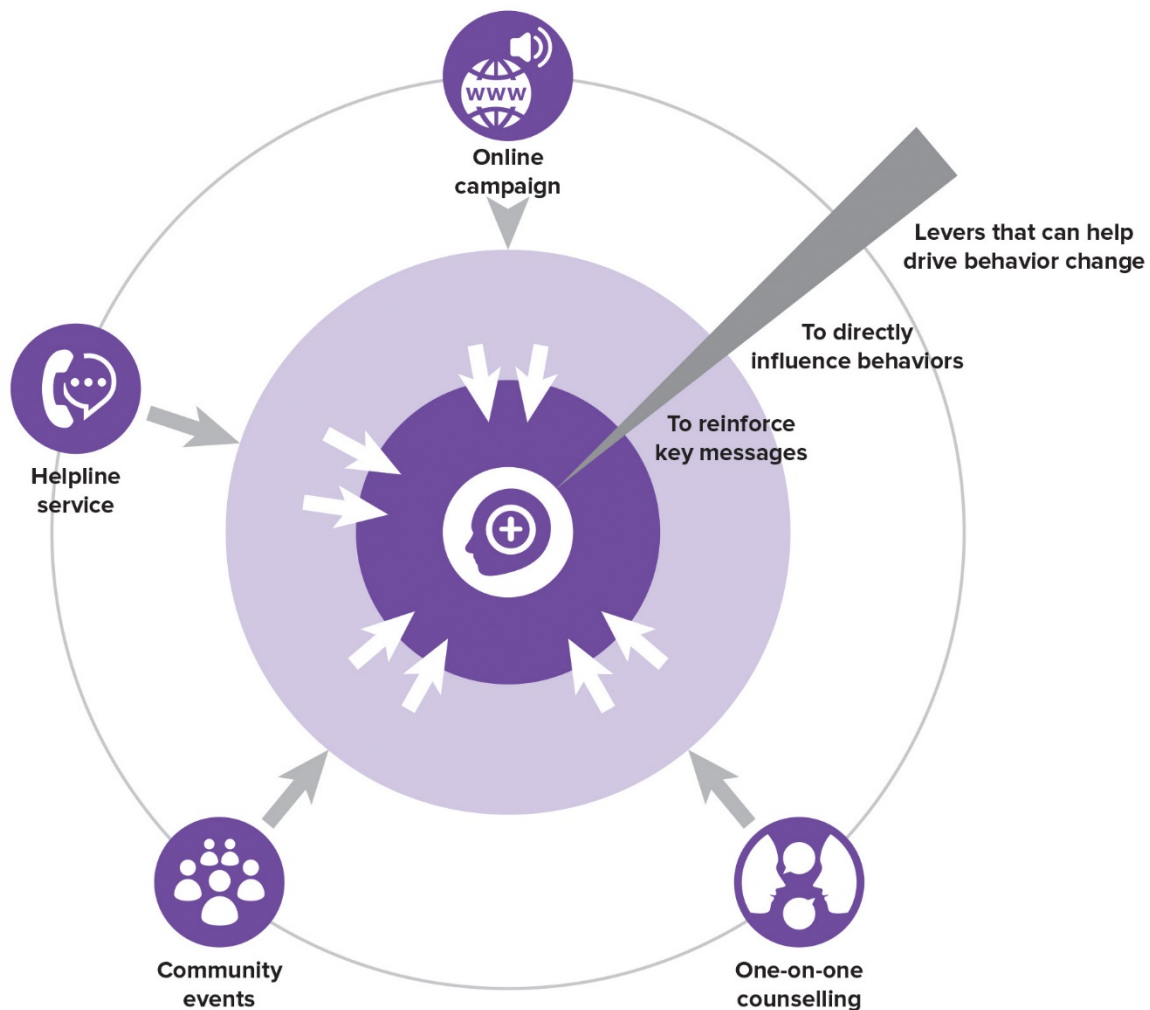


Figure 12: Relevant levers for behaviour change directly influencing behaviours and reinforcing key messages

5.2.1.1. Community events for sensitisation and knowledge building

- Knowledge-building events can play a key role in driving awareness and initiating dialogue within each of the stakeholder groups.
- It would be beneficial for these events to take place separately for boys, girls, mothers, and fathers. This will facilitate creating a safe space for each of the four groups. This will also give girls and mothers the opportunity to build agency for collective action.
- Events will also play a critical role in driving agency and ownership among community leaders towards CT/CSEC prevention.
- There will be merit in having sessions that promote interaction between the stakeholder groups to build stronger relations (for example, between fathers and children).
- **Sports & games**
 - Children from all districts have shown keen interest towards sports, particularly football and kabaddi.
 - They also actively engage in online and offline games.
 - Using extra curriculums like games, sports and theatre to drive the importance of safe practices could be an efficient tool for reinforcement of messaging and for rapport building with the children.
- **Videos & movie screenings**
 - Research found that video content was effective in communicating messages among parents and can therefore be used as an effective tool in strengthening risk perception and protective instincts.
 - Movies that display social issues in a simple, yet impactful way can be showcased. These can include films on migration, marriage, education, etc.
 - All participants had a positive response to the video content that was displayed during data collection.

5.2.1.2. One-to-one counselling

- There were instances where mothers preferred speaking privately to the facilitator rather than in a group. Conducting 1-1 sessions can help ensure privacy while encouraging mothers and fathers to engage on topics that they may be otherwise unwilling to discuss.
- Children migrate for work, elope and make friends with strangers/unverified profiles online. They are unaware of the dangers associated with these practices. 1-1 counselling sessions may prove beneficial in promoting safe migration, particularly because of the added confidentiality.
- 1-1 sessions with older children and mothers can help them understand their role within the ecosystem efficiently and subsequently promote a sense of agency.

5.2.1.3. Access to a helpline number

- Community members can be provided with helpline numbers that they can access whenever they are in a dangerous situation and require help/support. This can be an easy number that the child can memorise.
- After watching the Komal video,⁵ many children and parents noted down the 1098 helpline number. Since most agents have access to cell phones, provision of a helpline number could prove useful during an emergency or dangerous situation.
- Messaging around the helpline should be positioned positively and should not be positioned as a CT/CSEC-specific helpline, given the hesitation that stakeholders face in speaking about the same.

5.2.1.4. Online campaign and social media content

- Given the extensive use of mobile phones, campaigns run online can help reinforce information related to safe practices and positive behaviours.
- This may be done through targeted advertisements or social media content shared via applications such as Facebook and WhatsApp.
- Awareness material or video content on relevant topics made available on these platforms could help mothers and children assimilate relevant messages effectively.

5.2.2. Behaviours that need to be influenced

5.2.2.1. Strengthening risk perception and protective instincts among parents

Direct Influence: Community events
Reinforcement: Online communication campaigns

Fathers

Community events including video/movie screening can be organised to engage fathers in discussions regarding existing vulnerabilities and safe practices. This will give fathers the opportunity to engage with each other in a safe space and strengthen their perceptions towards child safety. Given the general hesitation faced by fathers, such a forum can help promote open dialogue and discussion, using interactive material. Through Operation Red Alert, videos were seen as an effective tool in grasping the attention of fathers.

Mothers

Mothers have high levels of intent in promoting safe practices but low levels of agency in influencing critical decisions in the child's life. Organising community events can play a role in empowering mothers to build their agency. Mothers have also used apps like WhatsApp and Hello to communicate with their family members. Awareness material or video content on strengthening risk perception can be made available on these platforms to help mothers assimilate relevant messages effectively.

⁵ Komal video: Komal is a young girl who is touched inappropriately by her family friend, Bakshi Uncle. She is scared by the experience, however, is reluctant to share it with her parents. At school, Komal's teacher notices that she is acting differently, and immediately informs her mother. Her mother is very encouraging and helps Komal share the incident. Komal's parents are upset and hurt upon discovering what Komal went through and want to remedy the situation. They seek support from the Childline Helpline, wherein a Childline volunteer counsels Komal and helps the family take necessary action.

5.2.2.2. Countering the emotional distance that exists between parents and children

Direct Influence: One-to-one counselling

Reinforcement: Online communication campaigns, community events

Fathers

One-to-one counselling sessions with fathers can build awareness regarding bridging the emotional distance that exists between them and their children. Community events including video/movie screening can be organised to promote interaction between fathers and children.

Mothers

One-to-one counselling sessions with mothers can help create awareness regarding bridging the emotional gap that exists between parents and children. Mothers have also used apps like WhatsApp and Helo to communicate with family members. Awareness material or video content on the importance of healthy emotional relationships can be made available on these platforms to help mothers assimilate relevant messages effectively. Knowledge building events can also be used to create awareness among mothers.

5.2.2.3. Promoting safe practices around migration, marriage and use of social media

Direct Influence: Community events, online communication campaigns

Reinforcement: One-to-one counselling, hotline

Fathers

Community events including video/movie screening or knowledge building activities can be organised to engage fathers in healthy discussions regarding safe practices around migration and marriage. This will give fathers the opportunity to engage with each other and help strengthen their perceptions towards child safety. In some districts, fathers were hesitant to engage in discussions around sensitive topics. Therefore, 1-1 counselling can also be used as a lever to spread awareness regarding safe practices while also ensuring comfort.

Mothers

Community events and 1-1 counselling can enable mothers to build a sense of agency and help create awareness among them regarding safe practices around migration, marriage and use of social media. Given that most children share trusted relationships with their mothers, they can also share their learnings with their children. Since mothers use social media platforms, awareness material or video content on safe practices can be made available on these platforms to help mothers assimilate relevant messages effectively. Mothers can also be provided with helpline numbers that they can access whenever they are in a dangerous situation and require help/support.

Children

Community events including sports, games and movie/video screening can be used to raise awareness among children regarding safe practices around migration, marriage and use of social media. After watching the Komal video, many children noted down the 1098 helpline number. Since many children have access to cell phones, provision of a helpline number could prove useful during an emergency. There is also widespread usage of social media apps including Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube among children. Awareness advertisements or video content on safe practices can be made available on these platforms.

Community leaders

One-to-one sessions with community leaders can help create awareness regarding safe practices around migration, marriage and use of social media. Research found that video content was effective in communicating messages. Community events can be organised to showcase videos around safe practices among community leaders as this can help them spread awareness to the larger ecosystem regarding the same.

5.2.2.4. Normalising dialogue around CT/CSEC within the larger community

Direct influence: Community events
Reinforcement: Online communication campaigns

Fathers	Mothers	Children	Community leaders
Knowledge based community events with fathers can be organised to break the existing resistance regarding discussing CT/CSEC and help normalise dialogue around the same.	Mothers have high levels of intent in promoting safe practices but low levels of agency in influencing critical decisions in the child’s life. Organising community events can play a role in empowering mothers to build their agency and facilitate dialogue around CT/CSEC. Awareness material or video content on CT/CSEC can be made available on social media platforms.	Research found that video content was effective in communicating ideas among children and consequently facilitating discussion. Therefore, community events that showcased videos or movies around CT/CSEC could be used as an effective tool in normalising dialogue. Given the wide usage of technology that exists among children, online videos/ advertisements around CT/CSEC can also be promoted to facilitate discussions among peer groups.	Conducting community events can promote interaction between the stakeholder groups to build stronger relations, spread awareness on safe practices and facilitate dialogue around CT/CSEC.

5.2.2.5. Promoting a sense of agency among mothers, older children and community leaders

Direct influence: Community events, one-to-one counselling with community leaders
Reinforcement: Online communication campaigns

Mothers	Children	Community leaders
Mothers have also used apps like WhatsApp and Helo to communicate with their family members. Promoting a sense of agency through these platforms could help mothers assimilate relevant messages effectively.	Children from all districts have shown a keen interest towards sports, particularly football and kabaddi. They also actively engage in online and offline games. Using community events to promote games and sports can help create agency among older children. One-to-one sessions with children can help them understand their role within the ecosystem efficiently and consequently promote a sense of agency. Online mediums can be used to reinforce their sense of agency.	One-to-one sessions with community leaders can help them understand their role within the ecosystem efficiently and consequently promote a sense of agency. Community events also play a critical role in driving agency and ownership among community leaders.

5.2.2.6. Normalising dialogue around sexual abuse

**Direct influence: Community events, online communication campaigns,
Reinforcement: One-to-one counselling, hotline**

Fathers	Mothers	Children	Community leaders
<p>Fathers have high levels of influence on their child but children share moderate levels of trust with their fathers. Promoting dialogue among fathers around sexual abuse can also help promote relations with their child. This can be done through community events or 1-1 counselling sessions. Research also found that video content was effective in communicating messages and can therefore be used as an effective tool promoting dialogue around sexual abuse.</p>	<p>Community events with mothers can help facilitate dialogue around sexual abuse, create trust and spread awareness. One-to-one sessions with parents can help them understand the importance of promoting dialogue around sexual abuse. After watching the Komal video, many mothers and children noted down the 1098 helpline number.</p>	<p>One-to-one sessions with older children, parents and community leaders can help them understand the importance of promoting dialogue around sexual abuse. Children from all districts have shown a keen interest towards sports, particularly football and kabaddi. They also actively engage in online and offline games. Using extra curriculums like games and sports can help promote dialogue around sexual abuse. There is also widespread usage of social media apps including Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube. Awareness around sexual abuse can be made available on these platforms to promote dialogue. Helplines can also be used.</p>	<p>One-to-one sessions with community leaders can help them understand the importance of promoting dialogue around sexual abuse. Community events can also facilitate discussion.</p>

5.2.2.7. Promoting the idea of independent, self-sufficient girls

**Direct influence: One-to-one counselling
Reinforcement: Community events, online communication campaigns**

Fathers	Mothers	Children	Community leaders
<p>One-to-one sessions with fathers can help them understand their role in valuing education and promoting independent and bold girls. Given the high level of influence that fathers have on the lives of their children, it is important to educate them on the prejudices that exist around girls. Given the authoritative, decision-making role that fathers play, these discussions could help facilitate positive change. This can be done through community events.</p>	<p>Community events involving videos or group discussions encourage mothers to participate in discussions regarding promoting the agency of girls and reducing the existing prejudice. 1-1 sessions with mothers can help them understand their role in valuing education and promoting independent and bold girls.</p>	<p>Children from all districts have shown a keen interest towards sports, particularly football and kabaddi. They also actively engage in online and offline games. Using extra curriculums like games and sports can help create bold, independent girls who can showcase their talents/skills on these platforms. 1-1 sessions with children can help them understand their role in valuing education and promoting independent and bold girls.</p>	<p>Research found that video content was effective in communicating messages and can therefore be used as an effective tool in reducing prejudice against girls. 1-1 sessions community leaders can help them understand their role in valuing education and promoting independent and bold girls.</p>

5.3. Recommendations for the wider child protection ecosystem

In addition to the recommendations identified for Seefar's behaviour change programming, the study also identified existing good practices that can be adopted by the larger ecosystem towards the prevention of CT/CSEC. Towards this, Sattva conducted a solution landscaping exercise, which included identification of 90+ organisations working on prevention of CT, CSEC and related vulnerability factors. On the basis of availability of information, Sattva shortlisted 39 organisations for further review of their programmatic interventions. A total of 66 programmes were studied to understand their thematic focus, target groups, programmatic activities and modalities, with emphasis on behaviour change programming. Based on their relevance to addressing issues identified in the current market research, good practices were distilled for the larger ecosystem. The solution landscaping was conducted using available secondary information (primarily sourced from websites of various NGOs/Foundations) and thus, may not include organisations/programmes that have limited secondary information available online. Identified good practices include children clubs to promote a sense of agency among children, sensitization programs to address existing vulnerabilities among the larger community, men-focused groups to promote dialogue, volunteer groups to provide support to women, and formation of protection committees, amongst others.

1. **Children's Clubs:** Children's clubs can be created to give a voice to children from all backgrounds. These clubs can facilitate discussions on child rights, education goals, verified financial opportunities, marriage and other important topics. Bagmari Mother and Child Development Mission (BMCDM) has also ensured linkages to the Village Level Child Protection Committees (VLCPC), in such channels of intervention.

Existing programmes

Aaina and Save the Children: The clubs discuss child rights related issues, especially in regards to discrimination faced due to caste and gender. The clubs are a means of raising awareness on rights and attaining justice

Breakthrough (De Taali): A youth club called Taaron Ki Toli has been launched in hundreds of schools in North India to bring gender equity into classrooms at an age when concepts of identity are still being formed.

BMCDM: Formation of Child Parliament & Kanyashree Club. Established Child Parliament and Kanyashree Clubs in each of the intervention villages. Children who are vocal and with leadership skills have been involved in the Child Parliament. Similarly the articulate girls who have received support from Kanyashree Prakalpa have been involved in the Kanyashree Clubs. The major tasks of these groups are to encourage all eligible children to study and also prevent them from all forms of abuse and exploitation. They regularly meet among themselves and also report back to the VLCPCs for necessary mitigation of the cases being identified by them. They also take part in the meetings of VLCPCs and events being organised by the committees on child rights issues.

2. **Sensitisation programmes:** Sensitisation programmes for community members will help them understand the importance of promoting safe practices and creating awareness.

Existing programmes

Childline: Hosts an annual campaign to reach out to people from all sections of society, sensitising them to the cause of children's safety and initiating a plan of action that propels them towards a much-needed change in thoughts and deeds through screenings, signature campaigns, street plays, rallies, games etc.

3. **Men focused groups:** On ground activities including sports, movie screening, games and other interesting activities can be organised to engage men in discussion regarding safe practices.

Existing programmes

Azad Foundation (Men for Gender Justice): Under this, groups of men engage around themes of sports, theatre and other creative activities. They attend various workshops, awareness and educational activities designed to question gender-based injustice and traditional concepts of masculinity through screenings, discussions, plays etc.

4. **Women volunteer groups:** Community based women volunteers could provide emotional support to women and children, monitor their safety and overcome any existing prejudices that exist against girls in their community.

Existing programmes

Aangan: Women volunteers are trained in PACT child protection curriculum that arms them with the knowledge and technical skills to mobilise their community's leaders, families and children, and to work with local government officials to jointly prevent child harm and keep children safe.

5. **Formation of protection committees:** Five-to-ten influential members from within the committee can be members and can help normalise dialogue around CT/CSEC and promote safe practices. They can help spread awareness and encourage community members to participate in dialogue, while also maintaining linkages with State and local-level AHTUs (Police Units).

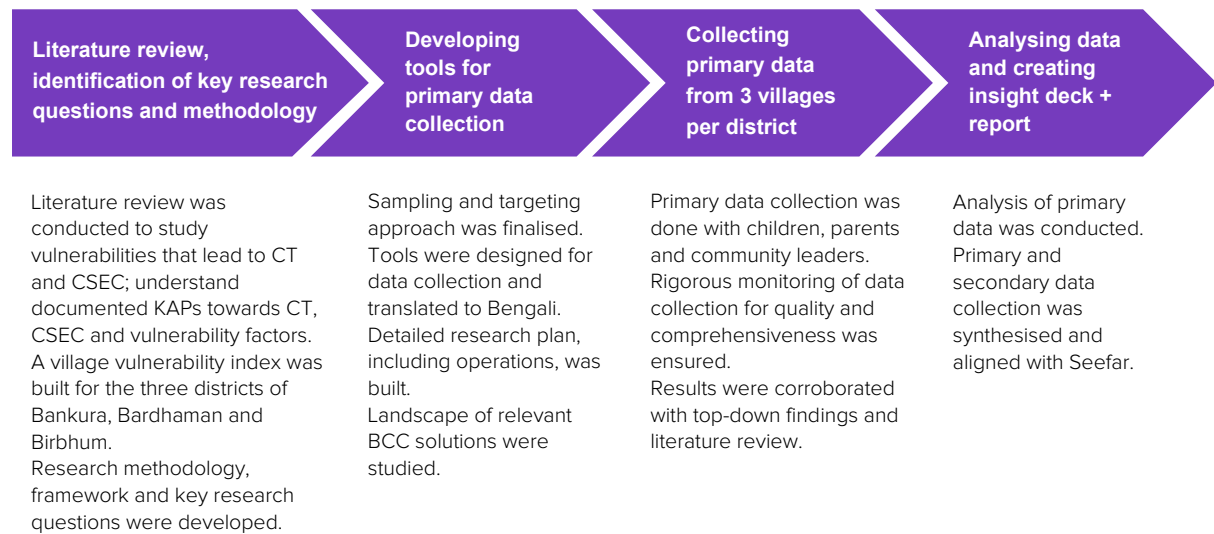
Existing programmes

Manav Seva Sansthan (Campaign Against Trafficking In Persons): Establishing Community Vigilance Groups (CVGs) among the community as social structures to spread awareness among the community, and linking with the Anti Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU).

Aaina and Save the Children: The Child Protection Committees (CPCs) are designed to support the children's clubs by bringing different members of the community together to discuss and promote equal rights for every child.

Annexes

Appendix A: Methodology



Appendix B: Study sample

Total sample	Sample size per village	Sample composition per village	Representation within sample (per village)
360 children	40 children	20 girls	5 girls (age group 12-14) 5 girls (age group 14-15) Representation of minorities/Children with Disabilities
			5 girls (age group 16-17) 5 girls (age group 18) Representation of minorities/Children with Disabilities
		20 Boys	5 boys (age group 12-14) 5 boys (age group 14-15) Representation of minorities/Children with Disabilities
			5 boys (age group 16-17) 5 boys (age group 18) Representation of minorities/Children with Disabilities
Note: In four out of the nine villages, the FGDs will be conducted with children from marginalised groups only (SC/ST, OBC or any other marginalised segment residing in that village). This will be done to ensure no discomfort is caused to participants during discussions on vulnerabilities or challenges that may be faced by one social group more than others.			
180 parents	20 parents	10 Men	Representation of persons with disabilities
		10 Women	Representation of persons with disabilities
Note: In four out of the nine villages, the FGDs will be conducted with parents from marginalised groups only (SC/ST, OBC or any other marginalised segment residing in that village). This will be done to ensure no discomfort is caused to participants during discussions on vulnerabilities or challenges that may be faced by one social group more than others.			
27 community leaders	3 community leaders	Panchayat, teacher, police, health worker	Representation of SC / ST / OBC, where feasible

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SEEFAR



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Knowledge, attitudes and practices among children, parents and community leaders in Bardhaman, Bankura and Birbhum

January 2021