

Need of the module: In Tripura early child marriage has become a serious problem and the following module has been developed after a research conducted by SCERT and headed by Smt. Manidipa Gan Chaudhuri, OSD SCERT (Sr. Lecturer, DIET) and SRG Member of SLA Tripura.



Module on Prevention of Early child marriage (ECM) for School leaders:

Objectives:

- 1) Understand the context, factors and consequences of early marriage in Tripura
- 2) Understand the Protection of Child Marriage act-2006 and its gaps and Challenges in implementation
- 3) Orientation on Roles and Responsibilities of HM and other Teachers and develop action plan

Expected Outcome: At the end of the session the participants will be able to

- 1) Understand the consequences of Early marriage or marriage before the legal age
- 2) Know the key provisions of PCMA act-2006
- 3) Exercise and practice problem solving , decision making and communication skill required to delay early marriage
- 4) Exercise and practice problem solving , decision making skills for girls who are married before legal age

Activity	Topic	Methodology	Time
1	Present status and main causes behind ECM in Tripura	Group work, discussion and presentation	45 min
2	key provisions of PCMA act-2006	Exhibition, discussion and presentation	45 min
3	Skill for delaying early marriage	Role play, group work, presentation	45min
4	problem solving , decision making skills for girls who are married before legal age	Brain storming, discussion and presentation	45 min

Activity 1

Present status and main causes behind ECM in Tripura Methodology: Group work, discussion and presentation

Time: 45 min

Materials required: chart paper and marker

Step-1 : The facilitator shares the case study of Sweety (fictitious name)

Sweety is a 18-year-old girl. She completed her 12th grade education but faced intermittent school attendance due to household responsibilities and taking care for her 2-years-old child. She was

forced into marriage due to community pressure, as her parents had 4 female children and considered them as a burden. The participant currently resides with her husband and in-laws, who are daily wage earners, while her parents work as carpenters. She has three sisters, two of whom are married. Sweety's marriage took place when she was 14 years old, while her spouse was 22 years old. The decision to marry was made by parents and elders of the family, despite the participant's opposition. Although the participant voiced her concerns and even threatened to involve the police, her family did not consider her opinions. The challenges she faced included a disrupted education, limited empowerment, and the perception of burdening her family.

Step-2 : discuss the story of sweety with participants and various other reasons why Early child marriage occurs.

Step-3: Ask the participants what they understand by the term Child marriage? Write down their responses in a chart paper.

Share with them the situation of child marriage in India and Tripura. What are the factors causing Early Child marriage as given by Teachers, HMs, Parents, Community persons, Adolescents (both married and Unmarried)

Step-4: Divide the participants into three groups and ask the groups to discuss on –
Group1: Physical and Psychological effect of child marriage on adolescents

Group2 : Social and health effects of child marriage

Group-3 what are the aspirations and dreams of adolescents

Step-5: Ask the groups to share their discussion in the form of presentation. The presentation can be any kind of role play, power point presentation or chart presentation.

Step-6 : Discuss on each topic with the whole group, in case the groups have missed out any issue or topic and conclude the activity.

Facilitators guide:

Present status of ECM in India and major causes of ECM in Tripura

- 1) In 2023, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) report revealed that the rate of child marriage globally was the highest in India; nearly 40 percent of all child marriages worldwide occurred within India [1]. The report (UNICEF 2023) highlighted that India alone accounted for one-third of the total number of child brides. UNICEF further reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of an additional girls becoming child brides. India is a home to an estimated 24 million child brides (UNICEF, 2023) [1], making it a significant contributor to the global burden of child marriage.
- 2) Tripura faces a daunting challenge in addressing Early Marriage. In the 5th Round National Family and Health Survey conducted by Young Lives in 2019-20 revealed that approximately 40% of women aged 20-24 in Tripura had been married before reaching the legal minimum age of 18 years. Moreover, teenage pregnancies (15-19 years old) witnessed an increase in first childbirth that is a higher number of teenagers became pregnant. Childbirth experienced for the first time among teenagers increased from 19% to

22% in NFHS-4, 2015-16 report in comparison with the previous survey which was done in 2005-06. Alarming dropout rates of 42.6% among girls after completing only 2 to 9 years of schooling further increase the complexities of issues.

- 3) A crucial study on 'Early Marriage and Education amongst Girl Children in North Tripura District'. Tripura titled "The factors contributing to Early Marriage amongst girl Children" in Dasda Block of Tripura undertaken by North East Regional Institute of Education (NERIE), Shillong, highlights the adverse consequences of early marriage. It reveals that a significant number of married girls aged 14 to 17 were unable to continue their education, leading to dropout rates within a year or two of marriage, these girls often experienced separation or divorce from their husbands. Notably, elopement is highly prevalent in the region.

- 4) A recent study was done by PE cell of SCERT titled " Investigation of Key factors of Early marriage – a study in west Tripura and Sepahijala District "revealed the major causes behind ECM as opined by Teachers, Parents, Married and unmarried adolescent girls and community leaders are – **poverty, lack of awareness on adverse effect of ECM, concerns about safety and security of girls , family pressure, own choice of adolescents, less interest towards Higher Education** . Maximum numbers of early marriages are occurred in the age of 16 years of the girls, who are reading in class X or Appeared Madhyamik exam especially for the cases who are poor in study. Teachers could not get prior information about ECM. Maximum number of teachers opined that they get information from other students after a few days of the marriage occurred. Teachers also express opinion that while they are trying to oppose ECM, in maximum cases they face parental opposition and sometimes community people also support the parents. Maximum number of Community leaders agreed that ECM is a great concern in their locality. Married students express about the reasons of ECM as – community pressure, own choice, love relationship and marry by elopement.

Impact of Early Marriage on adolescents:

- 1) Discontinued Education
- 2) Poor Health Condition of Girls and children
- 2) Lack of Knowledge about Reproductive health
- 3) No acquired skill for livelihood
- 4) Lack of decision making power
- 5) Victim of Domestic violence which impact the mental health
- 6) Difficult to balance responsibility among household, pregnancy and child care

Activity -2

Key provisions of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006-Salient Features

Methodology : Group work and Exhibition , discussion and presentation

Time: 30 min

Materials required : chart paper and marker

Step-1: Hang 4 charts in four different corners of the room and write one heading on each chart as follows :

Chart -1	Chart-2	Chart-3	Chart-4
How can we prevent child marriage	Punishments for person who get children married	Provisions for children who are married and want to break the marriage	Provisions for rehabilitation for children who have broken their marriage

Step-2: ask the participants to write whatever they think is appropriate in the respective chart . Ensure that each one to write in the chart.

Step-3: discuss the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006 and relate the points as enumerated by the participants in the activity.

Step-4: ask participants in case they want to discuss anything more

Facilitators guide :

This Act consists of 21 sections.

The Section 2 of the Act contains definitions.

- **Child:** A child is a person who has not completed 21 years in case of male and 18 years in case of female.
- **Contracting party:** Either of the parties whose marriage is or is about to be solemnized
- **Child marriage:** A marriage to which either party is a child.
- **Minor:** A person who is not deemed to be major under Majority Act.
- **Voidable marriage:** (Section 3) Every child marriage is voidable at the option of the contracting party who was child at the time of solemnization of marriage. A Decree of nullity can be obtained by such person by filing petition before the District court for annulment of marriage within 2 years after attaining majority. While granting a decree, the district court shall make an order directing both parties and their parents or guardians to return to the other party, money, gold, ornaments, gifts and other valuables.

Offences and punishment under this Act]

1. Punishment for male adult: If an adult male who is above 18 years of age contracts child marriage, he shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for 2 years or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees or both.
2. Punishment for solemnizing marriage: If a person performs, conducts, directs or abets any child marriage, he shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for 2 years or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees or both.
3. Punishment for promoting / permitting solemnization of marriage: Any person having charge of the child whether parent or guardian or any other person including member of organization or association of persons who does any act to promote the passing or permit child marriage or negligently fails to prevent it from being solemnized, including attending or participating such marriage, shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for 2 years or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees or both.
4. Offence under this Act is cognizable and non bail able..

5. Provision for maintenance and residence of female

The District Court while granting annulment of the child marriage, make an interim or final order directing the male contracting party, to pay maintenance to the female contracting party.

If the male contracting party is minor, then the court shall direct the parents/guardian to the minor, to pay maintenance to the female contracting party

The female contracting party is entitled to get maintenance up to her remarriage. The amount of maintenance may be paid monthly or in lump sum. The quantum of maintenance shall be determined considering the needs of the child, life style enjoyed by her and means of income of the paying party. The District court may also issue suitable order as to the residence of female contracting party.

District court shall make appropriate order for the custody of the children of such child marriage and while making such order of custody, the court issue order taking in to account of the welfare and best interest of the child of such marriage. The court shall also make appropriate orders of maintenance and issue visitation orders also.

Child begotten or conceived of such child marriage shall be deemed to be legitimate children not withstanding such marriage is annulled by the court.

Court has power to add modify or revoke any order made under Section. 3, 4 and 5, i.e., with respect to maintenance, residence, when there is change in circumstances.

When marriage is null and void

Marriage will be null and void in the following circumstances

1. Where minor child is taken or enticed out of the keeping legal guardian
2. By force compelled or by any deceitful means induced to go from any place
3. Is sold for purpose of marriage and go through a form of marriage or if the minor is married after which the minor is sold off or trafficked or used for immoral purpose

Such marriage shall be null and void.

Activity -3

Skills for delaying the age of marriage

Methodology: Role play ,Group work , discussion and presentation

Time: 45 min

Materials required: chart paper and marker

Step-1 : Tell the participants about the topic of the discussion that is delaying the age of marriage which will help their student's own lives .

Step-2 : Ask participants to think a situation when students were not able to express what they felt. Ask them to jot down various obstacles that students experience while trying to explain what they want to express.

Step-3: Discuss with the participants on how better they could deal the situation and share the important point to keep in mind.

Step-4: Divide participants into three groups and give them situation to discuss and present in any form like role play, group presentation, lecture etc.

Group-1:	Group-2 :	Group-3 :
Communicating with parents, relatives, neighbours on delaying age at marriage.	skills required to convince parents in the context of higher studies	situation where one is not able to communicate with parents

Step-4: presentation of the participants in front of peer group .

Step-5 : summarization of the discussion by the facilitator.

Facilitators guide:

For dealing with students:

Some at-risk young people get into trouble because of their timidity and withdrawal responses to friends, family members and relatives. Others express themselves in hostile, angry, aggressive ways that cause problems for people and themselves.

Ability to speak and act with power while maintaining respect for others is important. This is a style in which individuals clearly state their opinions and feelings, and firmly advocate for their rights and needs without violating the rights of others.

While discussing on assertive communication ask the participants to identify their student's trouble spots by discussing the following:

Does the student struggle to ask for what he/she want?

Is it hard to state his/her opinion?

Do he/she have trouble saying no?

Share some Tips for Communicating Assertively with the students:

Many people find it hard to ask for what they want, feeling that they don't have the right to ask, or fearing the consequences of the request. For example, you may think, "What if he says no?" or "She would think I am rude for asking".

Next, describe the situation and how your students feel about it. For example, "This is not the right time, I feel I can study for a few more years and then get married." It is important to talk about your feelings, not to make accusations to others. For example, it is better to say, "I know I did not succeed in my exams this time, but I want to give myself a chance Then, describe what you would like to see happen. Be as brief and positive as possible.

For example, "I really want to become someone important and earn money and want you to be proud of me." Last, tell the person what would happen if your request was honoured. How would you feel?

Sometimes, you may want to add what you will do in return. For example, "I would make sure to be responsible and prove myself." Being assertive means that you "own" your opinion; that is, you take responsibility for your view; for example, "I feel I can study higher and not be just at home and raise children." Being assertive also means being willing to consider new information, and even changing your mind. However, it does not mean changing your mind just because others think differently.

Tips for Saying "No" Saying "No" can be difficult if you are usually more passive. However, if you are not able to say no to others, you are not in charge of your own life.

When saying "No", remember to use assertive body language (e.g. standing straight, eye contact, speaking loudly enough that the other person can hear).

Remember: Everyone has the right to say "No!" Practice your new assertiveness skill First, think of a couple of past scenarios when you avoided giving your opinion or preference, saying "No", or asking for what you wanted. How could you have handled the situation differently? What would be an assertive way to communicate in those situations?

Practice saying your assertive statement out loud to yourself, to get used to it.

Other activities of School Leader :

1. To stop Early marriage a School Leader may Develop and implement **community-wide awareness programs** that highlight the negative consequences of early marriage on education and personal development. These programs should target parents, community leaders, and young individuals to foster a deeper understanding of the importance of education and the detrimental effects of early marriage.
2. Aware about the different types of Scholarships, stipends, and financial assistance can help alleviate the financial burden on families and motivate them to support their children's education.
3. Offer **career counselling and skill development programs** to empower young individuals to pursue their interests and ambitions. By equipping them with relevant skills and knowledge, they can become economically independent and have greater control over their life choices.
4. **Engage parents and guardians** through regular meetings and discussions to address the misconceptions surrounding early marriage and promote the long-term benefits of education. Involving parents in decision-making processes and making them aware of the potential risks of early marriage can lead to more supportive environments for education.
5. Provide **training to teachers to sensitize them to the challenges faced by students** who are at risk of early marriage. Teachers can play a crucial role in identifying and supporting vulnerable students, thereby preventing early dropout and promoting continued education.

6. **Establish safe spaces within schools** where students can freely express their concerns and seek guidance without fear of judgment or reprisals. These spaces can encourage open discussions about the importance of education and provide emotional support to students.

7. Advocate for **stronger legal protections against early marriage**, with stringent penalties for those involved in arranging or facilitating such marriages. This will serve as a deterrent and ensure that the law is strictly enforced.

8. **Engage with local community leaders, religious institutions, and influential members** to gain their support in advocating against early marriage and promoting education. Their endorsement can significantly impact community attitudes and behaviours.

9. Incorporate **life skills education** into the curriculum to equip students with essential knowledge, including decision-making, communication, and problem-solving skills. These skills will enable them to make informed choices and resist pressures related to early marriage.

Activity 4

Developing Skills for married adolescents - Decision making skills

Materials required-chart paper, marker

Time-60 minutes

Methodology- brainstorming, discussion and presentation

Step 1: The discussion on the topic about the role of school leader for those adolescents who are married need to focus on their future aspects and how they might shape the coming years of their lives.

Step 2: Ask the participants to think about what they would be doing if students were married. Ask them to share their responses and write the responses on the white board. Open a discussion on decision- making strategies. Have you ever made a choice that resulted in a consequence that you did not want?

Invite the participants to share. How do we decide whether we should do something or not?

Step 3: Share with the participants the various steps of decision making as in facilitators guide.

Facilitators Guide

THE FOUR STEPS IN DECISION-MAKING

Step 1: THE SITUATION: A situation has an invisible "stop sign." Stop, think, and then act. We have to recognize the situation that requires our attention. We need to identify those kinds of situations that require "putting on the brakes." It can be very helpful to discuss some recent situations where we have experienced that requires "putting on the brakes," but that choice wasn't recognized until it was too late.

Step 2: THINK: we need to think about all the possible choices that can be in a specific situation. Then consider the possible consequences of each choice.

Step 3: DECISION: After thinking about all your choices and the possible consequences of each choice, need to decide on what to do.

Step 4: EVALUATE DECISION: This step is designed to help us to learn from our mistakes. Some decisions are just fine. Others will be "okay," but not great. In such decisions where we thought a mistake has been made we need to think more on the situation, what were the choices, what was the thinking, and what was the decision.

Here are some questions that keep the discussion going, without judgment or criticism, and help participants evaluate a decision they've made:

What do you think you could have done differently?

What do you wish you had done differently?

What did you need to consider that you didn't think about?

How do you think your decision turned out?

Step 4-Ask the participants to think of one decision they want to consider and ask them to use the discussed steps. Sum up the session by revisiting the 4 steps of decision making and questions that we need to keep in mind while we decide on something.

The Story of Pearl

The Story of Pearl On the path to her future Pearl is 18-years old. Just this past year she graduated from secondary school – a dream that she fought hard to achieve. Pearl is the first girl in her family to finish high school. She has been accepted to university with a scholarship. Pearl will start university next year, to study medicine. Until next year, Pearl is focused on saving money for university. She will do so by helping her mother with at the market – using skills she learned in her girl's club and has shared with her mother. Pearl will also work as a mentor at the high school girls' club, assisting the girls' club leader. Pearl has used the support of her close friends from her girls' club to map out her plan for university and her savings for the next year. At first she was discouraged about the cost of university, even with a scholarship. But her peers helped her to use her skills to help increase her family's income. They also encouraged her to plan with her family about what part of her earnings would help the family and what part would be saved for university. Pearl and her friends practiced what she would say, and how she could explain the long-term

benefits of attending university for both herself and her family. Pearl, her peers, and her parents are all proud of her plans!

An earlier, serious bump in her path Pearl's path up until now had its hard moments. Three years ago, when she was just 15, she almost left school. She had started to miss an increasing number of days at school. That year most crops in her village had been lost due to draught, and her mother had had almost no yams to sell at the market. Pearl was staying home to help her mother gather other produce to sell – and to take care of her younger siblings while her mother spent longer days in the field. At the same time, her mother and father started to talk about looking for a husband for Pearl. They had married her older sister Esther when she was 15, and had been relieved to no longer pay school fees; they had also received a bride price. When plans for her marriage at age 15 were raised, Pearl started to panic. She had a clear goal to finish high school and wanted to be a doctor. She knew this would be almost impossible to achieve if she married. She was also concerned for her health and safety. She had seen the experience of her older sister Gold who was married at 15; and she had also learned about child marriage in her girls club. Yet, she knew her family was in crisis.

Pearl identified two people she knew and trusted to try to help her: her sister Gold and her girls' club leader. When Gold learned of these marriage plans, she reached out to her parents, community leaders and a local authority to advocate against it. Now 18 years old, Gold had a healthy newborn child (after having lost an infant in its first month of life, and nearly lost her own life, when she gave birth at 16); since her first infant's death, Gold had been connected to a young mother's group where she had learned many things including the risks of early marriage and childbearing, how to use contraception, and how to invite her spouse to a men's group to learn the benefits of more equitable relations between men and women. Pearl's girls' club leader mobilized a group of allied parents who had learned of the benefits of education to a girl's and family's future; parents from this club met with Pearl's parents. Finally, Pearl's family learned of an emergency fund established by a local project to pay girls' school fees. At first Pearl's parents were very angry with her for mentioning their family situation to anyone – and implying that she knew better than they what was best for her and her family; one of her older uncle's also made fun of her father, saying her father now relied on a little girl to manage his home. But Pearl's parents welcomed the new information and support from others – support that matched many of their own hopes for themselves and their children. Pearl returned to school – and continued to be able to study as well as learn practical life skills with other girls in her club.

At age 18, Pearl is not ready to get married yet. But she does have a special friend who is a boy from the next village. She enjoys spending time with him, and talking together about her hopes for the future. He will start university this year, and plans to train as a teacher in agriculture. He's excited about Pearl's plans to attend university and become a doctor. He sees her dreams and plans for her life as one of her most attractive qualities – and has said that he hopes at some point in the future her plans might include him. But he understands that her first priority now is focusing on her studies, and saving to be able to start university next year.