

IMAGE Toolkit

Transforming Lives - A Toolkit from the Initiative for Married Adolescent Girls Empowerment (IMAGE) Programme's Journey and Learnings in India



Background

Every year in India, 1.5 million girls are married before the age of 18, often resulting in gender-based violence, lack of education, and socio-economic hardship. Crucially, as policy and public attention focus on prevention efforts to stop future child marriages, the millions of girls already in early marriages are often overlooked. This systemic neglect leaves them vulnerable to profound socio-economic challenges. The Initiative for Married Adolescent Girls' Empowerment (IMAGE) programme was launched in 2018 to address this critical gap.

The IMAGE programme represents a transformative journey that addresses the challenges faced by early married girls (EMGs) in Karnataka. The programme was launched in 2018, focusing on areas where child marriage rates were particularly high.

Beginning with a focus on service delivery, the programme gradually transitioned into movement building and advocacy, ultimately empowering thousands of girls to reclaim their lives and drive systemic change.

The IMAGE programme was implemented in two distinct but interconnected phases.

The first phase focused on understanding and addressing the immediate needs of EMGs, laying the foundation for trust and engagement. After trust was built and initial successes emerged, the programme naturally transitioned into its second phase. This phase was marked by an expansion of scope and strategy, aiming to amplify the voices of EMGs and build a sustainable movement.



For many of us, the IMAGE programme feels like a second home—a place where we find comfort, guidance, and support. It has given us lessons that neither our families nor schools ever taught. Through this programme, we gained knowledge, skills, and confidence that changed our lives completely. It became a turning point, helping us face challenges and giving us the hope and opportunities to shape our future.

- Shared by EMGs during focus group discussions (FGDs) in Bagalkot



Objective of the toolkit

The IMAGE programme has shown remarkable success in transforming the lives of EMGs and their communities. This toolkit aims to consolidate the programme's learnings, provide practical guidance, and offer a resource for stakeholders interested in replicating or adapting the model.

Who will this toolkit help?

Designed as a practical resource for stakeholders such as researchers, child rights activists, civil society organisations (CSOs), and grassroots practitioners, the toolkit includes templates, case studies, and step-by-step guidance to support project planning, implementation, and monitoring. It emphasises capacity building to help stakeholders replicate participatory and child-led approaches, ensuring sustainable empowerment for vulnerable groups.

Methodology

The approach and methodology for developing the toolkit are centred on a participatory, inclusive, and trauma-informed framework. This process involved collaboration with EMGs, their families, and other key stakeholders who were part of the IMAGE programme. By actively engaging these groups, the toolkit reflects real-life experiences and insights gained from the project, ensuring it serves as a practical and user-friendly guide for future initiatives.



A Champion's Journey: Priyadarshi's Story

Priyadarshi, a 24-year-old from Chamaraajagar, was married young and faced the many challenges of early marriage, including limited education and isolation. However, her involvement with the IMAGE programme transformed her life and inspired her to help others.

"When I first attended an awareness session, I was nervous. But as I learned about child rights and how early marriage impacts girls, I wanted to help others like me," Priyadarshi shared. She began speaking to mothers in her village, drawing from her own experiences to explain the importance of education and health. "Some laughed and said I was wasting my time, but I didn't stop. I wanted every girl in my village to have a chance I didn't get," she said passionately.

Priyadarshi's dedication led her to prevent two child marriages and enroll three young girls back into school. Her ability to connect with families and address their concerns made her a trusted voice in the community. "I feel proud knowing I can make a difference. Seeing those girls in school gives me hope for the future," she said with a smile.

Key Learnings

- The initial focus on providing essential services (e.g., healthcare access, educational support) proved vital, as it successfully mitigated immediate crises and established the necessary trust for girls to engage in deeper advocacy work.
- Centring the lived experiences of the EMGs and adopting a trauma-informed approach ensures that all program tools are contextually accurate and highly effective.
- Investing in the organisational governance and leadership skills of the girls creates an autonomous, self-sustaining movement capable of continuous, long-term advocacy for systemic transformation.
- Integrating the movement's objectives with local government and formal systems provides a vital roadmap for successful replication and achieving widespread sustainability.

Ways Forward

As the IMAGE programme concludes its second phase, its future plans are rooted in sustainability and long-term impact. The focus will be on integrating the core issues addressed by the programme—early marriage, gender-based violence prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and leadership development—into the broader programme frameworks of partner organisations. This involves supporting partners in independently raising funds and embedding EMG-focused interventions as cross-cutting themes in their programmes.

Read and Download the Full Publication - IMAGE Toolkit



Through this toolkit, the programme also aspires to inspire scale and replication by other CSO partners, extending its impact to more communities in need.

Various tools, checklists, formats, and IEC materials have been developed and adopted during the implementation of the IMAGE programme.

Partner NGO Profile Form

Through this toolkit, the programme also aspires to inspire scale and replication by other CSO partners, extending its impact to more communities in need.

Social Protection Schemes Facilitation Tracker

A tracking tool to monitor and document the facilitation of EMGs in accessing social protection schemes and entitlements.

IMAGE Programme Phase 1 Results Framework IMAGE Programme Phase 2 Results Framework

Structured frameworks detailing key outcomes, outputs, & activities focused on service delivery.

Partner NGOs Assessment Tool

A tool to evaluate the strengths, challenges, and readiness of partner NGOs for effective programme implementation and collaboration.

Movement Membership Enrolment Form

A form to register EMGs and vulnerable girls into the Karnataka Forum Against Child Marriage, ensuring structured movement participation.

Handbook for the members of women and child protection committee

A guide designed to equip committee members with knowledge on child protection laws, their roles, and intervention strategies.

Staff Recruitment Guidelines for Partner NGOs

A guideline document outlining transparent, inclusive, and equal-opportunity recruitment processes for hiring staff under IMAGE.

Guidelines on engaging EMGs on participatory research studies

A guideline document outlining steps and protocols to be followed to select and engage EMGs in participatory research studies to ensure their perspectives and inform programme decisions.

Future is Female - A Story Book

A collection of real-life stories showcasing the resilience & transformation of EMGs, illustrating the impact of the IMAGE Programme.

EMG Baseline & Profiling Form

A form to collect demographic details, needs, and challenges of early married girls (EMGs) at the time of enrollment to tailor programme interventions.

Participatory Self-Assessment Tool for Movement

A tool to help movement leaders to self-assess the capacities and performance of Movement on various aspects, understand gaps and develop action plans to improve.

IMAGE NEXT Outcome Harvesting Tool

A tracking tool to monitor and document the facilitation of EMGs in accessing social protection schemes and entitlements.

About Terre des Hommes Netherlands and Children of India Foundation

Terre des Hommes Netherlands is a global child rights organisation working in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. We protect children and prevent child exploitation, and empower children to make their voices count. We work as a catalyst for systemic change with the support of grassroots level implementing partners.

Children of India Foundation (CIF) is a grassroots level organisation and the lead implementing partner of Terre des Hommes Netherlands in India. CIF reaches out to children and families living in vulnerable socio-economic conditions and empowers children to develop to the best of their capabilities.

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