

Combating Child Marriage in the Dalit Community

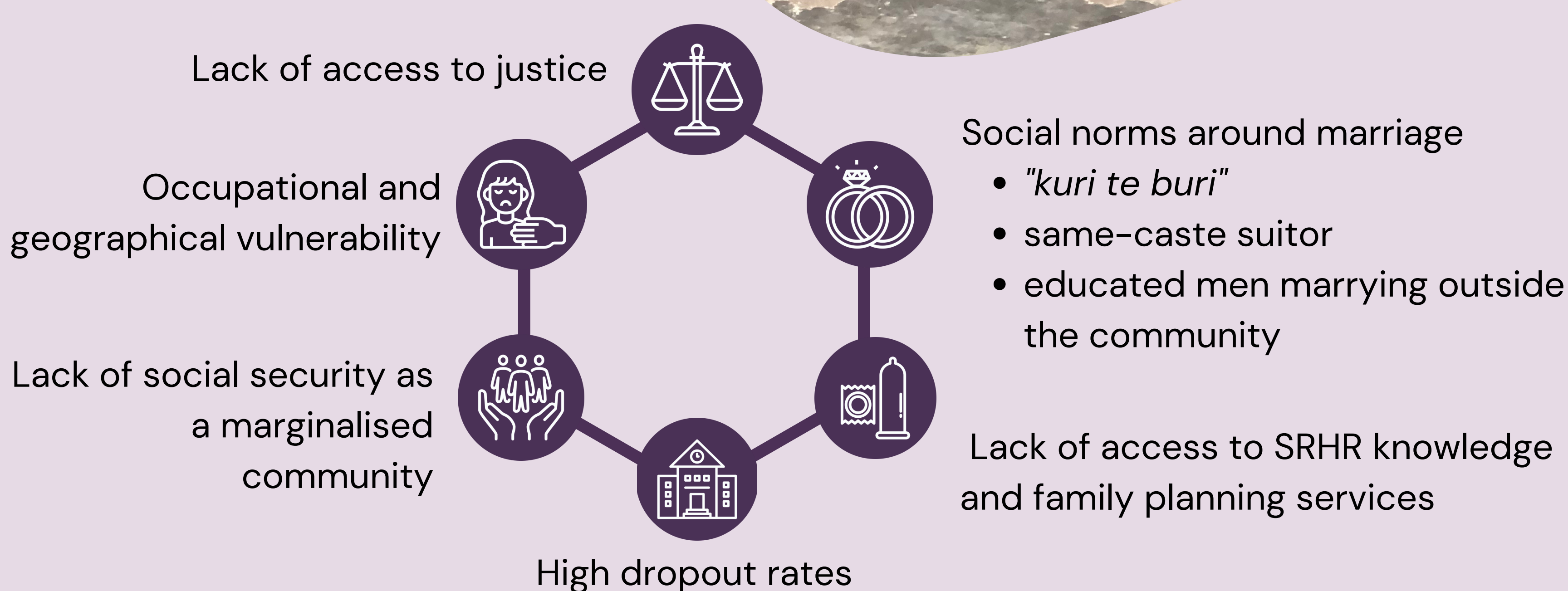
Who are the Dalit?

The word '*Dalit*' means '*deprived*'.

The Dalit community in Bangladesh is not only a caste-based community but rather a population marginalized by both religious sanctions and economic deprivations.

About 3.5 million Dalits live in Bangladesh.

Specific Dimensions of Vulnerability



Strategies

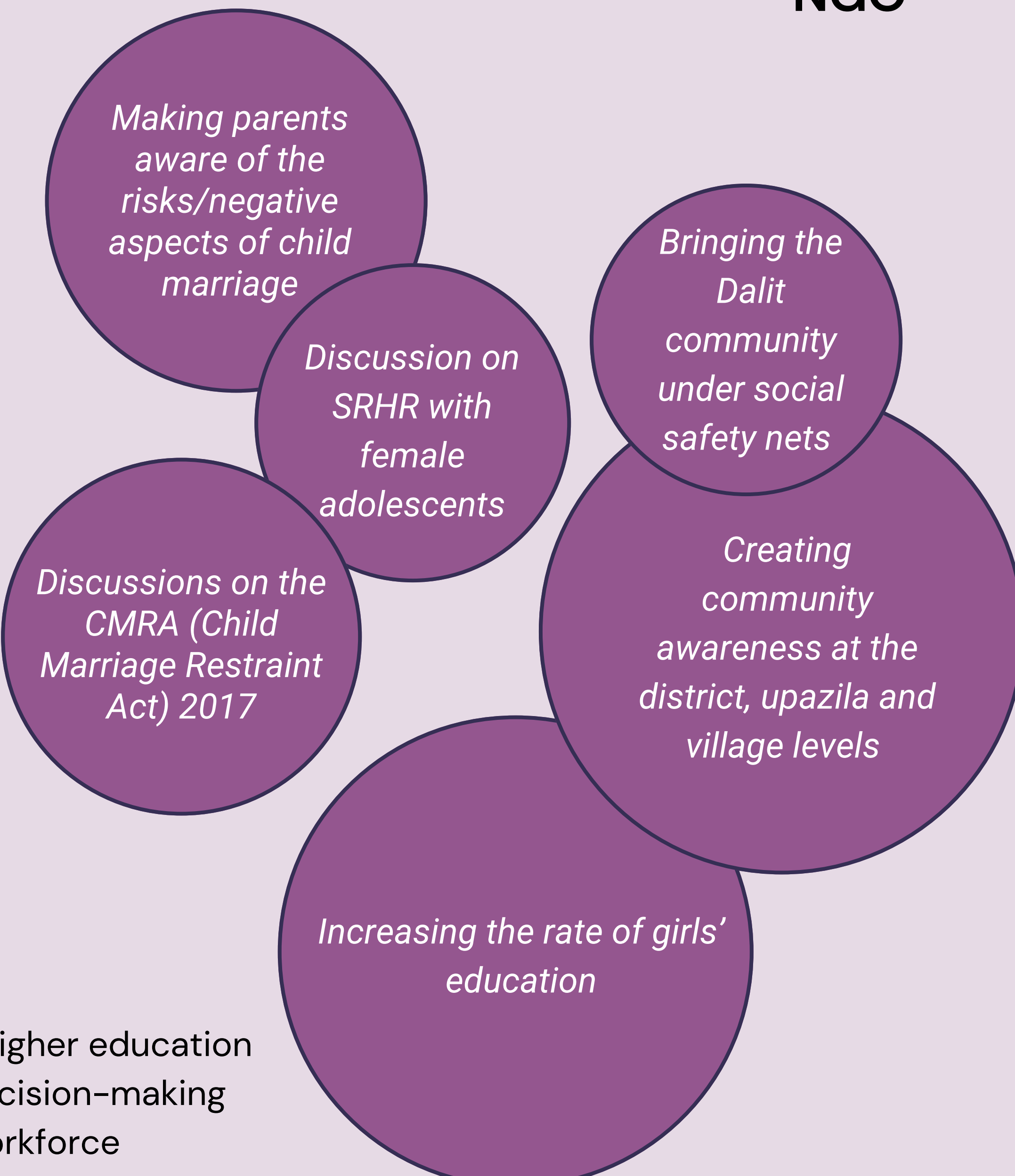
The strategies used to stop child marriage were discussed in separate FGDs to assess their effectiveness based on the criteria given below.

The size of each strategy is proportional to its effectiveness.

Community



NGO



Criteria of success

- Increase in girls' rate of HSC completion and access to higher education
- Girls able to express their opinions and participate in decision-making
- Girls becoming financially independent by joining the workforce

Community specific

- Decrease in maternal and neonatal mortality
- Decrease in domestic violence and divorce rate

NGO specific

- Laws correctly implemented

Backlash Faced

- Activists face the threat of expulsion from the community
- Activists face the threat of physical violence
- Activists labelled as a traitor to the community
- Public representatives fear losing votes if they stop marriages
- Unmarried girls and their families subject to social stigma

Possible Strategies to Counter Backlash

- Enabling youth to have greater agency through developing youth leadership and solidarity
- Include SRHR information in IGA/TCC training
- Increase social safeguarding and security of the Dalit community

About the Project

The **Sustaining Power: Women's Struggles against contemporary backlash in South Asia (SuPWR)** project is jointly undertaken by researchers in the UK, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) is conducting the Bangladesh part of the project, with Dalit as a partner for the section on Child Marriage. The support of the Economic and Social Research Council (UK) is gratefully acknowledged.