Combatting 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

Lack of access to justice Occupational and geographical vulnerability

Lack of social security as a marginalised community



High dropout rates

Social norms around marriage

- "kuri te buri"
- same-caste suitor
- educated men marrying outside the community

Dalit - Hope for the Oppressed

an organization working exclusively with the

Dalit community in Southeast Bangladesh.

Lack of access to SRHR knowledge and family planning services

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.



Making parents aware of the risks/negative aspects of child

> Discussion on SRHR with female adolescents

Discussions on the CMRA (Child Marriage Restraint Act) 2017

marriage

NGO

Bringing the Dalit community under social safety nets

Creating community awareness at the district, upazila and village levels

Increasing the rate of girls' education

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.







