



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID/India's Activities Toward Strengthening Family Health

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Strengthening the Family Health Work of USAID/India

USAID/India has been in partnership with the Government of India (GoI) for 31 years, aligned with the GoI's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's (MoHFW's) strategy of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A). The objective of this partnership is to scale up high-impact interventions for preventing child and maternal deaths and improving the quality of family planning (FP) / reproductive health (RH) services.

In keeping with this goal of advancing maternal and child health programs, USAID/India is working across 20 states to improve the quality of maternal and child health (MCH), FP, RH, and adolescent health (AH) services.

This newsletter highlights the activities of USAID/India's implementing partners in strengthening family health.

USAID's Commitment to Saving Lives: Ten Years of Progress in Maternal and Child Health

On March 21, 2023, USAID celebrated the tenth anniversary of its global commitment to prevent child and maternal deaths with an event called "Maternal and Child Survival: A Decade of Progress and Action for the Future," co-convened by USAID, UNICEF, and the governments of India, Senegal, and the United Kingdom. The event aimed to re-energize efforts to prevent maternal and child deaths, adopt best practices, and focus on approaches to improve global maternal and child survival. Assistant Administrator Dr. Atul Gawande moderated a panel of global health leaders and experts to discuss USAID's [new framework for preventing child and maternal deaths](#). The framework lays out an action plan for country-led programs to improve health outcomes for women and children by focusing on coverage, quality, and equity.



USAID/India works to enhance institutional capacity of public and private sector networks in vulnerable geographies to scale up proven high-impact maternal, neonatal and child health interventions. USAID's SAKSHAM project engages parents to actively participate in caring for their hospitalized newborns. Photo: USAID/India

During the event, Dr. Ashok Babu, Joint Secretary, MoHFW, highlighted India's progress in maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) through a convergence of efforts and announced that the Gol will launch a "Newborn Action Plan." Despite significant progress at the national level, the challenge of inequities at the state, district, and sub-district levels remains the biggest bottleneck in India. It is estimated that one-third of the districts may fail to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for under-five mortality rates. As part of USAID's "Acting on the Call" (AOTC) global commitment to end preventable deaths among mothers and children under the age of five, USAID/India and the MoHFW are working together to combat high rates of maternal and neonatal deaths.

Recently, USAID published a blog featuring the work supported by the USAID/India Health Office in Ranchi, Jharkhand, on the AOTC.

[Click here to read the blog.](#)

USAID/India's health programs have generated a **10-to-1 return on investment through public and private sector scale-up** in the past three years, proving the impact of targeted investments.

USAID is actively supporting the Gol and the state governments in quickly achieving standards of quality of care around birth through the Laqshya initiative as well as translating policy into action by demonstrating implementation models for existing guidelines, such as Family Participatory Care (FPC). The FPC demonstration model involved training staff on safely handling newborns and involving mothers and family members in special newborn care units.

Celebrating Women's Leadership and Gender Equality with USAID/India-supported Changemakers



USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Asia, Anjali Kaur, held an engaging session with USAID-supported changemakers across the Health Office portfolio. Photo: Jhpiego

On March 15, 2023, USAID-supported MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership: India-Yash (MCGL: India-Yash) organized a special event in New Delhi to celebrate International Women's Day. Anjali Kaur, USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Asia, joined the event as the chief guest, along with Rekha Sharma, Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, GoI, and representatives from civil society, entrepreneurs, innovators, thematic experts, academics, and women changemakers.

The inaugural session, a panel discussion titled "Igniting Inspiration: Voices from the Ground," featured five inspiring USAID-supported changemakers across the Health Office portfolio. In a lively Q&A session with Anjali Kaur, the changemakers shared their journey toward achieving gender-transformative change at the grassroots level. They highlighted the positive impact of USAID/India's support on their ability to achieve better outcomes. The event also included discussions by thematic experts, community members, and implementing partners on issues related to promoting collaboration and alliance; using technology and innovation to advance gender equality; exploring implementation models to combat gender-based violence; and protecting the rights of adolescent girls by preventing child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM).

The event served as a platform for recognizing and celebrating the remarkable achievements of USAID and its partners in promoting gender diversity and women's leadership across the Health Office portfolio of tuberculosis (TB), HIV/AIDS, family health and systems strengthening, and other critical sectors, including health, sanitation, education, nutrition, finance, and household decision-making.

[Click here to read more about the Changemakers.](#)

Padcare: A Revolutionary Menstrual Hygiene Solution Completing the Loop of the Menstrual Hygiene Economy

Padcare, a social enterprise supported under the Yash Entrepreneurs Program (YEP) by USAID-funded MCGL: India-Yash, has developed a unique 5D technology that aligns with the SDGs and complies with the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework and regulatory requirements. USAID/India felicitated Ajinkya Dhariya, the founder of Padcare, for his innovative solution at a recent Women's Day event in New Delhi.

In India, menstrual hygiene and waste disposal present significant challenges due to insufficient awareness, social stigma, inadequate infrastructure, poor waste management systems, and a lack of government and policy support. Ajinkya Dhariya was inspired to address this issue when he witnessed ragpickers handling sanitary napkins with their bare hands, exposing themselves to considerable health risks. Recognizing the importance of developing menstrual hygiene services that are adapted to Indian consumer behavior and provide affordable disposal options, Ajinkya established Padcare. The company provides a comprehensive solution to improving menstrual hygiene and waste management—from making menstrual products easily accessible to generating recyclable material output out of soiled pads.

With its patented technology, Padcare can store sanitary napkins for 30 days without emitting any odor or promoting bacterial growth. Once collected, the pads are processed and separated into pulp and plastic. Almost 99 percent of the material is recovered at a low cost. Most of the recovered material is reused in other industries, such as paper and packaging. The plastic is converted into granules and reused to create Padcare bins.

Padcare's success can be attributed to the support it has received from USAID's Yash Entrepreneurs Program, which provides technical assistance to social enterprises and helps them improve health outcomes for Indian adolescents through innovative solutions in sexual and reproductive health, mental wellness, and menstrual hygiene management. With the mentorship and technical assistance provided under the program, Padcare doubled its revenue and deployed menstrual waste management systems in over 30 corporations. It serves over 40 schools and conducts awareness campaigns for students. It is now experimenting with this patented technology to manage other materials, such as diapers and textile waste.



Padcare: A Revolutionary Menstrual Hygiene Solution Completing the Loop for the Menstrual Hygiene Economy. Photo: Jhpiego

As a part of the USAID-supported program, Padcare has raised **₹5 crores (\$625,000)**. Recently, Padcare raised investments through Shark Tank India, a popular business-themed reality show on television, where it secured an investment of **₹1 crore (\$125,000)**. In addition, Padcare has raised **₹4 crores (\$500,000)** from Social Alpha, Lavni Ventures, 3i Partners (Impact India Investment Partners), Rainmatter, and SpectrumImpact. The Shark Tank opportunity has already made Padcare hugely popular in the media, leading to more than **34,000** hits on its website and eliciting business requests from over **1,500** business entities.

ACTIVITY UPDATE

USAID/India Family Health Program Informs G20 Policymaking

The Think20 (T20) India Secretariat, which serves as the official think tank of G20, shortlisted USAID/India's abstract "A Framework of Intersectoral Synergy, Addressing, and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence: A Global Call to Action" for inclusion in Task Force 6, "Accelerating SDGs: Exploring New Pathways to the 2030 Agenda." The abstract highlights the learnings from USAID-supported interventions in Assam to prevent gender-based violence. The T20 recommendations serve as an "idea bank" for G20 and are synthesized into policy briefs presented to G20 working groups, ministerial meetings, and leaders' summits to help G20 deliver concrete policy measures. Thus, the lessons from USAID-supported activities in India are shaping the global policy discourse on social inclusion and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Empowering Women to Drive Economic Growth through Livelihoods and Care Infrastructure



Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, Amb. Sujan Chinoy, Chair, Core Group, T20 India 2023, Ms. Renana Jhabvala, Chairperson, SEWA Bharat and Ms. Gargee Ghosh, President, Global Policy & Advocacy, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, during T 20 side event panel discussion - "Addressing Structural Barriers: Care Infrastructure". Photo: SEWA Bharat

On March 22, 2023, SEWA Bharat, under the USAID-supported Udyami program, collaborated with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), United Nations in India, and the Asian Development Bank Institute to organize a T20 side event. The event addressed women's role in driving sustained economic growth and development through livelihoods and care infrastructure and the challenges they face in workforce participation. During the inaugural session, the speakers emphasized the importance of using gender-disaggregated data for targeted interventions and progress monitoring, since most women-owned microenterprises have small turnovers of under \$12,000 per year. They also observed the need for a dedicated women's enterprise development fund to promote women's entrepreneurship.

During a session on "Addressing Structural Barriers: Care Infrastructure," the panelists discussed the need to prioritize financing for care infrastructure in the G20 leaders' agenda. The speakers also noted the importance of education and training in data analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence for digital inclusion, and recommended involving intermediaries such as "digital sakhis"—a network of rural women who can help their communities in gaining digital financial literacy—to improve women's access to digital infrastructure.

Freedom Consortium for Childhood Pneumonia: A Systems Approach to Improve Child Health Outcomes in Jharkhand

USAID-supported SAMVEG, in partnership with the state National Health Mission and the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, has formed a group called the “Freedom Consortium for Childhood Pneumonia” in Jharkhand to converge efforts to boost the fight against childhood pneumonia, which is a leading but preventable cause of child mortality in the state.

The Freedom Consortium seeks to employ a systems approach and engage the private sector to enhance MNCH outcomes in susceptible areas. It is intended to be a locally led model for continuous advocacy and action on the issue of childhood pneumonia. The first meeting was held in Ranchi, Jharkhand, on February 1, 2023, where leading experts in the field discussed various strategies, including addressing social determinants such as malnutrition and household air pollution, to combat childhood pneumonia. The Freedom Consortium is one of the first initiatives to bring together actors from the public and private health sector, working jointly to address persistent challenges that require urgent attention and accelerated action from multiple stakeholders.



Experts discuss strategies to combat childhood pneumonia at the first meeting of the USAID-supported “Freedom Consortium for Childhood Pneumonia” in Ranchi, Jharkhand. Photo: IPE Global

[Click here to read the report on “Freedom Consortium for Childhood Pneumonia.”](#)

Putting the Power in Women’s Hands: How Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS) is Empowering ASHAs across Ten States of India

Amid the disruptions in the supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic, the availability of FP commodities decreased in several Indian districts. To address this issue, MCGL: India-Yash, supported by USAID, has been providing technical support to ten states to improve the capacities of health care providers, including Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), to streamline FP logistics and the supply chain using the Govt’s FP-LMIS application. The FP-LMIS employs a “pull system” that extends to the ASHA level, ensuring demand-based supply and avoiding both stockouts and overstocking of contraceptives and FP commodities. It allows real-time order placement, stock management, and utilization improvement at the community level. With the implementation of FP-LMIS, ASHAs can now demand FP commodities through a mobile application, making the process more efficient and accessible. This has resulted in a shift in power and digital literacy among ASHAs, advancing gender equity. The



Previously, Jitan Devi (ASHA) had to fill in a register with her requirements for FP/RH commodities, but now she can demand the commodities through the mobile app, making the process more efficient and improving accessibility. Photo: Jhpiego

FP-LMIS application has also enabled ASHAs to capture the unmet needs of women, ensuring that they have timely access to FP/RH commodities. The mobile-based application has been implemented in ten states in India—covering a wide range of communities, including rural and remote areas—where it has revolutionized FP accessibility and is helping ASHAs serve their communities better.

The success of this FP logistics and supply chain management in managing contraceptive supply chains was acknowledged and was highlighted at the **3rd International Symposium on Community Health Workers in Liberia** on March 20–24, 2023. The presentation demonstrated how other low- and middle-income countries facing similar supply chain challenges can benefit from this approach.

USAID Launches State-of-the-Art Simulation Lab for Maternal and Neonatal Care Training in India



Sangita Patel, Director, USAID/India Health Office, launched the new Advanced Simulation Lab Center at CMC Vellore, Tamil Nadu. Photo: CMC Vellore

On January 21, 2023, USAID/India launched a new Advanced Simulation Lab Center at the Christian Medical College Vellore, Tamil Nadu, supported by a \$1 million grant through USAID's American Schools and Hospitals Abroad program. This lab will serve as a training ground for doctors, nurses, and emergency teams to specialize in maternal and neonatal care. It will provide training on the latest technologies and procedures to respond to mother and infant emergencies, basic and advanced nursing procedures, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). As such, the facility incorporates U.S. best practices in protocols, patient safety practices, and debriefing tools that are essential for student evaluation and feedback. Through this initiative, USAID has also facilitated the procurement of cutting-edge commodities and equipment for labor and delivery rooms, as well as the neonatal intensive care unit at the hospital. The partnership between CMC and USAID aims to enhance the commitment and capacity of local institutions and providers to deliver high-quality, integrated health care in Tamil Nadu, which will reduce maternal, newborn, and child mortality and morbidity. The medical staff will have access to the latest tools and technologies, which will help save lives and provide essential community care in the future.

Improving Maternal and Child Health in Rural Haryana: Training on SAMVEG's ACE Model for Frontline Workers during the Critical 1,000-Day Window



SAMVEG conducts training on the ACE model for frontline workers in Haryana, emphasizing the critical 1,000-day window for improvement in maternal and child health. Photo: IPE Global

To enhance maternal and child health in Punhana block of Nuh district in Haryana, the USAID-supported SAMVEG project recently conducted a training session for Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND) on counseling based on the Antenatal Care and Early Childhood Development (ACE) model.

During the two-day training program, frontline workers such as ASHAs, Anganwadi Workers, and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives received training on the ACE model. This model provides counseling on nutrition, hygiene, indoor pollution, infant and young child feeding practices, play and communication for early childhood development, immunization services, and other health-related issues during the first 1,000-day window, i.e., from conception to the first two years of a child's life, which is considered critical to ensuring optimal growth, development, child survival, and lifelong health and nutrition. The project team used in-house-developed posters and job aids to conduct the session, paving the way for innovative solutions to improve the health and well-being of mothers and children in rural Haryana.

Promoting Smartphone Ownership Among Women Entrepreneurs to Boost Productivity

As part of its effort to increase productivity, the USAID-supported Udyami program provided smartphones and digital financial literacy training to community leaders and microentrepreneurs. To understand the impact of a smartphone on their lives and livelihood journeys, a study was conducted through telephonic interviews with around 90 women who had received smartphones across the states of Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal.

The survey responses were analyzed using the "Taxonomy of Mobile Phone Engagement" framework drawn from a 2018 study by Evidence for Policy Design, Harvard Kennedy School. It found that 95 percent of respondents used basic communication applications such as phone calls and text messages, with high engagement rates for phone utility functions such as the alarm clock, torch, calculator, and camera. Other applications with high utilization rates included WhatsApp and Google Suite apps, such as Youtube, that use specific digital communication. The survey also found that 49 percent of respondents used digital payment apps, indicating a medium degree of usage and scope for greater integration through better digital and financial literacy.

These findings can be used to conduct a second phase of the study to gain further insights into women's learning curve of smartphone use, training needs, relation between higher smartphone use and productivity, and the impact of access to smartphones on women's business and work as well as on their mobilizing and unionizing activities.

[Click here to read the study](#)

Empowering Tribal Youths in Odisha through Education on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

On National Youth Day, January 12, 2023, MCGL India-Yash and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU), supported by USAID/India, to strengthen the tribal youth landscape in Odisha. The collaboration aims to provide training to KISS peer educators on gender, SRH, digital literacy, community organization, social skills, and youth leadership. The partnership will localize interventions and leverage KISS's "Life Skills Education" program to implement tailored SRH interventions for marginalized and vulnerable adolescents and youths. Jhpiego, a global



Students supported by KISS Foundation prepare a puppet show as part of the SRH awareness activities under "Baatein Unlocked." USAID/India and KISS have signed an MoU to strengthen the tribal youth landscape in Odisha. The partnership aims to provide training on gender and SRH, and promote gender equality and social inclusion. Photo: Jhpiego

health organization, is leading the partnership with KISS, and both organizations will lead the innovations deployed under the youth-led movement called "Baatein Unlocked." The partnership aims to reduce early marriage and teenage pregnancy, increase access to health services and information, and promote gender equality and social inclusion. This project showcases how collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, and academic institutions can support local communities and address the unique health needs of vulnerable populations.

From Baatein Unlocked to Women Climate Collective: A Youth-Led Movement Towards Intersectional Climate Action



The "Baatein Unlocked" campaign began with the aim of creating a safe space for young people to discuss their SRH needs, but later evolved to focus on climate action. A session with youth champions was conducted at the Youth Resource Center in Dakshinpuri, Delhi. Photo: Jhpiego

The Women Climate Collective (WCC) is a remarkable initiative that emerged from the youth-led Baatein Unlocked campaign by USAID-supported MCGL India: Yash. Initially, the campaign aimed to create a secure environment where young people could express their sexual and reproductive health requirements. However, over time, Baatein Unlocked mobilized and engaged the community toward climate action, using online sessions as a platform for engagement and leveraging partnerships to drive action by the WCC. Micro- and macro-influencers were also used to achieve

community influence, leading to the creation of a platform for women to better understand the intersection between climate and gender.

The formation of the WCC was a response to the disproportionate effects and consequences of climate change on women, and it is quickly emerging as an essential space for #BaateinUnlocked, especially in addressing climate change and SRH. In just over one month, the collective has been successful in reaching over 5 million people, mobilizing the community toward intersectional climate action. By leveraging the strategies and insights emerging from the Baatein Unlocked campaign, the WCC has brought together women from different backgrounds to create a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

USAID/India Leads the Formation of the National Technical Advisory Group for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health



Experts from various government agencies, academia, medical professional associations, research institutes, and innovators, discussed how to improve MNCH interventions and outcomes using a continuum-of-care approach. Photo: PATH

The USAID-supported project SAKSHAM, led by PATH in collaboration with Piramal Swasthya, Jhpiego, and Deloitte, is assisting in the formation of a National Technical Advisory Group (NTAG) for MNCH. The group comprises experts from various sectors. It will create sub-groups that will focus on different themes, work with the MNCH Division of the MoHFW to identify support areas, and develop guidelines and protocols for GoI programs in states. The group will also recommend best practices and identify “champions” to advocate and promote the adoption of high-impact practices.

During the first NTAG meeting, held on March 23, 2023, participants engaged in discussions covering various topics such as technology, inclusion, private sector engagement, and health literacy. Recommendations were made on several fronts, including data sharing, the use of gender-transformative methods, and the comparison of technology-based interventions to enhance health literacy and provide direct health interventions. The primary objective of these recommendations is to support the Government of India (GoI) by implementing novel approaches that improve maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) interventions and enhance outcomes. These efforts are driven by a continuum-of-care approach, which ensures comprehensive care throughout the stages of pregnancy, childbirth, and early childhood.

Innovating Tech Solutions for Maternal and Child Health in India: USAID/India's SAKSHAM Aavishkar Grand Finale



Evaluators for the SAKSHAM Aavishkar Grand Finale evaluate presentations by the finalists. Photo: PATH

USAID/India-supported SAKSHAM launched the Aavishkar Innovation Platform to address the challenges of MNCH in India through innovative technological solutions with a user-centric approach. The initiative leverages the network of innovators through an “Impact Lab” to showcase user-centric MNCH technologies. It also supports deployment-ready technologies from local and global entrepreneurs, using existing low-cost health technologies in MNCH settings.

Recently, SAKSHAM and its partners organized a grand tech challenge, focusing on four key areas related to MNCH care: high-risk pregnancies, anemia, innovations for sick newborns, and developmental delays and other ailments or deficiencies in small children. The challenge took place in stages, and 21 applications were shortlisted in the preliminary screening. Out of the 21 applications that were shortlisted during the preliminary stage, 15 applications made it to the final stage. The grand finale was held on March 29, 2023, in New Delhi, where these 15 applications were judged on multiple criteria, including the fitness of the product solution, innovativeness, product readiness, simplicity of scalability, and potential impact.

IMPACT STORIES

Empowering Women Farmers to Combat Climate Change

Climate change has had a significant effect on women engaged in agriculture in Uttarakhand, leading to precarious livelihoods due to challenges like wildfires and deforestation. Farmers in the region experience reduced crop yields due to low rainfall and struggle with crop damage caused by wild animals. Additionally, the migration of men to urban areas for work leaves women to manage households and fields alone.

Pushpa, a farmer from Dotty village in Takula block, Almora district, Uttarakhand, is among the women facing these challenges. However, her association with the “Building Resilience of Women Entrepreneurs” project, supported by USAID/India and implemented by SEWA



Pushpa posing in front of her fields in Almora, Uttarakhand. Photo: SEWA Bharat

Bharat, has provided her with hope. SEWA Bharat is a grassroots organization supporting over 26,000 informal women workers in Uttarakhand. Through the project, Pushpa gained access to various schemes, including cattle insurance, which provided her with financial security.

As a SEWA Bharat-trained “aagewan,” Pushpa ensures that information about government schemes and financial literacy reaches the women in her community. Aagewans are grassroots leaders working as part of SEWA Bharat who establish community leadership models to facilitate access to government schemes for citizens. They receive training on various topics, including health and financial literacy, through SEWA Shakti Kendras.

USAID also supports **SEWA Atithi**, an initiative that connects tourists to authentic rural and cultural experiences of the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. Under this initiative, women microentrepreneurs receive training and marketing support to run their homestay businesses.

In her role as an aagewan, Pushpa has helped women in her community gain access to affordable seeds and acquire cowsheds with assistance from the Center for Aromatic Plants (CAP), a government-run business incubator center that supports farmers with facilities and services. With support from CAP and SEWA Bharat, Pushpa earned a profit of ₹13,000 by selling 7–8 kg of roses in 2022.

“ I believe strongly that women should be financially independent and should diversify their sources of income as much as possible. In my view, providing training to women farmers in turning their homes into homestays not only provides a sustainable livelihood that can support their families but also contributes to the economic growth and resilience of our communities.”

Pushpa, a woman microentrepreneur supported by USAID

In July 2021, SEWA Uttarakhand launched a signature campaign across five state districts, mobilizing 8,500 women to sign a memorandum directed toward the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. The memorandum requested him to activate the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 to provide alternative livelihood options to women, establish marketing platforms for their produce, amend forest laws, and re-forest indigenous vegetation in forest lands.

Despite the challenges posed by climate change, Pushpa's story exemplifies the hope and resilience that have been brought about as a result of USAID/India-supported initiatives.

Defying Resistance: CEFM Team Prevents Child Marriage in the Face of Local Opposition



Jesmin Sultana empowers youth volunteers in the village through community awareness sessions, educating them about menstrual health, hygiene, and their rights. Photo: Jhpiego

In the fight against child marriage, the team leading the child, early, and forced marriages (CEFM) project being implemented by USAID-supported MCGL India-Yash has made a significant contribution. In the Barpeta district of Assam, the team's tireless efforts, unwavering commitment, and timely interventions have successfully stopped critical cases of CEFM.

In one instance, the MCGL India-Yash team received a call from a concerned schoolteacher regarding a 14-year-old girl in Panimorisa village who was about to be married off. The team member

immediately alerted CHILDLINE, and an inquiry was ordered at the location of the alleged marriage. Despite facing resistance from the local community, who supported the marriage, the team did not give up. They worked with the police to locate the house where the event was taking place and gathered concrete evidence of the marriage. Additionally, they sensitized the community on the harmful effects of child marriage and strongly warned the community elders about the consequences of their actions.

“From the moment I got the information, it was a race against time. There was a point where it seemed like nothing could be done, but I knew that I could not give up. Knowing that I had it in me to stop child marriage and protect the girl from an untimely marriage makes me feel good.”

Jesmin Sultana, Gram Panchayat facilitator, Barpeta district, Assam

The MCGL India-Yash team has provided girls with a platform to voice their concerns regarding CEFM, empowering them to assume agency over their own lives. The team's interventions have conveyed a resounding message to the global community that child marriage is a violation of human rights, urging for an immediate end to it.

PHOTO GALLERY



The theme for International Women’s Day celebrations this year was “DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality.” USAID/India partner SEWA celebrated the occasion through its chapters across India with workshops, awareness drives, exhibitions, and online events promoting digital literacy, rural social security schemes, and access to health for women in the informal economy. The brand-new logo of SEWA Samarthya, a women’s papad (a crispy-thin cracker or wafer) collective in Bikaner, Rajasthan, was also launched. Twenty self-help groups from Jaipur (Rajasthan) received loans, and SEWA Jharkhand held quizzes and games for International Women’s Day celebrations. Photo: SEWA Bharat



The USAID/India-supported “Building Resilience of Women Entrepreneurs” project empowers women microentrepreneurs to thrive in a post-COVID-19 economy. Women in Patiala, Katihar, and Kohima are gaining new skills to start their own businesses, ranging from Phulkari embroidery to goat rearing. SEWA Dukaan provides a platform for the women to sell their products. Here are glimpses of training sessions on pickle-making and basket-weaving in Kohima, Nagaland. Photo: SEWA Bharat



USAID/India-supported SAMVEG facilitated the training of trainers under the Home-Based Young Care program, for the capacity-building of ASHAs in awareness generation and counseling, in Mandasaur, Madhya Pradesh. Photo: IPE Global



USAID/India-supported SAKSHAM in Assam is engaging with the Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC) in tea gardens to improve MCH outcomes. In a remote pocket of Sivasagar district, the VHSNC prepared a Village Health Plan to address in a timely manner referral challenges due to the unavailability of ambulances. In February 2023, the VHSNC partnered with a member of the local community and arranged an alternate vehicle for emergencies, which has already served five patients, including two pregnant women. Photo: PATH



On International Women's Day, USAID/India-supported SAKSHAM organized awareness sessions on menstrual hygiene and self-care for girl students and held discussions on the health implications of child marriage and teenage pregnancy at Bamunpukhuri Model School, Gelekey block, Sivasagar district, Assam. Photo: PATH



USAID-supported MCGL India-Yash empowers women in the Amalgamated Plantations Pvt Ltd gardens of Dibrugarh District (Assam) through the intervention 'Expanding the contraceptive basket of Choice'. ASHA workers, such as Kiron Baraik (pictured above), play a critical role in mobilizing their community towards local health planning, promoting good health practices, and empowering women to take control of their reproductive health. Photo: Jhpiego