

Situation of Children in Karnataka in the light of Covid-19 pandemic

A Comparative Study

Report



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DAY NOVEMBER 20

Situation of Children in Karnataka in the light of Covid-19 Pandemic

– A Comparative Study

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Executive Summary:

Millions of parents and caregivers have lost incomes and jobs due to COVID-19, and children of their families have been passed through critical situations of closure of schools, food insecurity, protection etc. Karnataka Child Rights Observatory (KCRO) has conducted a study in 20 districts of Karnataka State (Focus Groups Discussion with adolescents, men and women in two villages of each district). The study mainly reveals the gaps in schooling, education and related services and incidents of child labour, child marriages and children getting orphaned / semi orphaned [losing their parents and breadwinners - one or both parents] due to the impact of long drawn Covid 19 and its effects.

Several global and local reports, ground level information has revealed that COVID-19 has left a scar on the development of the communities and has certainly impacted adversely on achieving Sustainable Development Goals and also damaged current and future generations of children.

In the light of child development, particularly education, most educational institutions along with the Govt turned to online education. But it is found that the majority of the children, particularly from rural and urban poor, missed their '*online*' classes. But at the same time quite a large number of children (whether with online classes or without online classes) got addicted to mobiles - gaming and other platforms posing a new problem in the families and communities. There are reports of child labour and disguised economic exploitation of children who missed out school education as well as who were pressed in the families for earning.

Interestingly the study has shown that while the community members, particularly the adult community not coming forth about the incidents of child marriages, children's groups has shared about the increasing incidents of child marriage.

The whole Covid-19 lockdown and closure of schools have also resulted in declining interest in academic pursuits (reading, writing and math, etc) which may lead to children dropping out of schools and also posing a big challenge to teachers when the schools reopen. The study team has heard the parents and community members remarking that it will be a huge responsibility and a challenge to all to bring children back to appropriate schooling rails. The Govt and the school system have to now adopt new strategies to build a resilient education system in the long term.

The above said issues are only the visible issues and there are lots of invisible issues caused by COVID-19 like malnutrition, anaemia amongst children that needs to be addressed as early as possible to prevent further damage. These measures must be done in such a manner by ensuring 'no one left behind' in the push to achieve **Sustainable Development Goals**.

While accepting the reality of the negative effects on the lives of children, the communities who are part of the study, have appreciated the efforts of local service providers like school teachers, AWW for reaching the supplementary nutritious food to the majority of the children at their door steps during lockdown and after lifting the lockdown. Similarly health services, immunisation support by the Government is also appreciated by the communities. The efforts of NGOs are also identified by the communities and are appreciated for providing ration, medicines, masks, sanitisers, education kits and also continued information on Covid Appropriate Behavior.

People from the interior rural areas (from the sampling villages) also have said that during the crisis period the local Governments have ensured eligible people were involved in MGNREGA.

Majority of the informers have shared that they were continuously involved in agriculture and allied activities as the Govt had clearly indicated that such activities should not be obstructed.

As the study was mainly concentrated on the effects of Covid on children, the findings and suggestions are largely related to upholding the natural rights of children. We hope that the findings of the study may lead to some advocacy asks and to some actions towards children's education, nutrition and protection issues.

We acknowledge the support of Mr. Prosun Sen, UNICEF, Hyderabad to carry out this study and the NGO partners of KCRO in conducting the study in spite of the difficulties in mobility, reaching out and conducting FGDs in the villages.

Vasudeva Sharma N.V.

State Convener

Karnataka Child Rights Observatory

Introduction:

The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting children, in particular from economically weaker sections, families deprived of basic facilities and migrants, in all geographical areas in the world including health, education, nutrition, protection areas. But the closure of schools is one of the most visible and the most controversial areas that have affected the young people as well as their families and communities. As the Covid19 crisis spread very fast around the world, it transformed children's day-to-day lives. Since the poorest in both urban and rural areas will be hardest hit by all of these effects, lockdowns are expected to widen the existing inequalities across the globe, with repercussions for years to come.

The chances of violence against children in the families by parents is supposed to have increased in some places due to the stress related to Covid 19, due to job loss, isolation, excessive confinement and anxieties over health and finances. It is said that as the child protection monitoring personnel were not that active, cases of child abuse is not reported to that extent. As the schools were closed due to Covid fear, traditional monitors and counselors like teachers had no access to children and their grievances. Stray cases of child labour and child marriages were reported in some places, but as reported from the grassroots excepting a few the child protection personnel could not reach out in many cases. The other reason is that the personnel, particularly the teachers, were on Covid 19 duty and could not get into the homes and families to reach out and prevent and protect all cases.

As the COVID-19 pandemic overwhelmed health systems, in several places regular immunisations to children got hampered and so life-saving basic health care. The situation has not yet improved in several pockets in spite of the best efforts of the Government system to reach out the services.

In this background Karnataka Child Rights Observatory (KCRO) conducted a study in selected villages of all the districts to understand the situation of children during COVID-19 lockdown and post lockdown period.

Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the situation of children (health, immunization, education, nutrition, protection etc.) during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period;
- To understand the availability of social security schemes;
- To understand the situation of children after lockdown;
- Based on the findings of the study, recommendations to be submitted to government and other stakeholders.

Methodology:

- Finalization of questions to be asked during FGDs (focus group discussion).
- Conducted Focus Group Discussion with men, woman and adolescents in two villages of each district;
- Key person's interview (community leaders, elders etc.)
- Interview with service providers (AWW, ASHA, ANM, teacher etc.)
- Content analysis and report writing.

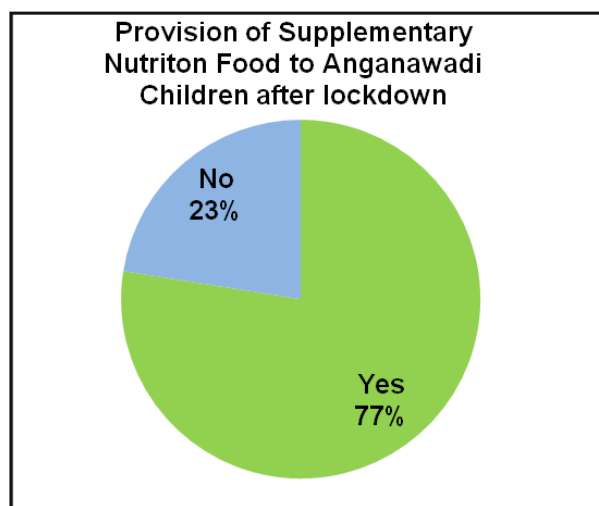
Limitations

- In some of the high COVID risk districts could not conduct the Focus Group Discussion (conducted in 20 districts)
- In some of the districts AWW ASHA and ANM are involved in COVID vaccination, so they were not available to discuss.

Responses

1. Supply of nutritious food (SDG 2, 3/ UNCRC 6, 24)

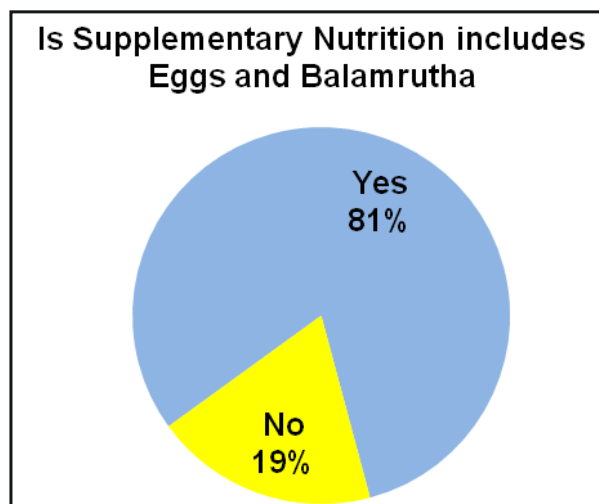
- For the question whether supplementary nutritious food for children was supplied to house during the Covid 19 lockdown, most of the **adolescents** have responded in positive (32 out of 40 groups)
- Similarly, 31 out of 40 **men's** groups also responded positively. 11 have given response in negative
- Among **women's** groups 34 have responded that supplementary nutritious food has been reached to houses. Only 5 groups have said no such service was given.



Majority of the groups from all the 3 categories (97 out of 120) have confirmed that supplementary nutritious food for Anganawadi children has reached the houses.

2. Eggs and Balamritha in the Supplementary Nutritious Food

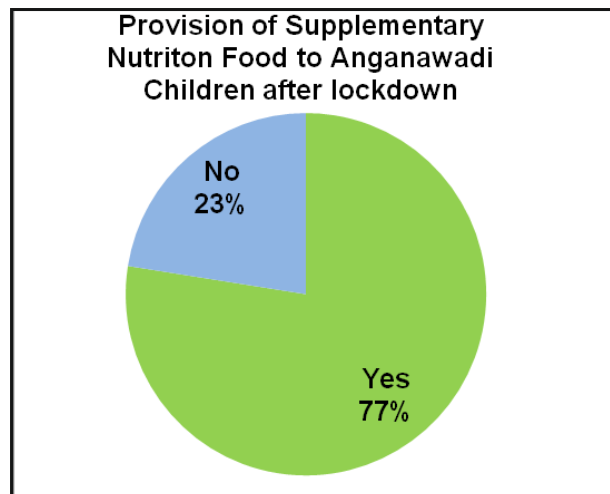
- For a query on whether the supplementary nutritious food included eggs and balamritha all the **adolescent** groups (32 of 40) who had responded positively about the supply have affirmed that it included eggs and balamritha.
- Among the **men's** groups 29 groups have agreed to the statement, 8 groups have said no such supplies reached homes.
- 36 **women's** groups have said that balamritha and eggs were given; only 3 groups have said NO.



In all out of 120 groups 97 have stated that Eggs and Balamritha were part of the Supplementary nutrition food supplied from Anganawadis to the homes.

3. Supply of nutritious food for children at door steps

- For a query whether nutritious food for children is being supplied at the door steps by the Anganawadi system, even after lifting of lockdown, 33 **adolescents'** groups out of 40 have said YES.
- While 29 **men's** groups accept, 10 groups have said no.
- Among the **women's** groups 31 groups have confirmed supply, 7 groups have said No and one group was not sure about the supplies.



It is very significantly observed that 93 groups out of 120 have said that even after lifting of the Lockdown nutritious food for children is reaching the houses.

Note: Although most informants are of the opinion that the children were provided with supplementary nutritional food by the Anganawadis and that it contained eggs and balamritha, it is not certain whether that the food delivered to the home was only served to that child or not. Due to food deprivation or non availability of required rations during the corona, it was found that the supplementary materials were used by all members of the household. It is therefore important to be conscious about the nutritional level of all children of this age group.

The early years of children are important for the all-round development of children. In this age, the child's brain develops rapidly and children need to engage in several supportive activities. But since the Anganwadis have been closed for the past two years, lakhs of children have been deprived of informal activity based education, formally learning the language, cleanliness and all other related activities. This will definitely have a negative impact on children's learning ability at the next levels of learning. An appropriate and learning plan has to be implemented to cover this learning loss.

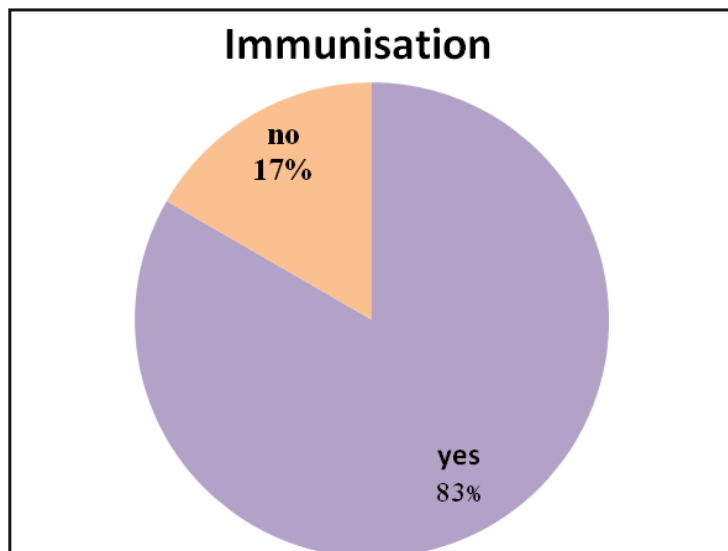
According to doctors and nutrition experts, in 2022 about 9.3 million children are malnourished and 20-25% of them suffer from stunted growth. What is even more shocking is that nearly 58 million children in the age group of 6 month to 23 months have not developed proper eating habits. (Times of India, 5 August 2021).

Goal No. 2 in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) accepted and adopted by the Government of India, draws the attention of all about Nutrition and Hunger. This means that malnutrition among children below 5 years, adolescents, pregnant and lactating months have to be addressed before 2030.

There was hope that we have addressed the two waves of Covid-19 and can face the third wave if any. However, the recent untimely heavy rains have resulted in losing vegetables and pulses. In many places the harvested crop either got swept away or is rotting in the fields. This has made vegetables and food grains more expensive. It is burning a deep hole in the pockets of the common people.

4. Immunisation (SDG 3/ UNCRC 24)

- For a query on whether regular immunization was administered to children during the lockdown 35 **adolescent** groups out of 40 have confirmed that it has been administered. About half of the respondents have said that the Immunisation was administered every month, some groups have said that the immunization reached children only June and July and some groups have said in August it has been administered.



- For the query 32 **men's** groups have confirmed administration of immunisations to children.
- Similarly, 33 **women's** groups have responded positively.

Majority of the responding groups (100 out of 120) have confirmed that immunization has been administered to children during Covid lockdown and most have said that it has reached the children every month.

Note: As per the current study it is found that immunization is given to most of the children. But the National Family Health Survey 2019-20 reports that among children in the 12–23 months only 84% have received all immunizations. And among 9-59 months children 86% children have got Vitamin A in the last six months.

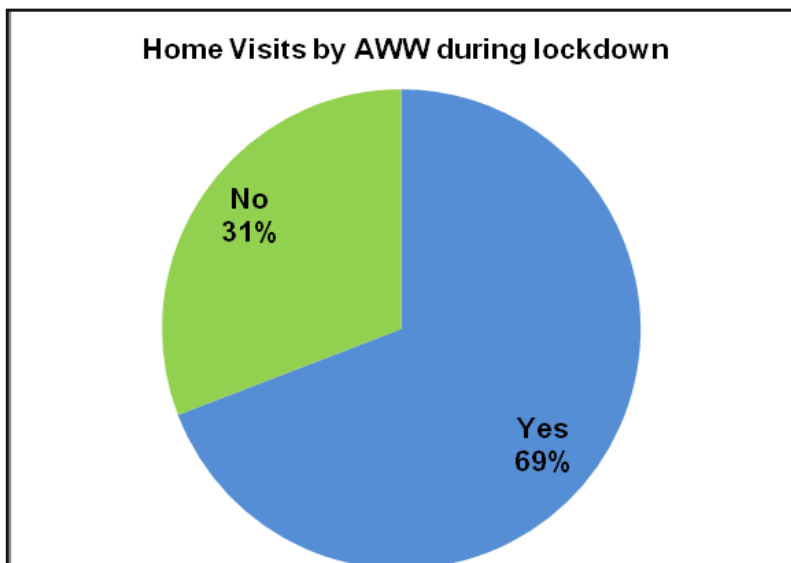
Recently the panel of experts on Covid control measures formed by the Karnataka government has said that many children in the state have not been immunized and most of the children of families who are migrating and re-migrating are not getting fully immunized. There is anxiety that this could lead to another epidemic. The Government has recommended that the process of immunization be strengthened on this basis. (The Hindu, 23, June 2021)

The central government also while responding in a debate in the Lok Sabha has stated that between April-June 2021 admission of immunizations for combating hepatitis B has declined by 19%. In the same period it is said that the immunization has declined to the extent of 31% in the same period. The government has said that it will take all measures to cover up this lacunae.

In addition, the central and state governments are taking decisions to vaccinate children under 18 years of age against Covid-19. The government and the concerned health department must also pay serious attention to vaccinate all children against all diseases.

5. House visit by Anganawadi Workers (SDG 3/ UNCRC 6, 25)

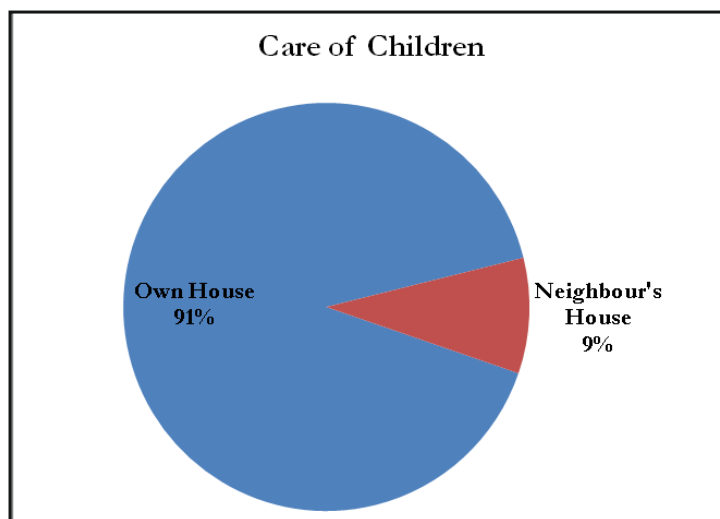
- For the question whether the AWW was visiting houses during the Covid lock down more than half of the **adolescent** groups (23 out of 40) have responded positively.
- For the same query 27 **men's** groups have positive reply and 9 have said no such visits happened and 3 groups were not aware of it.
- 33 **women's** groups also have accepted that the AWW was visiting houses and 5 groups said No and one group was not sure about it.



It was a common understanding that the AWWs were deployed for Covid 19 control and related responsibilities. In contrast to it of all the three category groups 83 have affirmed that AWWs were visiting families for follow up.

6. Child Care (SDG 3, 4/ UNCRC 18, 26)

- As the AWC was closed for a long period, taking care of young children became a burden. For a query on what was the alternative arrangement for child care when the parents were out for their work, 38 **adolescent** groups said the children were left behind in their own homes and 2 groups said that the neighbors took care of the children

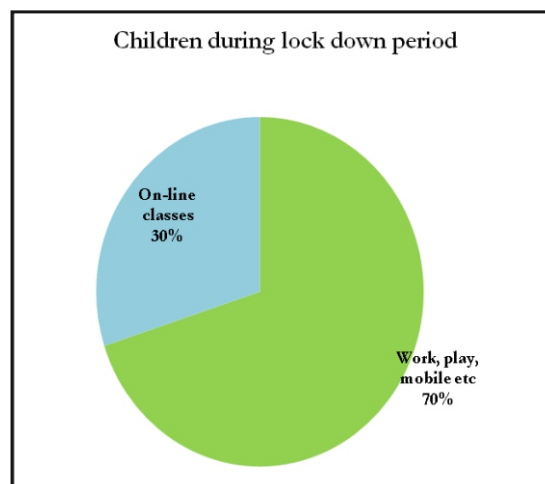


- Only one **men's** group said that the children were left behind with neighbors. The rest of the groups said the children were at their homes alone.
- A large number of **women's** groups (32 of 40) also said that the children were left behind at one's own houses and the rest said that the neighbors took care.

The information confirms that the majority of the groups (109 out of 120) left behind their children in one's own household when they were out for livelihood earnings.

7. What children were engaged during Lockdown? (SDG 11/ UNCRC 28, 31)

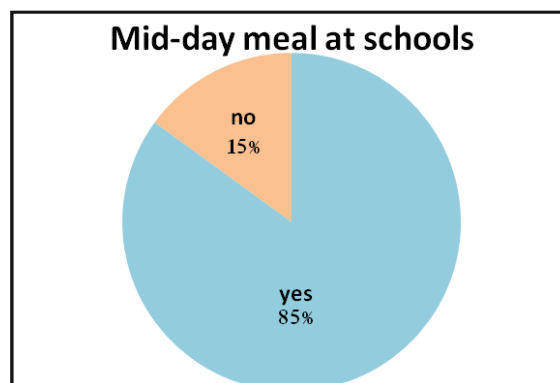
- For the question what were the children were doing during lockdown, 12 **adolescent** groups said that the children were engaged in Online Classes; 11 groups said that the children were at agriculture and related works, 9 said that children wasted their time while watching T V and mobile games and 8 groups said that children were engaged in playing.
- For the same query 13 **men's** groups and 11 **women's** groups have responded that the children were attending online classes. The rest have said children were largely into playing mobile games, watching TV and helping parents in household and agriculture related works.



It is interesting to note that a very small percentage of groups have reported that children were in online classes. The rest have said that the children were engaged in playing, watching TV, online games and helping parents in work.

8. Mid-day meal at schools (SDG 3, 4/ UNCRC 24, 28)

- Most **adolescent** groups 36 of 40 have confirmed that school authorities reached the school mid-day meal ration to houses.
- Similarly, 34 **men's** groups and 32 **women's** groups also gave an affirmative response for the supply of ration to families.



It is significant to note that 102 groups out of 120 have confirmed receiving mid-day meal ration at the houses.

Note: Nearly 56 lakh children in government and aided schools in the state of Karnataka are benefiting from the mid day meal scheme. But by the end of March, the government announced a lockdown to prevent the spread of Covid, and closed down schools also, that prevented children from getting the benefit of mid day meals.

To correct this lacunae, the government attempted to reach out 3 Kgs of rice and 1 Kg of pulses to school children's families. But this was limited to just two months. The ministry of finance claimed that these families could not be provided additional grains since they were already in the public distribution (ration) system. This worsened the state of child nutrition.

According to the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, as on October 14, 2021 in the country 17.76 lakh children are suffering from severe malnutrition and 15.46 lakh children are suffering from moderate malnutrition.

Between November 2020 and October 2021, the percentage of children with severe malnutrition has gone up to 91%. In Karnataka the number of malnourished children in Karnataka has also gone upto 1.3 lakh.

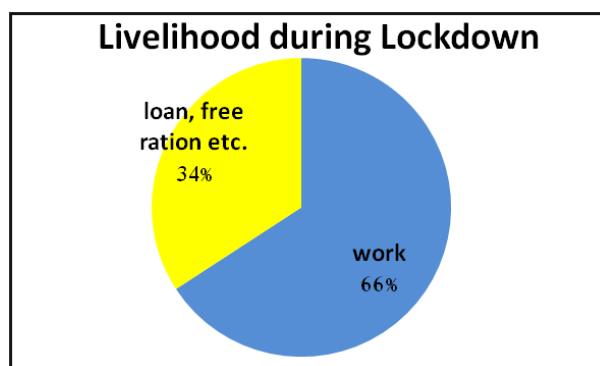
Now schools are in full swing and the mid day meal projects are underway. To alleviate malnutrition in children, recently, the Chief Minister has ordered for distribution of eggs or bananas along with the mid day meal.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/over-33-lakh-children-in-india-malnourished-177-lakh-of-them-severely-malnourished-government-data/article37367403.ece>

Now schools are in full swing and the mid day meal projects are underway. To alleviate malnutrition in children, recently, the Chief Minister has ordered for distribution of eggs or bananas along with the mid day meal.

9. Livelihood during Lockdown. (SDG 11/ UNCRC 6, 26)

- 31 **adolescent** groups from various parts of the state have said that during the lockdown most families were engaged in agriculture related daily wages, animal husbandry, sheep rearing, beedi rolling etc. While 4 groups said that due to non-availability of wages people depended on loans, the other 6 groups said that the families survived with the supplies from NGOs and Govt.



- Similarly, 23 **men's** groups and 26 **women's** groups also have said people who were engaged in agriculture and agriculture related works, took jobs under NAREGA. Rest said that they took loans or depended on the supplies provided by the Government and NGOs.

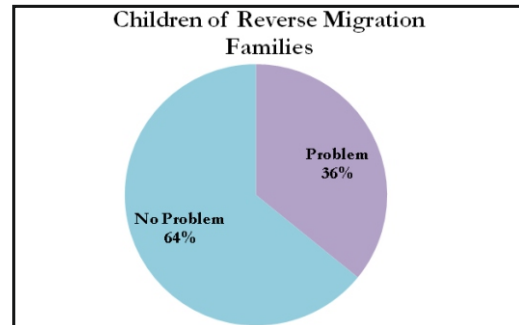
More than half of the groups i.e. 79 out of 140 groups opined that people are engaged in agriculture, dairy, cooli, employment guarantee scheme etc during lockdown for their livelihood. Rest of them took loan or depended on the supplies provided from the Government and NGOs.

Note: The FDGs for this study were conducted entirely in rural areas of the state. Lockdown was not so strictly enforced in rural areas. The state government did not impose restrictions on agriculture and related activities. In addition, under the Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Scheme, 80 lakh people were given 5 kgs of extra quantity of grains each month for three months. Under the Prime Minister's Kisan Scheme, 8.7 crore farmers got Rs. 2,000/- deposited directly into their bank accounts. Rs. 20/- hike was given to those who were engaged under the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and it is reported that all attempts were done to see that everyone registered

getting employment/ daily wage work. In addition, many NGOs provided food material and other assistance. For all these reasons, the lives of the rural people during Covid was not very life threatening.

10. Status of return migrated families and the children (SDG 3, 10/ UNCRC 22, 26)

- While responding to the situation of such families who returned to villages from urban areas, 14 **adolescent** groups felt that they were in great difficulty and as several of them were quarantined, they had no opportunity to earn and fend for themselves and depended on others. Other groups felt that they have not experienced any such migrant families and have no experiences.

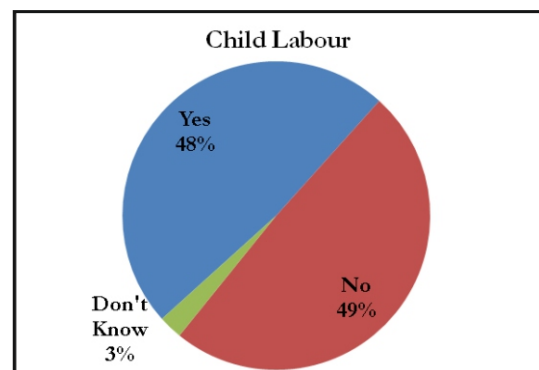


- 13 **men's** groups and 16 **women's** groups mirrored the statements of the adolescent groups and felt that migrated families had a lot of difficulties in getting to normal life. As adults in such families were in a dazed situation, children were forced to find jobs and earn for themselves.

Of the 120 groups 43 groups expressed that migrant families and their children were in very difficult conditions. Rest said that either they have not seen such families returning to villages or felt that such families had no problem in finding themselves settled with the communities. But all were compelled to be under quarantine for the specific period before they were accepted in the communities.

11. Child Labour (SDG 8/ UNCRC 19, 32)

- For the query whether there is a raise in the child labour incidents, 21 **adolescent** groups have said Yes, while 2 groups said that children helped their parents and 17 groups said that there are no such child labour incidents in their vicinity.
- For the same query 18 **men's** groups have confirmed existence of child labour, but 19 groups have rejected the proposition. One group said that children engaging in agriculture activities with the parents cannot be seen as child labour.
- Whereas 19 **women's** groups said yes, same number of groups have said No. Two groups have said that, they are not aware of it.



While most of the adolescent groups have confirmed existence of child labour, 19 groups each from Men and Women's groups also have rejected the proposition.

It seems that the pandemic has literally pushed back most of the efforts made by education dept., labour, women and child development, social welfare dept, NGOs, etc., in ending child labour. Although the adults and the local service providers did not accept the existence of child labour or increasing in the number of child labour, adolescent groups without any hesitation said that children are engaged in labour. This is both with their family members and also for wage labour.

Children were largely taken to agriculture and related labour for the purposes of extra hand in the work and also as a protection issue. Girls said that their family members considered taking them along to the work place is to see that they are not troubled by men in the village. Boys felt that it was a way of taking care of them, facilitating them to learn the skills and also to get some money in hand during the pandemic.

Adolescents said that no one complained to the authorities about the child labour incidents and so no such rescue or restrictions on the child labour. They felt that if schools were open and the teachers are around child labour could be prevented.

As per Census 2011, over 10 million children in the age group of 5-14 years are working as full-time and part-time workers in India. But many families are in financial distress due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and children of those families are more likely to become child laborers. In addition, the closure of 1.5 million schools in the country, approximately 247 million children in primary and secondary schools are facing the risk of becoming child labor.

According to a report released by UNICEF on June 10, 2021, the number of child laborers in the world is 160 million. The number of child labor has increased by 8.4 million in the last four years. The report warned governments of the possibility of 9 million children becoming child labor by the end of 2022 due to the Covid epidemic. The report also states that this could rise to 46 million if the children are not provided with adequate social protection measures.

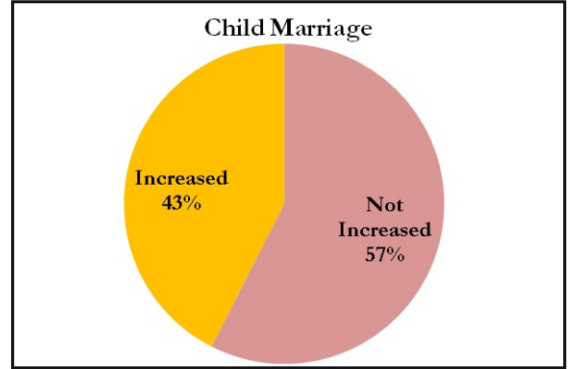
The highlights of this report are:

- Out of total child labour force 70% of children are engaged in agriculture, about 20% are in the service sector and the rest 10% children work in various businesses.*
- Boys are more likely to be child labor*
- The rate of child labor in rural areas (14 %) is almost three times higher than in urban areas (5%).*

IN this context it is very essential that every force and departments as well as the civil society have to work together to achieve the SDG Indicator 8.7, which intends to abolish child labor.

12. Child Marriages (SDG 5/ UNCRC 19, 34, 40)

- For a query about the raise in child marriage incidents, 13 **adolescent** groups have said yes, while 23 groups said no. The other 3 groups have no idea about the incidents.
- In contradiction to the opinion of the adolescents 15 **men's** groups and 17 **women's** groups said that incidents of child marriage have gone up. 23 groups each from Men and Women's groups have said no such child marriages are reported. Rest of the groups has no opinion.



The information prima facie indicates, much against to the popular belief. 69 groups out of 120 have confirmed that child marriage incidents are not so much.

According to a March 2021 UNICEF report, the Covid-19 pandemic had a profound effect on the daily life of females. Their physical, psychological, educational and financial circumstances of their families are responsible for this. These changes can lead to an increase in child marriage, and over the next ten years, more than 10 million girls are at risk of child marriages. (Already over 100 million girls are married off as child brides). This is supplemented by the closure of schools for a long time.

However, there is currently no complete picture of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has yet to be captured. The government and the community must take social protection measures for all girls. The SDGs Indicator 5.3 is set to end child marriage by 2030 by providing education, health and social care to all girls.

There are reported cases of child marriages in the state during Corona. In the Karnataka Legislative Council while responding to a question about child marriage in Karnataka (Question No. 574) dated 5-2-2021, the government has replied that there was an increase in cases of child marriage in the state during Corona. According to government official data, there were 102 child marriages in 2017-18, 119 in 2018-19 and 156 in 2019-20.

Some media reports on child marriage in Karnataka:

ಲಾಕ್ಡೌನ್ ನಡುವೆಯೇ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಹಲವು ಕಡೆ ಭರಪೂರ ಬಾಲ್ಯವಿವಾಹ! - ವಿಜಯಕರ್ನಾಟಕ

ಬಾಲ್ಯ ವಿವಾಹ ಕಡೆಗೆ ಹೊಸ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆಯಾಗುವುದೇ - ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ

ಬಾಲ್ಯಕ್ಕೆ ಮದುವೆ ಸಂಕೋಲೆ - ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ

ಹಾಸನ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚುತ್ತಿವೆ ಬಾಲ್ಯವಿವಾಹ: ಮೂರು ವರ್ಷದಲ್ಲಿ 200 ಅಪ್ರಾಪ್ತರ ಮದುವೆ - ಕನ್ನಡ ನ್ಯೂಸ್

ಮನೆಯಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಮದುವೆ ಅವಕಾಶ-ಲಾಕ್ಡೌನ್ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿದ ಬಾಲ್ಯ ವಿವಾಹ-ಉದಯವಾಣಿ

Kalaburgi-more Childmarriages during lockdown-NewIndianexpress

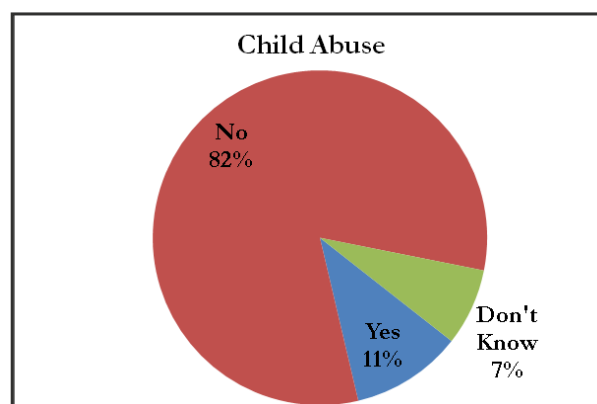
Schools closed, children forced into child marriage labour begging-News Career

Activists Karnataka fear child marriage may go unnoticed during lockdown - The Hindu

Child marriage to chores, longschool closure hazardous for kids - The Federal

13. Child Abuse incidences (SDG 8, 16/ UNCRC 19, 32, 36)

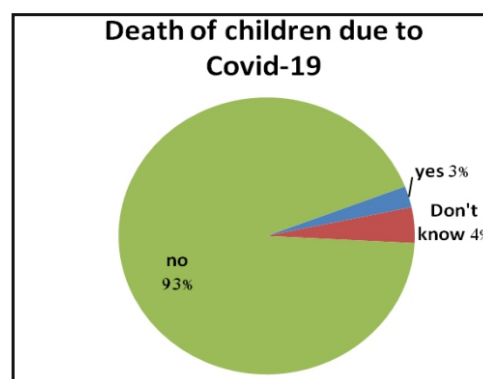
- In the FGDs 29 **adolescent** groups affirm that there is no increase or prominent incidents of child abuse in the last one year, that too during the Covid pandemic period. 5 groups have no opinion and only 5 groups have confirmed abuse incidents.
- Similarly, large number of **men's** groups (34) and **women's** groups (31) have said that there are no such incidents of child abuse.
- Two **men's** groups and 6 **women's** groups have confirmed abuse incidents. The rest of the men's (3) and women's groups (2) have no opinion.



It is very significant to note that large number of groups (94 of 120) have said that children have not faced physical, sexual or such abusive situations in the pandemic period.

14. Death of children due to Covid-19 (SDG 3/ UNCRC 6, 24)

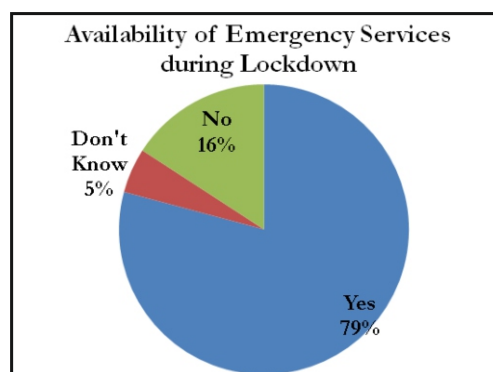
- It is very significant to note that only one **adolescent** group has confirmed the death of child/children due to Covid-19. While 35 groups responded in negative 3 groups have no information about it
- Similarly, 37 **men's** groups and 34 **women's** groups also responded negatively. Only one group from both Men's and Women's have confirmed the death of a child due to Covid-19.



The information shared by most of the groups, i.e., 106 confirms that there aren't a significant number of cases of children dying out of Covid-19 incidents.

15. Availability of emergency services during Covid-19 lockdown (SDG 2, 3/ UNCRC 26)

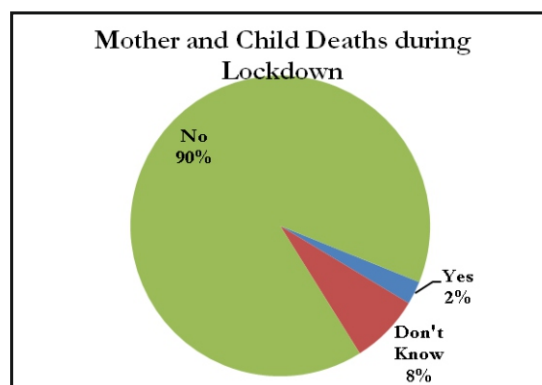
- A majority of 32 **adolescent** groups have confirmed that emergency services were available to them. Whereas 5 felt negative and one group had no opinion.
- While 31 **men's** groups and 32 **women's** groups have positive opinions, 5 groups each among men and women have said emergency services were not available. While the rest of the groups have no opinion on the issue.



In total a significant number of groups (95) have experienced positive emergency services. This probably is a very good opinion about the services provided by the Govt.

16. Maternity Services during Lock down (SDG 3, 5/ UNCRC 6, 24)

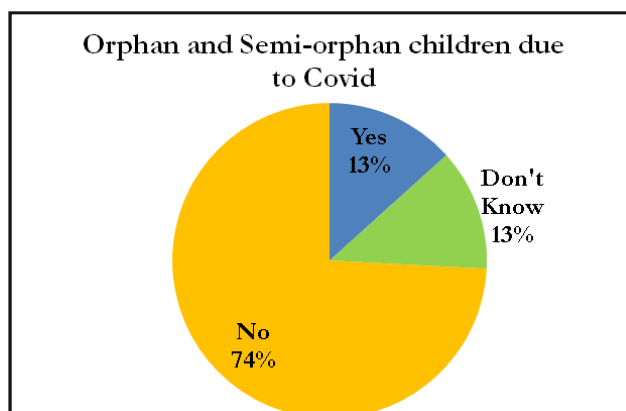
- Very significantly two **adolescent** groups have reported that there were incidents of death of children during pregnancy/delivery. 35 groups have said that no untoward incidents of death of children. While 5 groups have information.
- Similarly, 37 groups each from **men** and **women's** groups have no child death incidents to report, one men's group has talked about 12 incidents of children's death. This requires further examination.



Among all the 120 groups 9 groups have no opinion, but the majority have reported no incidents. Very significantly only the group has reported 12 such cases and this requires further study and calls for emergency response to the area.

17. Orphans and Semi orphans due to Covid-19 (SDG 3, 11/ UNCRC 6, 20)

- 4 **adolescent** groups have reported about 21 incidents of orphans/semi orphans due to covid-19. Whereas 28 groups have negative opinions and 8 groups have nothing to opine.
- For the same query 30 **men's** groups have negative responses and 4 have no opinion. Whereas 6 groups have identified 39 COVID orphans and semi orphans.
- Among **women's** groups 31 groups have given negative responses and 3 groups have no opinion. Whereas 6 women's groups have listed 36 cases of Covid-19 orphans and Semi orphans.



Significantly 99 groups out of 120 have said that there are no incidents, but the 16 groups have shown the existence of Covid orphans, which requires further follow up.

Over 4.5 lakh people have died due to Covid-19 pandemic in the country. According to the Union Ministry of Health, about one percent of the victims have died. 40 percent of the deaths are those in the 20-50 age group. They are usually more likely to have children under the age of 18. That means about 1.5 lakh children in the country are orphans. Because the number of working men is higher among those who have died, the children of those families are more likely to be victims of child laborers, child marriages, or such other exploitation. Education, health and protection of these children should be taken appropriately on a priority basis.

Karnataka Government's actions: Most importantly, the Department of Women and Child Development announced that it would arrange home-based food grains for its beneficiary children through anganwadis. The Directorate of Child Protection (ICPS) went on to deliver essential food grains and masks and sanitizers to children in various child care homes (government and government run homes). In addition, the CCIs were instructed to follow strictly the Covid-19 protocols. The Department of Education instructed its local administration to plan to deliver ration (instead of mid day meals) and facilities for continued learning to its students..

Voluntary organizations, donor organizations, entrepreneurs and the public have come forward to provide direct assistance to families and children in various forms throughout the entire state. KCRO with the help of UNICEF and other entrepreneurs with the Govt of Karnataka Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department has teamed up to provide immediate relief and ready to eat/drink material to more than 10,000 families and children who were rushing out of Bengaluru city.

Karnataka Government has come forward to make special financial assistance to children who are orphaned and semi-orphaned due to Covid-19 and is taking additional efforts to provide shelter to these children with the kinds of the children, adoption or non-institutional long-term assistance schemes, etc.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Although most groups have opined that during the lockdown supply of nutritious food for children from AWC to the families was good, we need to look at the gaps, where some groups reporting about non availability of the food. This calls for attention of the authorities to bridge the gap and reach out to all children. We also recommend for quick and systematic examination of all children in specific age group about their nutrition level and take necessary action.
- Measures have to be taken immediately in all the AWCs and schools with coordinated effort with the health dept to measure the height, weight and general health of children and take up action to provide nutritious food to the needy.
- A significant proportion of children, up to 70% are addicted to mobile (gaming, films, songs, chatting, etc.) and requires counselling at the earliest to wean them out of this.
- The local Government with the help of other key players have to collect data about the families who have returned to their natives and also find out the status of the children in terms of health, protection, education, etc. and take affirmative action to protect the interests and rights of the children.

- Although the FGD data says that there were no child labour incidents, it is found that large number of children were engaged in agriculture related works, petty shops and home bound industries along with their family members. Such children were missing online classes and might have lost connect with the regular school education, reading, writing and math. Once the schools begun it is necessary to make house visits to bring the children back to schools.
- It is noticeable that 43% of the respondents have said that child marriages are on raise. Although it is less compared to the larger data, we need to pay attention to the protection of girl children and provide opportunities for education and also think of providing legal support to them. It requires wide spread publicity and education about the existence of ChildLine 1098 and such support systems.
- It is reported 94 children are COVID orphans and semi orphans. We need to follow up with the cases to provide necessary support announced by the Government and provide such assistance till they cross 18 years of age.

Information of Participants:

Focus groups discussion was conducted in 20 districts (40 FGDs) in which 513 adolescents with the age of 12-18 years; 501 men in the age group of 19-56 and 510 women in the age group of 20-49 were participated. Same questions were asked for all the three groups.

Area of the study and the partners involved:

District	Village 1	Village 2	Partner Organisation
Belagavi	Mugalkoda	Shivapura	Amma Foundation
Bagalkote	Melligeri	Soragoan	Anthyoda
Bagalkote	Honnakatta	Adagalla	REACH
Gadag	Chabbi	Adagunji	ASARE
Vijayapura	Nagatana	Haranala	UJWALA
Kalaburugi	Bhuyar	Chandankera	Margadarshi
Koppala	Yathnatti	Balageri	Sri Gudadappa
Bellary-1	Itagi	Myduru	Sneha
Bellary-2	Yarragili	Badanahatti	CRT
Mysore	Ankanahalli	Kaggare	BIRDS
Mandya	Chickmulagudu	Mangala	BIRDS
Chamarajanagar	Siddayyanapura	Agara	BIRDS
Hassan	Dasihalli	Niduvane	Arasi Samskruthika Vedike
Dakshina Kannada	Kaniyuru	Konanje	CRT
Bengaluru Urban	Lingarajapuram A Block	Lingarajapuram B Block	Sakhi Samrudhi Trust
Bengaluru Rural	Ittasandra	Nandagudi	Spoorthi Samsthe
Ramnagara	Kailancha	Mattikere	BIRDS
Chickballapura-1	Varadanayakanahalli	Channaobayyagaripalli	CRT
Chickballapura-2	Thimmampalli	Sadali	CRT
Shimoga	Yedajigalemane	Malpe	The Anna Trust

Pictures of information collection







Karnataka Child Rights Observatory (KCRO) is an omnibus with a number of sub-projects that together coverage to provide the data, analysis, publicity and pressure (as needed) for both Government and Civil Society to act in the best interest of the child.

Visit www.kcro.in



UNICEF: An international UN organization striving for the survival, development, protection, primary and the skill education, gender equality, prevention of abuse and violence against children and upholding the participation rights of all children 191 countries.

Visit www.unicef.org

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