

POVERTY TO BLAME?

Child marriages spike with onset of *Thai*, 9-year-old among brides rescued so far

Most child brides have health issues: Study

Tiruchy : About 89 per cent of the girls who were married at the age of 13-17 years are affected by health issues and sexual violence, showed a pilot study conducted by the Campaign for Ending Girl Child Marriages In Tamil Nadu. As many as 297 victims from five districts, namely Tiruchy, Dindigul, Karur, Namakkal, Salem were contacted for the study. "The girls who get married at an early age are facing sexual abuse and some even contract HIV," said the NGO's convener, M S A Satish Babu.

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AS the marriage season has kicked in with the onset of the Tamil month of *Thai*, there has been a spurt in child marriages in the district. Eight such marriages have been stopped by authorities so far in January, the latest one involving a 9-year-old girl.

Based on a tip-off received by Childline, police and rural welfare officials intervened and stopped the Class IV girl's marriage to 39-year-old man at Minnathampatti near Thottiyam in Musiri on Thursday. "The Class IV girl was being forced to marry a relative of her father's age. Child marriage is prevalent in her Thottiyayanayakar community," said S Thiyagarajan, city coordinator of the Childline nodal agency in Bishop Heber College.

While 12 child marriages were stopped in January last year, this year's figure could go up before the *Thai* month is over. Poverty-ridden parents are trying to sell their kids in exchange for money. These girls are sexually exploited at an early age," said J Godwin Prem Singh, director of the Childline nodal agency.

District Social Welfare Officer S Usha said child marriages

are prevalent mostly in the Musiri, Mannachanallur, Marungapuri, Thuvankurichi and Thuraiyur regions of the district. "What would a Class IV student know about marriage? What could be her maturity level? It is her parents who need counselling," she said referring to the Thottiyayanayakar girl. About 600 children are training at centres working under the Child Labour Elimination and Effective Rehabilitation Society (CHEERS) set up by the Ministry of Labour and Employment in Tiruchy.

Crimes against children recorded between April - September 2017

Child marriage	39
Child labour	15
Child begging	5
Physical abuse	7
Child sexual abuse	9
Total	75

Source: Childline



AMIT BANDRE

Number of POCSO cases registered in 2017 **27**

Number of sexual harassment cases registered in 2017 **57**

Number of missing children (60 are found) **62**

12 Number of child marriages stopped in January 2017

8 Number of child marriages stopped so far in Jan 2018

48 Number of child marriages stopped in 2016

69 Number of child marriages stopped in 2017

