



Child-friendly Villages in Bihar

A report for the Mukul Madhav Foundation
September 2024 to December 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mukul Madhav Foundation has been a long-standing donor partner of the British Asian Trust's child protection programmes in India since 2021. With support from the Foundation, we have previously implemented several programmes across Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that aimed to protect children from harm and enable children and their families to recover from the adverse socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

In 2024, the Trust and the Foundation partnered once again on the '**Child-friendly Villages in Bihar**' project. This initiative seeks to create child-friendly villages across six blocks in four districts of Bihar, building family and community resilience, ensuring children remain in school, and strengthening child protection systems. Our programme draws together children, families, communities, and government systems, to foster fostering resilient communities that actively work to safeguard children from exploitation while ensuring their holistic well-being and access to growth opportunities.

Through our partnership, we have fostered community leadership to address critical child well-being issues, established protective safety nets, and enhanced economic resilience for vulnerable families by linking them to relevant social security schemes. Additionally, we have deepened relationships with key government stakeholders to amplify the impact of grassroots initiatives and drive systemic change at the district level. By addressing the underlying vulnerabilities that often force families to pull their children out of schools or, in extreme cases, push them into child labour or early marriage, we have secured better futures for children across Bihar.

This report provides an overview of the progress made under the Mukul Madhav Foundation-supported initiative, covering project activities carried out between September 2024 and December 2025.

Our heartfelt thanks to **Mukul Madhav Foundation** for its catalytic support in transforming the lives of children and communities in Bihar.

I. About the Child-friendly Villages in Bihar Project

The **Child Opportunity Fund**, launched in 2022, is the British Asian Trust's our ambitious 10-year initiative to provide the best possible opportunities for children in India to grow and thrive. Our vision is that children in India are safe from violence, abuse and exploitation, and we aim to do enable by promoting child-centric, holistic and evidence-backed preventive models and strategies, to create sustainable shifts for child protection in the country. Our programmes target the epicentres of child vulnerability across four states - Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal - all states with a large population of vulnerable children, high rates of child rights violations, deep-rooted socio-economic challenges, high school dropout rates especially among girls, as well as weak community-based protection systems.

Bihar, India's third-most populous state, faces deep-rooted child protection challenges, including high rates of child labour, trafficking, early marriage, and school dropouts. Socioeconomic disparities, lack of education infrastructure, and limited access to government welfare schemes exacerbate these issues.

The British Asian Trust (BAT), with support from the Mukul Madhav Foundation, is implementing the Child-friendly Villages in Bihar project, a holistic prevention model that focuses on strengthening child protection systems, empowering families and communities. The Child-friendly Villages in Bihar project sits within the broader framework of BAT's Child Opportunity Fund initiative, enabling us to leverage best practices and learnings from the larger programme.

BAT is working with a consortium of grassroots partners, including Centre Direct, Aditi, Bhusra Mahila Vikas Samiti (BMVS) and Tatvasi Samaj Nyas to implement the project in four districts—Gaya, Sitamarhi, Darbhanga and Katihar respectively, and Gaya—targeting a total of at least 70 villages to establish child-friendly communities, covering 1.14 lakh individuals.

We have also engaged three agencies to provide technical support to our partners, enabling them to design appropriate, scalable models on education, social security and livelihoods, that are rooted in the regional context. This includes Pratham for education programmes, Jan Sahas to ensure access to social security schemes and ensure effective delivery, and Samagra Shikshan Evam Vikas Sansthan to support on strengthening livelihoods.



Our focus on the most vulnerable children ensures catalytic and cumulative impact, lifting whole communities out of the cycle of multigenerational poverty, vulnerability, and social marginalisation.

II. Programme Highlights

a) Child Protection

A total of 2,870 cases of child rights violations have been reported by community members to child protection bodies, including the police. 974 cases were reported in the project period alone, including:

- 758 cases of child labour
- 152 cases of child marriage
- 1 case of child sexual abuse
- 96 cases of child trafficking

Children who are rescued trafficking and labour as well as those who are identified at-risk are enrolled into schools, to ensure they have access to formal education. For children who have experienced prolonged gaps in learning, the Bridge Education Centres provide additional support, helping them regain lost ground and reintegrate smoothly into the school system. Additionally, their families are linked to social security schemes to reduce the economic pressures that can lead to them having to pull their children out of school. Simultaneously, legal action is also pursued against traffickers and employers where possible, strengthening accountability and reinforcing the commitment to eradicating child exploitation in affected communities

Most identified cases of child marriage are successfully prevented through timely intervention by field staff and the Child Protection Committees (CPCs). These teams remain vigilant, working closely with communities and children's groups to identify risks early and intervene effectively. The proactive approach ensures that children, especially girls, remain protected from forced marriages, reinforcing broader efforts to shift harmful social norms.



Youth awareness programme

b) Strengthening Community & Governance Institutions

Significant strides have been made in strengthening child protection mechanisms at the village level. All villages in the project region have operational Child Protection Committees (CPCs), surpassing our original target of 90% which was set for our Bihar state programmes. This includes 249 CPCs that have been made operational at the ward and panchayat level, including 7 during the project period.



Ward-level Child Protection Committees meetings in progress in Katihar

155 CPCs are functional, actively preventing and responding to cases of child exploitation. Their functionality is assessed based on parameters such as securing allocations for child protection in the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) budget, maintenance of migrant registers, whether children's group and parent's collectives are meeting regularly, etc. Some highlights include:

- All 249 CPCs maintain a migrants register at the village/panchayat level
- 104 CPCs have received money under GPDP for child protection issues
- 221 CPCs have costed and budgeted child protection in the GPDP, ensuring sustained budgetary allocations for children's welfare
- 159 CPCs have had children bring their issues to the CPCs to be addressed
- All 70 village have active parent's collectives and children's collectives that meet regularly to discuss child protection issues. The children's and youth collectives have so far engaged nearly 2,800 children

Case Study: Rescuing a young girl at risk of trafficking

Alia is a 14-year-old from Katihar, who comes from an economically backward family. She was growing up with limited supervision as her parents worked as farmers, and her older siblings were either married or working in distant cities. Through social media, she developed a connection with a boy outside her community. In November, she ran away from home, reportedly lured away under the false promises of marriage.

Alerted by the local mukhiya, the Child Protection Committee (CPC) and our partner, TSV, intervened immediately. The Azamnagar Police Station was informed, and an FIR was registered the very next day. The police used mobile surveillance to trace her whereabouts and initiate recovery efforts. While Alia has returned home safe and the case is under investigation, she and her family continue to face social stigma. Community counsellors are also providing psychosocial support, and the District Legal Services Authority is ensuring her legal protection.

Even as Alia's case is a testimony to how effective Child Protection Committees can be in mitigating harm to children, it also highlights the need for digital safety education, particularly for adolescent girls in rural areas, to prevent similar vulnerabilities in the future.

Additionally, during UNCRC Week, held between 14 to 20 November 2024, partner organised Bal Sabha events across 36 Panchayats. Children actively participated, presenting key demands for inclusion in the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). Their suggestions aimed to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment, reflecting their priorities in local governance. Some key demands included construction of boundary walls around schools, separate toilets for boys and girls to ensure hygiene and privacy, development of playgrounds and provision of sports equipment, as well as establishment of libraries to promote reading habits.



Bal Sabha meeting at Darbhanga

c) Education

Ensuring access to quality education remains a cornerstone of the initiative. The School Management Committees play a crucial role in ensuring the effective functioning of schools, monitoring aspects such as child dropout rates, the quality of the Mid-Day Meal programme, and the development and execution of school improvement plans, which directly contribute to creating supportive learning environments.

- 6,219 children have been re-enrolled (or enrolled for the first time) in schools
- 1,581 children have been provided with remedial education at the Bridge Education Centre.
- 125 schools, which accounts for 99.2% of schools, have operational School Management Committees (SMCs), exceeding the 50% benchmark. Of this, 7 have been made operational in the reporting period, and 58 have been strengthened. This is assessed on the basis of at least 70% of SMC members knowing their roles and responsibilities.

- All 125 SMCs are monitoring the Mid-Day Meal programme, and in 107 schools, they also monitor children's attendance and drop-outs.
- In 44 schools, SMCs have improved safety measures in schools, including conducting safety audits, teacher training, instituting counselling services, etc.

Other highlights under the education work also include:

- Our partner, TSN, organised a bicycle distribution programme for 20 re-enrolled girls in Azamnagar, Katihar, helping them overcome challenges in reaching school.
- TSN also identified 24 out-of-school girls at risk of child marriage, held awareness meetings with parents, and is working to re-enrol them, offering tuition support to prevent early marriages and promote education.
- Our partner, Adithi, successfully admitted 20 girls from vulnerable backgrounds to the Kasturba Gandhi Residential School in Sitamarhi, ensuring they have access to quality education in a safe environment.

Case Study: Reintegrating a child at-risk of marriage back into school

Kumari, 17, had dropped out of school two years ago. Without educational prospects, her family considered marriage as a solution to their economic hardships. During a Children's Committee meeting in late-August, Kumari voiced her desire to return to school but lacked clarity on the process.

A collaborative response was initiated by the Ward Child Protection Committee and Panchayat Child Protection Committee over the next few months. Asraf, a local PCPC leader, engaged the Dighopatti School Principal, securing admission for Kumar in the school, also ensuring that she could start attending classes before official re-enrolment in March 2025. Simultaneously, community mediators counselled her parents, emphasising the legal prohibition of child marriage and the long-term benefits of education.

Pooja successfully resumed her education, becoming an advocate for girls' rights in her community. Her case highlights the critical role of community-based networks in enforcing child protection laws. Additionally, the incident led to stricter marriage registration monitoring in the panchayat, ensuring marriages are reported a week in advance for verification.

d) Social Protection & Economic Resilience

Social Protection: Economic security is a critical determinant in reducing child vulnerability. We have prioritised linking vulnerable families to social security schemes as well as alternate livelihood opportunities. A total of 29,332 families in Bihar have been linked to social security schemes. This includes 6,125 households linked during the project period, of whom 1,620 were not linked to any schemes previously.

Helping an orphaned child break the cycle of poverty

At just 14 years old, Ruksana from Sitamarhi had already faced immense hardship. Orphaned after losing her father to tuberculosis and her mother to illness, she became the primary caregiver for her two younger siblings, living in a fragile household with no toilet, ration access, or formal support. With no financial stability, her aunt pressured her into marriage, promising financial assistance for her siblings in return.

During a Ward Child Protection Committee (WCPC) meeting, her case was flagged as high-risk, prompting immediate intervention. A community mobilisation team acted swiftly to prevent the marriage, legally warning the aunt about its consequences. They secured financial assistance through the Parvarish Yojana, enrolling Ruksana and her siblings in government welfare schemes. Ration support was reactivated to ensure immediate food security, and efforts to re-enrol her in school were initiated, with official requests submitted to the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and the District Magistrate (DM).

Ruksana is now on track to resume her education. Her story highlights how child marriage is often driven by systemic poverty rather than cultural norms, underscoring the critical need for economic stability and accessible education in safeguarding children's futures. Her case also led to the establishment of a Legal Services Unit for Children at the DLSA, strengthening institutional mechanisms to protect other vulnerable children.

Economic Resilience: Strengthening livelihoods is key to enabling communities to become self-reliant and build economic resilient, thereby reducing child vulnerability.



Unlocking additional income for communities thorough livestock rearing and mushroom farming

- With SSEVS' technical support, our partners have trained 160 farmers in in sustainable practices like intercropping, mixed cropping and land leasing to boost yields and income.
- SSEVS' Pashu Sakhi model improved livestock health by deworming 1,100 goats, benefiting 374 families.
- Training in organic farming and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) reduced costs and improved crop quality, strengthening community resilience, food security, and nutrition.

- During the fruiting period, local producers in Sitamarhi and Gaya districts (within the Mahadalit communities) began selling their produce in local markets, marking a significant milestone in their journey towards economic resilience.

e) System Strengthening & Convergence

- In October 2024, the Empowered Child Trafficking Survivors Summit was held in Patna, following which the District Legal Services Authority invited survivors aged 18 and above to become Paralegal Volunteers, empowering them to lead community efforts in raising awareness and combating child labour and trafficking.



Survivors Summit in Patna

- In November 2024, the Bihar State Legal Services Authority hosted a workshop with key stakeholders, including government departments, District Legal Services Authorities, in which our partners TSN and Centre participated. The event focused on integrating at-risk children and girls into the mainstream and ensuring sustained support for rescued children.
- During UNCRC Week, held between 14 to 20 November 2024, all partners organised diverse activities such as street theatre, puppet shows, processions, exposure visits to key institutions, and children's groups meetings to raise awareness on child rights and protection.
- The British Asian Trust is also engaging with the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) to discuss a collaboration on child protection and child-friendly village initiatives across 150 clusters (1,250 Panchayats) in India through NIRD's fellows. The partnership will focus on training, research, and documentation, including sharing best practices, launching the Child-Friendly Village Index, and capacity building. A draft MoU has been prepared, and is expected to be signed soon.

III. Monthly Progress on Indicators

Programme Areas	Impact Indicators	Targets set for Bihar Programme	Overall Achieved	Monthly Progress				
			Cumulative	September	October	November	December	Total
Child Protection Committees	Wards and panchayats where Child Protection Committee (CPCs) are operational	90% (223 of 249)	100%	4	5	0	0	9
	Wards and panchayats where Child Protection Committee (CPCs) are functional	26.5% (66 of 249)	70.3% (155)	38	111	0	2	151
Child Protection Cases <i>Total vulnerable children at the time of baseline - 71,163</i>	No of reported cases to child protection bodies including Police, by the community for Child Labour, disaggregated by case type - child labour, child marriage, child sexual abuse, child trafficking							
	Child labour	775	2870	493	122	32	78	725
	Child marriage	137	347	130	3	2	17	152
	Child sexual abuse	N/A	7	0	0	1	0	1
	Child trafficking	60	158	0	32	39	25	96

Programme Areas	Impact Indicators	Targets set for Bihar Programme	Overall Achieved	Monthly Progress				
			Cumulative	September	October	November	December	Total
Education	Children up to 14 years of age to be brought back to school	6235	6224	1178	20	41	0	1239
	Schools with operational School Management Committees (SMCs)	50% (63 of 126)	99.2% (125)	1	6	0	0	7
	Schools where SMCs are strengthened	25% (32 of 126)	81.0% (102)	18	24	9	7	58
	Schools where SMCs and/or schools have taken initiative to improve 'safety measures' in schools (e.g., safety audits, teacher training, instituting counselling services)	10% (13 of 126)	41.3% (52)	0	4	40	0	44
Social Security <i>Average no of schemes per household during baseline - 1.54</i>	Households with linkages to social security	18550 (45% increase in average)	29332	2586	1278	1537	724	6125
	Households with 0 schemes to be linked to at least 1 scheme	1799 (30% of households)	5012	684	338	406	192	1620
Survivor Reintegration	Survivors trained for leadership/life-skills	55%	30.6% (651)	30	65	555	0	650
	Survivors re-integrated, with access to age-appropriate skilling, livelihood opportunities, and/or any other similar interventions	40%	33.6% (628)	8	75	1	0	84

IV. Risks, Challenges and Mitigation

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low

Challenge	Priority	Mitigation plan	Status
In child sexual abuse cases, NGOs acting as informants—when families are unwilling to report—can compromise confidentiality and legal processes, shifting focus from victim support to disputes, delaying resolutions, and jeopardising the child's privacy and welfare.	High	Engaging with stakeholders, including the CWC, police, and legal practitioners, to collaboratively address these challenges.	Ongoing
The Education Department's advisory against unauthorised activities in schools, particularly involving external organizations, led to resistance from some Headmasters, hindering the execution of SMC meetings and other planned activities.	Low	With Block Education Officer (BEO) authorisation, our partners clarified the scope of activities, resolving the issue, and are now allowed to proceed with project work in schools.	Resolved
The absence of high schools in project intervention villages is a significant challenge, leading to girls dropping out after Class 8. Proximity to schools is a key reason for this dropout, as many girls struggle to travel long distances.	High	Bicycles were purchased through community support and distributed among needy girls to enable them to continue their education.	Resolved
Integrating child protection into GPDP was challenging due to low WCPC awareness, lack of structured inclusion, and poor coordination between local governance bodies and child protection stakeholders.	Medium	A comprehensive approach was implemented, including sensitisation training to raise awareness among local governance bodies about the importance of integrating child protection into the GPDP. Additionally, the capacity of WCPCs was strengthened, and efforts were made to engage stakeholders, build consensus, and secure commitments, ensuring child protection became a central focus in local governance and decision-making.	

V. Way Forward

Building on progress until now, we are looking to strengthen institutional mechanisms, expand child protection frameworks, and scale livelihood initiatives to ensure long-term impact, in the remaining project period.

- **Enhancing school governance:** Consultations with District and Block Education Departments will assess the functionality of School Management Committees (SMCs) and strengthen their role in ensuring education quality and accountability.
- **System strengthening:** We have planned for a training on child protection for law enforcement in Magadh Division, and for a Divisional Child Protection Convergence Meeting at Tirhut to bring together key stakeholders to align strategies, define responsibilities, and operationalise District Child Protection Plans.
- **Advocacy for child protection budgets:** Efforts will continue to mobilise additional Panchayats to integrate dedicated child protection budgets within their Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), promoting community ownership and accountability.
- **Scaling Sustainable Livelihoods:**
 - Advanced Pashu Sakhi training will enhance livestock rearing practices, strengthening economic resilience for more families.
 - The "Mushroom Sakhi" pilot project will be expanded, with a focus on equipping more women entrepreneurs with the skills and resources needed to manage the entire production-to-retail cycle, including market linkage and financial management support.

These next steps will reinforce systemic change, drive economic self-sufficiency, and embed child protection into local governance structures, ensuring sustainable development across the project regions.

VI. Financial Report

The total budget request submitted to the Mukul Madhav Foundation for the Child-friendly Villages in Bihar project was INR 98,00,000 for the period September 2024 to March 2025.

We have so far received a total of INR 39,20,000 towards the project from Mukul Madhav Foundation. Overall project expenditure as on January 31 2025 stands at INR 48,86,061, and we have fully utilised the funds contributed by Mukul Madhav Foundation.

Cost Head	Description	Amount in INR	Expenditure in INR (as on Jan 31 2025)
Programme Delivery Costs	Collectivisation, awareness and capacity building, social security and economic resilience, education, rehabilitation support for survivors, convergence with child protection stakeholders	31,44,431	4,466,061
	Salaries and travel costs for implementation team, including community mobilisers, outreach workers, technical support	52,88,640	
Other Direct Costs	Impact assessment, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting	3,16,929	-
Total Programme Implementation Cost		87,50,000	4,466,061
BAT Programme Management & Administration Cost - Leadership oversight, finance, compliance, overheads		10,50,000	420,000
Total Programme Cost		98,00,000	4,886,061