

Press Release

International Women's Day 2025: JMI's Department of Social Work organises Presentation and Panel Discussion on 'Teenage Pregnancy: Prevention and Mitigation Strategies'

The Department of Social Work, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), celebrated International Women's Day 2025 by organizing a presentation and panel discussion on ActionAid Karnataka Projects report – 'Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood in India: Implications for Action' on March 4, 2025. The event aimed to draw attention to the challenges associated with teenage pregnancy and the necessity of urgent interventions to support adolescent girls and prevent early pregnancies.

The session opened with a warm greeting from Dr. Hem Borker, Extension Lecture Coordinator, Dept. of Social Work, JMI. She outlined the importance of celebrating Women's Day as a powerful means of expressing solidarity and promoting advocacy for gender equality, in alignment with the 2025 theme 'Accelerate Action'. She highlighted how child marriage and teenage pregnancy remain pressing concerns, especially in politically fragile regions and during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a surge in child marriages.

In her introductory speech Prof. Neelam Sukhramani, Head of the Department shared her lived experiences dealing as a social worker with the victims of forced child marriage and how addressing this form of child rights violation and gender violence necessitates social workers go above and beyond the mere implementation of legal frameworks. It is a matter for grave concern that one-fifth of the girls in India were becoming mothers before the age of 18 years as per the NFHS-5 data. She also expressed that exemplars of women having achieved heights are inspiring but we have to keep reminding ourselves that we are looking at dignity and respect of woman in everyday life.

The session featured a detailed presentation of a research report by the ActionAid team, represented by Mr. Sandeep Chachra, the Executive Director and Mr. Joseph Mathai, head of Communications Team. This was followed by dialogue on the interrelationship between gender inequality, child marriage and teenage pregnancy by Dr. Rajini Menon, a gender practitioner from 'Girls Not Brides'. The report revealed that India has the largest adolescent population in the world and faces a serious challenge in addressing the vulnerabilities of teenage mothers. Conducted in Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan, and West Bengal (across four districts in each state), the research used a participatory and qualitative approach using the socio- ecological model (SEM) to assess the root causes and impact of teenage pregnancy.

Mr. Joseph Mathai presenting findings of the report highlighted how child marriage remains the primary driver of teenage pregnancy, followed by self-arranged marriages. While pregnancy out of wedlock was less common in India, it still posed significant challenges in terms of societal stigma and legal complications. A case study from Rajasthan illustrated how adolescent girls navigate relationships, decision-making, and the pressures of early motherhood. Limited access to contraception and the lack of sexual and reproductive health education were highlighted as critical factors that contribute to teenage pregnancies.

The session also shed light on the various challenges faced by adolescent mothers, ranging from poor maternal health to lack of financial and social support. A significant concern raised was the high dropout rates among teenage mothers, which severely limits their future employment opportunities and forces them into cycles of dependency.

Following the presentation, Dr. Rajini reflecting on her work with 'Girls Not Brides' explained how teenage pregnancy needs to be contextualized within the larger framework of gender inequality

. She argued that child marriage is not just an individual or familial issue but a symptom of deep-seated patriarchal norms. These norms, she argued, intersect with caste, class, disability, and economic status, further marginalizing young girls. She highlighted global commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), emphasizing the need for continued advocacy and legal reform.

Mr. Sandeep further expanded on the social and familial dynamics of teenage pregnancy, identifying two major trends: family-supported child marriages and elopement-based teenage pregnancies. He emphasized that societal treatment of women remains deeply unequal, and adolescent girls often lack autonomy in making decisions about their reproductive health. He called for a shift in focus towards empowering young girls through education, accessible healthcare, and community support.

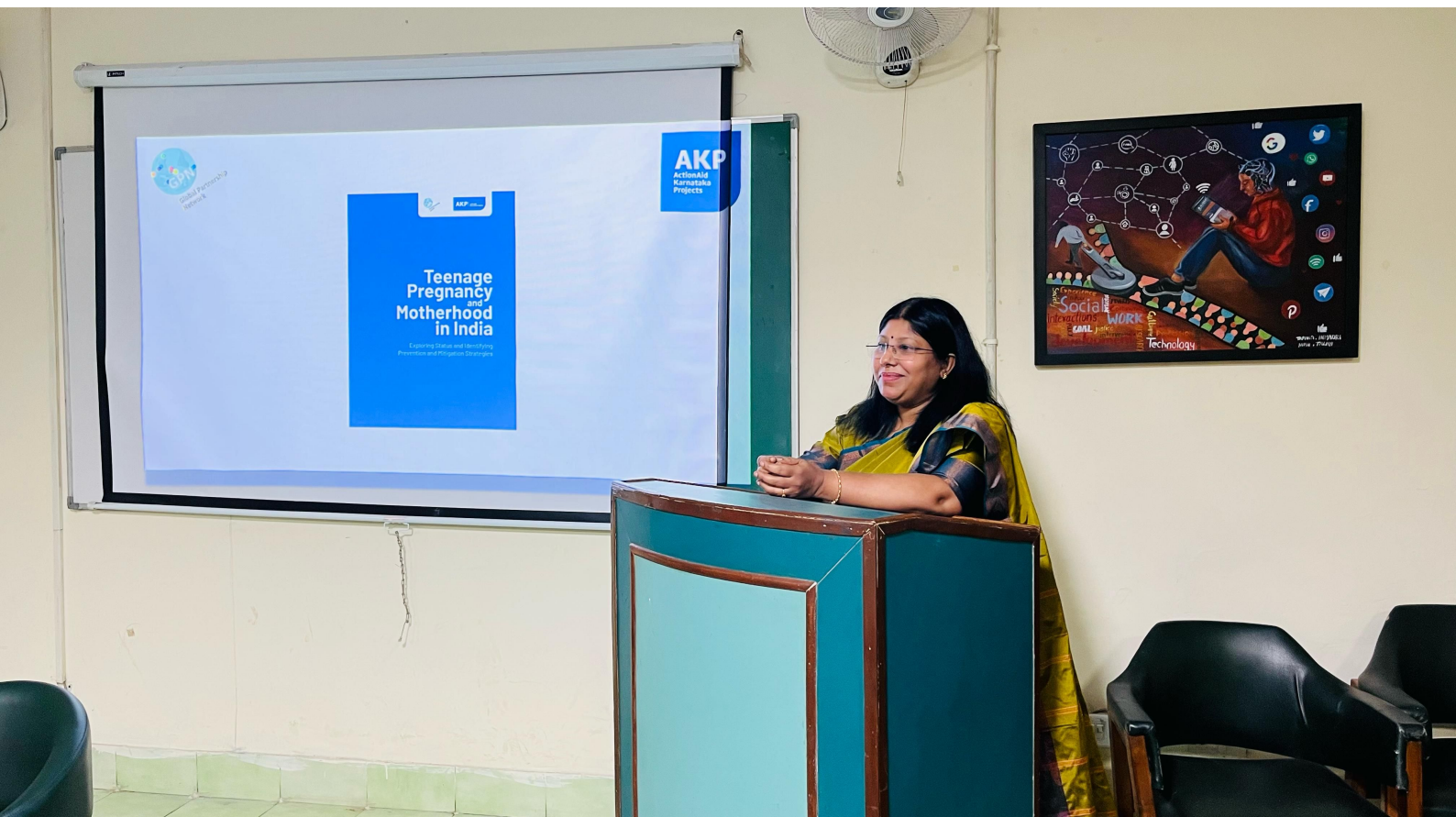
The session concluded with an interactive discussion with the masters and bachelors students of social work.

The speakers agreed that "there are no easy answers, but there are clear pathways"—through policy advocacy, education, and grassroots interventions to address Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood. The vote of thanks acknowledged the collaborative effort of civil society members, academicians and students in making the event possible which enabled student engagement on such a critical issue.











Department of Social Work
Jamia Millia Islamia
Celebrates
International Women's Day , 2025
"Accelerate Action"
A Presentation & Panel Discussion on ,
AKP ActionAid Karnataka Projects
Report on ' Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood in India ' : Implications for Action
Head of the Department 04/03/ 25 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM Seminar Hall Extension Lecture
Prof. Neelam Sukhrmani Dr Hem Borker

A woman in a yellow and green sari is speaking from a podium on the right side of the stage.

Several people are seated at a long green table in the foreground, listening to the presentation. One person on the left is wearing a light blue shirt and glasses.

Two women are seated at the table on the right, one is writing in a yellow notebook. Another woman is partially visible on the far right.



Study Findings (Cont...)



B. Pregnancy Outside of Wedlock

- This is characterised by stigma in all targeted states.
 - Teenage pregnancy out of wedlock, parents pointed to children's disobedience while teenagers cited a lack of parental oversight, particularly when parents or teenage girls themselves had temporarily migrated for work.
 - Some respondent point to mobile phone and alcohol
- Adolescent pregnancy outside of wedlock is rarely, if ever, a conscious choice and can be largely attributed to a lack of knowledge of and access to contraception and other sexual health services.





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Karnataka Projects

ActionAid Karnataka Projects

Report on ' Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood in India ' :
Implications for Action



04/03/ 25



9:30 AM - 11:30 AM



Seminar Hall

Head of the Department

**Prof. Neelam
Sukhramani**

Extension Lecture Coordinator

Dr Hem Borker

