Our presence…

85 hotspots in
25 districts across
09 states

Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Odisha, Assam, Telangana, Nagaland

Aangan works with children who are vulnerable to trafficking, hazardous or exploitative work, early marriage, violence and neglect. These children live in isolated rural settlements, urban unauthorized bastis, impoverished migrant communities – by the riverside, garbage dumping grounds, railway tracks, and have little or no access to services such as anganwadis, schools, police stations, and hospitals.

Aangan works at creating a safer environment for children – where every child is free from harm. Our child harm prevention model builds local community capacity and strengthens formal child protection systems in hotspots across high-risk districts. At the center of this work are a group of 10-12 trained community women volunteers who reach out and set up child and adult safety circles, bringing together local community knowledge, mutual trust, and accountability of government officials through a collaborative effort.
The basic premise of S.A.F.E. is that a child’s safety needs are interrelated and interdependent, wherein each of the four dimensions need to be addressed for any child to be kept safe from harm.

Based on this, Aangan defines hotspots as SAFE\(^5\) when...

- **Safety and Protection improves**
- **Access to Basic Services increases**
- **Family and Community Connectedness improve**
- **Education and Economic Security increases**

S.A.F.E. communities for children are where local officials are active, engaged in prevention work and work in coordination with community women.

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1. Additionally, 400 community volunteers trained on the PACT Prevention model are engaged in child protection work across 40 villages in Kokrajhar, Assam, through NGO partner NERSWN. Aangan provided the training and strategic support for operations
2. Mobile app data was analysed and converted into 190 hyperlocal data/ action plan reports
3. The H2S is a 10-section, 45 criteria checklist that quantitatively measures the transition of a community from hotspot (location particularly vulnerable for children and families) to a safe spot (location indicative of progressive child safety and having child protection systems in place). The obtained total score is converted into a 10-point scale score for comparison and analysis.
4. Impact-related data collected through baseline-endline surveys (mothers, girls, boys, government officials), formal/ official data records, mobile app, scoring of checklists, theme-based lists in community-maintained registers
5. S.A.F.E. framework adapted from Betancourt, T. S., Harvard School of Public Health
Safety and Protection

Reduced incidents of child harm, trafficking, hazardous work, abuse or exploitation and in the interim identification of harm, early reporting and action.

Increased Personal Safety and Agency
Increased (Interim) Reporting on Child Harm
Averting/Removal from Child Harm (or Re-harm)
Perspective Shift on Gender Violence

Route to Light

For us, safety and protection forms one of the cornerstones of our work across the country, and there are stories that go far beyond what just the numbers tell us. Consider, for instance, Aangan’s Route to Light campaign that emerged from the child safety app data results. It revealed that community residents from 22 of the 85 hotspots perceived toilet routes to be amongst the three most dangerous spaces within their communities. The campaign numbers show that over 2600 girls across these 22 hotspots were given solar torches by police officials. But the real empowering, long-term game-changer is how the torch campaign built bridges to ensure that the community and police officials come together to work on serious safety issues.

In Bharlai, for instance, the community homes did not have toilets, so the girls had to walk long distances to the public toilet, which was in a vacant lonely space, with no streetlights, near the railway line. As a result, the girls and women of the community were incessantly sexually abused and harassed. When this issue was highlighted by the app results and discussed amongst girls in safety circles, they decided to draft a torch distribution campaign plan to increase security. They further chose to approach other community influencers to partake in the campaign. Through the persistent efforts of community women volunteers and the girls, the Child Welfare Committee members, the local police, Aanganwadi Workers, Asha workers, school authorities and ward members came together on the chosen day to distribute 200 torches and debate on safety and security of women in the community.

Subsequent to the torch distribution, the police began to actively look into the issue and increased patrolling in the area. The young women and girls in the community finally had the police on their side; and were able to go to the toilets and walk after dark far more easily than they previously could. As a tangible side effect, it has also addressed issues of women working and children studying when there is no electricity in homes.

The solar torch thus became the symbol that will potentially transform the future of the girls in the communities.

Increased Personal Safety and Agency

25761 children are registered members of girls’ and boys’ protective safety networks that meet regularly and engage in interactive discussions, workshops, activities etc., keeping them safe from harm as well as actively involved in community child harm prevention strategies.
82% (of 19337) at-risk adolescent girls from girls’ safety networks can recognise early warning signs of harm (such as recognising potential trafficking through marriage, exploitation by child labour agents), and are prepared with personalised safety strategies towards preventive action.

20% ↑ in the number of children who have taken an active step to avert harm to self or peers (such as negotiated with parents to prevent early marriage or school drop-out, convinced a brother against running away from home etc.)

Joint Police-Community Initiatives

- **Route to Light Campaign**
  - 2639 girls received torches distributed by police officials in 22 hotspots where toilet route was identified as dangerous (fear of abduction, sexual harassment) as per the results of the Aangan mobile app survey. The joint effort reduced sexual harassment and increased freedom of movement for girls. Post the campaign...
    - Number of girls who perceived the toilet route as safe increased from 37% to 75%
    - 40% ↑ in the number of girls who felt comfortable approaching the police
    - 76% ↑ in the number of girls who perceived the police as helpful and cooperative
  - **Safety Mapping**
    - 65 hotspot safety maps created by community women and girls, and presented to police in 61 locations, resulting in increased security for children and police patrolling of dangerous spaces

- Increased belief in capability to bring about community change
  - 97% ↑ in the percentage of girls and boys who felt they were capable of affecting change for themselves and their communities
  - 25% ↑ in the number of mothers who believed it is possible to make an entire community safer for children
Averting/ Removal from Child Harm (or Re-harm)

- **50% ↓** in migratory child labour i.e. children moving away from home for work
- The number of families which planned to get their daughters married before age 18 years decreased from **47% to 20%** post the ‘Beti Hoon, Bhoj Nahi’ campaign implemented across hotspots. Parents and in-laws who believed that it was safe for a married girl to get pregnant before age 18 years also decreased by **67%** post this campaign
- **Less than 1%** (0.44% of 19337) girls enrolled in Aangan’s child safety circles have undergone early marriage or pregnancy before age 18 years (as compared to the national 2011 census statistic of 30% and UNICEF national estimate of 47%). This, in a context where **24%** of the girls were at acute risk having elder sisters who were victims of child marriage
  
  *providing evidence that girls who are part of safety networks are at significantly lower risk of early marriage or pregnancy, keeping them safe in family care.

- **16% ↑** in the number of parents who understand the importance of child supervision and ensure that their children are supervised by adults whether at home, school or elsewhere
- **78%** (of 1774) of serious harm cases informally reported to community women volunteers successfully averted with children being rescued from situations such as child marriage, sex trafficking and child labour
- **109** community women volunteers across **21** districts in two states trained in effective post-harm rehabilitation and trauma relief, ensuring that child victims who return to the community undergo a gradual process of rehabilitation, recovery and family/ community acceptance
- Capacity-building of **48** Child Welfare Committee (CWC) members across **9** destination CWCs; and intra-state coordination systems established amongst **139** source district CWCs (with their respective destination CWC) averting further child harm and resulting in more effective rehabilitation of child harm victims

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6 Additionally, 76 government shelter home staff, district child protection officials and CWC members across 11 districts in Nagaland were trained by Aangan on effective documentation and procedures for successful rehabilitation of children within state-run homes
Early marriages averted

Child marriage is a key area that we tackle within Aangan programs. The child safety app 2016 survey results revealed that 53% adult mothers in our hotspots were child brides. Additionally, 61% of minor married girls presently residing in our hotspots were found to have mothers who were married before age 18, suggesting a generational trend in early marriage.

Based on hyperlocal app data and risk assessment through focussed group discussions, communities with high rates of child marriage were identified, and a specially designed program ‘Beti hoon, Bhoj nahi’ for averting child harm was implemented in these hotspots. As a result of the campaign, the number of families which planned to get their daughters married before age 18 years decreased from 47% to 20%. Parents and in-laws who believed that it was safe for a married girl to get pregnant before age 18 years also decreased by 67%.

With increased community awareness and vigilance, several marriages were averted by the community residents. Girls themselves were able to negotiate with parents and successfully avert an early marriage. In some other cases, community women got together to approach and convince the girls’ families against making such a move, while also offering options for accessing relevant government schemes. In a few cases, community members felt the need to involve local officials. Take the case of 13-year-old Rekha from Motihari, Bihar who was betrothed to a man twenty years older – a suspected case of disguised child sex trafficking. A group of community women attempted to convince the parents against this. When that didn’t seem to work, the women approached the police and village head (Mukhiya) and the wedding was eventually prevented, after which Rekha was enrolled back into school and became a member of the girls’ safety circle. The women volunteers now periodically visit her family to ensure that she is regularly attending school and is well taken care of.

Finally, we found that girls who are members of safety networks are at significantly lower risk of early marriage and pregnancy, keeping them safe in family care. Of the over 19000 girls’ safety network members, less than 1% have undergone early marriage or pregnancy (as compared to the national 2011 census statistic of 47%).

Clearly, various levels of intervention are needed to make child marriage prevention effective and successful.

Increased (Interim) Reporting on Child Harm

- Formal reporting (FIRs) of cases on violence against children tripled, indicative of increased community vigilance on child safety and protection issues
- 45% ↑ in formal reporting (FIRs) of child marriage and 48% in child labour FIRs indicative of increased community awareness and acknowledgement of harm associated with child marriage and child labour practices
Perspective shift on gender violence

- **88%** (of 6424) at-risk boys are gender sensitised, and are empowered towards safer decision-making.
- **55%** ↓ in the number of boys who believe that a woman’s only role is to cook, clean and take care of her home and family.
- **39%** ↓ in the number of boys who believe that hitting a girlfriend or wife in some situations is justifiable.
- **81%** ↑ in the number of boys who believe that men can take as good care of children as women can.

Boys’ Perspective Shift on Gender Violence (2016-17)

% of boys showing perspective shift

- Woman’s role is to cook and clean
- Hitting a girlfriend/ wife is justified
- Men are as good child-carers as women
Access to Basic Services

Basics like health services, food and sanitation are increasingly available to vulnerable families. Increased awareness of laws and increased access to essential documents, officials, government schemes, entitlements and other protective systems aimed at reducing child vulnerability.

- Increased Access to Protective Systems and Officials – Anganwadi and Police
- Increased Knowledge and Access to Identity Documents, Government Schemes and Services
- Activation of local child protection officials
- Acknowledgement of hotspots by state authorities

Access – opening opportunities and changing lives

Awareness and access have a symbiotic relationship – the greater the awareness, the more the demand for access; and eventually a corresponding increase in access. Across the year, we saw great increases in awareness and access of several schemes and services within communities.

An important outcome for Aangan is an increase in children accessing child-focused services such as anganwadis and schools; and local protective services such as police stations during times of need. Anganwadi services, for instance, has an impact on child care, nutrition, adult supervision and continuing education. Increased access to anganwadis has made a huge difference for girls like Seema from Rajghat, Banaras; who is all of 7 years old and from a family that has an alcoholic unemployed father and a mother working two shifts. Sima can now actually go to school and not be concerned with taking care of her three younger siblings at home, since her family was able to access the nearby anganwadi services.

Access can take another form too. In Siklighar, in the Sewar community of Bharatpur, Rajasthan, children weren’t able go to school since the access road was perpetually waterlogged; indeed many children had fallen into the dirty water, and some had even succumbed to Malaria and Dengue. Community women volunteers persistently pushed local municipal officials to get the road reconstructed so as to ensure it remains dry. Work was eventually undertaken and completed in November 2016. Now, over 30 previously irregular children from Siklighar have begun attending school regularly.

Such instances, amongst several others, tell us that increased access to one service nearly always has an impact on the entire family and on child safety.

Increased Access to Protective Systems and Officials – Anganwadi and Police

- **20% ↑** in child access to Anganwadi services resulting in improved access to adult supervision, early education, nutrition and health care services
- **29% ↓** in the number of community people being turned away by the police without filing an FIR signifying improved police access and responsiveness
Increased Knowledge and Access to Identity Documents, Government Schemes and Services

- **27966** children and **53646** parents provided access to and benefitted from government schemes and services, reducing family vulnerability
- **20% ↑** in children with birth certificates and Aadhar cards across hotspots, and a **50% ↑** in access to disability certificates for children with disabilities
- **86% ↑** in eligible families holding caste certificates, while community adults with at least one identity document increased from **93% to 99%** easing access to government benefits and provisions
- **10.5% ↑** in the number of households with bank accounts
- **57% ↑** in awareness amongst families about government schemes and services
- **94% ↑** in the number of mothers aware about child protection laws
- Number of children aware of local organizations, helpline numbers or officials to approach for help or guidance increased from **35% to 86%**
- **57000** adults have an in-depth understanding of rights and entitlements, having accessed a total of **81600** previously inaccessible government schemes and services through community-run help desks
Activation of local child protection officials

- **43%** (of 19337) children directly engaged and negotiated with local authorities on community and child-related concerns, initiating a two-way conversation highlighting the accountability of officials
- **514** preventive actions taken by government officials to reduce child harm such as participating in community campaigns and meetings; sharing schemes/services/child protection information at community help desks or events; child open days at police stations, patrolling at spaces unsafe for children etc.
- **558** instances of community women sharing important child harm information with government officials such as lists of children in hazardous work; lists of out-of-school children; individual child harm instances, unsafe community spaces etc., to engage in jointly coordinated safety actions

Change in Government perception of community support

- As per District Child Protection Officials: Instances of community members being supportive, informative and helpful in making the community safer for children changed from ‘Rarely’ in 2016 to ‘Often’ in 2017
- As per Police officials: Instances of community members approaching them with valuable information that is helpful for the child safety work they do changed from ‘Rarely’ to ‘Sometimes’

Change in community perception of Government/Official support

- As per community mothers: Number of local authorities who were cooperative and willing to provide help when requested, changed from ‘Few of them’ in 2016 to ‘Most of them’ in 2017

Acknowledgement of hotspots by state authorities

- **54%** of Aangan-identified hotspots acknowledged as locations requiring specific investment in child protection by state authorities, as a result of ground-level data collected and presented by Aangan
Family and Community Connectedness

Community adults and influencers are engaged and alert about child harm, early action and response. Families and communities act collectively on child protection, reducing isolation or marginalisation of children in particular groups.

- Increased Recognition of Early Warning Signs and Implementation of Preventive Strategies
- Increased Presence of Community-based Active Child Protection Groups and Adults
- Community-Driven Child Safety Actions

The community as extended family

In hotspots where Aangan interventions are being implemented, families are supported to identify early warning signs of child harm and take preventive action. The community itself comes together in these locations to play the role of a larger family for those who need it. All of our hotspots today have at least one community-based group for children and families to approach in times of need.

Patharbandh is a good example of how a community can come together to resolve a child care conundrum. Most people in Patharbandh, Odisha, are daily wage labourers, including women. With two working parents, there is nobody to take care of younger children, who are consequently left unsupervised or in the care of school-age siblings. This has, in turn, resulted in high school dropout rates and worse yet, a high number of children who go missing. Identifying this as a serious issue during one of the community parent meetings, five community women got together and took on the responsibility of setting up a crèche at a monthly cost of Rs. 100 per month per household. They remodelled an unused room within the community premises to create a child-friendly crèche.

The community women themselves run the crèche on a rotational basis; engaging the children in basic educational activities, while also organising regular health check-ups for the children. Due to the efforts of the community women, more than 20 children are presently enrolled in the crèche and are gradually moving along a pathway to formal education; they are tended to and taken care of by their own extended community family.
Increased Recognition of Early Warning Signs and Implementation of Preventive Strategies

- 81% (of 45000) parents can identify early warning signs and are prepared for early preventative response
- 20% (of 45000) parents have in-depth knowledge on local child safety risks and strategies to avert the same
- 54% (of 22500) families strengthened by implementing at least two within-family child safety actions such as increased supervision, enrolment into school, accessing relevant schemes etc.

Increased Presence of Community-based Active Child Protection Groups and Adults

- 100% hotspots have at least one community-based group for children and families to approach in times of need or difficulty
- 46% ↑ in the number of children who have at least one trustworthy adult to confide in, when in times of danger, confusion or difficulty

Community-Driven Child Safety Actions

- 22500 households actively engaged in child safety
- 33% ↑ in the number of mothers who have taken an action to prevent harm to a child within their hotspot
- Percentage of mothers who have gotten together with others in the community to engage in child harm prevention increased from 35% to 94%
- 907 community projects initiated and implemented by community adult or child groups, aimed at increasing child safety within community spaces
The community as catalyst

The community can act as a powerful agent of change, and play an important role in child protection and safety through simple but potent actions. Here are two examples of how this can happen...

In one of the hotspot communities, community women volunteers sought to get the local liquor shop, or ‘theka’, shifted to a location out of their community. The ‘theka’ (small shop) was present exactly where the main market connected to the community. Men would litter the place after drinking and be on their worst behaviour, so young girls and women couldn’t access the main market without personal risk. The women volunteers helped the community to swing into action against the ‘theka’, gathering signatures and presenting a letter to the District Collector’s office. Since there was no response from the office, the community undertook a ‘dharna’ (non-violent protest) to protest against the inaction. Finally, after three days of the protest, the ‘theka’ was moved out of the community by local officials.

The challenge in Buddhanagar, Odisha, on the other hand, was poor sanitation with no water access. The community volunteers facilitated a series of meetings between the community members and local municipal authorities to address the lack of a water line. Due to the constant efforts of the community, a water line was installed in a little over 6 months. Nearly 750 families and their children have benefitted due to this proactive effort by the community, improving health and sanitary conditions for households across the community.

These two examples illustrate how the community people steered by women volunteers, have ensured greater safety and health for families and children through their own initiative.
Education and Economic Security

Children are in classrooms; safety in schools increases and financial security increases with impact on delaying work or marriage age as a survival strategy.

- Increased Enrolment, Attendance, Retention and Safety in Schools
- Improved Future Financial Security for Children
- Improved Household Financial Resilience
  - Towards Delaying Marriage and Keeping Girls Safe in School
  - Towards Reduction in Child Labour and Keeping Boys Safe in School

The Ripple Effect

Education is an important cog in the wheel when it comes to child protection. There are well-known and well-documented ripple effects due to children staying within the school system. We’ve had a closer look at our own data and it tells us an interesting story.

Aangan’s interventions ensured a 11% decrease in the number of out-of-school children across our hotspots, and 56% of the children now have a personally customised career and future financial plan. Further, the number of girls who plan to study up to graduation or beyond has gone up from 28% to 70%, and more parents (10% more) are now willing to allow their children to complete primary education as opposed to pulling them out of school for marriage or work.

In addition to this, what’s taking place in the household financial sphere is what has given us a lot of hope. First, there was a distinct shift in the mindsets of young girls, with a 69% increase in those who believed it was important to be financially independent. We also observed important ripple effects on the community’s perception of child marriage. For instance, a 6-fold increase in Sukanya Samriddhi Accounts being opened, implies that parents of girls are contemplating the delay of marriage. What’s more, through linkages of relevant financial schemes for families combined with school attendance, more than three-fourth of the boys have been made safer from child labour as well. Thus, education and household security are clearly a facilitator for a variety of child protection outcomes.

Increased Enrolment, Attendance, Retention and Safety in Schools

- **57%** (of 3166) of community-referred at-risk children removed from harm and enrolled into school. **11% ↓** in the number of out-of-school children and **2% ↑** in attendance of school-going children, improving levels of child safety and supervision across hotspots
- **86** schools in which safety checklists were introduced, increasing awareness and ensuring the involvement of school authorities in keeping schools safe
- The number of girls who planned to study up to graduation or further increased from **28% to 70%**
- **10%** (of 18957) ↑ in the number of parents who’ve decided against dropout and taken on the responsibility of ensuring that their children complete primary schooling
Every Child Safe in School

Education in a hotspot is not an easy accomplishment for a child. Reasonably functioning schools too are beset with poor attendance and high dropout rates in hotspots. Thus, it is with much pride that we say that our programs have led to a tangible reduction in out-of-school children as shown by the data results.

To give an example of how this was made possible, we have to look under the hood. In Rajghat, Uttar Pradesh, for instance, there are 3 primary schools and 2 secondary schools. Yet illiteracy and dropping out of school is commonplace. To address this issue, community women volunteers conducted child safety circles and parent circles, linking being in school to child safety. The volunteers facilitated discussions between the parents and school principals. They proceeded to make a list of drop-out children through surveys and formally enrolled these children into school. As a result of the efforts of all community stakeholders concerned, 252 out-of-school children have been enrolled in schools in Rajghat alone.

Another example is at the Shahpur brick kiln in Patna, Bihar. A migrant community, there were several children here aged between 4-10 years who had never been to school, and were being used as helping hands in the brick kiln where their parents worked. From linking children to a government school, to ensuring identity documents for children and finally arranging for rickshaws to bring the children to and from the school which was at a distance; the women volunteers ensured that 37 children were enrolled and going to school regularly.

Efforts such as these ensure that more and more children within hotspots, no matter how vulnerable their situation, receive an education and remain safe in school.

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Improved Future Financial Security for Children

- **56%** (of 25761) children have a personally customized career and future financial plan
- **8%** (of 25761) children removed from situations of harm and enrolled into vocational courses
- **69% ↑** in the number of girls who believe it is important to be financially independent

**Improved Future Financial Security for Children (2016-17)**

- **14367, 56%** With a career/financial plan
- **1952, 8%** Enrolled in vocational course
Improved Household Financial Resilience

Towards Delaying Marriage and Keeping Girls Safe in School
Towards Reduction in Child Labour and Keeping Boys Safe in School

Indirectly contributed to the prevention of a range of child harm factors such as school drop-out, child labour, bonded labour, early marriage and trafficking.

- An average increase in financial resources amounting to Rs. 7800 (14% ↑ from Rs. 54000 in 2016 to Rs. 61800 in 2017) per household through uptake of government schemes and services, lessening household vulnerability
- 8% ↓ in the number of indebted families
- 32% ↑ in the number of households with a financial and monthly budget plan
- 26% ↑ in the number of households that feel prepared in the event of a sudden financial crisis (such as loss of job, illness) – consequently preventing their children from dropping out of school, engaging in child labour etc., to contribute to household expenses

Towards Delaying Marriage and Keeping Girls Safe in School
- 5.5% (Rs. 2948 on average household income of Rs. 54000) increase in average annual monetary resources of girl’s households, through linkage with girl child-related government financial schemes
- 500% ↑ in Sukanya Samridhi Accounts (monetary scheme to promote delay in child marriage) opened in post-offices across Aangan hotspots

Towards Reduction in Child Labour and Keeping Boys Safe in School
- 78% (of 78690) boys were made safer from the risk of dropping out of school and child labour through increase in family financial security via linkages to relevant schemes and services

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