



It Takes Nepal to End Child Marriage

CAMPAIGN IMPACT REPORT

January 2024



It takes Nepal
to end child marriage

Abbreviation/Acronym

ACORAB	Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Nepal
ADP	Area Development Programme
AIN	Association of International NGO
AP	Area Programme
CBO	Community Based Organization
CESP	Community Engagement and Sponsorship Programme
CFLG	Child Friendly Local Governance
CP	Child Protection
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWB	Child Well Being
FBO	Faith Based organization
FO	Field Office
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GESI	Gender Equity and Social Inclusion
GoN	Government of Nepal
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
MCPPC	Municipality Child Protection and Promotion Committee
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MOHP	Ministry of Health & Population
MTR	Mid Term Review
MVC	Most Vulnerable Children
MWCSC	Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens
NACG	National Action and Coordinating Group
NCRC	National Child Rights Council
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NIRN	National Inter-Religious Network
NO	National Office

NYC	National Youth Council
PABSON	Private and Boarding School Organization Nepal
PNGO	Partner NGO
PWD	People with Disabilities
RC	Registered Children
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAIEVAC	South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMC	School Management Committee
TP	Technical Programme
WCRC	Ward level Child Rights Committee
WVI Nepal	World Vision International Nepal

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i. Executive Summary

WVI Nepal launched the "It Takes Nepal to End Child Marriage" campaign on 10 August 2017 as part of its global campaign, "It Takes a World to End Violence Against Children.". The campaign is contextualized in Nepal with a Nepali name नेपाली जुटौं बालविवाह रोकोँ slogan:

ॐ सानै छु, बढ्न देउ, बाल विवाह हैन पढ्न देउ

I am still Young Let Me Grow; Not Child Marriage but Let Me Study

The campaign contributed towards the vision of the Government of Nepal to eliminate child marriage by 2030 as outlined in the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage 2016 and also with the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children, the campaign aimed to reduce child marriage among the most vulnerable population through improved community practices and government systems.

Between the period 2017 – 2023 (six years), WVI Nepal collaborated with the Government at all levels, political leaders, diplomats, civil society representatives, children, academicians, and private/corporate sectors. WVI Nepal aimed to bring impact through the campaign with a specific focus on strengthening systems, changing behaviours of children, adolescents and their family and influencing effective implementation of policy.

WVI Nepal collaborated with **30+** Strategic Partners & **40** PNGOs in its working areas.

The campaign covers 46 municipalities, 6 provinces and reached almost 450,000 children, adolescents, young people, and their families through campaign initiatives including awareness raising events, popular mobilizations, collaboration with mega events such as Cricket Premier League, PABSON, and intensive engagement with the Governments in local, provincial and federal level.

As a result of our intensive engagement, WVI Nepal has been able to collaborate with the Government to influence 44 policies at the federal, provincial, local, and even regional level. Out of 46 municipalities, 24 rural municipalities and municipalities formed the ending child early and force marriage strategy/plan/procedures, and 10 rural municipalities and municipalities endorsed and implemented the strategy in their respective municipalities while one province level strategy on ending child, early and forced marriage in Sudurpaschim Province is in formulation process. In WVI Nepal working areas 13 wards have been declared Child-friendly Local Governance (CFLG) and all municipalities have been implementing CFLG in different stages. Sudurpaschhim and Madhesh province have drafted a strategy to end child marriage.

Empowerment of children and adolescents is at the centre of the campaign. Between the period, 1,466,11 children and adolescents are directly reached by the campaign. Children and adolescents themselves are empowered and at the same time engaging as torchbearer in the communities. Through their coordination and collaboration with service providers. 561 incidents of child marriage

have been stopped. This number has a multiplier effect in the communities to have an informed decision among children and adolescents.

It Takes Nepal to End Child Marriage promoted the momentum of GoN on ending child marriage. As ending child marriage is complex, multifaceted, multi sectoral and multi layered issue, WVI Nepal adopted different strategies to respond this issue. Engagement with the media to ensure accountability of service providers and to reach a wider mass, collaboration with Government which includes engagement with WCSC(women children and senior citizen service center), child helpline (1098), child rescue and research Centre (104), OCMC (one stop crisis management Centre) at different levels to ensure effective and responsive systems in place, engagement with inter-faith leaders to ensure their engagement on addressing harmful traditional practices, empowerment of children and adolescents through life and protective skills, collaboration with CSOs, I/NGOs and private sectors to ensure collective actions.

Throughout the campaign period, WVI Nepal observed remarkable progress and attention given by the Government on ending child marriages. Enhanced capacity of protection actors, creating an enabling environment for raising awareness as well as responding the cases related to child marriage have increased proactive responses to stop child marriages happening in the communities. The law enforcement authorities have started responding to the cases proactively and efficiently. Children and adolescents are empowered with their rights and responsibilities. Multiple stakeholders including inter-faith leaders have been working as change agents in the community to leverage the issue of ending child marriage and harmful traditional practices. Through collaboration with the Government, the issue of child marriage has been established as a matter of concern among various stakeholders at the local, provincial, and federal level. The strategic focus given by the Koshi province to eliminate child marriage by 2025, policy and procedures formulation and endorsement in 3 provinces namely Sudurpaschhim province, Madhesh province, and Bagmati province and importantly the adoption of campaign slogan 'सानै छु, बढ्न देउ, बाल विवाह हैन पढ्न देउ' as it is are some of the important milestones on the ownership of the seriousness of the issue raised by that different levels.

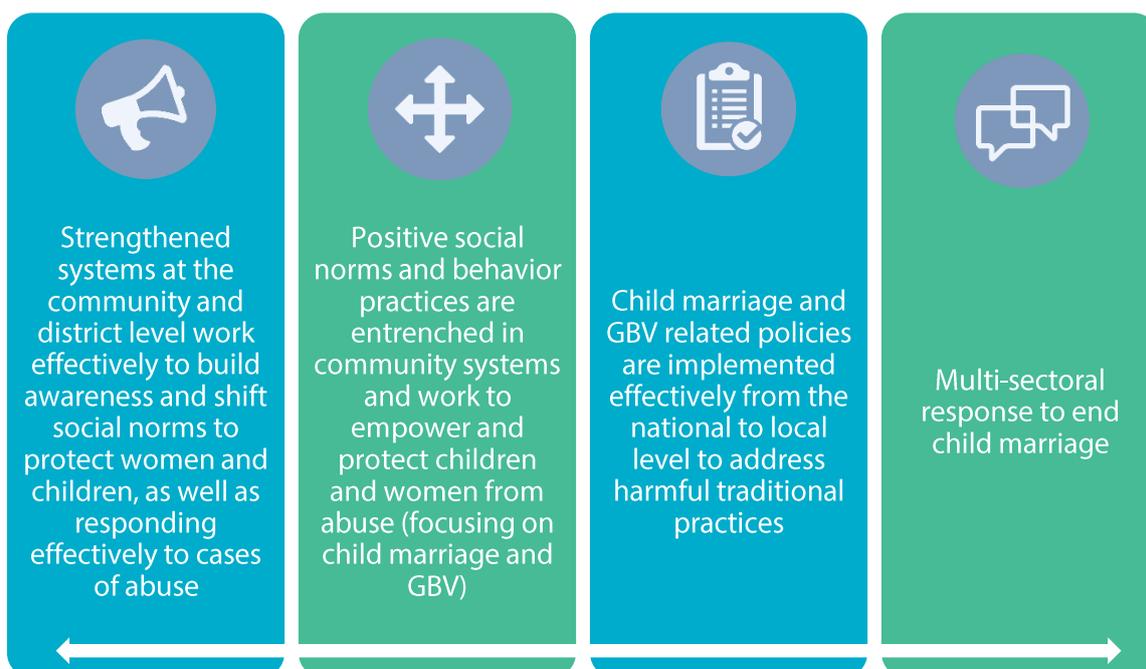
In order to continue the momentum of ending child marriage and to fulfil the national ambition of ending child marriage by 2030, there should be a more organized and focused campaign in place. The Government should update, endorse, and implement the strategy related to child marriage as the National Strategy to End Child Marriage 2016 requires amendment in the changed context.

Strengthening the child protection system at the local level and ensuring its effective functionalisation can help eliminating and address the issues related to child marriage. Coordinated actions between community leaders, religious leaders, parents, and family members can facilitate creating an enabling environment in the community. Their leadership will guide the children and adolescents to make informed decisions. Likewise, increasing budget allocation for children and adolescents from all levels of Government help to have more programming for empowering children.

1. About Campaign

"It Takes Nepal to End Child Marriage" campaign was launched on 10 August, 2017 by World Vision International Nepal (WVI Nepal) as part of its global campaign, "It Takes a World to End Violence Against Children,". The campaign was officially launched with the gracious presence of the former Rt. Honorable President of Nepal Bidhya Devi Bhandari, ministers, high-level government officials, political leaders, diplomats, civil society representatives, children, media, academicians, and different personalities from the private/corporate sectors. This initiative was driven by the alarming facts of child marriage in the nation and its detrimental effects on nearly all human development indicators.

The campaign has four major outcomes which aims to work for:



In alignment with all technical programmes to support the implementation of its country strategy, WVI Nepal's campaign also contributed to the implementation of the priority of the Government of Nepal on eliminating child marriage by 2030 as outlined in the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage 2015. The campaign also aimed to support the implementation of two Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators namely 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage, and 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children, the campaign aimed to reduce child marriage among the most vulnerable population through improved community practices and government systems.

The campaign was launched in 2017 by assessing the context in the national, regional and in instances on the global level. The alarming data and stories associated with those data are the major triggers to act collectively against ending child marriage.

2. The Context - Child Marriage is Still Prevalent

Across the world, each year 12 million girls are married before the age of 18, i.e., 23 girls marry every minute and nearly 1 every 3 seconds. In case of Nepal, the country has the 16th highest prevalence rate of child marriage across the world and second highest in South Asia after Bangladesh.¹ According to the Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2019, 19.3 per cent of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years were already married, whereas in the 20-24-year age group, 32.8 per cent married before 18 years of age, and 7.9 per cent were married before 15 years of age.² The table below compares prevalence of child marriage among men and women over the period of five years:

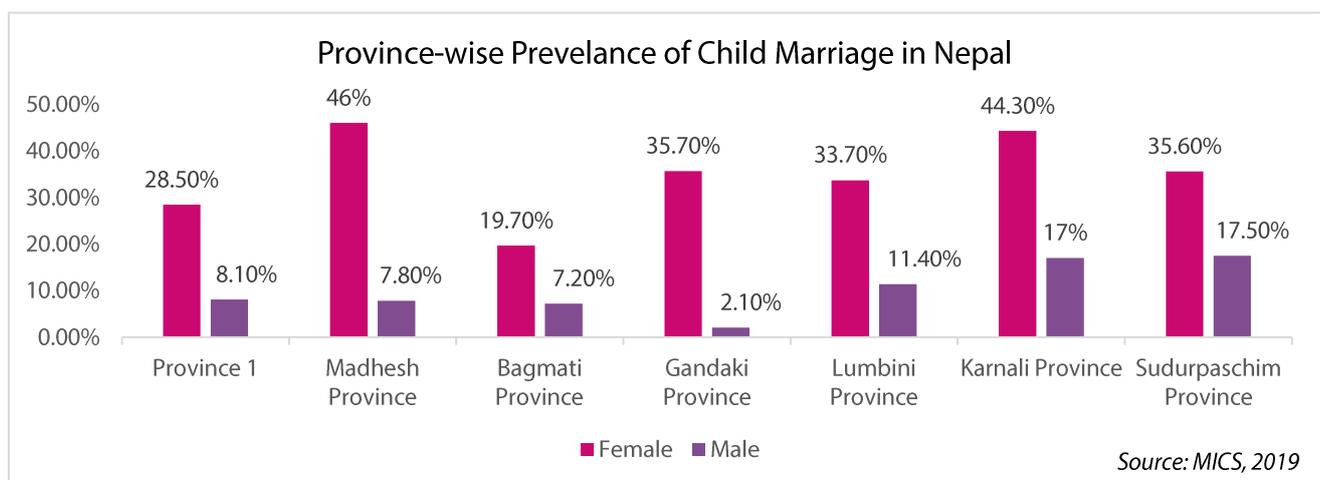
Table 1: Prevalence of Child Marriage in Nepal

S.N.	Source, Year	Age-Group	Before 18 years of age		Before 15 years of age	
			Female	Male	Female	Male
1.	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey, 2014	15-19 years	N/A	-	4.9%	-
		20-24 years	36.6%	-	10.4%	-
2.	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey, 2019	15-19 years	N/A	N/A	19.3%	5.3%
		20-24 years	32.8%	9.0%	7.9%	1.5%

Source: MICS, 2014 and MICS, 2019

In between the two Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, conducted in 2014 and 2019 respectively, the prevalence of child marriage among women (and girls) decreased from 36.6 per cent³ to 32.8 per cent⁴. Thus, nearly one-third of women (and girls) of 15-24 years old who got married before 18 years of age. In the case of men (and boys), 9.0 per cent⁵ of those aged 15-24 years got married before 18 years of age.

According to MICS, 2019, the highest prevalence of child marriage among girls is observed in Madhesh Pradesh (46%) and the lowest in Bagmati Province (19.7%), whereas among boys, the highest prevalence is recorded in Sudurpaschim Province (17.5%) and the lowest in Gandaki Province (2.1%).⁶



¹ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/> accessed on 12 June 2022.

² Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2020. Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report. Kathmandu, Nepal: Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Nepal, pg. 392.

³ *ibid.* pg. 192.

⁴ *ibid.* pg. 49.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Central Bureau of Statistics. (2020). *Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Final Report*. Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Nepal, pg. 49.

In terms of incidents of child marriage, 310 local levels observed 6,142 incidents of child marriage in FY 2019/20, whereas 268 local levels reported a total of 4,656 incidents in FY 2020/21. Of total 4,656 incidents, Karnali Province observed 38.1, followed by 16.3 percent in Bagmati Province, 15.9 percent in Lumbini Province, 13.5 percent in Sudurpaschim Province, 7.7 percent in Madhesh Pradesh, 6.9 percent in Gandaki Province and 1.7 percent in Province No. 1.⁷

Between the campaign implementation period, there have been remarkable initiatives have been started and in operations. In Koshi Province, Samriddha Pradeshka lagi Aatmanirbhar Chhori Karyakram (Independent Daughter for Prosperous Province Programme) with the aim of empowering girls of marginalised communities through a sponsored insurance program to end child marriage and help girls prepare to be educated and capable daughters is being implemented. In Madhesh province, Mukhya Mantri Beti Padhau Beti Bachau Campaign is in implementation. Bagmati province has been implementing Pradesh ra Sthaniya Tahako Yeutai Sandesh, Balbibah Mukta Hamro Pradesh (The Common Slogan of the Local Level and the Province: Child Marriage-Free, Our Province) in line with its vision of declaring the province child marriage. Lumbini province has been implementing '10-Year Strategy of Lumbini Province to End Child Marriage' (FY 2021/22-2031-32) in 2021 to end child marriage by 2030. Likewise, Karnali province, has been executing initiative called Bank Khata Chhoriko, Suraksha Jeevan Bhariko (Bank account belongs to daughter is life time protection). In the Sudurpaschim province, Sanai Chhu Ma, Badhna Deu, Balbibah Haina, Padhna Deu Campaign is in operation.



Following the mandate mentioned in section 12 (c)(32) of the Local Government Operation Act, 2017, municipals and ward committees are running the campaign against child marriage through endorsing local policies and programmes.

⁷ NCRC. (2021). *Research Report on the status of child marriage and impact upon girls*. National Child Rights Council, pg. ...

3. Campaign Implementation Areas and Partnership



The campaign is directly implemented in 46 municipalities and rural municipalities of 14 districts namely Udayapur, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Rautahat, Sindhuli, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Lamjung, Jumla, Kailali, Achham, Doti, Bajhang and Kanchanpur. Apart from its regular district-based partners, WVI Nepal worked with 30+ different strategic partners to sensitise and influence the policies at different levels. Some of the key influential CSO partners who worked together in the campaign are:



During the course of implementation, WVI Nepal established collaboration with Government which includes:

Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration	Ministry of Social Development in Koshi and Sudurpaschim Province	National Youth Council
National Child Rights Council	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology		

4. Major Achievements

WVI Nepal aimed to bring impact through the campaign with a specific focus on strengthening systems, changing behaviours of children, adolescents and their families, and influencing the effective implementation of policy. All the activities designed for the campaign are categorised into five intervention areas to achieve the desired impact: policy influence, prevention and protection, empowering children, partnership, and advocacy.

The campaign was designed to reduce child marriage in Nepal through improved community practices and Government system by 2021 in line with SDGs 5 and 16. The campaign has adopted major three approaches: (1) strengthening legal and social system for protection of most vulnerable children; (2) increasing community resilience including children and, (3) multi-sectorial response to end child marriage. The interventions are designed thoughtfully to end child marriage.

Outcome

1

Strengthened systems at the community and district level work effectively to build awareness and shift social norms to protect women and children, as well as responding effectively to cases of abuse.

Enhanced Capacity of Child Protection Actors

In course of implementing the campaign, WVI Nepal collaborates with the municipality and ward level government to engage and strengthen their capacity related to child protection. The WCRC referral processes, case management on child protection issues including child marriage. The committees are able to understand their roles and responsibilities and also able to influence the decision makers to create urgency on policies, structures, periodic plan and budget to protect children from harmful traditional practices including child marriage at local level. The WCRCs are capacitated to respond to child marriage cases when cases are reported and observed in communities. Likewise, they have also supported to and engaged in declaring child friendly local governance and child marriage free wards. Between the period, through the influence of WVI Nepal and its programme, 14 wards including Mellekh Rural Municipality (RM) Ward 3 of Achham, Besisahar Municipality Ward 1, 2, 6 & 10 of Lamjung, Rautamai RM ward 2 and 4, Triyuga Municipality Ward 15, Udayapurgadhi RM ward 1 of Udayapur, Tinpatan RM Ward 5 & 10 of Sindhuli, Kirtipur ward 7 of Kathmandu, Gramathan RM Ward 1 & 2 of Morang have been declared Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG). Declaration of CFLG has ensured the fulfilment and commitment of the local Government to eliminate child marriage from their communities.

Being the ward chairperson and president of Child Right Committee of this ward it was challenging for the declaration where more than 90 of the population belong to socially excluded community and the lack of awareness on child marriage was dominant. Members of Child Club and Rupantaran club were engaged on disseminating messages and case reporting against child marriage at every cluster. As a result, child marriage cases started decreasing. 5 child marriage cases were stopped in last year whereas since the past 6 months there were no any child marriage cases reported which means the anti-child marriage campaign has been showing its positive result.

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CASE STUDY

Yamuna Trying to Rebuild Her Life after being Rescued from Child Marriage

Yamuna (name changed) is a resident of Kirtipur Municipality. She is registered in World Vision International Nepal's Child Protection & Community Engagement Sponsorship Project (CP-CESP).

In March 2022, 15-year-old Yamuna told her parents that she was going out with her friends but failed to return home until nightfall. Her parents started to get worried and informed their relatives that Yamuna had not come back home. They went looking for her at her friend's place but there was no sign of Yamuna. The next morning, they went to the nearby police station and filed a missing complaint. Yamuna's parents visited the police station frequently to follow-up on the search process for Yamuna, but the police kept telling them that Yamuna for being searched for.

World Vision International Nepal along with its partner NGO Child Development Society (CDS) was carrying out routine monitoring of all children registered in the CP-CESP programme. That is when they came to know that Yamuna was missing and consulted her parents. By then, her parents had already come to know that Yamuna had married a boy. "We have already filed a complaint at police station but have not received any response or information," the parents said. CDS then informed the Ward Child Rights Committee (WCRC) of the development and requested to take quick action. The members of WCRC and CDS decided to report this case to child helpline number 1098. Through the help of Child Helpline, CDS got some information that the child got married with a guy who was already married and had a child.

Around two weeks later, CDS came to know from Yamuna's parents that she was located in Bara district and had been living with the boy's family there. CDS then requested the parents to bring Yamuna home and offered support in doing so. A month later, while the country was in COVID-19 lockdown, through frequent coordination among the police, WCRC, and Child Helpline, Yamuna's parents traveled to Bara district and brought her back. "We are thankful to have our daughter back home, we are indebted towards everyone for supporting us to bring our daughter back," said Yamuna's mother.

Following the incident, Yamuna was stressed, she always stayed home. To help her get better, she was recommended for psychosocial counseling and was referred to a counsellor. Eight months later, Yamuna's mental health is improving, and she has resumed school with support of stationary items required to continue with her study. The guy who married her is in the custody of police. Yamuna is among 561 children who have survived the consequences of child marriage through World Vision's interventions as a part of the campaign.

Changing Attitude of Law Enforcement Authorities

One of the initiatives taken during the campaign implementation period, Police Community Partnership Program (*prahari-samuday sajhedari karyakram*) where police in the working areas are actively engaged in raising awareness against child marriage, gender-based violence, human trafficking et.al. According to the Area Police Office (APO), Sukkhad Kailali, community outreach programs were launched by APO related to child marriage, domestic violence, gender-based violence, and human trafficking. Even though the formal case registration against child marriage is still very low. Community, teachers, child protection committee members, and local government officials have started reporting the case to police stations if they get information on child marriage. They also expressed that forced/arranged child marriage is visible and easy to act but it is difficult to track the marriage by self. The case study mentioned here outlined one of the cases of responsive law enforcement authorities.

End Child Marriage Rally at One Venue, Child Marriage Ceremony at Another Venue

Ward Child Protection Promotion Committee was formed in February 2018 with the support of Nari Bikash Sangh in coordination with World Vision International Nepal through the Protection Project at Biratnagar Municipality-19, Baijnathpur. The committee comprised of 16 members (5 Female and 11 Male). Throughout the World Vision's fiscal year 2018 (October 2017-September 2018), committee representatives were engaged in different programs conducted by Nari Bikash Sangh such as Protection and Menstrual Hygiene Management issues.



Jogendra, a resident of Biratnagar-19, is secretary of the Ward Child Protection and Promotion Committee and President, the Village Child Protection Committee. He is an active member and involved in many programs regarding child protection, child issues and laws. He actively participated in disseminating the message of child rights at different time periods in the community to the district level. On 8 August 2018, while children were busy organizing the "end child marriage" rally, Jogindra's youngest son of age 22, married with 16 years old girl on the same day early in the morning. After the case happened, community people registered the case in WCPPC and local Police with the support of WCPPC members. With proper counselling provided to the girl, she has returned with her parents while the guy has been imprisoned in charge of child marriage.

This case shows failure and success sides of the series of awareness level campaigns being held at the community level. The awareness-raising campaign is counted as a failure as the son of the End Child Marriage Campaigner himself got engaged in the child marriage. The same campaign is counted as a success as well, WCPPC responded on time resulting in prevention of a girl child from child marriage.

Outcome

2

Positive social norms and behavior practices are entrenched in community systems and work to empower and protect children and women from abuse (focusing on child marriage and GBV)

Children and Adolescents are Empowered on Their Rights and Responsibilities

Throughout the campaign period, empowerment of children remains in the centre. Children involved in the child club, Rupantaran club, are capacitated with different life skills based on the Rupantaran (social and financial skills package) curriculum endorsed by Government of Nepal. As a result of their involvement, they not only developed confidence but also engage in developing societal change. They have also developed good understanding on causes and consequences of child marriage i.e. early pregnancy, pregnancy complication, maternal and child death, school dropout, livelihood impact etc. Children take lead in organizing extra-curricular activities in schools. They have developed the capacity to plan and execute their plan related to harmful traditional practices including child marriage. In addition to their empowerment, the adolescents themselves became the torchbearers and have stopped 561 incidents of child marriage in WVI Nepal working areas across the six provinces of the country.

We got various capacity building opportunities from the campaign. We are now confident to speak in front of others. We have developed plan and we will submit it to the ward and rural municipality and we demand for budget allocation. We will continue our work. We coordinate with the child club networks within the Rural Municipality for continuation of the work.

Milan Saud
Chairperson, Child Club Network
Mellek Rural Municipality, Achham

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We have raised awareness and decided to run the one-hour session of child protection and child marriage in every school of Golanjor Rural Municipality. It's a very essential to enhance the knowledge of adolescents to reduce child marriage from community. Rupantaran class (life skill session) is really supporting in community to aware adolescence group.

Jamuna Koirala
Golanjor-6, Ward Child Right Committee
Member, Executive Committee of Golanjor

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Apart from their engagement in the local level, children get exposure to the national and regional forum. Those forums helped children to harness their confidence to dialogue with high level officials. The initiative around civic registration and vital statistics (CRVS), child led UNCRC report, regional child marriage forum, national community radio conference, regional child labour forum, child led advocacy and meaningful participation (CHAMP) forum helped children to increase their knowledge and capacity to influence the policy process. In those forums, children got chances to engage with Government delegates, UN representatives, CSOs including NACGs and children from the SAARC region.

Engagement of Inter Faith Leaders as Change Agents

Inter faith leaders from different religious groups come together to take actions against child marriage and harmful traditional practices. WVI Nepal established a partnership with National Inter-religious Network (NIRN) Nepal to work collectively on ending child marriage since 2021. NIRN Nepal has formed District and Palika-level Interfaith Committees in all WVI Nepal working districts of Madhesh, Gandaki and Sudurpaschim Province. The members (inter-faith leaders from different religions) have strengthened their knowledge on legal provisions on child marriage which they have implemented and shared through their actions in the communities. Inter-faith leaders have also been engaged on disseminating messages from scriptural references of their respective faiths regarding child marriage. With increased knowledge and skills, interfaith committees have taken initiatives on their own to reduce child marriage in the community by conducting awareness programs to send messages within their communities and through their religious platforms. The committees have also organized awareness campaigns in collaboration with different faith-based organizations, schools, communities where they have specially focused on educating parents, caregivers and family members about the harmful and long-term consequences of child marriage. Throughout the campaign period faith leaders are engaged in multiple ways to raise awareness, take actions and influence policy implementation. Through the engagement with faith leaders, between the period 54 incidents of child marriage have been stopped.

Engagement to Amplify Voices and Messaging in Communities and Schools to Spread Messaging of Ending Child Marriage

With an aim to increase outreach of programme, WVI Nepal established strategic partnership with PABSON with a concept of "Ten 4 Twenty". The schools were engaged in organizing extracurricular activities led by students focusing on issues affecting them. The interaction events were organized in 4 mega cities of Nepal, including Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Dhangadhi and Butwal, to create awareness on the causes and consequences of child marriage through "Ten4Twenty" concept where, 50 schools, 500 teachers and 5000 students from 5 metropolitan cities were engaged in the campaign. Participating teachers and students have been engaged in self-initiated action plans to disseminate messages of child marriage. The partnership with PABSON became an opportunity to formulate child protection measures and disseminate to the private and boarding schools. Likewise, WVI Nepal has established partnership with Dhangadhi Premier League and Little Flower Premier League in different years. The aim of the partnership was to spread the message of ending child marriage to wider communities as well as to seek solidarity of different stakeholders. The initiative called 'baal biwaha biruddha ko chakka (six against child marriage)' was very popular as and when

We have established a child club in the school. The child club members got various trainings from World Vision. Together with child club members, we visit to the communities and educate parents and community people on child marriage and its consequences. We also visit to parents when we heard about child marriage and stop the child marriage. We have stopped four cases of child marriage.

Siddha Prasad Adhikari
Head Teacher, Hirathumki High School
Tinpatan RM, Sindhuli,

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the player (batsman) hit a six in the tournament, the anchor called that six as six against child marriage. In the year 2018, 2021, and 2022, through the partnership with cricket tournament, the campaign can reach above 60000 public and spread the message on ending child marriage. World-renowned cricketer Jonty Rhodes along with National Cricket team of Nepal also gave solidarity to ending child marriage through a signature campaign during Dhangadi Premier League.

Child Marriage has been Established as an Agenda of Public Discourse

The campaign helped promote the issue of ending child marriage as an important agenda of public discourse. Through series of policy dialogues, efforts and engagement with decision-makers, CSOs, and inter-faith leaders, the issue has been established as an agenda in the public domain. As a part of policy influence, the campaign organised dialogues on child marriage with Federal Minister for Women, Children, and Senior Citizens and Chief Ministers from Koshi province, Madhesh province and, Sudurpashchim to get further reinforcement and commitment to address the issues of children.

There was more news about political issues before the campaign. After the campaign, we can see more news on social issues and particularly on child marriage. We should develop capacity of radio journalists and develop ambassador in each media to bring momentum on child marriage campaign and child marriage issues at public domain.

Deepak Acharya
Program Manager, ACORAB

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The campaign in partnership with ACORAB has been able to capture and broadcast 34,646 direct voice and commitments from the diverse group of listeners covering 66 districts for ending child marriage. The commitments made by former Prime minister, parliamentarians, youths, faith leaders, social workers, police, and parents to end child marriage were highly encouraging. The dialogues, commitments, and follow-up on commitments are of highly commendable. Similarly, capsules and public service announcement (PSA) related to child protection, education, and health were regularly broadcasted from more than 300 Community FM radios.

The campaign has been able to bring changes in social norms and practices. Children are empowered and working as change agents. The mother groups are organized and spreading message to end child marriage. The schools are performing extracurricular activities where the activities are focused on child marriage and made provision of sanitary pad for adolescent girls. The inter faith leaders are spreading message to end child marriage.

Outcome

3

Child marriage and GBV related policies are implemented effectively from the national to local level to address harmful traditional practices.

Increased Collaboration Among the Actors for Policy Influence 

WVI Nepal worked with variety of partners and key actors including Government, INGOs, CSOs and commissions. There have been regular policy dialogues organized in coordination with ACORAB and NIRN where influencers and decision makers come together to influence the policy making and implementation process.

As a part of Joining Forces⁸ alliance, joint policy dialogue organized, where more than 100 participants represented by the National Child Rights Council (NCRC), INGOs, UN, inter faith leaders, media, parents, and children are actively engaged. Similarly, WVI Nepal supported a national conference aiming to bring together all related agencies to end child marriage. The conference was coordinated by ACORAB where the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC) together with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), National Child Right Council (NCRC), UN agencies, I/NGOs, law enforcement authorities, CBOs, networks, and media actively engaged in the conference.

The regional child marriage forum on ending child marriage organized in Kathmandu created a base for an engagement of children and young people (CAYP) where children from WVI Nepal working areas engaged on influencing the policy makers for effective implementation of child marriage policy.

Collaboration with Government for Improved Implementation of Policies in the Province and Local Level 

WVI Nepal collaborated with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) in Koshi province to support the province priority of ending child marriage by 2025. With the series of engagement in the provincial level, the provincial government in Madhesh province is in the process of finalizing 'Child Marriage Free Declaration Guidelines', Sudurpaschhim province has drafted (followed with consultation) 'Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) Strategy.

Likewise, 24 municipalities and rural municipalities have endorsed and implementing the policy strategy in their respective municipalities. In the same way, 10 municipalities have formed the ending child marriage strategy and in the process of endorsing and implementing the policies.

⁸ The members of Joining Forces in Nepal are Child Fund, Japan; Plan International Nepal; Save the Children; SOS Children's Villages Nepal; Terre des homes International Federation; and World Vision International Nepal.

Similarly, WVI Nepal's campaign, namely "It Takes Nepal to End Child Marriage" has been contentiously owned by the Sudurpashchim Province Government and in each of the year, provincial Government has been allocating the resources to scale up the campaign in the districts of Sudurpaschhim province.

९.२. “सानै छु म बढ्न देउ, बाल विवाह होइन पढ्न देउ” भन्ने नाराका साथ बालविवाह अन्त्य गर्न प्रदेश सभा सदस्य, स्थानीय तहका पदाधिकारी, सामाजिक संघ संस्था, गैर-सरकारी संस्थाको समेतको संलग्नतामा अभियान संचालन गर्ने कार्यक्रमलाई थप विस्तार गरी वझाङ्ग, वाजुरा, अछाम र दार्चुलाका सबै स्थानीय तहमा विस्तार गरिनेछ, जसका लागि रु. १ करोड ६० लाख विनियोजन गरेको छ।

Partnering with Diverse Organisations

To bring multifaceted positive outcomes requires multi-sectorial response. The campaign has therefore worked, in partnership, collaboration, and coordination, with a wide range of government and non-government agencies from national to local levels. The campaign has established strategic partnerships with 17 different organisations i.e. PABSON, NARMIN, SAARC Law, Shilpee Theatre, SAIEVAC, Kathmandu University, Consortium Nepal, and CG among others, bringing their distinct and unique experience to end child marriage. The partnership with these organisations has brought notable results in terms of policy dialogue, policy formulation, changing religious and cultural misconceptions, commitment to ending child marriage, capacity strengthening of rights holders to claim their rights and duty bearers to respond to the right holders' demand.

Outcome 4

Multi-sectorial response to end child marriage.

Though ending child marriage is a major concern of child protection, WVI Nepal put a conscious effort to provide a multi-sectorial response to the campaign. At the field level, WVI Nepal worked with mother groups in health programme, School Management Committees, and Parents Teachers Association under education, Rupantaran leaders and graduates under Protection, and SKYE Club members under Youth & Economic Development programme.

Even though the focus of the campaign doesn't aim to stop child marriage, through our engagement at the community level, the empowered children and adolescent group coordinate with service providers have been able to stop 561 incidents of child marriages. Rupantaran leaders were active to seek commitments from the local government to end child marriage. The Rupantaran Club of Morang and Kailali handed over a letter of Memorandum Local Government as well as police

My son was 17 years old, I had planned for his marriage with 21 years old girl. All the preparation done for marriage ceremony and send the invitation to neighbors as well. Certainly, child club members suggested me to cancel his marriage. However, I ignore them. Later again the Ward child Protection Committee and police person came to my house and told me to stop the marriage. They have suggested me about the legal procedure and disadvantage of child marriage as well. I felt that, I need to follow the law and I decided to stop my son marriage. I was also suggested my son to do marriage after 20.

Tok Bahadur Khulala
Tinpatan 11, Lamsar

66

making an appeal to act to end child marriage.

In course of implementing the campaign, WVI Nepal adopted different approaches which helped to raise awareness and influence policies at different levels. Some of the highlights are:

Engagement with Media

WVI Nepal engaged with different media to raise awareness on ending child marriage. By engaging with the media houses and media persons, there have been series of dialogues, commitment from the service providers and continuous messaging to alert children, adolescents and service providers were organized. The partnership with ACORAB helped on ensuring commitment from the decision makers and duty bearers. Likewise, the voices collected from children and adolescents urged the Government to ensure effective policy implementation at all levels. Out of 36,464 recorded voices, most of them were of children and adolescents. The local government representatives and civil society organisations committed to end child marriage. During the policy dialogue with the commissioner of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) not only urged for joint actions but also different NHRIs shown their commitment to continue the momentum on ending child marriage.

Bringing attention from different sectors

Ending child marriage has been established as a concern of all sectors. Though, it is a major child protection concern, throughout the campaign implementation period, focus has been given to ensure collaboration from other sectors. As a result, teachers, FCHVs, mother's group, SKYE club members, religious leaders, farmers group, academia are engaged in different ways to take actions against child marriage.

Collaboration with Government

One of the major approaches adopted for leveraging campaign initiatives is the collaboration with Government. WVI Nepal established close coordination and collaboration with ministries and municipalities to implement their priorities related to ending child marriage. As a result of collaboration, child marriage strategies have been endorsed and formulated in 34 municipalities. The provincial Government has endorsed and allocated resources to continue the momentum of child marriage campaign.

Engagement with Inter Faith leaders

Engagement with the inter faith leaders found to be an effective as change agents to address child marriage. Leaders from different religions come together to spread the message against child marriage. The leaders also worked for stopping child marriage in their respective communities as a result of that 54 incidents of child marriage have been stopped. Between the period 2021 – 2023, a total of 1031 inter-faith leaders from different religious groups have been engaged to support the movement.

Collaboration with multi stakeholders

Several stakeholders with different areas of expertise have been engaged in the process of campaign implementation at the regional, national and local level. In the regional level, WVI Nepal collaborates with SAIEVAC, Joining Forces, SAARC Law and in the national and local level WVI Nepal collaborates with ACORAB, NARMIN, NIRN, PABSON, child protection structures, law enforcement authorities, I/NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, teachers, parents, youth, adolescents and children worked hand-in-hand to end child marriage.

Empowering children & adolescents as change makers

Empowering and ensuring the leadership of children and adolescents is in the major focus throughout the campaign. Children and are organized in child clubs, Rupantaran clubs, SKYE clubs and capacitated with different life and protective skills. Those children and adolescents played crucial role to end child marriage in their communities through various means i.e. street drama, extracurricular activities, speech competition, memorandum handover to the political leaders. They actively engaged in the in dialogues with Government and ensure accountability of leaders to continue their commitment on ending child marriage.

Lobby and advocacy for resource collaboration

Through the strategic partnership with Government and CSOs, WVI Nepal advocates with Government and CSOs to make the focus on ensuring effective resource collaboration. The campaign has been able to collaborate with the local and province government to formulate end child marriage strategy, child marriage free ward declaration and child friendly local governance declarations i.e. the campaign contributed Rs. 35,000.00 whereas ward office contributed around Rs. 100,000 for declaration of child marriage free ward in Kathari, Morang.

6.1 Key learnings

In its seven years journey of implementing the campaign, WVI Nepal has been able to acquaint with the issue closely by having a close initiation and interaction with it. As a result, some learning assumptions are verified further and some new learnings have been achieved. These learnings may help decision makers to continue the momentum of initiative related to ending child marriage.

Child Marriage Is Multifaceted and Contextual Issue 

Child marriage is an issue related to different sectors. In many instances it is interlinked and provoked by poverty, illiteracy, culture (mostly the malpractices), values and many more. At the same time, it is contextual. The driving factors in the upper hills or mountain are different than the Terai. In some families and circumstances girls are considered as burden to family economy and it is considered that after the marriage, it is the responsibility of grooms' family. The dowry system and gender disparity existed in Terai region is not much prevalent in the mountain and hilly region. The

caste system and patriarchal values (giving low value to girls and women in family) are other driving factors related to child marriage.

Child Marriage Caused Adverse Consequences on Adolescents' Girls

Early marriage resulting with teen age pregnancy cause adverse impacts on different aspects of adolescent's girls including the physical and mental health, their education, the economic status of the families as drop out in school education provokes reduced earning in adulthood, social impacts in the communities (as child spouses might struggle to earn a living) and deprivation from the rights (as the marriage is not registered).

Social Restrictions and Gap on Proper Life Skills During Adolescence Age

During the adolescence stage, young people are facing different physical, emotional and behavioural changes and in many circumstances, they are not able handle by themselves and also not get positive support from the family and society. Have attraction to opposite sex, curiosity on their body changes guides them to break the rigid restrictions in society. Nepalese society in general and the area where WVI Nepal works limits the adolescents to make close friends from opposite sex considered taboo. And the gap of having proper life skills education and their attempt to break the social restrictions is leading adolescents to have early marriage.

The section 219 of the *Muluki Criminal Code, 2017 (2074 BS)*, recognizes the issue related to pre-marital sex by mentioning that a girl has the right to give consent for sexual relations at the age of 18 years, whereas the legal age of marriage is 20 years for both women and men. However, the awareness on this issue among parents and family is not much and at even if they know, they want to restrict them with appropriate information on sexual and reproductive education, body changes and safe sex. These restrictions are resulting with the incidence of child marriage, unwanted pregnancy, mental instability, suicide et.al.

Increasing Trend of Marriage by Self-Initiated Marriage

There is a shift on the tendency of child marriage from parents' involvement to self-initiated or early and child marriage initiated by the adolescents and youth in WVI Nepal's working areas. Those marriages are imposed with the love affairs between opposite sex where parents don't get clue or parents are not also in the stage to delay their marriage until their legal age.

Again, self-initiated marriages are triggered with different factors and out of many, the exposure of children and adolescents in new media and their access to internet is causing them to have increased opportunities for wider interactions. This has been challenging the notion of marriage within the caste groups, defined/standard geographical locations, defined standards of rituals and standard practices (bride going to grooms house after marriage).

Early and Child Marriage Is Huge Loss to Economy

Child marriage directly impacts on the loss of economy of children, adolescent and youth in their personal as well as societal level. In many stances those who did early and child marriage are not able to continue their education and when they have children they need to take care of that. After

marriage, girls are forced to work inside house and boys are in the outside work, wage labour, and often foreign employment. The increase family pressure to take care of their family members and children obliged them to engaged in menial blue-collar jobs due to the lack of quality education and experience. This jeopardization ultimately leads to the loss on their productive age which ultimately impact to the national economy.

Missing to Address Child Marriage on Time may Derail to Fulfil National Commitments

Government of Nepal has an ambition and obligation to end child marriage by 2030 as a part of global commitment on Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030 (SDGs), periodic plan and other commitments. Goal 5, target 5.3, entails 'eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.' However, the progress made so far on this indicator is not satisfactory and if we see the trend of child marriage declination, it is 32.8% in 2021 however it 33.5% in year 2016.

Limited budget allocation for children from Government is limiting initiatives relating to addressing child marriage and other forms of violence against children

Eliminating child marriage and all forms of violence requires a strong political commitment. Along with the commitment there should be an increased budget allocation for children. Given to the mandate of federalism, the provincial and local governments are free to decide on allocating the budget however, if we see the trend, there is still a huge gap on investing on children.

6.2 Way Forward

Addressing the national commitment of ending child marriage by 2030, the stakeholders working against child marriage should address this issue consciously, collectively and collaboratively. Analysing the contextual factors and emerging trends on child marriage can only give the way out to address this issue. Given child marriage is a cross-cutting issue, addressing one reason or consequences of it may lead to generate another reason and consequence.

The federalization of the country has given enormous spaces and opportunities by bringing the Government in the door step of all families. Making the Government proactive on enforcing policy, guidelines and strategies, effective implementation and monitoring of those regulations is quite essential.

In more specific level, following way out has been suggested based on the learnings and achievements;

Continual Campaign and Awareness for Children and Adolescents on their Rights and Responsibilities

Empowering children and adolescents on their rights and responsibilities to take an informed decision should be the continuous priority and focus of the Government and all sectors. While doing so, those initiatives should be continued as campaign in the local level where local Government, political parties' leaders, community leaders, religious leader should come together. Likewise,

enhancing appropriate knowledge base, sharing the consequences of early and child marriage, providing positive messaging (focusing the survivors) in the community should be there.

Strengthening the System of Child Protection at Local Level and Making them Responsive to Children and Adolescents

Establishing and strengthening the child protection system in local level is the key gateway for ending child marriage. As stated in the State of Children Report 2080 BS of NCRC, until FY 2079/80, 373 local level Government out of 753 formulated the procedures related to child protection and promotions, 41% of rural municipalities and municipalities established child rights committee, 40% has nominated and appointed child welfare officer and 32% has established child fund. The procedure, child rights committee, appointment of child welfare officer, child fund and listing of social worker and psychosocial counsellor are the key aspects in which Government should keep immediate attention. Following to that, Government should formulate comprehensive strategies to end child marriage in alignment with national priorities and global commitments.

Empower and Engage Community Leaders, Religious Leaders, Parents and Family Members

Creating enabling environment in community and within family is very much essential to maximize the positive change in the life of children and adolescents so that they can take informed decisions. Informing, engaging and empowering the religious and traditional leaders on the negative impact of child marriage should be in priority and at the same time engaging them as agents of change can help on promoting the campaign further. The behaviour from the parents in family setting should be friendly so that, children and adolescent can share about their changes and development openly to the parents. Engaging men and boys as champion of violence against women and girls help on promoting ending child marriage initiatives as well as other forms of violence.

Update, Endorse and Implement the Strategy Related to Child Marriage

The national strategy to end child marriage developed in 2016, should be reviewed and updated in alignment and harmonization of legal systems including civil, criminal, family and customary as well as changed federal system. The effective inter-ministerial coordination in federal and provincial level and coordination between different units in the local level is very much essential. Likewise, the local level law enforcement authorities should be capacitated to respond to cases of child marriage.

Engage Multi Stakeholders Including Interfaith Leaders to Have Collective and Collaborative Actions

Multi-stakeholders, and multi-sectoral response is required to address the multifaceted aspects of child marriage. Government (at all levels), CSOs, private sector, academia, media, children and adolescents, community gate keepers including the inter-faith leaders should act collectively and collaboratively. The collaborative action should be envisioned further by the national strategy and Government mechanism should do the continuous monitoring on that.

Increase Budget Allocation for Children

The federal Government should allocate more budget to children and adolescent so that province and local government can act proactively on the issues related to children. And at the same time, local government should mandatorily provision dedicated (with minimum target) budget allocation for children in their trajectory. Having required resource help on establishing and strengthening the programmes related to children.

Generating Evidence for Policy Influence

Comprehensive and targeted research and documentation to certain communities and groups around child marriage is still the gap given their uniqueness on context and other societal aspects. Having more evidences help the policy makers to formulate right policy and programming.

Case Management Approach to The Survivors of Child Marriage

Local government should development their management information system (MIS) and urge for compulsory reporting the incidents of child marriage. After identifying the survivors, there should be proper support and referral mechanisms ensured by local government.

