



Program Summary

Tipping Point: Digging Up the Roots of Child Marriage to Replant the Future

OVERVIEW CARE's Tipping Point project addresses child marriage through a dynamic process of **innovation**, **insight**, and **influence** through advocacy in Nepal and Bangladesh. With the generous support of the Kendeda Fund, the project focuses on identifying the root causes of child marriage and facilitates innovative strategies to create alternative paths for adolescent girls. Grounded by this work, the project also seeks to influence the way policymakers, donors, researchers, and civil society approach the issue of child marriage, specifically to steer the global discourse beyond short-term solutions.

In 16 sub-districts of Nepal and 90 villages of Bangladesh, the project works with adolescent girls and boys, parents, community and religious leaders, and nationally with networks of social activists, experts, and government agencies. These areas are both **geographically** and **economically** isolated from other regions. CARE expects this learning and innovation initiative to contribute to global understanding of the complex issues driving child marriage and strategies that can contribute to a "tipping point" of sustainable change to prevent child marriage and create viable alternative paths for adolescent girls.

Innovation

EXPLORING NEW PATHS, MATCHING SOLUTIONS TO LOCAL CONTEXTS

Child marriage is not restricted by religion, country, income bracket, or level of education. It disproportionately affects girls around the world because their rights, well-being, and potential are undervalued. Additionally, each community has complex and particular reasons for child marriage. The Tipping Point project's goal is to match our strategies to the drivers of child marriage in each context.

In Nepal and Bangladesh, child marriage is rooted in a complex dynamic of **limited choices and material resources** (economic insecurity, lack of livelihood options, household labor) and **prevailing social norms** about family honor, control of sexuality, and the low social status of girls. The Tipping Point teams are developing methods to:

ENGAGE

...communities, families, individuals, government, academia, development, media and staff to critically reflect on child marriage, gender equity and rights.

TRANSFORM

...adolescent self efficacy, relationships in the home, and systems and structures, so girls can exercise their sexual and reproductive rights.

AMPLIFY

...the voices of girls with diverse stakeholders from community up to national and global levels.

OUR VISION OF CHANGE

ITERATIVE LEARNING



Create spaces for dialogue between adolescents, parents, and other community members to promote communication, trust, and support for gender equity and rights



Deepen girls, boys, parents, and community members' critical awareness of gender equity and rights, and promote solidarity within peer groups



Promote positive/gender equitable norms through exemplifying and celebrating alternative behaviors



Encourage networks, solidarity groups, and organizations to collaborate, shift discourse, and take action to support gender equitable opportunities for girls' and boys'

TIPPING POINT



Gender equitable social norms

STAFF ENGAGE IN ONGOING SELF-REFLECTION AROUND GENDER AND POWER

Tipping Point is engaging in an iterative approach.

As actors engage and issues emerge, our approach helps us tailor and adapt our strategies to promote social norms that support gender equitable opportunities.

Insight

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING TO FIND THE BEST PATHS TO A TIPPING POINT

The monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach for this initiative is driven by a focus on facilitating innovation and prioritizing learning. The MEL design is built on **Developmental** and **Feminist** evaluation principles. The project is using **Outcome Mapping** as its core design, monitoring and learning tool. This supports an iterative process in which as actors engage, and issues emerge, shift, and take unexpected turns, we can tailor our strategies to new situations.

Influence

CREATING CHANGE THROUGH LOCAL TO GLOBAL ADVOCACY

CARE has developed new and strong relationships with a diverse range of actors – donors, policymakers, researchers, activists, I/NGOs in national and international arenas for action on child marriage. Tipping Point's influence strategy seeks to use learning and documentation from field experience to support action by local, national, and global coalitions, activists, and decision-makers' against child marriage. Advocacy efforts extend beyond a focus on formal policies - such as age of marriage laws - to include efforts to influence social and cultural institutions that drive gender discrimination and contribute to child marriage.

Specifically in the US foreign policy context, CARE co-chairs the Girls Not Brides USA (GNB USA), a leading US based coalition which is part of the Girls Not Brides Global Network. Over the past year, GNB and CARE have engaged strategically with key US Government (USG) officials through meetings, events, and key moments to encourage implementation of financial and policy commitments to prevent child marriage and support married adolescents. For example CARE and fellow co-chairs, International

Marriage is seen as an end point, and along with that thinking comes the calculation to invest in dowry rather than other options (like education).



SPOTLIGHT: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The communities in which CARE works are under stress because they are both socially marginalized and economically isolated. There is recognition among parents and community members of the risks and harms associated with early marriage in terms of undermining the health and well-being of girls and their children. However, there are limited choices and material resources, and prevailing social norms that factor in. For parents, it is a difficult decision but one that often ends with the perceived risks of marrying a girl young being outweighed by the perceived benefits in terms of lower dowry, family respect, avoiding risk of love affairs, finding an acceptable match, and reducing the family's economic burdens. Based on Tipping Point's research the following drivers contribute to this practice in these contexts:

The marriage process is complex...

It is a complex set of steps and exchanges involving families, neighbors, business interests and government people – each with a specific interest and influence in the process. Throughout this, though, the voices and decision-making power of the adolescents themselves is absent/negligible, against the authority of fathers and brothers. When adolescents, especially girls, try to assert their choices around if, who, and when to marry, they are often stigmatized by their families and communities.

Dowry mirrors and perpetuates unequal gender norms...

Dowry is an expected exchange within the marriage process that make economically constrained parents feel compelled to decide between investing in education or a dowry for their daughters. Given normative expectations for girls to marry and live with their in-laws (and not engage in work outside the household), girls are not viewed as having future careers. Marriage is seen as an end point, and along with that thinking comes the calculation to invest in dowry rather than other options (like education). From a community perspective, worries over dowry and views toward girls as economic burdens can lead to decisions for earlier marriage. This is especially applicable for poorer families, since dowry prices are lower for younger girls. Dowries reflect and reinforce broader social norms that value girls for their potential reproductive and domestic roles, and value boys for their potential income-earning roles.

Family honor is tightly linked to girls' sexuality...

Social pressures around family honor are key drivers for early marriage. Families want to secure their daughters future, and do not want to face threats to her character if she remains unmarried for too long after reaching puberty, or risk compromising the family's honor from love affairs/marriages. Once a girl hits puberty there is a general notion among adults that any interaction with the opposite sex involves some sort of sexual or "love" connotation i.e. there is an absence of any kind of model for platonic relationships between boys and girls and an overall fear of any intermingling between adolescent girls and boys.

Risks outweighed by the perceived benefits...

For parents in particular the perceived risks of marrying a girl young are outweighed by the perceived benefits in terms of lower dowry, family respect, avoiding risk of love affairs, finding an acceptable match, and reducing the family's economic burdens.

Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), led the coalition in developing and disseminating a detailed policy memo outlining steps the USG government could take to integrate child marriage prevention and response into key development sectors and diplomatic efforts. The key messages from the memo were shared with staff from various parts of the USG at an inter-agency consultation co-hosted by GNB in July 2014.

Another goal of the project is to broaden the discourse amongst donors, researchers, and policy makers beyond focusing only on education and poverty and towards addressing root causes, tackling social norms, addressing issues of sexuality, applying a comprehensive approach and addressing the needs of married girls. As such, Tipping Point plans to document and disseminate research and programming findings amongst a broad audience, to help expand the conversation.

Our Partners

FINDING LOCAL SOLUTIONS WITH LOCAL PARTNERS

Ending child marriage depends on finding local solutions that address local causes and respond to the needs of the communities where we work. CARE is pleased to work with local partners to reach communities to ensure that we can end child marriage for good.



Siddhartha Samuyadayik Samaj NEPAL

Founded in 2003 years ago, SSS's vision is a fair and equitable society, and their mission is to create social and economic and health empowerment for women to change their status in society. With 9 board members and 110 members, 105 of whom are women, SSS currently has programming in 30 VDCs, with partnerships with CARE, World Vision, the United Mission, and local and national federations. SSS's areas of expertise are WASH, anti-trafficking, education, gender awareness, women's empowerment and advocacy, and community health.



Association for Slum Dwellers BANGLADESH

Since its inception in 1988, ASD has worked to ensure poor peoples' participation in development. ASD's focus is to ensure that poor people have support so they can change their own lives. Its mission is to encourage the poor to create solidarity, build skills, link to resources, improve their bargaining position, and have income earning opportunities. ASD works to improve its clients' quality of life through social, institutional and public resources.



Dalit Social Development Center NEPAL

DSDC's vision is to promote a self-reliant and dignified Dalit society, with a mission to mobilize Dalits in a participatory way and to facilitate their access to and control over local resources. They also work to inform community groups of their rights, and facilitate their access to rights and resources by linking them to local networks and governments. Their priority groups are the poorest of the poor, poor, vulnerable, and socially excluded women, illiterates, and minority ethnic groups, as well as areas that are more rural and less aware of girls' and Dalits' rights.



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Jaintia Shinnomul Songstha BANGLADESH

JASHIS is a non-profit organization based in the Sylhet district of Bangladesh. JASHIS conducts most of its work through a participatory approach that considers everyone's perspective. JASHIS values providing everyone with an opportunity to participate in the planning process, and a role in decision making. JASHIS has gathered knowledge and skill through extensive training on PRA tools, and the team applies their learning during all stages of a project.

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