



TIPPING POINT - NEPAL

PHASE 1 EVALUATION FINDINGS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PHASE 1 OF CARE'S TIPPING POINT PROJECT addressed child marriage through a dynamic process of innovation, insight, and influence in two districts of Nepal in partnership with Siddhartha Samudayik Samaj (SSS) and Dalit Social Development Centre (DSDC). In its first phase, the project promoted girls' rights and choices regarding marriage in 16 communities using complementary approaches with collectives of girls, boys, and parents, who regularly participated in meetings, and advocacy events to raise public awareness and promote gender-equitable social norms. The project also engaged allies and potential champions for girls' rights, including government and civil society, to help drive social change and direct more resources towards girls' empowerment in project communities.



At the conclusion of Phase 1, an external evaluation team visited project sites in Kapilvastu and Rupandehi to conduct qualitative data collection with girls, boys, parents, and community members.¹ The evaluation team's findings indicate that Tipping Point's iterative and adaptive strategies have contributed to several changes in the lives of girls, the actions of parents and community members to support girls, and social norms that promote gender equity. Among the results:

Girls demonstrated growth in their communication and negotiation skills, personal aspirations, and practical knowledge. Notably, girls demonstrated increased reflection and understanding of themselves and their desires and aspirations for their futures, in a context where girls are not commonly encouraged to have thoughts about the course of their lives. Similarly, girls' expectations for marriage and the ideal age of marriage evolved into wanting a later marriage, with simultaneous *gauna*,² to a man who will share daily household chores. Through life skills education, girls gained skills in self-advocacy: there were many examples of girls asserting their rights with family members over important life events, such as marriage, and smaller matters like time to socialize. Sexuality education increased girls' knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, especially in menstrual hygiene management but also family planning. Tipping Point also supported livelihood skills development in some areas. Lastly, girls took on visible roles leading and organizing community events that challenged traditional gender roles and supported girls' rights.

¹ <https://caretippingpoint.org>

² *Gauna* refers to the consummation of marriage within the Hindu religion, in the Southern belt of Nepal. Once a young girl is married, she will continue to live with her parents until after menarche. On the day of her *gauna*, her conjugal life begins, and she joins her husband's family household.

Boys grew into better brothers for their sisters and started to think critically about their place in a family. The most notable change among boys was a new appreciation of women’s traditional duties in the home like cooking, sewing, and washing clothes. Through group exercises to map girls’ and boys’ use of time, public competitions for boys in cooking and sewing, and other project activities, boys came to understand that their sisters had a greater burden of labor and that it was skilled labor. They began taking on more household work to allow sisters to study and relax and advocated for them with parents. Boys also advocated for girls in their communities by participating in street dramas about child marriage, dowry violence, and other issues, and joining girls in girls’ other advocacy work. When it came to their own marriages, boys wanted to marry later than their older peers, but they showed varied levels of change in the qualities they desired in a future marriage.

Parents demonstrated a greater commitment to their daughters’ educations and defended girls’ rights to be active citizens. Parents grew increasingly supportive of sending their daughters to school and prioritized school attendance over household work. There were many cases of girls returning to school, sometimes facilitated by scholarships awarded through the project. Parents also indicated that they had begun to give more value to a girl’s ability to be self-reliant, make decisions for herself, and play a role in the community. Related to these changes, adolescents and parents alike reported better communication with each other.

Government and civil society agencies collaborated with the project. Tipping Point built relationships with local agencies and actors, some of whom were already strong advocates for girls, such as Village Child Protection Committees (VCPCs), and others who sometimes opposed more equitable social norms for girls. Some religious leaders, for example, were active with the project and sought closer collaboration, while some rejected the project’s messages. Government groups were increasingly responsive as they came to know the project and its mission, and some Village Development Committees funded sports equipment and community meeting spaces for adolescents. School Management Committees in some locations started providing menstrual pads and changing facilities for girls, which improved girls’ school attendance.



Tipping Point project staff found themselves thinking in new ways and doing things they never imagined.

Because local staff were the faces of Tipping Point, the project prioritized fostering their own personal transformation on issues of gender and power. Through workshops and personal reflections, staff internalized a critical awareness of the role of gender in their lives and discovered new capabilities in leading personal and social change. Despite challenges, staff reported pride in tackling tough issues like sexuality education with communities.

Key social norms that restrict girls' opportunities and autonomy loosened slightly. Adolescent girls who participated in Tipping Point activities realized the biggest change in their families' and communities' expectations of them as compared to girls who did not join Tipping Point groups. Members of Tipping Point groups gained greater freedom to move around their village, ride bicycles, play sports outdoors, work with boys to organize community events, and express their opinions. Still, there was some normative diffusion from the project outward into communities, so that, for example, friends of boys in Tipping Point groups were more likely to say that they planned to share household work with their future wives. Girls faced social approbation through gossip and criticism of their non-traditional behaviors, but with the support of parents and each other, they largely disregarded it, demonstrating resilience in the face of sanctions for behavior outside the norm. There were also potential signs that economic considerations that families make in the process of marrying children may be shifting. Parents provided new justifications for delaying marriage based on reducing ceremonial costs and lower dowry prices when girls are educated or earning an income.

In just a few years, Tipping Point has made significant progress in mobilizing advocates for girls' rights and in shifting social norms related to child marriage in Nepal. It is difficult to measure the impact of Tipping Point on the frequency of child marriage itself, but there were many stories of marriages averted through the intervention of parents, boys, and girls involved with the project or in conjunction with local groups like the VCPC.

The successes of Tipping Point to date have not fully overcome the many barriers girls continue to face in realizing their potential and achieving agency in key life decisions. However, there are successes that hold promise for the Tipping Point approach to social norm change and girls' empowerment. Tipping Point is unique in its active engagement of boys as brothers and future husbands, and the transformation of boys into advocates for girls is a surprising result that deserves attention. In addition, the project piloted new ways of operationalizing social norm change work, with programming according to a set of Social Norms Programming principles that include focusing on positive messages about girls rather than the negative outcomes of child marriage.³ Tipping Point also deployed innovative ways of measuring social norms and normative change, based on CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) framework tool,⁴ which can inform academic and program design thinking.

As the project enters its second phase, key goals will be to build upon the strong results achieved within the core girls', boys', and parents' groups to deepen the process of social norm change throughout communities. The project's model of diffusion, whereby group members engage intensively with the project and become community role models in inspiring social norm change, has worked to an extent but is uneven, requiring more effort to reach and make a difference to more marginalized groups such as girls who remain out of school. Strengthening networks of supporters will also increase the resonance of project messaging and will encourage more allies to take action and drive resources to girls. Like-minded religious leaders represent an opportunity for the project to expand its message's reach beyond the current project sites. Finally, in Phase 1, the potential of income generation to delay marriages of adolescent girls was not fully explored, and girls will benefit from more financial literacy and livelihood skills.

³ See the Social Norms Programming Principles in the Innovation Briefs at <https://caringpoint.org/innovation/>.

⁴ For more information on the SNAP framework, see <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/care-social-norms-paper-web.pdf>.



PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL NORMS PROGRAMMING ADDRESSING CEFM

CREATE SPACES FOR MORE INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

Hold joint dialogue sessions with girls', boys', and parents' groups together so that all can benefit from shared discussions and learnings and can develop mutual respect and understanding. Separate sessions that are gender and age-specific are still important and effective moments for facilitating learning and conversation among peers in safe spaces, but joint dialogue sessions can allow for shared learning and discussions between groups.

CREATE TARGETED STRATEGIES FOR DIFFUSION OF PROJECT MESSAGING

Take deliberate steps to include community members (including adolescents) who are not directly involved in a project to attend and participate in public activities that promote social norm change. Develop targeted strategies for engaging different segments of the population and encouraging their interaction with peers who are directly or intensively involved in programming.



SCALE UP WORK WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Engage a larger number of religious leaders so that they can build a supportive network and be consistent in their actions and messaging about child marriage. Work with leaders from different religions to develop materials that are aligned with their respective faiths but that also enable them to amplify progressive social norms that promote girls' rights.

HELP OLDER GIRL GROUP MEMBERS "GRADUATE" TO BECOME ADULT CHAMPIONS

Encouraging older girls to remain involved in the project and offering a path to community leadership can help older girls to continue developing skills after they age out of groups. Mentorship of younger girls is one option for engaging girl group members as they become adults, giving them a structure for continuing to be role models. This would also have a positive demonstration effect on their communities, demonstrating how girls who participate in groups can mature into strong and respected women.

PROVIDE FINANCIAL AND INCOME GENERATION SKILLS TO GIRLS

Investments that ease financial pressures create goodwill within communities that may facilitate receptiveness to social norms messaging. Out of school girls in particular need alternatives to marriage, and income generating activities help girls to have autonomy and reduce the perception of unmarried girls being a "burden" on their household.

TAILOR SEXUALITY EDUCATION TO THE CHANGING MARRIAGE CONTEXT

As the age of marriage and *gauna* are rising, sexuality education must respond to a changing context in which adolescents are expected to delay sexual activity for a longer time. It damages a girl's honor for her to interact



with a boy, yet she is expected to wait until at least age 20 before starting married life. Age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education for girls must meet the needs of both younger and older adolescent girls and boys, recognizing that there is a cultural preference for abstinence but that young people need adequate information to be able to make their own sexual and reproductive choices.

PROVIDE EDUCATION AND SUPPORT FOR THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Girls and boys are starting to communicate using mobile phones. Planning early to teach adolescents about responsible use alongside practical skills for using technology to improve their lives will help to promote safe usage while empowering youth with greater access to information.

INVEST IN TRAININGS AND CONTENT SPECIFICALLY FOCUSED ON EQUITABLE MASCULINITIES

Meaningful engagement of men and boys in gender equality requires planned and specific engagement with content and discussions on masculinity and versions of it that are expansive and equitable. Invest in the development and facilitation of discussions on masculinities as a core part of programming.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ENGAGE CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PUBLIC TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGEMENT WITH NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Following elections in 2017 and the restructuring of government administration systems, the government of Nepal has an opportunity to engage civil society and the public to promote understanding of the working and mandates of new governance structures and to ensure that key stakeholders (including non-governmental organizations) are able to work with federal, provincial and local bodies to achieve common goals. The evaluation shows some positive examples of how building relationships between the project and local governments has helped to garner resources for girls and to work with structures such as the VCPCs to promote girls' rights, which contributes to achieving national goals such as ending child marriage by 2030. A systematized approach to resource allocation to ensure girls' rights are fulfilled would include gender responsive planning and budgeting at municipal level.

IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

In 2016, the Nepal government adopted a national strategy to end child marriage. The strategy presents opportunities for concrete action to tackle the root causes and consequences of child marriage. A draft plan of action to implement the strategy has been submitted to the government by the Girls Not Brides (GNB) Network of Nepal. The government should take steps to approve the action plan, including ensuring adequate consultations and review of the plan by relevant ministries and civil society stakeholders and providing dedicated resource. Additionally, the government can support accountability and coordination mechanisms for implementation at federal and local level. Community leaders, religious leaders, men and boys, civil society organizations, and multiple levels of government have shown a willingness to engage in and support efforts to end child marriage and would benefit from inclusion in consultative processes in order to have a feasible and effective national action plan to end child marriage.



CREATE/STRENGTHEN PLATFORMS FOR YOUTH, INCLUDING GIRLS, TO ENGAGE IN GOVERNMENT POLICY PROCESSES AND DECISION-MAKING

A key finding from the evaluation is that, in some communities, girls have been able to positively engage with government representatives and service providers, including schools, public health posts, and the Village Development Committee (VDC) offices, leading them to involve girls in programs and seeking girls' opinions on how the programs should be run. As the new decentralized system of local and provincial governance starts being implemented across the country, the government should create or strengthen platforms or processes for meaningful engagement of adolescent girls and young people in decision-making and policymaking at all levels. This engagement will help ensure that youths' needs and rights are represented and promote youth leadership and civil engagement. The National Youth Policy can provide an initial framework for this work, coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

INTEGRATE AND SCALE UP STRATEGIES TO CHANGE DISCRIMINATORY NORMS AS PART OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

The findings of the evaluation show the promise of approaches aimed at shifting discriminatory norms and expanding community perceptions of the potential roles and contributions of girls to their communities beyond household duties. There is an opportunity for new government actors at federal and local level to increase support for such promising approaches and strategies, including through collaboration and support for efforts by youth and civil society organizations to mobilize communities and through integration of norm change strategies and approaches within large-scale development programs across various sectors.



ENSURE THAT GOVERNMENT SERVICES, INCLUDING HEALTH SERVICES, ARE YOUTH-FRIENDLY

With the development of a new adolescent health and development strategy (2017), government bodies and departments at local and federal levels have an opportunity to promote and strengthen adolescents' and young people's access to critical health and social services, especially in remote and marginalized communities. It is critical for the government to integrate services for adolescents into existing sexual and reproductive health services, quality assurance, and funding.⁵ Girls highly valued Tipping Point's focus on sexual and reproductive health knowledge, particularly for menstrual management, indicating that there is an unmet need among adolescents for timely and youth-friendly health and social services.

STRENGTHEN THE PROVISION OF AGE-APPROPRIATE AND COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

The government's current efforts in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to develop a new comprehensive sexuality education curriculum are welcome. Tipping Point staff reported that discussing sexuality was one of the most challenging aspects of their work, noting that schoolteachers are not currently providing adequate sexuality education to students and that there continues to be some resistance in communities to these efforts. The government should ensure adequate resources and capacity for delivery and implementation of the curricula in schools but also ensure outreach to out-of-school girls and boys, parents and community members to reduce taboos around sexual and reproductive health and rights and equip adolescents to make informed decisions.

INVEST IN SKILLS TRAINING FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES TO EXPAND CHOICES AND CREATE ALTERNATIVES TO CHILD MARRIAGE

The government should invest in life skills training and vocational programs for adolescent girls and young people, particularly those out of school, to create viable alternatives to early marriage. Evaluation respondents reported highly positive views of girls who contributed to household income through income generating activities such as sewing, reversing views of unmarried girls as a "burden" on their families. Skills training strategies should include diverse ways to connect young people from remote and marginalized communities to vocational, livelihoods, and employment opportunities and markets and supporting infrastructure and access to services and programs that can transform the geographic isolation of communities.

⁵ <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/95/2/17-020217/en/>



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Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. Last year CARE worked in 93 countries and reached 63 million people around the world. To learn more, visit www.care.org.

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