



Story from the Field

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

Together We Stand

Shushila Yadav and Gongotri Yadav are sisters. They are bright, capable, and ambitious. Meeting young women like them in a small village like Maryadpur, which lies in Rupandehi district in Nepal, is not all common. However with role models like them, this may soon be changing as many girls look up to them for inspiration.



*Shushila Yadav and Gongotri Yadav
Maryadpur VDC, Rupandehi, Nepal*

Twenty year old Shushila Yadav is currently pursuing her High School Degree in Education. She hopes to

become a teacher someday so that she can educate the children in her village. She is confident and outspoken and easily bursts into youthful giggles. This is a stark contrast from how she was only four years ago.

“I told my parents of the social and physical repercussions of marrying early. Initially my father did not listen to me- they don’t really listen to girls and women in my community.”

Gongotri Yadav

Four years ago, Shushila was set to be married at the young age of 16. Openly expressing herself, talking to elders and even laughing was a far-fetched reality for her. Her father was keen on getting her married because this was the norm. Her elder sister, Gongotri Yadav, had also married when she was only in the eighth grade. Their father dreamt a similar future for his younger daughter- she would be an obedient housewife.

Shushila and Gongotri, however, had different aspirations. Both of the young girls were part of the CARE supported adolescent girls group created to understand and tackle the root causes of child

marriage. CARE has been partnering with Siddhartha Samudayik Samaj in Rupandehi to facilitate these life skills sessions. Gongotri had become a member of the group and found that many of the issues that were discussed here were very pertinent to her own life. A child bride herself, she found that many a problems she faced in her day-to-day life were actually common consequences of an early marriage. Therefore then she did not wish a similar fate for her young sister.

Gongotri tried very hard to convince her father and family to delay Shushila's marriage. "I told my parents of the social and physical repercussions of marrying early. Initially my father did not listen to me—they don't really listen to girls and women in my community. To add to my endeavors, Pannilal Yadav Sir, who works in the capacity of a social mobilizer in the Maryadpur VDC, came to our house and talked to our father," Gongotri shares.

"The fact that the group allowed my sister to learn of the ills of child marriage provided credibility to her knowledge and is a major part of why my father got convinced to halt my marriage," Shushila shares in hindsight. Shushila also recalls the numerous meetings that occurred between the community members and all the hard work that went in to finally allow her father to change the decision for the better.

Both of the young girls say that trying to convince a society against something that is deemed acceptable is a tough challenge, and this is where CARE's work plays a vital role. CARE is working with local partners on the ground to ensure that there are positive shifts in social norms to celebrate and empower adolescents, and adolescent girls in particular. The project encourages celebrating the girls and giving the girls a voice so that they can openly express themselves.



In Maryadpur, like in most of Rupandehi, like in most of the Terai belt in Nepal, like in most of Nepal, early marriage is an easily digested social “fact”. Gongotri herself reflects that, “When I got married so early, there was no knowledge that to marry young had such dire consequences on the physical and physiological health. No one discussed issues of violence and the like. But after this program came, and after I was a part of the girls group, and later on a group facilitator, and received numerous trainings on the effects that child marriage could have, I was better informed and could articulate the harms of early marriage to my community members.” Shushila also adds that had she not known about the ill effects of child marriage, she would have been happy to wed at sixteen.

Today Gongotri is a school teacher in a neighboring community, and Shushila is soon on her way to following her sister’s footsteps. These girls stand as examples of how given the right opportunities in life, and given the fact that girls have alternate choices in life, opting out of child marriage and convincing the society of the ill effects of child marriage is possible. However,

it is not a task one person can do overnight; like Shushila rightly notes, “We absolutely need to collectively support one another to fight against this social ill.”

“We absolutely need to collectively support one another to fight against this social ill.”

Sushila Yadav

This story was documented by Ayushma Basnyat , CARE Nepal.