

Study Report on The Status of Early Marriage in Lalitpur

(Case Study of Ashrang, Gimdee and Thuladurlung VDCs)



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Study Conducted By
Loo Niva Child Concern Group
Lalitpur, Nepal

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(Case Study of Ashrang, Gimdee and Thuladurlung VDCs)

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Acknowledgement

This is a pleasure for Loo Niva Team to present this study report on early marriage situation in southern Lalitpur rural area. Early marriage has been a concern for child rights and reproductive health campaigning communities as it violates the fundamental rights of children, threatens their life and generate a vicious cycle of poverty in community with fostering domestic violence and conflict. Despite of national attention and action on child marriage the village area of urban periphery are forgotten, the villages of south Lalitpur has been super shadowed by the presence of Lalitpur Metropolitan city.

Loo Niva has been active in south Lalitpur with interventions of education, awareness and empowering children and communities. The observation of high prevailed child marriages draw, Loo Niva to take action on this issue. This study is the first step for moving ahead with interventions to end child marriage.

I would like to thank all enumerators, research participants and the community leaders for their support and engagement in the study. Our sincere thanks goes to the research management team, advisor Asst. Professor Milan Dharel and the board of Loo Niva.

The study as an initial step should be considered with it's limitation and constructive feedbacks are expected from our readers. This study despite of it's few limitations can be considered as indicative document on the prevalence of child marriage problem and need of interventions in south Lalitpur.

Loo Niva is pleased to coordinate and collaborate with actors in the area for taking up action to prevent children from being young brides, young parents and grooms in South Lalitpur.

Thank you
Narendra Dangol
Executive Director

Executive Summary

Early Marriage (Marriage under 20 Years of Age) is a critical challenge in Nepal as in many developing or least developed countries. Nepal has prohibited early marriage in its constitution as well as in other domestic laws and policies. This is in line with the provisions in international human rights conventions to which Nepal is a State party. Campaign against early marriages is also one of the major interventions from non-governmental organizations working in the field of child rights, women rights and adolescent health. The Government of Nepal has recently adopted national strategy to end child marriage within the next 10 years. Early marriages have resulted in risk of maternal death, forced labor, trafficking, community violence and school drop out. This has disproportionately affected girls, compared to boys. In this context, Loo Niva Child Concern Group as a leading child rights and education campaigning organization conducted a study on the prevalence, causes and consequences as well as community perspectives on early marriages. Applying mixed methods including survey, focus group discussion (FGD) and key informants interview, the study attempted to explain the magnitude of early marriage practices, its consequences on the lives of young people and in community as well as community perception on early marriages. With information obtained from household survey of 262 households, FGDs with 41 children (20 boys and 21 girls), 15 key informant interviews and six case stories, the study has presented findings on the overall context of early marriages in three villages of Lalitpur: Gimdee, Ashrang and Thuladurlung.

The findings from the study suggest that the magnitude of early marriage in the study area is almost one third of the total marriages. Out of total participants in the household survey 31% (81) mentioned they got married before the age of 15 years and 52.7% (138) participants reported that they got married at the age of 16-20 years. Similarly, out of 786 family members with married status 28% have married before the age of 20 years.

The study reveals that there are mainly three key factors leading to early marriages: individual causes of young people, causes related to family and social factors. The individual causes include lack of reproductive health knowledge and understanding, absence of counselling for adolescents, peer influence, affair and risky use of cell phones. Similarly some of the social factors leading to early marriage are neighbourhood pressure, culture, gender biased social norms, perspectives against girls maturity and freedom, social stigma and fear of not getting a good husband if marriage is delayed. Similarly family factors include economic reasons such as dowry and expenses, social stigma and cultural perception, fear on chastity of girls and free labor.

Participants of the study shared that early marriages have a number of negative consequences on the lives of young people including poor reproductive health, maternal death, child malnourishment, school dropout, social and family conflict, complexities on handling family life and responsibility, low grade work and employment. Some of the participants shared that there are some perceived benefits of early marriages for community and family such as no risk about girls' chastity, less expenses in marriage, getting better caring family and groom for own girl, free labor at home, learning family skills and roles at early age, having child at early period that would benefit in old age.

While the young people were found to be wrongly influenced to get married, to a large degree it was parents' and guardians' decisions that prevailed on their choice of marriage. In this context, the study found that almost 40% parents and guardians in the community thought of marrying their children off before the age of 20 years and some 12% planned to have marriage before the age of 15 years.

Based on the findings the study concluded that the study area has a high prevalence of early marriage problems. It is based on the adult-children imbalanced power relation regarding the decision about marital life which has been strengthened by gender-biased perception and false perception of benefits of marriage. Early marriage is further nurtured by absence of life skills education for young people, lack of knowledge on smart use of smart phones, and absence of counselling services for adolescents. School drop out has been identified as both a cause and

a consequence of early marriages. Another serious consequence of early marriage is the adverse effect over reproductive health, forced and free labor and foundation for domestic and social conflict.

The study based on FGDs, case stories, suggestion from key informants and survey respondents suggested interventions which break adult-child power relation through empowering and promoting child participation; and promote life skills and knowledge and skills on smart and responsible use of smart phones and communication technologies. Other interventions suggested include breaking misconception regarding early marriages and investing more for the continuation of school by children and on reducing drop out of girls and boys from school. The study also recommended for criminalisation of early marriage and effective legal enforcement.

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Study Report on the Status of Early marriage in Lalitpur

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Nepal stands at 145th position on human development status with HDI (0.548) improving slightly than at past (UNHDR, 2015) with a life expectancy rate of 69.6 years. Out of its 27.8 million population, 41.44 percent are living under poverty (living on less than 2\$ a day), one fourth under absolute poverty and the employment ratio is 85.2 percent. Nepal is a least developed country. The ratio of inequality-adjusted index is 0.384 and the gender inequality index stands at 0.479 as of 2013. The child poverty report (NPC, 2009) indicates that almost two third children in Nepal are deprived of at least one basic needs and more than 40 percent children live in poverty. Child poverty is much higher than that for adults.

Nepal has made some progress in past decades on the socio-economic status of its citizens with better democratisation, respect for human rights and having constitutional guarantee on the protection of interest of marginalised and excluded communities. Children remain one of the major citizens group that has been laying at the bottom in social power structure leading to high vulnerabilities to their life, liberty and bodily integrity as well as limiting their freedom of choices. Early marriage is one of the many difficulties and rights violation that children and young people are facing in Nepal. The Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2014) revealed that 48.5% of married women had their first marriage before 18 years of age.

Nepal is a party to the UN Convention on the rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). The Constitution of Nepal has guaranteed children's fundamental right to be protected from violence, abuse, trafficking and early & forced marriages. Marriage before the age of 20 years is legally prohibited and punishable according to the Nepalese law. .

1.2 About Early Marriage in Nepal

Early marriage is a critical issue of children and adolescent development and protection in the world. South Asian nations are with a high rate of early and forced marriage problem with 46% of women aged 20-24 reporting married before the age of 18 years (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2013). Nepal is not an exception. A study conducted by Plan Nepal, Save the Children and World Vision International in 2013 revealed that the average early marriage rate is 46.2% among both sexes with 52.3% among girls. The study also revealed that the early marriage has high prevalence rate among janajati, illiterate and opportunity deprived communities. Largely it is parents' pressure, need of a support in household work and adolescents own interest which are key factors contributing to early marriage. The study also suggested peer education, reproductive health education, food security and educational opportunity as well as participation opportunity for girls will reduce the early marriage incidences. In addition to reproductive health complexities and early STDs, married child is more likely to lose educational and participation opportunities.

1.3 Nepal's Legal and Policy Commitments

The Government of Nepal has endorsed several international instruments including the Convention on the Rights of Child and its two optional protocols, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which prohibit early marriages and make state responsible to act on addressing the problem. A number of human rights instruments lay down norms to be applied to marriage, covering issues of age, consent, equality within marriage, and the personal and property rights of women. Some of the key instruments and articles are as follows (paraphrased for clarity in some cases): Article 16 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states: (1) Men and women of full

age ... have the right to marry and found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties. Similar provisions are included in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 1 of the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery includes in the institutions and practices similar to slavery: Article 1(c) Any institution or practice whereby: (i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family. Article 16.1 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women prescribes equally for men and women: (a) The same right to enter into marriage; (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent; Article 16.2 states: The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage.

In Nepal marriage before age of 18 years is considered as early marriage. Article 39.5 of the Constitution of Nepal 2072 has mentioned that early marriage; illegal transportation, abduction or kidnapping of any child shall not be allowed. The Civil Code (Muliki Ain 2020) of Nepal has provisioned that the legal age of marriage is 20 years.

1.4 About Loo Niva

Loo Niva Child Concern Group (Loo Niva) is a child centered Nepali Non government organization founded in 1997. The organization since the establishment has been working towards promoting and defending right to education, quality education, and education governance, with an emphasis on the vulnerable and marginalised communities and children. The main thrust of its strategic work is to empower local people especially children, child clubs, youth and marginalized groups so that they are able to hold the local agencies and governments more accountable and responsive towards their rights to education including in emergency.

Loo Niva continuously works for creating a link between children, adults and the government agencies from child rights based approach to development. This approach consists of: i) Empowerment of right holders; ii) Sensitization and strengthening duty bearers; and iii) Advocating for child friendly policies and practices especially on basic service delivery i.e. education, health and social protection.

Its continuous interventions and strong stand for children's rights in Lalitpur and scaling up of its learning and experiences on education have resulted Loo-Niva as a leading agency for quality education and social transformation in Dadeldhura district in Far West as well. It was rewarded as one of the best NGOs working in quality education in Dadeldhura by the District Education Office (DEO) in 2014. In addition, Loo-Niva is a committed child rights organization dedicated to holistic development of children as enshrined in the UNCRC. As a central player for quality education, Loo Niva strategically strengthens the local capacity of NGOs and education stakeholders on quality education through education networks in both national and district to share each other's learning and good practices.

2. About the Study

Loo Niva has been working to ensure children's right to education and education governance in schools of Lalitpur District. It has been carrying out education governance project in Lalitpur district particularly in remote villages (Ashrang, Gimdee and Thuladurlung). During the project interventions Loo Niva observed that early marriages are a major factor resulting into the early drop out of girls and boys from school, constraining their future potentials. However, there was an absence of empirical data on the situation of early marriage. Therefore, Loo Niva conducted this study on the status of early marriage in three VDCs :Ashrang, Gimdee and Thuladurlung.

2.1 Objective

The study aimed at contributing to the knowledge and information on the national efforts to reduce early marriages and enhance better opportunities for girls and boys including access to school education. Specifically the study has following objectives:

- Identify the volume and main reason for early marriage in the study area.
- Understand the consequences of early marriage on the enjoyment of the right to education for children in the study area.
- Develop practical recommendations for addressing early marriage and promoting the right to education.

2.2 Study Universe and Sampling

The study has been conducted in three VDCs of Lalitpur: Ashrang, Thuladurlung and Gimdee. These three VDCs are located in southern hill belt of Lalitpur. Despite being in Lalitpur (a capital valley district), the

VDCs are highly underprivileged in terms of development, poverty and other interventions. The population in the VDCs are largely janajati with small population of dalit, bramhin and chhetris.

The study has taken 20% of households from each settlements of the VDCs reaching a total of 262 households participating in the study. The selection has been done randomly with stratification of settlements to ensure inclusive representation of all ethnicities and locations.

In addition to the household survey a total of 41 children (20 boys and 21 girls) have participated in focus group discussions.

15 people including 3 head teachers from higher/secondary schools, 3 health persons, 3 social mobilizers of District Development Office of Lalitpur, 3 from ward citizenship forum and 3 local religious leaders have been involved in interviews.

6 case stories were collected from 3 male and 3 female participants of age below 30 years who had been married at age below 18 years.

2.3 Methodologies

The study has employed mixed methodologies including both qualitative and quantitative tools. The key methods of the study include household survey as quantitative and focus group discussion, key informant interviews and case stories as qualitative methods. The application of multiple and mixed methods enabled triangulation of the information and findings to ensure high validity.

Household Survey:

A total of 262 households have been interviewed with a structured questionnaire. The survey has been conducted through in person interviews at the premises of participants' houses. The enumerators informed participants about the objectives and issues of the study and provided a voluntary choice of participation. The households were randomly picked up through lottery methods. Among the 262 households 70 were from Ashrang VDC, 110 were from Gimdee VDC and 82 were from Thuladurlung VDC.

Focus Group Discussion:

Six focus group discussions- two in each VDCs- were carried out in this study. Out of two FGDs in each VDCs one was with boys and one was with girls. A total of 41 children (20 boys and 21 girls) participated in FGDs. The FGDs applied checklist to discuss the issue of early marriage including status, causes, consequences and possible interventions.

Key Informant Interviews

The study interviewed 15 participants representing from school, health service providers, social mobilisers, citizens forum and religious leaders to identify the status and to understand the social, economic, political as well as religious/cultural dimensions of the problem. The interview was conducted using guided questions.

Case Story

The study interviewed 6 people who had married before the age of 18 years and are currently below 30 years of age. The case story was to understand the life phenomena due to early marriage and its implication over the individuals' life and rights. An unstructured checklist was used to collect information for case story.

Desk Review

In addition to primary data collection the study also undertook desk review, where the research team went through legal, policy documents and previous study reports and policy briefs on early marriage in Nepal and South Asia. A total of 11 documents have been reviewed based on guided questions.

2.4 Scope and Limitations

The study is mainly about the status of early marriage and its relation with educational opportunities for children in three VDCs of Lalitpur. The study has been able to explain the early marriage situation, its causes and consequences along with effect over educational opportunities in the study area. The situation is not very different in other part of the nations either; however the findings of the study shall be considered with the samples, methods and universe of the study.

2.5 Ethical Strategy

The study has applied standard ethical strategies that clearly defined processes to accessing and contacting participants; informing and consent receiving as well as behavioural aspect with the participants. The ethical approach has also adopted grievance-handling mechanism. During the study no such complaints were received.

The enumerators and researchers were oriented on ethical behaviours and required to abide by the rules.

The detail ethical strategy is provided in Annex.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Profile of Participants

The study interviewed 262 household representatives (122 women and 140 men). Among 262 household representatives 152 were Janajati, 9 were Dalit, 77 were Bramhin and 24 were Chhetri. 16 representatives were below the age of 20 years; 119 were of the age group 21-40 years; 106 were from the age group

of 41-60 years and 12 were of above 60 years. 9 participants could not define their age. Out of 262 participants, 243 participants were married, 8 were widow men and women and 11 were not married. Among the household survey participants 97 (35.5%) claimed themselves as the head of the house, 48 were men head (husband) and 56 were women head (wife). Remaining 62 were second generation of the family (son, daughter, son in law or daughter in law).

Table 2: Participant's Position in Family

Relation	Frequency	Percent
Head of house	97	37.0
Husband	48	18.3
Wife	56	21.4
Son	14	5.3
Daughter	13	5.0
Son in Law	2	.8
Daughter in Law	29	11.1
Others	2	8.4
Total	262	100.0

Out of 262 families, 83% (217) mentioned the main income source of family was agriculture, whereas 30.5% (80) family were dependent on daily wage. 35.5% also claimed animal husbandry as their income source. Very few families mentioned their income sources are other employment and business. Largely people were found dependent on agriculture and daily wage work as their main income source.

3.2 Family Profile

The study identified that an average family size in the project area is 6.02, whereas the average Nepalese household family size is 5. The household family size is found bigger in Thuladurlung with an average of 7 members family followed by Ashrang with 6 members and Gimdee with 5.5 members. The participants reported a total of 1579 members in 262 families with 418 members in 70 families of Ashrang, 614 members in 110 families of Gimdee and 547 members in 82 families of Thuladurlung.

Out of 1579 family members, 37% were engaged in agriculture and 28% were studying in schools and colleges. 9% population were working as daily wagers. In Ashrang and Thuladurlung the volume of daily wage workers population is found higher than in Gimdee.

Table 3: Occupation of Family member

VDC	Agriculture	Business	Job	Labor	Study	Others	Not Mentioned	Total
Ashrang	160	7	10	58	106	23	54	418
	38.28%	1.67%	2.39%	13.88%	25.36%	5.50%	12.92%	100.00%
Gimdee	271	29	31	28	180	9	66	614
	44.14%	4.72%	5.05%	4.56%	29.32%	1.47%	10.75%	100.00%
Thula durlung	159	14	18	62	161	12	121	547
	27.46%	2.42%	3.11%	10.71%	27.81%	2.07%	20.90%	94.47%
Total	590	50	59	148	447	44	241	1579
Percent	37.37%	3.17%	3.74%	9.37%	28.31%	2.79%	15.26%	100.00%

The participants informed that 786 out of 1579 members i.e. 49.78% were married, only 67% (176/262) mentioned their family members had birth registration and 73.79% (580/786) of married family members had marriage registration.

3.3 Incidence of Early Marriages

The study found the incidence of early marriage is high in the study area. Out of total participants in the household survey 31% (81) mentioned they got married before the age of 15 years and 52.7% (138) mentioned they got married at the age of 16-20 years.

Similarly, out of 786 family members reported with married status, 28% have married before the age of 20 years. Among which 50 (6%) have married before the age of 15 years, 101 (13%) have married at the age

of 15-18 years and 74 (9%) have married between the age of 18-20 years. None of the couple reported married have applied court marriage, 48% were 'arranged marriage' and 52% married couple mentioned that had love marriage. This has to be considered that the study sites are largely ethnic population area, and there is comparatively more freedom for people to make choice, have affair and found family on their own choice and parental decisions are less applied. The trend is found no significantly different among the three study villages.

Dinesh is 21 years now; four years ago he married a girl from his village, who was just 15 years. It was an affair between them; they married despite their family will. However, now Dinesh feels the life is difficult as he and his wife both left school. They are not able to find a good job due to low education. As Dinesh has low income and fewer wage, he needs to depend on his father even to spend for his wife. This often results in family disputes and Dinesh feels to flee home leaving all these troubles.

In focus group discussion children mentioned that they have witnessed that there is a high prevalence of early age marriage in their village. Almost all participant children in FGDs shared that they have witnessed that parents have put pressure on children to get married. Some of the factors for such a pressure was the intention to save dowry cost, to reduce the risk of spoiling the child (girls) in future and the hope of better family for their girl with better income and prestige. 40% of FGD participant children mentioned that in many cases they have witnessed the young girls getting married which also stimulates boys and many of them marry at an early age due to affairs.

According to VDC

The key informants shared, though they do not have exact data on early marriage in their surroundings, they have observed the existence of the problem significantly high. School teachers suggested that one of the reasons for drop out of girls was early marriage; the health practitioners shared they have observed almost one third of the visiting pregnant women are actually married at an early age. The VDC officials said that they could not officially share the magnitude of early marriage as registering early marriage would be void. However, they are aware of existing early marriage practices.

3.4 Causes and Consequences of Early Marriages

A number of causes were suggested to be contributing to early marriages. Some of them include widely prevailing misconception, deprivation, lack of opportunities at home and community, lack of knowledge and information on reproductive health. The suggested causes of early marriages can be categorised mainly in three headings: Individual causes of young people, Causes of Family and Social Factors. It was found that 19.59% of married people have married as they got dropped out from school. There is no significant difference among boys and girls on getting married after being dropped out from school. The causes are listed in following Box 1.

Box 1: Causes of Early Marriages	
Individual Causes	No knowledge about self-determination right in regards to marriage. Misconception regarding married life such as beautiful ornaments, and loved life. School dropped out at teenage. Early affairs and sexual relation forced to get married. Lack of awareness on the negative consequences of early marriage Girls mobility controlled by family and the thought that their mobility would be easier after marriage Fear of not finding a good pair Stigma of pre marriage pregnancy
Family Causes	Family pressure to girls to get married off early on Single parent and lack of parental care and guidance to the children. To skip financial difficulties Lack of awareness on the negative consequences of early marriage Domestic violence and discrimination against girls To skip dowry and other financial consequences of late marriage Need of a household work helping person in family (free labor) Too much work load at home pushed the girls to choose marriage
Social Factors	Absence of counselling services for girls and boys Fear of getting engaged in war and organized armed conflict Religious factors and misconception regarding early marriage

Peer influence

Neighbourhood influence and pressure to family

Unemployed and discrimination against girls in education

Fear of family prestige and stigma due to affair and other gossips about grown up girls in family.

Cultural practice of forced marriage

Misuse of mobile phones and connectivity

Grand parents' decision and will to witness wedding of grandchild.

Stigma of pre marriage pregnancy

Participants in the study did not mention lack of legal enforcement, lack of child rights awareness or absence of legal policy measures. The study confirmed that the early marriage largely happens due to social, cultural and individual factors. Therefore, along with legal and policy measures, social change theory should be followed that addresses the risk factors and behavioural change along with perception transformation initiatives. Change of power relation between children and young people and adult family members are also important.

The participants of the study mentioned that marriage decisions are influenced by the individual (63%), fathers (56%), relatives (53%) and mothers (47%). They also suggested friends (29%), priest (29%), grand father (25%) and neighbours (27%) influential in making decision about marriages. However, among these entire individuals the top few number one influential individuals for marrying are: self (63%), father (47%), priest (31%) and relatives (31%).

Nabina is 27 years now, 10 years ago she got married at the age of 17 years. She was bound to marry because her grand parent thought they were at the end of their life and if they did rituals of their grand daughter marriage (Goda Dhune, Goda Ko Pani Khane), they might be heading for heaven. So she could not deny. Soon after the marriage, in few years she started having problem with her husband and on 5th year, her husband abandoned her and the three children marrying another woman.

Child Participants in FGDs shared that parents' pressure is much higher (70%) than the children's interest (20%) along with relatives and neighbourhood influence (40%) for practising early marriage.

Participants suggested both benefits and difficulties they have experienced of early marriages. The consequences of the early marriages can be categorised into three headings for positive outcomes: economic, workforce and social security. The negative consequences of early marriages can be categorised into 4 categories, which are: health consequences, forced labor, social/family conflict and personality development. Participants suggested among 786 married couple, 28% faced maternal complexities; 32% menstruation complexities and 13.49% faced miscarriages. Similarly 15% of 786 married members dropped out from school due to married status; surprisingly number of boys' dropping out is higher (17.30 %) than that for girls (12.47%). Box 2 below presents the specific consequences of early marriage as suggested by participants:

Box 2: Consequences of Early Marriages	
Positive Benefits as Perceived	Difficulties as Experienced
Economic	Health Consequences
Low wedding expenses (dowry and other) Fewer burdens for the maternal family of girl mainly food, clothes and educational cost. Have child on time and timely children are brought up. Married couple have access to resource and decision making	Difficulties in menstruation and other reproductive health Infant mortality Pregnancy complexities Other health consequences due to workload, lack of care and support.
Workforce	Forced Labor
Support for household chores and work in family	Increased Work load Hard to handle family members' interest Need to manage household without experience
Social Security	Family/Social Conflict
Children are timely brought, educated and employed, would be able to take care of parent.	Tussles with family Lack of understanding among family members

Grand parents' wishes are fulfilled Religious blessings attained No risk of possible stigma due to girls' affair and early pregnancy.	Misunderstanding between husband and wife Polygamy and polyandry problem Family conflict and quarrels and got separated at early period adding more burden. Isolated and no personal life. Conflict and misunderstanding with neighbours, lack of neighbourhood support.
	Low Personality Development
	School dropped out, no educational opportunity after marriage Get employed in low skilled work Financial difficulties Suppressed and unable to make independent decision

3.5 Perception and knowledge

Even during the time of study, the current parents with children have been found with an idea of conducting early marriage. Out of 262 respondents in household survey, 40% parents shared they have thought to have marriage of their children before the age of 20 years. Some 12% have thought to marry even before the age of 15 years. Participants shared they have made this perception because of the modernization of the society, realising the importance of education, learning negative consequences of early marriages, with the better economic opportunities

Table 4: Planned Marriage Age for their Child

VDCs	0-10 Yrs.	10-15 Yrs.	16-20 Yrs.	21-25 Yrs.	26-30 Yrs.	Total
Ashrang	0	5	3	38	24	70
Gimdee	18	5	54	32	1	110
Thuladurlung	4	0	16	53	9	82
Total	22	10	73	123	34	262
Percent	8.40%	3.82%	27.86%	46.95%	12.98%	100.0%

of mature marriages, to strengthen independent decision making skills, better personality development opportunity including better employment opportunity and moreover an independent identity and strength of their children. For men and boys, they shared they will marry them after returning from foreign employment as they get more wealth.

Anita is now 24 years. She got married at the age of 15 years. She has experienced a number of difficulties including pregnancy complexities, malnourished children and even a mentally retarded child. She thinks this is all because of early marriage. Though her husband loves her and takes care of the family, his income alone could not help to survive. Anita has five children and she thinks that it was because they got married early and no body was there to provide advice on family planning. Anita has determined that she would not let her children to marry before they are fully capable and only after 20 years.

Regarding the risk factors contributing to early marriages, the participants suggested similar factors as mentioned above in causes. In addition to this the misuse of

technologies, such as cell phones, access to Facebook and unsecured access to online services also led to young peoples' risky decision of early marriages. The power relation between adult and children have been emphasised by many participants. One participant said "children shall not be provided more freedom rather shall be kept under control of adults and marriage makes them responsible".

However, some respondents still shared that immediately after 20 years, they will organize marriage of their girl child, because if she gets older better groom may not be approached, risk of affairs and other issues and expenses of girls' marriage would be increasing day by day.

Even among child participants of FGDs, 15% of the boys shared that they should marry girl below 19 years, as after 19 years the girls might have been already spoiled. However, the remaining children (85% of boys and 100%) girls shared they would get married after the age of 20 years and some 25% shared they would get married only after 25. Those who have planned to marry after 20 years shared early marriage is very difficult to face due to the responsibility at married home, conflict with in-laws, child-conceiving problem. They shared the marriage at the age

of 25 or later could make them independent economically and able to handle the role and responsibility at home too.

Regarding legal and policy knowledge among participants, the study found that only 23.7% of participants have claimed that they know the legal and policy provision on early marriage. Among the participants who claimed having knowledge and information on law and policy information on early marriage, very few can suggest the mechanism to make complaints, fine provision and prohibition of marriage before 20 years of age.

They key informants suggested that there is absence of targeted interventions regarding early marriage in the community and through child rights organizations. As the early marriage is a long-standing, culturally rooted problem in society it is very difficult to change overnight and sensitive actions are required.

With regards to possible actions to address and reduce early marriage, participants in the study suggested

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Based on the survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with children the study findings suggested following conclusions:

High prevalence of early marriages

The study found that there is a high prevalence of early marriage with almost 28% of total recent marriages being early marriages in past five years. The fact that 40% of the respondents have a view to marry their children off before the age of 20 years further confirms the prevalence of early marriage and continuity of this problem in these three VDCs of Lalitpur. However, comparatively Gimdee is a bit better than Ashrang and Thuladurlung, yet the prevalence of early marriages is higher comparing to the other parts of the Lalitpur District.

Adult-child power relation on marriage decisions

The study observed that the unbalanced power relation and strong adult influence on the decision-making process regarding marriages has caused early marriages. The adult parent, grand parent (mainly male), relatives and priests seemed to be more influential to maintain the practice of early marriages. In such cases it can be considered as forced marriage that provided limited or no choice of decision for young people.

Role of new media and communication on early marriage

Participants of the study highlighted that the rampant use of new media and communication technologies, the Internet, cell phones and smart phones have further triggered the problem. Young people without having

adequate knowledge and information regarding adolescent phase, reproductive health and sexual behaviours, protection skills have been largely entrapped in anomalies and wrong practices often leading to early marriages.

Early marriage as source of free labor

As participants suggested one of the reasons for early marriage is the need of labor force at groom's family. It has been identified that the early marriage has been used as source of free labor. Therefore the early marriage issue shall be integrated and tackled by anti slavery organizations too.

School drop out/ low academic performance- both cause and consequence

The study observed that the school drop out children are more vulnerable than others to get married at an early age. The study also observed that due to early marriage young people, mainly girls, get dropped out from school due to stigma, work load and pregnancy problems. Thus, school drop out is another risk factor as well as a consequence of early marriage.

Early marriage – A factors for domestic violence and social conflict

Large number of participants including children shared, due to early marriages and young age, and due to difficulties to handle household responsibilities they face conflicts in family and in neighbourhoods. The married girls often get into problem with husband and in-laws in married family. In some cases they even end at divorce. Early marriages have been identified as a source of domestic violence and social conflict.

Health consequences of early marriage

Participants in this study also confirmed that they faced number of health consequences including infant, maternal mortality, pregnancy and delivery complexities, problems in menstruation, psychological difficulties and malnutrition of the child. Prevalence of such health consequences have been more observed in early married family mainly women.

False benefits of early marriages

Participants in the community are practising early marriages largely with false conception of benefits. Some such perceptions found during the study are that early marriage is economically beneficial, that it is helpful to find better family for girls, and that they can skip family burden of investment in girls. In case of boys' family, having children at an early age helps the couple to live a better-supported life when they are at old age- "An informal social security concept".

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, recommendations by children, experiences of respondents in survey and key informant interviews, the following recommendations are suggested to end early marriage in Nepal.

Change power relation of adult-child

As the marriage is of choice, it is important to keep in mind that young people have no choice for marriage, though they are curious about married life and sexual relation. The marriage decisions are largely adult led decisions with limited or no choice for young people. This adult-child power relation has to be changed in society by empowering children as independent individuals with evolving capacity, able to speak on their concern and interest and their views shall be respected. Children shall have association with powerful institutions to prevent wrong exercise of power by adults over them. As Nepal has more than 23 thousand children's clubs (child led organizations), youth associations and organizations, such organized actions of children supported by youth and adults as well as state authorities could change the power relation. For this following actions could be helpful:

- Promote children's clubs and child led activities in the community campaign against early marriages.
- Promote child led monitoring and reporting of early marriages to the state authorities, service providers by child club leaders.
- Organize youth groups and promote youth campaign and children's campaign for peer education and influence for stopping early marriage.

- Develop child led organizations and youth led organizations' relation with local state authorities and service providing organizations.

Promoting smart use of new media and communication

As the participants observed that the wider and uncontrolled access to smart phones and the Internet services are one of the risk factors for promoting early marriages, children and young people can be promoted as smart users of new media and communication with better knowledge on reproductive health, safer behaviours and media champions to act against early marriages. Following actions could be useful for that purpose:

- Train children about smart use of new media and communication technologies.
- Train children about reproductive health, marriage and household roles, adolescent, safer practices.
- Promote Smart Media Users Club among children and mobilize them for better and safer use of digital media and smart phones.
- Educate parents and teachers about the safe use and engaging children's media skills for reducing early marriages.

Criminalisation and legal enforcement

Law enforcement is one significant foundation to reduce early marriages. The practice of early marriage in the name of culture can be prevented with strict legal enforcement and applicable legal policy provisions. Following advocacy actions should be taken ahead for this purpose:

- Advocate for the inclusion of reducing early marriages in National SDG Plan, local government's periodic plan and annual plan and budget of local governments.
- Advocate for practical, applicable legal provisions in civil code, criminal code and other relevant Acts.
- Identify the incidence of forced labor, slavery and trafficking disguised in the form of early marriage and campaign to include it under slavery law and policy.
- Train local government officials, political leaders, police personnel and public attorneys to take up case of early marriage in legal prosecution and actions.

- Facilitate legal aid, emergency services for the victim/survivor of or those vulnerable to early marriages.

Invest on school education continuation

The study identified school drop out is one of the key risk factors contributing to early marriage and on the other side early marriage further contributes to the drop out of children (mainly girls) from school. Therefore, there should be proper investment in strengthening continuation of school education of girls and boys. Following action shall be beneficial for strengthening investment in continuation of school education to reduce incidence and risk of early marriages:

- Integrate early marriage and drop out agenda in local education mechanisms (Village Education Committees, School Management Committees and Parents-Teachers' Association)
- Ensure the married girls have unhindered access to education in school and married family shall encourage sending their bride to school.
- Promote child led and teachers led vigilance for preventing children's drop out and taking up immediate actions.

Break the misconception of early marriage

The study also observed that the early marriage is happening with rampant presence of misconception regarding early marriage mainly associated with household economy, labor demands and future security. This misconception needs to be broken down. Breaking misconception needs wider awareness campaign, media mobilisation and outreaching people in creative and innovative way. Following ideas could be useful:

- Producing Public Service Announcements (PSAs) reflecting misconception and reality.
- Organizing community meetings, interactive theatres (Kachahari) and local cultural programs addressing the issues
- Supporting child led and youth led local campaigns and information initiatives.
- Mobilize schoolteachers, health practitioners and health volunteers for door-to-door communication against early marriages.

The-End

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Annex

Ethical Strategy

Accessing Participants:

- The research team will access the participants through a local contact or service providers, thus does not have direct influence or control over the participant.

Consent:

- The research team will share a participant information statement (PIS) for individual interview and read out the participants' Information Statement in larger group.
- In case of individual interview the team will take written consent of the participant and in case of child consent from local guardian too will be considered.
- In case of FGDs and group consultation the team will take verbal group consent.

Identity and Privacy:

- The research team allows freedom to its participants for not disclosing identity in case the participant does not want or in case it is against the best interest or may generate any kind of threats to him/her.
- Public position holders' identity will be revealed for a public and official position of institution.
- All the data, interview transcription and first hand reports are kept confidential and remained within the Loo Niva Child Concern Group premise.
- All the data collected within this research process will be solely used only for this research and will be applied in any other purpose.

Withdrawal and Freedom of Choice:

- All participants in this research reserve the right to participate or not to participate on their own informed voluntary interest.
- All participants have a right to withdraw from the research at any step till the data entry phase of this research through contacting researcher and Loo Niva Child Concern Group.

- The participants in this research will not be benefited individually with any special facilities and services in exchange of their participation.
- Any of the participants in this research will not lose any services from the contacting agency or their relation with contacting agency will not be adversely affected due to their refusal to participate or withdrawal from the research.

Behaviours and Practice of Researchers:

The research team and local contact will follow following ethical behaviours and practices during the field work:

- Respect participants' voluntary and informed interest to participate or not to participate.
- Respect cultural, religious and other social and physical, institutional position of the participant/s.
- Inform participants about the research purpose and process in simple way for their understanding that includes objective, methods, use of data and expected hours from the participants.
- Encourage the participant to put his/her views and experience in positive way during the research process.
- Ensure confidentiality and respect for privacy by researchers and other participants in the group.
- Do not force the participant for not recalling the incidence and bad stories, if the participant does not want to.
- Report to local protection authorities and service providing NGOs in case of any risk, violence or abuses witnessed or suspected.
- Refrain from direct engagement in any forms of service providing that includes psychosocial care, representing legal actions or any others.
- Ensure safety of research team and participants before visiting any place and making choice of consultation venue.

Reporting and Complaint Mechanism

Inform participants that if they recognize any sort of abusive behaviours or discomfort from any of the team members they can report to local official in their contact number or to the Loo Niva Child Concern Group.

VDC Wise Respondent		
VDCs	Frequency	Valid Percent
Ashrang	70	26.7
Gimdee	110	42.0
Thuladurlung	82	31.3
Total	262	100.0

Gender		
Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	122	46.6
Female	140	53.4
Total	262	100.0

Ethnicity		
Ethnicity	Frequency	Valid Percent
Janajati	152	58.0
Dalit	8	3.1
Bramhan	77	29.4
Chhetri	24	9.2
Others	1	.4
Total	262	100.0

Marital Status		
Marital Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
Married	243	92.7
Unmarried	7	2.7
Widowed	4	1.5
Single Women	4	1.5
Others	4	1.5
Total	262	100.0

Age of Marriage		
Marriage Age	Frequency	Valid Percent
0-10	2	.8
11-15	79	30.2
16-20	138	52.7
21-25	36	13.7
26-30	5	1.9
31-35	2	.8
Total	262	100.0

Relation with House Holder		
Relation	Frequency	Valid Percent
Head of house	97	37.0
Husband	48	18.3
Wife	56	21.4
Son	14	5.3
Daughter	13	5.0
Son in Law	2	.8
Daughter in Law	29	11.1
Others	2	.84
Total	262	100.0

Source of Income		
Source of Income	Frequency	Valid Percent
Labor	80	30.5
Agriculture	217	82.8
Job	12	4.6
Business	20	7.6
Trade	1	.4
Domestic Animal	93	35.5
Others	3	1.1

VDCs wise Family Member			
VDC	Male	Female	Total
Ashrang	201	206	418
Gimdee	300	314	614
Thuladurlung	271	275	547
	772	795	1579

Relation with Family Member											
VDC	Head of house	Husband	Wife	Son	Daughter	Son in Law	Daughter in Law	Others	Father	Mother	Total
Ashrang	39	42	43	93	58	2	36	34	10	4	361
Gimdee	43	26	44	153	94	0	62	97	43	11	573
Thuladurlung	36	32	57	139	109	1	30	64	11	3	482
Total	118	100	144	385	261	3	128	195	64	18	1416

Occupation of Family member								
VDC	Agriculture	Business	Job	Labor	Study	Trade	Others	Total
Ashrang	160	6	10	58	106	1	23	364
Gimdeed	271	20	31	28	180	0	9	539
Thuladurlung	159	2	18	62	161	1	12	415
Total	590	28	59	148	447	2	44	1318

VDCs wise mean family Education Status					
VDCs	Literate	School	University	Illiterate	Total
Ashrang	44	11	2	13	365
Gimdeed	83	6	3	18	530
Thuladurlung	47	10	2	20	453
Total	174	27	7	51	1348

VDCs wise mean family marital Status			
VDCs	married	unmarried	Total
Ashrang	211	151	362
Gimdeed	334	217	551
Thuladurlung	241	250	491
Total	786	618	1404

VDCs wise mean family Married Registration			
VDCs	Yes	No	Total
Ashrang	181	180	361
Gimdeed	249	302	551
Thuladurlung	150	339	489
Total	580	821	1401

VDCs wise main family Birth Registration			
VDCs	Yes	No	Total
Ashrang	64	6	64
Gimdeed	74	35	86
Thuladurlung	38	42	58
Total	176	83	208

VDCs wise main family Citizenship Card			
VDCs	Yes	No	Total
Ashrang	70	0	62
Gimdee	107	2	99
Thuladurlung	78	1	66
Total	255	3	227

Family member Married Before 15 Years			
VDCs	No. Of Female	No. of Male	Total
Gimdee	49	17	66
Ashrang	16	10	26
Thula Durlung	42	8	50

Family Member Married Between 15-18 Years			
Name of the V.D.C.	No. Of Female	No. of Male	Total
Gimdee	89	58	147
Ashrang	37	25	62
Thula Durlung	51	50	101

Family member Married Between 18-20 Years			
VDCs	No. Of Female	No. of Male	Total
Gimdee	28	29	57
Ashrang	32	20	52
Thula Durlung	46	28	74

Family Member Married Above 20 Years			
VDCs	No. Of Female	No. of Male	Total
Gimdee	16	28	44
Ashrang	25	38	63
Thula Durlung	21	48	69

Methods of marriage					
VDCs	Arrange	Love	Gandharba	Court	Others
	marriage	marriage	marriage	marriage	
Gimdee	64	93	0	0	0
Ashrang	45	54	0	0	0
Thurladurlung	80	77	32	0	7

Polygamy								
VDCs	Husband	Wife	son	Daughter	Daughter in law	Son in law	Grand son	Grand daughter
Ashrang	7	4	5	5	6	4	0	0
Gimdee	8	4	12	4	2	3	0	0
Thurladurlung	11	1	1	0	0	1	0	1

Influential Person for marriage													
Person	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total
Father	Frequency	69	37	14	6	8	2	5	3	1	0	1	
	Percent	26.34	14.12	5.34	2.29	3.05	.76	1.91	1.15	.38	.00	.38	
Mother	Frequency	9	62	27	6	3	3	1	0	5	0	1	
	Percent	3.44	23.66	10.31	2.29	1.15	1.15	0.38	0.00	1.91	0.00	0.38	
Grand Father	Frequency	4	3	24	21	2	1	1	1	1	4	3	
	Percent	1.53	1.15	9.16	8.02	0.76	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	1.53	1.15	
Grand Mother	Frequency	2	3	2	14	4	1	2	2	2	5	4	
	Percent	.76	1.15	.76	5.34	1.53	.38	.76	.76	.76	1.91	1.53	
Priest	Frequency	24	28	5	4	1	0	1	1	2	3	8	
	Percent	9.16	10.69	1.91	1.53	0.38	0.00	0.38	0.38	0.76	1.15	3.05	
Premi	Frequency	26	33	22	8	4	3	1	4	2	6	1	
	Percent	9.92	12.60	8.40	3.05	1.53	1.15	0.38	1.53	0.76	2.29	0.38	
Premika	Frequency	3	19	11	20	7	9	5	9	5	1	0	
	Percent	1.15	7.25	4.20	7.63	2.67	3.44	1.91	3.44	1.91	0.38	0.00	
Friends	Frequency	3	4	9	14	16	10	8	9	2	0	0	
	Percent	1.15	1.53	3.44	5.34	6.11	3.82	3.05	3.44	0.76	0.00	0.00	
Neighbours	Frequency	2	10	13	12	8	12	10	1	1	1	0	
	Percent	.76	3.82	4.96	4.58	3.05	4.58	3.82	.38	.38	.38	.00	
Relatives	Frequency	47	11	41	14	16	5	2	0	1	1	0	
	Percent	17.94	4.20	15.65	5.34	6.11	1.91	0.76	0.00	0.38	0.38	0.00	
Self	Frequency	103	12	22	6	18	3	1	0	0	0	0	
	Percent	39.31	4.58	8.40	2.29	6.87	1.15	0.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Problems before marriage at 20 years old						
VDCs	Menstruation	No pregnancy	Miscarriage	STD	Delivery Problem	Death Delivery
Ashrang	23	5	14	1	32	6
Gimdeed	69	19	29	9	66	2
Thurladurlung	34	2	10	2	10	1

School drop out after marriage		
VDCs	no of female	no of male
Ashrang	24	19
Gimdeed	7	31
Thurladurlung	18	18

After school dropout marriage		
VDCs	no of female	no of male
Ashrang	18	13
Gimdeed	29	32
Thurladurlung	28	34

VDCs wise marriage age						
VDCs	0-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	Total
Ashrang	0	5	3	38	24	70
Gimdeed	18	5	54	32	1	110
Thuladurlung	1	0	16	53	9	79
Total	19	10	73	123	34	259

knowledge legal provision child marriage		
	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	62	23.7
No	200	76.3
Total	262	100.0



With Financial Support



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