

CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

Child, early and forced marriages often mean the end of a girl's education, setting aside her chances of a vocation or career and undermining her life choices and her human rights. Early marriage can also have life-threatening consequences. Girls who are married at a young age are exposed to early and unwanted pregnancies and often face a higher risk of STIs such as HIV. Many girls also suffer physical, emotional and sexual violence.

41% of girls in Nepal are married before the age of 18¹. This calls for investments in girls through giving access to education and health services, developing their social and economic assets and ensuring that they can postpone their marriage until they are ready. The Government of Nepal recently endorsed a new National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and has set the legal age of marriage at 20 to discourage early marriages.



of 1,000 women aged 15-19 were already pregnant (2008-2010)¹



of women aged 20-49 were married before turning 18²



of adolescents aged 15-19 are currently married¹



of women aged 15-19 have unmet needs for family planning²



Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

UNFPA — Because everyone counts.

Child, Early and Forced Marriages in Nepal: UNFPA Response

Strengthening national legal and policy frameworks

To target the lack of protection of girls' human rights, UNFPA works to review and recommend amendments to the existing legal frameworks on child marriage and marriage registration to identify gaps and legal reform needs. UNFPA was a contributing partner to support the recent National Strategy to End Child Marriage and has also supported Center for Reproductive Rights in identifying gaps and weaknesses in Nepal's legal provisions on child marriage. The support is also to develop recommendations and to address the gaps as well as an amendment proposal aimed at law reform and harmonization with human rights standards, producing a policy brief outlining the key findings and recommendations, and developing and publishing a manual for stakeholders, including law enforcement officials, to highlight their role in implementing the child marriage law.

Empowering adolescent girls

UNFPA Nepal is working to empower adolescent girls to resist early marriage and stay in school. By delivering a comprehensive life skills package to girls both in and out of school, UNFPA helps to increase their access to information on issues that are relevant to them, such as health, gender issues, leaderships skills, and basic finance and accounting skills. UNFPA also works with their parents, community members and religious leaders to create an encouraging environment. An important focus for UNFPA is also to support young girls who are already married, to help them plan their pregnancies.

Improving adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health

UNFPA works with the Government of Nepal to improve access to sexual and reproductive health information, services and education for young people. Youth-friendly health services should be welcoming and non-judgmental, ensure confidentiality, and provide high quality services and information to young people regardless of their age, marital status, or sexual orientation. UNFPA helps to certify health centres as youth-friendly according to a set of criteria.

UNFPA is working with the government to implement comprehensive sexuality education, both in schools and through community-based training and outreach. Comprehensive sexuality education goes far beyond traditional 'sex education'. It encompasses age-appropriate information and dialogues on health, puberty, relationships, human rights, gender issues, and other life skills relevant to young people.

Mobilizing communities

UNFPA is promoting public expressions of commitment towards ending child marriage by working with young people and leaders at the community and higher levels. We are engaging religious leaders, men and boys to change attitudes towards harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriages.



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Sources:

1. Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2011
2. Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014