

Statement of Action: Addressing Child Marriage in Nepal

Background Information

Child marriage is a grave violation of human rights, affecting both girls and boys. In Nepal, despite the legal age for marriage being 20 for both sexes, more than a third of young women aged 20-24 report being married before the age of 18. This practice restricts children's choices, alters their life trajectories, and exposes them to significant risks of abuse and violence.

Gender-based violence and child marriage are critical issues in Nepal. These practices violate human rights, restrict children's choices, and expose them to significant risks. This statement outlines actionable steps to combat these challenges.

Key Issues in Nepal

1. High Prevalence:

- Nepal has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Asia for both girls and boys.
- Despite the legal age for marriage being 20 for both sexes, more than a third of young women aged 20-24 report being married before the age of 18, and just over one in ten before 15.
- Nepali boys are among the most likely in the world to be child grooms, with more than one in ten marrying before they reach 18.

2. Human Rights Violation:

- Child marriage is a human rights violation that restricts children's choices, alters their life trajectory, and exposes them to significant risks of abuse and violence.
- A UNICEF study found that one in three married girls in Nepal had experienced sexual violence from their husbands, while one in six reported physical violence.

3. Impact on Education and Health:

- Married girls in Nepal are 10 times more likely not to be in school compared to their unmarried peers.
- Married boys often face pressure to work and support the family instead of continuing their education.
- Girls' right to health is also compromised, as over one in eight Nepali women have babies before the age of 18, putting them at higher risk during childbirth.

4. Complex Causes:

- Poverty, low value attached to daughters, lack of access to education, caste system, and patriarchal culture contribute to child marriage.
- Adolescents sometimes choose their own partners and may even elope.

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- Parents may encourage adolescents to marry early to avoid dowry costs or expensive weddings.
- The devastating earthquakes of 2015 raised concerns that child marriage could increase, as families sought to protect their children's futures during crises.

Call to Action

1. Ending child marriage is ending gender inequality in all public and private spaces. It requires a multi-sectoral approach involving government agencies, civil society, and communities working together to protect the rights and futures of young people in Nepal by transforming gender norms and rebalancing power at every level.
2. Child marriage has a multidimensional aspect, thus working in single aspects is not enough. Thus, emphasis should be given on the importance of multi-dimensional discussions surrounding child marriage to address its various aspects and consequences. Child marriage is a form of gender-based violence, thus to end child marriage we must address the root causes of gender-based violence. This means transforming patriarchal masculinities and dismantling stereotypical social norms that drive the abuse of girls' rights and gender-based discrimination.
3. Youth-led initiatives play a crucial role in raising awareness, advocating for policy changes, and implementing interventions to prevent child marriage. Awareness program should include comprehensive sexuality education and empowerment programs for adolescents to enable them to make informed choices and pursue alternative life goals.
4. We demand urgent global action to end child marriage. It robs vulnerable children (especially girls) of childhood, education, and opportunities. Governments must enforce laws against underage marriage, promote girls' education and empowerment, and provide support to at-risk families. Addressing root causes like poverty and gender inequality is crucial. Let's unite to protect children from this harmful practice, ensuring every child can fulfill their potential. We demand immediate action against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) to safeguard children.
5. Increase the statute of limitations for victims of child marriage from the present three-month limit to a suitable length of time.
6. Develop a specific protection and support plan for those who have been married as children to make it easier for them to annul and after the annulment of the marriage.
7. Create and implement a system for integrating child marriage victims into socioeconomic channels through trainings and assistance with employability. Ensure that they have access to education.
8. Facilitate and ensure the right to citizenship for victims of child marriage by removing barriers created by relevant authorities requiring presence of husband.
9. Ensure that health, education, protection and other systems are responsive to the needs of girls.

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10. Support governments to create a positive legal and policy environment to end child marriage.
11. Data and evidence are very important for evidence-based advocacy. Thus, use and build the data and evidence on what works to end child marriage.
12. Post-Disaster Preparedness: Recognize that disasters or crises can exacerbate child marriage rates. Implement strategies to protect vulnerable children during emergencies.

This statement emphasizes the urgency of ending child marriage, promoting education, and fostering a gender-equitable society. By implementing these recommendations, Nepal can protect its young population and create a brighter future for all.

Sources:

1. [UNICEF Nepal Report: Ending Child Marriage in Nepal¹](#)
2. [World Vision International: It Takes Nepal to End Child Marriage²](#)
3. [Impact Report: It Takes Nepal to End Child Marriage³](#)
4. [Girls Not Brides: Ending Child Marriage in Nepal⁴](#)

