

# “I am a Child, not a Bride” Campaign

By the children and for the children of Province-02 of Nepal  
*(A Community health improvement initiative of IRHDTC/Nepal)*



## Annual Report

October 2019 to September 2020

### Coordination



पर्सगढी नगरपालिका  
नगर कार्यपालिकाको कार्यालय  
हरपुर, पर्सा

### Support from



### Implemented by



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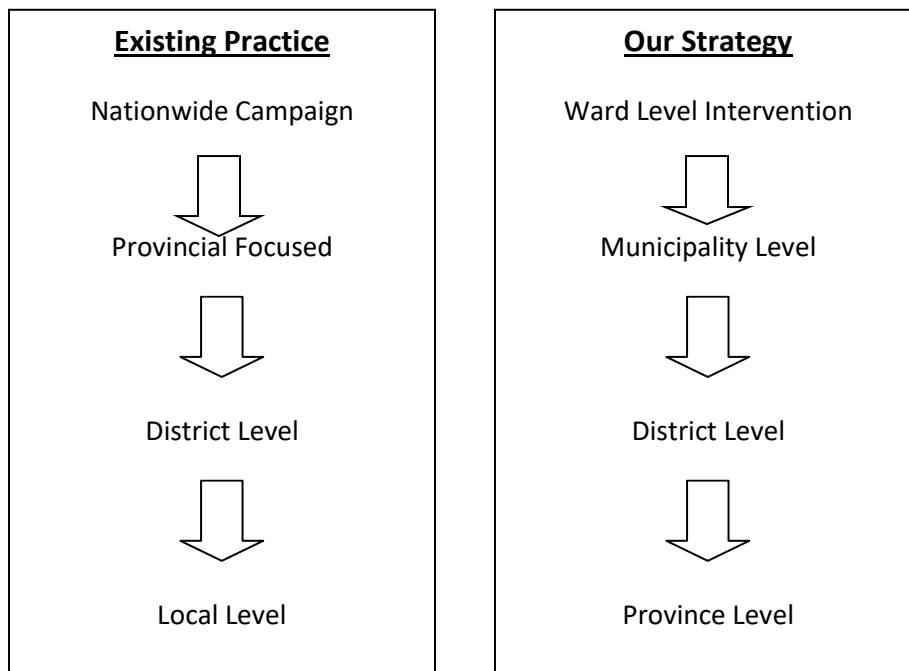
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## Background

Child marriage is the root cause of numerous social problems. The site where we initiated the campaign is a predominantly *Madhesi* community. In this community, child marriage is a norm and an integral part of their culture. Practiced for decades and generations, eradicating child marriage in a single attempt is an impossible task. Many national and international organizations have been implementing various programs to tackle the problem of child marriage in Nepal for a long time now. The Nepalese law also provisions child marriage as a punishable offence. Therefore, unless we generate awareness about the ill impacts of child marriage within the local community, child marriage will remain a part of the culture and will be hard to get rid of. While the programs formulated by national and international organizations embody the top to bottom approach, it is hard for these programs to address the actual needs of the local rural communities because of which the negative consequences of child marriage remain intact. Therefore, instead of focusing on the topmost unit, our focus shifted to the smallest unit of the community, which is the village and the ward in order to effectively run our campaign - 'I am a Child, not a Bride'.



The first phase of our campaign covered only two out of nine wards in Parsagadhi Municipality. Twenty adolescent girls (ten from each) were selected from two schools to participate in our campaign- Janata Secondary School in Ward-03 and Nepal Rastriya Secondary School in Ward-09. Initially, we aimed for our campaign to make an impact at the ward level and thereafter at the entire municipality level. Within a year of operation itself, our campaign has received high priority from both ward and municipalities. At present, both the ward offices have been running programs such as wall painting, mass rally, behavior change communication (BCC) and information education and communication (IEC) materials against child marriage on their own.

Similarly, Parsagadhi municipality has also provided high importance to the issues of child marriage, education and health of children and adolescents. Local health post statistics at our campaign site suggest that the rates of early pregnancy, child and maternal mortality have declined in comparison to previous years. In addition, number of institutional deliveries, antenatal (ANC) and postnatal checkups (PNC) have increased significantly. The local health post has also been conducting orientation programs on a regular basis, addressing the issues of adolescent health. These progresses, to some extent, can be attributed to the effective implementation of our campaign. The number of school going children has increased in since last year with a significant increase in the number of girl children. Within a year itself, the wards that adopted our 'I am a Child, not a Bride' campaign, the rates of child marriage have dropped massively. In addition, the local administration and stakeholders are conscious and alert regarding this issue.

The first phase of our campaign was a big success. Moving on to the next phase, we will be catering to the remaining 11 community schools in the Parsagadhi Municipality. The 20 participants from the two schools in the first phase will now lead the campaign and provide orientation to 110 adolescent girls from 11 schools.

Our ambitious campaign that began a year ago, is now heading towards a massive expansion where the local government including the municipality, ward, health post and concerned stakeholders are extremely willing and committed to the expansion and success of second phase of the campaign.

## Summary

In general, the access to health service is not easy for a lot of people across Nepal. Especially, the situation of child and maternal health in the rural areas is extremely dismal. Looking at Province-2, a vicious circle surrounding the issues such as child marriage, violence against girl child, early pregnancy, gender discrimination, poverty, educational deprivation and poor health, is in existence in the region for a long time now. To break this circle at the ward level (the smallest unit), IRHDTC/Nepal with support from America Nepal Medical Foundation (ANMF), successfully completed the ‘I am a Child, not a Bride’ campaign with the slogan – *By the Children and for the Children* from October 2019 to September 2020. Within a year of this campaign, we were able to accomplish various health orientation programs and trainings, formation and mobilization of child clubs and adolescent girls group. We also advocated for creating a ‘Community free from Child Marriage’. Our biggest achievement was that the respective ward and municipality felt an ownership towards this campaign and are committed and willing to extend this campaign to the entire municipality. In addition to the child clubs and adolescents girls group, we also formed two mothers’ group namely *Nawajivan Aama Samuha* each. We also conducted an orientation for the mother’s group on basic health awareness and local level advocacy. We are hopeful that in the future, child clubs, adolescent girls group and mothers’ group will advocate and work towards raising awareness regarding child and maternal health at the local level. The present COVID-19 situation has posed a lot of challenges and thus, the campaign is unable to run smoothly as per our expectations.

## Campaign at a glance

Expectations	Activities Carried Out	Achievement
Minimization in the cases of child marriage and initiation for gender equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We provided trainings to the selected 20 adolescent girls on child rights, child and maternal health, advocacy and communication.</li> <li>At present, both the ward offices have been running programs such as wall painting, mass rally, behavior change communication (BCC) and information education and communication (IEC) materials against child marriage on their own.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participating girls committed to not get married early while also making their peers aware about the drawbacks of child marriage.</li> <li>The local administration and stakeholders are conscious and alert regarding the issue of child marriage.</li> <li>Within a year itself, the wards that adopted our 'I am a Child, not a Bride' campaign, the rates of child marriage have dropped massively.</li> </ul>
Increased number of children going to school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both the schools conducted 'Admission Campaign' focused on enrolling more girl students.</li> <li>We convinced Parsagadhi Municipality to provide scholarships to adolescent girls so that they don't discontinue their education while in school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the annual report of the school committee, the number of school going children has increased since last year with a significant increase in the number of girl children.</li> <li>Parsagadhi Municipality provided 300 bicycles, schoolbags and stationeries (books, pens, notebooks, etc.)</li> </ul>
Minimization in maternal & child death rate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local health posts together with IRHDTC and adolescent girls' group ran awareness programs for institutional delivery, ANC and PNC visit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to Baghbana Health Post in Parsagadhi Municipality, the institutional deliveries increased from 180 in the previous year to 213. Also, number of ANCs last year was 125 and PNCs was 131 and those have increased to 188 ANCs and 170 PNCs in the current year. <i>*Four time visit during the pregnancy period as Government of Nepal's Ministry of Health protocol.</i></li> </ul>

<p>Access to health services &amp; facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We had the female community health volunteers (FCHV) and adolescent girls group make door-to-door visits to the community people where FCHV provided health counseling, vitamins and polio vaccination at the doorsteps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community people were aware and started placing importance on the issue of child and maternal health.</li> <li>• There was an increase in the number of people visiting the health post.</li> </ul>
<p>Leadership development as well as capability enhancement of adolescent girls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We formed child clubs and adolescent girls' groups in both the schools and thus both the groups gave continuity to their regular activities.</li> <li>• The adolescent girls group started monitoring regularity of teachers and students in school, health and hygiene standards and gender-friendliness of the toilets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is regularity in the monthly meeting conducted by the child clubs and girls' groups.</li> <li>• The groups are also leading the extracurricular activities (ECA) in the schools.</li> <li>• The 20 participants in our campaign have also been able to receive various rewards from the municipality.</li> </ul>
<p>Efforts to make local government more responsible and accountable towards the issue of child marriage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the sustainability of the campaign, we approached the municipality, ward and school committee on a regular basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parsagadhi municipality and the two wards are placing high importance on the issues of child marriage, education and health of children and adolescents.</li> <li>• Local government including the municipality, ward, health post and concerned stakeholders are extremely willing and committed to the expansion and success of second phase of the campaign.</li> </ul>

## What people say?



Students' reflection on 'I am a Child, not a Bride' Campaign

If I hadn't been in this campaign, I probably would have been married. Due to this campaign, I was able to participate in various programs relating to children and also won scholarships and rewards and all of them helped me become more confident and career-oriented. I aim to become a nurse in the future and educate people in my community about different issues relating to health.

*Reena Kumari Pandit, 15/F (Student, Nepal Rastriya Sec. School)*

The session on menstrual hygiene organized by this campaign gave me a better understanding about menstrual cramps and the ways to deal with it properly. After attending the session, I was also able to share my knowledge with my family and friends. Now, sanitary pads are easily available at my school due to which I don't have to miss school anymore.

*Ritu Shrestha, 16/F (Student, Janata Sec. School)*



**Listening a father's perception about her daughter who is participating in the Campaign**

I got married at 15, had kids soon after (4 of them) and was unable to continue my education. After having children at an early age, my wife's health got worse. As I am the sole earner in the family, we are barely able to meet our basic needs. But I won't let my children go through the same difficulties. My daughter Reena aspires to become a doctor and I would do everything to my ability to make her dream come true. *(People in the village regard nurses as doctors)*

*Umesh Pandit, 42/M (Father of Reena Kumari Pandit)*



**School Principal highlighting the achievement of the Campaign**

Only 10 girls from our school participated in this campaign but with the help of those girls, we were able to make our entire school aware about health, hygiene and sanitation. The Child Club and the Adolescent Girls' group at our school are very active and the enrolment of girl students is also on the rise.

*Chetman Prasad Das, 34/M (Principal, Nepal Rastriya Sec. School)*



We will be organizing programs against child marriage at our ward and not let children be deprived of the opportunity to receive good education. I would like to thank IRHDTC for bringing this campaign to our ward.

*Ram Narayan Gauro 62/M*

*(Ward President- 09, Parsagadhi Municipality)*



Deputy Mayor addressing the health orientation program organized by IRHDTN Nepal

This campaign has addressed the major issue of child marriage in our municipality in a remarkable way, thus playing a big role towards empowerment of girls. The issues of children and adolescents receive high priority in our municipality's programs and policy, and plans are being drafted accordingly. Although this campaign is based only in two schools until now, it has to be expanded to all the 13 community schools in our municipality. We commit to collaborate in order to make that happen.

*Archana Chaudhary, 26/F (Deputy Mayor, Parsagadhi Municipality)*

## Achievement Gallery



Uniform and stationeries Distribution to the adolescent girls taking part in the campaign



Orientation session on Child and Maternal Health



One of our adolescent girl Reena Kumari receiving scholarship from Municipality



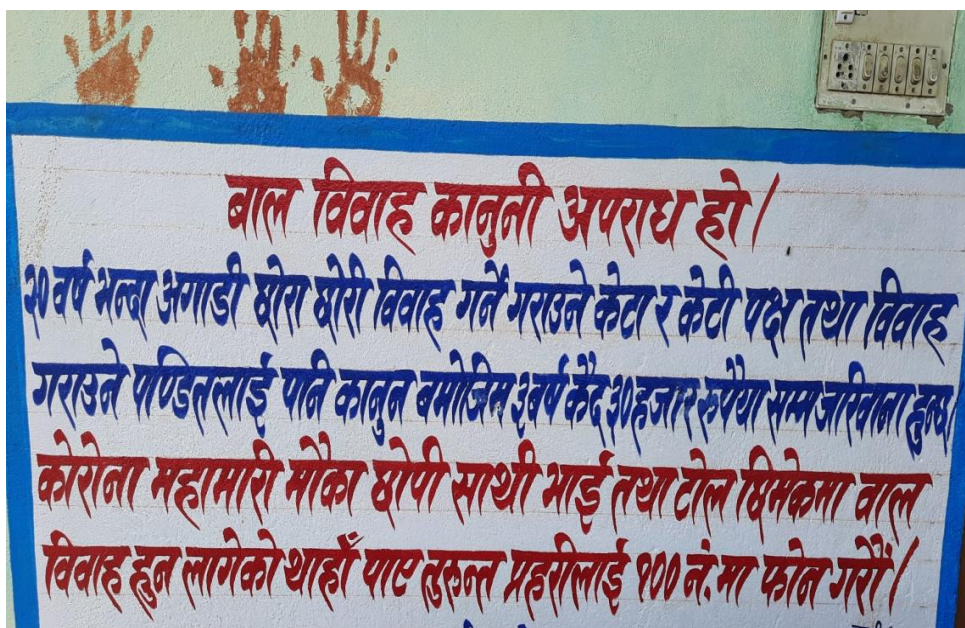
Formation of Mothers' Group

Efforts to make local government more responsible and accountable towards the issue of child marriage.



Wall Painting at Ward office:

“Let’s be committed to make our community Child Friendly”



Wall Painting at Ward office:

Containing the message regarding Child Marriage, Legal punishments and its consequences



Bicycle distribution for the adolescent girls by the Parsagadhi municipality



Monitoring the 'Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination campaign of Government of Nepal' in our campaign site, Parsagadhi municipality



Activities conducted during COVID-19 pandemic; provided sanitizer, hand wash, flex and Hand –mike- speaker to both the schools.