

Behavioral Determinants of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy in Nepal: A Qualitative study



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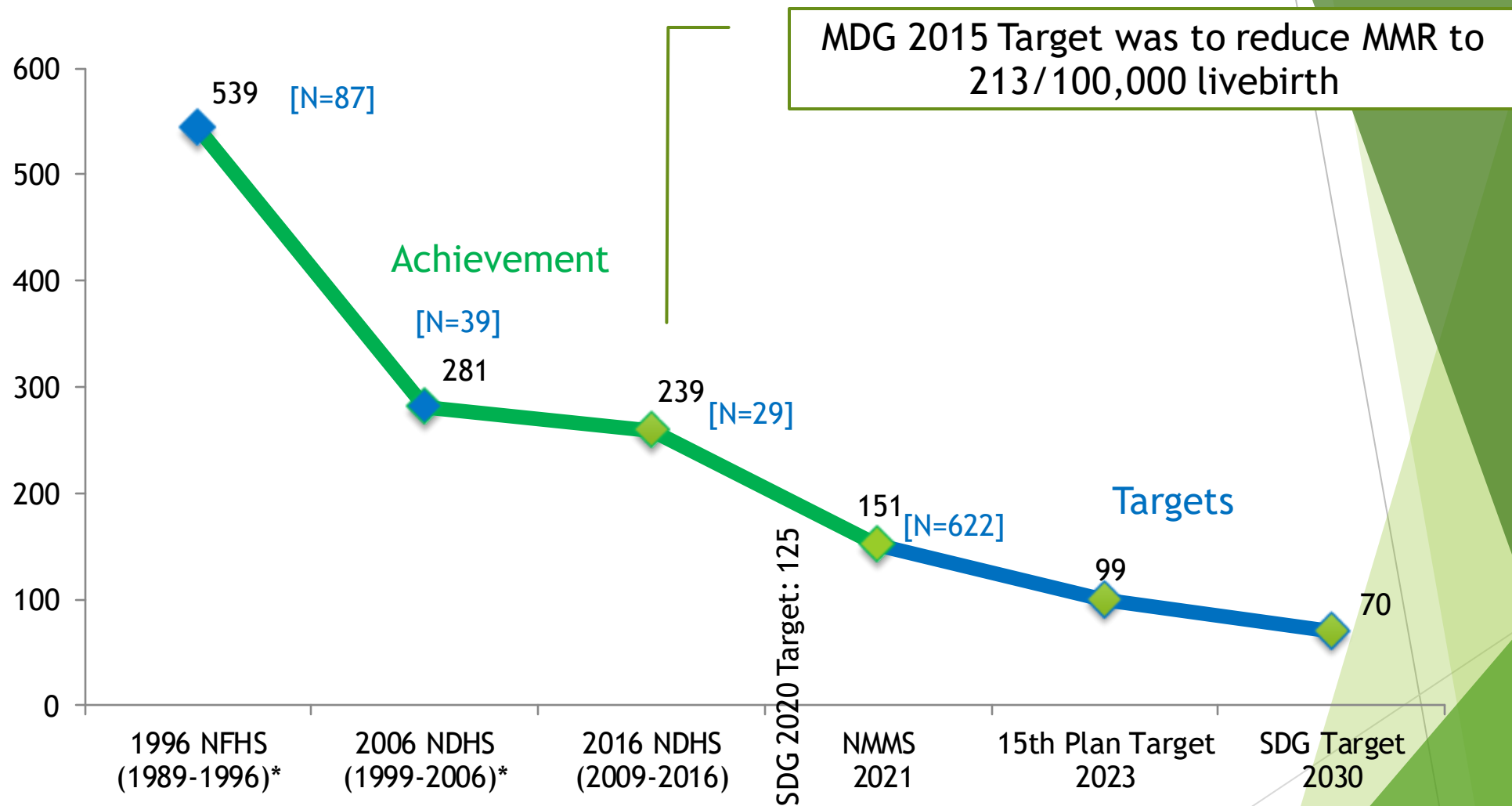


Background

- ▶ After the establishment of the global minimum marriage age of 18, and recognizing the pressing need to address this issue, Nepal raised the legal marriage age to 20 for men and women in 2017.
- ▶ Nepal has pledged to end child marriage by 2030 as part of its commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Constitution of Nepal.



Trend of Maternal Mortality Ratio in Nepal



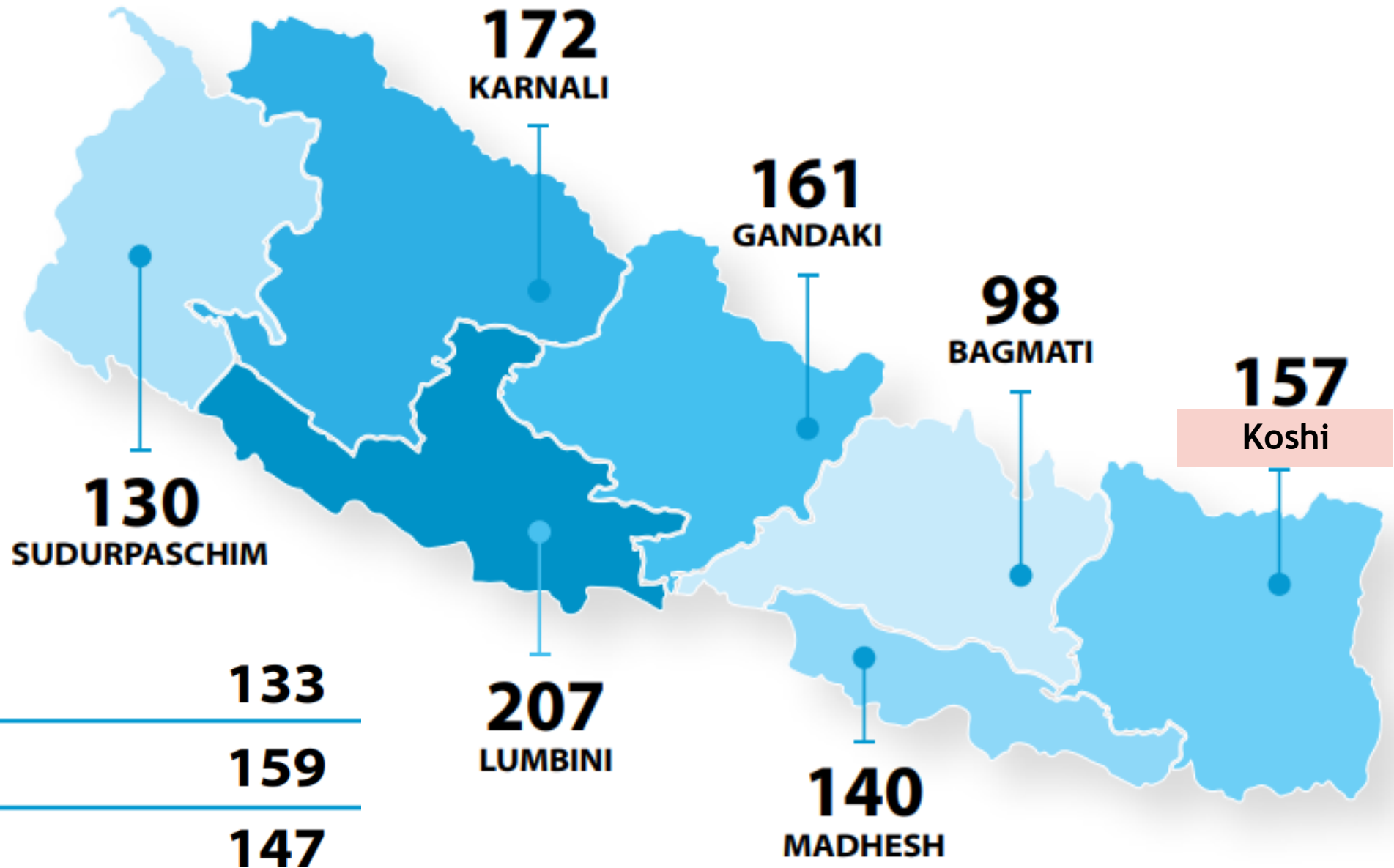
*MMR has been measured using pregnancy related deaths

Source: Data for 1996 from Nepal Health Facility Survey (NHFS), rest of the data from succeeding Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS)

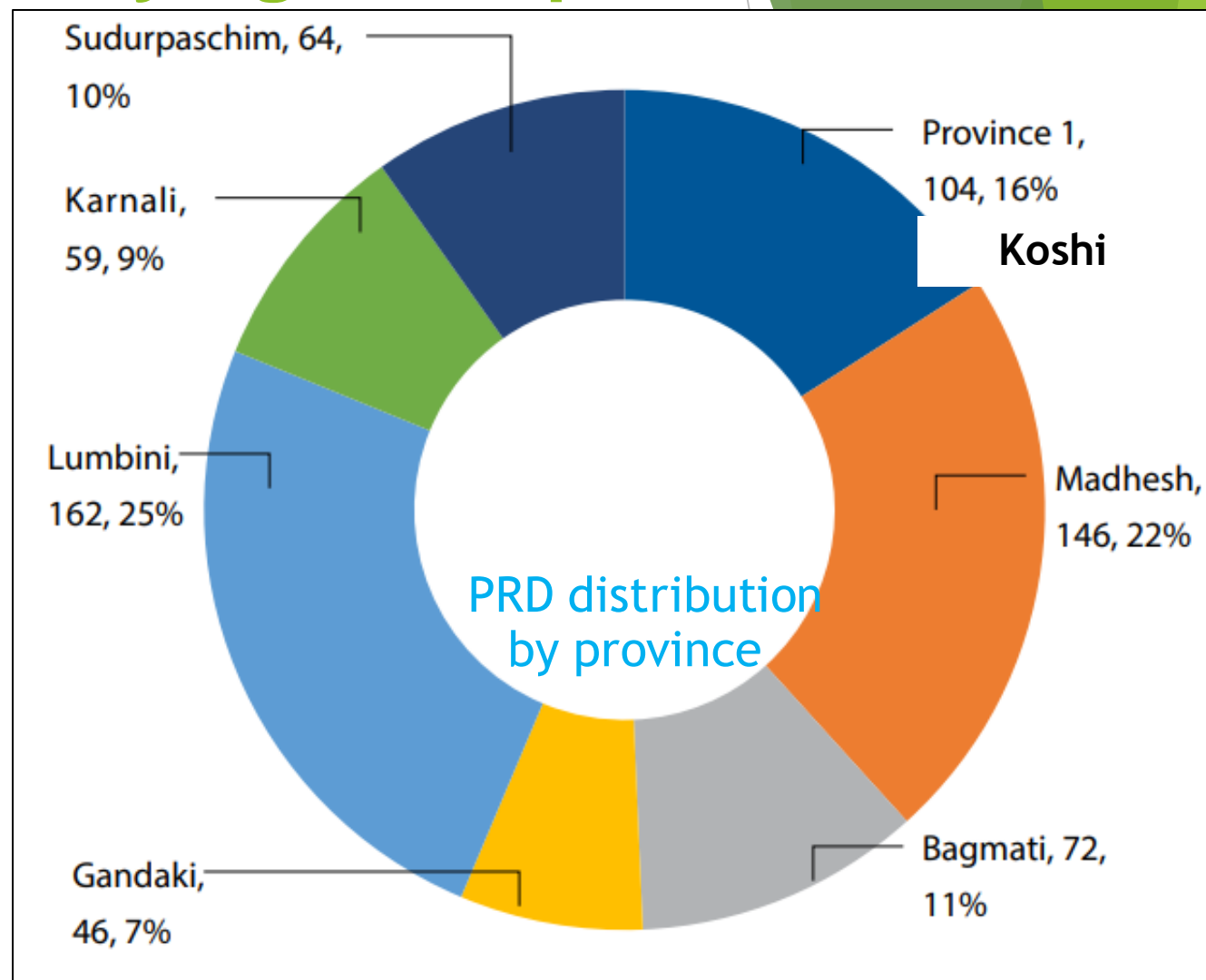
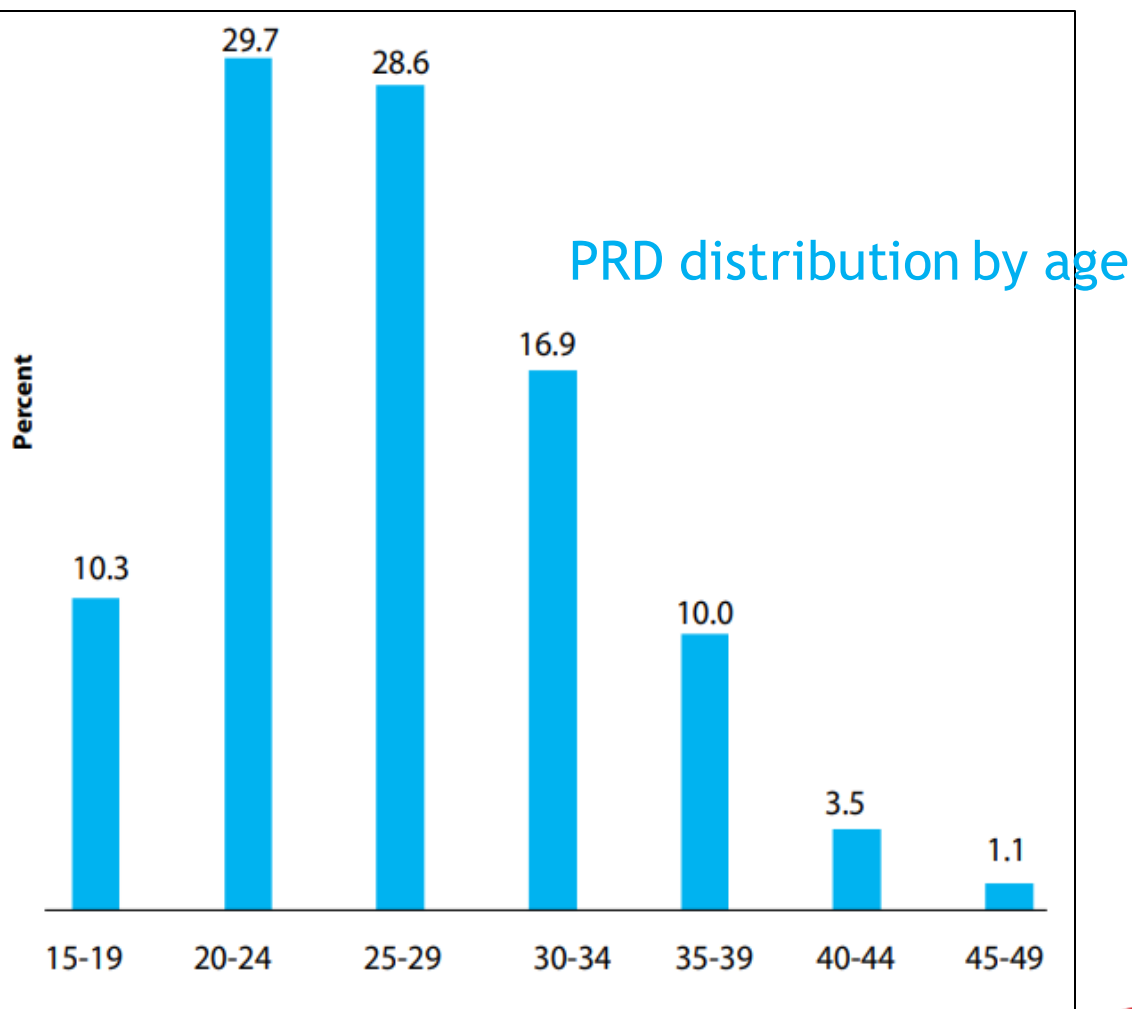


MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO BY PROVINCE

151
100,000
LIVE BIRTHS



Pregnancy Related Deaths by Age Group and Province



Proportion of Maternal Deaths among WRA by Age Group

Age group	Number of deaths among women of reproductive age (15-49 yrs)	Number of pregnancy-related deaths	Number of maternal deaths	Percent of maternal deaths
15 - 19	1456	67	63	4.3
20 - 24	1589	193	183	11.5
25 - 29	1528	187	176	11.5
30 - 34	1494	111	109	7.3
35 +	6909	95	91	1.3
Nepal	12976	653	622	4.8



Background

- ▶ Despite efforts to combat the practice, Nepal has the eighth-highest rate of child marriage in the world and the third-highest rate in South Asia.
- ▶ The prevalence of teenage marriages and pregnancies is widespread, especially in marginalized communities across the country.
- ▶ A 2019 study revealed that 8 percent of girls were married before the age of 15 and 33 per cent were married before the age of 18.
- ▶ Meanwhile, 2 per cent of men were married before age 15, and 9 per cent were married before they were 18.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ▶ What are the behavioral drivers (socio-economic, educational, cultural, religious) for child marriage and adolescent pregnancy in Nepal?
- ▶ Why is the prevalence of child marriage is high among marginalized communities in Nepal?
- ▶ What are social, health, legal consequences of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy?
- ▶ How can we decrease the prevalence of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy in Nepal?



GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the study is to identify behavioral drivers and consequences of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy among marginalized communities in Nepal.



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To explore behavioral drivers (social, cultural, religious) norms for child marriage and adolescent pregnancy among marginalized communities.
- ▶ To explore gender role for child marriage and adolescent pregnancy in Nepal
- ▶ To explore impact of policy shifts especially on minimum age of girls and boys on child marriage and early pregnancy in Nepal
- ▶ To explore knowledge attitude and practice of legal age of marriage and adolescent pregnancy among marginalized communities.
- ▶ To explore social, health, legal consequences of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy amongst the marginalized communities.



STUDY DESIGN

- ▶ An exploratory qualitative research design



Study Site

- ▶ This study was conducted in the seven province of the country.
- ▶ Two districts were selected from each province.
- ▶ Three marginalized communities were selected from each province with the objective of striking a balanced geographical representation covering the mountain region, hilly region and Terai region of the country.
- ▶ Two community from a R/Municipality and next one community were selected from other R/Municipality in each province.



Study sites distribution

Province	District	R/Municipality	Community
Koshi Province	Jhapa	Gauriganj rural municipality	Santhaal Gangai
	Ilam	Sandakpur rural municipality	Gurung
Madhesh Province	Dhanusha	Janakpur sub metropolitan city	Chamar Muslim
	Mahottari	Ekdara municipality	Musahar
Bagmati Province	Dhading	Benighat rorng municipality	Tamang Chepang
	Chitwan	Bharatpur sub-metropolitian city	Bote

Province	District	R/Municipality	Community
Gandaki Province	Gorkha	Barpak sulikot RM	Baram
	Tanahu	Rishing RM	Dalit (Bishwokarma) Magar
Lumbini Province	Pyuthan	Pyuthan municipality	Gharti Magar
	Dang	Ghorahi Sub-metropolitian	Badi Chaudhary
Karnali Province	Dailekh	Bhairabi municipality	Raute
	Dolpa	Tripurasundari	Dalit (Sarki) Kham Magar
Sudurpaschim Province	Achham	Ramaroshan Municipality	Rural Dalit Chettri
	Kailali	Dhangadi metropolitian city	sub- Rana Tharu

Sampling technique

- ▶ Purposive sampling was employed for the selection of the study participants for qualitative data collection.



SAMPLE SIZE

- ❖ Three marginalized communities (altogether 21 communities from seven provinces) were selected from each province.
- ❖ 36 participants were selected from one province .
- ❖ In total 252 participants were selected from seven provinces. However the participants were selected more in some province based on the characteristics of the data and saturation.

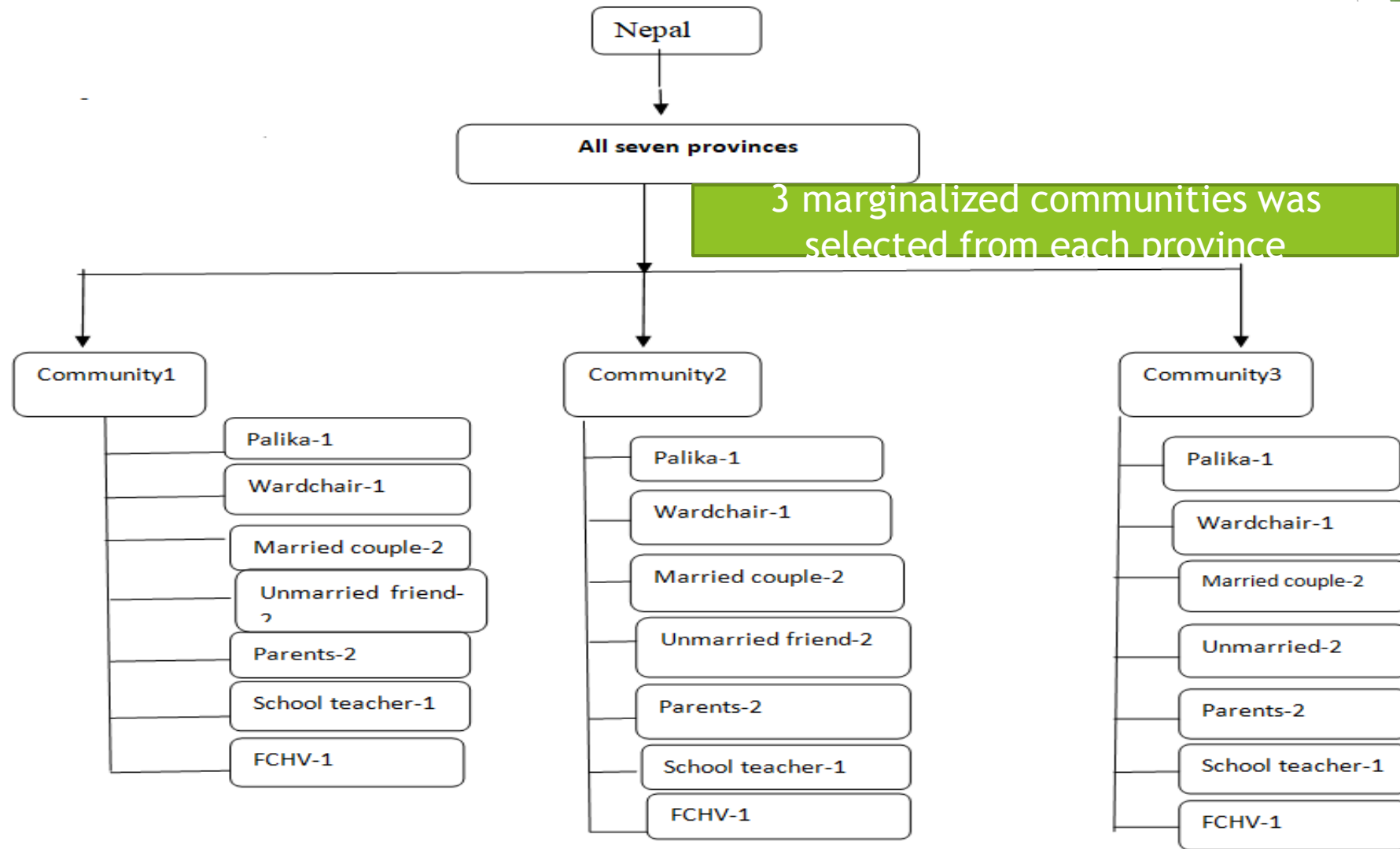


Study Participants

Interview	Participants
KII	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women, children and senior citizen section• Ward chairperson• Government school teachers• FCHVs
IDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two couples from each palika (who has done early marriage)• Unmarried adolescents of same community/friends• Parents of the adolescents who have married in young age
Kuragraphy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faith/Traditional Healers• Police Personnel• Community influencers like senior citizen, Dhaarmik Guru, Mukhiya



Sample size chart



FINDINGS

(Finding of this study is based on Socio-ecological model theory and categorized in two part, i.e. Drivers and consequences of child marriage)



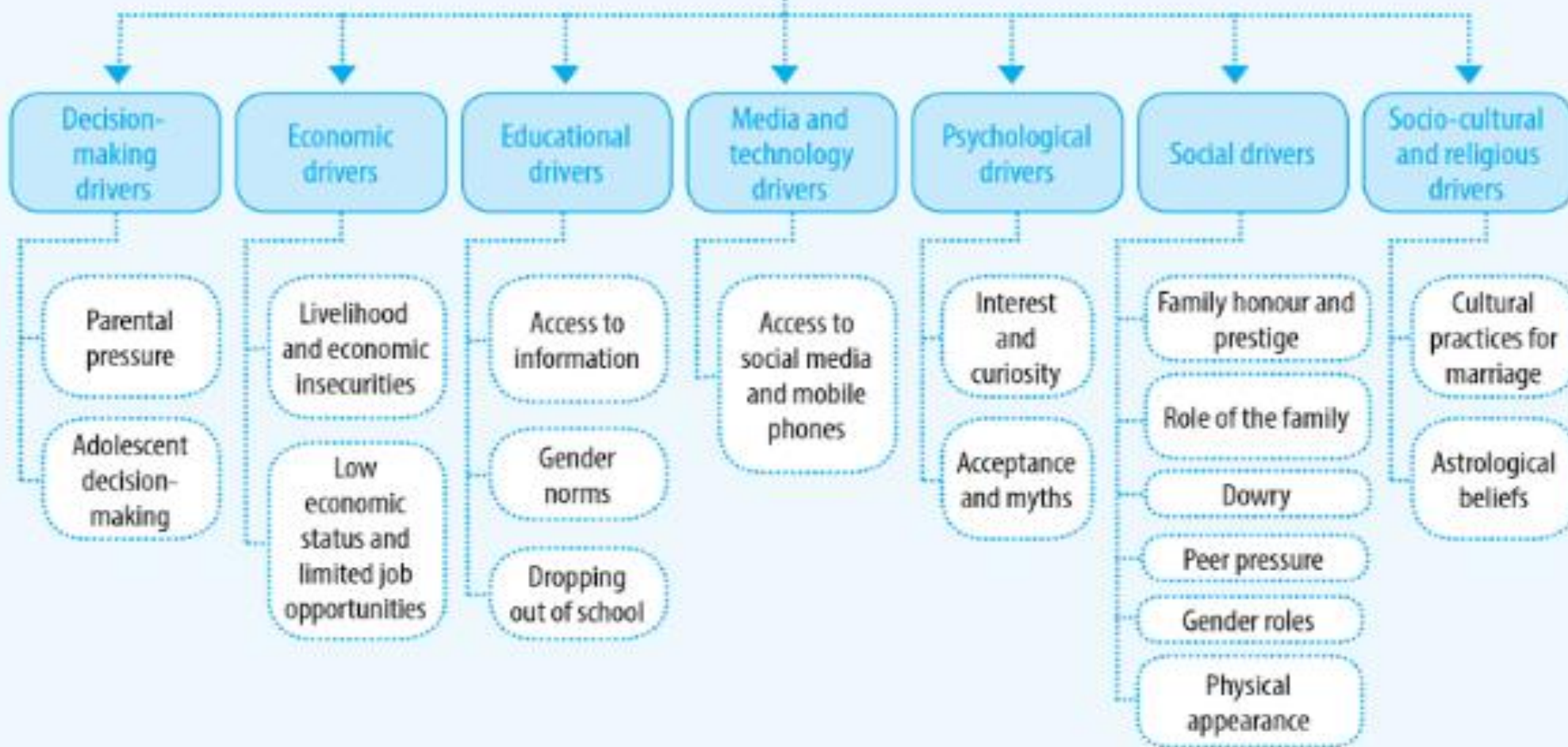
SEM (Socio Ecological Model)



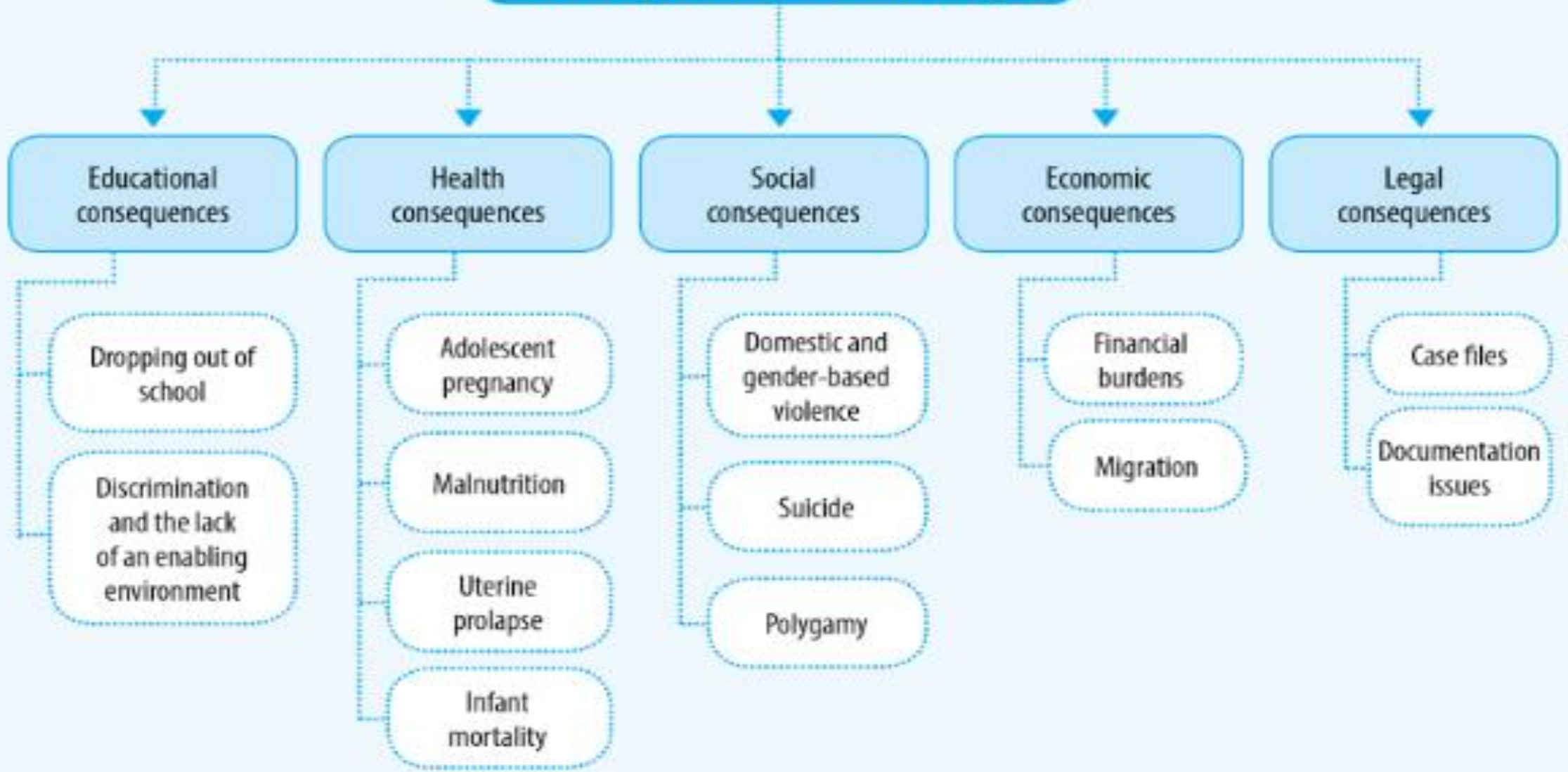
The socio-ecological model served as a guiding framework during the analysis of qualitative data, acknowledging the complex interplay of factors influencing child marriage. This model facilitated the exploration of multiple layers- – from individual beliefs to societal norms and environmental influences – providing a comprehensive understanding from different perspectives. This analysis of this study is also based on SEM model.



Drivers of child marriage



Consequences of child marriage



Major findings

- ▶ The findings revealed that a significant number of participants were well-informed about child marriage and acknowledged it as a crime.
- ▶ Some participants viewed child marriage as a cultural and traditional practice with a long-standing history.
- ▶ **Societal expectations and economic challenges** contribute to early marriages in Chhetri, Chamaar and Dalit communities.
- ▶ **Economic constraints** often push families to prioritize marriage over education, affecting adolescents futures, as was found in Chepang communities.



Major findings

- ▶ The Gharti Magar, Santhal, Chepang, Sarki and Gangai communities voice concern about **gender bias**, including favoring and prioritizing sons education over daughters, leading to higher school dropout rates among girls.
- ▶ **Cultural complexities**, especially in Muslim and Musahar communities, hinder girls' schooling after marriage due to restrictive norms for daughters-in-law pursuing education and discomfort in wearing traditional marriage attire to school.



Major findings

- ▶ **Health issues such as adolescent pregnancy, malnutrition and mental health** concerns prevail in the Sarki, Kham Magar, Santhaal, Gangai and Chaudhary communities, warranting improved health education.
- ▶ **Economic burdens and suicides** are linked to early marriages, as reported in the Santhal, Gangai, Kham Magar and Gurung communities.



Related Verbatim

schools distributed 100 SIM cards for students in coordination with the local government for their online classes. Instead of focusing on class, they were chatting with friends, which has caused a number of child marriages in the community.”

-Key informant interview with a male school teacher from the Kham Magar community, Dolpa, Karnali Province

“My mother expired [passed away] when I was nine years old, and I have a stepmom at home. I was fat at the time. She told me I looked huge due to my body and I might get even more fat, so she married me off.”

-15-year-old married girl from the Chamaar community, Dhanusha, Madhesh Province



Young girls are considered adept at collecting Yarsagumba: a caterpillar fungus known for its medicinal properties and found in the mountain regions of Nepal. This has led some parents from the Kham Magar community in Dolpa to marry their sons at a young age so their young wives – who are thought to have excellent eyesight – can collect this delicacy and contribute to the family income.

– *In-depth interview with an 18-year-old married man from the Kham Magar community, Dolpa, Karnali Province*

“I have seen that one of my relatives married their daughter earlier by consultation with an astrologer because the astrologer said that her future will be better if she married before the age of 19.”

– *Key informant interview with a female community health volunteer from the Santhal community, Jhapa, Koshi Province*



There is a rule that the school administration will not allow married adolescents to study in school if they find out they are married.”

– *Key informant interview with a school teacher from the Badi community, Dang, Lumbini Province*

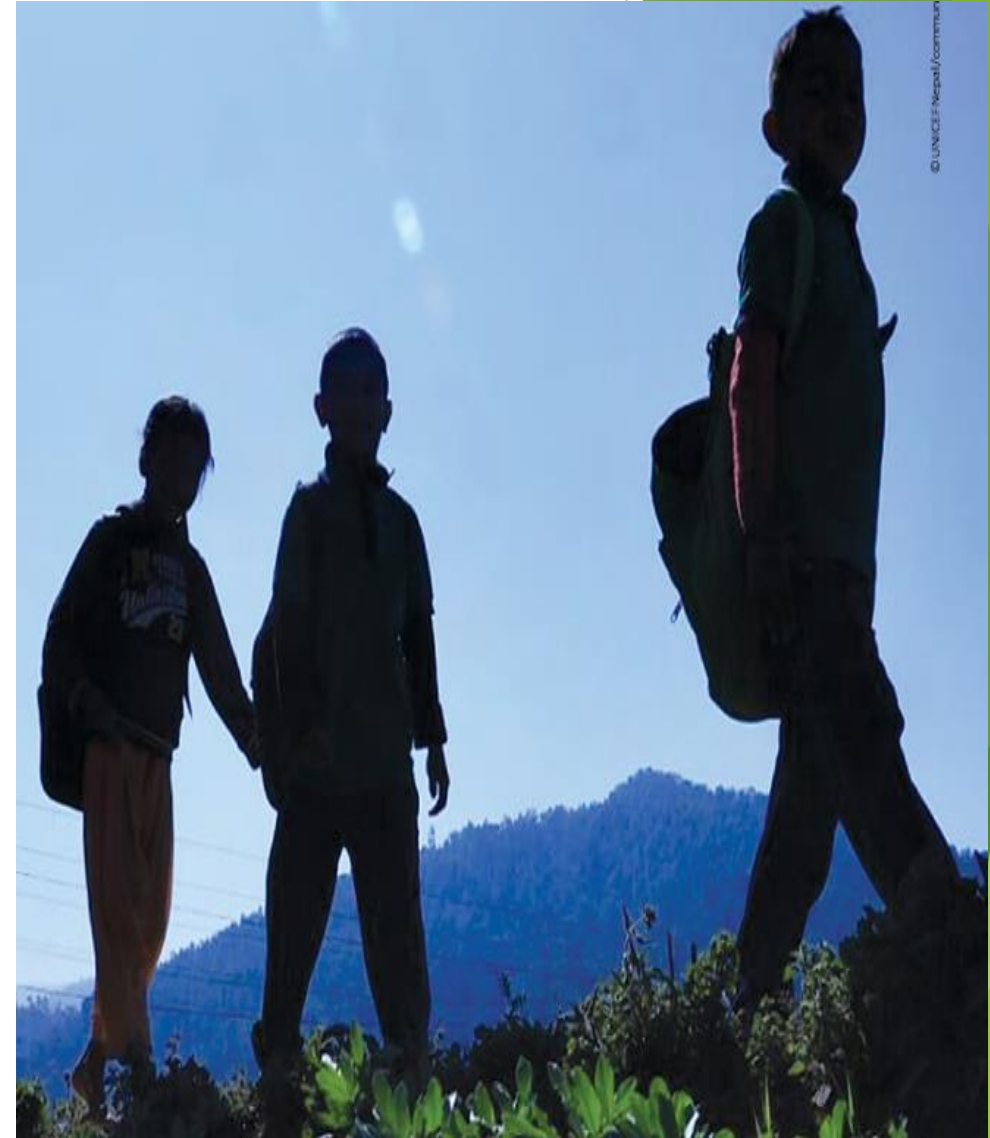


Following early marriage, a young couple committed suicide at a tea garden because their families were pressuring them to separate to maintain family prestige.

– *Key informant interview with a school teacher from the Santhal community, Jhapa, Koshi Province*

Most often the marriage is done by the families rather than love marriage. The families think that the girls will run away by doing love marriage. To maintain their prestige, the families confined their daughters in the marriage.”

– *In-depth interview with an unmarried adolescent girl from the Muslim community,*



Conclusion

- ▶ Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy linked to family decision, perceptions of physical attractiveness, desire for independence which is due to lack of comprehensive education and awareness, Societal pressures and traditional beliefs play roles.
- ▶ Elopements tend to be driven by adolescents and are frequently motivated by family conflicts, broken households and the fear of rejection by romantic partners
- ▶ The impact on the health of young brides and their children is severe, with increased risks of pregnancy-related complications, malnutrition, infant mortality rates, uterine prolapse and long-term health consequences.
- ▶ Child marriage diminishes educational opportunities, leading to school dropout and restricting the empowerment of young girls.



Recommendation

- ▶ Our study highlights the urgent necessity for coordinated action and targeted interventions to combat early marriage and pregnancy.
- ▶ Implementing comprehensive awareness campaigns alongside supportive policies can empower communities to identify and report cases of child marriage, safeguarding vulnerable children.
- ▶ Involving adolescents in decision-making processes and program development offers insight into their needs and concerns, enhancing the efficacy of interventions.
- ▶ Incorporating their perspectives fosters the creation of effective policies to prevent child marriage and promote children's well-being.



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Thank you

