TIPPING POINT - NEPAL

PHASE 1 EVALUATION FINDINGS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PHASE 1 OF CARE'S TIPPING POINT PROJECT addressed child marriage through a dynamic process of innovation, insight, and influence in two districts of Nepal in partnership with Siddhartha Samudayik Samaj (SSS) and Dalit Social Development Centre (DSDC). In its first phase, the project promoted girls' rights and choices regarding marriage in 16 communities using complementary approaches with collectives of girls, boys, and parents, who regularly participated in meetings, and advocacy events to raise public awareness and promote gender-equitable social norms. The project also engaged allies and potential champions for girls' rights, including government and civil society, to help drive social change and direct more resources towards girls' empowerment in project communities.

At the conclusion of Phase 1, an external evaluation team visited project sites in Kapilvastu and Rupandehi to conduct qualitative data collection with girls, boys, parents, and community members.[1] The evaluation team's findings indicate that Tipping Point's iterative and adaptive strategies have contributed to several changes in the lives of girls, the actions of parents and community members to support girls, and social norms that promote gender equity. Among the results:

Girls demonstrated growth in their communication and negotiation skills, personal aspirations, and practical knowledge. Notably, girls demonstrated increased reflection and understanding of themselves and their desires and aspirations for their futures, in a context where girls are not commonly encouraged to have thoughts about the course of their lives. Similarly, girls' expectations for marriage and the ideal age of marriage evolved into wanting a later marriage, with simultaneous *gauna,*[2] to a man who will share daily household chores. Through life skills education, girls gained skills in self-advocacy: there were many examples of girls asserting their rights with family members over important life events, such as marriage, and smaller matters like time to socialize. Sexuality education increased girls' knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, especially in menstrual hygiene management but also family planning. Tipping Point also supported livelihood skills development in some areas. Lastly, girls took on visible roles leading and organizing community events that challenged traditional gender roles and supported girls' rights.

Boys grew into better brothers for their sisters and started to think critically about their place in a family. The most notable change among boys was a new appreciation of women's traditional duties in the home like cooking, sewing, and washing clothes. Through group exercises to map girls' and boys' use of time, public competitions for boys in cooking and sewing, and other project activities, boys came to understand that their sisters had a greater burden of labor and that it was skilled labor. They began taking on more household work to allow sisters to study and relax and advocated for them with parents. Boys also advocated for girls in their communities by participating

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1   https://caretippingpoint.org
2   *Gauna* refers to the consummation of marriage within the Hindu religion, in the Southern belt of Nepal. Once a young girl is married, she will continue to live with her parents until after menarche. On the day of her *gauna,* her conjugal life begins, and she joins her husband's family household.

in street dramas about child marriage, dowry violence, and other issues, and joining girls in girls' other advocacy work. When it came to their own marriages, boys wanted to marry later than their older peers, but they showed varied levels of change in the qualities they desired in a future marriage.

Parents demonstrated a greater commitment to their daughters' educations and defended girls' rights to be active citizens. Parents grew increasingly supportive of sending their daughters to school and prioritized school attendance over household work. There were many cases of girls returning to school, sometimes facilitated by scholarships awarded through the project. Parents also indicated that they had begun to give more value to a girl's ability to be self-reliant, make decisions for herself, and play a role in the community. Related to these changes, adolescents and parents alike reported better communication with each other.

Government and civil society agencies collaborated with the project. Tipping Point built relationships with local agencies and actors, some of whom were already strong advocates for girls, such as Village Child Protection Committees (VCPCs), and others who sometimes opposed more equitable social norms for girls. Some religious leaders, for example, were active with the project and sought closer collaboration, while some rejected the project's messages. Government groups were increasingly responsive as they came to know the project and its mission, and some Village Development Committees funded sports equipment and community meeting spaces for adolescents. School Management Committees in some locations started providing menstrual pads and changing facilities for girls, which improved girls' school attendance.

Tipping Point project staff found themselves thinking in new ways and doing things they never imagined. Because local staff were the faces of Tipping Point, the project prioritized fostering their own personal transformation on issues of gender and power. Through workshops and personal reflections, staff internalized a critical awareness of the role of gender in their lives and discovered new capabilities in leading personal and social change. Despite challenges, staff reported pride in tackling tough issues like sexuality education with communities.

Key social norms that restrict girls' opportunities and autonomy loosened slightly. Adolescent girls who participated in Tipping Point activities realized the biggest change in their

families' and communities' expectations of them as compared to girls who did not join Tipping Point groups. Members of Tipping Point groups gained greater freedom to move around their village, ride bicycles, play sports outdoors, work with boys to organize community events, and express their opinions. Still, there was some normative diffusion from the project outward into communities, so that, for example, friends of boys in Tipping Point groups were more likely to say that they planned to share household work with their future wives. Girls faced social approbation through gossip and criticism of their non-traditional behaviors, but with the support of parents and each other, they largely disregarded it, demonstrating resilience in the face of sanctions for behavior outside the norm. There were also potential signs that economic considerations that families make in the process of marrying children may be shifting. Parents provided new justifications for delaying marriage based on reducing ceremonial costs and lower dowry prices when girls are educated or earning an income.

In just a few years, Tipping Point has made significant progress in mobilizing advocates for girls' rights and in shifting social norms related to child marriage in Nepal. It is difficult to measure the impact of Tipping Point on the frequency of child marriage itself, but there were many stories of marriages averted through the intervention of parents, boys, and girls involved with the project or in conjunction with local groups like the VCPC.

The successes of Tipping Point to date have not fully overcome the many barriers girls continue to face in realizing their potential and achieving agency in key life decisions. However, there are successes that hold promise for the Tipping Point approach to social norm change and girls' empowerment. Tipping Point is unique in its active engagement of boys as brothers and future husbands, and the transformation of boys into advocates for girls is a surprising result that deserves attention. In addition, the project piloted new ways of operationalizing social norm change work, with programming according to a set of Social Norms Programming principles that include focusing on positive messages about girls rather than the negative outcomes of child marriage.[3] Tipping Point also deployed innovative ways of measuring social norms and normative change, based on CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) framework tool,[4] which can inform academic and program design thinking.

As the project enters its second phase, key goals will be to build upon the strong results achieved within the core girls', boys', and parents' groups to deepen the process of social norm change throughout communities. The project's model of diffusion, whereby group members engage intensively with the project and become community role models in inspiring social norm change, has worked to an extent but is uneven, requiring more effort to reach and make a difference to more marginalized groups such as girls who remain out of school. Strengthening networks of supporters will also increase the resonance of project messaging and will encourage more allies to take action and drive resources to girls. Like-minded religious leaders represent an opportunity for the project to expand its message's reach beyond the current project sites. Finally, in Phase 1, the potential of income generation to delay marriages of adolescent girls was not fully explored, and girls will benefit from more financial literacy and livelihood skills.

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3   See the Social Norms Programming Principles in the Innovation Briefs at https://caretippingpoint.org/innovation/.
4   For more information on the SNAP framework, see http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/care-social-norms-paper-web.pdf.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER: K TANIS   JANUARY 2019