The Difficulties Girls Face in Families, in Ramghat and Ghusra Villages of Surkhet District, Mid-western Nepal

Irada Gautam

Save the Children (UK)
Office for South and Central Asia Region
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Irada Gautam

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Acronyms

AIDS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DCWC District Child Welfare Committee
HIV Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
INGO International Non-Government Organization
NPC National Planning Commission
NGO Non-Government Organization
OSCAR Office for South and Central Asia Region-SCF
OSP Out of School Education Program
SAC Social Awareness Centre
SCF Save the Children Fund
SLC School Leaving Certificate
UK United Kingdom
UN United Nations
UML United Marxist and Leninist
ML Marxist and Leninist
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The introductory section gives an overview of the various forms of discrimination girls face in S. Asia, which regionally constitutes the worst in the world. It then sets out the rationale for this research. This in part came about as a result of SCF (UK)'s decision to address violence against girls as a regional thematic issue. The research sought to find out from primarily rural adolescent girls in two villages of Surkhet district, in mid-west Nepal, the difficulties they face. These adolescents live in families and are not especially vulnerable as a group.

The research addresses 3 key questions:

i. What do girls, their brothers, parents and community leaders understand about girls’ aspirations and the difficulties girls face?

ii. What solutions do they suggest to address the difficulties girls face?

iii. What are the barriers that prevent the solutions?

In order to better understand the situation of adolescent girls the research protocol proposed that in-depth interviews were held with adolescent girls as well as focussed group discussions. So as to triangulate the information and gain more understanding of the family and community context with regard to discrimination against girls additional interviews were held with the peers of adolescent girls, with pre-adolescent girls, with married adolescent girls, the brothers of these girls, their parents and community leaders.

2. Section 2 describes the research methodology and process used. It provides a brief background to SCF’s work with partners in Surkhet. A regional SCF seminar on ‘Violence against Girls’ in October 1998 was the catalyst for a case study on the difficulties girls face in the two villages. The resulting group interviews were filmed and edited into a video called ‘Girls’ Voices’. The transcripts of the interviews with the children’s groups and later with the parents and brothers is given in Appendix 1. This research was a continuation of that case study and was carried out over a 3 month secondment to the SCF (UK) OSCAR regional office in Kathmandu from November 1998 to February 1999. The research took place in Ramghat and Ghusra villages, where SCF’s partners have been working with children’s groups for the last 6-9 months. Table 1 on page 6 shows the number and breakdown of the 155 people interviewed individually and in groups, and their caste/ethnicity. Individual interviews took place with 9 adolescent girls
from their group and with 13 of their peers. Otherwise interviewing was done in groups. The profiles of the various groups were:

- Pre-adolescent girls aged 6-10 years,
- Adolescent girls aged 11-18 years,
- Married adolescent girls aged 14-18 years,
- Brothers aged 10-18 years,
- Parents of adolescent girls,
- Community leaders of the 2 villages.

The original case study and the research interviewed members of the 3 different caste/ethnic groups separately to see if there were any noticeable differences as to how adolescents and adults in these groups viewed their situation and responded to similar questions. Appendix 4 contains the check list used in discussion with different groups. The caste/ethnic groups were the Kamai/Damai (traditional artisan caste), Brahman/Chhetri (traditional priestly/educated and warrior castes) and the Tharu (an ethnic group of cultivators). The reasons for choosing these groups to interview is described and also how individuals were selected. Also described are the methods for data collection, how various ethical issues were addressed and the time schedules for different parts of the research.

3. In Section 3 the researcher describes her own background, her experiences and observations concerning the research. This includes what she often found the interviewees wanted of her. Interestingly, the brothers’ group expressed great sympathy with their sisters. However, the fathers seemed not to accept that they had any role in bringing up their daughters. The cultural norms which restrict unmarried girls are described. Some background is also given by the researcher concerning the political and economic context of the caste/ethnic groups she interviewed.

4. Section 4 records the key findings of the research. With regard to the 32 adolescent girls interviewed in the 3 groups it analyses their aspirations but particularly the 6 key issues they identified as significant in making their lives difficult. These are:

- low value and status,
- workload,
- mobility restriction,
- scolding and attitude of parents,
- early marriage,
- attitude of neighbours.

The great majority of girls are not happy at being daughters. Education is bringing some improvement to their lives (see Table 2) but because of cultural norms and being undervalued they are usually not given the same opportunities as their brothers and are less supported by their parents in terms of
encouragement and basic school requirements (pens, stationary and books). In addition, the heavy workload they have to undertake as opposed to their brothers means that in comparison they are at a grave disadvantage in succeeding at school. The girls resent the restrictions put on their mobility due to societal pressure and their being the custodians of the family honour. Because of the very different expectations of how girls should behave, in comparison to boys, girls are frequently reprimanded and scolded for their behaviour by parents, relations, neighbours and brothers, while boys are allowed considerable to excessive freedom. Traditionally girls were married in their early teens or before, nowadays for various reasons, e.g. workload, attitudes to sex, restrictions, etc some girls are choosing themselves to marry early. Others want to put off marriage until after they have completed their education but come under great pressure to marry before then. Neighbours especially exert pressure on parents to remove their daughters from school once they have reached puberty so that they should marry. The solutions and the barriers to these solutions are discussed.

20 married adolescent girls were also interviewed. Information concerning their ages and domestic situation is set out in Table 3. 13 of the 20 married men of their own choice rather than having a marriage arranged by their parents. Case examples are given in the text and in Appendix 2. For most of the girls life became harder after marriage and they seem to have been ill-prepared, despite all the hardships they experienced in their parents home, for the isolation, reprimands and hard work they encountered. 15 of the 20 reported being unhappy in their marriage. For the Kamai/Damai and Brahman/Chhetri all but one of their husbands have left home for India or elsewhere. 5 of the Kamai/Damai have returned to their mother’s home. In their suggestions they advise other girls not to marry early but to continue their education. For those who do marry they recommend belonging to a support group. The barriers to their suggestions are listed and the researcher’s observations.

20 brothers were interviewed, mainly younger ones, and seemed well aware of the plight of their elder sisters, which they regretted. Across caste/ethnicity brothers describe the same problems for girls. The boys have given their suggestions as to how girls should achieve equal status to boys but they and the researcher also note the barriers to this.

29 pre-adolescent girls (aged 6-10) were interviewed. Their educational status is set out in Table 5. Unlike the adolescent girls who saw the age of 10 as the time that discrimination began these girls saw it starting at the age of 6 years. Their feelings and responses to questions very much depended on
whether they felt their parents openly showed them love and affection. The scoldings and beatings they commented on was frequently connected to their not doing the housework to their parents satisfaction.

16 parents (12 mothers, 3 fathers and 1 uncle) of the adolescent girls describe their expectations and aspirations for their daughters. The mothers want a better life for their daughters, particularly on remembering their own. However, the research shows that the powerful influence of neighbours and the long accepted divisions of gender labour and responsibility make such change difficult.

The comments from the group interviews held in the two villages with a total of 21 VDC representatives (17 male, 4 female) further underlined the known discrimination girls face from birth, noting that boys are greeted with joy but not the girls. They have put forward their suggestions for girls’ development which is very enlightened as well as the likely barriers. However, those who were fathers did not see it as their role to improve the status of girls but that of the mothers, which makes future change problematic.

In-depth individual interviews were conducted with 15 adolescent girls. 9 were with girls from the adolescent group and 13 with peer girl friends of girls in the group. As can be seen from Table 8 in 7 cases girls were interviewed with regard to both roles. Two case examples are given in the text and nine others in Appendix 3. The peer friends support to individual girls appears to have been much valued by them and reciprocated. Their ideas for improving the situation of girls is listed, as also the barriers. The areas that a village support system for girls should cover are detailed.

5. The conclusions from this research are set out in Section 5. They show that girls, parents, brothers and VDC representatives express the wish for a social environment where girls are encouraged in every sector and given the opportunity to lead a life without discrimination or violence. They know many of the solutions by which to bring about change but the root of the problem seems to lie with the lack of will by men and boys to change their behavioural attitudes to girls so that they receive equal opportunities and by society to adopt other than negative and inhibiting attitudes towards them. The saddest issue to emerge from this research is the under-valuing and low status given to girls, which led most of those interviewed to express strong frustration and resentment at being daughters. Despite the ratification of various international instruments (the Convention on the Rights of the Child, etc) little has changed for girls in Nepal. A positive attitude by men and boys towards an equal status for girls as their right is seen as one of the major critical factors required for their real future development.
The need to mobilise the strengths of girls, families and communities to work out solutions is emphasised. Building the capacities of girls to analyse and identify issues and advocate for change with like-minded adults is essential and will require a new approach from all levels of government, NGOs and other development agencies. Girls should also be encouraged to carry out their own research. Strong commitment is required at many different levels especially by decision-makers to redress the current low status of girls by recognising and changing discriminative attitudes and by responding to what girls see as their most pressing needs.

6. Section 6 look at the lessons learnt from the research and the recommendations as to how the challenge of eradicating discrimination against girls should be taken forward locally and nationally. The lessons learnt come under the following headings:

**At Local Level:**

- Children’s role in confronting social environment.
- Children and the decision making process.
- Establishment of community support systems essential in every village.
- Children’s movement to fight discrimination and change the society for equality, peace and justice.
- Leading the way in local advocacy campaigns.

**At National Level:**

- Leading the way in national advocacy campaigns.
- Policy for adolescent girls and boys.
- Research recommendation.

7. Section 7 lists the recommendations in the areas where lessons have been learnt as follows:

**At Local Level**

7.1 **Children’s role in confronting social environment.**

i. Children should be encouraged from pre-adolescence to meet together to play, discuss and act to improve their own and their community situation.
ii. The rights and hopes of girls and their achievement of them should be constantly on the agenda at all levels especially in the family, VDC, DCWC, schools, women’s groups, children’s groups and other user committees at local level and this also should be discussed up to the national level.

iii. To use the child to child approach, especially through the role of adolescent brothers and sisters with younger pre-adolescent girls, to establish a non-discriminatory approach to gender.

7.2 Children and the decision making process.

i. That girls and boys be involved in decision making in their groups first then in their families and schools and then more widely in the village and VDC.

7.3 Establishment of community support systems essential in every village.

i. Community support systems for girls need to be developed in every village to enable girls to achieve their potential.

ii. Girls’ groups to identify and make profiles of persons [especially men, women and boys] at community level who are willing to raise their voice against the agents and perpetrators of difficulties and give them advice and long term support at local level.

iii. The children and their adult supporters should meet with local and district officials especially the DCWC to emphasise a rights based approach to the treatment of girls.

iv. The role of fathers in supporting their daughters needs to be explained and emphasized.

7.4 Children’s movement to fight discrimination and change the society for equality, peace and justice.

i. i. Programmes should be designed to provide equal opportunities for girls and boys to develop their skills in leadership and advocacy so as to empower them to raise their joint voice against girls’ discrimination.

ii. ii. Boys should be encouraged with girls [particularly brothers and sisters] to join a grass root movement which emphasizes equal opportunities to girls, sharing of the workload in their own home, to support each other having equal opportunities to education, health, nutrition and mobility and then each to have equal responsibility for their parents.

iii. iii. Groups should be set up by NGOs and INGOs for married adolescent girls who are isolated by all.

7.5 Leading the way in local advocacy campaigns.

i. i. A dialogue with journalists should take place especially at local level to exchange views about the difficulties girls face based on this
research, so they could raise awareness of these difficulties with the public through local newspapers.

ii. Girls should be encouraged to describe their difficulties through the local press, radio, village theatre, puppetry and television to disseminate and create awareness in different villages.

iii. Discussion should be held with local teachers to promote the giving of positive images concerning women and girls in class work.

At National Level

7.6 Leading the way in national advocacy campaigns.

i. The deficiency in present legislation and policies concerned with property rights should be made public both locally and nationally. A campaigning network should be started from local to national level.

ii. Teaching materials, including text books should be reviewed and revised to promote self-esteem of women and girls through positive self-images highlighting women’s/girls role in society, including in decision making, development, culture, other social and economic endeavours.

iii. Active networks of girls and women, which increasingly should include boys and men, should meet and exchange their experiences and encourage new groups/networks in areas where they do not exist and through this strategy empower the girls/women movement nationally.

7.7 Policy for adolescent girls and boys.

i. The government and other organizations should have a policy and programmes focussing on adolescence.

ii. Sexual and reproductive health education should be introduced into schools from age 8-9 years i.e. well prior to puberty.

iii. Groups should be set up by NGOs and INGOs for married adolescent girls who are isolated by all.

7.8 Research recommendation.

i. To understand why some of the girls are more fully able to exercise their rights in certain areas

Section 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Girls and Discrimination: An Overview in South Asia

The SAARC ‘Year of the Girl’ was celebrated in 1990. The situation of girls is very bad and may be getting worse throughout South Asia, especially in rural villages. In many areas of South Asia, girls continue to be discriminated against and continue to suffer. The disadvantage of being female tends to
persist throughout life. Early childhood discrimination against girls may lead to poor educational achievement, which severely undermines their development throughout their lives.

In Nepal, the majority of children in rural areas have access (in theory) to free primary school education. The primary school enrolment is 80% for boys and 60% for girls, but many of these children repeat classes and the drop out rate is high (NPC 1996). Girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys.

The negative attitudes, social practices, proverbs, and myths, which discriminate against girls, are supported by different institutions of society, which are:

- Family
- Medical institutions/practices
- Legal institutions
- Customs, tradition, culture, religion and the social community
- Political structure/government policy
- Media
- Formal education system, e.g., schools and curricula

Such practices result in various social evils in society and the continuation of discrimination against girls.

1.1.1 The girl child is unwanted. Preference is given to sons, because the son:

- Is traditionally the income earner.
- Tends to be the caretaker of his parents in their old age.
- Continues the family name.
- Stays in the family (the daughter moves out upon marriage).
- Maintains religious rituals.
- Does not have dowry liability.
- Protects the family or property.
- Is more valued for his labour [girls are undervalued].
- Is not a social burden; is socially prestigious.

1.1.2 The girl child is exploited in the following ways:

a) Sexually through:

i. child marriage,
ii. girl trafficking,
iii. eve teasing, sexual harassment, abusive language, rape, and resulting control over mobility.

b) Physically through battering, acid throwing, stove burning [especially in the case of dowry].
c) Employment:
   i. hard, but unpaid and unrecognised domestic work carried out by girls,
   ii. lower wages for similar work.

d) Media: pornography and blue movies show girls and women as objects for male gratification.

e) Procurement of dowry.

f) Legal constraints: The reasons for legal exploitation include greed, lust, religion, superstition, social stigma, economic and cultural factors, and the unacceptableness of women being involved in the decision making process.

1.1.3 The girl child is neglected:

Girls are neglected in many aspects of their lives. This neglect is frequently seen in the following situations:

- Nutrition
- Family relationship
- Health care
- Educational opportunities
- Social norms: girls tend to have more restrictions and fewer opportunities than boys.

1.1.4 Girls are a liability in economic, socio-cultural and religious respects:

Economic Liability:

- Girls receive lower pay.
- Parents need to raise a dowry for their daughters.
- Girls are frequently not allowed to work outside the home, or even in the local area.

Socio-cultural: The purdah system hinders a girl's/woman's mobility and earning capability.

Religion:

- Only sons can carry out cremations, so families have to have a male child.
- Religious customs prevent girls/ women taking part in some activities.

1.1.5 Girls are over protected:
Society’s negative attitudes and actions cause parents to over protect girls. The honour of the family depends on the daughter. Where she goes and with whom she talks may bring her in contact with threats of, or actual, sexual violence, which would damage the family's social honour per culture and tradition.

A girl’s first encounter with gender violence occurs even before she is born. Sixty million women are ‘missing’, mostly from Asian nations. Most have been killed by discrimination of some kind, such as infanticide, selective abortion, deliberate under nutrition or lack of access to health care.

1.2 Research Rationale

Violence against girls is one of the regional issues for Save the Children (UK) in the South and Central Asia Region. The issue, as set out in the current Regional Strategy 1998 to 2000 states:

‘Girls’ rights to survival and development are systematically denied because of the discrimination and social violence suffered by girls in the region’

The objectives that are mentioned in the regional strategy on the issue of girls are:

1. To reduce social violence, intolerance and discrimination against girls by building social pressure and encouraging greater accountability.

2. To work towards securing the rights of girls at all levels of society by increasing their access to resources, expanding their choices and enhancing the capability of girls to counter violence and discrimination.

1.3 The Nature of this Research

This study does not aim to focus on one particular form of violence. We know what violence is and what forms of violence are practiced against girls and women in South Asia. Many organizations have done research on the situation of specific vulnerable groups such as community sex workers, street girls, girls with HIV/AIDS, rescued girls, refugee groups, girl domestic workers and trafficked girls, but this research study is quite different.

The girls interviewed were daughters from poor families in rural villages of Surkhet district. Probably their situations are typical for girls in every rural village of Nepal, where more than 80% of girls reside. The groups which I studied live in the two villages of Ramghat and Ghusra, not far from Surkhet district headquarters. While they come from poor families in rural villages, they do not
belong to a particularly vulnerable group like the ones mentioned above. The girls stay with their families, in a protective environment, almost all are studying and of them all go to village government schools. They are ordinary girls living in families and their situation probably is similar to that of many girls in rural areas and is little changed in reality from their mother’s time and previous generations.

1.4 Key Questions/Issues

1. What do girls, their brothers, parents and community leaders understand about girls’ aspirations and the difficulties that girls face?
2. What solutions do they suggest to address the difficulties that girls face?
3. What are the barriers that prevent the solutions.

This research aims to understand the main areas in which girls suffer from difficulties and seeks practical solutions from girls, their brothers, parents and community leaders. In particular, it focuses on the following specific areas:

a. Understanding girl's aspirations and the difficulties girls' face for the age groups of 6-9 years, 10-18 years and adolescent married girls up to 20 years in their families, as they perceive them.
b. Hearing from girls and some of their peers what they think are practical/realistic ways to reduce/solve difficulties.
c. Hearing the reactions from their brothers about the difficulties facing sisters and if they see themselves as having a role in bringing about change. If so, in what areas and how?
d. Hearing the views of parents on the difficulties facing girls, and:
   o Their hopes for their daughters
   o Their attitude towards societal pressures with regards to the difficulties facing daughters.
   o How they would like this situation to change.
e. Hearing from community leaders about the difficulties facing girls and their solutions.

Section 2: METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

2.1 Background

Save the Children has been working in Surkhet district with a direct focus on children. SCF-Surkhet is trying to address the
country strategy issues through mobilizing children groups, women groups and through other local bodies such as LNGOs, schools and VDCs. Since 1998, SCF has concentrated more on children’s groups and trying to incorporate children’s participation in each part of the project cycle, as SCF believes that children are potentially amongst the most powerful ‘agents of change’ in society.

An SCF partner organization WEEDS has been working with children’s and women’s groups in Ramghat, where the local VDC also works with SCF. The adolescent children’s group, made up of boys and girls, in Ramghat had been in existence for about nine months before this study began. The adolescent girls in Ghusra village came from a legal literacy project and formed a new children’s group; it had already been in existence for about five to six months. This group was supported by SAC, which is a partner organization of SCF-Surkhet, but the legal literacy project was not supported by SCF (UK).

In October 1998, SCF-OSCAR decided to hold a regional seminar on ‘Violence Against Girls’. For this I arranged to do some preliminary group interviewing as a case study for the seminar. It was further decided that it would be useful to film these groups and if possible make a short video of their views. A preparatory visit was made prior to the filming, during which I pre-tested parts of the checklist with adolescent girls to see whether they understood and if there was anything they would like to change.

The video film then was made with an adolescent group of girls from among three different castes/ethnicities, namely Kami/Damai, Tharu and Brahman/Chhetri on the difficulties girls face in Ramghat and Ghusra villages.

The draft video was shown to the children and adult participants at the girls and violence seminar. Two children from each group (six girls and two boys) with whom the interviews had been held and video made (except the boys) were selected by their groups to come to the seminar for one day to make a presentation and see and comment on the video. At the children’s request, we again returned to Surkhet and filmed the parents talking about the difficulties girls face and then showed them the film and filmed their reactions to it. Some of their responses have been included in the film. Both the children and their parents agreed to the video being shown to any audience.

At roughly the same time that the seminar was being organized, it became known that a three-month SCF secondment (a sponsored research period) was available for further research into the difficulties that girls face. As the programme manager of
SCF’s Surkhet programme, I was interested in this secondment and decided to base my application on the cases I was preparing for the seminar. My in-depth research therefore began after the regional seminar.

2.2 Location of the Study Site

Surkhet is the headquarters of the district and also of the Midwestern Development Region, located about 600 kilometers from Kathmandu; Nepal’s capital. The district headquarters and the surrounding areas are relatively newly settled with people from the adjoining hill districts, such as Jajarkot and Dailekh, who have migrated to these places. Surkhet lies in the inner land; its geography is comprised of hills and valleys. The groups studied live in the villages of Ramghat and Ghusra, which are not far from the headquarters. It takes one hour to reach Ramghat and 20 minutes to reach Ghusra village by SCF vehicle.

2.3 Selection of the Study Villages

This research study is primarily linked to the preliminary groups interviewed for the seminar’s film. The aim of the film interviews was to determine whether girls from the various ethnic groups expressed common problems and concerns. It was decided that these same girls, if possible, should be re-interviewed to further discuss the issues, especially the barriers that prevent solutions taking hold in the village or at home, among the different groups so as to triangulate the information and to probe in-depth. This study focussed more at the family level in order to help families bring about their own changes and hopefully catalyst their neighbours. Moreover, because the study was to be completed in such a short time period, it was felt that in order to make the information most useable the information had to feed directly back into an existing programme for children as is well established in these two villages.

2.4 Selection of the Groups

Groups and individuals from three different castes/ethnicities, namely Kami/Damai, Brahman/Chhetri and Tharu, were chosen for this research study. The groups interviewed were:

- Pre-adolescent girls of age group 6 to 9 years
- Adolescent girls of age group 11 to 18 years
- Married adolescent girls of age group 14 to 20 years
- Brothers aged 12 to 18 years
- Parents of adolescent girls
- Community leaders of the two villages
• Individual in-depth interview with adolescent girls
• Female peers of girls who selected for individual in-depth interview

Table 1

Number of people interviewed in groups and individually* by age and ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of group</th>
<th>Brahman/Chhetri</th>
<th>Tharu</th>
<th>Kami/Damai</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent girls from 11 to 18 yrs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-adolescent girls from 6 to 9 yrs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married adolescent girls from 14 to 20 yrs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent brothers from 12 to 18 yrs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDC representatives [Ramghat]</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDC representatives[Latikoili--Ghusra is one village]</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Adolescent girls, in-depth individual interview case study</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Adolescent peers, in-depth individual study</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>155</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from table 1: 116 children were interviewed, of which 96 were girls, 20 boys and 39 adults. Total number of persons interviewed was 155.

The above table also shows the number of people in the various groups by their caste/ethnicity. Not all Ramghat VDC representatives participated due to their political dispute (UML vs ML). In Latikoili-Ghursa VDC, four men participated who are not representatives, but are village social workers. However, they had been members of the VDC in the past.

2.5 Reasons for Choosing These Groups
The reasons for choosing different ethnic groups were to provide me with a greater depth of understanding and to see the commonalities and differences among the different groups. In addition, I wanted to know what the barriers were that prevent the solutions. Furthermore, when we saw how the adolescent girls were facing difficulties, we wondered if the pre-adolescent and married adolescent girls also faced difficulties. Do pre-adolescent girls have same experiences? Do married adolescent girls have some relief after marriage from what they faced before marriage or do they suffer more? What types of support systems are there? How are the support systems useful in the village? In order to make a more in-depth study the parents, brothers and peers were chosen to see how they support girls who face difficulties and this helped me to triangulate information.

The process of selecting adolescent girls was easy for me, because I knew them during the development of the film. Most of the adolescent girls were the same, very few were new. I met the adolescent girls four times, and their parents twice. This includes my preparatory visit prior to filming. The adolescent girls arranged for me to meet with their brothers and parents.

For the other groups, I asked the NGO staff of WEEDS and SAC in Ramghat and Ghusra village respectively to select pre-adolescent and married adolescent girls for the study in both villages. To overcome time constraints and the very cool mornings and evenings, most of the girls chosen lived close to the WEEDS office in Ramghat, where the interviews took place. From among the adolescent girls, eight individual in-depth interviews and seven peer support interviews were completed. One individual from each caste/ethnicity was chosen by the adolescent girls themselves for an in-depth interview and I chose a second girl from each caste/ethnicity for individual in-depth interview.

Reasons given by the group for choosing individual girls were:

- The girls who faced more difficulties than others like ‘caged life’, i.e., heavy workloads, no mother or father, no time to study at home,
- Have to support themselves.

Reasons individual girls were chosen by the researcher were:

- Girls who seemed unhappy in group discussion and the way they expressed their feelings (emotional, outspoken, with tears, with change of voice).
The girl who had more responsibility for her age and was struggling to get an education; so how she is succeeding?
The student who worked as a facilitator for the literacy class.
Girls from different socio-economic backgrounds.
Girls who dropped out of school

The peers for the individual case studies were chosen by the girls who had given individual in-depth interviews. Almost all the girls gave the following reasons for choosing their peer support girl friend, namely that they:

- Trust each other.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Encourage, listen to problems, give love, are not irritating and support each other.
- Help to buy stationery, help to work in the field during times of necessity.
- Go to the forest together to collect fodder and firewood.
- Are from same village, have similar experience of pain sharing.
- Are from same school and in same grade.
- Are related through mother or father.
- Help in learning and give feedback on the literacy class during times of absence.

Each girl did not necessarily mention the entire list, but they used at least three or more of the above criteria in choosing their peer. Their details are mentioned in Table 8 under Section 4.7.

One of the peers is from a lower caste although her friend is Brahman. Two peers have never been to school and one is from a very different age group. For all these peers, the first three points listed above are the most important. The individual girls have more friends than one, but the peer is the one they chose; with whom they shared all feelings and sought moral support.

2.6 Data Collection Tools

The studies mainly focussed on exploratory qualitative aspects. The maximum time for focus group discussion was two hours and one hour for individual interviews. Some quantitative information such as age, ethnicity and education status of respondents, etc., was also collected.

The following tools were used:

- Structured group interviews for the film using the same questions.
• Semi-structured interviews using a checklist in focussed group discussion.
• Observed mixed-children's group meeting in Ramghat village.
• A tape recorder was used to record the focus group discussions.
• Spontaneous drawing was done by some smaller girls and brothers which reflect their hopes towards sisters, and girls drew their daily activities.
• The individual in-depth interviews and their peer support case studies were done.

2.7 Limitations

As the research focussed more on the qualitative aspect and on a participatory approach with girls, brothers, parents and community leaders, time was not sufficient. As most of the pre-adolescent and adolescent girls were in school, interviews were scheduled either in early morning, evening or on Saturday. Per the research plan, all parents and brothers (within the age range of 10 to 18 years) of adolescent girls had to be interviewed, but it was not always possible. Some of the girls had no mother, or she was too busy with household activities, or the father was in India or outside the village. Likewise some of the brothers were difficult to find, so some brothers were selected from the group of 6 to 9 year old girls.

This is not an extensive study. It opens up many questions which should be followed up. It might be interesting to do further research in another area in hopes that some of the gaps will be filled.

The research agenda itself was identified by SCF (UK) and was developed by an adult researcher. It is interesting to wonder what would have been different if the research topic had been identified by the girls themselves and if they had created the agenda and had facilitated the research process themselves.

2.8 Ethical Issues

The informed consent of village development committees, school teachers and NGOs was obtained before discussing these matters in groups with the children. There were separate discussions with NGO staff at Ramghat about why this research study should be carried out. Before starting the discussion with the various groups, the objectives of the research were outlined. The information collected from the 12 individual interviews with adolescent girls will be kept confidential and the names of the informants are not given in the text study. Pseudonyms are used instead.
The executive summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study will be translated into Nepali and discussed in VDC monthly meetings, children's and women's group meetings, and re-discussed with the interviewed groups.

2.9 Research Timing

The main research process took a period of eight weeks (December 1998 to January 1999), but there were preliminary interviews with groups prior to and during filming, which were conducted in October 1998. The field study itself was carried out from 13th to 30th December 1998 in the two village development committees in Ramghat and Ghusra in Surkhet. The total process can be divided into five parts:

1) Pre-testing and film interviews
   One week, September 21 to 23 and November 1 to 3, 1998

2) Preparatory phase for research
   One week, December 5 to 11, 1998

3) Information collection and recording
   Two weeks, December 12 to 30, 1998

4) Analysis
   One week, January 1 to 5, 1999

5) Report writing and presentation
   Five weeks, January 5 to February 9, 1999.

Section 3: MY EXPERIENCE AS RESEARCHER

Although I have worked with children’s and women’s group before, this experience as an adult facilitator with adolescent and pre-adolescent groups and their brothers and parents was new to me. My involvement began after the girls arrived to participate at meetings, where we discussed their perspectives on issues and concerns for daughters, mainly in the family and in their villages. All of the girls participated and wanted to listen and learn from one another. As a result, my task was simply to facilitate the interviewees speak out about violence and discrimination against girls, to listen and encourage the participants. I am very much grateful to have had such a memorable experience.

3.1 Researcher’s Observations

I have worked in the study district since 1992. One of the study villages was familiar to me because we have worked in that village with local NGOs for the last three years. The target groups for the research study were very new to me except some parents and VDC representatives in Ramghat.

I am a female researcher facilitating girls from various backgrounds, their brothers, parents and village representatives.
Though I am Brahman, I grew up in Newar culture, so I only know a little about Brahman culture. Thus, this was very much a learning experience for me as well.

Among the discussions that took place with the various groups, the Kami/Damai group was much more open and freely expressed their inner feelings.

In general, I felt much more comfortable discussing matters with the adolescent girls’ group, since I was already familiar with them before this study. With the married adolescent girls, it was difficult for them to express their feelings in the beginning. They seemed anxious whether I would share their information with their parents-in-laws. After I assured them that I would not tell their family members, they talked openly. They soon realized that each of them has had similar experiences and began to feel relaxed after listening to each other. They believed that I was the medicine to cure their problems at home and to counsel their family members, but I told them that was not possible and that was not part of my research.

The same expectation came from a women's group in Ramghat. These women came together as part of a savings and credit group (some of them were facilitators and some were women's group treasurers and chairpersons). Although this group was not part of the research plan, I wanted to know whether they provided support to those girls who faced difficulties. Altogether 20 women and one man were at the meeting.

From my discussion with them, I came to the conclusion that the agencies that are working for women’s empowerment are not raising their voices against the difficulties girls face, nor are providing support at all. When I brought up the fact that married adolescent daughters are facing a lot of problems from their husbands and parents-in-laws, the younger mothers in the group started to whisper with each other and expected me to visit their home and counsel their family members. I realised that they are facing the same difficulties, but they do not support the adolescent married girls. I wondered why the women’s group existed if there is no support for girls’ and women’s issues. During the discussion, they raised very similar issues as did the adolescent girls’ groups.

The one man in the group works as a facilitator in a literacy class and was very supportive to my ideas. He said he would like to raise the issue and wants to be supportive, but that many in the village did not support him including previously members of the women’s group. I then asked the group how many were willing to support him to raise these issues. Every one raised their hand to support him. The women's group expressed that
they know the difficulties, but are afraid to raise the issues and often hide the problem. They said society tries to hide these issues instead of punishing abusers.

Among the girls’ groups, discussions were more like debating with each other and with me, but we also listened and questioned each other. In individual case studies, I adopted the approach of listening, encouraging, respecting their ideas and providing moral support to the girls.

Facilitation of open-ended discussions among the pre-adolescent group, I felt was more difficult. In the beginning, I gave the girls paper to draw what their hopes were and what they were doing at home on a daily basis. Again, time was not sufficient. They would have liked to continue drawing, but I had to stop the activity and begin the discussion. I started the process differently from the other groups by singing a song. My skills with pre-adolescent groups may be lacking, but I enjoyed this group as well.

I did not face such difficulties in discussion with the brothers’ groups. Most of them were younger brothers of adolescent girls. They expressed great sympathy for their sisters. I met these groups after discussion with the adolescent and pre-adolescent group. Maybe they were prepared for what I would talk to them about.

I also got the opportunity to attend a children’s group meeting in Ramghat village, where about 35 children (boys and girls) represented 12 children’s groups. They used to call such meetings once a month. All of them shared their own interest in the meeting. Surprisingly, almost all the girls expressed their interest in studying and the boys preferred playing and sports. I asked why boys and girls have different interests? According to boys and girls, the difference is due to heavy workload; the girls have no time to study at home, so if they have time they would rather have time to study instead of playing. It then was discussed with boys how they could help to reduce the girls’ workloads.

Again, it surprised me that the girls from the lower caste group (Kami/Damai) gave their personal introduction, their interest, and information about their group very confidently compared to higher caste girls.

Discussion with VDC representatives was very interactive and exciting. Most of them were men. In Ghusra village, three were women and in Ramghat there was only one woman. Being a female researcher, it was very difficult for me to control myself at times, since they blamed mothers for a daughter’s future. It is
the responsibility of the mother alone to raise the daughter in a fitting manner. They did not see a role for the father anywhere. I asked them why, if this were true, they want to be called ‘father’ - and what was their responsibility to their children. I was surprised at the idea of their taking on a father’s identity without doing anything. Later, having realized what I said, a chairperson of a school management committee gave a five-minute speech about the power role held by men, which is so deeply rooted in society. He questioned why only the mother is to blame, as they do all the household activities, while men never share their work. Sons also learn from the father and daughters learn from the mother.

3.2 Local Cultural Understanding

Working with girls is not easy. Theory is one thing, but living with the girls’ human and social problems is another. They are afraid to talk with males, especially those who are from same village. In villages, the society acts as a watch dog toward the girls to see with whom she talks, where she goes, especially dealings with males quickly arouse suspicion. Other females may be unconsciously jealous of them. Girls are also easily frightened; they have been used to the unconditional authority of adults, which if questioned, is punished.

The womb is seen both as a blessing and curse. It stands as a major constraint hindering mobility, personal, professional development and even to the extent of earning their own livelihood. The womb has increased girls’ and women’s vulnerability to unwanted pregnancies arising from rape. It is difficult to prove who the father is, yet it is obvious to the girl but she remains silent and invisible because it causes social stigma.

Sex before marriage has never been accepted because of the risk of pregnancy. There is no culture of girls having a male friend in rural villages; friendships between the genders are assumed to be sexual. And, marriage is essential before having sex for those girls and boys who like each other.

The unmarried pregnant girl or woman has never been accepted in rural society and this makes it difficult for girls to survive. Though the number of unmarried pregnancies was identified at four to five in the last two years, the negative impact is widely felt by all girls. Almost all the girls expressed that this is the reason why parents restrict to their mobility. Family honour would be lost. This is one of the reasons, I believe, why early marriage of girls is prevalent in rural villages. In addition, culture and religion may render girls even more vulnerable.
On the other hand, for many girls marriage and the ability to give birth to children have provided them safety, a sense of security, a sense of respect and a better status at home.

3.3 Local Political/Economic Context

In Nepal, the lowest structure of government is the Village Development Committee (VDC). There are nine wards in a VDC. The VDC is a body with one ward chairperson and four ward members representing each ward. Altogether there are 47 members including the VDC chairperson and vice chairperson. The full number of VDC members meets only twice a year. In the regular monthly meetings only 11 members (ward chairpersons, VDC chair person and vice chairperson) attend. In each ward, the number of households vary. Members are elected for 5-year terms. As of last year, by government requirement it is now mandatory that there be at least one female member out of the four ward members. Per the decentralization process, the VDC is the most powerful body to mobilize local resources and government institutions, such as schools, and health clinics. The Government has allotted 500,000 Rs per year to VDCs for village development.

In the study area, there are only two ward chairpersons from the Tharu caste among the elected VDC members, and in Ramghat there are three (one vice chairperson and two ward chairpersons) from the Kami/Damai.

In Latikoili VDC, Tharus make up about 30% of the population. But in the Tharu village, where the study was carried out, only 5% of the land is owned by Tharu caste members. The rest of the land is owned by members of the Chhetri community. Tharus work in Chhetri fields; are responsible for planting and harvesting and give 50% of production to the land owner. The remaining 50% is kept by the labourer.

In Ramghat, about 40% population consists of the Kami/Damai group. In general, land owned by the Kami/Damai is not fertile and there is a problem of insufficient irrigation too. Due to poverty, most of the male members migrate seasonally to India for work. This practice is very common among the lower ethnic groups like the Kami/Damai.

Section 4: KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Adolescent Girls

Table 2

Education Status of Adolescent Girls in Relation to Caste/Ethnicity
A total of 32 adolescent girls participated in focus group discussions from three different ethnicities: Brahman/Chhetri, Tharu, and Kami/Damai. The majority of the girls interviewed for this research study were the same as those who took part in the filming, only three were different from the Brahman/Chhetri group. Most of the girls participate in children’s groups, except for three girls, who will soon join a group.

Six key issues were identified from the discussion groups with the adolescent girls, which they felt were the most significant for girls. They are:

- Low value and status
- Workload
- Mobility restriction
- Scolding and attitude of parents
- Early marriage
- Attitude of neighbours

4.1.1 Aspirations

No matter their caste/ethnicity, all of the girls expressed their interest to continue their education, go for higher study and in most cases to become social workers. They want to somehow end the conservative culture found in their village. If their parents will not send them to school, they want to convince their parents to allow them to continue education at least until they can receive their school leaving certificate (SLC). All of them would like to stand on their own feet.

The Kami/Damai girls gave more emphasis to illiteracy among women saying girls must have rights to education. And all of the girls think that they would like to marry between the age of 20-25 years if they can get a good man.

4.1.2 Difficulties

A. Low value and status:

Almost all of the girls feel the low value and status of being a daughter. Girls from the Brahman/Chhetri group related that
once a daughter is born it will be neglected and insulted. When a daughter is born, parents become sad, but in the case of son all the family members are full of pleasure and happiness. They said parents rather feel ambivalent towards daughters instead of feeling an equality between daughters and sons. Parents complain of wasting money for a daughter’s education, even if they do send their daughters to school. Parents and brothers scold the girl if she does not complete household work or if she comes home late from school.

"I am the first child of my parents. I have a small brother at my home. If the first child were a son, my parents might be happy and would be confident as their future is assured by having a son. But I am daughter. I complete all the household tasks, go to school, again do the household activities in evening and at night only I do my school homework and study. Despite all the activities, my parents do not give value or recognition to me. They only have praise for my brother, as he is the son." ---- Chhetri girl, 15 years old

"Daughters are keen to go school, but parents do not show interest in this unless and until daughters are quite successful in exams. The social and home environments are not encouraging for daughters’ development." ---- Tharu girl, 18 years old

"Once we are not successful in school examinations, then our brothers and parents bring up the issue of marriage: ‘You should do all the work at the husband’s house, be supported there; why should we keep you in our house?’" ---- Chhetri girl, 13 years old

"Parents and other adults don’t listen to our views. If we say something they discourage us by saying ‘you are over-clever and have over-knowledge” ---- Kami girl, 15 years old

Fifty per cent of adolescent girls from the Brahman/Chhetri group are partly happy at being a daughter. They are happy because they are in school like their brothers and their parents and family members encourage and support them with buying exercise books and pencils. While these girls are happy at getting an education, they are unhappy with mobility restrictions and heavy workloads. The remaining 50% of this group are unhappy in all sectors because of heavy workloads, no time to study at home, mobility restrictions and because they could not complete school homework. These girls said that parents sell their land to educate sons, but not for daughters as after marriage they have to leave home.
Out of the 11 Kami/Damai girls, only one girl seems happy at being a daughter. The saddest things for them were that their parents are angry and scold them too much; during difficult times they did not have money to buy stationary; and they could not get study time at home.

Society says that daughters are grown up and ready for marriage at 13 to 14 years. If a mother has many daughters, usually the father will marry a second time to attempt to have a son. If a family has lots of daughters, usually the younger daughter receives more education than the others. All girls have some sort of difficulty; either workload, mobility restriction, forced marriage or verbal abuse.

Tharu adolescent girls explained that they understand daughters to be second class citizens. The boys have many choices, but the daughters must remain happy without any choices. Most sons are encouraged to study, and when a son does not want to go to school, the parents force him. As for the daughter’s education, parents will be happy if she stayed at home and did more household work. Daughters can not do what they want to do. Parents discriminate between sons and daughters, because daughters are not involved in the funeral process.

Only four of the eleven Tharu girls are getting good support from family for their education. The other girls do not have as much support as they want because of poor economic conditions, heavy workloads, and social pressure.

These Tharu girls feel that they are doing all the household activities and as much or more of the field work as their brothers - except ploughing the fields, but their work is still not recognised.

From all castes/ethnicities, the girls explained that their value and status are low because they will belong to the husband’s house and because daughters do not inherit parental property.

B. Workload

From Brahman/Chhetri group, only one girl has sufficient time to study at home. She has never had to face the same workload as the other group members.

Almost all the girls from the three castes/ethnicities carry out hard work as their parents prepare them to be perfect in household activities. This is to ensure that the future husband’s family will be happy, will not complain about the bride, and therefore, the daughter will not return to her parents’ home. As the daughter grows up, the workload is increased. With heavier
and heavier workloads, by adolescence the girl often drops out of school. Parents and society blame the girl for being weak in school, without recognising her household workload.

"If a daughter does all the household activities, then her parents’ attitude is good otherwise a bad attitude is expressed in bad ways for their daughters."
---- Chhetri girl, 14 years old

"There is no sense [in going to school] if you don't get time for school work and time for study at home. Parents are reluctant to buy stationary and books. Because of that, girls in school can not succeed as boys, but then are scolded in bad ways by their parents. There is no freedom to study compared to our brothers." ---- Chhetri girl, 15 years old

The Kami/Damai girls said that they can not go to school regularly. If there are any household activities, they have to stay at home.

"I am not happy as a daughter because my parents are less interested in my education and make me work hard by asking me to complete lots of work in the house which hampers my doing school work and studying at home, and then the school teacher scolds me." ---- Kami girl, 14 years old

Tharu girls related that their brothers do not do household activities even when their parents ask them to do so. A daughter can never behave as the brother. If, for some reason, the daughter is unable to carry out household activities, ultimately the load goes to the mother.

"If a son doesn’t want to go school, his parents force him. If a girl doesn’t want to, they will be happy because then she can do more housework." ---- Tharu girl, 15 years old

C. Mobility restrictions

Girls from all castes/ethnicities have restricted mobility imposed by their parents and brothers. Brothers can go out as they like, parents and the local society raises many questions where a daughter goes and to whom she talks. Even if a daughter is late from school sometimes, parents will doubt the daughter and will scold her heavily even if she has not made any mistakes. Often this prevents a girl from taking opportunities.

Girls are quite worried at 15 to 16 years of age. They are over burdened with household activities, they have to think more, and are worried about their school education. The girls are quite anxious about what they will do if parents do not send them to
school. On the other hand, parents are quite suspicious at this age.

"If girls walk or talk with a boy in school or in the village, people suspect they are in love."---- Chhetri girl, 15 years old

Next door neighbours become jealous and ask parents why they send their daughter to a higher grade as girls learn many bad things from school.

All the girls said they were happy until the age of 10. The reason behind this is that until then they can play as they like; there is no restriction on mobility and no work. However, pre-adolescence girls did not agree!

The Kami/Damai adolescent girls have had problems because in their villages three girls became pregnant by a man outside of the caste [Magar], and these girls have not been accepted. The man’s parents gave some money to other boys who will marry these girls instead of the father of the child. The man in question already has a wife and children. Recently, [October, 1998] in a Kami/Damai village, a four year old girl was raped by a 14 year old boy. The girl became seriously ill and was admitted to hospital, but the boy’s family gave only Rs 500 for treatment and the police department has not punished him. The girls believe that the father of the boy gave money so that he would not be punished.

The girls from this caste are very interested in cultural programmes, especially singing, dancing and enacting dramas. There is a cultural forum, but parents discourage them from attending. When they do go to this cultural forum, they must have completed their household activities. Brothers never offer to do the work so that they can go to the forum.

"I am unhappy because I am not allowed to join groups and practice my talents in the cultural forum. If I were a boy, I also would have travelled and seen new places." ---- Kami girl, 17 years old

The Tharu girls have strong feelings of frustration for not being allowed to travel as are sons. They want to do various things, but their parents will not allow them; e.g., educational trips with the school, peer studying at friend’s home in the evening, visiting the market with a friend, visiting a friend’s house, etc. The son can go as they like anywhere without permission, yet daughters are barred from learning good things. Parents either simply do not allow the activity or the daughter has to ask many times for parents’ permission. Boys also threaten girls.
"Because of the threats by groups of boys and my fear of such threats, I have stopped teaching karate but would like to continue." ---- Tharu girl, 18 years old

If they go somewhere with parents’ permission and return late, they have to justify themselves.

"When there is a festival in the village, I can’t go; parents only allow their sons to attend. Sons can go to watch films in the cinema hall and learn many things, but daughters can’t go to watch films and can’t learn good things."
---- Tharu girl, 18 years old

D. Scolding by parents and attitude of parents

[As best translated from Nepali, the word scolding is used to describe the verbal tone and harshness of parents’ words with daughters. Scolding should be read as verbal abuse due its severity, and frequency.]

Among the Brahman/Chhetri group, the adolescent girls want to finish their school work, but parents and brothers scold them unless they have completed their housework. In the mornings, parents ask their sons to do homework, but send daughters to fetch water.

Daughters get scolded by their parents when they fail in exams, but sons do not get scolded as much as daughters. One girl committed suicide because her parents scolded her after listening to the neighbours saying that she had been prostitute. Sometimes their parents’ quarrelling affects them emotionally. Because of property rights, when brothers fight with their sisters they say the sister can not get the property and threaten to marry the sister off as soon as possible. It is in these ways that brothers become corrupted.

The Kami/Damai girls said that if they return late from school or from attending meetings, parents scold them very badly. It is therefore a problem to attend meetings although they have informed their parents where they are going. In the village, some of the girls have eloped; some were not married, but pregnant, and were not accepted later on due to their lower caste. Because of this, parents frequently use these examples and ask whether their daughter will be spoilt in that way.

Almost all the girls feel that parents are less angry with sons and scold them less though they make as many mistakes. Despite their support with household activities and assistance to the parents, daughters do not feel loved as much as sons. They are rather treated as a burden to the parents.
Tharu girls reported that if sons make a mistake, they are not scolded or beaten while daughters are scolded, but not beaten nowadays because they have grown up. These girls feel that the brother and sister-in-law (brother's wife) are quite jealous and use abusive language towards girls which discourages their development.

"My mother listened to the views of my brother and his wife and tore my books." ---- Tharu girl, 18 years old

"I couldn’t get time to study when we stayed together, but now we are separated from our brothers I get time for regular study at home. Now there is no discouraging environment toward my education." ---- Tharu girl, 18 years old

An example of family jealousy given by these girls is that a girl from the village went to the city for work and earned a lot of money. She returned home with this money and used to wear nice dresses, but her sister-in-law became jealous and asked her mother-in-law, ‘Why does your daughter only wear nice dresses and not me’. As a result of this, there was a big fight at home. The daughter was unable to tolerate it and committed suicide by hanging herself.

Four to five of the 11 Tharu girls are staying separately from brothers due to family disputes and conflict. Now parents and these girls are happy. They do not hear verbal abuse, their parents give the girls freedom and allow them to do any activity, which feels good for them.

E. Early marriage

The Brahman/Chhetri girls do not feel too much pressure from parents for marriage while they are in primary school. When the daughters become 13 years old, brothers say their time has come to marry and they should prepare for it. If daughters are good in school, parents do not force marriage. Only if the daughters have failed an exam, then the issue of marriage arises. But nowadays, the girls themselves marry early by their choice without the parents’ permission. In this year alone two girls from grade 6 and one girl from grade 7 married school boys. One girl from grade 8 married a boarding school teacher, and one girl from grade 4 and one girl from grade 2 married men from another village. The girls' ages were between 12 and 17 years. This issue was brought up by a VDC representative and was mentioned in an individual case study, by parents, younger girls and adolescent girls. One of the main reasons for daughters’ mobility restriction is to make sure girls marry within the caste.
The Kami/Damai adolescent girls told how girls often are married early against their will by their parents. Boys' lives, unlike daughters', are full of enjoyment and there are few pressures on them for marriage. Yet daughters must go to their husband's home where their life is work and having babies. Once a girl gets married, she has many more responsibilities.

The girls who participated in the discussion groups are 14 to 17 years old. It is a big issue that they have not married. Men say, 'Look! What will these girls do in the future,' and want to take revenge on them.

"My sister was married at 14 years old. She appealed to the school to stop the marriage, but to no avail." ---- Kami girl, 14 years old

If girls do not marry until 18 to 20 years then the issue of not being married becomes bigger. She then becomes a topic of conversation and people start to suspect that she is promiscuous and say 'Budhi Kanya', an unmarried girl.

"I am 17 years old. At home my relatives tell my parents and me that I am grown up and ask why I am still not married. Because of that, my mother always pushes me to marry. I always tell my mother that I wish to be independent and to continue my studies, but my parents are forcing me to marry." ---- Kami girl, 17 years old

In the Tharu communities, the practice of early marriage is very open and occurs frequently. The girls explained that if they walk with a boy or man it is not accepted and neighbours say they are spoilt. In their village, they choose to marry themselves starting about the age of 14 to 15 years. This practice was also discussed with the married adolescent girls in the village. In their opinion, every girl marries at this age.

Reasons for early marriage offered by girls from three different castes/ethnicities:

- Society refuses to accept unmarried pregnancies. The problem begins when the father does not accept and claim the baby, therefore it is difficult to prove who the father is. Even after marriage, there can be problems. In one case, the husband's family did not accept the mother who gave birth to a daughter while her husband was in India. They did not want to believe that she could have been pregnant before her husband went to India. This adolescent mother was blamed and now she stays at her mother's home.
• In rural villages, one must be married in order to have sex. There are no other alternatives. Actually, the understanding of ‘love’ in rural village is seen only in sex.
• The media also influences the age of marriage.
• Between the ages of 14 to 18 years, there are a lot of physical and emotional changes, but these are not discussed among adolescent girls and boys. Boys and girls simply do not know the consequences of marriage, sex and early pregnancy.
• The dream of love, good food, having nice clothes, and seeing new places.
• Mostly girls elope because of heavy workloads in mother’s home.
• Society raises questions when a girl walks or talks with boys and if the parents listen, the girl is either scolded or restricted from going to school.

F. Attitude of neighbours

The adolescent girls from all castes emphasized that a major player in the amount of difficulties they face is the attitude of neighbours and societal pressure towards girls. If the society has a positive attitude towards daughters, then the parents and brothers will not be restrictive in that way. If a daughter remains unmarried or continues with her education, neighbours will criticise her and her parents openly. It is a big worry for parents if they hear things against their daughters. For example, even if the daughters are doing something for the family benefit, society uses a very common village proverb, ‘the hen crows in that house’, which is not considered good [Pothi Bashyo]. It means that if women or girls are active or give suggestions to family members and if they follow the advice, especially the husband or the father, then society will speak badly about the daughter or daughter-in-law.

4.1.3 Researcher’s Observations

The issues might horrify some of the readers, but they repeatedly occur to girls. The world has already celebrated of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, yet still, the situation is very bad for these girls. The discrimination between girls and boys has always been there. So, where are the human rights for them? How long will the discrimination continue? Why are girls neglected? Are only urban girls allowed rights? If so, more than 80% of the girls’ population reside in rural areas, where the situation is very grim, offering a depressing picture indeed.

The discrimination in workloads directly impacts girls’ development, as does mobility restriction due to workload and
threats of sexual violence. Scoldings and negative parental attitudes are very common due to unfinished household activities, which in turn have a negative impact on the mind set and behaviour of girls. Due to scoldings, some of the girls run away from their home to seek love outside, resulting in marriage. Furthermore, some of the girls commit suicide; all of them have a strong dislike and frustration at being a daughter. The psychological pain remains very strong for daughters following verbal scolding through parents. If girls do not complete household activities or if they do not succeed in exams this may also lead to early marriage, either forced or by their choice.

4.1.4 Suggested solutions to address the barriers limiting adolescent girls:

Kami/Damai, Tharu and Brahman/Chhetri:

- Peer education should be introduced.
- All girls should be united through a group, to build consciousness about the difficulties facing girls and to raise voices against these issues and support each other when facing difficulties.
- The girls should be counseled to be sincere, honest and to not tell lies, in order to analyse what are good and bad activities before involving themselves in any work.
- Household work should be divided equally between sons and daughters in order to give more opportunities to the daughters.
- Daughters should have the same property rights as sons; it will give them the confidence to do the same work as boys.
- Before going any where, the girls should inform their parents, and get their advice and suggestions.
- All girls should protect themselves and be strong.
- Children in the community should go to all the houses and talk to parents about the difficulties and discrimination that girls face.
- Show dramas about bad events against girls and provide solutions in the villages.

4.1.5 Barriers to obtaining equal status for girls:

- Parents are suspicious; they are quite worried about the threat of sexual violence, rape and unmarried pregnancy.
- In a village, girls usually marry at 14 to 15 years. In this year, there are six or seven girls married by their own choice, who studied in different grades.
- The girls have heavy workloads, which restricts their opportunities.
- Caste discrimination; members of upper castes tease the girls saying they are Kami/ Damai.
• Adults do not listen to the children, especially girls.
• Lack of equal property rights.

4.2 Married Adolescent Girls

Table 3

Distribution of Married Adolescent Girls by Marriage Age and Domestic Situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of girls</th>
<th>Age range of girls</th>
<th>Avg. age of marriage</th>
<th>Husband at home or not</th>
<th>Staying at Husband’s or Mother’s home</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
<th>Common difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kami/Damai</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14 to 18 yrs</td>
<td>15 yrs</td>
<td>All are in India, except one at home</td>
<td>5 girls staying at mothers’ home due to family disputes</td>
<td>2 girls have one child</td>
<td>Husbands have not sent letter or money; uncertain future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14 to 20 yrs</td>
<td>16 yrs</td>
<td>All are at home, except one husband, who committed suicide due to a family dispute</td>
<td>8 live in the husband’s home and 2 are in their mother’s home</td>
<td>5 girls have one child, one girl has 2 children</td>
<td>Workload, family disputes, and mobility restriction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahman/Chhetri</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16 to 18 yrs</td>
<td>15 yrs</td>
<td>All are not at home (3 are in India and one in Hetauda, Nepal)</td>
<td>3 live in the husband’s house and one girl stays at her mother’s home</td>
<td>3 girls have one child and one girl is 9 months pregnant</td>
<td>Lack of emotional support from husband, workload and mobility restriction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1 Aspirations

No matter the caste, all of the girls believed that when they married they would live with their husband, would get love and affection, would go and see different places, and would have good clothes and good food. After marriage they realise that these ideas were only a dream.

4.2.2 Difficulties

Brahman/Chhetri:

Three of the girls chose to marry themselves and one married at the request of her parents. Out of the four women, only one participates in a women’s group. This one woman is both facilitator and group secretary for a women’s group.

These married girls have experienced heavy workloads, but they feel it is normal. There are restrictions on their mobility, because the husband’s family is suspicious that they will run way with another man and the family will lose honour.
These girls are sad and believe that their life became harder after marriage. For example, they can not attend good activities out of the house as they do not have any freedom; they are under pressure from their parents-in-law; their husbands do not listen to their views; and they have had to discontinue their education. Furthermore, it is hard to work with mothers- and sisters-in-law as they do not understand the daughter-in-law’s problems.

Nitu is 17 years old. She discontinued her education after marriage when she was in grade six. She married by her own choice two years ago. She is a facilitator for the literacy class. She has a one year old son. The parents-in-law do not put much pressure on her. She feels she has good status at home because of having a son and being a facilitator. Her parents recently came to their house to visit her, as she could not go to mother’s home because of her small son. Her mother’s home is four hours away, so it is not easy to travel frequently. At present, her husband works in Hetauda in the police department. She receives letters, money and sometimes he comes back to house.

Kanchi is 16 years old. She married one and a half years ago and has a 6 month old son. She married due to pressure from her mother and had to drop out of school at grade five. Now, her husband has been in India for the last eight months. She receives letters rarely; she does not know what he is doing in India. Her mother- and father-in-law do not love her very much. Her husband has not seen his child. She has to do all the household activities for her nine-member family. She has very hard life. At her mother’s home, her father brought another wife and now lives in a different district. Therefore, she has to support her mother because she has smaller siblings. Her mother expects her husband to help with the farming, but her husband is in India. Her mother’s house is very close, so when she feels sad she likes to visit her mother, but her mother- and father-in-law become angry with her when she does this.

**Kami/Damai:**

Of the six girls from the Kami/Damai group, four of the girls were in school, but dropped out after getting married, and two of the girls were never sent to school. Two girls chose to marry themselves, and four girls married due to pressure from their parents.

Out of six girls, five are very sad and have difficult circumstances. These five now stay at maiti, their mother’s home, due to disputes with their mother- and father-in-law. All of their husbands have gone to India, except one. They do not
receive any news from their husbands. The girls who now stay at maiti say that when their husbands return, they would like to discuss further whether they continue a life with them. Three of the girls’ husbands went to India as a result of quarrelling with their wives.

Reasons for conflict with husbands and in-laws:

- Returned late from sister’s marriage, or Teej festival, at maiti.
- Bad treatment by parents-in-laws for not working hard enough, so returned to maiti.

"When I was pregnant, my husband and his family quarrelled with me because I returned late after Teej festival celebrated at my mother’s home. Then my husband ran way to India, so I came to my mother’s house. I gave birth to a daughter, yet my husband has not returned. He never sends letters or money. I want to go back to his home, but no one from his house comes to fetch me. If I go by myself, I am afraid that they might scold and beat me. At maiti, my family also doesn’t feel good that I am staying there and suggest I go back to my husband’s home. But how can I go without them coming to take me? My husband’s family accuses me that my daughter is not my husband’s. If my husband does not accept me, I have to think of other options." -- Damai mother, 17 years old

"At my husband’s home, my mother- and father-in-law quarreled with me. My husband was not there. He has been in India for the last six months, but I don’t ever receive a letter or money. My mother-in-law decided that we should divorce and she took my marriage head scarf (for keeping red powder necessary for the ceremony). When husband comes back, I will go and talk with them. So I came back to maiti, where my sister-in-law (brother’s wife) has also left to stay at her maiti due to a family dispute."

---- Damai married girl, 15 years old

The girls see a difference in a daughter and a daughter-in-law in that in the mother’s home, everyone has feelings of love, and they can express dislike and it does not matter. But at the husband’s home, the daughters-in-laws have to get up early in the morning, must do heavy work, which if they are unable to carry out this work, the parents-in-law blame her parents for not training her well. As a result, the daughters-in-law always have tensions and the fear of threats.

Now that these girls are married, their problems are: discontinued education, having a greater work burden than in their mother’s home, and that their husbands do not stay at
home. They say they lack love and affection. If they live at maiti after marriage, society and their sisters-in-law look down on them. There is greater restriction on their mobility than in their mother’s home as their parents-in-law do not allow them to have any spare time.

**Tharu Girls:**

Eight Tharu girls were married by their choice rather than by arranged marriage. Only 2 girls were married by parent's arrangement.

The difficulties they face are: lack of control of their life, and pressure and threats by their husbands and parents-in-laws. At their mothers’ homes they can show anger when it is felt and they have some freedom, but now they have to tolerate everything and must please the husband’s family members. Out of ten girls, three are happy as a daughter-in-law. They are happy because they have a son, less workload, their mothers-in-law do not scold them, and they do not have to be involved in agriculture farm work. However, they are still unhappy for not being able to continue their education. The other seven girls are unhappy as a daughter-in-law. Their reasons are that their fathers- and mothers- in-law and husbands scold them frequently and do not care whether they are happy or sad.

Six of the married adolescents who have a child explained that in the beginning they felt good, had good love, their husband worried about them running away, but having had a baby their husbands started to neglect them and no longer care about them. The husbands became confident that after having a child, the mother could not go anywhere. The girls expressed that they were very sad that husbands think they can do anything they like with their wife; for example, sometimes the girls do not want sex, but their husband do, so the girl must comply.

"I am very sad when my mother- in-law and father-in-law scold me and behave in bad ways, but what am I to do? Many times I cry, but I have to tolerate it and feel it is a normal process." ---- Tharu married girl

"One girl has said that family disputes, quarreling and conflicts are very common in this village. The ‘dishes don’t clatter by themselves’ in that way, but at home there is always fighting. Remembering these things, I have remorse. Why I did marry?" -- Tharu married girl

One girl, 20 years old with a six month old daughter, lost her husband due to a dispute between father and son. Her husband
committed suicide by hanging himself, because he was always accused of stealing money, though apparently he was innocent.

4.2.3 **Suggestions to other girls from these married adolescent girls**

**Brahman/Chhetri, Kami/Damai and Tharu girls combined:**

- From their one to three-years experience with marriage, they want to advise their younger sisters not to marry early and to continue their education.

- They would be happy if they could continue their education and have good relations with their husband’s family members. Also, if they could come together as a group to share their feelings and to support each other, so they could better stand on their own feet.

- They would like to unite all daughters and daughters-in-law to raise their voices against these difficulties. They feel it is better to have a separate group for daughters-in-law, especially for this adolescent age group. They explained further that women’s groups have different feelings from theirs and it is difficult to share feelings with them as the ages are different. And, some of the women are relatives, such as mother- and sister-in-law, who dominate the girls.

- Programmes should be discussed with husbands and mothers- and fathers-in-laws.

4.2.4 **Barriers**

**Brahman/Chhetri, Kami/Damai and Tharu:**

- No groups for daughters-in-law; if there were, they could share difficulties and support to each other.
- Lack of emotional support as all of their husbands are away.
- Low status of their own home and their in-laws’ behaviour in relation to their mother’s home.
- Mobility restrictions because of workload and suspiciousness among the husband's family that they will have a love affair and the family will lose honour.
- Husband’s family do not listen to the daughter-in-law’s views, but also the husband does not respond to the difficulties they face. When they share their feelings with their husband, the husband takes it as normal and says that a wife has to tolerate all of these things.
- The sisters-in-law do not support each other; they have no sympathy at all.
• Fear of sharing their problems with peers, because if it becomes known to their in-laws that they have disclosed family problems, the in-laws will threaten them.

4.2.5 Researcher’s Observations

The married adolescent girls are doubly victimised and are in a more difficult situation than the other groups. They do not get emotional support within the husband’s home and they are oppressed if they return to their mother’s home.

The girls who are facilitators have more education than others. They get more respect and have a good status in their mother’s home.

These girls are very disunited and do not believe they can get support from each other. The girls are neither in children’s groups nor in women’s groups. They are neither targeted nor visible in NGOs work and, as a result do use any facilities such obtaining loans or being a co-operative member of NGOs. The NGO have difficult requirements when giving loans. One of the criteria is that borrower should be based locally, but once the girl marries out of the NGO’s area, they are not eligible for a loan. Adolescent girls who are married, but living in their mother’s home, find it very difficult to use NGO facilities.

I think married adolescents are the most marginalised and isolated group in terms of getting emotional and physical support.

4.3 Brothers’ Groups

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of brothers</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Related to adolescent or pre-adolescent girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahman/Chhetri</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12 to 18 yrs</td>
<td>5 are pre-adolescent girls’ brothers one is a brother to an adolescent girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kami/Damai</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12 to 16 yrs</td>
<td>All are adolescent girls’ brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12 to 14 yrs</td>
<td>All are adolescent girls’ brothers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1 Common difficulties from all castes/ethnicities:

• Girls have to work in the house, so they do not get time to study at home and are sometimes irregular in school attendance, then the teacher scolds them. Sons can get educated at a boarding school, but daughters do not.
- Girls run away and get married because of hard work in their own home.
- Boys and men tease them when they walk, especially young girls.
- Daughters want to do a wider variety of things and to have more freedom, but the parents do not allow them to do so. There are few restrictions for sons.
- The parents think that daughters are other’s property. She has to learn all household activities otherwise parents-in-law will blame the mother for not teaching her properly.
- Sisters do not inherit property from the family.

In Tharu villages, younger brothers like and love their elder sisters very much, because their elder sisters love them very much unlike their elder brothers. The boys said that many families are living separately due to elder brothers’ and their wives’ behaviour towards sisters. They say that while sisters and brothers are from the same family, they do not know why there are such social differences.

4.3.2 Suggestions by all brothers for the equal status of girls as boys:

- Share workload; starting with their own house, so that girls can continue with their education and have time for school work and study at home.
- Men who make girls pregnant should be punished by society and government authorities.
- Girl victims should make their problem known rather tolerate it and hide.
- With children’s groups, create public awareness through street drama, singing and dancing against girls’ discrimination.
- Sisters have a good identity if they are educated; and after marriage, the sister’s husband and his family will give more love and more support to the sister.
- Raise awareness on equality for sons and daughters in the provision of love, affection, education and equal property rights.
- Eliminate the social practices that talk unnecessarily against girls.
- Support sisters with buying stationary and clothes.
- Behave well with other girls and convince others to do the same.

4.3.3 Barriers as seen by brothers:

Brahman/Chhetri:
Son preference. Families are waiting for a son even if there are a lot of daughters. If there are a lot of daughters, parents cannot fulfill all responsibilities and in this case only the younger daughter goes to school.

There are still some superstitions and the conservative culture that restrict the daughter's mobility.

The rules and regulations are not implemented by police authorities. For example, there are problems with rape and unwanted pregnancies, but the abuser is not punished.

Tharu:

The main barriers they see for their sister's development are heavy workload, society's negative attitude towards daughters, and that brothers do not support sisters with the workload.

Kami/Damai:

- Forced marriage when a sister reaches 15 to 18 years of age.
- Parents pay more attention to household activities rather than caring about a daughter's time to study at home.
- Bias in parental property rights against sisters.

4.3.4 Researcher's Observations

Despite any sympathy shown by these brothers, I doubt whether they will assist with their sisters' workloads because the culture and society are the main pushing factors. In rural villages, there are no such houses where men or boys have a productive role mainly within household activities. This is suspect in urban areas too. Unless the boys and men share the workload, it is not possible to reduce the girls' workloads. Also, the daughters themselves should try to get released from heavy workloads for their own development.

4.4 Pre-Adolescent Girls

Table 5

Distribution of Age and Education Status by Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of girls</th>
<th>Age range (Years)</th>
<th>Education status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahman/Chhetri</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 to 9</td>
<td>All are in grades 1 to 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8 to 10</td>
<td>12 are in grade 1 to 3; 3 are not in school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.1 Aspirations

Almost all the girls want to continue their education and stand on their own feet. They are happy when they are going to school, playing with friends, and when their mother gives them food and love.

"We like to study more than playing. When we were very young we liked to play, but from grade 2 we don't like to play because then we have no time to study." ---- Damai girl, 9 years old

4.4.2 Difficulties

The girls from each of the three castes/ethnicities have sad feelings for being a daughter, because their elder sisters, who married and went to their husbands' houses, have painful lives; but sons can stay in their own home. Parents do not love their daughters very much and do not allow them to play as do their brothers. Only after completing household activities are they allowed to play.

All of the pre-adolescent girls were happy up to the age of 6 years, because they could play as they like, they did not do any household activities, and they could cry as they liked. These girls are unhappy when their parents do not allow them to play, and when they are scolded for not carrying out their duties. They would be happier if their parents and elder siblings did not scold or beat them.

Four of the Brahman/Chhetri girls had experienced beatings by their father, and two had been beaten by a teacher.

They know whether their parents love them in following ways:

- If parents are not angry with them and do not beat or scold them.
- Speak politely with them.
- If parents hold them on their lap.
- If parents buy notebooks and pencils when they ask.
- If parents send them to school regularly.

All of the girls felt that parents love them more if they do more household activities, otherwise they do not get love.
The Tharu girls said that if they did not obey their parents, they get scolded and called names of prostitutes (Sithi, Pather, Randi, Beshya and ‘poila ja’) and are told they should run way with a man. At these times, they become very sad and if they say something in response their parents become angrier and beat them. From this, they know whether parents love them or not. They also identify whether their elder brothers and sisters love them or not by their behaviour.

From among the Kami/Damai girls, one is not in school. She is 9 years old and previously attended an out-of-school education program. She is very sad because she does not have a father, has to do all of the household duties while her mother works in other people’s fields, and she is not in school while her peers are. She has an elder brother, but he is in India.

4.4.3 Suggestions from pre-adolescent girls for equal status as their brothers:

- The discussion programme should take place with their parents and their brothers as well. They want to convince their parents not to scold or beat them and not to give so much work.
- Such things should be learned in a type of discussion or children’s group.
- Try to get time to study at home, and to work hard at school studies.

4.4.4 Barriers seen by all pre-adolescent girls:

- If they walk in the village, it is seen in a bad way.
- If they perform certain things, then people say the girls have become over-smart.
- Work load.
- Psychological pain due to verbal abuse by parents.
- Mobility restrictions.

4.4.5 Researcher’s Observations

The discussion with these girls made me realise just how little value and status is given to a daughter by a family. They clearly expressed that parental love and affection dependent on whether she completes the house hold activities or not. The girls understand well from their early years that they are not meant to be equal with a son.

4.5 Parents of Adolescent Girls

Table 6

Number of mothers and fathers by ethnicity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of Mothers</th>
<th>No. of fathers</th>
<th>Total parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahman/Chhetri</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 father &amp; 1 uncle</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kami/Damai</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.1 Their expectations of and aspirations for daughters

From each caste/ethnicity, all parents have some expectations regarding their daughters. While daughters are not expected to look after or provide for parents in the future; however, parents hope that their daughters:

- Will belong to a good home and have a good husband who will take care of them.
- Maintain honour at home (mothers’ and parents-in-laws’ house).
- Stand on own feet and get employment.
- Hope daughter will study in a good way because they will not get any property from mother’s home.
- If there is no son, a daughter may be allowed to carry out the funeral rituals but this is controversial.
- If they go to a good husband’s house a daughter might look after her parents but this is doubted.

Parents’ expectations and aspirations of a son:

- Look after the parents in their old age.
- Responsibly manage and use family property.
- Fulfil the role and responsibilities of head of the house.
- Obtain a good education and be good earner.
- Not to take alcohol and or smoke.
- Wishes the sons and daughters-in-laws will be happy.

4.5.2 Common difficulties

Almost all the parents explained that a daughter learns from the mother and son is guided by the father. Usually the son is reluctant to work at home, so that daughter must do all household activities. If son fetches water or cleans the floor, everyone teases him. So that all parts of society behave in this way.

"We see our daughter equal to our son, but priority goes to the son in every aspect. Girls are discriminated against from birth, while few work demands are made of boys."
"In house my wife became sick so that, my elder daughter discontinued school at grade 3. We know we have to send our daughters to school, but due to household problems we dropped her from school though she was quite good in her school performance."

---- Chhetri father

"Usually in our village, the parents love the son and preference is given to the son, but daughters are neglected. Parents are always waiting for the birth of their first son; this is a very bad concept."

---- Khada uncle

"More than 10 years ago, the women’s development office of Surkhet took the members on a field trip to Pokhara. It was then that I realised the importance of education. At that time I was illiterate. I could not read the alphabet and had problems identifying where the toilet was. I found the toilet with the help of a supervisor. From that experience, I decided to send my daughter to school and raise my voice in the village, ‘Girls should go to school’."

---- Kami mother

The parents further explained if a daughter wants to marry by running away during school time, they can not do anything.

"Before marriage the son does not take care of any household activities, and after marriage they belong to their wife. But the daughter looks after all the household activities and takes care of the parents, but why does society not value and recognise the daughter as they do a son?"

---- Tharu father

"The parents don’t understand daughters and scold them badly if they failed an exam. Our limitations as mothers often leads to our daughter not fulfilling their potential. We should be sensitive towards our daughters so that they will not be frustrated and will not be spoilt."

---- Brahman mother

"I give my daughter freedom and as a result our neighbour criticises both her and me. This is the social problem faced by daughters."
Parents are happy in the sense that daughters help and support mothers to carry out all the household activities, whereas the son does not help. The son does not listen to what parents say. In fact, the daughters are more sincere than sons are. Once, the son grows up either they go to India or leave home for work.

Parents are unhappy with daughters when they marry by their own choice, because the girl then quits school and the fact that the daughter chooses her own husband destroys the honour of the family. If they are spoilt, the direct shame goes to the mother, because fathers and other relatives always blame the mother. Their main worries are whether a daughter will take up bad activities, will marry to a far location by their choice, someone might violate them and the daughter will lose her purity, and daughter might have a hard life.

Parents from all castes/ethnicities believe that when girls reach the age of 15 to 18 years the mobility restrictions are necessary, because there is more chance of their being spoilt.

**Common reasons from all castes for daughters’ mobility restrictions are:**

- The parents hear the news about girl trafficking, so they also worried for their daughters.
- In the village, there is evidence that unmarried girls became pregnant and they are now in difficult circumstances.
- If daughters make a mistake, parents and society does not tolerate it; but if it was done by sons every one ignores it. It is the issue of honour and the potential moral downfall of all family members. Whatever a sons does, the family does not lose honour. If sexual violence or any injustice occurs, no one raises their voice nor supports the victim, rather the problem is hidden. So every parent should be conscious towards daughter.

**4.5.3 Parents’ solutions for the equal status of daughters as son:**

- Parents should understand children’s views. Should be sensitive towards what the daughters say.
- Should not blame daughters for failing exams as we make them do so much work.
- Give less workload to the daughter so that they have time for study and school work. This would help them to succeed in examinations. By being well educated, she can be a more fulfilled person, can get a job, and could stand on her own feet.
• Allow mobility per situation such as school field trips, peer studying, and playing with their friends.
• There should be a law which ensures that parental property is divided equally between daughters and sons.
• If the fathers think positively about daughters, mothers must think even more positively.
• In village, there are practices of unnecessary talking against girls that should be eliminated.

4.5.4 Main barriers seen by all parents to the daughter’s development are:

Neighbours talk more against daughters. For example, if daughters are unmarried until 18 to 20 years and if freedom is given to a daughter, neighbours criticise daughter and mother.

4.5.5 Researcher’s Observations

Most of the parents were mothers and are in women’s groups. They see the importance of education for their daughters. Remembering their bad experiences and being dominated by their husband, they do not want to pass down the same experiences to their daughter.

All parents are conscious of their honour and expect to maintain it with their daughters. Questions arise: Why is it only the daughters who are supposed to take responsibility for maintaining honour, why not the son? Is it correct that the daughter restricts her mobility for the purpose of maintaining honour? Do workload, mobility restrictions, and family honour block the girls’ right to participation and is it in their best interest. Is it the threat of sexual violence that restricts the daughter’s mobility?

The reality for these mothers is they have been doing household work since their early life and will pass their work down to daughters for the purpose of learning house hold activities so that they will not hear any complaints from husband’s home. If there were a culture of sharing household activities by all members (father, son, husband), these issues might not have come about. But that is not the case and the physical and psychological burdens are passed from mother to daughter.

4.6 Village Representatives

Table 7

Number of representatives by gender and VDC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VDC</th>
<th>Chairperson</th>
<th>No. of</th>
<th>No. of</th>
<th>No. of</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>present Yes/No</th>
<th>males</th>
<th>females</th>
<th>Elected members</th>
<th>participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ramghat</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latikoili</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ghusra Village:

Ghusra is one of the Tharu villages in Latikoili VDC. There were no Tharu representatives in the focus group discussion. There were two representatives from Sunar, one Gurung, and nine Chhetri.

4.6.1 Common difficulties girls from Ramghat and Ghusra face as seen by the VDC representatives:

Whether educated or not, household activities are the extra work for daughters, which sons do not do. The attitude of parents towards daughters is very negative. When a daughter is born they wrinkle their nose, but parents are happy when a son is born.

Parents want to send their sons to school on time, whereas for the daughters it does not matter if they go late. According to the VDC chairperson, in Tharu society daughters are actually brighter than sons until primary school. But when they complete primary school, they start to drop out or they are very weak in school because of the burden of household activities.

Regarding marriage, it does not matter if a son is unmarried by the age of 25 to 30 years, but parents are quite worried about the daughter and hurry marriage at the age of 13 to 15 years. In Ramghat village nowadays, girls themselves choose to marry at 14 to 15 years.

According to the Ramghat VDC chairperson, parents’ mentality and way of behaving towards daughters is different regarding money because they think daughters are other people’s property. The parents search for the best son-in-law for their daughter, qualified and skilled, so the daughter would be able to stand on her own feet.

Parents also discriminate between sons and daughters with medical treatment. The son gets immediate treatment, but parents do not care about daughters; only in the last stages of illness will they get treatment.

4.6.2 Suggestions from VDC representatives for the girls’ development:

Ghusra and Ramghat Village:
• Build the girls’ capacity so that they have confidence to speak against any kind of violence and they should be able to determine the punishment for the abuser.
• The social and family environment should be built from the daughter’s perspective.
• From each household, there should be equal sharing of household responsibilities.
• Encouragement should be given for daughters in each sector such as getting skills, education, going on field trips and playing.
• The practice of scolding by parents should be stopped because of its negative effects on daughters, such as suicide, frustration and discouragement of girls’ innovation.
• Establishment of a girls’ scholarship system in each school by the village development committee, so that poor girls could continue their education.
• Legal rights, especially property rights, should be given to daughters so parents will not discriminate against daughters.
• This discussion program should be held among different groups especially parents, children, school teachers and political leaders, so that commitment from different levels would be possible. Usually schoolboys tease girls, so this is the responsibility of school teacher too.

4.6.3 Main barriers seen by the VDC representatives for girls’ development:

Ghusra and Ramghat:

• The society talks more against daughters even if they do good activities.
• The patriarchal social structure has insisted that boys be more powerful than girls.
• The current legal, political, social system is not favourable for daughters.
• Mothers are not responsible enough.
• Parental lack of awareness.

4.6.4 Researcher’s Observations

The male VDC representatives who participated were fathers also. Some of them have daughters and some do not. According to the VDC representatives, they send their daughters to school equally as sons, but as the daughter grows up, they are weak in school because of the heavy workload. As a father, they did not see it as their role to improve the status of girls. Rather, it is the mother’s responsibility because daughters learn from mothers and sons learn from fathers. That’s why the gender role has remained the same from generation to generation.
In both villages, they reported that there is strong social concept of ‘what benefit will the parents get after sending a daughter to school?’. Parents’ mentality and use of negative expressions towards daughters cause the girls to have frustrating situations. They know daughters/mothers have heavy workloads, but they never try to share their workload or give suggestions to others. From our discussions, the main barriers are that girls are not getting encouragement at family or in society, so these should be improved. The next main issue was that there should be equal property rights for son and daughter, so parents will not discriminate against daughter. I feel that in order to change these gender roles, we must work especially with boys and men otherwise change will be a very slow process.

4.7 In-depth Individual Case Studies

Table 8
Distribution by Age, Ethnicity and Education Status of Individuals and Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Age in years</th>
<th>Education Status</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Peer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chhetri</td>
<td>Individual +</td>
<td>Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chhetri</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dropped out at grade 3</td>
<td>Chhetri</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chhetri</td>
<td>Individual +</td>
<td>Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kami</td>
<td>Individual +</td>
<td>Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kami</td>
<td>Individual +</td>
<td>Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dropped out at grade 10</td>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>Individual +</td>
<td>Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Dropped out at grade 6</td>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>Individual +</td>
<td>Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Attended legal literacy class, no other education</td>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>Peer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kami*</td>
<td>Peer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chhetri*</td>
<td>Individual +</td>
<td>Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chhetri*</td>
<td>Peer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Attended literacy class</td>
<td>Kami</td>
<td>Peer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kami</td>
<td>Peer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dropped out at grade 9</td>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>Peer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Individual case study not incorporated into this report.
The total number of individuals and peers interviewed was 15, but only 11 will be discussed in this report, which I feel represent the more important aspects of the problems. One individual and her peer are discussed below; the rest are attached in Appendix 3. Three extra individual case studies were included due to my interest. The selection process for in-depth interviews with individuals and their peers was discussed in the methodology section.

Nisha (individual) and peer to Prameela (Kami)

Nisha is 17 years old and studies in grade 7. According to her, the daughter has to tolerate everything, which is not the case for the son. From the very beginning, sons are allowed to go everywhere, can jump and play as they like.

At this time her mother is forcing her to marry because her mother had a bad experience with her elder sister. When her elder sister was in grade 9, she married an old man (a Bhutanese refugee working in Surkhet), by her own choice. Because of this, her mother is worried about her marriage and she is suffering.

She is the second eldest daughter and has two younger brothers and one younger sister. All of them study in the village primary school. She is lucky that her mother and father are 40 and 46 years old respectively. Compared to other girls, she has more experience. She is a facilitator in the village's out-of-school education program, so she has gotten involved in different programmes. Previously, she was the chairperson of a children's group, but she gave that role to another girl. She also tried to become a policewoman, but she did not succeed because she did not have someone powerful (a family member for example) to select her. She wishes the selection process was a fair competition.

She is also successful in school. She has been ranked first or second in school since grade one. She is a good resource in the village if something is happening such as drunken quarreling, boys teasing girls, misbehaving at festivals. She leads and gives the application to the police department.

She has one peer Prameela from the same caste (Kami), who has never been to school and they share each others feelings. She encourages her to attend non-formal education programmes and they are very supportive to each other. They collect fodder and firewood together. Their houses are in the same village.
Prameela, peer to Nisha

Prameela is 16 years old and has never been to school. She has one older and one younger brother and two younger sisters. Her elder brother works in India and one younger sister is married. Her father was killed eight years ago by villagers who got jealous of her father’s hard work. Her mother is 40 years old.

She is sad because she has to do the entire house hold activities. She is attending literacy and legal literacy class. She wants to stay in a group and learn more from non-formal education programmes. Though she is not in school, she encourages her younger brother and sisters to go.

Her main hope is not to marry, because she has seen in the village that life is difficult for all of them.

She believes that after marriage she would have to do more work and the husband and parents-in-law would blame her unnecessarily. So, she thinks it is better to stay in her mother’s home.

She is very happy that she has a best peer whom she loves very much. They go together to different places, share their feelings and support each other. They trust and maintain confidentiality with each other. Her peer is Nisha, who will also support her with money if necessary. If she goes to work in another’s field, she gets Rs 30 per day. She was happy when she was 6 to 10 years old. At that age, her father was alive and thus she was less burdened with responsibilities.

4.7.1 Suggestions from individuals and their peers:

- Peer or another group of friends should counsel parents.
- Girls should not go out alone, they should go with a friend or with their brothers or parents.
- All daughters should study as hard as boys.
- All daughters should be bold and strong so that they can face difficulties.
- Should identify any person in the village who has spoilt girls and inform the women’s and children’s groups.
- Girls should get involved in good activities and influence society so that they will regret why they talk against daughters.
- Should identify and listen to those girls who face more and/or specific difficulties ensuring confidentiality so that no one will misunderstand her.
- Use a slogan which promotes the girls status.
- Girls need to gain the confidence of their parents; be honest about what she is doing and where she is going.
• Raise a voice against difficulties faced and report to concerned organizations, such as VDC and police authorities.
• Unite in a group and support in a positive way those who face difficulties rather than talk negatively.
• Show dramas in the village concerning the difficulties girls face and explaining the reasons for them.

4.7.2 Barriers they see against girls’ development:

• The village people talk more, asking what the daughters will do after education and encouraging parents to arrange marriage for their daughters.
• The parents restrict the daughter’s mobility, because daughters are marrying without parents’ permission.
• The traditional and conservative practices are very strong in the village, so their parents must follow the practices.
• Some rules and regulations are not strong e.g. there is no punishment if some man makes some girls pregnant. The abuser will be free after paying a certain amount of money.

4.7.3 Researcher’s Observations

Despite the difficulties faced by this individual and her peer, they are psychologically and emotionally rich and strong. They support, encourage and boost each other although they are from rural poor families. I think this is a new way of learning and these adolescent girls could be the best resources for each other.

Sharing feelings among those girls who have similar experiences is actually their life-giving strategy for each other, otherwise many of them would suffer from psychological damage. Though some are not in school, they are attending legal and basic literacy classes. They feel it was good to join the children’s group, where at least they can meet friends. Parents are also supportive of the children’s group. Our discussions were a good learning experience for me, especially on the support systems (peer-based approach). How they succeed in providing support to each other is important for every village.

Village support systems should:

• Identify those girls who face more difficulties so that those girls will not be doubly victimized and other girls will not suffer by being labeled a victim. Their stage of development, their previous life experiences, etc., are fundamental in determining appropriate strategies.
• Support young girls in moral danger.
• Help prepare girls for an independent life.
• Help families to support those girls.
• Mobilise community resources: the girls who have faced more difficulties can be the best teachers for a life-giving strategy and for restoring responsibility to the community.
• Girls should not be blamed; a non-judgmental approach should be used.
• Provide a network of supportive relationships.
• Listen to girls and create a climate of confidence, help them to discover new values and question our own values, develop solidarity amongst the girls through collecting the girls’ strength and using a peer based approach.
• Develop a sense of identity and pride in the identity.

Section 5: CONCLUSIONS

This research study has clearly revealed that the girls in the rural area of Surkhet are routinely exposed to discrimination, exploitation, and threats of sexual violence and injustice irrespective of caste/ethnicity. The girls’ opportunities are hindered compared to sons’ in each and every sector.

The girls, either pre-adolescent (6 to 10 yrs), adolescent, or married adolescent, all have the same kind of painful experiences. Discriminatory social, religious, and cultural practices start early in life and continue until death. It is still uncertain how long these girls will have to wait for the day of equality, peace and justice. They are deprived of their inherent rights to adequate physical, mental and psychological growth and development.

Why are there difficulties and barriers against girls only and not for boys? Do the boys want to suffer the same difficulties that girls face? Do mothers want to discriminate against their daughter? Actually not.

What all the girls, their parents, brothers, individual and peer case studies, and the village development representatives expressed was the need to create a social environment where girls are encouraged in every sector and are given equal opportunities to lead a life without any discrimination.

Policy makers and all key actors, who either work for girls’ development or who have responsibility for girls in one way or another need to start thinking about how girls see their world.

First, all the group are quite aware of their own needs and the solutions to obtain equal status with boys, but the problem lies in the negative attitude of society. Perhaps the saddest issue that
emerged from the research is the under valuing and low status given to daughters by society and parents, which is why most of the girls have feelings of strong dislike and frustration at being daughters.

The Government of Nepal has ratified all major human rights documents including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention against torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment, and established the Children’s Act [1992]. Despite all of these ratifications and the investment of millions of dollars, little has been done for the women’s development programmes to bring changes to their status and for the new generation. One of the major changes resulting from women’s development programmes is observed in girls’ access to education over the last decade, but whether education really helps to eliminate discrimination and violence against girls is a big question.

From my experience, unless the boys and men change their hearts and attitudes towards girls, there can be no real development.

We have to analyse the strengths of girls, families and communities and mobilise those strengths and see if that allows girls, families and communities to work out some solutions. Thus, we need to encourage their active participation in all our efforts. At the same time, strong commitment is necessary at different levels to address the specific needs of girls.

Lastly, it can be argued that there are few organizations working for girls, of those that are some are superficially treating the symptoms of discrimination instead of building girls’ capacities and having girls identify issues. Girls who reside in rural areas (80% of the girl population) face the same problems; their experiences are more or less similar. But there are extremely few agencies working with girls in rural areas and they lack adequate resources. The girls’ difficulties cannot possibly be addressed by the current approaches.

The commitment, skills and experiences of those working closely with girls is being questioned so that girls will not be confronted with new practical problems or be oppressed by project implementation. In order to bring effective results in a real sense, the views and opinions of girls should be properly represented in policy, research and advocacy interventions. Otherwise all the efforts will be confined to paperwork only. This research is not extensive and it was facilitated by adults,
nevertheless it is essential for girls to carry out research by themselves to build up their capacities in the research process and raise their understanding of the issues and the ways forward.

Section 6: LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Challenge

The Challenge is to Change and Eradicate the Discrimination Against Those Girls Who Face Difficulties

Fighting discrimination against girls and fulfilling girls’ rights for development is not only for the single girl’s development, but for the family, society and nation as a whole. To achieve this, rights based organizations have to show strong dedication and commitment at all levels - not just lip service and paperwork.

To people who hate discrimination between girls and boys, or women and men: please be true to yourself and sincerely advise other people to allow equal opportunities. It is still a social reality that girls experience discrimination in the family from their birth. The discrimination has some social roots, which eventually take on a kind of political character. A boy can go out as he wants, while this is not possible for girls. The role of girls in society is still the same as their mothers’: limited to their reproductive role, except for a little education. But even the little education girls receive is still questioned by the girls as there is no sense in it if they can not get time to study at home. The value of school education is further questioned if girls do not have access to jobs and are only involved in household activities after marriage.

Boys and girls, men and women should work together to eradicate this discrimination and allow for the growth of equal opportunities in each sector. We must create a more congenial situation for girls and we all should come forward to promote it. A wide spread campaign through posters, TV and other media should be organised to underline the fact that girls can work with the same abilities as do boys. We should discuss this theme inside and outside the family. Below are some lessons learnt based on the research findings.

6.2 Local Level

6.2.1 Children’s role in confronting the social environment

This study reveals that most of the girls are unhappy at being daughters because they are under-valued and given low status
compared to boys in their society. Most are discriminated against by tradition and culture. Examples and findings from the different groups clearly demonstrate that the societal environment is not encouraging for girls' development. Discrimination, as identified by the girls, starts from the pre-adolescent period of life. From a decade of experiences, it seems that working with women alone to bring changes to a new generation in society is a very slow process and has doubtful impact.

As discrimination starts early in life, pre-adolescent girls’ participation is a prerequisite. Pre-adolescent girls have much more potential for the rapid realization of changes. They need only respect and encouragement.

Actively engaging children (boys as much as girls) from the pre-adolescent period is most urgent to protect and promote the human rights of girls. Listening to girls, creating a climate of confidence, discovering new values, questioning our own values, and collecting the girls’ strength is most urgent. This is not only for the purpose of girls' representation or participation, but girls have to be seen as active members of society and as people who are the future leaders of tomorrow.

The interviews demonstrate that the peer-group approach enhances the process of building self-esteem. It is equally necessary for girls to develop a sense of identity and pride in their identity. After peer groups have developed some collective strength, then they are in a position to interact with the community.

Recommendations:

1. Children should be encouraged from pre-adolescence to meet together to play, discuss and act for the improvement of their own and the community situation.
2. The rights and hopes of girls and their achievement of them should be constantly on the agenda at all levels, especially in the family, VDC, DCWC, schools, women’s groups, children’s groups and other user committees at local levels. This also should be discussed up to the national level.
3. To use the child-to-child approach, especially through adolescent brothers and sisters with younger pre-adolescent girls to establish a non-discriminatory approach to gender.

6.2.2 Children and the decision making process
Involving girls and boys in the decision-making process and including them as full and active partners in identifying their own issues and problems and in designing, planning, implementing and assessing programmes which affect their own lives will have more sustainable impact. In fact, certain rights, if fulfilled, would help girls protect themselves.

**Recommendation:**

1. Involve girls and boys in decision-making in their groups first, then in their families, and schools and then more widely in the village and VDC.

6.2.3 *Establishment of community support systems is essential in every village*

Unless the community as a whole is involved in the project, it cannot succeed and changing will be a difficult and slow process. Adolescent girls and boys should work together and raise their unified voices against social discrimination and sexual violence. In villages, those girls who face difficulties are getting support from their peers, but there are seldom any groups or community systems to support them in their difficulties. Getting support from police authorities is a very complicated procedure: they do not listen to girl's voices, as they do not believe girls and they would rather tease girls.

The support systems should identify girls who face more difficulties so that those girls will not be doubly victimized and other girls will not suffer.

The strategy creating process needs to take into account the girls’ stage of development, their previous life experiences, etc. Girls who have faced many difficulties can be good teachers for a life-giving strategy and for restoring responsibility to the community.

Respect and a loving environment makes every girl feel loved and helps each girl to develop.

Fathers often deny any responsibility for children and blame mothers for any problems. The strategy should be to educate men about the dignity of fatherhood and to prepare the adolescent boys to take on the role of fatherhood.

**Recommendations:**

1. Community support systems for girls need to be developed in every village to enable girls to achieve their potential.
2. Girls’ group should identify and make profiles of persons, especially men, at the community level who are willing to raise their voice against the agents, perpetrators of difficulties and who will give advice and long-term support at the local level.

3. Children and their adult supporters should meet with local and district officials, especially the DCWC, to emphasize a rights-based approach in the treatment of girls.

4. The role of fathers in supporting their daughters and of brothers in supporting their sisters needs to be explained and emphasized.

6.2.4 Children’s movement to fight discrimination and change the society for equality, peace and justice

The research study clearly identified that mothers do not like to pass their experiences on to their daughters; men also do nothing to change existing practices. The current situation is an intolerable status quo, which make girls seriously frustrated at being a daughter.

We have to analyse critically and seriously, to think about forging a partnership between girls and boys for radical change through children’s movements. We adults should have positive attitudes and believe a small change in our perception can have a major impact.

Recommendations:

1. Programmes should be designed to provide equal opportunities for girls and boys to develop their skills in leadership and advocacy to raise their joint voice against girls’ discrimination.

2. Boys should be encouraged with girls, particularly brothers and sisters, to join a grassroots movement which emphasizes equal opportunities for girls, sharing of the workload in their own home, supporting each other to have equal opportunities to education, health, nutrition and mobility and then each to have equal responsibility for their parents.

3. Groups should be set up by NGOs and INGOs for married adolescent girls who are isolated by all.

6.2.5 Leading the way in local advocacy campaigns

Research has shown that the difficulties faced by girls is not only faced by adolescent girls, but pre-adolescent and married adolescents as well.
To bring change at the local level, it is necessary to bring change at national level with regards to legislation, e.g., equal property rights. The village development representatives and some of the groups believe that legislation is the most powerful means to fight discrimination against girls/women, but at the same time agree that legislation without awareness is insufficient in the case of property rights.

There is a need for men, boys, women and girls to lobby actively against the issues which were heard in the different groups. It is solidarity that will make it possible for their voices to be heard more loudly in the future than today. The formation of networks and the continuance of building up solidarity across a wide spectrum and across sections of society, at the local, national, regional level is of the utmost importance.

**Recommendations:**

1. A dialogue with journalists should take place, especially at the local level, to exchange views about the difficulties girls face based on this research so they could raise awareness of these difficulties with the public through local newspapers.
2. Girls should be encouraged to describe their difficulties through the local press, radio, village theatre, puppetry and television to disseminate and create awareness in different villages.
3. Discussions should be held with local teachers to promote the giving of positive images concerning women and girls in class work.

**6.3 National Level**

**6.3.1 Leading the way in national advocacy campaigns**

**Recommendations:**

1. The deficiency in present legislation and policies concerned with property rights should be made public both locally and nationally. A campaigning network should be started from local to national level.
2. Teaching materials, including text books should be reviewed and revised to promote self-esteem of women and girls through positive self images highlighting women’s/girls’ role in society, including in decision-making, development, culture, and other social and economic endeavours.
3. Active networks of girls and women, which increasingly should include boys and men, should meet and exchange their experiences and encourage new groups/networks in
areas where they do not exist and through this strategy empower the girls/women movement nationally.

6.3.2 Policy for adolescent girls and boys

There is no government policy focussing particularly on adolescent children, though there is a policy for women and children in general. Particularly in this age range, a lot of physical and emotional change is happening but there is no such program for this group during this vulnerable period.

The married adolescent girls (mothers included) face double difficulties from their own parents and from their husband’s home. They are silent sufferers, having low self-esteem and remaining too much in tension and fear.

The married adolescents are neither in children’s nor women’s groups. They are neither targeted nor visible in NGO work.

Recommendations:

1. The government and other organizations should have a policy and programmes focussing on adolescence.
2. Sexual and reproductive health education should be introduced into schools from age 8-9 years, i.e., well before puberty.
3. Groups should be set up by NGOs and INGOs for married adolescent girls who are isolated by all.

6.3.3 A shift in perspective and the building of resilience is necessary. Some girls enjoy fuller exercise of their rights in certain areas

Research recommendation:

1. Further understanding of why some of the girls are more fully able to exercise their rights in certain areas

Section 7: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Children’s Role in Confronting Social Environment

i. Children should be encouraged from pre-adolescence to meet together to play, discuss and act to improve their own and their community situation.

ii. The rights and hopes of girls and their achievement of them should be constantly on the agenda at all levels especially in the family, VDC, DCWC, schools, women’s groups, children’s groups and other user committees at local level and this also should be discussed up to the national level.
iii. To use the child to child approach, especially through the role of adolescent brothers and sisters with younger pre-adolescent girls, to establish a non discriminatory approach to gender.

7.2 Children and the Decision Making Process

i. That girls and boys be involved in decision making in their groups first then in their families and schools and then more widely in the village and VDC.

7.3 Establishment of Community Support Systems is Essential in Every Village

i. Community support systems for girls need to be developed in every village to enable girls to achieve their potential.

ii. Girls’ groups to identify and make profiles of persons [especially men, women and boys] at community level who are willing to raise their voice against the agents and perpetrators of difficulties and give advice and long term support at local level.

iii. The children and their adult supporters should meet with local and district officials especially the DCWC to emphasize a rights based approach to the treatment of girls.

iv. The role of fathers in supporting their daughters needs to be explained and emphasized.

7.4 Children's Movement to Fight Discrimination and Change the Society for Equality, Peace and Justice

i. Programmes should be designed to provide equal opportunities for girls and boys to develop their skills in leadership and advocacy so as to empower them to raise their joint voice against girls’ discrimination.

ii. Boys should be encouraged with girls [particularly brothers and sisters] to join a grass root movement which emphasizes equal opportunities to girls, sharing of the workload in their own home, to support each other having equal opportunities to education, health, nutrition and mobility and then each to have equal responsibility for their parents.

iii. Groups should be set up by NGOs and INGOs for married adolescent girls who are isolated by all.

7.5 Leading the Way in Local Advocacy Campaigns

i. A dialogue with journalists should take place especially at local level to exchange views about the difficulties girls
face based on this research, so they could raise awareness of these difficulties with the public through local newspapers.

ii. Girls should be encouraged to describe their difficulties through the local press, radio, village theatre, puppetry and television to disseminate and create awareness in different villages.

iii. Discussion should be held with local teachers to promote the giving of positive images concerning women and girls in class work.

National Level

7.6 Leading the Way in National Advocacy Campaigns

• The deficiency in present legislation and policies concerned with property rights should be made public both locally and nationally. A campaigning network should be started from local to national level.

• Teaching materials, including text books should be reviewed and revised to promote self-esteem of women and girls through positive self images highlighting women’s/girls role in society, including in decision making, development, culture, other social and economic endeavours.

• Active networks of girls and women, which increasingly should include boys & men, should meet and exchange their experiences and encourage new groups/networks in areas where they do not exist and through this strategy empower the girls/women movement nationally.

7.7 Policy for Adolescent Girls and Boys

• The government and other organizations should have a policy and programmes focussing on adolescence.

• Sexual and reproductive health education should be introduced into schools from age 8-9 years i.e. well prior to puberty.

• Groups should be set up by NGOs and INGOs for married adolescent girls who are isolated by all.

7.8 Research Recommendation

i. To understand why some of the girls are more fully able to exercise their rights in certain areas.

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**Appendix 1**
INTERVIEW RESPONSES FROM FOUR CHILDREN'S GROUPS IN SURKHET (SEPTEMBER 22-24TH), CONCERNING 'THE DIFFICULTIES GIRLS ARE FACING'.

PRODUCED FOR THE SCF (UK) REGIONAL SEMINAR VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS, KATHMANDU, NEPAL, OCTOBER 1998.

(Parts of the group interviews with girls were filmed; those responses that were are asterisked.)

First Group Interview.

Interview with Brahman/Chhetri and Magar Girls’ Group at Ramghat, (6 Brahman/Chhetri & 2 Magar Girls).

1. What are your feelings at being a daughter?
   - We are not happy because of discrimination, because of hard work and because of our being married early.*
   - Society does not promote girls’ education.*
   - Parents will sell their land to educate sons but not for us, as on marriage we leave home.*
   - Some brothers support us in receiving education others oppose it.*
   - In the morning parents make their sons do homework but send daughters to fetch water.*
   - Discrimination between son and daughter.
   - Forced to stay at home and cannot study properly.
   - Society raises questions when a girl walks or talks with boys. Even if a girl talks with their own relative boys then the villagers says that is a love situation. This is a society problem not a family problem.
   - If they want to finish their school work, parents and their brothers will scold them unless they have completed their house work.
   - They don't like being a daughter because parents will marry them at an early age i.e. from 13 year old.

2. What are the good things in your life?
   - Discrimination is lessening and so more girls are studying.*
   - Some parents are insisting we learn new things.*
   - My parents insist that I stand on my own feet.*
   - Illiterate parents have given both sons and daughters rights of education.
   - Before daughters didn’t receive any education but now they are receiving education.
   - If they get a chance to further their education in future they will be happy.
   - Some parents are becoming literate so they promote their daughters education.
   - Now their brothers are helping them in their house work.
3. What are the difficulties for girls?

- We have a heavy workload and suffer from early marriage.*
- I am beaten at home.*
- Neighbours become jealous when we study and tell our parents we will be spoilt.*
- There is a rape problem.*
- People say if we keep going to groups like this one we may become prostitutes.*
- Work is the main difficulty for them.
- One girl committed suicide because her parents scolded her after listening to the neighbours saying she had been prostitute.
- Girls feel insecure.

4. What are the good things daughters are receiving in the village?

- Discrimination decreasing so girls are starting to read.*
- I am happy as I am receiving love and affection, which is more important than money.*
- Receiving education.
- Can finish their school work on time.
- No discrimination between sons and daughters.

5. How is your life different from that of boys?

- We are sent to others houses on marriage but boys are not.*
- Sons get the paternal property we do not.*
- After SLC boys go to college but we are married.*
- Sons are sent to boarding school but daughters to government schools.*
- Daughters get scolded by their parents when they fail in exams but sons don't get it as much as the daughters.

6. Who do you love the most at home?

- Most of them said mother. But some said father.

7. How do boys, man and parents behave towards girls?

- Sometimes our brothers tell our parents it is time we were married.*
- If the daughter becomes 13 year old, brothers say their time has come to marry and prepare for it.
- They hate political leaders because they cheat the innocent people.

8. What are the problems they are facing when fighting and quarrelling happens in their village?

- There is a lot of quarrelling between our parents.*
- Our parents quarrelling affects us emotionally.*
- I know a father who when drunk tore up his son’s school books.*
• When a father and mother fight and quarrel we have problems in studying.
• Having an alcoholic father who is always quarrelling at home.
• Because of property brothers fight with their sisters saying they can't get it and threatening them to marry as soon as possible. (In our law there is a rule that an unmarried daughter can get half father's property.) This is how brothers get dishonest.
• Because of poverty poor families are always fighting, because no one can fulfil their wishes.

9. How do you cope with or solve the problem of fighting?

• We need to raise public awareness about the harm done by constant quarrelling.*
• Women neighbours and other mothers go and stop the fighting.

10. What problems are you facing when you go to school, collect water, cut grass and go to festivals?

• Some people are selling girls in Dasrathpur.*
• Some men are marrying girls to sell them.*
• Back biting from boys. Boys speak bad words using bad language.
• One 14 year old boy raped a 4 year old girl at Ramghat, Ward No. 10. The boy who raped has not yet him punished. One policeman himself raped a pregnant woman. If nothing is done to stop this growing then others will not be deterred.
• Because of the growing rape problem parents won't allow their daughters to go out.

11. What is your aim in life?

• Study a lot and be a social worker.
• They want to stop this conservative culture happening in their village.
• Most of them want to be a nurse or a teacher.
• One girl gave as an example the late Pasang Lhama Sherpa, who was the first lady to climb Mt. Everest in Nepal; she said how much she admired her confidence.

12. When do girls become adults?

• At the time of menstruation.
• Over 18 years and under 25 years.
• With physical body development.

13. At what age do you want to marry?

• Over 21 below 25 year old.
• Most of them said when childhood is finished.

14. What should be your husband’s age?
• Between 21 - 25.
• Three years older than his wife.
• Some like to have a husband of 25 or 26 year old.

15. What are you expecting from your future husband?

• Give equal rights to children.
• Not to be a drunkard.
• When wives ask husbands to do sensible things they should do them.
• Love them, take care of the family.
• Everybody knows that husbands and wives are two wheels of one cart, so must be equal in the work that they do.

16. How can you improve your village for girls?

• The problem of discrimination between sons and daughters still exists and must be changed.
• Getting scolded from their parents must be stopped.
• Mostly daughters have to do housework not sons; this must be changed.
• The rape problem in the villages must be tackled.
• They want to get equal preference in every field of society. However, because of superstitions and the conservative culture, daughters are having a very bad time. This
  • needs to be changed.
• Where girls see there are not receiving equal rights, they need to raise public awareness in front of their village.

Second Group Interview.

Interview with Brahman/Chhetri and KDS Boys’ Group from Ramghat, Ward No. 1 -6, Aged 11-17 Years Old (20 Boys).

1. What are your feelings at being a son?

• Sons help their fathers.
• A son will receive his father’s property.
• He doesn't like to migrate for work because he will depart from his family.
• They dislike those men who drink, play cards and don't help in the family.

2. What would be your feeling if you were a daughter?

• They will be happy if they will be the only daughter in a home with many brothers.
• Would hate it if their family sell them for prostitution.
• They said boys can choose many wives but a girl can't.
• Girls are much more backward than boys.
3. What are the happiest thoughts in your life?

- They will receive father's property.
- They receive parents love and affection.
- Being a son they can go anywhere, no questions arise when they are going.
- Parents give them better education.

4. What are the difficulties for girls?

- Daughters cannot get better education than sons. Sons can get education at a boarding school but daughters just sit at home and do house work.
- It would be nice if parents let their daughters study the same as boys.
- They are sold for prostitution.
- Cannot get love and affection from parents.
- Marriage at an early age.
- Brothers don't take care of their sisters, because they will take some of their property as dowry.
- Daughters have to go to their husband's home one day, so she has to learn many things for home-making rather than to read and write.
- Girls must do the housework but sons could also if they wished help their sisters i.e. cut grass, graze cows, sheep, etc.

5. What are the good things daughters are receiving in the village?

- Parents are giving daughters education from an early age.
- Receiving love and affection from parents.

6. How is your life different from that of girls?

- Daughters want to get a job but the parents don't let them do so, while there no restrictions for sons.
- In sports also it is mostly boys who are accomplished.
- Daughters housework is much more than sons. Parents don't allow sons to do much housework.
- Mostly girls run away or do flying marriage because of hard work in their own home.
- Parents lock sons in their room if they fail in the exams and yet love them and give them food to eat but with girls they don't care.
- If the girls do not finish their school work on time, they get scolded by their teacher. This is because their parents won't allow girls to finish their school work unless they have finished their house work.
- Seeing many modern things like cosmetics and city areas, girls like to marry a rich person.

7. How do boys, men and parents behave towards daughters?

- Daughters are not getting legal rights i.e. property from family.
- Both the girls and boys tease each other like whistling and clapping.
Girls used to wear short minis and tight dresses, so the problem of teasing.

8. What are the problems they are facing when fighting and quarrelling happens in the village?

- Quarrelling mostly concerns the property problem.
- Fathers who drink - beat and scold their daughters.
- Because of liquor fathers beat mothers.
- If they go and try to stop their parents quarrel, their father scolds them not to bother in their affairs saying you are very small and don't know about these matters.
- Because of no laws in the village, one man has three wives and naturally fighting will take place.

9. How do you cope with or solve the problem of fighting?

- Through neighbours, and the husbands and wives themselves.
- The problem of fighting mostly occurs as a result of drinking and gambling.
- Go to their parents and tell them the problem children are facing, while their parents quarrel at home.
- Public awareness.

10. What problems are daughters facing when they go out (to school collect water, cut grass and go to festivals)?

- Boys tease them; this depends upon girls' behaviour.
- Girls have to work in the house, so they can't get time to go to school early in the morning.

11. What is your aim in life?

- Want to study hard.
- To be a social worker.
- To be teacher.
- Want to teach his fellow villagers to be more educated.
- Want to join the army.

12. When do boys become adult?

- After 20 - 25 year old.
- With different voice and weight.

13. At what age would you like to marry?

- 22 - 23 year old.
- When he can stand on his feet.
- First wants to obtain a nice job and earn money, and then marry.
15. What are you expecting from your future wife?

- To be well educated.

16. Are girls receiving equal rights as boys or not?

- No, because their husband is chosen for them. The girls must marry the man who her parents have chosen, even though she doesn't want to.

17. How can you improve your village for girls?

- By teaching illiterate parents to give a chance to their daughters to study as their sons are doing.
- There must be equality between sons and daughters.
- Stop the drinking of alcohol and gambling.
- Drinks companies must know that they are spoiling their own country and must stop producing alcohol.
- Girls must be educated.
- They can stop alcohol problem by showing street dramas.

Third Group Interview.

Interview with Tharu Girls’ Group at Ghusra Village, Aged 18-20 Years Old (16 Girls).

1. What are your feelings at being a daughter?

- I am not at all happy being a daughter.*
- I can’t do what I want to do.*
- I can’t go out like boys.*
- If a son doesn’t want to go to school his parents force him, if a girl doesn’t they are happy, because she can do more housework.*
- I can’t go to the cinema and learn new things.*
- Girls are keen to go to school but can’t step inside.
- Daughters are neglected in their village.
- Parents don't allow them to go outside.
- Most sons are encouraged to study but it is more difficult for daughters.
- We have no choice but to be happy being a daughter.
- Boys pass the S.L.C. (School Leaving Certificate) exam but girls often can't even see the school books.

2. What are the good things in your life?

- She would like to be a son rather than a daughter.
- They will be happy at the Dashain and Tihar festivals.
- Not happy at being a daughter because society treats them as a lower caste and therefore less important.
3. What are the difficulties for girls?

- Life for a boy is full of joy while that of a girl it is full of sorrow.*
- If boys make a mistake often they are not beaten but girls are beaten even without mistakes.*
- She wants to do various things but her parents won't let her do them, e.g. dress up, roaming etc.
- If they want to go anywhere they have to ask their parents permission but sons can go anywhere without permission.
- Sons can go to watch films in the cinema hall and will learn many things but daughters can't go to watch films and can't learn good things!

4. What are the good things daughters are receiving in the village?

- My parents do not restrict me.*
- Receiving education.
- One girl said her parents let her go anywhere, without restriction. Her mother gives her freedom and lets her to do many activities. As a result of being educated she can now write a letter.

5. How is your life different from that of boys?

- Points about education similar to those already given above.
- She can't even get nice food to eat as her brother is given it.
- If a girl wants to develop herself neighbours negative comments often prevent this.
- They get scolded by parents but not get beaten because they have grown up.
- Mostly get scolded and beaten by their mother.

6. Who do love you the most at home?

- Mostly mother rather than father.

7. How do boys, men and parents behave towards you?

- Parents teach us good things but men attempt to abuse us.*
- Boys threw small stones and teased me using bad words.
- Boys tease them.
- If the girls are walking with their relative's brothers, neighbours and other people will say that they have spoilt their life and are making many boy friends without doing any work.

8. What are the problems they are facing when fighting and quarrelling happens in the village?

- One girl in the village went to the city for work and earned a lot of money. She returned home with this money and nice dresses but her sister-in-law became jealous and said to her mother-in-law, 'Why does
your daughter only wear nice dresses and not me". As a result of this there was quarrelling and fighting in the home. The daughter was unable to tolerate it and got upset and committed suicide by hanging herself in her home.*

• If wives stop making alcohol they will be beaten.*
• Husbands and wives fight and quarrel with each other after drinking and gambling.

9. How do you cope with or solve the problem of fighting?

• If the quarrelling is happening in one home they can go and try to make them understand the harm it is doing to children.
• The community women should go and stop the fighting.

10. What problems are you facing when you go out (to school, collect water, cut grass and go to festivals)?

• A group of us were stopped by drunk men and had to run away.*
• It is better to walk with a group of women then you are not teased.*
• They mostly get teasing from drunk men when they go to festivals.
• They will go with a group of women and boys can't do anything to them.
• One example: When I was returning home, a group of boys gathered and blocked my way because I am teaching Karate to girls at school. The boys don't like the fact that I am developing myself and other girls, and say I am trying to get above my caste. The boys said that I am being over-smart but I replied 'Tell me what I have done wrong. You are many while I am alone. What are you going to do to me? But remember I know you and I can also cause trouble for you.' This confrontation also happened on two following occasions explained all these things to my karate teacher, who felt that I should continue teaching the course. However, because of the threatening by those boys and my fear I have stopped teaching Karate at the school but I would like to continue it.*

11. What is your aim in life?

• Most want to be nurses.
• They first want to be well educated and then to have a nice job.
• Most of them seem not to have thought about this before.

12. When do girls become adult?

• After 17 and 18 years old.

13. At what age do you want to marry?

• Minimum of 18 years old.
• 30 years old.
14. What should be your husband’s age?

- 28 year old.
- If husband’s age will be lower than the girl’s, the husband may marry another wife, so they want to have a husband older than them.

15. What are you expecting from your future husband?

- Not drinking alcohol, not gambling.*
- Husband must listen to the wife.*
- Not marry others.*
- We must divide the jobs equally.*
- Nice person.
- Helpful in all activities.
- Not adopt bad habits.
- Help in housework.
- Making a happy family by doing family planning. Not having many children.
- Love and care for wife and children.
- They don't want to have an ordinary husband.

16. How will girls contribute to making a happy family?

- By being well educated.
- Standing on her own feet.
- She wants to have equal property as sons are getting.
- She wants to work as males do.

17. How do you want to improve the situation of girls in your village?

- The daughter must have an equal share of the paternal property and this would give us the confidence to do equal work.*
- To stop the problem for daughters, sons also must help them in housework.
- As boys can go anywhere, similarly girls also want to have rights to do so. Not just sitting in the home as in a prison.
- Equality of son and daughter; no discrimination.

Brief Discussion with Tharu Mothers and Elected Women Members (4).

1. What are your suggestions as to how your daughters should develop their life?

- Now daughters are receiving equal education unlike before.
- Daughters must read and get a job.
- Even a daughter can show her inner power in front of all the people by doing constructive things and learning many things.
• By being well educated she can be a more fulfilled person and also develop herself.
• Society is not good. There are many talkative women in the village who spoil their society or village by what they say. Because of negative attitudes daughters are not receiving good education and equality.

Fourth Group Interview.

Interview with KDS Girls’ Group at Ramghat, 11-17 years old (10 girls).

[KDS stands for - Kami (Blacksmith), Damai (Tailor) and Sharki (Shoemaker), however, only Kami and Damai were interviewed on this occasion.]

1. What are your feelings at being a daughter?

• I don’t like being a daughter as we are discriminated against.*
• I am not happy as a daughter because my parents are less interested in my education and make me work hard.*
• When they come late from school they get scolded by their parents.*
• Parents won't allow them to go to school.
• If she were a son she would have a better education.
• They have to face all the problems. Even when girls do the house work in the right way they still get scolded.

2. What are the happiest memories in your life?

• None of them mentioned any.

3. What are the difficulties for girls?

• I wish to be independent and continue my studies but my parents are forcing me to marry.*
• When I make suggestions to my parents they tell me I am too young to do so.*
• My sister was married at 14 years old and appealed to the school to stop it but to no avail.*
• When there is a festival in the village I can’t go; parents only send their sons to attend.*
• If a girl is not married by 18-20 years she becomes a topic of conversation and people start to suspect that she is promiscuous.*
• If they talk with boys, they get beaten and scolded by parents.
• Parents let them marry at an early age.
• Many of them are being told about their future marriage by their parents but they are fighting with their parents for this not to happen. (One girl was crying when relating this.)
• They have to work hard.
• In the village, women neighbours used to say bad things about other daughters, so their parents scolded them when they returned home and frightened them by saying they would marry them early.
• There is a strong pressure on daughters from their parents to get married.

4. What are the good things daughters are receiving in the village?
• Most are receiving some education.
• One girl's brother doesn't want to study but his parents scold him saying he must study. While she wants to study but her parents are reluctant for her to go to school.

5. How is your life different from that of boys?
• When there is a festival in the village I can't go; parents only send their sons to attend.*
• If a girl is not married by 18-20 years she then becomes a topic of conversation and people start to suspect that she is promiscuous.*
• Daughters must go to their husbands home; their life is now work and having babies.*
• Boys lives, unlike ours, are full of enjoyment and there are few pressures on them.*
• Sons are having an easy life.
• If she doesn't work in her husband's house she will be scolded and not given food to eat.
• Small children often get scolded and beaten by their mothers. Mostly fathers beat them if they don't cut the grass or come late from school.

6. Who loves you the most at home?
• No one loves me, only my aunt.*
• Most of them said their mother.

7. How do boys, men and parents behave towards you?
• Boys often tease us saying such things as, 'You are 15-16 years old but still in class 4-5'*. *
• The upper caste tease them saying they are KDS.

8. What problems are you facing when fighting and quarrelling happens in the village?
• Once my father and grand-father quarreled and we were kicked out from home.*
• Once when my father was drunk he hit a teacher.*
• Once when there was a dispute political leaders prevented us from making representations to the police.*
• My father scolded all of us when he was drunk.*
• If a mother has many daughters and no son the husband takes another wife.*
• A first wife who had many daughters and no son- the husband then takes another wife.*
• A first wife who had many daughters was thrown out and later changed her religion.*
• I only want one child and that should be a girl.*
• I want the production and consumption of alcohol banned in the village.*
• Also adults should not smoke in the home as they cough all night and keep us awake if we ask them to stop smoking they scold us.*
• Members of higher castes and political leaders told us not to go to school but to do housework, saying then everyone will love you.*
• Political parties also don't let them speak in front of villagers because they are KDS.
• If they want to speak about girls rights, nobody listens to them.

9. How do you cope with or solve the problem of fighting?

• Alcohol must be banned from village.
• Social workers must go where there is fighting and stop it.

10. To whom do you express your feelings?

• We express our feelings to our friends.*
• If they express their feelings to parents they scold them.
• One 11 year old girl said she doesn't express her feelings to anyone.

11. What problems are you facing when you go to school, collect water, cut grass and go to festivals?

• The upper castes tease and bully us.*
• Brahman and Chhetri won't let us touch their drinking water.*
• People of our caste, who have a close connection with Chhetris look down on us.*
• In Jatras and festivals daughters can't go, only sons can go.
• Higher castes used to frighten her by saying not to go to school simply stay at home and do house work.

12. What is your aim in life?

• A 11 year old girl wants to be a doctor if her parents let her study. Another also wants to be a doctor but can't because of coming from a poor family.
• Most of them want to be social workers and to teach the illiterate mothers by saying girls must have rights to study and must stand on their own feet.
• To help the village women.
13. When do girls become adults?

- Some said after 20 years.
- Most of them said 15 - 20 years.
- Most of them want to stay as a small child and don't want to grow up, because then they do not have to worry about anything i.e. marriage and work. At a young age they can do anything and boys also don't tease them.
- Once they will grow up they have to worry much about their family and themselves.
- One said when she is grown up her parents will force her to marry at a young age and she will have to worry about being a woman.

14. At what age do you want to marry?

- Mostly above 20 years old.

15. What should be your husband’s age?

- 23 years old or 24 years old.

16. Why you want to have your husband older than you?

- Because an older husband will love them.
- He will take care and look after the family and love her.
- Most of them don't want to marry a younger husband because if they get pregnant they will be older and their husband will bring another wife and not even love them.

17. How do you want to improve the situation of girls in your village?

- I want to make mothers aware of the importance of sending their daughters to school.*
- I would like to be a child under 10 years of age as then there are no tensions.*
- Girls are often forced to marry early against their will.*
- Once a girl gets married she has many more responsibilities.*
- If you marry a younger husband they will eventually look for a younger wife.*
- Recently in our village a 4 years old girl was raped by a 14 years old boy.*
- Children in the community must go to all the houses and talk to parents saying, ‘You must give equality to both sons and daughters and not practice any discrimination’.
- Older children must go to their village and must teach non-discriminatory attitudes and about good morals, mostly to the illiterate parents. Peer education must be introduced. Equal preference in every field of society including education should be given to girls.
- Daughters need to do equal work with sons which will therefore mean less work!
18. What are you expecting from your future husband?

- I want my husband not to drink, not to gamble and not to take a second wife.*
- Listen to his wife and respect her.
- Help wife in every step on her way.
- Well educated and planning carefully for the future.
- No alcohol and gambling. A job holder.
- Not to marry another.
- Equal share and help in work i.e. in the housework.

19. What are your unhappy feelings?

- I am sad that my parents don't let me attend the children’s group.*
- I am unhappy because I am not allowed to join groups and practice my talents within cultural programmes.*
- If I were a boy I would travel and see new places.*
- They are only getting limited education.
- One of the girl’s is being forced to marry by her parents.
- Parents don’t give equal education to them.
- They are unhappy at being a daughter.
- Some mothers told them not to study.
- Most of them would like to be sons.
- Brahman and Chhetri suppress KDS families.
- They are suffering being poor.

INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS AND GIRLS’ BROTHERS FOR THE FILM ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDES AND RESPONSES ON VIOLENCE/DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GIRLS

(November 2, 1998, Surkhet, Nepal)

1. Interview with Brahman/Chhetri Parents and Brothers.

How are boys and girls treated differently?

- Girls are discriminated against from birth, while few work demands are made of boys.
- Parents are always waiting for the birth of their first son.
- Our society has a negative attitude towards daughters.
- Our limitations as mothers often leads to our daughter not fulfilling their potential.
- The same education and an equal share of the property should be given to them.
- We should be sensitive towards what our daughters say.

Comments after watching the video of their children being interviewed about Violence against Girls.
• What our daughters have said both shows us our mistakes and makes us realise that we should do things differently.

Can we show this film elsewhere?
• Yes, we should show it nation wide.

Other Comments
• Our daughters express what they see in our villages.
• We should not blame our daughters for failing exams when we make so many work demands of them.
• It’s worth showing this film to others.

2. Interview with Tharu Parents.
• When Tharu girls are young they are brighter than Brahman/Chhetris and go regularly to primary school. But with adolescence they have an increased work load and often drop out of school, (VDC Chairperson).
• In our village if a daughter remains unmarried neighbours will outspokenly criticise her and her parents.
• I give my daughter freedom and as a result our neighbour criticise both her and me.
• We Tharu are poor and have not been able to afford schooling but now we realise the importance of education.
• When girls reach puberty they should go to a husband.
• There should be a law which ensures that parental property is divided equally between daughters and sons.

Comments after watching the video of their children being interviewed about Violence against Girls.

Is what your daughter said, true?
• Yes, they describe our village and home situation.

Do you give us permission to show this film elsewhere?
• Yes.

Other Comments
• We parents did not know the level of discrimination between sons and daughters but from this film we realise how large it is, (VDC Chairperson)

3. Interview with Kami/Damai Parents
• We, as mothers, should not pass down the same bad experiences we suffered to our daughters.
• There is no difference between sons and daughters, in fact the daughters are more sincere than the sons.

Tell me about the boys?

• The boys do not listen to what we say.
• Remembering our bad experience we do not want our daughters to marry but to be independent.
• Because we mothers were uneducated our husbands dominated us, so, if our daughters obtain education this should not happen.
• We are afraid that our daughters may become involved in bad activities.
• The honour of our families depends much more on the behaviour of our daughters than of our sons.
• We are afraid of our daughters being sexually harassed.
• We hope our daughter will become independent.

Comments after watching the video of their children being interviewed about Violence against Girls.

• We, mothers, have grown up discriminated against as has been the tradition.
• If our daughters made a mistake we did not tolerate it but if it was our sons we ignored it. Now we realise our mistake.

Do you give us permission to show this film elsewhere?

• Yes.

Other Comments

• We need more programmes for girls.
• If fathers are beginning to think positively about daughters I must think even more positively, (a mother).

Appendix 2

MARRIED ADOLESCENT GIRLS’ STORIES

"My parents married me to a man in Lekh (hill region, not like Ramghat). It is a precipitous place, I had to do very hard work, but my parents-in-law didn’t have good feelings and didn’t recognise my hard work. So I am very sad. They sent my husband to India and told him to come back home after I have married another man. Before he went to India, I returned to maiti, but my husband beat me, so I don’t like to go his house even though he will come to take me. I want to go to school. If I go to school, his family doesn’t feel good and says go to your mother’s home."
---- Kami girl, 14 years old

"I did marry due to my father’s pressure. I am a facilitator and am involved in a children’s group. I gave birth to a son, yet my family members encouraged me to go to school. Now I would like to join school in grade nine. I might face the same problems like other friends, but I am a facilitator and I study more than others do. So my husband’s family members respect me."

---- Kami girl, 17 years old

Rama is 17 years old, married three years ago. She did not get a school education, but completed non-formal education, which was supported by WEEDS. She married with a man who already had a wife and children. The husband ran way to India without asking her. He does not send letters or money at all. She stays at her mother’s home. Her brothers and their wives complain a lot, but she has nowhere to go. She is very sad and does not go to her husband’s house; it is quite far from the village in the next district, called Dailekh. She does not hope to stay together with her husband. At the present, she has a two-year old son and no plans for another baby. In her mother’s home, her father, brothers and their wives ask her to go the her husband’s house, but her mother and younger sisters love her.

Shilu is 18 years old, married one year ago. Her mother’s home is in another village. Their marriage was interesting. Her husband came to propose the marriage, but at the same time they ran way and came to the husband's house. Now she is nine months pregnant and her husband has gone to India. Her family members are doing well. She has not yet faced much difficulties. Sometimes they allow her to go to her mother's home for about one week. She did not get a school education, but she completed a non-formal education programme.

Appendix 3

INDIVIDUAL AND THEIR PEERS’ CASE STUDIES

Reena, (individual, Chhetri, peer of two girls, one is Sara, see next page)

Reena is 15 years old studying in grade 9 at the village school. Her mother ran away with another man when she was one and half years old. Actually she did not know why her mother left her father. She has a stepmother. Her stepmother has two sons and three daughters.

She gets up early in the morning at 5 a.m. and fetches water, firewood, and fodder and cooks food. This procedure repeats itself in evening until 10 p.m. She has free time from 10 am to 4 pm for school. In the evening after completing house hold activities, she does school work and studies at home.
She becomes sad and her heart is very painful when her step-mother talks about her mother’s behaviour, that she enjoyed many men, and scolds Reena that she will go the same way and also brings up the issue of marriage. Her step-mother discriminates in food, clothing and she does not feel her step-mother loves her. She dreams sometimes how different her life might be if she had her own mother.

Reena knows that her grandmother loves her very much and her uncles also love her. Her relatives are worried that she is faced with difficulties due to her stepmother. She continues going to school because of her grandmother, father and other relatives.

Despite her hard work and painful life, she still struggles to be a success in school. Out of 40 students in grade 9, she got 6th position, which is very encouraging to her. She is very worried about grades 9 and 10 because of the heavy workload at home. She is the best peer of two other girls sharing their feelings and supporting each other.

Actually, she shared her feelings with these girls who have had similar experiences and she thinks it is their life-giving strategy. The adolescent girls chose her because they think she has a ‘caged life’. All of her friends are very supportive of her and she is in a children’s group as well.

She has one peer who studies in the same grade and same school. She and her peer are school friends from a very young age. Their houses are in the same village. Reena gets lots of encouragement from her peer.

**Sara (individual, Chhetri, befriended by Reena)**

Reena is Sara’s peer, but Sara is not Reena’s peer. Sara is 11 years old and studying in the village school in grade 4. Her mother is not with her father. She ran way with another man two years ago. Her father has been in India for the last two months. She has two younger brothers of eight and five years of age. They both are in school.

She has to do all household activities and take care of her two small brothers. Her grandmother is 60 years old and cannot do anything. In the morning, she always goes to school with her brother. The younger brothers help her to carry out some household activities. She learned how to do the household activities at very early age from her mother.

She hopes to continue her and her younger brothers’ education, but she has lot of problems such as having no money to buy stationary, having to complete all the household activities, looking after her brothers. She hides her deepest memories of her mother and her inner wishes. She knows she cannot study many more years in the school because of the workload, and poverty is waiting around the corner to stop her.

She is not allowed to go see television in Ramghat Bazaar, or to see a marriage ceremony at night. This is because last year at a marriage ceremony
in the village, a boy caught a 14 year old girl who studies in grade 4, and took her to his house.

She feels that creating a climate of confidence is most important to her, which she has gained from her peer. She has been successful in her struggles due to her peer, Reena, who counsels her, shares her feelings, gives example of her own, and encourages her to continue her education although there is an age difference. Due to Reena’s morale support and encouragement, she can tolerate things and take life more easily.

She is waiting for when her father will return from India. He sent a letter but she was not allowed to read it by her ‘brother’ (grandmother’s daughter’s son who stays with them; cousin). Her father’s family is in the village, but no one loves her except her younger uncle. Sometimes her uncle gives her money and encourages her education. Her younger uncle is studying for a Bachelor’s at the education faculty in Surkhet campus. When her uncle comes to the village he helps her carry out her work. She looks very strong and mature though she is just 11 years old.

She was happy at the age of 4 to 5 years. She has no friend to play with and no time as well. She is very sad as she is lacking her parents’ love and affection. But she loves her brothers very much and they love her.

**Ritu (individual, Chhetri)**

Ritu is 16 years old and she is not in school. She dropped school at grade 3 because her mother became frequently sick. Her father works as a labourer; her elder brother has gone to India. Her sister-in-law (brother's wife) also stays at maiti due to the heavy workload. She has other two younger siblings, one sister and one brother. She is very sad because she is not in school and because she can not visit anywhere due to her work burden.

Though she is not in school, she is attending a legal and basic literacy class. She is also in a children’s group, which she feels is good to join. At least there she can meet friends and her parents are supportive of her participating.

She has a best peer from a lower caste who helps her with her household activities. They go together to the forest to collect fodder; and sometimes elsewhere. They share their feelings with each other. Although her peer is from a lower caste and studies at the school, they like each other and have become peers. Her family members do not object to their relationship. Their houses are very close to each other and if they don’t see each other Ritu feels lonely as does her peer. The reasons for making a peer are to get support in each and every activity and to maintain confidentiality.

**Neeta (individual, Chhetri)**

Neeta is 14 years old and studies in grade 5 in Ramghat village. She has a mother and one sister, but they do not live with her. Her mother is 50 years old and lives in another district called Dailekh. She does not know who her
father is. Because her father’s identity is unknown and she has no brother, she feels that everyone insults and hates her and her mother.

For the last two years, she has been looking after ten blind children, who are studying in Ramghat school. She gets 200 Rs per month. Her food, school uniform and accommodation are managed by the school. Other school children insult her by saying that because of insufficient food, she works with blind children. She has no time to study at home due to looking after these children. In the morning and evening, she takes care of everything, including cooking, for the children. In the afternoons, she goes to school. She only has 1 to 2 hours at night for her own school work.

Her main worry is that her mother is quite old and she can’t stay with her mother due to her economic condition. She has various interests, but again due to being poor, everything is like a dream to her. She likes to go to children’s groups, but it is difficult to find the time to go anywhere. Sometimes, she can’t even take proper food. She has to stay in the same room with the blind children, which does not make her feel very secure.

One day she went Chhinchu to see Mela (a festival) with a friend, a man caught her hand. She immediately hit him with her sandal and asked why he did it.

She has one peer, together they share problems and counsel each other. They both are in the same grade in the same school. Her friend helps her buy stationary when she doesn’t have any money. Her aspirations are to continue her education as much as she can and stand on her own feet.

Rita (individual, Kami, also peer of Meera)

She is 15 years old and studying in grade 8. She is the chairperson of Laligurans children’s group.

She is lucky to be getting an education, whereas her elder sisters have not. She has one brother and five sisters. Her elder sisters are already married.

She does normal house hold activities, yet her parents allow time to study at home, encourage her to go to the children’s group, and encourage her to do street drama and sing and dance through the cultural forum. She plans to marry once she becomes independent and wants to continue studying while her parents support her.

She sees one of the main barriers to girls’ development is that adults neither listen nor trust children, especially girls. In the village, adults don’t allow girls to attend forest user’s committee meetings. It is her feeling that her parents are powerless before others who are from a higher caste. The powerful people dominate meetings.

Her peer is Meera, who currently studies in a different school, though before they were in the same school. They both are from same village. They both are
very interested in showing cultural programmes that illustrate discrimination against girls and castes. They succeeded in convincing the parents of one friend to support regular schooling. When Rita was in grade 7, the school teacher scolded her for not having paid the full amount. She asked that she be allowed to bring the money the next day, but teacher’s expression was very bad. So her peer supported her by giving 5 Rs to complete payment (at that time they studied in the same school).

Meera (peer of Kami)

She is 14 years old, studying in grade 6. She is one of the girls who attended in the Violence Against Girls seminar in Kathmandu from 16 to 20 Oct 1998. She is also one of the girls who seemed very happy at being a daughter from the Kami/Damai adolescent girls’ discussion group. While making the film four months ago, she reported that she was quite unhappy for being a daughter because her parents were forcing her into marriage. But now her parents have realized and did not in the end force her to marry. According to her, the change came after the film interviewer showed her parents the film and discussed the issues with them.

She is the younger daughter. Her brother and his wife love her and encourage her to study. She is in a children’s group and is the chairperson of the cultural forum. She can’t tolerate any discrimination exercised by the upper castes. One example of such discrimination is that her father is the chairperson of the forest user’s committee, but the upper caste people dominate him during meetings. One day she attended a meeting and asked them why they speak in such a way as the committee’s management is better than before. After she spoke, the upper caste people were angry with her and discouraged her from attending meetings. After that, she exclaimed, ‘You people don’t know child rights and you don’t allow us to speak out!’.

She hopes to continue her education and get employment, if possible. She plans to marry after 25 years. She wants to do social work, especially showing cultural programmes against the difficulties faced by girls. She is afraid there may be barriers from society to her fulfilling her hopes.

She is Rita’s peer, and Rita is her peer. They share each other’s feelings and help each other buy stationary when necessary. They also help each other do household activities. They are in the same children’s group.

Ashmita (individual, Tharu)

Ashmita is 17 years old. She passed grade 6 and then discontinued her education due to poor economic conditions at home. Her parents are very old and cannot do anything, so she dropped out of school. She earns money by working in others’ fields and still looks after her whole family. She has two younger brothers, who are studying in grades 7 and 4. Her elder sister is married, but is close to the village. Her sister helps to carry out the day to day household activities.
She is unhappy because she could not continue her education, but in another sense, she is happy because her brothers are able to attend school on her earnings. She looks after her parents and they are quite supportive of her. She is very happy when she gets time to play with a friend, have time to sit together, or go to see a cultural program.

The difficulties she faces with the heavy workload and scarcity of money are barrier to her mobility. She expects to get involved in a small job, if it is possible. She is in a girls’ group, which was formed after legal literacy. She has one peer from the same caste, though the peer is from a different place and is a different age. She has never been to school, but she attended a legal literacy class. She is the best peer although they haven’t known each other very long. Her peer is very supportive if Ashmita does not know the lesson or if she missed a literacy class. She was also supportive when Ashmita was obtaining her citizenship certificate. They both encourage and support each other in times of difficulties. She thinks it would be difficult to survive without her peer.

**Seema (individual, and peer to Mimmi, Tharu)**

Seema is 18 years old and studying in grade 10. She also participated in the Violence Against Girls seminar in Kathmandu. She stays with her mother, father, one younger brother and one younger sister. Her father is quite old and ill, undergoing tuberculosis treatment. She helped him to get treatment. She has a step-mother, who has two sons older than Seema.

Despite other difficulties, such as workload, mobility restriction is her most specific problem.

One day she and her elder brother argued, as her step-brothers and mother were quite jealous of her education, and her elder brother beat her. She could not tolerate it and thought about suicide. Later on, she thought of her mother and younger brother and sister and came to stay instead with her friend in Birendranagar. Her friend is from a lower caste and was always helpful in karate class though she is older than Seema. One day, she and her friend went to the market and saw a man from Seema’s village. He asked her to return to her house and said that everyone was searching for her. Seema returned to her house and discussed with her mother that it would be better to separate from her elder brother otherwise she couldn’t continue her life. Per her suggestion, her family did separate from the elder brother and she has not faced further problems from him.

Her next frustration is that she has not been able to pass her exams for two years due to those tensions. After she failed the second time, she was so depressed that she stayed in the house for seven days and did not go outside. She did not want to return to the village school, so she is continuing her exams for grade 10 in Dailekh district.
She learned karate for two and a half years, though the course goes for five years. The reason she stopped the lessons was higher caste men were jealous of her and threatened her.

Despite her difficulties, she became a facilitator for an adult literacy and out-of-school education program for 12 months. Through this position, her confidence developed and she learned many new things.

She hopes to continue doing social work and wants her brother and sister to continue studying, so that they will not face such difficulties. Her mother allows her freedom, and as a result the neighbours criticise both her and her mother.

She has one peer from the same village who also participated in the Kathmandu workshop. They share each other’s feelings

Mimmi (peer to Seema)

Mimmi is 18 years old and has passed grade 9. She is now doing private examination for grade 10, as she could not attend school regularly due to her economic condition. She is not happy to be a daughter because her father sends her brother to school although he failed many times. Yet she failed only one time and her father discontinued her schooling.

She worked as a housemaid in a house belonging to the British Army and in Banijya Bank, but her employers did not behave in a good way.

Recently, she has had lower abdominal pain and a thick white discharge, so she went to the health post, where they did a blood test and gave her some medicine. But one of the men started a rumour in her village that she has HIV/AIDS and he said that all the girls in the village are not good.

Because of this rumour, Mimmi is very worried about her life. The man who said things is the landlord of the village, so he can say what he likes. But Mimmi thinks it has a very negative effect on all the girls and on her.

She is the peer of Seema, and Seema is her peer too. They both encourage and support each other in the time of difficulties. Without her peer, she feels it would be difficult to survive but her peer always gives her advice.

Appendix 4

CHECKLIST USED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH DIFFERENT GROUPS

Girls’ group:

1. What do you mean by daughter?
2. What are your feelings at being a daughter?

3. When do you become happy? If you are not happy at all, why you are unhappy?

4. Parents are saying they provide equal treatment and positive towards daughters. Why do you have feelings of discrimination? Why is there a contradiction? Where does the problem lie? Why has it not happened in reality?

5. What is your hope in life? What are your parents’ and brothers’ hopes towards you? Why it is different?

6. What are the barriers at home and village to reach your hope?

7. Why do parents or brothers worry about daughters?

8. Why does this problem arise? Is there any evidence?

9. How could you overcome those barriers?

10. What are ways to reach an equal status for girls and boys? What, when & who?

11. In the village, how do you know that certain girls are facing more difficulties than others?

12. How can you help those girls who are in difficult circumstances?

13. At what age are the girls happy and unhappy?

14. How can you be involved in changing things?

**Community leaders:**

1. What are the difficulties these girls are facing?

2. Why are these girls facing these problems?

3. Who is responsible for these girls’ difficulties?

4. What could be practical ways to obtaining equal status for girls and boys?

5. What might be the barriers?

6. How we can overcome these barriers?
7. What are your commitments from VDC to lift up the situation of girls in your village?

**Brothers’ group:**

1. What do you mean by sister?

2. What do you like and dislike about being a brother?

3. What are your hopes?

4. What are your hopes for your sisters?

5. Why is it different than your sisters?

6. How do boys, men and parents behave towards daughters?

7. What difficulties are girls facing and why is there a big gap? [education, property rights and mobility]

8. What do you feel when parents restrict a girl’s mobility?

9. What are the solutions to obtaining equal status for girls and boys?

10. What are the barriers to reaching the solutions?

11. How could you overcome the barriers?

12. How could you support those girls who are in difficult circumstances?

13. What could be your role to bring changes?

**Parents group:**

1. What do you mean by daughter?

2. What are your hopes towards daughter and son?

3. Why you have different hopes? Why is there a big gap? What does a daughter hope and expect from you, and what is her hope?

4. How long do you plan to send daughters to school?

5. What is your opinion about your daughters marriage?

6. When do you restrict the mobility of daughters? And why?
7. What do you think about the pressure society puts on daughters?

8. What are the practical solutions to improve the status of girls to be more equal with boys in the village? What could be done from your level?

9. What are the barriers?

10. Who creates these barriers?

11. How do you overcome these barriers?

12. Who influences you and whom do you influence?

13. How you can bring change?