**Inputs from the Government of Nepal**

**on**

**Progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide**

**pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 69/156**

1. The Government of Nepal (hereinafter referred as the GoN) respects the international legal obligations and is committed to instruments related to Human Rights. It has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among others. Child, early and forced marriages are criminal offences under the General Code, 1963. The Constitution of Nepal (2015), General Code, 1963, and National Policy on Children, 2012 prohibit all forms of discrimination against women and girl children, and provide special provisions in order to empower them. The Constitution and relevant legislations guarantee women's right to equality and non-discrimination in marriage and family relations. The Chapter on Marriage of General Code, 1963 fully recognizes and protects the right of every person to establish matrimonial relationship with a person of own choice. Early and child marriage, forced marriage and marriage caused by fraud are prohibited. Persons involved in executing such marriage are liable to face penalty including imprisonment. Article Number 1 of Chapter on Marriage of General Code guarantees right to marriage on one’s own choice and with full consent. Article Number 2 of the said Chapter prescribes the same minimum age of 20 years for marriage for both men and women. Article Numbers 4, 5, 7 and 8 of Chapter on Marriage prescribes punishment for fraudulent practices in marriage, forced marriage or a marriage without the consent between man and woman. Due to legal, policy and programme interventions against child marriage and harmful traditional practices against the girl child, the practice of child marriage has been gradually decreasing. Among good initiatives, nearly 1,000 village level committees are active in 59 districts along with vigilance committees at ward level to support girls and families in high risks of child marriage, resolve such issues in the community or refer them to district level enforcement authorities. To enhance monitoring of child marriage and related issues, 75 new job positions, 22 Child Protection Officers and 53 Child Protection Inspectors, have been created and deployed in all 75 districts.
2. The GoN has adopted the following measures to eradicate all harmful practices including child, early and forced marriage:
3. Persuading changes in people’s attitude and community practices through Behaviour Change Communication;
4. Criminalization of all forms of harmful traditional practices against women and girls;
5. Launching awareness raising campaigns against harmful practices such as child marriage, dowry system and allegations of witchcraft;
6. Strengthening the access of women to health care, education, employment and social security;
7. Execution of adolescent girls’ empowerment programme in all 75 districts through the Department of Women and Children;
8. Introducing policies of positive discrimination for women’s employment in government and public services; and
9. Nepal police has been conducting awareness programs related to child marriage since Fiscal Year 2062/63 (2005/2006) which have contributed to increased sensitization of people on the reporting of the cases. The program has shown progressive result in the reporting of child marriage. As per the statistics provided by Nepal Police, the reporting of such cases has been continuously increasing over the period of ten years. The data shows that in the fiscal year 2005/06 when the program was initiated, reporting of the child marriage case was only one; in the subsequent years the reporting is on incremental trend, and the record for the fiscal year 2014/15 is 23.
10. The GoN has launched preventive programs against child marriage focusing on the vulnerable caste, ethnic group, or community. Such programs include sensitization programs, counseling services, and education programs for adolescent, and courses containing such contents are continued in the curricula of school education. The GoN has conducted specific programs against the child marriage in 59 selected Village Development Committees through Women and Children Offices. The GoN has established various institutions to prevent child marriage and support victims of child marriage, which are overseen by agencies like the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Department of Women and Children, and Central Children Welfare Committee at the central level. Similarly, there are Women and Children Offices in all 75 districts, and Women and Children Service Center under the Nepal Police. In 2016/17, budget has been allocated for conducting adolescent education and skill development training aiming at curbing child, early and forced marriage and potential violence against women due to dowry system. Similarly, funds have been allocated for conducting the awareness programmes in local languages.
11. The ‘*National Strategy to End Child Marriage 2016’,* endorsed in March 2016, has been implemented with the goal of ending child marriage by 2030. Implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been established and are functional from the center to the district levels to ensure proper implementation of the strategy. Nepal is a member of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children, which links Nepal to the broader regional network on ending child marriage in South Asia. The First National Girls’ Summit held in Kathmandu on 23rd March 2016 has galvanized national and international support to end child marriage.
12. The GoN has taken several measures to eradicate harmful practices by raising awareness and enforcing several plans, policies and guidelines. The new draft Bill related to Children has incorporated provisions to prohibit all forms of harmful practices that affect children. The GoN is also in the process of drafting a consolidated legislation against all forms of harmful traditional practices.
13. The GoN, in collaboration with civil society organizations, is also running campaigns against dowry system, and child and forced marriages all over the country. The government agencies and civil society organizations have been continuing advocacy and awareness raising campaigns against harmful practices at the community level. The role of media has been marked positive and encouraging with significant impacts to bring changes in the social behavior. The Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare has been implementing programmes for the prevention of child marriagethrough Women and Children Offices in the affected districts.
14. After the abolishment of harmful traditional practices of *Kamlari* (child bonded labour), the freed *Kamlaris* have been socially reintegrated and are receiving scholarships, hostel facility and other economic opportunities. A total of 12,000 *Kamlaris* have been able to access education including vocational training since the development of National Plan of Action against Child Bonded Labour in 2009. The awareness level of freed *Kamaiyas* and *Kamlaris,* including that of the potential employers, has increased significantly so that they now better understand the ill effects and legal consequences of the *Kamlari* practices.
15. Positive activism manifested by the Judiciary has encouraged the process of legal and administrative reforms along with developing institutional capacity to respond to the cases of harmful practices against women and girl children. The national human right institutions have expanded actions against such practices by strengthening institutional capacity, surveillance systems and watchdog functions. Law enforcement agencies are acting proactively against such practices. Community resilience against such practices has increased remarkably due to consistent advocacy, awareness, outreach, and prosecution of the perpetrators through the government machinery and civil society organizations working in tandem. The Nepalese girls and women are gradually challenging harmful traditional practices within households and beyond, through increased socio-economic engagements, improved health and educational status, and increased political involvements.
16. The programs related to prevention of child, early and forced marriage are conducted through multi-agency involvement. A budget of NRs. 73,502,000/- was allocated for child protection under Child Welfare Program and budget of NRs. 11,155,000/- was allocated under Department of Women and Children in the fiscal year 2015/16.
17. Despite continuous interventions through constitutional, legal, policy, institutional and programme measures, and subsequent achievements, cases of violence against women and girls are still posing big challenges. The GoN is aware that it requires sustained and systematic efforts at all levels: in families, relationships, households, communities, institutions and society as a whole.
18. The GoN has been implementing preventive, promotional and punitive approaches to eradicate discriminations and harmful practices in society. Bringing changes in behavior and attitude seeks longer term interventions. Developing a culture of resilience is regarded as a strategic need to mitigate these practices and discrimination in society.