IMPACTING
ONE MILLION GIRLS
TO ELIMINATE CHILD, EARLY, AND FORCED MARRIAGE IN NEPAL
We are now in full gear embarking on our new journey together in Nepal – with a clear aim and direction – to promote children’s rights, and equality for girls. Our new five year strategy focuses on a robust gender transformative approach and strong emphasis on inclusion for children with disability and other marginalised groups, including Dalits.

SVEN COPPENS
COUNTRY DIRECTOR
PLAN INTERNATIONAL NEPAL

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Nepal, one of the “least developed,” poorest countries in South Asia, aspires to upgrade to “developing” status by 2022. Currently the poverty rate is 21.6%. Of 187 countries, Nepal ranks 145th on the Human Development Index, and the GINI index of 32.8 is increasing. This points to increasing income inequality for women. Nepal remains a highly patriarchal society, impacted by a caste hierarchy. Girls’ and women’s access to social, economic, and political power is limited and they are subject to harmful gender-based social norms and practices, including gender-based violence.

After decades of negotiations, Nepal adopted a new constitution in September 2015. The new constitution provisions central government, and decentralizing governance to seven provincial governments. The constitution has guaranteed a number of civil rights to its citizens, however child, early, and forced marriage and early motherhood still constitute a major reproductive health challenge. The median age of marriage is 16 years and 17% of married girls aged 15–19 have a child or are pregnant.

Children with disabilities find it difficult to access affordable healthcare services. Girls with disabilities are at higher risk of sexual abuse. Women and girls are exposed to various types of gender-based violence, with rape, domestic violence, human trafficking, and harmful traditions, including persecution of “witches”, the most common (2015).

**NEPAL AT A GLANCE**

- **Population**: 26.5 million
- **Per capita annual income**: USD 752
- **Poverty ranking**: 21.6%
- **Population of children**: 11.6 million
- **Ethnic groups**: 125
- **83% Rural population

**WHY GIRLS’ ISSUES ARE OUR AGENDA?**

- The child marriage rate in Nepal is the third highest in South Asia; 43% of girls in rural areas marry before the age of 18;
- About 30% of all children are underweight; girls are slightly more likely to be underweight, at 32%, than boys, at 29%;
- 652,000 children aged 5-12 (49% of them girls) do not attend school at all;
- The total number of out-of-school children is 1.6 million. Among them, 53% are girls;
- A lack of separate toilets for girls in 75% of schools affects regular attendance among menstruating girls;
- Enrolment of girls in school goes down as they reach secondary level;
- Median age of marriage is 16 years, with 17% of married girls aged 15–19 having had a child or are pregnant;
- About 70% of rural girls and women are not informed/aware about menstrual hygiene;
- Each day 1,500 youths go overseas for employment; adding burden to women and girls within the family;
- About 8,500 people, mostly girls and women, were trafficked in 2015. As a result of the upheaval following the earthquake, trafficking increased by 15% that year, and
- 13,000 girls work in the “entertainment” sector.

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1National Planning Commission, 2016. Baseline paper for 14th Plan. Kathmandu.2 National poverty rate is 19,261 per capita per year (approx. $190 per year or $0.52 per person per day).
2http://www.indexmundi.com/nepal/distribution_of_family_income_gini_index.html
3National Living Standard Survey 2015
4Sancharika Samuhahas
Since its foundation in 1978, Plan International Nepal has earned a reputation among communities, civil society, and government bodies for its contributions in early childhood development, education, protection of child labourers, combating child trafficking, promoting child and maternal health, and helping survivors of gender-based violence become economically independent. Plan International has developed expertise in reaching vulnerable groups of children, including children with disabilities, and has gained prominence in child-centred disaster risk management.

Our long dedicated history in Nepal

A humanitarian actor
Plan International Nepal’s active role after the 2015 earthquake established it as a key humanitarian actor. Having been involved in humanitarian response since 2006, Plan International Nepal has significantly upgraded its response capacity to incorporate learning from past experiences. As of December 2017, the earthquake response/recovery programme reached 293,365 individuals, including over 120,279 children. In 2017 Plan International Nepal responded to the monsoon flooding in the eight most affected districts, including six regular programme districts.

Our ambition for the coming five years

Programme targets: Plan International Nepal has ambitious targets and plans to directly reach out to one million girls in its working districts. The indirect reach through policy influence and media campaigns will be five million girls and five million boys; comprising girls and boys from marginalised and excluded communities, children with disabilities, Dalits, children from low income and disadvantaged families, and children living in deprivation in remote areas.

Leading a movement for girls: Plan International Nepal will build on its work with women and girls to become a leader in girls’ empowerment, brokering strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations (UN, INGOs and donor missions) and with influential national-level organisations, including educational institutions. This movement will focus on localising Plan International’s engagement with the Equal Measures global SDG tracker initiative (identifying and filling gaps in data on girls’ issues in Nepal), and on bringing the voices of girls directly and indirectly to the political decision-making sphere for collective influencing.

A gender-transformative impact: Plan International Nepal will use its gender-equality expertise as a springboard towards putting fully gender-transformative approaches at the core of all its work. It will facilitate this leap through improved project design, strategic investment in capacity development, and building critical alliances with international and domestic actors with expertise to tap into. Recognising that childhood experiences profoundly influence and shape men’s attitudes and behaviour we will encourage and engage boys, at a very early stage, in gender equitable norms and practices and pay close attention to the effects of gender socialisation of boys and on men and masculinity.
Plan International Nepal’s strategic choices focus on a robust gender transformative approach with an equally strong emphasis on inclusion for children with disabilities and other marginalised groups, including Dalits and ethnic minorities. Elimination of child, early, and forced marriage is an overarching goal and all of our programme objectives contribute to it. Plan International Nepal will work on five Strategic Programmes during the strategy period, namely:

I) THRIVE
Girls and boys grow up equally and healthy right from the start in an environment providing equal opportunities as parents socialise them in a gender equal and inclusive manner.

II) LEARN
Girls and boys learn equally in gender-transformative and disability-inclusive educational institutions that deliver quality education in developmental and humanitarian settings.

III) ACT
The agency of children especially that of adolescent girls, is increased through asset building, enhanced access to SRHR services and growth in self-confidence and enhanced capacity to engage in decision making processes.

IV) PROTECT
Girls experience reduced levels of gender-based violence and discriminatory social norms and practices and grow up safely in communities free of child marriage, child trafficking, and child labour.

V) RESILIENCE
Girls and boys strengthen community resilience-building through gender-transformative and disability-inclusive disaster risk management; climate change adaptation, and WASH promotion.

Plan International Nepal will play a highly visible leadership role in advancing equality, for girls in particular, taking bold steps in challenging the patriarchal values and norms that perpetuate discrimination and violence against girls and women and reinforce their subordinate position. We will engage with the most marginalised children, especially girls, and be mission-driven. Inclusive and gender-transformative approaches will be the cornerstone of all programmes.

Plan International Nepal is known for its strong presence in communities, but will be increasingly engaged at provincial and national levels to influence policies and practices that support a conducive environment and transformative changes for children, especially girls.
HOW WE WILL WORK

Working with Children and Communities: In order to bring about transformative change in the lives of girls and enable them to learn, lead, decide and thrive, it is imperative to work closely with boys and girls, their families, and communities. Gender-transformative measures of change will specifically focus on encouraging boys and men to examine how patriarchy affects their own lives and opportunities, and to stand as an ally for gender equality.

Working with Partners: Plan International Nepal will continue partnering with NGOs for delivering programmes (the government mandates that INGOs must deliver all interventions through local NGOs). Local NGOs will be preferred and external NGOs engaged only when expertise is not available locally. Cooperation with concerned UN agencies such as UNICEF, like minded INGOs, and private organisations will be developed. Capacity building of partners will be an integral aspect of the partnership and mutual learning, including feedback mechanisms.

Communicating Effectively with External and Internal Audiences will help to deliver programme messages to wider audiences to create impact. This will be done through developing strategic partnerships with the media, specifically radio and TV networks. Partnering with the media will be instrumental in Plan International’s influencing work and allows us to reach out to the larger population and influence the public. As social and online media is becoming prominent, innovative online communications for programme work will be initiated.

WHERE WE WILL WORK

Plan International will phase-in three new districts, namely, Jumla, Mugu and Kalikot in the mid-west. These districts sit in difficult high mountains, connected only by seasonal (often treacherous) roads. In terms of poverty, Jumla, Kalikot and Mugu rank 70th, 74th and 67th out of 75 districts. At present, Plan International Nepal works in 11 districts with children from marginalised and excluded communities. During the period of this strategy, two districts, Rautahat and Morang, will completely phase-out.

FINANCIAL RESOURCING

The new strategy requires a total investment of €78.6 million (€6m more than the previous strategy). Plan International generates funds through sponsorships and receives grants from various donors. Sponsorships will generate 24% of income, while 76% will come from grants.

Influencing: Plan International Nepal will lead or join coalitions and alliances to promote tried and tested solutions from its programmes for replication, mainstreaming, and sustainability. Close relationships will be forged with government agencies (local and national), CSOs engaged and alliances made for joint advocacy and influencing to scale-up effective work. Plan International will maintain a good balance between software and hardware work as required for achieving the stated objectives.

Embedded Disaster Risk Management: To mitigate any negative effects of disasters on reaching the country strategy objectives, child centred disaster risk reduction and humanitarian responses are in place.
The national neo-natal mortality rate is 23/1,000 live births; rates among the poorest wealth quintile (32) and illiterate mothers (26) are double those for the richest (14), and the most educated households (12). The national infant mortality rate of 33 also masks considerable wealth and education disparities. The high maternal mortality rate (258/100,000 live births) is due partly to poor care (60% and 58% of mothers have four ante-natal and one post-natal check-up, respectively) and a low rate of institutional delivery (55%). About 30% of all children are underweight. Girls are slightly more likely (32%) than boys (29%) to be malnourished, but regional disparities are more striking, with rates ranging from 16% in the western mountains to 45% in the mid-western mountains. Many children lack proper parenting and early stimulation. Nationwide, only 60% of Grade 1 children benefit from early childhood education, and the situation is worse in poor, remote regions. Parents perpetuate patriarchy and children learn early that in Nepal girls are not equal to boys.

**INTERVENTION LOGIC:**
Parents and care-givers guide their children to learn the value of gender equality and non-discrimination at an early age, through positive parenting programmes (including piloting tested approaches like Triple-P and Care for Child Development (CCD) in resource poor settings). Boys and girls are socialised equally without any gender based discriminations. Children as well as mothers have adequate access to health care and services starting from pregnancy. Concerned government agencies and local organisations institutionalise gender equality through early socialisation and parenting and early childhood health and nutrition services in the communities.

**KEY ACTIVITIES:**
- Promote model inclusive ECD services and mechanisms;
- Capacitate parents, care-givers and educators on equitable and inclusive early stimulation, learning and responsive care;
- Promote role/responsibility of fathers/men in early stimulation and positive care giving through a system of home-based counseling;
- Develop/use gender-transformative guidelines on early stimulation;
- Strengthen maternal; newborn, and child health services including family planning;
- Promote dietary diversity/essential nutrition;
- Social behavioral change through pregnant women’s groups (including significant engagement with husband/mother-in-laws) developing girls/boys as champions;
- Strengthening linkages of functional groups, committees and families (e.g. health, nutrition and ECD committees);
- Promote non-institutional care and early intervention for vulnerable children;
- Introduce early detection/prevention of disabilities through positive parenting programmes, and
- Responsive care giving and health and nutrition.

**OBJECTIVE**
Girls and boys grow up healthy from the start in an environment providing equal opportunities as parents socialise them in a gender equal and inclusive manner via positive parenting programmes.
In Nepal, education is free and compulsory up to Grade 8. The constitution calls for excluded children, primarily Dalits and children with disabilities, to receive scholarships. The National School Development Plan (2016–2022) addresses inclusive education as well as ECE, and disaster-resilient “safer” schools. However, enrolment, quality, inclusion and gender equality all require attention. About 35% of three to four year olds have no access to early childhood education; 12% of children aged 5 to 12 are not enrolled in the appropriate grade, and 652,000 children aged 5 to 12 (49% of them girls) do not attend school at all. The number of out-of-school children at secondary level reaches 1.6 million (53% girls). Almost one-third of children with special needs do not attend school, and most schools lack the capacity and infrastructure to educate those who do. Only 4% of public schools have adequate classrooms, teachers, and textbooks. A lack of separate toilets for girls in 75% of schools markedly affects regular attendance among menstruating girls. For many children, school is not a safe place as they face violence there, such as abuse, threats, bullying, and physical punishment.

**INTERVENTION LOGIC:**
Action at multiple levels to eliminate gender disparities in accessing quality education for all children through gender-sensitive educational contents, pedagogies and learning environments with government approved gender transformative policies, guidelines, and manuals. Promote model classrooms/schools with gender transformative pedagogies and safe learning environments. Support, model and advocate for social inclusion and disability-inclusive education and reduce the barriers for children with disabilities to ensure a welcoming learning environment. Strengthen ability of girls, children with disabilities, and Dalits to claim their rights to equal education opportunities and quality education. Education services will also improve early learning and reading comprehension of all young learners; assist completion of basic and transition to secondary education, and strengthen inclusive and gender-sensitive educational governance at school, village, and municipality levels.

**KEY ACTIVITIES:**
- Promote model safe and inclusive schools;
- Use evidence to influence gender transformative policies and practices;
- Gender transformative pedagogy via teacher training and education committees;
- WASH and hygiene behaviour - menstrual hygiene management in school;
- Support children with disabilities for accessible and inclusive learning;
- Train parent/care-giver/teachers on early learning, reading materials, and development;
- Provide early learning/reading materials, furniture, drinking water, and toilets to early grades;
- Support quality education (mentorship) through information technology;
- Alternative education to out-of-school children (13–17 years): rapid education and mechanisms for re-entry to formal education;
- Assistance for a comprehensive education data system at different levels, and
- Awareness raising to end corporal punishment, sexual abuse and bullying and all “Girls in School”.

**OBJECTIVE**
Girls and boys learn in Gender-Transformative and Disability-Inclusive Educational Institutions that deliver quality education in developmental and humanitarian settings.

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6MOE (2014/15): EMIS Flash report
7Census 2011
In Nepal, two-thirds of the economically active population work part-time in the agricultural sector, but agriculture holds little appeal for young people. Off-farm employment achieved just 2.9% growth and the government is able to assist barely 6% of those entering the job market.\(^8\) Skills training is prohibitively expensive for the poor and many workers (especially women). In the private sector many do not receive the legal minimum wage (in the Terai women earn just 50–60% of a man’s wages). Each day an additional 1,500 youths emigrate, joining the 3.5 million already working abroad (58% aged 14–24). Remittances from overseas workers totaled USD 6.2 billion in 2015 (29% of GDP)\(^9\) and significantly contributed to poverty rates falling from 31% in 2004 to 22% in 2016. Women’s share in the overseas labour force, increased from 1% in 2006 to nearly 6% in 2012. But female migrant workers face significant risks including that of returning penniless.\(^11\)

**INTERVENTION LOGIC:**
Working at individual, community, institutional, and policy levels with CSOs, the Government of Nepal (GoN) and the private sector will create innovative employment opportunities for girls, enabling them to challenge and transform power dynamics and structures that reinforce gender inequalities. Strengthen collective capacities of children and young women to claim and exercise their rights through strong movements for gender justice, rights and change. GoN and private sector scale-up Self Reliant Group and Young Women Group programmes to promote employability and self-employment and help youth access financial services and marketing support. Private sector links will yield quality skills training, internships, and employment, and promote corporate and social responsibility and decent work conditions. Youth, including young people with disabilities, will be taught about SRHR, menstrual hygiene and body-integrity. Boys and men will be engaged to tackle ingrained norms. Continued support will be given to the birth registration system.

**KEY ACTIVITIES:**
- Impart innovative income generating skills;
- Promote apprenticeship and enterprise marketing support and linking enterprise youth to financial services;
- Form partnerships with employers for youth employment;
- Organise/reorganise child, young women, and adolescent girl groups;
- Capacity building trainings and support initiatives;
- Strengthen government and CSOs;
- Support advocacy plans and advocacy initiatives;
- Raise awareness on civil rights;
- Collaborate with GoN agencies; organise registration campaigns;
- Build capacity and increase participation/leadership of children and adolescent girls and develop role models and champions;
- Joint advocacy with CSOs for influencing stakeholders;
- Life skill education;
- Promotion of SRHR services and menstrual hygiene, and
- Engage boys and men.

**OBJECTIVE**
The agency of children, especially that of adolescent girls, is increased through asset building, enhanced access to SRHR services and growth in self-protection capacities.

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Policies and laws against child labour and human trafficking are strong but violations persist. About 8,500 people, mostly girls and women, were trafficked in 2015, (vulnerable indigenous and Dalit groups constituted 37% and 16%, respectively) and the earthquake increased trafficking by 15%. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports 40% of the 7.77 million children aged 5–17 in Nepal are “working children” and 21% are “child labourers” who do not attend school. Of the child labourers, 38% work in the worst forms of child labour, including 13,000 girls in the “entertainment” sector. Child marriage rates are the third highest in South Asia with 43% of girls in rural areas married before the age of 18, and rates among Dalit communities in the Terai as high as 87%. Rates are lower among boys (11% in 2011), but are still high. Though the law requires birth registration within 35 days of delivery, in 2015, only 58% of children below age 5 were registered nationally (39% in Plan International working areas), with a gender gap for girls of 2%.

**INTERVENTION LOGIC:**
Continue to strengthen community and national-level child protection mechanisms and carry out awareness activities to tackle root causes of gender discrimination. Empower individual girls and through networking build collective capacity for influencing change and persuading local government to set aside funds for them. Through life-skill education spark change on gender equality, child rights, and child protection, and engage parents, political, religious, and local leaders through inter-generational dialogues. Mobilise communication experts, public figures, youth, and journalists to promote positive Internet use and influence GoN to develop online protection policies. Train role models and change agents in leadership, public speaking and advocacy. With CSOs and government help communities address gender based violence, link survivors to relevant services, and build the capacity of service-providers for gender, child and disability-sensitive responses. Support a child-protective code of conduct at schools/hostels and promote positive discipline. Strengthen child protection in disasters.

**KEY ACTIVITIES:**
- Research/policy analysis (online protection, child marriage and gender based violence affecting girls) and influencing for on-line protection laws;
- Influencing implementation plans on child marriage, trafficking and child labour;
- Strengthen community based child protection mechanisms and child protection services (helpline, crisis centres);
- Capacity building of police, lawyers and judges;
- Strengthen child protection in disaster preparedness and response plans;
- Improve capacity of girls/young women on gender and child protection, including online protection and child protection in emergencies;
- Support girls at risk, survivors of gender based violence, and child labourers;
- Raise awareness (value/norms/practice) vs. school violence;
- Ensure gender sensitive code of conduct and child protection committees at schools/hostels;
- Support positive discipline training to teachers and school management committees, and
- Promote gender sensitive reporting mechanisms for gender based violence in schools.

**OBJECTIVE**
Girls experience reduced level of gender based violence and discriminatory social norms and practices grow up in safety in communities free of child marriage, child trafficking and child labour.

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11National Human Rights Commission
13National Strategy on Child Marriage, MOWCSWS, 2016
142011 NDHS
15Nepal Multiple Cluster Survey, CBS, 2015
16Nepal Demographic Health Survey, 2011
Nepal is one of the world’s top 20 multi-hazard-prone countries, frequently facing floods and landslides as well as urban and rural fires and, periodically, major earthquakes. Disasters affect children - girls more as they become the most vulnerable. WASH also remains a key challenge during any emergency. Water shortages impact women and girls most, as they are responsible for water collection and have to allocate more time to this task. The 2011 National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan brought a huge improvement in sanitation. Today, 38 of 75 districts are open-defecation free and in 2014, 70% of the population (56% rural and 91% urban), had toilets. However, the earthquake destroyed 220,000 toilets. One in five schools still has no toilet and only 43% of rural households used soap and water for handwashing. About 70% of rural girls and women are not informed/aware about menstrual hygiene.

**Objective**

Strengthen community resilience through gender transformative and disability inclusive disaster risk management, climate change adaptation and WASH promotion.

**Intervention Logic:**

Transfer skills to communities to enable them to protect themselves from disaster risks and respond to emergencies. Strengthen organisational capacity of Plan International and partners to respond to emergencies (and solicit feedback to improve). Identify vulnerabilities, capacities and needs (particularly of children and women) and build individual and community resilience, reduce risks and underlying vulnerabilities and ensure marginalised groups participate in planning/implementation. Support local partner DRM projects and develop strategic partnerships with UN agencies and INGO to extend reach, influence, and capability. Coordinate with government bodies during and after disasters. Meet practical WASH needs and strategic interests, promote gender transformation and equitable access using Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), behaviour change communication, and child-to-child and demand-driven approaches aligned with GoN policies, plans and guidelines. Promote household-level WASH and climate-smart water security with the private sector.

**Key Activities:**

- Awareness raising/sensitisation on DRR/climate change adaptation (CCA);
- Build disaster risk reduction capacity in children, adolescents, girls, and youth clubs;
- Develop responders, early warning systems and management information systems;
- Promote gender transformative disaster risk management;
- Enhance capacity on climate change adaptation;
- Gender transformative and inclusive contingency planning, annual updates, and mock drills;
- Enhance staff response capacity through training, monitoring, and logistics;
- Gender transformative disaster risk management plans;
- Support education cluster contingency planning, and DRM policy/action plans;
- Promote nutrition sensitive, gender transformative and inclusive WASH;
- Community-managed small scale water supplies;
- Promoting hygiene behaviour (including menstrual) and CLTS;
- Build capacity in WASH governance and management, and
- Promote social marketing with the private sector.
PLAN INTERNATIONAL NEPAL
STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR FIVE YEAR: (2018-2022)

Girls and boys start equally
ECD and Education

Girls and boys learn equally
Promoting Inclusive, Quality Education

Girls act
Girls and Young Women’s Empowerment

Girls Protect
(Child Protection)

Resilient girls and boys
Disaster Preparedness and Response/WASH

OUR AMBITION IS TO IMPACT ONE MILLION GIRLS THROUGH PROGRAMMES AND REACH 10 MILLION CHILDREN THROUGH POLICY INFLUENCE AND MEDIA CAMPAIGNS IN NEPAL.

Plan International Nepal
Country Office
Maitri Marga, Bakhundole
Metropolitan City, Ward no.3, Lalitpur
Phone Number. 977-1-5535580, 5535560
www.plan-international.org/nepal
Find us