

# Local System Strengthening for Reducing Child, Early and Forced Marriage Project in Nepal

A Report on

## Most Significant Change (MSC) Evaluation

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## Acronyms

CEFM Child, Early, and Forced Marriage

FGD Focus Group Discussion

IR Intermediate Results

KII Key Informant Interview

LCRC Local Child Rights Committee

MSC Most Significant Change

R-CEFM Reducing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage

USAID United States Agency for International Development

WCRC Ward Child Rights Committee

WCSC Women, Children and Senior Citizens

## Executive Summary

Breakthrough ACTION started implementing activities to help reduce child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) in Nepal in FY 2020, and these activities have continued through multi-year investments. The goal of this work is to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the Government of Nepal in Madhesh Province to design, implement, monitor, evaluate, and coordinate effective social and behavior change activities and strengthen child protection systems to reduce CEFM through a community-based, multisector, data-driven lens.

Breakthrough ACTION also engages municipalities in developing activities with schools, parents, and communities to promote educational opportunities for girls, creating a supportive environment that deters child marriage by ensuring girls remain enrolled in school. All activities were led and funded by the local municipalities through the local networks.

The project's monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities assess changes in capacity and evaluate the project's progress.

This report covers the Most Significant Change (MSC) evaluation, a participatory approach to monitoring and evaluating that aimed to capture key stakeholders' perspectives regarding what changes they identified as the most significant outcomes of the Reducing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (R-CEFM) project.

To learn what changes various stakeholders considered the "most significant," the Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM project contracted the research firm New Era to carry out this study. New Era, with supervision from Breakthrough ACTION staff, conducted 43 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 19 focus group discussions (FGDs) with community and government stakeholders in six focal municipalities in Madhesh Province where R-CEFM activities occurred. The goal of these KIIs and FGDs was to ascertain significant changes observed during the project and identify opportunities and challenges in developing programs to reduce CEFM. In each KII and FGD, study participants identified significant CEFM-related changes that they had observed over the past 18 months. Each FGD or KII was allowed to choose only one MSC. Based on the change participant(s) identified as "most significant," the research team wrote a story of change for each KII and FGD. From these stories, five categories of change were identified, as detailed in this report: changes in community awareness about CEFM; changes in perception of value of education for girls; changes in behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of parents and guardians; structural and institutional changes that support R-CEFM; and observed reduction of CEFM.

### Changes in Community Awareness

After the R-CEFM project began working in collaboration with key counterparts in the six focal municipalities in Madhesh Province, all participants reported an increase in community awareness of the adverse effects of CEFM. Communities became more aware of potential legal repercussions if involved in arranging an underage marriage, the negative consequences of CEFM for the health of girls and their future children, and how CEFM undermines their education and economic security.

Notably, some participants in Matihani and Rajpur reported learning about the scope of CEFM in their community through data collection efforts conducted and funded by the municipalities with technical support from the R-CEFM project. Those stakeholders asserted that they learned that CEFM occurred among most, if not all, social groups in their communities and was not restricted to marginalized groups.

## **Changes in Education**

Participants from all municipalities reported a change in community-level perception of the value of education for their children, particularly girls, as a suitable alternative to early marriage. Numerous anecdotal observations indicated that both girls and boys were returning to school and staying in school for longer periods of time.

## **Other Changes in Behavior, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions**

While parents or guardians may have previously prioritized marriage over education for their daughters or their daughters' wishes, participants reported a change in their mindset that favored their daughters' education and interests in their decision making. Further, some participants reported changes in children's ability to advocate for themselves.

## **Observed Reduction in CEFM**

Participants reported observing a reduction in CEFM or an increase in the age of marriage in their community. Many shared firsthand experiences of intervening in planned child or early marriages.

## **Structural and Institutional Changes**

Several participants emphasized the systematic approach to R-CEFM that the project provided, in part by establishing a framework for this work. Some elements had already existed but were not coordinated or leveraged for broad effects. Others highlighted the strengthening of existing structures such as the Women, Children, and Senior Citizens Section, Local and Ward Levels Child Right Committees and child clubs, as well as activities whereby the municipality formed new structures such as the All-Party Committee and Influential Civil Society Members Committee, as being significant changes in their community. Participants also recounted that municipality staff who became involved in the programs offered technical and financial support whenever needed, noting that support from ward chairs and secretaries further enhanced program attendance and implementation. Further, the most mentioned policy change was the adoption of a standardized practice of verifying the age of individuals by checking their birth certificate before officiating a marriage. Finally, some participants identified budgetary allocations at the municipal and ward levels for activities to reduce CEFM as being the MSCs.

## Introduction

Since 2020, the Breakthrough ACTION Nepal Reducing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (R-CEFM) project has worked to strengthen local and institutional capacity to reduce child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) in Madhesh Province, Nepal. The R-CEFM project conducts monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities to examine the project's process and evaluate its progress. This report covers the Most Significant Change (MSC) evaluation, a monitoring, evaluation, and learning activity that involved key stakeholders in identifying changes that occurred over the R-CEFM project.

This report presents the MSC evaluation of the R-CEFM project. It employs a participatory, complexity-aware methodology specifically focused on local perspectives of change and success related to the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Madhesh municipalities' action plans designed to reduce CEFM. The focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIs) with community members and key collaborators in the R-CEFM project yielded stories of change that capture the project's changes and successes from the perspective of community members. In essence, this report is their evaluation of the project. Additionally, Breakthrough ACTION Nepal conducted a secondary thematic analysis of the complete set of MSC stories to identify cross-cutting themes related to the changes shared by the key informants and to identify program-related catalysts for the changes identified by community members and stakeholders for each theme.

In the following sections, we provide a brief overview of CEFM in Nepal and the R-CEFM project, describe the MSC methodology used, highlight major findings, and spotlight important learnings and recommendations that emerged from this methodological approach.

## Background

### CEFM In Nepal Overview

CEFM has a pervasive presence throughout Nepal and affects youth throughout the country. Marriage before the age of 18 constitutes "child marriage," while marriage at the age of 18 or 19 is defined as "early marriage" in Nepal. According to the 2022 Nepal Demographic Health Survey, 35% of women aged 20–24 years reported being married before the age of 18 as did 7% of men in that age group. Early marriage is also a concern in Nepal, where the legal age of marriage is 20. The 2022 Nepal Demographic Health Survey also indicated that 19% of women aged 20–24 years reported being married at the age of 18 or 19 as did 11.8% of men ages 18–19. It is important to note that CEFM occurs among all groups regardless of religion, education, rural/urban, lower/upper class, and so forth. However, a higher prevalence of CEFM occurs among socially vulnerable/excluded populations in Nepal, including Indigenous ethnic groups, lower caste groups, Muslims, and Madhesi people, particularly among those living in poverty (Bhattarai et al., 2022; Pandey et al., 2021).

Globally, COVID-19 has been projected to put children, particularly girls, at greater risk for child marriage, with the impact expected to be felt for at least a decade after the start of the pandemic (UNICEF, 2021). Factors influencing early marriage in Nepal that were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic include an increase in household poverty; school closures and a lack of access to remote education; disruptions to programming, surveillance, and services related to reducing CEFM; and impacts to social support and sociocultural norms (Dahal et al., 2020; Pandey et al., 2021; UNICEF Nepal, 2020; United Nations Population Fund, 2022).



Despite the Government of Nepal's 2015 law banning marriage before the age of 20, much remains to be done to reduce CEFM at the national and local levels, particularly with populations deemed more vulnerable to CEFM. Further, efforts of surveillance and prevention of CEFM at the national, province, ward, and municipality levels were interrupted, if not suspended altogether, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during Nepal's lockdown, which lasted from April until July 2020. It is within this context that USAID-funded Breakthrough ACTION Nepal's R-CEFM project was implemented.

## Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM Project Overview

The R-CEFM project aims to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the Government of Nepal in Madhesh Province to design, implement, monitor, evaluate, and coordinate effective social and behavior change activities and child protection system strengthening for reducing CEFM through a community-based, multi-sectoral, data-driven lens.

The R-CEFM project leads evidence generation, capacity strengthening, "learning by doing," and coordination activities at multiple levels. The activities are intended to produce two intermediate results (IRs) to build progress towards the project's strategic objective of strengthening the institutional and technical capacity of the Government of Nepal to reduce CEFM at the local and provincial levels in Madhesh Province:

**IR1:** Build the capacity of newly elected ward, municipal, and provincial officials, civil servants, and other community actors to advocate, design, and budget for local activities to reduce CEFM

**IR2:** Support the implementation of municipal- and provincial-level activities and initiatives to reduce CEFM

To understand reasons for child marriage and to identify and refine potential social and behavior change activities to address CEFM, the R-CEFM project facilitated a human-centered design process in six focal municipalities in conjunction with local stakeholders. Through this process, municipality leadership and community members were able to jointly develop, test, and monitor programs, using municipality resources and providing all the funding.

Through the human-centered design process, the municipality and other stakeholders developed, funded, and tested the following 11 prioritized interventions:

1. Mobilization of influential religious leaders who have significant public support at the local level to reduce child, early, and forced marriage.
2. Formation and engagement of all-political party committees at the ward and municipality level for reducing CEFM.
3. Municipality-led honor and public acknowledgment of the chair and secretary of the ward with the best progress towards reducing CEFM in the current fiscal year within the municipality.
4. Organization of an annual award program honoring parents who arrange their daughter's marriage after the age of 20.
5. Formation and mobilization of influential civil society members committees at the municipality and ward levels.
6. Strengthening and mobilization of the existing formal and informal structures at the local level for CEFM reduction. The Local Child Rights Committee (LCRC) and Ward Child Rights Committee (WCRC) are local formal structures formed under the child rights promotion and protection procedures developed by the

municipality. Municipalities work to strengthen the capacity of these structures. They also work to mobilize child rights advocacy of adolescent girls through child clubs (informal structures formed by the school or the children themselves in the community for child rights advocacy), including engagements with the WCRC.

7. Felicitation of adolescent girls who actively prevent CEFM and advocate against it. WCRCs encourage and annually honor adolescents who refuse early marriage even when pressured by parents and relatives.
8. Ward/municipality-led arrangement of scholarships for girls and boys to continue their higher education (grades 11 and 12).
9. Support for marketable skills development of unmarried girls who have passed grade 10 or studied up to grade 12 and dropped out from higher education.
10. Promotion of role model families who get their children married after 20 years of age. Such families are acknowledged in public programs, provided rewards, and honored by WCRCs or LCRCs.
11. Provision of discounts or other support for families engaged in agriculture: Municipalities collaborate with their agriculture section to provide discounts or support for agricultural equipment, fertilizers, seeds, or irrigation equipment for families engaged in agriculture who arrange the marriage of their daughters only after reaching the age of 20.

**This document reports findings from the MSC evaluation of activities that have taken place over the course of the R-CEFM project.** It is a key element in the R-CEFM project's evaluation plan, which also includes other participatory, complexity-aware, and qualitative methodologies, as well as several quantitative studies.

## Methodology

### Introduction to the MSC Methodology

The MSC methodology is a flexible, participatory approach to monitoring and evaluating intended to capture the complex and broad array of experiences or effects of a program or project (Davies & Dart, 2005). The approach involves project stakeholders both in identifying the social changes that have emerged in their communities and in synthesizing, analyzing, and prioritizing the data collected.

The MSC approach uses qualitative methods—often key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs—to gather stories and perspectives where programmatic activities are occurring. Key informants, who are often the beneficiaries or key players in a project, are asked a set of open-ended questions about significant changes they have noticed or identified during or following the program. After each interview, stories of change described by participants are summarized in short one-page summaries. The stories are collected through asking simple questions such as the following:

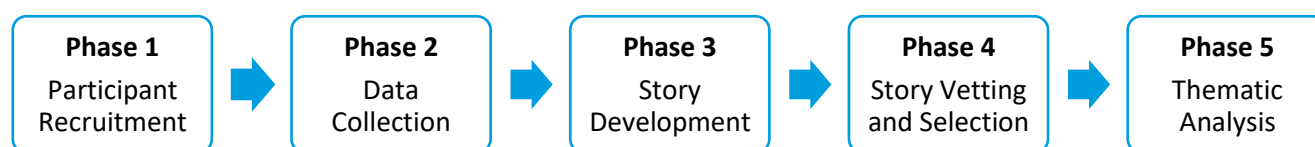
- In your own opinion, what is the most significant change that took place in the past six months?
- Why do you think this change is significant?

### The R-CEFM Project's MSC Approach

The R-CEFM project used the MSC approach to capture stories of change and success from the ward, municipality, and provincial levels related to the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of municipalities' action plans to address CEFM. KIIs and FGDs were conducted with local-level decision-makers, implementers, and other stakeholders involved in addressing CEFM at the municipal and/or provincial levels in Madhesh Province to gather stories and perspectives of the intended and unintended changes that occurred over the course of the R-CEFM project. In addition, the research team conducted FGDs with community members, including parents and unmarried adolescents, who participated in local activities related to reducing CEFM.

The MSC approach involved several phases including (1) participant recruitment, (2) data collection, (3) story development, (4) story vetting and selection, and (5) thematic analysis.

Figure 1. Phases of the Implementation of MSC



### Participant Recruitment and the Study Population

A purposive sampling approach was used to recruit eligible individuals for participation in the Nepal R-CEFM project's MSC activity. Eligible individuals were defined as adults who were (1) at least 18 years old and (2) a member of a community where the R-CEFM project is working, or a community leader, stakeholder, or partner with whom the R-CEFM project works. Additionally, several FGDs were held with adolescents who were at least 10 years old, in grades 6–8, and had been part of R-CEFM educational activities such as remedial classes. Throughout recruitment, the study team sought to include diverse individuals with respect to age, education

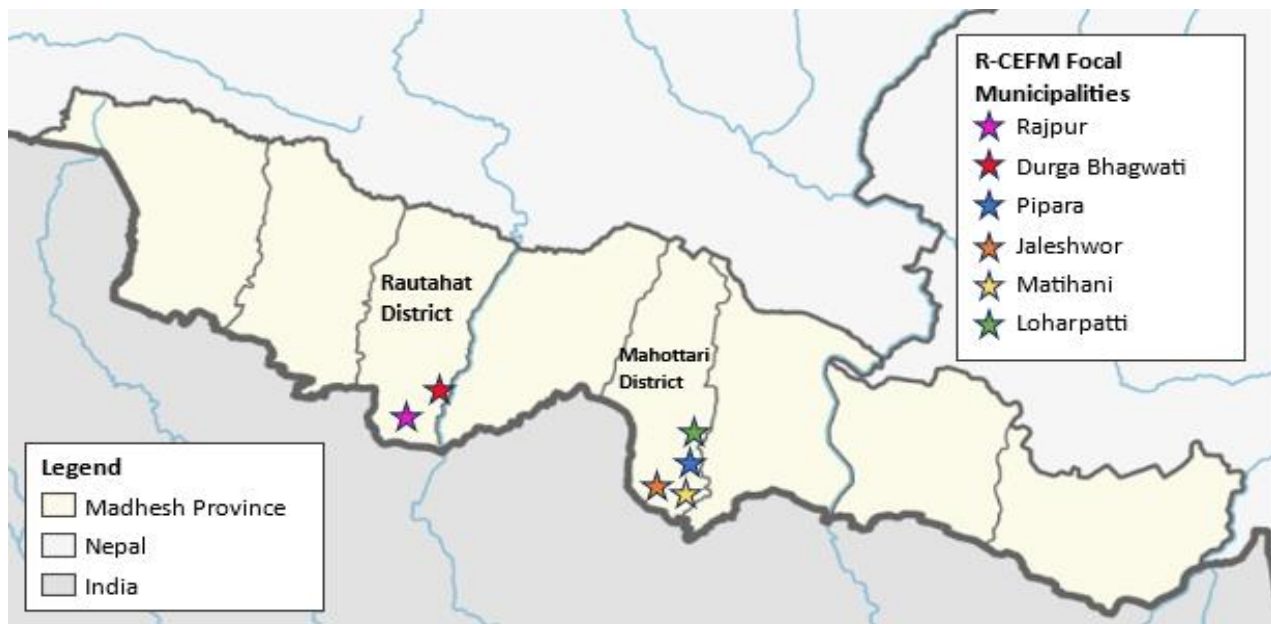
level, and ethnic background who met the eligibility criteria. Individuals were recruited from within six municipalities in Mahottari and Rautahat districts in Madhesh Province where R-CEFM activities occurred.

Figure 2 details the six municipalities where R-CEFM project activities took place in Nepal.

Figure 2. Map of Municipalities with MSC Participant Recruitment in Madhesh Province

The study population of this MSC activity included different stakeholders and community members within each municipality. The following types of participants were recruited:

- Municipality-level political leaders (e.g., mayors and deputy mayors)
- Ward-level political leaders (e.g., ward chairs)



- Women, Children, and Senior Citizen section chiefs
- Other government workers (e.g., education coordinators, health coordinators, municipality executives)
- Local Child Rights Committee (LCRC) members and Ward Child Rights Committee (WCRC) members religious leaders, other influential community members (e.g., teachers, social workers)
- Parents (including mothers and fathers)
- Unmarried adolescents (ages 14–19)

The municipality-based project field staff, guided by the research protocol for this study, identified participants based on their engagement in R-CEFM activities. The MSC activity also recruited province-level government counterparts from Madhesh Province.

### Data (Story) Collection

The Nepal R-CEFM project conducted KIIs and FGDs from August to October 2023 with key informants from the six municipalities in which project activities took place to identify and document stories of changes. KIIs and FGDs lasted approximately 60 minutes and were facilitated in person by a local research firm (New Era). For each participant, oral informed consent was obtained following their recruitment into the study. FGDs with parents and adolescents were conducted separately by gender.

The same interview guide (Annex 2) was used with key informants in KIIs and FGDs to inquire about significant changes noticed or identified during the Nepal R-CEFM project, opportunities and challenges that exist in developing programs to reduce CEFM at the local level, and ways to strengthen future efforts. The interview guide contains a set of open-ended questions, such as the following:

- What have been some of the changes that have taken place in the past six months?
  - Of these changes, what do you think is the most significant one?
- In your opinion, what are the unexpected changes that have happened as a result of the program?

Overall, 43 KIIs and 19 FGDs were conducted. Among these, three FGDs and seven KIIs were conducted with members from each municipality studied, one FGD was conducted with LCRC members from municipalities studied in the Mahottari District, and one KII took place with a Madhesh Province government counterpart. Table 1 describes the number of FGDs and KIIs by participant type and region/jurisdiction.

Table 1. Number of FGDs and KIIs by Participant Type and Region/Jurisdiction

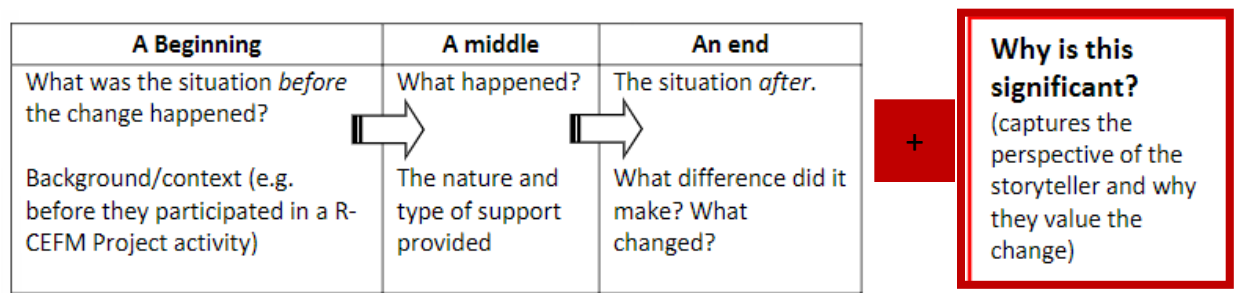
Participant Type	Region/Jurisdiction				
	Mahottari District		Rautahat District		Madhesh Province
	No of KIIs	No of FGDs	No of KIIs	No of FGDs	No of KIIs
Province-level government counterparts	—	—	—	—	1
Municipality-level political leaders	4	—	2	—	—
Ward-level political leaders	4	—	2	—	—
Other government officials	5	—	2	—	—
Women, Children, and Senior Citizens Section	4	—	2	—	—
Local Child Rights Committee members	4	1	1	—	—
Ward Child Rights Committee members	—	4	—	2	—
Religious leaders	4	—	2	—	—
Influential community members	3	—	3	—	—
Parents (separately by gender)	—	4	—	2	—
Unmarried adolescents (separately by gender)	—	4	—	2	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>

## Story Development

Following each interview, the local research firm drafted stories of change (MSC stories). These stories highlighted the significant changes reported by participants and are described in short one-page summaries in Annex 1. Each MSC story was drafted following the format below.

Each MSC story included a beginning, middle, and end, and concluded with why the storyteller believed the change to be significant (see Figure 3). Changes were deemed significant based on the perspective of participants. They could be small or incremental, but all were linked with or related to project objectives.

Figure 3. Diagram of MSC Story Development



## Story Vetting and Selection

In total, 62 MSC stories were initially collected and developed based on the KIIs and FGDs. These stories were internally vetted by the Breakthrough ACTION Nepal team based on quality, level of detail, relevance, and uniqueness. Through this iterative process, the number of MSC stories was reduced from 62 to 37 stories.

The local research team, with R-CEFM staff, then facilitated two participatory workshops—one in Mahottari district and one in Rautahat district—with local stakeholders to select a core set of MSC stories out of the 37 stories. Stories were divided by the district, with a total of 23 stories reviewed in Mahottari and 13 stories reviewed in Rautahat. The story from the Madhesh Province government counterpart was reviewed in both workshops.

Workshop participants were local stakeholders holding a variety of roles in the district who had *not* participated in a KII or FGD on MSC. Within each workshop, local stakeholders were organized into groups based on roles and reviewed stories from KII and FGD participants holding similar roles. For example, government stakeholders participating in the workshop reviewed stories drafted based on FGDs and KIIs with government stakeholders.

In these participatory workshops, stories were vetted through a systematic review and ranking of each story gathered, using a consistent set of criteria. These criteria, which were developed in conjunction with key stakeholders to ensure they reflected local priorities, included the following:

- **Evidence of the change:** How strongly is the change supported with information or examples?
- **Significance of the change:** How significant is this change for you and your community?
- **Sustainability:** How likely do you think it is that the change will continue?
- **Change among socially vulnerable/excluded populations (e.g., poor, Dalits, Janjatis, Muslims):** Does the change mention a vulnerable/excluded group?

In each workshop, participants individually scored the stories using the agreed-upon criteria and then convened in their small groups to discuss and rank the stories by summing their individual scores. The two highest scoring stories from each group were presented to the full workshop and discussed among all participants, who then determined which MSC stories warranted inclusion in the final set of MSC stories. This process yielded four stories in Rautahat and seven stories in Mahottari for a total of 11 MSC stories. Since six out of the 11 stories focused on community awareness, the R-CEFM project team reviewed these six stories to assess their uniqueness and applicability to other settings. One of the awareness stories from Mahottari was excluded, resulting in a final total of 10 MSC stories. These community-selected stories are included in Annex 1 of this report and are available to government counterparts, USAID, and other relevant partners to inform local level decision making and programmatic activities.

## Analysis

For the analysis, study team members reviewed the full set of KII and FGD transcripts. In the first phase of analysis, categories of change were identified across the full set of stories (N=62). These categories included (1) changes in community awareness of CEFM, (2) observed reduction of CEFM, (3) changes in education, (4) other community-level or behavioral changes, and (5) institutional changes. The research team identified emergent themes related to each category of change. A thorough review of each theme and its associated quotations from transcripts was conducted. The results from this analysis are reported in the Key Findings section of this report.

To determine the role of the R-CEFM project's activities related to capacity strengthening, a secondary analysis of the participants' stories was conducted. This analysis relied primarily on information-rich transcripts from a subset of the KIIs and FGDs, specifically those involving individuals who closely interacted with the R-CEFM project, including government officials, community leaders, and other influential community members such as educators, social workers, and religious leaders. To supplement that information, community member transcripts were also scanned for capacity-related insights. The research team developed a capacity-focused codebook based on the categories of change identified in the first phase of analysis and coded the transcripts using Dedoose, a software package that aids in qualitative data organization, coding, and analysis (Miles, 2014). Following the coding process, a thorough review of each code and its associated quotations from transcripts was conducted and key insights were summarized by code. Findings from this analysis are reported in the Key Findings section of this report.

## Data Management

All KIIs and FGDs were recorded with the permission of participants and interviewers, who noted the key points during the discussion. After the completion of interviews or a discussion, interviewers prepared a transcript in Nepali. Core evaluation team members were responsible for checking the completeness of transcripts against recordings, removing any identifiers in the interview, and translating the transcripts into the English language. The translated transcripts were then used to develop the MSC stories.



## Key Findings

### Most Significant Change Stories

The final set of 10 MSC stories is summarized in Table 3, and full English-translated versions of these stories can be found at the end of this report (Annex 1).

Table 2: Final Set of Most Significant Change Stories

Story	Informant(s)	Municipality	Most Significant Change
A	Municipality official	Durga Bhagwati	Change in education
B	Municipality official	Matihani	Community awareness of CEFM
C	Religious leader	Jaleswor	Community awareness of CEFM
D	Male parents	Pipara	Community Awareness of CEFM
E	WCRC members	Matihani	Change to community perceptions of education
F	Madhesh Province government official	N/A	Change in parent/guardian behaviors
G	Municipality official	Pipara	Allocation of budget for reducing CEFM
H	Municipality official	Jaleswor	Award programs
I	LCRC member	Durga Bhagwati	Dalit community awareness of CEFM
J	Ward chair	Durga Bhagwati	Reduction in CEFM

### Emergent Themes and Capacity-Strengthening Catalysts to Change

Five categories of change emerged from analysis of the 10 stories: changes in community awareness; changes in education; other changes in behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions; structural and institutional changes; and observed reductions in CEFM. For each category of change, several emergent themes are reported in the following sections. We also describe the role of R-CEFM capacity-strengthening activities in catalyzing these changes.

### Changes in Community Awareness

#### Emergent Themes

Participants of all types, across all municipalities, identified changes related to the increase in knowledge and awareness of the adverse consequences of CEFM as significant. Participants reported that before the R-CEFM project began in their community, many were unaware that marriage before the age of 20 was illegal and that they could face legal repercussions if involved. The excerpt below illuminates this change:

*The awareness level of people has also increased. Before, people were unaware of child marriage; but now, they know that if child marriage happens, they will be punished by the marriage law. This change is brought about by the R-CEFM program. —Municipality Official, Matihani, Story B*

In addition to recognizing heightened awareness that CEFM is punishable by law, participants of all municipalities reported an increased awareness of the adverse consequences of CEFM, particularly its effects on the health and livelihood (e.g., education, economic security) of girls and their potential children. Although

participants mostly spoke about their community in general, some participants highlighted change in awareness among specific groups, including religious leaders, parents and guardians, and the Dalit community, as shown in the following example:

*Community people's, especially Dalits', understanding that marriage should not be done before the age of 20 is the most significant change... if a child gets married before 20, children will be weak, and financially broken. —LCRC member, Durga Bhagwati, Story I*

## Capacity-Strengthening Catalysts to Change

Government and community stakeholders in all municipalities specified several unique contributions of the Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM project that increased community members' awareness of CEFM and its adverse consequences. Among these contributions, the R-CEFM project facilitated increased involvement of various stakeholders and the creation of new structures and processes that helped to raise awareness.

Participants repeatedly spoke of the significance of engaging a diverse group of stakeholders in the R-CEFM programming and how that action influenced community awareness of CEFM. These stakeholders included government officials or representatives at the municipal and ward levels, community leaders such as religious leaders and educators, police, parents or guardians, and adolescents. Participants referenced stakeholder participation in several types of R-CEFM project activities, including capacity-building workshops, committee meetings, and committee formation, as playing an important role in the increased awareness observed at the local level. For instance, a government official in Pipara recounted the following:

*We have conducted meetings with priests and imams who officiate weddings in our community. Additionally, we have established an All-Party Committee where we engage in discussions and provide suggestions to all stakeholders. These collective efforts aimed to ensure that the message against child marriage reaches and influences everyone in our community effectively.*

A second theme related to the increase in community awareness of CEFM was the creation of new structures and processes or the strengthening of existing structures to improve local capacity to reduce CEFM. For instance, some participants highlighted the formation of an All-Party Committee and the revitalization of LCRCs or WCRCs; from their perspectives, these committees contributed to changes in awareness. Further, participants also spoke of the capacity-strengthening efforts that led to awareness-raising activities such as award programs and door-to-door campaigns, and improved coordination among existing structures, such as the Women, Children, and Senior Citizens' Section, to address CEFM. Reflecting on the influence of R-CEFM activities on the processes of religious leaders, a social worker in Loharpatti explained,

*On Fridays, the imam reads the Quran and discusses the potential consequences of child marriage. In the temple, they [leaders] organize religious storytelling programs where the priest educates the community about the circumstances and negative effects of child marriage on people's lives.*

It should also be noted that several participants in Matihani and Rajpur reported learning about the scope of CEFM in their community through data collection efforts conducted by the municipalities with support from the R-CEFM project. From these efforts, involved stakeholders learned that CEFM occurred among most, if not all, social groups in their communities. In revealing why their community's awareness of CEFM had increased, a municipality official in Matihani said, "Before the survey, it was believed that child marriage had only happened in Dalit and Muslim communities. But the survey revealed that it had been occurring in other high castes and rich households too."

## Changes in Education

### Emergent Themes

Participants from all municipalities reported changes in community-level perceptions of the value of education for children, particularly girls. Many participants reported that parents, children, and the community in general now prefer that children stay in school longer so they can obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the responsibilities of adulthood—including their health, jobs, and marriage. In addition, several participants reported that parents chose to prioritize education over marriage for their children, indicating a perception that marriage could wait until children finished their education up to secondary school or higher.

WCRC members in Matihani highlighted this significant change in Story E, with one person saying, "We must make children educated because if they get education, they know what child marriage is and, in the future, they can decide for themselves for appropriate age of marriage." The WCRC members emphasized this development as the MSC because when a child gets an education, they will not get married at an early age and will not have their children married at an early age. Another participant asserted that education has a crucial role in raising awareness about the adverse effects of child marriage: "Now people's knowledge has increased, in the village they are getting training, in ward to ward they are reading; previously, people did not have education."

Several participants in Durga Bhagwati and Loharpatti reported ongoing municipal- and/or ward-level actions to reduce barriers to accessing education, such as free tuition, supplies and books, and transportation to school. Numerous anecdotes from participants conveyed observations of children returning to school and staying in school for longer periods of time. Reflecting on these changes in Durga Bhagwati (Story A), a municipality official reported the following: "Those families who have children who had left their education and went to work after the start of this program, these children are showing interest in continuing their education further and doing jobs, not marriage."

### Capacity-Strengthening Catalysts to Changes in Education

The provision of free education and scholarships has significantly eased the decision-making process for families, facilitating increased enrollment of girls in schools. Additionally, the introduction of cash incentives for girls completing their secondary education examination and higher secondary (grades 11 and 12) degrees before marriage has promoted educational attainment in Durga Bhagwati and Pipara municipalities. These changes are reinforced by the efforts of committees such as the child club committees and all-party committees. Stakeholder engagement from governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and international non-governmental organizations has also been pivotal in driving these educational changes, highlighting the collaborative nature of the R-CEFM capacity-strengthening initiatives.

*Projects have played a significant role here. The committees we have in place, such as the Child Club Committee and All-Party Committee for reducing child marriage, emphasize the importance of education. Education is a crucial aspect in this process, and with the involvement of every individual, this change has become possible. We have reached this point through collective effort. —WCRC Member, Loharpatti*

## Other Changes in Behavior, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions

### Emergent Themes

Participants from all municipalities reported several changes related to beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of parents or guardians, children, and local leaders. Participants most mentioned changes in parents' or guardians' perceptions regarding their children's marriage, education, and overall livelihood. While parents or guardians may have previously prioritized marriage for their children ahead of their education or their wishes, participants reported a change in their mindset, and thus their decision making, that favored education for their children and considered their children's interests. Further, some participants reported changes in children's mindsets, as shown by advocating for their own wants and needs.

Story C and Story D highlight examples of these changes in perspectives. In Story C, a religious leader in Jaleswor said, "Children, especially, are saying that they would not get married before the age of 20 and not let others do it. From this, we are happy." Moreover, he added that parents and children are now well informed about child marriage, with parents eager to prevent their daughter's early marriage and send their children to school.

Most of the male parents (Story D) expressed that the MSC that occurred because of municipality and ward efforts to reduce CEFM project was the notable improvement in people's awareness that restrictions are needed on marriage before the age of 20. They perceived the development of people's awareness as an MSC because, after becoming aware of the negative consequences of child marriage, community members started sending their children to school instead of getting them married before they turned 20.

Some of the participants perceived changes in parents' or guardians' attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors as a reduction in gender-related discriminatory behavior because parents were now prioritizing education equally for their daughters and sons. A Madhesh Province official (Story F) framed these changes among parents as follows:

*Among the many changes described by the undersecretary, she found changes in people's behavior to be the most significant because people used to discriminate between boys and girls prior to the project... To make a change in this kind of thinking to guardians is an excessively tremendous change brought by the R-CEFM project. Stopping discrimination between boys and girls, stopping child marriage, sending them (boys and girls) to the same schools and marrying without dowry is significant.*

Participants in Rajpur, Durga Bhagwati, and Pipara notably highlighted how behaviors and mindsets of Hindu and Muslim religious leaders regarding CEFM had changed. They reported observing these religious leaders amending practices, such as officiating marriages between individuals under 20, after learning that they could be punished by law and that it could lead to negative consequences for girls. While this change was not reported by the religious leader in Jaleswor (Story C), it was observed directly by religious leaders in other municipalities. For example, a maulana (Muslim religious leader) in Rajpur explained that maulanas changed how they respond to families seeking to have them facilitate a child or early marriage: “We refused to read ‘nikah’ [Islamically sanctioned marriage contract] in those situations because that was against the marriage law.”

## Capacity-Strengthening Catalysts to Other Changes in Behaviors, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions

Participants cited numerous aspects of the R-CEFM project that fostered the changes observed across focal municipalities by enhancing municipalities’ and wards’ capacity to fund and implement activities. For example, a municipality official in Pipara explained the impact of awareness activities on parental mindsets about child marriage:

*Because child clubs have been organizing meetings actively to alert people against child marriage and violence against women. Parents who got married at an early age have been now thinking that they will not get their children married at an early age.*

Some participants highlighted the technical assistance provided by the R-CEFM project to gather data from each ward using the HCD process to understand the child marriage situation and its underlying causes. Based on the community-derived suggestions from this process, activities were developed to reduce child marriage. Participants regarded several distinct activities, including discussions or trainings with religious leaders, the formation of all-party committees, and parent award programs, as contributing to the changes in behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions observed. Of the specific activities to reduce CEFM that were selected via the human-centered design process, funded, and implemented by municipalities and wards, parent award programs at the ward and municipality levels were the most frequently mentioned. A municipality official in Rajpur explained the significance of the award program among members of their community:

*When we called 36 families who followed the rules of child marriage and married their children after the age of 20, making them role models and providing awards and complimenting them in front of the whole village, then others also got motivated and now many families want to do the same.*

## Structural and Institutional Changes

### Emergent Themes

Participants reported observing several structural and institutional changes at municipal and ward levels over the course of the R-CEFM project. Although the specific changes varied by municipality and/or ward, the

participants commonly mentioned the introduction of policies and formal practices aimed at strengthening local capacity to prevent CEFM. The most commonly mentioned policy change was the adoption of a standardized practice of checking birth certificates to verify the age of individuals before officiating a marriage. This practice was facilitated by religious officials and other stakeholders involved in enforcing the policy, including ward leaders and some established committees. For example, an LRCR member (Story I) that she and a ward representative were informed that a child marriage was happening in their municipality, and they “reached the marriage spot instantly, discussed with parents, and suggested parents not to go ahead [stop child marriage].”

In addition to the municipal- and ward-level policy changes aimed at preventing CEFM, several participants reported changes to their ward’s and/or municipality’s government budget to accommodate programming to reduce child marriage. Considering her experience of the R-CEFM project, a WCSC section chief in Pipara (Story G) cited the budget allocation encouraged by municipality and wards for reduction of child marriage as the MSC brought about by the project. For support of establishing budgetary arrangement of wards, she stated,

“Now, in every ward there is a provision for a budget of 5 to 1 lakh, there are around 5 lakhs, 2.5 lakhs, 3 lakhs...1 lakh budget compulsory allocated in each ward for reducing child marriage.”

### Capacity-Strengthening Catalysts to Structural and Institutional Changes

Several participants highlighted R-CEFM capacity- and system-strengthening activities, particularly the formation of new structures such as the All-Party Committee and the Influential Civil Society Members Committee as well as the strengthening of existing structures such as the WCRC and child clubs, as being significant structural and institutional changes in their community. Reflecting on the role of the R-CEFM project in bringing about such changes, a municipality chief in Durga Bhagwati explained,

*Before R-CEFM’s involvement, there were existing programs aimed at women and children, but they lacked a systematic approach. R-CEFM was instrumental in establishing a structured framework for its work. It collaborated with other existing systems and utilized them for its activities. The Women and Children Division in the Municipality had organized various programs, but they lacked a systematic structure. With the intervention of R-CEFM, they began working on the reduction of child marriage.*

Importantly, “generating evidence for CEFM programming” was identified as a significant change, indicating that the R-CEFM project has increased municipality staff’s familiarity with and use of data. This official noted that municipalities are collecting data from health, education and other sectors, and triangulating the data to understand the child marriage status as part of the Provincial Ministry of Sports and Social Welfare’s current effort to develop and finalize a procedure to declare areas free of CEFM.

### Observed Reduction in Child Marriage

#### Emergent Themes

Participants from all municipalities reported observing a reduction in CEFM or an increase in the age of marriage in their community over the duration of the R-CEFM project in their communities. Many shared

firsthand experiences of intervening in planned child or early marriages. For example, a municipality official in Jaleswor (Story H) highlighted her experience intervening with other stakeholders in the community:

*All sorts of preparations which are required for marriage were being fixed. In the meantime, someone has filed a case against child marriage at the police station. Just after that, I, including police staff, reached the marriage ceremony at night and the marriage was canceled.*

### **Capacity-Strengthening Catalysts to Reduction in Child Marriage**

Committees such as the child clubs, all-political party committees, LCRC and WCRC, alongside the involvement of priests, maulanas, maulabis, and others, played crucial roles in reducing child marriage, according to participants. These committees participated in training and actively engaged with their communities. For instance, quarterly meetings and record-keeping within a WCRC helped members to discuss and facilitate monitoring of child marriage rates. Additionally, based on comments from multiple MSC study participants, the active participation of child clubs in the community and the implementation of programs that recognize and award parents for delaying their children's marriages have significantly contributed to the reduction in child marriage by increasing awareness of approaches to reduce child and early marriages and encouraging the use of these approaches. Finally, municipalities were the cornerstone of facilitating these efforts through the allocation of budgets and strengthened leadership role in reducing CEFM with technical assistance from the R-CEFM project.

### **Challenges to R-CEFM**

The following section highlights some commonly reported challenges encountered when trying to prevent CEFM and those related to the R-CEFM project's capacity-strengthening activities experienced during the project. It further details strategies that participants reported to overcome these barriers and challenges.

### **Barriers Observed by Participants in R-CEFM**

The most mentioned barriers preventing changes in parents' or guardians' mindsets or in their ability to delay the marriages of daughters until they reached the age of 20 were household poverty and the dowry system. Male FGD participants in Pipara reflected on this barrier in Story D. Following activities with the R-CEFM project, the participants observed instances in which children in the community are getting married at an appropriate age, but they regarded poverty as a barrier for many households to achieve this outcome. One participant shared the following:

*Child marriage is slightly lower than before the R-CEFM project. The ward has also been inspecting child marriage. However, most communities are poor in this municipality and are still getting their child's marriage before 20 due to household poverty.*

Another male parent elaborated on this sentiment, explaining, "Due to poverty, some people are still marrying their children. Further, parents cannot afford to host their daughters in their homes for a long period."

Participants also reported challenges in convincing parents or guardians in their community to avoid marriages of their children before 20 due to their fears and concerns about social ostracism or backlash if their children

eloped in a love marriage. A municipality official in Jaleswor elaborated on this in Story H, by describing how people made statements such as, “If my daughter flees, then will you take the responsibility? If you take responsibility, then I will not marry my daughter at an early age.”

### Capacity-Strengthening Challenges

Participants noted that political party involvement could be hindered by limited understanding of the program goals and objectives. Delays in the release of funds, which sometimes restricted the implementation of activities and the ability to engage with key groups, including children, were also reported as a barrier to capacity-strengthening activities. Additionally, insufficient time and staffing were highlighted as barriers to achieving program objectives.

### Overcoming Challenges

According to participants, political party commitment to reduce CEFM improved after program goals were explained to members and party members were directly involved in activities. Moreover, explaining the importance of the program and the consequences of child marriage overcame the challenge of all-party committee members expecting meeting allowances for their involvement.

Participants also described how municipality staff who were involved in the programs offered technical and financial support whenever needed. Several participants mentioned the importance of the municipality-led local census to inform these efforts. Support from ward chairs and secretaries further enhanced program attendance and implementation. As one influential community member, a municipality official in Matihani, noted:

*If any obstacle comes while implementing the program, all municipality staff, the mayor, deputy mayor, ward chairs, and secretaries jointly work to resolve that problem. So, these changes have come due to joint effort of all because a single person can't bring change in society.*

### Recommendations for Capacity Strengthening

In KIIs and FGDs, participants offered numerous recommendations to strengthen existing efforts with the R-CEFM project so that the related programs could be sustained after the R-CEFM project is complete. These recommendations include the following:

- Foster collaboration among political representatives, child clubs, and various committees such as the All-Party Committee and female health volunteers to maximize collective efforts.
- Provide adequate budget allocations from the municipality to sustain initiatives, alongside the technical support offered.
- Augment staffing support and actively engage political representatives in driving community-level change to enhance program effectiveness.
- Expand training programs to involve more participants, such as health providers, female community health volunteers, and religious leaders.
- Prioritize education as a preventive measure against child marriage.
- Continue awareness campaigns and community engagement activities for parents, guardians, and adolescents.



- Ensure the sustainability of initiatives through ongoing support mechanisms, including additional training and providing the technical support needed to build upon their successes to date.
- Provide detailed guidance to key officials and stakeholders on the process of managing CEFM at the community level and what might be legal for enforcement so that officials do not implement their own ways of tackling child marriage at the community level that could prove harmful and discriminatory, such as denying birth certificates to children born from CEFM.

### Unanticipated responses to the National Penal Code 2017

An unintended but, unfortunately not rare, response by some ward-level officials in Nepal to the **National Penal Code 2017** regarding child and early marriage has been to deny birth certificates to the offspring of individuals engaged in child or early marriage. This is in contravention to the Constitution of Nepal. According to the Constitution of Nepal and the Child Act, all children have the right to identification and a birth certificate. This issue is of grave concern, and the Director General, Department of National ID and Civil Registration Ministry of Home Affairs issued a letter dated June 24, 2022, in which he stated that “According to the Constitution of Nepal and the Child Act, all children have the right to identification and a birth certificate. The names of the father and mother are required, but the marriage certificate is not mandatory.”

One of the original 62 MSC stories collected for this study included mention of this practice by a ward-level official, who asserted that “If someone, however, manages to get married [who was under 20 years of age], then their born child will not get a birth certificate.” The Department of National ID and Civil Registration /Ministry of Home Affairs as well as R-CEFM project staff and other organizations e.g., UNICEF, have addressed and continue to address this matter, emphasizing the rights of all children, regardless of the marital status of their parents, to a birth certificate.

## Conclusions

### Summary of Findings

Using the MSC evaluation method, the Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM Project conducted 43 KIIs and 19 FGDs across six municipalities in Madhesh Province to gather different stakeholders' perspectives on the MSCs observed during the 18-month period of the project. From these discussions emerged stories of change that were categorized into five main areas, highlighting a notable increase in community awareness of CEFM; changes in perceptions of the value of education and reports of improved educational attainment; changes in attitudes and perceptions of marriage among parents; institutional and structural changes to address CEFM; and perceived reduction in CEFM cases. Secondary data analysis found evidence of wide-ranging capacity strengthening.

The R-CEFM project was implemented alongside the new law, working synergistically to bring the issue directly to the attention of decision-makers, respected community leaders, and the general public. The project focused on strengthening the capacity of individuals with power—the power to influence parents, honor role models, and ignite change. Informed by the CEFM data they collected, municipality and ward staff were able to assess their own situations, decide what would work in their settings, and allocate funds accordingly. The last point is of considerable note as it was not external, but internal, funds that fueled R-CEFM activities, which bodes well for sustainability. With local decision making as the cornerstone, a sense of responsibility for the issue was fostered and deepened, and policy changes were enabled. An example of a consequential change was the verification of the bride's age by ward and religious leaders, which was credited with contributing to the observed reduction in CEFM. The R-CEFM project also successfully leveraged existing structures, such as WCSC section, ward secretary, WCRC, LCRC, child clubs, and the activation of new committees such as the all-party committees, Influential Civil Society Members Committee, all of which played a crucial role in promoting education and discouraging CEFM.

### Limitations and Strengths

This study has a few limitations. It is specific to the municipalities where it was conducted, so these findings may not be generalizable to other contexts or populations. Further, several other projects designed to reduce CEFM were implemented concurrently in some of the project municipalities. Hence, some of the changes observed by participants may not be exclusively attributable to the R-CEFM project.

Despite these limitations, this study has several strengths. Utilizing an MSC approach, community stakeholder perspectives were prioritized in understanding and conveying the changes that took place in Madhesh Province at the local level. Through this process, participants shared insights based on their own experiential evidence that a quantitative study would not have yielded, including suggestions for sustaining and expanding the program and its effects.

### Recommendations

Considering the barriers and challenges participants reported encountering during the R-CEFM project and their suggestions for improvement regarding the implementation and sustainability of its activities, we suggest the following next steps:

- Establish cross-sectoral networks within municipalities for existing entities, such as WCSC, LCRC/WCRCs, child clubs, and all-party committees, to exchange information, share resources, and collaborate on activities related to CEFM.
- Encourage religious leaders across multiple faiths to work together and use their influence to reduce CEFM.
- Encourage municipalities to seek opportunities to study their own data, whether from the census or other means, so that they can continue to make plans based on local priorities. When feasible, this should be complemented with activity selection through the human-centered design process.
- Encourage municipalities that are engaged in R-CEFM, to use their power to allocate budgets and provide direction to wards to implement programs utilizing the existing systems such as child clubs.
- Encourage municipalities and wards to allocate funding for activities supporting education and school retention, given that parents' willingness to keep girls in school and prioritize their education rather than getting them married appears to be a more socially acceptable way to make change.
- Inform all government officials, committee members, and the general public through multiple communication channels that, according to the Constitution of Nepal and the Child Act, all children, regardless of their parents' marital status, have the right to identification and a birth certificate. This should be consistent with the letter that has been circulated to all local government officials by the Department of National ID and Civil Registration/Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Nepal dated 2079/03/10 (June 24, 2022).
- Engage parents or guardians in activities facilitated by peers and/or trusted community leaders to further identify and develop solutions to address barriers to preventing CEFM.
- Continue to disseminate the recently designed *Sahyogi Pustika* guide, which takes key stakeholders through the process of developing, funding through the government system, implementing, and monitoring their own programs and activities. This document provides step-by-step guidance to achieve child marriage free municipalities, and should be made available to, and used by, other municipalities and new staff.
- Provide extended technical support to municipalities to ameliorate unanticipated challenges in efforts to reduce CEFM after the R-CEFM project ends.

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## Annex 1: Most Significant Change Stories

### Story A: Municipality Official's Perspective of Changes in Education in Durga Bhagwati

Before the R-CEFM project in the Durga Bhagwati rural municipality, knowledge and awareness concerning the adverse effects of child marriage were lacking, according to the official. He noted that the absence of this knowledge fostered a high incidence of such marriages in the community. In addition, he attributed the prevalent custom and tradition of early-age marriages to the community's educational shortcomings: "The situation before the implementation of this program, here the situation was not so good. It was bad. I see with my own eyes, a girl child who was born, her marriage happens at the age of 16 or 17, after 15." Concerned about the child getting married at an early age, he added, "They only read up to the class of five to six and they get away from education, then they do not do anything and stay at home, and financial condition is also poor and they get married and go to their house, some get poisoned and some suicide, all these types of condition was there."

Since the R-CEFM project began two years ago, it has worked diligently in coordination with municipality and ward staff to reduce child marriage in the community. According to the official, the R-CEFM project has provided technical support to the rural municipality, which helped the municipality reach all five wards and based on their input and priorities, organize several awareness-raising programs in the community, such as meetings, trainings, and door-to-door visits, on the negative consequences of child marriage. Further, the WCSC section with support from the R-CEFM project visited schools and helped the formation of child clubs and several committees to work against child marriage. The official said, "I did not miss any program because this is not a political subject, it's the subject of our children's future and in the coming days everyone hopes that our children will reach a good place and be educated and knowledgeable." Reflecting on the work done by the R-CEFM project, the official perceives the change in education as being the most significant because it has helped to increase awareness among the community people on living a better life. He said, "There has been a change in people's behavior also. That is why keeping education is the priority." Further, the official said, "After this project came, they (the community people) are active now. Especially in [some] communities. They now know that education is free<sup>1</sup>, and they also know that child marriage should not be done."

"Those communities, wards, or municipalities are connected with education, and after connecting with education, knowledge, where there is knowledge, then it will improve all sectors," said the official, further emphasizing the importance of education to meet the objective of the project. As a result of the increased education level, community members' attitudes and beliefs about child marriage are slowly changing, according to the official. He said, "Those families which have children who had left their education and went to work after the start of this program, these children are showing interest in continuing their education further and doing jobs, not marriage." As a prominent community member actively promoting the reduction of child marriage, the official recognized education as a crucial measure in mitigating CEFM within the community.

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<sup>1</sup> The Durga Bhagwati municipality made education through grade 12 free while the R-CEFM project was taking place.

The municipality official observed a reduction in child marriage resulting in positive changes in the community. "This R-CEFM program has brought us more energy through several capacity building activities and assistance in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of R-CEFM activities. This is a subject of pride for us, this is for our municipality's future, this has brought a change in every guardian, children, and different communities," he explained. Moreover, the official commended R-CEFM for working within the system to create impact at the community level, creating awareness about the detrimental consequences of child marriage. He said, "It is like people are becoming aware and guardians are thinking best for their children. Now, guardians are willing to take responsibility for education, health, and other things up to the age of 20, previously they did not know all these things." Acknowledging the tireless work of the R-CEFM project and its work in collaboration with the municipality, representatives, community people, parents, students, and religious leaders to bring positive change in the community, the official concluded, "The R-CEFM program has brought change in every sector" through its work with municipalities and wards.

## Story B: Municipality Official's Perspective of the Increase in Community Awareness of CEFM

"Before [the R-CEFM project's technical support to our municipality], there was not any program to reduce child marriage in this municipality," explained an official in the municipality of Matihani. Further, members of the community were practicing child marriage without knowing the laws regarding it or its harmful consequences. This official, who has been serving the municipality for the past three years, stated, "Before, people were unaware of child marriage, but now they know that if child marriage happens, they will be punished by the marriage law."

According to this interviewee, the R-CEFM project worked with the WCSC for three years to organize different activities in Matihani at the municipal and ward levels. In the initial year, efforts were concentrated on data collection to understand the reasons for child marriage. This involved the human-centered design study with adolescents, child clubs, parents, municipal and ward staff, elected bodies, and others. Additionally, the municipality allocated a budget for a local CEFM census and hired 20 enumerators, and with the technical assistance of R-CEFM, the municipality conducted the census to explore the magnitude of child marriage in the municipality. According to this official, the data revealed that the prevalence of child marriage in Matihani was 37%; the prominent causes of child marriage were low education and poverty, and the effects of child marriage included health problems for the girls and their babies. Additionally, this interviewee commented on a particularly notable finding: "Before the survey, it was believed that child marriage had only happened in Dalit and Muslim communities. But the survey revealed that it had been occurring in other high castes and rich households too."

After obtaining information on the status of child marriage in Matihani, the R-CEFM project facilitated several other activities, including review meetings, monitoring, planning for budget allocations, formation of committees, and capacity development trainings to raise awareness about the negative consequences of child marriage and to bring change in the community. According to this official, the R-CEFM project has worked tirelessly to reduce child marriage by supporting different stakeholders from the municipality who have in turn motivated the municipality to reduce child marriage: "The municipality staff, including the mayor and deputy mayor, ward chair are participating in this program which makes a great impact on the public so that every person knows about this R-CEFM program." Consequentially, the project-inspired activities brought positive change through increased awareness and the people of the community are happy, according to this official who has observed the project throughout its implementation. She further added the following: "Awareness against child marriage has increased due to this program, so people are thinking about not getting their daughters married before 20 years." The WCSC chief also mentioned that community members were afraid to engage in child marriage once they learned that it was punishable by the law: "People are afraid that if they get their daughters married under 20, they will be arrested by the police and as a result, marriage will be stopped."

Based on her observations of activities designed to reduce CEFM, the WCSC chief stated that the most significant change has been the increase in awareness of the negative consequences of child marriage. "Before only educated people were aware of child marriage, but most uneducated people were unaware of it. Now due to joint efforts of R-CEFM and municipality, most of the people are aware of child marriage," she explained.

She also shared the following: “I organized a parents’ and children’s interaction program. I was happy when daughters told parents that they would get married only after 20.” The WCSC started to celebrate parents who got their daughters married after 20 years. Community members, impressed by these celebratory events, began to report that they also had their daughters married only after 20 years so that they would also be felicitated in the future. These events contributed to this change.

The ancient tradition of getting children married at an early age in the community, a practice embedded in the culture, is slowly being eliminated by the WCSC-led activities at the municipality level and by ward secretaries at the ward level, asserted the WCSC chief. Even though people are aware of these problems, some still practice child marriage due to neighbors’ and relatives’ pressure, poverty, and/or lack of education. According to the municipality official: “More importance should be given to education because lesser educated persons were involved in child marriage [more] than educated persons in comparison,” she explained.



## Story C: Hindu Religious Leader's Perspective of the Increase in Community Awareness of CEFM

According to a Hindu religious leader in Jaleswor municipality, it was a community practice to marry girls between 12 and 14 years of age. He further explained that “children were not going to school and dropped out at a young age,” which was especially true for children from families who were poor, had low levels of education, and were illiterate. These families often did not send their children to school. Parents and guardians alone had decided on their girls’ early marriage, and the children did not have the freedom to express their views about marriage. According to the religious leader, parents and guardians prioritized social respect, stating “If their daughter will elope with one whom she loved, then who will take responsibility and fear about families’ prestige?”

Since the municipality began working with the R-CEFM project, selected activities based on human centered design exercises, and began implementation, this Hindu religious leader has participated in several meetings and discussions on the subject of child marriage and other child rights issues. In these engagements, he learned about the consequences and effects of child marriage at both household and societal levels. Further, he joined a meeting organized by the ward with Hindu and Muslim religious leaders to reduce child marriage. In this meeting, ward officials asked religious leaders to conduct marriages only for individuals who are at the appropriate legal age. They were also warned that, if they facilitated any marriages for individuals under the legal age of 20, they would face punishment—including a three-year jail sentence and/or being fined approximately Rs 30,000. After participating in these municipality- and ward-initiated activities, the Hindu religious leader worked to raise awareness in his community about the illegality of marriage before the age of 20 and conveyed information about the adverse consequences of enabling such marriages. He also observed fellow Hindu and Muslim leaders actively working to reduce child and early marriage in the community in collaboration with the wards and the R-CEFM project. For instance, maulana and moulbis are now actively working to help parents in the community understand the issues with child and early marriage.

“How much is the difference between life in light and dark? That is how much change I have seen here,” explained the Hindu religious leader in reference to these activities. “Up to yesterday, there were those who did not know about child marriage. They now know what it is, and children, especially, are saying that we would not get married before the age of 20 and would not let others do it. From this we are happy.” Moreover, he added that parents and children are now well informed about child marriage, with parents eager to prevent their daughters’ early marriages and to keep their children to school. The religious leader identified the increase in awareness as the MSC since almost everyone in the community now knows what child marriage is and that it is a crime. In addition to the MSC, community members are now prioritizing education, which the religious leader attributed to these activities, the Rautali Youth Club, and guardians in the community.

The Hindu religious leader noted that this change has been happening slowly and more work remains to be done on this issue. People care about their image and respect in the community. “The way of thinking among parents±—that if their child runs away and elopes, then who will take responsibility—is not a new concept. This has existed from the very beginning, and while this stereotype exists, the child marriage will not go away/not be eliminated,” he remarked. He also noted that if parents do not change their thinking and share it with their children, then the problem will remain: “We must work more on this issue. We must further get

involved and continue doing child marriage reduction-related activities. We should keep working until the time when it will be eliminated. We must make society a better place. We have to take it to the bright side.”

## Story D: Male Parents' Perspectives of Change in Community Awareness of CEFM

A group of male parents in the Pipara municipality noted that the R-CEFM project has been working in the municipality for three years. These parents were between the ages 30 and 67, and most were from the Terai Dalit caste, had low levels of education, and were unemployed. These parents explained that most people in their community are poor and uneducated. In discussing the situation of child marriage before the R-CEFM project, one parent explained that “Parents used to marry their children at a young age because of community pressure. They were also anxious about whether their girls would run away/elope with a boy whom she loved.” People used to get their girls married as soon as possible because the groom’s parents would demand a higher dowry from the bride’s parents as the girls got older. This demand motivated parents of girls to marry them early, which ultimately hampered the child’s education. In addition, people in the community did not know that child marriage was a problem before the R-CEFM project occurred.

Inspired by the R-CEFM project, the municipality has organized meetings to reduce child marriage and conducted different types of child marriage-related awareness activities for the community. According to the male parents, all local representatives and many community members participated and learned that marriage should not take place before the age of 20. Most of these parents reported participating in ward-level meetings in which they discussed ways to reduce child marriage in their wards. Additionally, some referenced honor programs, in which the guardians who have their child marry only after 20 years of age are awarded with a certificate. Among this group of participants, two were honored and obtained letters of appreciation. According to these individuals, the honor programs have been an influential factor in marrying daughters after the age of 20.

Considering the municipality’s efforts to reduce CEFM, most of the male parents expressed that the MSC was people’s new awareness that girl’s marriage should be restricted before the age of 20. They perceived the development of people’s awareness as an MSC because, after becoming aware of the negative consequences of child marriage, community people started sending their children to school instead of having them married before they turned 20. People realized that if their children were educated and attended school, educated girls would have more job opportunities and they might have to pay little or no dowry. This change in the mindset within the community has been brought about by local representatives, the ward chair, non-governmental organizations, and other people. “The changes were possible after the municipality organized a door-to-door awareness program for reducing child marriage and honored those parents who arranged their child’s marriage after they turned 20,” explained one parent.

Following the wards’ efforts to reduce CEFM, the male parents have observed instances in which children in the community are getting married at an appropriate age, but they still regard poverty as a barrier for many households to achieve this outcome. One participant stated, “Child marriage is slightly lower than before the R-CEFM project. The ward has also been inspecting child marriage. However, many communities are poor in this municipality and are still arranging their child’s marriage before 20 due to the household poverty.” Another male parent elaborated on this sentiment, explaining, “People in poverty marry off their daughters early because they fear having to provide a dowry if the marriage is delayed. Marrying at a young age often results in a lower dowry, which is why early marriages still occur here, leading to the persistence of child marriages.”



## Story E: WCRC Members' Perspectives of Change to Community Perceptions of Education

According to a group of WCRC members in the Matihani municipality, before the R-CEFM project, child marriage was a deeply rooted problem in society that affected many facets of children's lives, including their education. One WCRC member explained, "Previously, after completing grade 10 many children used to get married." Further, WCRC members remarked that the community was unaware that marriage should take place only after an individual turns 20 years old.

The R-CEFM project began working in Matihani two years ago, according to the WCRC members. The municipality and other relevant stakeholders, such as the mayor, deputy mayor, municipality members, ward head, and secretary, developed the plans, policies, and programs with R-CEFM project support. Through meetings and awareness campaigns in the community, the ward office is reducing child marriage. By emphasizing education and health and helping guardians understand these issues, wards and municipalities are making progress. All sectors are actively engaged in these efforts. Reflecting on this, one WCRC member explained, "With the municipality budget and technical support from the project, our municipality has conducted data collection where we reached every household and collected the data. In a different activity, a ward conducted an interactive program between mother and child, informed students about the health hazards of CEFM in school, and provided training through awareness-raising programs in Matihani."

This group of WCRC members reported several changes due to the R-CEFM activities, including heightened awareness of CEFM. One member shared, "After this program came, we give community people information and made people aware about child marriage. We tell people that if marriage is happening below the age of 20 then it will give you mental, physical, and financial problems. For this, we also give thanks to R-CEFM." Owing to greater awareness of the detrimental nature of child marriage and the efforts to minimize it, community members, including children, underwent a shift in their attitudes and beliefs toward this harmful practice, as reported by WCRC members. "Girls will also get the chance for education, and after education, they will get the chance for a job. Overall, the community will be changed," said a WCRC member. Further, the WCRC members shared the importance of education to make community members aware of the adverse consequences of child marriage. "And, this is also helping people in reducing child marriage, and in comparison, to yesterday, now people are also being interested, they come to an understanding that child marriages are happening," said a WCRC member.

Importantly, these WCRC members observed that child marriages have decreased in their community since the municipality started working with the R-CEFM project. Activities implemented by the wards at the community level, such as discussion programs between mother and child, honor programs, and other activities in schools, have raised awareness in the community and among the students. "Going from home to home and making them understand about this program has helped in reducing child marriage," said a WCRC member. Additionally, this group of WCRC members observed that boys and girls used to run away from their homes and get married, but that has decreased. Notably, another participant explained, "The change will happen slowly, but after running this program in our municipality, this is our thinking. The R-CEFM project has only been here for two years and suddenly child marriage will not stop. But here, the number of child marriages has decreased. You can see here the number of reductions. I think in this place this is a very much improvement."

These WCRC members in the Matihani municipality identified the MSC as the change in the community's perception of sending their children to school. One member shared, "We must make children educated because if they get education, they know what child marriage is and, in the future, they can decide for themselves the appropriate age of marriage." This group of WCRC members perceived this as the MSC because when a child gets an education, they will not get married at an early age and will not get their children married at an early age in the future. Another participant emphasized that education has a crucial role in raising awareness about the adverse effects of child marriage "Now, people's knowledge has increased, in the village they are getting training, in ward to ward they are reading, previous people did not have education." Further, another member of the WCRC emphasized the change saying, "After the start of this program, in the sector of education, there has been improvement. Due to this program, the dropout rate of children is decreasing, and the number of higher studies is increasing."

Despite the observed reduction of child marriage resulting from municipality initiatives implemented with R-CEFM support, WCRC members pointed out that poverty remains the primary factor contributing to the persistence of such unions within the community. One member noted, "Those people who have things, they usually do not do child marriage but [those] who are poor and uneducated, they generally do child marriage, and they do not want to keep their children in their house." WCRC participants suggested that for reducing child marriage and sustaining this change, municipalities should continue to allocate a budget to keep this program as a priority and continue running it. They state that the health section and the women and children's section could continue the program and look after it.

## Story F: KII-Province-Level Government of Nepal Official, Madhesh Province

Child marriage was a social tradition and culturally accepted in the Madhesh province,” said a government official in Madhesh Province. People used to get married at a young age. Some families would have to sell their houses to provide a dowry for their daughter’s marriage. The government official stated that adolescent girls faced many challenges due to child and early marriage, including health issues and difficulty earning money because of their limited education and skills. Adolescent girls with limited education and skills, in particular, were abused and treated poorly by household members. Many married girls returned to their parents’ homes with small children because they faced physical violence from their husband and his family members, which created more burdens for the girls’ parents. Many adolescent girls did not know or understand the culture of their married house, which was the alleged justification for violence.

In her role working for the Government of Nepal on behalf of Madhesh Province, this official works in collaboration with non-governmental organizations. Hence, she has been involved with the R-CEFM project since its origin, working for the reduction of child marriage in collaboration with the local level of government and at the grassroots level, such as the ward level in Madhesh province. She has observed several changes since the start of the R-CEFM project. She perceived that community members now know what child marriage is and that it is a harmful practice. Additionally, she believed that many of them became aware of the value of prohibiting child marriage and are now against it. Further, she thought local-level representatives and committee members are also more aware of child marriage. She stated, “Child marriage has not been exactly stopped and it cannot be stopped suddenly, it will take time.” She related that most people understand that marriage should take place only after girls complete their education and at the right age, which will benefit both parties. She said, “Education up to 12 grades is free, if they get educated up to that time girls’ minds will also be developed automatically.” She added that “if girls are educated their parents do not have to give dowry and girls can make their own decisions.”

Due to the R-CEFM project, changes have occurred in municipality-level officials’ capacity and their work performance. The municipalities are collecting data from health, education and other sectors, and triangulating them to understand the child marriage status. However, other municipalities might feel it difficult to do all the analysis. Therefore, the provincial ministry is collaborating with R-CEFM and other development organizations in Madhesh in developing and finalizing a procedure to declare areas free of CEFM. Some of the local authorities are declaring themselves as free from child marriage, but this is problematic, the official noted, because there are no standard guidelines for doing so. Therefore, developing this procedure with R-CEFM support is essential for the future, as it will become a crucial tool for all 136 local government in Madhesh Province in moving forward.

Adding to the capacity building of local officials, especially the Women, Children and Senior Citizens Section in municipalities, she explained that the provincial ministry is developing another document called “Sahayogi Pustika”. The guidebook will provide clear step-to-step guidelines for officials to plan, implement and monitor R-CEFM activities. She further stated, “Once approved, this book will enable any incoming officials to become fully capable by following its instructions. The book is currently in its final stages of preparation.”

Among the many changes described by the government official, she found changes in people's behavior towards child marriage to be the MSC. Previously, parents used to discriminate between their sons and daughters. People used to believe that girls should not stay at their parents' house for too long because they might run away. The official explained that if adolescent girls eloped without their parents' consent, it would bring great shame to their families and be very difficult for them to endure. She perceived the behavior change as the most significant because it can lead to widespread societal changes. This includes ending discrimination between boys and girls, stopping child marriages, ensuring both boys and girls attend the same schools, and promoting marriages without dowries. These are all significant changes. She further added that "this change will help Madhesh province to achieve its goals against child marriage and make society a better place to live."



## Story G: Municipality Official's Perspective of Changes in Municipality and Ward Budgets for CEFM, Pipara

According to the interviewee, a municipality official in Pipara, many child marriages were happening before the R-CEFM project owing to a lack of awareness about CEFM, financial problems, and other social problems in poor and Dalit communities. Child marriage was prevalent as a traditional practice passed from one generation to another. Regarding the change brought by the R-CEFM project, the chief said, "Before there was no budget allocation for activities to reduce child marriage. Now there is the budget for this."

Since the start of the R-CEFM project, the municipality official was directly involved in the project as part of her work and participated in various training and monitoring meetings. She highlighted that "every three months we participate in a program for monitoring meetings. As I said before, in the skills development training in which I am involved, there is a section of WCSC. As WCSC is related we must be there." In addition, R-CEFM also helped her section with skills development and provided the municipality with technical support to run child marriage reduction programs effectively. Moreover, through collaborative efforts with the R-CEFM project, the municipality funded and successfully organized different meetings, trainings, felicitation programs, and capacity-building programs to make the community aware of the negative consequences of child marriage, according to the municipality official. She explained that "representatives and common people also became aware that child marriage is illegal." She shared further that religious leaders were also involved in R-CEFM programs in several wards and interacted with adolescent groups where girls also participated.

Reflecting on the experience of the R-CEFM project, the municipality official perceived the necessity for budgetary allocations by municipality and wards to reduce child marriage as the MSC brought about by the project. With respect to support at the ward level, she stated "Now, in every ward there is a provision for a budget of 1- to 5-lakh allocation to reduce child marriage. Previously there were no budgets for reducing child marriage. We should take it as progress." Moreover, she said that owing to the passage of the Child Protection and Promotion Act in Pipara, the LCRC and WCRC were formed with R-CEFM support, and community members became aware of activities related to children in the ward. She further shared, "Now I am planning to say it in a meeting about combining both budgets of R-CEFM and the municipality so that at least one ward of this municipality can be declared a free of child marriage ward."

The municipality official observed that a reduction in child marriage resulted in positive changes in the community. Moreover, the chief commended their collaboration with the R-CEFM project for the positive impact at the community level, creating awareness about the harmful consequences of child marriage. She believed that all community members will gradually realize the benefits of delaying their children's marriages until they reach 20 or beyond. Recalling what the representatives have said, she stated, "Until we stop some child marriages by direct intervention, the people won't be fearful enough." Although the R-CEFM project did provide full technical support for the reduction of child marriage, the chief pointed to the need for more funding to carry out different programs at the community level to make people aware of child marriage. She noted, "The program should be supported financially and not only provide technical support. When there is no budget, we cannot work even when there are people willing to work."

## Story H: A Municipality Official's Perspective of the Parents Honor Program in Jaleshwor

In reference to child marriage in the Jaleshwor municipality, an official explained that “people used to take it [child marriage] as a common, everyday activity in this society” before the R-CEFM project. Further, “people were unaware about child marriage and did not know that it is a crime,” explained the municipality official. People thought that marriage at any age was okay. Child and early marriage still occurred as an ancestral custom and was highly practiced in Muslim communities in Jaleshwor.

Since the start of the R-CEFM project, child marriage in Jaleshwor has gradually decreased. The R-CEFM project offered technical support to gather data from each ward using the HCD process to understand the child marriage situation and its underlying causes. Based on the community-derived suggestions from these findings, activities were developed to reduce child marriage., including the establishment of a WCRC in each ward, and an LCRC at the municipal level. Additionally, an All-Party Representative Committee/sarbadaliya samittee was also formed to advance the child marriage re-education-related program in the municipality. As a result of these activities, some parents now wait and marry their children after they turn 20 years of age. In some cases, marriage has also been stopped instantly, as in a case in which the age of the bride was revealed to be less than 20. The municipality official described the scenario, recalling that “all sorts of preparation which required for marriage was being fixed. In the meantime, someone has filed a case against child marriage at the police station. Just after that, I, including police staff, reached the marriage ceremony at night and the marriage was canceled.”

The municipality official noted some challenges during the R-CEFM project. She described how people would make statements such as, “If my daughter flees, then will you take the responsibility? If you take responsibility, then I will not marry my daughter at an early age.” She added that many community people said, “Solving the child marriage practice is impossible in Madhesh province.”

According to the municipality official, the R-CEFM project brought several changes to peoples' mindsets, such as child marriage being against the constitution of Nepal. As a result of these changes, community members know that a girl's marriage should not be permitted before 20 years of age, and anyone who proceeds with the marriage of their children before 20 might be sent to jail. Additionally, an award program with an appreciation letter was hosted for parents who married their children after they turned 20, leading to many parents appearing to be motivated to marry their children after 20. The parents award program has been funded and conducted jointly by ward, WCSC members, and the municipality with the help of the R-CEFM project. Parents thought that keeping their daughters in school and only getting girls married at the right age would lead to the award. For the municipality official, the MSC was the parents award program because it was organized in an open space and many people participated, causing others to become motivated as well. Additionally, the parents/guardians said that the program was good for their children's future, and they stressed that this type of award program had never been done before. The ward chair, mayor, municipality representative, and community members, including WCSC members, were directly involved in child marriage reduction-related programs and activities that supported these sorts of changes in the Jaleshwor municipality.

## Story I: LCRC Member's Perspective of the Change in the Dalit Perspective of CEFM

According to an LCRC member from the Durga Bhagwati rural municipality who is also a teacher, the majority of students enrolled in her school are considered Dalit (lower caste) and have parents who are illiterate. Parents of this community make decisions on their own accord, with marrying their child at an early age being one such decision, with some marrying at the age of 10–12.

Once the R-CEFM project began collaborating with this municipality, “people began to work with enthusiasm to reduce the child marriage; if anyone notices that a child marriage is going to happen, people instantly visit the respective parents and suggest not to marry their child at an early age,” explained the LCRC member. To stop child marriage, wards and municipalities formed a working group to work against child marriage in every tole.<sup>2</sup> Groups were trained in how to make people aware of child marriage and to stop it by acknowledging that it is a social issue. “I myself, including my students, had participated in street rallies against child marriage,” said the LCRC member. Additionally, a committee with representatives from the LCRC member’s school and community was formed with the technical support of the R-CEFM project to work actively to prevent child marriage in the area. At one point, the teacher and a ward representative were informed that a child marriage was happening in their municipality, and they “reached the marriage spot instantly, discussed with parents, and suggested parents not to go ahead [stop child marriage].”

The LCRC member perceived that the increased awareness among the community people to get their child married after the age of 20 as the MSC. She said, “Community people’s, especially Dalits’, understanding that marriage should not be done before the age of 20 is the most significant change.” This change is due to an increase in people’s awareness level, which came from education. She emphasized the significance of getting children married at the right age and said, “If a child gets married before 20, children will be weak, and financially broken.” The teacher focused on getting children educated so that they will be healthier and happier and could get married only after they reached a proper age. For those guardians who belong to the Dalit community and are mostly illiterate, the LCRC member thought that the change in their mindset on getting married at the right age was the most significant.

The LCRC member perceived that people changed their mindset to believe that marriage should not occur before 20 years of age. Referring to what she heard from parents in the community, she recalled statements such as, “I will not do my girls’ marriage before 20.” For this increase in awareness level, the ward formed a group in every tole and trained the community people to be aware of child marriage. Moreover, the LCRC member herself, along with her students, organized a rally against child marriage. Likewise, school and community representatives also formed a committee and frequently discussed child marriage and worked to stop child marriages. She recounted that once, during her visits with parents/guardians in the community, she saw 15- to 16-year-old girls cutting grass. Then she got back to their parents and said, “What will you do by keeping them like this, marriage cannot happen before the age of 20. That’s why to educate them at least until

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<sup>2</sup> A small unit of the community

grade nine to ten—I will admit them.” She was able to admit five or six girls to school by convincing their guardians that it was important.

The teacher acknowledged the supporting role of the R-CEFM project in decreasing cases of child marriage in this community of Dalits and appreciated the positive change brought about with the contributions of the R-CEFM project.

## Story J: A Ward Official in Durga Bhagwati's Perspective of the Reduction in CEFM

According to a ward official of the Durga Bhagwati rural municipality, his community was not aware of the negative impacts of child marriage and did not regard child marriage as an issue. He explained that illiterate community members had more child marriage practices than literate community people. He further shared that “those community people, who can read had been doing marriage as per Nepal Government’s laws and systems, but people who were unable to read had not understood the system and laws that marriage should be done only after 20 years of age. They further felt a burden as their children got older, especially towards adolescent girls, and they feared social disgrace.” According to the ward official, people in the community with this perspective would marry their girls as soon as they could.

The introduction of the R-CEFM project to the ward official’s community brought a new approach to reduce child marriage through learning about and implementing different activities such as training, orientation, and interaction meetings against child marriage. The ward official also shared that the R-CEFM project supported the rural municipality in mobilizing concerned stakeholders such as rural municipality representatives, social leaders, community people, news reporters, and guardians to reduce child marriage at the ward level. With this active and meaningful participation of everyone, child marriage has been decreasing in this ward. He illustrated that “they are still working against child marriage and child marriage is declining, they coordinate with the ward and rural municipality while working on it.”

The ward official perceived that among several changes brought by the R-CEFM project in collaboration with Durga Bhagwati and his ward, the reduction in child marriage was the MSC. He highlighted this change as the most significant because “after reduction of child marriage, the child automatically can continue their education. If girls can be educated at least up to the grade of 12 in every municipality, it will be the means and source for girls’ self-reliance.”

During the R-CEFM project, every representative of this ward, such as the police, local community people, and local party representatives, participated in and supported reducing child marriage with the help of the R-CEFM project. All participants actively took part in municipality- and ward-led programs related to child marriage awareness such as street rallies and dramas and meetings. Similarly, several rounds of the awareness program contributed to change the traditional mindset of parents towards child marriage, helping them to understand that marriage should occur only after 20 years. The wards and rural municipality are collaboratively working with religious leaders, teachers, students, and youths with support from the R-CEFM project. Such collaboration has enabled the changes for reducing child marriage. Through this collaborative work, “they made a plan, effectively implemented it, and brought a change in the child marriage situation,” explained the ward official.

## Annex 2: Interview Guide for Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

### ANNEX 2: MSC guidelines for FGDs and KIIs

#### QUESTIONS

#### प्रश्नावली

##### If interview:

- MSC key informant interview number:
- MSC key informant's professional title:
- Participant type:
- MSC key informant location (e.g. Province, Municipality, etc.):

##### यदि अन्तर्वाता भएमा,

- अन्तर्वाता नम्बर
- अन्तर्वाता दिनेको पद
- अन्तर्वाता दिनेको किसिम
- अन्तर्वाता दिनेको बासस्थान (जस्तै प्रदेश, पालिका)

##### If group discussion:

- MSC focus group discussion number:
- Participant type:
- MSC key informant location (e.g. Province, Municipality, etc.):

##### यदी समुहगत छलफल भएमा,

- समुहगत छलफल नम्बर
- समुहगत छलफलका सहभागिको किसिम
- समुहगत छलफलका सहभागिको बासस्थान (जस्तै प्रदेश, पालिका)

#### Guiding questions for Most Significant Change activity

#### सबै भन्दा महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन सम्बन्धी अध्ययनको लागि मुख्य प्रश्नावली

Question	Probe
1. Please tell me what you know about the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What is the Nepal R-CEFM Project doing in your ward/municipality/province? ➤ तपाईंको प्रदेश/पालिका/वार्डमा आर सि एफ एम परियोजनाले के गर्दै छ ?</li></ul>

Question	Probe
<p>Nepal R-CEFM Project.</p> <p>तपाईंलाई आर सि एफ एम परियोजनाको बारेमा के थाहा छ ?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Since when has the Nepal R-CEFM Project worked in your ward/municipality/province? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ यो प्रदेश/पालिका/वार्डमा आर सि एफ एम परियोजनाले कहिले देखि काम गर्न थालेको हो ?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Have you participated in any Nepal R-CEFM activities in your ward/municipality/province? What were those activities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ के तपाईं आर सि एफ एम परियोजनाले सञ्चालन गरेको कुनै क्रियाकलापमा सहभागी हुनुभएको थियो ? यदि थियो भने कुन क्रियाकलापमा सहभागी हुन भएको थियो ?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● In your opinion, what could the R-CEFM Project do to improve? What activities would you like to see? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ तपाईंको बिचारमा उक्त परियोजनाले आफ्नो उद्देश्य हासिल गर्न कस्ता क्रियाकलाप सञ्चालन गर्नु पर्दछ ? उक्त परियोजनाले तपाईंको ठाउँमा कस्ता क्रियाकलापहरू सञ्चालन गरोस जस्तो लाग्दछ ?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Note: The participant may not know the name of the project. If the participant has not heard of the Nepal R-CEFM Project by name, you can rephrase the questions as follows:</p> <p>नोट: अन्तर्वाता वा छलफलमा सहभागीहरूलाई परियोजनाको नाम थाहा नहुन सक्दछ । यदि सहभागीहरूलाई परियोजनाको बारेमा थाहा नभएमा, सहभागीहरूलाई यसरी सोध्नुहोस:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have you heard of a project working to reduce CEFM in your community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ के तपाईंले बलपूर्वक गराईने बाल विवाह न्युन गर्ने परियोजनाको बारेमा सुन्नु भएको छ ?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● What have you heard about the project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ उक्त परियोजनाको बारेमा के सुन्नु भएको छ ?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● What is that project doing? How long has the project been working in your ward/municipality/province? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ तपाईंको जानकारीमा उक्त परियोजनाले के गरिरहेको छ ? यस वार्ड, नगरपालिका, प्रदेशहरूमा उक्त परियोजनाको कहिले देखि सन्चालनमा छन् ?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Have you participated in any activities related to reducing CEFM in your ward/municipality/province? What were those activities?</li> </ul>

Question	Probe
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ के तपाईं उक्त परियोजना अन्तर्गत सञ्चालन भएका कुनै क्रियाकलापमा सहभागी हुनु भएको थियो? यदि थिए भने, कुन कुन क्रियाकलापहरू छन् ?</li> <li>● In your opinion, what could this project trying to reduce CEFM do to improve? What activities would you like to see?</li> <li>➤ तपाईंको बिचारमा उक्त परियोजनाले आफ्नो उद्देश्य हासिल गर्न कस्ता क्रियाकलाप सञ्चालन गर्नु पर्दछ ? उक्त परियोजनाले तपाईंको ठाउँमा कस्ता क्रियाकलापहरू सञ्चालन गरोस जस्तो लाग्दछ ?</li> </ul>
<p>2. In your opinion, what have been some of the changes that have taken place after the Nepal R-CEFM Project [after the project trying to reduce CEFM] came in? तपाईंको बिचारमा बालबिबाह न्यून गराउने परियोजना यस ठाउँमा लागू भए पश्चात के कस्ता परिवर्तन महसुस गर्नु भएको छ ?</p>	<p>Important probes to construct a complete story: निम्न कुराहरू सोध्नुहोस:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What was the situation like before? पहिलेको (परियोजना लागू हुनु भन्दा अगाडिको ) अवस्था कस्तो थियो ?</li> <li>● How is the situation now? अहिलेको अवस्था कस्तो छ ?</li> <li>● How was this change possible? यो परिवर्तन कसरी सम्भव हुन सक्यो?</li> <li>● What were some of the challenges/barriers to make this change happen? How were these overcome? यी परिवर्तन भईरहेका के कस्ता समस्या अथवा बाधाहरू आईपरे? यी बाधाहरूलाई कसरी समाधान गरियो ?</li> <li>● What are the benefits people are experiencing as the result of this change? यी परिवर्तनले गर्दा कसले के कस्तो फाईदाको महसुस गरिरहेका छन् ?</li> <li>● Who was involved in making this change? यी परिवर्तन आउनमा सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका कसको रहेको थियो ?</li> <li>● Was this change expected or unexpected? Why? के यी परिवर्तनहरू आसातित थिए कि अप्रत्यासित पनि थिए ? किन?</li> </ul>
<p>3. Of these changes, what do you think is the most significant one? यी परिवर्तनहरू मध्ये, तपाईंको बिचारमा सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन कुन हो ?</p>	
<p>4. Why do you think this is the most significant change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What makes it significant or important in your opinion? तपाईंलाई के कारणले गर्दा यो महत्वपूर्ण लाग्यो ?</li> </ul>



Question	Probe
<p>तपाईंलाई यही परिवर्तन नै सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण किन लाग्यो?</p>	
<p>5. In your opinion, how do the people in your ward/municipality/province feel about this change? तपाईंको बिचारमा यस वार्ड/पालिका/प्रदेशका ब्यक्तिहरुले यो परिवर्तन लाई कसरि हेर्नु भएको छ? यो परिवर्तन प्रति उहाँहरूको बिचार के छ ?</p>	
<p>6. In your opinion, what should be done to make sure this change is sustained? तपाईंको बिचारमा उक्त परिवर्तनलाई दिगो बनाउन के गर्नु पर्दछ ?</p>	
<p>7. What are other changes you think are most significant that happened as a result of the CEFM Project? आर सि एफ एम परियोजनाको कारण भएका अन्य मुख्य परिवर्तनहरू के के हुन् ?</p>	<p>Important probes to construct a complete story: निम्न कुराहरू सोध्नुहोसः</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What was the situation like before? पहिलेको (परियोजना लागु हुनु भन्दा अगाडिको ) अवस्था कस्तो थियो ?</li> <li>● How is the situation now? अहिलेको अवस्था कस्तो छ ?</li> <li>● How was this change possible? यो परिवर्तन कसरी सम्भव हुन सक्यो?</li> <li>● What were some of the challenges/barriers to make this change happen? How were these overcome? यी परिवर्तन भईरहेका के कस्ता समस्या अथवा बाधाहरू आईपरे? यी बाधाहरूलाई कसरी समाधान गरियो ?</li> <li>● What are the benefits people are experiencing as the result of this change? यी परिवर्तनले गर्दा कसले के कस्तो फाईदाको महसुस गरिरहेका छन् ?</li> <li>● Who was involved in making this change? यी परिवर्तन आउनमा सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका कसको रहेको थियो ?</li> <li>● Was this change expected or unexpected? Why? के यी परिवर्तनहरू आसातित थिए कि अप्रत्यासित पनि थिए ? किन?</li> </ul>
<p>8. In your opinion, what are some of the unexpected changes that have happened as a result of the program?</p>	<p>Important probes to construct a complete story: निम्न कुराहरू सोध्नुहोसः</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What was the situation like before? पहिलेको (परियोजना लागु हुनु भन्दा अगाडिको) अवस्था कस्तो थियो ?</li> <li>● How is the situation now? अहिलेको अवस्था कस्तो छ ?</li> <li>● How was this change possible? यो परिवर्तन कसरी सम्भव हुन सक्यो?</li> </ul>

Question	Probe
<p>तपाईंको बिचारमा, यस परियोजनाले ल्याएका अप्रत्याशित नतिजाहरू के हुन् ?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What were some of the challenges/barriers to make this change happen? How were these overcome? यी परिवर्तन भईरहेका के कस्ता समस्या अथवा बाधाहरू आईपरे? यी बाधाहरूलाई कसरी समाधान गरियो ?</li> <li>● What are the benefits people are experiencing as the result of this change? यी परिवर्तनले गर्दा कसले के कस्तो फाइदाको महसुस गरिरहेका छन् ?</li> <li>● Who was involved in making this change? यी परिवर्तन आउनमा सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका कसको रहेको थियो ?</li> <li>● Was this change expected or unexpected? Why? के यी परिवर्तनहरू आसातित थिए कि अप्रत्यासित पनि थिए ? किन?</li> </ul>
<p>9. If I want to learn more about the changes that have taken place in this community, whom do you think I should talk to? मलाई यस समुदायमा आएका परिवर्तनहरूका बारेमा थप बुझ्न परेमा, तपाईंको बिचारमा मैले अरू कुन ब्यक्ति सँग बुझ्नु पर्दछ ?</p>	