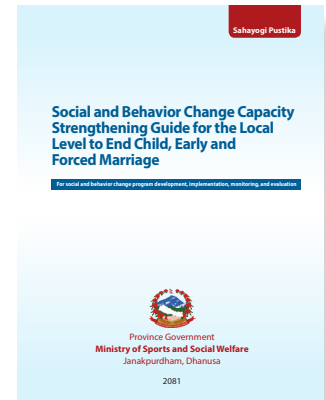


Social and Behavior Change Capacity Strengthening Job Aid for the Local Level to Reduce Child, Early and Forced Marriage

This Sahayogi Pustika—or job aid for reducing child, early, forced marriages (CEFM)—is designed to help key Madhesh province local government staff, especially the municipality Women, Children, Senior Citizens (WCSC) Section chief, child welfare officer, and ward secretary responsible for reducing CEFM, plan, implement, and monitor programs within the Nepal Government system to reduce CEFM (R-CEFM).

Child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) remains a common practice despite the legal age of marriage for men and women in Nepal being 20 years since 2017. The prevalence of child marriage (under 18) in Madhesh Province is 37% (19% for boys and 52% for girls) (National Census 2021). According to the local CEFM census conducted by 6 Rautahat and Mahottari municipalities in 2022 and 2023, the prevalence of child and early marriages in these municipalities ranged from 20% to 41%, with boys encountering rates from 6% to 28% and girls experiencing rates between 35% and 59%.

The Sahayogi Pustika can support local-level government staff to implement activities to reduce CEFM in support of the Madhesh Province's 10-Year Provincial Strategic Plan to end CEFM, 2078, and help municipalities work towards evidence-based CEFM-free status (please also see Province Guide to Declare area CEFM free).



"Sahayogi Pustika (job aid) lives up to its name; it helps us in every aspect of our job," says Junaida Khatun, the Women, Children, and Senior Citizens (WCSC) Section Chief of Rajpur Municipality, Rautahat. "It has enabled us to work independently, without having to rely on others to perform our duties."

Rachana Jha, WCSC Section Chief of Pipara Rural Municipality, Mahottari, states, "This job aid is designed to assist us with implementing R-CEFM activities, but it actually helps us in every program we run in our municipality."

Yasoda Karki Bhandari, WCSC Section Chief of Loharpatti Municipality, Mahottari, adds, "Sahayogi Pustika contains all the necessary documents, making it easier to implement our programs."

Deepa Das, the section chief of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens section of Matihani Municipality, Mahottari, says, "This Sahayogi Pustika has greatly assisted me in understanding and effectively implementing activities to reduce child, early and forced marriage, including how to conduct the activities, whom to involve, which forms to fill for advances, and how to settle advance."

"The provisions and descriptions in Sahayogi Pustika are so clear that even the ward secretaries, who usually need guidance at every step, are now capable of implementing programs on their own with its help," says Anita Sah of the WCSC Section, Jaleswor Municipality, Mahottari.

Monika Jayasawal, the section chief of the Women, Children, and Senior Citizens section of Durgabhagwati Rural Municipality, Rautahat, emphasizes, "In our annual plan, the Sahayogi Pustika has facilitated the preparation based on data for implementing activities to reduce child marriage, and it has made it easier to identify the status of child marriage in the community afterwards."

How was it developed?

The Sahayogi Pustika was co-designed, tested and developed by officials and representatives of 51 wards within six municipalities from Mahottari and Rautahat districts. WCSC Section chiefs, Social Development Committee coordinators, Executive Committee members (mayor/chairperson, deputy mayor/vice-chairperson, ward chairs, women, Dalit representative), ward secretaries, chief administrative officer (CAO), and other related staff were involved. Concerned provincial ministry and representatives of organizations such as CARE Nepal, Plan International, UNFPA, SAVE, and UNICEF) that are working to reduce CEFM, also reviewed the document.



What is in the Sahayogi Pustika?

The Sahayogi Pustika contains detailed steps and a timeline for what the WCSC Section, child welfare officer, and ward secretary can do to ensure that social and behavior change (SBC) activities for reducing CEFM are easily selected and effectively implemented and monitored.

The Sahayogi Pustika is divided into three sections that align with local government processes for annual planning and budgeting.

- **Section 1:** Preparation beforehand: before starting the process of preparing the annual work plan and budget. (from mid-March, April, and mid-May)
- **Section 2:** Advocacy: after the annual work plan and budget formulation process starts (mid-May to mid-July)
- **Section 3:** Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation: after the annual work plan is approved. (every year after mid-July)

The annex includes detailed implementation plans for 11 activities strategically developed and tested through a human-centered design approach by six municipalities in Madhesh Province to reduce CEFM are included.

Social and behavior change approaches to reduce CEFM

In Madhesh Province, most of the marriages are arranged by the family/parents. Parents are found to be influenced by neighbors and relatives or by various groups in the community. The reduction of CEFM depends on creating a supportive community environment. The responsibility for shaping this environment rests upon each member of our community. Therefore, when discussing CEFM social and behavior change, it is important to consider not only the individual but also the family, society, and relevant policies and regulations. It is important to create an atmosphere that discourages CEFM and promotes waiting till a boy or girl turns 20 before marriage within our communities.



The data clearly indicates that CEFM is rooted in the family and broader societal dynamics and influenced by prevalent social and gender norms. The social and behavioral reasons that contribute to CEFM in the six R-CEFM project municipalities were articulated by key stakeholders as:

- Parents who marry off their daughters at an early age are concerned about the threat to the reputation of the family if the daughter has to face any allegations related to her character.
- Parents do not give priority to their daughters' education. Daughters then falter in their studies, leading to losing interest in them. They are then married off to fulfill the parents' responsibility and save money.
- Stakeholders do not acknowledge/internalize the presence of CEFM in all groups in their communities regardless of religion, class, education, or place of residence.
- People who are willing to work against CEFM have not been able to come together.
- Influential civil society members are not proactive in reducing CEFM.

This section and the brief ends abruptly. Please add a sentence or two to tie it back to the Sahayogi Pustika

Child, early, forced marriage (CEFM) remains a common practice in Madhesh Province driven by prevailing broader societal dynamics influenced by prevalent social and gender norms. This Sahayogi Pustika with its Madhesh field-tested social and behavioral change approaches is designed to help key Madhesh province local government staff in their efforts to reduce CEFM in their locality through systematic planning, implementation, and program monitoring process.



Please use the QR code below to access the Sahayogi Pustika digital version

Disclaimer: This manual is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported Breakthrough ACTION project. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



Province Government
Ministry of Sports and Social Welfare
Janakpurdham, Dhanusa