Child Grooms of Nepal

Boys forced to marry as young as 7 years old in Nepal endure psychological trauma, have children early and often drop out of school to support their new families, according to a report from the poverty-fighting group CARE. Titled “Dads Too Soon: The Child Grooms of Nepal,” the report sheds new light on an issue often seen through the eyes of girls, who suffer the most at the hands of child marriage. Through stories and statistics, the multimedia report details the forces pushing both girls and boys into early marriages in parts of western Nepal. The analysis comes amid fears that April’s deadly earthquake, which devastated the capital Kathmandu and surrounding areas, will further isolate rural communities and increase child marriage rates. But it offers hope, too. Through CARE’s Tipping Point program, former child grooms are emerging as key allies in the movement to strike at the roots of child marriage in Nepal. View the report to learn more.

CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. We place special focus on working alongside poor women because, equipped with the proper resources, women have the power to help whole families and entire communities escape poverty. In 2014, CARE touched the lives of 72 million people in 90 countries with over 880 poverty-fighting programs.
CHILD MARRIAGE
OFTEN LOOKS LIKE THIS.

Child Grooms of Nepal
But in Nepal, the face of child marriage also looks like this.
AND THIS.
THESE ARE BOYS FORCED TO BE MEN.
AND FATHERS.
THEY ARE CHILD GROOMS.

Child Grooms of Nepal
CHILD MARRIAGE TAKES ITS HEAVIEST TOLL ON GIRLS.

THEY ARE FORCED TO LIVE WITH THEIR HUSBANDS’ FAMILY, SPEND THEIR DAYS DOING HOME CHORES, AND OFTEN ENDURE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND COMPLICATIONS FROM CHILDBIRTH.
AMONG THE POOR, MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES OF WESTERN NEPAL, CHILD GROOMS SUFFER TOO.

PARSHURAM HARIJAN’S TRAUMA STARTED ON HIS WEDDING DAY.
UNABLE TO UNTIE HIS DHOTI, PARSHURAM URINATED IN THE TRADITIONAL OUTFIT.

HE FELT ASHAMED, AS IF HE HAD SULLIED HIS WEDDING DAY.
HE WAS 9 YEARS OLD.

Child Grooms of Nepal
THREE YEARS LATER, PARSHURAM’S WIFE MOVED IN. THEY WERE EXPECTED TO PRODUCE A CHILD.

PARSHURAM SAID HE WAS NOT PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY READY. HE WAS 12.

“I WAS OVERWHELMED,” HE SAID. “I COULDN’T DO WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF ME AS A MARRIED MAN.”
OFFICIALLY, THE LEGAL AGE OF MARRIAGE IN NEPAL IS 18.
BUT THAT IS LARGELY IGNORED - FOR BOTH GIRLS AND BOYS - HERE AMONG
THE RICE-FARMING VILLAGES OF WESTERN NEPAL, NEAR THE BORDER WITH INDIA.
Child Grooms of Nepal
Western Nepal's concentration of child grooms is enough to make Nepal one of only 8 countries in the world where more than 10% of boys marry before the age of 18.

Source: UNICEF
Child Grooms of Nepal

MATHURA DHOBI
MARRIED AT AGE 12.
Child Grooms of Nepal

HIS WIFE, SHIVNANDANI, WAS 10.
TO SUPPORT HIS FAMILY, MATHURA DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL IN 8TH GRADE TO TOIL IN THE PADDY FIELDS.

Child Grooms of Nepal
Once a top student, Mathura wonders what life would have been like had he been able to stay in school.

Click here to meet Mathura.
TODAY HE LIVES UNDER THIS ROOF WITH HIS PARENTS, WIFE, SON, DAUGHTER, THREE BROTHERS AND TWO OXEN.

"THERE'S A LOT OF HARDSHIP," MATHURA SAYS. "WE ARE NOT HAPPY."

Child Grooms of Nepal
Child Grooms of Nepal

MATHURA’S FATHER, SHIV PUJAN DHOBI, SAID HE ACTUALLY DIDN’T WANT TO MARRY OFF HIS SON YOUNG BECAUSE HE KNEW HIS OWN MARRIAGE AT AGE 10 HAD TRAPPED HIM IN POVERTY.
BUT HE FELT INTENSE PRESSURE FROM FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS.

CLICK TO HEAR FROM MATHURA’S FATHER

Child Grooms of Nepal
Mathura’s mother, Kamalawati Dhobi, feared the family would be stigmatized if her eldest son wasn’t married early. She also wanted a daughter-in-law who could help ease the burden of home chores.

Click to hear from Mathura’s mother.
AND THAT’S EXACTLY WHAT SHIVNANDANI DHOBI DOES TODAY, FROM COOKING FOR THE FAMILY TO SWEEPING COW DUNG.

CLICK TO HEAR FROM MATHURA’S WIFE
SO WHAT ARE THE OTHER REASONS WHY BOYS MARRY YOUNG IN NEPAL?

AVOID ‘LOVE’ MARRIAGE

protect family honor

fear that good wives will be gone

CONTROL OF SEXUALITY

create new income-earner in family

Assure marriage within caste.

Child Grooms of Nepal
Some grandparents believe that seeing their grandchildren get married brings Hindu blessings and increases their chances at an afterlife.

Families of young girls often want to marry them off, too, to lower the dowry price and have one less mouth to feed.

Families struggling to feed themselves get sons married early for a dowry of livestock, furniture or other goods.

Boys and young men often travel to India or the Middle East for work, and families believe a married son is more likely to send money back home.
There is a silver lining emerging, however, in the fog that envelops these poor communities dotting the flatlands along Nepal’s border with India.
FORMER CHILD GROOMS SUCH AS PANNILAL YADAV (FAR LEFT) HAVE BECOME KEY ALLIES IN A PROGRAM, CALLED THE TIPPING POINT, THAT STRIKES AT THE ROOT CAUSES OF CHILD MARRIAGE.

CLICK HERE TO READ MORE ABOUT CARE’S TIPPING POINT PROGRAM

Child Grooms of Nepal
Child Grooms of Nepal
Child Grooms of Nepal
AND GIRLS.

Child Grooms of Nepal
REMEMBER PARSHURAM, WHO FELT PRESSURED TO BECOME A FATHER AT AGE 12?

His first marriage ended

He married again at age 14, wedding Mayadevi, who is pictured here with their son Sakcham

Today, he is part of the solution too,

Click here to read how Parshuram fights child marriage today.

Child Grooms of Nepal
Mathura’s father Shiv is among those who have changed. He and his wife vow not to marry off their younger sons.
HE HOPES HIS GRANDCHILDREN GROW UP IN A WORLD WHERE
BOYS AND GIRLS AREN’T FORCED TO TRADE CHILDHOOD FOR MARRIAGE.

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