



TIPPING POINT NEPAL
Phase 1 Evaluation Findings

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
ACRONYMS.....	3
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION	7
SECTION II: EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS	9
PROJECT MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING OVERVIEW	9
ENDLINE EVALUATION	10
METHODS	10
CHANGE ANALYSES.....	12
SECTION III: EVALUATION FINDINGS	13
1. REPLANTING THE FUTURE, GROWING SKILLS AND DREAMS: ADOLESCENT GIRLS	14
2. TODAY’S BROTHERS, TOMORROW’S HUSBANDS: ADOLESCENT BOYS	22
3. BETTER LISTENERS, BETTER SUPPORT: PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS	26
3. SHIFTING SOIL, WIDER PATHS: SOCIAL NORMS.....	29
4. GATHERING ALLIES, BUILDING NETWORKS: PARTNERS AND ADVOCACY	34
5. INSPIRING CHANGE, BEING CHANGE: PROJECT STAFF	37
CONCLUSIONS	40
SECTION IV: PROGRAMMING AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	41
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GIRLS’ EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL NORMS PROGRAMMING ADDRESSING CEFM	41
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	43
ANNEX I: MOST IMPACTFUL ACTIVITIES	45
ANNEX II: PREDOMINANT SOCIAL NORMS	48
REFERENCES	50

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ACRONYMS

CPA	Community Participatory Analysis
DSDC	Dalit Social Development Committee
FGD	Focus group discussion
SSS	Siddhartha Samudayik Samaj
VCPC	Village Child Protection Committee
VDC	Village Development Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Phase 1 of CARE's Tipping Point project addressed child marriage through a dynamic process of innovation, insight, and influence in two districts of Nepal in partnership with Siddhartha Samudayik Samaj (SSS) and Dalit Social Development Centre (DSDC). In its first phase, the project promoted girls' rights and choices regarding marriage in 16 communities using complementary approaches with collectives of girls, boys, and parents, who regularly participated in meetings, and advocacy events to raise public awareness and promote gender-equitable social norms. The project also engaged allies and potential champions for girls' rights, including government and civil society, to help drive social change and direct more resources towards girls' empowerment in project communities.

At the conclusion of Phase 1, an external evaluation team visited project sites in Kapilvastu and Rupandehi to conduct qualitative data collection with girls, boys, parents, and community members. The evaluation team's findings indicate that Tipping Point's iterative and adaptive strategies have contributed to several changes in the lives of girls, the actions of parents and community members to support girls, and social norms that promote gender equity. Among the results:

- **Girls demonstrated growth in their communication and negotiation skills, personal aspirations, and practical knowledge.** Notably, girls demonstrated increased reflection and understanding of themselves and their desires and aspirations for their futures, in a context where girls are not commonly encouraged to have thoughts about the course of their lives. Similarly, girls' expectations for marriage and the ideal age of marriage evolved into wanting a later marriage, with simultaneous *gauna*,¹ to a man who will share daily household chores. Through life skills education, girls gained skills in self-advocacy: there were many examples of girls asserting their rights with family members over important life events, such as marriage, and smaller matters like time to socialize. Sexuality education increased girls' knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, especially in menstrual hygiene management but also family planning. Tipping Point also supported livelihood skills development in some areas. Lastly, girls took on visible roles leading and organizing community events that challenged traditional gender roles and supported girls' rights.
- **Boys grew into better brothers for their sisters and started to think critically about their place in a family.** The most notable change among boys was a new appreciation of women's traditional duties in the home like cooking, sewing, and washing clothes. Through group exercises to map girls' and boys' use of time, public competitions for boys in cooking and sewing, and other project activities, boys came to understand that their sisters had a greater burden of labor and that it was skilled labor. They began taking on more household work to allow sisters to study and relax and advocated for them with parents. Boys also advocated for girls in their communities by participating in street dramas about child marriage, dowry violence, and other issues, and joining

¹ *Gauna* refers to the consummation of marriage within the Hindu religion, in the Southern belt of Nepal. Once a young girl is married, she will continue to live with her parents until after menarche. On the day of her *gauna*, her conjugal life begins, and she joins her husband's family household.

girls in girls' other advocacy work. When it came to their own marriages, boys wanted to marry later than their older peers, but they showed varied levels of change in the qualities they desired in a future marriage.

- **Parents demonstrated a greater commitment to their daughters' educations and defended girls' rights to be active citizens.** Parents grew increasingly supportive of sending their daughters to school and prioritized school attendance over household work. There were many cases of girls returning to school, sometimes facilitated by scholarships awarded through the project. Parents also indicated that they had begun to give more value to a girl's ability to be self-reliant, make decisions for herself, and play a role in the community. Related to these changes, adolescents and parents alike reported better communication with each other.
- **Government and civil society agencies collaborated with the project.** Tipping Point built relationships with local agencies and actors, some of whom were already strong advocates for girls, such as Village Child Protection Committees (VCPCs), and others who sometimes opposed more equitable social norms for girls. Some religious leaders, for example, were active with the project and sought closer collaboration, while some rejected the project's messages. Government groups were increasingly responsive as they came to know the project and its mission, and some Village Development Committees (VDC) funded sports equipment and community meeting spaces for adolescents. School Management Committees in some locations started providing menstrual pads and changing facilities for girls, which improved girls' school attendance.
- **Tipping Point project staff found themselves thinking in new ways and doing things they never imagined.** Because local staff were the faces of Tipping Point, the project prioritized fostering their own personal transformation on issues of gender and power. Through workshops and personal reflections, staff internalized a critical awareness of the role of gender in their lives and discovered new capabilities in leading personal and social change. Despite challenges, staff reported pride in tackling tough issues like sexuality education with communities.
- **Key social norms that restrict girls' opportunities and autonomy loosened slightly.** Adolescent girls who participated in Tipping Point activities realized the biggest change in their families' and communities' expectations of them as compared to girls who did not join Tipping Point groups. Members of Tipping Point groups gained greater freedom to move around their village, ride bicycles, play sports outdoors, work with boys to organize community events, and express their opinions. Still, there was some normative diffusion from the project outward into communities, so that, for example, friends of boys in Tipping Point groups were more likely to say that they planned to share household work with their future wives. Girls faced social approbation through gossip and criticism of their non-traditional behaviors, but with the support of parents and each other, they largely disregarded it, demonstrating resilience in the face of sanctions for behavior outside the norm. There were also potential signs that economic considerations that families make in the process of marrying children may be shifting. Parents provided new justifications for

delaying marriage based on reducing ceremonial costs and lower dowry prices when girls are educated or earning an income.

In just a few years, Tipping Point has made significant progress in mobilizing advocates for girls' rights and in shifting social norms related to child marriage in Nepal. It is difficult to measure the impact of Tipping Point on the frequency of child marriage itself, but there were many stories of marriages averted through the intervention of parents, boys, and girls involved with the project or in conjunction with local groups like the VCPC.

The successes of Tipping Point to date have not fully overcome the many barriers girls continue to face in realizing their potential and achieving agency in key life decisions. However, there are successes that hold promise for the Tipping Point approach to social norm change and girls' empowerment. Tipping Point is unique in its active engagement of boys as brothers and future husbands, and the transformation of boys into advocates for girls is a surprising result that deserves attention. In addition, the project piloted new ways of operationalizing social norm change work, with programming according to a set of Social Norms Programming principles that include focusing on positive messages about girls rather than the negative outcomes of child marriage.² Tipping Point also deployed innovative ways of measuring social norms and normative change, based on CARE's SNAP framework,³ which can inform academic and program design thinking.

As the project enters its second phase, key goals will be to build upon the strong results achieved within the core girls', boys', and parents' groups to deepen the process of social norm change throughout communities. The project's model of diffusion, whereby group members engage intensively with the project and become community role models in inspiring social norm change, has worked to an extent but is uneven, requiring more effort to reach and make a difference to more marginalized groups such as girls who remain out of school. Strengthening networks of supporters will also increase the resonance of project messaging and will encourage more allies to take action and drive resources to girls. Like-minded religious leaders represent an opportunity for the project to expand its message's reach beyond the current project sites. Finally, in Phase 1, the potential of income generation to delay marriages of adolescent girls was not fully explored, and girls will benefit from more financial literacy and livelihood skills.

² Social Norms Innovation Briefs. *CARE Tipping Point*. Retrieved from <https://caretippingpoint.org/innovation/>

³ Stefanik, L.; Hwang, T. (2017). *CARE's Journey Piloting Social Norms Measures for Gender Programming* [PDF file]. Retrieved from <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/care-social-norms-paper-web.pdf>

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Phase 1 of CARE's Tipping Point project addressed root causes of child early and forced marriage (CEFM) through a dynamic process of innovation, insight, and influence in Nepal and Bangladesh, two countries with high rates of CEFM. The project focused on identifying the root causes of child marriage and facilitated innovative strategies to create alternative paths for adolescent girls. As a learning and innovation initiative, the full project is expected to contribute to the global understanding of the complex issues driving child marriage and different strategies that can foster a "tipping point" of sustainable change to prevent child marriage and create viable alternative paths for adolescent girls.

The legal age of marriage in Nepal is 20 years for both males and females. Despite this, the most recent data on child marriage rates show that 10% of women aged 20-24 were married by age 15 and 37% by age 18. Both girls and boys can be subject to child marriage, although boys on average marry four years later than girls.⁴

A unique aspect of child marriage practices in Nepal is the tradition of *gauna*. *Gauna* refers to the consummation of marriage within the Hindu religion, in the Southern belt of Nepal. Once a young girl is married, she will continue to live with her parents until after menarche. On the day of her *gauna*, her conjugal life begins, and she joins her husband's family household. The amount of time between marriage and *gauna* varies depending on the girl's age and usually lasts between one and five years.

Phase 1 of Tipping Point (2013-2017) focused on engaging adolescent girls, boys, parents, and community leaders in 16 villages where CEFM is common. This engagement occurred across two districts in partnership with Siddhartha Samudayik Samaj (SSS) and Dalit Social Development Centre (DSDC). Tipping Point's vision of change in Phase 1 was five-fold: build the agency of adolescents; change adolescents' relationships with key adults, particularly parents; transform social norms; and grow networks for collective action and influence. Personal change among project staff provides a foundation for change (Figure 1). Accordingly, the Phase 1 programming worked to create spaces for dialogue between adolescents, parents, and the broader community, deepen awareness for gender equity and rights, promote positive gender equitable norms, and encourage networking. Project activities varied across villages but were built on collective groups formed by the project. Each village had an adolescent girls' group, an adolescent boys' group, and a parents' group, facilitated by staff and volunteers. Groups participated in trainings and facilitated discussions on life skills, gender, adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, and engaged in creative processes to organize community events to spur discussion and advocate for social change.

⁴ Ministry of Health, Nepal; New ERA; and ICF (2017). *Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2016*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Ministry of Health, Nepal.

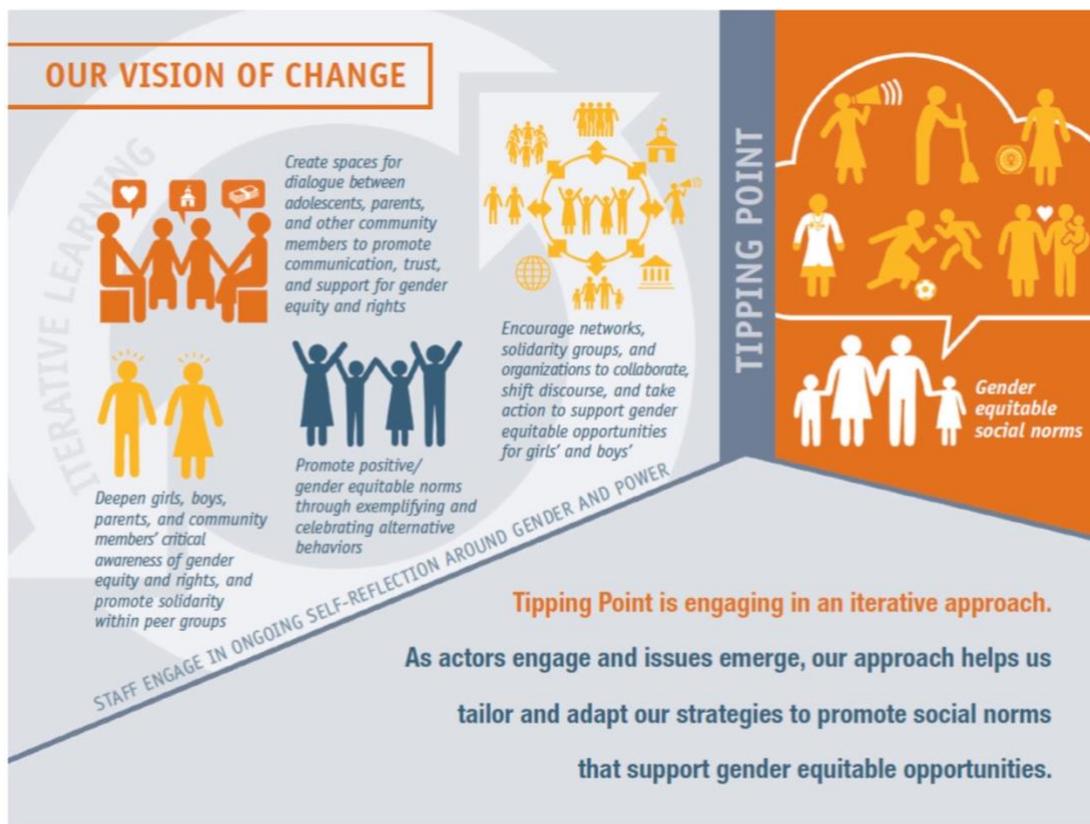


Figure 1. Theory of Change

In Phase 1, the project reached approximately 1,400 adolescents and parents who were intensively engaged in collective groups, which are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Numbers of Tipping Point Collective Group Participants

Group	Group members
Girls	621
Boys	367
Mothers	279
Fathers	124
TOTAL	1,391

Section II of this report includes a discussion of Tipping Point’s approach to monitoring, evaluation, and learning, the primary evaluation questions, methods used and process of analysis. **Section III** presents evaluation findings in six key outcome areas for the project: changes experienced by girls, boys, and parents, respectively; shifts in gender discriminatory social norms; building networks of allies for girls’ rights; and staff transformation. **Section IV** provides a set of recommendations for girls’ empowerment and social norms programming and details a set of policy implications for government actors. **Annex I** describes the project activities that participants deemed to be most impactful in their communities. **Annex II** displays a summary of key social norms in project communities, acceptable exceptions to them, and sanctions for breaking them.

SECTION II: EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS

PROJECT MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING OVERVIEW

The monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach for Phase 1 of Tipping Point (Figure 2) builds on developmental evaluation⁵ and feminist evaluation⁶ principles – which, together, facilitate innovation and prioritize learning.

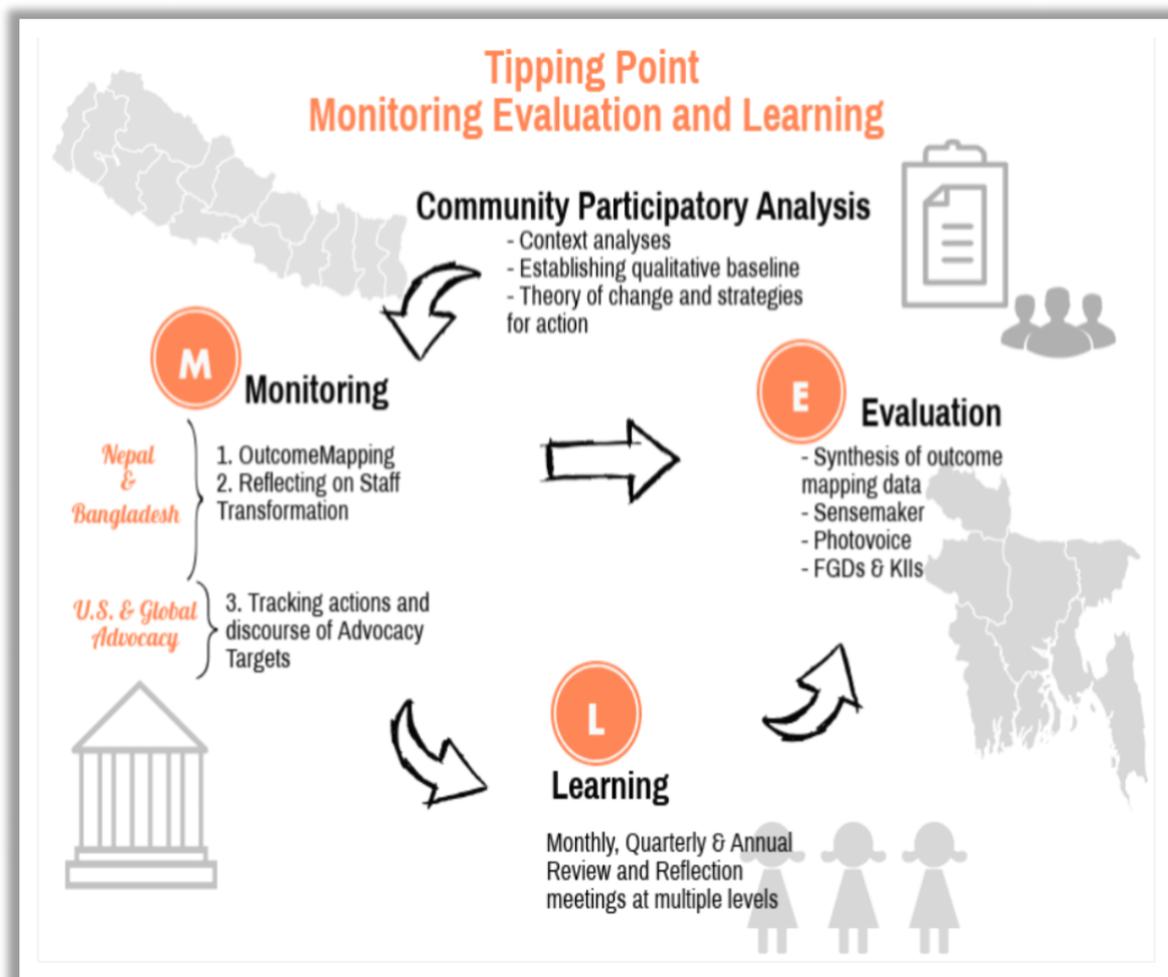


Figure 2. Monitoring, evaluation and learning approach

⁵ According to Patton (2010), developmental evaluation “supports innovation development to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments. Innovations can take the form of new projects, programs, products, organizational changes, policy reforms, and system interventions [...] Complex environments for social interventions and innovations are those in which what to do to solve problems is uncertain and key stakeholders are in conflict about how to proceed.”

⁶ Podems and Negroustoueva (2016) stated that “Feminist evaluation puts the voice of women and girls at the centre of knowledge generation for the purpose of achieving more equitable social outcomes and dismantling structural and systemic forms of gender-based discrimination. It is a way of thinking about evaluation rather than being a prescribed set of methods, but often draws upon qualitative and participatory approaches to advance social justice through inclusive and reflective practice.”

At the project's start in 2014, Tipping Point conducted a Community Participatory Analysis (CPA) to deepen understanding of the contextual factors and root causes driving the prevalence of child marriage in the two programming districts of the Terai region in Nepal.⁷ The project subsequently utilized Outcome Mapping⁸ as its core monitoring, reflection, and learning tool.

ENDLINE EVALUATION

For the endline evaluation, the project utilized a combination of qualitative methods to explore changes in three areas related to the Phase 1 programming in Nepal:

1. What expected and unexpected changes can be observed within the project communities in relation to core Tipping Point objectives? Were the changes meaningful and relevant for people?
2. What was the relationship between Tipping Point processes, approaches and activities and the changes observed? Did project activities contribute to these changes?
3. To what extent have there been changes in staff reflecting upon and taking up values, practices and action that model anti-oppression and reflect critically on beliefs about sexuality?

Note that as a qualitative assessment, the evaluation did not seek to quantify the average age of marriage or changes in the rate of married girls and boys in project communities.⁹ However, the qualitative methods used captured several stories of child marriages being averted or delayed as a result of project activities.

METHODS

This qualitative evaluation drew upon multiple methods for assessing the project's contributions to changes at community and individual levels.

1. Photovoice

The first component of the evaluation used Photovoice¹⁰ to explore the changes that adolescent boys and girls who had participated in Tipping Point programming perceived in their communities. In **Photovoice**, participants were taught basic photography and asked to document changes in their lives. They then returned to the group to discuss the significance of the images they took and what issues they represented. Photovoice was conducted with two groups of

⁷ Tipping Point project (2016). *The cultural context of child marriage in Nepal and Bangladesh. Findings from CARE's Tipping Point Project Community Participatory Analysis* [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/CARE_Tipping_Point_External_Report_Web.pdf

⁸ According to Smutylo (2005), outcome mapping is a methodology for planning, monitoring and evaluating development initiatives that aim to bring about social change. The process of outcome mapping helps a project team or program to be specific about the actors it targets, the changes it expects to see and the strategies it employs.

⁹ The evaluation team reviewed household mapping data to determine if any conclusions could be drawn about rates of child marriage, but more detailed data and analysis is required to understand the extent and nature of adolescents' migration in and out of project wards during the project.

¹⁰ Wang, C., & Burris, M. (1997). Photovoice: concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24 (3). Retrieved from: <http://heb.sagepub.com/content/24/3/369>

adolescent girls and one group of boys from two Tipping Point communities. Each group had 11 participants (see Table 2), and the average age of participants was 14-16 years old.¹¹ Among the girls who participated, four were married.



“This is a photograph of Tipping Point participants with CARE staff at the girls’ group meeting place. This photo is important because ladies from different places came to teach us about photography. We learned and can use the skill whenever we get the opportunity. I like this photo, because I didn’t know how to use a camera, but you came and taught us. If I didn’t know but had a camera, I would not do it. But now I know and can do it.”

Adolescent girl, age 17

2. Focus group discussions and interviews

The second component of the evaluation took place in five of the communities where Tipping Point worked. This component consisted of focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews. Table 2 shows the number of FGDs and interviews completed with individuals who participated in Tipping Point collective groups, and individuals who had not.

Table 2. Number of Photovoice participants, FGDs, and in-depth interviews

	Tipping Point group members and staff				Non-Tipping Point group members				
	Girls	Boys	Parents	Tipping Point staff	Girls	Boys	Parents	Religious leaders	Community and district leaders
Photovoice	22	11							
FGDs	7	5	4	3	2	2	4	2	
Interviews	2	1	2	2					4

The evaluation was also informed by two other methods of analysis: Outcome Mapping¹² change stories recorded by project teams over 14 months as part of the project monitoring and reflection system; and CARE’s Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP)¹³ framework used to conceptualize and assess progress made towards reducing the prevalence of gender discriminatory social norms. The Outcome Mapping monitoring and reflection system consists of change stories about notable events witnessed by staff in project communities. These stories demonstrated a person’s behavior related to the project’s desired outcomes and goals. CARE’s SNAP framework was utilized as a tool to differentiate empirical expectations (what I think others do) and normative expectations (what I

¹¹ Photovoice. CARE Tipping Point. Retrieved from <https://caretippingpoint.org/about-photovoice/>

¹² Tipping Point project (2018). Tipping Point Phase 1 Outcome Mapping report. Retrieved from https://caretippingpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Phase1_OutcomeMapping.pdf

¹³ Stefanik, L.; Hwang, T. (2017). CARE’s Journey Piloting Social Norms Measures for Gender Programming [PDF file]. Retrieved from <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/care-social-norms-paper-web.pdf>

think others expect me to do). It also explores dimensions of social norms that can indicate how they might be shifting or loosening, namely, social sanctions for transgressing norms, such as gossip, isolation, or ridicule, and exceptions under which a person might transgress norms without being sanctioned. A reduction in sanctions or an expansion of the exceptions to the norm suggests a norm undergoing change. Additionally, not all individuals are equally sensitive to the effects of social sanctions; empowerment programs can bolster people's confidence or resolve to act contrary to dominant norms despite sanctions. The SNAP framework informed the evaluation interview questions and the tools used to explore social norm change in FGDs relating to the rights of adolescent girls specifically and processes of marriage generally.

CHANGE ANALYSES

The evaluation compared the data from the CPA in 2014 with endline data. In particular, two focus group discussion (FGD) exercises from the CPA were replicated:

- 1) Visioning exercise—This exercise was conducted to explore the dreams and aspirations of adolescents, paying attention to the barriers and facilitators to those dreams.
- 2) Risks & benefits—This exercise sought to understand parents' perceptions of the risks and benefits of child marriage versus delaying marriage, with special focus on girls. Findings from the risks and benefits exercises relate to changes in what parents consider when making decisions about their daughters' marriages.

The analysis also compared the data from FGDs with Tipping Point group members with FGD data from community members that had not joined Tipping Point groups, to see if exposure to project activities made a difference to individuals' attitudes, skills, expectations, and behaviors. The evaluation team triangulated the findings from the FGDs and interviews with Outcome Mapping change stories and Photovoice results to draw conclusions about the project's impact.

SECTION III: EVALUATION FINDINGS

Tipping Point set out an ambitious agenda for a roughly three-year-long Phase 1, to engage with multiple layers of the world around adolescent girls, along with girls themselves. At the end of this first phase, girls experienced personal growth in their psychosocial skills and practical knowledge, from knowing how to sew menstrual pads to negotiating with parents for the right to play outdoors. Boys grew into better brothers for their sisters and started to think critically about their place in a family. Parents found a greater commitment to their daughters' educations and defended girls' rights to be active citizens. Government and civil society agencies have moved a step closer to Tipping Point as potential partners. Tipping Point project staff found themselves thinking in new ways and doing things they never imagined they could do. Finally, a few key social norms that restrict girls' opportunities and autonomy have opened up in some circumstances.

This section lays out the key findings of the evaluation regarding the project's contribution to the following five outcomes:

1(a): Girls have critical awareness of gender and rights, and strengthen confidence, skills, and social capital for making progressive choices in their lives; and **1(b):** boys reflect critically on how society's expectations of "what it means to be men" affect their lives and relationships; advocate for their own rights to freedom of choice in life, specifically about marriage and education; and become role models for gender-equitable values and behaviors

2: Parents value the voices, opinions and aspirations of adolescent girls

3: Social norms related to marriage (dowry expectations, perceptions of girls' potential, and perceptions of marital relationships that promote hegemonic masculinity and ignore girls' rights) are changing to be more supportive of girls and against early marriage

4: Networks, solidarity groups and organizations collaborate together (laterally and vertically) to take actions for girls

5: Staff continue to reflect upon and take up value practices and actions that model anti-oppression (based on gender, caste and other group identities) and reflect critically on their beliefs about sexuality

1. REPLANTING THE FUTURE, GROWING SKILLS AND DREAMS: ADOLESCENT GIRLS

OUTCOME 1(a): Girls have a critical awareness of gender and rights, and strengthened confidence, skills, and social capital for making progressive choices in their lives.

Key findings

- Girls understand they have the right to dream and are better able to express their visions of the future
- Girls' ideal age of marriage (and gauna) has risen
- Girls gained skills in advocating for themselves and others
- Girls gained practical knowledge in menstrual management and livelihood skills
- Girls engaged in collective action to influence their communities and local leaders



"A girl is going to school. This photo is important because her parents were planning to marry her, but she talked with her parents and said that she wants to study."

Adolescent boy, age 14

Adolescent girl groups were a cornerstone of Phase 1 of Tipping Point. The project teams established safe spaces in project sites where adolescent groups meet to socialize, discuss issues, gain new competencies, support one another, and plan community action. Girls' groups met regularly, led by a volunteer facilitator and a partner NGO staff member, and supported by CARE staff. A group had on average 17 members ranging in age from ages 10 to 18 with most girls age 13 to 15. Roughly half of the group members were members of traditionally excluded castes, predominantly Dalit.

The evaluation showed that important changes in girls' expectations for the future and their psychosocial skills related to confidence and assertiveness took place. They also gained practical skills in several areas and discovered the power of collective action over the course of the project.

Girls understand they have the right to dream and are better able to express their visions of the future

At the time of the Community Participatory Analysis (CPA), which serves as a baseline point, girls were asked to draw pictures of their visions of the future and what they hoped their lives would be like as adults. In some villages, there were few girls who were able to articulate their dreams beyond getting married. In other places, girls had an easier time expressing their wishes for the future in terms of education, occupation, and family life but largely could not conceive of the steps required to reach those goals.

In the evaluation FGDs, the visioning exercise was repeated. Common themes across members of Tipping Point groups were a desire to provide a service to their community through future work and the importance of education in being able to do so. They described wanting to pursue occupations such as nursing, teaching, tailoring, or becoming a police officer. **Members of Tipping Point girls' groups said that after participating in the project, they were able to speak more confidently about their aspirations for the future and reported that the project had helped them to develop hopes and dreams that they felt they could achieve.** In one village, they said that Tipping Point had influenced their visions of the future and what they perceived as possible in their lives.



"This is the picture of a girl in my group. She studies hard, does household work, and feeds everybody. Then she goes to study [...] if you can study, [and] pass your higher education then you can get good jobs."

Adolescent girl, age 14

Other girls said they knew what they wanted for their futures before Tipping Point but that group activities helped them understand what they needed to achieve the future they wanted. Girls said that they started sharing their dreams with their parents and that they now felt that it was normal for girls to have goals for themselves in life. For example, one girls' group member asserted:

"There has been a drastic change. We had no idea how to dream or think about ourselves, but since the start of Tipping Point and its activities, we have realized that we also have a say in our own lives."

There were some differences in the results for this area by age and group participation. Older group members' responses differed from younger girls and girls who had not participated in the project in two ways: a desire to achieve higher levels of education (at least higher secondary, some saying up to bachelor's and master's degrees); and wanting to be role models in promoting social justice and education in their communities. **Some girls were specific about wanting to be involved in activities that work to end domestic violence and child marriage as adults. Others stressed having enough education to stand on their own, i.e., achieve financial independence, and be examples to people who did not believe in the value of girls' education.**

When asked about what they wanted in their future spouses, there were contrasts in some villages between the girls in Tipping Point groups, who wanted husbands to share household chores, and girls who had not participated in Tipping Point groups, who wanted to maintain the traditional gendered division of labor within the household. **The girls who had not attended group sessions saw it as emasculating and shameful for men to do work in the home.**

The barriers to achieving their dreams that girls said they faced included social approbation, distance to schools, and lack of family or financial support. **Among girls in Tipping Point groups, two barriers were mentioned much less frequently in the evaluation FGDs than in the CPA**

sessions: girls' freedom of movement within the community and the burden of household duties. This suggests some improvement in girls' mobility and sharing of household work by brothers and other family members over the course of the project.

Girls' ideal age of marriage (and *gauna*) has risen

Girls who had participated in Tipping Point and those who had not gave similar answers to questions about when they would like to marry, with most saying ages between 18 to 24 would be ideal. At the time of the CPA, girls' ideal age of marriage averaged around 20. Due to differences in the methodologies, it is not possible to compare these sets of findings statistically; however, qualitatively, the change seems to suggest that **older ages of marriage are becoming more desirable for girls.**

Most of the Tipping Point participants were confident that their wishes to delay marriage would be respected by their families to an extent; that is, many of them predicted that they would end up being married a couple of years before their ideal age but much later than today's young women, who largely married between the ages of 12 and 16. Data from other evaluation respondents (parents and key stakeholders) and Outcome Mapping also suggest that the expected length of time between marriage and *gauna* is shortening; many girl respondents in evaluation FGDs said they expected their marriage and *gauna* to happen at the same time and that this was preferable to them.

Although this data reflects positive change in girls' ideal and expected ages of marriage, girls agreed that even when they are consulted about their wishes in marriage, ultimately, their parents and families get the final say in when and whom they marry. In one village, it remained shameful for girls to even have an opinion about their marriage. For the places where girls reported change, they were not clear why girls' expectations changed: because girls had gained confidence in their own self-efficacy, because parents became more understanding of their daughters' desires and/or the importance of education, or because there is a broader trend in society towards later marriage and shortened periods to *gauna*. Later sections of this report will use data to suggest that it was a combination of these factors.

Girls gained skills in advocating for themselves and others

There is strong evidence that girls are gaining skills to effectively advocate for themselves. Members of Tipping Point girls' groups were excited and proud to share the positive changes that their participation in the project brought to their lives. They said what they learned about gender and rights helped them feel empowered. Through participation in group sessions, girls gained a range of skills in negotiation, goal setting, communications, leadership, and teamwork.

One of the **most important changes for Tipping Point girls was finding a voice within their families and communities to advocate for themselves and express their opinions and wishes.** It can take a great deal of courage for a girl to speak up because a girl's consent to marry, and indeed her opinion of when, whom, and if to marry, is rarely sought out when a marriage is arranged. There were several examples in FGDs and in Outcome Mapping stories of girls advocating within their own families to continue their education and delay marriage. For example, a 19-year-old Tipping Point participant was able to persuade her father to put off her marriage after she heard that it was being planned for her.

Girls spoke out on each other's' behalf as well. There were several Outcome Mapping stories of **girls advocating for each other to stay in school**. Most involved members of girls' groups, often accompanied by adults from the parents' group and/or local committees working on violence or child protection, visiting a girl's home after her withdrawal from school. These interventions appear largely effective at convincing families to support a girl's return to schooling, and girls enrolled or re-enrolled in schools in at least eight different villages. Another way that Tipping Point girls' groups supported other children's education is by participating in school enrollment campaigns to register students.

A few girls emerged as leaders in advocating for girls' rights. One girl, in addition to convincing her family to delay her own marriage, spoke directly with another girl's parents to stop her friend's marriage and help the girl re-enroll in school. Within her own family, she convinced her father not to demand dowry for her brother's wedding after speaking with him about the negative consequences of the practice. She also committed to becoming economically independent and to not giving dowry when she gets married. According to her,

"I gained this knowledge and ability to speak up only after getting involved in this [Tipping Point] group [...] In the beginning, I could not speak up in my family and in society, but now I can."

In another instance, one Photovoice participant described how she helped another girl register for school when she was turned away:



"She went to enroll on Friday but returned home without doing it because the school closed for a half-day. She told me that she could not register her name because the man there said, 'today it is already done, and registration will not be done anymore.' Then I told her to come with me and that I would do her registration, and so I went with her and did it."

Adolescent girl, age 11

Adolescent girls need skills in self-advocacy not just for the big life decisions such as marriage and education but also to win greater freedoms in day-to-day activities. Another Photovoice participant shared a new understanding of her rights in terms of free time and physical activity:



"Earlier we could not go out of the house. And I was a drop-out. But since I joined the program, I joined the school [...] since the program, there is equality, and I have time to go out of the house, go to school, and even play football."

There is a change, that ladies can play; we are more physically active, and now we are healthier."

Adolescent girl, age 16

Data also suggests that **girls have become more aware of their potential to play a role in shaping their own lives, and that expressing oneself, taking a stand on something, and putting in hard work are worthwhile and admirable.** At the time of the CPA, ‘hard work’ was not raised as an enabling factor for achieving dreams. However, by the time of the evaluation, girls both in and out of Tipping Point groups pointed to the contribution of their own hard work, suggesting a growing belief that they can influence the course of their lives.

A 16-year-old Photovoice participant depicted her personal growth in self-expression with a photo of a tree. When asked what the picture meant to her, she explained:



“I could not talk to my parents at home. They used to say, I gave birth to you, you are smaller than me, and you cannot talk back to me [...] I compare myself to that tree. It just stands there saying nothing, just as I stood saying nothing [...] I am showing [in this photo], this is how I was not able to talk, but I am now.”

Another Photovoice participant expressed her admiration for the assertiveness of a member of her girls’ group, showing that she values confidence and boldness:



“This is the photo of a girl in my group [...] she does not fear anybody. She walks boldly, she is not shy with anybody and she speaks confidently to all.”

Adolescent girl, age 11

Girls engaged in collective action to influence their communities and local leaders

Besides advocating for individual girls at risk of school dropout or marriage, adolescent girls in Tipping Point groups were active at community levels to create enabling environments for their empowerment. Nearly half of the Outcome Mapping change stories related to girls taking action and

speaking out in the community. Often these activities were done in conjunction with boys’ groups and parents’ groups, strengthening girls’ networks and social capital. Collective actions included:

- Community rallies against child marriage
- Football and cycling competitions
- Exposure visits outside the communities
- Hygiene awareness campaigns
- Vital registration campaigns
- Raksha Bandhan and Teej festival celebrations
- Cooking competitions for men and boys
- Street dramas about child marriage and dowry
- Elocution competitions for girls
- Quizzes on girls’ rights and Knowledge Fairs
- Community dialogues about girls’ rights
- Home visits to share messaging
- Requesting funds from local administration for sports
- Attendance at national Girl Summit
- School enrollment campaigns
- Requesting menstrual pads at schools



‘School enrolment campaign at Kapilvastu School enrolment campaigns were prioritized in each community. Adolescent’s girls and boys organized a rally with the close collaboration of schools and ward member of village municipality.



The girls and boys group jointly organized the Hand washing session at Chhotkiramnagar in High School Narainapur.



Girls and Boys group conducting a speech competition at Thumhawa Piprahawa.



The adolescent girls participated in a public hearing at Sammarimai Rural municipality office. This program was organized by NCE Nepal in coordination with CARE Nepal

Girls took leadership roles in organizing, preparing, and facilitating public events. According to Outcome Mapping stories and FGD participants, these activities contributed to changing community perceptions and social expectations. The public events provided education and entertainment, while at the same time allowing adolescents to exercise emerging skills and gain visibility in their communities. Rallies against child marriage with community dialogues were particularly successful in engaging community members and shifting people’s attitudes toward child marriage. In some villages, intergenerational dialogues were organized by girls’ and boys’ groups to discuss issues with parents, the Village Child Protection Committee (VCPC), religious leaders, teachers, governmental officials, and police. An adult member of the VCPC explained:

“The rally against child marriage has done great work. It has raised awareness among children and their parents. Now parents are aware of the disadvantages related to child marriage, they know the possible future harms, and this has reduced the incidence of child marriage.”

However, this person echoed the comments of girls in FGDs in adding:

“The best thing about Tipping Point is parents’ involvement, as no change is possible by children only.”

The involvement of trusted adults gave the girls’ actions legitimacy and reduced any potential harm to girls’ reputations from working alongside boys, expressing opinions in public, and being visible agents of change in their communities. Girls felt that their collective action efforts were only successful with the support and active involvement of the parents’ groups.

Some Tipping Point adolescent girls’ groups were also successful in advocating to local government. In three villages, adolescents were invited to participate in the village’s annual agenda and planning sessions. In one of these sites, adolescents organized a rally for cleanliness and sanitation in coordination with their Village Development Committee (VDC). In another village, twenty-seven adolescent girls participated in an annual VDC meeting where they could share their concerns and ask members to address issues related to child marriage and girls’ empowerment.

Girls involved in Tipping Point also found room for activism at their schools. **In some locations, the girls asked for sanitary pads in schools, and the school met their request.** At one school, adolescent girls began conducting and performing their own songs on social issues such as child marriage and school enrollment. They sang once a month during school extracurricular time, giving girls the opportunity to take on leadership roles with their peers and communicate in a creative way with their community.

Finally, adolescents took on leadership roles in other issues of societal cohesion and equality. Caste discrimination is very common in Nepal. In one village, adolescent group members organized a picnic to challenge caste discrimination in their community. During the event, people from all castes cooked and ate together.

Girls gained practical knowledge in menstrual management and livelihood skills

Besides increasing their psychosocial skills, girls gained practical knowledge for better health and livelihoods. **Members of Tipping Point girls’ groups in some communities valued learning skills for**

menstrual management, alongside education about reproductive and sexual health, family planning, and sexuality. Body mapping exercises taught them that there is no shame in menstruation, and, in at least one village, girls learned how to make their own menstrual pads from local materials. There were reports that mothers had started asking their daughters to share their new knowledge on menstrual hygiene. Outcome Mapping change stories from eight villages described similar positive developments about menstrual hygiene and management. One girls' group member shared:

"I was happy to learn those things in the group that I could not learn in grade 10, for example, knowing about menstruation."

Better menstrual hygiene in combination with more support from schools meant that girls missed fewer days of school while menstruating, as explained in this Photovoice comment:



"This is a photograph of sanitary pads. We learned to prepare it and use it. Earlier, we didn't know what a sanitary pad was. Since the discussions started, we were told what it was. I didn't give much attention to it. But I learned how to make it, so now I make it and use it [...] I bought this, but I can make them myself to use. Earlier we used to use cloth, and we would have health issues, but now we can use this. Earlier when we had periods, we were not allowed to go to school. But now we can use sanitary pads and go to school. And even in the school we have the provision to change the pads. Earlier we could not touch the food or cook the food. But now we can."

Adolescent girl, age 16

Tipping Point supported livelihoods training, either directly or through partner organizations, for girls that had left school and could not or did not want to return. **Several girls, married and unmarried, started earning income through tailoring, cobbling, and vegetable cultivation.** Adolescent group participants also learned basic computer skills from an instructor sponsored by the project. Having these new capabilities, especially in skills that many others in their communities do not have, was a source of pride for Tipping Point girls.

2. TODAY'S BROTHERS, TOMORROW'S HUSBANDS: ADOLESCENT BOYS

OUTCOME 1(b): Boys reflect critically on how society's expectations of "what it means to be men" affect their lives and relationships; boys advocate for their own rights to freedom of choice in life, specifically about marriage and education; and become role models for gender-equitable values and behaviors.

Key findings

- Boys gained critical awareness of gender inequities and started sharing household responsibilities
- Boys advocated for girls personally and collectively
- Boys' aspirations for marriage showed limited change



"A boy is washing clothes at home. This photo is important because the boy is helping his mother in washing clothes. Earlier boys did not help in household work, but since the boys have joined [Tipping Point group] discussions, they have started helping at home."

Adolescent girl, age 16

Tipping Point sees adolescent boys as important actors in achieving gender equality and ensuring girls' rights are fulfilled. Boys are also constrained by strict gender roles and norms, and many of them will become husbands and fathers to women and girls. In project areas, boys are also often married before they turn 18. Tipping Point organized groups of adolescent boys to discuss gender, relationships, and other important topics, and to support girls' efforts to make their communities more gender equitable. The evaluation process confirmed that Tipping Point contributed to shifts in the burden of household labor and brothers' support of their sisters and other girls in their communities. Boys' expectations for future marriages showed limited change as well.

Boys gained critical awareness of gender inequities and sharing household responsibilities

Stories from Outcome Mapping pointed to the influence of sessions in adolescent boys' groups that illustrate inequitable distribution of routine household work. These sessions included pile-sorting of routine activities of girls and boys, clock exercises that explore the daily schedules of girls versus boys, and gender and sex discussions. All of these helped to increase boys' understanding of gender roles and inequities. **The most widely reported change was that boys' group members came to realize how much housework their mothers and sisters were doing, prompting these boys to start helping with household responsibilities. Defying traditional notions of gender roles, boys' group members recognized that contributing to household chores meant that their sisters would benefit from having more time to study and do homework.**

Besides boys’ group discussions, Tipping Point sponsored public events that highlighted boys and men engaging in work traditionally done by women only. Particularly influential in changing people’s thinking were public cooking competitions for men and boys. These competitions were entertaining for the entire community, creating an environment in which it was acceptable and encouraged for males to take on traditionally female roles. **Boy participants in Tipping Point groups reported that they had never realized how much skill is required in the work their sisters and mothers did in the home, until they themselves had to perform the same work.** Many of the Photovoice photographs were of men and boys cooking, cleaning, or washing clothes. In the image below, a boy Photovoice participant had someone take his photo helping his mother and described the photo.



“Me, in my mother’s shop. Helping my mother. This picture is important because I help my mother whenever she needs help.”

Adolescent boy, age 15

Girls noted these changes in FGDs and Photovoice stories as well. A 16-year-old girl said:

“Earlier it was just the ladies who used to do the work. We didn’t have time to go to school, do the homework or free time for ourselves. But now since they help, we get to go to school and do housework together. Now we have time to go do things for ourselves, to do things we like, like football and computer.”

However, quotes from participants in FGDs and Photovoice treated men and boys doing housework as helping women and girls, rather than fulfilling an equal responsibility for tasks, and several girls in the Photovoice exercise expressed struggles with managing domestic duties and school work. On the other hand, as reported in the section on adolescent girls, girls no longer listed the burden of housework among barriers to achieving their dreams, as they did at the time of the CPA.

There are mixed results depending on which Tipping Point village the participants live, suggesting that the project had a greater impact in some villages than others in terms of changing boys’ behavior. This might be explained by social networks and the diffusion of ideas. Boys who did not join Tipping Point boy’s groups in one village knew of project activities and had been invited to at least one community-wide event, but the boys’ group members had not shared any other information with them. **In another village, the non-member boys knew the Tipping Point group members as friends and reported that they had talked to them about child marriage, gender-based violence, and dowry. These boys saw Tipping Point boys’ group members as role models and said they would like to help their future wives with housework.** Ideas of gender equality in household division of labor seemed to have spread from Tipping Point’s work through the boys’ friendships.

Boys advocated for girls personally and collectively

Since boys in the project areas generally have greater influence in their family than girls, they can be effective advocates for the rights of their sisters, women in general, and a more equitable kind of masculinity. Evidence from FGDs and Outcome Mapping stories showed boys in Tipping Point groups intervene on behalf of their sisters and started to realize the potential that they have to positively change in their communities.

Frequently, **boys came to the aid of their sisters to help them avoid marriage or stay in school.** Many of the stories were of boys arguing with parents to delay a sister's marriage. Following a community event, one boy realized how much more difficult it was for his sister to get to her faraway school than for him to get to his nearby school, so he gave her his bicycle.

In addition, boys are teaching girls sports and supporting girls playing sports in public, which has helped shift the opinions of parents. One boys' group recognized that it was discriminatory to prevent girls from wearing pants. After this, members encouraged their younger sisters to wear jeans.

Boys not only spoke up for individual girls, they advocated for girls collectively. Outcome Mapping stories showed that **boys in nine different villages engaged in collective action and took on leadership positions in village-level activities.** This included membership in village-level civil society groups; participation in school enrollment campaigns; persuading VDC to allocate funds for Tipping Point groups and address their concerns; and planning for advocacy such as street dramas on child marriage, a program regarding violence against women, issues related to the dowry system and child labor. For example, one boy noticed that girls received most of the community criticism about boys and girls collaborating through Tipping Point, so he organized a street drama event. He encouraged the audience to discuss why girls were being criticized for behaviors such as performing dramas alongside boys and to be less judgmental about what others were doing in their lives.

Boys' aspirations for marriage showed limited change

As with adolescent girls, adolescent boys were asked about their hopes and dreams for careers, education, and marriage. Boys' visions for the future included occupations such as police officer, farmer, doctor and teacher. Compared to girls, boys spoke more frequently about the need to work hard in order to achieve their dreams, indicating a greater sense of individual agency and control over their futures. Boys recognized that they had a greater say than girls do in making decisions about the timing of their marriage and choice of spouse, but their parents still make the final decisions concerning marriage. **Outcome Mapping revealed two stories about boys who had successfully advocated to their parents for delaying their own marriages.**

At the time of the CPA, adolescent boys' groups had predominantly said that they hoped to get married at age 20 or later, except for one village where boys indicated a desire to marry in their teens, even as early as age 15. **In the evaluation, the ideal age of marriage of boys from this village — Tipping Point group members and nonparticipants — went up to age 20 and higher.** Yet they felt there was a real threat that their parents could force them to marry earlier. Many boys said that they wanted to have marriage and *gauna* at the same time.

Boys often spoke of wanting to help their parents in the future, to take care of aging parents. When asked about future spouses, boys said that they valued harmonious marriages and working together with their wives. Their views of ideal qualities in wives largely aligned with traditional expectations of a wife — someone who doesn't quarrel, takes care of the household well, works hard, and is respectful. **This was true for boys who had joined Tipping Point group activities and those who had not. However, one difference between group members and nonmembers was that group members more frequently said that they wanted to help their wives with housework while only one group of nonmembers said this.** Boys in FGDs did not discuss how old they would like their spouses to be at the time of marriage nor how important dowry was to them.

Therefore, it seems that while boys who joined Tipping Point groups took action on behalf of girls and women in their families by doing work at home and becoming active in their communities, they have yet to grapple with what being role models for those changes would mean for their own future marriages. Still, the importance of the change in boys so far should not be downplayed. The boys faced challenges in questioning and reflecting on their own beliefs and societal ideals of masculinity, including some backlash from peers and others in the community for advocating for equality. Boys said they valued what they learned in Tipping Point groups and wanted to continue their personal journeys of growth and learning. While boys did not adopt progressive messaging as fully as girls, they did begin to critically assess social norms and their own individual behaviors. As one boy stated:

“Before getting involved in the group, I never thought about society. I used to think about myself. Now I think if the society will change, it will be good for me. I am making my own family aware about not taking dowry because changes should start from our own home.”

3. BETTER LISTENERS, BETTER SUPPORT: PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS

OUTCOME 2: Parents value the voices, opinions and aspirations of adolescent girls.

Key findings

- Parents are more supportive of their daughters’ education and autonomy
- Parents are communicating more with their children about life issues



“My friend and her father are at home, collecting cow dung. This photo is important because her father is helping his wife when his daughters go to school [...] he is taking the cow by himself. He is doing that on his own initiative, on his own, after his girls go to school. Earlier, they would say, ‘no, don’t go to school for now, do this, then go to school if you have time.’ But now since Tipping Point, they are saying, ‘It’s good for you to go to school and learn, to move forward in life. It’s fine, I will do it.’”

Adolescent girl, age 18

Tipping Point parents’ groups met once every month and included both mothers and fathers, although fathers participated less regularly, in part due to migratory work. At the monthly meetings, project staff held discussions with parents using curriculum that mirrored the discussions in girls’ groups. This allowed the project to simultaneously gain parents’ understanding and approval of the content before it was shared with their daughters. Parents’ groups also provided support to the implementation of collective action initiatives led by the girls’ groups.

Parents were more supportive of their daughters’ education and autonomy

Discriminate treatment of sons and daughters in regard to education was a common issue identified in the CPA. Boys’ education was said to be more important than that of girls, and the belief that boys should achieve a higher level of education than girls was prevalent. **In the evaluation, the preference for boys’ education was not mentioned.** The importance of education for girls was stressed throughout Tipping Point’s work and especially in parents’ groups and community events. The evidence suggests that this consistent messaging has had an impact for girls.

Several Outcome Mapping stories show that **parents were directly influenced by information sessions in parents’ group or rallies against child marriage to continue sending, enroll, or reenroll daughters in school.** Direct communication between girls’ parents and project staff helped girls attend school in a number of cases. Sometimes, Tipping Point granted scholarships to help the poorest families cover the costs of schooling, and parents’ group facilitators engaged those families to give their daughters proper time for schoolwork. That being said, support for girls’ education has been increasing in project areas for quite some time, and this shift may or may not have occurred without Tipping Point. The social norms section in this report describes the nuances of norms for girls’ education.

Parents increased their support for girls' education in more involved ways, as well. **Photovoice stories and FGDs with girls included mentions of supportive mothers and sisters telling girls to let them finish a domestic task so that girls could get to school or join Tipping Point activities. There were also accounts of fathers and mothers working together more to get their children to school on time.** As one Photovoice girl participant said of another one's mother:

"This photo is important because her mom is very supportive. When my friend comes for discussion or goes to school, she does all the work at home [...] On Friday, when my friend came to [the group meeting place] for discussions, her mom cleaned, washed, cooked, and did all the other work that my friend used to do."

Adolescent girl, age 16



Evidence also suggests that parents are increasingly valuing their daughter's autonomy and independence. In the CPA, some parents said that girls needed to be educated because boys like to marry educated girls. **During the evaluation after Tipping Point programs, parents in multiple communities said a girl should be educated to earn an income and "stand on her own two feet".** This shift from a focus on what boys want in a girl to what a girl needs for herself suggests that some parents may be putting a higher value on girls' self-reliance. A similar result emerged from the exercise on the risks and benefits of early vs. delayed marriage. **Mothers belonging to Tipping Point parents' groups included girls being able to have a voice in the community and make their own decisions as a benefit of delayed marriage.** Neither a girl's decision-making power nor her role in the community had been mentioned during the CPA as a benefit of delaying marriage.



"My friend is playing football with other girls in the garden. This picture is important because earlier parents and other elders in family and society didn't let girls play. They had to do household work only. But after joining the groups and participating in discussions, everybody in the family started helping each other. The parents let the girls play, and they get time to play."

Adolescent girl, age 14

Parents began communicating more with their children about life issues

The CPA found that adolescents and parents rarely spoke to each other about adolescents' aspirations and concerns. Therefore, Tipping Point facilitated occasional exchanges between adolescent groups and

parent groups as well as special events to spur dialogue between parents and children on holidays such as Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. These events and parents’ discussion groups fostered openness and stronger relationships between parents and adolescents. Parents in Tipping Point groups reported in FGDs that **daughters are sharing their dreams for the future and talking about their rights and needs, and parents are listening to them. According to parents, girls only want to be married after age 20.** Some parents also said that for other girls in their communities, it is still common to marry before age 20, but parents of girls in **Tipping Point groups are providing an example of listening to their daughters’ wishes.** Notably, parents expressed doubts that they can provide their daughters with all of the opportunities the girls are seeking in life.

Furthermore, **girls in Tipping Point groups reported feeling closer to their parents and more comfortable opening up to them.** In one village, the Father’s Day celebration in particular made a difference in girls’ relationships with their fathers. Tipping Point boys’ group members in another village reiterated that **the lines of communication with parents were widening** due to intergenerational dialogues that the project had facilitated. Relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law improved as well:



“Two women, a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, are at home. This picture is important because earlier, before they joined the discussions, they used to quarrel. But now they live in harmony. They help each other at home [...] The mother-in-law is involving the daughter-in-law in conversations and taking help.”

Adolescent girl, age 17

Other project activities that were not specifically designed to develop trust between adolescents and parents nevertheless seem to have had that effect. For example, the Education Fair was described by girls as good for them and for their parents. A girls’ group that did an exchange visit to another project site reported that the journey, which was undertaken with parents’ accompaniment, had brought them closer together. Girls also reported that the **street dramas and rallies had spurred discussions with parents who had witnessed the shows, including on the topic of child marriage.** In one village, parents were moved to tears during the performances.

One mother described how her views of child marriage had changed after attending Tipping Point group sessions:

“Since I heard about the side effects of child marriage in the meeting, then I knew that marriage of our children makes us free of burdens, but our children bear the burden. They become deprived of all the children’s rights; the problems are shifted from one to the other. I learned everything after coming here to the group.”

3. SHIFTING SOIL, WIDER PATHS: SOCIAL NORMS

OUTCOME 3: Social norms related to marriage (dowry expectations, perceptions of girls’ potential, and perceptions of marital relationships that promote hegemonic masculinity and ignore girls’ rights) are changing to be more supportive of girls and against early marriage

Key findings

- Norms of girls’ behavior loosened under certain conditions
- Tipping Point participants faced some sanctions but were not very sensitive to them
- Economic considerations in the marriage process may be shifting



“This is a photo of me. In my village, girls do not wear jeans. If a girl wore jeans, people make jokes and tease. I had gone to my aunt’s house [across the border in India], and she told me to wear jeans, but I said no. But when she insisted that it will look good on me, I put on the jeans. Then, my friends took my photo. This photo is important because when girls wear jeans, people laugh and make jokes, so no girl wears jeans in our village.”

Adolescent girl, age 11

Tipping Point sought to shift social norms related to child marriage and adolescent rights at a community level in addition to encouraging individual empowerment and equitable relationships in girls’ lives. Tipping Point utilized CARE’s Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP)¹⁴ framework in conceptualizing and assessing progress made towards reducing the prevalence of gender discriminatory social norms.

Early in the project, the team identified key norms to which they gave special attention during planning and monitoring. [Annex II](#) presents those predominant norms, acceptable exceptions to them, and sanctions for breaking norms as captured in FGDs and interviews for the evaluation. This section discusses the most relevant signs of shifting norms and widening windows of acceptable behavior for girls and girls’ resilience to sanctions.

Norms regulating girls’ behavior loosened under certain conditions

Most of the norms of interest to Tipping Point experienced shifts towards somewhat greater acceptance by society of girls’ rights, but with conditions to acceptance that resulted in varying experiences for different groups of people.

Among girls in Tipping Point groups, girls’ freedom of movement within the community was mentioned much less frequently as a barrier to achieving one’s dreams in the evaluation FGDs than in the CPA sessions. However, this too had conditions. Community members in the evaluation

¹⁴ Stefanik, L.; Hwang, T. (2017). *CARE’s Journey Piloting Social Norms Measures for Gender Programming* [PDF file]. Retrieved from <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/care-social-norms-paper-web.pdf>

expressed clear ideas about the difference between “good” and “bad” girls. While adolescent girls’ group members sometimes tested and stretched the definitions of acceptable behavior for girls in terms of public visibility and exercising their voices, they generally behaved in ways that were characteristic of “good” girls and did not transgress more serious norms that threaten their families’ honor, such as eloping to marry a boy of their own choosing. Parents in project communities suggested that as long as Tipping Point girls continued to exhibit mostly “good” behaviors, there would be greater lenience for behaviors such as riding bicycles or walking around the community, which were largely unacceptable before the project started.



“A girl is learning to ride a bicycle on the road. This picture is important because she is learning to ride a bicycle so that she can reach school on time.”

Adolescent girl, age 14

Some of the shifts in behavioral expectations for girls can be linked directly to Tipping Point, as they were contingent on participating in an adolescent girls’ group, and those girls benefited directly from engagement with their parents and assuming roles in public collective action. Changes in social expectations and restrictions for girls who were not group members occurred to a lesser degree. However, this was not true across the board, as Tipping Point had some influence in the broader community that led to greater options for all girls. Additionally, girls, boys, and parents seemed to gain respect over the course of Phase 1 of the project, which promises greater diffusion of gender equitable attitudes and behaviors in the next phase. **The relatively limited social network of girls compared to boys might explain why changes in boys’ behavior (namely, in doing housework) spread beyond the bounds of project participants in at least one village (see section above), while girls were less free to share their experiences with peers and more dependent on family members to enable change.**

Likewise, girls who were in school were more likely to receive progressive messaging, to have greater freedom of movement and to interact with boy classmates compared to girls who were out of school. Unmarried girls also benefited more from Tipping Point than did married girls, whose movements and time were generally more restricted.

As one key informant, a representative of the district, said, norm change happens slowly but lays essential groundwork:

“Tipping Point seems to have done good work in the community. Behavioral change is not to be expected within days, months or even a year but [Tipping Point] definitely has increased

awareness among every group of people in the community which is an important change that makes me believe that now better things will slowly but surely follow.”

Tipping Point participants faced some sanctions but were not very sensitive to them

Despite some relaxing of rules for girls, there were many examples of girls, boys, mothers, and fathers facing criticism and gossip from neighbors as a result of their participation in Tipping Point. They described in FGDs and interviews how they reacted to such sanctions over time and displayed a great deal of fortitude in continuing to be a part of the project.

While girls who were not Tipping Point group members identified a lack of community support, often manifest in criticisms and gossip, as the most common obstacle to achieving their dreams for education or otherwise, girls who were group members placed less emphasis on community support but instead said that family support was important. This distinction confirmed what girls and others suggested in the FGDs, that **girls in Tipping Point were more resilient to criticisms from the community and were less likely to listen to what others said, as long as they themselves felt that they were doing the right thing**. It should be noted, however, that the project likely attracted girls and families with greater resilience, and individuals who were more sensitive to social sanctions may have been participants at one time but stopped due to these pressures.

Collective action initiatives organized by Tipping Point groups made it possible for girls and boys who were group members to work together in “safe” and supervised environments. It was much less acceptable for girls and boys who were not group members to interact with one another. Some members of boys’ groups said they did encounter backlash from the community when boys and girls worked together on activities, and parents sometimes complained that the boys were flirting with girls, increasing their chances of eloping. This kind of negative talk caused some parents to try to withdraw their sons from Tipping Point activities.

Nonetheless, boys recognized that talk from community members mostly focused on the girls and their families rather than the boys. **Members of girls’ groups said that they greatly enjoy organized Tipping Point competitions in bicycle riding and sports, and they felt emboldened to ignore mild criticisms from community members who disapproved.** One girl shared how community members had told her parents that she was doing bad things at Tipping Point group sessions where she interacted with boys. The girl insisted:

“I play with my friends there. There is nothing wrong with playing with them; they are like brothers and sisters to me.”

Parents of girls in Tipping Point groups were largely supportive in resisting community critiques. Mothers admitted that some community members said bad things about girls that played sports or rode bicycles, but they themselves dismissed this kind of talk as unimportant. One mother said that community people sometimes criticized her daughter for riding a bicycle, but she told her daughter not to think about

what others say, to just go and study. She reassured her daughter that if she was not doing anything wrong, then there was no need to worry about the words of others.

Tipping Point parents themselves also faced a mix of reactions from the broader community, but their participation was mostly viewed positively. **One father who is involved in the project shared how he had faced questions and resistance from others in the community for his participation in Tipping Point, but that with time, his family came to be respected for it.**

“I had to face a lot of bad and negative comments from the community and also relatives which adversely affected my whole family. I remember proudly how my family (especially daughters) supported me at that time. We all moved forward together and now we are past the blaming/shaming situation, people respect us and come to us with problems[...] It is not an easy thing to stand against so many people and the traditional things that have been happening for hundreds of years, but if you stand bold and with valid logic it gets easier.”

Another father who is a member of his local parents’ group described his personal experience with Tipping Point and why he felt it was worth it to endure initial criticisms from his community:

“People in the community, especially my own Muslim community, started saying bad things to me for joining the group and going out and being involved in useless things. But I didn't let it discourage me, and I continued my group activities. Now I feel that it was a wise decision and being a part of the group has helped me greatly to understand the good and bad things in the community and to work for its betterment. Although I am not a very educated person myself, being part of Tipping Point has helped enhance my knowledge.”

In general, members of Tipping Point girls’ and boys’ groups were admired by their peers in the communities. Adults recognized the positive leadership of these adolescents, but some also saw their potential to become troublemakers who might spoil other girls by demonstrating bold and non-traditional behaviors. Different groups consistently repeated that more educated community members held more progressive and accepting views of girls in the Tipping Point groups, while less educated individuals were more likely to disapprove of girls pushing the boundaries of traditional social norms. Some girls reported that their parents did not allow them to participate in Tipping Point groups even though the girls wanted to, in part because their parents feared that the girls would become more demanding at home. **Thus, while seeing the positive results of the project, many community members remained fearful of social norm change.**

Economic considerations in the marriage process may be shifting

There were notable differences in the results of the exercise on the risks and benefits of early vs delayed marriage between the CPA before Tipping Point and the evaluation after Tipping Point. Opinions related to dowry, *gauna*, and timing of marriage changed. **During the CPA, respondents overwhelmingly said that dowry costs rise with the age of a girl, that is, older girls had to pay larger dowries in addition to the costs of marriage and *gauna* processes. The evaluation FGDs were more variable on this;**

some groups reported the opposite that later marriage resulted in a lower dowry if the girl was more educated or was earning an income.

For most segments of society, receiving a high dowry remained an important sign of a groom’s desirability and social standing. Yet some respondents said that dowry was not as important as it used to be, and grooms would prefer to marry someone they like than to receive a large dowry.

Some groups also named a benefit of waiting to marry daughters that was not mentioned during the CPA: reduced costs when marriage and *gauna* take place at the same time. The corollary was also explained, that a risk of early marriage is having “double the expenditure” because marriage and *gauna* take place separately. **These findings imply that there are emerging economic incentives to delay marriage**, or at least that the traditional template of how one gets married shows some fluctuation in terms of financial exchanges between families. It is clear, though, that the expectations for financial exchange among Hindu families are closely linked to class and caste.



“A boy from our village is getting married. This picture is important because he is against the dowry system. That’s why he did not demand dowry in his wedding.”

Adolescent boy, age 16

4. GATHERING ALLIES, BUILDING NETWORKS: PARTNERS AND ADVOCACY

OUTCOME 4: Networks, solidarity groups and organizations collaborate together (laterally and vertically) to take action for girls

Key findings

- Community organizations collaborated well with Tipping Point
- Religious leaders were both allies and opponents of change
- Government officials were increasingly responsive



“The priest of the temple donated his land for the temple, the adolescent groups meeting place, hospital, and Sachetana Kendra [Awareness Center] run by the Village Development Committee [local government]. Sachetana Kendra is for raising awareness of girls and women in the village. Daughter-in-laws [married girls] go there for meetings. This photo is important because he donated generously. He is helping small kids and provides donations for needy people.”

Adolescent boy, age 14

Tipping Point has provided momentum for girls’ empowerment and child rights advocacy within communities and district-level mechanisms, and there have been some positive steps towards strengthening collaborative structures. Girls’ rights advocates are loosely connected in Tipping Point communities, forming nascent partnerships and networks of organizations that as of yet are not regularly collaborating to scale resources and efforts. One challenge of maintaining a strong network is that frequent governmental transitions in Nepal change priorities and make partnerships a moving target. Still, Tipping Point has built relationships with a number of actors, agencies, and organizations that provide a solid foundation for future growth.

Community organizations collaborated well with Tipping Point

Several local governmental and civil society organizations worked collaboratively on various components with Tipping Point. Village Child Protection Committees (VCPCs) are government bodies that were formed and regulated under Nepal’s Local Self Governance Act. In Tipping Point villages where there was no VCPC established, the project facilitated the process of forming them. They consist of three to five community members who meet on a monthly basis and conduct advocacy and awareness raising activities to promote child rights, including intervening to prevent cases of child marriage. Various VCPC bodies contributed to Tipping Point through organizing events such as International Women’s Day celebrations, school enrollment campaigns, and murals against child marriage. Child Clubs are another set of voluntary committees that worked alongside Tipping Point during vital registration and school enrollment campaigns.

Other groups that were well aligned with Tipping Point and accompanied project activities and advocacy include School Management Committees (SMCs), who **cooperated with Tipping Point to enroll children in school and incorporate sessions on child marriage, gender, sexuality, menstruation and other issues into**

the curriculum. In two villages, the SMC also worked to provide sanitary pads in schools for girls to use during menstruation. Some villages had other NGO projects operating in them, and there was collaboration on an ad hoc basis by, for example, referring girls and families to their services as needed.

Religious leaders were both allies and opponents of change

The project engaged with a small number of Hindu and Muslim religious leaders. **Some individual leaders supported the project and took actions against CEFM like checking birth certificates, advising families against child marriage, and championing equal rights for adolescents.** While more religious leaders were checking birth certificates before conducting marriage ceremonies because of Tipping Point, many others were not. Some leaders continued to espouse views that threaten girls' rights, such as a belief among some Hindus that marrying a girl before menarche will accrue religious merit to her parents. In contrast, an Outcome Mapping story showed that in one village, **a Muslim scholar and a Hindu scholar worked together to use their influential positions to eliminate child marriage. This demonstrates how religious leaders can have a strong and positive influence.**

Religious leaders participated in two FGDs in which they expressed a strong desire for additional support from the project to help them network with one another so that they can be more consistent in communicating to their communities. They also said it would be helpful if the project provided them with information and written materials to help them advocate against child marriage. Interestingly, religious leaders did not seem to view themselves as thought leaders within their communities, with the FGD group from one district noting that people relied less on religion to guide their behavior and values as their education increased. Instead, religious leaders believed that conforming with community expectations was the main driver of people's behavior today. Therefore, they identified challenges of influencing their constituents' behaviors around child marriage and the rights of adolescents, which helped to further inform the project learnings.

Government officials were increasingly responsive

Coordination between Tipping Point groups, project staff and local government officials increased over time as the government representatives attended more community events. In some communities, strong linkages with village governments led to important achievements for the girls' groups. **Schools, health posts, and at least one government office started involving girls in programs that they organize and seeking girls' opinions on how the programs should be run.** In addition to helping achieve Tipping Point outcomes, governments showed appreciation for Tipping Point's new approaches. **A district level representative noted that Tipping Point had been able to raise awareness of child marriage and gender equality in a way that the government had not, and in areas where the government had not reached.** Some girls' groups were also able to secure funds from their community's administration for purchasing sports equipment, providing the added benefit girls learning to exercise citizenship and make demands of their government representatives. The image below depicts toilets that the government provided after girls' group members put forward a request to their local administration.



“We can say society has changed. We all went to the VDC and asked for our rights. Seeing our boldness, nobody said no. We should not let our rights be deprived. There was also no toilet in our village. But we did a rally and made toilets for everybody. We all did a meeting at the VDC and demanded it in the meeting, and then toilets were made. Every toilet nearby is from that. We all use the toilets, our families, our communities.”

Adolescent girl, age 16

One village exhibited particularly effective collective action when the Tipping Point parents’ group brought a grievance to the VDC and later to the District Development Committee (DDC). These parents had been unable to conduct meetings and sessions due to the lack of a proper venue. They asked the DDC to repair and maintain a community building for this purpose. Other groups supported their concern, and the DDC gave them the money necessary to complete the renovation. Another village had a similar story in which the parents’ and adolescent groups worked together to finish building a learning center. Tipping Point also facilitated adolescent participation in district and national events, including the International Day of the Girl, the Nepal Girl Summit, and other high-profile events that gave girls and boys exposure to broader advocacy networks and opportunities to meet with government officials.

5. INSPIRING CHANGE, BEING CHANGE: PROJECT STAFF

OUTCOME 5: Staff continue to reflect upon and take up values, practices, and action that model anti-oppression (based on gender, caste and other group identities) and reflect critically on their beliefs about sexuality

Key findings

- Staff internalized a critical awareness of gender
- Staff becoming role models for others was a process
- Challenges in power dynamics remained throughout the course of the project

“Especially her mother-in-law was not supportive [of Laxmi working for DSDC on Tipping Point] in the beginning, but her perception changed when Laxmi was showing her photographs and sharing stories from the field visits. Her mother-in-law saw Laxmi was doing a good job in the field and was teaching the boys and girls, so she became proud of her. Laxmi herself is very proud that other community members call and recognise her by her own name instead the name of her in-laws and husband.”

Notes from an interview with DSDC staff member Laxmi



The Tipping Point staff members were the core of the project in Phase 1. They organized and facilitated girls’ and boys’ groups each week as well as regular meetings of parents’ groups. They acted as teachers, mentors, and collaborators who provided leadership to group members in collective actions to shift social norms, such as street dramas about child marriage and girls’ football matches. Outside of the group sessions and events, staff were also important advocates for girls’ rights in intervening in individual cases to keep girls in school and to prevent child marriages.

Female staff, especially the younger ones, faced the same discriminatory gender norms that the project was working to change, and male staff were subject to the same expectations of dominance over women and other aspects of masculinity. To be credible voices and advocates for change within communities, project staff needed to be able to question and analyze their own beliefs and actions before they could lead others in challenging norms and traditions. Therefore, staff transformation and capacity development were integral elements of Tipping Point, and the project invested in a series of workshops and transformative experiences for staff to support their skills in personal reflection and foster a process of raising consciousness about gender.

This process was evaluated in part with three workshops with staff from partner organizations Siddhartha Samudayik Samaj (SSS) and Dalit Social Development Centre (DSDC) in which they reflected on how Tipping Point brought about significant changes in their values, beliefs, and personal and professional relationships.

Staff internalized a critical awareness of gender

Staff members reported that prior to working with Tipping Point they held views that reflected patriarchal and gender discriminatory values, such as thinking that females needed to do as others told them and that women were not capable of doing the same things as men. Female staff described how they had not been able to speak up to defend themselves or negotiate with family members about their rights, and that they did not believe that females should be outspoken. One female staff member shared:

“Earlier, even though I worked in a different organization, I always thought that women needed to do whatever was allocated for them by society and family. I was under a perception that I didn't have access to resources and was not capable of doing anything. However, after joining Tipping Point and becoming part of the girls' empowerment project, there is a huge improvement in all aspects of my personality. I am able to make decisions about myself on my own at home, and I have developed leadership skills as well. Along with that, my attitude has changed, and I am capable of searching for resources and accessing them independently. I have become financially stable as well. I don't consider myself meek, and I am confident that I can do any task. I treat my son and daughter equally.”

Female staff said they felt valued and respected by their communities, who in the past had expressed amazement that women could do things such as sit on chairs, not wear head coverings, and speak eye to eye with elders.

One of the most frequently reported and significant changes for staff was understanding that men and women were equally capable of doing the same tasks and that “women's work” and “men's work” were artificial constructions. Some male staff members began actively sharing household duties such as cooking and practicing joint decision-making with their wives. A staff member described the changes in his household this way:

“[We] share one kitchen, and we are living together by helping each other. Cleaning the home, cooking food, and performing agricultural tasks are the responsibilities of all. Food, clothes, and all the available facilities are equally distributed among all, this is the reason my joint family is as it is. These things came from GED [gender, equity, and diversity] training, male/female workload analysis, workshops, group discussions, visiting, concepts of zero tolerance, and do no harm. This is the result of a realization that the changes can be brought from oneself and from our own family.”

Staff becoming role models for others was a process

Staff members at Tipping Point have improved their ability to facilitate and negotiate conversations, document and communicate ideas, and use critical thinking and analytical skills to lead people through a process of identifying the root causes of problems to find solutions, rather than telling others to simply accept their point of view. They took pride in being positive role models in their communities, embodying the progressive values of the project through their own actions and behaviors. Staff recognized the importance of being considered part of the community and were encouraged by their contribution to the changes they saw occurring.

In terms of relations between co-workers, at the start of the project some staff members had difficulty speaking with colleagues of the opposite sex because unrelated men and women do not frequently interact in daily life. But through training and continued discussion, they became comfortable speaking openly with one another. A female colleague explained:

“I used to feel awkward to talk to male friends. Actually, men were not even said to be friends. We only did the housework and did what the family members told us. I didn’t have many friends, either. Now, the community people want to befriend me and ask how I learned about so many positive things.”

In addition to learning about gender equality, staff became more conscientious about other identity-based forms of discrimination in society. One colleague described how he changed his own thinking to be more inclusive and respectful of community members from marginalized castes:

“Before I came to the project I understood Dalits as untouchable, but after I came to the project I understood the meaning of Dalit. Now I have a positive perspective towards Dalits and have started to treat people in my community as my family.”

Speaking with communities about sexuality and sexual health and rights was particularly challenging for staff, although they made great inroads in addressing difficult topics. Staff had to overcome initial opposition from community members through engaging people in dialogue and public activities. In a number of communities, parents feared that the project would harm their children through exposure to taboo topics. Over time, this view softened, and parents of adolescents recognized the value of the knowledge and skills their children gained.

Challenges in power dynamics remained throughout the course of the project

Despite the profound changes among staff themselves, they continued to face challenges in their work and homes. For example, there were female staff who resigned because their families were unhappy that they were working, thought they were away from home too much, or were displeased that they worked closely with men. Tipping Point engaged the spouses of staff on occasion to address these issues, in some cases effectively. Female staff also received criticism in the project villages for riding on the back of male staff’s motorbikes, which is necessary sometimes. Indeed, there were considerable transportation challenges for women who did not drive or would not be safe traveling alone but needed to move between locations to do their work.

The perceived social distance between junior and senior positions was also a concern of staff and made communicating honestly in teams difficult. In communities, local leaders sometimes pressured staff into performing work in a way favorable to them. Yet these realities do not diminish the personal transformation of staff to become stronger advocates for adolescents and especially for girls. As a female staff member shared:

“What I am today, whatever changed occurred in me, is only because of this project. In the coming days, I will bring more positive changes within myself and in my friends and family.”

CONCLUSIONS

In just a few years, the first phase of Tipping Point made significant progress mobilizing advocates for girls' rights and shifting social norms related to child marriage in Nepal. Tipping Point groups for girls, boys, and adults have been educated participants about rights and equality and empowered them to make changes in their own lives. Group members are developing new skills and awareness and are sharing these with others in their communities through public advocacy initiatives, direct interventions with girls' families, and through informal information sharing between peers. Collective action efforts, including rallies against child marriage, street dramas and debates on social issues, and sports and cooking competitions, have been particularly influential on community norms.

Staff from CARE Nepal and partner organizations DSDC and SSS have undergone their own personal journeys of change. They challenged previously held beliefs and adopted new gender equitable behaviors, becoming role models within their communities. Tipping Point has also made inroads in activating supportive girl champions and allies at district and VDC levels such as the VCPCs, although these networks need further strengthening to be more effective advocates for girls' rights.

It is difficult to measure the impact of Tipping Point on the practice of child marriage itself, but there were many stories of marriages averted through the intervention of parents, boys and girls involved with the project. Girls still face many barriers girls in realizing their potential and achieving agency in key life decisions. But, the successes of Tipping Point so far hold promise for future social norm change and girls' empowerment. Tipping Point is unique in its active engagement of boys as brothers and future husbands, and the transformation of boys into advocates for girls is a surprising result that deserves attention. In addition, the project piloted new ways of operationalizing social norm change work, with programming according to a set of principles that include focusing on positive messages about girls rather than the negative outcomes of child marriage.¹⁵ Tipping Point also deployed innovative measures of social norms and normative change that can inform academic and program design thinking, such as the SNAP tool.

As the project enters its second phase, key challenges will be to build upon the strong results achieved within the core girls', boys', and parents' groups to deepen the process of social norm change throughout communities. The project's model whereby group members engage intensively with the project and become community role models in inspiring social norm change has worked to an extent but is uneven. Therefore, it requires more effort to reach and make a difference to more marginalized groups such as girls who are out of school. Strengthening networks of supporters will also increase the resonance of project messaging and will encourage more allies to take action and drive resources to girls. Additionally, there is an opportunity to spread the project's message beyond current project sites through like-minded religious leaders. Finally, in Phase 1, the potential of income generation as a means to delay marriages of adolescent girls was not fully explored, and girls will benefit from more financial literacy and livelihood skills.

¹⁵ Social Norms Innovation Briefs. *CARE Tipping Point*. Retrieved from <https://caretippingpoint.org/innovation/>

SECTION IV: PROGRAMMING AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL NORMS PROGRAMMING ADDRESSING CEFM

Create spaces for more intergenerational dialogue

Hold joint dialogue sessions with girls', boys', and parents' groups together so that all can benefit from shared discussions and learnings and can develop mutual respect and understanding. Separate sessions that are gender and age-specific are still important and effective moments for facilitating learning and conversation among peers in safe spaces, but joint dialogue sessions can allow for shared learning and discussions between groups.

Create targeted strategies for diffusion of project messaging

Take deliberate steps to include community members (including adolescents) who are not directly involved in a project to attend and participate in public activities that promote social norm change. Develop targeted strategies for engaging different segments of the population and encouraging their interaction with peers who are directly or intensively involved in programming.

Scale up work with religious leaders

Engage a larger number of religious leaders so that they can build a supportive network and be consistent in their actions and messaging about child marriage. Work with leaders from different religions to develop materials that are aligned with their respective faiths but that also enable them to amplify progressive social norms that promote girls' rights.

Help older girl group members "graduate" to become adult champions

Encouraging older girls to remain involved in the project and offering a path to community leadership can help older girls to continue developing skills after they age out of groups. Mentorship of younger girls is one option for engaging girl group members as they become adults, giving them a structure for continuing to be role models. This would also have a positive demonstration effect on their communities, demonstrating how girls who participate in groups can mature into strong and respected women.

Provide financial and income generation skills to girls

Investments that ease financial pressures create goodwill within communities that may facilitate receptiveness to social norms messaging. Out of school girls in particular need alternatives to marriage, and income generating activities help girls to have autonomy and reduce the perception of unmarried girls being a "burden" on their household.

Tailor sexuality education to the changing marriage context

As the age of marriage and *gauna* are rising, sexuality education must respond to a changing context in which adolescents are expected to delay sexual activity for a longer time. It damages a girl's honor for her to interact with a boy, yet she is expected to wait until at least age 20 before starting married life. Age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education for girls must meet the needs of both younger and older adolescent girls and boys, recognizing that there is a cultural preference for abstinence but that young people need adequate information to be able to make their own sexual and reproductive choices.

Provide education and support for the responsible use of social media and digital technologies

Girls and boys are starting to communicate using mobile phones. Planning early to teach adolescents about responsible use alongside practical skills for using technology to improve their lives will help to promote safe usage while empowering youth with greater access to information.

Invest in trainings and content specifically focused on equitable masculinities

Meaningful engagement of men and boys in gender equality requires planned and specific engagement with content and discussions on masculinity and versions of it that are expansive and equitable. Invest in the development and facilitation of discussions on masculinities as a core part of programming.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Engage civil society and the public to promote understanding and engagement with new governance structures

Following elections in 2017 and the restructuring of government administration systems, the government of Nepal has an opportunity to engage civil society and the public to promote understanding of the working and mandates of new governance structures and to ensure that key stakeholders (including NGOs) are able to work with federal, provincial and local bodies to achieve common goals. The evaluation shows some positive examples of how building relationships between the project and local governments has helped to garner resources for girls and to work with structures such as the VCPCs to promote girls' rights, which contributes to achieving national goals such as ending child marriage by 2030. A systematized approach to resource allocation to ensure girls' rights are fulfilled would include gender responsive planning and budgeting at municipal level.

2. Implement the national strategy and action plan to end child marriage

In 2016, the Nepal government adopted a national strategy to end child marriage. The strategy presents opportunities for concrete action to tackle the root causes and consequences of child marriage. A draft plan of action to implement the strategy has been submitted to the government by the Girls Not Brides (GNB) Network of Nepal. The government should take steps to approve the action plan, including ensuring adequate consultations and review of the plan by relevant ministries and civil society stakeholders and providing dedicated resource. Additionally, the government can support accountability and coordination mechanisms for implementation at federal and local level. Community leaders, religious leaders, men and boys, CSOs, and multiple levels of government have shown a willingness to engage in and support efforts to end child marriage and would benefit from inclusion in consultative processes in order to have a feasible and effective national action plan to end child marriage.

3. Create/strengthen platforms for youth, including girls, to engage in government policy processes and decision-making

A key finding from the evaluation is that, in some communities, girls have been able to positively engage with government representatives and service providers, including schools, public health posts, and the VDC offices, leading them to involve girls in programs and seeking girls' opinions on how the programs should be run. As the new decentralized system of local and provincial governance starts being implemented across the country, the government should create or strengthen platforms or processes for meaningful engagement of adolescent girls and young people in decision-making and policymaking at all levels. This engagement will help ensure that youths' needs and rights are represented and promote youth leadership and civil engagement. The National Youth Policy can provide an initial framework for this work, coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

4. Integrate and scale up strategies to change discriminatory norms as part of government programs

The findings of the evaluation show the promise of approaches aimed at shifting discriminatory norms and expanding community perceptions of the potential roles and contributions of girls to their communities beyond household duties. There is an opportunity for new government actors at federal and local level to increase support for such promising approaches and strategies, including through collaboration and support for efforts by youth and civil society organizations to mobilize communities and through integration of norm change strategies and approaches within large-scale development programs across various sectors.

5. Ensure that government services, including health services, are youth-friendly

With the development of a new adolescent health and development strategy (2017), government bodies and departments at local and federal levels have an opportunity to promote and strengthen adolescents' and young people's access to critical health and social services, especially in remote and marginalized communities. It is critical for the government to integrate services for adolescents into existing sexual and reproductive health services, quality assurance, and funding.¹⁶ Girls highly valued Tipping Point's focus on sexual and reproductive health knowledge, particularly for menstrual management, indicating that there is an unmet need among adolescents for timely and youth-friendly health and social services.

6. Strengthen the provision of age-appropriate and comprehensive sexuality education

The government's current efforts in collaboration with UNFPA to develop a new comprehensive sexuality education curriculum are welcome. Tipping Point staff reported that discussing sexuality was one of the most challenging aspects of their work, noting that schoolteachers are not currently providing adequate sexuality education to students and that there continues to be some resistance in communities to these efforts. The government should ensure adequate resources and capacity for delivery and implementation of the curricula in schools but also ensure outreach to out-of-school girls and boys, parents and community members to reduce taboos around sexual and reproductive health and rights and equip adolescents to make informed decisions.

7. Invest in skills training for girls and young people in marginalized communities to expand choices and create alternatives to child marriage

The government should invest in life skills training and vocational programs for adolescent girls and young people, particularly those out of school, to create viable alternatives to early marriage. Evaluation respondents reported highly positive views of girls who contributed to household income through income generating activities such as sewing, reversing views of unmarried girls as a "burden" on their families. Skills training strategies should include diverse ways to connect young people from remote and marginalized communities to vocational, livelihoods, and employment opportunities and markets and supporting infrastructure and access to services and programs that can transform the geographic isolation of communities.

¹⁶ Mishra, S.R. (2017). Reaching adolescents with health services in Nepal [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/95/2/17-020217/en/>

ANNEX I: MOST IMPACTFUL ACTIVITIES

Tipping Point group members and staff implemented a wide range of activities to empower project participants with new knowledge and skills and to promote a shift towards adopting more progressive social norms in communities. In addition to the regular meetings of different project collectives, community members identified the following as the activities that they felt were most impactful:

Public rallies: Many respondents felt these community-level rallies were very successful at raising public awareness of the negative impacts of child marriages and benefits of delaying marriage, and at shifting social expectations for girls. Incorporating education and information sharing through activities such as debates and dramas, these events also engaged stakeholders including VDCs and VCPCs in promoting messaging about strengthening girls' rights and opportunities. In addition to rallies against child marriage, Tipping Point groups also organized rallies on topics including sanitation, caste discrimination, dowry practices and the importance of education.

Cooking competitions: Competitions in which men and boys competed at preparing meals were very popular within communities. The events created a fun environment for men and boys to experience first-hand the work that female family members conduct every day and included a facilitated discussion on why it was necessary that fathers come forward to be role models for doing household chores. As a result, it became more socially acceptable for males to do household work and reaffirmed the importance of having an equitable division of labor within families, challenging the notion of "women's work". Some boys and men have started taking more responsibility for household chores, reducing the work burden for their mothers and sisters.

Football and cycling competitions: Tipping Point organized girls' football matches and cycling competitions, enabling adolescent girls to compete in sporting events and to incorporate more play into their lives. In addition to learning new skills through a fun activity, girls and their parents became more aware of the physical and mental health benefits of sports and community members came to accept that girls could still respectably play and compete in public. At first, communities were resistant to the idea of girls playing and feared that this would draw inappropriate attention from boys and men, but over time they have come to appreciate the positive benefits of sport for girls. In an indirect way, games and sports competitions have helped to validate girls' voice, mobility and visibility within communities and also support the idea that girls should have some leisure time to play outside of the home.

Vital registration campaign: This campaign sought to encourage families to formally register to obtain government-issued documentation, such as birth certificates. Girls' and boys' group members coordinated with VDC officials and received leadership from School Management Committees and VCPCs in implementing the campaign. A public hearing facilitated by a local radio station also amplified the reach of the campaign. As a result of these efforts, the campaign led to increased numbers of birth registrations, marriage registrations and citizenship registrations. Having official documentation has also made it easier for religious leaders to demand to see proof of age before performing a marriage ceremony, preventing potential child marriages from taking place.

Intergenerational dialogue: Held every quarter, these dialogues brought together parents, members of the Village Development Committee and adolescents. Parents shared their own experiences during childhood, and adolescents shared what they were learning and spoke about their aspirations. The dialogues provided girls and boys with opportunities to request support with issues they were facing, and for parents and adolescents to discuss their expectations for one another while challenging assumptions they may have had about each other's thoughts and feelings. The dialogues gave adolescents a platform for speaking out and also reinforced the belief that adolescent girls and boys have valuable thoughts and opinions to share

Street dramas: Girls and boys formed drama groups for creating and performing dramas on issues including child marriage, violence against women and dowry. After the performances, the adolescents facilitated discussions about the content of the dramas, what audience members would change about the situations portrayed and how the dramas related to their own lives. Many parents worked as allies to girls in the drama groups and reported that the dramas were influential in increasing awareness of issues related to rights and equality and in shifting community members' perceptions and behaviors. Adolescents felt that their parents were more open to discussing child marriage after having attended a street drama event, increasing girls' voice within their family. The dramas also created an opportunity to show the public that adolescent girls and boys could work together for a good cause and their interactions could be meaningful and appropriate rather than flirtatious.

Raksha Bandhan celebrations: Raksha Bandhan is a festival celebrating the bond between brothers and sisters in Hindu communities in Nepal. In a ceremony, a sister ties a *rakhi* (a colored thread) on her brother's wrist, prays for his long life and asks him to offer her protection. The brother responds with an oath to protect his sister. Tipping Point adolescent groups saw the potential for reshaping this ritual to emphasize equality between sisters and brothers as they felt that the traditional practice reinforced patriarchal norms of male protection and heroism, along with female supplication. To challenge these, they organized a public version of the holiday in a central place in the village, in which brothers also tied *rakhi* on their sisters' wrists. In the exchange of *rakhis*, brothers and sisters shared ways that they could support each other, and siblings promised each other friendship and solidarity in the pursuit of their dreams.

Public debates and debate competitions: Tipping Point groups used public debates at various moments to engage community members in discussions about social issues. For example, they used religious and cultural festivals to discuss social norms and gender equity. During the Hindu festival Saraswati puja, which celebrates the goddess of learning, the team held an event to question why girls are married and investment in their education is restricted. The event consisted of plays and debate competitions followed by facilitated discussion with the community. Public debates also played an important part in making events such as street dramas and Raksha Bandhan more impactful.

Knowledge fair: Tipping Point groups organized Knowledge Fairs that included activities such as drama performances, art competitions, elocution contests, cooking competitions, incense stick making competitions, bangle making competitions, training on sanitary pad making and that had stalls exhibiting child-friendly educational materials, art and handicrafts. Girls, boys, parents, teachers and other

community stakeholders all participated in the fairs, facilitating shared learning and an appreciation of girls' skills.

To read CARE's Innovation Briefs on Intergenerational Dialogues, Cooking Competitions, Raksha Bandhan and Street Dramas in Nepal, visit: <https://caretippingpoint.org/innovation/>

ANNEX II: PREDOMINANT SOCIAL NORMS

The following table presents key norms that Tipping Point wished to give special attention to during planning and monitoring. Also shown are acceptable exceptions to the norms and sanctions for breaking norms as captured in FGDs and interviews for the evaluation.

Predominant social norms	Social expectations and sanctions for transgressions at time of evaluation	Exceptions when defying norms is acceptable
Girls should not move around freely in public	Communities still view girls' mobility with suspicion, particularly if they perceive a girl to be "roaming" without a productive purpose. People fear that a girl moving around her village will lead to interaction with boys and dishonoring her family. Girls may be criticized by the community and parents pressured to better control their daughters, sometimes even pressured to marry her off. Change is occurring slowly and there is a slight loosening of restrictions on girls' movements.	Girls may move about in their communities for purposes such as going to school or market; doing a job; going to a health clinic; collecting fodder; attending a wedding (including their own); or participating in skills training. Tipping Point activities have become an acceptable reason to be outside the home.
Girls should not speak up for their rights or voice opinions	People generally look positively on girls that are now speaking up for rights within their families and communities, although this varies between villages. In some areas, such girls receive criticisms and community members may also speak badly about their parents. It is commonly considered shameful for girls to discuss marriage with parents, but Tipping Point girls are defying this norm.	In some communities, it is acceptable for girls to speak out in public within Tipping Point group contexts but not as individuals. There is some approval for girls' rebuking boys that tease them. Within families, girl group members are increasingly able to voice their wishes and opinions and communicate better with their parents.
A family should educate their son more than their daughter	Society is largely accepting of girls' being more educated than in the past, although an expectation exists that boys will still likely reach a higher level of schooling.	There are no strong sanctions for parents that educate sons and daughters to an equal level, but neither is there a strong norm dictating that they must do so.
Girls should not play sports or ride bicycles	Community members view these activities somewhat negatively but have become more accepting. For people who oppose girls playing sports or riding bicycles, they tend to mildly sanction girls and their parents by saying negative things about them, although in at least one community a girl who does these things could be beaten by her parents.	Girls can play sports and games at school, at home or at Tipping Point events, but not in other contexts. Riding bicycles is acceptable for productive purposes (e.g. going to school, market, or a health clinic). It becomes less acceptable for girls to play sports as they get older.
Giving/receiving low or no dowry is shameful for families	Marriage without a high dowry is becoming more acceptable within a minority of the population in project communities. For the majority, receiving a high dowry is still important and associated with social status.	People are gradually accepting the idea that if a girl is educated and/or employed it is more acceptable for her groom to receive a low dowry, as she has skills and knowledge that will be

	<p>Failing to provide sufficient dowry can result in calling off a wedding, shaming of the girl's family, or abuse of the bride when she joins her in-law's household.</p>	<p>beneficial over the long term. In cases of elopement, dowry is not needed. Girls from poorer families are expected to give less dowry.</p>
<p>It is inappropriate for girls to be interacting with boys</p>	<p>Interactions between adolescent girls and boys continue to be highly sensitive, as communities are fearful of sex and they commonly oversexualize girls' actions. If a girl and boy are suspected of having a romantic relationship, the community will pressure their parents to marry them to prevent shame. Parents may also beat a girl and community members will question her character if she speaks with a boy. However, there has been an increase in the acceptability of such interactions.</p>	<p>Girls and boys may acceptably interact if they attend the same school, if they are discussing school, if they are relatives, or if they are members of Tipping Point groups.</p>
<p>Love marriages are unacceptable</p>	<p>Love marriages continue to be a great source of shame for girls and their families although they are happening with more frequency in recent years and there is very slight movement towards greater social acceptance. Couples that elope without their parents' consent will be shunned by their community and families, and the girl's parents will also be blamed for raising an "anti-social" daughter.</p>	<p>Acceptability of a love marriage is contingent upon the couple being from the same caste and getting prior consent from parents in both families.</p>
<p>Intercaste marriages are highly taboo</p>	<p>Intercaste marriage is the least acceptable social norm discussed in the evaluation. Intercaste couples are rejected by their communities and families and become social outcasts so that they cannot remain in their communities.</p>	<p>In very rare cases, it can be acceptable with permission of the bride's and groom's parents, but the couple will still have to relocate to a different community.</p>

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