

## Background

The Strategic Goal for World Vision International Nepal's (WVI Nepal) Country Strategy (2021-2025) is 'to improve the well-being of 0.8 million children, in particular, the most vulnerable ones, to be protected from violence, well-nourished, able to access quality and inclusive education and to experience positive and peaceful relationship in their families and communities.' This expects the priority of WVI Nepal to work on three primary technical programmes (TPs): Protection and community engagement and sponsorship programme (PCESP), Inclusive Quality Education (IQE) and Nutrition Resilient Livelihood (NRL) for the well-being of the child. The baseline study of the Technical Program (TP) named Protection and Community Engagement & Sponsorship Plan (PCESP) covered the entire 22 project implementing area programs (APs), with the representative number of beneficiaries from each project model. This baseline also included relevant key stakeholders, social institutions, and service centers. Moreover, the sector-specific secondary information was also reviewed to meet the purpose of the baseline study.

Center for Research on Education Health and Social Science (CREHSS) carried out this Baseline survey for World Vision International Nepal from July to September 2021.

## Objectives:

The overall purpose of the baseline was to establish the base value for each indicator that provides the basis for setting the target and measuring impact over the project period, which can be communicated to governments, donors, and beneficiaries.

## Methodology:

The baseline study adopted mixed methods, i.e., both quantitative and qualitative methods. A cross-sectional survey including household survey and the children/adolescent survey was conducted for the quantitative part, while qualitative methods included key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders. The study was conducted across all APs where WVI Nepal APs intervention has been planned for the current strategic cycle (FY 21-25).

A total of 10,785 households, 4478 adolescents/children aged 12-18 years, and 64 key informants were interviewed.

SPSS software was used for quantitative data analysis, whereas thematic analysis was performed for qualitative data. Bivariate (chi-square test) and multivariate analysis (binary logistic regression) were performed with the goal level indicators.

## Key Findings

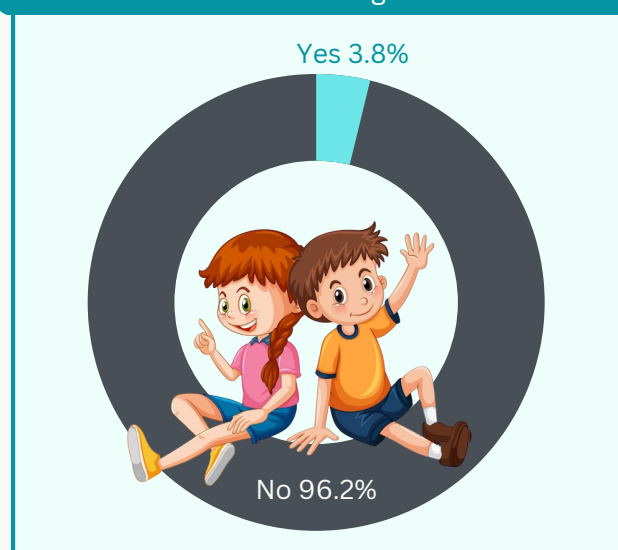
### Background characteristics:

A total of 4478 adolescents aged 12-18 years from 10,785 households were interviewed in the study. More than two-thirds of adolescents (68%) were aged 12-15 years, and more than half (54%) were girls. Nearly a fourth (24%) adolescents were RC children, two-fifths (40%) were vulnerable children, and more than a fourth (28%) were most vulnerable children.

### Goal level indicators

The ability of households to recall the community vision for child well-being was quite low. Only 4% of households were able to recall the community vision for child well-being.

### Able to recall the community vision for child well-being



In regards to the prevalence of early marriage, two percent of the children and adolescents aged 12-18 years were married at the time of the survey, and the proportion was significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) highest in APs like Rautahat W (6%), and Udaypur E (5%) and larger among females (3%). Multivariate analysis shows that males were 74% less likely (adjusted Odds Ratio=0.263, 95% CI=0.188-0.367) to marry at earlier age (before 18 years) than female respondents

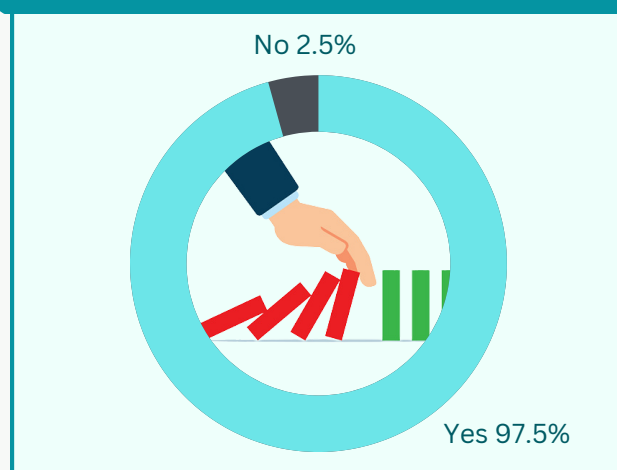
Qualitative finding is contradicted with quantitative finding. Key stakeholders were also asked about the prevalence of child marriage in their respective communities. The findings from KII and FGD revealed that the prevalence of child marriage was higher in Terai districts. The proportion of child marriage was found more than 80% in Parsa (Sarlahi) followed by Rautahat (50%) and Jumla (40%). Meanwhile, the prevalence of child marriage was found comparatively lower in Sindhuli (15%), Lamjung (10%), and Kathmandu (5%). Key stakeholders further explained the reason of child marriage that due to illiteracy, peer pressure and love affairs, children elope themselves and get married on their own. Child marriage are mostly seen among Dalits, Poor and underprivileged community. KIs added that, lack of awareness, increasing use of social media, peer pressure, poor financial status, ineffective implementation of laws and policies etc. are some of the contributing factors of child marriage

"People should be made aware about harmful consequences of the child marriage, or they should be strictly punished when the case of child marriage is found in the community." - Parent, Mahottari

**Outcome 1: Community partners understand and utilize child sponsorship to care for children and enable children, families, and communities to have life-enriching experiences**

It is notable that more than nine out of ten (91%) RC parents reported that sponsorship provides life-enriching experiences for children, families, and communities, and the proportions were slightly higher among MVC and VC families (94% each) than better-off families (91%). Similarly, nearly three-fourth (73%) RC households were able to articulate how sponsorship contributes to the development of sponsored children and their communities. Households in Bajhang W (34%) had comparatively poor recall about the sponsorship than other APs, and this could be because Bajhang is a new program area of World Vision. It is impressive to note that almost all (98%) RCs could articulate the program's impact on their lives. A larger proportion of unmarried (98%) than married adolescents (88%) could communicate the program's impact on their lives.

**RCs can articulate the impact of the program on their lives**

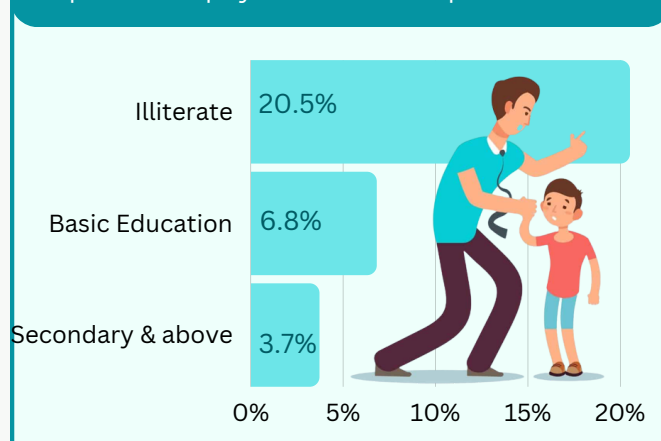


"Sponsorship program has been very beneficial to us so; it should be continued in the future as well. Alongside, while implementing such programs community people should be given the ownership of the project to ensure transparency and sustainability of the project." -Chief of Women and Children Section: Bajhang

**Outcome 2: Children, with support from caregivers, are resilient and able to respond to CP issues**

The study found that 7% of adolescents experienced physical attacks in the past 12 months. Notably, higher proportions of illiterate adolescents (21%) than those who had basic (7%) and secondary and above education (4%) had experienced physical attacks in the past 12 months.

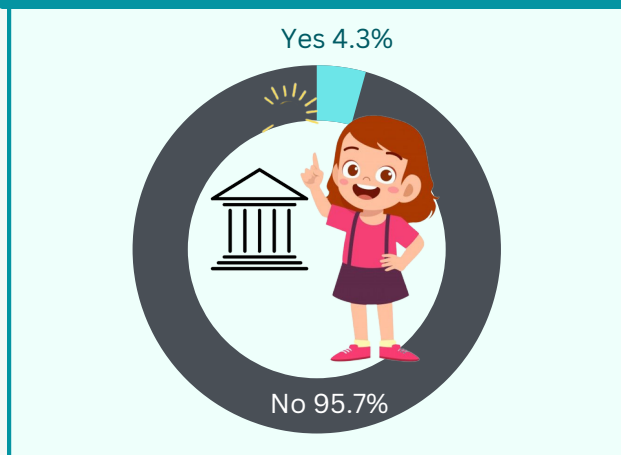
**Experienced physical attacks in past 12 months**



In this regard, an important qualitative finding revealed by the study is that most parents do not consider beating or using physical force and using abusive words as violence against children. Only 4% of children reported that the local government

sought their views, and among those whose views were sought, more than half (53%) children reported that their views/ideas were put into practice.

#### The local government asked for opinions and ideas



It is encouraging to note that nearly four-fifths (79%) adolescents had strong/very strong positive and peaceful relationships with their parents/caregivers. Positive relationship with parents/caregivers was stronger in children of higher age group, 16-18 years (82%), male children (80%), and married children (83%). Similarly, larger proportions of children having secondary or above education (81%) had a strong positive relationship with their parents than their counterparts. So, it can be inferred that education plays an important role in establishing better children's relationships with their parents/caregivers. Similarly, the qualitative finding showed that there had been some negative impact of COVID-19 on parents' and children's relationships, such as frustration among parents due to job loss/financial crisis and hence the expression of that frustration in the relationship with their children.

"Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the schools have shut down. Meanwhile, parents are continuously forcing their children to study due to which children get irritated, and they try to stay away from their parents, which have also created bitterness in the family." -Ward Representative, Kathmandu

#### Other Indicators:

Most adolescents had a healthy relationship with their peers, as seven out of ten mentioned they had strong/very strong relationships with their peers. In regards to the prevalence of violence,

2.5% of children/adolescents faced sexual violence in the past 12 months, and the proportion among girls (3.3%) was higher, which was even more than national prevalence (1.4%, for girls aged 15-19 years, NDHS, 2016). Similarly, a larger proportion of adolescents living with disabilities (a tenth of them) and most vulnerable children (7%) were the victims of sexual violence than their counterparts.

Child participation in the family's decisions was not given much priority in the community. Just above a tenth (12%) households had child participation at the family level. The child participation varies at different APs; highest in Lamgunj (39%) and lowest in Mahottari E (2%). Child participation was comparatively higher in households whose main source of income was government/private employment (19%) than other sources of income.

This could be because households engaged in government or private service are more aware of the importance of child participation due to the environment and people they interact with during their work. Overall, nearly one-quarter (23%) of households practiced interaction with children for children's career issues. Higher proportions of better-off families (28%) practiced interaction for children's issues than their counterparts. Regarding the source of family income, the families involved in employment (govt/Pvt) (40%) practiced more interaction for children's issues than families with other family income sources.

The prevalence of child labor in the study area was 16% for children aged 12-18 years, which is slightly higher than the national prevalence, i.e., 10% for the child between 14-17 years (Nepal Child labor report, 2021). APs like Sarlahi (Haripurwa) (43%), Bajhang E (40%), and Jumla Sinja (36%) had an alarmingly high prevalence of child labor. It is noted that 39% of children from MVC families while none from better-off families were engaged in child labor. Similarly, APs like Mahottari E (12%) and Achham W (10%) had a notably higher prevalence of gender-based discrimination, and a higher proportion of illiterate children (7%) and children belonging to the Dalit caste (6%) were more prone to gender-based discrimination.

#### Conclusions

The study showed that only 4% of households could recall the community vision for child well-being. Although the study showed a low prevalence of early marriage, area programs like Rautahat W

had notable proportions of early marriage (6%). This may be somehow justified by its caste/ethnicity distribution, as all of the adolescents belonged to either Dalits/Muslims/Janjati caste. More than nine out of ten (91%) RC parents reported that sponsorship provides life-enriching experiences for children, families, and communities, and the proportions were slightly higher among MVC and VC families (94% each) than better-off families (91%). Likewise, 7% of adolescents experienced physical attacks in the past 12 months, the proportion being higher among illiterate adolescents, adolescents living with disabilities, and belonging to Dalit and Muslim caste (10% each). Only 4% of children reported that the local government sought their views, and among those whose views were sought, more than half (53%) children reported that their views/ideas were put into practice. Child participation at the family level was lowest in APs like Mahottari E, and Bajhang E. The prevalence of child labor in the study area was higher than the national prevalence (Nepal Child labor report, 2021). Notably, 39% of most vulnerable children (MVC) while none of the better-off children were engaged in child labor. Overall, there is a huge scope to work on child protection issues in different Area Programs.

## Recommendations

Following recommendations are drawn based on the findings of the study.

- Child marriage is common, especially in the Terai districts, although there is a law regarding child marriage. **Hence, an advocacy program for awareness of harmful practices of child marriage to the parents and children as well is needed to prevent child marriage and its negative effect.**
- Adolescents living with disabilities and most vulnerable children were more likely to become victims of sexual violence than their counterparts. Likewise, a larger proportion of illiterate adolescents, adolescents living with disabilities, and belonging to the Dalit and Muslim caste (a tenth each) experienced physical violence. **Hence, these groups of children should be particularly focused during the design and implementation of child protection programs, especially for the project component that addresses the violence.**
- Child participation in family decisions and

interaction for children's careers was found neglected in the community. Child participation at the family level was lowest in APs like Mahottari E, and Bajhang E. **So, child protection and advocacy intervention must satisfactorily promote child participation and interaction in the family through active involvement of parents, with a special focus on these APs.**

- An important qualitative finding that should be pondered upon is that most parents are unaware that beating or using physical force and using abusive words is violence against children. Hence, positive parenting skills should be made an integral component of child protection interventions.
- Very few adolescents reported that the local government sought their views during the decision-making of local government, and in certain instances, even if the children got the opportunity, they were not always enthusiastic to participate. **Hence, upcoming CFLG intervention should also sensitize local government about the significance of children/adolescents' participation at local level decision making process.**
- The prevalence of child labor in the study area was higher than the national prevalence (Nepal Child labor report, 2021). Similarly, APs like Sarlahi (Haripurwa), Bajhang E, and Jumla Sinja had an alarmingly high prevalence of child labor. Likewise, children from MVC families were more likely to be engaged in child labor, as evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative studies. **Hence, interventions that create employment opportunities for the poor and vulnerable people should be designed along with educational programs. Similarly, the aforementioned areas and groups must be particularly focused during the intervention that addresses child labor.**
- Area programs like Mahottari and Achham had a notably higher prevalence of gender-based discrimination. Similarly, a higher proportion of illiterate children and children belonging to the Dalit caste were more prone to gender-based discrimination. **Hence, special focus should be provided to these areas and groups of people during child protection programs that address gender-based discrimination.**

### Suggested Citation:

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