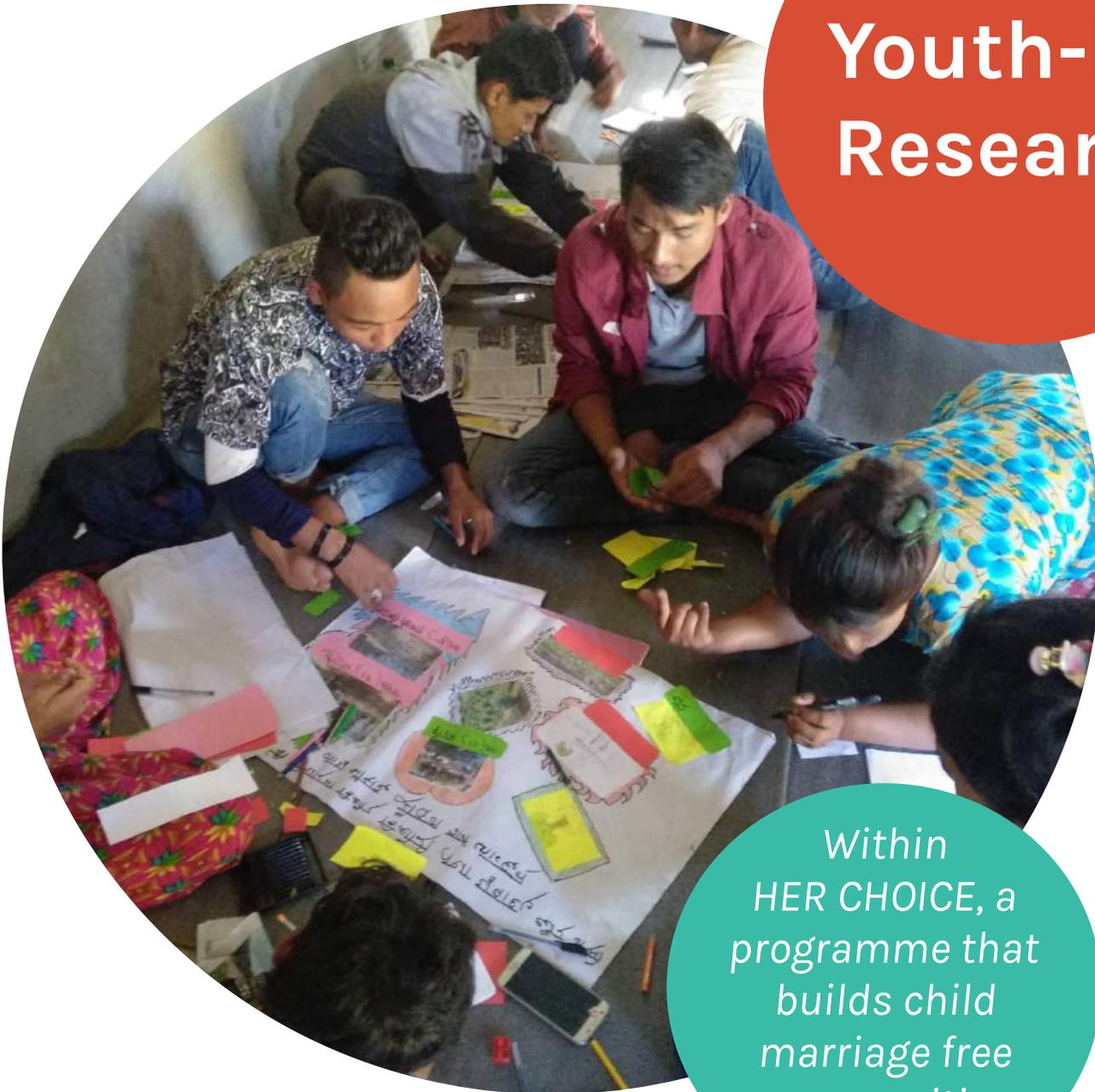


International Child  
Development Initiatives

## Youth-led Research



*Within  
HER CHOICE, a  
programme that  
builds child  
marriage free  
communities*

**Summary report from  
Ethiopia, Nepal and Pakistan**

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# About Youth- led Research

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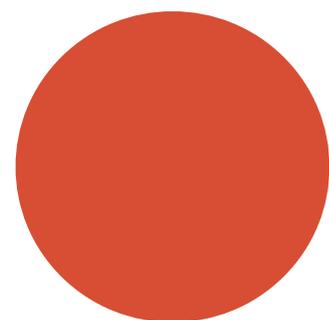
**Youth-led Research is an approach that empowers children and young people growing up in difficult circumstances, to understand better their communities and the social values and issues that involve and affect them, so they can become active agents of change.**





- *What do young people themselves think about child marriage and its root causes?*
- *Would we be able to prevent more effectively child marriage if the views of young people on this problem were taken into account?*
- *Would young people feel stronger in refusing child marriage if they were able to better understand this phenomenon and how it takes place in the communities where they live?*

**We believe that the answer to all these questions is 'yes' and that putting girls and boys at the centre of research and advocacy efforts at local level would bring great results!**



# YOUTH-LED RESEARCH



## GOALS

1

Support girls and boys in understanding the world they live in.

Give children the necessary skills to make decisions.

2

3

Support children to become agents of change in their communities.



## BENEFITS

### FOR CHILDREN



Improved capacity to make choices, reflect and think critically.

Better writing, communication and organizational skills.



More confidence to contribute to improving children's lives in their communities.

Children's contributions also benefit research because they

Bring valuable insights and original contributions to knowledge.



Observe with different eyes, ask different questions, have different concerns.

# About ICDI and the HER CHOICE programme

International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) is a knowledge organization in psychosocial development of children and young people growing up in difficult circumstances. ICDI believes in the power of children and young people, supporting their rights and addressing the underlying causes of the problems they face (for more information please visit [www.icdi.nl](http://www.icdi.nl)).

Child marriage is a widespread phenomenon that endangers the healthy development and well-being of girls and young women. Each year, 15 million girls get married before the age of 18. HER CHOICE is an alliance of four Netherlands-based organisations: Stichting Kinderpostzegels, The Hunger Project, International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and the University of Amsterdam. They combine their efforts with 27 local partner organisations to fight child marriage in ten countries in Africa and Asia. The programme runs from January 2016 to December 2020 and is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (for more information, please visit [www.her-choice.org](http://www.her-choice.org)).



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

## Where:

Youth-led Research as part of the HER CHOICE programme was piloted in three countries in close cooperation with the following partner organizations:

### Ethiopia:

In Ethiopia, the activity is carried out by Education for Sustainable Development (ESD, [www.esdethio.org](http://www.esdethio.org)). They work on



integrated community development with a special focus on children, youth and women since 2007.

### Nepal:

In Nepal the project is carried out with CWIN ([www.cwin.org.np](http://www.cwin.org.np)), a pioneer child rights organization active since 1987. CWIN's main areas of concern are child labour, street children, child marriage, bonded labour, trafficking of children, children in conflict with the law and commercial-sexual exploitation of children.



### Pakistan:

In Pakistan, Youth-led Research is carried out with Bedari ([www.bedari.org.pk](http://www.bedari.org.pk)), a non-governmental organization working for the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls. Active since 1991, Bedari has longstanding experience in creating attitudinal change in communities through training and education, and in conducting advocacy for legal and policy reforms through networking and lobby with parliamentarians. For many years they have been fighting to change laws to lower the legal age for marriage in Pakistan.



*These three countries were chosen to pilot the Youth-led Research approach, to investigate if this method can contribute to the overall HER CHOICE programme. One of the reasons why child marriage is still prevalent in many places is because children and young people (and especially girls) are not heard and their rights and needs not respected. Empowering children and youth through this activity could help alleviate this problem.*

# Training



# Training

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ICDI carried out training to staff of the local organizations on how to engage young people in participatory research projects. Subsequently, the trained staff members delivered training to the girls and boys who would be carrying out the research. Young researchers were divided into groups, selected their own topics and developed plans for implementation. All throughout the process they received support and advice from staff of the local partner organizations (with long distance support from ICDI).

Young people learned how to implement different aspects of doing research, such as:

- Research ethics
- Framing a research question
- Observation techniques
- Interview techniques
- Questionnaires and surveys
- Experimental techniques
- Analyzing qualitative data
- Analyzing quantitative data
- Producing a research report
- Presentation skills

All this was embedded in a 7 step process, that can be visualized as follows:



# Numbers

The table below shows how many adults and young people were involved in the pilot project. These are just the numbers for those involved in the training and implementation of the researches. During the

implementation phase the young researchers went out in to their communities and interviewed many more peers and adults.

	Ethiopia	Pakistan	Nepal
Received training by ICDI	13	4	15
Youth trained by local partner organization	76 (52 girls and 24 boys)	24	73 (57 girls and 16 boys)
Age range of the youth	14-18	13-17	14-18
Districts covered	2	3	4





# Research topics and findings

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# Research topics

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In each country the young researchers could define the topics they wished to explore (centered around issues that negatively affect them and that may lead

to child marriage). The range of topics they came up with was diverse:

## Ethiopia

Why and how are schools not friendly for girls, as well as possible solutions

Reasons for girls' relatively poor academic performance

Impact of child marriage and possible solutions

## Nepal

Alcohol and drugs use in children and adults

Domestic violence

Prevalence and causes of child marriage

Prevalence and causes of child labour

## Pakistan\*

Health & hygiene

Reasons for boys dropping out of school

Reasons for girls not participating in games and outdoor play

\* In Pakistan the topic of child marriage is very sensitive, so it could not be directly addressed.



Before becoming part of this activity I used to think that only a student of master's degree can do research. But now I have experienced it at 10th grade. I am proud of being a researcher.'

Adolescent girl, Pakistan





“Adolescent researchers from Nepal were very excited to share their finding among their peer group and teachers in school. As this was the first ever research initiated by themselves they were really happy to put forward their learnings and experiences. They have said that this training and whole experience of research has built self-confidence and courage.”

Sony Piya, CWIN Nepal

# Findings from the Youth-led Researches

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In this short report we only highlight some of the many interesting findings that the young researchers found.

## **Ethiopia:**

Parents believe that getting their daughters married enables them to secure additional income through dowry and decreases household consumption costs. Parents don't see any advantage of continued education for their daughters. A specific reason why (married) girls don't attend school has to do with menstruation: because they don't have proper sanitation materials, almost all of them stay home when menstruating. However, girls themselves indicate they want to stay in school and not be married young.

## **Nepal:**

In Nepal, young people found that child marriage has other negative consequences such as early pregnancy and health complications. Their research also indicates that child marriage is still prevalent, for example in one community where over 50% of the people said they would allow child marriage. Respondents mentioned cultural traditions as the most important reason. The young researchers found it alarming that the dowry system can lead to domestic violence: poor families are not able to give dowry. In those cases many of the (married off) daughters face violence at their husband's homes.

But some of the results from the Youth-led Research also indicate positive developments concerning child marriage, such as:

- Most of the adolescents were aware of the legal age of marriage in Nepal.
- Most of the adolescents said they will only marry after their 20th birthday when they (think they) can earn their own money.

- Most respondents said they would inform the police when they come to know of a child marriage taking place.

## **Pakistan:**

One of the main findings was that girls 12 – 18 years old hardly play outside because of (their parent's) fear of harassment and because they have many duties such as caring for siblings and doing household chores. There is a direct link between these findings and child marriage. When there are no spaces for girls to play and especially if they are not attending school, girls live at home all the time and the parents think that they should get rid of this burden/responsibility as soon as possible. Furthermore, when girls are only trained in household chores the parents tend to assume that they are mature enough and can also perform such duties in a husband's home. In other words: parents think they are ready for marriage. Also parents often want to get rid of the responsibility of taking care of their daughters before any mishap in terms of family honor can happen. But a large majority of the girls interviewed did clearly state that they would like to be able to be more free like boys.

# Follow up and recommendations

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# Follow up: from young researchers to child rights advocates

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## Ethiopia:

During community meetings the results were shared and discussed with a whole range of stakeholders, including staff from Ministries of Education and Women & Children Affairs, municipal administration offices, Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs), influential community and religious leaders, health workers, school principals, teachers, parents, and girl and boy students. The main goal of the validation workshops was to verify the findings and to develop joint action plans. Some of the concrete follow up activities implemented by the young researchers (who had now become child rights advocates) included a series of edutainment activities through drama shows and musical performances at schools and out of schools (see picture on page 17).

‘After I heard the findings of the research I decided that at any social gathering I will advocate that parents make their daughters free of domestic workload and I will also preach boldly that child marriage is social evil!’

Ethiopian father

## Nepal:

The young researchers presented their findings to groups of stakeholders such as local authority representatives, teachers, mother groups, religious leaders and young people themselves. These

meetings led to concrete commitments from the participants. For example, a local authority representative promised to allocate budget for children, women and other marginalized groups. This year his municipality will become officially a ‘child friendly community’. Religious leaders committed to advocate against child marriage and harmful practices through their preaching. Also plans were made for awareness-raising and school enrollment campaigns in communities, led by the young researchers.

## Pakistan:

During a meeting of the young researchers with the regional governor on the issues girls face regarding access to education and safe play spaces, the governor gave instructions to the education department to take required actions to resolve these problems.

‘We are committed to use the research findings and to create spaces/play grounds for girls in communities and especially in girls’ schools. As men we never realized this issue. Thanks to the young researchers for making us see this as one of girls’ important needs and rights.’

Regional governor in Pakistan



## Overall recommendations from the Youth-led Research pilot in HER CHOICE

Youth-led Research can be an important contribution to programmes combatting child marriage. It empowers girls and boys by enhancing life skills like cooperation, conducting interviews and analyzing data and presenting results to (adult)

stakeholders. And very importantly, it can lead to concrete youth led activities that raise awareness and address child marriage and other practices that negatively affect the rights and development of children and young people.

‘We the young people should be asked how we feel about things like child marriage. Too often adults just decide things for us, not realizing how this really badly affects us. Being a researcher I felt taken seriously for the first time.’

Adolescent girl, Ethiopia

**International Child Development Initiatives** (ICDI) is a knowledge organization in psychosocial development of children and young people growing up in difficult circumstances.

ICDI believes in the power of children and young people, supporting their rights and addressing the underlying causes for the problems they face.

We aim to improve policies and practices by building the skills of: children, mothers, fathers, families, communities, local organizations, and authorities. ICDI also works with and for bigger international child rights organizations, supporting knowledge transfer through training, research and advice.

From Nepal to Nicaragua, and from Kiev to Katwijk, our dream is 'a happy life for all children'. Serious and sincere, academic and practical, small and with major impact, ICDI has been promoting psychosocial well-being of children and young people for more than twenty years.

