CONFERENCE REPORT

South Asia Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Child Marriage
“Accelerating our Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage”
22-23 March 2016, Kathmandu, Nepal
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Cover Photo:
AFPPD Executive Director Ms. Mika Marumoto expresses her appreciation to Right Honorable Nanda Bahadur Pun Pasang, Vice President of Nepal. Also present are Hon. Dina Mahalaxmi Upadhyay, MP Nepal and Chair of the Nepalese Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (NFPPD) and Hon. Mr. Bhishma Nath Adhikari, Secretary General of NFPPD.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Asia Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Child Marriage “Accelerating our Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage” occurred on 22-23 March 2016, in Kathmandu, Nepal. The meeting was co-organized by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and one of its member National Committees, the Nepalese Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (NFPPD).

The conference was inaugurated by Right Honorable Nanda Bahadur Pun Pasang, the Vice President of Nepal. An inaugural session was followed by three sessions with panelists ranging from social scientists to subject matter experts as well as Parliamentarians. The conference ended on the second day with the negotiation and adoption of a Declaration to Accelerate Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage.

In the inauguration session, Hon. Mr. Bhishma Nath Adhikari (MP, Nepal), NFPPD Secretary General, delivered a welcome speech first, by introducing the progressive nature of the newly approved Nepalese Constitution, in the context of gender equality and women’s empowerment as a means to eliminate child marriage.

Following the welcoming speech, two funding organizations of the conference, namely, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (DFAT) and the South Asia Regional Office of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) shared their respective approaches to the issue of child marriage. H.E. Ambassador Glenn White cited the recent launching of Australia’s gender equality strategy and its new funding commitment to provide life skills and sexual health education to children between the ages of 15-16 years. Ms. Anjali Sen from IPPF pointed to the root causes of child marriage as poverty, gender inequality, and customary practices, clarifying IPPF’s two-pronged approach through policy advocacy and projects to address daunting tasks in South Asia where acceptable laws and policies criminalizing child marriage can clash with religious and customary laws and practices.

AFPPD Executive Director Ms. Mika Marumoto urged Parliamentarians to prioritize Sustainable Development Goal 5, achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls—specifically calling out early, child, and forced marriage as a key indicator for this goal. While noting the declines in child marriage rates for girls under 15 in recent years, she emphasized the need to accelerate collective efforts by parliamentarians and all other stakeholders to eliminate child marriage. In this regard, AFPPD launched a new publication, Parliamentary Good Practices for Effective Implementation of Laws and Policies for the Prevention of Child Marriage.

In his keynote speech, Rt. Hon. Nanda Bahadur Pun Pasang, Vice President of Nepal pointed to the problems of poverty and lack of education as root causes of child marriage in Nepal, calling on all participants to take up the challenge of protecting the rights of children, in particular, protecting them from early marriage. In the enabling legal framework under the new Nepalese Constitution, Vice President emphasized that the chief challenge remains the effective implementation of these positive laws and policies. He expressed his high expectation for the conference outcome in the form of a declaration of commitment by
Parliamentarians to eliminate child marriage.

The inaugural session was closed by NFPPD Chair Hon. Dina Mahalaxmi Upadhyay, who pointed out that the South Asia region has almost half of all the world’s child marriages, and that child marriage disproportionately impacts the poorest in a society. In a call to action, Hon. Upadhyay noted that positive legal reforms can only go so far in eradicating child marriage, and must be supported by action and implementation.

The first panel focused on understanding the context of child marriage, specifically the causes of, and the need to end child marriage in South Asia. Experts from the United National Population Fund and the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children gave detailed presentations on the data about child marriage—understanding the scope and urgency of the problem, and also some root causes of the problem. The second half of this panel focused on how to use evidence-based strategies to design program interventions to fight child marriage. For example, these presentations included an analysis of a cash transfer program implemented by the Haryana State government in India in the 1990’s, the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches to properly collect and incorporate data, in particular about girls’ health when they are forced into early marriages, and also addressing gaps in the legal framework affecting child marriage, which can go beyond simply establishing the minimum age for marriage.

The second panel focused on case studies and individual programmatic interventions that had already been implemented or tried in various countries. Selected evidence-based good practices in Africa and Asia were introduced from the AFPPD’s newly launched publication. Parliamentarians from Bangladesh and Pakistan also provided specific examples of successful approaches in their countries to adopt and implement laws relating to child marriage. Effective program implementation specifically focusing on forging partnerships including the engagement of community and/or religious leaders was also introduced.

The third panel focused on commitments of Parliamentarians in incorporating the issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment into child marriage laws and policies. Members of Parliament from Australia, Nepal, and Tonga shared some specific issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment in their countries. Social welfare support for single parents, the negative social and psychological effects on individual child brides, and the need for enhanced representation of women in government were the key topics discussed on the panel.

The conference closed with a debate over a proposed draft declaration of the conference. While recalling a number of other similar instruments adopted at prior conferences related to women’s and children’s rights, the proposed declaration goes beyond what is provided for in the relevant international instruments. It provides specific commitments to address some root causes of early marriage, including gender inequality, lack of economic opportunity, and low levels of education. “A zero-tolerance policy towards child marriage” and the adoption of “a minimum age for marriage at no lower than 18 for all genders” are a few examples indicating the progressive nature of the declaration as well as the political will to stop child marriage. The draft was unanimously adopted by all participants.
FINAL REPORT
South Asia Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Child Marriage

INAUGURATION SESSION

MC: Hon. Mr. Dhani Ram Poudhel,
Vice-Chair of the Nepalese Forum of Parliamentarians on Population Development (NFPPD)

Welcome Speech

Hon. Mr. Bhishma Nath Adhikari, MP, Secretary General of NFPPD

Hon. Adhikari welcomed all participants to the meeting and noted the historic nature of the meeting. He noted the importance of the new Nepali Constitution after 8 years of hard work. He also noted the progressive nature of the new Constitution, establishing strong representation for women in government and protection of women’s rights. Specifically, women have obtained equal rights in inheritance, and the right to reproductive health. The Constitution also establishes the right of women to be free from violence, and the right to protection of their religious, social, and cultural rights, without discrimination.

Mr. Adhikari noted the particular problems of child marriage, and education for girls— noting that 62 million girls across the world are not attending school. He noted the importance of this conference in creating more positive change for women’s rights and accelerating collective efforts to end child marriage.

H.E. Mr. Glenn White, Ambassador, Australian Embassy in Kathmandu

H.E. Mr. White noted the importance of the work of AFPPD in protecting the rights of women and girls, and in particular in eradicating the practice of child marriage. He also noted the importance of breaking the cycles of gender inequality, noting the Australian Aid and Development priorities in raising the rights and profile of women and girls and promoting gender equality.

H.E. Mr. White cited the recent launching of Australia’s gender equality strategy, and promised $500,000 to the UNFPA for the Nepal government to provide life skills and sexual health education to children between the ages of 15-16 years. He also noted the specific efforts of Australia’s government to target and eradicate the practice of child marriage. In Australia, child/forced marriage is punishable by imprisonment, with additional penalties for those who traffic girls across national borders for the purpose of marriage.

Finally, H.E. Mr. White noted the particular role of parliamentarians in ending the practice of child marriage, and encouraged the participants to develop a set of actionable goals as an
outcome of the conference and share with the Australian government for focusing its continued support in their efforts.

Ms. Anjali Sen, Regional Director
International Planned Parenthood Federation, South Asia Regional Office (IPPF SARO)

Ms. Anjali Sen, Regional Director for the International Planned Parenthood Federation, South Asia Regional Office (IPPF SARO), opened her remarks by welcoming the process of discussing the issue of child marriage in light of the recent enactment of the new Sustainable Development Goals. In explaining the aim and role of the IPPF, Ms. Sen noted that the IPPF promotes sexual and reproductive health rights and access to health care, particularly for women. Ms. Sen also noted the efforts of the IPPF and affiliates in bringing sexual and reproductive health to the forefront of the SDG process—in particular noting Goal 3 and Goal 5.

To provide context for the problem of early marriage, Ms. Sen noted that South Asia is home to approximately 50% of the world’s child marriages—where children are married before the age of 18. In particular, girls from impoverished backgrounds face the most significant risk of early marriage. She mentioned the countries with the highest prevalence of early marriage as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Afghanistan. Ms. Sen pointed to the root causes of the problem of child marriage as poverty, gender inequality, and customary practices. She noted some of the customs in Pakistan, such as marriage to satisfy debts or blood feuds, which are often sanctioned by community elders, as particularly problematic.

Ms. Sen noted that most countries in South Asia do have acceptable laws and policies criminalizing child marriage. However, these laws can clash with religious and customary laws and practices, increasing the risk for early marriage. In some countries, the law does allow girls to be married at 14 years of age with the consent of a parent. Ms. Sen also mentioned the impacts of early marriage, including school drop-outs and the continuation of the cycle of poverty, where girls lack education and opportunities to develop life skills. Without changes to some of these fundamental root causes of child marriage, up to 1.2 billion girls will be married worldwide by the year 2050. Ms. Sen noted that boys also face risks of early marriage, and over 155 million men have been married before the age of 18. In light of these statistics, Ms. Sen urged the Parliamentarians to address child marriage as a matter of gender inequality and a violation of human rights.

Ms. Sen pointed to the examples of Pakistan and Bangladesh, where a two-pronged approach to addressing child marriage is being undertaken. The approach targets the community level, reaching out to survivors of child marriage in an effort to reduce the impacts of child marriage. At the same time, these countries are prioritizing the policy and program level to create an enabling environment for implementing the laws and policies protecting girls from child marriage. In conclusion, Ms. Sen called for a multi-sector approach to targeting child marriage, engaging CSOs, academics, media, and government to address child marriage. In addition to putting women at the center of population and development planning, she urged
Parliamentarians to also consider how to engage men and boys in the efforts to make gender equity sustainable and long-lasting.

Dr. Mika Marumoto, Executive Director
Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD)

Dr. Marumoto welcomed all the distinguished guests to the conference and thanked them for their time, noting NFPPD’s leadership in co-hosting the conference. Dr. Marumoto then explained the context of the AFPPD, a regional network of 29 Asia-Pacific member national committees of parliamentarians. In particular, AFPPD focuses on issues such as gender equality and women’s empowerment, youth and ageing issues, universal health care, and population dynamics.

Regarding child marriage, Dr. Marumoto noted the declines in child marriage rates in recent years, particularly for girls under the age of 15. She praised national committees for publicizing and prioritizing the issue of child marriage, especially by focusing on its detrimental health consequences. She encouraged Parliamentarians to continue prioritizing SDG 5, achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls—specifically calling out early, child, and forced marriage as a key indicator for this goal.

Despite this progress toward eradicating child marriage, Dr. Marumoto noted that the progress has been too slow. She called on the Parliamentarians to address the root causes of child marriage in each cultural and socio-economic context, launching public awareness campaigns and incorporating evidence-based research outcomes into effective program design. Furthermore, enabling legislative and policy frameworks, and targeted aid, can also contribute to the eradication of child marriage.

In closing, Dr. Marumoto launched the new publication on Parliamentary Good Practices for Effective Implementation of Laws and Policies for the Prevention of Child Marriage. This publication identifies the root causes of early marriage in different country contexts, and identifies barriers to effective implementation of positive laws and policies that would protect girls from child marriage. She encouraged Parliamentarians to utilize the publication in designing programs to effectively target and eliminate child marriage in their own countries in the future.

Keynote Speech

Rt. Hon. Nanda Bahadur Pun Pasang, Vice President of Nepal

The Vice President welcomed the participants to Nepal and to the conference, and wished participants a happy Holi.

Regarding the practice of child marriage, the Vice President noted that child marriage is a shame for South Asia, and prevents young people from actively participating in their society.
In Nepal, he pointed to the problems of poverty and lack of education as root causes of child marriage. He called on all participants to take up the challenge of protecting the rights of children, and in particular protecting them from early marriage.

The Vice President noted the promulgation of the new Constitution of Nepal, bringing stability and prosperity to the nation. The new Constitution firmly criminalizes child marriage, and punishes those who perpetrate child marriage. In this enabling legal framework, the chief challenge remains the effective implementation of these positive laws and policies. He looked forward to the outcomes of the conference in the Kathmandu Declaration. In the context of the reconstruction of the country after the tragic earthquake of 2015, he called upon participants to continue their work in cooperating to end child marriage in Nepal and throughout the region.

Hon. Ms. Dina Mahalaxmi Upadhyay, MP, Nepal, Chair of NFPPD

Hon. Upadhyay highlighted the role of the AFPPD in bringing together lawmakers across Asia to engage in putting population and development issues at the forefront of policy. She noted the particular emphasis of the AFPPD on the rights and opportunities of women and girls. She also outlined the approach of the AFPPD in advocating for progressive policies in reproductive health, gender equality, and women’s empowerment, with a particular emphasis on holding governments accountable for keeping their commitments in these areas, and encouraging them to enhance their financial support for population development issues.

Hon. Upadhyay also explained the organizational structure of the AFPPD and its member National Committees, providing information about the origins of the NFPPD in Nepal, and its aims of sensitizing Parliamentarians to emerging issues in population development from a policy and legal perspective. In particular, she highlighted the efforts of the NFPPD in promoting women’s rights and issues into the national Constitution. She identified some of the key policy areas in this regard as the rights of a mother to pass on her nationality to her child, a basic right to reproductive health, equal protection for women in employment, and promotion of women’s representation in government. Hon. Upadhyay also mentioned the particular challenges lawmakers in Nepal face when confronting traditional beliefs and practices that hinder the implementation of the positive policy and legal frameworks already existing in national law.

Providing some background on the issue of child marriage, Hon. Upadhyay noted that over 700 million women have been married before the age of 18, and one-third of those women were married before age 15. Child marriage disproportionally impacts the poorest in society, and she noted that Nepal has the third highest rate of child marriage in the world. She also noted that the South Asia region has almost half of all the world’s child marriages, citing gender inequality, traditional beliefs and practices, poverty, lack of education, and insecurity as the root of the problem. Given these conditions and the prevalence of child marriage, girls are continually denied access to important rights and activities in social and political life.
In a call to action, Hon. Upadhyay noted that positive legal reforms can only go so far in eradicating child marriage, and must be supported by action and implementation.

**SESSION I: Understanding the Context of Child Marriage in South Asia**

The session addressed the situation of child marriage in South Asia. The discussion centered on the human rights and development impacts of child, early and forced marriages, with particular emphasis on the post-2015 development framework. The panel also addressed the causes of child marriage and imperatives for ending it, and the challenges to be overcome. This session explored promising program interventions, evidence-based research and strategies on child marriage and related areas which provide lessons and insights for participants.

**Child marriage video:** (Courtesy of UNFPA Nepal)

Two out of five girls in Nepal are married before age 18. Many girls are formally married before attaining puberty. Child marriage is a cycle or continuum of abuse, where girl-children bear children of their own. The UNFPA’s “Choose Your Future” campaign targets out-of-school girls to give them basic health and livelihood information, and also attempts to re-enroll girls into formal schooling. The girls in this program are formed into groups where they are also taught about the laws protecting them from early marriage, and they support each other in resisting early marriage. Through the program, girls are also given encouragement to pursue careers and consider how to support their own development and their families in the future.

**Chair: Hon. Ms. Joanne Hayes, MP, New Zealand**

**Ms. Ingrid FitzGerald**

*Technical Adviser on Gender and Human Rights, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office: “Overview of Child Marriage in South Asia and how the issue can be addressed most effectively in the post-2015 Development Agenda”*

Ms. FitzGerald introduced some fundamental statistics about child marriage, including the prevalence of child marriage in a number of South Asian countries. She noted the decline in child marriage for girls under 15, but encouraged continued action to stop the increase of child marriage for girls between 15 and 18 years of age, which continues to increase as population growth increases. With significant efforts, over 188 million girls can be protected from child marriage by 2050. Ms. FitzGerald also noted the differing impacts of child marriage on a sub-national level in both Nepal and Bangladesh, where the problem is the most acute in rural areas.
Ms. FitzGerald noted that some countries still maintain differential treatment of boys and girls in their child marriage laws, with the problem of child marriage disproportionately impacting girls. She noted the causes of child marriage as poverty, conservative social norms around girls’ sexuality and position in the society, unequal inheritance rights, and limited educational and employment opportunities. The consequences of child marriage range from domestic violence, STIs, social isolation, and the perpetuation of gender discrimination and inequity. Some of the outcomes of child marriage include the perpetuation of cycles of poverty due to girls missing educational and employment opportunities. Early and frequent childbearing also accompanies child marriage and perpetuates these cycles of poverty as well. Parliamentarians can consider child marriage policies in light of the fact that eliminating child marriage is a clear pathway to increasing GDP at the national level.

International instruments protecting women and girls from early marriage include the UDHR, CRC, CEDAW, and the SDGs. In particular, child marriage is part of SDG 5, with Target 5.3 specifically calling for the eradication of child marriage. Ms. FitzGerald emphasized that eradicating child marriage is fundamental to the achievement of all the other SDGs as well. As a theory for change, Ms. FitzGerald noted the importance of an enabling legal and policy environment, increased access to education for girls, life skills training, increasing the value of girls in the society, and engaging men and boys in the empowerment of girls and the eradication of child marriage. Ms. FitzGerald introduced the joint UNFPA-UNICEF program, launched in the previous week, to work on ending child marriage in 12 countries by strengthening access to health information and improving education and skills for young girls and women, facilitating their employment. This program has a particular focus on monitoring, evaluation and research, and engaging men and boys as fundamental participants in the change.

Some of the barriers to change in the practice of child marriage include fragmented approaches, which are limited in reach and fail to address the root causes of child marriage in a clear way. These interventions often also fail to focus on the “demand side” of the problem (men and boys). The lack of robust evaluation frameworks means that the causal effect of interventions is never measured, and ineffective programs may be praised as a success without any real evidence to back up those claims. Some of these interventions only temporarily delay marriage without addressing the underlying causes, which are linked to a whole host of other human rights and development challenges for women and girls.

Mentioning a few programmatic models of success, Ms. FitzGerald noted financial incentives to families can be instrumental in ending child marriage, as well as promoting enhanced educational opportunities for girls. Legislative frameworks that are in line with international commitments and are non-discriminatory must also be enacted. Integrated approaches, and awareness-raising among the broader population should also be employed, and a strong commitment of resources should be utilized to end child marriage—shifting the view of expenditures as a burden to an investment in economic development and the protection of women and girls.
Dr. Rinchen Chophel, Director General
South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), Regional Secretariat:
“Harmful consequences of child marriage: how child marriage hinders women and girls’ development (e.g. health, education, social and economic status)"

Dr. Chophel opened his presentation by noting the aim of SAIEVAC to promote the rights of boys and girls throughout the region and protect them from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination. He also noted SAIEVAC’s five thematic priority areas of child marriage, child labour, corporal punishment, sexual abuse and exploitation, and trafficking. Overall, SAIEVAC emphasizes child participation in setting priorities and implementing programs.

Providing context for the urgency of the problem of early marriage, Dr. Chophel noted that nearly 10% of the world’s population was married before the age of 18, and these numbers are predicted to grow if concerted action is not taken. The South Asia region has the highest incidence of child marriage anywhere in the world, with almost 50% of girls married before they attain the age of 18. Dr. Chophel emphasized the importance of South Asia achieving the SDGs because it is home to nearly a quarter of the world population, and nearly 621 million people who are below age 18.

Noting some of the root causes of early marriage in South Asia, Dr. Chophel pointed to poverty, traditional beliefs about protecting a girl’s chastity, gender discrimination, limited educational opportunities, instability, and weak enforcement of legislation and policy that would be protective of women and girls. The economic motivations include the problem of poverty, and also of prohibitively high dowry payments. Traditionalized beliefs about gender roles and women’s chastity lead some communities to seek out early marriage as a way to protect their reputations. Furthermore, the practice of early marriage perpetuates gender inequality and creates a context for the continued dominance of men over women, citing an often large age gap between the husband and the wife in early marriage. Dr. Chophel noted some of the cultural practices that perpetuate child marriage as well, where children, and especially girls, are used as a tool for conflict resolution, or other business or property settlements. In some contexts, children can be betrothed for marriage before they attain the age of 10. In conflict situations, the risks of child marriage are even more acute.

Early marriage not only harms the social and intellectual development of girls, but also creates severe mental trauma for the child spouses. It also poses serious risks to the physical health of young brides. Girls married young are at a high risk of STIs due to the typical age gaps between the spouses, and the girl’s lack of education and understanding about how to protect her reproductive and sexual health. Early childbearing results in high risks of maternal and child mortality, and girls unprepared to raise children are often ill-equipped to handle the health, nutrition, and developmental challenges of child rearing. Child marriages are also often characterized by high levels of domestic violence, with the girls unable to assert their rights, and in fact not even aware of those rights.
Dr. Chophel then introduced the Regional Action Plan to End Child Marriage in South Asia (2015-2018) developed by SAIEVAC participants in Kathmandu in 2014. The Action Plan established multiple outcomes for the eradication of child marriage, including improved access to education, mobilization to change discriminatory gender norms, and a focus on the root causes of early marriage in each socio-cultural context. The Action Plan also focused on the key action areas of political leadership, accountability, national-level engagement, and coordination of efforts, resulting in the Kathmandu Call for Action. The outcomes from the Action Plan can be adapted to each country-context for addressing the problem in various national circumstances.

Q&A/Discussion:

Directed to Dr. Chophel: What does a meaningful child participation strategy look like?

SAIEVAC has established national-level child participation forums, and regional child participation forums to incorporate children into the participatory process of SAIEVAC's work. Two children serve as voting members on the board, and two other children serve as observers to learn the process for joining the board in the future. Children will also be represented through CSO networks, and often some members in the CSOs have the specific responsibility for child participation. Both children and adult consultation will occur, where each country will send a boy and a girl. These outcomes will then be brought before the adult consultation. They will be reviewing child participation in India to evaluate and improve outcomes.

Directed to Dr. Chophel: What is the maximum age of a child for SAIEVAC's programming?

Child labor, child marriage, etc., sometimes have different ages defining a child. The CRC sets the age of a child as any person below the age of 18, irrespective of national law. For SAIEVAC's purposes, children can join the governing board as observers at age 16, full board members at age 17, and then age out at 18.

Directed to Ms. FitzGerald: What is the role of the international human rights frameworks for ending child marriage?

The focus is really on the SDGs. The SDGs make human rights and development as indivisible, hand-in-hand goals. Every goal from the SDGs is based in one of the international instruments. This new development agenda tries to reach those who are the furthest behind, recognizing and protecting the dignity of the individual.

Dr. Ravi Verma

Regional Director for the International Center for Research on Women's (ICRW):

“Evidence-based Interventions”

Dr. Verma introduced the problem of child marriage through the drivers or root causes of
the practice, which include conservative views about girls’ sexuality, limited educational opportunities for girls, gender discrimination, poverty, and weak enforcement of laws. The drivers of child marriage are contextual, and can be rooted in the family context as well as the cultural context.

Some of the successful interventions for addressing child marriage include educating and mobilizing parents and community members, enhancing accessibility to formal education for girls, facilitating an enabling legal framework, empowering girls with skills and social support, and providing economic incentives for girls and their families.

Dr. Verma presented some basic statistics on the wide variety of programs targeting child marriage from 2009-2015, both those that directly targeted child marriage and those that targeted other outcomes but had effects on child marriage. Dr. Verma then presented the case of ABAD CCT scheme in detail. In this program, the girls’ families were given a small payment upon registration in the program and also given a bond that could grow to a value of about $500 by the time the girl turned 18, which she could cash if she remained unmarried. The program was implemented by the Haryana State Government from 1994-1998, and was then discontinued. After the girls turned 18, the program was comprehensively evaluated by ICRW.

Approximately 10,000 girls were tracked in the ICRW study, and asked what they did with the cash and whether and when they were married. Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were studied for comparison purposes. Among beneficiaries, the rates of marriage under the age of 18 was lower than non-beneficiary girls. Interestingly, the girls in the beneficiary group married at very high rates precisely at the age of 18, upon receiving their cash incentive. One explanation for this unexpected outcome was that beneficiary girls were much poorer than other non-beneficiary girls, so the cash transfer became a proxy dowry.

One of the mechanisms of change resulting from the program was the girls own aspirations to study and achieve further education and opportunity. When that girl aspired to become something in life, she was sometimes able to mobilize the support of her father to postpone marriage—the deposit in the bank account became a message to the girl that she had a worth. Norms around education also shifted through the program—communities became increasingly supportive of educating girls. However, for the economically weaker families, marriages still took precedence over education. A fear of losing sexual control over the girls who traveled further distances to attend school was pervasive, causing drop-outs. And although the girls’ educational aspirations were high, their employability was low, so they continued to drop out of school.

What the evaluation of the ABAD program shows is that the fixation with the age of marriage may not address all the gender discrimination and inequity that drives the practice, creating a set of conditions that habitually disadvantage girls. Some of the attitudinal shifts measured due to the program included the increased value of an educated girl in marriage—however, her education was still viewed as incident to her marriage and as a way to negotiate a better marriage. Communities are also now beginning to embrace separated and divorced girls, which is a major change. Furthermore, due to the skewed sex ratios, dowries are going down.
What has not changed, however, is that a girl must get married—there is no professional or other alternative to marriage. A girl’s sexual purity and chastity is the primary concern for families of girls.

The greatest programmatic needs in child marriage are for multi-sectoral approaches. Girls must get opportunities to earn income and develop their own livelihood opportunities. They must also get access to safe public spaces. The approaches of the ICRW in this regard include: 1) the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS), targeting gender norms for children between the ages of 10-14; 2) the PARIVARTAN program for girls and boys to engage in sports and breakdown gender and social barriers; 3) the PAGE program for employability, to provide alternatives to marriage; and 4) the PANKH program, to create safe spaces for girls, and re-enroll girls into formal education.

**Ms. Azra Abdul Cader, Senior Programme Officer for Inter-faith Advocacy and SRHR, Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW)**

Ms. Abdul Cader urged participants to begin by re-thinking the terminology and categories typically used to address child marriage—child marriage and early marriage should not be used interchangeably, and girls under 18 who are married are still children. The health impacts of early marriage on girls include HIV and STI transmission, vulnerability to violence and fistula, unwanted intercourse, and a general lack of agency and autonomy. When young girls give birth, their children also suffer health consequences, such as malnourishment and underdevelopment, and lack of access to education and other opportunities—so the cycle continues.

Poverty and inequality of women contributes to the cyclical nature of the problem of child marriage. Girls are expected to be subordinate to men, and in some cases child marriage is even considered as a way to protect girls. Conservative religious and cultural norms also affect a girl’s position in her family, putting her under the protection of a brother or father, limiting her access to education and employment.

In order to address child marriage, there is a need for high quality, national-level data. Political will to support efforts, as well as accurate and thorough assessments of impacts much also be employed to increase effectiveness of interventions. Improved legislative frameworks can lessen the influence of religious laws and parallel informal court systems. Furthermore, engaging religious communities to employ progressive interpretations religious frameworks, and addressing root causes of conservative quasi-religious practices, such as poverty, gender inequality, and patriarchy, can lessen the impact of religious conservatism. Poverty, for example, is multi-dimensional, and is often accompanied by health and other rights problems. Criminal penalties for the perpetrators of child marriage, while important, must be carefully implemented because they can also have the effect of driving the problem underground.

Strategies for multi-stakeholder approaches, coordinated efforts, and training programs for policy implementers must be undertaken. Furthermore, efforts to address child marriage
should be mainstreamed into social protection programming—for example, compulsory education, religious mainstreaming, and other vocational opportunities. Robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks for assessing the impact of programs is critical for expanding and scaling up efforts. Engaging men and boys in the fight against child marriage will also be important for effectively addressing the practice, as well as free and compulsory birth and marriage registration.

Access to education will be the key intervention for women’s empowerment and eradicating child marriage. Formal education is critical, but life skills and vocational training will also fill gaps for girls who have dropped out of formal education. Girls must receive comprehensive sexuality education to ensure they have the information they need to protect their health and rights. Finally, shifting the focus and the language to empowerment frameworks, and strengthening political will to end child marriage can lead to lasting change and protection of girls from early and forced marriage.

Ms. Sonali Regmi, Regional Manager, the Centre for Reproductive Rights: “Ending Child Marriage: Addressing legal gaps and implementation barriers”

Ms. Regmi focused on the role of law in addressing the issue of child marriage. Some of the major issues she noted in this regard included incorporating reproductive rights into the constitution, and ending impunity for child marriage. Gaps in laws can be from interrelated laws which have not been harmonized into a comprehensive framework for women’s and children’s protection and ending child marriage.

Child marriage touches on the right to life and health, the right to non-discrimination and equality, and the right to be free from sexual and gender-based violence. These rights emanate from international instruments and national constitutions. The right to determine the number, spacing and timing of children, and the right to be free from torture and cruelty are also implicated rights in the practice of child marriage. These human rights framework should be respected, protected, and fulfilled. Respect alone is not enough to protect girls from early marriage. Remedies must be provided for the girls who want to leave child marriages.

International instruments do set appropriate legal frameworks, but the gaps remain in the absence of a uniform minimum age of marriage. Lack of consent requirements may also exist, even for those who are above 18. Also, the legal status of child marriages (void v. voidable) is in question, and restrictive statutes of limitations for challenging child marriages also cause problems for child brides who are socially isolated and unaware of their legal rights even after they attain the age of majority. When child marriages occur, the government must provide remedies for the young spouses (spousal support, etc.). Voidable marriages may require the girl to achieve majority before challenging the marriage, and may require the marriage to be childless in order to attain annulment, which is not an adequate remedy in many cases. Punishments for child marriage are often very minimal, with little to no prison time and negligible fines. Furthermore, these remedies hold perpetrators responsible for the small fines, while the State remains free of accountability. Girls coming out of child marriages
will need more support, including psycho-social support, financial support, and policy support by government.

Other laws related to child marriage that need attention and harmonization may include discriminatory citizenship laws, inheritance laws, divorce laws, dowry practices, trafficking, child labor, and birth and marriage registration laws. Barriers to the implementation of these laws can include the perceptions in the communities about taboo issues and family matters as opposed to state intervention and protection. Overall, poor knowledge of the legal age of marriage, and ill-equipped implementers of the law perpetuate the problem of child marriage. In order to end the impunity for child marriage, laws must be reformed and these gaps must be closed. The penalties must be increased, and child marriages should be declared void. Judicial decisions already made on these issues must also be properly implemented (for example on freedom of religion which may promote child marriages versus the right to equality also guaranteed in the constitution).

The role of Parliamentarians includes taking steps to harmonize laws on child marriage and related issues. They can also address the gaps, inconsistencies, and inadequate penalties for child marriage. They can ensure the implementation of laws and policies, and ensure access to justice for girls at risk of child marriage. They can also ensure sufficient budgetary allocations for implementing programs and policies to end child marriage. Adopting laws that make birth and marriage registration compulsory is a necessary starting point. Furthermore, developing national indicators for the achievement of the SDGs will ensure implementation of positive laws and policies to protect girls from early marriage.

SESSION II: Good Practices and Experiences Sharing on Policies and Programs to Prevent Child Marriage

The session will share good practices on child marriage drawn from different countries around the world to encourage parliamentarians to consider how existing laws and policies can be put into action and how “prevention of violence against women and girls and “value of girls” can be better addressed in national policies and programs. The participants will be encouraged to consider about the potential for replication of these initiatives/interventions in other contexts, and concrete recommendations regarding if and how these initiatives/interventions could be successfully scaled up. In this session, MPs will also be given an opportunity to share current efforts and national-level experiences on ending child marriage including what intervention has worked and what hasn’t.

Chair: Hon. Mrs. Viplove Thakur, MP, India

Ms. Hadley Rose, J.D./LL.M., Independent Consultant on Child Marriage:
“Overview of DFAT project and Research on Good Practices on Child Marriage, including recommendations for parliamentarians”

Ms. Rose provided a summary of a recent research project and publication commissioned by the AFPPD as part of the DFAT project. The aim of this project was to take a critical look at a
number of approaches to ending child marriage, analyze and compare program results, and consolidate recommendations for how Parliamentarians might implement the lessons learnt from these programs into their own national policy agendas.

To begin with, Ms. Rose explained the major categories of programmatic approaches to addressing child marriage: life skills programs, cash transfer programs, and miscellaneous other types of programs. She first presented the life skills type programs through the Berhane Hewan project, a UNFPA award-winning program implemented in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. This program consisted of the engagement of girls into small peer groups, where a girl was required to attend school and their peer group meetings, and remain unmarried, in order for her family to receive a sheep. Girls were given life skills training through these peer groups, and the mentors of the groups followed up with girls on an individual basis to ensure continued school attendance. The program had overwhelmingly positive results, increasing school enrolment to 96%, and reducing child marriage rates drastically. These family-level interventions were complemented by “community conversations,” where influential community members were mobilized to create action plans for disseminating information about child marriage to their communities. In fact, the peer group model was so successful that the sheep aspect of the program was dropped in the scale-up phase, without significantly affecting results. Ms. Rose attributed the program’s success to its detailed monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as the solid research foundation used to diagnose the root causes of early marriage in the region and design the programmatic responses accordingly.

Next, Ms. Rose presented the cash transfer cases, comparing a cash transfer case from Malawi with the ABAD program introduced by Dr. Verma in the earlier session. This program showed interesting results, where the cash transfer was linked to school enrolment for one group of girls, and was given unconditionally to the other group of girls—contrasted with the ABAD program, which conditioned the cash transfer only upon the girl remaining unmarried. The program results for rates of marriage for the conditional group were almost the same as the control group that received no cash transfer, although school enrolment was improved. However, the unconditional group showed great drops in the rate of marriage and increases in school enrolment, even though the cash was provided without any conditions or requirements. Program evaluators attributed this difference to the fact that the unconditional group included higher rates of already out-of-school girls, who were the most vulnerable economically. The influx of cash into these extremely poor families was used to send their girls to school, resulting in delaying their age at marriage.

Finally, Ms. Rose quickly introduced other various types of interesting program interventions for addressing child marriage, including Sri Lanka’s legislative reform agenda, the PRACHAR-reproductive health program in India, the “Girls Project” on access to land rights in India, and Save the Children’s “Choices” program on gender equality and mobilizing boys, implemented in Nepal. Ms. Rose encouraged program participants to consult the booklets for summaries of all of these and other cases on addressing child marriage, which include lessons learnt for Parliamentarians in implementing similar programs in their own countries.
Hon. Mrs. Sanjida Khanam, *MP, Bangladesh*

“Case study: efforts in ending child marriage at national level”

Hon. Khanam introduced the problem of early marriage in Bangladesh, identifying it as a serious deprivation of rights, and a risk to health and development. She also confirmed that child marriage has a disproportionate effect on women, causing severe complications in pregnancy and childbirth. In fact, she noted that pregnancy- and childbirth-related consequences are the leading cause of death for girls aged 15-19.

On the national level in Bangladesh, one-third of girls are married by age 15, and two-thirds are married by age 18. She cited the root causes of the practice in Bangladesh as stemming from cultural and religious practices, as well as prohibitive dowry costs and poverty. In response to this issue, Bangladesh has adopted age restrictions on marriage in the law, and has criminalized the practice of child marriage. She also noted that birth and marriage registration can be used to fight child marriage. However, she strongly noted that education is the best and most effective way to fight child marriage. In addition to basic education, these girls should also receive training on their legal rights, particularly to avoid marriage.

In addressing child marriage, addressing the problem of poverty and improving the economic opportunity for all will be one of the key aspects of ending child marriage in Bangladesh. This will allow families to re-enroll girls in school and give these girls hope of a future beyond marriage. She also noted the need of support from other countries in these endeavors.

Hon. Mahtab Akbar Rashdi, *MP, Pakistan*

“Case study: efforts in ending child marriage at national level”

Hon. Rashdi opened her talk by establishing that laws criminalizing child marriage have been adopted in many countries, but what remains to be achieved is their effective implementation. In Pakistan’s system of government, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution allows provinces autonomy in adopting legislation. Sindh Province was the first province to adopt child marriage legislation. Hon. Rashdi referenced a 1929 law restricting child marriage (for under age 16), where Charles Napier implemented the strictest standard for child marriage whereby any family member of a child spouse would be taken in front of a firing squad. Later, the age of marriage was raised to 18 in Sindh. Punjab was the next (and only other) province to adopt child marriage legislation, setting the age at 18.

Hon. Rashdi then asked participants to consider the next step in eradicating child marriage as identifying the role of government in implementing this legislation. In Pakistan, the drivers of early marriage include poverty and customary practices. This poverty leads families to treat girls as a liability. By marrying early, girls then bear many children for many years. Child marriage, however, is a problem affecting the mental and physical health of girls for a pro-longed period or permanently, and often the mother-in-laws, not only the husbands, are the perpetrators of the abuse.
Hon. Rashdi pointed to education as the key to changing the situation of girls and ending child marriage. Some initiatives such as providing meals for girls at school and providing other incentives for school attendance can be utilized to encourage school attendance. The problem with such initiatives is that they have yet to be sustainable, nationally-funded initiatives.

In the end, Hon. Rashdi noted that the political will to end child marriage can transform the whole of society in that regard. Parliamentarians must mobilize their constituents to also get behind the cause of ending early marriage. She noted the example of the domestic violence bill in Punjab, which was resisted by conservatives due to their arguments that husbands have a right to beat their wives. But through the empowerment of women, child marriage can be eradicated.

**Mr. Aatur Rahman, Director**
*International Planned Parenthood Federation, South Asia Regional Office (IPPF SARO)*

“Good practice through partnership”

Mr. Rahman noted that 3 of the top 20 countries in the world for child marriage rates are in the South Asia region—Bangladesh, ranked 4th; India, ranked 11th; Nepal, ranked 19th. Furthermore, in terms of the absolute number of child marriages, India ranks 1st in the world, Bangladesh ranks 2nd, and Pakistan ranks 6th. Child marriage tends to be most prevalent in rural areas, among poorer and less educated segments of the community. In looking for strategies to address child marriage, Mr. Rahman encouraged the empowerment of girls with skills and support networks, the mobilization of families and communities to end child marriage, service provision to girls who are already married or at risk of early marriage (life skills training, for example), and the establishment and implementation of comprehensive laws and policies to address child marriage, going beyond simply setting the minimum age for marriage. In summary, Mr. Rahman stressed that partnerships are key to ending child marriage.

Mr. Rahman also provided a few examples of IPPF programs that addressed child marriage. First, he introduced a program to increase accessibility to family planning resources and information in Bangladesh. The program worked through 72 Family Development Centers in 19 districts in Bangladesh. These Centers not only provided women with SRHR services, including contraceptives and screening for GBV, but also provided comprehensive sexuality education for children, implemented through local madrasas (religious schools), and mobilized youth through local clubs and peer groups. Furthermore, these Centers mobilized financial resources and stability for women through providing access to micro-credit and skills development. These programs facilitated some of the IPPF’s broader goals of confronting taboo social topics through mobilizing conservative institutions like madrasas, and empowering women to protect and assert their own rights through information, skills, and economic opportunity.
Mr. Rahman credited the success of these programs due to the multi-sector, multi-institutional approach. The Bangladesh program, although it did not actually focus on child marriage, had positive impacts on child and maternal mortality, which are some of the most acute results of child marriage. The child mortality rate in the program area was actually measured at half of the national average after program implementation. The program also significantly reduced adolescent fertility.

A second example Mr. Rahman provided was the Rahnuma program, a family planning program in Pakistan. This program was implemented in a context where women are often used as an exchange for the settlement of a blood feud or inter-family/inter-clan dispute, and reached out to the survivors of these coerced marriages. This program reached some of the most marginalized girls and women in the society, where the prevalence of VAW was exceptionally high.

One of the methods of partnership utilized in this program was the engagement of religious leaders in the community, who have substantial influence in their societies. The engagement of these religious leaders had the effect of engaging whole communities in the process of better protecting and empowering women and girls. Community theatre programs were found to be one of the most effective ways of reaching the communities in this way. Furthermore, the women and girls were reached directly and provided with GBV counseling, legal aid, SRHR services and contraceptives, and also education and access to microcredit. Partnerships with other local CSOs were also critical in order to refer the survivors to shelters and legal aid service providers. Partnerships with national-level service providers made the provision of microcredit and the mobilization of additional resources possible as well.

Mr. Rahman noted that some of the lessons learned from the program included the need to raise awareness among other CSOs about the problem of child marriage. Also, engaging men and boys, and partnering with religious and community leaders to raise awareness of the problem also proved essential to program success. Comprehensive sexuality education, provided both through schools and through other channels to reach out-of-school children, was another key aspect of the program. Associating the problem of GBV with these other programmatic activities would also be one of the key ways to enhance project effectiveness and sustainability of results.

**SESSION III: Commitments of Parliamentarians in Ending Child Marriage and Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment**

The session will discuss the principles of accountability in the implementation of the policies and programs and the role of parliamentarians in supporting and advocating for ending child marriage and promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment

**Chair: Hon. Mahtab Akbar Rashdi, MP, Pakistan**
Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone, MP, Australia and Vice-Chair of AFPPD
“Collaborative efforts and commitments of parliamentarians from ODA countries in supporting policies and programs in ending child marriage and empowering women and young people”

Hon. Dr. Stone opened her talk by mentioning the commitment of the Australian government to support a program for educating girls in Nepal and South Asia, which links to the issue of child marriage. She also noted the need for donor countries to prioritize their own national legal frameworks and practices for fighting child marriage. She noted the strong laws in Australia penalizing trafficking children for the purpose of marriage, and for arranging the marriage of children as potential examples of supportive legal frameworks for the eradication of child marriage.

Hon. Dr. Stone further noted the methods of implementing the strong laws against child marriage in Australia, including the designation of medical and educational professionals as mandatory reporters of child abuse. Overall, Australia has taken approximately 250 cases of child marriage in the past 2 years, many of which have come to light through this mandatory reporting practice. She noted that child marriages in Australia can often be informal, but can be detected through careful monitoring by medical and educational professionals.

Furthermore, Hon. Dr. Stone noted the danger of voiding child marriages outright due to the strict cultural and social customs in conservative communities where girls who have been separated or divorced are shunned from their families and societies. She also noted the harmful practice of female genital mutilation, remarking that not all cultural practices are acceptable or positive. She urged a zero-tolerance policy by all governments toward child marriage, noting that child marriage could be addressed through better restrictions on trafficking.

Hon. Dr. Stone also identified the root causes of child marriage in a country like Australia where poverty and the need for cheap farm labor are non-existent, pointing instead to traditionalized, harmful views about the chastity of girls. She noted that local-level leaders can help to fight these discriminatory and restrictive views about women, mentioning that oftentimes, local leaders are responsible for implementing national policies. She provided an example of a female mayor who required all would-be citizens to shake her hand in order to get their citizenship, including men from ultra-conservative societies. This practice, which was a usual part of the citizenship ceremony, was also symbolic of the new citizens accepting the laws and norms of their new country, including a deep respect for the role of women in the society.

Hon. Ms. Dina Mahalxmi Upadhyay,
MP, Nepal and Co-Chair of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth
“Ending child marriage through empowering young people at the center of social change process”
Hon. Ms. Upadhyay presented some information about child marriage in Nepal, and many other South Asian countries. In this region, marriage is considered a fundamental social institution, and marrying one’s children is a strong obligation upon parents. In fact, in order to protect the image of young girls’ chastity, some girls are promised in marriage or are actually married off before their first menstrual period. In Nepal, in fact, early marriage of boys has been common as well.

Following the recent legal reforms in Nepal, Hon. Upadhyay explained that the legal age of marriage has been increased from 18 for girls and 21 for boys (16 for girls and 18 for boys with parental consent) to now age 20 for both genders (or 18 with parental consent). She also mentioned the linkages between school drop-outs and child marriage in Nepal. Furthermore, she noted that the penalties for violations of these laws are much too minimal to have a deterrent effect.

In practice, Hon. Upadhyay noted that marriage can occur at age 10 or below for girls in Nepal. The practice of child marriage disproportionately affects girls and harms their rights to education. Child marriage causes school drop-out and brings on onerous domestic responsibilities for the child spouses. Child marriage can also cause forced migration and trafficking, and can exacerbate access to healthcare problems. In one rural district in Nepal, 90% of girls were married before 18. The practice causes burdens on both the girls and the boys, where boys are required to travel and search for work in order to maintain the household expenses. She also noted the inter-generational gaps causing further challenges to girls in child marriages. These girls lack access to contraceptives and information about their health.

Hon. Upadhyay encouraged Parliamentarians to consider additional legal provisions that can support the eradication of child marriage, and to strongly support the implementation of these laws. She noted that education can contribute to the eradication of child marriage, and also mobilizing local level authorities to monitor child marriages and ensure registration of marriages will help end the practice. In closing, she called for a regional taskforce to address child marriage in the region, and to further utilize media outlets to call attention to the issue of child marriage.

**Hon. Lord Tu'i'afitu, Deputy Speaker, Tonga**

“Engaging men and boys in ending child marriage and promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment”

The Deputy Speaker gave information about the background of women’s rights and women’s involvement in government in Tonga, sharing that the Tonga Parliament is fully male. The Tonga legal framework on marriage is good, and mandates marriage, birth and death regulation, and requires marriage at age 18 or later. In Tonga, primary education is compulsory and accessible to both genders. However, the level of drop-outs at the high school level is acute, and creates vulnerabilities to child marriage. Furthermore, despite generally accessible health services country-wide, girls giving birth are still at risk of health complications during childbirth.
The Deputy Speaker encouraged participants to realize that engaging many stakeholders, at grassroots and national levels, in the fight against child marriage will be crucial to eradicating the problem of child marriage. In Tonga, and in other countries, this effort will require mobilization of men and boys. In Tonga, for example, women are raising their profile in the private sector, but they still lack proportionate representation in Parliament and government. Because men have been occupying higher roles within the government and households, the burden upon them to protect the human rights of women and children is particularly high.

Although child marriage is not an acute issue in Tonga, women in Tonga face discrimination in accessing land and property rights through biased inheritance laws. The legislature must promote women’s empowerment and gender equality in all their policies and activities. Realization of these rights goes part and parcel with the accessibility and quality of education for girls. Parliamentarians have a role to play by ensuring the allocation of resources toward these policy priorities, including ending child marriage and encouraging school enrollment. In realizing these policies, Tonga and other similarly situated nations can seek out targeted technical assistance in implementing national and international obligations. The Deputy Speaker also noted that economic empowerment of women and girls can also contribute to ending the practice of child marriage. Parliamentarians can also partner with NGOs and grassroots organizations to support the efforts of women’s empowerment. Parliamentarians believing in the message of women’s empowerment will be critical in actually realizing women’s empowerment in practice.

Q&A/Discussion

Directed to Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone: What is the percentage of underage/unmarried mothers in Australia, and how are unmarried/teenage mothers assisted by government?

In a case of rape, termination of a resulting pregnancy is lawful in Australia. The “morning-after pill” is also freely available without a prescription for anyone seeking to prevent an unwanted pregnancy after having unprotected sex. In poorer communities in Australia, the rate of teenage pregnancy is high. However, the social welfare system in Australia has single-parent support for both mothers and fathers, which subsidizes accommodations, health and education for single parents, allowing them to remain on these benefits until their youngest child reaches school age.

Directed to Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone: In Bhutan (which is the youngest member of the AFPPD), the Bhutanese Constitution, Article 8 of the Constitution guarantees the right to life. The Penal Code, however, steeply punishes statutory rape, even when the intercourse is otherwise consensual. What is the law on this issue in Australia?

The age of consent for sex is 18, but prosecutions seem to be minimal. More prosecutions seem to be undertaken when one of the partners is under the age of 16. Australia’s major...
policy approach is, rather than criminalizing sex, to promote sexual education to secondary school age children.

Directed to Hon. Lord Tu’i’afitu: Women’s empowerment policies in Bangladesh are generally good, and we have achieved good representation of women in our Parliament. What is the strategy in Tonga for women’s empowerment?

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy, was never colonized, and has a population of about 100,000 people. Tonga only became fully democratic in the year 2010. In that year, only 8 women ran for Parliamentary positions, and only 1 was elected. Moving forward, we will reserve 4 seats for women in Parliament.

Directed to Hon. Dina Upadhyay: What can Bangladesh do to implement some of the campaigns against child marriage that have been so successful in Nepal?

Nepal’s approach has included addressing domestic violence and child marriage as violence against women issues, through a “zero tolerance” policy. Child marriage should be labeled and recognized as a form of violence against women, and Parliamentarians must come out strongly against child marriage as a matter of policy and law. Social leaders, political leaders, teachers, and others in the community must also be mobilized to support the efforts to end child marriage.

SESSION IV: Presentation of the draft of “Kathmandu Declaration”
(See Annex 2)

CLOSING MESSAGE By
Hon. Dina Mahalaxmi Upadhyay
&
Press Conference
(See Annex 6)
### Annex 1. Conference Agenda

**South Asia Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Child Marriage**  
*“Accelerating our Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage”*

**22-23 March 2016, Annapurna Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal**

<table>
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<th>Monday, 21 March 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arrival of Delegates</td>
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| Tuesday, 22 March 2016 (Day 1)  
Kumari Hall, Ground Floor |  
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| 09.00 – 10.30  | **Inauguration Session**  
|----------------|-------------------------|

**MC:** Hon. Mr. Dhani Ram Poudhel, Vice-Chair of the Nepalese Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (NFPPD)  
**Chair:** Hon. Ms. Dina Mahalaxmi Upadhyay, MP, Chair of NFPPD  

National Anthem of Nepal  
**Welcome Speech:** Hon. Mr. Bhishma Nath Adhikari, MP, Secretary General of NFPPD  
**Remarks:**  
*H.E. Mr. Glenn White, Ambassador, Australian Embassy in Kathmandu*  
Ms. Anjali Sen, Regional Director, International Planned Parenthood Federation, South Asia Regional Office (IPPF SARO)  
*Dr. Mika Marumoto, Executive Director of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD)*  
**Keynote Speech:**  
Rt. Hon. Nanda Bahadur Pun Pasang, Vice President of Nepal

| 10.30 – 11.30 |  
|----------------|-------------------------|

| 11.30 – 13.00 |  
|----------------|-------------------------|

| 13.00 – 15.00 | **Session I: Understanding the Context of Child Marriage in South Asia**  
|----------------|-------------------------|

**Objective:**  
The session will address the situation of child marriage in South Asia. The discussion will be centered on the human rights and development impacts of child, early and forced marriages, with particular emphasis on the post-2015 development framework.
The panel will also address the causes of child marriage and imperatives for ending it, and the challenges to be overcome. This session will explore promising programme interventions, evidence-based research and strategies on child marriage and related areas which provide lessons and insights for participants.

Presentation of a short child marriage video (6 minutes)

Chair: Hon. Ms Joanne Hayes, MP, New Zealand
Speakers:

Overview, causes and the need to end child marriage (why it is happening and why we should stop it)

- Ms. Ingrid FitzGerald, Technical Adviser on Gender and Human Rights, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office – Overview of Child Marriage in South Asia and how the issue can be addressed most effectively in the post-2015 Development Agenda
- Dr. Rinchen Chophel, Director General of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), Regional Secretariat – Harmful consequences of child marriage: how child marriage hinders women and girls’ development (e.g. health, education, social and economic status)

Programme interventions and strategies (how we can effectively address child marriage)

- Dr. Ravi Verma, Regional Director for the International Center for Research on Women’s (ICRW) – evidence-based interventions
- Ms. Azra Adbul Cader, Senior Programme Officer for Inter-faith Advocacy and SRHR, Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW) – support programmes through partnership
- Ms. Sonali Regmi, Regional Manager, the Centre for Reproductive Rights – “Ending Child Marriage: Addressing legal gaps and implementation barriers”

Q&A/Discussion (30 mins.)

15.00 – 15.15 Coffee/Tea break

15.15 – 17.15

Session II: Good Practices and Experiences Sharing on Policies and Programmes to Prevent Child Marriage

Objectives:
The session will share good practices on child marriage drawn from different countries around the world to encourage parliamentarians to consider how existing laws and policies can be put into action and how “prevention of violence against women and girls and “value of girls” can be better addressed in national policies and programmes.
The participants will be encouraged to consider about the potential for replication of these initiatives/interventions in other contexts, and concrete recommendations regarding if and how these initiatives/interventions could be successfully scaled up.

In this session, MPs will also be given an opportunity to share current efforts and national-level experiences on ending child marriage including what intervention has worked and what hasn’t.

**Chair:** Hon. Mrs. Viplove Thakur, MP, India

**Speakers:**
- Ms. Hadley Rose, J.D./LL.M., Independent Consultant on Child Marriage – *Overview of DFAT project and Research on Good Practices on Child Marriage, including recommendations for parliamentarians*
- Hon. Mrs. Sanjida Khanam, MP, Bangladesh - *case study: efforts in ending child marriage at national level*
- Hon. Mahtab Akbar Rashdi, MP, Pakistan - *case study: efforts in ending child marriage at national level*
- Mr. Aatur Rahman, Director, International Planned Parenthood Federation, South Asia Regional Office (IPPF SARO) – *good practice through partnership*

**Q&A/Discussion (30 mins.)**

18.00-20.00 Welcome dinner and cultural performance hosted by NFPPD

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**Wednesday, 23 March 2016 (Day 2)**

**Arch Room, First Floor**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session III: Commitments of Parliamentarians in Ending Child Marriage and Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment</th>
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| 9.00-10.30 | **Chair:** Hon. Mahtab Akbar Rashdi, MP, Pakistan  
**Speakers:**  
- Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone, MP, Australia and Vice-Chair of AFPPD – *Collaborative efforts and commitments of parliamentarians from ODA countries in supporting policies and programmes in ending child marriage and empowering women and young people*  
- Hon. Ms. Dina Mahalxmi Upadhyay, MP, Nepal and Co-Chair of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth – *Ending child marriage and supporting policies and programmes in ending child marriage and empowering women and young people* |

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<td><strong>marriage through empowering young people at the center of social change process</strong></td>
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<td>• Hon. Lord Tu’i’afitu, Deputy Speaker, Tonga – <em>Engaging men and boys in ending child marriage and promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30-10.45</td>
<td>Coffee/tea break</td>
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<td>10.45-12.30</td>
<td><strong>Session IV: Presentation of the draft of “Kathmandu Declaration”</strong></td>
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<td>Dr. Mika Marumoto, Executive Director, AFPPD</td>
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<td><strong>Session’s Chair:</strong> Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone, MP, Australia and Vice-Chair of AFPPD</td>
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<td>12.30-13.30</td>
<td>Lunch (Pool Side Deck)</td>
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<td>13.30-14.15</td>
<td><strong>Closing Messages</strong></td>
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<td>Chair/Vice Chair of NFPPD</td>
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<td>14.30 – 17.30</td>
<td><strong>The Joint Meeting of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and Investing in Youth (members only)</strong></td>
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<td>Venue: Boarding Room 2, Third Floor</td>
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Annex 2

KATHMANDU DECLARATION

Declaration of the
South Asia Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Child Marriage:
“Accelerating our Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage”

22-23 March 2016, Kathmandu, Nepal

We Parliamentarians, representing 13 countries from the Asia Pacific Region, gathered together on 22-23 March, 2016 in Kathmandu, Nepal, to discuss the importance of designing and implementing laws and policies to promote accountability and accelerate our collective efforts both nationally and sub-regionally for ending early, forced and child marriage.

Preamble

Recognizing early, child, and forced marriage as a grave violation of fundamental human rights, an unlawful harmful practice, and a severe form of violence against children and child labor;

Understanding early, child, and forced marriage is often a symptom of entrenched gender inequality, social inequality, poverty, and inter-generational violence and discrimination;

Recognizing that the elimination of early, child, and forced marriage is necessary for strengthening universal peace and freedom, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the International Conference on Population and Development priorities [according to SDG Target 5.3];

In light of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, in its Article 16(2), obliging all signatory States to adopt a minimum age for marriage, require marriage registration, and nullify the betrothal and marriage of children;

Considering the Convention on the Rights of the Child, setting an international standard for the definition of a child as any person under the age of 18 in its Article 1, and calling for the abolition of traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children in its Article 24;

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, obliging States to promote gender equality and equal access to education and opportunity through legislation and policy, and to take steps, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in these instruments;

Asserting that our sub-regional inter-governmental bodies, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and Parliaments in Central Asia have a critical role to strengthen accountability of member States to mainstream gender equality and SRHR priorities and enable parliamentarians and all branches of government to play an essential advocacy and monitoring role on policy and legal
reform and implementation;


Recalling existing national-level commitments of all of our member States to eradicate early, child, and forced marriage, achieve gender equality, and protect children from all forms of violence;

Reaffirming the crucial role of parliamentarians in ensuring policy and legislative changes are adequately resourced, communicated, and implemented to eradicate the practices of early, child, and forced marriage;

Recalling the duty of parliamentarians to support the development of effective, accountable, and transparent institutions and ensure participatory decision-making at all levels;

We hereby endorse and embrace the Kathmandu Commitment to accelerate our collective efforts to end early, child, and forced marriage to:

1. Identify and address, and have a zero-tolerance policy towards early, child, and forced marriage as a fundamental violation of human rights, a form of violence against women and children, a form of child abuse and child slavery, and as a public health crisis, and commit legislative, political, and financial efforts and resources to eradicate it;

2. Ensure all States adopt and implement a comprehensive and harmonized set of laws that establish the minimum age for marriage at no lower than age 18, for all genders, define child marriage in accordance with international standards, adopt and implement laws making birth and marriage registration free and compulsory, adopt and implement penalties for the perpetrators of child marriage that fit the gravity of the crime, and end impunity for early, child, and forced marriage;

3. Commit resources to understanding and addressing the role of men and boys in the continuation of gender inequality and early, child, and forced marriage, both as perpetrators and victims of early, child, and forced marriage, and promote the universal understanding of the harmful effects of early, child, and forced marriage and early and frequent childbearing, particularly upon young girls;

4. Engage a multi-stakeholder approach to addressing early, child, and forced marriage on national and sub-national levels, enhancing the direct participation of children in the process, as well as civil society advocates for the rights of women and children;

5. Design appropriate legislative measures to create legal and social remedies for the survivors of early, child, and forced marriage, such as alimony, compensation, marriage annulment, educational and healthcare assistance, and psycho-social support;

6. Design policies and action plans that carefully consider the root causes of early, child, and forced marriage in each country-context, dedicating adequate financial resources to research, policy design, planning, and implementation, as well as strict oversight of financial and program activities;
7. Promote universal public awareness of the dire health consequences of early, child, and forced marriage, both for the young spouses and their children;

8. Ensure that gender equality, women’s empowerment, the eradication of child marriage, and the eradication of all forms of violence against women and children remain priority legal, program, and policy issues;

9. Increase the active and meaningful participation of women and girls in civic, political, and social life, and provide for free and compulsory school enrollment and attendance through reducing or eradicating school fees, increasing geographic access to schools, incorporating comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health education for all, and developing alternative and vocational programs to reach children who are no longer in formal education;

10. Enhance legislative and policy protections for women’s and girls’ access to and control over property and other assets in order to enhance their economic opportunities and social status, reducing their vulnerability to early, child, and forced marriage;

11. Foster collaboration, partnerships and interdependence among branches of government, and create and support partnerships between government, political parties, regional and national human rights institutions, local community leaders, faith communities, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, and inter-governmental and donor organizations, with the aim of creating holistic, effective, and sustainable solutions to the root causes of early, child, and forced marriage.

Annex 5. Evaluation of the conference by participants

*Please note that the comments have been edited for brevity and appropriate grammar where needed.*

**General Comments:**
- Speakers provided good arguments in support of ending child marriage.
- The meeting on “child marriage” met my expectations. It was a very good meeting.
- The subject matters discussed were important and interesting. The time was well-managed.

**Comments on the Kathmandu Declaration:**
- The Declaration was prepared and adopted after a well-debated process.
- I am satisfied with the declaration, but it all depends now on collective efforts both at national and sub-regional levels to end child marriage and reflect them in national parliament legislation.

**Comments on ‘Ending Child Marriage’**
- [Parliamentarians] must stay focused on their oversight roles, development of good practices and ensuring allocation of resources among many others.
- [Holding Parliamentary meetings] is a start. However, it would be useful to keep the conversation going and ensure actions at every level.

**Recommendation(s):**
- Simultaneous translation is a better practice. It can save time.
Comments:
- The meeting had good, informative presentations (including the featured video) on child marriage. Presentations included: 1) good practices in addressing child marriage; and (2) challenges in implementing actions and in addressing the issue of child marriage through effective policies.

Recommendations:
- The topic should be discussed more in depth. The presentations and discussion should include examinations of other cultures other than Asia.
- A complete set of hard copies of the presentations, not just hard copies of the PowerPoint slides, should be given to the participants.

Comments on ‘Child Marriage’
- In ending child marriage, Parliamentarians must reflect on national level and parliament procedures, as well as endorsement procedures.
- Culture, religion, traditional practices, poverty and lack of education are among the reasons of marrying child at a young age. (Parents marry off their children early to avoid dowry.)
- The issue of child marriage should be revisited to ascertain common and shared understanding of the issue.

Session II: Good Practices and Experiences Sharing on Policies and Programmes to Prevent Child Marriage

Comments:
- The session had good presentations and discussion.

Recommendations:
- The session can be improved with discussions/presentations on more practical examples of good practices to end child marriage, on advocacy by parliamentary groups and NGOs.
- The discussion on child marriage is focused only girls’ age of marriage, it should also concern boys’ age at marriage.

Comments on 'Good Practices and Experiences Sharing on Policies and Programs’ to Prevent Child Marriage:
• Policies and programs to prevent child marriage are good practices but they are not enough. Poverty and children’s lack of education must be effectively addressed.
• Caste system must also be addressed because it plays a major role.
• Access to education can help eradicate child marriage.

**Session III: Commitments of Parliamentarians in Ending Child Marriage and Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment**

Comments:
• The session had relevant presentations and sharing of experiences.
• Some presentations presented very good information but were very country-specific.
• Some of the information were not clearly understood by some participants.

Comments on 'Commitments of Parliamentarians in Ending Child Marriage and Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment'
• A key message was: "zero-tolerance to child marriage and atrocities against girls, women and boys.
• All participant parliamentarians should fully commit to ending child marriage and promoting gender equality in their respective countries by working with NGOs, setting up parliamentary committees and through legislative and policies means to ensure minimum age to be 18 and above.
• Laws and policies are necessary in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment to make all population educated, however, implementation is still a problem.
• Parliamentarians should also examine common laws
• Policies and practices should be compared between countries.
Comments:

- The session chairperson was effective with her job. Participants were able to have good discussion and were able to clearly express their thoughts.
- The session was able to reach consensus and [the draft declaration] was adopted.

Recommendation(s):

- More technical sessions (to discuss language, terms, and previous agreements, etc.) would have benefitted participants.

General Comments:

- The success of ending child marriage depends on how [stakeholders] accelerate collective efforts and how well national efforts will be in line with international efforts.

[Q] During the meeting, which subjects did you find most interesting? Least interesting? Why?

- All the subject matters and sessions were important and relevant.
- Session on the commitment of parliamentarians to end child marriage and promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Discussion on corrective measures and the approaches used to discourage child marriage through various projects such as cash transfer and special scholarships to girls.
- Discussion on addressing legal gaps and implementation barriers.
- Harmful consequences of child marriage, how child marriage hinders women and girls’ development.
- Evidence of what has worked, especially, the ICRW presentation.
- Good practices and experiences, sharing of effective policies and programs.

[Q] Of which subject would like to know more about?

- How to deal with cultural, traditional and religious root causes of child marriage.
- How to use the human rights framework to protect adolescent and young people from child marriage.
- Legislation on child marriage in other countries
- How to create an effective oversight mechanism and to strategically implement laws and policies.
• Formal vs. informal legal systems.
• Investing in youth and the improvement of the role of women in society.

From what you have learned at the meeting, what actions do you plan to take in order to influence the national policy related to the elimination of child marriage? Please specify.

• To conduct more dialogue and discussion on its implementation and resource allocation and to raise awareness of child marriage problems at all forums.
• To inform girls under the age of 18 and their parents of the negative consequences of child marriage.
• To take zero-tolerance stance and policy toward child marriage.
• Amendment and implementation of the existing legislation.
• To empower youth especially women in terms of early child marriage and its consequences.
• To work on this issue with parliamentarians.
• To build on the learnings and networks to promote individual country convergence.
• To increase awareness through my parliamentary committee on HIV/AIDS.
• The PNG Constitution does not agree/endorse marriage of minors, and to ensure it.
• To introduce to our provincial assembly policies on child marriage.
• “Review my bill and update/streamline with the Minister for Woman and Minister of Justice”
• To mobilize local to high level holistic annual plans.
• To share work with media and CSOs.
• To promote harsher penalties for the perpetrators.
• “To integration of evidence-based approach into our policy.
• “To use proposals here to prepare commitments to laws in my country.
• “(1) to make legislation on child marriage ; (2) to increase programs on increasing awareness of the child marriage issue for our people; and (3) to establish an implementation mechanism”

How would you evaluate the length of the sessions and overall number of sessions?

Comment(s):
• Summarized comment: The length of the sessions were adequate, however, more time should have been allotted to plenary discussions.

Additional comments:
• The meeting was a success. It achieved its objectives.
• These events could also create a mechanism to report progress on:
  o National level initiatives;
  o Past decisions taken as building blocks to next steps;
• *Thanks to the Government of Nepal, DFAT, IPPF and AFPPD, [I was able to attend] such a wonderful conference in an amazing country.*
• *There should be follow up meetings.*
• *Researchers, social workers, and religious leaders should also be invited when discussing child marriage.*
## Annex 6. List of media coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Media Agency, Date, Publication Title, and URL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td></td>
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|  | **Reliefweb International**, March 21, 2016  
|  | **Nigeria News (Repost from Reliefweb International)**, March 21, 2016  
http://nigeria.shafaqna.com/EN/NG/2111823  |
|  | **Himalayan Times**, March 21, 2016  
**South Asian parliamentarians’ meet to discuss child marriage**  
|  | **Info Nepal**, March 24, 2016  
**Asia Pacific parliamentarians promise to fight child marriage**  
http://www.infonepal.net/english/59671/  |
|  | **Reliefweb International**, March 25, 2016  
**Kathmandu Declaration- Declaration of the South Asia Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Child Marriage: “Accelerating our Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage”**  
http://reliefweb.int/report/world/kathmandu-declaration-declaration-south-asia-parliamentarians-meeting-child-marriage  |
|  | **ICT Emergency (Repost from Reliefweb International)**, March 25, 2016  
**World: Kathmandu Declaration- Declaration of the South Asia Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Child Marriage: “Accelerating our Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage”**  
Shortened URL: http://goo.gl/3QOeRK  |
|  | **Himalayan Times**, March 27, 2016  
**MPs of 13 nations vow to end child marriage**  
| **Nepalese** |  |
|  | **Annapurna Post**, March 24, 2016  
|  | **Setopati**  
http://setopati.com/raajneeti/43792/ |
Kathmandu, March 26

A two-day international conference of Members of Parliament from 13 countries of the Asia-Pacific Region concluded in the capital by issuing Kathmandu Declaration yesterday.

The MPs had gathered in Kathmandu to discuss the importance of designing and implementing laws and policies to promote accountability and accelerate collective efforts both nationally and sub-regionally to end early, child, and forced marriage.

Recognising early, child, and forced marriage as a grave violation of fundamental human rights and a severe form of violence against children, the MPs endorsed the declaration.

They have expressed commitment to ensuring that all participating countries adopt and implement a comprehensive and harmonised set of laws that establish the minimum age for marriage at no lower than age 18.

Himalayan Times, March 27, 2016

North Asian MPs vow to end child marriage

Himalayan Times, March 22, 2016, Page 2

Meeting of South Asian MPs begins

Setopati
http://setopati.com/raajneeti/43792/
### Annex 7. List of Participants

#### MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

1. **Australia**  
   Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone, MP  
   Vice-chair of AFPPD

2. **Bangladesh**  
   Hon. Mr. Farhad Hossain, MP  
   Hon. Mrs. Sanjida Khanam, MP

3. **Bhutan**  
   Hon. Mr. Kuenga, MP  
   Hon. Ms. Kinley Om, MP

4. **Cook Islands**  
   Hon. Ms. Selina Napa, MP  
   Hon. Mr. Toka Hagai, MP

5. **India**  
   Hon. Mrs. Viplove Thakur, MP  
   Hon. Dr. Vijaylaxmi Sadho, MP

6. **Kyrgyzstan**  
   Hon. Mr. Dastan Bekeshev, MP

7. **Maldives**  
   Hon. Mr. Jaufar Dawood, MP  
   Hon. Mr. Ibrahim Naseer, MP

8. **Nepal**  
   Hon. Ms. Dina Mahalaxmi Upadhyay, MP  
   Co-chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth  
   Hon. Mr. Bhishma Nath Adhikari, MP

9. **New Zealand**  
   Hon. Ms. Joanne Hayes, MP

10. **Pakistan**  
    Hon. Mahtab Akbar Rashdi, MP

11. **Papua New Guinea**  
    Hon. Mr. Sasindran Muthuvel, MP

12. **Tajikistan**  
    Hon. Mr. Sharif Rahimzoda, MP

13. **Tonga**  
    Hon. Lord Tu’i’afitu  
    Deputy Speaker

#### INAUGURATION SESSION PARTICIPANTS

**Nepal**

- Rt. Hon. Nanda Bahadur Pun Pasang  
  Vice President of Nepal

- Hon. Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal, MP, Chief Whip, CPN-UML  
  Hon. Hita Raj Pandey, MP, Chief Whip UCPN-M  
  Hon. Anjanee Shrestha, MP  
  Hon. Anita Devkota, MP  
  Hon. Amrit Lal Rajbanshi, MP  
  Hon. Anarkali Meaiya, MP  
  Hon. Asha Yadav, MP  
  Hon. Babina Moktan Lawati, MP  
  Hon. Balaram Adhikari, MP  
  Hon. Deepshikha Sharma Dhakal, MP  
  Hon. Durga Khuna, MP  
  Hon. Gaure Kumari Oli, MP  
  Hon. Gita Chhetri, MP  
  Hon. Jiwan Pariyar, MP  
  Hon. Jayanta Chand, MP  
  Hon. Kamala Pangani, MP  
  Hon. Kabita Kumar Sardar, MP  
  Hon. Karna Bahadur B.K., MP  
  Hon. Kalpana Chaudary, MP  
  Hon. Laxmi Rai, MP  
  Hon. Lalendra Mandal, MP  
  Hon. Lal Bahadur Gurung, MP  
  Hon. Madhu Shai Thakuri, MP  
  Hon. Mira Dhoju Pokhrel, MP  
  Hon. Nirmal Subedi, MP  
  Hon. Parmila Devi Dash, MP  
  Hon. Ratna Shergan, MP  
  Hon. Ranju Kumari Jha, MP  
  Hon. Pemba Lama, MP  
  Hon. Rita Rawal, MP  
  Hon. Ranjana Sarkar, MP  
  Hon. Rajaya Laxmi Shrestha, MP  
  Hon. Rak Kumar Bhattari, MP  
  Hon. Afelal Ukhada, MP  
  Hon. Attar Kamal, MP  
  Hon. Amar Singh Pun, MP  
  Hon. Jitendra Yadav, MP  
  Hon. Sindhu Jalesha Budhathoki, MP  
  Hon. Sita Nepali, MP  
  Hon. Sayandra Banawa, MP  
  Hon. Tuka Bhadra Hamal, MP  
  Hon. Tulasha Rana, MP  
  Hon. Wangdi Sherpa, MP
RESOURCE PERSONS:

Ms. Azra Abdul Cader  
Senior Programme Officer for Inter-faith Advocacy and SRHR, Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW)

Ms. Sonali Regmi  
Regional Manager, the Center for Reproductive Rights (CCR)

Dr. Ravi Verma  
Regional Director for the International Center for Research on Women’s (ICRW)

Dr. Rinchen Chophel  
Director General of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), Regional Secretariat

Ms. Ingrid Fitzgerald  
Technical Advisor on Gender and Human Rights, UNFPA APRO

Ms. Giulia Vallese  
Representative, UNFPA Nepal

Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)  
H.E. Glenn White  
Ambassador of Australian Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal

The International Planned Parenthood Federation, South Asia Regional Office (IPPF SARO)  
Ms. Anjali Sen  
Regional Director

Dr. Ataur Rahman  
Director

Parliamentary and National Committee Secretariat Staff  
India  
Mr. Manmohan Sharma  
Executive Secretary, IAPPD

Kyrgyzstan  
Mr. Ahmadhon Yusupkhanov  
Assistant to the MP

Taiikistan  
Ms. Zulfiya Barotova  
Special adviser to the Vice-Speaker

Tonga  
Dr. Sione Vikilani  
Clerk of the Parliament

Observers  
Amu Singh Sijapati  
Chairperson, Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN)

Prof. Dr. Dr. Ram Sharan Pathak  
Head, Central Department of Population Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Mr. Bidhan Acharya  
Central Department of Population Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Ms. Anita Shah  
Nepal NT TB Associate

Ms. Gita Poudel  
Population Researcher

Dr. Umakanta Bhattarai  
Gynecologist

Mr. Bishnu Bhattarai  
VSCO

Dr. Tirtha Thapa  
Human Development and Community Services (HDCS)

Representative from the Embassy of Norwegian Kathmandu, Nepal Surya Court, Pulchowk, Lalitpur

AFPPD  
Ms. Mika Marumoto  
Executive Director

Ms. Apiradee Thienthong  
Policy Research and Advocacy Advisor

Ms. Kusalin Wongnamkob  
Programme Specialist – Gender
Ms. Pornprapas Sappapan
Administrative Manager

Mr. Marc Eliemel Tagub
Programme Specialist – Communications

Ms. Jirapa Rerkphongsri
Account Officer

Ms. Hadley Rose
Consultant (Rapporteur)

NFPPD
Mr. S.P. Neupane
Mr. Balram Budhathoki
Ms. Shima Neupane

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TOTAL:</th>
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<td>Of which</td>
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<td>Members of Parliament:</td>
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