



HER
CHOICE

HER CHOICE Partners Forum

Bangkok, 6th to 10th November 2017

Highlights, Discussion Points and Action Points



Day 1: Monday, 6th November 2017

Introductions and getting to know each other and the HER CHOICE Alliance

Introductory words of welcome from ICDI's Rutger van Oudenhoven, Her Choice Coordinator; Odilia van Manen, Kinderpostzegels, overall Her Choice Coordinator and Steve Smith, ICDI, Partners Forum Coordinator. Highlighted was our wish to exchange both our challenges and our successes in preventing child marriage and learn from each other during the Forum. Also pointed out was that we are part of a larger family as Her Choice partners also connected to other two Alliances supported by Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs focused on Child Marriage: Yes I Do Alliance; More than Brides Alliance and the international Girls Not Brides Alliance.

Why work as an Alliance? Maximizing our strengths and different skills and experience - by coming together we are stronger, and have a greater capacity to influence.

In Her Choice, we are guided by common vision and commitment to exchange knowledge and skills and we are supported by strong leadership at many levels.

United in our communication

Important to use our common communication tools – our Her Choice logo, our website, brochure. We aim to achieve our goals and objectives and we tell stories - all with the overall goal of preventing Child Marriage.

Goals and expectations of Forum: Partners perspectives

These were the main points raised by the participants:

On partnership

- As the 'Her Choice' family, important to have fun together, enjoy each other and trust each other.
- Transparency, including conversation, is also important as well as being able to give each other constructive criticism.
- Sustainable partnerships need to last, and should not stop when the funding stops.
- By exchanging experiences and challenges, we are building each other's capacity.

On building a Her Choice community

- Making more effective communication among partners: it's an ongoing process and we need to adapt and change as we go along to be more effective.
- Use the logo: it's part of our brand and common to all of us.
- Sharing best practice on engaging boys and men; all agreed important to also include boys and men – but it's also about boys and men taking responsibility for their behavior, and their role in child marriage.
- Mutual trust, means that we also feel safe to share our vulnerabilities.

Skills

- Important to understanding and know **children's** issues and concerns and be able to communicate with children and young people – keeping in mind that every child is different.
- Also need to be able to engage community leaders, and elected officials – in this regard helpful to use socially accepted terms.
- Regarding skills of involving boys and men, it was noted that this Forum has already been success in the fact that there are so many men participating: 9 men, 10 women present! Pointed out that this is quite unique compared to most SRHR meetings.



- Bangladeshi and Pakistani participants share examples of activities that have worked to involve boys and men: mixed groups, explicit invitation to boys and men to participate in SRHR activities and preventing child marriage; quizzes for boys and men about menstruation (as well as girls and women).

In summary – we need sensitivity AND belief in our heart AND genuine commitment AND conceptual understanding in order for SRHR and child marriage to be addressed.

SRHR and Child Marriage: the perspective of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Mieke Vogels

Mieke working in Department of Social Development where there are four focus areas on SRHR: 1) youth and sexuality; 2) better access to contraception; 3) improvement of sexual and reproductive health and rights; 4) human rights including SRHR and rights of marginalized groups, such as LGBTI.

What does the Ministry do? Policy implementation. The fact that Mieke is here and participating in the Forum gives her the opportunity to bring experiences of all participants to high level Steering Groups and in this way **influence policy**. She describes herself as the ‘spider in the web’ linking and connecting people, organizations, policy makers.

Ministry places actors and partners in countries where the Netherlands prioritizes SRHR. For example, there is an SRHR expert in the Dutch Embassy in these countries.

What is added value of the Netherlands in this field?

The Ministry and her officials are not afraid to address sensitive issues and advocate for human rights. Also tries to be evidence based, innovate and consistent in funding.

Ministry has a **Special Ambassador** for SRHR and HIV/AIDs and **Youth Ambassador** for SRHR and HIV/AIDs.

What is the Ministry’s approach to Partnerships?

A new way of working designed from 2015 called ‘Dialogue and Dissent’ based on policy framework on 4 focus areas: 1) youth and sexuality; 2) better access to contraception; 3) improvement of sexual and reproductive health and rights; 4) human rights including SRHR and rights of marginalized groups, such as LGBTI.

Consortia of NGOs were asked to send their Theory of Change and Track Records and 7 out of 12 were selected. 3 of 7 working on Child Marriage, one of which is the Her Choice Alliance. This instigated the partnership relationship between the three alliances and the Ministry on child marriage.

Ministry keeps an eye on results leading to the end goal i.e. ending child marriage.

Questions from Participants to Mieke:

What has been her experience of Child Marriage partnerships so far?

Mieke remains passionate about the topic – but feels there is a need to stop talking about policies and really start to act to bring about change – this should be a collective responsibility.

Child Marriage is a relatively non-controversial topic in many countries in comparison to gender equality, access to contraception. Important to keep in mind that Child Marriage actually addresses all these issues.

Why a less hierarchical relationship between NGOs and Ministry? Why this different approach?

Analysis of issues are important, also questioning if approach is actually leading to change. She believes a partnership approach is a positive development, but is maybe more vulnerable for the Dutch Ministry. It needs ongoing review.

What about position of smaller NGOs such as those represented at this Forum?

‘Dialogue and Dissent’ provided opportunities for larger NGOs to include expertise of smaller NGOs in their alliances. Maybe there is diminished competitiveness between NGOs in NL as a result of partnership approach.



Problems at higher level in Ethiopia – what room does she have to influence this to ensure a more enabling environment?

Have to adapt your language and still be effective in influence policy. Demonstrate you know local context.

Sharing examples of successful interventions in Her Choice: highlights from the participating organizations

Making commitments visible

- Village child protection committees have been spraying stencils on the wall of family homes where families have committed not to have their children marry when they are child (Bedari)

Building girls confidence

- Self-growth training sessions have built girls confidence in speaking out about personal issues with their peers (Bedari)
- A successful girl's empowerment programme (CWIN)
- 18 girls' clubs with 25 members each, who are led by leaders – all involved have grown in confidence (Dalit)

Challenging gender stereotypes

- Gender role reversal activities: the boys cooked, cleaned and cared for children, while the girls got to play cricket, football and ride bicycles (Bedari).
- 40 girls went on a bicycle trip to celebrate International Day of the Girl Child (Dalit)
- A girls' sports club established where girls can play football. This has also improved confidence, reduced shyness and given girls chances to make decisions. (ESD)
- Boys as well as girls learned how to make sanitary pads using local materials, which they teach their parents – also means girls much less likely to miss school during menstruation (ESD).

Challenges Her Choice partners are confronted with (1) BEDARI, Pakistan

Bedari performed 3 street theatre sketches to illustrate how 1) they relate with and talk about sensitive topics in village communities; 2) engage with government officials about changing policies on SRHR and child marriage; and 3) deal with harassment from security officials in Bedari offices.

Two contrasting approaches were demonstrated based on lessons learnt by Bedari: In the community gently probing parents, rather than imposing information; avoid using potentially offensive terms also with government officials; and when women staff members being sexually harassed by security officials, move out of situation and ask male colleague to come in to office. Stay polite, don't counteract.

The plenary discussion which followed addressed the ways in which Bedari can work constructively using international diplomacy in bring attention to these problems: such as informing Dutch Ambassador in Pakistan who in turn can, use the Article 8 on human rights in the context of trade agreements between EU countries and Pakistan.



HER
CHOICE

Day 2: Tuesday, 7th November 2017

Children as Researchers, ICDI workshop Rutger van den Oudenhoven & Giulia Cortellesi

This theme was part of the application for Her Choice, including also the suggestion that children would take part in the mid and end term evaluation. This method is suitable for different age groups, including young children. But mostly developed for age 12 to 18 years, who have abstract thinking abilities.

Research is about finding out, asking questions, exploring, being systematic.

Different approaches to including children in research:

1. Children as objects
2. Research with children
3. Research by children

Partners already involve children in different ways in research (apart from baseline). ESD and CWIN have experience with the 2nd Approach: Research with children.

Why research with and by children?

- Children are experts on their lives

Also based on Art. 12, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Children's right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.

During workshop participants did five practical activities which can be adapted when working with child and adolescent researchers

1. Understanding the concept of research: picture cards on the floor. Everyone selects a card that fits to an aspect of research from your perspective.
2. Getting familiar with research terminology: matching research terms to definitions.
3. Putting the 7 steps of the research process in the right order on the research ladder (see below)
4. Matching research method to research question: Depending on the research question of your choice, decide if and how you will use questionnaires, open interviews, observations, and/or experiments for your research.
5. The group makes a joint collage of aspects of child marriage as an illustration of how creative methods can be used to explore and understand an issue and come up with interesting research questions. Other examples of creative methods are researchers using a range of visual media (photographs, films, etc.); children using portraits of themselves; timelines; relationship maps; video/picture documentaries; 3D models; murals; comics; songs; etc.

7-phase process of children-led research introduced (see also Power Point)

1. Engaging children
Which target group should you choose? Which is the optimal setting (formal or non-formal)?; Introducing the concept of children-led research to those who will work with them; Which children will participate?; Important to also introduce the concept of child-led research to the children.
2. Identifying a facilitator
This should be a practitioner who can guide and mentor the children and engage the community in the process. This person needs to have research skills and experience.
3. Informing community
Because it is a participatory process, the community must be informed and engaged.
4. Building capacity



The facilitator receives training; is introduced to stakeholders; and conducts background research on the most prominent issues. The children receive training on methods and techniques based on their age and skills. This is usually a 10-week training of 1 session of 2-3 hours per week.

5. Conducting research
6. Sharing findings
7. Building community ownership: Develop community action plan; define responsibility to take action (with deadlines); organise follow-up meeting to check progress; see if any other issues need to be researched?

Case study Nicaragua

100 children, 5 schools (sub-groups), each exploring 1 subject (violence; sexual abuse, trafficking, sexual exploitation, etc.). Video shows the process with the organisation La Amistad in Nicaragua. Subject: violence against children. Because most of such violence takes place within the homes the children, this is a sensitive subject and very difficult to address. It happens by people who are known. Thereby mostly not possible to address in a direct way. Ways to ask questions had to be developed in a subtle and indirect way.

ICDI provide training on Children as Researchers

Training an organisation to implement the children as researcher's method needs a 2/3-day training by ICDI. This includes: Introduction; importance of participation; ethics; how to involve children; models and methodologies on how to train children to become researchers; creative methods.

Challenges Her Choice partners are confronted with (2) THP Bangladesh

Implementation of SRHR-related activities + how to convince people that it is an important issue.

Through a role play the following challenges are highlighted

- School authority thinks that SRHR is less important
- Parents fear the issue of SRHR
- Although SRHR is part of the curriculum, it is avoided by educational institutions

Because it is not very easy to do in school, training is organised for members of youth units; teachers are also trained in SRHR; health centres and workers are connected with schools. After receiving SRHR training, girls tell that they have learned what they did not learn from their mothers. They state that SRHR is about their life and their future.

Documentary about the Dream School

In THP's Dream School, youth committees check that schools are clean and safe for girls; girls can say if they don't feel safe; girls can submit complaints into a special box - also about having to marry. All complaints are being followed up on by the group. Issue of eve teasing (sexual harassment) and other issues are being addressed by posters and magazines. Girls are involved in sports and skills training.

Introduction to trauma (ICDI workshop led by Steve Smith)

Child marriage is a traumatic event, especially when a pregnancy and early motherhood is involved. Steve demonstrated how you can use your hand as the brain and Arm and wrist: *spinal cord* as a way of explaining the workings of the brain and the body's response to trauma. Ball of the thumb: *brain stem*, where memory is recorded and flight, fight, freeze or collapse mechanism are initiated. Above this, the *limbic system* regulates the response to such reflexes and transports information to the *cortex*. Then, usually, an adequate reaction follows. In case of trauma, these systems disconnect and the limbic system cannot carry out its regulating function. Child brides often experience such trauma. They experience a sense of being overwhelmed and powerless. Cortex and brain stem become increasingly disconnected. The regulating mechanism of the limbic system stops. Stress is normal and can be healthy to a certain extent. But if the stressful event is too overwhelming or persists over a longer period, it can be considered trauma (or a toxic stress). Children which are already married, should be getting psychological support for this.



Day 3: Wednesday, 8th November 2017

Multi-generational approach to break the cycle of child marriage - ICDI workshop Giulia Cortellesi & Margaret Kernan

It is important to involve and work with all family members while dealing with child marriages. The interventions should range from very young children to the older adults in the family.

Period of being a very young child corresponds to the 'First Thousand days' i.e. Pregnancy to year 2 of the life.

1. Group reflection on the role of different family members on child development

Ecological Model of Child Development model is introduced illustrating the multiple environmental levels that impact on how children develop.

Group exercise: Role of In-laws and other relatives in:

- Deciding about marriage
- Deciding about pregnancy
- Role in care and education of the infants and toddlers.

Group work findings

In Pakistan, the marriage is mostly decided by the grandmother, in some cases fathers make the decision. In Nepal and Bangladesh, it is mostly fathers. In Ethiopia, it is mostly fathers to make decisions, however in urban areas boys and girls make the decision to marry.

In Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal, it is the grandmother and other relatives in law who insist the women to get pregnant. In Ethiopia, the decision lies with the couple.

In Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, usually the grandmother plays the role of taking care of the children. The level and quality of care depends upon sex of the infant (boy gets more attention) and order of the child. First child gets more attention while second and third especially if they are girls do not get enough attention, rather face neglect by the grandmother and sometimes by the mother also.

Role of the grandfather is mostly visible when the child gets around 1 year of age. They mostly play with the child and contribute to giving childhood gender related messages like brave boy, sweet doll etc.

In Ethiopia, the couple takes care of the infant and toddler. While the grandparents usually spend time with the infants on special occasions and holidays.

2. Risks of early marriage to mother and baby (see PP)

- Girls are more vulnerable to violence
- Children observing violence in home start thinking about it to be 'normal'
- Girls may feel powerless to refuse sex while in marriage.
- Limited discussion, information and availability of contraceptives
- Girls are more likely to die of child birth than through an accident or any other disease
- Obstetric fistula
- The infants of teenagers are more likely to suffer disease, be malnourished and may suffer neglect and even more likely to die, increasing infant mortality rate in a country

3. Importance of first 1000 days for child development

- Video showing development of brains

Genes provide basic blue print but behaviors contribute towards further development. The attributes used frequently get even stronger and the attributes not used fade away.

Psychosocial development in first 1000 days (See Power Point)



- Sense of being nurtured and loved is developed between 0-2 years of child's life
- Between 9 and 12 months of age child start exploring
- 9-18 months, children learning to crawl, walk and start to understanding different emotions expressed by people around them
- Early experiences including children's relationships with parents and others around them interact with genes to shape their development including the development of the brain

Group Exercise:

Men's group illustrated the Role of Mothers (care, relationship and education) in first two years of child's life
 Women's group illustrated the Role of Fathers (care, relationship and education) in first two years of child's life

Group findings:

Fathers are usually involved in covering the financial side of the baby care, like shopping for the children, bringing money back home and deciding about when to send a baby to school and to which school.

Mothers do all the physical care like feeding, massaging, cleaning and changing the diapers etc. They talk to them, observe them, tell the stories and protect them from hazards.

Key discussion points during presentation;

- Reading, singing to and telling stories to babies right from their birth can be very productive in child's development.
- Adequate stimulation and safe environments are key factors

Everything starts from womb. Video

- Mother's stress level can affect the baby in her womb
- Babies can be effected by arguments and environment around them
- Fathers, employers and all around the pregnant women have to play their roles
- What happens in the womb can last to the rest of your life?

Stress

Positive stress: is helpful and contributes positively to the development of child, Example: starting to attend a day care center

Tolerable Stress: The stressful event may happen only once or occurs infrequently

Toxic Stress: strong frequent and prolonged stress, like witnessing violence against mother, being intimidated, having limited food and other needs because of poverty

Video on Toxic Stress

Learning and reasoning area in brain can be affected by the toxic stress

Toxic stress can be avoided if the environment around the baby is nurturing and supportive

Effects of Toxic stress

Growth may be slow

Long term effect on the personality development of the child

Slide on comparing the brain of the child brought up under trauma and the one brought up in normal environment.

4. How to translate multi-generational approach into activities to prevent child marriage (see PP)

A Four Pillar Strategy

Pillar 1: Nurturing relationships

- Enhancing early learning and mother-child interaction for children aged 0-5.
- Health, hygiene and psycho-social support
- Multi-generational approach

Pillar 2: Family Planning

- Increase spacing between children



- Right to decide to choose how many children and when to have them
- Children living with smaller family have better growth

Pillar 3: Education opportunity

- Education and skills training specifically designed for young mothers which also offer young mother a break from their child-rearing and housework responsibilities
- And offer child care services for babies and pre-school aged girls and boys also involving grandmothers

Pillar 4: Community ownership

- Enhancing a sense of ownership in the whole community (especially fathers, grandparents, in-laws) with respect to the health and psychosocial wellbeing of girls and boys aged 0-5 and their mothers;

It takes a village to raise a child

Discussion point:

What is the connection between the 4 pillars and breaking the intergenerational cycle of child marriage?

- It provides an entry point to work with families and communities starting with relatively acceptable theme and then once trustful relationships have been built, introduce more progressive ideas about child marriages and family planning etc
- Engaging young women in the life skill activities will help them understand the importance of girls' psychological and physical development before getting married

Presentation by Dalit of a multi-generational project in planning – Basonti

The newly conceived idea around responsive parenting is planned to be started in Bangladesh with Dalit in 2018. The project will be piloted in one village in first year.

Plan to establish a *House of Peace* with following elements:

- Livelihood skills training
- Counseling department
- Research Department
- Recreation/Play Zone
- SRHR Info Department
- Saving Department
- Child Care and Responsive Parenting workshops

Questions and Suggestions for Dalit:

- Entrepreneurship training can be included in the program so that women can develop some business
- Education component should be added

Can Dalits be empowered enough not to be called Dalits and given equal opportunity to explore their potential?

Basonti's response, "Dalits are getting empowered every day. We now have Dalit lawyers, teachers and other officials. And their struggle has made us a visible group with equal rights as human being".

There needs to be the involvement of government institutions to increase the ownership among the government of activities in Dalit communities and to sustain the activities.



Day 4: Thursday, 9th November 2017

Linking and Learning: challenges

Day opened with a **12 question quiz** based on previous day's workshop sessions and the cultural visit to the city.

Challenges Her Choice partners are confronted with (3) CWIN, Nepal:

How to encourage local authorities to act on existing child marriage law: CWIN presents a context analysis on a poster of issues and forces impacting on child marriage and strategies to combat it.

Following highlighted:

- Lack of education, poverty, dowry, cultural practices, and lack of implementation of laws are main reasons for child marriage
- Political structure has recently changed in Nepal; Federal level election and Provincial elections are going to be held in one month in Nepal.
- CWIN received a case of Child Marriage, staff called to police, but because of Political Pressure, no action was taken

Examples of CWIN's response:

- CWIN is working with local government closely and need to give orientation to them about existing laws
- Social Issues are not priority of Political Parties in Nepal. Their priorities are making buildings, roads
- On all CWIN publications Child Helpline number and services available for Child are being printed
- CWIN is also making plans to print the information about Child Marriage in 2 or 3 local languages of Nepal

Questions and Comments on the Presentation of CWIN:

- *Who is imprisoned in case of Child Marriage Law Violations?* Ans: the persons who facilitate the Child Marriage
- *Are you allowed to do lobbying during elections?* Ans: yes
- Bangladesh partners, Dalit, added that they are also trying to do monthly meetings with the government authorities to try to sensitize them. We are trying to coordinate with local level government, district level government and at upper level
- Ethiopia has same kind of challenges of working with local level government that Nepal is facing. Task Force is responsible to take action against the violations of law



Poster Exhibition: Bedari, CWIN, Dalit and ESD present their Girls and Boys Clubs in Poster Exhibition

Discussion following Poster Exhibition about successful and innovative approaches in the clubs

- Door to door campaign (visible mark on family home walls) idea of Bedari is much appreciated and will be tried by others
- Bedari, Pakistan will try to use idea of making sanitary pads - it is economical. Unlike Ethiopia who do this with girls and boys, they will only do this with girls for now
- Pakistan would love to introduce Karate like Bangladesh
- Comment from Mieke: In some countries there are Social Protection Systems. Getting welfare support can be used as an incentive for parents to allow their children to join a club. Parents need to demonstrate that their girls and boys are participating in a club in order to receive the social support from the government

Challenges Her Choice partners are confronted with (4) Dalit: Delivering outcomes during a disaster – flooding

- During floods the major issue for the affected people was accommodation and toilet facilities. For pregnant women there was no rest place and they faced the challenge of proper food and medical facilities

- Trafficking issues, Schools destroyed. Dropout rate increased. Migration is one reason for dropout from the schools
- During the flood some activities of Her Choice were stopped

Questions /Comments

What was the response of Govt during the flood? Ans: The government support was there but it was not enough and appropriate.

Is there any advance information System from the govt. before flood? Only plans but no implementations of plans. Govt. gives contracts to the local persons/institutions but the work is not done properly.

What happened to the Girls Clubs, Trainings and other activities of Her Choice during floods? They stopped for a while. During severe floods the major need is medicines, sanitary materials and food and drinking water and other emergency relief. However, some Girls Clubs and life skills trainings can continue in alternative locations i.e. school buildings.

What kind of issues SRHR issues are triggered during/after flood, for example the trafficking and sexual abuse? Yes, confirmed these issues increased.

Recommended that:

- 1) contraception, sanitary pads also provided in emergency package during floods
- 2) As Bangladesh faces floods almost every year. Plan preparedness sessions/trainings for the respective community. Acknowledged that during flood the priorities are changed.

Challenges Her Choice partners are confronted with (5) ESD, Ethiopia:

5 challenges presented pictorially with participants asked to identify precise challenge from illustration.

Abduction of girl brides to be by grooms and family members as prelude to forced marriage. Very common in Ethiopia.

NGOs not allowed to explicitly talk about child marriage or children's rights, despite fact that Government have committed to end Child Marriage by 2025. NGOs need to 'work around' this limitation.

FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) unfortunately still very common in Ethiopia, especially in South Ethiopia and Oromia.

High turnover of school staff and education officials – and many are currently preoccupied with bureaucratic activities and have little or no time for social issues and initiatives which are priority of NGOs.

Family planning, spacing of children, lack of contraception – with negative effects on health of mother and children, adequate nourishment, development etc.

Noted that governance in Ethiopia highly decentralized. Most of ESD day-to-day contact with government officials is with local government, although they also are working towards building personal contacts in national government ministries.

Amongst successes as a result of Her Choice programming highlighted by ESD are:

Increasing school attendance rate of schools due to activities around SRH awareness amongst boys, girls, mothers such as: making sanitary pads, reducing taboo around menstruation; ensuring separate toilets for girls; provision by ESD of training and information on SRH to Health Extension Workers at district level; establishment of mothers' self-help groups.



HER
CHOICE

Day 5: Friday, 10th November 2017

Recap and conclusion

Recap of yesterday, based on a photo elicitation approach. Participants asked to use their mobile phone to take a photo of something on partner poster that inspired them. Photos and reasons for taking them shared in the group. Explained that this is an example of a research methodology used in social sciences and which child researchers can use.

Planning for 2018 – Group exercise – participants work with their colleagues to identify **new** activities they will introduce in their 2018 Her Choice Programme and a draft timeframe for activities taking into account what they have learned this week.

ESD, Ethiopia: incorporating Children as Researchers into their Her Choice Programme

10 children will be selected from intervention schools and ESD will train and mentor young researchers to identify research questions, collect data, analyze and interpret data. Action plan will be devised based on findings and recommendations.

DALIT, Bangladesh: incorporating a multi-generational approach to combating child marriage: The House of Peace.

Presented the plan within the annual 6 season timeframe. All generations in the village involved, very young children, children, adolescent girls and boys, parents, grandparents, professionals (health, legal). Planning takes into account limitations of implementing activities during flooding (see discussion yesterday).

CWIN, Nepal: incorporating Children as Researchers into their Her Choice Programme

For children, with children is their motto also guiding this activity. Will do activity in two areas – but first need to discuss with local authorities to get approval. Suggested children motivated to stay involved during 2-month rainy season, even at a small scale in order to maintain interest and continuity.

Bedari, Pakistan: incorporating 1) Children as Researchers and 2) Making Sanitary Pads Activities

In all three regions where Bedari implementing Her Choice. Will involve girls and women.

Concluding Comments: Mieke on behalf of Ministry

The 5-day *Linking and Learning* Forum was a considerable time investment but it was worth it. Clear that since the organizations present are all working on Child Marriage there is a common goal. As child marriage is a very complex phenomenon – it is important to come together and learn about different contexts in which it occurs and the various forces which effect it. Need to involve all levels, boys as well as girls, parents, community leaders and religious leaders as well as politicians and organization such as UN. Mieke also reiterated the importance of exploit Mieke's access to high-level policy discussions on child marriage noting that through Forums like this one, partner's experiences and insights find their ways to other levels.

Mieke also reminded everyone about the **Girls Not Bride Global Meeting**, which takes place June 2018 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (end of November 2017, there will be a call for applications to attend published) see <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/events/#2018-global-meeting> for more information

Also keep in contact with continent level networks such as the African Union, which seems to be very committed to preventing child marriage.

Finally, it is important to stay connected at national level too – “Together we will get there”.

Concluding Comments: Odilia on behalf of Her Choice Alliance

Spoke about her individual conversations with partners this week and how she was very struck by the fact that in some villages in Nepal girls are shunned and sent to a shed during menstruation. Recalls our aim this week was to celebrate successes, share doubts and failures. Odilia also reminded everyone about our Her Choice communication tools.

Formal meeting ended with a celebratory balloon flying activity with all our highlights of the meeting written on the balloons.



Follow-up Action Points from ICDI

- ICDI will circulate these notes and discussion points and list of participants and their emails, notes are primarily meant for the participants.
- We will circulate share link to documentary about child marriage and climate change.
- Extra funds for Sports for Girls available via Dutch and other embassies. Partners also encouraged to seek funding from Amplify Change.
- Use the evidence in research report by International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) in June 2017 titled 'The economic impact of child marriage' in lobbying and advocacy. <http://www.costsofchildmarriage.org/>. Report shows that child marriage will cost trillions of dollars to the poor and developing countries in coming years. It will have negative effect on ministries of population, health and education.
- ICDI will consider organizing online experience sharing meetings with partners implementing children as researchers in 2018.





HER
CHOICE

HER CHOICE is an alliance of four Netherlands-based organisations: Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland (lead organisation), The Hunger Project, International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and the University of Amsterdam.

These organisations combine their efforts with 27 local partner organisations to create child marriage –free communities in eleven countries.

The programme runs from January 2016 to December 2020 and is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

