

Children Lead a Powerful Movement for Girls' Dreams and Marriage at the Right Time in Life

By Sangeeta Shrestha, Director WAWCAS Nepal and Founder.

A powerful and inspiring event under the theme

*“Every Girl Child Can Dream of a Marriage at the Right Time in Life,
Further Education, and Career Development”*

was successfully held on 14 March 2026, bringing together more than three thousand children and young people in the age of 10 -19 years along with partner organizations in a united call for the rights and future of girls.



This event was not just a one-day gathering. It was the result of a two-year long Slisha WAWCAS programme-led movement in collaboration with partner organizations. Through a series of Training of Trainers (TOT) programmes, all concepts and approaches were developed and led by Slisha WAWCAS. Working in partnerships has not always been easy, but it has been essential. Without collaboration, reaching such a large number of children would not have been possible.

Continuous coordination meetings and strong mutual trust ensured that partners embraced the program with commitment and shared ownership.

At its core, the initiative recognizes that every girl deserves the opportunity to realize her full potential - free from early marriage, gender discrimination, and socio-economic barriers. The program/event created a unique platform where children themselves led conversations about their dreams, challenges, and future.

What made the event truly remarkable was its child-centered leadership. The entire program was chaired by a child participant, and the stage was given primarily to children representing different partner organizations. Their voices, ideas, and commitments shaped the discussions and outcomes, demonstrating the strength and clarity children bring when given the opportunity to lead.



The spirit of collective ownership was strongly emphasized throughout the event:

"This initiative is not only Slisha's WAWCAS Program - it belongs to all of us."

Nearly 50 trained volunteers from higher secondary schools played a vital role in facilitating the event. Their journey itself was transformational. Initially, many of them were too afraid even to

introduce themselves. Recognizing this, a safe and supportive environment was created where fear was openly discussed. By identifying the root causes of their hesitation, they were encouraged to overcome it. Gradually, they opened up, engaged actively, and became confident facilitators - an inspiring transformation in itself.

Inspiring Purpose for Children

The program aimed to inspire, empower, and equip the children and young people with knowledge, confidence, and practical steps toward achieving their dreams. By the end of the event, each participant carried four strong commitments:

- **Believe:** “My dreams are valid.”
- **Know:** At least one concrete path to overcome barriers through education, skills, and support
- **Commit:** One action they will take after the event
- **Pride:** Understanding that their actions can shape a better future for the next generation



A Rally of Determination

The event began with an energetic cycle rally led by children, carrying powerful slogans advocating for girls' education, timely marriage, and equal opportunities. The rally captured public attention and set a strong and inspiring tone for the day.

Following the rally, participants were divided into three age-based zones to ensure meaningful and age-appropriate discussions:

- Zone A: 10 - 12 years
- Zone B: 13 - 15 years
- Zone C: 16 - 19 years

The formal inauguration was conducted by the Chairperson along with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, reflecting strong support from local leadership.

Voices of Confidence

One of the most powerful moments of the event was the collective call-and-response session:

Facilitator/Master of Ceremony(MC): "Who owns your future?"

Children: "I DO!"

Facilitator/MC: "What do we break?"

Children: "BARRIERS!"

Facilitator/MC: "What do we build?"

Girls: "OUR FUTURE!"

Facilitator/MC: "Girls are..."

Children: "POWERFUL!"

The atmosphere echoed with confidence and determination as thousands of children raised their voices together.

Transformational Group Discussions

Children participated in small group discussions of 20 - 25 members, guided by trained facilitators and volunteers. These sessions created safe spaces for honest reflection and dialogue.

They explored key questions such as:

- What barriers do girls and boys face in our community?
- What stops me personally from achieving my dreams?
- Who can support me?
- What is one step I can take this year?

Each group later presented their insights, offering thoughtful ideas and practical solutions to overcome challenges and support girls' education and aspirations.



Boys as Allies

A dedicated session with boys focused on their role in supporting girls and promoting equality. Boys openly discussed behaviors and attitudes that need to change, showing a strong willingness to become allies in building a respectful and supportive society.

Celebrating Talent and Expression

The event also celebrated creativity through drama and dance performances. These powerful expressions highlighted critical issues such as child marriage, gender discrimination, and the importance of education, leaving a lasting impact on the audience.



A Collective Promise for the Future

The program concluded with a powerful pledge. Thousands of children stood together, raising their hands or placing them over their hearts, and committed:

"Today, I promise:

I believe in myself and my dreams.

I know my rights and my worth.

I will continue my education and learning.

I will not marry at an early age, nor will I allow others to do so.

I will speak up against discrimination and violence.

I will support other girls to rise with me.

I will take at least one step toward my dream this year."

The event closed with a deeply inspiring message:

“Together we can dream stronger, and together we will succeed better.”

Financial Contribution and Collaboration

The successful organization of this large-scale event was made possible through strong collaboration and shared responsibility among stakeholders:

- **Gujara Municipality:** Provided the tent and sound system
- **RDC:** Supported with banners and ID cards
- **Slisha / WAWCAS:** Managed and paid for all training of the volunteers, educational materials, wristbands, tiffin for all participants and transportation for own children and one of the other partner’s children
- **Partner Organizations and Others:** Covered transportation costs for participating their own participating children
- **Shree Namuna Higher Secondary School:** Provide School ground for the event

This shared contribution reflects the true spirit of partnership and collective commitment behind the movement.

Through the voices, ideas, and commitments of children, the event delivered a powerful message to the community: when children are empowered to speak and lead, they become the strongest advocates for a just, equal, and hopeful future.



The success of this event has been made possible through the unwavering support of the entire WAWCAS team, including members from Lamjung, Tanahun, and Kathmandu. Similarly, the WAWCAS team in Rautahat has been diligently working day and night in preparation. Mahesh Kumar Basnet, Program Manager, and I have been actively involved since March 9, 2026. This achievement is a testament to the collective effort of our team, including Nina, who has been providing consistent support from Denmark. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved - thank you for your dedication and commitment!

Warm Regards

Sangeeta

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