



# Case study: WOREC's SNEHA initiative delivers women-centric disaster relief across Nepal and centres youth leadership to end child marriage in disaster-affected settings

## The SNEHA initiative

The SNEHA initiative was set up by The Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) in Nepal in 2008 and has since engaged in active disaster response across the country. In 2022, an earthquake affected districts in the Sudur-paschim province, resulting in loss of lives and livelihoods. In response, the SNEHA initiative – which means “love” and “affection” in Nepali – set up women-friendly spaces to provide critical services and supplies.

WOREC's overall approach **centres the needs and rights of youth advocates** in their community.



PICTURED: A session conducted by youth peer facilitators at a women-friendly space in Gaumul. Photo: WOREC

## How the SNEHA works

SNEHA provides services – including psychosocial services and referrals, and food, shelter and essential supplies – through **safe spaces**. Here, girls and women can also exercise freedom of expression, experience dignity, safety, love, care and support, learn to build resilience from their own experiences, and challenge unequal power.

Young people – both girls and boys – identify issues of concern in their communities, and these issues set the agenda for advocacy with various actors. This approach to **youth leadership and community-led agenda-setting** has supported girls to strengthen their agency and self-identify as changemakers.

Youth advocates have identified child marriage as a major risk, and WOREC has held sessions with girls and boys – facilitated by youth peer facilitators – to further support efforts to end child marriage. Youth facilitators conducted **awareness raising** and worked actively to **refer child marriage cases to legal bodies** like judicial committees and the police.

## Results and implications

The SNEHA and other WOREC initiatives have had significant impacts on child marriage and early pregnancies, including reduced prevalence. The story of Gita Bohara illustrates this success [name changed]:

*Gita, a 17-year-old girl from Gaumul Rural Municipality, belonged to an earthquake-affected family, and her family was struggling to sustain their livelihood. During this time, Gita fell in love with a boy from the Dalit community. When Gita's parents discovered the relationship, they began to physically and mentally abuse her. In response, the couple planned to marry without telling their parents.*

*The parents discovered their plan and informed the police, who arrested the couple. More than 50 people were at the Area Police Office during the process, creating additional psychosocial risks and security threats for the couple.*

*Youth leaders referred Gita to WOREC's women-friendly spaces. Here, Gita accessed psychosocial counselling and information on the importance of education and the negative impacts of child marriage. The counsellors also provided psychosocial support to both of her parents, so they could support her as she continues her education.*

Since donor funding ceased, WOREC has engaged with municipal authorities, advocating for policy formulation and implementation on child marriage and gender-based violence, and highlighting **the importance of sustaining women's safe spaces and psychosocial counselling services.**

As a result, one municipality – Gaumul, Bajura – has funded and is operating a women-friendly space, acknowledging the importance of sustainability of GBV response services in the disaster recovery phase.