Striving for Respect: Male Youths’ Transition to Adulthood

Case Studies from Nepal and Sri Lanka

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### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AYON</td>
<td>Association of Youth Organizations in Nepal</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Constituent Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency (US Government)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Peace Agreement</td>
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<td>CPN-UML</td>
<td>Community Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist-Leninist</td>
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<td>CSW</td>
<td>Commission on the Status of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEVS</td>
<td>Graduate Program in Development Studies, Kathmandu University</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (UK Government)</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>GWU</td>
<td>George Washington University</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>ICG</td>
<td>International Crisis Group</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labor Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTI</td>
<td>Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex</td>
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<td>LTTE</td>
<td>Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>Nepali Army</td>
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<td>NC</td>
<td>Nepali Congress</td>
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<td>NYP</td>
<td>National Youth Policy</td>
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<td>NYSC</td>
<td>National Youth Services Council</td>
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<td>PLA</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCPN-M</td>
<td>United Communist Party Nepal - Maoist</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDMF</td>
<td>United Democratic Madhesi Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village Development Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>YEN</td>
<td>Youth Employment Network</td>
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Executive Summary

To date there has been a gap in the understanding of the challenges faced by male youth in South Asia. Male youth are often overlooked in research, particularly gender research which focuses largely on women and girls. To gain a greater understanding of the current experiences of male youth in Nepal and Sri Lanka, this cross-generational study explores the definition of “youth” in each context and the landscape facing male youth including expectations, aspirations, and the barriers and opportunities facing them today.

The study collected qualitative data through individual interviews, focus group discussions, and meetings with experts in the field and practitioners, totaling 131 interviewees in Nepal and 114 in Sri Lanka. Interviewees included individuals 18-85, males and females with interviews conducted in urban, semi-urban and rural locations.

Sri Lanka and Nepal have different definitions of youth. In Nepal, youth is a largely age-defined concept, whereas youth in Sri Lanka is primarily defined by activities and behaviors, though loose age brackets were still applied to this phase. In both countries the definitions of youth delineated by the government do not truly reflect the societal definition of the term. For the most part, interviewees in both countries are satisfied being youth and not rushing to be seen as adults.

The primary goal for youth in both countries is to become a respected adult in their societies. To achieve this, male youth must meet high expectations relating to education, employment, and making progress toward getting married and starting a family. While transitioning to adulthood is not seen as particularly challenging, becoming a respected adult is much more difficult. In Nepal, in addition to education and employment, one’s character, involvement in local development, and showing respect for tradition and religion are crucial to gaining this respect as well as to marriage prospects. In Sri Lanka, the primary criteria for being a respected adult are having a full-time, formal sector job and caring for one’s family, however, societal respect is augmented by marrying and having children. While youth in Sri Lanka and Nepal have high hopes for their futures, many feel frustrated with the realization that they may not be able to fulfill their aspirations.

Several barriers and opportunities face male youth today, notably political climate and unemployment in both countries and massive migration in Nepal. In addition, the brutal civil wars in both countries have had varying degrees of impact on the lives and opportunities of many youth, their families, and communities.

While society presents youth with many challenges, youth in turn play key roles in transforming and improving their societies. Male youth in both Nepal and Sri Lanka have the potential to positively contribute to their country’s economic and social development. They are increasingly educated, aware, and connected. However, those that cannot access constructive outlets in terms of jobs and social engagement are becoming increasingly frustrated and are choosing alternate routes such as political violence, apathy or migration abroad. Providing male youth with greater opportunities to effect positive change in their communities, voice their frustrations and hopes, expand the possibilities for what constitutes respected work into new industries, and meet their economic and educational aspirations is crucial to their ability to be this positive force.
Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding for policymakers and service providers of the expectations placed on male youth, their aspirations, and society’s impacts on male youth in Nepal and Sri Lanka from a cross generational perspective. To provide this perspective, this study explores the definition of “youth” in each context and the landscape facing male youth. This research focuses on male youth as a key sub-section of post-conflict societies, as this demographic can play a critical role in societal, political, and economic change.

Research Objectives

This research focuses on the following areas:

I. **Definition of Youth**
   What characteristics does society see as defining male youth? How does this compare with the government’s conceptualization of youth? What freedoms and responsibilities do male youth have? When and how does a male youth transition into adulthood? What social requirements do youth need to fulfill or achieve progress on to successfully transition to adulthood?

II. **Societal and Familial Expectations for Male Youth**
   What are society’s expectations for male youth? How are these expectations different from those of adult males? What activities are male youth expected to engage in? Are these societal and familial expectations different depending on location, ethnicity, religion, etc?

III. **Self-Expectations and Aspirations of Male Youth**
   What do male youth aspire to achieve? What do male youth in Sri Lanka and Nepal expect their future to hold? How are these self-expectations and aspirations different? Do male youth agree with these social expectations? Is there a difference between their aspirations and the realistic self-expectations?

IV. **Society’s Impact on Youth**
   How is society impacting male youths’ livelihoods? How is society causing and/or impacting the gap between the expectations and reality for male youth? How do society’s cultural/ethnic/religious traditions impact male youth? How do the recent conflicts affect the perceptions of different generations, including youth? How is the advent of technology influencing youth?

V. **The Impacts of Male Youth on Society**
   How are male youth impacting their society? Are they doing so in a positive, negative or neutral way?

Significance of the Study

The majority of gender-related research has focused on women and girls, overlooking the role of male youth in society. There has been a general lack of understanding and attention placed on
male youth in international development literature, policy, and programming. When male youth are discussed in literature they are often presented in a negative manner, stereotyped as violent, and capable of producing negative impacts on society. This report seeks to gather qualitative data about the perceptions and reality of male youths’ lives in Nepal and Sri Lanka. It further seeks to gather a cross-generational understanding of how these have changed given the large changes both countries have faced in recent years.

This study further looked to see whether there was a rigid process for transition from childhood to adulthood or if youth in these countries experienced a liminal phase of transition and flexibility between childhood and adulthood. Additionally, the study explores the importance of gender relations and how they have progressed over time.

Finally, this study seeks to draw conclusions on the impacts that male youth have on the society around them. Male youths’ future aspirations and their ability to achieve them have a strong impact on themselves and their society. The gap between their expectations and their reality directly relates to their overall hopes and frustrations, as well as their actions. In both Nepal and Sri Lanka, civil conflict has just ended, and male youth are now ready to take advantage of greater peace and security by moving forward with their lives. But are they able to?

**Overall Research Design**

Qualitative data was collected through individual interviews, focus group discussions and meetings with key informants, practitioners, and experts in the field. To gather a range of perspectives on the issue, the interviewees and focus group participants included both males and females as well as youth and individuals one and two generations older. The design research further called for a range of socio-economic, educational, religious, and ethnic backgrounds to represent the diversity found in each country.

Going into this study the age definition of youth was left as an open question to be defined by the respondents. However, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child’s definitions and research implications, the research team defined those under 18 as children and only spoke with individuals 18 and older. As a qualitative study conducted under a limited time frame it is important to recognize that these findings represent a snapshot of the realities for the individuals interviewed as a reflection of their communities and cannot be broadly generalized to all male youth throughout Nepal or Sri Lanka.

**Report Structure**

The report is divided into six sections:

SECTION ONE provides an overview of the report, stating the purpose and significance of the study, and providing a brief description of the overall research design and the structure of the report.

SECTION TWO provides a background of findings from the existing literature, which includes: the international spotlight on youth issues; the youth experience in South Asia; the international frameworks on gender; and an overview of male-focused literature.
SECTION THREE provides a **comparison of the different country contexts** including historical and current political, economic and social indicators.

SECTION FOUR presents a **detailed report on findings from the field research conducted in Nepal**, which covers: the methodology of the research in Nepal; the definition of youth in Nepal; and the landscape facing male youth today in Nepal.

SECTION FIVE presents a **detailed report on findings from the field research conducted in Sri Lanka**, which covers: the methodology of the research in Sri Lanka; the definition of youth in Sri Lanka; and the landscape facing male youth today in Sri Lanka.

SECTION SIX presents a **summary of the key findings of the research studies in Nepal and Sri Lanka** including similarities and differences between the two very different countries.

Finally, the APPENDIX contains the biographical data form, the questionnaire used in semi-structured interviews, the list of key informants met during the research study, and the works cited.

**Background on Youth and Male-Focused Literature**

Youth today play an integral role in the development of their societies. A significant proportion of the world’s population is comprised of youth. According to the United Nations Population Fund, the world now has the largest youth cohort in history with almost half of the world’s 7 billion people under the age of 24 (UNFPA 2011). Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations increasingly focus their efforts on youth. Engaging youth in decision-making to formulate better policies and programs is critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The report “Youth and the Millennium Development Goals” states that while youth have greater opportunities to participate in discussions on policy formulation, most countries do not have specific structures in place for effective youth participation and that governments rarely consult young people on matters affecting their lives, including poverty reduction strategy efforts (UN 2005).

Across the globe, youth are often key actors in situations of conflict and political struggle. The Arab Spring of 2011, during which youth protested against repressive political regimes and fought for greater economic opportunities, has been attributed to youths’ frustration with high levels of unemployment and inequality in the Middle East and North Africa region (ILO 2011). During the Nepalese Civil War, a conflict that officially came to an end on 21 November 2006, youth were a driving force behind many uprisings. Youth involvement in the conflict centered on issues of inequality, discrimination, and unemployment (British Council 2011). The conflict in Nepal had adverse impacts on youth, compelling many young people to either join the Maoist insurgency or flee their communities (UNDP 2006).

Looking to gender, to date, there has been insufficient attention given to the male component of gender, as there is a widespread tendency to conflate gender with women (World Bank 2006). However, gender is relational and refers not simply to females or males, but to the relationship between them. Specifically, gender refers to the socially constructed roles and relationships, values, and relative power and influence that society ascribes to males and females (USAID
2007). Conflict-afflicted societies across the world have shown that gender is an important variable to take into account as male identities can be used and manipulated to promote violent action (World Bank 2006). To this point, many studies have stressed the importance of mainstreaming gender in conflict analysis.

Since the 1980s, to begin to address the severe inequalities facing women, the international community has focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Increasingly however, examining the male side of gender has also gained prominence. For example, as a result of greater recognition of the importance of including men and boys in promoting gender equality, international and national laws have evolved to require equal responsibilities and rights between men and women in all spheres of life, whether as caretakers of children, promoters of reproductive health, or as supporters working with women against gender-based violence. In 2004 and 2009, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held special sessions devoted to male involvement in achieving gender equality. The CSW encouraged governments to implement legislation to reduce occupational sex segregation, grant parental leave and flexible work arrangements, and promote greater male involvement in childcare and support (Plan International 2011).

In many regions, including South Asia, men are expected to earn an income and provide for their families financially. Barker and Pawlak indicate that due to global trends, the role of the male ‘breadwinner’ may no longer be secure (Barker and Pawlak 2011). They note that the concept of adult manhood is defined, perhaps universally, by societies, institutions, and individuals in terms of the role of provider, breadwinner or working man. In many parts of the world, labor markets are undergoing extensive changes and employees in certain industries are struggling to adapt. New economic realities may present serious challenges for men in some cultures where seeking training for new skills as an adult can be perceived as a threat to their masculinity (Barker and Pawlak 2011). For some men, the loss of status caused by unemployment and lower earning potential drove them into depression and into increasingly unhealthy lifestyle activities such as drinking, drug abuse, and risky and violent behavior (Rubin and Somach 2010).

In addition to finding a job, getting married is another key expectation that young men face as they transition to adulthood. In many societies, men are expected to fulfill certain requirements prior to getting married. These achievements include being financially stable, owning a home, and getting an education. However, challenges associated with obtaining societal requirements make it difficult for male youth to secure housing. For young men, these obstacles contribute to a delayed transition to adulthood (Sommers and Uvin 2011). Marital postponements have become increasingly necessary, as both men and women must wait longer to accumulate the resources required to set up an independent household (De Silva 2000).

In spite of the increasing attention given to the male side of gender, there remains a paucity of research on masculinity and male gender roles and a lack of targeted gender programming. As stated by Somach, “it is abundantly clear that there is too little understanding about where men fit into the gender equation”, and that “what we do understand...
is that there are a variety of real and perceived threats to the male role and masculinity” (Somach 2011, p.1, 9). In his book, *Dying to Be Men: Youth, Masculinity, and Social Exclusion*, Barker observes that there are many reasons for focusing on young men and their lack of access to income, and their limited ability to improve their situations (Barker 2005). According to Barker, violence among young men may be caused by their awareness of the limitations to their opportunities (Barker 2005).

Increasingly, international organizations, NGOs, and governments have recognized the importance of engaging youth and promoting youth participation. Throughout the world, youth play pivotal roles in transforming their societies, as evidenced by youths’ involvement in political protests, conflict, and changes in social norms and expectations. Additionally, there has been a greater focus on the male component, or the “other half”, of gender. To date, most research on gender has centered on women. However, as men and boys are critical to achieving gender equality, understanding the challenges and opportunities that they face is also essential.

**Key Points**

- Across the globe, youth are actively transforming their societies.
- To date, research on male gender roles and the challenges that male youth face has been limited.
- Increasingly, international organizations pay more attention to the male side of gender as boys and men are critical to promoting gender equality and developing their countries.

**Different Country Contexts**

Examining the different country contexts in Nepal and Sri Lanka is critical to understanding the challenges and opportunities that youth in those countries face as well as understanding the differences to be expected between the countries. Sri Lanka is a middle-income country of approximately 21 million people (U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Sri Lanka” 2011). Nepal is a low-income country with a population of around 29 million (World Bank, “Data-Nepal”). High levels of ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity are found in both countries. In Nepal, caste is a major determinant of not only one’s identity, but also social status and opportunities. According to the 2001 Census, the main caste and ethnic groups in Nepal include Brahman/Chhetri, Tarai/ Madhesi, and Dalits (Bennett et al. 2008). Regarding religion, approximately 81 percent of the population in Nepal is Hindu, while Buddhists account for just under 11 percent and Muslims make up around 4 percent of the population. Linguistically, although Nepali is the country’s official language, other widely spoken languages include Maithali, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Tamang, and Newar (CIA 2012).

In Sri Lanka, the majority of the population strongly self-identifies along ethnic and religious divisions (Sriskandarajah 2005). According to the most recent census in 2001, there are six official ethnic groups: Sinhalese (82 percent), Sri Lanka Tamil (4.3 percent), Indian Tamil (5.1 percent), Sri Lankan Moors (referred to as Muslims in this report) (7.9 percent), Burgher (0.02 percent) and Malay (0.3 percent) (Department of Census and Planning 2001). Ethnic divisions are further augmented by geographical separation. The Sinhalese population is located primarily
in the southern and western portions of the country, whereas the Tamil population is primarily in the north and eastern provinces. Religious divisions are also concurrent with ethnic divisions. The Sinhalese population is largely Buddhist; the Tamil population is largely Hindu; and the Moors account for the Muslim population. The Christian minority population is a combination of Sri Lankans of Sinhalese and Tamil ethnicities (Department of Census and Planning 2001). In addition to ethnic, religious, and geographical divisions, there are two official languages in Sri Lanka: Sinhala, which is spoken by 81 percent of the population and Tamil, spoken by 14.9 percent of the population.

Of central importance to the development and current situation of both countries are the brutal civil wars that each experienced. Nepal’s ten-year civil war between the Maoist rebels and the government ended in 2006 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). In the aftermath of the war, Nepal has experienced significant transformations, especially with regard to its political system. The monarchy was abolished and the peace agreement outlined a process for the establishment of a constituent assembly, a body tasked with drafting a new constitution. Today, the Maoists make up the largest party in the constituent assembly. The CPA also included provisions to address issues of disarmament, demobilization, and integration of the former Maoist combatants into the Nepali Army.

One of the main priorities of the CPA was to make Nepal’s political system more inclusive and democratic. To that end, political parties in Nepal pledged to address various grievances faced by ethnic groups that historically faced marginalization such as the Dalits and Madhesis as well as to end ethnic, linguistic, gender, cultural, religious, and regional discrimination (ICG, “Nepal’s Peace Agreement” 2006). Nepal’s political system has made significant progress in providing greater political influence and power to a diverse group of individuals. According to a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), the constituent assembly is a “remarkably inclusive body, far more representative of Nepal’s caste, ethnic, religious and regional diversity than any past parliament. One third of its members are women, catapulting the country into regional leadership on gender representation. Thanks largely to the [proportional electoral system], no fewer than 25 parties have secured constituent assembly seats, reflecting a kaleidoscope of ideological and regional or community specific agendas” (ICG, “Nepal’s Election” 2008). With respect to issues of reconciliation and rights, the CPA called for the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission as well as an end to impunity over human rights violations (ICG, “Nepal: Peace and Justice” 2010).

In contrast to Nepal, the government of Sri Lanka has not made an effort to address the grievances of marginalized ethnic groups that helped fuel the civil war. While the civil war in Nepal concluded with both parties to the conflict coming to an agreement, the government’s killing of the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) marked the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka. In post-conflict Sri Lanka, the government has not addressed issues of reconciliation and accountability. Marginalized groups such as Tamils and Muslims continue to have little decision-making power in the government (ICG, “Sri Lanka: A Bitter Peace” 2010). The government’s lack of initiative to make the country’s political system more inclusive was reflected in a May 2009 resolution proposed by the Sri Lankan government at the United Nations
Human Rights Council which lauded the government for defeating the Tamil Tigers and condemned the LTTE for using civilians as human shields (Philp 2009).

In addition to major differences in the outcomes of the civil wars, the two countries also face dramatically distinct economic situations. On a macroeconomic level, Sri Lanka has fared much better than Nepal. GNI per capita for the entire South Asia region in 2010 is US$1,176. The figures for Sri Lanka and Nepal are US$2,240 and $490, respectively. Similarly, Sri Lanka’s GDP grew by 8 percent in 2010; the respective figure for Nepal was only 4.6 percent. Additionally, while reducing poverty is a major concern for both countries, Nepal suffers from much higher levels of poverty than Sri Lanka. Nine percent of the population lives below the poverty line in Sri Lanka. In Nepal, this figure is 31 percent (World Bank, “Sri Lanka at a Glance” 2012; World Bank, “Nepal at a Glance” 2012). Another major challenge that Sri Lanka and Nepal face is youth unemployment. While unemployment levels in Sri Lanka have declined considerably over the past decade, nearly 80 percent of all unemployed individuals in 2006 were youth. According to the World Bank, Sri Lanka’s youth unemployment rate in 2006—at nearly 16.8 percent—was nearly eight times that of the adult unemployment rate of 1.2 percent (World Bank 2010). A report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) notes that youth unemployment in urban areas, where many youth go in search of jobs, is extremely high (16 percent). Additionally, “approximately 46 percent of young people aged 20-24 are highly underutilized and remain outside the formal labor force” (British Council 2011, p.14). Each year, about 300,000 Nepalese youth enter the labor market (ILO 2008) and face limited employment prospects.

Other ways in which Nepal and Sri Lanka differ are illustrated by a number of social indicators. According to the United Nation’s Human Development Index (HDI), Nepal fares worse than Sri Lanka on all three of these indicators including life expectancy, GNI per capita, and education. Out of 187 countries, Nepal and Sri Lanka ranked 157 and 97, respectively (UNDP, “Sri Lanka Country Profile”; UNDP, “Nepal Country Profile”).

Disparities in educational attainment between the two countries are due largely to historical differences in education policy and investment. In Sri Lanka the government has invested substantially in social services, providing education free of charge to its citizens from primary to tertiary levels. The country has a high literacy rate with very few uneducated youth. Additionally, the percentage of female youth with no education is nearly identical to that of male youth. According to the World Bank, Sri Lanka is on track to achieve the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to primary education enrollment and completion rates and gender equity ratios of 100 percent in primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary education (World Bank 2010; WHO, “Fact Sheet: Sri Lanka” 2007). In contrast, in Nepal, while literacy of adolescents is
increasing, the educational attainment of young people is still low. Additionally, while the gender disparity in educational attainment is shrinking, there is still a significant gap between the literacy levels of boys and girls. The government of Nepal adopted the policy of free education for all children through the seventh grade in 1990 (WHO, “Fact Sheet: Nepal” 2007). In post-conflict Nepal, the government has increasingly emphasized the importance of improving access to education and quality of education (ibid).

Another area of concern for both countries, but a more severe problem in Nepal, is gender inequality, a problematic issue for the entire South Asia region. The UNDP’s Gender Inequality Index assesses disparities in terms of opportunities, health outcomes, and risks between men and women. The Gender Inequality Index is comprised of five indicators, including maternal mortality, adolescent fertility, representation in parliament, educational attainment, and labor force participation. In 2011, Nepal ranked 113 and Sri Lanka ranked 74 out of a total of 187 countries (UNDP 2011).

Besides gender inequality, another challenge that must be addressed by both countries is child marriage. Child marriage leads to the removal of girls from school and limits their opportunities to participate in the public life of their communities. Additionally, child marriage is associated with numerous health risks, including pregnancy-related deaths and increased vulnerability to HIV (International Planned Parenthood Federation 2006; UNICEF, 2006). Moreover, the consequences of child marriage extend beyond the individual children affected. Studies have shown that infant mortality among children of very young mothers is almost two times higher than among those of older peers (UNICEF, “Early Marriage in South Asia”). Child marriage is much more common in Nepal than in Sri Lanka. Between 2000 and 2009 the percentage of women aged 20-24 married or in union before age 18 was 51 percent in Nepal and 12 percent in Sri Lanka (UNICEF 2011). According to UNICEF child marriage is especially problematic in South Asia compared to other regions (UNICEF 2006).

Although both Nepal and Sri Lanka recently emerged from civil wars, it is important understand their distinct differences. Nepal and Sri Lanka face markedly distinct political, social, and economic realities today all of which impact the experiences of male youth and their interactions with their families and societies.

**Key Points**
- Nepal and Sri Lanka are ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse.
- Although both countries experienced civil wars, the political outcomes of the conflict are vastly different.
- Nepal and Sri Lanka are also characterized by stark differences in economic and social conditions.
Case Study: Male Youth in Nepal
Alexandra Burrall and Kristen Tymeson, with Rekha Bhandari and Reshma Joshi

Introduction

A focus on male youth in Nepal is both timely and important. Nepal has a very large youth population that will not only form the future of Nepal but also has a significant impact on the country today. Additionally, male youth form the core of Nepal’s political groups, which frame many of the daily realities for Nepalis. However, when asked about challenges for male youth in Nepal, one youth organization responded, “To be very honest, in Nepal today we don’t talk much about males. It is hard to (say) what are the problems for male youth – there hasn’t been that much research on it.”

Nepal has a young population, which includes a large youth population. The median age is 21.6 years old, with more than 7 million Nepalis aged 15 to 29 – roughly a quarter of the population (CIA 2012; British Council and AYON 2011). Adolescents (10-19 years of age) make up 23 percent of the population and 34.6 percent are under the age of 18 (UNICEF 2012). Over the past decade, Nepal has seen significant changes in health and family size, which have resulted in rapidly changing demographics. Examples of these changes include a sharp decline in the fertility rate, from 5.1 children per woman in 1986 to 2.6 children in 2010, with both urban and rural areas experiencing this decrease (Parashar 2012). Life expectancy has also increased greatly, from only 43.2 years in 1971 and 51.6 years in 1986 to 68.4 years in 2010 (World Bank 2012).

These factors, combined with high levels of external migration, bring into question whether it is accurate to use the term “youth bulge” when describing Nepal. Regardless, the large youth population is an important consideration for development in the country. In regard to Nepal’s efforts to support this group, the Ministry of Youth and Sports released a National Youth Policy in 2010, which discusses 17 policy areas related to youth (Ministry of Youth and Sports 2010). This is an important policy development, however, the policy lacks an implementation plan and an allocated budget. The Ministry of Youth and Sports only received 0.19 percent of the total 2011 budget for government expenses (Nepali Sports 2010). Furthermore, of the Ministry of Youth and Sports’ 2011 budget, 79 percent was allocated for the National Sports Council, with the primary goal of attracting youth to sports (Republica 2010).

Additionally, in Nepal the concept of “youth” is a heavily politicized term. This is largely because, throughout Nepal’s recent turbulent history, youth have been at the center of political action – both fomenting conflict and building peace. During the decade-long conflict between the Maoists and the government, youth were a driving force that focused society’s attention on issues of inequality, opportunities, and access, as well as discrimination and widespread unemployment (British Council and AYON 2011). At the same time, the conflict adversely affected many youth in Nepal, compelling thousands of youth to either join the insurgency or flee from their communities (UNDP 2006).
When the civil conflict ended in 2006, there was enormous hope that significant positive change would ensue in the “New Nepal.” Included in this change was the hope for a greater youth role and true voice in the political, economic, and social arenas. The conflict heightened people’s awareness of their rights and highlighted the severe inequalities ingrained in Nepal for centuries. These included ongoing discrimination by caste, ethnicity, gender, region, religion and sexual orientation (DFID 2011). One 24-year-old male youth in Kathmandu stated, “One of the very, very few good things about the war was that people in every nook and cranny of the country were aware of their rights – ethnic rights, minority rights. Also now villages send both girls and boys to school, that is a good result of the war.” Some improvements have been seen in addressing these inequalities, particularly in terms of educational access for formerly repressed groups such as Dalits, Madhesis, and women and girls. All of these disadvantaged populations continue to face severe challenges in Nepal. Along with this, while this research is focused on male youth, this should not diminish the importance of addressing the existing gender inequalities in Nepal.

Additionally, while there has been some progress since 2006, the country - and by extension, its male youth - are still facing major challenges. Nepal has long been one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world (U.S. Department of State 2012). Of the 26.6 million Nepalis, almost 25.2 percent are living below the national poverty line with 64.7 percent categorized by the UNDP as “multi-dimensionally poor” (Central Bureau Statistics 2011; World Bank 2012; UNDP 2012). The 2011 Human Development Index (HDI) placed the country at 157th place of 187 countries for human development indicators, which measure health, education, and standard of living (UNDP, “Nepal Country Profile”). However, it is important to note that the HDI has steadily and significantly increased from a dismal 0.242 in 1980 to 0.458 in 2011 (ibid.). The economy also has enormous challenges - Nepal has high unemployment as well as a problem with underemployment, which leaves many struggling in subsistence agriculture or searching for opportunities abroad.

However, in the past few years the hope that emerged at the end of the conflict has become stagnant, and many Nepali people wait in frustration for internal politics to allow for an economically, socially, and politically stronger Nepal. Many are frustrated with the slow progress in these areas and the overall political instability that remains in the country but must continue with their lives despite the challenges. As one male youth in Kathmandu commented, “Very, very, very few youth feel hopeful at this time. I’m a very optimistic person but I don’t know how optimistic I am at this time.”

Since the signing of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord, Nepal has been in transition. Currently the interim Constituent Assembly (CA) members are working to complete the peace agreement for the integration former People’s Liberation Army (PLA) troops into the Nepali Army and to promulgate an official Constitution, which is hoped to outline a permanent governmental structure and process for ongoing elections. Additionally, political parties put together frequent bandhs (strikes) to influence and change political decisions. Meanwhile, some groups continue to employ violent tactics used during the conflict including extortion,
kidnapping, murder, and bombings for personal economic gain. As noted in the Nepal Background Case Study of the 2011 World Development Report, “violence has gradually been adopted as a legitimate form of protest” (Thapa 2011). During and since the conflict, male youth have been portrayed as perpetrators of these violent actions. While some male youth have engaged in these activities, this violence is committed by only a small minority of male youth. Overall, however most youth are focused on their education, finding employment to provide for their families, supporting the development of their local community, fitting in with their peers, and are becoming more independent, just like many youth in South Asia and throughout the world.

Methodology

Methods

In keeping with the overall research design discussed earlier, qualitative data was collected in Nepal from March 12-30, 2012. The researchers used a combination of semi-structured individual interviews, focus group discussions, and interviews with experts and practitioners in the field. Each of the face-to-face interview sessions lasted 45-60 minutes. The large majority of interviews were translated from Nepali. Each interview included the completion of a short biographical data form. This form can be found in Appendix A. Information was gained through 77 individual interviews, 54 participants in 9 focus group discussions, and meetings with 13 practitioners and experts in the field, including 3 youth organizations.

Research Study Population and Location

To understand the perceived cross-generational changes for male youth in Nepal, the research design called for interviewees from 18 to over 50 years of age, with the largest emphasis on male youth who were 18-29 years of age. To gather a broad understanding of the expectations and realities facing male youth today, both male and female interviewees were included. Below, Figure 1 outlines the age and gender distribution of the 131 interviewees, made up of 77 individual interview participants and 54 focus group participants. Interviewees included individuals from 18-85 years of age, as well as males, females and third genders (an increasingly common name in Nepal for individuals who identify as neither gender or who choose to change between genders).

Figure 1: All Interviewees by Age and Gender
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age 18-29</th>
<th>Age 30-49</th>
<th>Age 50+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Gender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Location type was also incorporated into the research design, including urban, semi-urban and rural perspectives. Due to the limited time frame and travel limitations, research was only conducted in Kathmandu and the surrounding areas (See Figure 2). Data was collected in Kathmandu to represent the urban demographic. These interviews and focus groups were held at three universities (Tri-Chandra, Tribhuvan and Kathmandu University) representing public and private schools, two youth organizations (Youth Initiative and the Alliance for Social Dialogue), a mosque, and on the street in the neighborhoods of Baneshwor, Battisputali and Bastapur. To represent the semi-urban perspective, interviews were conducted in the towns of Bhaktapur and Chhampi (in Lalitpur District); each was approximately 1 hour outside of Kathmandu. Data was collected for rural locations in Sarikhel and Sunachuri villages in Makwanpur district – approximately 4 hours outside of Kathmandu.

**Figure 2: Map of Research Locations**

Individual interviews were conducted in each of these locations, totaling 25 interviewees in the capital of Kathmandu, 28 in semi-urban areas, and 24 in rural areas. Figures 3 & 4 below show the breakdown of individual interviewees by location.
Of the 9 focus groups, 6 were conducted with male youth in mixed youth groups in the capital, while 1 was conducted in the semi-urban town of Chhampi and the remaining 2 were done in the rural village of Sarikhet. Focus groups were between 4 and 8 people in size depending on the setting, totaling 54 participants in all. This resulted in 33 participants from rural locations, 5 from semi-urban and 16 from rural (see Figure 5 for distribution).
The focus group discussions were conducted at a youth organization, during a women’s economic collective monthly meeting and primarily in informal locations such as hillsides, in shops, and along roadsides with amenable groups. These settings were very effective for obtaining broader perspectives on the issue but were not conducive to collection of extensive personal data. Therefore the additional demographic analysis below is exclusive to the 77 individual interviewees.

Within the structured distribution of age and location, interviewees from different castes/ethnicities, educational backgrounds, religions, and employment were interviewed. In terms of caste and ethnicity, as of Nepal's 2001 Census, 15.5 percent of the Nepali population were Chhetri (Kshatriya), 12.5 percent Bahun (Brahmin), 7 percent Magar, 6.6 percent Tharu, 5.5 percent Tamang, 5.4 percent Newar and 4.2 percent Muslim. The interviewee group was largely representative of this distribution with the largest numbers of interviewees self-identifying as Chhetri, Newar and Brahmin followed by Tamangs, Dalits, Magars, Muslim and Lama. Other interviewees self-identified as Madhesi, Thakuri, Janajati, Sunuwar-Kirant and Gurung (See Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Caste/Ethnic Distribution of Individual Interviewees**

![Caste/Ethnic Distribution of Individual Interviewees](image)

Regarding education, the interviewees represented a spectrum of educational achievement as outlined below in Figure 7. Additionally, of the 42 interviewees under the age of 30, 15 were still in school. These rates represent higher educational achievement than the overall Nepali population, likely as a result of conducting several interviews at universities in Kathmandu.
Nepal’s religious breakdown as of the 2001 census was: Hindu 80.6%, Buddhist 10.7%, Muslim 4.2%, Kirant 3.6% and other 0.9%. Accordingly, the large majority of the study’s interviewees are Hindu (70%), while 16% are Buddhist and an additional 5% identified as both Hindu and Buddhist. Additional interviewees are Muslim, Christian, several that practice “all religions” and an individual that did not practice a religion.

In terms of employment, the 77 interviewees represented a variety of work experience, with 36 currently working, 7 subsistence farmers, 8 working while completing their studies, 9 exclusively students, 9 retired, and 8 unable to find work (see Figure 8 below for the percentage breakdown).

Through asking employment status, it became clear that in the Nepali context a person is only considered “employed” if they have a full-time salaried position. Therefore, those working in farming and self-owned businesses are considered “unemployed,” and self-identify as such. For clarity, researchers shifted to discussing whether an individual is working rather than their
“employment status.”

The interviews, focus groups and meetings in Kathmandu were conducted by a team of four graduate students in Development Studies, including two from George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs and two from Kathmandu University’s Graduate Program in Development Studies (DEVS). The two GWU researchers additionally conducted the research in Makwanpur district through the assistance of Plan International and local translators.

**Research Study Limitations**

While the study does include a broad variety of interviewees in terms of age, gender, location type, caste, educational attainment, and employment status, there are also some important limitations to this work. The research was conducted in the Kathmandu Valley and just south in Makwanpur District, thus the data does not represent the variety of perspectives that likely exist in the other regions of the country. However, the capital is often a draw for those seeking further education or additional opportunity. Therefore, some Kathmandu interviewees were originally from other areas of Nepal. At the same time, their capacity to migrate may also speak to their status or resources. Drawing from the capital and nearby semi-urban areas also has implications on the educational attainment, socio-economic status and employment opportunities of interviewees as compared to those that would be found in other regions. However, many citizens living in Kathmandu are severely disadvantaged. Unfortunately, these individuals proved harder to access. Further research should be conducted to understand the realities facing severely disadvantaged male youth in the capital.

Another limitation is the caste and ethnicity representation in the sample, which does not encompass the breadth of those found throughout Nepal, notably of Dalits, Madhesis, Janajatis and Muslims. Interviewees were sought from as many castes as possible, but given the sample size it is important not to extrapolate broad conclusions based on differences between responses of limited numbers a respective caste or ethnicity.

Lastly, the rural interviews were conducted in villages of Makwanpur that have received consistent and intensive development support from the NGO Plan Nepal. This support may have impacted the status and views of interviewees as compared to those in rural areas that have not received such support.

**Key Points**

- 131 individuals were interviewed for this qualitative research including 77 individual interviews and 9 focus group discussions comprised of 54 participants.
- Interviewees included individuals from 18-85 year of age to contribute a cross generational perspective
- Interviews were conducted in urban, semi-urban and rural locations and were sought from all genders, socio-economic, educational, caste, ethnic and religious backgrounds
- Due to bandhs during the trip, research could only be conducted in the capital and within a few hours drive of Kathmandu, which is a notable research limitation.
Definition of Youth

The first step toward understanding issues facing male youth is to determine how those in Nepal define youth. In Nepal, the government National Youth Policy defines youth as men, women and third gender people who are between 16-40 years of age (National Youth Policy 2010). However, from the individual interviews, focus group discussions, and information from key informants, the definition for Nepali’s proves to be much more complex than that suggests.

As suggested by the policy, the term “youth” is in large part an age-defined term in Nepal. The majority of interviewees approximate male youth to be between 18 and 32 years of age. The range of responses included a lower age limit of 16-20 years of age for youth with 25-40 years of age as the maximum. There is no specific accomplishment or action that defines one as a man, as is the case in some cultures. This was underscored by interviewees in their mid 20s who were married with children but that still identified as youth. Slight differences in age definition were seen by location, with those in the rural areas having more responsibility at a younger age, both in terms of earlier marriages and economic responsibilities. For these reasons, rural male youth may be expected to be adults sooner than urban youth, although this has changed greatly in the last few decades. In a semi-urban location visited, interviewees said that a male used to become an adult at age 15 or 16 – but that now 25 is the youngest age at which a male would be seen as an adult. Some interviewees, particularly elderly individuals, defined youth strictly as a mental state and felt they were very much still youth regardless of their old age.

Interviewees who identify closely with political parties followed the government definition that youth are 16-40 years of age. However, other interviewees that were more critical of the government policy stated that the extended definition of youth from 16-40 years old was a political tool used so older politicians could still be termed “youth” leaders – a heavily loaded positive quality in Nepali politics. Many opponents of this age extension also mentioned that entire families could be seen as “youth,” particularly for families with parents in the upper thirties and children in their upper teens. Several of the organizations working on youth issues suggested that if the definition continues to include such a broad age group, programs directed to youth should be further sub-divided into smaller age brackets that could more specifically target needs for those individuals. Interviewees cited the family system of continuing to live with parents and cultural history in Nepal as reasons why the age range for youth is longer in Nepal than in other countries or in other definitions. The definition for male adults was most often contingent on the youth definition – if interviewees said that youth were 18-30 years of age, then adults were over 30, most stating that adulthood begins between 30 and 40. Age continued to be the primary factor of differentiation from youth. Once this is reached, however, different behaviors are expected and attributed to adults. Overall, male adults are those that must now primarily focus on meeting their family responsibilities.

There are, however, a variety of opinions on the traits, capabilities, and behaviors of a male youth as opposed to a man. Many interviewees suggest that youth are the only group that can change society for the better, citing

“Youth are still very free, still fearless, will take chances.”
- Male adult (Age 52), Kathmandu
characteristics that are considered traits of youth, such as being youthful, energetic, hopeful, and with the potential to tackle various societal challenges. There was also a difference noted in maturity and responsibility. A 32-year-old female adult in Bhaktapur stated, “There is more advantage of being a youth than an adult as youth have less responsibility, can live a free life. An adult life is more stressful.” Many interviewees particularly in rural locations described adults as set in their ways, past their prime, and dependent on others for basic needs to the point that “adult” seemed almost interchangeable for “elderly.” However, others pointed to the advantages of being an adult in terms of trust, support, respect and independence. An older man in Kathmandu with two youth sons stated, “Both have advantages. Adults have experience and get support, trust and praise from family and society but youth have more energy.”

Additionally, given the largely age-focused definition of youth, interviewees are not concerned that male youth will achieve adulthood - it will come with age. Due to the increased responsibility that accompanies and in many ways defines adulthood, youth interviewees were in no rush to be seen as adults but rather were overall pleased to be youth.

**Key Points**

- Youth is a largely age-defined phase in Nepal that lasts from approximately 18-32 years of age.
- Nepal’s National Youth Policy defines youth as those 16-40 years of age.
- There is no clear dividing line between youth and adulthood for males in Nepal, nor any specific accomplishment that demarcates one as a man.
- Youth are in no rush to become adults

**Current Landscape for Male Youth**

While “achieving manhood” is an eventuality of little concern in Nepal, becoming a respected man is a much more challenging goal, and one of great importance to youth, their families, their potential spouses and their families, and society overall. Throughout Nepal, the importance of social status and respect from society is deeply ingrained. To be respectable, male youth must be striving for future goals that are seen as worthy by society and their family. Behaviors and accomplishments necessary to achieve this respect frame the primary expectations of families and society for male youth, as well as the self-expectations of youth. The major expectations for male youth in Nepal revolve around education, employment, local development, and progress towards marriage and family.

However, there is a large gap currently found in the aspirations of male youth and their families, and their current ability to achieve their aspirations and meet these expectations. Youth overall felt that the political instability in the country was the primary barrier to their achievement of their aspirations, but that there were also a variety of problems because they are in the career development phase, but in this time (there is) the political instability, the country is having a problem of economic crisis and the education system of Nepal is also a problem.”
- Female Youth (Age 24), Kathmandu

“Adults have more benefits – they are more established, make own decisions, get good support from their family.”
- Female Youth (Age 20), Bhaktapur
other factors as well. Another interviewee stated, “The major challenges for youth are unemployment, a good quality education, lack of access to leadership and networks, and lack of access to the internet.” The following section explores the current landscape for male youth including these expectations, aspirations and realities impacting their achievement.

**Societal and Familial Expectations**

“We have high expectations for youth, they are the future builders of the community and nation. We want youth to be well educated and to build this road, schools, access to drinking water, to be teachers, to decrease caste discrimination.”  
- Adult female (Age 38), Chhampi

Male youth in Nepal face high societal and familial expectations, and are seen as the main hope for their family and society’s future. Women and girls are gaining status as additional important contributors to the family, but males still hold a primary position. Given the large government-approved age range seen as “youth” there are also different expectations for those in different ages within the group (i.e. focus on education for a 16 year old vs. employment and likely contributing to the family income for a 28 year old).

The expectations of potential spouses and the women’s families as another important aspect of societal expectations. Interestingly, there was little pronounced difference of expectations to be an eligible spouse between urban, semi-urban and rural areas. In fact, when asked what they look for in a son-in-law, many adults in all locations responded that they wanted someone who was educated, was either employed or had the potential to be well employed, and was a respectable and upstanding member of society, preferably a devout man. Spouses are also expected to financially support their family and have good education. Responses included someone who was a “good person with good character,” and refrained from drinking or doing drugs as eligible for marriage. Many mentioned that these expectations had changed over time; earlier expectations included caste and sub-caste, social status, and financial capability in discussions of arranged marriage. Along with this, ancestral property is no longer a requirement for male youth. Property – and specifically, a home – was previously necessary for a male youth to have before marriage and a family. Now, with rising land prices in urban and semi-urban areas, property is still seen as a status symbol and economic indicator, but is no longer a requirement for marriage for male youth.

The expectations for male youth are heavily laden with hopes and frustrations related to the new opportunities facing the country today while also carrying over from the civil conflict. Older generations in all locations acknowledged that their expectations for youth are so high that they are unrealistic, but felt that only by maintaining these high standards that individuals, families, and societies would develop and progress quickly. There is also high pressure to succeed where their elders have failed in the past. Particularly in rural areas both the tone and the responses of community members including elderly, middle aged and young men and women speak to a high level of expectation, but also of respect for and faith in the potential of youth.

This does not match the responses found in the urban areas which are much more cynical, negative toward youth, and frustrated with youths’ perceived inability to meet these expectations. While hopes for youth are very high, in reality it is clear that many adults see youth as less
capable and sometimes inferior. Older interviewees in urban/semi-urban areas repeatedly stated that they did not trust youth to make good decisions about their future because they lack experience. This lack of respect and trust is a frustration for many youth. Many male youth in urban and semi-urban areas reported that they were not truly respected by their family or society unless they achieved very high expectations, and very few youth could achieve those.

Also, several spoke of a wide divide between the rhetoric on Nepali youth as leaders and the reality. One male youth stated, “they say ‘there is lots of hope for you’, but if they don’t have trust in us, how can we do anything.” Further, a focus group of youth in Kathmandu concurred that there was also such a fear of failure that youth are not allowed to explore or create. One participant said, “If you fail in one thing, you may have chances in another. But who is going to say that to youth – that it is ok to fail?”

Male youth must also stay within the expectations set by society. If male youth deviate from the major expectations set for them, then they lose the respect of their family and society as well as any associated social and economic supports. For those in society that break tradition and disengage from what is expected of youth by their society and family, there are severe consequences. For example, the LGBTI community in Nepal faces severe discrimination, despite numerous laws (including the new draft constitution) protecting their rights. One interviewee from the LGBTI community said that many youth must leave their homes when society starts questioning their sexual orientation – demonstrating the importance of societal expectations and norms on youth and their families.

**Self-Expectations & Aspirations**

Apart from the expectations of family and society, it is also important to understand youths’ aspirations for their own future - what they want to achieve, the drivers that support their growth, the constraints that keep them from achieving their goals, and their feelings about their own future and the future of their country. Youth have high hopes to excel in higher education, have a good job, one day marry and have children, and support their family. The expectations of many youth are largely in line with societal and familial expectations, but male youth want to forge their own path. In particular, many male youth complained that what their families cared about most was money, particularly having a high salaried position. Both male and female youth interviewees were very clear that they had their own aspirations aside from the expectations of their society and families, particularly in regard to their desire for a more modern life. For some, this takes the
form of broader community aims and enacting societal change, while for others this is seen in a rising trend of individualism and materialism.

**Impact of High Expectations**

While aspirations both of and by youth are very high, current realities are keeping them from achieving those hopes. This results in frustration among youth. Youth reported feeling frustrated that they could not impact the political situation around them nor change the economic situation. Additionally, youth have energy and enthusiasm but feel they do not have the power or influence to make the changes expected of them. In the minds of youth interviewees, the lack of this influence or voice circles back to a lack of respect.

There are also differences seen within the larger group on how these expectations are affecting individual male youth. Those with a higher socio-economic status have more opportunity to achieve many of the expectations set in place for them by society. Thus, they are frequently more confident in their ability to achieve them in comparison to youth of a lower economic status. However, education and employment expectations particularly by the family may be even higher for youth from higher socio-economic backgrounds, again setting expectations beyond that which can be realistically accomplished. Additionally, youth interviewees in urban areas are more frustrated by these expectations than rural male youth. They feel abandoned by their government and society, which gives them few opportunities and little respect but expect youth to achieve near-impossible accomplishments. These youth are consistently frustrated, angry, and stressed about having to live up to high expectations from their family and society. This is, in part, due to their frustrations about Nepal’s political and economic instability, which they perceive as hurting their own chances of success in the job market. These interviewees also feel that they are not given enough power or opportunities to truly achieve these high expectations so they are set up to fail. They mention being worried about their own future, as well as the future of Nepal. They saw these two futures as intertwined, and believed that only if Nepal succeeds in the future will they be able to succeed as well.

However, youth interviewees in rural areas respond differently, remarking that these high expectations serve as a positive motivating factor that drives them towards their goals. Many mentioned being inspired and motivated by their community and family’s high expectations – particularly concerning local community development. These interviewees feel respected by their family and society and less frustrated with life. Rural male youth interviewees feel more hopeful about the future and noted that the support of their family and society was essential to their hopefulness. Several rural male youth interviewees mentioned that they have been frustrated with the slow progress of the government to make change, but are no longer frustrated as they have given up on their national government and are focusing on local community resources and approaches. A 32-year-old mother in semi-urban Bhaktapur reflected a similar sentiment saying, “We are frustrated, but citizens have to be hopeful, we all have to do
something rather than just believe in politicians.” This pro-active and hopeful response is also largely driven by their past memories of the conflict. Rural youth were much more affected by the conflict, and youth as well as older interviewees talked about how their lives stopped when the Maoists were in their village - they had loved ones die, were used as porters by Maoist forces, were prevented from going to school, had few to no economic opportunities, and had their homes broken into at night by government officials searching for hidden insurgents. In comparison with their life during the conflict, youth feel more confident about their future, as they now feel safe enough to leave their homes, attend school and enter the job market. This is in direct contrast to the youth who have spent their lives in Kathmandu – many of whom responded that the conflict never directly affected them or their family. These urban youth have never felt fear for their safety or security. In this way, they have seen much less improvement in recent years and thus see little to be positive about. While frustration is a drag on many male youth, some are still hopeful. Some interviewees also pointed out that whether individuals responded with frustration or motivation was in many ways a personal choice.

**Education**

The level of education that youth are both expected to and aspire to complete today is notably higher than in the past. Since 2006, the Nepali government has placed a much greater emphasis on raising overall access to education. In fact, the country may meet the second Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015 (The Kathmandu Post 2011). Due to these recent increases in access to education, there is also a new expectation that both male and female youth achieve higher levels of education than their parents. In all the urban, semi-urban and rural areas where interviews were conducted, male youth are expected at a minimum to finish secondary school and pass all of the necessary exams to graduate, comparably higher than expectations in previous times. Currently the literacy rate for male youth (15-24) is 87 percent, alongside a literacy rate for female youth of 77 percent (World Bank, 2012).

While access is markedly improved over previous generations, interviewees are concerned about the quality of the schools, teaching and curriculum. In general, key informants mentioned that the quality of education in Nepal was lacking, particularly in the areas of critical thinking and skills-based practical knowledge. Though students were gaining more education than their parents, many key informants stated that the education system needed major reforms to adequately prepare students for employment. Interviewees also discuss the differing quality between government and private schools and that it is nearly impossible to find quality employment after graduating from a government school unless one has connections. Government schools were much more affordable for poorer families but even those have school fees, which some families cannot afford. In addition, interviewees at private universities complained that while the private schools were of better quality, the schools are increasingly concerned with making money – increasing prices and decreasing the quality of education.
In all locations, education of female youth is increasing, yet many older interviewees stated that if they had few economic resources, families would invest in private education for male youth and government education for female youth – demonstrating an obvious preference between the two. However, one educator interviewed noted that the gender aspects in schools are changing with women becoming more active, getting better marks than men and studying in larger numbers.

Depending on location, socio-economic status, and family, the level of education expected varies. Many interviewees stated that in terms of respect, a masters degree has become what a university degree was in previous times. For youth of a higher socio-economic status in urban areas, they are expected to continue on to university and other higher education. These youth are also expected to focus solely on their education, particularly on achieving high marks, when in school. The vast majority of privileged youth hope to complete their education abroad – and if possible, extend their visas to remain there into employment. If their families are able to afford travel expenses to study abroad, male youth are expected to take advantage of this opportunity. However, visas are scarce and only available for the most financially able, frustrating the families of male youth with less means, but enough to travel. Studying abroad is highly coveted and creates a large separation among youth. The expectation for more affluent male youth to migrate is even further exacerbated by peer pressure as these youth have many friends studying overseas and encouraging them do so as well.

Rural and disadvantaged youth interviewed also aspire to higher education, a proposition that is slowly becoming more likely with increased educational access throughout the education system. In fact, many disadvantaged youth and young adult interviewees into their upper 20s and lower 30s, still express hope that they will someday achieve higher education. However, this is still less likely, as the high cost of higher education, the lack of scholarship opportunities available, and the necessity to feed their family keep disadvantaged male youth from pursuing this goal. Higher education was delayed or impossible for many poor youth, as was pursuing higher education abroad. Families of disadvantaged youth, particularly those in rural areas, stated that the ideal scenario is for male youth to find employment in conjunction with achieving higher education. At times, these can be conflicting expectations, as finding and maintaining employment and continuing education can be difficult to manage. Families readily acknowledge these challenges, yet stress the importance of higher education for youth, even if not economically possible in the present.

Despite there being many challenges in Nepal today, education points to some of the increased opportunities available to youth today in comparison to their fathers’ or grandfathers’. Although some of the opportunities are different in rural and urban areas, all male youth - regardless of location type - have more educational opportunities today than in the past. For some, this has lengthened the phase of youth, as many male youth now focus on education before embracing the adult responsibilities of providing for children or their extended family. This is a current reality not only for youth in Nepal but in many other countries around the world. As in other locations this has both positive and negative implications. Often this extenuated period of youth is mentioned in the literature as a negative change over time, yet interviewees stated that there were many positives in continuing to be a youth for a longer time.
Economic Realities & Poverty

Poverty is a reality for many male youth in Nepal, particularly those who are less educated, lower caste, or are disadvantaged in another way. Poor youth have fewer options: they are sometimes forced to leave school early to help meet the basic needs of their family through farming or other work and often must work as laborers and/or travel to the Gulf countries or Malaysia to earn a living. Job opportunities were also scarce for disadvantaged youth, as they had few social networks to draw from. All of these factors usually condemn disadvantaged youth to labor or subsistence farming jobs.

Social factors can also help determine if male youth will face economic hardships. For example, the caste system is still prevalent and highly complicated with a strict structure that controls the opportunities available for those of lower castes. However, in this study, several Dalit interviewees stated that their lives were better than before, and that they had more opportunities to earn a decent living since the end of the conflict. Most were still only able to work as laborers, with few possibilities for employment in other sectors. Nepal also continues to have problems with trafficking of children, women and men for forced labor and the sex trafficking. Historically discriminated against groups continue to have a greater exposure to these dangers than elite groups (U.S. Department of State 2011).

Employment

After education, the second major expectation of male youth in Nepal is employment. In all locations, as with education, youth today are expected to achieve more than their fathers and grandfathers. In a country with 75% of the labor force in agriculture (CIA 2012), the majority of men in the country make their living by farming. Male youth today are, however, encouraged to do business rather than farming. Obtaining employment is a high priority for youth once they have completed school, as it is central to being a respected male and later helps them provide for their family. When asked if he felt respected, one male youth in semi-urban Bhaktapur responded, “Yes, because I work, and earn and so have a position in my family and in society – prestige comes with work.” One male youth lamented his inability to find a job by stating, “How can they believe me or trust me if I can’t even make earnings myself?” It is also notable that to the question “Are you employed?” all respondents would only mark yes if they had a salaried position. Those who are self-employed—whether it be in business, tailoring or agriculture—all consider themselves unemployed.

Specific employment aspirations of youth are quickly changing as job opportunities change. Primarily male youth aspire for a salaried and stable job, which is also the expectation of their family. This is not only the case in urban areas but also in the rural interview locations. There are very few salaried positions available for youth in Nepal and even fewer in rural areas. However, in tandem with
improved education, rural youth today are expected to find employment that their family feels utilizes their additional education, leaving few interested in agriculture. Additionally, another reality facing rural male youth is the feminization of agriculture. This began during the Maoist conflict when males were either forced to join as fighters or leave the area to hide from forced recruitment. Agriculture is now seen primarily as the women’s domain, eliminating the majority of jobs that have traditionally sustained Nepali males. Interviewees from all areas mentioned that in the past, becoming a doctor or an engineer was seen as the best position available, lauded as the ultimate goal by society. Now, though many older interviewees still state that becoming a doctor or an engineer is a good career route, many youth interviewees are focused on working in the government. These youth describe government jobs as secure in an insecure environment, with a pension and prestige to ensure long-term continued support for their family. However, though many youth aspired to gain these positions, government jobs are extremely rare and primarily only available through social connections. If such a position is not available in the government, they may look to INGOs. Many youth were interested in working in the NGO community as a social worker. Private sector positions are hardly mentioned by male youth, with the exception of the banking industry. Some older interviewees stated that they put so much pressure on youth to find a high-paying full-time stable job quickly because of economic realities, and did not have the luxury to pay attention to what the youth wanted to do in their lives. However, other parents and grandparents felt that male youth should choose their own direction in life – yet the individuals who stated this were more economically secure than most.

Although women increasingly contribute to family income, men in Nepal are still expected to be the breadwinner for the family. This is tied to the responsibility of adulthood, which still includes looking after not only a wife and children, but also one’s parents after they turn 50. Male youth should be working towards the goal of one day providing for the family. The age at which they should begin earning is further affected by location and socio-economic status. For male youth living in urban and semi-urban areas, after graduating from higher education, the expectation quickly shifts to attaining a permanent salaried job with a high income and social status. Youth in urban/semi-urban areas are also expected to support their families, yet there is far greater pressure on them to find and maintain a position with high social status than to find any employment. One man in Kathmandu stated, “I would like my sons to earn money, start a business, and get respect.” There is a clear tie between the salary and how much respect youth are given. Another adult male interviewee in Kathmandu stated, “A respectable job is not really based on the job or position, it comes down to money.” One gender expert mentioned how “masculinity is now focused on being economically powerful.” He further mentioned that education is necessary but not sufficient for societal respect, and that to be recognized as a man you must be making money. According to respondents in rural locations, in previous times, the number of children a man had determined his masculinity. The developing middle class provides one possible explanation for this shift in that gaining greater wealth allows one to rise in social status as well as economic status. As opposed to the situation for many youth in Kathmandu, youth in rural areas and from lower socio-economic groups are expected to contribute to their family’s income for reasons of economic necessity. Social status is seen as important as well, but not as much as providing for
their families. A poor 20-year-old female outside of Bhaktapur reflected this sentiment: “every job is equal, any job is good.”

As the supply of higher education rises, youths’ expectations to find a permanent and secure job also rise, yet there are few of these jobs available resulting in a large gap between the high expectations and the realistic possibilities. The result is a high level of frustration over the current employment situation in Nepal. Recent closings of industrial plants in the South have further worsened the situation, and by extension increased the appeal of political and paramilitary groups for youth in the region. According to the Nepal Labor Ministry, approximately 200,000-300,000 young people enter the job market every year, far fewer than those who leave the country for work (Manandhar 2010). One male youth respondent reflected the sentiment heard from many that, “You can work hard but you won’t get the returns, so it is frustrating in general.” According to the World Bank, the employment to population ratio for youth (ages 15-24) is only 73 percent (World Bank 2012). As with many other countries currently facing economic challenges, youth in Nepal also face the problem of being the first out and last in for employment opportunities, resulting in higher unemployment for youth than the overall working age population. At the same time, there is severe underemployment in Nepal – including both working for less than full time and working in positions requiring less education and qualifications. One route several organizations and the government have taken to address unemployment is the promotion of entrepreneurship. As a concept, this is still taking seed in Nepal and it will take significant shifts in expectations and attitude for a self-employed business culture to develop. Additionally, while in some areas NGOs are pushing entrepreneurship and loans are available, for most male youth you must have collateral to get financial help or loans, which youth generally do not have. Another reality in Nepal is that many employers feel youth jobseekers lack necessary business skills, including critical thinking, business writing, and work place experience. Some blame this on the education system’s focus on theory and rote learning rather than skills-based problem solving. Additionally, Nepali culture pressures youth to focus solely on education and not to intern, volunteer, or work while in any level of school. This leaves youth graduating with a certificate but with little to no transferable experience for a future job. Employers also cite a lack of respect of the importance of work and a poor attitude toward work overall.

It is important to note that some youth feel that there are more opportunities available today than in the past. One youth focus group participant stated, “things are getting better these days – with better education and exposure to all the recent advances in every field the youth these days have better job opportunities.” This seems to be the case for the few that can obtain positions, but is far from the minds of those that are unable to find desired employment.
Migration is a major factor for male youth today in Nepal. In fact, migration has become so common that male interviewees fully expected to migrate if they had not yet. Many do not hope to migrate, but assume they will for either the education or the money they think it will provide. High levels of migration both within the country and abroad started during the conflict when it was a necessity for many males avoiding recruitment by the Maoist forces. Since the conflict, both internal and international migration has continued although for a wider variety of reasons. While official numbers list just over 1 million as being out of the country as of the 2011 Census, informal estimates suggest that approximately three million youth are currently outside the country (Central Bureau of Statistics 2011). One adult male respondent stated, “The entire Nepali population is losing its young people.” The impact has been particularly great on rural areas where few employment and higher educational opportunities exist. More men migrate abroad than women, although female youth also migrate for school and to a lesser extent to Gulf States and India as domestic workers. The recent census found that the country’s sex ratio has changed over the decade from 99.8 males per hundred females in 2001 to 94.4 in 2011. Additionally, some areas had rates as low as 76 males per hundred females (Central Bureau of Statistics 2011). Many male youth also migrate internally for school – often deciding not to return home after adjusting to city life and also due to the limited employment opportunities in rural areas.

There are currently two differing international migration patterns in Nepal – migration for education and migration for employment as a laborer. However, due to the upfront costs to obtain visas and pay for travel, for those in the lowest socio-economic situations, migration is not even an option. For those of a higher socio-economic level (youth more likely to be living in urban/semi-urban areas), many male youth wish to migrate to Western Europe, the United States or Australia for further education. One interview asked a group of well-off youth why they had not gone abroad to study. Participants immediately responded, “because we cannot get visas.” They further clarified that some chose to stay due to family responsibilities or a commitment to change Nepal. Some youth do not leave to study abroad because there are many private universities in Kathmandu offering bachelor’s and master’s degrees more affordable than those available abroad. Along with this economic consideration, it is difficult for privileged youth living in rural areas to access the information necessary to study abroad.

For youth with less economic resources (and more often in rural areas), youth wish to migrate for employment to Gulf countries in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain,
etc), Southeast Asia (Malaysia), or Northern India (through the open border). These countries have high manual labor demands and many companies have emerged to connect youth in Nepal to these positions. Interviewees in rural areas reported that it is now expected for male youth to migrate for a few years, come back to visit for 3-6 months, and then migrate again. Many of these labor jobs paid more, and were widely seen to be a good alternative to labor in Nepal. In addition to the economic rationale, migration for work is appealing for many because laborers are not treated with respect in Nepal. As one interviewee stated, “fake respect” is given to anyone who is in a manual labor position. Many youth are willing to take a laboring job overseas that they would not take in their community. Interviewees also frequently mentioned the influence of peer pressure in encouraging migration. This has led to a lack of manpower for Nepal’s labor sector, as more youth are demanding higher-paying jobs that reflect their higher education. When unable to achieve this, youth migrate to do labor work rather than resign themselves to a non-respected position in Nepal. Labor migration presents other challenges for male youth and leaves many vulnerable to exploitation. Interviewees mentioned friends, brothers and sons going into serious debt before their travel and not making as much as they were promised. Additionally, life as a laborer in these countries is often very hard and has impacts on male youths’ physical and mental health.

In line with the different types of migration, there is also a divergence in whether male youth return or intend to return after their migration. Many urban/semi-urban youth said they and those they knew that had migrated for education did not plan to return until Nepal’s political situation stabilized and economic opportunities emerged. One key informant mentioned that of the Nepali youth that travel to the United States to study, approximately 80 percent do not return and that Nepal has the 11th highest number of foreign students in the United States, surprising for such a small country. Several youth interviewees spoke of their own concerns as well as their friends’ concerns that they will not be able to use their education in Nepal. However, some youth do choose to stay. When discussing migration for labor, semi-urban and rural youth consistently stated a high desire to return in 2-3 years and help develop their local community. They intended to stay abroad only for a limited period of time during which they can make the money necessary for their family. Some spoke of familial responsibilities, some of the rough existence of living as a laborer, while others simply prefer to live in Nepal. One male youth stated, “I can get a pizza and burger anywhere in the world, but I can’t have gundruk everywhere…only in Nepal.”

Regardless of the type of migration, the widespread absence of the male youth population has positive, negative and combined impacts on the families left at home. Some key impacts include the importance of remittances that are allowing for education and investment in farming that would otherwise not be possible, the empowerment and disempowerment of women and families remaining in Nepal, and the inability of communities to complete critical farming and traditional
activities. Interviewees particularly in semi-urban and rural locations expressed concern for the spouses and children left behind – citing stories of marital problems, abandonment, and HIV/AIDS. An adult female Dalit from the rural side of Chhampi stated that in addition to those challenges, “Everyone feels powerless here because the men are gone. If the men were here it would be harder for the Brahmans and Chetris to rule over the Dalits.” Additionally, migration is creating distances between families, which appear to be having societal impacts on male youth’s relationship with their elderly family members. As migration for work overseas is a recent phenomenon (excluding historical migration between India and Nepal), it is unclear what long-term effect this will have on families and societies. These impacts deserve further study.

**Social Networks**

Another major challenge facing youth today is nepotism and the need for social networks. These networks are very important in Nepal and are essential particularly if one is seeking a government position. One older man in Kathmandu commented, “To get jobs, the most important thing is your network. Connections with the ministers are more important than education.” This requirement has a major impact on involvement in student and youth politics, as it is a primary reason why most interviewees felt that youth participate in politics. Social networks are also needed for employment in other sectors. The NGO community in Nepal is robust, with many opportunities available. However, due to nepotism and corruption, it is still difficult to gain entry into a local or national NGO. Most INGOs work to hire based on merit. Outside of employment, social networks also factor into eligibility for arranged marriages and for overall community respect.

**Political Climate and Male Youth Participation in Political Parties**

For youth in Nepal, political instability heavily impacts their daily and life-long opportunities. The current volatility in the country related to drafting the constitution and army integration is causing continued challenges. Many interviewees spoke of how political instability was the primary barrier to their future, as the political instability causes economic instability resulting in a lack of jobs, energy and overall infrastructure. Interviewees feel that creating political stability is a critical step to the availability of new opportunities for youth. There are also concerns over corruption, which placed further barriers to finding a government or high-income position.

This political instability actively impacts Nepal through frequent strikes, demonstrations and political violence - largely carried out by male youth. This violence is orchestrated by others, using the youth as the implementers of political *bandhs* and *chakajams*, as well as the criminal violence increasingly seen in Nepal. One interviewee noted, “Boys saw the fighting during the conflict and saw that if you want to achieve something, you have to fight for it.” This learned violence is particularly being employed in the Terai for both political and economic greed purposes. Additionally, the frequent *bandhs* (strikes) and *chakajams* (traffic jams) interrupt all aspects of daily life. During strikes schools are closed, causing significant negative impacts on students’ education, businesses are closed and violence often erupts. Some in semi-urban areas were even more affected than Kathmandu residents by *bandhs* in the city because the semi-urban
areas rely on buses for transit to work and to the market, which do not run during strikes. *Bandhs* in more remote areas shut down all business, schools and restrict freedom of movement.

Male youth participation in political parties is very high in Nepal as a result of an extensive political structure in which each party operates not only the party but also youth and student wings. This is not surprising as youth participation has been central to Nepali politics for decades including recent critical roles in the 1980 referendum, the 1990 restoration of the multi-party system, and the 1996-2006 civil conflict. The party orchestrates the actions of their associated groups, although each entity has separate leadership. However, these “youth led” groups are often led by older politicians that consider themselves to be youth, stating that they are “youthful and energetic” but are in their 60s or 70s. One youth leader is 85. One interviewee stated, “There is a tradition in more advanced democracies for people to retire, whereas here people cling onto power until their deathbed.” Interviewees voiced a concern that the age of the leadership and limited representation of those under 30 demonstrates a lack of true youth leadership and a lack of respect in these organizations for the actual voice or concerns of youth. Many youth and older interviewees specifically said that youth were a “tool” used by the political parties, with little real voice in the political system and that youth are only called on for manpower in political demonstrations. Interviewees in Kathmandu that do not participate in politics feel that the political parties are simply using youth and that their issues and voices are not actually heard in the current system.

The parties are very active throughout the country with youth recruitment central to their political strength. In Kathmandu these student or youth wings of political parties are highly active at public schools and universities, where they recruit large number of members. This recruitment starts in early levels of education and continues through university and beyond. At public universities association with one of the political parties is almost universal. Participation at private schools and private universities is much lower. There is a large gender divide in terms of political participation. For male youth it is rare to not be engaged in politics, whereas for female youth the opposite is true.

In interviews with both political and non-political youth and adults, there was agreement that the potential for economic improvement is the primary rationale for the high participation of male youth in political parties. Participation may improve their economic situation either through improved social networks, which may lead to employment opportunities or direct payment for daily participation. In addition to the economic situation, connecting with the leaders of political parties may also enhance their social status. Many students with few other opportunities seek to join political parties even though they recognize that the likelihood of tangible benefit is low. Interviewees feel that although the likelihood of benefit is low, it does still exist and no other pathway provides those networks or the possibility of a government job. Some also feel that they gain leadership training through participation in these
groups. Participation is also a social activity for the involved male youth. Particularly at public universities that are often closed during bandhs, the students do not have classes and thus are easily swayed to participate in their free time. Several political youth believe in the specific causes of the particular parties, although overall it is felt that the economic prospects, social networks, and social activity aspects were the primary draws for most male youth. Another reason cited for the use of youth by the political parties is that youth are often more easily swayed than adults.

Another factor of youth political participation is that interviewees knew of no other outlets for youth to impact society or make change. Rural youth often join local political parties or youth clubs, some of which are traditional political groups while others according to interviewees are focused more on community development projects – such as construction of community buildings, filling potholes in streets, and more. Increasingly youth groups work to provide apolitical alternatives but many of these organizations also become political.

**Local Community Development**

A third expectation in addition to education and employment for male youth in rural and semi-urban areas is their contribution to community local development. These communities see the potential of youth to better their society and expect them to follow through on that potential. Rural male youth also expressed a desire to develop their community, in keeping with these expectations that they do so. They feel hopeful about the future of their local community, and aspire to be a part of that development. In terms of impacts of male youth on society, as the population is increasingly educated, these youth are harbingers of improved health and the desire for overall social improvements. Many male youth actively work to eliminate what they term “superstitious” traditions, many of which involve poor treatment of women, and fight inequality based on caste, ethnicity, religion, gender and sexual orientations. These efforts are in tandem with government, INGO, NGO and local efforts to address some of the country’s past ills. Through these interviews the researchers saw the progress made in several significant areas, including: educational achievement, reduction and continued efforts against discrimination by caste, gender, and sexual orientation, reduction in family size within each family, and generational changes on the attitudes toward and practice of child marriage and female education. Male youth proudly spoke of these and other changes they would like to see in the future of Nepal. Interestingly, this expectation for societal betterment did not seem to exist in the capital. Youth in the capital are expected to focus on their studies or jobs, and to focus primarily on their family rather than society as a whole. While some families expect social development of their male youth, in general, there was no expectation. Some of the more politically involved youth do feel there is an expectation on them to make change, but the expectation comes from their political party rather than their family.
Several of the urban youth interviewed were incredibly motivated to develop Nepal and change society for the better, but they clarified that this was a personal drive rather than an expectation from their family or society. Those working toward development strive to do so in addition to the society-pressured goals of succeeding in education and respected employment.

**Technology**

Technology is another important factor affecting male youth today. In the urban/semi-urban areas, technology refers mostly to mobiles, computers, Internet, and television. Many older interviewees in urban/semi-urban areas complained that youth were always on their computer or mobile, which was distracting them from their studies. These older interviewees also feel that youth today are much less active and less social than when they were young. Many youth report that they are not paying attention to world events, but rather on social networking sites such as Facebook and applications such as Skype, to stay in touch with friends that now live abroad. However, through technology they are able to keep up with trends and information outside of Nepal. An expert suggested that one of the factors for the comparatively greater sense of frustration felt by urban youth as contrasted with frustration felt by youth in extremely rural locations was that those in urban areas now constantly compare themselves and their possessions to those they see on television and the internet, creating a sense of inferiority.

Youth in rural areas only have access to mobiles and television – lessening the concerns of the older interviewees in the area, although female adult interviewees in the rural areas still felt youth were overly focused on their cell phones. In one of the villages visited, electricity had only been installed in the village a year ago, so technology is a nascent concept for the community. However, technology in agricultural production is just beginning to take root. Many male youth in the rural areas stated that they were looking forward to further agricultural innovation, as it could become an employment possibility that would provide higher dividends in the future. As discussed, male youth do not wish to engage in agriculture unless it provided more economic benefits than before.

**A “Modern Life”**

Youth interviewed also desire to live a more modern life, reflecting the increased exposure to outside influences in recent years. Through the interviews, differences were seen that separated the oldest interviewees who were set in their traditions, the youth who were on the forefront of change, and the adults who acknowledged that some of their expectations had changed and likely would continue to change, but not all. They reference this in terms of their dress, use of technology and eliminating some cultural aspects that they feel are outdated. Access to the Internet and additional information has also impacted youths’ aspirations for themselves and their future families. When asked what they want to do differently in raising their families than their fathers, many youth spoke of a desire for

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**“Frustration is higher in the urban area – because we have more things to compare with. In rural areas, there is less frustration, because there is less comparison.”**  
- Male youth leader (Age 26), Kathmandu

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**[The large youth population] “is changing the mindset of old people – they have to adjust to our thinking, so our ideas affect them. The older generation is actually learning from the youth nowadays.”**  
- Male Youth (Age 25), Kathmandu
“a more developed family.” Aspects of a more developed family included having smaller families, equality for women, ending child marriage and elimination of outdated and “superstitious” parts of traditional Nepali culture and religions. Youth are excited about these changes and hopeful about their ability to implement them. At the same time, male youth spoke of wanting to continue their Nepali culture, but integrated with new lessons.

In addition, youth today put great importance on having what some termed “the three M’s”: a mobile phone, a motorcycle and money. Older men in particular noted that owning a mobile phone and a motorcycle are the primary focus for young men these days, and a marker of masculinity for youth. Male and female youth interviewees confirmed that having a motorcycle in particular was crucial to getting a girlfriend in Kathmandu and semi-urban areas, and also mentioned that having a mobile phone was useful for communication purposes. For some male youth, such items were more important than school or family. This is a change from earlier times, which many ascribe to the fact that youth today are allowed to date. In addition to facilitating dating, having these items is also important in raising their status with peers.

Family Dynamics & New Freedoms for Male Youth

Due to the high importance of family in Nepali society, family dynamics have an important impact on male youth. Family dynamics are very individual to each family, and interviewees report a wide variety of experiences. However, in aggregate, there do appear to have been several changes within the family in the last few decades. One change has been an increased influence in decision-making. In previous times youth had little to no say in major life decisions such as employment options, education, migration or marriage, but this has changed and now youth exhibit a wide variety of decision-making. Many older interviewees felt that with the increase in education, youth today have more knowledge on many things and thus their views should be incorporated into decisions. The head of family usually still makes the ultimate decision on major things, but youths’ input is taken into account, and they are often allowed to make their own decisions on smaller choices. Male youth also still often make choices for their sisters, although as women’s empowerment increases, this role is also shifting. At the same time, many families have not seen this change, such as the Dalit interviewees in rural Chhampi who succinctly stated, “Father takes decisions still – male youth don’t decide – this hasn’t changed.” Overall, Nepal is still an age-structured society and respect for the wisdom of elders is still important. While there appears to be a trend toward increasing individualism among youth and a decreasing respect for family and particularly the elderly, the level of respect and deference among interviewees continued to be very high. One male youth stated, “Whatever they say to us, we have to say yes, because they are our parents.”

Family also has a very direct and daily impact in that Nepal male youth traditionally live with their family. This allows youth to focus on education rather than immediately having housing needs met by their families.
costs. The housing situation also keeps them closer with their family – a tradition that male youth respondents frequently wanted to keep. Male youth are expected to continue living at home after marriage, although it is common for the son and daughter-in-law to move out of his parents’ house a few years later if there is tension, particularly between the mother and new daughter-in-law. Youth described that many recently married couples live with the son’s parents for the first few years before having a child and moving into their own home, although moving out seems more prevalent in the more urbanized areas. Nepali youth are now more likely than before to live only with their nuclear family rather than in a joint family living situation, however, living as a joint family is still the norm. Migration has also impacted this living situation, with those migrating for school or work finding independent housing or living with extended relatives. It is still more common for youth to live with their family, although in larger cities independent living is increasingly accepted.

There are also changing family views on many things that were until recently completely unacceptable. Third gender interviewees spoke of gradual improvements in acceptance by families, although many are still vehemently anti-LGBTI. This group is often forgotten in research on either male or female groups but interviewees stated that they often have very different experiences than male or female youth.

Shifting family dynamics have also expanded the freedoms for youth. Families increasingly allow both male and female youth to spend larger periods of time unsupervised outside the house, particularly after they finish university. Male youth still have much more freedom than female youth in this regard. Interviewees indicated that some male youth have taken to drinking, smoking and occasionally violence out of frustration over unemployment. However, this is not common in most areas and one adult female clarified, “95 percent of male youth are good and don’t consume alcohol or do such things.” Domestic violence was also discussed in this same light, usually in relation to increased frustrations over money causing drinking and familial problems. Another change has been the increased individualism and decreased responsibility for ones elders that some male youth feel today.

Additionally, dating is increasingly allowed which has greatly impacted male youth behavior including increased violence between male youth resulting from jealousy. Male youth fighting over their girlfriends is a new phenomenon in a society that until recently only allowed arranged marriages.

**Progress Towards Marriage and Family**

Woven throughout the more tangible societal and self-expectations on education and employment is an expectation that male youth should be progressing towards marriage and family. All youth are expected to marry at some point: female youth between the ages of 20-25 (shortly after education), and male youth between the ages of 26-32. Male youth are marrying slightly later than in the past, while female youth are marrying noticeably later. These expectations are slightly younger in rural areas according to interviewees, with the reality in rural areas of marriage age being much younger. While youth interviewees are in no hurry to marry
and accept the accompanying responsibility that family brings, all but one of the male youth interviewees expected and desired to one day marry and have children. Marriage is not a requirement to be seen as an adult, but all agreed that respect increases after you get married.

Many marriages are still expected to be arranged marriages, though love marriages are steadily increasing in acceptance and number. There are various degrees of love marriages though and for many this involves dating, asking permission of their parents, and then marrying a partner in their same caste/ethnicity. However, if youth have strictly traditional family members or want to marry outside of their caste/ethnicity, then some youth choose the option of elopement. In some areas of Nepal a dowry system is still in place, although no interviewees in this study had experienced the need for one.

Additional changes include that family size has been decreasing in Nepal, with both youth and older interviewees agreeing that one or two children is now a desirable number for a new family. This was the case regardless of location. The family size data collected, including each interviewee’s number of siblings, children, and grandchildren, showed a clear pattern of decreasing family size in individual families. This places much less pressure on youth to provide for such large families and opens resources to other things. Interviewees also spoke of having children further apart and later now in keeping with people marrying later. In addition both researchers spoke with women spanning multiple generations in a single family, and were told of the large generational changes witnessed in those families on child marriage, a problem that remains a large challenge in Nepal today. In one Dalit family the grandmother spoke of being married at 13 and the mother at 17, neither of whom attended school of any kind. The 18-year-old daughter returned home after school to participate in the interviews and both she and her family expect her to complete her IA before considering marriage. These decreases in family size and later ages for marriage and motherhood have resulted in much improved maternal health, which has a major impact for the male spouses that previously had to cope with that loss emotionally, economically and socially.

Conclusion

Today, male youth in Nepal face many challenges, however, they also have many more opportunities than in the past. Overall, male youth want to develop their country, but face the challenges of providing for themselves and preparing to provide for their family. Nepal is currently in a position to make a transition politically, economically, and socially. Male youth are also in this transition, looking forward to future possibilities. They are also unsure how their country’s future will impact their lives and also unsure how to meet the expectations and gain the respect that they so desire from their peers, family and society overall. More detailed conclusions are presented in this report under the Key Findings section.
Key Points

- Though all male youth will become adults at some age, becoming a respected adult is the true goal of male youth interviewees.
- The major expectations for male youth revolve around education, employment, local development, community respect, and progress towards marriage and family.
- While there are no set requirements for marriage, a combination of factors is usually assessed: the primary focus is on his educational level; then employment or prospects for employment; and finally his character and respect in the community. Some of these expectations have changed over time.
- There are very high expectations both of and by male youth in Nepal today. Some are motivated by these high expectations while others are very discouraged.
- The impact of political instability on economic opportunity and the resulting high level of migration is the most commonly referenced challenge for male youth. Additional challenges include a lack of jobs, high poverty, and remaining caste and socio-economic discrimination.
- Youth aspire to obtain more education than their parents and, at a minimum, graduate from higher secondary school (equivalent of high school graduation in the American system).
- Male youth aspire for a salaried and stable job, although many recognize they will likely not be able to obtain such a job.
- Migration for education is an aspiration for most and a possibility for few. Meanwhile, migration for work in the Gulf countries or Malaysia is a likely reality for those in lower socio-economic levels and sometimes for others finding themselves under- or unemployed.
- Male youth participation in political groups is very high. However many feel used by the political system and that they do not have a voice in the system. Most participate in politics due to the potential economic benefits and possible connections for government positions that could be gained from participation.
- Youth feel they have no other outlet to impact society.
- Particularly rural and semi-urban youth are incredibly focused on the importance of local community development. They see themselves as the ones that must bring positive change, eliminating discrimination, improving community services, and bringing roads and other necessary infrastructure to their communities.
- Youth also aspire for a more modern life than in previous times. This includes changes in attire, attitudes towards dating, and opinions towards many traditionally accepted customs, including the poor treatment of women and girls and desire for very large families.
- The family continues to have a large impact on male youth in Nepal with changes emerging in terms of decision making, new freedoms for youth and later marriage and smaller family size expectations.
Case Study: Male Youth in Sri Lanka
Jodi Chan and Leilani Greene

Introduction

In Sri Lanka, the expectations placed on male youth by themselves, their families, and society at large are complex and vary by ethnicity, geographical region, and socio-economic status. This is largely due to the impacts the conflict has had on educational and economic opportunities, language barriers, and the level of local development. Overall, expectations placed on male youth are complex and multi-layered, including: educational expectations; working to enhance future employment opportunities; progress towards marriage and family; and being a respected member of society.

“‘The society expects leadership from young men as they transform from youth to adult. Sometimes mothers and sisters expect a young man to become the father of the family. Men always try to be leaders for others, which automatically put the high pressure on the men.’
- Ministry of Youth Representative, Male Adult (Age 35), Colombo

As in Nepal, one of male youths’ primary concerns is how to become a respected adult, rather than simply transitioning into adulthood. In order for male youth to be seen as respected adults in Sri Lankan society, it is expected they should have a full-time job and be capable of making mature decisions. Being financially stable, providing for their families, and making progress towards marriage are important goals for most male youth. When making important life decisions, including those relating to their fields of study, career, and choice of spouse, male youth feel that these decisions must be made jointly with their parents. Additionally, in Sri Lanka society, it is very important that male youth take care of their family members. Most male youth are expected to look after their parents as they get older and can no longer work. In certain cases, largely depending on family resources, male youth are also expected to contribute to their sisters’ dowries and ensure that their sisters are financially secure. Overall, most male youth are focused on their education and finding employment to provide for their families.

“As young men transition from youth to adulthood, their lives are shaped by many factors, including social norms, political institutions, and the ramifications of the 27-year civil war. The United Nations estimated that between 80,000-100,000 civilians were killed during the civil war (UK Border Agency 2009). Impacts of the civil war are still prevalent throughout the country; however, they are most severe in the northern and eastern provinces of the country, including the city of Batticaloa and the surrounding areas. In Batticaloa and Kiran many primary male wage earners in families of respondents are no longer alive, and male youth now face far greater expectations to financially support their families. Additionally, many Tamil youth feel they face discrimination from the government and have limited opportunities to voice their concerns to

“‘In Sri Lanka, there is a very family-centric culture, so marriage is not just between individuals but between families...In order for a man to get married, he needs to have a stable job, good personality...in some social circles, horoscopes are important. In Sri Lanka, marriage is perceived as what settles people down.’
- Male Youth (Age 26), Colombo
politicians. For many Tamils, the marginalization and discrimination that they experienced prior to the war has not significantly improved since the end of military hostilities.

Society’s aspirations for male youth, as well as male youths’ aspirations for themselves are hampered by present realities in the country. There is a significant gap between what male youth would like to accomplish and what goals can actually be realized. This is for two principal reasons. First, the aspiration held by society that all young people, regardless of academic prospects and economic realities, obtain an ideal, ‘proper’ job is not feasible. This unrealistic expectation placed on male youth is a major source of stress and disappointment when, for whatever reason, this expectation is unrealized. The second set of components that inhibits male youths’ aspirations are insufficiencies in both a quality education, for which the demand is outpacing supply, and employment, for which willing labor supply far exceeds employer demand. Their families, friends, society, and country resources also impact male youth in a variety of additional ways. The environment created by these interacting forces largely defines the possibilities available to male youth. Male youth overall felt that the political climate, lack of educational opportunities, economic hardship, and the lack of proper jobs in the country were the primary barriers to the achievement of their aspirations, but that there were also a variety of other factors as well.

While male youth are impacted by society in many ways, they are also actively transforming it. In particular, many male youth expressed a desire to improve their communities and alter traditional norms and expectations. Traditionally, women are not expected to work outside the home after marriage; however, this expectation varies depending on the socio-economic status of the family. Specifically, many women from underprivileged households are expected to work after marriage, often in garment factories or as unskilled farm laborers, to help support their families. Additionally, when choosing a potential spouse, factors such as an individual’s socioeconomic status, family background, horoscopes, and in many cases, ability to provide a dowry, are critical. Opinions regarding the necessity of a dowry for a woman to marry seem to be changing, and is highlighted by many male youth as an expectation that their parents have, but one that they do not subscribe to. Many male youth state that they would not ask their bride’s family for a dowry and that both the husband and wife should earn an income.

This case study presents the research methodology utilized and the findings of that research regarding the definition of “youth” and the current landscape for male youth in Sri Lanka today.

**Methodology**

**Methods**

In keeping with the overall research design discussed in the introduction, qualitative data was collected through a combination of semi-structured individual interviews, focus group discussions, and interviews with key informants in Sri Lanka from March 12 - 30, 2012. Each of the semi-structured interviews was face-to-face and lasted 45-60 minutes. Depending on the location, interviewees and focus group interviews were either conducted in English, or translated from Tamil or Sinhala to English. Each interview included the completion of a short biographical data form (Appendix A). Information was gained through a total of 42 individual interviews, 12
focus group discussions made up of 72 participants, and meetings with 8 practitioners and experts in the field.

**Research Study Population and Location**

The research design called for interviewees from 18 to over 50 years of age, with the largest emphasis on those who were 18-29 years of age. To gather a broad understanding of the expectations and realities facing male youth today, both male and female interviewees were included (See Figure 9 for breakdown of interviewees).

![Figure 9: All Interviewees and Focus Group Participants by Age and Gender](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>18-29</th>
<th>30-49</th>
<th>50+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Location types included urban, semi-urban, and rural perspectives. Due to the limited time frame and travel limitations, research was only conducted in Colombo, Negombo, Batticaloa, Kiran, and Monaragala, as shown by the map in Figure 10, below. Most interviewees in Colombo were Sinhalese Buddhist, but Muslim and Sinhalese Christians were also interviewed. All participants in Kiran were Tamil Hindu. In Negombo, most participants were Sinhalese Buddhist, but included one Muslim. In Batticaloa, most were Tamil Hindu, including some Muslim interviewees. In Monaragala, all were Sinhalese Buddhist. Data was collected in Colombo to represent the urban demographic. These interviews and focus groups were held at the University of Colombo, Open University: Colombo Campus, a private D.S. Senanayake College, the National Youth Services Council (NYSC) in Colombo, and various open spaces around the city. To represent the semi-urban perspective, interviews were conducted in the Negombo, Kiran, and the city of Batticaloa. Interviews and focus groups in Batticaloa and the surrounding areas in this eastern province were conducted at the Open University: Batticaloa Campus, one of the NYSC in Batticaloa, an all girls university dormitory, and at a local community center. In Kiran - a town located 26 kilometers outside of Batticaloa - two focus groups were conducted. To represent the rural perspective, interviews were conducted in Monaragala (Uva Province) at a community center, Plan Sri Lanka’s local office, and a restaurant.
Individual interviews were conducted in each of these locations, totaling 22 interviewees in the capital of Colombo, 16 in the semi-urban locations of Batticaloa, Kiran and Negombo, and 4 in the rural area of Monaragala. Figures 11 and 12 below show the breakdown of individual interview interviewees by location.

**Figure 11: Individual Interview – Interviewees by Location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Settings: Colombo</th>
<th>Semi-Urban: Batticaloa, Kiran &amp; Negombo</th>
<th>Rural: Monaragala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>30-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 12: Percentage of Individual Interviews by Location**

Of the 12 focus groups, 6 were conducted in the capital of Colombo – of which 3 were conducted with male youth, 2 were with youth of mixed gender, and 1 was with males of various ages (See Figures 13 and 14). However, due to time constraints, personal data was not collected.
for two focus groups - mixed gendered and the mixed age males – both of which were conducted at the University of Colombo. For the semi-urban settings, 1 focus group was conducted in Batticaloa, 2 in Kiran, (located 26 kilometers from Batticaloa) and 1 in the town of Negombo located (36 kilometers from Colombo). The rural focus groups were conducted in a town located approximately 30 minutes outside of Monaragala.

Figure 13: Focus Group Participants by Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban Settings: Colombo</th>
<th>Semi-Urban: Batticaloa, Kiran &amp; Negombo</th>
<th>Rural: Monaragala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14: Percentage of Focus Group Participants by Location

Two graduate students from George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs conducted the interviews, focus groups, and meetings with key informants in each of the regions. The focus groups in Kiran were conducted with the assistance of Care International and the focus groups in Monaragala were conducted with the assistance of Plan Sri Lanka.

Within the structured distribution of age and location, interviewees from different religious and ethnic backgrounds as well as various employment and educational levels were interviewed (See Figure 15). The percentage of the individual interviewees that are Sinhalese Buddhists was 48 percent, followed by 19 percent Hindu, 14 percent Christian, 14 percent Muslim, and 5 percent did not list a religious affiliation. Among the focus groups Sinhalese Buddhist made up 49 percent, Hindus were 32 percent, Christians were 14 percent, and Muslims were 6 percent.
Regarding education, the interviewees represented a spectrum of educational achievement as outlined below in Figure 16. Many of the individual interviewees, 24 out of the 42, were still in school, either studying for their Advanced Levels or in university. Meanwhile, 17 out of the 72 focus group participants were still either studying for their Advanced Levels or in university. The level of educational achievement attained by the interviewees in this study is disproportionately higher than that of the overall Sri Lankan population. This difference is likely due to the percentage of interviews conducted at universities throughout the country and the lack of translators in Colombo and Batticaloa - requiring the researchers to seek out English-speaking interviewees.
In terms of employment, interviewees represented a variety of experiences. Of the 38 individual interviewees, 13 were currently employed. 27 of the 72 focus group interviewees reported having a job. If the number of people self-reporting as employed are broken down further by individual interviewees’ gender, only 3 women reported being employed, all of whom lived in the Colombo area. Among the focus group interviewees, 6 women reported being employed.

**Research Study Limitations**

While the study does include a broad variety of interviewees in terms of gender, location, religion, educational attainment, employment status, and age, there are also some important limitations to this work. The primary research sites of Colombo and Batticaloa are relatively modern, urban environments that draw those seeking further educational or formal employment opportunities. Drawing from the capital and other semi-urban environments also has implications on the educational attainment, socio-economic status and employment opportunities of interviewees as compared to those that would be found in other regions.

The most severe limitations on the research were the language barriers and lack of reliable translation. In Colombo, the researchers had no assistance with translation, which limited the interviewees to middle and upper socio-economic status English speakers. In Batticaloa and Monaragala, translation services were available; however, at both sites only one translator was available, limiting the number of interviews the researchers could conduct.

Lastly, the rural interviews were conducted in villages outside of Monaragala that have received consistent and intensive development support from the NGO Plan Sri Lanka. This support may have impacted the status and views of interviewees as compared to those in rural areas that have not received such support.

**Key Points**

- 114 individuals were interviewed for this qualitative research including 42 individual interviews and 12 focus group discussions comprised of 72 participants.
- Interviewees included individuals from 18-63 years of age to contribute a cross generational perspective
- Interviews were conducted in urban, semi-urban and rural locations and were sought from all genders, socio-economic, educational, ethnic, and religious backgrounds
- Due to lack of translation services in Colombo the range of interviewees accessible to the researchers was limited to the English speaking population, a significant limitation.

**Definition of Youth**

In Sri Lanka, the National Youth Policy (NYP) - which was drafted in May 2007 and still remains in draft form without parliament approval - defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 to 29 years of age.
However, the experiences shared by individual interviewees, focus group participants and key informants indicate that the definition is more complex and layered than conveyed by the NYP. When asked to describe what “youth” means to them, interviewees most often explained that the period of youth is defined as time of life when a person is able to gain experience and explore adulthood, with oversight from their families and without fear of severe consequences. They also described the act of gaining experience as an opportunity for youth to practice their decision-making skills. This is mentioned as particularly important for male youth, since they were perceived as needing to be responsible and capable of making decisions for their family’s future. The pursuit of education is the second most oft-mentioned component of the “youth” phase. All interviewees from all locations stressed that male youth should receive as much formal education as possible, and that the period of youth is the best time for education. Finally, interviewees did indicate age brackets surrounding youth in very general terms, however, most indicate that the age could vary, depending on the amount of individual responsibility. It is critical to note that definitions of youth varied across the country and among youth of different ethnicities and religions.

While many interviewees provided specific age brackets surrounding the period of youth, almost all emphatically state that the age in which a person becomes an adult is conditional on achieving certain milestones. Specifically, a young man is expected to have an income and be able to support his family. As one female youth state, “When he gets a job and he is looking after his parents, he is defined as a man.” For adult males, the expectation of increased responsibility becomes even greater after marriage, particularly as a married man is expected to provide for not only his wife and children, but also his parents.

Age brackets for the youth stage of life varied greatly depending on gender and location. In Colombo the age bracket most often mentioned (18-32 years for males and 18-28 years for females) most closely represented the government definition of 15-29 years. In Batticaloa and Kiran, interviewees felt that the window of youth ends earlier for both men and women. Due to the reality that male youth in Batticaloa bear the heavy burden of supporting their families, most interviewees indicate that the youth phase ends at 26, or as soon as a young man could find permanent employment. For females in Batticaloa, the youth phase ends when she marries, ideally before 26. In Monaragala, interviewees indicate that men are expected to adopt adult responsibilities as early as 18 but no later than age of 25, and women are expected to marry between the ages of 16 and 25.
Current Landscape for Male Youth

Respect from Society and Family

As was seen in the Nepal case study, a drive for respect underpins many of the expectations and aspirations for youth in Sri Lanka. As male youth mature, society expects them to slowly adopt higher levels of responsibility. In doing so, they can earn the respect of their family and community. In order to attain respect from society, interviewees indicate that male youth are expected to first attain some level of academic achievement, create social networks throughout their community, and find formal sector employment. Secondary indicators for gaining respect include having a successful love life and, depending on the age of the interviewee, marriage and children. Interviewees indicate that the level of pressure for each of these steps is significant, but that there is no pressure to attain these goals on a strict timeline. The amount and type of pressure that male interviewees place on themselves to earn respect varied by age and location.

Unemployed male youth in the Batticaloa region indicate a desire for the respect of their peers, family and society, and that being unemployed hindered their ability to accomplish this. However, male youth in this region reported that they face severe political and economic realities that exclude them from professional opportunities. Because the whole community experienced this economic and political discrimination, many community members and peers understood and empathized with male youth regarding these challenges. Male youth indicate impediments to achieving their personal aspirations overall are the lack of educational opportunities, lack of political or family connections, and an insufficient number of professional jobs.
**Political Climate**

Throughout the country, youth feel that the political climate impacts both their short and long-term professional and livelihood opportunities. There are two aspects related to how the political climate is affecting male youth today.

The first centers on the aftereffects of the 27-year conflict. Throughout the field research the end of military conflict was mentioned as central to the current landscape for male youth. Respondents in Colombo and Monaragala (areas with a Sinhalese majority) almost universally indicate that their future is more secure, and their opportunities greater, than that of their parents due to the end of the war. Youth in Colombo particularly feel optimistic about their future due to increased personal security and freedom of movement.

Tamil and Muslim youth respondents in the Batticaloa region also indicate their future opportunities were greater than during the war. Specifically, youth say they now have a wider geographical range in which they could seek work, especially since military checkpoints have been removed and transit throughout the country (except to the north) is now open. However, the Tamil populations in the Batticaloa region still feel the issues that initially led to the conflict have not been fully addressed. They express grievances about the lack of accountability for human rights violations that occurred during the final stages of the military conflict. Additionally, Tamil interviewees indicate feeling particularly disaffected by the government - some even indicate that their voices could only be adequately represented through the creation of an independent Tamil state.

The second component centers on the interviewees’ strong feelings that they lack a political voice. Interviewees feel that politicians do not address their needs and that corruption in the government inhibits the nation’s ability to develop and create jobs. In Sri Lanka, low voter turnout in recent elections has been viewed as a sign of voters’ apathy (Polgreen, 2010). Interviewees, especially in Tamil dominated-areas, frequently mention low voter turnout and the presence of apathy. While many youth state that unemployment and politicians’ lack of concern for their interests are serious problems in Sri Lanka, they also indicate that an appropriate mechanism to air their political voice does not exist. The majority of all interviewees also indicate that strikes as a protest mechanism are neither an effective nor efficient way to express political frustration. However, some interviewees, mostly located in Colombo state that peaceful protests could draw positive political responses. Tamil interviewees in particular emphasize that violence is not an acceptable mechanism for voicing their frustrations, which may stem from a fear of government reprisal. However, in general, interviewees feel that youth have limited opportunities to effect change in their societies through political channels, and most prefer to stay out of politics.
Being educated, particularly with a university degree, is seen as critical to finding a good job, improving marriage prospects, acquiring social connections and earning respect in Sri Lanka. Interviewees from all locations indicate that the pursuit of tertiary level education is the primary expectation placed on male youth. For the most part, male youth are expected to prioritize their schoolwork; however, the expectations to provide financial assistance to their family sometimes conflicted with this expectation in semi-urban and rural regions of the county. If educational goals are not achieved, interviewees indicate that male youth will still be able to find employment opportunities, but they will be less desirable and receive less respect from society.

Youths’ educational opportunities both simultaneously impact and are impacted by their economic realities. Families’ economic circumstances play a large role in a person’s ability to attain an education. For example, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are largely precluded from attending prestigious private secondary schools due to their inability to pay tuition fees. Public primary and secondary schools are free in Sri Lanka, as are public universities. While primary and secondary school are free in Sri Lanka, indirect costs of education, such as transport to and from school, uniforms, and lost labor, places a bigger burden on disadvantaged families as their children attain their basic education. This principle also holds true for tertiary school. While public universities are free in Sri Lanka, they may not be feasible for children in families suffering from economic hardship.

However, demand for access to public tertiary education far exceeds supply. Entrance to public university is based on performance in the A-Level exit exams and competition for entrance to public university varies by field of study. In 2010, 233,609 students sat for the A-Level exams of which only 142,516 met the minimum qualifications for university entrance. Of the 142,516 eligible students 22,016 were granted admission into free public university, an admission rate of 15.5% (University Grants Commission, 2010). For students from rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds, if they are unable to achieve a high standing in their A-Level examinations, then post-secondary education becomes infeasible and their educational pursuits will end there. For this reason, respondents in Batticaloa and Monaragala indicate a desire to pursue public education for as long as possible, while male youth in Colombo indicate that private education, both domestically and internationally, is a feasible and desirable aspiration.

For more privileged children, the indirect costs of education place less of a strain on family resources. Additionally, children from middle and upper class backgrounds have a higher likelihood of pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities at private universities, both domestic and international, if they do not gain entrance into or wish to attend public universities
For students from higher socio-economic backgrounds, the quality of public university may be seen as inferior so they will automatically pursue international tertiary educational opportunities. Additionally, more privileged students have the option of pursuing domestic private university options if they are unable to gain entrance into public universities.

With respect to expectations regarding education, many interviewees note that male youth face stronger pressures from their families to do well in school in comparison to female youth. For male youth, getting a good education, and a university degree in particular, is seen as critical to obtaining a desirable career. In contrast, as women are not necessarily expected to have a job, especially after marriage, succeeding in school is not as big of a concern for their families.

Male youth currently in secondary school mention their A-Levels as the largest source of stress they face both through pressure they place on themselves and pressure from their families. They perceive these examinations as having a huge impact on their future academic and professional opportunities. These young interviewees indicate the outcome of their A-Levels will have a huge impact on their ability to gain future respect, since it heavily influences their tertiary educational opportunities. Some interviewees indicate that this stress could lead some male youth to take drastic measures, such as turning to drugs and alcohol, or in extreme cases, committing suicide.

Interviewees further indicate that passing their A-Levels is no longer sufficient and that achieving a university degree is an essential prerequisite to transitioning into respected adulthood. Many youth feel that the pressure and competition to do well at school today is greater than it was in the past, due to the high competition for jobs. While interviewees from all regions indicate society expects them to pursue tertiary education, the possibility to do so varies dramatically by region and socio-economic status. Youth in Colombo note that although there is significant competition to attend a university, they generally felt optimistic about achieving these goals. Interviewees also indicate that due to their family’s financial security, they are both expected and able to focus on tertiary educational, rather than earn wages and contribute to their families’ incomes. This is directly in contrast to male youths’ realities in Batticaloa, who faced conflicting expectations.

Youth interviewees who either are actively engaged in their tertiary studies or are currently employed do not indicate a high level of pressure to immediately accomplish additional tasks to earn respect from their peers, family, and society. These youth seem comfortable with their position and ‘on the right track’ to attain their personal aspirations and goals. This positive outlook is largely due to the lack of a strict timeline.

**Economic Realities and Financial Responsibilities**

Poverty in Sri Lanka varies substantially by province and by district. Regional disparities in poverty are reflected by the large gaps between the districts with the highest and lowest incidence of poverty (Gunetilleke and Senanayake, 2004). This is also represented in the research study, where interviews and focus groups were conducted in one of the poorest districts,
Monaragala, and one of the richer areas, Colombo. According to the government’s 2006-2007 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), one of out every three persons in the district of Monaragala is poor – giving the district a poverty headcount index of 33.2 percent. The same figures for Colombo and Batticaloa are 5.4 percent and 10.7 percent, respectively (Department of Census and Planning, 2008).

As mentioned, economic realities have a significant impact on educational opportunities for male youth in Sri Lanka (See Education). In addition, economic realities inhibiting disadvantaged children from attending the top private primary and secondary schools in the Colombo area also hamper their ability to build social networks, which are essential components to finding jobs. Many male youth are prohibited from building strong social networks because of the economic realities faced by their families.

Economic realities facing male youth in Sri Lanka center on two aspects: 1) financially assisting family members; and 2) economic impediments to achieving educational goals. Interviewees indicate strong social pressure for male youth to financially assist family members, particularly their parents and sisters. Pressures to provide financially for parents is usually the responsibility of males, however, interviewees in Colombo indicate that women are increasingly contributing financially to their parents. However, a women’s financial contribution to their families is optional and not an expectation.

The financial responsibilities of youth are largely dependent on their socio-economic status and regional location. Male youths’ economic responsibilities were twofold. The first major financial responsibility consists of the immediate expectation to contribute financially to the family to cover household expenses or save funds for a sister’s dowry (see Dowry section below).

Male youth in Batticaloa feel a significant amount of pressure to contribute to their families’ incomes. Interviewees across all generations stressed the need for young men to help their fathers save money for dowries (see Dowry section below). In Monaragala, men are expected to contribute to their family’s income if they are not engaged in academic pursuits. Moreover, their ability to do so is an important component of being seen as respected adult man in society. Compared to Batticaloa, however, the expectation that male youth contribute to their sisters’ dowries is not as strong.

Interviewees in Colombo indicate that providing financial support to parents is less of a concern in comparison to interviewees in the Batticaloa and:

“Since the day I started earning, I'm contributing to my families' expenditures. And I really love to do that. It's not compulsory, but it's a habit in Sri Lanka.”
– Male Adult, (Age 28) Colombo

“When he gets a job and he is looking after his parents, he is defined as a man.”
- Female Youth (Age 18), Colombo
Monaragala. In Colombo, interviewees indicate that parents did not expect immediate financial contributions from their sons or daughters, which allows youth to exclusively focus on educational goals. Additionally, the majority of youth interviewees in Colombo indicate providing financial support for their parents in the future is optional, rather than a distinct expectation. This grants youth more freedoms in their educational and professional pursuits. Along with this, male youth in Colombo that do not face these expectations generally come from households that are wealthy enough so that the male youth do not need to help their parents financially. Most Colombo male youth interviewed either spend what they earn from working or put those wages into their own savings accounts. It is important to note that although parents may not expect future financial support, most youth indicate they would like to support their parents as they aged – hinting at a broader social expectation to do so.

Interviewees also indicate that in the past, expectations for young men and young women varied substantially. Traditionally, women were not expected to contribute financially to their families. Men were expected to be the breadwinners for their families and women were expected to take care of children at home. However, many youth, especially those in Colombo, noted that these norms are shifting, as it is now more acceptable and common for women to have jobs. One factor driving this change is the quickly increasing cost of living throughout Sri Lanka. Only in Colombo did interviewees indicate that in order to meet these rising costs, there is a stronger need for both male and female youth to earn wages to cover the costs of living in the city.

**Conflicting Expectations for Education and Family Contributions**

When asked about the expectations of education, financial responsibilities, and employment, interviewees in Batticaloa and Monaragala stress that these expectations are often conflicting. These financial responsibilities present a clear challenge for male youth, since it is difficult to simultaneously work toward both short-term and long-term financial goals. Sometimes, there is not just an expectation, but also a strong need for male youth to immediately contribute financially to their family, often preventing male youth from furthering their education. In turn, failing to pursue further education hampers male youths’ ability to care for their parents at a level deemed respectable. This dichotomy is more pronounced in the semi-urban and rural locations of Batticaloa, Kiran, and Monaragala.

Male youth in Batticaloa and Monaragala felt they are expected to simultaneously pursue a tertiary education and contribute financially to their families. Male youth expressed concern and confusion about how they should simultaneously pursue these two disparate goals. They also indicate this pressure is augmented by the high number of fatherless households, a consequence of the conflict and tsunami. Male youth indicate that one of the key responsibilities expected from them by society is that they assist their parents in saving for their sisters’ dowries (See Dowry section below).

For many male youth of a lower socio-economic status, these conflicting pursuits from family and society are a source of stress. In reality, many of these youth interviewed indicate that due to economic constraints, they would probably leave their educational pursuits earlier than hoped to provide economic support to their families. Only male youth in Batticaloa and Monaragala mention this being a stressful issue. There could be male youth that face these challenges in Colombo as well; however, all those interviewed were English-speaking elite youth due to research translation challenges.
Employment

Aside from pursuing educational opportunities, interviewees indicate that male youth are expected to make progress towards finding formal sector employment. All interviewees, including women and individuals of older generations, stressed that for a male youth to acquire the respect of his community, it is essential that he have a full-time, formal sector job. Additionally, having a “proper” job is viewed as a requirement that male youth must fulfill prior to getting married. What constitutes society’s definition of a “proper” job varies by social status and location. Every male youth interviewed emphasized that this is a top priority in their life, even though the specific types of jobs they consider to be desirable varied.

Interviewees in Colombo express a desire for young men to obtain upper-echelon private sector jobs. In Colombo, youth feel society is accepting of formal employment in a broad range of fields, cutting across the private and public sectors. Commonly cited examples of occupations that gain the respect of their peers, family and society include: engineer; doctor; lawyer; and academic professions. In the Batticaloa and Monaragala regions (semi-urban and rural locations), interviewees expressed a desire for young men to obtain public sector jobs with the government, or if that is not feasible, a lower-echelon private sector job such as working with an NGO. Public sector jobs are perceived as stable, due to the provision of pensions and medical benefits.

While they recognized that finding employment in Sri Lanka today is not easy, many youth in Colombo felt that given their educational qualifications they would be able to find a good job. As discussed, particularly in Colombo, interviewees state that having an education is critical to securing a good job and that obtaining a university degree would provide them with the best chance of obtaining a desirable position.

The sentiments of youth in Batticaloa are dramatically different than those of youth in the capital city. In general, youth in Batticaloa feel that they lack access to viable job opportunities and express disillusionment with the country’s political system. In particular, many Tamil youth attribute the lack of public sector jobs available to discrimination along ethnic criteria that favor Sinhalese job seekers. They also felt that politicians make promises to promote job opportunities for youth that often go unfulfilled.

Interviewees repeatedly emphasize the insufficient supply of jobs for qualified individuals. Many youth felt that they have to take jobs that are not directly relevant to their fields of study or professional qualifications. Interviewees indicate that ‘proper’ jobs were in short supply and if a young person

“If youth have a job, then their family will respect them.”
– Male Youth (Age 24), Kiran

“There is a clear mismatch between the types of jobs youth want, and what the market can provide. We have conflict situations with the youth because everybody is trying to become doctors or have an ideal job but the demand for these jobs doesn't match the supply so that is where the clash starts to happen...it would be good to change the attitude of the people, sometimes parents want their children to reach a perfect level, so home life becomes stressful with parents demanding great things from their children, but there are certain circumstances where parents need to accept alternative schemes like technical school or vocational school. Desirability for these jobs should be created.”
– Adult Female (Age 27), Colombo
is unable to obtain a good job before their late twenties or early thirties, they will be forced to seek a job that is below their qualifications. This sentiment is particularly strong in Batticaloa and Monaragala. Interviewees in Colombo have a broader variety of less desirable jobs than interviewees in Batticaloa and Monaragala. Interviewees in Batticaloa and Monaragala felt their only viable options to finding formal sector employment are to work in agriculture, garment factories, or work as a labor migrant to Colombo, or work internationally. In contrast, interviewees in Colombo felt they could find less desirable office jobs, or migrate and seek work as professionals abroad, if forced to be underemployed.

Another common thread throughout the interviews is the prevalence with which politicians dole out public sector jobs through systems of favoritism and corruption. Interviewees almost universally stressed the importance of political connections and patronage in getting a job in the public sector. Participation in political parties, especially campaigns for local politicians, is perceived as essential if a young person wants to obtain a public sector job. Nearly all of the youth interviewed state that politicians handed out the majority of public sector jobs. Youth described two methods of getting a public sector job: first, knowing a politician through family connections; or second, working on a political campaign at a high level, so that youth are personally acquainted with the politician. Interviewees from throughout the country indicate that their lack of access to political networks effectively precludes them from public sector employment. Very few interviewees felt that a person could obtain a public sector job using their academic qualifications. These challenges constitute a constraining factor for all youth, as they attempt to find permanent, formal sector jobs in Sri Lanka.

While interviewees throughout the country expressed frustrations with the high levels of political patronage, these sentiments are especially pronounced in the Batticaloa region. This seems to be the case for two reasons: 1) public sector jobs are especially desired in this region of the country, so their aspirations are high and quite prevalent; and 2) the Tamil population in the region feels particularly disaffected and discriminated against. Tamil youth indicate that due to the conflict, they have had limited educational opportunities and are limited in their ability to participate in politics. This combination effectively eliminates their ability to find public sector jobs since they have no avenues to gain entry to these positions.

Many interviewees state that the expectation to find full-time employment in the formal sector is a significant source of stress in their lives. Youth in the Batticaloa region particularly emphasize this point. Obstacles include the lack of adequate professional and academic qualifications – including the ability to attain tertiary education. Some youth noted that individuals that do

"In Sri Lankan society, earning a wage, that means having a job of some sorts, a job as defined by society so far. Engineers, doctors, lawyers, academics, good jobs in the private sector—these jobs are perceived as being stable and providing good income. In upper middle class Sri Lankan society, jobs such as carpenter and plumber are not as socially accepted, even if these jobs provide good wages. For middle class and lower middle class individuals, public sector jobs are perceived to be extremely stable because of pensions.”

– Male Youth (Age 26), Colombo

“Everything depends on the politicians. Sometimes you can pay a politician to get you a job but I don’t want to pay.”

– Male Youth (Age 26), Batticaloa
graduate from university are still unable to find jobs, contributing to stress among youth. Finally, political connections are seen as necessary to finding employment in the public sector. Very few interviewees feel they could get a public sector job without political connections. Two mechanisms through which youth can potentially increase their employment opportunities are social networks and migration, which are discussed in detail below.

**Social Networks**

Social networks are seen as a necessity in Sri Lankan society. Political networks, as discussed in the previous section, are perceived as an essential component of an individual’s social network, especially when trying to secure a public sector job. In addition to political networks, extended family networks and social networks are heavily relied upon to assist in obtaining jobs and receiving preferential treatment for goods and services.

Interviewees had a difficult time articulating the benefits of social networks and their structures, but rather discussed social networks in terms of valuing their friends and family and seeing the importance of favoring them in the business arena. Interviewees expressed value in their own social networks but frustration for what they saw as an elitist political system. Interviewees utilize a similar structure of networks, but the political iteration is simply at a higher socio-economic level.

The importance of social networks is particularly emphasized in Monaragala, with focus group interviewees explicitly stating it is important for male youth to attain the respect of their communities. Older interviewees particularly emphasize the importance of all male youth developing a good social network, as a way to gain respect within their communities and be seen as responsible and eligible for marriage.

**Migration**

Migration to pursue educational or work opportunities is common in Sri Lankan society. Interviewees indicate that migrants generally fall into two categories. The first category consists of low-skilled workers, traditionally of a lower socio-economic status, searching for jobs in the Middle East to support their families. The second group consists of male youth, primarily of a higher socio-economic status, who have the opportunity to attend a foreign university. Armed with degrees from international universities, many of Sri Lanka’s university-educated male youth seek highly specialized jobs in the work force abroad.

In search of higher wages, male and female low-skilled laborers from poorer provinces find employment in countries such as the U.A.E., Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, in spite of the difficult working conditions they experience abroad. Interviewees in Batticaloa and Monaragala indicate that working abroad for several years is a good opportunity to provide for their families and save up for marriage or to build a house. Workers send remittances back home, and return to Sri Lanka after working abroad for several years. For the most part, female migrants find employment as domestic laborers, while men tended to work in manual labor or in the tourism industry.

"The spirit of Sri Lankan communities goes out, there's an outflow always. We don't get much people from other countries who are qualified...Sri Lanka cannot compete with other countries in terms of salaries and benefits."
-Male Youth (Age 28), Colombo
In contrast, male youth with sufficient economic resources are able to attend university abroad in places such as the United States, England, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore. Reasons for studying abroad were two-fold. The first reason is that foreign education is seen as more desirable overall. Many interviewees indicate that any family who could afford to provide their child with an international education should. Secondly, many male youth travel abroad in the hope that after graduating from a foreign university, they can obtain a visa to live and work overseas.

In Colombo, some interviewees cite the lack of suitable employment opportunities in Sri Lanka as a motivating factor for migration. They note that in Sri Lanka, there is a shortage of jobs for those looking for work in fields such as engineering, biology, and electronics. In general, the migration of skilled individuals from the country is viewed as having a negative impact on Sri Lankan society, due to the loss of qualified professionals. Many interviewees noted that Sri Lanka cannot compete with the higher wages available in other countries.

**Progress towards marriage and family**

The majority of interviewees indicate that for males, marriage is seen as a result of transitioning into adulthood, rather than an expected prerequisite. Generally males are expected to marry after they find a job. If a job cannot be secured in the formal sector, then they will seek any type of informal employment – informal work primarily consists of farming or fishing. Ideally, society also expects males to marry after they have met their immediate responsibility of ensuring the financial security of their siblings and parents.

After a male youth is working steadily and his family’s finances are secure, he will begin to work towards getting married. Generally, male youth are expected to marry between the ages of 26 to 35, and women are expected to do so between the ages of 18 to 25. Many interviewees state that, in Sri Lanka, a married man is seen as more responsible and mature than an unmarried man. Interviewees also noted that having children is a marker of even greater responsibility, and in turn respectability, and that married couples are expected to have children.

Older interviewees indicate there are specific characteristics they would ideally expect their daughter’s husbands to possess. These expectations were echoed by young women as well and are, for the most part, similar across the country. Principal concerns are that a man be a respected person who cares for his family, that he has ensured the financial stability of his nuclear family before setting up his own household, and that he has a secure job that will enable him to provide for his wife and future.
children. Secondary concerns that were echoed by a majority of interviewees across research locations included that a man be older, have a higher level of education, and earn more money than his future wife.

Interviewees in Colombo, Batticaloa, and Monaragala state that male youth should accomplish certain milestones prior to getting married, including finishing school (their ideal level of education varied by region), being financially stable, and acquiring land to build a home. Economic realities and family dynamics discussed above can hamper an individual’s ability to marry.

Most youth state that their families, and their parents in particular, have substantial influence over whom they marry. Interviewees noted that over time however, some of these factors, such as horoscopes and socioeconomic status, have become less important. Interviewees also noted that youth today have more freedom to choose their spouse and that love marriages, as opposed to arranged marriages, are becoming more common.

**Dowry**

While many interviewees indicate that dowry expectations are changing throughout the country, dowries are still widely cited as a challenge for male youth, especially in the Batticaloa region. Referred to as “the dowry problem” by many interviewees, this tradition is the expectation that a woman’s family provide her with a dowry as a prerequisite to entering marriage. The provision of a dowry is frequently mentioned as a societal expectation that places significant stress on all members of the family. The expectations and type of dowry varied, mostly by ethnicity and religious denomination. Based on the interviews and focus groups, the most severe burden seemed to fall on the Tamil and Muslim populations.

The Tamil interviewees in the eastern part of the country are extremely concerned with their ability to supply female family members with a dowry. This social expectation places severe pressure on families, especially young men in fatherless households. Women are increasingly working to help save for their own dowry; however, the principle burden is still perceived to fall on the males of the household. All Tamil interviewees indicate that brothers need to ensure that all their sisters were married before they are able to look for a wife and establish their own households. Muslim interviewees were less inclined to discuss dowry concerns with the researchers; however, they indicate that despite the fact that the system is changing, the groom’s family would still expect a dowry. Several young male Muslim interviewees did indicate that they would not ask for or expect their future wives to provide a dowry but that their parents and extended family would most likely still expect it be provided. Overall, the dowry system did not seem to be as significant a source of stress for Muslim interviewees as it did for Tamils. Finally, Sinhalese interviewees indicate that traditionally, a dowry is given at the time of marriage, but that the practice is becoming less institutionalized. As opposed to being a barrier to marriage it is now seen as a tradition. Interviewees in Colombo indicate that the bride’s family now offers the

“In our culture, almost every girl’s family has to pay a dowry.”
 – Male Youth (Age 18), Kiran

“For a guy, he might not be married until he’s 35 because he has to settle his sisters first, we have that tradition here…. If his sister is not married, then it’s a problem.”
 – Male Youth (Age 23), Colombo
dowry for tradition’s sake rather than complying with the demands made by the husband and his family. The amount of dowry varies from family to family, but it is indicated that the lack of a dowry is no longer seen as viable reason to prevent a marriage in Colombo.

An overarching trend seen with the dowry system is that due to increased social expectation that women receive an education and, depending on the husband, work after marriage the amount of a dowry expected is lessening and in some cases being eliminated.

**Family Dynamics**

All interviewees emphasize the crucial role of family in Sri Lankan society. Parents are seen as the most important guiding force in a youth’s life. All major life decisions for youth are discussed with their parents, which have varying amounts of influence over their outcomes. All of the important decisions, such as educational aspirations, career paths, and marriage, are influenced or decided by parents. One of the most important changes over time discussed by interviewees throughout the country is the increased level of influence that children now have when discussing important decisions with their parents. Interviewees in Colombo had the greatest degree of autonomy in terms of making their own educational and professional career choices.

Interviewees from all regions of the country indicate that parents kept a closer eye on daughters’ activities in comparison to their sons’ activities, and that daughters had less influence regarding important life decisions than sons. The difference in parental treatment of daughters and sons varied by region, with interviewees in Colombo indicating their parental relationship with their children, regardless of gender, is the most similar.

In Sri Lanka, family connections have a substantial influence on male youths’ career decisions. Many male youth noted that their parents would like them to work in the family business. Additionally, in some cases, families act as an important support network when male youth face difficulties finding employment. In particular, male youth that come from households that are sufficiently wealthy are able to rely on the support of their parents if they cannot find a job.

**New Freedoms for Male Youth**

Many interviewees in Colombo state that young people today have more opportunities than in the past. Some youth feel that as a result of increased access to technology and globalization that modernization is occurring and youth today are more open-minded and independent. Some interviewees feel that in comparison to the past, youth today have more control over their career paths and are better able to face challenges.
Education is one factor that is extending the period during which an individual is considered a youth. Compared to when their parents were young, many youth – especially in Colombo – are staying in school longer, and consequently, delaying the search for a full-time job. This is contributing to a lengthening of the youth phase, because full-time employment is one of the main markers of adulthood in Sri Lankan society. Many youth state that they have, or expect to attain, more years of education than their parents, reflecting the importance of additional years of education.

For the most part, youth felt that there is an increase in love marriages and that youth today have more influence over who they marry than in the past. Male youth noted that traditionally, factors such as a girl’s family background, socioeconomic status, ability to provide an acceptable dowry, and horoscopes were taken into account when choosing a spouse. Recently however, these norms are changing.

Another shift in cultural norms can be seen in expectations regarding employment for women. Traditionally, a woman is not expected to have a job after marriage. While some interviewees agreed with this expectation, others – especially in Colombo – rejected this norm and felt that it is important for both the husband and wife to have jobs.

Key Points

- Though all male youth will become adults at some age, becoming a respected adult is the true goal of male youth interviewees.
- The major expectations for male youth revolve around education, employment, and progress towards marriage and family.
- Despite the end of military hostilities in 2009, the civil war continues to adversely affect the opportunities of male youth.
- Youth feel they lack voice and influence in politics.
- Male youth express that conflicting expectations between education and financially supporting their families is a large source of stress in their lives, especially in the East.
- Economic realities facing male youth in Sri Lanka impede their educational goals.
- Youth aspire to obtain more education than their parents and, have access to tertiary level education.
- Male youth aspire for a full-time, formal sector job, although many youth feel they will be unable to find work or suffer from underemployment.
- In the East, contributing to sisters’ dowries is a large source of stress for male youth.
- Social networks and systems of political patronage are seen as the only form of obtaining public sector employment.
- Youth feel they have outlets to impact society.
- For male youth, marriage is seen as a result of transitioning into adulthood, specifically finding formal sector employment, rather than an expected prerequisite.
- The family continues to have a large impact on male youth in Sri Lanka with changes emerging in terms of decision making, new freedoms for youth, later marriage and smaller family size expectations.
Conclusion

Youth in Sri Lanka is primarily defined by activities and behaviors, though loose age brackets were still applied to this phase (approximately 18 and 32 years for males). However, this age bracket fluctuates, depending largely on youths’ socioeconomic status and financial resources. In regions such as Batticaloa and Monaragala, many interviewees indicate that the period of youth ends earlier, around the age of 26. Reasons for this difference are primarily due to the financial responsibilities that youth are expected to bear. In Batticaloa, the burdens placed on young men to provide for their families have been exacerbated by the conflict. As a result of the large number of male family members killed in the conflict, many male youth are now confronted with greater responsibilities to take care of their siblings and parents. In contrast, the majority of male youth in Colombo do not feel substantial pressures to contribute to their families’ incomes. Most youth in Colombo expressed satisfaction with this period of their lives, stating that this is a time to gain life experiences.

Most male youth do not view the transition from youth to adulthood as challenging. However, for many, the biggest concern is being viewed as a respected adult by their family members and communities. For male youth in Sri Lanka, gaining the respect of society hinges significantly on their ability to find a full-time, formal sector job. Having a permanent job and being financially stable are also key requirements that a man should achieve prior to getting married.

Most youth in Colombo express satisfaction with this period of their lives and generally, consider the period prior to becoming an adult as a time for male youth to enjoy themselves and gain life experiences. In contrast to the perspectives of youth in Colombo, many youth in Batticaloa say they feel pressure to support their families financially and express frustration at the lack of jobs available.

Over their lifetimes, male youth in Sri Lanka have experienced tremendous societal changes, including the end of the decades-long civil war and the subsequent improvement of the country’s security climate. While society impacts the challenges and opportunities that youth face in numerous ways, youth are also key players in impacting and changing their society. Some of the ways that youth are impacting their society can be seen in the changes of traditional norms dictating who one should marry, expectations for women to work outside the home, and the benefits that youth provide to their society.

Regarding expectations for marriage, most youth feel that compared to the past, the number of love marriage has risen and that youth today have more of a say over whom they marry. While arranged marriages were the norm for their parents, most youth state that love marriages have become much more prevalent. While there has been an increase in love marriages, parents of both parties were still said to have the ultimate decision in approving a love match.

When choosing a spouse, male youth noted that traditionally, factors such as a girl’s family background, socioeconomic status, ability to provide an acceptable dowry, and horoscopes were taken into account. In Colombo, most male youth feel that these norms are diminishing, particularly, the importance of horoscopes and dowries. Many male youth rejected this norm, stating that receiving a dowry is not important to them and that they would not ask their brides’ family to provide a dowry. However, youth feel that they must marry within their religion and ethnicity, a requirement that has not changed considerably over time. Additionally, for the
bride’s family, the employment situation of the future groom is very important – another expectation that has not weakened over time.

In addition to expectations regarding marriage, another shift in cultural norms is related to opportunities for women to work outside the home. Traditionally, a woman is not expected to have a job after marriage as her main responsibilities center around domestic household chores and raising children. Although some male youth agree with this expectation, others - especially in Colombo - reject this norm and feel that both the husband and wife should have jobs. Although employment for women is more accepted than before, this is often still dependent on the husband’s approval. Particularly in Batticaloa, women wanted to work, but felt that doing so would hurt their husband’s ego, as this would create the perception that he cannot provide for his family if his wife has to work. In Colombo, youth have been able to change societal expectations and it is more acceptable for women to have a job. However, in Batticaloa and other semi-urban/rural areas, women are still largely expected to work inside the home.

Many interviewees state that male youth today have more opportunities to make a positive impact on their society. Organizations and programs such as youth associations are beneficial as they empower youth and teach youth how to take initiative and solve problems within their communities. Additionally, these organizations provide youth with avenues to volunteer in their communities and raise awareness about key issues affecting young men and women such as youth unemployment. Interviewees also expressed that youth can be a benefit to Sri Lanka by contributing to the country’s social and economic development. In Colombo for example, some interviewees noted that after working abroad for a few years, they would like to return to Sri Lanka to invest in the country and set up their own businesses.

Today, male youth in Sri Lanka are confronted with multiple expectations and pressures from their families, communities, and society as they transition from youth to adulthood. The challenges and opportunities that they face are impacted by factors such as the country’s political climate and economic situation. The lives of youth and their families were drastically affected by the civil war. The end of the conflict has led to many changes in the country, including greater economic and education opportunities for male youth. In the aftermath of the conflict, male youth want to have a positive impact on their society and it is critical that their voices are heard. With all of these various thoughts and experiences surrounding male youth in Sri Lanka, it is clear that Sri Lanka male youth are an important portion of the population. How they impact their society will not only shape themselves, but will also shape Sri Lanka’s future, and their grievances must be heard now.
Key Findings

Similarities Between the Countries
Several similarities emerged in the current experiences of male youth in the researched areas of these two very different countries. Key similarities between these two very different countries include: male youth striving to achieve respected adulthood; societal and familial expectations of education, employment, and progress toward marriage; the need to make social connections in order to be successful in those areas; the importance of family in the lives of youth; male youths’ feelings that they have no voice in government and few constructive outlets to genuinely effect change in their societies; and that youth are not rushing to be seen as adults, but instead are largely content with this period of their lives in spite of the challenges that they face. The purpose of this qualitative study was to further understand the dynamics for male youth in each Sri Lanka and Nepal. While not intended to generalize between the two or for the South Asia region as a whole, for purposes of brevity, the similarities found are summarized together below.

Respected Adulthood is the End Goal
- The primary goal for male youth is to become a respected adult in their societies. While transitioning to adulthood is not seen as particularly challenging, becoming a respected adult is much more difficult.
- Youth are, however, in no rush to be adults. Youth interviewees are satisfied with this period of their lives and do not rush to be seen as adults. This is largely because youth view this stage of their lives as having less responsibility compared to when they become adults and have a family and the accompanying obligations. Youth in both Sri Lanka and Nepal speak positively of their ability to be more carefree than adults. While youth are content with their current life phase, they look forward to gaining the respect from society and family accorded to adults.

Expectations of Education, Employment and Progress Towards Marriage
- Expectations include: Obtaining a higher level of education than their parents, being employed in a well-paid, full-time, formal sector position, and making progress towards marriage. Additional expectations exist that differ by country, but education and employment are given the highest level of priority, both of which contribute to one’s marriage eligibility.
- Conflicting expectations for education and employment exist in that youth are supposed to achieve higher levels of education, but at the same time are often expected to contribute financially to their families.
- Full-time, salaried employment preferably in the public sector or at banks, and NGOs in Nepal, is the goal for youth according to interviewees in all areas visited in both countries regardless of location or other factors. Self-employment and labor or service jobs (ex: tailor, security guard, construction worker, plumber) are not seen as respected positions. Working in agriculture in Nepal and agriculture or fishing in Sri Lanka provides necessary money, but not respect. In both capitals there is a slowly growing acceptance of additional full-time salaried, private sector office jobs.
- Unemployment, underemployment, and migration for the purposes of education or labor are widespread and are an even greater problem for youth than the overall population. Domestic violence in both countries is discussed primarily in relation to economic
worries leading to increased family problems as well as increased frustration and drinking.

- There are gaps between the hopes and realistic expectations for their future given the current political and economic realities in Nepal and Sri Lanka make many youth feel frustrated.
- Youth is not a homogenous group. Youth is a broad term that encompasses individuals of various locations, ages, life phases, ethnic groups, religions, sexual orientations and more. Expectations, traditions, barriers, facilitators and stressors vary greatly within the “youth” group in both countries. For example, youth in rural and semi-urban areas face higher societal and familial pressure to contribute to their families’ income. However, youth in higher socio-economic urban areas are primarily expected to focus on education. Additionally interviewees in similar demographic circumstances had differing levels of frustration and aspirations.

Social Connections or Networks are Necessary

- The need for social networks and connections holds great sway on employment options. This has been true in both countries for some time and is particularly evident for the limited number of government positions, but also in jobs with the private sector and NGOs. The need to acquire social connections drives youth involvement in political parties, although to a much greater degree in Nepal.

High Importance of Family

- Throughout South Asia family plays an important role for youth - this has implications for housing, education, financial responsibilities, employment and marriage in both Nepal and Sri Lanka. One impact seen is that living with families through marriage allows male youth additional freedom to focus on education without having the financial burden of paying for housing.
- Increasingly, youth are gaining more of a voice in family decision-making, particularly when making decisions regarding marriage and employment options. However, family elders continue to have the ultimate say with most decisions.
- Compared to their parents, male and female youth today are marrying later and families are having fewer children.

Youth Feel They Lack Voice and Have Few Constructive Outlets

- Youth in both countries feel they lack a voice and influence in the government and that politicians are not genuinely interested in addressing their needs. There is a correlated feeling that they are being used in politics but that their participation does not equate to influence or youth focused change. Youth in both countries feel there are limited constructive outlets to effect positive local development or improve their society or communities – however, this plays out differently in the two countries.
- Youth see this lack of voice and influence as a lack of respect.
Country Specific Key Findings
While similarities existed, as anticipated many of the findings differed between the two countries.

Nepal
According to interviewees, the major trends for male youth in Nepal today include: very high expectations both of and by youth; a desire by youth to improve their local community; many barriers resulting from the current political instability; high levels of youth engagement in political parties primarily for economic rather than ideological reasons; a largely absent youth population due to migration for work and higher education; and a difference in the definition of youth by the general public and the government.

High Expectations
- There are currently very high expectations for youth from their families, societies and themselves. Additionally youth have very high expectations for their futures. While this hope has subsided significantly since the 2006 CPA, and interviewees feel frustrated with the slow progress in the country, this hope still remains.
- In Nepal, the major expectations for youth revolve around education, employment, local development, community respect, and progress towards marriage and family. Particularly in terms of marriage eligibility, education, potential for employment, one’s character, involvement in local development, and showing respect for tradition and religion are highlighted.
- Nepali youths’ responses to these expectations vary across different locations. In urban and semi-urban areas, many youth feel frustrated with their limited abilities to meet these extremely high expectations. Youth in the capital of Kathmandu are largely very frustrated over political instability and the poor economic condition of the country. They were also less affected by the conflict but continue to experience frequent political strikes. In contrast, many youth in rural areas feel that these high expectations motivate them to accomplish their goals. Respondents in rural locations are much more hopeful about the future, largely due to the improved freedom of movement, education and employment options in relation to their lives during the civil conflict.

Desire to Improve their Local Community
- Especially in rural and semi-urban areas, youth are eager to contribute to the development of their communities and effect positive social change. This includes aims to eliminate “superstitious” traditions and reduce inequality and discrimination along the lines of caste, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Male youth in Kathmandu also express a desire to further develop Nepal, but it is viewed more as a personal choice than a societal expectation.
- Interviewees suggest the desire to develop their communities ties to a broader interest by male youth in Nepal for a more “modern life” and to one day have a more modern family. Increased access to technology and information is seen as beneficial for a variety of reasons, including the introduction of modern ideas and innovations in health, education, and the possibility of effecting positive social change. In Nepal, with respect to social norms and traditions, youth may work to adapt the aspects desirable to their culture and eliminate some traditions they feel are outdated such as marrying one’s daughter before she starts puberty. An additional impact of technological access is that material things
such as modern dress, a cell phone and a motorcycle are increasingly seen as a part of being a man.

**Political Instability**
- Political instability is a major factor impacting the lives of youth including their access to employment, education and basic services.
- In a macro sense respondents feel that political instability breeds economic instability, unemployment, and continued poverty and that it is a major barrier to the necessary development the country so desires. Frequent political strikes often turn violent, ethnic tensions continue and some Nepalis including youth are employing tactics learned during the civil conflict such as extortion and kidnapping for economic gain.

**Youth Engagement in Political Parties**
- Male youth are currently providing the manpower for political violence through participation in student and youth wings of the national political parties.
- Youth join political parties in hopes of securing future employment and making connections with the leadership. Through interviews with both political and apolitical youth it emerged that few youth join due to ideological reasons but rather primarily for these economic purposes.

**Absent Youth Population Due to Migration**
- Nepal lacks sufficient job opportunities for male youth thus they are migrating abroad to find employment. These youth send remittances home to their families which are vital to their families’ survival and opportunities. However, conditions in these jobs are hard and returns are rarely what were expected.
- Youth are also migrating abroad for higher education, many of whom do not return. They see limited opportunity in Nepal.
- The rural areas in particular have few male youth as those that do not migrate abroad, may migrate to urban cities for the same reasons – education or employment. Many adjust to life in their new locations and either do not wish to return home, or cannot find jobs other than farming in their villages thus stay in the cities.

**Difference in General Definition of Youth and the Government Definition**
- In Nepal, youth is a largely age-defined concept including individuals between the ages of approximately 18 and 32. However, the government defines youth as individuals between the ages of 16 and 40 which was broadly seen as a political move rather than a reflection of true societal definitions of youth.

**Sri Lanka**
In Sri Lanka the realities for male youth differed in several ways. Specific trends found include: youth are generally not interested in participating in politics and feel they are [are what?]; youth prioritize education when feasible while still meeting family responsibilities; and stark regional differences in the educational and employment opportunities, family responsibilities, and attitudes of male youth. The findings specific to Sri Lanka are influenced by the civil war.

**Youth Generally Not Interested in Participating in Politics and Changing Their Society**
- Youth expressed a high level of frustration with political systems, especially in the Batticaloa region. All youth, but especially male youth, feel their voices and opinions are
not heard by politicians and that they have a negligible impact on the political system. Youth in Colombo indicated that at times striking was an effective way of drawing attention to an issue, however, this sentiment was not shared by respondents in Batticaloa or Monaragala. Youth also feel that systems of political patronage and corruption limit their employment opportunities as youth with insufficient economic resources or political and social connections do not have access to many jobs, especially those in the public sector. This trend is seen throughout the country but was especially pronounced in the East.

- The majority of respondents did not express interest in working to improve their communities. Those who did express interest were apathetic due to limited opportunities to improve their communities. A minority of youth in Colombo, are engaged in youth organizations that provide them with opportunities to volunteer and raise awareness about key issues affecting youth (ex: youth unemployment)

**Youth Prioritizing Education as Much as Family Responsibilities Will Allow**

- Education has historically been seen as very important in Sri Lanka and this emphasis only continues to grow. Education is seen as a way of improving one’s opportunities for formal sector employment. Respondents indicated that the primary focus of youth throughout the country should be academic achievement. All respondents, regardless of location expressed the importance of achieving the highest levels of education possible.
- Male youths’ ability to focus on their education is at times limited by familial expectations that they act as the breadwinner. This trend was more pronounced in Batticaloa and Monaragala where, due to necessity, male youth are expected to contribute financially to their family.

**Low Returns on Educational Investments**

- Underemployment, both being unable to find work and being employed beneath one’s qualifications, is a serious problem for male youth in Sri Lanka. As a result, many youth feel that their employment aspirations are unlikely to be fulfilled. Thus, even though youth are expected to focus on their education, they may lack the incentives to do so, especially if they have short term requirements to contribute to their families’ incomes.

**Stark Differences Between East and West in Terms of Opportunity, Family Responsibility and Attitude**

- The conflict is still very present in the minds of youth and their families, with noticeable differences in opportunities falling along regional and ethnic lines.
- Youths’ feelings about the future and their prospects to meet those expectations differ by location – youth in Colombo are fairly optimistic and feel that if they work hard enough, good things will be possible. In contrast, in Batticaloa, the Tamil youth interviewed expressed a sense of hopelessness and disillusionment with their personal prospects and the prospects for their communities. In particular, the Tamil youth population expressed feelings of marginalization and discrimination. Many felt that although the war has ended, their opportunities and circumstances have not significantly improved.
- Compared to youth in Colombo, youth in the East face stronger expectations to support their families financially. Male youth from poor households face stronger expectations to contribute to their families’ incomes. Especially in Batticaloa, a largely Tamil-populated district, male youth are frustrated with the pressures to simultaneously do well in school while at the same time have a job in order to contribute to their families’ incomes.
• Male youth in the East also face strong pressures to contribute to their sisters’ dowries. Additionally, they must ensure that their sisters are married before they themselves can get married. These expectations were much less prevalent in Colombo. These expectations are a significant source of stress for many male youth in the East (not so in the West).

Conclusion

Male youth in both Nepal and Sri Lanka have the potential to very positively contribute to their country’s economic and social development. They are increasingly educated, aware, and connected. However, those that cannot access constructive outlets in terms of jobs and social engagement are becoming increasingly frustrated and choose alternate routes such as political violence, apathy or migration abroad. Providing male youth with greater opportunities to effect positive change in their communities, voice their frustrations and hopes, expand the possibilities for what constitutes respected work into new industries, and meet their economic and educational aspirations is crucial to their ability to be this positive force for development.
Appendix

A. Biographical Data Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview #:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Name: ____________________________

Age: _______  Sex: Male / Female? (circle one)

What is your ethnicity? ____________________________

What religion do you practice? ____________________________

Where do you live currently? ____________________________

Where are you from? ____________________________

Are you married?  Yes / No (circle one)

If you have children, how many do you have?  Children: ____  Grandchildren: ____

How many siblings do you have?  Male: ____  Female: ____

Are you currently in school?  Yes / No (circle one)

What is the highest level of education you completed? ____________________________

Are you currently employed?  Yes / No (circle one)

What is your profession? ____________________________

Do you consider yourself a youth or an adult?  Youth / Adult / Undecided (circle one)
B. Semi-Structured Questionnaire

For all of the semi-structured interviews, the interview questions were based on the following questionnaire. For male youth, female youth, male adults, and female adults, the questionnaire served as a guide for the interview, but through the course of the interview some questions would be changed, replaced or additional questions would be asked.

Questions for Male Youth Respondents

Interview Logistics:
Duration: 45 minutes – 1 hour
To Bring:
- Questionnaire
- Audio Recorder
- Pen and Paper

Instructions: This is a semi-structured interview designed to facilitate an informative discussion between the interviewer and interviewee. This will be accomplished through asking the numbered key questions first, with follow-up sub-questions as needed in to guide the discussion.

Introduction

Welcome. Today we will be speaking to you about your opinions on male youths’ role in society, what challenges male youth face today and their transition into becoming a man. The conversation should take approximately one hour. If I ask you anything that you don’t wish to answer, you don’t have to – you can simply let us know and we will move on to then next question. If a question is confusing or unclear, please let me know, and I can ask it again in a different way. We would like your permission to tape record the interview. The recording is simply for us to help remember all of the important details you share with us and will not be shared with anybody else. Additionally, at the end of the interview we may ask to videotape particularly interesting quotes and insights. At the conclusion of the interview we can discuss if this is something you feel comfortable with. Finally, we will not use your name, nor personally identify you in regards to anything you say today – the information you give here will be confidential. Do you have any questions for us before we begin? Let’s get started.

Section 1: Society’s Expectations for Manhood

First, we’re going to start with some questions about society’s expectations of what it means to be a man.

1. When does society consider a young man to be an adult? What do you have to achieve to be a man?
   - Prompts:
     - Employment: Is having a job necessary to be a man?
     - Formal education: Is having a formal education important to being viewed as a man? Is there an ideal level of education?
- Economic threshold: Is there a certain economic threshold to be considered a man? Owning a home? Having a job? Having a certain amount of savings? Being able to care for immediate family? Extended family
- Marriage/ Marital Status: Is it important for a man to marry? Why?
- Parenthood: Is becoming a father an important part of manhood? How? What are fathers’ parental duties?
- Housing: Does a man need to own his own house?
- Social Capital: Do you need to attain a certain amount of social capital/standing/networks etc. in order to be viewed by society as a man?
- Cultural Traditions
- Religious group/ethnic group/caste requirements
- Violent behavior

2. Have these requirements changed over time? If so, how?
   - Prompt: How has the war impacted how young men become adults?

3. What are the benefits of being an adult?
   - Prompt: What can you do as a man that you can’t do as a young man?
   - Prompt: What can you do as a youth that you can’t do as a man?

4. How can you tell if someone is a youth (young man)?

5. Are you comfortable or satisfied being a youth at this stage in your life?
   - Prompt: Is being a youth stressful?
   - Prompt: How do you manage this stress?
   - Prompt: How does stress affect your family relationships?

6. Do your male friends feel pressure to conform to societal expectations of adulthood? Pressure from whom?

7. What jobs do you consider appropriate for men to do? Are there certain occupations that are viewed as more prestigious or desirable? What makes a job desirable?

8. What do you need to have accomplished in order to get married?

Section 2: Driving and Constraining Factors and the Impacts of Delayed Transition

Now we’re going to talk a little more about the challenges and opportunities that young men face.

1. Are these expectations realistic for youth today? / Are male youth able to meet them?
2. What is holding you back?
3. When your fathers and grandfathers were young were they able to meet them?
4. How has the civil war affected Sri Lankan/Nepali youths’ ability to meet these expectations? Has it changed their opportunities?
5. Do you feel respected as a male youth in this country?
6. How do social networks impact your opportunities?
   - Prompt: Job, School, Marriage, Other
7. Are you staying in school longer than your father? Is this making the youth phase longer? Why do they go to school?
8. Why did you leave school?
9. How important do you think your education will be to your future in-laws/wife?
10. Earlier we talked about what financial responsibilities a man is expected to bear. Are you able to meet these responsibilities?
   ○ If yes, how? If no, what challenges do you face?
     ▪ Do you need access to financial institutions to meet your responsibilities? Have you been able to access financial institution for bank accounts, credit, loans etc.
11. Do you contribute to your family’s income? If so, how much or in what way? What happens if you can’t?
12. Where are young men today employed? Where are your friends employed? What are the challenges young people like yourself face in finding employment?
   ○ If you can’t find a job what do you do with your time? How did you choose these activities? Do you find these activities rewarding?
13. Are you employed?
   ○ If yes: How did obtain your present job? How did you choose this profession? Is this job acceptable/desirable to you? If yes, how long did it take you to find this job?
   ○ If no: how long have you been looking work?
14. Why do young men migrate?
   ○ Did you have to leave home to attend college or find a job?
   ○ Do you think you are more likely to migrate than your father? Why?
15. What is your living arrangement? Do you plan to stay in this arrangement? Would you like to move? Is moving feasible? Where would you move to?
16. Regarding decision-making within your family:
17. What decisions can you make on your own and what does your family decide for you?
   ○ Prompt: Career, Marriage, Housing.
   ○ Are young men responsible for making decisions for their sisters, wives, or mothers? If so, when?
   ○ Do family members have influence over decisions about your career? When and who you marry?
18. What do male youth do around the house/what are their responsibilities? Is it acceptable for a youth to reprimand or beat his sister or mother? For what reasons? Is a man justified in beating his wife? Younger male siblings? For what reasons?
19. Regarding marriage:
   ○ Do you want to get married? Why do you want to get married? What changes after marriage? Where do you live after you get married?
   ○ How do you find a spouse? Is it hard to find a spouse? Why do you think that is? Why not?
   ○ How old do you want to be when you get married? How old was your father when he got married? Are people getting married earlier or later now? Why?
20. How old do you want to be/were you when you have/had children? Is this how old your father was when he had children?
21. Are there things you wish/would have wanted to accomplish before you become/became a parent? If so, what?
22. Shifting gears a bit, I’d like to talk a bit about politics:
   ○ Do youth have a voice in politics?
   ○ Do you have different political views than your parents? How are they different?
As a youth, does your political voice carry equal weight as a man’s? If not, what is the difference? What other avenues can you use to express yourself or make your voice heard?

Do you have a larger voice in political decision-making than your father did at your age?


Is this an appropriate response? Necessary response? Why or why not?

Are young men more or less likely to engage in violence than in the past?

Do you feel pressure to use violence to express your manhood?

Section 3: Priorities and Aspirations

Finally in this last section, I will ask you a few questions about the priorities and aspirations that young men have for their future, and how that has changed in the past few decades.

1. Does having a large male youth population affect Sri Lankan/Nepalese society? How?
3. What are three things you wish to achieve in life?
4. What are your parents’ hopes for you?
5. What do you want to do differently than your father? What do you hope to do that is the same?
6. Who are your role models?
7. How are youth different today than 20 years ago?
8. How are the challenges we have talked about impacting your ability to achieve your aspirations?

Close and Thank You

Those are all my questions. Is there anything I’ve missed or anything you’d like to clarify? Is there anything I should say differently when speaking to another interviewee?

Thank you so much for taking the time to sit down and speak with us, your comments were very insightful and valuable. Your responses will help supply our research study on male youths’ role in society and their transition into adulthood.
C. List of Key Informants

Nepal
1. Kathmandu University – Dr. Mahesh Banskota
2. The Alliance for Social Dialogue - Archita Pant
3. Youth Initiative - Santosh Acharya
4. Social Science Baha - Deepak Thapa
5. Subhash Ghimire
6. Plan Nepal – Makwanpur District: Dr Chandra Kumar Sen; Anil Deoja; Gus; Hem Poudyal; and Donal Keane.
7. Association of Youth Organizations in Nepal (AYON) – Pradip Pariyar
8. Youth Action Nepal - Pawan Roy
10. Tribhuvan University Department of Peace and Conflict - Pitambar Bhandari
11. Change Fusion Nepal - Rafael Poudel
12. Save the Children - Laxman Belbase

Sri Lanka
1. Young Researchers Collective – Andi Schubert
2. University of Colombo – Professor Hettige; Dr. (Rev) W. Wimalaratana; Pradeep Jeganathan
3. The World Bank – Anouk Tyagaraja; Melanie XX; Uma Selvaratnam; Hafiz Zainudeen
4. Prianth Iyaduria
5. Randy Sathyawadi
6. Plan Sri Lanka – Milton Batagoda; Karu Bandura
7. Care International – Prabu Deepan; Kamani Jinadasa
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