

Vikhu Piyadassi, A Monk's commitment to ending Child Marriage and harmful practices in remote communities in Nepal

Ven. Vikhu Piyadassi, a well-wisher of *Religions for Peace* Nepal, is a Buddhist monk from Ehipisso Budha Bihar. He has been involved in advocating and campaigning on various social issues. He has worked on programs that focus on the abolition of child marriage.



Ending child marriage is one of the key advocacies of *Religions for Peace* Nepal. Nepal has one of the highest rates of child marriages in Asia for both girls and boys. The legal age for both sexes to enter into marriage is 20, yet more than a third of young women aged 20-24 were married before reaching the age of 18, and just over one in ten by 15 years old. For Nepali boys, one in ten is married before reaching 18 years of age.

“I am committed to ending child marriage as a practice in Nepal, the issue is rampant especially in remote villages which I normally visit to campaign and sensitise communities on the need to end child marriage” shared Vikhu Piyadassi

In collaboration with local religious and community leaders, Ven. Vikhu conducts community meetings to educate the parents regarding the rights of children and the life-long impact of early marriages. He also conducts community and village level workshops and programs with children to raise their awareness about their basic rights and the need to eradicate child marriage practice.



In a community awareness raising program located in the remote area of Bankhandi Gurukul Vidyalaya, Saptari, Vikhu Piyadassi said:

“Our peaceful country Nepal is multi lingual and multi cultured as well. Although many districts of Nepal are suffering from religious mal-practices, it is our duty as religious leaders to minimize such mal-practices. The Nepali government and non-governmental organizations including *Religions for Peace* Nepal have been working on reducing and eliminating such practices and this is a positive thing.”



He has also been encouraging importance of people like Gurus (teachers) and religious leaders to preach against child marriage. He observes:

“In this program (with *Religions for Peace* Nepal), I noted the diverse representation of faith communities in. The religious leaders present in the forum admitted that the religious books never have stated that such mal-practices should be allowed. They even vouched that we should unite and should bring such negative trends to an end.”

Ven. Piyadassi’s campaign, he admitted, springs from his profound religious devotion to the compassionate Buddha. He reiterates that the sacred books do not allow such practice, and that children’s rights must be upheld, including the right to enjoy their youthful years.

The efforts of religious leaders like Vikhu Piyadassi to end child marriage are the continuing programs of *Religions for Peace* Nepal in collaboration with UNICEF to work for the abolition of such a practice. Nepal has the third highest rate of child marriage in Asia, and religious leaders are

trying to make a difference to change this scenario. We have started with our small steps and we are hopeful to make a big difference.

Religions for Peace is the world's oldest, largest and most representative multi-religious leadership platform, advancing common action among the world's faith communities. Unlike any other interfaith organisation, *Religions for Peace* works through legally registered, representative, multi-religious platforms ([Interreligious Councils](#)) in over 95 countries and 6 regions. We convene to catalyse and promote multi-religious collaboration for the common good. In Asia, [Religions for Peace Asia](#) is our regional affiliate founded in 1976. *Religions for Peace* Asia is part of the global *Religions for Peace* movement with a mission to advance common action among religious communities in Asia and the Pacific for peace.

The link to the Child Marriage video:

https://youtu.be/_2NRIN_uuR4

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