

Nepal gender bias sparks health crisis in young women: Amnesty

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Hundreds of thousands of young women living in impoverished areas of rural Nepal have developed a debilitating uterus condition which usually only occurs after the menopause, Amnesty International said Thursday.

In a report, Amnesty blamed "ingrained discrimination" for the widespread prevalence of uterine prolapse, a condition which sees the uterus descend into and protrude out of the vagina, with many [women](#) falling victim after having to return to work in the fields days after giving birth.

Patients suffer from [chronic pain](#) that leaves them unable to work, walk or even sit comfortably.

Madhu Malhotra, director of Amnesty's Gender, Sexuality and Identity Programme, said that successive governments had failed to address the underlying issues which led so many women to develop the condition.

"If you look at the risk factors leading to uterine prolapse, we see malnutrition among women, cultural practices like forced early marriages, early pregnancies, no rest after childbirth, poor access to healthcare," Amnesty's Malhotra told AFP in Kathmandu.

Nepal, one of the poorest countries in Asia, is a predominantly rural nation where women typically marry early, have children while still in their teens and are expected at the same time to labour in the fields.

Amnesty, quoting UN and Nepalese government figures, said that up to 10 percent of Nepal's 13.6 million female population were sufferers but the actual figure was much higher in some areas.

Prevailing social stigma around the condition, which makes it painful for women to have sex and complicates childbirth, leaves many women reluctant to seek help, the report said.

"It's high time it is seen as a human rights issue, not just a women's health issue," Malhotra said.

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