



COUNTRY BRIEFING: NEPAL



The Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) was launched by FCDO in 2012 as a 12-year commitment to reach the most marginalised girls in the world and is the largest global fund dedicated to girls' education.

The GEC had five projects working in Nepal, which aimed to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for 34,000 of the country's marginalised girls. Two projects focused on transitioning girls between basic and secondary education. Three projects supported the most marginalised and vulnerable out-of-school girls to gain functional literacy and numeracy, and transition into formal schooling or safe livelihoods.

LEAD PARTNER	PROJECT	WINDOW	START DATE	END DATE
Mercy Corps	Supporting the Education of Marginalised Girls in Kailali (STEM)	GEC-T	April 2017	March 2021
VSO (GEC-T)	Sisters for Sisters' Education	GEC-T	April 2017	June 2021
VSO (LNGB)	Empowering a New Generation of Adoles-cent Girls with Education (ENGAGE)	LNGB	August 2018	February 2023
People in Need (PIN) Nepal	Aarambha	LNGB	November 2018	March 2024
Street Child of Nepal	Marginalised no More (MnM)	LNGB	October 2018	March 2022



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LEAD PARTNER	NUMBER OF GIRLS REACHED	NUMBER OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES REACHED	NUMBER OF BOYS REACHED	TEACHERS TRAINED	TEXTBOOKS AND LEARNING MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED	CLASSROOMS AND LEARNING SPACES CONSTRUCTED OR MADE MORE ACCESSIBLE	STUDENT KITS DISTRIBUTED	ASSISTIVE LEARNING DEVICES PROVIDED
Mercy Corps	7,046	70	7,377	550	3,294	24	3,861	0
VSO (GEC-T)	7,328	227	7,485	560	3,794	0	2,056	102
VSO (LNGB)	2,525	179	118	422	5,785	0	1,051	111
PIN	9,497	28	0	1,957	32,210	723	6,585	401
Street Child of Nepal	7,856	90	0	538	6,765	238	3,716	50

Highlights

Improving transition and employment opportunities

According to the Midline Evaluation of the [Supporting the Education of Marginalised Girls in Kailali \(STEM\)](#) project, an overall transition rate of over 95 percent was observed among the in-school girls. The transition rate for out-of-school and graduate girls increased from about 30 percent at baseline to nearly 50 percent at midline. The endline showed that the combination of youth financial literacy training, business skills development training, vocational training and Girl Transition Fund (GTF) loan led to increases in girls' confidence, access to livelihood opportunities, decision-making ability in the household, self-efficacy and agency. In particular, girls who received GTF loans were found to be confidently running their business while also supporting their families financially. Also, as an unintended positive consequence, STEM observed that some girls who graduated from the vocational training and were running their business started training and employing other out-of-school girls in their communities. A similar out-of-school transition outcome was attained in the [Aarambha](#) project. Longitudinal assessments conducted under the project indicated that approximately 2,347 number of girls enrolled in TVET and 65% started and continued their businesses. Income generated from these businesses was being used in household, health and education expenses and to invest in the business itself. Findings also indicated that 50% of girls that had businesses were also practicing saving. Support from multi-stakeholders such as local suppliers, local government and employers for job creation and parents counselling was also being done to ensure retention and support in sustaining businesses.

Improving learning outcomes and transition for girls with disabilities

The Endline Evaluation of [Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education \(ENGAGE\)](#) project suggests that the learning and daily life skills of girls with severe disabilities improved by more than 60% from baseline to endline through parent/caregiver training, the provision of assistive devices, physiotherapy and counselling. At endline 92 girls with disabilities supported by the project transitioned to livelihood pathways. The project witnessed positive changes in parents' and communities' attitudes and perceptions towards educating girls with disabilities.

Improving enrolment for highly marginalised girls

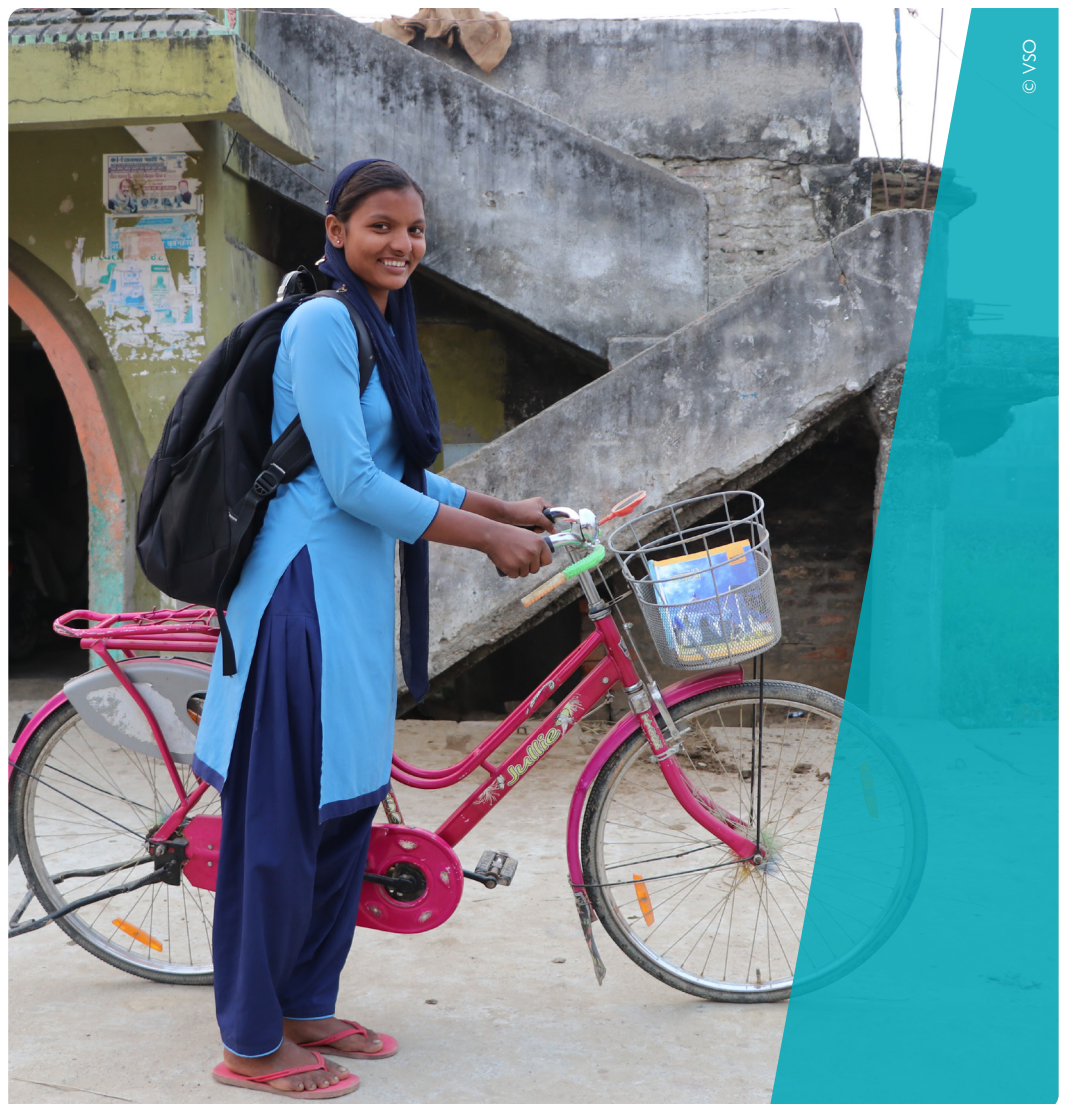
The [Marginalised no More \(MnM\)](#) project successfully motivated Musahar girls who had never been to school and achieved an enrollment rate of 48.3% overall, according to the project's Endline Evaluation. It is important to note that girls selected for the project were the first participate in education from the Musahar community and receive formal education. Similarly, the project was successful in overcoming various education barriers like economic, familial, community, perception of girls and document related. The [Aarambha](#) project also focused on integrating excluded young women in its interventions – pregnant and young mothers – were provided additional support (safe transportation, mental health and wellbeing support) and parental counselling sessions to ensure they continued with their businesses and did not dropout.

Improving self-esteem and self-efficacy

The Endline Evaluation of [Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education \(ENGAGE\)](#) project used the general self-efficacy tool to assess girls' self-belief to cope with difficult situations. This quantitative data showed that the average self-efficacy of girls rose from 60% at baseline to 90% at the endline. The girls supported (Little Sisters) reported that they were more self-confident because of the support received by the Big Sisters. Girls said they could set plans and have more agency about their future. These plans included starting their own business for older girls, while the younger girls had plans for continuing their education. The parents also highlighted that their daughters could assert themselves and were more confident in making decisions.

Increasing support for girls through engaging parents and mentors

Evidence from the [Aarambha](#) project showed that parental engagements via tailored educational sessions helped parents raise awareness and equip them with skills that support girls at home, promote school quality and support gender retention. A study investigating changes in community attitudes in 2023 indicated that 96% of parents capacitated through sessions highlighted concerns on early childhood marriages in the community. The [Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education \(ENGAGE\)](#) project supported marginalised girls by working with school staff and parents, community members and mentors (the Big Sisters). The project witnessed positive changes in parents' and communities' attitudes and perceptions towards the importance of girls' access to quality education. Through sensitisation work with parents – in which the Big Sisters played an important role – parents reduced girls' domestic duties and ensured they had time to study at home. The Big Sisters made a positive difference to their Little Sisters by motivating them to enrol in school, improving their learning and building their self-confidence.



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¹ Read more in our think piece [Foundational Learning for All: including the most marginalised is possible, pragmatic and a priority](#)

Delivering accelerated learning

The [Marginalised no More](#) project delivered an effective Accelerated Learning Programme, as evidenced by their final cohort demonstrating considerable improvements in literacy and numeracy skills. This was corroborated by qualitative data from girls who commented that their learning improvements could be credited to the efforts of community educators, the fact that learning centres were easily accessible and the improvement in quality of instruction and teaching methods used (i.e., interactive ways of teaching, pedagogy involving playing games, having discussions, pictorial illustrations and gender-sensitive teaching methods). These methods were based on the Teaching at the Right Level approach. The multi-grade management and learning approach applied under the [Aarambha](#) project also yielded positive learning outcomes with out-of-school girls enrolled in community centres in non-formal accelerated learning programmes showing learning gains in English, Maths and Nepali of 63%, 64% and 59% in post-tests when compared with pre-tests using standardised assessment tools.

Establishing community networks

A huge achievement of [Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education \(ENGAGE\)](#) project, the [Aarambha](#) project and the [Marginalised no More](#) project was establishing a cohesive and structured platform for girls' education advocacy and communications – the Girls Inclusive Education Network (GIEN). Formed and being led by the Government of Nepal under Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), the network is conducting activities across all provinces, closely working with the local governments and implementing activities in schools, municipalities, provinces and at the federal level. GIEN is an active forum that advocates for inclusive education, focusing on girls. It aims to raise the voices of marginalised girls, lobby local authorities, influence policies, promote girls' rights to education and protection, and raise awareness of climate change. Rights-based advocacy focused on eliminating early, forced and child marriage, gender-based violence and gender-based discrimination. The network is a sustainable body that will continue post-GEC closure through its key partners and other donor-funded programmes under the stewardship of CEHRD and its long-term strategic plan.

Increasing awareness of safeguarding risks and referral mechanisms

The [Aarambha](#) project worked with Nepal agencies in developing a strong complaint resolution management system (CRM) tackling the restrictive social norms in Madhesh province palikas/ local municipalities. Stakeholders across the local governments, schools and communities were capacitated on safeguarding and child protection compliance. 81% of project schools built a functioning CRM system that effectively addressed child marriage concerns in the region affecting girls' dropouts. The project also worked with local judicial committees for case reporting and handling mechanisms in 22 local municipalities in the Madhesh province. The endline evaluation of the [Supporting the Education of Marginalised Girls in Kailali \(STEM\)](#) project assessed girls' awareness of safeguarding risks and the referral mechanisms in place. More than 70 percent of the girls demonstrated good understanding of harassment, abuse, and bullying. Girls were also aware of the different referral mechanisms, including talking to their peers or parents and reporting through the complaint handling mechanism at school and government-based referral services. The Endline Evaluation reported that more than 95 percent of the girls demonstrated increased confidence in dealing with safeguarding threats because of the in-school and out-of-school support received by STEM, which included self-defence training, sensitisation about adolescent sexual and reproductive health and community-level activities, such as household dialogue and street drama.



The GEC projects have published robust evidence to demonstrate their impact:

LEAD PARTNER	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS*
Mercy Corps	By midline in 2019, STEM had already achieved its project lifetime targets for literacy by 115 percent and for numeracy by 266 percent. Considering the challenges related to COVID-19, the learning outcome indicators were revised before the Endline Evaluation shifting the focus from literacy and numeracy assessments to-wards the girls' perceptions of their learning in the last two years of implementation. At endline, 86 percent of the girls reported that their learning performance improved against 75 percent in the control group. The Endline Evaluation reported that more than 65 percent of the girls agreed that the girls' club classes had helped them improve their learning. Also, the Endline Evaluation reported how girls' engagement in household chores re-duced from over 75 percent of the girls involved in household chores for more than three hours every day at baseline to less than 10 percent at endline.
VSO (GEC-T)	At midline, the difference in learning was 11.56 percentage point over and above comparison for numeracy and 4.70 percentage point for literacy, both of which were statistically significant achievements. Considering the challenges related to COVID-19, the learning outcome indicators were revised before the Endline Evaluation shifting the focus from literacy and numeracy assessments towards the girls' perceptions of their learning in the last two years of implementation. Based on this, 78.7% of the girls expressed confidence towards their improved learning performance since midline, reinforcing the learning outcome achievements recorded at the midline. Most of the girls attributed these different forms of learning improvement to the Learning Support Classes and increased confidence to make inquiries with the teachers in the classroom. The study also found the changed parental attitude facilitated by the project to have supported the girls in their learning, mainly through reduced engagement in household chores and creating a conducive learning environment at home for the girls.
VSO (LNGB)	The project's Endline Evaluation showed that girls' learning outcomes improved significantly from baseline to endline. The average Early Grade Reading Assessment score was 41.98 at baseline, which increased to 110.75 at endline. Likewise, the Early Grade Mathematical Assessment average score at baseline was 16.22, which increased to 42.18 at endline. These improvements in learning outcomes were attributed to the bridge and preparatory classes, remedial support classes after school, engagement with parents and Big Sisters mentoring.
PIN	Results from the Endline Evaluation of Cohort 2 noted a significant improvement in girls' literacy. For Nepali the proportion of girls in non-learner's category declined significantly from 52.25% in the baseline to 21.3% in the endline. A considerable improvement was noticed in girls' numeracy skills. The Endline Evaluation noted a sharp decline of 45% in the percentage of girls in the non-learners' category from 75.5% in the baseline to 30.8% in the endline. The evaluation noted that 1,354 girls gained learning improvement compared to 869 tar-geted girls signifying overachievement of the target set at baseline.
Street Child of Nepal	Learning was measured based on the acquisition of foundational reading and arithmetical skills, which were defined in this project as the ability to read and comprehend texts containing stories and/or paragraphs, and conduct the four mathematical operations. These benchmarks in learning levels were based on the Teaching at the Right Level methodology. At endline, 30% of the girls could read paragraph and 19% could read story which was a change from 2% and 1% respectively at baseline. The number of girls that could recognize 3-digit numbers increased by 45% points from Baseline survey (1%) to endline survey (46%). According to the project's Endline Evaluation the Accelerated Learning Programme was one of the project's interventions to facili-tate and enhance the girls' learning process.

* Evidence in the table is from an evaluation point, baseline, midline or endline carried out by an external evaluator or the implementing partner.

Spotlight on the GEC and COVID-19 in South Asia

[This brief](#) summarises emerging findings around the impact of COVID-19 on learning, wellbeing and return to school from GEC projects in Nepal, Afghanistan and Pakistan. All projects in Nepal were asked to participate in workshops and submit evidence around understanding the impacts of COVID-19 on learning, wellbeing and return to school. The brief was primarily aimed at national governments, INGOs and NGOs working in the region and it has continued relevance due to the ongoing uncertainty and continued impact on schools and in some cases, school closures and learning. It outlines interventions that support the reopening of schools, and in some cases the continuation of remote learning as schools remains closed.

Sustaining results

- At household level, the **Marginalised no More (MnM)** project was found to have changed perceptions of community and parents who had limited interest in girls' education. At school level, teachers and headteachers were committed to continue using school improvement plans and running child protection circles beyond the lifetime of the project. Based on learnings from the project, Street Child of Nepal were able to pilot Teaching at the Right Level in 3 different local governments and remote learning in 10 different local governments.
- The Endline Evaluation of the **Sisters for Sisters' Education** project suggests that schools demonstrated ownership and readiness to maintain and sustain the school infrastructure in the longer run. Similarly, the project's achievements in improving the quality of teaching were also likely to be sustainable, with evidence of teachers applying their skills from the training into their classrooms. At system level the project's support to local governments in formulating child protection policies of the project municipalities was expected to improve the education status of the respective areas and contribute to the municipalities' education plans. Local governments across all project districts appeared optimistic about continuing the project activities, specifically the Little Sister-Big Sister mentorship scheme and work on tackling climate change under the GIEN.
- The **Supporting the Education of Marginalised Girls in Kailali (STEM)** project worked on ensuring sustainability at school, local and provincial levels. At endline schools supported by STEM were found to be replicating girls' club classes in the form of remedial classes. Qualitative evidence showed that knowledge and skills acquired through STEM teacher training were being transferred from trained to non-trained teachers. At local and provincial government levels, STEM worked closely with local and provincial governments. This provided a great opportunity to exert influence at the system level by institutionalising some of the key learnings and good practices from the project, while enhancing local government capacity in terms of framing local policies and plans. For example, local governments started to place a primary focus on constructing girls' toilets in schools, while some of the local governments committed to continue operating girls' clubs in all the schools of their jurisdiction. Other STEM interventions which were embedded into government systems were the use of suggestion boxes in schools and the continuation of the GTF by the local government.
- The **Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education (ENGAGE)** project worked closely with government and community partners to ensure interventions were more effective and likely to continue. Once the project completed its activities, the government partners at the local and provincial levels decided to continue to support gender-responsive and inclusive education. The project worked closely with these partners to build capacity and institutionalise approaches. As a result of these engagements, municipalities allocated their budget for GIEN members and decided to support the function of the GIEN after project closure.



Resources

[Spotlight Brief: Value for Money. Aarambha project](#)

[Spotlight Brief: Value for Money. Sisters for Sisters' Education project](#)

[Final reflections. Achievements and lessons learned by the ENGAGE project](#)

[Final reflections. Achievements and lessons learned by the Sisters for Sisters' Education project](#)

[Final reflections. Achievements and lessons learned by the STEM project](#)

[Blog. Final reflections on the Marginalised No More project](#)

[Blog. Final reflections on the ENGAGE project](#)

[Blog. Final reflections on the Sisters for Sisters' Education project](#)

[Blog. Working together to educate girls in Nepal](#)

[Blog. Breaking barriers to tackle Chhaupadi in Nepal](#)

[Blog. My second chance](#)

[Blog. What does it take to have an effective safeguarding reporting mechanism? Insights from the Aarambha project](#)

[Blog. Teaching the teachers: asking the right questions in Nepal](#)

[Blog. Radio Revision: How lockdown exam preparation in Nepal took to the airwaves](#)

[Short film. Supporting and securing livelihoods. Marginalised No More project](#)

[Short film. Distance teaching and learning. Marginalised No More project](#)

[Short film. Amplifying voices that matter. Marginalised No More project](#)

[Short film. The STEM project](#)

[Case study. Distance teaching and learning. Marginalised no More project](#)

[Case study. Distance teaching and learning. Aarambha project](#)

[Case study. Distance teaching and learning. Sisters for Sisters' Education project](#)

[Impact report. Distance teaching and learning assessment. Marginalised no More project](#)

[Impact report. Pilot of distance teaching and learning. Aarambha project](#)

[Participatory Ethnography Research for Musahar Girls' Education](#)

[Participatory Ethnography Action Research for Musahar Girl's Education, Summary](#)

[Nepal Country Briefing \(October 2021\)](#)

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**Girls'
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