



COUNTRY BRIEFING: NEPAL



GEC-T	2 projects	11,840 beneficiaries targeted
LNGB	3 projects	18,340 ¹ beneficiaries targeted

The GEC has five projects in Nepal. Two GEC-T projects are focusing on transitioning girls between basic and secondary education. Three LNGB projects are supporting the most marginalised and vulnerable out-of-school girls.

All projects have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis with Nepal going into lockdown in March 2020. Closure has led to competition over scarce resources, interrupted access to social services and heightened security and safety risks, especially for the most vulnerable girls. In response, projects have focused their efforts on continued learning, safety and wellbeing support, and hygiene and sanitation. During the quarter April to June 2020 for GEC-T projects and May to July 2020 for LNGB projects, projects reached 9,880 girls through their COVID-19 response activities.

PROJECT NAME	WINDOW	LEAD PARTNER	PROJECT START DATE	PROJECT CLOSE DATE
<u>Supporting the Education of Marginalised Girls in Kailali (STEM)</u>	GEC-T	Mercy Corps Europe	April 2017	March 2021
<u>Sisters for Sisters' Education (SfS)</u>	GEC-T	Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)	April 2017	June 2021
<u>Marginalised no More (MnM)</u>	LNGB	Street Child	November 2018	September 2021
<u>Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education (ENGAGE)</u>	LNGB	Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)	August 2018	August 2022
<u>Aarambha</u>	LNGB	People In Need (PIN)	November 2018	January 2024

From April to July 2020, projects reached 9,880 girls through their COVID-19 response activities.

¹ Number subject to adjustment following identification of beneficiaries

Project data is based on reporting from May to October 2020



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Since the start of the second phase of the GEC² (2017-2025), projects in Nepal have reported the following achievements up to June 2020:



1,261
teachers trained



9,628
textbooks/learning materials distributed



3,224
community awareness-raising events held



113
assistive learning devices provided

Achievements

- **Mercy Corps** targets for girls' learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy were overachieved by an encouraging 115 percent and 266 percent. This was mainly due to the establishment of girls clubs where marginalised girls had increased access to resources and teachers were trained to improve their teaching practices.
- **VSO SFS** saw an improvement in girls' numeracy skills, a reduction in dropout and improved transition to secondary school.

Challenges

GEC projects have faced significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. An increase of returnee migrants from India and elsewhere (around 500,000 in total), heightened the risk of spreading the virus in project areas. Sixty-three schools across the GEC projects were used as quarantine centres during the peak of lockdown. School closures and strict lockdown measures made it much harder for projects to stay in touch with the girls. A lack of access to technology meant that projects had to modify distance learning and teaching approaches to reach the most marginalised girls. Projects had to consider how best to support children with severe and profound disabilities remotely. An exceptionally wet monsoon season caused floods and landslides across much of Nepal, which has exacerbated the impact of COVID-19. Food shortages have forced some parents out of the house to find work leaving girls at home to care for family members and carry out household chores, preventing them from taking part in lessons. As a result of the multiple crises facing the country, there has been a rise in gender-based violence, suicide and early marriage.

Recent highlights

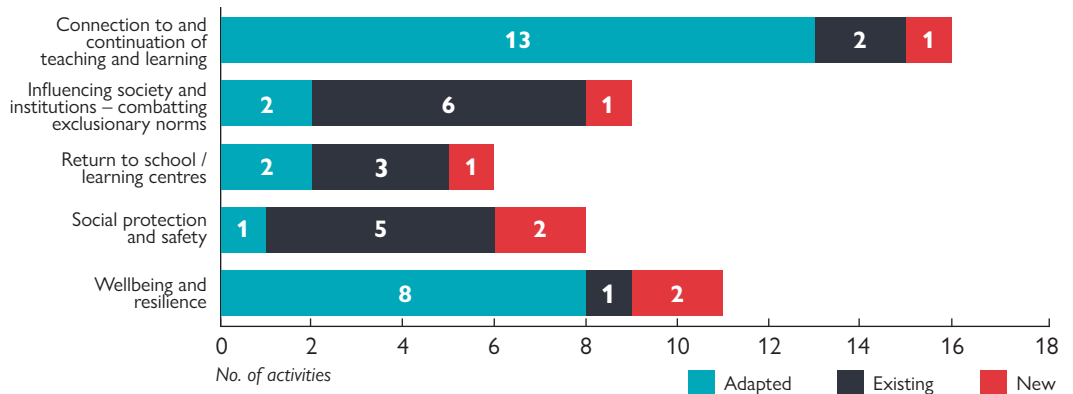
In response, projects have now changed their activities to best meet the needs of the beneficiary girls. *Figure 1* outlines the types of activities projects have implemented and indicates the proportion of these that are existing, adapted from existing activities or completely new to projects. Some highlights from these activities include:

- **Projects remain in contact with girls:** To address the negative effects of confinement on girls, **Street Child** offered psychosocial support. They have conducted weekly wellbeing checks for 1,960 girls. **VSO ENGAGE** has reported that children with severe and profound disabilities found their situation improved at homes as parents were making a concerted effort to take their needs into consideration.
- **Ensuring learning could continue:** All projects have made efforts to ensure continued learning, even for the most vulnerable girls. At the start of lockdown, **PIN** managed to rapidly implement a distance learning approach through the use of mobile phones, with some girls using neighbours' phones where there was limited access. **Street Child** delivered remote learning (literacy, numeracy and life skills) for girls in rural, hard-to-reach communities (e.g. using audio devices, worksheets and telephone calls). Results from the pilot showed improvement in both literacy and numeracy and the project will now support all girls in this way.
- **Focussing on the most vulnerable:** **VSO** created a number of videos on the impacts of COVID-19 on children with disabilities are now being used by the Disability Empowerment Society Nepal and the National Association of Sign Language Interpretation. During the monsoon season, **Street Child** provided food assistance to 1,579 girls who were severely affected by the flood and linked communities to government-led food distribution programmes.

² The first phase of the GEC ran from 2012-2017 and provided quality education for over a million marginalised girls. The GEC is now in its second phase (2017-2025), with up to 41 projects in 17 countries. The second phase is enabling existing GEC beneficiary girls to complete primary school and transition to secondary education, technical vocational training or employment. Within the second phase, a second cohort of girls are also being supported through the Leave No Girl Behind funding window, which consists of interventions for highly marginalised, adolescent girls who are out of school.

- **Safeguarding:** All projects have put in place safeguarding protocols and procedures specifically to ensure that their COVID-19 responses are safe for girls, other beneficiaries and staff members. Safety, as well as learning, continues to be a top priority for all GEC projects.*
- **Lord Ahmad (FCDO Minister S Asia) virtual visit to Nepal:** Lord Ahmad undertook a highly successful virtual visit to Nepal, featuring the Mercy Corps project in August 2020.³

Figure 1: COVID-19 Response activities in Nepal⁴



Coordination and collaboration

The projects in Nepal have strong links to government and NGOs. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, coordination and collaboration efforts have increased with all projects. For example, Mercy Corps is supporting the government by conducting rapid assessments to track levels of psychosocial stress and wellbeing amongst adolescent girls, informing the national response. VSO is working with FCDO and GEC Nepal partners, such as UNICEF, to initiate sustainable local networks of ‘Big Sister’ volunteers.

Lessons learned

One of the most crucial and challenging aspects of the recent period has been keeping in touch with girls. Projects have learned the value of investing in community actors, as they have provided a vital link in these crises, helping the projects to keep in touch with girls and implement key interventions.

Priorities from January 2021

Since the release of the government school opening framework in early November, some schools are reopening based on local government permissions, but dropout rates appear to be high due to problems exacerbated by the pandemic. Projects are focused on activities to support the return to school and learning centres using mixed learning modalities. This includes conducting a back to school campaign (integrated with FCDO Girls Booster and UNICEF support), meeting new operational protocols and ensuring that there are catch-up classes for those girls who have fallen behind or dropped out. **STEM** and **VSO** are due to close in early 2021 with their current priorities focussed around sustainability. **VSO** are focusing on institutionalising a girls education network, while **STEM** is ensuring the girls transition fund, which provides small business loans to girls, is continued beyond the lifetime of the project.

* Please see the safeguarding section on the COVID-19 page of the GEC website for materials and guidance provided to projects: <https://girlseducationchallenge.org/#/article/covid-19-response>. The GEC expects our projects to be compliant with our 14 minimum standards on safeguarding.

³ See here for Lord Ahmad tweet about the visit

⁴ Projects began implementing the COVID-19 response activities in March 2020 and will continue or be adapted in accordance with the evolving COVID-19 situation in each context and in agreement with the Fund Manager.

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Girls' Education Challenge



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