

Project Evaluation Report

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Notes:

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BASELINE EVALUATION OF AARAMBHA PROJECT COHORT - IV



February 2023

Girls'
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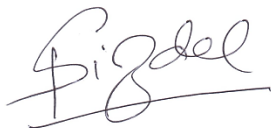
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Most importantly, I wish to express my gratitude to all the respondents who agreed to be part of the study and share their opinion and experiences with the research team. I hope that the information presented in this report can be used to address the key issues and concerns they highlighted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sigdel', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Abbreviations

ASHR: Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health
ASER: Annual Status of Education Report
BBBP: Beti Bachau-Beti Padhau
CLC: Community Learning Centre
CRM: Complaint Response Mechanism
CBO: Community-Based Organization
CSO: Civil Society Organization
DRR: Disaster Risk Reduction
DIL: Daughter-In-law
DFID: Department for International Development
VfM: Value for Money
EE: External Evaluator
FDM: Foundation for Development Management
FP: Family Planning
FL: Financial Literacy
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
FM: Fund Manager
GIEN: Girls Inclusive Education Network
GESI: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GEC: Girls Education Challenge
GBV: Gender Based Violence
GWDs: Girls with Disabilities
HH: Household Head
HDM: Household Decision Making
IS: In-School
IO: Intermediate Outcome
KII: Key Informant Interview
KAP: Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice
LNGB: Leave No Girl Behind
LGOA: Local Government Operation Act
M-OOS: Married Out of School adolescent girls
MIL: Mother-in-law
MGML: Multi-Grade and Multi-Level
NDHS: Nepal Demographic and Health Survey
OOS: Out of School adolescent girls
ODK: Open Data Kit
PIN: People in Need (PIN)
PTA: Parents Teachers Association
SSRP: School Sector Reform Program
SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

SIP: School Improvement Plan

SMC: School Management Committee

SESP: School Education Sector Plan

SIYB: Start and Improve Your Business Session

ToC: Theory of Change

Executive Summary

Background

Aarambha project is being implemented in Bara and Rautahat districts of Province-2 of Nepal by People-in-Need (PIN) Nepal. The project is funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development office (FCDO) under the flagship Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) programme's Leave No Girls Behind (LNGB) window. The project aims to mitigate the risks of early marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth among young girls, uplift their social status and help them lead healthy, safe, and educated lives. PIN Nepal aims to work with 8,500 married out-of-school adolescent girls as the direct beneficiaries. The other indirect beneficiaries include 17,000 family members of the direct beneficiaries identified, 4,000 in-school girls, 4,000 in-school boys, 400 newly elected local government officials, and community/ religious leaders. The project aims to roll out its interventions in four cohorts throughout its life-cycle of five years from 2019 to 2024. Cohort 4 includes 2,775 girls.

Methodology

The Aarambha Cohort IV baseline evaluation is a convergent parallel mixed-method study. It adopted a pre-test-post-test research design similar to the preceding cohorts. The baseline evaluation study for Cohort IV was guided by the longitudinal mixed method approach, comprising quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The quantitative data provided a numerical measurement of the assessments while the qualitative information validated and contextualized quantitative findings. Data were collected simultaneously as in the previous cohort. The areas of inquiry were based on the preliminary discussion between the project and the evaluators.

The respondents for the baseline evaluation included a sample of 400 girls who form the project's primary beneficiaries, that is, OOS adolescent girls between the ages of 10-19 years, and the secondary beneficiaries such as parents of OOS adolescent girls, change champions, project staff, head teachers, Community Learning Centre (CLC) facilitators, and Municipal Education Officials who were included in the qualitative discussions.

Learning

Functional literacy and numeracy of girls were tested using the ASER tool. The learning test was done across 3 subjects: Nepali, English, and Mathematics. The analysis showed that in Nepali, 49.3% of the surveyed girls were 'non-learners', 48% were 'Emergent Learners', 2% were 'Established Learners', and only 0.8% were 'Proficient Learners'. This means only 0.8% of girls reached the benchmark of reading comprehension which is the last subtask. In the case of English, out of the total surveyed girls, 75% were 'non-learners', 24.5% were 'Emergent learners' and 0.5% were 'Established learners' while no 'Proficient learners' were identified in English subject during the baseline. Girls were reported to face difficulty in English subjects compared to the other two subjects because the classes had been operated for only 25 days. Girls who had never been to school had not reached a stage where they could identify letters and words. Likewise in the case of mathematics, 36.8% were 'non-learners', 61.5% were 'Emergent learners', 1.5% were 'Established learners' and only 0.3% were found to be 'Proficient learners' during the baseline survey.

Transition

The baseline evaluation of the transition outcome is marked zero as girls are yet to complete the CLC classes before choosing a transition pathway. The project aspires to meet the target of 70% of the

total cohort, that is, 1,890 girls are expected to transition into either school or into vocational skills training by the end of the cohort.

Qualitative consultation disclosed that girls aged 10-14 were skeptical about going to school while parents were willing to send daughters younger than 15 years to school. Girls are discouraged by others who have dropped out from school who recall tales of beating and ethnic discrimination at school by teachers. Inquiring about the reason for their unwillingness, girls indicated poor teaching engagement from the teachers. The teacher, despite being present at the schools would rather be spending time chatting among themselves rather than going to the designated classes to teach. While at class too, girls reported that teachers explicitly discriminated against students based on ethnicity and such incidents discouraged girls to attend school.

In the case of girls who are 15-19 years, the girls and the parents expressed disinterest in continuing school education after the completion of CLC classes. When asked for the reasons, most of them stated that the girls have been waiting for Gauna¹. All the decisions regarding their daughters are being taken by their in-laws and most of them would prefer their daughter-in-law to not go out of the household. Rather than going to school, they prefer to learn extra skills such as tailoring, makeup, etc. The girls also stated that they do not want to go to school due to their physical appearance and from the fear of being teased by their classmates for being married. Rather than going to formal school the majority choose to uptake vocational training so that they do not need to ask their husband and in-laws for money. Additionally, safety concerns were also raised by the parents during the conversation. For instance, the distance between the household and school was long, that is, around 5-7 kms. It takes around an hour to go to the nearest school on foot or approximately 20 minutes by bicycle. Though the roads are often flat, they have to cross the jungle way. Due to the fear of their daughter being bullied on the way to school, parents were skeptical to send their daughter who was waiting for Gauna to school.

Barriers to learning and transition

In the baseline evaluation, the most notable barriers for OOS girls were the poor household conditions, household chores, and parental attitudes. Additionally, safety concerns, mobility restrictions, dowry, school environment, and gender disparity were the additional barriers for the girl to access quality education.

The quantitative findings showed that 8.8% of the sampled parents (n=400) still feel unsafe sending their daughters to school due to the distance between school and the household. Similarly, out of the total sampled households, 34.8% were deemed to be poor and could not afford to send their daughter to school. Furthermore, in comparing between Muslim and Non-Muslim backgrounds, it was found that girls from non-Muslim households² have less access to education compared to Muslim girls.

The qualitative findings demonstrated that gender disparity was a prevailing issue across both intervention districts. For instance, the trend of sending boys to private schools and girls to government schools still prevailed across both districts. In the case of performing household chores,

¹ Gauna is a traditional Hindu custom associated with the consummation of marriage. It is associated with the custom of child marriage. The ceremony takes places several years after marriage. Before the ceremony, the bride stays at her natal home. Marriage is considered only as a ritual union and conjugal life begins only after Gauna.

² Non-Muslim households includes those who are either Hindu or Christian.

girls and families believed that it is the primary responsibility of the girls to do the household chores. Overall data also showed the regressive parental attitude towards girls' education and life plans: 17.8% of parents do not support their girls to join school or formal education, 33.3% of parents do not let their girls participate in training and 15.8% of parents do not support girls to initiate their businesses. In contradiction, during qualitative consultations the majority of the parents were supportive of letting their daughters/ daughter-in-law attend training or letting them initiate their businesses. Parents were simply reluctant to send the girls to formal education.

Dowry was another indirect but important factor impacting the girls' access to education and leading to early marriage. Consultations with various stakeholders of the project led to the conclusion that the practice of giving and taking dowry was normal in the context of Terai³. During the consultation with the parents and girls, they stated that the younger the daughters were married, the less dowry they had to give to the groom's side which is cheaper than investing in the girl's education. Hence, it is precisely the choice of parents whether or not to send the children to school. During the qualitative consultations, it was found that the parents are willing to liquidate their assets for dowry acquisition but never for educating their girl child.

Intermediate Outcomes

To tackle the ongoing problem of the community support for girls' education, the project has been engaging change champions from the local communities, parents, schools, government officials and social mobilizers, who can help the project to create a conducive environment for girls' education and transition. The key outcomes focus on the OOS girls' attendance, cognitive and non-cognitive skills, the school's initiative to create environments for OOS girls' learning and communities, and authorities' positive social norms that encourage delayed marriage and realization of OOS girls' life plans.

In this regard, the evaluation assessed the OOS girls' decision-making capacity. The figures illustrated that 97% of girls had poor decision-making capacity. During the qualitative consultation, it was found that all the decisions were taken by the parents on behalf of the girls. Similarly, male members were considered the main decision-maker of the household while females were always dominated by the male members of the family. Similarly, the decision regarding girls' marriage was also taken by male members of the family without consulting girls. While in the case of boys, boys are consulted and asked for their interests before making any kind of decision regarding them.

Likewise, the life skill index has three major domains – attitude, knowledge, and practice. These three domains are based on the project's intervention that includes financial literacy, family planning, and girls' social skills. In terms of financial literacy, 50.9% of girls illustrated poor knowledge, attitude, and practice. Girls have very little access to money as they cannot go out of the household as per their wishes. Even the little money they get from their mothers, girls spend on eating street foods or buying cosmetic items from the mobile vendors that go around in the town. A few cases of savings were encountered where girls save money in money jars. Similarly, in the case of Family planning, 69.5% of girls demonstrated poor skills over three domains. The major reason for having poor knowledge, attitude, and practice among girls about family planning could be having a higher number of girls of the 10-14 age group in the cohort. Moreover, Girls demonstrated low confidence as observed by the researchers. They were shy, and it was deemed that girls rely on their parents to decide for them too.

³ Terai region are the plains of Nepal. They occupy 17% of the land, stretching from far-west to the far-east covering the entire southern part of the country.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the project is measured at three levels i.e., at the community level, school level, and lastly, at the system level. From the baseline findings, sustainability efforts by the program are yet to start at the community level, school level as well as a system level.

The community-level indicator focuses on changing people's attitudes toward child marriage. While the quantitative data paints a positive picture showing a progressive attitudes of parents toward early marriage, education, and supporting girls' life plans. Nevertheless, the qualitative findings contradict this, revealing that although parents have relatively changed in terms of delaying marriage and educating girls, parents were still not sending their daughters to school due to security concerns, the distance between school and home, traditional beliefs, and poverty. Similarly, in the case of early marriage, the cases have decreased due to the law and punishment provisioned by the local government. However, parents still would not hesitate to marry off their daughters if they find a suitable groom, defying prevalent laws and prosecutions.

Similarly, in terms of sustainability at the school level, the schools where girls are likely to transition lacked School Improvement Plans (SIP) and SMC/PTA in most cases. Additionally, a high ratio of students to teachers and a lack proper infrastructure were common problems at the schools where FDM visited. In addition, teachers were known to discriminate against students based on ethnicity while diverting from their responsibility of teaching and engaged in conversations among themselves. Also, in few cases the schools viewed the addition of CLC girls as an added responsibility and complained about teacher insufficiency and discretely stated that they cannot managed an increased number of students.

In terms of sustainability at the system level, the Girls Inclusive Education Network (GIEN) had yet to be set up. However, coordination between the local government and the project was found to be good. During the conversation, the official from the Rautahat district showed their readiness to support the project and carry forward its activities even after the project phases out, while on the other hand, none of the officials responded when asked about the sustainability of project activities.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Project Context

Nepal has seen significant achievements in the education sector over the last decade with the implementation of sector-wide programs such as the Education for All National Plan of Action (2000–2015), School Sector Reform Program (2009–2016), and School Education Sector plan (2022-2030). The Constitution of Nepal (2015) guarantees compulsory and free education up to the basic level and free education at the secondary level to all the children living under the boundary of the country ensuring inclusive access to quality education.⁴ Exploration of Educational Statistics Provincial Perspectives study done by the National Campaign for Education Nepal shows that more than 95% of school-age children are in schools and more than 70% of them retain in the classrooms at the end of the academic year. However, it has been noted that all social groups have not celebrated their achievements equally. Rather, disparities in access, participation, and learning outcomes remain to leave certain groups of children behind.

Decentralization of power at the local level has been identified as one of the ways to include those excluded groups in the education sector. Thereafter, the Government of Nepal created 753 local government units. As a result, Nepal has now moved from a centralized system to a federal mode of governance, including the operation of school-level activities. The Government of Nepal through the Local Government Operation Act 2074 has now handed 23 different lists of activities at the local level⁵ including basic education.

Although there has been a significant improvement in girls' education in Nepal, challenges persist due to deeply embedded gender stereotypes and unequal norms resulting in high female dropout rates by the time they reach the higher secondary school level⁶. This is further compounded by the fact that these same girls have a higher chance of being victims of early marriage and pregnancy, domestic and sexual violence, and other stigmas of gender inequality. And the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the rate of low female school enrollment in Nepal.

In 2019, Province 2 in partnership with the eight municipalities implemented the “*Beti Bachau-Beti Padhau*” (BBBP) (Save Girls - Educate Girls) campaign, an insurance scheme that was the major program conducted by the provincial government to encourage girls' education. The Provision of the campaign includes insurance schemes, free Public Service Commission classes, and the distribution of bicycles to female students. Under the insurance scheme, girls receive the insured amount after they receive citizenship certificates. All these campaign schemes are aimed at ensuring girls stay in school and receive an education.

Despite investing multimillion dollars in education-related projects through various donor agencies as well as that owned by the government like the BPBB, a significant number of children specifically

⁴ School Education Ssector Pplan retrieved from https://um.fi/special-target-groups/-/asset_publisher/hVUm8qOoXH3u/ahaKytInterventionType/id/56977264

⁵ <https://ncenepal.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Exploration-of-Educational-Statistics-Provincial-Perspectives.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/strengthening-girls-education-nepals-province-2>

girls of Madesh Province continue to be out of school girls⁷. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education (2021), 191,221 students in Province 2 did not attend school. Of them, 25,344 are of primary school-going age and 135,877 are fit to be in secondary school. Similarly, more girls are skipping school than boys. Figures from Province 2 stand out even when they are compared with those of other provinces. Although Province 2 is relatively ahead of other provinces in terms of transportation, access to communication, education, and the availability of infrastructure children are ⁸ still out of school due to poverty, the walls of traditions, unmatched students and teacher ratio in schools, and its infrastructures and child/early marriage.

Table 1: Figures on out-of-school children

Provinces	Children out of school
Province no. 1	49,037
Madesh Province	191,221
Bagmati Province	32,988
Gandaki Province	14,616
Lumbini Province	59,904
6Karnali Province	13,845
Sudurpaschim Province	29,188

According to The Equity Index 2018, Rautahat and Bara districts are ranked in the bottom (red-zones) as two of the least-performing districts within Madhesh Province in terms of development indicators, especially relating to girls' education and life outcomes. Adolescent girls in the region face several barriers on the individual, community, and systemic levels in terms of their access to education stemming from their low social status, which lowers their agency, access to information and services, and self-value. The region accounts for the highest rate of illiteracy i.e. (41%) in the country, followed by the highest proportion of females who have never attended school (58.7% of females compared to 32% of males). Due to high school dropout rates, the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2016 exhibited that the province's net attendance ratio for female adolescents at the secondary level is the lowest of all provinces (42%)⁵. The presence of gender inequality and orthodox practices has derailed the education status of this region and led to lower levels of numeracy and literacy among adolescent girls. In these districts, early marriage of girls is still practiced despite the parents being aware of the legal age for getting married in 20 years only⁹. As a result, girls are getting married at a young age and dropping out of school.

Early marriage is one of the significant factors leading to higher dropout rates among adolescent girls in the province. The NDHS 2016 survey also showed that the adolescent marriage rate in Madhesh

⁷ <https://ncenepal.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Exploration-of-Educational-Statistics-Provincial-Perspectives.pdf>

⁸ <https://cijnepal.org.np/province-2s-dirty-laundry-thousands-of-children-face-dark-future-without-education/>

⁹ [Ending Impunity for Child marriage\(final\)_25Nov16.pdf \(unfpa.org\)](#)

Province is 23%, and 18% of girls aged 15-19 had already begun childbearing, both being the highest of all provinces. In Nepal, early marriage/pregnancies were found to have the highest percentage linkage (32%) to early dropout among girls aged (12-17). The out of school adolescent girls (OOS) in the region also have a notable age difference between their spouses, which lowers their bargaining power with their husbands, and in-laws, and acts as a barrier to their fulfillment of life plans and education.

Given the situation, the findings from the formative research conducted by People in Need (PIN) Nepal in 2019 also strongly highlighted the social acceptance of early marriages and other harmful social practices, such as the dowry system in these districts contributing to early dropouts of adolescents from schools. In light of these circumstances, Aarambha Project was instigated with the financial support of the UK AID flagship Girl’s Education Challenge (GEC) program’s Leave No Girls Behind (LNGB) window. This project aims to mitigate the risk of early marriage among out-of-school adolescent girls, lift their social status and help them lead healthy, safe, and educated lives.

Target Beneficiary Group

The project’s direct beneficiaries include out-of-school (OOS) adolescent (10-19 years) girls of Madhesh Province. Based on the project’s Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework, the following inclusion criteria were used to select the primary beneficiaries.

Table 2: List of target beneficiaries

Criteria	Number of girls selected	
Age		
Age: 10-19 years	2,775 OOS adolescent girls	100%
Age: 10-14 years	2,274 OOS adolescent girls	81.9%
Age: 15-19 years	501 OOS adolescent girls	18.1%
Marital Status		
Married	436	16%
Unmarried	2219	80%
In union/waiting for Gauna/promised to be married	118	4%
Widowed	1	0.03%
Divorced/ Separated	1	0.03%
School Status		
Never been to school	1441	52%
Dropped out at grade 7 or below	1334	48%

With regards to Cohort IV, the initial identification of primary beneficiaries was conducted through communication with schools, religious leaders, and local authorities including local and ward-level representatives and officials. Further identification and verification were conducted by PIN on the household level during the pre-baseline assessment. The beneficiaries identified during the pre-baseline were enrolled in the Community Learning Centers (CLCs) by the project team, during which further verification of the eligibility was done.

Theory of change

The project's theory of change is based on addressing the foundational barrier that has caused these girls to drop out and marry early: the low social status and value of girls in Nepal. The following figure summarizes the project's theory of change.

Table 3: Theory of change

Impact: Improved life chances of married out-of-school (M-OOS) adolescent girls in Central Terai				
Outcome	(O 1) Improved learning outcomes for OOS adolescent girls	(O 2) Increased transition into formal education, informal literacy, or vocational training according to OOS girls' life plans		O 3) Communities', schools', and authorities' gender-equitable attitudes sustain improved life chances for OOS adolescent girls and prevent early marriage
Risks & Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Learning Centers or other units are available Education Review Office is open to collaboration on formal certification Families will accept OOS participation, including those with high domestic labor burden and unsupportive of and perceiving low-value girls' education Adaptations for OOS with learning disabilities are feasible within the VfM considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRHR services are available and accessible for OOS girls. Local trainers from women-led community networks are available and willing to participate in the programs. Backlash against improved negotiation skills can be mitigated (Output iv) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of available trainers for girls' and boys' workshops who meet the criteria are available No political interference in the school-based project activities. Collaboration between schools and relevant authorities is functional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The local government is functional and staffed. Authorities are open to the inclusion of OOS girls in service provision. Collaboration between schools and relevant authorities is functional. Community members willing to become Gender Change Champions. Change Champions recognize the unique needs of various sub-groups (girls living in poverty, GWDs, SGBV survivors, etc.)
Intermediate Outcome	(IO 1) OOS adolescent girls' improved attendance in literacy & numeracy courses	(IO 2) OOS adolescent girls have acquired cognitive and non-cognitive skills to develop and pursue life plans	IO 3) Schools have created enabling environments for students to learn and are supportive of M-OOS girls' life plans	IO 4) Communities and authorities foster positive social norms that encourage delayed marriage and realization of M-OOS girls' life plans
Output	1) Improved access to numeracy & literacy courses for M-OOS adolescent girls	2) Access to life skill training, coaching sessions, cash assistance, and peer support networks	3) Access to safe and enabling learning environments in schools for students and M-OOS girls whose life plan is to re-enroll	(IO 4) Communities and authorities foster positive social norms that encourage delayed marriage and realization of M-OOS girls' life plans

Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Identification and training of female trainers ii) Curriculum development iii) Engagement with participants' families iv) Literacy and numeracy courses v) Catch up classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Formative research ii) Identification and training of female community mentors iii) Curriculum development iv) Life skill workshops, coaching, and life planning sessions v) Cash Assistance for peer-selected training & projects that address health, safety, and livelihood needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">) Training of mentors to lead workshops ii) Her Turn - gender-transformative workshops within and out of school girls iii) His Chance - gender-transformative workshops within and out of schoolboys iv) Gender-responsive pedagogical training for teachers to create safe learning environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Gender transformative workshops for M-OOS girls' families delivered by community and religious leaders ii) Cash grants for M-OOS girls' family members to pursue life plans iii) Training for local government officials. iv) Gender transformative community events led by Gender Change Champions
Barriers	<p>Individual-level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth. (IO2) - Limited access to literacy, numeracy, or transitional programs. (IO1) - Social isolation, lack of peer support network. (IO2) - Limited access to family planning; motherhood, early pregnancy, and childbirth-related health problems. (IO2) - Limited life skills: low levels of self-esteem, agency, confidence, and ability to negotiate important life decisions. (IO2) - Vulnerability to or experience SGBV. (IO2) - Power dynamics in the household - the burden of household chores, the age difference between spouses, and intrahousehold bargaining power. (IO2) - Ethnic and caste status. - Low Nepali language competency (school medium language). (IO1) 		<p>Community, School, and System Level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low social status of daughters-in-law: unpaid work, lack of decision-making power. (IO4) <p>Risks & Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harmful social norms and practices: mobility restrictions, menstrual restrictions, demands to bear children, early marriage. (IO4) - Lack of gender-responsive, safe, and enabling schools environments: lack of sufficient & adequate WASH facilities, gender-sensitized teachers, the prevalence of corporal punishment, bullying of married girls, education in minority mother tongues, lack of teachers from ethnic and caste minority backgrounds. (IO3) - Poor implementation of policies, strategies, and programs preventing married adolescents from dropping out and encouraging M-OOS to reenroll. (IO3, IO4) - Lack of services available to M-OOS adolescent girls. (IO1, IO2, IO3, IO4) - Poverty within the community prevents families' investment in educational opportunities for their children. (IO2, IO4) 	
<p>Low social status of OOS adolescent girls leads to a low agency, low self-esteem, and limited access to information</p>				

Through Output 1, the intervention aims to ensure that girls will have access in attending, literacy and numeracy courses that will improve their learning outcomes. The literacy course inculcate culturally sensitive and contextualized adaptive learning approaches in the Freirean-Stuart tradition with a particular emphasis on interactive student-centered teaching practices and gender-responsive pedagogies.

Within Output 2, the intervention intends to allow girls to acquire the additional skills needed to develop personal agency and pursue their life plans. Life skills sessions are administered which are based on a gender transformative approach as modeled by PIN and emphasis is given to improving girls' non-cognitive skills such as negotiation skills, self-esteem, problem-solving, reasoning, decision making, and communication. These sessions impart critical cognitive skills for OOS adolescent girls that enabled them to identify health and safety-related issues. The intervention desire that after the enrolment, the OOS girls are able to make life plans to pursue either formal or informal educational opportunities or careers. These life plans are developed through the coaching session with community mentors. The life plans include ways and procedures to help girls identify how they will transition and where they would transition- either to school through re-enrolment or choose vocational training.

Under output 3, schools, teachers, and student bodies are supported in creating enabling environments for OOS adolescent girls whose life plans include transitioning into formal education. The project provide teachers with *Gender Transformative Workshops* to create the school as a safe space with gender-responsive pedagogies, school management, and action plans. Similarly, students undergo gender-transformative workshops that enabled them to report violence and harassment within schools and create supportive student-led peer networks. PIN's existing work with schools in Nepal has produced evidence that this output has directly led to the enrolment of out-of-school girls and boys into formal education.

Within output 4, change champions from the community are mobilized to challenge harmful social and gender norms that affect OOS adolescent girls in creating a promising and encouraging environment. Furthermore, the project works with OOS adolescent girls' families, government officials, and community decision-makers focused on change in the social context to enable OOS adolescent girls to pursue their life plans.

Table 4: Summary of Direct Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiary numbers	Cohort I Baseline 2020	Cohort II Baseline 2021	Cohort III Baseline 2022	Cohort IV baseline 2022
Total number of girls targeted in cohorts	1709	2125	2300	2700
Total number of girls enrolled in cohorts	1709	2484	2528	2775
The total number of girls targeted to reach by end of the project	8500			
Education level	The proportion of total direct beneficiaries			
Never been to school	53%	61%	49%	51.9%
Been to school but dropped out.	47%	39%	51%	48.1%
Age banding (The age bandings used is appropriate to the ToC)	The proportion of total direct beneficiaries			

10 to 14	6%	78%	67.01%	81.7%
15 to 19	94%	22%	32.9%	18.26%

Table 5: Level of schooling before dropping out

Level of schooling before dropping out	Proportion of cohort I direct beneficiaries	Proportion of cohort II direct beneficiaries	Proportion of cohort III direct beneficiaries	Proportion of cohort IV direct beneficiaries	Data source
Never been to school	53%	61%	49.4%	48.07%	Project's CLC enrollment data
Nursery	NA	NA	1.4%	1.08%	
Grade 1	1%	9%	4.9%	4.18%	
Grade 2	7%	23%	8.9%	10.16%	
Grade 3	6%	23%	9.1%	10.70%	
Grade 4	8%	16%	7.2%	7.32%	
Grade 5	11%	16%	9.3%	9.77%	
Grade 6	3%	6%	4.3%	2.77%	
Grade 7	2%	5%	5.4%	2.09%	
Grade 8	5%	NA	NA	NA	
Grade 9	2%	NA	NA	NA	
Grade 10	2%	NA	NA	NA	
	The average duration of time OOS girls spent in school:				

Table 6: Transition Pathways

Sub-group	No. of girls following this pathway for C4	Transition pathways
Younger (10-14 years) married adolescent without children	28	Formal school re-enrollment to the grade corresponding to their literacy/numeracy post participation Safe employment, as allowed by the Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act 2000 (less than or equal to 14 years) and Labor Law (above 14 years)
Younger (10-14 years) married OOS adolescents who are mothers	0	Informal and formal literacy enrolment, informal vocational training Safe employment, as allowed by the Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act 2000
Older (15-19 yrs) married OOS adolescent without children	225	Formal school re-enrollment to the grade corresponding to their literacy level post, vocational training, safe employment as allowed by the Child labor Prohibition and Regulation Act 2000
Older (15-19yrs) married OOS adolescent who are mothers	183	Formal school re-enrollment in appropriate grade or Informal vocational training. Safe employment as allowed by the Child labor Prohibition and Regulation Act 2000
Unmarried girls 10-14 years	2219	Enroll in Formal school
Married girls 10-14 years	28	Enroll in Formal school
Unmarried girls 15-19 years	0	Enroll in Formal school or vocational training
Married girls 15-19 years (Including widow, separated/divorced)	2	Enroll in Formal school or vocational training
Girls with disability 10-14 years	50	Enroll in Formal school
Girls with disability 15-19 years	7	Formal school enrollment or vocational training

Table 7: Indirect beneficiary groups [PROJECT]

Group	Training and Activities planned	Total number targeted for C4
In-school girls (Output 3)	Gender transformative workshop	1067
In-school boys (Output 3)	Gender transformative workshop	1067
Families (Output 4)	Gender transformative workshops, events led by Change Champions	2700

Women-led community networks and other active literate women from the community (Output 1,2 and 3)	Literacy and numeracy training, Life skills training to work with adolescent girls	284
Young male community members (Output 3)	Life skills training to work with adolescent boys	100
Teachers (Output 3)	Gender-responsive pedagogical training	100
Government authorities (Output 4)	Gender transformative workshops	100
Community members (Output 4)	Community orientation at CLC-level events led by Change Champions	2700

Key Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions and summary of quantitative and qualitative data/analysis.

Table 8: Key evaluation questions and summary of data analysis

Evaluation question	Qual data/analysis required to answer question	Quant data/analysis required to answer question
How effective was the project in developing OOS adolescent girls' literacy and numeracy?	FGD with OOS adolescent girls	Proficiency level generated from ASER tool established since the baseline cohort II.
How, if at all, do literacy numeracy, and cognitive and non-cognitive life skills translate into household decision-making and agency? How and why was this impact achieved? Were there different impacts for different sub-groups?	FGD with OOS adolescent girls and parents to explore reasons and barriers to transition.	The proportion of girls engaged in different activities in the past year and the present (Girls and Household survey)
How effective was the project in developing OOS girls' cognitive and non-cognitive skills?	FGD with OOS adolescent girls to explore knowledge attitude, and practice in terms of financial literacy, Family planning, and self-efficacy Life skill index which includes knowledge attitude and practice relating to financial literacy, family planning, and social skill (Girls Survey)	Survey with OOS adolescent girls to get scores on knowledge attitude, and practice in terms of financial literacy, Family planning, and self-efficacy Life skill index which includes knowledge attitude and practice relating to financial literacy, family planning, and social skill (Girls Survey)
How, if at all, do literacy, numeracy, cognitive, and non-cognitive life skills translate into household decision-making and agency?	Decision-making and agency? FGD with OOS girls, parents KII with change champions to understand the general practice of household decision making.	Household survey
How, if at all, did the project succeed in creating enabling learning environments in schools, families, and communities, for the married, OOS adolescent girls to pursue their life plans?	KII with Teachers, headteachers	The aggregated score for gender-sensitive teacher tool, scorecard, and approach classroom observation
What is the community doing and how is it engaged to challenge harmful social norms that affect OOS adolescent girls and create conducive environments within which they can pursue life plans?	KII with government officials, headteachers, parents, and change champions/ religious or community leaders to understand the general, present, and past trends of the society relating to marriage, and education. Activities being conducted as a part of the campaigns to make community people aware of the issue of early marriage	N/A
How is the community addressing the impacts of climate change and what DRR plans do they have to mitigate its impact?	FGD with parents	Household survey
How is the GIEN contributing to ensuring enhanced girls' education?	KII with the GIEN members	Self-assessment tool for GIEN member girls developed by PIN

BASELINE EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Evaluation purpose and Evaluation questions

The project's theory of change is based on addressing the foundation barriers that caused girls to drop out of school, prevent them from ever going to school, and early marriages. In light of this, the project has been working primarily with the married and unmarried OOS adolescent girls between the age of 10-19 years from the Bara and Rautahat districts of Madhesh Province, along with other key stakeholders such as the girls' families, community/religious leaders and local level governments. Through its interventions of literacy classes and advocacy, the project aims to address the underlying barriers that prevent girls from leading healthy, safe, and educated lives. Hence, the objective of conducting the baseline evaluation is therefore to gauge the assertions, and the progress of the intervention by measuring the outcomes, and output level indicators developed by the project. The specific objectives of the baseline evaluation are stated below:

1. Generate the baseline value for the indicators to establish a target for the project and allow comparisons in the subsequent evaluation points.
2. Identify and assess the barriers faced by married and unmarried adolescent OOS girls for learning and transition.
3. Examine the assertions made by the ToC of the project and generate necessary evidence to inform the further improvement of the project design.

The MEL framework has outlined a set of evaluation questions relevant to the overall evaluation design. While the subsequent evaluation points are aimed at assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the project, the current evaluation point seeks to establish the baseline values, which will further set the targets of assessment among the aforementioned factors. Moreover, the following questions listed below guided the baseline evaluation.

Evaluation questions and tools used are as stated in the table below:

Table 9: Key evaluation questions

Evaluation questions	Indicators and Index	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the situation of learning of girls at the baseline? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls' proficiency level in numeracy and literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASER Tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the baseline transition status of girls? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of girls engaged in different activities previous year and in the present to explore reasons and barriers to transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls and Household survey • Qualitative consultation with OOS adolescent girls and parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective was the project in developing adolescent girls' cognitive and non-cognitive life skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life skill index which includes knowledge attitude and practice relating to financial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls and Household survey • Qualitative consultation with OOS adolescent girls

	literacy, family planning, and self-efficacy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do literacy, numeracy, and cognitive and non-cognitive life skills translate into household decision-making and agency? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Decision-making Index 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls Survey • Qualitative consultation with OOS adolescent girls, parents, and change champions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the project succeed in creating enabling learning environments in schools, families, and communities, for OOS adolescent girls to pursue their life plans? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aggregated score for the Gender-sensitive teacher tool, Scorecard, and approach classroom observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative data was collected via a Gender-sensitive tool while the barefoot assessment wasn't conducted as the schools were closed • Qualitative consultation with headteachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the perception of the community changed and how is it engaged to challenge harmful social norms that affect OOS adolescent girls and create conducive environments within which they can pursue life plans? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities are being conducted as a part of the campaigns to make community people aware of the issue of early marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative consultation with Municipal Education Officials, headteachers, parents, and change champions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current safeguarding mechanism existing in the community and the perception of the people regarding reporting the case that the girls can use to report the cases of violence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning in CLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative and qualitative data on existing mechanisms of safeguarding and the perception of girls and families regarding reporting it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective has GIEN been in enhancing girls' education status in the community? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not assessed as the GIEN was formed so far.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How successful has the project been in disseminating knowledge on climate change and ways of reducing its impact on the lives of people? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The household survey and qualitative consultations with the parents.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Overall evaluation design

The Aarambha Cohort IV baseline evaluation is a convergent parallel mixed-method study. It adopted a pre-test-post-test research design to measure changes that can attribute to the project intervention until the endline and in the subsequent phases too. The baseline evaluation study for Cohort IV was guided by the longitudinal mixed method approach, comprising quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The quantitative data provided a numerical measurement of the assessments while the qualitative information validated and contextualized quantitative findings. Data were collected simultaneously as in the previous cohort. The areas of inquiry were based on the preliminary discussion between the project and the evaluators.

The respondents for the baseline evaluation included the project's primary beneficiaries who were OOS adolescent girls between the age of 10-19. Apart from the primary beneficiaries, the secondary beneficiaries such as parents of OOS adolescent girls, change champions, project staff, head teachers, CLC facilitators, and Municipal Education Officials were included in the qualitative discussions.

Adoption of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion minimum standards into the evaluation

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) were ensured throughout the evaluation process. Firstly, the data collection tools were designed cautiously to avoid cultural and gender insensitivity. The tools were also reviewed by the project before moving to the field. The evaluation team ensured representation in terms of ethnicity, and age while selecting the sample. As the sample was calculated to be representative of the actual target population, girls across different age groups and ethnicity were represented in the sample.

The longitudinal evaluation modality of LNGB implied keeping a record of identifiable personal information like the name, phone number, and address of marginalized girls. This meant that only female enumerators would be appropriate to collect such information to avoid skepticism among parents. Thus, understanding the cultural sensitivity, FDM recruited local female enumerators who were well acquainted with the local context and the environment of the community. These enumerators also spoke the local language which meant that they could communicate with clarity with the respondents and their parents.

In addition to this, the girl's survey also consisted of questions on sensitive topics such as questions related to Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health (ASRH), which the girls would not have been comfortable answering with a male interviewer. Recruiting a female enumerator eased the interview process. As some of the questions such as ASRH, and Washington Group Module in the survey were sensitive to administer, FDM trained all the field enumerators on rapport building, on how to approach questions using sensitive measures such as proper language and approach, following GESI-inclusion protocol to avoid trauma or shame while administrating these types of questions. The same training modality was applied to researchers conducting qualitative interviews with girls and their parents.

Lastly, for analysis, the data was disaggregated by ethnicity and income status wherever required to ensure that the differences in the social background were reflected to inform the project adjustments.

Baseline data collection process

The baseline data collection took place in four municipalities of the Bara and Rautahat districts. In Bara, the assessments were carried out in Mahaghadhimai Municipality and Bishrampur Rural Municipality while in Rautahat, the assessment was done in Gadhimai Municipality and Baudhimai Municipality.

Sampling Framework

The girls for the baseline evaluation were identified and sampled from the list provided by the project while girls who could not be located were replaced from the master list provided by the project. The sampling unit for the quantitative study was the district. Data was taken such that each district represented 50% of the total needed sample. The sampling was done in such a way that it covered 50% of the CLCs. Henceforth, the sampling was done at the municipality level where a proportionate number of data was taken to ensure an equal number of samples from both districts. After allocating samples for each municipality, systematic random sampling was applied to select the sample respondents. The age of the girls was also taken into consideration before generating the final sample list. A proportionate sample list was generated for both age groups, that is, for 10-14 years and 15-19 years based on the master list provided by PIN.

Quantitative sample size determination

The sample for baseline evaluation was calculated based on the sampling framework. Based on the sampling frame, the sample size was calculated based on the GEC evaluation guideline, that is, using minimum standards ($p_0=0.58$, $p_a=0.50$, Power=80%, Confidence interval= 95%, Margin of error = 0.05, Test=2- sided test).

As the sample was finalized, stratified random sampling was done to select the targeted OOS adolescent girls to draw out individuals for baseline evaluation from the sampling framework. The sample for each subgroup was drawn out from the total number of beneficiaries and was divided proportionately among each sub-group, that is, OOS girls of the age of 10-14 and 15-19. Additionally, since the project has also envisioned learning outcomes as one of the transition pathways for OOS girls, and as the project has not yet defined the proportion of girls who will transition, the sample size for transition was the same as the learning sample. The sample selected for the evaluation was fully representative. Representativeness of sampling was ensured considering the project’s marginalization framework, following inclusion criteria to select the primary beneficiaries.

The final sample sizes for each of the instruments (quantitative and qualitative) are presented below:

Table 10: Sample for the baseline survey

Tools	Beneficiary group	Sample size agreed in MEL framework	Actual sample size	Major changes
ASER	OOS adolescent girls	Baseline Sample: 400	400	All the learning tools were calibrated during the baseline evaluation of C-IV

Girls' Survey	OOS adolescent girls	Baseline Sample: 400	400	Since the project had adapted a logical framework based on the findings from the baseline of cohort-I few new questions about child safeguarding were added.
Household Survey	OOS adolescent girls' parents	Baseline Sample: 400	400	HH survey tools were made owing to the changes in the logical framework indicators as with the girls' survey. A component of climate change was added to the questionnaire. Additionally, a Washington group of questions regarding girls were added.
FGDs	OOS adolescent girls and parents	N/A	OOS adolescent girls (10-14) - 4 OOS adolescent girls (15-19) - 4 HH/parents - 4	Since GIEN was not formed, FGD with GIEN members was not conducted.
KIIs		N/A	CLC facilitator - 4 Municipal education official - 4 Change champion - 4 Head teacher - 4 Project staff - 2	Since GIEN was not formed, KII with the GIEN coordinator was not conducted.

Sample for benchmarking

Benchmarking was conducted as part of the quantitative data collection to generate information on the literacy and numeracy skills of girls at school, which will later be used to set a target for the project beneficiaries. Benchmarking was done in the 9 schools of the project intervention municipalities of the same districts where girls are likely to enroll on the completion of the CLC classes. Schools were randomly selected based on the locality, that is; one school in each project intervention municipality was selected. A total of 80 students (20% of the total sample size) were taken and proportionately divided across grades 1-4 for the ASER assessment.

Qualitative sampling framework and sample size determination

In the baseline evaluation, CLCs from each of the districts were selected randomly at the convenience of the research team. Among all CLCs, two CLCs in each municipality were selected representing each municipality of the intervention. Likewise, the purposive sampling method was adopted to identify the respondents in the communities to gather information on the status of girls' education, early

marriage, and other underlying contexts. The purposive sampling method was used to ensure the inclusivity of people from all backgrounds in the qualitative discussion and to conduct qualitative consultations in a limited timeframe. The methods used for data collection were focus group discussions (FGDs), Key-Informant Interviews (KII), and observation. A total of 12 FGDs and 18 KIIs were conducted with direct and indirect beneficiaries.

OOS adolescent girls aged 10-14 and 15-19, along with the CLC facilitator, parents, change champions, and municipality education officers were consulted for qualitative discussion. To triangulate the information, 20 parents and community leaders from a different location other than the sampled location were informally consulted along with the headteachers. Primarily, gender, age, and ethnicity were the determining factors for stakeholder selection for qualitative discussions. Respondents for the interviews were selected keeping in mind they represented different ethnic and age groups.

Table 11: Qualitative sample for baseline evaluation

Respondent group	Number of FGDs	Number of KIIs
OOS adolescent girls	8	-
Parents of OOS married/unmarried adolescent girls	4	-
CLC facilitators	-	4
Change champions	-	4
Municipal education official	-	4
Project staff	-	2
School Headteachers	-	4
Total	12	18

Designing Quantitative and Qualitative Tools

The external evaluators designed both the quantitative and qualitative tools as per the LNGB guideline along with the tools from previous cohorts and the current log frame. The tools were jointly finalized by the EE and PIN before implementing them.

In regards to the quantitative tools, it included a girls' and household survey questionnaire. The girls' survey was the primary data collection tool among girls attending CLC classes. Similarly, the household survey questionnaire was administered to the parents/guardians of the sampled girls. As in every evaluation point, girls were traced through the CLCs, and then their households were visited. Parents who were part of the survey were either mothers or fathers or whoever was present and agreed to the interview was approached for the HH survey. In addition, an abbreviated version of the Washington Group of Questions on disability was included as part of the household survey, as done in cohort 3.

As a part of the quantitative survey, learning and numeracy assessment was done using the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)¹⁰ tool, similar to the previous cohorts. It was jointly agreed by EE, PIN, and FM during the second cohort on using ASER for assessing the proficiency of students up to grade 3 according to the curriculum of the Nepal government.

Regarding qualitative data collection, a structured checklist was developed to conduct Focused Group discussions (FGD), Key Informant Interviews (KII), and observations with the stakeholders of the project. The checklists were developed based on a logical framework and indicators of the project.

Likewise, the qualitative data collection was conducted simultaneously with the quantitative data collection. Based on previous evaluations, it was agreed between EE, PIN, and FM that concurrent data collection would be conducted sequentially as the characteristics of the girls from each cohort are homogenous.

Enumerators, Monitors, and Researchers

For the survey, FDM selected enumerators from its roster of more than 100 enlisted enumerators. Priority was given to those enumerators who had already been involved in the evaluation of Aarambha projects' previous cohorts as well as those who were familiar with the questions, format, and nature of the assignment. The key qualification sought by the enumerators was language competency as they needed to converse in the local language spoken in the sampled area. For baseline evaluation, 20 enumerators (10 males, 10 females) and 4 supervisors were deployed for data collection.

Moreover, for monitoring overall quantitative data collection, FDM commissioned a monitor and 4 supervisors to lead and supervise each of the four teams. The monitor and supervisors were assigned the primary responsibility of ensuring the authenticity and quality of data collected by the enumerators while ensuring that the enumerators followed the research ethics. Monitors and supervisors were available in the field throughout the data collection period and the chain of command was maintained for the reporting to the project coordinator.

Simultaneously, the qualitative data was collected by the researchers from FDM. Two researchers were deployed in each district. Researchers from FDM who had prior experience working in the GEC and LNGB project were selected for this assignment. The researchers were experienced in conducting FGDs and KIIs along with taking notes and transcribing the information collected in the field. The recording and notes of the consultations which were in the Nepali language were translated, transcribed, and summarized in the English language for the analysis.

Training

The monitor, supervisors, and enumerators were given extensive training for two days on 12-13th September 2022, where they were oriented on the girls' survey, household survey, and ASER test. On day 1, the training also familiarized the enumerators with project background, child safeguarding policies/protocols, and basic research etiquettes to be maintained during data collection. Upon

¹⁰ ASER tool was developed by ASER Nepal, a member of People's Action for Learning Network (PAL), a global network which is a partnership of countries working across three continents to assess basic reading and math competencies. The tool has been piloted numerous times before standardizing it by ASER Nepal. It is standardized for measuring the proficiency of students up to grade level 3 according to the curriculum of Nepal government. <https://palnetwork.org/aser-nepal/>

completion, all questions were thoroughly discussed, including the loops and the probable answers. Later, the enumerators were separated into two groups: male and female. While the female enumerators practiced the girls' survey and the ASER test, the male enumerators practiced the household survey and the Washington Group of Questions on Child Functioning. A mock session was conducted to ensure that the enumerators grasped the information accurately.

Similarly, on day 2, female enumerators practiced the data collection using the ODK system on the tablets among themselves. While on the other hand, male enumerators were trained with the ASER tool for conducting benchmarking. At the end of the day, a mock session was conducted where all enumerators practiced on a final tool and were dispersed for fieldwork. The monitors were also oriented on their roles and responsibilities over the data collection duration.

In regards to qualitative consultation, the project coordinator provided a one-day orientation to the researcher on the project objectives, log frame, and what the designed checklist aimed to achieve through qualitative consultation before field mobilization. It was ensured that the researchers understood the objective of each of the questions. In addition to this, researchers were also oriented on how to collect sensitive information from the girls.

Data Collection Process

Quantitative data collection

Baseline data collection commenced on 16th September 2022 in Bara and Rautahat. The data collection was done in 10 days. The data collection was done through a tablet provided by FDM where the Open Data Kit (ODK) software was installed. The enumerators were divided into 4 groups where 2 teams were mobilized in the Rautahat district and the remaining two were mobilized in the Bara district. A chain of communication was maintained where each supervisor was mobilized to supervise the enumerators and supervisors were liable to report to the monitor. Further, the monitor was liable for the overall monitoring of quantitative data collection and reporting to the project coordinator who had been monitoring the data received at the server continuously on a real-time basis and provided feedback accordingly.

Additionally, monitors were responsible for the planning of the field data collection, assigning enumerators the sample they are required to collect, and coordinating with the project staff and local authorities in the data collection area. Also, the monitors ensured that the data collected in the tablets were uploaded to the server at the end of each day as well as give an update. Any emerging errors were sorted through a telephone conversation with the monitor and the enumerators.

To ensure that all the child safeguarding policies and ethical protocols were followed in the field, all enumerators were trained and informed on child safeguarding policies and ethical guidelines ahead of the field. Written consent from the girls and household was taken before each interview was conducted. Each of the respondents was made aware of the data protection and confidentiality of their information verbally. For the safety of the enumerators, researchers, supervisors, and monitors, FDM provided an insurance package. In addition to this, local authorities were formally informed about data collection before its commencement to avoid any misunderstanding during data collection. Furthermore, FDM and the team worked in close coordination with the local partner for smooth data collection in the field.

A sampling list that included names of all girls, their respective CLC group, age, and ethnicity were provided to all the enumerators and monitors. The first point of contact for enumerators was CLC and CLC facilitators. The list of the girls was also verified from the CLC attendance sheet before conducting the survey. For the girls who were not present at the CLC on the day of data collection, enumerators visited their households to track them. When the same girls could not be met, enumerators planned to re-visit their respective houses for the survey. If the enumerators were unsuccessful even at the third attempt to get hold of the girls, a replacement strategy was used. While replacing the girls, it was ensured that the demographic characteristics including the CLC itself matched. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the girls for replacement.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collection during the baseline was conducted simultaneously with quantitative data collection. The checklist was designed with reference to the baseline of the previous cohort and the recommendations made previously. The checklist was initially designed in English language and upon finalization from the project team and team leader, the tools were translated into the Nepali language. The team leader approved the final version of the checklist before heading to the field for data collection. Both FGDs and KII were carried out with relevant stakeholders in two districts simultaneously by FDM researchers.

All the interviews and discussions were electronically recorded by the researchers with the consent of the respondents. A translator was used in instances where the respondents could not speak the Nepali language. At the end of each day, the researchers shared their findings, impression, and challenges with the project coordinator. This helped to get generalized and differentiated views in the two districts. The researcher's reflection during the qualitative consultations was also recorded. Once the consultation for both districts was completed, an extensive debriefing session was held among all the field researchers who shared and discussed their experiences, findings, and observation during the qualitative exercises.

Quality Assurance

Appropriate measures were taken to ensure the quality of the study in each step of the data collection. Before the fieldwork, the FDM team worked extensively with the PIN to revise the format and the content of the survey questionnaires and qualitative checklist to eliminate ambiguities, language complexity, and complicated skip patterns. In addition, mature and experienced researchers and enumerators who had a contextual understanding of the study were selected for the project.

Fieldwork training was an essential part of the quality control process. The training focused on an in-depth discussion of the questionnaire to familiarize the enumerators with the questions, options, skip patterns, and other details. Besides, the enumerators conducted mock interviews to get acquainted with conducting interviews. Furthermore, a detailed field plan was developed with a total of 20 enumerators, 4 supervisors, and a monitor.

A field plan was devised to meet planned as well as unforeseen challenges and thereby ensure the smooth operation of day-to-day field activities. Monitors and supervisors were an essential part of the FDM team that helped further to ensure data quality. The monitors ensured data quality by assessing the performance of the enumerators. Supervisors checked whether the enumerators were executing the tasks they were expected to perform. Spot-checks were done by the monitor to ensure

that the correct respondents were selected for the interview and that the selection process was also correct. Additionally, the core FDM team in Kathmandu was continually monitoring the data remotely.

Post Data Collection

Data cleaning and storage

The quantitative data received from the online platform was taken with utmost care to prevent the unforeseen loss of data during any cleaning and analysis process. Therefore, password-protected soft copies were saved by the statistician, project coordinator, IT expert, and team leader.

The android software, ODK, itself allowed for range checks. During the data collection process, the FDM team in Kathmandu regularly checked and cleaned the database for complete blank entries and conditional field cleaning. Various errors in the data that would come during the fieldwork could come about due to the negligence or ignorance of the enumerators and sometimes due to errors in the device. Therefore, the IT expert who was vigilant of the data informed the project coordinator of any anomalies in the data received in the server. Following that, the project coordinator communicated with the field supervisors, monitor them to inquire about the glitches, and re-do the survey to rectify the error if needed.

Upon the completion of data collection, the statistician commenced the data cleaning process where they sorted the variables as well as checked for inconsistency. Data were checked for the representativeness of the sample based on ethnicity, religion, age, and project areas. Frequency distribution was checked for each variable for identifying any missing data and inconsistency. For example, in the baseline evaluation, the sample size was 400. Hence, for every question filtered, the base was 400. In the case of outliers, the research team assesses the situation to see if it is justified. For instance, the actual age of the respondents and the age registered in project documents were different. Such cases were informed to the concerned enumerators and appropriate actions were taken to ensure accurate information are taken.

Data was also checked for duplication which could easily be spotted through the unique id provided to each girl/household. While cleaning, it was ensured that the codes used in the baseline matched those provided in the master list. Once cleaned, the data was exported to SPSS from the Excel sheet. In the SPSS, all the values were then labeled properly. A double-entry mechanism was maintained to establish a backup database if the working file or sheet gets deleted or data is lost. To mitigate the risks of data loss, a master database was maintained on more than two computers and external storage devices.

While the statistician was dealing with the quantitative data, researchers were simultaneously transcribing the qualitative data. Audio records collected with the consent of the respondents were used to generate transcribed documents. The recordings were also duly saved in the FDM computer as a data protection strategy.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis

The cleaned data was exported to IBM SPSS 23 for analysis. The cleaned data were checked for normality tests using box plots and normal curves for all of the continuous variables of that any existing outliers could be detected. The normal distribution and skewness of data were used as a basis for deciding on the parametric and non-parametric tests. Descriptive analysis was done for most of the variables including frequency distribution and various measures of central tendency and dispersion of variation. Moreover, tests used during analysis to establish relationships and test the significance were independent/ two-sample t-test, paired sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, correlation, and chi-square test.

Qualitative data analysis

Upon the completion of transcribing the gathered information, the data was analyzed via NVIVO. The following steps were undertaken during data analysis:

- a. **Theme generation:** a deductive approach to theme generation was adopted, which was primarily guided by the log-frame indicators, evaluation questions as well as the analysis done in preceding cohorts. The major themes identified as 'learning', 'transition', and 'sustainability'. Sub-themes were further developed based on the intermediate outcomes. This process enabled the systematic organization of information from qualitative consultations and in determining trends among groups and contexts. An inter-rater agreement of 80% or above was sought for validation.
- b. **Data coding:** with pre-developed themes, the transcripts were coded for further analysis. The transcripts were studied thoroughly assigning codes as per the identified themes. As the qualitative research was conducted under a convergent mixed method design, the information was intended to provide casual inference and explanation of finding from quantitative data.
- c. **Data interpretation:** coded and thematized data were analyzed for the conclusion. The interpretation focused on explaining trends and finding casual interference in the quantitative data. This step also included the presentation of opposing views, and the use of quotes, and sought to establish inter-thematic validation and relation of data.

After the completion of the aforementioned steps, the findings were interpreted and consolidated into the report while substantiating the quantitative information. The findings were presented following the guideline provided by the fund manager and also segregated based on different themes and subgroups identified during analysis.

Challenges and Mitigation measures

Table 12: Challenge and mitigation measures

Challenges	Mitigation measures
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Language barrier during qualitative consultations	A female translator adept in the local language was recruited to ensure smooth communication during the qualitative consultations.
Dropout from CLCs	Some girls had already dropped out of the CLC. Therefore, a replacement list was generated statistically which the enumerators adhered to.
School examination and closure	During the baseline survey, the majority of the school were conducting their terminal examinations and towards the end of quantitative data collection, schools were closed due to the upcoming festival of Dashain. Therefore, ASER was conducted amidst their exam days seeking permission from the school administration.
Poor coordination with the schools	Due to the lack of proper coordination between the project and the school where girls were likely to transition, the head teacher refused to talk with the researchers. Nevertheless, with timely intervention from the project, a phone interview was possible.

Limitations

Apart from the challenges mentioned above, there were a few limitations that might have affected the robustness or reliability of the evaluation design. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative results reported herein should be considered in the light of some of the limitations stated below

- Sensitive information such as information on Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health (ASRH) and family planning was most difficult to administer, partly because the conversation on this issue was still uncomfortable for most girls due to their social, religious, and cultural factors. As a result, the enumerators, as well as the researchers, had to probe the questions multiple times and in multiple ways. Also, a major proportion of the girls in this cohort were of the younger group who did not have sufficient knowledge about issues around ASHR.
- The presence of self-reported bias in some of the questions may have resulted in the over-estimated result. This is beyond the control of evaluators since it involves the opinions and behaviors of people which can hardly be verified independently. Therefore, questions were asked in the simplest language. This was mostly evident during consultations with stakeholders other than the girls.
- The occurrence of nonresponse bias is common during qualitative consultations where the girls must talk to the researchers. Under such circumstances, an ice breaker activity or informal talk with the girls before starting the consultation reduced nonresponse biases.

Representativeness of the samples

The sample selected for the evaluation was fully representative. Representativeness of sampling was ensured considering the project’s marginalization framework. The following inclusion criteria were used to select the primary beneficiaries:

- Beneficiaries were between the age of 10-19 years.
- Beneficiaries were unmarried, married, girls having children or waiting for Gauna
- Beneficiaries were either out-of-school girls who had never been to school or girls who had dropped out at some level of school (below or at grade 7)
- Marginalized girls from the project intervention area

It was ensured that all beneficiaries met the aforementioned criteria to take part in the project activities, irrespective of their disability status, caste/ethnicity, literacy status, religion, or any other social, economic, and cultural factors. Once the sample size was calculated, systematic random sampling was done to select the targeted OOS adolescent girls from the master list. The statistician made a deliberate attempt to ensure the representativeness of the sample which is reflected in the tables in the next sections. By intervention pathways, the project intervenes in the two broad age groups of 10-14 and 15-19. The girls within the age group 10-14 will be enrolled in formal education after CLC class. Girls within the age group 15-19 will either enroll in formal education or participate in skill development training and then get into employment.

CONTEXT, EDUCATIONAL MARGINALIZATION, AND THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN BARRIERS AND CHARACTERISTICS

This section discusses the characteristics of the sampled population, along with the key barriers identified during baseline, which supports the educational marginalization of married and unmarried out-of-school girls across different sub-groups.

Characteristics

The following section discusses the characteristics of the sampled girls and the household which appeared as prominent determinant factors in influencing girls' education. 'Ethnicity,' 'language,' 'household income,' 'poverty,' and 'household features' are the protruding characteristics identified in the baseline evaluation.

Ethnicity

Table 13: Ethnicity of respondents

Ethnicity	Age group of girls		Total
	10 to 14 (n=325)	15 to 19(n=75)	%
Terai/Madheshi Dalit ¹¹	27.7%	36.0%	29.3%
Terai/Madheshi others ¹²	23.1%	16.0%	21.8%
Muslim	49.2%	48.0%	49.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Household Survey

The Terai area of Nepal has its own share of multiple ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural groups of people. Some of the ethnic groups found in the Terai area include Brahmin/Chettri, Dalits, Janajati, Muslims and other castes. Based on the prevalence of the caste in the project area, the respondents were classified into three groups as outlined in the table above. Almost half of the sampled girls were from the Muslim community (49%), 29.3% were from the Terai Madhesi Dalit community and the remaining 21.8% were from other Terai Madhesi groups. Out of the total sampled girls, the maximum number of Muslim girls (78%) were from Garuda municipality while the maximum number of non-Muslim girls (100%) were from Paroha municipality. Similarly, the lowest number of non-Muslim girls (22%) were found in Garuda Municipality.

¹¹ Musahar, Dom, Halkhor, Chamar, Dushad/Paswam, Tatma, Baantar, Halkhor

¹² Kewat, Mallah, Lohar, Nuniya, Lodha, Rajbhar, Kamar, Sudhi, Kumhar, Haluwai, Badhai, Teli

Language

The primary language of sampled girls in baseline was either Bhojpuri or Bajika. Amongst the sampled girls, 83.5% of the girls spoke Bhojpuri while 16.5% of girls spoke the Bajika language. From the qualitative research, it was found that language was also a prime barrier to girls' education across both communities due to girls' incompetency to understand the Nepali language. This was validated during the researcher's visit to CLC classes where the facilitators were teaching girls in their local language instead of Nepali as the language was completely incomprehensible to the girls. The facilitators across all five CLCs visited during data collection shared that they primarily taught in the local language before teaching them in either Nepali or English.

A major challenge for the girls to learn Nepali language is the population composition of the community they live in. Their language and culture corresponds more with people across the border in India than in the northern regions of the country. Also, the language they speak bears more resemblance to Hindi than Nepali making Nepali more difficult to learn.

It is important to note that the CLC classes had operated for 25 days only at the time of data collection.

Household Income

Table 165 establishes agriculture and wage labor as the major sources of income (34.5%) of the total sampled household across both groups. This was validated through the FGDs where the majority of the girls as well as their parents mentioned that they were engaged in agriculture and daily wage labor for their sustenance. It was known that while mothers/female members worked in the agriculture sector, the father/male members worked as daily wage laborers. The men in the village, left the house in the morning for labor work while the women left for the agriculture field after preparing breakfast or lunch. For men, they often work in the construction centers or as porters in the shops, godowns or mills. For women, they work as agricultural laborers that involves working in the field, tilling the field, harvesting, plantation under the landlords. The girls are naturally obliged to help their parents in the agricultural fields. Even the boys who go to school are expected to help their parents in agricultural activities once they reach 15 years. Rather than hiring paid labor, families prefer using the helping hands available at home.

Table 14: Sources of income

Source of Income	The age group of girls		Muslim/Non-Muslim		Total
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%
Agriculture	34.5%	34.7%	37.2%	31.9%	34.5%
Livestock rearing	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Job/Services	4.3%	2.7%	6.1%	2.0%	4.0%
Business	12.0%	12.0%	12.8%	11.3%	12.0%
Wage Labor	35.1%	32.0%	22.4%	46.1%	34.5%
Foreign employment/Remittance	13.5%	18.7%	20.9%	8.3%	14.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HH survey

Apart from agriculture and wage labor, foreign employment was the most popular source of income among the sampled households. Among the 14.5% of households that relied on foreign employment

for their income, 20.9% of the families were Muslim and 8.3% of the families were non-Muslim. During the consultation with girls and parents, it was known that some of the girls had at least one male member away on foreign employment. Likewise, 12% of the respondents had business as a source of income, followed by 4% in jobs or services, and 0.5% were rearing livestock to make ends meet.

Household Characteristics

Table 15: Household characteristics

Household characteristics	Age group of girls		Ethnicity		Total
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%
Girls with Children	0.0%	41.3%	2.6%	12.7%	7.8%
Head of a household has no/ limited education	86.8%	90.7%	89.3%	85.8%	87.5%
Households having 5 or more members	96.6%	94.7%	95.9%	96.6%	96.3%

Source: Household Survey

Table 17 presents the household characteristics of the sampled household where 87.5% of household heads were found to have limited education or no education. The statistical relation between the educational qualification of the household head and that of girls is insignificant. Likewise, while assessing the number of girls having babies, 7.8% of girls in the age group 15-19 years had children. The relationship between educational qualification and having children is statistically significant. It was known that having children acted as an impeding factor in educational attainment. Though the girls received some support from their in-laws to come to CLC classes, they had to shoulder the entire household responsibility and that of the child after returning from the CLC classes leaving her with little time to study.

Table 16: Number of children

Number of children	Married	Unmarried	Waiting for Gauna
1	14	0	0
2	12	0	0
3	5	0	0
Total	31	0	0

Source: Girls' Survey

Table 17 illustrates the number of children married girls of age 15-19 years have. Of the sampled girls, 74.5% were unmarried, 19.5% of them were married, and 6% were waiting for Gauna. The study also showed that, out of the total married girls, 7.8% (31) girls have children with them. It was found that 45% have one child with them, 38% have two children and 16% of girls have 3 children. Ethnically, it was found that Muslims tend to have more children compared to non-Muslim girls with

the mean value of 1.8 and 1.7 simultaneously. With up to three children, it is very unlikely that girls will get a conducive environment at home to study.

Despite the hardship, the girls were willing to come to CLC classes and so were the parents to send them. It was known that the representative from the project had already convinced their parents regarding the project activities and the advantages they would receive, hence they did not mind sending their daughter to the CLC class. For instance, a girl whose baby was just 15 days was present in CLC class. She stated that her in-laws insisted she goes to CLC class and learns properly.

Likewise, 96.3% of the total sampled household surveyed had 5 or more members in their family. Statistical analysis establishes that the number of household members is an insignificant factor in determining the girl's education. Nevertheless, in the area of the survey, it appeared that with more people at home, it is likely that the choice of sending girls to school is compromised as families struggle to meet their basic needs. Rather than sending girls to school, they are engaged in household activities so that their parents can engage in income-generation activities. Also, the choice of sending girls to school depends on the parents. While the boys have the option to go to private school, in the same house, it still takes a lot of effort to convince parents to send their girls to school.

Against the odds, parents have now become more aware of the importance of educating girls. The project staff of Rautahat also validated that projects conducted by different donor agencies had brought differences among the parents and their attitudes toward educating their girls. For instance, in the case of the Gadhimai Municipality, parents were very willing to send their daughters to school. Parents are even more eager to send the girls to CLCs primarily because of the material support the girls get at the CLCs. Though the researchers were of the opinion that the stationery given to the girls are insufficient, the parents are willing to send girls since they do not have to spend on buying learning materials. Besides parents were aware of the multiple advantages of sending the girls to learn to read and write. When asked reasons for sending their daughter to school or other informal education, the majority of the parents, especially mothers, stated the girls will be more knowledgeable and can read if they are given education. In addition, they also mentioned that it will be easier for parents to travel especially to hospitals if girls are able to read what is written on the board. Parents believe that girls' trafficking can be minimized if the girls are educated, as shared by a parent from Gadhimai.

“Girls should be given education. Because if they get educated, they can assist us while we go to the hospital or they can identify the location they visit.” – Parents, Gadhimai

Generally, when there are more family members in the house, the work burden of girls should also decrease. According to girls, even though they have many family members, being the eldest daughter of the family, they have to look after every work of the household. Additionally, in the case of girls whose elder sister had already married, the work burden is more on them. Since their common

fathers are mostly engaged in wage labor and agriculture, all the responsibilities of their household fall on girls.

Poverty

Table 17: Household characteristics for poverty

Characteristics	Category				Total %
	Age group of girls		Ethnicity		
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non- Muslim (n=204)	
Roof made of mud/thatch/plastics	38.5%	33.3%	31.6%	43.1%	37.5%
Gone hungry to sleep many days in the past year	19.7%	17.3%	19.9%	18.6%	19.3%
Households not having land for themselves	23.4%	22.7%	20.9%	25.5%	23.3%
Poor HH defined as cash income	21.2%	14.7%	16.8%	23.0%	20.0%
Unable to meet basic needs	16.9%	16.0%	13.3%	20.1%	16.8%
Source: HH Survey n = 400					

Table 19 shows the basis of poverty analysis which is characterized by the type of roof the household has, whether the household members had gone hungry over the last year, and if the household members can meet their basic needs. It also shows characteristics of whether the household has enough cash income and if it has irrigatable land or not. These criteria were defined for determining the poverty of the household since the first Cohort.

The table above shows that 37.5% of the sampled household have rooftops made of mud/thatch/plastics. 81.25% of girls aged 10 to 14 years were living in a household the roof was made up of mud/thatch/plastic whereas only 18.75% of girls aged 15-19 years were found living in a household with similar structures. The old and traditional household which was made up of mud/thatch/plastics was mostly found more in the non-Muslim community (43.1%) and less in the Muslim community (31.6%). The statistical relation of households having rooftops of mud/thatch/plastic is statistically significant across ethnicities.

The qualitative researchers also observed that the majority of the houses in the Muslim community were concrete houses while the majority of the houses in the non- Muslim community were of the traditional model with roofs made of hay and tiles. Based on the figures in table 16 and the observation made during the field visit, it may be inferred that Muslim households have better income as compared to their counterparts Muslim households can be seen to have better sources of income (more reliance on agriculture and foreign employment) than non-Muslim household (more reliance on wage labor).

Likewise, the household not having land to themselves was found to be 23.3% among the sampled household. 23.4% of girls aged 10-14 years and 22.7% of girls aged the 15-years were found not to have land for themselves. Moreover, it was found that 20.9% and 25.5 % of Muslims and non-Muslims respectively did not have land to themselves.

*When it is about investing girls' education, parents termed themselves as poor. But when they it is about providing dowry, they get ready to sell their property for her dowry and marry her off."-
Project staff, Rautahat*

In terms of cash income, 20% of the total sampled household did not have enough cash income. According to table 19, 21.2% of girls aged 10-14 years and 14.7% of girls aged 15-19 years are still facing the problem of a shortage of cash income. Similarly, assessment across the ethnicities portrays that 23% of non-Muslim still do not have adequate cash income compared to 16.8% in the Muslim community. Despite the shortage of cash flow, parents do have some fixed assets as disclosed during the qualitative consultations.

The assets are utilized when in need of large sums of money such as for the wedding of the daughter or education of the son.

In consultation with the municipal education official, head teachers, parents, and change champions, it was found that the people in the project districts were relatively poor. Only a few households in the Dalit and other marginalized communities experienced absolute poverty. To overcome the problem of money shortage, boys from Dalit and other marginalized communities get engaged in economic activities from an early age. The headteacher in the Rautahat district shares that despite facing absolute poverty, a parent from these communities admits their children to school. However, they do not continue for long. As most of the students from the farming community come to his school, they drop out during agriculture season as they have to support their parents in agricultural activities. Prolonged absence from school results in lost interest and motivation to continue studying.

Similarly, among the total surveyed household, 16.8% of the total household were unable to meet the basic needs of the family members. Households of 16.9% of girls aged 10-14 years age and 16% of girls aged 15-19 years were unable to meet the basic needs of the family members. Likewise, 20.1% of non-Muslim and 13.3% of Muslim households were unable to meet the basic needs of the family. Furthermore, 19.3% of total survey households were found to be sleeping hungry out of poverty.

With reference to table 16, 34.5% of the sampled household relied on wage labor for income. These families may or may not find work each day to ensure definite cash income. Under those circumstances, households are often unable to meet even the basic needs. The finding was also verified during the qualitative research. During the focused group discussion, many mothers stated that they are engaged in agriculture and work in others' fields to sustain their livelihood or they are engaged in wage labor for their sustenance.

"I am an uneducated person. If you are uneducated, then no one will offer/give you any job and so happened with me. Therefore, I had to work in others' agricultural fields or daily wage labor to sustain my household". - parent Gadhimai

Summary Of Girls' Characteristics

The summary of the main characteristics groups identified in the baseline is outlined below:

Table 18: Summary of girls' characteristics

Characteristic/Barrier	Proportion of baseline sample (%)
Single orphans	N/A
Double orphans	N/A
Girls aged 10-14 years	81.30%
Girls aged 15-19 years	18.70%
Muslim girls	49.0%
Never been to school	44.80%
Dropped out of school	55.20%
Living without both parents	73.70%
Living in female-headed household	38.80%
Married	19.5%
Married but waiting for Gauna	6%
Mother under 18 (n=31)	8%
Mother under 16	0.00%
Difficult to afford for the girl to go to school	22.0%
Household doesn't own land for themselves	23.30%
Material of the roof (hay)	37.50%
Households unable to meet basic needs	19.30%
Gone to sleep hungry for many days in the past year	16.80%
Language different from mother tongue	100%
Girl doesn't speak LoI	NA
HoH has no education	87.50%
Primary caregiver has no education	NA
Didn't get support to stay in education and do well (%)	NA
<i>Sufficient time to study: High chore burden (Performed HH chores the whole day %)</i> N=400	10.00%

Source: Household Survey

The table above summarizes the significant factors in determining the girl's education among the surveyed sample. These subgroups are the basis for outcome and output level analysis throughout the report.

Two distinct age groups of girls, 10-14 years and 15-19 years are the major characteristics of the subgroups. Apart from this, Muslim ethnicity was found to be an additional subgroup of the girls as

the Muslim community is recognized as a separate ethnic group. Regarding the intervention districts, Rautahat constitutes 17.2% and Bara constitutes 11.9% of the total population. Since the ethnic group belongs to the minority group of Nepal and is often marginalized, they need support for upliftment.

School-going status, that is, 'never been to school or dropped out of school' is another identified subgroup. Girls who had never been to school or dropped out at some levels were taken as subgroups due to their high representation in the sample. These girls were taken to analyze the difference in the literary and numeracy skills of the girls from two different groups through the ASER tool.

Similarly, in terms of language, the entire sampled girls' spoke a language other than Nepali. Therefore, language was considered a significant subgroup as it appeared to be a major barrier in girls' education. This was substantiated during the qualitative consultations as well where a translator was needed to deliver the questions. The CLC facilitator also reported having taught in their local language to explain the content before referring to the textbooks.

Characteristics like 'household not having land', 'rooftop made out of hay', 'household unable to meet basic need', and 'gone hungry to sleep' were all categorized as 'poor household' and it will be analyzed as a barrier in the report. Characteristics like 'girls with children,' 'agriculture' as a primary occupation,' and 'parents with no education,' were initially considered to be potential subgroups. However, these were not taken to be the major subgroups despite having high representation in the sample because they did not generate any significant results when cross-tabulated with different barriers

BARRIERS AND INTERSECTION BETWEEN KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The Theory of Change (ToC) outlined barriers to girls learning and transition based on their experience of working with adolescent girls. The barriers identified by the project were social isolation, lack of peer support network, limited access to literacy and numeracy, limited access to family planning, early marriage, limited life skills- low levels of self-esteem, and vulnerability to or experience of GBV. Apart from the barriers outlined by the project, the baseline evaluation showed “poor school management”, “demotivated girls” ‘Parental attitude’, ‘Household chores’, ‘Safety concerns’ and ‘Poor household’ as key barriers to OOS girls’ learning and transition.

Poor Household

In the baseline evaluation, the poor household activities occurring at the household level such as the engagement of girls in household chores were identified as a key barrier to the girls’ education. In the table below, it can be noted that non-Muslim families are poorer than Muslim families. It may be because Muslim families have a higher reliance on the remittance money sent by male family members away for foreign employment and agriculture than non-Muslim families who rely mostly on wage labor and agriculture as the source of income as demonstrated in table 16.

Table 19: Barriers to education

Barrier	Category				
	Age group of girls		Ethnicity		Total
	10-14 (n=325)	15 -19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%
Poor Household	35.4%	32.0%	30.6%	38.7%	34.8%

Moreover, the poverty of the household was analyzed across other poverty characteristics such as the ‘households having more than 5 members,’ ‘girls with children,’ ‘education status of the HH head,’ and ‘roof type of the household.’ The roof of the household had a significant relation with the poor household.

Here, 66.7% of the poor households had roofs made of mud/thatch/plastic. The material of the roof is a significant barrier to a girl’s education because proper shelter is one of the basic physiological needs of a human as explained by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. In absence of fulfillment of basic physiological needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and sleep it is unlikely that the person can advance to fulfilling other needs such as education and recreation. Families are more concerned about managing their day-to-day needs, and educational needs specifically those of a girl are always deemed secondary or unnecessary. As more families in the neighborhood are transitioning from mud/thatched roofs to concrete or at least galvanized roofs, they are motivated to accomplish that as a matter of social prestige than sending girls to schools.

Table 20: Household characteristics

Characteristics		Poor HH
Girls with Children	Yes	29.0%
	No	35.2%
HH head Education	Head of the household has no/ limited education	36.3%
	HH head having higher education/Literate	24.0%
Households having 5 or more 5 members	Family members 5 or more	34.3%
	Family members less than 5	46.7%
Roof made of mud/thatch/plastics	Roof made of mud/thatch/plastics	66.7%
	Roofs made by other	15.6%

Source: HH and Girls' Survey

Likewise, in poor households, girls were found to have fewer children. This can be directly associated with the expenses of running a family and raising a child. In terms of the education of the household head, 36.3% of the household heads had little or no education at all. 46.7% of the households characterized as poor had less than five family members. Qualitative consultation with parents showed that they no longer desire a large family as they are concerned about the expenses associated with a large family.

Table 21: Household chores

Barriers	Category				
	Age group of girls		Muslim		Total
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%
Engagement in household chores	8.6%	18.7%	9.7%	11.3%	10.5%

Source: Girl's survey

The engagement of girls in household chores is also considered a barrier to girls' education. This is a common trait found and witnessed across all households. Table 22 illustrates that 10.5% of the sampled girls are engaged in household chores. Relatively more girls from non-Muslim families (11.3%) spend doing household chores than girls from Muslim families (9.7%). 18.7% of girls aged 15-19 years are engaged in household chores compared to 8.6% of girls aged 10-14 years. Engagement in household chores is statically significant across the age of the girls, implying the older the girls are, the higher their engagement in household chores.

This was substantiated during qualitative consultation where researchers learned that the girls from both districts had to perform the majority of the chores such as cleaning, cooking, and fetching water before and after the CLC class. More specifically, girls aged 15-19 years shared that they have to look after the animals along with doing chores inside the house. For the girls who were engaged in tailoring, such as some of the girls from the Muslim community, it was constant juggling between household chores, jobs, and CLC. In this regard, one Muslim girl stated;

“We have divided our household chores in such a way that every one of us can work tailor as well as in household and support the family.” - Muslim girl, Gadhimai

Table 22: Household characteristics

Household characteristics		Has to perform household chores most of the day	Spending a few hours, a day on HH chores
Girls with Children	Yes	22.6%	77.4%
	No	9.5%	90.5%
HH head Education	The Head of the household has no/ limited education	10.9%	89.1%
	HH head having higher education/Literate	8.0%	92.0%
Households having 5 or more 5 members	Family members 5 or more	10.6%	89.4%
	Family members less than 5	6.7%	93.3%
Roof made of mud/thatch/plastics	Roof made of mud/thatch/plastics	12.0%	88.0%
	Roofs made by other	9.6%	90.4%
Gone hungry to sleep many days in the past year	Gone hungry to sleep many days in the past year	14.3%	85.7%
	NA	9.6%	90.4%
Households not having land for themselves	Households not having land for themselves	17.2%	82.8%
	Households having some land	8.5%	91.5%
Poor HH defined as cash income	Poor	13.8%	86.3%
	Not poor	9.7%	90.3%
Unable to meet basic needs	Unable to meet basic needs	9.0%	91.0%
	Able to meet the basic need	10.8%	89.2%

Source: HH and Girls’ Survey

The relation of OOS girls’ household chores with characteristics such as ‘girls with children/girls without children, ‘and ‘household having some land/ household not having some land’ were statistically significant. This suggests that household chores are not similar across all girls irrespective of the different characteristics of their households.

In terms of the engagement of girls in HH chores, only 22.6% of the girls with children spent doing household chores for long hours as compared to 77.4% of the girls who spent few hours despite having children. As for girls without children, while 9.5% of girls engaged in HH chores for long hours, 90.5% of girls spent only a few hours on the HH chores. As discussed earlier, girls are bound to engage in household chores before and after the CLC classes. Nevertheless, in some cases, the girls were getting support from their mother-in-law to care for their children allowing time for their studies. The duration of the household chore is a determinant of the time girls can spend studying at home. As most girls are seen doing HH chores for a few hours only, it can be inferred that these girls can utilize their

time to study at home too. As for the girls with longer working hours, they might not get the appropriate environment at home to study.

Similarly, households having lands to themselves was also a determinant factor in the duration girls spent on chores. For instance, among the households which did not have lands to themselves, 82.8% of the girls spent few hours doing the chores while 17.2% of girls were engaged in HH chores most of the day. In terms of the house with their land, 91.5% of the girls spent few hours whereas 8.5% of the girls spent long hours on HH chores. From the qualitative discussion with girls and parents, it was known that among the household which did not have land to themselves, mothers worked as wage laborers in other’s agricultural fields to generate income. As for the households with their land, girls often completed the household chores before joining their parents in the fields for a certain duration. Nevertheless, it is important to note that all children beyond 10 or 11 years are often obliged to work along with their parents in the field during the plantation and harvest seasons.

Parental Attitude And Engagement In The Girls’ Lives

Table 23: Analysis of parental support across age and ethnicity

Barriers	Category				
	Age group		Ethnicity		Total
	10 to 14 (n=325)	15 to 19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%
Doesn’t get support to join school/formal	12.6%	40.0%	17.3%	18.1%	17.8%
Doesn’t support participating in training	27.4%	58.7%	27.0%	39.2%	33.3%
Doesn’t get support to initiate a business	12.6%	29.3%	13.3%	18.1%	15.8%

Source: HH Survey

The rigid and conventional parental attitude was another barrier identified during the baseline evaluation. The quantitative figures in table 24 illustrate that parents are moderately positive in terms of providing support to the life plans of the girls. here, 82.2% of the parents showed a willingness to support girls to join the formal school., 66.7% of parents said they will support girls participating in training and 84.2% of the parents stated that will support their daughters to initiate a business.

Disaggregation based on age showed that only 12.6% of girls aged 10-14 years and 40% of girls aged 15-19 years are unlikely to get support from their parents for joining formal education. As the girls get older, parents are more concerned about their safety, especially as the girls undergo a lot of physical changes. Older girls are not keen on enrolling in the school either; they are too shy. Similarly, 27.4% of girls aged 10-14 years and 58.7% of girls aged 15-19 years are not getting support from their parents to join the training. Restrictions were higher on the older girls than on younger ones primarily due to safety concerns and secondly due to the fear of girls engaging in any immoral activities that would humiliate the family. Lastly, only 12.6% of girls aged 10-14 years and 29.3% of girls aged 15-19 years are denied support from their parents to initiate business as parents inherently believe that girls cannot make judgments. Based on these data it may be inferred that while younger girls (10-14 years) get more support to join the school, the older girls are encouraged

to initiate business. Parents are willing to educate younger girls as long as it does not lead to any expenses on their end. As for establishing a business, parents willing to support their daughters are always keen on receiving additional support to run the household. The willingness of the parents to support girls to join the formal school, join the training and initiate business are statistically significant across the age of the girls.

“We have no problem sending our daughters to school. But, when the school fails to provide quality education, then there is no point in sending them to school.” –
Mother Baudhimai

In terms of ethnicity, Muslim parents were comparably more supportive than non-Muslim parents. For instance, only 17.3% of Muslim parents denied supporting the girls to join the formal school as compared to 18.1% of non-Muslim parents. Similarly, 27% of Muslim parents opposed sending girls to training, unlike 39.2% of non-Muslim parents who are reluctant to send the girls for training. And 13.3% of Muslim parents were reluctant to support girls initiating business as compared to 18.1% of non-Muslim parents. One of the major reasons behind Muslim parents being more positive towards supporting the life plans of girls is because, as stated by the head teacher of Rautahat, Muslim parents are relatively more educated than non-Muslim parents. The willingness of the parents to support girls joining training is statistically significant across the ethnicity of the girls.

The quantitative findings were substantiated by the qualitative findings. The majority of the consulted parents were found supportive of letting their daughters/ daughter-in-law for training or letting them initiate their businesses. However, parents did appear reluctant to send the girls to formal education. In the case of girls who are 10-14 years old, the majority of the parents mentioned that they are reluctant to send their daughters to school due to poor quality of education at school, the long distance between home and the school, safety concerns at school as well as on the way to school, poverty, and less interest shown by the girls towards learning. Many of the parents consulted mentioned that they are aware of the advantages of girls being educated. Despite being aware of it they were not able to change their perception due to the aforementioned reasons.

As opposed to this, some Muslim parents consulted were also of the opinion that, “*girls should not be sent to school*” and that the “*Education given in the Madrasa is enough for them*”. When probed further, they stated that at the end of the day, girls get married and engage themselves in kitchen work only, so, there is no point in investing in their education. Rather it will be a wiser decision if parents saved for their dowry.

Similarly, in the case of girls aged 15-19 years, the parents are wary about sending their daughter who has had Nikah¹³ but is yet to have Gauna to school due to the fear of girls being associated with other boys and being rejected by her husband. Likewise, the qualitative research also found that the decision-making authority of a married girl rests on her in-laws/husband and not her parents. The girl is allowed to go to school or training only if her in-laws permit. For instance, a girl who has been waiting for Gauna in Gadhimai municipality stated that she wants to continue her studies even after

¹³ The Nikah is the religious ceremony that binds together man and wife. Muslim women and their partners will be officially married at the end of the Nikah ceremony.

the CLC phases out. Her husband and in-laws are happy with her decision, and they want her to complete her higher studies before their Gauna.

If a girls had to participate in any training or program, they should be accompanied by one of their parents or myself." - CLC facilitator, Mahagadhimai

Likewise, in terms of supporting girls in participating in the training, the majority of the parents mentioned that they will support their daughters to participate in the training that enhances their skills. Parents are in favor of learning skills that would be beneficial to the girls once they are married like stitching, cooking, pickle making among others. Rather than economic independence, they are more concerned about running a household smoothly without any criticism from the in-laws. Moreover, parents were willing to send the girls to training which happens within communal vicinity. If the training is happening in another town, all mothers believed that girls cannot travel alone; either she must travel in a group of girls or has to be accompanied throughout the time by someone from the family or a CLC facilitator. It was observed that parents were reluctant to send their girls to the CLC class alone. Mothers were seen waiting outside the CLC class to accompany the girls on their way back home.

Even in terms of supporting girls to initiate business, parents were moderately positive as established by both quantitative and qualitative findings. Parents were willing to shoulder a load of household chores for the girls to have time for business. In terms of married and girls with children, the parents mentioned were willing to look after the babies and support the girls in performing the household chores whenever needed since the girls would be generating income for the household. This was verified by the project staff, who stated that the parents are willing to engage girls in income-generation activities if the project invests in the business.

Table 24: Parental support toward life plans

Parental support	Age group		Ethnicity		Total
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%
Highly unsupportive (>70%)	13.2%	38.7%	14.3%	21.6%	18.0%
Moderate Unsupportive (51 to 70%)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Least Unsupportive (below 50%)	86.8%	61.3%	85.7%	78.4%	82.0%

Source: HH Survey

Table 26 states the range of parental support across the girls' education and life plans. Parental support is categorized as highly unsupportive if the aggregate score of their unwillingness to support a girl's education and life plans is 70% and more. Similarly, they are categorized as moderately supportive parents when the aggregate score of their willingness to support a girl's educational and

other life plans ranges between 51% to 69%. And finally, if the scores of unwillingness towards a girl's life plan are less than 50%, then the parents are categorized as highly supportive parents. 82% of sampled parents were found to be highly supportive while 18% of the parents were less supportive of letting girls enhance their life skills.

As shown in the above table, disaggregation based on age shows that the parents of girls aged 10-14 years were found to be more supportive (86.8%) as compared to girls aged 15-19 years (61.3%). Simultaneously, 85.7% of Muslim parents appear supportive of their daughter's education and life plan compared to 78.4% of non-Muslim supportive parents. This implies that parents are partly supportive of their daughter's education and life plans. Similar inferences could be drawn from qualitative consultations too.

Table 25: Parental attitude toward life plans

Parental Attitude	Age group		Ethnicity		Total
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%
Positive Attitude (above 70%)	73.8%	68.0%	67.9%	77.5%	72.8%
Neutral (51-70%)	21.5%	26.7%	27.0%	18.1%	22.5%
Negative Attitude (up to 50%)	4.6%	5.3%	5.1%	4.4%	4.8%

Source: Household Survey

Table 27 presents the parental attitude assessed across the girls' education and their life plans. Parental attitudes are categorized as having a positive attitude if the score of their perception of a girl's education and life skills exceeded 70%. Likewise, if the score ranged between 51% to 69%, the parents are deemed as being neutral. However, if the scores of parental attitudes on girls' education and life skills are less than or equal to 50%, they are considered as having a negative attitude. 72.8% of the parents portrayed positive attitudes toward girls' education and pursuing life plans. 22.5% of the parents appeared neutral, that is, they had no thoughts regarding girls acquiring education and their life plans. 4.4% of the parents appeared negative; they considered girls' education and their life plans a sheer waste of investment as parents will be obligated to ultimately spend on their dowry.

From the qualitative discussion across both intervention districts, it was known that parents are moderately positive toward girls' education and life plans. Parents are aware of the advantages of educating girls, although they are reluctant to send them to school due to the conventional practices inherent within the community. Also, parents face veiled pressure to save for the girls' dowry rather than in securing their future by investing in their education. Against the odds, parents were starting to send their daughters to schools and training where their investment was not required. Still, such efforts are hindered by ongoing social evils like the elopement of young girls (below the legal age of marriage), gender-based violence, and defaming families and girls' reputations.

“Only when the girls are educated, they can decide what is right and wrong. This is why I am sending my DIL to CLC class. Right now the girls need to ask for

permission but once they are educated we can trust their decision.” – Parent, Mahagadhimai

Safety Concerns And Restrictions On Mobility

Table 26: Barrier to mobility

Barriers	Category				
	Age group of girls		Ethnicity		Total
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%
Fairly unsafe or very unsafe to travel to school	8.9%	8.0%	6.6%	10.8%	8.8%

Source: HH survey

With regards to the safety concerns among parents to send girls beyond the household or community, only 8.8% of the total sampled parents stated that it was fairly unsafe or very unsafe for the girls to travel to school. From the table above, 8.9% of parents of girls aged 10-14 years feel that their daughters are unsafe while traveling to school or going out of the community. Similarly, 8% of parents of girls aged 15-19 years feel unsafe letting their daughters go to school or out of the community. Ethnically, the data shows that only 6.6% of Muslim parents feel unsafe letting their daughters travel from home to school while 10.8% of non-Muslim parents feel the same for their girls.

“Our daughters can travel from home to school and are safe while traveling. But I don't know what is inside the school. In school, teachers should pay attention to safety. If they ensure the safety of our daughters, we can send them to school without fear”. - Mother Gahdimai

When asked during the qualitative consultations, it was encountered that a significant number of sample of parents stated that they had safety concerns for girls while traveling to and from school. Amongst them, the majority of the parents mentioned that the distance between the school and the household was the only safety concern for the parents like them. Parents feared the unforeseen circumstances that might arise once the girl leave the house like elopement or physical assault. Girls often walk to the schools or if they have a bicycle at home, they ride a cycle.

In addition to safety concerns on the way to and from school, parents are also concerned about things taking place within the school premises, such as discrimination based on ethnicity among teachers, harassment by teachers, and bullying among students.

“The teachers treat Muslim and other caste students differently, so I dropped out from the school and don't want to go anymore.” – Muslim girl – Baudhimai

Other barriers

Besides the barriers stated in the preceding section which were explored in the quantitative survey, other barriers such as ‘dowry,’ ‘gender disparity,’ ‘poor school management’ and ‘demotivated girls’ were noted during qualitative consultations which have been briefly touched on in the sections above too.

Dowry

Dowry was one of the implicit but important factors impeding the girls’ access to education and leading to early marriage. Consultations with various stakeholders of the project led to the conclusion that the practice of giving and taking dowry was normal in the context of terai. During the consultation with the parents and girls, they stated that the sooner the girls are married, the less the dowry. Parents thus see early marriage as a strategy for economic survival which subsequently deprived the girl of proper education. In addition, mothers talked about how the society they live in will start seeking flaws in the girl if she doesn’t get married early.

During the qualitative consultations, it was found that the parents are willing to liquidate their assets for dowry acquisition but never for educating their girl child. During the consultation with the municipal education official of Rautahat, he stated

“The Dowry system is also a problem in society. When the girls are more educated parents are supposed to give more dowry during her marriage.” – Municipal official – Gadhimai

Parents are obliged to give dowry due to the fear of their daughters being beaten and tortured at their in-laws’ homes for not bringing enough dowry. Parents across all four municipalities and both ethnicities agreed to the fact that despite the difficult in managing expenses and gathering funds to give dowry, they are obliged to do. This socio-cultural practice is still deeply rooted and people have easily normalized it too. So, when it is their turn to receive it, they don’t deny it either.

“We have a daughter and at one point in time, she should get married. You know we have a culture of giving dowry as well. We have to give the same amount of dowry to her in-laws when she gets married. So to be prepared for the future and minimize the economic burden, we cannot deny the gift of today.” – Parent Gadhimai

Despite parents intending to marry off their daughters at an early age, it was also found that the rate of child marriage has decreased as compared to the past. According to the Mayor and Education

official of Baudhimai and Gadhimai respectively, ever since the local government passed the provision stating girls who give birth to a baby before she turns 18 years old, her babies will not get the birth certificate, parents have become reluctant to marry off their daughters at an early age. However, the case of elopement is still prevailing despite having various laws and prosecutions against it. Additionally, some of the cases of early marriage were also conducted defying existing law. For those who defy the law, the Palika has a provision of punishment that includes a few months of imprisonment and a fine of some amount.

Gender Disparity

Gender disparity was another impeding factor for limiting girls' education in the context of the terai region of Nepal. During the qualitative consultation with the parents and girls, they stated that gender discrimination was absent in their families. But while asking about sending children to school, the majority of the girls mentioned that their male siblings often go to private schools or study in cities, while the girls do not even get opportunities to go to public school/ Madrasa/ other informal education. When this practice is pointed out to girls, the majority of the girls said that their household cannot bear the expenses if girls are sent to school. Parents are explicitly biased toward the boys while the girls perceive the differential treatment as 'normal.'

Despite being aware of the advantages of educating girls, parents are still prioritizing educating sons over daughters solely because they consider the sons as the breadwinner and their support during their old age and because the daughters are married off to a different household. Girls were prioritized when teaching household chores as these skills are considered crucial for an ideal daughter-in-law. Therefore, despite the number of household members girls were responsible for the household chores. When the eldest sister gets married, the responsibility is transferred to the younger sisters but never to a male sibling. Many girls tend to drop out of schools (and or CLC) because their older sister got married while they struggle to manage between household chores and learning.

"In our religious books, it is mentioned that sons should not do household work and daughters should not study" –Muslim girl Baudhimai

From among the sampled households, 68% of the parents stated that their sons 'help' in performing household chores like cooking, cleaning the house, taking care of the elderly, collecting firewood, and fetching water. On contrary to this, girls stated that household chores were meant for girls and not for boys who were born to enjoy the facilities gathered by parents. While discussing with girls, all of the girls across both districts mentioned that none of their brothers perform household chores while girls have to perform all of them. The girls blamed their fate for being born as a girl, *"The girls believe that doing household chores are written on their fate and have to do that until the last day of their lives."*

"A son should not work while we have daughters in the household". – mother, Maha-gadhimai

Based on the consultations with the project staff, change champions, government officials, and head teachers, it can be inferred that society and the social system always prioritized the boys. One of the best examples of the biases is sending boys to private schools while girls aren't even sent to public schools. The common finding in all of the municipality was, the parents are okay if the boys travel alone or even if he doesn't come home till late. While in the case of girls, none of the parents let the girl go out of the community alone. One of the girls in consultation mentioned that her parents do not allow her to go out of the household or community out of safety concerns and also due to the fear of society questioning her character. Hence parents strictly limit her mobility. If she needs anything, her parents will get it from the market or will accompany her to get it, but never let her travel alone. This was also confirmed by the change champions and facilitators during the discussion.

Poor school Management

Amongst all the school research teams visited, only one school in the Bara district had a School Management Committee. While the remaining three did not have SMC so far. When asked for the reason for not having SMC, the head teachers stated that the political instability of the local government was the major reason for not formulating SMC. Similarly, they also stated that political interference in the education sector was very high across both of the intervention districts. Similarly, in terms of the School improvement plan, only one school in Bara was able to show the document while other headteachers mentioned that they were in process of formulating SIP. According to the head teacher, the trend of duplicating SIP from cyber was commonly reported case across both of the districts. When duplicating the document, they just rename the name of the school while others were kept as it is. As a result of that, the need for one school does not match the need for another school. Similarly, during the conversation, none of the headteachers mentioned that they had considered gender-sensitive issues in their making of SIP. Similar was the case with the PTA. None of the schools that FDM visited had PTA. The political fluctuation was the commonly reported reason for not being able to formulate PTA as well. In terms of school infrastructure, lack of classrooms, lack of water, and pad disposal areas were commonly raised issues by the headteachers. Additionally, the unmatched ratio of teachers and students was the biggest issue of both districts.

Demotivated girls

Across both intervention districts, girls were found to have lost interest in going to school. This was common among girls who had dropped out of school at some point. Their previous experience of going to school entailed being bullied by classmates and corporal punishment that discouraged them from re-joining school to an extent. In Rautahat, the majority of the girls stated that they faced ethnic discrimination as well as were mistreated by teachers purely based on their ethnicity. In addition, teachers either spent time gossiping among themselves or were absent. Under such circumstances, girls and parents felt it would be better if the girls discontinued going to school. As for the married girls and those waiting for Gauna, they were too conscious about their physical appearance that they no longer had the confidence to go back to class. This was worsened by teasing and bullying by classmates.

Some of the girls from the non-Muslim community at Baudhimai Municipality shared that they dropped out of school because they were badly beaten by the teachers. On the other hand, some of the Muslim girls of the same community also stated that the only reason behind their dropout was the misbehavior of teachers towards Muslim girls.

“I wanted to study. My parents will allow me to go to school. But when I was at school, teachers use to scold me and my Muslim friend. He used to insult Muslim region and Muslim children so often that I could not bear that and dropped out.”

Muslim girl, Baudhimai

Correspondence Of Sample Characteristics With A Total Population

Correspondence of the barriers with the theory of change (ToC)s

As stated in the previous section, poor household, parental attitude gender disparity and safety concerns were the major barriers for married and unmarried girls identified during baseline evaluation. It is important to note that while barriers relating to 'safety issues', 'poor household', and 'household chores' have been fairly straightforward to evidence by findings, barriers relating to attitudes and behaviors, such as 'dowry,' 'gender discrimination,' 'poor school management' and 'demotivated girls 'were harder to capture, hence, these barriers may be more extensive than reported. PIN in its TOC had also identified some barriers that affected OOS girls' learning and transition. The barrier mentioned in the TOC that did not come up strongly and those barriers which were in line with the project's intervention are explained in detail below:

Social isolation, lack of peer support network

During the baseline evaluation, issues such as social isolation and lack of peer support networks did not come up as a barrier during qualitative as well as quantitative consultation. None of the girls reported that they lacked support from their friends or other members of the community.

Limited access to literacy, numeracy, or transitional programs

The project identified limited access to literacy, numeracy, or transitional programs as barriers for OOS girls. However, FDM findings suggested that limited access to literacy numeracy or transitional program was the result of poverty, household chores, gender discrimination, and safety issues which have already been identified as key barriers to girls' learning.

Low Nepali language competency

Low competency in the Nepali language among girls as well as in the CLC facilitator was identified as one of the barriers by the project. In the project area, the majority of the girls spoke either Bajjika or Bhojpuri. 64.8% of the sampled girls did not understand the Nepali language at all whereas 34.3% % of the girls had very little understanding of the Nepali language. With very little understanding of the Nepali language, the sampled girls were unable to read and write Nepali. At the time of data collection, it has only been 25 days since the CLC classes had started, due to which girls were only able to introduce themselves only in Nepali. Nevertheless, the girls showed a keen interest to read and write during the time of consultations. The CLC facilitators were instructed to teach the girls in the Nepali language, but because the Nepali language was unknown to the girls, facilitators had to teach in Bhojpuri or Bajjika language.

Limited access to family planning, motherhood, early pregnancy, and childbirth-related health problems

Access to family planning was identified as one of the barriers by PIN. This barrier, therefore, is relevant to the project. Questions related to family planning were part of the life skill indicators, which indicated that most of the girls lacked knowledge about family planning. As stated above, out of the total sampled girls, 81.3% of the girls of the 10-14 years age group were girls while 18.8 % of girls were of the 15-19 years age group. Out of 18.8% of older girls, 12% of girls were married while

6% of girls were waiting for their Gauna ceremony. Similarly, 81.3% of the total sampled girls were unmarried and were mostly of the 10-14 years age group who rarely had got their menstruation. Since the major proportion of the sampled girls was from the 10-14 years age group, they had little or no knowledge about family planning or contraceptive devices. The parents were aware of the family planning measures and were able to discuss the devices and share about the measures they had been adopting without any reluctance either.

At the time of data collection, the change champions had been recruited for more than 3 months and were involved in door-to-door activities of the project including creating awareness about girls' education, family planning, child marriage, mensural health management resulting in parents being more aware and less reluctant to discuss on these issues. When inquired about when to start using a family planning device, the majority of the parents mentioned that they should start family planning when they give birth to two babies among which one must be a boy child. When asked if they teach their daughters or daughter-in-law regarding family planning measures, mothers informed that girls need not know about it before giving birth to the first child, which is expected within a year of the Gauna ceremony or until a son is born. Once a son is born, then the daughter-in-law is free to use any form of contraceptive after discussing it with the family, which includes the husband and the in-laws. During the conversation one of the parents stated:

“Price hike has reached the sky. When you are unable to bear the expenses of yourself, what to do give birth to many children? it is a very bad decision to take the burden of many babies when you are unaware about how you are going to raise them.”- parent Baudhimai

In Mahagadhimai and Bishrampur municipalities of the Bara district, it was found that parents were unknown of family planning. The majority of the parents were able to answer after some probing only. Similarly, the majority of the parents seemed to be hesitant to talk about family planning during the discussion session. It was also found that they were not using any means of family planning so far. While in the case of girls of the 15-19 age group, they were aware of the information regarding family planning and most of them said that it was a matter of discussion about when to have children and how many children to have. During the conversation, one of the male respondents stated:

“All the decisions regarding me and my wife are taken by my mother. I am unaware of the use of family planning devices. Please ask about it, my mother.” – Husband, Bara

In both of the districts, a common finding was that older girls were familiar with the family planning methods while younger girls did not know about the same. Similarly, girls of both age groups were aware of mensural hygiene across both districts.

Likewise, during the qualitative discussion, both parents and girls were asked about the legal age of marriage and everyone said that they were aware of the legal age. The entire sampled stated that 20

years is the legally appropriate age for girls to get married. Contrary to this, a headteacher mentioned that the legal age of the marriage should be diminished to 16 years old.

“The case of divorce is increasing in America because of late marriage, if people marry early, the marriage lasts longer. The legal age for marriage should be 16 years.”-headteacher, Bishrampur

Even though all parents are aware of the legal age for getting married, the practice of organizing the marriage of girls at a younger age is still prevalent in both districts. When questioned about such practices, parents believed that when a suitable match comes along, it is best to grab the opportunity rather than wait for the girl to mature. Since the girls are bound to get married someday, it doesn't matter when she is married when a suitable match is found. Also, it is easier to find a suitable groom when the girl is still young. It may be implied that parents feel the pressure to marry their daughters as early as possible due to societal pressure and poverty (the need to reduce the number of mouths to be fed). However, consultation with government officials and other indirect stakeholders of the project, verified that the instance of child marriage has decreased as compared to past years but if parents got the chance, they would not step back to marry off their daughters. This was achieved through myriad interventions over the years at local and national levels.

Early marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth

Early marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth were other barriers identified by the project in the ToC. The quantitative data shows that amongst the total sampled girls 12.8% of girls were married amongst which 7.8% had babies. As discussed above, the result of parental awareness about early marriage is contributing to lower cases of child marriage and teen pregnancy. In addition, the cases of child marriage and elopement have been decreasing due to policies against child marriage and rigorous awareness campaigns through various agencies. Despite that, at times parents are known to marry their daughters if they find a suitable match for their daughters even before the legal age. Thus, to sustain the progress achieved, and minimize the practice of child marriage the researchers suggest the involvement of the GIEN while incorporating the local leader, change champions, and the municipal official in the community along with the parents and husbands in the campaign against child marriage.

Limited life skills: low levels of self-esteem, agency, confidence, and ability to negotiate important life decisions

Limited life skill (low self-esteem, confidence, and ability to negotiate) was identified as a barrier by the project and this barrier is relevant to the project. The quantitative figure shows that 51.3% of the girls have lower self-efficacy (less than 50% of the total score). This indicates that most of the girls were not confident to stand up for themselves to solve their problems. While 33.8% of girls were found to be more confident to talk about their problems and solve them. Contradicting the quantitative findings, the qualitative finding suggested that the self-efficacy of the girls was very low. For instance, it was found that the girls were dependent upon their parents and the elder one for any kind of decision. For example, girls have to ask their parents, if she wants to go to the market or the fair (Mela), if they refuse then they stay at home without questioning their parents. They believe that

they are not capable of making any decision, so it is written in their fate to obey the decision of their parents.

Vulnerability to or experience of GBV

The project identified vulnerability to or experience GBV as one of the barriers for OOS girls. During the baseline evaluation, it was inquired if the cases of GBV should be shared with people outside of the home to which, 90.3% of the girls stated that cases should be reported while 1% think that they should not be shared. Similarly, ranking the priorities of the institutions where the incidents should be reported, 98% of girls said that the cases should be reported to parents. 54.8% of girls prefer to tell it their teachers and 41.3% prefer to share it with their friends about the violence that happened to them. 38.3% of girls prefer to report violence to the police.

“There are some intense GBV cases, however, girls prefer to stay quite rather than sharing. – Girl, Rautahat

Contradicting the quantitative findings, the qualitative research found that girls as well as parents were hesitant to disclose matters related to gender-based violence due to the fear of being defamed in the community. Parents were more cautious to suppress matters related to unmarried girls as it would create challenges in her marriage.

A girl from Baudhimai municipality shared that though she had not experienced any form of GBV, she has witnessed it being inflicted upon other female members of the community. She had seen domestic violence after abusing alcohol where family members were thrashed, the daughter-in-law was brutally beaten in the name of dowry in her locality. However, none of those instances were reported to the concerned authority. When asked for the reason, she stated that *“at the end of the day she has to live with them, then there is no point in reporting cases. Similarly, if the cases are reported then male, husbands beat them again. So they do not want to take risk of being beaten repeatedly”*

“Girls are reluctant to share their stories due to the fear of being bullied by their mates in the CLC. However, the cases of GBV are still high in the community. For instance, one of the girls at her CLC was the victim of such violence from her in-laws' side. Now she is living in her parents' house.” CLC Facilitator- Gadhimai

GBV continues to persist in society as long as people do not voice them due to the fear of defamation. For instance, a married girl from one of the CLCs visited shared her experience of being the victim of GBV. Her in-laws used to humiliate her and beat her in the name of dowry. Neither she nor her parents never spoke up about the case due to fear of being humiliated by society. Only after prolonged suffering did she decide to return to her parents' house. Now the girl is staying in her parent home and studying at CLC.

KEY OUTCOME FINDINGS

This section presents the findings on three major outcomes of the project: Learning, transition, and sustainability.

Overview

Through intervention, the project aims to enroll the girls to formal school or successfully uptake a vocational skill so that they can generate income for their livelihood. Based on the experience from previous cohorts, the project offers TVET course on tailoring, beautician, embroidery and animal husbandry. For the girls of the 10-14 age group, the project has envisioned a transition into formal school after the completion of the 9-month-long CLC class. The girls aged 15-19 years will also primarily be encouraged to go to formal school. However, if they are not willing to go to formal school then they will be encouraged to uptake vocational training so that they can earn money to sustain their livelihood. Another reason for letting girls choose is to give them some financial independence from their husbands or other male members of the family.

The nine-month CLC operated by the project aims to increase the proficiency level of girls so that by the end of the CLC class, girls can develop a life plan and options for one. Similarly, from this cohort, the project has introduced a Multi-Grade and Multi-Level (MGML) system where girls will be segregated into different levels in the CLC class based on their knowledge. If the girls had never been to school and were not able to identify the letters, then they will be kept in the 'basic level', one letter identifier will be kept in 'level one, and word identifiers will be kept in 'level two'. Lastly, sentence identifiers will be kept in 'level three'. The placement of the girls who want to enroll in school into specific classes will be decided by the school management based on the assessment conducted by the school. In the case of the girls who choose to uptake their business, the girls will be given life plan sessions where one of the members of the girl's family will also be given chance to participate in the sessions. Similarly, along with the life plan session, the project official from Rautahat reported that the project has introduced Start and Improve Your Business Session (SIYB) for girls opting for vocational training. During these sessions, the girls are given more options other than the training they prefer. Similarly, girls are oriented about their business during these sessions, and activities that can enhance their knowledge and abilities are done.

During the baseline data collection, OOS girls were in the starting phase of CLC classes. It was reported that the CLC classes had been running for 25 days. External evaluators conducted learning tests with all 400 girls in the sample to determine the baseline learning values. The ASER tool was used to capture girls' literacy and numeracy proficiency levels. EE followed the exact guideline developed by ASER Nepal for testing literacy and numeracy.

Subject	Task I	Task II	Task III	Task IV	Task V
Nepali and English	Letter identification (contains 10 letters)	Word identification (contains 10 words)	Word identification (contains 10 words)	Reading story (contains a story that is composed by the combination of words used in subtask 3)	Story comprehension (contains 2 questions related to the story)
Mathematics	Story comprehension (contains 2 questions related to the story)	Story comprehension (contains 2 questions related to the story)	Story comprehension (contains 2 questions related to the story)	Subtraction (Contains 4 subtraction question of 2-digits number that needs borrowing)	Division (Contains 2 problems of 3-digits numbers divided by – a digit number with remainder)

According to the ASER guideline, girls did not need to attempt all the subtasks; both literacy and numeracy assessments were administered like adaptive testing: the assessment began at task ‘three’, and then proceeded either up to task ‘four’ or down to task ‘two’, depending on whether the girl completed task ‘three’ to a satisfactory standard. This administration method meant that each girl completed only two or three tasks per domain. For instance, girls were first asked to read out a sentence. If girls could read the sentence correctly, they proceeded to read the story. If they could easily read the story without mistakes, they advanced to the comprehension level. However, if girls could not read the sentence itself, they regressed to word identification, and those who could not even identify words reverted to letter identification. Similarly, for numeracy, first girls were asked to identify three-digit numbers, if they could identify three-digit numbers, they proceeded to subtraction and division thereafter. However, if the girls were stuck at identifying three-digit numbers themselves, they reverted to identifying double-digit numbers. If they even failed to identify a double-digit number, they reverted to identifying a single-digit number.

OOS girls’ proficiency level would then be classified as Non-learner, Emergent learner, Established learner, and Proficient learner. OOS girls were categorized on the proficiency level that they achieved during the learning test. Proficiency level was determined based on the sub-tasks that the student passed. The proficiency level was set in a manner that those who could not identify anything were classified as ‘non-learners.’ Those who could identify letters and words were categorized as ‘Emergent learners.’ Those who could read out sentences and stories correctly were categorized as ‘Established learners’, and lastly those who reached comprehension level, and answered the questions correctly were categorized as ‘Proficient learners. For instance, if a girl completed reading a story and progressed to comprehension level, but if the girl could not answer the comprehension question, she would be categorized as an ‘Established Learner’, and not a ‘Proficient Learner’. To measure the overall achievement level, the completion of the final subtask was taken as a benchmark. In the case where no girls have completed the final subtask, the second last subtask has been taken as a benchmark. Learning outcome: Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Literacy Nepali

The overall Nepali literacy proficiency showed that 49.3% of the surveyed girls are ‘non-learners’, 48% as ‘Emergent Learners, 2% as ‘Established Learners’, and only 0.8% as ‘Proficient Learners’ in Nepali Subjects.

Table 27: Learning outcome of OOS in Nepali Subject

Nepali Learner	Proficiency	Count	Column N %
	Non-Learner	197	49.3%
	Emergent learner	192	48.0%
	Established learner	8	2.0%
	Proficient	3	0.8%
Total	400	100.0%	

Source: Girls’ survey

As Nepali is not the primary language of the sampled girls, they are likely to face difficulties in comprehending the language, especially the girls who had never been to school. Nevertheless, the girls considered the Nepali subject to be the easiest among the three subjects taught in the CLC even though it had been 25 days since they started learning. In the initial learning phase, the girls were taught to introduce themselves in the Nepali language as shared by the facilitator and the project staff.

Table 28: Disaggregation of learning outcome of OOS girls

Proficiency	Age group						Ethnicity		Total
	10 to 14 years		15 to 19 years		Total		Muslim	Non-Muslim	
	School Status								
	Never been school	Drop out	Never been school	Drop out	Never been school	Drop out			
Non-Learner	59.5%	43.5%	64.5%	27.3%	60.3%	40.3%	45.4%	52.9%	49.3%
Emergent learner	38.5%	53.1%	35.5%	68.2%	38.0%	56.1%	51.0%	45.1%	48.0%
Established learner	2.0%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	2.3%	3.1%	1.0%	2.0%
Proficient	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	1.4%	0.5%	1.0%	0.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Girls’ Survey

Table 30 illustrates that 60.3% of the girls who had never been to school were deemed ‘non-learners’ as compared to 40.3% of the girls who had dropped out at some point. Similarly, 56.1% of the girls who had dropped out of school were gauged as ‘emergent learners’ as to 38% of girls who had never been to school. 2.3% of the girls who had dropped out of school were considered ‘established learners’ compared to 1.7% of the girls who had never been to school and only 1.4% of the girls who had dropped out of school were deemed as ‘proficient learners.’ Here, girls who had dropped out of school are seen performing better than the girls who had never been to school. Nevertheless, few girls who had never been to school were also deemed as established learners presumably because

they were learning from their siblings at home who had proper schooling opportunities. Here, girls who had dropped out of school performed better than girls who had never been to school.

Furthermore, disaggregation based on the age of the girls shows that 59.5% of the girls of the age group 10-14 years who had never been to school are gauged as 'non-learners' as compared to 64.5% of the girls from the age group 15-19 years. The older group of girls have more non-learners arguably because the younger girls have less responsibility for the household chores enabling them more time at home to revise the lessons from CLC than the older group of girls. 43.5% of the girls aged 10-14 years who had dropped out of school were 'non-learners' compared to 27.3% of the girls aged 15-19 years. The older girls who had been at school at some point were able to recall the basics of the CLC leading to higher scores than the younger ones.

Similarly, 38.5% of girls aged 10-14 years who had never been to school were deemed 'emergent learners' compared to 35.5% of girls aged 15-19 years. The younger group of girls are seen performing better than the older group presumably having more opportunities to learn through playing among their peers even before they enrolled into the CLC or they had less mobility restriction than the older group of girls enabling them to learn by seeing or hearing other people in and around the community. Coming to the CLC class, they were able to learn better than the older girls who are bound to the household by strict rules. Among the girls who had dropped out of school, 53.1% of the girls aged 10-14 years were considered as 'emergent learners' as to 68.2% of girls aged 15-19 years. Here, the older girls are performing better since it is a matter of recalling the previous lesson than learning new things for them.

In terms of girls who had never been to school, 2% of girls aged 10-14 years were gauged as 'established learners', and among the girls who had dropped out 2.8% of girls were 'established learners.' There were no girls from 15-19 years at this proficiency level.

Moreover, among the girls who had dropped out of school, 0.6% of girls aged 10-14 years and 4.5% of girls aged 15-19 years were deemed as 'proficient learners.' There were no proficient learners among the girls who had never been to school. Both age groups of the girls are statistically significant to the learning proficiency in Nepali subjects.

In terms of ethnicity, Muslim girls were seen performing better than non-Muslim girls. For instance, 45.4% of Muslim girls were 'non-learners' and 52.9% of non-Muslims were in the same proficiency level. 51% of the Muslim girls were 'emergent learners' as to 45.1% of non-Muslim girls, and 3.1% of Muslim girls were 'emergent learners' compared to 1% of non-Muslim girls. However, 0.5% of the Muslim girls were deemed 'established learners' compared to 1% of non-Muslim girls. The quantitative finding shows that among the sampled Muslim girls, 33.2% of girls have dropped out of school while 66.8% of them have never been to school. In terms of sampled non-Muslim girls, 76.5% of the girls have dropped out and 23.5% of the girls have never been to school. The figures are indicative of the fact that non-Muslim girls had better access to formal educational opportunities than Muslim girls. Despite this difference, Muslim girls performed better in the ASER test though they have not been in formal schools because of continued learning at Madrasa, which the non-Muslim girls are bereft of.

Table 29: School status of girls

School status	Age group		Ethnicity		Total
	10 to 14 (n=325)	15 to 19 (n=75)	Muslim(n=196)	Non-Muslim(n=204)	%
Drop out	54.5%	58.7%	33.2%	76.5%	55.3%
Never been to school	45.5%	41.3%	66.8%	23.5%	44.8%

Source: Girls' Survey

English Literacy

Table 30: Learning outcome of OOS girls in English subject

		Count	Column N %
English learner	Non- Learner	300	75.0%
	Emergent learner	98	24.5%
	Established learner	2	0.5%
	Proficient	0	0.0%
	Total	400	100.0%

Source: Girls' Survey

The overall English literacy proficiency showed that 75% of the surveyed girls were 'non-learners', 24.5% were 'Emergent Learners, 0.5 % were 'Established Learners', and no proficient learners in English subjects.

Table 31: Disaggregated learning outcome of CLC girls

Proficiency	Age group						Ethnicity		Total
	10 to 14		15 to 19		Total		Muslim	Non-Muslim	
	School Status								
	Never been school	Drop out	Never been school	Drop out	Never been school	Drop out			
Non-Learner	81.8%	70.6%	77.4%	68.2%	81.0%	70.1%	78.1%	72.1%	75.0%
Emergent learner	18.2%	28.8%	22.6%	29.5%	19.0%	29.0%	21.4%	27.5%	24.5%
Established learner	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.9%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Proficient	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Girls' Survey

English as a foreign language is quite challenging and is considered to be the toughest among the three subjects taught at CLC. Nepali language is commonly heard through audio-visual mediums and

is relatively familiar. However, the English language is entirely new to the girls and is used very little in and around their community.

Table 33 illustrates that 81% of the girls who have never been to school were deemed as 'non-learners' as compared to 70.1% of the girls who had dropped out of school. Likewise, 19% of girls who had never been to school were gauged as 'emergent learners' as 29% of girls who had dropped out of school. 0.9% of girls who had dropped out of school were considered 'established learners.' There are no proficient learners in the English subject. Based on these figures, it can be deduced that girls who had dropped out of school performed better in English subjects than girls who have never been to school.

Furthermore, among the girls who have never been to school, 81.8% of girls aged 10-14 years were deemed 'non-learners' as compared to 77.4% of girls aged 15-19 years. In terms of girls who had dropped out, 70.6% of the girls aged 10-14 years were considered 'non-learners' along with 68.2% of girls aged 15-19 years. Similarly, 18.2% of girls aged 10-14 years who had never been to school were labeled as 'emergent learners' along with 22.6% of girls aged 15-19 years and never been to school. Among the girls who had dropped out of school, 28.8% of girls aged 10-14 years and 29.5% of girls aged 15-19 years were considered to be 'emergent learners.' 0.6% of girls aged 10-14 years who had dropped out of school were deemed as 'established learners' along with 2.3% of girls aged 15-19 years who had also dropped out of school. The older girls demonstrated higher proficiency in the English language, more specifically the girls who had dropped out of school.

Across the ethnicity, the non-Muslim girls were seen performing relatively better. For instance, 72.1% of non-Muslim girls were 'non-learners' as to 78.1% of Muslim girls. 27.5% of non-Muslim girls were 'emergent learners' as to 21.4% of Muslim girls. Both ethnicities had 0.5% of 'established learners.' Based on these figures coupled with the data from table 30, it may be inferred that because more non-Muslim girls had dropped out (they had the opportunity to learn before CLC) along with more Muslim girls who had never been to school, the non-Muslim girls are seen performing better in the English language. Also, Muslim girls learn the Urdu language instead of English in Madrasa.

Target Setting

Benchmarking was conducted as part of quantitative data collection to gather information on the literacy level of girls of the same age as that of the CLC-going girls but currently enrolled in the school to set a target that the beneficiaries are expected to attain.

Benchmarking was conducted at those schools where the CLC girls were likely to go after completion of the CLC classes. Schools were purposively selected based on feasibility. A benchmarking assessment was commissioned with a total of 80 (20% of the total sample size) girls from grades 1-4 from different schools in both the Bara and Rautahat districts.

The results of the benchmarking will be useful for the project to set targets for learning. The targets for the outcome will be set taking into account the learning outcome progress of previous cohorts and benchmarking results drawn from the Cohort IV baseline.

Figure 1 shows the comparison of the proficiency level of girls from CLC and schools in the Nepali language. As per the figure, girls from the school are seen performing better. only 27.5% of the girls from the school were considered as 'non-learners' as compared to 49.3% of girls from CLC. Similarly, 61.3% of the sampled in-school girls were labeled as 'emergent learners' as to 48% of girls from the CLC. 8.8% of girls from the school were gauged to be 'established learners' compared to just 2 % of girls from the CLC. 2.5% of girls from school were deemed as 'proficient learners' of the Nepali language compared to 0.8% of girls from CLC.

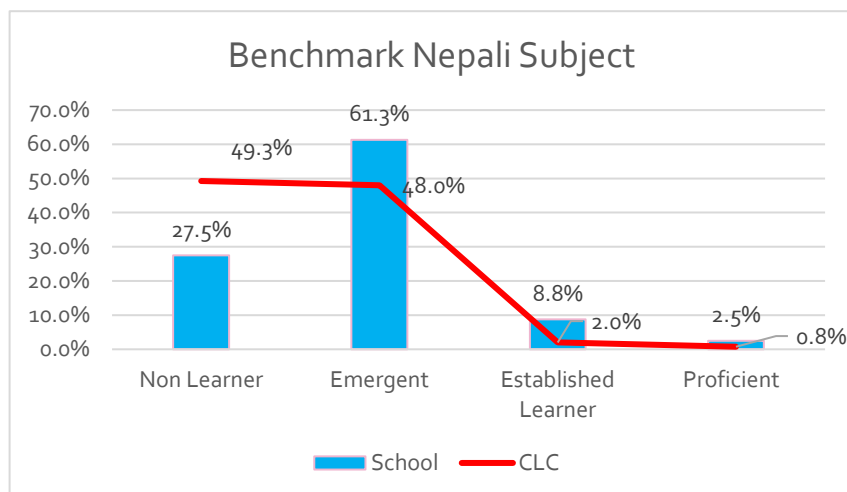


Figure 1: Benchmark for Nepali subject

Table 32: Benchmarking score per class

Grade (n=20 per class, N=80)	Nepali Learning (Row %)					N
	Non- Learner (n=22)	Emergent (n=49)	Established Learner (n=7)	Proficient (n=2)	Total (n=80)	
1	45.0%	55.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20
2	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20
3	5.0%	65.0%	30.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20
4	20.0%	50.0%	20.0%	10.0%	100.0%	20
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	80

Source: ASER for In-school girls

Table 34 represents the proficiency level of in-school girls across grades 1 to 4. In grade 1, 55% of the girls were 'non-learners' and 55% of girls were 'emergent learners.' In grade 2, 40% of the girls were 'non-learners' and 60 % of the girls were 'emergent learners.' in grade three, only 5 % of the girls were 'non-learners,' 65% of girls were 'emergent learners' and 30% of the girls were 'established learners.' In grade 4, 20% of girls were 'non-learners,' 50% of girls were 'emergent learners,' 20% of girls were 'established learners' and 10 % of girls were 'proficient learners.' Though the in-school girls performed better than the CLC girls, the proficiency of the in-school can be considered to be low too. It is only from the third grade have the girls have been able to read sentences. It is important to note that the tool used to assess language proficiency was easier than the curriculum prescribed at school.

Figure 2: Benchmark for English subject

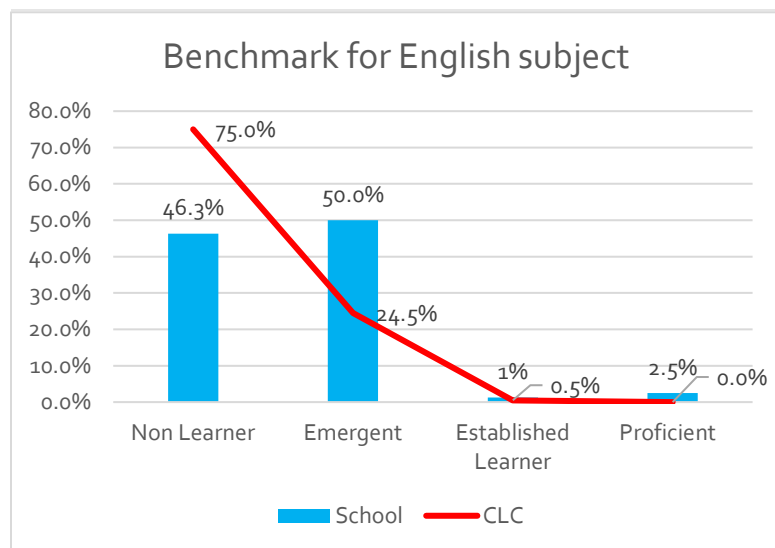


Figure 2 illustrates the comparison between the proficiency score of the in-school girls and the CLC girls in the English language. The proficiency of IS girls was found better than the CLC girls. That is, of the sample in-school girls, 46.3% of girls were 'non-learners,' as to 75% of non-leaners from CLC. Likewise, 50% of girls were 'emergent learners,' as compared to 24.5% of girls from CLC, '1 % of girls from school were 'established learners' as to 0.5% of girls from the CLC and

2.5% of girls were 'proficient learners.'

with none from CLC.

Table 33: Benchmark as per grade

Grade (n=20 per class, N=80)		English Learning (Row %)				
	Non- Learner (n=22)	Emergent (n=49)	Established Learner (n=7)	Proficient (n=2)	Total (n=80)	N
1	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20
2	60.0%	35.0%	0.0%	5.0%	100.0%	20
3	30.0%	65.0%	0.0%	5.0%	100.0%	20
4	25.0%	70.0%	5.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	80

Source: ASER for In-school girls

Table 35 represents the proficiency level of in-school girls across grades 1 to 4. In grade 1, 70% of the girls were 'non-learners' and 30 % of girls were ' emergent learners.' In grade 2, 60% of the girls were 'non-learners' 35 % of the girls were 'emergent learners' and 5% of girls were 'proficient learners.' In grade three, only 30 % of the girls were 'non-learners,' 65% of girls were 'emergent learners' and 5% of the girls were 'proficient learners.' In grade 4, 25% of girls were 'non-learners,' 70% of girls were 'emergent learners,' and 5% of girls were 'established learners.' English as a foreign language is considered a difficult subject across the nation, especially in public schools where the competency of the teacher is low and additional resources to boost the skills are also low.

Numeracy Overview

The numeracy proficiency level of OOS girls was measured in the same way, as it was measured for literacy. For numeracy, first, girls were asked to identify a three-digit number, if they could identify the three-digit number, they proceeded to subtraction and division thereafter. However, if the girls were stuck at identifying the three-digit number itself, they reverted to identifying the double-digit

number. If they even failed to identify the double-digit number, they reverted to identifying single-digit numbers.

Numeracy Outcome

Table 34: Learning outcome in numeracy

		Count	Column N %
Math Learner	Non -Learner	147	36.8%
	Emergent	246	61.5%
	Established Learner	6	1.5%
	Proficient	1	0.3%
	Total	400	100.0%

Regarding the numeracy skills of OOS girls, 36.8% of the girls were labeled as ‘non-learners’ while 61.5% of the girls were considered to be ‘emergent learners.’ 1.5% of the girls were deemed ‘emergent learners’ and 0.3% of the girls were gauged to be ‘proficient learners.’ A comparison between the three subjects shows that the girls performed well in Math than in English and Nepali.

From the qualitative consultation with girls, it was found that in some of the cases, girls were likely to go to market with their mothers which helped them learn numbers. Additionally, some of the girls in the Bara district also stated that they support their father to calculate sales in their local shops due to which they find mathematics subjects easier compared to English. In the case of Muslim girls of Rautahat, they find mathematics to be easier because most of the girls were simultaneously attending Madrasa also where they were taught Mathematics along with Urdu. As a result of that, they are likely to be better in mathematics compared to English and Nepali.

Table 35- Disaggregated learning outcome of OOS girls

Proficiency	Age group						Ethnicity		Total
	10 to 14		15 to 19		Total		Muslim	Non-Muslim	
	Never been school	Drop out	Never been school	Drop out	Never been school	Drop out			
Non-Learner	41.2%	35.6%	41.9%	22.7%	41.3%	33.0%	33.7%	39.7%	36.8%
Emergent	58.1%	62.1%	58.1%	72.7%	58.1%	64.3%	65.3%	57.8%	61.5%
Established Learner	0.7%	1.7%	0.0%	4.5%	0.6%	2.3%	0.5%	2.5%	1.5%
Proficient	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%
Total	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0%	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0%

Table 37 shows the disaggregated data on the numeracy skills of girls across ages and ethnicity. 33% of the girls who had dropped out of the school were deemed as ‘non-learners’ as compared to 41.3% of the girls who had never been to school. Likewise, 64.3% of the girls who had dropped out of school

were gauged to be ‘emergent learners’ compared to 58.1% of the girls who had never been to school. 2.3% of the girls who had dropped out of school were ‘established learners’ along with 0.6% of girls who had never been to school. Only 0.5% of girls who had dropped out of school were considered to be ‘proficient learners.’ It can be inferred that girls who dropped out of school performed better than girls who had never been to school.

Moreover, among the girls who had never been to school, 41.2 % of the girls aged 10-14 years were ‘non-learners’ along with 41.9% of the girls aged 15-19 years. 35.6% of the girls aged 10-14 years who dropped out of school were also ‘non-learners’ along with 22.7% of the girls aged 15-19 years. Among the girls who had never been to school, 58.1% of girls aged 10-14 years as well as 15-19 years were ‘emergent learners.’ As for the girls who had dropped out, 62.1% of the girls aged 10-14 years and 72.7% of girls aged 15-19 years were considered ‘emergent learners.’ 0.7% of the girls who had never been to school and from the 10-14 years age group were labeled as ‘established learners.’ Among the girls who had dropped out of school, 1.7% of girls aged 10-14 years and 4.5% of girls aged 15-19 years were ‘established learners.’ Only 0.6% of girls who had dropped out and from the 10-14 years age group were gauged as ‘proficient learners.’ Based on these figures, it may be deduced that girls from 15-19 years and those who had dropped out of school performed better than the younger group and those who had never been to school.

It was also verified in the qualitative consultation that the girls of the 15-19 age groups often engaged in tailoring work in both of the districts which might be a contributing factor that improved their performance in mathematics. Similarly, it was also found that all the kitchen-related expenses were decided by mothers in the majority of the household. The daughters often accompanied their mothers to the market exposing them to monetary calculations and ultimately contributing to the improved performance of the girls.

In terms of ethnicity, Muslim girls performed better than non-Muslim girls. 33.7% of Muslim girls were ‘non-learners’ as compared to 39.7% of non-Muslim girls. Likewise, 64.3% of Muslim girls were ‘emergent learners’ as to 57.8% of non-Muslim girls. 2.5% of non-Muslim girls were deemed as ‘established learners’ as 0.5% of proficient learners and only 0.5% of Muslim girls were considered as ‘proficient learners.’ As discussed earlier, exposure to work such as tailoring and additional classes in Madrasa increased the chances of Muslim girls performing better.

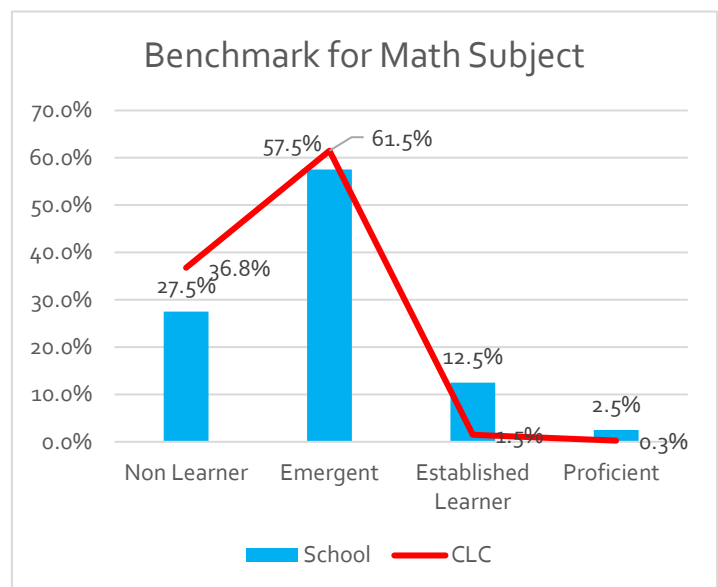


Figure 3: Benchmark for math subject

Figure 3 illustrates the compares the proficiency level of in-school girls with that of the CLC. 27.5% of the in-school girls were considered as ‘non-learners’ as compared to 36.8% of the CLC girls. Similarly, 57.5% of the girls from school were gauged as ‘emergent learners’ as compared to 61.5% of girls from the CLC. 12.5% of girls from the

school are deemed to be ‘established learners’ with just 1.5% of girls from CLC at that proficiency level. 2.5% of school girls reach the ‘proficient learner’ level while 0.3% of girls were at that level.

Table 36: Disaggregated data on math subjects from school

Grade (n=20 per class, N=80)			Math Learning (Row %)		Total (n=80)	N
	Non -Learner (n=22)	Emergent (n=49)	Established Learner (n=7)	Proficient (n=2)		
1	45.0%	50.0%	5.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20
2	45.0%	55.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20
3	5.0%	85.0%	5.0%	5.0%	100.0%	20
4	15.0%	55.0%	25.0%	5.0%	100.0%	20
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	80

Table 38 shows the disaggregation in the proficiency of in-school girls based on their grade where grade one had 45% of ‘non-Learners,’ 50% ‘emergent learners,’ and only 5% ‘established learners.’ None of the ‘proficient learners’ were reported in grade one. Similarly, at grade two, the maximum percentage of the sampled girls were found to be ‘emergent learners’ constituting 55% followed by ‘non-learners’ containing 45% of the total sampled girls. No Proficient girls were found in grade two as well. At grade three, the majority of the sampled girls were found to be emergent learners containing 85% of girls, while 15% containing 5% in each topic were Non-learners, Established learners, and Proficient learners respectively. Lastly, in grade four, 55% of the sampled girls were found to be Emergent learners followed by 25% of Established learners. While 15 % and 5% of Non-learners and Proficient learners respectively were found in grade four.

Barrier analysis for Learning and numeracy

This section presents the proficiency level of girls based on characteristics and obstacles associated with the lowest level of learning. Although gender disparity and safety concerns were some of the foremost barriers identified in the characteristics and barrier chapter, no relationship could be established when it was cross-tabulated between the learning proficiency. Only the analysis of ‘Household chores’ and ‘Poor household’ have been done, as these barriers showed a significant relationship with the learning outcome.

Impact of household chores on learning

The baseline evaluation analyzed that household chores as an impeding factor for girls’ learning and performance. Table 38 illustrates the proficiency of the girls who spend most of the time of the day doing household chores. According to the table, girls who are engaged in household chores for longer hours are performing relatively low scores than girls who are performing household chores for a few hours only. For instance, in the Nepali subject, 48.3% of girls who performed household chores for a few hours a day were ‘non-learners’ compared to 57.1% of the girls who were engaged in household chores for long hours. Similarly, 48.9% of the girls doing few hours of household chores were ‘emergent learners’ as to 40.5% of the girls working for longer hours. And, 0.8% of the girls who worked for fewer hours were deemed ‘proficient learners’ while there were none in the other group. Similarly in math, the proficiency level of girls who were engaged in household chores for a few hours was better than the girls who were doing household chores for long hours. For example, among the

girls doing work for fewer hours, 36% of the girls were deemed ‘non-learners’ as compared to 42.9% of girls doing household chores for long hours. 62% of girls working less were gauged as ‘emergent learners’ as to 57.1% of girls doing household work for long hours. 1.7% of girls with less engagement in household chores were labeled as ‘established learners’ while there were none in the other group. 0.3% of girls who performed household chores for a few hours were deemed as ‘proficient learners’ while no girls doing long hours of household chores were in that level of proficiency. Girls who are engaged less in household chores are likely to spend revising the lesson from the class resulting in a better score than the group who has to spend most of the day on household chores.

Table 37: Learning amidst household chores

Household chores					
Learning	Proficiency	Has to perform household chores most of the day (n=42)	Has to perform household chores a few hours a day (n=358)	Total	
		Column N %	Column N %	Column N %	N
Nepali Learners	Non-Learner	57.1%	48.3%	49.3%	197
	Emergent learner	40.5%	48.9%	48.0%	192
	Established learner	2.4%	2.0%	2.0%	8
	Proficient	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%	3
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	400
English Learner	Non-Learner	69.0%	75.7%	75.0%	300
	Emergent learner	31.0%	23.7%	24.5%	98
	Established learner	0.0%	0.6%	0.5%	2
	Proficient	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	400
Mathematics Learner	Non-Learner	42.9%	36.0%	36.8%	147
	Emergent	57.1%	62.0%	61.5%	246
	Established Learner	0.0%	1.7%	1.5%	6
	Proficient	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	1
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	400

Source: Girls’ Survey

Moreover, as disclosed during the qualitative consultations, younger girls are most likely to have a sister-in-law who shoulders more responsibility of the household than her even if they are relatives of the same. As the sister-in-law does the chores, the younger girls get time to revise their lessons.

In terms of English subjects, the girls performing household chores for most hours of the day have performed better than the girls doing a few hours of household chores. This is likely because this group comprises older girls who have mostly dropped out of school. They have a relative advantage over the girls who are learning a foreign language for the first time and are having difficulty comprehending it even when taught in their local language primarily and then only in English. 69% of girls performing long hours of household chores were ‘non-learners’ with 75.7% of the girls working for less time. 31% of girls with long working hours were considered ‘emergent learners’ as to 23.7% of girls who worked for a few hours only.

The household chores undertaken by the girls at their homes seem to impact the education of the girls as not all girls get a conducive learning environment at home. Since early morning girls are obliged to engage in household chores such as cleaning, preparing and cooking, doing the dishes, and looking after the cattle. During the consultation with girls, it was known that they complete some level of work before coming to the CLC and finish the remaining on returning home, which leaves very little time to study. However, the situation differs for some girls as they do get time to study at home, but are not keen on utilizing the time to study even when the mothers and sister-in-law are doing their part of the work.

Impact of Poverty on the proficiency level

In English subjects, 73.2% of girls from the non-poor household are 'non-learners' along with 78.4% of girls from the poor household. 26.4% of girls have considered 'emergent learners' from the non-poor household and 20.9% of girls are from the poor household. 0.4% of the girl from the non-poor household are 'established learners' as compared to 0.7% of girls from the poor household. In math, a similar trend of non-poor girls being more proficient than girls from poor households is observed. 32.2% of girls from the non-poor household are 'non-learners' as compared to 45.3% of girls from poor households. 65.9% of girls from the non-poor household are labeled as 'emergent learners' along with 53.2% of girls from the poor household. Similarly, 1.5% of girls from the non-poor household were gauged to be 'established learners' compared to 1.4% of girls from the poor household. 0.4% of girls from the non-poor household were established as 'proficient learners' while there were none from the poor household.

Table 38: Proficiency of girls across poor household

Learning	Proficiency	Household status		Total	
		Poor household (n=139)	Non poor HH(n=261)	Column N %	N
		Column N %	Column N %	Column N %	N
Nepali Learner	Non-Learner	59.0%	44.1%	49.3%	197
	Emergent learner	38.8%	52.9%	48.0%	192
	Established learner	1.4%	2.3%	2.0%	8
	Proficient	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	3
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	400
English learner	Non-Learner	78.4%	73.2%	75.0%	300
	Emergent learner	20.9%	26.4%	24.5%	98
	Established learner	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	2
	Proficient	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	400
Math Learner	Non-Learner	45.3%	32.2%	36.8%	147
	Emergent	53.2%	65.9%	61.5%	246
	Established Learner	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	6
	Proficient	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%	1
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	400

Source: Girls' survey

Girls from poor girls have better proficiency skills in Nepali and Math than in English. Girls across all CLCs deemed Nepali and math to be relatively easier than English. While Nepali could be more easily grasped than English when taught, they were already practicing math in their day-to-day life when going to the markets.

Nevertheless, the performance is still low as compared to that of the girls from non-poor households because they engage in household chores for longer durations. Their sources of income are irregular, and rely upon wage labor and rearing livestock for income. As the parents leave home to earn money each day, the girls fill in for their parents. The girls are limited within the household premise with mobility restrictions and have limited interaction with others. Quantitative figures show that 87% of the sample household do not have televisions, and 1.8% of households still do not have any telephones or mobiles. Under such circumstances, girls are bereft of the opportunity of acquiring additional skills from these electronic mediums as well as from their peers. Neither are parents able to guide the girls through their learning.

*“Parents think their responsibility is over after enrolling their child in school” –
headteacher, Bara*

Functional Limitation analysis and learning outcome

Table 39: learning outcome of girls having a functional limitation

Girls with functional limitations (n=28)	Nepali Learner (Row%)				
	Non-learner (n= 197)	Emergent (n=192)	Established (n=8)	Proficient (n=3)	Total (n=400)
	53.6%	46.4%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
	English Learner (Row %)				
	Non-learner (n=300)	Emergent (n=98)	Established (n=2)	Proficient (n=0)	Total (n=400)
	89.3%	10.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
	Math Learner (Row %)				
Non-learner (n=147)	Emergent (n=246)	Established (n=6)	Proficient (n=1)	Total (n=400)	
42.9%	57.1%	0.0%	0.0%	100%	

Source: Girl’s Survey

Amongst the sampled girls, there were 28 girls with some forms of functional limitations¹⁴ across the domain of disabilities (visual, sound, walking, self-care, communication, learning and remembering, behavior change, and mental health).

Table 41 represents the percentage of girls having functional limitations amongst surveyed girls. In Nepali subjects, 53.6% of girls having different forms of disabilities were categorized as 'non-Learners' followed by 46.4% of girls considered as 'emergent learners.' None of the girls solved questions beyond this level.

In terms of English subjects, the largest portion of the girls were 'non-learners,' that is, 89.3% followed by 10.7% of girls who were 'emergent learners.' There were no girls in the 'established' and 'proficient' learners categories.

Similarly, in mathematics subjects, mathematics, 42.9 % of the girls with functional limitations were placed as 'non-learners,' followed by 57.1% as 'emergent learners,' and 13.6% of the girls as 'established learners.' There were no girls in the established and proficient learners categories.

Based on the data, it can be inferred that girls with functional limitations performed relatively better in mathematics subjects compared to the remaining two subjects. . The statistical relationship of functional limitation with proficiency level is non-significant too.

¹⁴ The Child Functioning Module was deigned to better identify children with disability. It assesses difficulties in the following domain: vision, hearing, mobility, communication/comprehension, behavior and learning and self-care, remembering, focusing attention, coping with change, relationships and emotions the purpose is to identify the subpopulation of children who are at greater risk than other children of the same age of experiencing limited participation in an unaccommodating environment.

<https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wgunicef-child-functioning-module-cfm/>

TRANSITION OUTCOME

Transition in LNGB is best understood in terms of pathways that OOS girls will follow once the CLC classes phase out. The pathways are mapped at different points in time so that the girls can move over time during the duration of the project. With the object of increasing the literacy and numeracy skills of girls, the project has been running CLC classes which will be 9 months long. After completion of the CLC classes, the project supports the girls to transition to formal schooling or to a livelihoods pathway which includes vocational skills training according to their interests.

Both qualitative, as well as quantitative tools, were used to explore these pathways. While the household and girls survey with parents of transition cohort girls generated information on the status of transition rates, the qualitative consultations explored the enablers and barriers to transition. A detailed transition pathway is presented in the table below.

Table 40: Transition pathways

Primary Beneficiary sub-group	Possible transition pathway	Summary of qualitative findings
Younger (10-14) OOS unmarried adolescent girls who had dropped out of school less than a year ago	Re-enrollment to school to the grade corresponding to their literacy level post participation Safe employment, as allowed by the Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act 2000 (less than or equal to 14 years) and Labor Law (above 14 years)	Girls aim to rejoin formal school or engage in TVET as per their life plans. A few girls were still unsure about their pathway selection once the classes are over.
Younger (10-14) OOS married adolescents who are mothers	Re-enrollment to school to the grade corresponding to their literacy level post participation or engage themselves in different forms of vocational training. Safe employment, as allowed by the Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act 2000 (less than or equal to 14 years) and Labor Law (above 14 years)	Although the project has envisioned that girls will transition to formal school after completion of CLC classes, none of the girls who were consulted during qualitative research mentioned that they wanted to go to formal school in the future. They expressed interest in vocational training and enhancing their presentation skills and continue their ongoing small-scale business. In addition to this, the girls also showed their willingness to join other informal classes in the future while they were a bit skeptical to go to school and learn with children who are younger than them. Concerns relating to physical appearance, and girls being bullied by classmates were the issues that girls brought forward when asked about their interest in joining school.
Older (15-19) OOS married adolescents without children	Formal school re-enrolment to the grade corresponding to their literacy level post participation, informal literacy enrolment, informal vocational training Safe employment, as allowed by the Labor Law 2017	
Older (15-19) OOS married adolescents who are mothers	Informal literacy enrolment, informal vocational training Safe employment, as allowed by the Labor Law 2017	
OOS married adolescents who still live in their natal family waiting for the Gauna ceremony	Formal school re-enrolment to the grade corresponding to their literacy level post participation, informal literacy enrolment, and informal vocational training. Safe employment, as allowed by the Child Labor Prohibition and	

	Regulation Act 2000 (less than or equal to 14 years) and Labor Law (above 14 years)	
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To get an insight into the lives of girls within the intervention areas, girls were asked about what are they currently involved in besides attending the CLCs. Out of the total sampled girls, 80% of girls were engaged in the non-formal education sector, that is, the CLCs followed by 9.3% of the girls stating that they are not engaged in anything significant, so were simply staying in the house after returning from the CLCs. The majority of the girls took going to the CLC as a significant activity that entailed learning, but 9.3% of the girls identified themselves as not being engaged in anything as it did not bring drastic change in their lifestyle besides attending the classes in the afternoon. Likewise, 8.3% of the girls were involved in paid vocational training. Out of the total surveyed girls, only 0.8% of girls were involved in self-employment and 0.5% were looking after their newborn babies.

Table 41: Current engagement of girls

Current Engagement	Age group of girls		Muslim/Non-Muslim		Total	
	10 to 14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%	N
Involved in paid work	1.2%	1.3%	1.0%	1.5%	1.3%	5
Involved in training	8.9%	5.3%	11.2%	5.4%	8.3%	33
Self-employment	0.6%	1.3%	0.5%	1.0%	0.8%	3
Looking after newborn	0.0%	2.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	2
Staying at home	8.0%	14.7%	7.1%	11.3%	9.3%	37
Non-formal education	81.2%	74.7%	79.6%	80.4%	80.0%	320
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	400

Source: Girls' Survey

Similarly, disaggregation based on the age of the girls, the data showed that the largest percentage of girls of 10-14 years were involved in the non-formal education sector, that is, 81.2% followed by 8.9% of girls' involvement in a different kind of vocational training. While the largest percentage of girls were involved in the informal education sector, the least percentage of the girls were found to be involved in self-employment with 0.6% of girls out of the total sampled girls. In the case of girls of the 15-19 age group, 74.7% of girls were found to be involved in the informal education sector while the second largest percentage, that is, 14.7% of the sampled girls were seen staying at home without any significant engagement. Similarly, 5.3% of girls were found to be involved in paid vocational training.

The disaggregation based on age showed a greater number of the sampled girls of the 10-14 age group were involved in the informal education sector. The disaggregation based on ethnicity showed that 79.6% of the girls of Muslim ethnicity were involved in the informal education sector while 11.2% of girls were involved in different kinds of training. In terms of girls from the non-Muslim

community, out of the total sampled girls, 80.4 % of girls were involved in the non-formal education sector along with 11.3% of girls simply being at home.

It is important to note that the response given by the girls do not denote that the girls were engaged in a single kind of activity only. The girls engage in various kinds of activities throughout the day. For instance, in addition to attending the CLC, girls were engaged in other activities, like going to Madrasa, taking care of newborns, or being involved in vocational training such as tailoring.

The quantitative figures were substantiated by the qualitative findings where the girls shared their daily activities with the researchers. In the case of Muslims, the majority of the girls and parents consulted mentioned that girls go to Madrasa in the early morning for studying the Urdu language and go to CLC classes afterward. Additionally, a few of the Muslim girls, after they complete household chores, they go on to their tailor shop operated by the family. These girls were motivated to learn in the CLC because they believed that learning to read and write would help them in their tailoring work as well. This indicates that the major motivation of those specific girls was to improve their learning. In the case of non-Muslim girls, the majority of the girls said that besides attending CLC classes, they do not do anything significant other than the household chores and looking after elderly people or newborn babies.

Table 42: Prospective pathways for girls

Prospective Pathways	Age group of girls		Muslim/Non-Muslim		Total	
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%	N
Rejoin school	64.6%	8.0%	50.5%	57.4%	54.0%	216
Join vocational training	26.5%	74.7%	36.2%	34.8%	35.5%	142
Start own business	2.5%	5.3%	3.6%	2.5%	3.0%	12
Job	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	2
Marry	0.6%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.5%	2
Take care of my household	1.5%	4.0%	1.5%	2.5%	2.0%	8
Nothing	0.9%	4.0%	2.6%	0.5%	1.5%	6
Don't know	2.5%	4.0%	3.6%	2.0%	2.8%	11
Other	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%	1
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	400

Source: Girls' Survey

Table 44 lists some of the pathways that girls are likely to take upon the completion of the CLC classes. Out of the total surveyed girls, 54% of girls said that they will rejoin the school after completion of CLC class followed by 35.5% of the girls who said they will join vocational training. Additionally, 3% of the girls said that they will start their own business after the CLC classes end. Although the project has envisioned different kinds of transition pathways for girls, 2.8% of girls said that they still have not thought of anything about their future. 2% of girls said that they will stay at home taking care of their household and 0.55 % of girls said that they will get married at the end of the class.

Similarly, the qualitative consultations with the parents and girls also helped researchers to understand that most of the parents might be willing to send their young daughters who are below

15 years to formal education after the completion of the CLC classes, as long as the project or the school can ensure delivery of quality education. In addition to the concerns of the parents, girls aged 10-14 years who had dropped out of school were also skeptical about going to school because of their unpleasant experiences at school.

“Teachers keep gossiping with each other rather than teaching us. There is no point in going to school.” – girl, Baudhimai

As for the older group of girls aged 15-19 years neither are the parents keen on sending girls to school nor are the girls themselves interested to resume formal education. Since some of the girls were already married and had children with them, they felt out of place amidst their young and unmarried classmates. Moreover, for the girls waiting for Gauna, they needed permission from their in-laws to join the school, which was likely to be denied as families dislike daughter-in-law mingling with people outside the household. Also, the distance between the home and school is long causing parents to fear any mishaps that might happen on the way and back from school. Besides, parents and in-laws of girls aged 15-19 are rather willing to send their girls to acquire vocational skills that will be of use once married like tailoring, and also because engagement of girls in such work was acceptable in society. Girls were also inclined towards this than joining school because with the vocational skill they can earn some money and not rely on their husbands or in-laws for money.

“I never wanted to go to school. I was always interested in art and craft. After finishing CLC class, I will join tailoring classes. My father as well as my brother also gave their permission for this. I am here just to learn basic numeracy classes so that I can take measurements properly.” – Muslim girl, Baudhimai

When the girls were asked about their future aspirations, none of the girls were able to state any definite plan. They were unaware of the availability of the multiple choices that they could do in the future besides enrolling in school or uptaking tailoring work. When inquiring with the project staff, it was found that the project will encourage girls of 10-14 years to enroll in school rather than opting for vocational training. All the girls and the parents were informed that their children should be enrolled in formal school as soon as the CLC classes phase out. Nevertheless, not all parents have consented to this option. On the other hand, married girls and girls who have been waiting for Gauna are aware of the option of transitioning to vocational training. However, re-enrolling to formal school is also open for girls of 15-19 years if they are interested. The project staff also stated that the project has not conducted a market assessment to look for options for creating more options for girls. Once the assessment is being carried out girls will be asked about their interests as well.

Based on the qualitative consultation with the girls and the parents, it can be inferred that even though the girls choose to uptake different types of vocational training, the final decision regarding their involvement in the training rests on their parents and in-laws in the case of married girls. Given the conservative mindset of the parents, the proposed pathway for girls, that is, transitioning into formal school and up taking a vocational skill to become financially independent appears challenging.

“Parents are skeptical to invest in the education of girls because when girls are given the freedom, they misuse them and elope with a boy from another ethnicity humiliating parents’ prestige.” – Parent, Gadhimai

All in all, with the end of the CLC, girls will be expected to choose a pathway: either enroll in formal schools or choose a vocational skill to initiate a business. Other than the added knowledge and skill at the girl’s end, all other barriers such as repressive and gender discriminating parental attitudes, deeply rooted cultural practices, looming security concerns of sending to a distant school to continue learning, perceived poverty of the family that makes them reluctant to educate the girls or invest in the girl’s business, will continue to pose a challenge even after the transition of the girls.

Household Characteristics analysis of the transition outcome

The household characteristics analysis of the transition outcome is shown in table 45. It illustrates 39.8% of the girls who had dropped out and 16.2% of the girls who had never been to school are Terai/Madheshi Dalit. Similarly, 30.8% of the girls who had dropped out of school and 10.6% girls who had never been to school were from Terai/Madheshi’s other ethnic group. Likewise, 29.4% girls who had dropped out of school and 73.2% girls who had never been to school were Muslims, This is the highest figure for overall ethnicity which indicates that Muslim girls are less likely to access school/formal education.

Table 43: Transition based on household characteristics

Characteristics			Total	
	Never been to school (n=221)	Dropped out (n=179)	%	N
Ethnicity				
Terai/Madheshi Dalit	16.2%	39.8%	29.3%	117
Terai/Madheshi others	10.6%	30.8%	21.8%	87
Muslim	73.2%	29.4%	49.0%	196
Source of household income				
Agriculture	36.3%	33.0%	34.5%	138
Livestock rearing	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	2
Job/Services	5.0%	3.2%	4.0%	16
Business	10.6%	13.1%	12.0%	48
Wage Labor	28.5%	39.4%	34.5%	138
Foreign employment/Remittance	19.0%	10.9%	14.5%	58
Language				

Bhojpuri	75.4%	90.0%	83.5%	334
Bajika	24.6%	10.0%	16.5%	66
Household characteristics				
Girls with children	5.6%	9.5%	7.8%	31
Head of household has no/ limited education	92.7%	83.3%	87.5%	350
Households having 5 or more 5 members	95.5%	96.8%	96.3%	385
Poverty				
Households not having land for themselves	22.9%	23.5%	23.3%	93
Roof made of hay	33.0%	41.2%	37.5%	150
Unable to meet basic needs	9.5%	22.6%	16.8%	67
HH has no cash income	19.0%	20.8%	20.0%	80
Gone hungry to sleep many days in the past year	19.6%	19.0%	19.3%	77

Source: Household Survey

Analysis across the household income reveals that 36.3% of girls who had never been to school along with 33% of girls who had dropped out relied on agriculture as one of the major sources of income. Moreover, 39.4% of the girls who had dropped out of school and 28.5% of girls who had never been to school had wage labor as a means of income. Among 14.5% of the households that also relied upon foreign employment for income, 19% of the girls never went to school and 10.9% of them dropped out of school. Similarly, of the 12% of households with business as one of the sources of income, 10.6% of girls never went to school while 13.1% dropped out of it at some point. Based on these figures, it may be deduced that in absence of a definite source of income, girls are either not able to reach school or compelled to drop out of it soon. Increased engagement of girls in agricultural activities or filling for their parents at home while they engage in wage labor activities is likely to result in discontinuation of schooling as seen among the girls who dropped out.

In terms of language, 75.4% of the girls who had never been to school spoke the Bhojpuri language while 24.6% spoke Bajika. In terms of girls who had dropped out of school, 90% of girls speak Bhojpuri while 10% speak Bajika.

In the context of household characteristics, out of the total sampled girls, only 5.6% of the young mother had never been to school while 9.5% of the young mother had dropped out of school. Having a child is added obstacle in acquiring education for girls. Moreover, the percentage of the household head having no education or limited education was found to be 83.3% amongst the girls who had dropped out from school and in terms of girls who had never been to school, 92.7% of household heads had limited or no education. With this figure, we can conclude that when the parents are illiterate themselves, they do not perceive education as important for their children as well. Correspondingly, 95.5% of the girls who had 5 or more 5 members in the household had never been to school and 96.8% had dropped out of school. With many household members and limited sources of income, families often struggle to meet the necessities. In such cases, educating girls becomes the secondary or tertiary need of the family.

In the context of poverty, 33% of girls who lives in a household having a roof of hay had never been to school, and 41.2% of girls who live in similar conditions had dropped out of school. 22.9% of girls whose households do not have land had never been to school and 23.5% had dropped out of school. Likewise, 19% of girls who lacked cash income had never been to school while 20.8% of girls who do not have enough cash income had dropped from school. Correspondingly, out of the total sampled girls, 9.5% of girls who had never been to school were found to be unable to meet their basic needs. Girls living in the same circumstance in case of dropout were found to be 22.6%.

Reflection of transition outcome

Based on the findings discussed above, the EE foresees a few challenges in sustainably supporting the transition of girls. The CLC classes will be running for approximately nine months, which both parents and girls feel is insufficient. The classes are operated for 4 hours and the girls have to learn all the things required to enroll in the school within this period. As explained in the above section, most of the girls are still 'non-learners', and 'emergent learners' phases in terms of literacy proficiency. Additionally, English is the most difficult subject among all of the surveyed girls. This shows that girls are likely to need more effort in English subjects compared to Nepali and mathematics. Similarly, language was the most observed barrier among the girls. The repressive attitude of the parents and their diminishing confidence in the school system to provide quality education has appeared as another major barrier to the successful transition of girls, especially into formal schools.

Regarding the transition into school, the project has already identified some schools where the girls are likely to enroll upon the completion of CLC classes if they wish to transition to school. However, based on the field experience of the researchers, the availability of resource- physical resources, as well as human resources, was found to be insufficient in the school. For instance, limited classroom space is a major concern across many schools. They are already struggling to accommodate students, so they believe that adding more students from the CLC along with regular students is likely to place pressure on the existing limited resources.

As already mentioned above, the language barrier is the most observed barrier for girls enrolling in school. During the qualitative and quantitative consultations, it was observed that the primary language of most of the girls was Bajika and Bhojpuri. The girls were primarily learning every subject in their native language. Usage of the Nepali language was found to be limited in the CLC classes. Limited usage of the Nepali language is likely to generate problems once the girls transition into formal schools where the language of instruction is mostly Nepali. As a result of the incomprehensive teaching-learning experience, girls might choose to drop out. To minimize the risk of dropout of project girls, increased usage Nepali language by both the facilitators and the girls should be encouraged.

Similarly, during the qualitative consultation, it was found that there was minimal coordination with the school. During the consultation, a head teacher stated that he was unaware of the project and their roles and responsibility toward those girls. Nevertheless, he also stated that the school committee as well as he was personally willing to support the project and its target beneficiary in the future.

Similarly, the Headteacher from. Bara district seemed to be annoyed by the fact that they must take admission of the girls from CLC class even though it is beyond their capacity. He perceived the transition of girls from CLC to school rather negatively; he believed that once these girls transition

into formal schools, scholarship and lunch allocated for the old students has to be shared with them too. During the consultation, the headteacher also stated that they lacked sufficient toilets for both girls and boys. During the observation, it was also found that the toilets lacked hygiene and even water.

Currently, the main problem at schools is the appointment of the teachers as per the requirement. – Municipal Education Official, Bishrampur Municipality

The School Education plan must be made only after the school makes the SIP. It should come from the plans of the schools but the schools are not committed to making SIP. – Municipal Education Official, Bishrampur Municipality

According to the municipal education official of Gadhimai municipality, a draft of the policy has been formulated recently. However, the policy is yet to be adopted. Internal conflicts between the political parties have left the new education policy in limbo. He also highlighted that currently, the Palika has been operating under the guidance of the central government's education policy. Additionally, he highlighted the problem of insufficient teachers' appointments for schools within the Palika. Likewise, he was aware of the absence of SIP at schools, which he believes is the blueprint for proper school governance. Despite the financial support from the Palika for SIP formulation, schools are unable to develop one because they are not equipped with skilled human resources to develop it.

Similarly, during classroom observation, it was observed that the classroom infrastructure was inadequate as per the ratio of students. During the consultation with the headteachers, all of them mentioned that they have a separate washroom with water and a facility with sanitary pad disposal. Contrary to the head teacher's claims, the students stated that while there is the provision of separate toilets for boys and girls, it barely has water and a dustbin for pad disposal. As a result, girls have to stay at home during the time of their mensuration.

In the case of Baudhimai Municipality of Rautahat district, the official consulted stated that the school was unable to maintain transparency when they were given financial support a year ago by the local government. He mentioned that the school does not have a clear vision about how to utilize the funds given by the government. He stated that there is no point in providing support to the school until and unless they have a plan for utilizing them. Also, the local government should have a monitoring mechanism to monitor such support upon giving the support.

Along with the lack of clarity about fund utilization, headteachers also accepted that schools still lack School Management Committee (SMC), Parents Teacher Association (PTA), and School Improvement Plan (SIP). Despite the government's support worth NPR 10,000 provided for the development of SIP, schools were unable to formulate the policy due to a lack of skilled human resources.

“SIP is not only the plan but a commitment, so the SMC is also diverted from its responsibilities and the school education development formulation is also difficult. There is no PTA or child club at any school” – Municipal Education Official, Bishrampur, Bara.

According to the head teacher from Baudhimai Municipality, the central government and the local government has adequate resources for improving the education of Province two. Despite having adequate resources, the government, specifically the local government is not investing an adequate budget in the education sector as education is not a priority of the local government. Infrastructural development always overshadowed education every time. Similarly, corruption is another burning issue within the education sector too. Likewise, the lack of skilled human resources was another issue that was encountered during a conversation with the head teacher and verified by the Mayor of Baudhimai municipality. He stated that due to the lack of skilled human resources, a single person was looking after 2-3 departments of the Municipality. For instance, a single person was found heading the Education department as well as the district Coordination Committee. Additionally, the misuse of power has been taking place due to which schools are not getting adequate support from the local government; further verified by the Mayor of Baudhimai Municipality.

SUSTAINABILITY OUTCOME

The sustainability of the project is measured at three levels i.e., at the community level, school level, and lastly, at the system level. The overall sustainability level score in the baseline was 2 out of 10, that is 20%. The endline target for sustainability indicators is 40%.

Community-level indicators included the percentage of key family members (Husbands, parents/in-laws) of OOS adolescent girls who demonstrated their support in their life plan and the percentage of community members who feel it is harmful to a girl to get married below the legal age. The activities of the project were envisioned to create awareness among family members regarding child marriage, and support girls by helping with household chores, and their transition pathway. Both indicators were measured through the quantitative survey as well as through qualitative consultation. However, baseline data showed that the project was yet to conduct its community-level activities.

Regarding the school-level sustainability indicator, it aims to measure the gender-sensitive school sustainability index, and the percentage of Girls Inclusive Education Network scoring acceptable or above in sustainability assessment. The project aims to expand the GIEN network across 48 schools and 72 Palikas, of which 25 has been formed so far. All the activities are focused on the school level. For this, the project had to identify schools where the OOS girls are likely to be transitioned, and then a gender-transformative workshop would be conducted with the teachers as well as students to create a conducive environment for OOS girls. To measure a sustainable change at the school level, the external evaluator used barefoot assessment to observe the classroom activities of teachers, observe the overall infrastructure of the school (well-managed toilets, sanitary pad disposal, and complaint boxes among others) and conduct scorecard assessment with the headteachers. Furthermore, the external evaluator also conducted KIIs with headteachers. The headteacher was consulted and the classroom observation was conducted. However, coordination issues were raised in most of the schools.

System-level indicators captured a percentage of government officials who can demonstrate their support to minimize the cases of child marriage, alternative roles of girls, and Local government incorporating some or all components of the Aarambha project into the local plan while leading the Girls Inclusive Education Network, which is chaired by Deputy-Mayor of the Municipality. Both the system-level indicators were measured through qualitative consultation. The finding showed that the project has good coordination with the local government to implement its planned activities at some level. However, the most important intervention of the project, that is, the formation of the GIEN network was delayed due to some technical issues on the project side.

All three sustainability indicators were measured based on the scorecard approach whereby each achieved target was scored on a scale of 0- 4. The fully achieved target was scored 4, and the unachieved target was scored 0. Once the total score was generated, it was divided by 10 (score 2 for each indicator) to generate the baseline value.

Table 44 score card for sustainability

Score	Rating
0	Negligible
1	Latent
2	Emerging

3	Becoming established
4	Established

Table 45: Sustainability scoreboard

Indicators	
<p>The community-level indicator I: Key family members (Husband, parents/in-laws) of OOS girls who demonstrate their support for their life plan</p>	<p>The community level indicator was measured at three levels:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support to join formal school: 82.2% of the parents said that they will allow their daughters/Daughters-in-law to join the formal school. Support to join training: 66.7% of the surveyed parents said that they will allow their daughters and daughters-in-law to join different kinds of vocational training. Support to initiate business: Amongst the total survey parents, 84.2% of the parents said that they would support their girls to initiate business if they wished to. <p>Although the quantitative figure portrays the supportive nature of parents towards girls' pathways, the qualitative findings suggested that while parents were slightly positive about sending girls less than 15 years to school, parents portrayed repressive attitudes towards the older girl and are not open to the idea of girls going to schools or joining the training. Specifically, regarding girls of 15-19 years, they had no intention of sending the girls to formal school.</p> <p>Score: out of 4, 2 scores are given to the community level indicator as parental support still is lacking for girls' pathways.</p>
<p>Community Level Indicator II: Indicator 2: % of community members who feel it is harmful to a girl to get married below the legal age</p>	<p>The perception that girls should not be married before 20 years: 82.5% of parents thinks that girls should not get married before she turns 18.</p> <p>Although the quantitative figure shows that the parents perceive child marriage as bad. However, in qualitative consultation, it revealed that parents would not hesitate to marry off the girls if a suitable groom is found even while the girl is still a child. In consultation with municipal officials and headteachers, it was also found that the tradition of marrying off girls at an early age has decreased as compared to the past.</p> <p>Score: The perception of parents towards early marriage is still conservative hence, the score for this indicator is given as 2 out of 4.</p>
<p>Total Community level sustainability score (0-4)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p>
<p>School Level Sustainability Indicator</p>	
<p>School Level Indicator I: Gender-sensitive school sustainability index</p>	<p>Based on the gender-sensitive school sustainability index, schools under assessment lacked GESI documents. The schools did not have appropriate toilet facilities, no regular meetings with parents, and lacked SIP.</p> <p>A score of 0 is given out of 2 because the schools failed to produce evidence of implementing GESI standards at school</p>
<p>School Level Indicator 2: % of school support committee scoring</p>	<p>Based on SIP assessment and consultation with headteachers, schools lacked SMC/PTA. None of the schools that the research team visited</p>

acceptable or above in sustainability assessment	had formed SIP even though the school was running halfway through the academic session. A score of 0 out of 2 is given because SMC/PTA was absent/inactive in the schools.
Total School Sustainability score (0-4)	0
System-level sustainability indicators	
Indicator 3: % of Girls Inclusive Education Network scoring acceptable or above through self-assessment tool	No assessment was done during the baseline due to the delay in the formation of the GIEN network hence the score of 0 out of 2.
Total System level Sustainability score (0-4)	0
Total Sustainability core (0-4, average of the three-level scores)	2

The three sustainability components i.e Community, School, and System have two indicators each which have already been discussed in detail above. The summary of the scores for each of the indicators is given in the table below.

	Community Level	School Level	System Level
Indicator 1	1	0	0
Indicator 2	1	0	N/A
Total score out of 4	2	0	0

In the baseline, the score achieved by the project in sustainability is 2 out of 10, which is 0.2% in the baseline.

Sustainability at the community level: The project had designed community-level activities to ensure the ownership and continuation of project activities even after the project phases out. The major objective of this indicator is to sensitize the importance of girls' education and create awareness among community members on the issues such as early marriage, and family planning. Similarly, it also aims to increase the support of parents toward girls' life plans. This indicator also plays a vital role in changing the environment for those girls who have been living in a community where traditional cultures and social norms are deeply rooted. These deeply rooted social and traditional practices impact more on the girls' life as it stops them to step out of the household.

From the field-level observation, it was found that plenty of the project interventions had taken place from the project end such as awareness campaigns amongst parents about girls' education and child marriage. Nevertheless, parents marry off their children while keeping the authorities in their shadow. For instance, a Mualabi (Islamic priest) in Rautahat, who was also a change champion recalled that in the Muslim community, Nikah (Islamic wedding) takes place in the Masjid only in the presence of the Mualabi, the groom, and a couple of families and the bride's father, who later informs the rest of the family. The Gauna ceremony then takes place when she is of legal age. As for non-Muslim families, parents are willing to marry off their child if they find a 'good' groom even before reaching the legal age. These incidents were common in both districts.

Sustainability at the school level: Transitioning to the formal school is one of the transitional pathways for the girls after the completion of CLC classes. For the girls to successfully transition into the school, a conducive learning environment needs to be created so that these girls can be retained. For this, PIN designed an intervention for creating an enabling environment for girls in schools. This will be done through establishing committees like SMC, PTA, and Gender focal points among others, who will have a defined role to ensure gender sensitivity. In addition, schools will also conduct a gender gap assessment and make a report to identify the issues. Schools will be trained on making SIP and ensuring GESI is incorporated into the SIP. At the time of baseline evaluation, the project had just identified the school, so these activities are yet to be conducted at the school.

Officials from both districts stated that the practice of educating girls' children has slightly increased as compared to the past. The enrollment rate of girls is higher than that of boys. The finding was also verified by the head teachers of all of the municipalities who claimed that the enrollment rate of girls is higher compared to boys, but retention was very low. According to the headteacher of Bara, the flow of the students is very high during the initial stage of the academic session. When the students receive textbooks or support from the school, they stop to come to school. He also stated that the parents were also negligent toward their children's education. For instance, he cannot recall any instances where parents inquired about their children's progress in education.

Despite this, the quantitative and qualitative data from baseline evaluation reveals that most girls aged 10-14 years along with their parents were keen about girls transitioning into formal schools after the completion of the CLC. However, the parents and the girls wanted the project to ensure quality education at school; more productive hours, and less time lost with teachers gossiping amongst themselves without coming to class. They wanted to ensure that girls are not bullied in the classroom by either peers or teachers based on their ethnicity or for being married.

In Cohort IV, the CLC is expected to operate for nine months and girls will be given all the pre-requisite knowledge and skills for transitioning to the school. However, the baseline research found that the schools lacked SMC/PTA which could ease the transition process for the girls.

Sustainability at the System Level: This indicator aims to form the Girls Inclusive Education Network (GIEN) where girls from every ethnicity are encouraged girls to take a stand for their rights. Additionally, this network allows girls to lobby the local authorities, continue influencing policies, promote girls' rights to education, protection, and safeguarding, and have contributed to reducing gender-based violence, raising awareness in the community to eliminate harmful social norms like early child marriage and gender-based discriminations ultimately empowering marginalized girls to continue their education and learning.

The GIEN network was formed to support the local government and school to promote gender equality through harmonizing governmental and non-governmental efforts made in the past and present in education; mainstreaming Gender and Inclusion policies, while developing capacity on complaint response mechanism (CRM). Additionally, the GIEN network will be mobilized to raise parental and communal awareness to support girls' education, eliminate harmful social and cultural practices, create a conducive and safe learning environment at school, and create awareness amongst community people about the disaster, climate change, and their mitigation measures. Moreover, it encourages women and youth participation in promoting girls' education and eliminating harmful social practices in the community.

Likewise, GIEN will play an active role to strengthen the engagement of young girls in climate change resilience from strengthening awareness of climate risks and drivers (ensuring peer support and positive action to address the psycho-social impacts of a changing climate on children) to promoting action and engagement with schools and local government planning about climate resilience. GIEN will also inform relief and response processes in close collaboration with local governments. All in all, the GIEN will create an enabling environment for girls to take leading roles in the community in promoting awareness regarding the importance of girls' education, climate change mitigation, resilience, and better livelihood through extending networks with other like-minded CSOs and the government.

The project was in the preliminary phase of network formation, hence not assessed in the baseline. So, the sustainability from the GIEN's end is not mapped. While on the other hand, the local government that the research team visited had shown their willingness to continue the project activities even after the project phases out. For instance: an official from Baudhimai and Mahagadhimai has ensured that they are ready for allocating funds or incorporating the CLC as a part of their education plan and continuing the project activities. Likewise, the official from Gadhimai municipality has ensured the internal monitoring of CLC and its girls from Palikas' end after the project phases out. On the other hand, Bishrampur municipality has not shown any interest in ensuring the sustainability of the project activities although the project activities were good enough. Correspondingly, none of the officials interviewed were aware of the GIEN network so far due to which the sustainability aspect of the GIEN network was not mapped.

KEY INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME FINDINGS

The project has identified key intermediate outcomes in its ToC to capture improved learning and transition of girls, and the sustainability of the project activities. Such key outcomes are OOS girls' improved attendance, OOS girls increased cognitive and non-cognitive skills, the school's initiative to create environments for OOS girls' learning and communities, and authorities' positive social norms that encourage delayed marriage and realization of OOS girls' life plans. Each of these intermediate outcomes has been measured using a mixed-method approach which has been discussed in the section below.

Attendance

Intermediate Outcome Indicator 1.1: OOS adolescent girls who have attended literacy and numeracy sessions

Girls' attendance was tracked to capture OOS girls' learning status. The CLC of Cohort IV was started on September 2022. At the time of baseline, classes had been operating for 25 days only. Therefore, the data from the time of commencement of the class till the baseline will be assessed. An aggregated attendance record of each CLC was provided by the project team for analysis which included the attendance record of all the girls from Cohort 4.

Table 46: Intermediate outcome: attendance

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring techniques used	Who collected the data?	Baseline Value	Endline Target	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point (Y/N)?
Out of school adolescent girls' improved attendance	% of OOS adolescent girls who have attended 70% or more literacy and numeracy sessions	PIN	82%	83%	Y
Qualitative findings	The girls are regular to the CLC classes despite the engagement in the household chores. For some, it is a learning opportunity and for others it is an opportunity to escape from the household chores and rest while meeting with friends.				

The overall attendance rate for 25 days of CLC was 82%. This can be deemed high given it is the initial phase of the CLC and the girls also portrayed high enthusiasm to attend the classes.

Regular attendance is imperative for better learning and performance but the fact that OOS girls are still expected to perform household chores, and they have a greater responsibility of taking care of the family over self-improvement can certainly increase the chance of absenteeism over the length and directly impact their learnings.

OOS adolescent girls have acquired cognitive and non-cognitive skills to develop and pursue life plan

This domain captured the decision-making capacity of girls and girls' knowledge, attitude, and practice about different agencies like financial literacy, family planning, and self-efficacy.

Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2.1: Household Decision-Making

Household decision-making indicators generated information on OOS girls' decision-making capacity. These indicators were captured through quantitative and qualitative consultations.

Table 47: IO 2.1- household decision-making index

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring techniques used	Who collected the data?	Baseline Value	Endline Target	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point (Y/N)?
Household decision-making index	Quantitative and qualitative	FDM	3%	30%	Y
Qualitative findings	The girls demonstrate poor household decision-making ability. According to girls, they were neither included in any of the household decision-making nor given space where they can decide anything for themselves. According to girls, obeying their parents' decision was written in their fate and they cannot go against their parents.				

Amongst the total sampled girls, only 5% of the girls were involved in paid work and were financially active. When these girls were asked about the decision-making regarding the use of money that they had earned, 65% of girls stated that their parents decide the ways to use the money. Similarly, 25% of the girls said they decided it themselves how to use the money. During the qualitative consultation, it was found that all the financial decisions were taken by the parents even if the girls were financially active and earning money.

In regards to taking other decisions like visiting friends or relatives, 86.8% of girls said that their parents decided if they can go to meet friends, neighbors, and relatives followed by 8.2% of girls who said that their other family members decided regarding their mobility. Likewise, only 1.8% of the girls mentioned that they are free to decide about going to meet their friends, and relatives while 0.8% of girls said that they relied on their husbands to take the decision.

In line with the quantitative findings, qualitative findings also showed that girls had little liberty to take decisions. Most of the girls stated that they are not even allowed to go to the market to buy their goods or visit friends without their parent's permission. Taking major decisions like marriage and education was unimaginable for the girls because they are accustomed to their parents, moreover, their fathers and grandfather take all the major decisions in the family. Married girls from Mahagadhimai Municipality stated that they always take permission from their husbands and in-laws to do things even in their day-to-day life. According to the girls of Gadhimai Municipality, fathers and grandfathers take decisions for their household.

During the discussion with girls aged 10-14 years in Baudhimai Municipality, it was known that in case the girls have to participate in any kind of activity outside the household, they rely on their mothers to accompany them. Only if their mothers can accompany, they will they be allowed to

participate in it, otherwise, they will not. Similarly, in the case of financial decision-making, most of the girls said that all financial decisions are taken by their parents.

While asking about the bank account and savings, none of them stated having bank accounts in any of the financial institutions. During the qualitative consultation with girls from the Rautahat district, they stated that they practiced saving money in money jars at home. Additionally, some of the girls also shared that they used their savings at times when their family members needed financial support. For instance, one of the girls in Baudhimai stated that she had savings of three thousand in her piggy bank. When her father got sick, she gave her saving to her mother and took her father to the hospital.

While asking girls about where they get money for saving, girls stated that they save the money they get to buy snacks while accompanying their mothers to the market. Additionally, some of the girls also reported that they get money from their parents for purchasing their beauty products and inner garments. These findings were verified with the parents as well. In addition, parents expressed that they are reluctant to let their daughters make decisions. All the parents unanimously stated that girls were too young to make decisions for themselves, hence they took it on their behalf. The parents believe that girls lacked the skills to make sound decisions. Therefore, to circumvent poor decisions that may tarnish parents' prestige, parents do not let the girls take any decisions.

The expenses of a single child are so high that people who live in village areas cannot afford the expenses of many children. It is better to use family planning devices rather than be surrounded by debt. Me being a Muslim girl, I can say that I definitely will use family planning device when I get married.”- Muslim girl, Gadhimai

Likewise, regarding the decisions on using family planning devices, all girls said that the husband and wife (girl) jointly decided on whether to use the devices or not. Likewise, girls who have been waiting for Gauna and girls who are above 15 years old were asked about who should decide on using contraceptive devices. The majority of girls stated that it should be jointly done by the girl and the husband.

Based on the figures and discussion in the preceding section, it can be concluded that household decisions and financial decisions are always made by the elder male members of the family. In absence of male members, the mother-in-law decides for the household. Additionally, it was also found that elder female members exercise dominance over the younger female members of the family due to having decision-making power. For instance, girls have to take permission from their mothers and mothers-in-law before cooking food. Similarly, daughters and daughters-in-law were expected to perform household chores and stay put within the four walls of the household. Predefined gender role was the majorly seen problem in the intervention areas. While talking with the girls and their parents they revealed that deep-rooted social norm that defined the role of a girl as someone who does household chores while the boys are born without any household-level responsibilities. This notion from the girls denoted that from an early age, the girls are groomed to engage in household activities, limited within the household boundaries, and looked at as someone who are bound to leave after marriage. In the case of boys, they receive preferential treatment as they are likely to bear the financial responsibility of the family.

Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2.2: Targeted unmarried girls who are married or in a union during the project phase

This intermediate outcome aims to represent the number of unmarried girls who get married or are in a union but waiting for the Gauna ceremony. With this, the project aims to reduce the number of early marriages.

Table 48: IO 2.2- girl's marital status

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring techniques used	Sampling and measuring techniques used	Baseline value	EL target	Will the IO be used for the next evaluation point (Y/N)?
% Of targeted girls who are married or in a union during the project phase	Qualitative finding Qualitative consultation with OOS girls	FDM collected qualitative data The PIN collected quantitative data	Unmarried -74.5% Married - 19.5% Waiting for Gauna - 6%	Actual	Y
Qualitative finding	Both parents and the girls were aware of the legal age of marriage. Despite being aware of the legal provisions, parents tend to marry off their daughters at an early age due to societal pressure, culture, poverty, and due to the fear that their daughters will elope if kept home till old age.				

During the baseline evaluation, it was noticed that out of the total sampled girls, 74.5% of the girls were unmarried followed by 19.5% of married girls. Among the married girls, only 6% of girls were waiting for Gauna during the baseline survey. As discussed above, the qualitative findings reveal that although the parents are aware of the legal age of marriage and practice relatively late marriages, they do not hesitate to marry off their daughter early if they find a suitable match. Besides that, parents often felt the social and cultural pressures coupled with the fear of girls eloping by keeping girls unmarried for a long.

Moreover, among the non-obvious reasons to marry the daughters early is associated with poverty. With one less person to be provided for, poor families are often encouraged to marry the girls early. Also, the majority of the parents in intervention districts believe that when the girls are married earlier, then they do not have to give a large amount of money in dowry. If a girl is above 18 years old then the proportion of dowry increases as per her increasing age. The data showed that among the surveyed household, 34.8% of the household were found to be poorer households.

“If the daughters are not given anything after getting married, their in-laws will beat them harass them, and do violence.” – parent Baudhimai

Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2.3. Life Skills Index

The life skill index measured a girl's knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) about family planning, financial literacy, and general self-efficacy. Life skill tools were developed with reference to tools from cohort-I, II, and III. Since the curriculum of cohort IV was similar to the preceding cohorts, the same tool was adopted.

The analysis for the Life skill index was done separately based on three different domains i.e., financial literacy, family planning, and general self-efficacy. To generate the indicator value, all the responses were first computed and recorded to calculate a total percentage score. This percentage score was divided into three categories, 'more than 70%', '50-70%', and 'less than 50'. To calculate the indicator value, girls whose scores were 'more than 70%' were deemed as girls having good KAP concerning each of the domains.

Table 49: IO 2.3- Life skill index score

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring techniques used	Who collected the data?	Baseline value	EL target	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point (Y/N)?
Life Skills Index Score (%)	Quantitative survey Qualitative consultation with OOS girls	FDM collected qualitative data	Financial literacy – 27.3% Family planning – 29.5% Self-efficacy – 33.8%	50% 35% 45%	Y
Qualitative findings	<p>Girls have mere access to money as they cannot go out of the household as per their wishes. They can collect some from the amount they get when they accompany their mothers to the market or save from the money given for their expenses.</p> <p>In the case of family planning, the majority of the girls that FDM visited for qualitative consultation were unmarried or married but waiting for Gauna, where questions regarding knowledge and attitude were asked. The discussion led to the conclusion that girls were unaware of family planning.</p> <p>Girls demonstrated low confidence as observed by the researchers. They were too shy and it was deemed that girls rely on their parents to decide for them too.</p>				

Financial Literacy

The baseline survey assessed the OOS girl's knowledge, attitude, and practice of financial literacy through a set of questions on financial planning, more specifically about banking, saving, and borrowing. The overall financial literacy index generated a value of 40% implying that KAP on financial literacy among girls is low.

Table 50: KAP index for financial literacy

Life Skills		Age group of girls		Muslim/non-Muslim		Total	
		10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%	N
Financial Knowledge	Good (More than 70 %)	37.5%	58.7%	41.8%	41.2%	41.5%	166
	Moderate (51-70%)	21.5%	21.3%	21.4%	21.6%	21.5%	86
	Poor (Up to 50%)	40.9%	20.0%	36.7%	37.3%	37.0%	148
Financial Attitude	Good (More than 70 %)	30.8%	72.0%	38.3%	38.7%	38.5%	154
	Moderate (51-70%)	49.8%	17.3%	45.4%	42.2%	43.8%	175
	Poor (Up to 50%)	19.4%	10.7%	16.3%	19.1%	17.8%	71
Financial Practice	Good (more than 70%)	0.6%	8.0%	1.0%	2.9%	2.0%	8
	Moderate (51-70%)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
	Poor (Up to 50%)	99.4%	92.0%	99.0%	97.1%	98.0%	392

Source: Girls' Survey

Table 50 illustrates the disaggregated data on financial literacy among girls across ages and ethnicity. Among the girls aged between 10-14 years, only 37.5% of the girls had 'good' financial knowledge, 49.8% of the girls demonstrated a 'moderate' financial attitude but 99.4% of girls exhibited 'poor' financial practice.

Similarly, in the case of girls of the 15-19 age group, 58.7% of girls had 'good' financial knowledge and 72% had a 'good' attitude toward financial literacy. However, 92% of the girls of the same age group had 'poor' financial practices.

A Comparison between the two groups of girls leads to the conclusion that girls aged between 15-19 years have better KAP in finance.

Similarly, analyzing KAP across ethnicity, financial knowledge among 41.8% of Muslim girls had 'good' financial knowledge, 45.4% of Muslim girls had 'moderate' financial attitude, and 99% of Muslim girls had 'poor' financial practice. Among the non-Muslim girls, 41.2% of girls had sound financial knowledge and 38.7% had a good attitude toward finance. But, 97.1% of the non-Muslim girls had 'poor' financial practices. All in all, non-Muslim girls have slightly better KAP on financial management than Muslim girls.

Qualitative discussion around finance and some of the common terminologies and practices disclosed that the girls were ignorant of it all. Neither did the girls have any bank accounts where they could save money. Quantitative data showed that among the sampled girls, only 2% of the girls had a bank account. As stated in previous sections, among the girls who practice saving money, they tend to do it in a money jar at home.

Furthermore, while asking girls about where they get money for saving, all of the girls consulted stated that they accompany their mothers when they go to the market. There, they get money to have snacks. Instead of having food, they save money so that they can use them in the future. Additionally, some of the girls also reported that they get money from their parents for purchasing their beauty products and inner garments. The findings were also verified by the parents as well reported that they use to give money to their girls so that they can buy their beauty products and inner garments on their own resulting in girls having access to some money.

Family Planning

The family planning index had questions surrounding girls' knowledge, attitude, and practice on basic family planning processes like gaps between children, use of contraception, and access to contraception among others. The overall life skill index for family planning was only 29.5% indicating that girls' knowledge, attitude, and practice on issues related to family planning is poor. One of the major reasons for this poor score is that girls do not have access to them easily and are restricted by their in-laws/husbands to use them before giving birth to a son.

Table 51: KAP index on family planning

Life Skills		Age group of girls		Muslim/Non-Muslim		Total	
		10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%	Count
FP Knowledge	Good (More than 70 %)	32.6%	85.3%	36.2%	48.5%	42.5%	170
	Moderate (51-70%)	3.1%	0.0%	1.0%	3.9%	2.5%	10
	Poor (Up to 50%)	64.3%	14.7%	62.8%	47.5%	55.0%	220
FP Attitude	Good (More than 70 %)	42.8%	57.3%	37.8%	52.9%	45.5%	182
	Moderate (51-70%)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
	Poor (Up to 50%)	57.2%	42.7%	62.2%	47.1%	54.5%	218
FP Practice	Good (More than 70 %)	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	1.0%	0.5%	2
	Moderate (51-70%)	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	1.0%	0.5%	2
	Poor (Up to 50%)	100.0%	94.7%	100.0%	98.0%	99.0%	396

Source: Girls' Survey

Data disaggregation based on the age of girls showed that among the girls aged 10-14 years 64.3 % of girls had 'poor' knowledge about family planning, 57.2% of the girls had 'poor' attitudes towards family planning and all girls had 'poor' practices of family planning.

Similarly, among the girls aged 15-19 years, 85.3% of the girls had 'good' knowledge of family planning, 57.3% of girls demonstrated a 'moderate' attitude towards adopting means of family planning, but 94.7% of the girls exhibited 'poor' family planning practices.

From the data above, it may be concluded that knowledge, attitude, and practice of family planning are better among girls aged between 15-19 years than girls aged between 10-14 years. It is so because in the former group, girls were already married and some of them already had children too.

Disaggregation based on ethnicity shows that 48.5% of non-Muslim girls had 'good' knowledge about family planning followed by only 52.9% of girls who showed a 'moderate' attitude towards the use of family planning devices. Nevertheless, 98% of non-Muslim girls demonstrated 'poor' family planning practices. Similarly, in the case of Muslim girls, 62.8% had 'poor' knowledge about family planning followed by 62.2 % of girls with 'moderate' family planning attitudes. 100% of Muslim girls showed 'poor' family planning practices. This disaggregation of data led us to the conclusion that non-Muslim girls have a better KAP toward family planning than Muslim girls.

During the qualitative consultation, girls and parents were asked about their knowledge, attitude, and practice of family planning, and most female parents were found to know about family planning. Specifically, Muslim parents in Gadhimai municipality were found to have broad knowledge about

family planning and they reported that they are using different forms of family planning devices. While in the case of girls, the majority of girls were unaware of family planning in both groups. In the case of the Bara district, a single girl who was married and had children demonstrated good knowledge about family planning. Later the researcher shared information about family planning with girls.

Social Skills

The social skill tool was designed to gauge OOS girls' self-belief to successfully navigate a difficult situation and make good decisions. The tool contained statements around self-decision-making on life plans, convincing family members, and tackling problems. Adhering to the data collected on the baseline of social skills, the overall social index score was 33.8%. This indicates that girls lacked the self-confidence to make decisions or to be able to influence their parents, husband, and in-laws to comply with their decisions.

Table 52: Self-Efficacy Index

Life Skills		Age group of girls		Muslim/Non-Muslim		Total	
		10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non-Muslim (n=204)	%	Count
Self-Efficacy Index	Good (More than 70%)	31.4%	44.0%	33.7%	33.8%	33.8%	135
	Average (51-70%)	16.6%	8.0%	15.3%	14.7%	15.0%	60
	Poor (Up to 50%)	52.0%	48.0%	51.0%	51.5%	51.3%	205

Source: Girls' Survey

Assessing the self-efficacy among girls, girls aged between 10-14 years were found to have lower self-efficacy than girls aged between 15-19 years. In the 10-14 age group, 31.4% of girls were found to have good self-efficacy while 16.6% were found to have average self-efficacy and 52% to have poor self-efficacy. Among the girls aged between 15-19 years, 44% were found to have good self-efficacy, 8% had average self-efficacy and 48% had the lowest self-efficacy.

Across ethnicity, there is not much difference between Muslims and non-Muslims in terms of self-efficacy. As per the data, 33.7% of Muslim girls were found to have good self-efficacy followed by 51% of girls who had low self-efficacy. Similarly, in the case of non-Muslim girls, 33.8% were found to have good self-efficacy while 51.5% were found to have lower self-efficacy.

When girls were asked what they would do in a situation where they would want to take part in training, but would not be allowed by their family members. Girls from both districts responded that they do not revolt against their parents' decision and obey their parent's decision to stay at home. The same conditions applied to their plans too; if the parents allowed them to continue schooling or uptake training, they would. Otherwise, they would be staying at home. The majority of girls from both districts also stated that they cannot retaliate against their parents, in-laws, or husband's decision due to the fear of being beaten by their parents if they spoke against their parents.

To sum up, girls have demonstrated low self-efficacy in both quantitative and qualitative findings. Due to the repressive attitude of parents and male dominance within the family, the decision taken by male members is considered the ultimate decision in the family. Girls are never part of any discussion done at home, even if it directly relates to them. The dominance of male members over females is normalized across both intervention districts. According to girls, parents do everything for their daughter's better futures.

Key Intermediate outcome 3: Schools have created enabling and supportive environments for OOS girls' learning

In the baseline, the indicator around schools was not collected since the project was yet to start the intervention and had only identified the probable schools where the girls are likely to enroll.

Intermediate Outcome Indicator 3.1: Gender Sensitive teacher tool

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring techniques used	Who collected data	Baseline Value	Endline Target	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point (Y/N)
The average score in the "gender-sensitive teacher tool"	Gender-sensitive teacher tool Barefoot analysis (Classroom observation) KIIs with headteachers	FDM	Not collected	Actual basis	Y
Major Qualitative findings	The schools lacked basic infrastructures like a classroom, and separate toilets for girls and boys, even the available ones were unusable, no proper mechanism for sanitary pad disposal. None of the schools that FDM visited had SIP, SMC, or PTA nor have done a Gender Gap Assessment.				

Key Intermediate Outcome 3.2 Attitude Change Index for in-school adolescents

PIN aims to improve the knowledge, attitude, and behavior of in-school adolescents to create a supportive environment for OOS girls' learning when they enroll in formal schooling. However, data for this indicator was not collected due to the project's delay in school-level intervention. Hence, the value of this indicator is 0.

IO	IO indicator	Sampling and measuring techniques used	Who collected the data?	Baseline value	Endline target	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point (Y/N)?

Schools have created enabling and supportive environments for OOS girls' learning	Attitude change index score (%)	In school boys and girls survey FGD with school girls and boys	Quantitative: PIN Qualitative: FDM	0	Actual basis	Y
Qualitative findings	N/A					

Intermediate outcome 4: Communities and authorities foster positive social norms that encourage delayed marriage and realization of OOS girls' life plans

Intermediate Outcome Indicator 4.1: family members who have supportive behaviors toward girls' education and employment

By the end of the project, the project aims to foster positive social norms among parents and community members to encourage delayed marriage and allow OOS girls to pursue their life plans. The overall attitude change index was calculated by aggregating scores on attitude-related statements around child marriage, social norms, and OOS girls' education. The overall indicator value for the indicator is 72.8%, implying that parents showed a high level of interest in delaying child marriage while supporting her in their life plans.

Table 53: IO 4.1- Supportive behavior toward girls' education and life plans

IO	IO indicator	Sampling and measuring techniques used	Who collected the data?	Baseline Value	Endline target	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point (Y/N)?
Communities and authorities foster positive social norms that encourage delayed marriage and realization of OOS girls' life plans	% of OOS adolescent girls' families with a changed attitude	Girls' and HH survey FGDs, KIIs with girls, parents, government officials	FDM	72.8%		Y
Major qualitative findings	Parents are willing to send girls below 15 years to school to learn. Girls above 15 years, prefer vocational training as it is socially acceptable for girls to engage in this work. Also, such skills are deemed valuable to operate a household smoothly after marriage. Nevertheless, participation in the training should be borne by the project and not the families as they consider themselves 'poor' to be able to afford it.					

The table below illustrates the disaggregated data on the parental attitude which has been categorized as showing a ‘positive attitude,’ being ‘neutral’, and portraying a ‘negative attitude.’ From the table, it can be stated that 72.8% of the sampled parents showed a highly positive attitude towards delaying marriage and supporting girls to achieve their life plans. Likewise, 22.5% of parents were neutral towards the issue while 4.8% of parents appeared to have a negative attitude toward delaying marriage and supporting girls in pursuing their life plans.

Table 54: Parental attitude across age and ethnicity

Parental Attitude	Age group of girls		Muslim/Non-Muslim		Total	
	10-14 (n=325)	15-19 (n=75)	Muslim (n=196)	Non- Muslim (n=204)	%	Count
Positive Attitude (above 70%)	73.8%	68.0%	67.9%	77.5%	72.8%	291
Neutral (51-70%)	21.5%	26.7%	27.0%	18.1%	22.5%	90
Negative Attitude (up to 50%)	4.6%	5.3%	5.1%	4.4%	4.8%	19

Source: Household Survey

Similarly, disaggregation based on age shows that, among girls aged between 10-14 years, 73.8% of parents portrayed a positive attitude, 21.5% were neutral and 4.6% had a negative attitude. In terms of girls aged between 15-19 years, 68% of parents appeared to have a positive attitude followed by 26.7% neutral while 5.3% portrayed themselves as having a negative attitude. The figure shows that parents of girls aged between 10-14 years tend to have a more positive attitude towards girls' education and girls achieving their life plans compared to the parents of older girls.

In terms of ethnicity, 67.9% of Muslim parents showed a positive attitude followed by 27 % of parents exhibiting a neutral attitude. 5.1% portrayed a negative attitude towards supporting girls' education and life plans. In the case of non-Muslim parents, 77. 5% of parents had a positive attitude towards girls' education and girls pursuing their life plans. Likewise, 18.1% of parents were portrayed as neutral and 4.4% as negative. Comparing the ethnicities, there isn't much difference in how parents perceive early marriage and supporting life plans of girls of both ethnicities; parents from both ethnicities appear relatively positive.

However, the qualitative findings contradict the quantitative figures because parents expressed mixed views on supporting girls' education and their life plans. Some parents were willing to send only young girls to school and the older girls for learning vocational skills. on the other hand, some parents still held conventional views on girls being limited within the household only. Such a perspective was common among parents from the Muslim community in Rautahat. Some parents expressed that educating girls at formal school (letting the girls beyond the household) was against their culture and tradition. As a result of which girls were not allowed to go to school for formal education. Similarly, regarding the non-Muslim community, parents cited poverty as the main reason for not sending their daughters to school. As already discussed above, parents of both Muslim and non-Muslim communities show their willingness to send their daughter to school or acquire any kind of vocational training only when someone else is investing in her. Likewise, the distance between the school and the household was another region for not allowing girls for formal education. The parents were willing to send the girls to primary school which was available in the nearest vicinity. But for higher education, the girls have to travel further and the parents aren't willing to take the risk. In the Rautahat district, parents of girls who were waiting for Gauna stated that they were skeptical to send

their daughters to school fearing any mishaps with the girls and fear of girls getting engaged with other boys.

Apart from this, as stated by the headteachers and education officers from both districts, people in the intervention areas are still bound by traditional thoughts and are biased against male children; while the male child is sent to private schools, girls hardly make it to public schools. According to the Asst. Municipal Education officer of Gadhimai Municipality, the dropout rate of the students is very high in the community. Culture and household chores are the major reasons for the dropout of children that as highlighted by the official. Even if they have sound financial resources, they prefer to send their daughters to the Madrasa rather than send them to school. Similarly, the official highlighted the problem of child marriage in Dom¹⁵ and other marginalized communities which impedes girls' education. Additionally, self-initiated marriage by teenagers is another surging problem and a barrier to girls' education in the community. According to the officer, even when parents are convinced to ward off the marriage for a couple of years more, the children get married themselves.

The finding was also verified by the headteacher of the Bara district. He stated that dropout cases are seen among both girls and boys. While early marriages are ending girls' educational opportunities, the economic responsibilities of the family push the boys to end school and start earning. The girls attending school are doing so along with the household chores; they complete some work before school and finish the remaining after school. This has direct implications for her learning. Despite girls being overburdened by household chores, the number of girls was comparatively higher than boys in all the schools that FDM visited. Headteacher from Bara District stated that there were girls in his school who continued their education even after their marriage which has encouraged other girls to acquire higher education even if they are married.

Similarly, the Municipal Education Official of Bishrampur also stated that they have scholarship provisions for higher studies. However, despite having opportunities none of the students have claimed the support. He stated;

*“There are scholarship programs under the policy of the municipality for the girls to pursue higher studies targeting disabled students. The municipality has a policy of covering 50% of the fee for MBBS or BDS to girls and for LLB the municipality covers the full fee. There aren't any cases of this being used but in case the girls wish to they are ready to assist. This is also a move to motivate girls' education”-
municipal education official, Bishrampur*

Amidst the mixed response of the parents, the journey for girls to attain education and pursue life plans still appears challenging. The negative impact of the traditional socio-cultural beliefs, conventional gendered role division, and poverty will hinder the girls from achieving the targets as anticipated by the project. Though the project has intervention at the community level, it will be challenging for the project to bring the positive attitude portrayed by the parents into practice.

¹⁵ The Doms are considered the lowest untouchable caste groups of Terai; they are not allowed to fetch water either from the private or public wells.

OOS Adolescent Girls' Families Who Use The Cash Grants to Support Their Life Plans

OOS adolescent girls, as envisioned by the project would transition by either enrolling back in school or by choosing to start safe employment. In either case, the project would support the OOS girls to achieve their aspirations by providing them with non-cash materials. Those girls who wish to enroll in school would get the necessary materials to continue their studies or establish an enterprise to generate livelihood independently. Since girls during baseline had not yet transitioned, the value was 0 for this indicator.

Although the transition has been accessed during baseline, the qualitative discussion with parents led FDM to the conclusion that parents were willing to support the girls either through cash support or support in performing household chores so that girls can invest more time towards their life plans. However, this contradicts the information shared by project staff who stated that even though parent appears in position at this point when it comes to investing from their asset, they step back and expect the project to do the entire investment.

The CLC facilitators also expressed similar views. According to them, as people perceived themselves as relatively poor, they are willing to compromise on their daughter's education and in supporting her business aspirations. One of the change champions from the Bara district pointed out that the boys in the community start working early as they have to shoulder the economic responsibility of the household and become financially independent but the girls are only involved in household chores and are unpaid. They are dependent on their family. At a younger age boys start choosing their pathway by themselves while girl relies on the family. Being financially dependent on family members and unable to choose their pathways on their own, parents feel skeptical about investing in girls' businesses.

Although the parents were skeptical to invest in the girls' business, the girls showed their keen interest to involve in tailoring after the completion of CLC classes.

IO	IO indicator	Baseline Value	Endline Value	Will this IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point (Y/N)?
Communities and authorities foster positive social norms that encourage delayed marriage and realization of OOS girl's life plan	% Of OOS adolescent girls' families who use the cash grants to support their life plans	0		Y
Major qualitative findings	The majority of the parents consulted stated that they would support girls through cash and performing household chores so that they can invest more time in their life plans. However, through the consultation with project staff, facilitators, and change champions, it was also assessed that parents have a positive attitude towards girls' businesses until and unless the project is funding them to establish their businesses. But when it is about their turn to invest in them, they step back.			

OTHER FINDINGS

This section includes information on child safeguarding, family members' knowledge of climate change, and disaster risk reduction and preparedness. This information collected is not explicitly linked with the indicators, but these topics capture a general view of girls which would contribute to achieving the larger goal envisioned by the project.

OOS Girls Who Can Identify Where to Report Any Safeguarding Concerns

The project interventions are designed to raise awareness regarding not just only family planning and early marriages, but gender-based violence too. During the baseline evaluation, it was found that the project had envisioned playing PSAs regarding child marriage, and girls' education by placing speakers in the temples and mosques. Additionally, the project has envisioned radio programs, wall paintings, and street dramas kind of artistic programs for the future. Similarly, to having multiple options for girls for their transition, the project has been planning to conduct market assessment/research as well. So that they can design life plans as per the needs of the market.

During the consultation with girls at CLC, the girls reported that they learned about the importance of reporting cases of gender-based violence to the concerned person. When asked if they should report the cases of any form of violence inflicted upon them, the maximum percentage of girls 90.3% said that the case of violence should be reported while 1% said that the case should not be reported. Furthermore, 8.8% of girls were unaware of what should be done if the case happened to them. Moreover, the girls were asked about the places or people they could report the case to, to which most of the girls said parents, police, and CLC facilitators, as stated in the table below.

Table 55: Ranked preference of the girls to report

Reporting Agency	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Parents	90.3%	6.4%	3.2%
Friends	3.0%	29.9%	9.9%
Teachers	2.8%	34.5%	19.9%
CLC facilitators	1.3%	8.8%	11.8%
Project staff	0.0%	0.8%	9.4%
Police	2.0%	10.8%	27.7%
Ward office	0.8%	8.2%	18.0%
Tell nobody	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Others (specify)	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Girls' Survey

During the qualitative consultation with girls, none of the girls reported knowing the toll-free number to report cases of GBV. Additionally, when girls were asked where the cases can be reported, the maximum number of girls stated that they should share the case with parents, friends, and teachers while the minimum number of girls stated that the case should be reported to the police. While asking

parents if the case should be reported or not, the finding was the same as the girls'. In the case of GBV that takes place inside the household, one of the parents from Gadhimai stated:

At the end of the day, they have to live together in the family. There is no point in taking family members to the police station. Rather, the cases should be solved by family members. – Parent Gadhimai

The fact was also verified by the CLC facilitator of Gadhimai. She stated that the cases were kept secret due to the fear of people speaking ill of them behind their backs. She also disclosed the fact that the case that happened to unmarried girls was kept under the family due to the fear that she will be defamed and not get married. Parents and girls agreed to this too. Similarly, when parents and girls were asked if they will report a case as a support to the victim, they stated that they will support them.

CLC facilitators of Gadhimai also shared that they often hear about the cases of GBV in the community. But, none of them talk about it nor report it to the authority. Victims fear getting victimized further upon reporting it to the authority. Therefore, victims often remain mum. Additionally, regarding the findings from girls and parents regarding supporting the victim if she/he wishes to file a complaint, the CLC facilitators stated that none of the girls or parents will risk themselves by supporting them. The fear of being scolded by the victim's family members and being taken to the police for inquiry stops them to support those victims.

Climate change, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Preparedness

Parents were consulted regarding their knowledge of climate change and their practice. The quantitative data showed that, amongst the total surveyed household, only 18.5% of parents were aware of the concept of climate change and disaster management while 60.3% were unaware of the same.

Furthermore, respondents were asked about the impact of disaster where 61% of respondents mentioned that the disaster causes the loss of property followed by 58.8% stating loss of life was caused due to disaster. Similarly, 28.8% of the household said they encounter injuries, 26.8% mentioned the spread of an epidemic, 16.8% said it displaced people, and 13.8% stated loss of jobs.

Likewise, while asking respondents about work that should be done to make the community resilient to disaster, the majority of the respondents (47.3%) said that preparedness for disaster should be done followed by 38.8% of respondents mentioning that they should preserve open space. Additionally, 30.8% of respondents feel that awareness regarding disaster should be taken forward to make the community resilient to disaster. Furthermore, respondents carry forward the opinions such as conducting simulation activities (20.8%), formation of community response team (21.5%), and effective implementation of building codes (13%) to prevent disaster in the future.

During the qualitative consultation with parents, it was found that people do not have distinct knowledge regarding climate change, though they could make inferences based on their own experience. People accurately were unaware of climate change but were very familiar with the annual disaster that takes place in their regions. They stated that neither the projects nor government

agencies had supported them to cope with the disaster nor had anyone given them skills and knowledge about coping mechanisms. They had learned everything from their own experience.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data, it can be inferred even though the parents appeared to be supportive and portrayed a positive attitude towards girls' education and life plans to an extent, girls are still likely to be held back from probable life opportunities because of the deeply rooted conventional social norms and gendered role division, which was still evident in the project intervention areas. The study demonstrated that girls still lack decision-making ability which has a direct implication on their prospects along with their self-esteem.

Learning

Literacy and numeracy of girls were measured using the ASER tool which classified girls into four different categories – 'non-learner,' 'emergent-learner,' 'established-learner' and 'proficient learner.' Out of the total girls who appeared in the learning test, 53.7% were established 'non-learners,' 44.7% were deemed as 'emergent learners' while 1.3% girls were gauged to be 'established learners' along with 0.3% girls who were 'proficient learners.' Girls' learning proficiency was found to be better amongst the girls who had dropped out of school as compared to girls who had never been to school. It may be inferred that a history of being at school (never been to school or dropped out at some point) is likely to impact their current learning. Learning across the literacy and numeracy skills are summarized in the table below:

Subject /Proficiency	Non-Learner		Emergent Learner		Established Learner		Proficient Learner	
	BL	EL target	BL	EL target	BL	EL target	BL	EL target
English	75%	0%	24.5%	75%	0.5%	22%	0%	3%
Nepali	49.3%	0%	48%	65%	2%	30%	0.8%	5%
Mathematics	36.8%	0%	61.5%	50%	1.5%	40%	0.3%	10%

Source: Girls' Survey

Girls deemed English as the most difficult among the three subjects taught at the CLC. The project could revise the modality of classes, at least for English subjects where the girls have the opportunity to learn through audio-video medium along with additional textbooks. Similarly, time allocation for English subjects could be increased.

Transition

Transition pathways map different tracks that the girls might undertake throughout the project implementation period. The project aims to enroll girls interested in studying into formal schooling, and those who are interested in the livelihood pathway to vocational skills. As per the findings of this evaluation, transition pathways for respondents of different sub-groups were different. Qualitative findings showed, the girls who belonged to the age group 10-14 aspired to enroll in school, while those who belonged to the age group 15-19 were not keen on re-enrolment, rather, they wanted to

join vocational classes. Despite the interest of the younger girls to join schools, the schools lack human as well as infrastructural resource to accommodate many students. This is likely to pose challenges in the retention of the girls once transitioned into school. As for the girls aspiring to learn vocational skills, the project should create more vocational opportunities besides tailoring and beauty services with higher market value. Not only creation of opportunities, but the project should also convince girls about the advantages of choosing other skills that they can sell in the existing market.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the project focused on community, school, and the functioning of the Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN). The community-level indicator focused on changing people's attitudes toward child marriage. While the quantitative data paints a positive picture showing a changed attitude of parents toward early marriage, education, and even terms supporting life plans. Nevertheless, the qualitative finding contradicts it to an extent; it shows that even though the parents express support for delaying marriage and educating girls, parents were still not sending their daughters to school due to security concerns, the distance between school and home, traditional beliefs, and poverty. These restrictions are stricter on older girls. Similarly, in the case of early marriage, the cases have decreased due to law and punishment provisioned by the local government coupled with increased awareness programs conducted via multiple projects operating in Province 2. Nevertheless, parents do not hesitate to marry off their daughters if a marriage proposal from a suitable groom or family comes along. Engagement of Change Champions whom the community members treat with respect, such as teachers and religious leaders who can conduct a door-to-door campaign against early marriage and discourage teenagers from eloping could be increased. Program targeting teenagers highlighting the risks of elopement before maturity and teen pregnancy could be highlighted in the project activities.

The school-level sustainability indicator to create a gender-sensitive learning environment by formulating a supporting committee was absent as the project is yet to start interventions at schools. Given the availability of resources and infrastructure at school, it is less likely that the schools where girls are likely to transition will be able to create a conducive learning environment for the transitioned girls as anticipated by the project. This warrants immediate project attention to assess the school resources and also to start school-level activities soon.

In terms of sustainability of the GIEN, it is also in the preliminary phase and no activities were done at the time of baseline evaluation.

Intermediate Outcomes

The first intermediate outcome of the project is related to the attendance of the girls at CLCs. For better learning outcomes, it is expected that girls regularly attend CLC classes. However, amidst harvesting season, festivals and household chores, girls are not able to attend the CLC classes. Under such circumstances, the change champions should seek ways to influence the parents to support the girls to attend classes regularly and refrain from being absent.

The second IO which relates to the ability and engagement of girls in household decision making found that girls have very little space to make and contribute to the decisions made at home, even if it directly concerns them. For example, even to make small purchases for herself, she needs to seek permission from her parents or to go out with friends. In the case of married girls, she has to be dependent upon their husband or in-laws for any kind of decision. All the decision-making power is vested in the male members of the family. In absence of male members, all the decisions are made by the mother-in-law. Male dominance was commonly sighted across both project districts in this cohort

too. And depending on the hierarchy of relationships, where the girls are always in the lowest position compelling her to follow the decisions taken by others without anyone consulting her.

The third outcome of the life skill index measured girls' attitudes, knowledge, and practice about financial literacy, family planning, and social skill.

With regards to financial literacy, the overall literacy index showed the financial literacy level of girls to be 40%. The quantitative figures show that the girls have a low level of financial literacy, as girls have very less access to money. Similarly, during the qualitative consultation with girls, girls were reported to have little knowledge about finance and saving. Despite not having adequate information about financial knowledge and access to money, some of the girls in both districts had set saving habits.

The family planning index had questions surrounding girls' knowledge, attitude, and practice on basic family planning processes like gaps between children, use of contraception, and access to contraception among others. The overall life skills index for family planning was only 29.5% indicating that girls' knowledge, attitude, and practice of family planning are constrained. One of the major reasons for this was that in this cohort, the proportion of girls aged 10-14 years was higher than the girls aged 15-19 years. Additionally, amongst girls aged 15-19 age group, 19.5% were married due to which KAP on family planning among this group was relatively higher than the younger group.

The social skill tool was designed to gauge OOS girls' self-belief to successfully navigate a difficult situations and make good decisions. The overall social skills index score was just 33.8% implying that the girls have low self-esteem and low confidence. Qualitative consultations with girls showed that girls have such low self-esteem because they perceive themselves as incapable of doing anything besides household chores. In addition, since decisions are placed on the girls without consulting them, they depend on others for everything. The fact that decisions regarding them are being taken for them without consulting them does not appear problematic to them whatsoever.

The fourth intermediate outcome aims to foster positive social norms among parents and community members to encourage delayed marriage and allow OOS girls to pursue their life plans. Quantitative data portrayed exceptionally positive parents who were willing to delay the marriages of girls as well as support them in their education and life plans. In contrast, qualitative findings suggested that parents were willing to send the girls to training as long as the training is conducted in their neighborhood. Girls are still at risk of early marriage under the social pressures, poverty, and cultural norms. In addition, parents fear that girls will elope humiliating the family.

All in all, the baseline evaluation shows that girls are full of potential to do well in their studies given sufficient support at the learning institutions and at home. Despite the amount of work at home, girls are eager to continue their studies. But, learning at CLC for just nine months may not be sufficient for the girl to transition into schools at higher grades, especially in English and Nepali subjects. Similarly, as most of the girls reported that they had faced discrimination at school, they were demotivated to re-join school. To address this, the project should have proper coordination during the initial stage of the project. In addition, teachers' training on GEDSI components could be operated to enhance the teacher's skills to deal with a similar situation in the future.

Furthermore, for the girls who are looking forward to uptake a vocational skill, more options need to be introduced to them other than tailoring and beauty services. Girls were likely to look for these two options only because these works can be done in the communal periphery or their household

and also because it is socially acceptable. Therefore, the project needs to explore more vocational skills that can be done by home-based workers and make them financially independent.

Regarding the parents, they are aware of the implications of early marriage and the need to educate girls as well. However, due to societal pressure, and fear of not getting an appropriate groom for their daughters in the future, they are unable to bring that knowledge into practice. Therefore, the project needs to plan interventions that encourage parents to initiate the change process going beyond the conventional and rigid gendered role division. The project could include parents as change agents in the project period to achieve the desired changes.

Recommendations

1. **Identification of influential people as change champions:** Change champions play a vital role in spreading change at the community level. Therefore, change champions identified should be someone willing to surpass the prescribed duties and spend time in the community understanding them and be able to influence on an individual basis rather than simply relying on mass activism and campaigns. A change champion could be a schoolteacher, a government official, or a religious leader whom people respect and cannot overlook requests either.
2. **Teenager-centric programs:** Though the project already has activities against child marriage, teenager-centric activities that focus on the importance of education, maturity, and the negative consequences of marrying early in a long run could be disseminated to them directly along with the community-level campaigns and activities. The activities should include boys and girls alike rather than focusing solely on girls.
3. **Increased parental engagement at school:** Parents expressed their concerns over absent teachers and deteriorating teaching quality at schools being a major reason for not sending children to school. Therefore, parents could be associated with the school in preparing the mid-day meal provided to children so parents can monitor the school and their children's learning process on a day-to-day basis too. Parents from each grade could be assigned the responsibility to take turns cooking meals for their children at school. This can result in closer coordination between the school and the parents too.
4. **Provision of roving instructors:** A roving instructor could be appointed to support the girls to do assignments once the girls transition into school. Unlike the CLC, they will be studying multiple subjects which could be overwhelming to the girls. Therefore, roving instructors who go from house to house or locality to locality supporting girls with lessons could prevent girls from dropping out of school. As the roving instructor, preferably a female, comes to the house, parents will also not worry about any mishaps.

Additionally, the concept of remedial classes or resource classes should be developed where girls will be taught or revise the lessons that were taught in the formal classroom. Moreover, for the sustainability of the resource classes/ remedial classes, they should be established under the guidelines and policies of the local government. Furthermore, the project can tie up the GIEN network and remedial/ resource classes so that the local government can own it after the project phases out.

5. **Anti-bullying and anti-corporal punishment campaign:** One of the major findings was that girls faced bullying at school from peers and teachers resulting in school drop-out. Anti-bullying campaigns at the school and in the community could be conducted to discourage its practice. Still more, teacher

training on child-friendly teaching-learning could be conducted to support teachers in their teaching process and handle the situation differently rather than imposing physical harm on children.

6. Engagement in extra-curricular activities: While being aware of the time limitation, extracurricular activities could be introduced to the CLC classes which are deemed socially and culturally appropriate in their community. Along with academics, classes on self-awareness could also help in raising the self-esteem of girls and confidence.

7. Facilitate the policies of local government in the CLCs: While the project has been working in the field of minimizing cases of child marriage, girls along with parents must be aware of the laws and policies against child marriage. Although the parents as well as girls were aware of the laws, cases of child marriage have been taking place in both of the intervention districts. To reduce the cases, EE suggests activities to facilitate the laws and the policies of the local government with the girls via CLC classes and with parents/in-laws/husbands during communal gatherings. Government officials from the Municipality or Ward offices can be invited to facilitate the session, which can be followed by interaction between the girls and the officials and also between the parents/in-laws/husbands and the officials. Besides discussing the prevailing legal provisions, the project could mediate to bridge the information gap between the families and the government. For instance, the prevalence of scholarships for higher studies. So, to support girls continue their education after the school level, projects could play a mediatory role.

Overall Reflection

FDM has been part of the assessment of the Aarambha project since Cohort I and with the baseline assessment of Cohort IV, evaluation of the Cohorts from EE completes. Over the years, the EE has had the following impression of the project:

Design

The overall design of the project can be lauded for its tailored approach to incorporate girls from marginalized and different circumstances; adolescent girls who had dropped out of school, girls who had never been to school, girl brides, and young mothers were brought together to enhance their literacy and numeracy skills as well as increase their vocational skills that would eventually contribute to generating livelihood in the future. Over 4 years, the project has reached to numerous girls, boys, families, and communities. Despite the wide project engagement over the years, EE believes that:

1. The direct beneficiaries of the project, that is, married and out-of-school girls, and indirect beneficiaries such as the boys, parents/in-laws, and the community could have benefited more from the interventions had the project adopted an annual modality rather than a cohort approach. Though the project catered to a large number of girls over a short period, the interventions are unlikely to be sustainable. With reference to other GEC projects such as STEM, ENGAGE, and SFS, focused interventions on limited beneficiaries is likely to generate more sustainable results than shifting focus on a larger population.
2. In addition, adopting an annual system is likely to increase the CLC durations too. In each cohort, EE saw that the duration of the CLC was not sufficient as per the learning capacity of the girls even though the CLC adopted a standardized informal education course. A longer learning period in the

CLC is likely to generate positive results after the transition phase too. Also, considering that girls waiting for Gauna and girls having children are at higher risk of dropout, a rapid and revised curriculum could be developed for this group of girls.

3. Moreover, as an exit strategy, the project could turn the CLC centers into learning centers (a community library) where girls and children from the community can come to learn.
4. Another area where the EE felt that the project could re-work was the holistic approach it adopted in the CLC classes. Girls of various circumstances have gathered in the CLC classes, so one blanket approach in terms of learning literacy and numeracy skills might not suit the needs of all girls. For instance, the girls who have dropped out of school need not necessarily learn letters like the girls who have never studied before. That time could have been used to learn new skills for the girls who have basic literacy and numeracy knowledge. The different curricula should be developed as per the needs of the girls.
5. A larger part of the project was designed to cater to the direct beneficiaries. Over the years, we have learned that to bring changes among the direct beneficiaries, equal engagement of the indirect beneficiaries like the parents/in-laws/husband is essential too. Therefore, EE recommends that project activities need to be designed to increase family engagement to support the girls' education and life plans.
6. Engagement with the community members, schools, and local government also appeared limited during the assessment. To ensure the sustainability of the change interventions, these community actors need to take ownership of the activities.

Effectiveness

Based on the learning from various cohorts, EE evaluated the effectiveness of the project. Here, we looked at the extent to which the intervention achieved or expected its objectives and its results, which takes into account the relative importance of the objectives. The effectiveness of the project was considerably high over the four years. First, the project was designed to cater to the learning needs of married and out-of-school girls. Second, the project mapped the transition pathway for the girls upon the completion of the CLC classes. Based on their capacity, availability of resources, and the flexibility granted by their families, the girls could opt to either continue learning at school or choose to uptake a vocational skill to establish a livelihood. Third, the project collaborated with the school to ease the process of transition into the school so that girls can continue learning. Along with this, the project invested in school management development with teachers' training. All in all, the project worked simultaneously with the project to prevent dropouts from schools. And lastly, the project built up on the exiting efforts of the government to discourage child marriage at the community level and to an extent was able to generate positive results too.

The project certainly had a humongous impact on the lives of girls and other indirect beneficiaries. Nevertheless, EE felt that the project could engage in the following activities to enhance the impact:

1. The impact of the project would be amplified if the project could provide girls with material support such as stationery items, bags, and school uniforms. As girls are often less prioritized in terms of expenses, they have to compromise at many points. If the project, in collaboration with the school, could ensure that no girl drops out of school in absence of learning materials. At the prospect of receiving material goods from school, parents might as well be tempted to continue as seen from other LNBG projects.
2. Extension of the bridge classes to incorporate more subjects and teaching computer skills. The project could provide computer literacy lessons in the bridge classes either only to the project girls or other girls at the least possible charge. This could be an added temptation to continue school while learning technical skills. Even if the girls can complete the tenth standard, they will still be able to work as an operator if nothing is complex.
3. For the girls opting for vocational skills instead of going to school, the project provides a range of support for girls to learn the skill and establish an enterprise. Nevertheless, for an individual girl belonging to a conventional family who considers themselves poverty-stricken to sustain the enterprise. Rather, if the project formed homogenous groups and invested accordingly, the group is likely to progress as the share of investment is also less in a group. In addition, without any place to sell their product, learning the skill alone will be insufficient for the girls to sustain. Hence it is recommended that the project connects such girls with industries that employ home-based workers. Home-based work is suitable even for girls with children as shown by several studies. Studies point out that mothers are more able to multitask and are more efficient at work than other people.
4. A toll-free number or a help desk at each school where girls transition in coordination with the school and community learning center where any girl can come without hesitation and express herself.
5. Awarding the best-performing students from the CLC center could also encourage capable students to do better. The monetary award could be placed to entice the parents to send the daughters regularly and encourage them to study at home too rather than spend time on household chores or gossiping with friends and family.

Relevancy

Relevancy of the project until the baseline of Cohort 4 was assessed. The relevancy of the project was assessed based on the extent to which the intervention's objectives and design resonated with the beneficiaries' needs, policies, and priorities, and continued to do so if circumstances change. Till the time of assessment, the relevancy of the project is also deemed to be high. The project was implemented in two districts with the least performing districts within Province 2, in terms of development indicators especially relating to girls' education and life outcomes. For instance, both districts have low ranks in the Equity Index. The Equity Index uses core dimensions of inequity and ranks the districts based on three educational outcome-access, participation, and learning. Bara, which has some of its municipalities bordered with India in the South, presents with unique socio-economic and cultural practices, such as cross-border and the social acceptance of early marriages, and other harmful social practices, such as dowry leading to early dropouts of adolescents from schools. The project's relevance also proved to be

high because the project acted as a catalyst in a place where the presence of law enforcement agency was low and almost nil actions was taken towards controlling such acts. Essentially, the project contributes to the national target of providing education for all. Despite its high pertinence in the project areas, EE is of the recommendation that:

1. The relevancy of the project could be amplified if the engagement of parents could be significantly increased be it during the CLC session or after the transition. The project could organize a meeting with parents fortnightly to share updates from the class and the progress of the girls. Once at school, the project could collaborate with the school at least for a year to engage parents closely with the school. During this course, the parents may be notified that the girls need not only study till the 10th standard but can opt for TVET courses from the 9th standard onwards and learn skills too.
2. As stated in the sections above, a roving instructor or “Big Sister” as in other LNGB projects could be assigned to conduct home visits and closely follow up on the girls’ learning and attendance. During such visits, the girls get an opportunity to talk about personal things with the mentor and seek solutions.
3. Given the challenges the girls face in terms of doing household chores and the time pressure they have, an optional schedule could be presented to the learners. The project could carry the feasibility of this option and operate accordingly.
4. A major concern among the parents for letting girls travel further into another community is safety concerns. Therefore, the project could collaborate with “*FightBack Nepal*” which specializes in teaching self-defense to school-going children in rural areas. With the set of skills and mentality of being able to defend oneself, girls will be much safer and parents can ease their worry about any probable harm while allowing girls to continue learning without fear.
5. Besides conducting awareness campaigns in the community, the project could also operate financial literacy and market linkage session among the girls and parents. This way, the project will be creating an avenue for the prospectus entrepreneurs who can take a loan from the local cooperatives or banks to finance their business plans.

Learning Impact

The project had a profound learning impact on the girls especially because it reached girls who had absolutely no literacy and numeracy skills at all and those girls who had dropped out of school amidst challenges such as marriage, pregnancy, and poverty. Girls had the opportunity to learn literacy and numeracy skills which were known to be immensely helpful in their day-to-day life. For example, dialing phone numbers, reading hoarding boards, and following instructions at the hospitals, and directions among many others. It further created an avenue for girls to continue schooling after the completion of the CLC too. The project enabled girls the resume school as per their capacity and not necessarily from primary grade. To enlarge the learning impact on the girls, the EE recommends the following:

1. A common curriculum for the girls seemed a bit inappropriate; those without any literacy and numeracy skills started with the basics and so did the girls who had dropped out of school. Therefore, different curricula could be developed to cater to the differing learning needs of the girls. as for the girls who had dropped out of school, more subjects could be introduced. Teachers from the nearby schools could be linked to the CLC to teach the varied subjects.

2. Based on the experience of implementing other LNGB projects, EE is of the recommendation that peer-to-peer learning can complement student -teacher learning. Therefore, several girls could be assigned to at least revise the lesson taught in the class once a week.
3. In addition to regular teaching-learning sessions, the girls should be encouraged to read more. For this, the CLC could develop a learning corner where additional books, magazines, and newspapers could be placed. The girls have limited books to be used during the CLC session. A separate exercise book should also be developed so that they have more to learn from.

Efficiency

In this component, the extent to which the project delivered results in an economic and timely manner was assessed. Evaluating the efficiency involved looking at the key areas of economic efficiency, operational efficiency, and timelines. Assessment of economic efficiency will be omitted at this stage as EE does not have complete information. The operational efficiency of the project was deemed high; the efficiency of the CLC facilitators in teaching the girls was commendable; the facilitators were teaching the girls in their local language so that the girls could comprehend the lessons. The efficiency can be deemed high given the limited training the facilitators received and the limited training materials they receive. On the contrary, the efficiency of the change champion at the community level and the trained teachers at school can be deemed medium since significant changes after the project intervention was not noted.

Similarly, in terms of timeliness, the efficiency of the project from the C1 to C4 baseline is rather low. Unforeseen challenges at the field level often delayed the operation of the CLC classes and the vocational training to an extent that EE hasn't been able to assess both parts post-transition until till end of C3. Also, the girls require more time than anticipated; it has to be taught in the local language initially before moving on to Nepali or English language. Moreover, the GIEN, which was conceptualized since the early phase of the project has not progressed much even as the project marches towards the end. Therefore, the timeliness and the resource invested in the GIEN can be deemed low. All in all, the EE found the efficiency of the project to be on a mediocre end. In light of this, EE recommends the following to enhance the efficiency of the project:

- a. As CLC facilitators come from varied backgrounds and different education levels, their level of delivery in the class will also vary. To maintain uniformity in the teaching-learning process of the CLC classes, it is recommended that the facilitators undergo rigorous teaching courses before starting CLC classes. As the facilitators become capacitated, they can deliver in a child-friendly manner.
- b. Change champions are engaged in community-level activities only. If capacitated, these change champions could synonymously levy the role of roving instructors conducting home visits, engaging in conversation with families to encourage them to invest in girls' education, and gaining the confidence of the girls so that they can confide in the change champions with their issues and openly discuss with them.

- c. Similarly, the project has been engaging parents and husbands in its activities, but the results were not up to the mark envisioned by the project. Engagement of the family members through various mediums, for instance, communal gatherings, street dramas, word-of-mouth promotions, and audio and visual mediums could be done in addition to the current initiatives.
- d. Similarly, ensuring regular income generation at the household level could also contribute to ensuring girls' education. If the project could engage parents in livelihood generation activities, such as animal husbandry or growing raw materials needed in the industries, especially for families relying on wage labor for income generation could bring about significant changes in girls' engagement in education. As noted in each cohort, due to sufficient household income generation capacity, the health, education, and life plans of the girls are often compromised.
- e. The issue of child marriage and self-initiated marriages are still prevalent in the project district since the initial cohort. The intervention is designed to address the issues of early marriage too, but only with the families. Therefore, the project should incorporate a youth program where the youth campaign against self-initiated marriages highlighting the negative consequences of marrying at an early age. The boys should be equally included in this campaign against child marriage.

Coordination/ sustainability

Assessment of sustainability entails the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or is likely to continue after the project phases out. It evaluates if the project was able to build an enabling environment for sustainable development, the development of ground for the continuation of positive effects: actual and prospective sustainability, and risks and potential tradeoffs. Sustainability was assessed based on the findings from Cohorts 1 to 4 at the individual, household/ community, and system levels.

The project built a conducive learning environment for the girls to acquire literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills. The literacy and numeracy skills were swiftly translated into day-to-day activities too. Appropriate pathways were also identified by the project for the girls to transition into schools and continue studying. As for vocational skills, girls who had access to implement skills, such as a family-owned tailor shop were also immediately employed. Even for those who did not transition into employment immediately, with the acquired skills, they can engage in livelihood generation at any point in their life. The project lobbied with the parents in developing the life plans of the girls and motivated them to partly invest in it too. The efforts of the project in creating an enabling environment for sustainable development are quite commendable making prospects quite high.

Moreover, the project has been collaborating with organizations to operationalize GIEN since its inception of the project. Once the GIEN comes into operation, its positive ripple effect is likely to expand widely. Conceptualization and operationalizing the GIEN does enable an environment to continue education and the multitude of effect education has on the lives of the girls.

In terms of the continuation of the positive effects, the actual sustainability of the project activities other than the learning garnered from the CLC center is bleak. The project is operated at a place where people still hold the conventional socio-cultural practices very closely. Therefore, it poses numerous challenges to the project activities of limited time to instill replacing the traditional practice. Parents are also aware of the legal age of marriage and to some extent, the harmful impact of early marriage but are intent on marrying off their daughters whenever a suitable groom comes

along despite the rigorous campaigns. At the school level, the immediate impact of project intervention reflects on the successful transition of the girls into school in appropriate grades. However, without additional support to ensure that girls do not drop out of school, sustainability at this level also appears low.

With regards to prospective sustainability, the positive effect of the project may reflect at the school level where the project engages with teachers in child-friendly learning. Each subsequent batch will benefit from trained teachers and developed SIP.

Assessing the risks and potential trade-offs of the Aarambha project, the major risk identified for the sustainability of the project is the regressive attitude of the parents and their reluctance to change according to the demand of the time. Without sufficient support from the parental level, the changes instigated by the project are likely to sustain. Another major risk is weak law enforcement. Though the project is collaborating with the local level government, the rules are mended to suit the need of the cultural groups. Unless the rules against child marriage, dowry, and gender-based discrimination are sternly taken at the system level, it will continue to challenge the sustainability of several other projects designed like Aarambha.

A major trade-off in the project is the simultaneous classes operated by the Madrasa, which is often given higher weightage than the families. Parents are willing to send girls to Madrasa so they learn the religious texts while limiting them from learning more. Therefore, to ensure that girls are brought to mainstream education while due respect to the religious approach, the project could campaign to raise awareness among the Muslim community to send their daughters to a registered Madrasa where they get the opportunity to learn beyond the religious texts and expand their knowledge horizon.

In addition, to these scenarios, EE is of the following recommendation:

1. Functionalize the GIEN to ensure a support group for the girls to continue their education journey and to build on their self-efficacy. The steering committee members can positively influence the parents to prevent drop outs or marry off the girls early.
2. The project engages with the school in several ways, but these are mostly intangible. But, since the schools are often short of essential infrastructure, investing in tangible support at the school can bridge the gap between the schools and the project. The schools are likely to implement the request of the project once they are on the receiving end. The schools are more receptive to receiving material support than in forms of training as only limited people will benefit from it. Such support could translate into better treatment of the transitioned girls over the long run.
3. Through the project intervention and efforts of the local government, the case of GBV and child marriage has decreased as compared to past years. So to control the GBV cases and to make communities more aware of GBV, the project should encourage communities, especially youth in its activities.

4. Similarly, EE sees that the provision of seed money is very questionable as no one is monitoring the use of those seed money. There is a high probability of using seed money for other household expenses rather than utilizing them in education or up-taking life plans. So, to reduce the case of misutilization of seed money in other household expenses, the project should formulate seed money's utilization mechanism and assign personnel who records the database about the seed money its utilization.

Transition

The component of transition was assessed on the successful completion and advancement into another level as envisioned by the project.

- a. The project has envisioned giving vocational training to the girls to enhance their livelihood. While giving the training to the girls, the project should keep in mind that only giving vocational training is not adequate for them. The major objective of providing training is to make them financially independent which is only possible when they engage themselves in some kind of business. So, the project should invest in sellable work rather than the interest of girls. Additionally, they should be linked with the industry so their product can easily be sold.
- b. Assigned change champions should be a more active role in reducing irregularities and dropouts. Furthermore, they should play a vital role in the successful transition of girls to vocational training and education. For this addition of new indicators of opting to stay home than into education/vocational training should be done.
- c. Since most of the target beneficiaries were from the poor class, it is difficult for them to establish their own business alone. Financial constraints and negative parental attitudes towards investing in girls' education and their life plans were the major barriers to for opting a single business. So, to ensure the successful transition of girls, formulation of homogeneous groups and working in groups would be much better than working individually.
- d. In terms of bridge class support, the girls have been taking it very positively as it is helping them to continue their formal education. But again, the conduction of bridge classes for shorter months was the major issue raised by girls. It would be more helpful for girls if the bridge classes were made a little longer. For instance, it would be better to continue bridge classes until a set of girls are promoted to at least one grade.
- e. For girls who have transitioned to vocational training, it is necessary to link them with financial institutions such as micro finances or cooperatives so that they can borrow loans from them to initiate their business upon completing vocational training.

Intermediate outcome:

1. The project envisioned improving the knowledge, attitude, and practice regarding family planning and financial literacy. However, the KAP index regarding family planning and financial literacy in all of cohorts was found very low in all of the cohorts. So for improving knowledge, attitude, and practice of family planning and financial literacy, the project should give intensive training to parents and husbands. Additionally, girls should be linked with micro-finance and other financial institutions so that they get support to initiate their business and get a chance to practice their learning in practical life.

2. During every point of evaluation, EE found that only female members of the household especially girls were liable to perform all household chores in a household. As a result, they were unable to go to school. so, to create an environment where girls can join the school, support in performing household chores by male members or other family members should be done. This project should involve male siblings and caregivers of girls in its activities so that they support girls to perform household chores and encourage them to go to school.
3. Self-confidence and improving the self-efficacy of the girls were envisioned by the project during its designing phase. But beyond counseling sessions, the project has done nothing to increase self-efficacy and self-confidence among girls. For this EE suggests a project to design activities beyond counseling for increasing self-confidence among girls. For example, extra curriculum activities such as debate competitions can be organized to enhance the public speaking skills of girls, self-defense training can be organized to boost their confidence. Additionally, the project can coordinate with child clubs of the municipality to conduct different kinds of activities to enhance and improve the confidence level of girls.