

Project Evaluation Report

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Notes:

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Report on
Sisters for Sisters' Education-II Project Endline Evaluation
by
Foundation for Development Management



June 2021



Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviation

ASRHR	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
CRM	Complaint Response Mechanism
DID	Difference in Difference
EDGE	English and Digital Girl's Education
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GEC – T	Girls Education Challenge - Transition
GoN	Government of Nepal
IO	Intermediate Outcome
LSC	Learning Support Classes
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
OOS	Out-of-School
PTA	Parents Teacher Association
PGL	Peer Group Leader
SEE	Secondary Education Examination
SeGMA	Secondary Grade Mathematical Assessment
SeGRA	Secondary Grade Reading Assessment
SfS II	Sisters for Sisters' II
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene

Table of Contents

Executive summary	7
1. Background to Project	1
1.1. Project Theory of Change and Beneficiaries.....	1
1.1.1. SfS and its Relation to SfS-II	2
1.1.2. Key Project Activities to Address the Barriers.....	5
1.2. Project Context	7
1.3. Key evaluation questions and role of endline	9
2. Context, educational marginalization, and intersections, barriers, and characteristics	11
2.1. Characteristics	11
2.2. Barriers	12
2.3. The intersection between barriers and characteristics.....	13
2.4. Appropriateness of project activities to the key barriers and characteristics.....	23
2.5. Value for money (VfM).....	25
3. Key Outcome Findings.....	29
3.1. Learning Outcome.....	29
3.1.1. Performance against indicator.....	31
3.1.2. Type of Learner During the Midline and Perception on Learning During the End-Line	34
3.1.3. Analysis of Learning Perception Based on Ethnicity.....	35
3.1.4. Analysis of learning perception based on location	36
3.1.5. Subgroup Analysis of the Learning Perception Outcome	36
3.1.6. Analysis of Learning Outcome According to the Districts.....	40
4. Transition Outcome	42
4.1. Trending Reason Behind Unsuccessful Transition	43
5. Sustainability Outcome	48
5.1. Government.....	49
5.2. School	51
6. Key Intermediate Outcome Findings.....	52
6.1. Increased Attendance	52
6.2. Increased Self-Esteem and Empowerment of Girls	53
6.3. Increased Parental Engagement in Girl's Education	61

6.4. Teaching Quality	64
6.5. Gender Responsive School Management and Governance	65
7. Conclusion and Recommendation.....	67

List of Figures

Figure 1: Areas of Improvement	32
Figure 2: Reasons behind perceived improvement among girls.....	32
Figure 4: Analysis of learning perception based on SeGMA scores	34
Figure 3: Analysis of learning perception based on SeGRA scores	34
Figure 5: Learning Perception Segregated by Ethnicity.....	35
Figure 6: Analysis of learning perception based on location	36
Figure 7: Trend of Drop-out due to marriage in LS	46
Figure 8: reasons for dropout among LS in Parsa	46
Figure 9: Reasons for Dropout among LS in Lamjung.....	47

List of tables

Table 1: beneficiary's age and grades	2
Table 2: Project activities.....	5
Table 3: Characteristics of the sample girls	11
Table 4: analysis of the characteristics of the girls.....	12
Table 5: analysis of household level barriers.....	13
Table 6: analysis of school-level barriers.....	13
Table 7: the intersection between key characteristics and barriers of in-school girls.....	14
Table 8 : VfM for SfS E-II activities.....	28
Table 9: Baseline-midline comparison of segma score, disaggregated by grade	29
Table 10: average segma score of intervention and control segregated by grade.....	30
Table 11: Perception of improvement in learning performance since midline	31
Table 12: Degree of improvement	31
Table 13: Perception of learning of girls segregated by school-level characteristics and barriers.....	37
Table 14: analysis of areas of improvement against school-level barriers.....	38
Table 15:analysis of learning perception against household level barriers.....	39
Table 16: analysis of perception on learning outcome and the areas of improvement according to district	40
Table 17:crosstabulation of ethnicity against the district	41
Table 18: Transition Status of girls	42
Table 19: reasons for unsuccessful transition.....	43
Table 20: Secondary Education Examination (SEE) pass rate of LS till December, 2020.....	44
Table 21: Total Number of Little Sisters Transitioning into High School	44
Table 22: Drop-Out Rate among the Little Sisters till December 2020	44
Table 23: Sustainability Indicators	49
Table 24: Areas of decision making among girls	53

Table 25: Segregated data on decision making	54
Table 26: analysis of decision-making ability of girls.....	57
Table 27: analysis of decision-making ability according to districts.....	57
Table 28: key decision taking ability against ethnicity	59
Table 29: household characteristics against the DECISION-MAKING ability of girls.....	60
Table 30: cross-tabulation of the areas of decision-making as per household head.....	61
Table 31: Amount of time girls spent on household chores.....	62
Table 32: analysis of time spent on household chores according to district.....	62
Table 33: household chores segregated by ethnicity.....	63
Table 34: the amount of time spent on household chores against household characteristics	64

Executive summary

Background

The Sister for Sister's Education- II (SfSE-II) project was implemented in Nepal by VSO with the support of FCDO's Girls Education Challenge Transition Window (GEC-T). The project aimed to support girls' transition from school either into livelihood-related employment or continuing their education. VSO implemented this project across four districts of Nepal -- Dhading, Lamjung, Parsa, and Surkhet -- from 2017 to 2021. SfSE-II was built on the achievement of the first phase (implemented between 2013 and 2016), which took an iterative model to upsurge girl's access to and utilization of formal and non-formal education. The project worked with in-school girls in grades 6 to 10 at the time of project inception. In Parsa, beneficiaries also included out-of-school girls. Throughout its duration, SfSE-II reached out to a total of 16,257 students (8,158 girls and 8,099 boys), among which 7,382 girls¹ were the direct learning beneficiaries. Out of the total beneficiary population, 1,255 were extremely marginalized girls identified as 'Little Sisters.' The little sisters received additional interventions through the 'Big Sister-Little Sister mentoring scheme.' The innovative mentoring approach was, in fact, at the heart of the project, whereby 'Little Sisters' were supported and mentored by a set of senior girls known as Big Sisters in their academics to boost their self-efficacy and deal with everyday challenges.

On an individual level, the project benefitted the girls directly through academic support such as Learning Support Classes in Math, Science, and English. In addition to this, the project conducted EDGE clubs to support girls with digital and literary skills. The school-level support included infrastructural support such as the library, development of model classroom, wash kits. Additionally, the project also trained teachers in the intervention schools extending benefits to all the school students. The teachers' training scheme of the project included promoting learners' centred classroom and improved school governance. The project also helped establish Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) at schools which helped the students put forward their complaints and concerns. The project also assisted the schools in developing their School Improvement Plan (SIP).

At the community level, the project conducted door-to-door campaigns and street dramas spreading awareness on the importance of girl's education among parents and community members. In that light, the project undertook a holistic approach in addressed girls' education challenges at four levels – individual level among in-school girls; at the broader community level among parents/ guardians; in the schools among the teachers; and the school management.

Methodology

Foundation for Development Management (FDM) was assigned to conduct the longitudinal evaluation of SfSE-II. In that regard, the objective of this end-line evaluation is to assess whether the project was successfully designed and implemented and if the project activities showed good Value for Money. Moreover, the evaluation also looks at what impact the GEC funding had on the learning and transition of marginalized girls and examines what worked to facilitate this change. Additionally, the evaluation also focuses on the sustainability of the activities funded by the GEC

¹According to the MEL framework, 16,257 is the anticipated target in the second phase of the SfSE-II project, of which 8158 are girls and 8099 boys. Among these 16,257 students from 49 treatment schools, 1255 are little sisters from phase 1. The project worked with 7,382 beneficiaries from BL until ML and had 7,272 beneficiaries at ML.

by exploring the extent to which the project was successful in leveraging additional interest and investment. The project-level evaluation questions were guided by OECD's DAC criteria, whereby FDM assessed the efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance, and sustainability of the project activities.

FDM conducted the data collection for the midline evaluation in March 2019 and the end-line between December 2020 and January 2021. In terms of methodology, the end-line evaluation adopted a sequential mixed-methods design. In the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, FDM, in collaboration with representatives from VSO and GEC, made some changes in the evaluation design. Since a few of the indicators in the log frame were rendered unusable, new indicators were designed along with relevant evaluation tools. Furthermore, as the pandemic restricted mobilities during data collection, FDM conducted remote data collection for the end-line evaluation. Consequently, as remote data collection was not feasible with the control group, the evaluation had to do without quantitative comparisons across treatment and control groups. Nevertheless, FDM conducted in-field qualitative consultations involving representatives of the control groups, which provided qualitative comparisons and insights across treatment and control groups.

Similarly, unlike during midline evaluation, which had two cohorts of in-school and out-of-school girls, the end-line evaluation assessed only the in-school cohort. The end-line omitted the assessment of out-of-school girls because the attrition rate for these girls was high, at almost 60 percent, at the midline. Moreover, only limited OOS interventions were implemented after midline, as a result of which, the OOS cohort had been out of the project's contact for almost two years, making it impossible for the external evaluator to track them for end-line evaluation. Changes made in the evaluation design have been outlined in detail in Annex 3.

Learning Outcome

At midline, the difference in difference was 11.56 percentage point over and above comparison for numeracy and 4.70 percentage point for literacy, both of which are statistically significant achievements. Considering the challenges related to COVID-19, mainly the closure of schools for a prolonged time, the learning outcome indicators were revised before the end-line evaluation. The revised learning outcome indicators shifted the focus from literacy and numeracy assessments towards the girl's perception of their learning in the last two years. Based on this, 78.7% of the girls expressed confidence towards their improved learning performance since midline, reinforcing the learning outcome achievements recorded at the midline. Some of the common examples of learning improvement highlighted by the girls included 'improved examination score,' 'increased interest to learn,' 'more active classroom participation,' and 'better comprehension of the lesson.' Most of the girls attributed these different forms of learning improvement to the Learning Support Classes and increased confidence to make inquiries with the teachers in the classroom. The study also found the changed parental attitude facilitated by the project to have supported the girls in their learning, mainly through reduced engagement in household chores and creating a conducive learning environment at home for the girls. Additionally, an improved learning environment at school was also found to have substantially contributed to the perceived learning progression among girls.

The end-line evaluation also explored the impacts of COVID-19 on learning. 82.1 percent of the girls believed that the pandemic had affected their future aspirations regarding education and employment. The girls were bereft from continuing their studies while their learning competencies also diminished with the prolonged lockdown. Also, the pandemic created new challenges for many girls, especially in terms of their access to learning. For instance, not all girls had access to

smartphones, the internet, radio, and television to participate in remote learning. Therefore, most girls didn't have exposure to learning interventions and activities throughout the nine months of the school closure.

Transition Outcomes

The project had outlined pathways that the girls were expected to follow to be considered to have successfully transitioned. These pathways were linked with the re-enrolment in formal or non-formal education, including vocational training or involvement in technical training, safe and self-employment. The midline data established a highly successful transition among the target beneficiaries, with the entire sample population recording 'successful transition.' Considering the findings from the midline, the EE, the project, and the fund-manager agreed to assess transition based on the project's comprehensive data for the entire population, rather than FDM collecting the transition figures for simply the sample group. This change in the evaluation design allowed FDM and the project to better picture the transition rate amongst the entire target beneficiaries.

The data showed that a vast majority -- 94 percent of the girls -- were found to have successfully transitioned, while only the remaining 6 percent had an unsuccessful transition. Some of the most cited reasons for these unsuccessful transitions were marriage and drop-out from school due to financial condition post-COVID. There are still few girls in-school girls supported by the project and the number of those remaining in-school girls is not included in the transition figure.

Comparing the results of endline evaluation with the midline results, it was known that in both points school drop out and child marriages were the major reason behind unsuccessful transition of girls. During the midline evaluation, it was noted that while the drop out among in-school girls was minimal, it had increased during the endline evaluation, owing to the financial condition of the families post COVID situation where parents lost sources of income and could no longer support girl's education. Similarly, the midline evaluation showed significant reduction in the child marriage practices among girls with continued intervention from change agents like the Big Sisters and Adult Champions. On the contrary, it was observed that the occurrences of self-initiated marriages were high during the end-line evaluation even though parent led marriages had remarkably decreased. Parent's awareness regarding detrimental impacts of child marriage was found to be higher during the endline evaluation than in the midline. In addition, it was noted that greater number of girls had more life choices; continuing with higher studies or opting a vocational during the endline than in the midline which was rather limited to studying till grade 10 in most cases.

Sustainability Outcome

During the midline evaluation, sustainability was assessed at three levels: community, school, and system. However, in the end-line evaluation, the assessment was modified to assess replicability, scalability, and continuity. The project's infrastructural supports to the schools are sustainable, as schools demonstrated ownership and readiness to maintain and sustain the infrastructure in the longer run. Similarly, the project's achievements in improving the quality of teaching are also likely to be sustainable. The evaluation came across evidence of teachers keenly applying their skills from the training into their classrooms. However, FDM's finding on Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM)- a mechanism established by the project to ensure that grievances of the children are addressed through a formal mean was rather dismal. For instance, the CRM boxes were found stored in the staff rooms and the children had stopped using them for some time already.

The end-line evaluation came across some encouraging evidence of the project's sustainability at the system's level. For instance, the project's support to the local governments in formulating the Child Protection Policy was commendable. Many of the local governments in Nepal are devoid of such policies and face problems formulating the same due to a lack of knowledge and resources. In this context, the child protection policies of the project municipalities can be expected to improve the education status of the respective areas and contribute to the municipalities' Education Plan. Moreover, the local governments across all project districts appeared optimistic about continuing the project activities, specifically the little sister-big sister mentorship program. Even with a limited budget and debilitated education planning, the local governments hope to scale up the program under the government's banner or simply replicate it to increase direct beneficiaries.

Intermediate Outcome (IOs)

The intermediate outcomes at the end-line evaluation were selected with regards to their relevancy and contribution to the achievement of the key outcomes of learning, transition, and sustainability. For instance, the intermediate outcome of self-esteem and empowerment of girls increased parental engagement in the girl's education, teaching quality, and gender-responsive school management and governance.

Under self-esteem and empowerment, a set of key decision-making areas was presented before the girls to assess their decision-making ability solely, jointly with the family members, or entirely by the family members. The evaluation did not come across any remarkable changes in the degree of girls taking critical decisions independently or jointly with family members since the midline evaluation. The rate of girls taking all key decisions independently or with their family members was 54.9 percent and 54.2 percent at the midline and end-line, respectively. Nevertheless, statistical significance is seen in terms of the girl's ability to decide on their choice to continue school in the subsequent years, age of choice to get married, the decision to work after completing studies, and the type of work to opt for after completing studying. This IO contributes to learning and transition outcomes, as more girls can decide about their education and employment, and parents are supporting it.

Under parental engagement in the girls' education, the study assessed the time girls spent on household chores and parents' involvement with the school regarding their daughters' education. The midline findings showed that the girls spent 1.8 hours on average per day in household chores. By the end-line, girls' engagement in household chores was found to have reduced to 1.7 hours; a difference deemed statistically significant. Tailoring girls' engagement in household chores to the period of COVID-induced closure of schools, the study found that they had been devoting 2.3 hours to household chores. However, this trend of increased engagement in household chores should not be taken negatively. It is usual for parents to expect their children to work for a slightly more extended period when they are at home, especially when they don't have to go to school. Moreover, despite girls allocating a relatively higher amount of time to household chores during COVID-19, they were still getting enough time to study at home. This IO contributes directly to the learning outcome, as with lowered household chores, girls have ample time to engage in learning activities at home.

The evaluation's analysis of teachers' self-perception regarding teaching before and after the project's training and their engagement in providing learning support to the girls during school closure was based entirely on qualitative consultations. The training imparted pedagogical skills on a children-friendly approach and student-centered learning and encouraged the teachers through self-motivation and a sense of self-worth. The study found a positive change in the attitude of teachers and a change in teaching techniques like using more respectable words to address students or making classroom learning more child-friendly. This finding remains constant with the midline results too. Nonetheless, there were some apparent barriers that limited teachers from fully implementing pedagogical techniques in regular classes. For instance, a large number of students in classrooms, limited availability of learning resources, time limitation, and a rigid course structure, among others, hinder full implementation of children-friendly teaching methods in the classrooms. Moreover, the study also found that teacher's training was a one-off activity of the project, which lacked continuous support and monitoring. This IO contributes to the learning and sustainability outcomes as the trained teachers sharing the experience and knowledge with others at school ensure child-friendly learning and the sustainability of training.

Regarding gender-responsive school management and governance, all the consulted schools demonstrated a fair understanding and realized the need for a gender-friendly environment for better learning and development. Consequently, schools were found to be promoting different activities to ensure a gender-friendly environment in school, including separate toilets for girls and boys and free distribution of sanitary pads. Additionally, the appointment of a gender focal and female trained teacher to listen to girls' issues and appointing girls to leadership positions in school activities are other activities in practice. These end-line results present an encouraging picture compared with the midline evaluation findings, where only 47.3 percent of the schools achieved satisfactory progress regarding gender responsiveness. This IO contributes to the sustainability outcome, with a significant focus on school management and participation of the local government in enhancing the gender responsiveness of schools.

Value for Money (VfM)

The end-line evaluation assessed the project's Value for Money (VfM) against five of the project's significant interventions: 1) the mentoring support; 2) the EDGE Club; 3) the Learning Support Classes (LSC); 4) teacher training and 5) parental awareness. In terms of effectiveness and efficiency, the end-line evaluation showed that the mentoring support had the most significant impact on improving the Little Sisters' learning and confidence. Both parents and girls themselves stated that the mentoring support was one of the most effective interventions they received. Similarly, the LSCs were also found to have generated a good value for money as these remedial classes resulted in girls' improved learning. EDGE clubs were also a beneficial intervention that allowed the girls to be acquainted with essential digital skills.

Regarding relevance, the interventions that showed the highest level of VfM were the mentoring support, the LSCs, and the EDGE clubs. Since the mentoring support targeted the most marginalized girls in dire need of educational support, it was highly relevant. The mentoring support had consequently helped improve the LSs' learning capability as well as their confidence. The LSCs were also highly suitable as English, Maths, Nepali, and Science – subjects taught in the LSCs – are the common subjects most students find difficult. EDGE clubs were also highly relevant in project intervention areas as despite having computer classes in schools, most public-school students do not have access to computers and do not know how to operate them. Many of the

girls FDM interacted with said that they were highly appreciative of the EDGE clubs for having provided them with an opportunity to touch computers for the first time.

In terms of sustainability, mentoring support demonstrated the best value for money. Because much of the training and capacity building of the mentors has already been done, less investment would be required in the future to replicate this component and the Big Sisters were willing to continue their role even with minimum remuneration in the future too. However, despite demonstrating a good value for money in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, the sustainability of EDGE clubs and LSCs is questionable. For instance, contrasting the spirit of EDGE clubs, the schools said that they would not be able to provide additional computers or learning materials to all the students. Similarly, it was not clear how the LSCs could sustain in the absence of the project's support in remunerating the facilitators.

COVID-19 pandemic

The onslaught of the pandemic indiscriminately hampered the smooth functioning and implementation of most of the project activities. For instance, the schools were closed, and the Learning Support Classes and the EDGE clubs were suspended. Responding to the most pressing needs of the communities, the project diverted towards the most demanding needs of the hour for masks, sanitizers, and WASH kits. The project coordinated with the local government and designed and distributed the handbooks to facilitate learning at the time of closure.

Apart from the efforts of the project to mollify the impacts of COVID-19, the schools also mobilized teachers to reach the students in clusters and provide psychosocial first aid and emotional support to the student. The project conducted mobile clinic sessions for professional sharing for teachers, focusing on creating a conducive learning environment at the school during and post-crisis periods. In addition, the teachers were also provided with innovative support such as radio/ TV lessons, provision of SD cards to promote learning, and distribution of print-based learning materials. Moreover, as the girls could not meet for the EDGE classes, the program was aired through local radio stations. The Peer Group Leaders (PGL) were held responsible for ensuring that the group members attended the radio program and continued their learning.

While the evaluation did not look into the effectiveness of these interventions in detail as it was outside the scope of work, it was found that a number of these initiatives were of great relief and highly effective. Emergency support provided by the project like the mask and sanitizer helps the beneficiaries remain safe to an extent too. The handbooks were also found to have helped students continue their learning. However, despite commendable, the remote learning training was not found to be as effective as other supports during COVID-19, as most of the students did not have access to remote learning tools (laptops or phones with internet).

Conclusion

To sum up, with regards to learning, endline evaluation findings have consistently highlighted a perceived improvement in learning among the girls, accentuated by the learning support classes

and EDGE club alike. Apart from the individual level, it is essential for the project to continually engage at the household and community level to assure that a conducive learning environment is maintained outside of the schools as well. As for the transition, humongous materialistic support and learning support at school have ensured a smooth transition for girls till the secondary level. The cascading of teachers' training on child-friendly and learner-centric training has generated ample positive results among the learning attitudes of the girls. And ultimately, the project's effort in ensuring the sustainability of the project's achievements by engaging the local bodies is credible.

There were some areas where the project could have fared better. For instance, the highly ambitious intervention of setting up CRMs in school had not brought changes as anticipated. Moreover, although the teacher training component had helped teachers improve their pedagogical skills, there did exist some obvious barriers that limited teachers from fully implementing pedagogical techniques in regular classes, such as a large number of students, limited availability of learning resources, time limitation, and a rigid course structure. Similarly, although the parental attitude towards girl's education had positively changed, their engagement in making inquiries, visiting schools to inquire about the progress of the child is still rare and among those parents who were doing it, they were mostly mothers.

In terms of continuity of the project achievements and activities, it could be seen that components such as the mentoring scheme, which was one of the most successful components, did have good scope for replicability. In addition, the project's infrastructural support to schools was also deemed to be sustainable. However, despite the EDGE component's high impact, its sustainability remained questionable particularly due to the school's struggle with managing resources. Moreover, the Learning Support Classes, which had helped improve the learning of the girls stood on shaky grounds as, without remuneration, the teachers will not deliver such extra classes. In this regard, the role of the local government is crucial. Although the local government was appreciative of the project's efforts and said that they would try their level best to give continuity to the achievement of the project, they did admit that they did not have adequate resources and said they would struggle to give continuity to all the activities. However, from the qualitative information, it could be deduced that even with their limited budget and debilitated education planning, they did hope to scale up the program even if they are to continue the same program under government or simply replicate it to increase the number of direct beneficiaries.

1. Background to Project

1.1. Project Theory of Change and Beneficiaries

The Sisters for Sisters (SfS) project, supported by the DFID Girls Education Challenge, began in Nepal in 2013 intending to provide support to marginalized female students through mentorship and bridge programs to encourage further educational attainment. Through its various activities, the first phase of the SfS project (2013- 2016) worked to increase out-of-school girls to access education and, along with those at risk of dropping out, to complete a full cycle of education. It introduced gender-sensitive teaching methodologies, management systems, and school environments to facilitate girls' active participation in education. The project helped develop the skills and capacities of stakeholders throughout the education system and in the community to effectively implement, monitor, and expand improvements in girls' education. Ultimately, the project was designed to empower girls and women to assert greater control over their lives, to influence decision-making, and to contribute more fully to the development process.

The endline evaluation of the first phase of the project, conducted by **Foundation for Development Management (FDM)** showed that after four years of implementation, the project had demonstrated significant impact at multiple outcomes and output levels. The findings also validated the project's Theory of Change (ToC) showing that challenges have indeed been addressed at four levels; at the individual level amongst girls themselves; in the wider communities within which the girls live and in particular amongst parents/careers; in the schools; and in the overall education sector. The evaluation highlighted the significant contribution of the project's unique peer network support – **the Big Sisters' Mentoring Scheme** approach which had helped marginalized girls to retain and have a better understanding of the importance of education and its benefits.

Building on the success of the first phase of the project, VSO received funding to implement the second phase of the project from the Girls' Education Challenge Transition Window. As a result, VSO started working in partnership with Global Action Nepal and Aasaman Nepal as local implementors with British Council implementing its EDGE (English and Digital for Girls' Education) curriculum in the same four intervention districts as the first phase. Through improved access to quality education along the education continuum, the project continued to work with marginalized adolescent girls to support their transition from basic to secondary education, and secondary to upper secondary, empowered to leave school to either secure a sustainable livelihood or continue with education. The project aimed to see marginalized girls equipped with skills, bolstered by strong learning outcomes that improve employability, enhance confidence and self-esteem to act as leaders, and enable them to influence and control their own Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR).

Interventions in phase two included Big Sister-Little Sister mentoring, peer learning support, and coaching for teachers and the Education Unit. VSO international volunteers mobilized from the headquarters in Kathmandu also provided support to the project in activities like teacher training. Community engagement was facilitated through a variety of volunteering roles and expertise and sharing from implementing partners and resource partners. Working in partnership with Education Unit and existing government education systems from the school and community level to the Ministry level, the project contributed to changes in schools, communities, districts, and national inclusive education policies and practices. Together the project team facilitated the sharing of learning, gathering, and funnelling of evidence to influence policy directives and donor decision-making – ultimately deepening the impact for better life choices and opportunities for marginalized girls.

The SfS E-II project primarily worked with two groups of girls. First, all in-school girls enrolled in grade 6 to grade 10 in 49 treatment schools across the four project districts. This encompassed a total of 7,382 marginalized girls in treatment schools in grades 6-10, including 1,208 extremely marginalized girls. Second, in the Parsa district, the project also worked with girls aged 6-9 years who dropped out of school or had never been to schools to facilitate their transition into formal or non-formal education. This intervention was a continuation from phase one as even after the completion of phase one; there were still girls in the community for whom this intervention was deemed necessary.

TABLE I: BENEFICIARY’S AGE AND GRADES

	Beneficiary grades & ages		
	<i>Baseline (2017)</i>	<i>Midline (2018)</i>	<i>Endline (2020)</i>
<i>Grade</i>	Grade 6,7,8 and 9,10	Grade 7,8,9 and 10,11	Grade 9,10, 11 and 12
<i>Age</i>	11-14	12-15	e.g., 14-17
Number	8,158	7,382	5,877

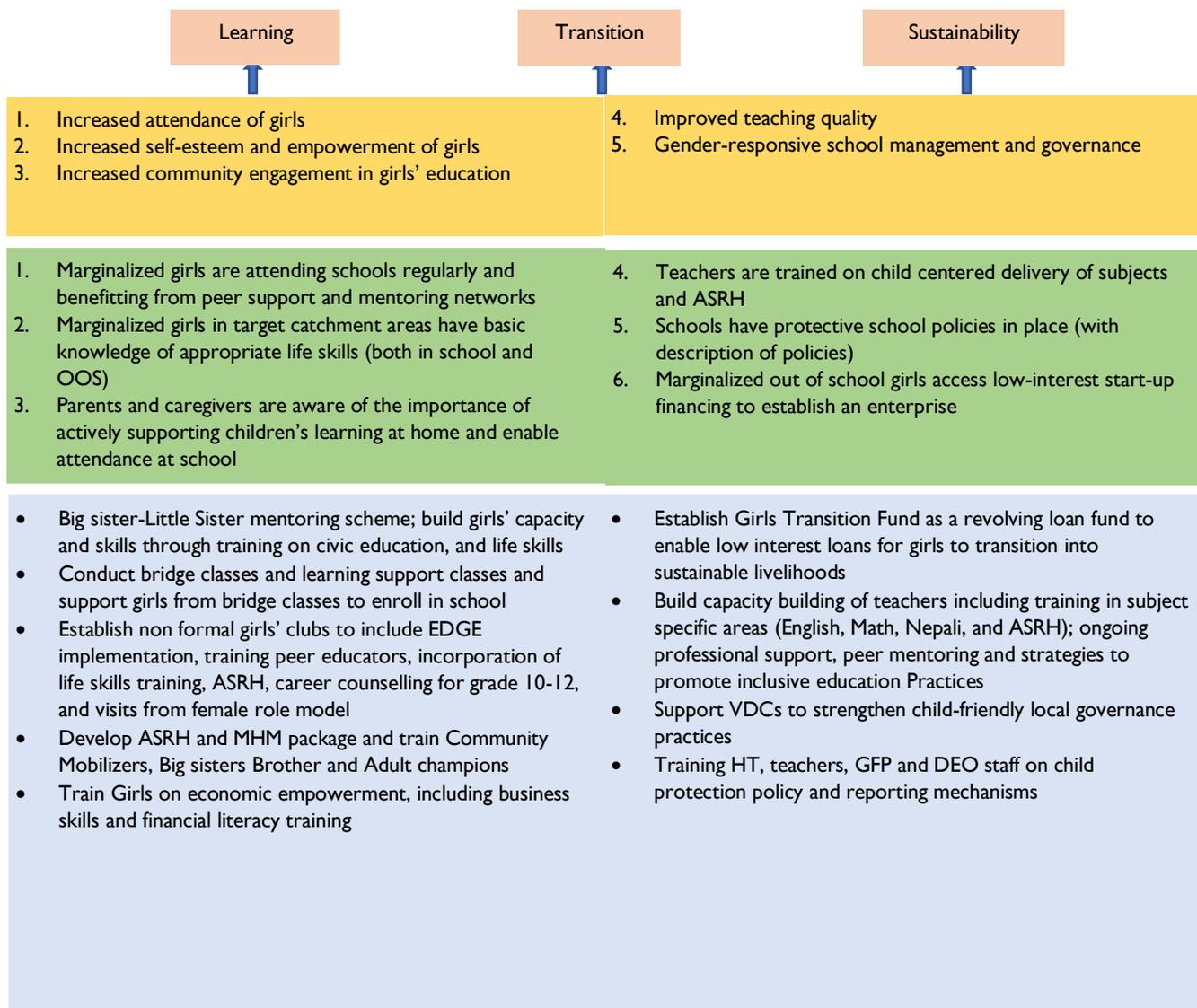
Source: Project data

1.1.1. SfS and its Relation to SfS-II

The ToC of the SfS-II was based around the logical process and continuity of phase I which identified the specific barriers marginalized girls faced and addressed them holistically through a set of targeted activities intended to improve learning outcomes and successful transition. Moreover, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting closure of schools further added to the already existing list of barriers. For example, lack of access to digital technology, devices, and internet access was not identified as a barrier initially. In the changed context, this was a major barrier to address the learning needs of the girls as well as the capacity of teachers and schools to deliver the learning from distance/remotely. To address this barrier, the project provided support such as psychological first aid training to the teachers, radio and TV learning lessons, distribution of printed learning materials and distant mentoring support along with providing protective equipment such as masks, sanitizers and WASH kits.

The SfS-II project envisaged that in the community, mentoring support, and exposure to successful women can help to reposition the gender expectations of both girls and boys, and girls’ educational and transitional aspirations. For marginalized girls to complete their education, which will strengthen the ability of these girls to transition successfully, they need support to go to school. The project expected that this will be accomplished through establishing a peer support network, supported by adults within school and community, with parents and boys sensitized on valuing this right. Furthermore, SfS-II identified the need for a learning environment that is sensitive to their needs and aimed at achieving this by strengthening school management to prioritize enabling conditions and improving the quality of education in an inclusive and safe learning environment with adequate focus given to teachers’ professional development. This is how the subsequent phases of the SfS-II project contributed and aimed to continue contributing to empowering the most marginalized girls, their parents in the community, and ensuring child and gender-responsive pedagogical practices in the schools.

As a continued and dedicated effort, the SfS-II project in its two phases provided support to the same girls. In the first phase, the project supported girls to develop their learning focusing on girls in the primary level of education, while in the second phase, the project supported the same girls in their secondary level education and also enhance their ability to transition.



Demand Side Barriers: Socio-cultural pressures – increasing pressures as girls move into adolescence, early marriage, girls required to help at home, parental feelings of protection and shame. Lack of awareness of options and alternatives, gender stereotypes about work appropriate to girls, lack of financial/business literacy for girls

Supply side barriers: Lack of trained female teachers, lack of gender-responsive inclusive teaching, poor learning environment, lack of WASH facilities, lack of child protection mechanisms in school. Lack of training in life skills and skills for work, lack of equity related policy implementation at school level.

The SfS-II project categorized barriers to girls' education into two categories: Demand-side barriers and Supply-side barriers. These barriers, either independently or in tandem, adversely affected girls' education. The project's ToC, therefore, responded to the diverse and inter-related barriers affecting marginalized girls' education and transition (to income generation activities, higher education, or informal education/training).

The demand side barriers are those barriers that persisted within girls, their family and/or community. On the other hand, the supply-side barriers were those barriers that are the results of shortcomings in human resources and institutional capacity of educational institutions.

Demand-side barriers

- **Child marriage** - It is estimated that about 37% of the girls in Nepal get married by the age of 18 years, and almost 10% get married before the age of 15 years.²
- **Gender norms (household chores)** - Adolescent girls are expected to contribute more than boys to household chores, caring for the elderly and siblings, or assist families in agriculture/business.
- **Poverty** – 28.6% of Nepal's population is still multidimensionally poor³. The cost of education and the need for finance lead either to children not enrolling in an education or dropping out.
- **Low decision-making power** - Most of the decisions regarding a girl's life are taken by their families with limited involvement of the girl, creating dependency and limiting the ability of the girls to make life choices that could have a long-term impact.

Supply-side barriers

- **Lack of gender-responsive school environment:** Although a significant stride has been made in terms of gender parity in enrolments in school-level education, there persists a gap in ensuring that the school environment, management, and pedagogy are also highly sensitive towards gender inclusion. This effect of lack of a gender-responsive school environment is especially prominent among girls.
- **The weak planning process at school:** The government guidelines on school-level planning and administration highly prioritize inclusion and participation of wide-ranging stakeholders. However, due to the shortcoming in school leadership and skills, the community-level education institutions suffer from a weak planning process leading to ineffective implementation of those plans.
- **Lack of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR) education among staff and students:** The ToC of the project stipulates that the lack of awareness and education on ASRHR among and school staff and students alike, coupled with inadequate Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities creates situations whereby young adolescent girls are for vulnerable to the discontinuity of education.

² Our Time to Sing and Play: Child Marriage in Nepal, *Human Rights Watch*, 2016

³Nepal Multidimensional Poverty index: Analysis Towards Action, *National Planning Commission*, 2018

- **Inadequate opportunity and skills among girls to successfully transition to income-generating activities, vocational training, and non-formal education.**
- **Disruptions as a result of the change in governance structure:** Nepal is undergoing a state restructuring process that involves the devolution of power into three tiers of government. As a result, local governments are ill-equipped in terms of human resources and financial resources, and this, along with unresolved institutional issues, has resulted in poor policy drafting and planning in important areas such as education and health.

In addition to this, the project also identified an additional barrier in Parsa district, where the number of girls aged 6 to 9, who had never attended a school or had dropped out, was high. All these barriers have an impact on the learning and transition of girls as envisaged by the project ToC. Hence, the project activities are designed to address these barriers.

Along with the above-mentioned barriers mentioned in the ToC, the project experienced an unexpected barrier in the form of a Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic resulted in the closure of all schools for almost four months and suspension of classes. Due to the fear of contracting the virus, parents maintained a strict restriction on children from leaving home. Teachers were also unable to reach out to children during that phase. As a result, girls were bereft of learning opportunities. The pandemic also resulted in an increased workload for girls as they would have to stay home throughout the day where their parents expected them to perform household chores.

1.1.2. Key Project Activities to Address the Barriers

To address the above barriers identified by the project, VSO conducted the following activities with schools and communities:

TABLE 2: PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Before Covid-19	
<i>Community activities</i>	<i>School activities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community awareness events such as Community Dialogue, Community Campaign against child marriage, gender-based violence, school enrolment, national and international days celebrations • Interactive Theatre by primary actors, including community stakeholders such as big sisters, adult champions. Community Mobilizers • Parenting education • Interaction among parents of little sisters (primary actors) • Bridge classes for girls who are out of schools or have never been to schools and boys only in Parsa where drop out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School events (extra-curricular activities) • Mentoring support to selected marginalized girls known as little sisters helping boost their self-esteem and learning skills • AYSRH training to teachers • AYSRH orientation to girls and boys • Support on Menstruation Hygiene Management. • Child-centered teachers training • School Management Committee (SMC)/ Parents Teachers Association (PTA) orientation on their roles and responsibilities

<p>and never been school rate are high compared to the other three districts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on Business development and financial literacy skills to Out of School Girls • Support local government to develop local-level education policy and strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English and Digital for Girls Education (EDGE club) • Capacity Building on Complaint Response Mechanism on child safeguarding • Support to revise SIP in terms of gender-sensitive and child-friendly related activities. • Orientation on DRR and develop a school safety plan • Learning support classes • Learning sharing visit
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After Covid-19

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting awareness on child protection and psychosocial support to children during a pandemic • Child protection message dissemination to parents through sparrow SMS • Psychosocial first aid support to community volunteers and community mobilizers through virtual mode • Distance mentoring and interaction among parents of Little Sisters and Senior Big Sisters (SBSs) for parental support in the context of Covid-19. • Psycho-social counselling through mobilizing experts on handling the child protection issues and GBV cases. • Community Level Campaign- Back to school, COVID-19 awareness, Preventing Child Marriage, Dowry • Interactive sessions through the radio program Sajilo Silkai and EDGE radio program and narrowcast the program by Community Volunteers and PGLs • On-air short radio drama on psychosocial support, early and child marriage, and GBV/VAWG in the context of COVID 19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of essential relief materials to marginalized girls (health and hygiene kit) • Online teacher training on distance learning through using google classroom • Orient on the use of virtual learning and mobilize teachers on distance learning support and virtual classes • Orient and mobilize schoolteachers and school management authorities (SMC) to spread awareness messages, information regarding COVID-19 to the parents, primary actors • Audio/visual narrowcasting and distribution of learning materials among marginalized girls and boys to promote home-based learning and engagement of parents in supporting their children’s learning as well as safeguarding. • Creative competitions through distance mode like essay writing, thematic arts, poems, etc. • Broadcasting of radio programming for English Skills and TV programming for social skills; • Radio and SD cards distributed to schools/EDGE Club for narrowcasting of radio episodes and offline learning materials. • Back to school” kits provided to schools to support marginalized girls in the context of COVID 19.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An SMS-based campaign about Safeguarding/Child Protection risks, early and child marriage, GBV, protection, and menstrual hygiene management. Also, dissemination of IEC materials and service providers' information to the primary actors through the pocketbook • 3 PSAs developed in Maithali, Tharu and Nepali language focusing on safe learning spaces at home, safety during Covid19 and safe return to school • One to one support through telephone conversation through mobilizing master trainers, project teams and community volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided self-learning materials to the marginalized boys and girls • Support to established handwashing station in 47 schools • Textbooks support the marginalized girls and boys • Stationaries and other learning materials such as colourful books provided to girls and boys • Virtual teachers training on positive behaviour and classroom management in the context of this COVID- 19 pandemic.
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1.2. Project Context

In the past decades, Nepal has significantly made progress and improvements in access to education for children across the country the enrolment rate of children from primary is about 96% compared to 72% in 2000. Additionally, the adult (15+) literacy rate of the Nepali population has grown steadily from 21% in 1981 to 68% in 2018.

Despite this success, UNICEF considers the poor quality of education and the unequal access to education based on remoteness, gender, and socio-economic background as key weaknesses of the present-day education system. Inequality is a key characteristic of the Nepali society linked to the settlement area (rural/urban), caste, and gender of the child. Male children, children from higher castes, and urban areas are far more likely to attain education than female children and children from lower castes and rural areas. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to drop out of school or not attend education at all. 99% of children from the richest quintile have taken part in education, compared to 90% of boys and 86% of girls from the lowest quintile. Furthermore, only 18% of children from the lowest caste (Dalit) were enrolled in basic education in 2014. (UNICEF 2018 report)

While most children are enrolled in, and complete primary education, enrolment in secondary education is significantly lower (58% of children of the relevant age group in 2019). When children reach the age of receiving a Secondary Education Examination (SEE) previously School Leaving Certificate (SLC), only 20% of children are still in school and eligible to receive the certificate.⁴

Among many other sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has severely disrupted access to quality education and health, sexual and reproductive health services in large part due to systemic barriers including a weak management system and gender and social inequalities. As discussed above, the education system of Nepal is highly influenced by the poverty and inequality prevailing in the country. As a result, the ability to enjoy education is limited for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. As history has shown, these children are the first to suffer when a disaster takes place. Therefore, it can be predicted

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <http://uis.unesco.org/>

that children in rural areas, from lower castes and girl children, are most likely to be negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools in Nepal were closed for almost two to six months due to the pandemic following which The Government of Nepal's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology released the guideline of school reopening framework in the context of COVID-19 in November 2020⁵ with the following guideline: a) Local governments can decide on reopening/reclosing or keeping the schools closed based on the assessment of the risks involved for COVID transmission at the local level. b) Before reopening the schools, local governments must coordinate with the district COVID response management center. c) For those schools which have been used as quarantine or isolation sites for COVID, they need to ensure implementation of standard public health security protocols recommended by the Ministry of Health, including disinfection of the schools, before reopening the schools. d) Local governments can decide on running the schools in different modalities depending on the local situation, such as conducting all the classes in the school at the same time as in a normal situation, or running classes at different times for different levels/grades in different shifts, or conducting classes only a few days in a week, or only a few hours in a day, etc. Based on the above guideline now the school has started to reopen with some limitations and constraints

However, ensuring inclusive and equitable education to girls in this pandemic situation has been a continuous challenge. Nepal is a developing country that has several social and economic challenges that have consistently proven hindrance towards equitable development. One challenge is gender inequality. Although Nepal is making progress towards bridging the gender gap, according to the Gender Gap Index 2018, Nepal is still below the global average gender gap score. Similarly, the same report shows while Nepal Ranks 105 in the overall gender gap index, it ranks 125 out of 149 in terms of girls' attainment of education.

Moreover, Nepal is undergoing a state restructuring process that involves the devolution of power into three tiers of government: Federal, Provincial, and Local. Under a federal government, 7 provincial governments and 753 local governments are the decision-making power centres, closer to the communities than ever. These local government structures have assumed responsibility for development efforts as well as delivery of services. The development of the education sector and the delivery of educational services is one such responsibility of the local government.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that investing in girls' education will bring the highest return to individuals, families, and the entire community⁶. It is important to support girls' education and raise awareness concerning the importance of girls' education. Some of the cultural beliefs, the school environment, lack of awareness, affordability, geographical terrain, plus a lack of motivation to promote girls' education have been some of the major hindrances in girls' education in Nepal. There has been a gradual progression towards realizing the goal of complete literacy among the female population of Nepal. GoN's SSDP for the period 2016-23 is also aiming at improving the efficiency, management, and governance of the country's basic and secondary education for over seven million students. It is imperative to provide the poor, marginalized girls and women with the right access to opportunities and resources through the medium of education.

⁵ Framework of School Reopening in the context of COVID-19 (2020). Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The Government of Nepal. <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/10871/file/Government%20of%20Nepal%20School%20Reopening%20Framework%20-%20English.pdf>

⁶ What Works in Girls' Education (2016). Gene B. Sperling and Rebecca Winthrop with Christina Kwauk. Brookings Institute Press.

1.3. Key evaluation questions and role of endline

The end-line evaluation adopted a mixed-method research design with a focus on the sequential approach. Under this design, quantitative data was collected first followed by qualitative data collection. The preliminary findings from the quantitative data guided the development of qualitative tools that allowed for the use of qualitative data to verify, interpret and understand the patterns emerging in the quantitative data.

For the outcome level measurement among school girls, the quantitative study was initially based on a quasi-experimental design guided by the Difference in Difference (DID) approach. However, the approach was changed later due to multiple reasons. First, given the COVID-19 situation whereby quantitative data had to be collected through phone, it was not feasible to administer phone surveys with the control school students. During midline, FDM had noticed that engagement with control school required extensive consultations with the head teacher, which would not be possible to do through phone. More importantly, since it was agreed that learning data would be captured only through qualitative tools (the COVID situation acted as hindrance in administered the learning tools – SeGRA/SeGMA), the inclusion of control schools during the endline was not deemed necessary. As for the qualitative data collection, once the situation was under control and was safe to go out in the community, the researcher teams were mobilized. Following all safety protocol, the research team were provided with mask, sanitizers and maintained distance with the stakeholders at all times during the KII and FGDs.

The findings against the indicators set in the project log frame for different outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) were analysed from the quantitative data. These findings were then used to structure the qualitative exercises which were designed for identifying the causal factors of the quantitative findings FDM administered the survey for quantitative data collection in December 2020 whereas qualitative data was collected in January 2021. The end-line evaluation sought to generate answers for the evaluation questions outlined in the project's Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework. The project's MEL framework had outlined the following four broader evaluation questions:

- Was the GEC successfully designed and implemented?
- What impact did the GEC Funding have on the transition as well as the IOs with the marginalized girls through education stages and their learning?
- What works to facilitate the transition of marginalized girls through education stages and increase their learning?
- How sustainable were the activities funded by the GEC, and was the program successful in leveraging additional interest and investment?
- Did the project activities generate good Value for Money (VfM)?

The project-level evaluation questions for the end-line were as follows:

Learning

There were no evaluation questions regarding learning (literacy and numeracy) during the endline as administering the standard learning assessment tool (SeGRA/SeGMA) and alternative data source (SEE) was not feasible due to the COVID circumstances. Moreover, the learning outcome had observed a large degree of progress from baseline to midline served as evidence of the success of program activities as the performance against the target for the literacy outcome is 98.43% and the same for the numeracy is 220.49%.

Transition

- How and what transition pathway (beyond SEE) have the girls taken?

During the midline, the data around transition was inconclusive and needed further probing into the transition pathways beyond SEE. In regards to in-school girls, the letter grading system in schools entails that no students fail or are compulsorily required to repeat grades. The only instances where these might occur is if a student has not appeared on examination or if there is consent from the parents, students, and school to allow a student to repeat a grade if her/his grade is not satisfactory. For these reasons, the instances of repeat grades were nil during the midline in both control and treatment school. Hence, contrary to the assumption, during the midline, both the control and the treatment saw an increment in the transition rate, especially owing to the success in school progression. On the other hand, in regards to girls who had graduated from SEE, FDM had not collected any data. Given the disruption in project activities and the possible impact of the pandemic on the transition of girls; this outcome was measured by analyzing the records maintained by the project.

Sustainability

- To what extent has the project been able to leverage additional interest, investment, and policy changes and transfer ownership of its achievement and activities to local and provincial government?
- How replicable are the project activities for adoption in another similar context?

While the midline data had gauged sustainability at three levels: community, schools and the government, in the end-line it assessed the aspect of sustainability at two level only, that is, at the school and government level. During the end-line, focus was centered in assessing the transfer of ownership to local government and replicability of the project activities. Considering the fact that schools are highly dependent on local governments, the sustainability and replicability of the project activities might only be successful if local government takes ownership.

Intermediate outcome: Involvement in Decision Making

- What changes can be observed in terms of girls' involvement in the decision-making processes within the family in matters concerning them and their future?

As per the suggestion made during the midline evaluation, the intermediate outcome of increased self-esteem, this was measured in terms of increased involvement in decision making process in matters that directly affect the girls; such as their education and career. This will also aim to find out if there has been any changes in such practice since the implementation of the project activities.

Intermediate outcome: Community

- What change can be observed among community members and parents regarding their involvement in girls' education?
- What efforts have teachers made to support girls in their education and wellbeing during the Covid 19 pandemic?

Based on the findings from midline evaluation which showed the need within the community and among parents to engage in more productive roles regarding girl’s education, the question to see if there has been changes in how community and the parents involve themselves in girl’s education was developed. However, there are no questions related to improved teacher quality as the activities targeting this outcome had been severely hampered by the pandemic. some degree of this component was expected to be answered by the question regarding their better learning environment.

Intermediate outcome: Resilience

- If and how resilient were the treatment schools to the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What adaptive measures did the project employed as a response to the pandemic and what outcomes were observed as a result?
- If and how have treatment schools been able to provide services of child protection and gender-based violence to children within the community?

Since the challenges of the Covid -19 were encountered only during the end-line evaluation, resilience of the systems directly responsible for the girl’s education was measures through qualitative consultations, where the researchers were involved in KIIs and FGD with parents, headteachers and municipal officers.

2. Context, educational marginalization, and intersections, barriers, and characteristics

2.1. Characteristics

The table below presents the prevalence of barriers and characteristics of schoolgirls across various assessment criteria. The characteristics and barriers discussed in this report are those that were identified since the midline evaluation, in addition to the current barriers all based on the project’s theory of change.

TABLE 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE GIRLS

Ethnicity		
	Midline	Endline
Dalit (hill/Tarai)	21.7%	25.3 %
Hill Janajati	31.5%	33.0%
Madesh (middle class)	17.4%	11.5%
Muslim	2.1%	1.60%
Madhesh (Brahmin/Chhetri)	1.8%	1.30%
Hill (brahmin/Chhetri)	25.2%	27.3%

Source: Household Survey, Endline N= 549, Midline N= 800

The tables presented above reflect the characteristics of the in-school girls who were part of the end-line evaluation across all four districts. Ethnic representation of the girls is mostly static through the midline till end-line evaluation. Utmost sample girls were from Janajati (hills) community, followed by Brahmin/Chettri (hills), Dalits (hills/Tarai). The number of girls from the Madhesh community was also significant whereas the representation of girls from Brahmin/Chettri (Madhesh) and Muslim were low. The population size has slightly altered since the midline evaluation. However, it was the same sample group recontacted during the end-line evaluation too. The distribution of the sample across rural, peri-urban, and urban follows the same trend as in midline evaluation. Since the midline evaluation, the number of female-headed household had decreased from 42.1% to 36.8%, while the families with the primary

caregiver or household head who have lower educational competence slightly decreased from 45.9% to 42 %. The rate of early marriage reduced from 1.1% to 0.9% only. This is mostly due to self-initiated marriages are on rise contrary to the customary marriage conducted by parents. It can be argued that during the pandemic those girls who had access to smart phones spent much time on social media (Facebook and Tick Tok) increasing their likeliness to get acquainted with boys and influencing their decisions to get married.

TABLE 4: ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIRLS

Characteristics	Midline	Endline
Girls living without both parents	19.3%	4.4%
Female-Headed Household	42.1%	36.8%
Married	1.1%	0.9%
Primary caregiver/ head of household has not completed primary education	45.9%	42.0%
Girls with difficulty in seeing, even if wearing glasses	0.1%	1.3%
Girls with difficulty in hearing, even using a hearing aid	0.0%	0.6%
Girls with difficulty in walking or climbing steps	0.3%	0.2%
Girls with difficulty in remembering or concentrating	0.5%	0.9%
Girls with difficulty in self-care	0.1%	0.2%
Girls with difficulty in communication	4.5%	0.0%

Source: Girls' Survey, Endline N= 549, Midline N= 800

2.2. Barriers

In the case of barriers, the household level barriers considered are whether the girls get sufficient support from family to study at home and if the girls spend more than two hours in household chores. When the data from these categories are compared to that of midline assessment, it appears that the number of girls who get support from the family to study at home has increased whereas the burden of household chores for girls was on decreasing trend, which seems to have bounced up again since the pandemic. The impact of lockdown has had a severe toll on the learning engagement of the girls, among other things, substantiated by qualitative data in the report. Poverty was identified as one of the major barriers in the midline but omitted in the end-line quantitative data collection considering the economic turmoil created by the COVID-19 lockdown. Hence, the factor of poverty was also treated as static, further supported by qualitative data in the sections below.

TABLE 5: ANALYSIS OF HOUSEHOLD LEVEL BARRIERS

	Midline	End line
Girls don't get support from family VS Doesn't get support to stay in school and do well	3.6%	1.3%
Girls spend more than two hours in household chores	25.1%	33.7% (after covid) 23.2% (before covid)

Source: Girls' Survey Endline N= 549, Midline N=80

Likewise, in terms of the school-level barrier, issues related to the mode of discipline, respecting girls, discriminatory behaviour between boys and girls, and a sense of safety among girls are included. Though the practice of physical punishment and verbal admonition as a means of disciplining students is declining, it hasn't stopped entirely as evident from qualitative data. During the consultations with girls, when asked if the teachers still use physical punishment as a means of disciplining or rebuking them, girls joked about still getting some form of punishments if they don't finish homework or can't answer the questions asked in the class such as having to stand on the bench for the entire class or being humiliated in front of the entire school in the assembly next morning. Girls from comparison school specifically pointed out such practice which was still prevalent at their school. In terms of quantitative data, the rate of physically punishing students is still intact since the midline although verbal condemnation has decreased. There have been changes in teacher's perception towards girls too and are no longer disrespectful and discriminatory towards them.

Teachers' absence, another major barrier identified in the midline, was omitted in the end-line evaluation considering the massive project input in teacher's training. Teachers' regularity and their engagement with the students has become a major project achievement in the end-line as substantiated by the qualitative information in the report below.

TABLE 6: ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL-LEVEL BARRIERS

	Midline	End line
Teacher discipline or punish students if students get things wrong	84.6% (physical-26.0%, verbal 58.6%)	60.9% (Physical -26.5%) (verbal- 34.4%)
Girls who feel teachers did not treat them with respect	15.7%	4.3%
Girls who feel teachers treated boys and girls differently	13.5%	1.2%
Teachers are often absent	10.8%	4.1%
Girls who do not feel safe at school	3.6%	2.8%

Source: Girl's Survey, Endline N= 549, Midline N=800

2.3. The intersection between barriers and characteristics

This section presents an intersection between the key characteristics and barriers of in-school girls. Since girls performing more than two hours of household chores, the practice of corporal punishment and girls saying COVID-19 pandemic will affect their future aspiration came up as the three significant prevalent barriers from the quantitative data, only these barriers have been cross-tabulated with key characteristics. As far as characteristics are concerned, FDM has cross-tabulated the barrier with four different characteristics – ethnicity, location, nature of the household (male or female-headed), and education level of the primary caregiver. Other characteristics like marriage, disability, or girls living without parents have been omitted from the interaction as not many girls shared these characteristics.

TABLE 7: THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN KEY CHARACTERISTICS AND BARRIERS OF IN-SCHOOL GIRLS

Barriers	Characteristics			
	Ethnicity	Location	Primary caregiver not completed primary education	Female-headed household
Spend more than two hours in household chores After Covid	Dalit (hill/tarai) n=139 – 34.5% Hill Janajati n=181- 36.4% Madesh (middle class) n=63- 25.5% Muslim n=9- 55.6% Madhesh(Brahmin/Chhetri)n=7- 42.9% Hill (brahmin/Chhetri) n=150 – 31.4%	Rural (n=271): 38.8% Peri-Urban (254): 28.7% Urban n=24: 29.2%	(n = 180) 36.67%	(n=158) 32.3%
Believes COVID-19 has affected/ will affect future aspirations regarding education	Dalit (hill/tarai) n=138 – 66.7% Hill Janajati n=179- 73.2% Madesh (middle class) n=54- 48.1% Muslim n=8- 37.5% Madhesh(Brahmin/Chhetri)n=7- 42.9% Hill (brahmin/Chhetri) n=149 – 65.1%	Rural (n=266): 69.2% Peri-Urban (246): 63.8% Urban n=23: 47.8%	(n=179) 67.60%	(n=158) 66.5%
Teacher discipline or punish student (verbally or physically) if a student gets things wrong.	Dalit (hill/tarai) n=138 – 59.4% Hill Janajati n=179- 57.5% Madesh (middle class) n=54- 87.0% Muslim n=8- 75.0% Madhesh(Brahmin/Chhetri)n=7- 42.9% Hill (brahmin/Chhetri) n=149 – 57.0%	Rural (n=266): 62.4% Peri-Urban (246): 56.9% Urban n=23: 87.2%	(n=179) 62.6%	(n=158) 55.7%

Source: Household Survey

Analysis based on ethnicity

From the table above, it can be noted that across all the ethnicities, girls got sufficient support from the family to study at home, which varied slightly in the case of Brahmin/Chhetri from the Madhesh. Here, family support can duly be interpreted as parental awareness and engagement in their daughter's education and willingness to invest in girl's education contrary to existing social norms besides merely enrolling their daughters in school. Most parents from all four districts unanimously said during FGDs that they had created a conducive learning environment at home by allocating studying time and space for girls and reducing their engagement in household chores. The exceptional case includes parents from the Madhesh community in Parsa, who felt they did not need to take further responsibility for girls' education besides enrolling the girls in school. Also, during the consultations with parents, the researchers have cited parents stating that they will support girls to study only till grade 10. After that, the girls have to obey their parent's decision, which is most likely directed at the parent's decision of marrying off the girls.

Parental awareness and support from all family members, mostly siblings count in creating a favourable environment at home to study. Most of the girls in the Parsa district stated that their male siblings helped them with chores outside of the household, such as grazing animals, fetching water, and collecting fodders for cattle. Regardless of increased support for some girls, for most of the girls in the Madhesi community in Parsa, household chores like cooking and cleaning are mandatory before going to school and upon returning from school too. They can only go to school after finishing their share of household work. The situation in Dhading and Lamjung doesn't contrast significantly where the male siblings refrain from doing any forms of household chores whatsoever mostly due to two reasons: first, they consider the household chores as the sole responsibility of the women leading to increased burden among the female members of the household, and second, parental reluctance to engage them in household activities with a presumption that, as boys, they will refuse.

“Daughters are more sensitive towards the workload of mothers. Even when I refuse any form of help from her, because I know she has to study, she will go to the kitchen and prepare meals even before I go into the kitchen. As for the younger son, he will play football or toil around in the neighborhood with his friends and come home demanding food to be served” – A Mother, Dhading

Moreover, in the case of Surkhet, even though the male siblings do engage in outside activities like fetching water, shopping, they do not actively participate in chores inside the house. And, when it comes to the division of household, the burden was largely observed on mothers, as male members of the family hardly engage in activities like cooking, cleaning, washing, and care work among others. The existence of such a scenario across all the districts is a major threat to the sustainability of girl's reduced engagement in household chores despite increased parental awareness.

Parents demonstrated an awareness about their extended role in their daughter's education, outside of merely enrolling them in school. For instance, a parent in Surkhet said, while schools give formal education to the students, it is the job of parents to nurture their children with social and cultural values. Mothers in Lamjung were equally vocal about their responsibility as a parent to create an appropriate environment at home and to ensure that children have all the materials needed for school, such as pencil, exercise copy, uniform, exam fee among others.

“As a kid, when I requested my mother to send me to school, my parents said, “if daughters are sent to school, they will elope with a guy!” bringing disgrace to the family. Now, in community gatherings sometimes when asked to sign, I don't know how to that much also. I don't want the same for my daughter. I will do

the household chores all by myself, but send my daughters to school” -A mother, Dhading

Analysis based on the gender of household head

Support to girls is common where across female-headed households where the mother fully supports daughter’s education merely out of fear of them having to go through the same challenges of early marriage and burden of the household as they had on one hand and with the future aspirations of making daughters independent, on the other. This was common across all four districts.

“If my daughter studies well and later take up a proper job, she can buy whatever she wants with that money and don’t need to linger around agricultural fields and cattle. Unlike us, we have no skill hence our life revolves around the house, cattle, and agriculture only.” -A mother, Lamjung

The situation is still challenging in Parsa where parents of the Madhesi community still feel their responsibility towards girls’ education ends after enrolling them in school. But, to the researcher’s surprise, was a family which had risen above the customary practices of the Madhesi community that believed in marrying off daughters at an early age and curtailing her educational rights. The father showed unparalleled courage and support towards his daughter’s education:

“I am thinking of enrolling my daughter in the MBBS program since it is the desire of my family along with my daughter. Even my sons are working to support her in this path. But in our Madhesi community, people take investment in girl’s education quite negatively, which often saddens me. Therefore, to avoid all sorts of discouraging comments from the community, I shifted to live in the market area. Now, I don’t have to listen to any of those comments and my mind doesn’t get distracted.” – A Father, Parsa

Furthermore, positive interest was observed among all parents who participated in the interviews regarding their perception of girls’ education. except for a handful of parents from the Madhesi community, utmost parents appeared dedicated to investing in their daughters’ education as per their economic capability.

“How much we spend in the education of children is entirely dependent on the economic status of the family. However, we don’t discriminate the investment between sons and daughters. It is now a thing of past” – A Mother, Surkhet

Analysis based on location

Parent’s readiness to invest in girl’s education was observed across rural and urban settings alike. For instance, it was noted that in the rural setting of Pagma and Chepang of Surkhet, many parents were found to be sending their daughters to nearby market areas for higher studies after grade 10. The movement of girls for higher education was also noted in Lamjung where girls travelled for 45 minutes to an hour to reach high school. Conversely, the situation varied in Dhading where not many girls travelled longer distances for educational purposes, mostly due to the financial setback of the family. Though the willingness and determination of the parents to send girls for further studies were perceptible, financial shortness limited their desires. A mother, in Dhading, was on the brink of tears after she learned about the completion of the project and the withdrawal of all support for the little sisters. She stated that her family was in dire need of the project support to ensure that her daughter got through at least grade 10. The project team came across several such cases where parents have been unable to fund the higher education

of their daughters due to economic reasons. For example, a little sister in Chepang (Surkhet) stayed back home after grade 10 while most of her friends have already moved to town for higher studies. Her mother, who took part in the FGD with parents, made a rather discouraging remark, she said-

“I have three more daughters, who are all in school currently. If I send her (little sister) for further studies to Birendranagar (city area), my other children will have to drop out of school. I can only wait for her to get married now. There is nothing I can do.” - A mother, Surkhet

A similar situation was found across comparison schools of all districts where the number of parents who were ascertained about sending their daughters for higher education was immensely low. All in all, poverty, which was identified as a major barrier even in the midline stills remain intact. Though not so distinctly explored quantitatively, inferences could be made from the qualitative data that poverty is still a major underlying barrier for girl's education. Despite the aspirations, neither the girls nor their parents can escape the vicious circle of poverty. Besides, parents are more concerned about the added expense that would accompany girls once they move out of home for higher education including travel and accommodation costs since not all places have higher educational institutes in the neighbourhood.

Challenges of COVID-19

There are data on both the household level and school level barriers that substantiate the challenges girls encounter daily for proper educational attainment. However, during the end-line evaluation, an unseen challenge was encountered which was absent in: the challenges created by the COVID – 19 pandemic. The negative impact of the pandemic was uniformly seen across all ethnic groups alike. Even among those households which showed extensive support for girls' education at home (above section), it was found that the number of girls spending more than two hours in household chores post-Covid was markedly high. For instance, girls from the Janajati group (hills) which had the utmost support to study at home was also the group with the maximum number of girls engaged in household work after Covid. Similar circumstances were found across Dalit (hill/Tarai), Brahmin/Chhetri (hill), and Madesh community.

An absolute reason for such escalated engagement is the increased amount of time at home due to the closure of the school. Unavailability of sufficient learning materials at home also proved to be a more reasonable excuse to engage girls in household chores more rigorously. and insufficient learning materials for a few. Also, it was known through the number of girls that their mobility was limited within the household premise only during the entire lockdown period.

“I am so happy to come back to school because I get to rest from additional household chores while am at school” – Little sister, Lamjung

This conjecture can be validated from the qualitative data where girls participating in the FGD said that their share of workload increased substantially since the lockdown. When asked about their daily routine during the lockdown, several girls from Dhading and Lamjung said they shouldered the entire responsibility of the household that included cleaning, cooking, rearing cattle, fetching water. Normally, girls assisted mothers in household chores before and after school, but since the lockdown, they are no longer assisting. Rather, they are doing all the work themselves.

“Because I am a girl, I have to work when at home. So, I did the cleaning, cooking, grazing cattle, tilling in the fields each day. That left me exhausted and little time for studying.” – Little Sister, Dhading

Despite the increased workload during the lockdown period, situations varied among girls. The degree of workload varied between rural and urban areas whereas it was notably similar in the case of urban and peri-urban areas. Through the qualitative data, it was known that for few girls in the rural areas of Dhading and Lamjung, this time added workload, but for most girls in all four districts, who had access to tv, radio, and smart mobile phones, it was an added time for entertainment along with some household chores in the morning and evening. For instance, many girls from Parsa clearly stated that most of the time during Covid was spent watching tv or mobile besides regular household work of cooking from treatment and comparison schools alike. For the girls from slightly affluent families, the lockdown period was a leisure time for waking up late, exploring the internet, reading fictional books without having to worry about the household chores. As these girls had just been promoted to new grades and had new textbooks, motivation to do self-study was tarnished by the level of difficulty that came with advanced grade. Though lessons were given from radio and televisions alike, girls could not grasp the lesson well. Rather they preferred to spend time indulging in fictional studies than textbooks prescribed from school. Unlike those fortunate girls, little girls from the Madhesi community in Parsa or Dalit community from Dhading who didn't have access to any form of gadgets and limited mobility, the pandemic simply brought added work burden which they would have been able to escape while at school.

It is impressive to see how girls across all the districts preferred going to school over staying home, not just because of the increased load from household chores but because of their interest in studying. The girl expressed that they can learn from the teachers at school while enjoying the company of their friends, which are missing at home. The level of distraction is also lower at school, girls feel. Most of the little sisters accredited the project for arousing their interest in studies. Girls who took studying as a burden are now interested in learning since they have acknowledged education as a means of future change.

Analysis based on the educational competence of household head

The trend of girls engaging more in household work was found to be higher in the female-headed household along with those families whose household head was limited educational qualification themselves. Aligning with the conjecture that parents with limited education supported the education of girls at home, the same assumption can be implied here too. Those parents who had Big Sisters trailing behind for giving time and opportunity for girls to study were no longer obliged to do so during the closure of the school. On top of that, many children didn't have the textbooks for the new grade to which they had been promoted to. Under such circumstances, such parents often took advantage of the additional helping hand at home to get more work done. A similar presumption can be applied to the finding that female-headed households also had considerable numbers of girls being engaged in household works. There is no substantial qualitative evidence to support this notion except for the girls stating that they had increased workload at home during the pandemic time

However, these findings with parents with limited education and female-headed households engaging girls more during lockdown can be contradicted with the qualitative evidence. For instance, according to parents in Surkhet, throughout COVID-19, as the girls had already graduated from SEE, they did not have any compulsion to continue studying while at home, neither did they have any study materials relevant for further studies. With regards to the girls in lower grades, parents said that they encouraged their daughters to study most of the time.

“However, as the classes were not running, and there was no any online alternative to continue studies, it was very difficult for the children to continue learning.” – A mother, Surkhet

Similarly, mothers in Lamjung and Dhading specified that even though most of them were illiterate or had low educational skills, they had demonstrated a deep longing to educate their daughters despite the

hardship. The mothers were vocal about shouldering the household burden for the sake of their daughters. Even during the break, they had constantly urged the girls to study at least for few hours. Fearing the repetition of the same fate as their, mothers are especially concerned about girl's education.

“Hoping to see my daughter clear school properly, I do all the works at home. Even if I don't finish it today, I keep the work for tomorrow but tell my daughter to study. She did sit in front of books for a certain time each day, but I cannot tell whether she was studying or not since I do not recognize letters”- A mother, Dhading

Mothers often joked during the discussion that their mobility has been limited since the daughters have started studying seriously. Their social life, they claim has been disrupted since they cannot visit their maternal homes as frequently as they used to or even participate in rituals organized by their relatives since they have to be home at all times. Through project activities, parental awareness has been raised, they claim, which has resulted in parents being more sensitive towards girl's education.

“I haven't been able to leave home to go anywhere. I haven't even visited my old parents for quite some time because once I step out, my daughter has to do all the chores that I am doing right now. that will hamper her studies.”

The negative impact of Covid 19 was widespread, yet its severity was felt highly among the girls from the Janajati (hills) Dalit (hill/Tarai), and Brahmin/Chhetri community (hills) followed by the Madhesi community along with Brahmin/Chhetri of the Madhesh. Girls from these communities felt that Covid-19 has affected their future aspirations along with their current education. Severeness of the pandemic was varied as per the location: the highest impact was seen in the rural area and peri-urban area uniformly, whereas the impact moderately lower in the urban area. There is ample qualitative affirmation that verifies the negative impact on girl's education due to the pandemic.

All schools were temporarily shut down for almost four months where all forms of classes were suspended. Due to the fear of contracting the virus, parents maintained a strict restriction on children from leaving home. Teachers were also unable to reach out to children during that phase, as mentioned by headteachers during the discussion. Afterward, once the fear subsided by a certain degree, one of the treatment schools in Dhading started reaching students in the community via several clusters. The headteacher of that school claims that such pioneering initiative was first done by his school and later replicated by other schools including the municipality government. Nonetheless, the results were not as satisfactory as anticipated. The girls as well as the teachers reiterated the fact clustered gathering was for entertaining than educational since children from various grades were gathered in a place. In Dhading, girls from grade 9 stated that while they informally met during lockdown with teachers, they used that time for revision that learning something new or starting a new topic. The modality of operating classes in the cluster was replicated in Dhading and Lamjung alike under the influence of municipality but not in Surkhet and Parsa, where girls stayed home during the lockdown and relied on radio or tv for additional learning.

“I stayed with my daughter while she took classes through tv, but it was unclear. I thought it was unclear. My daughter couldn't benefit much studying from tv either.” A mother, Dhading

Teaching students through radio and television was widely accepted across all four districts. However, several obstacles were encountered when an alternative medium was adopted for teaching. For example, the quality of the material disseminated through these mediums was not satisfactory enough for neither students nor parents. Also, because not all girls had complete access, alternatives of online learning want' effect in most locations as most of them did not have their smartphones or tablet devices. Apart from

that, erratic internet connection and expensive mobile data internet were among the major barriers to switching to online learning.

“During the lockdown, while the school classes were not running, there was no alternative medium to continue studies, it was very difficult for the children to continue learning.” – A father, Surkhet

Besides, conducting classes in the community, the municipality of the Lamjung initiated to distribute a handbook for children till grade 7 to make the optimum use of the time at home. When the team inquired if students from other districts also had access to such workbooks, it was known that other than Lamjung, girls from Surkhet and Parsa did not get any handbook from either government or any institutions. Moreover, students from all districts stated that they had not received any form of support from any other institutions during the lockdown, where a couple of schools in Dhading and Lamjung stated that they received support for the local youth club to reopen the school after temporary shut down of schools.

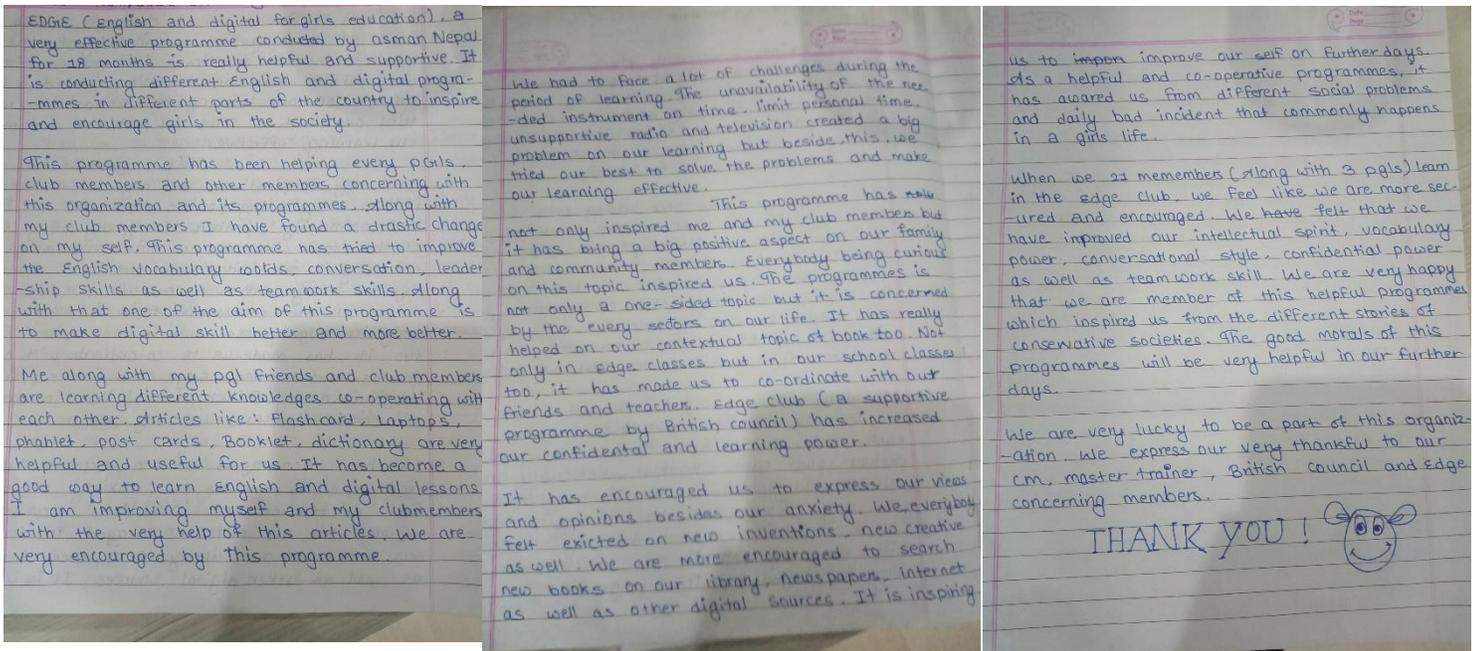
Another major setback caused by the Covid-19 pandemic for the girls is the end of learning support classes. Once the learning support classes were withdrawn, girls were bereft from the opportunity to learn in a more child-centric approach where teachers taught from the basic without having to worry about rushing to complete designed lesson plans; opposite to regular classes at school. Even from the discussion with teachers, it was learned children had tremendously benefited from the learning support class and were eager to come to class.

“Students who weren’t eager to learn and considered themselves as weak students who were prone to dropping out became enthusiastic after coming to learning-centered classes. With the conceptual clarity through these classes, their confidence, as well as self-esteem, was boosted.” – A teacher, Dhading

Termination of the EDGE club due to the pandemic led to another impediment in the girls’ education and their future aspirations. During the conversation with girls, utmost girls aspired to be staff nurses, teachers, and army. This was consistent across all districts. The girls were able to identify the relationship between the lesson from the EDGE club their future aspirations. After the suspension of the club, the girls were rather worried that they will no longer be able to practice English skills and digital skills- both of which are essential for their future. Little sisters, who were also Edge members, were disheartened by the closure of Edge class to an extent that they valued the intangible support through Edge class more than the tangible support received through the SfS project.

“Even if I become a nurse, I have to study all English books. I need to use the laptop to look for things I don’t understand. After working, I have to write about patients in English and make records on the laptop.”- Edge member, Lamjung

The alternative medium of teaching and learning was adopted in the Edge class too, through the local radio programs, but it only addressed the English section of learning through PGLs. Even though the PGLs make the effort to circulate the information, the effectiveness of the activity is still questionable. Essentially, girls miss the opportunity to practice using laptops and tablets.



In-school girl expression her appreciation of the EDGE Club

Moreover, quantitative data point towards the severeness of impact of Covid being higher among the female-headed household and families where the educational competence of the parent is lower than the primary grade. These data alone are imprecise and that the assumptions can yet again be associated with the economic status of the family rather than these characteristics solely. Due to economic reasons, the girls were unable to access the additional learning source, such as tv, internet, radio, and smartphones.

Despite economic hardship, parents are making effort to meet the needs of the children. For example, a mother in Dhading, whose husband was a migrant labourer in India, shared about selling her chicken to buy radio so that her children would not miss the educational programs aired through radio. In a congenial community, children from the neighbourhood often moved from one house to another to watch tv or listen to radio programs when they don't have the device at their disposal.

At school, there are still instances where teachers use various disciplining means or punishment on students for getting things wrong. . During the midline, the total number of students getting punished was 84.6% which has remarkably decreased to 60.9% in the end-line. The summative figures show a relative decrease in the rate of punishment given to children since the midline. However, the segregated data show otherwise: while the rate of physical punishment given to the children during the midline and end-line remained the same, a significant reduction was noted in the rates of verbally punishing children. . Such change can be attributed to several pieces of training given by the project that focused on child-centered learning including creating a child-friendly learning environment along. Among the students, girls from the Janajati (hills), Dalit (hill/Tarai) Brahmin/Chhetri reported receiving either form of punishment from teachers the most.

Analysis based on location

In terms of the location of the school, quantitative data showed that more schools in urban still practice physically (and verbally) punishing children than in peri-urban and rural areas. Still, the rate of punishment in the latter places is also considerably high as evident from the comparison school, where the teacher stated that to discipline students, punishment is mandatory. He boasts that despite being a community school, its performance is on par with private schools. Since the urban school bear unseen pressure produces better results than other contemporary schools, they adopt harsh methods to make students study. However, a girl from the same school, shared with the research team, that the science teacher still makes students stand on the bench for the entire class if they fail to answer the question asked during class and hits with a stick if they turn up without completing the assignment. All the girls participating in the group discussion expressed fear of the teacher in particular. Also, the researchers witnessed a teacher walking into the classroom with a pipe in a treatment school!

A complaint response mechanism (CRM) has been instituted in all project schools under the direct support of the Sfs project as a means of assuring the child protection system at school. During the discussion with the headteacher regarding the child protection mechanism at school, all teachers unanimously pointed towards the presence of complaint boxes in their schools as evidence of upholding child protection at school. In the initial phase of the project, the CRM was not functioning effectively since the students were not sharing their grievances through the complaint box. Students were still to use complaint box to register grudges about safeguarding threats such as bullying and abuse, as they are not fully confident about their anonymity since all teachers recognize students individually and it is close to impossible to maintain confidentiality even though students don't disclose their identity in the complaints that they submit this scepticism among students was mostly because, in most schools, the complaint box was placed at the closest proximity of the staff room. As per the SIP checklist developed by the project, the CRM box should be placed inside a room that is not near to any faculty or administration office and is placed at an estimated height of 3.5 and 4 feet, labelled as a complaint box.

A headteacher in Surkhet stated that children mostly complain about defunct classroom accessories like fans, old desks and benches, and the use of corporal punishment to discipline students- a trend common across schools in all four districts. Only one school in Parsa reported receiving complaints regarding gender-based violence and harassment in the complaint box.

“Our English teacher shares with us the importance of love and compassion in the class. However, he punishes the students for every small mistake made”- Complaint Box, Surkhet

CRM can be viewed as a deterrent to violence: parents and students refrain from any form of violence as they fear that it might be reported through the complaint boxes. Nonetheless, it is surprising to learn that all CRM has been inert since the schools resumed after the pandemic break as the priority of teachers and students has been changed.

Substantial reduction in the rate of verbally rebuking children has been noted in the end-line evaluation when compared with the midline. This can be attributed to the cascade of training the teachers received focusing on child-centered learning. Teachers have personally felt the difference in practice since participating in the training organized by Sfs. For instance, the focal teacher of a school in Dhading, who also a math teacher shared with the researcher that since the training, she has started using more respectable language towards students, is attentive to maintaining the child dignity even when pointing out the errors and believes in counselling rather than using physical force as a means of discipline. Similarly, a math teacher, also in Dhading, recalls himself as someone who used a lot of physical punishment to discipline children, especially math is considered to be a challenging subject. After training with Sfs, he

internalized the things taught and reflected on his methods of teaching. Since then, he no longer uses physical means of punishment and the students are no longer to ask about him.

These two examples are just a minor representation of how a teacher transformed to a more appropriate measure of disciplining rather than harsh means. Even with the project intervention, not teachers have been able to internalize and change as the teachers mentioned above have.

Quantitative indication of higher use of physical punishment (or verbal) is significantly high in families with parents with low educational competence. Even though there is no qualitative information to substantiate, it may be presumed as the ignorance on part of parents to adopt a more child-friendly means of dealing with children. Nonetheless, through the qualitative data, it was learned that domestic violence, mostly after indulging in alcohol was still rampant in rural areas, mostly among the Janajati and Dalit communities. All teachers interviewed in Dhading and Lamjung have verified that such social ill exists in the community though the number may have resided in some places. Girls in Parsa and Surkhet also admitted to the existence of such practices in their community.

A teacher in Dhading, reiterated that almost every evening he hears his neighbour (Dalit family) quarrel once either or both parents get drunk. It can be assumed that the children internalize such acts and normalize them too. Hence, as per the quantitative data, the fact that children get physically punished more at home than at school has never been an issue. Similarly, scores indicate that children are more physically punished in female-headed households, though it is not statistically significant. There are no qualitative data to verify the figures, but what can be assumed is that since females bear the entire responsibility, they are physically, emotionally, and mentally stressed that they adopt the easiest and fastest means of disciplining the child. Both parents and children are accustomed to physical and verbal punishment. However, this is in contradiction to the project activity that aims to increase parental awareness of child rights.

2.4. Appropriateness of project activities to the key barriers and characteristics

To mitigate the identified barriers to the education of the girls and their ability for a successful transition, the project had conducted multiple community and school-level activities. At the household level, girls' excessive engagement in household activities, as well as inadequate familial support, emerged as a major setback during the end-line for achieving girls' education.

To overcome this barrier, since the midline, the project had identified 1200 extremely marginalized girls, who were designated as little sisters and made direct beneficiaries of the project. These little sisters received the additional intervention, including mentorship from Big sisters, and received in-kind support such as stationery items, sanitation kits, uniforms. Likewise, stakeholders from the community and school ascribed these changes to the engagement of change agents of the project, that is, most big sisters, adult champions, and teachers' champions with community members through community dialogues. In addition to that, project activities like interactive theatres and awareness campaigns against child marriage, personal hygiene, and gender-based violence were found to effectively deliver the message to the community and further enlighten them regarding these issues.

Furthermore, Big Sisters worked in close collaboration with the school in raising awareness on the importance of girls' education among parents, besides mentoring the little sisters. As a change agent, Big Sisters regularly engaged with parents through the period program and regular visits to the homes of the little sisters. Big sisters, with the community, ensured that no girl child was left outside of school. As a result of constant intervention from the Big Sisters and Teacher Champions, there is evidence of increased familial support for the girls to study.

“I found door-to-door campaign of Big sisters the most effective one among others, as it is not a one-off activity. A dedicated Big sister visiting our house regularly and talking with family members about the education and future of our daughter has made me more serious and committed towards the future of my daughter” – A mother, Surkhet

As evident from both qualitative and quantitative data, there has been a substantial change in the level of support family provides for girls to study. Even during the FGD with the in-school girls, they stated that they had been receiving more support from parents and siblings alike at home for them to attend school and perform well too. There have been instances where the male siblings have started shouldering the household chores responsibilities like fetching water, shopping, gather fodder, or feeding the cattle as well as assisting in their female sibling's education too. However, this is not consistent across all districts. Parental engagement in their daughter's education was also found escalating in a manner that parental realization extended beyond merely enrolling their daughters at school.

“Besides just enrolling daughters in school, we also need to understand what is going on in the school. We need to discuss with the teachers whether our daughter is progressing or not. If we take an interest in our daughter's education, her future, and her desires, she will be motivated to study. Otherwise, she will be demotivated.”- A Father, Parsa

All these relevant pieces of evidence are indicative of the success of the project to an extent, where parental awareness was raised to a substantial level that allowed time and space for girls to study and community engagement in assuring girls' education was heightened, beyond customary norms which still bind societies. Nonetheless, there are ample spaces for the project to engage more with the community to empower them as promoters of girls' education.

At the school level, project intervention was directed towards promoting gender-responsive management and teaching, ensuring child protection, and capacitating teachers to adopt learner-centered teaching. Among the cascades of project input, the Learner support classroom was one activity that benefited many individuals. Apart from the teacher's training or the infrastructural support from the project, operating the LSC was the most commendable activity that was equally appreciated by students and teachers alike. Except for the fact that the class size was limited, the overall modality of the class was lauded.

“Students were very excited to come to the LSC since there they were taught from the basic concept. And once the student grasps the basic concept, confidence is boosted in that individual to study further no matter how weak that student was in regular classes. Teachers could also concentrate on delivering knowledge and seeking ways to make students understand without having to worry about curriculum pressure.” Teacher, Dhading

In regards to the practice of physically punishing students, probably the biggest challenge encountered by the project besides the humongous burden of household chores for girls, the project has a multi-dimensional approach that includes teachers' training on child protection and safeguarding and on making classroom more learners centered. Similarly, strengthening the SMC and PTA to ensure that the school has child protection policies as well as to ensure that the school has set up child protection and referral mechanism along with setting up of code of conduct for teachers and students.

It is important to note that while the rate of physically punishing children has not exceptionally decreased, profound changes can be noted in verbal admonishment through both quantitative and qualitative data.

During the KII with the headteachers and focal teachers, it was known that besides exceptional cases, teachers no longer use physical punishment as a means of discipline. Rather, they adopted a counselling approach to understanding the underlying cause behind the deviant behaviour of the child or the reason behind the failure to produce the assigned task. Teachers are now using more respectable language towards students; this can be acclaimed as another breakthrough of the project since teachers have become sensitive towards the dignity of the student and attempt to uphold that too.

Also, as a result of extensive teachers' training and a vigilant school management committee, the regularity of the teacher has improved since the midline: yet another accomplishment of the project. Teachers are motivated to conduct alternate classes in absence of the subject-related teacher, as evident through qualitative data. Also, since more training are conducted at the local level, teachers have ample of opportunity to learn hence grow their professional skill.

The activities that are undertaken by the project at intervention schools and communities have indeed addressed a myriad of problems, with varying degrees of effectiveness. The inability of the project to address the assumptions and stated barriers in ToC concerning lack of financial/business literacy of girls, which was found to be essential for a successful transition of girls remains intact.

And finally, a major unseen barrier during the end line was the COVID-19 pandemic. As evident in both quantitative and qualitative data, the majority of the girls, little sisters in specific stated that they have been affected by COVID-19 mostly in terms of accessing learning items and opportunities, and increased workload at home. As the situation was completely unforeseen, and beyond planned project activities, there was very little the project could do to support the girls during that period. Nevertheless, the end-line evaluation found evidence where the project had supported the girls/school at times of pandemic with COVID-19 safety kit like a mask, sanitize as a primary response. Besides that, a radio program was conducted under the module of EDGE classes that assisted continuous learning for girls. In addition, radio lessons on Maths, Science and English were also developed and broadcasted by the project in close coordination with Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) to address the learning needs during COVID-19. The girls FDM interacted with highlighted that the radio program kept them engaged in a learning activity to the least during the lockdown. (further elaborated in the report below). In addition to the tangible assistance by the project during the lockdown, this period also tested the resiliency of the community to handle an unforeseen situation.

2.5. Value for money (VfM)

The Value for Money (VfM) has been assessed five of the project's significant interventions: the mentoring support, the EDGE club, LSCs and Teacher training.

Effectiveness and efficiency

In terms of effectiveness and efficiency, the greatest Value for Money was achieved by the mentoring support. The endline evaluation showed that the mentoring support had the biggest impact on improving the learning as well as the confidence of the Little Sisters. Both parents and girls themselves stated that the mentoring support was one of the most significant intervention for them from the project. In this regard, the greatest value for money was demonstrated by the mentoring support the girls received. However, the relatively high cost of the activity for the four-year duration of the project showed relatively low reach of mentoring and lower work load among the Big Sisters. Therefore, as per the cost effectiveness, it is the least effective component. This was followed by the Learning Support Classes. Some of the common examples of learning improvement highlighted by the girls included, 'examination score', 'increased interest to learn', 'classroom participation, and 'comprehension of the lesson'. For this, utmost

girls attributed the change to the increased level of confidence to make inquiries with the teachers and as well as being free of the burden of judgment in the learning support classes operated by the project. Hence the learning support classes demonstrated good value for money as well. In regards to efficiency, no major issue was found and both the interventions had been implemented efficiently without any unnecessary wastage of resources.

Another aspect that demonstrated some good value for money in terms of effectiveness and efficiency was the EDGE clubs. The EDGE clubs had provided with the girls an unprecedented opportunity to be acquainted with digital skills. Most of the target beneficiary girls had never had the opportunity to access computers at school neither had they had the opportunity to learn English in an interactive environment such as the EDGE clubs. Moreover, girls mainly attributed their achievements made in the learning outcome to the support received from the learning support classes and the EDGE club simultaneously, both of which have boosted their confidence. In this context, the support provided by the EDGE clubs was definitely good VfM for the project.

The teacher training aspect of the project was relatively successful in introducing new teaching -learning method with increased empathy and fewer cases of corporal punishment, although teachers did express their concern over the feasibility to adopt child friendly teaching methodology in the classrooms. the project's intervention in this regard produced relatively less value for money in regards to the other interventions. It is important to note that this component was slightly conceded by prolonged school closure amid the pandemic where the VSO volunteers had to leave before the completion of the trainings. On a larger part, the lack of effectiveness can be partly attributed to the factors that were beyond the project control, that is, COVID but also largely to inefficient processes and program management. Such as, the training designed were centered on residential events rather than continuous mentoring.

Another intervention of the project on parental awareness activities targeting the parents had mixed results in terms of behavioral changes and effectiveness . Similarly, from the qualitative consultations it could be deduced that even though the parental attitude towards girl's education had positively changed, their engagement in making inquiries, visiting schools to inquire about the progress of the child is still rare and among those parents who were doing it, they were mostly mothers.

Relevance

In regards to relevance, the interventions that showed the highest level of VfM were the mentoring support, the LSCs and the EDGE clubs. Since the mentoring support targeted the most marginalized girls who were in dire need of educational support, it was highly relevant. The mentoring support had consequently helped improve the LSs' learning capability as well as their confidence. The LSCs were also highly relevant as students in Nepal are often found to be lacking in English, Maths, Science, and Nepali – subjects which were focused on in the LSCs. While some do take extra tuition classes, not all of them have the privilege and hence the project's support in the form of LSCs was deemed to be highly relevant. LSCs, like the mentoring support, were one of the two interventions which had helped improve the learning amongst the girls. Both these interventions, thus, demonstrated a high value for money for the investment made by the project.

In terms of relevance, another intervention that had the highest Vfm was the EDGE component. Despite having computer classes in schools, public school students almost in all cases, do not have access to computers and do not have idea on how to operate it. Moreover, their English classes do not impart education in an interactive environment as a result of which many students in Nepal fail in English subject in the SEE. In this context, the project providing EDGE classes was of big help to the girls. Many of the girls FDM interacted with said that they were highly appreciative of the EDGE clubs for having provided them with an opportunity to touch computers for the first time. The girls felt confident after learning to

use computers and even in classrooms, their confidence in the English classes had greatly increased. As a result, the EDGE clubs can be deemed as good VfM.

The parental awareness activities can also be said to have good VfM. As shown by the endline evaluation, parental awareness activities have resulted in outcomes such as improved attitude, lesser household chores for daughter and greater engagement in daughters' education. This was not the case earlier, especially during the baseline, where it has been pointed out that despite parents enrolling their daughters to school, their engagement in their daughters' education was very low. Although during COVID lockdown, the burden of household chores has slightly increased on the girls, the burden has decreased during school going days for the girls which is a good improvement. As a result, the project seems to have demonstrated good VfM in regards to its intervention targeting parental awareness.

In terms of relevance, the intervention targeting teachers' skills was found to have the lowest VfM owing to the content, modality and teacher's limited capacity to absorb it. While the intervention in itself was commendable, in Nepal's context, where teachers are burdened with finishing the course on time within limited class hours, use of interactive teaching techniques appears unfeasible, as stated by stakeholders within the study. Although orientation on child friendly teaching methodology is definitely relevant in Nepal's context, where corporal punishment still exists, there is a question over how relevant the teacher training is in relation to 'interactive teaching techniques' which consequently also puts a question over its VfM. Also, dependency on relatively expensive consultants and one-off training events for a limited number of participants rather than implementing proposed continued professional development approach also reduced the relevance of teachers' training.

Sustainability

Despite several factors supporting sustainability of the project, such as the material from the EDGE clubs being uploaded onto Government systems, the overall project has missed to deliver much in terms of sustainability when assessed through continued funding, replication or scale up of project activities within the government.

In regards to sustainability, the mentoring support demonstrated the best value for money. There have been positive developments in terms of current drive through the SfS Network, to achieve government acceptance and replication of the SfS mentoring model. Considering the investment, which were of fixed nature; training and capacity building, replicating mentorship in the future would be significantly lower as training and capacity building need not be repeated. Nevertheless, even in future remuneration for the Big Sisters would still be an important component. Reassuringly, the Big Sisters stated during the qualitative consultation that they would be happy to continue with their roles even when provided with minimum form of remuneration.

Moreover, another component that demonstrated limited VfM in regards to sustainability was the interventions targeting parental awareness. Parents' increased awareness was likely to continue even in the future as they had not realized the importance of educating their daughters and engaging in their education.

However, there were questions around the VfM of the other three major interventions. To begin with, the EDGE component showed the least VfM. Since the schools said that they would be unable to provide additional computers or learning materials in view of the limited resources they had, it was not clear how the girls in the EDGE clubs could increase their access to laptops and phablets. The provision of two tablets and laptops are clearly not enough for the students. Even the local governments were not likely to be supportive on this front. Thus, in the lack of support for additional gadgets, there were chances that not all girls would have the opportunity to learn properly in the EDGE clubs. Thus, despite having very effective outcome, the EDGE component showed a low VfM. Another intervention that showed low VfM in regards to sustainability was the LSC. Since the LSC require remunerating the teachers who facilitate

these LSCs, it was not clear how the schools or the local governments would remunerate these teachers. Most of the local governments and schools are already reeling under the pressure of low resources and in this light, it is unlikely for them to continue the intervention.

Value for money for the entire project activities can be aptly summarized in the table below:

TABLE 8 : VFM FOR SFS E-II ACTIVITIES

	Effectiveness and efficiency	Relevance	Sustainability
Mentoring support	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>
LSCs	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
Teacher training	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>
Parental awareness	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>
EDGE clubs	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>

3. Key Outcome Findings

3.1. Learning Outcome

The end-line evaluation of learning outcomes deviates from the literacy and numeracy scores analysis model as in the previous evaluation since the assessment of the SeGRA⁷ and SeGMA⁸ was completely omitted in the phase of evaluation. This is primarily because administering the standard learning assessment tool (SeGRA/SeGMA) and alternative data sources from the Secondary Education Examination (SEE⁹) which marks the completion of grade 10 in Nepal was not feasible due to the current COVID circumstances. However, the learning outcome had already observed a large degree of progress in the midline evaluation; the project achieved the literacy target by 98.43% and numeracy target by 220.49%. The DiD between treatment and control groups and across baseline and midline evaluation was 18.15 percentage points for numeracy and 7.17 percentage points for literacy, both of which are statistically significant achievements accomplished through two years of project intervention. This factor also contributed to the FDM not administering the learning tests, in agreement with the implementing partner and fund manager.

TABLE 9: BASELINE-MIDLINE COMPARISON OF SEGRA SCORE, DISAGGREGATED BY GRADE

Grade	Baseline literacy treatment (n=702)	Midline literacy treatment	Difference baseline to the midline	Baseline literacy control	Midline literacy control	Difference baseline to the midline	The difference in difference (treatment – control difference)
Grade 6 (Tn=277) (Cn=166)	5.81 (29.09%)	6.81 (34.06%)	1* (5%)	6.60 (33.01%)	6.51 (32.59%)	-0.09 (-0.42%)	1.09 (5.45%)
Grade 7 (Tn=208) (Cn=92)	6.49 (32.45%)	8.27 (41.37%)	1.78* (8.90%)	7.82 (39.13%)	8.56 (42.82%)	0.74 (3.70%)	1.04 (5.20%)
Grade 8 (Tn=117) (Cn=94)	7.70 (38.54%)	9.95 (49.78%)	2.25* (11.25%)	8.45 (42.28%)	9.64 (48.24%)	1.19* (5.96%)	1.06 (5.3%)
Grade 9 (Tn=87) (Cn=37)	8.50 (42.52%)	9.58 (47.93%)	1.08* (5.40%)	9.75 (48.78%)	10.59 (52.97%)	0.834 (4.19%)	0.246 (1.23%)
Overall (Tn=702) (Cn=400)	6.705 (33.41%)	8.14 (40.71%)	1.43* (7.17%)	7.67 (38.35%)	8.12 (40.63%)	0.453* (2.27%)	0.977 (4.88%)

⁷ SeGRA is a literacy test for secondary grades students. It primarily tests reading and comprehension skills among the students. The SeGRA test is divided into three subtasks and the maximum score a student could obtain was 20 points.

⁸ SeGMA is a test of numeracy of second grade students. It primarily tests the ability of the secondary-grade students in solving mathematical problems based around arithmetic, algebra and word problem. A SeGMA test usually consists of three subsets and a maximum score of 25.

⁹ SEE exams in Nepal are the national level examination of more than 300 thousand students every year. This government board examination has become an important part of life of a student as it determines students' educational career path. SEE (previously known as SLC – School Leaving Certificate Exams) is conducted every year by the Office of Controller of Examinations (OCE) under the Ministry of Education. It is the final examination in the secondary school system of Nepal. The first secondary grade board exams were held in 1934. Details about SEE here -- <https://www.see.gov.np>

TABLE 10: AVERAGE SEGMA SCORE OF INTERVENTION AND CONTROL SEGREGATED BY GRADE

Cohort	Baseline numeracy treatment	Midline numeracy treatment	Difference baseline to the midline	Baseline numeracy control	Midline numeracy control	Difference baseline to the midline	The difference in difference (treatment – control difference)
Grade 6 (Tn=273) (Cn=166)	3.52 (17.61%)	6.68 (33.42%)	3.16* (15.80%)	5.38 (26.89%)	6.15 (30.75%)	0.77* (3.85%)	2.39
Grade 7 (Tn=206) (Cn=92)	4.26 (21.31%)	8.98 (44.90%)	4.72* (23.60%)	5.91 (29.56%)	8.11 (40.590%)	2.2* (11.00%)	2.52
Grade 8 (Tn=117) (Cn=93)	6.99 (34.95%)	9.73 (48.67%)	2.74* (13.70%)	7.59 (37.95%)	9.16 (45.80%)	1.57* (7.85%)	1.17
Grade 9 (Tn=87) (Cn=37)	7.18 (35.91%)	10.77 (53.85%)	3.59* (17.95%)	8.91 (44.59%)	9.67 (48.37%)	0.76 (3.80%)	2.83
Overall (Tn=696) (Cn=399)	4.83 (24.14%)	8.48 (42.42%)	3.63* (18.15%)	6.43 (32.15%)	7.71 (38.55%)	1.28 (6.4%)	2.35
* statistically significant average difference in baseline score and midline score							

Source: Sfs E-II Midline Report, 2019

In addition to that, by the end-line evaluation, the primary project beneficiaries, that is, the Little Sisters included in the baseline had graduated from their schools before this evaluation. This group of girls had prolonged exposure to the intervention, extended mostly due to pandemic reasons. Therefore, rather than limiting the assessment to two strict categories of learning, and overall learning achievement among the girls was analysed in the end-line that strongly resonates with the project goal of holistic improvement among girls. The assessment was rather focused on the general performance along with other project interventions like family support, additional classes, improved school environment, additional support from teachers, and change in pedagogy. In terms of SEE scores, since the examination was omitted due to the prolonged impact of COVID-19, the grades for the girls were given by their respective schools based on their internal exam scores and other learning performances. In addition, not all schools were able to share the SEE records of 2019 and 2020 with the external evaluators to make any analysis on the progress girls made over this period of time.

Based on the mutual agreement between the external evaluator (FDM) and the Project team as well as the financial benefactors, the focus of the evaluation was switched from judging subjective outcomes to rather assessing the positives changes in perception of girls regarding their learning performances since the midline. As mentioned before, since we already know from the previous evaluation results that the project interventions have successfully improved girl's literacy and numeracy skills. Hence, the end-line appraisal is mostly oriented towards assessing if the project intervention has been able to generate positive perceptions in learning among girls.

It is important to note that assessing girl’s perceptions in learning was introduced only in the end-line, thus, no previous quantitative data are available in all sections for comparison the end-line data. Nonetheless, the tools for qualitative data collection were designed in a manner that girls can incorporate the retrospective view of the girls in the past two years.

3.1.1. Performance against indicator

Indicator: Percentages of girls who have demonstrated positive changes and their perception about learning since midline

Table 10 below shows the percentage of girls who have demonstrated positive changes towards learning performance since the midline. The degree of improvement among the girls was assessed on a scale ranging from slight improvement to high-level improvement as demonstrated in the table above.

TABLE 11: PERCEPTION OF IMPROVEMENT IN LEARNING PERFORMANCE SINCE MIDLINE

Witnessed improvement	78.7%
Not witnessed improvement	4.7%
No response	1.1%
Don’t know	15.5%
N= 535	100%

Source: Girls’ Survey

TABLE 12: DEGREE OF IMPROVEMENT

Degree of Improvement	Valid %(n=421)
Slight improvement	67.5%
Good improvement	30.4%
High improvement	1.2%
Can’t say/ no response	0.2%
Don’t know	0.7%

Source: Girls’ Survey

Table 10 further supplements the information in Table 9 with the degree of improvement seen among the 78.7% of girls who had witnessed improvement. The areas of improvement perceived in this assessment include ‘examination score’, ‘classroom participation’, ‘comprehension of the lesson’, and ‘increased interest to learn’ where girls felt the most changes.

“Earlier, I wasn’t interested in studying. But now, I like studying so try to spend more time studying even at home”– Little Sister, Lamjung

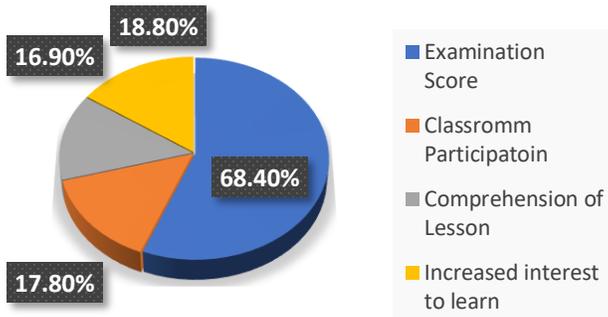


FIGURE I: AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Source: Girl’s survey

of the classroom in a comfortable manner and without fear of being judged.

Thus, concerning the above finding, it can be deduced that the girl’s perception of their learning performance is closely associated with the level of confidence to make inquires with the teacher and as well as being free from the burden of judgment, which often happened during regular classes. For the girls, the learning support classes were a haven that did not simply provide extra input in terms of learning opportunities, but also crucial support that prevented multiple girls from dropping out of school. It revived the enthusiasm among children to study instilling courage and self-esteem to overcome the challenges of studying.

During both quantitative and qualitative inquiry, girls attributed their perceived improvement in learning to the girl’s engagement in learning support classes, provided by the project the most followed by increased parental support. Other factors contributing to the perceived changes in the girls also include improved school environment and changes in pedagogy. The project operated learning support class exclusively for the weakest students in the class, the Little Sisters had ample opportunity to re-learn the lesson from the basics repeatedly without having to worry about being discriminated against. That has resulted in a better understanding of the lesson among girls. Also, parents and girls were vocal about the increased family support for girl’s education. Besides that, an improved school environment, that is, the school becoming more child-friendly and the added benefit of an abundance of learner-centered training for the teacher, girls were able to make queries in and out

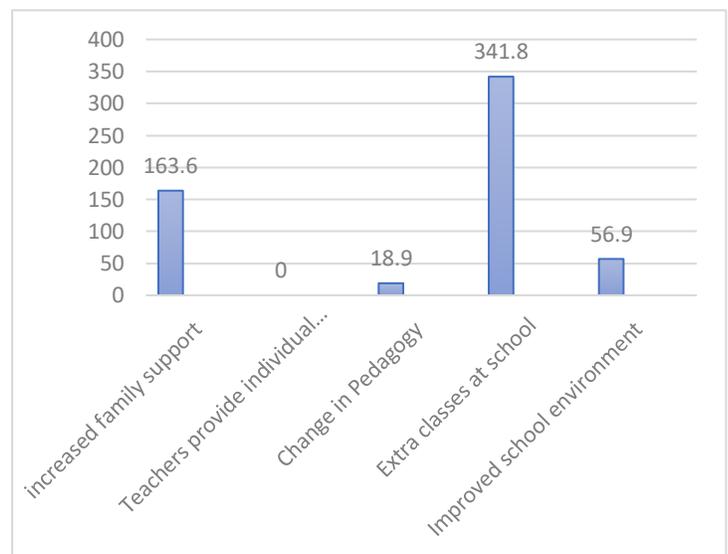


FIGURE 2: REASONS BEHIND PERCEIVED IMPROVEMENT AMONG GIRLS

Source: Girl’s Survey

“When students fail in class, they often feel ashamed to return to school. Rather than facing the situation courageously, they prefer to drop out.” – Head Teacher, Dhading

These support classes were run simultaneously with the tuition classes for grades 9 and 10 conducted by the school. Similar patterns of operating tuition classes were also found in control schools across all four districts as a SEE preparatory class. However, such classes were only good as the regular classes, in terms of duration and pedagogy. Rather, such tuition classes¹⁰ were an added financial burden to most parents. Due to the financial setback of the family, girls were found missing from those tuition classes.

“It will cost Rs.3000 for the tuition class which my parents think is expensive and cannot afford to give it to me each month. That’s why I am not going to the tuition classes even though I am aware that my classmates have already studied so much.” – Little Sister, Dhading

Besides the additional learning support classes at school, girls also attributed the improvement in learning performance to the increased family support, or rather, decreased engagement in household chores. Recollecting their parental awareness regarding girls’ education in the past two years, girls show that parental realization has much improved giving them a considerate amount of time and space to study even at home. Especially among the parents whose girls recently cleared the SEE or are on the verge of appearing for one, parents appeared particularly supportive since the exam is perceived as a major obstacle, colloquially referred to as ‘iron gate’ in the Nepalese context. Clearing the exam is not only essential for a successful transition for the girls, but also a matter of social prestige among the parents. This find also resonates with the finding from midline where girls are seen spending increasingly less time in household chores and more time for studying at the cost of increased responsibility in part of mother’s share.

“My daughter was support to appear SEE exams last year. She has been preparing very hard for that. However, due to the Covid-19, students graduated without having to take the exams. After that, it’s been almost a year, I have not seen my daughter engage in studies like before. After her formal education in grade 11 begins, I doubt if she can cope up with the studies any soon.” – A Parent, Surkhet

Some common forms of support girls received, especially the girls from the 10th standard are reduced workload at home with mothers shouldering the workload, moral encouragement, and keen attention towards their diet to help them study properly. This information can be validated from quantitative data. Parents of the control school also appeared equally supportive of their daughter’s education. An aspiring father of three girls in Dhading comparison school talked about sending his eldest daughter for additional classes outside of school such as IELTS practice classes, driving lessons among others to prepare his daughter to go abroad for further studies.

Yet, the same level of support was not seen from all parents. For instance, from the qualitative data, it was known that parents of the Madhesi community in Parsa strictly limited and support girl’s education

¹⁰ Tuition classes are very common in Nepal. Children as young as grades 1 and 2 uptake tuition classes because their parents aren’t competent to support them or are too busy with their own that they cannot afford to spend time with children. The cost of the tuition of the cost varies from Rs. 1000 to up to Rs 5000 or even more, depending upon the grade and subject being taught.

only till grade 10. After that, the girls cannot expect any form of support from parents in terms of pursuing higher education.

3.1.2. Type of Learner During the Midline and Perception on Learning During the End-Line

Assessing the learning performance of the girls at school during the end-line evaluation against the learning ability of the girls as identified during the midline, the results are rather on a positive front. Girls who were once identified as non-learner experienced a breakthrough in terms of English reading skills. The quantitative figures of girls once categorized as emerging learners indicate their inability to reflect on the changes in their performance since the last two years and appear rather ambiguous. The established learners are persistently performing well along with the proficient learners. Nonetheless, the high rate of perplexity among proficient learners attests to the lower quality of the course that the girls haven't felt a sense of challenge and accomplishment alike.

“When I was in Edge class, I didn’t feel afraid of speaking up in the class with the teacher or when it is my turn to read the text. But these days, since the edge club is no longer functional, I feel like I am losing my confidence. Unlike before, even when I know the answer, I cannot answer in class.” – Girl, Lamjung

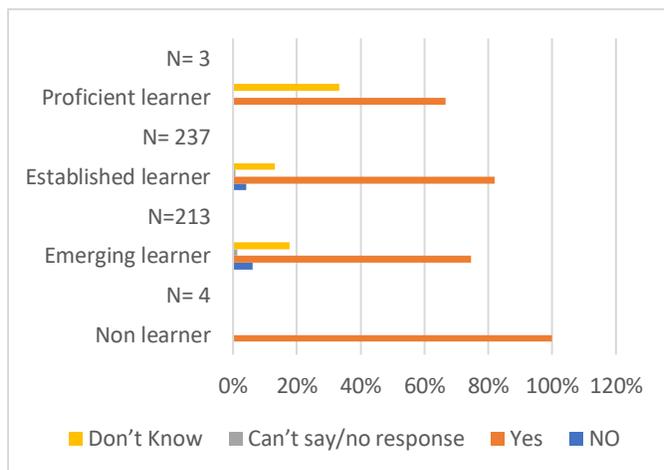


FIGURE 4: ANALYSIS OF LEARNING PERCEPTION BASED ON SEGRA SCORES

Source: Girls' Survey

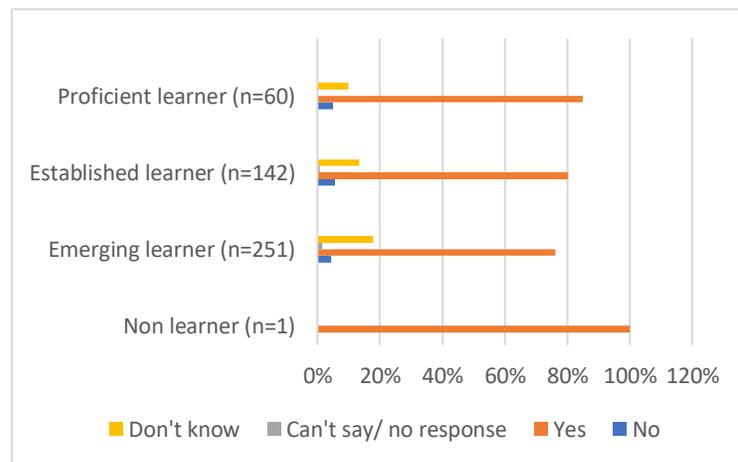


FIGURE 3: ANALYSIS OF LEARNING PERCEPTION BASED ON SEGMA SCORES

Source: Girls' Survey

These ascribed changes among girls are a major accomplishment of the project. Mentoring the girls on English and digital skills through the Edge club's girls have been able to experience such profound changes. As part of the mentorship, girls have been able to develop their leadership ability while working on English literacy proficiency and digital skills. During the qualitative consultations with girls across all districts, girls appeared extremely enthusiastic about the activities of the Edge club and appreciate the modality of the class. The girls are even able to make the association between the learnings from edge class and their future aspirations. The only setback was the devices for acquiring digital skills were limited in number.

In terms of assessing the midline SeGMA scores and end-line change perception of girls, the results indicated an unequivocal positive impact on girls. Progress can be traced among the girls alike and a lower rate of ambiguity is seen. Notable changes have occurred in terms of enhancing the numeracy skills of the girls. Despite this, from the qualitative consultations with girls, it was learned that, unlike English, math is

the toughest subject and least likable. Once the Learning Support Classes ceased, girls had to rely on tuition classes for extra support which, as mentioned above, is not much different from the regular classes.

“Till grade seven, students are simply promoted without any strict assessment of their skill and knowledge still grade 7. Once they reach grade 8, most of the students face difficulty since they get promoted even without understanding the basic concept. It is more challenging for me as a teacher- I face the dilemma of whether to proceed with the course or to start with the basics of mathematics!”
 - Math teacher, Dhading

3.1.3. Analysis of Learning Perception Based on Ethnicity

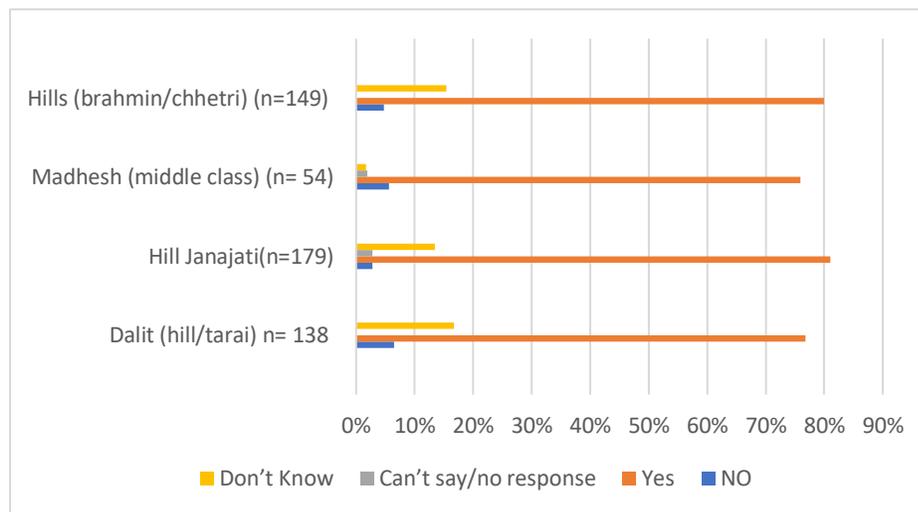


FIGURE 5: LEARNING PERCEPTION SEGREGATED BY ETHNICITY

Source: Girls' Survey

There is no correlation between ethnicity and change in the learning perception of the girls. The figures show that girls across all ethnic groups have consistently progressed in terms of learning for the last two years. It is important to note that even girls from the most marginalized communities of Nepal: the Dalit and Janajati communities have made remarkable progress in learning on par with girls of other ethnic groups. With direct project

intervention, such as Learning Support Classes and ample educational materials for Little Sisters, these girls were able to overcome the challenges. For most Little Sisters, continuous support from the SFS project had led them to a more progressive path. Nonetheless, from the qualitative information, it was known that their results are not satisfactory enough.

Focal teachers and headteachers in all four districts unanimously agreed that the project has brought tremendous changes in the lives of little girls with a humongous amount of materialistic support. Sadly, due to factors like the COVID-19 crisis, the project has seen a setback livelihood interventions. The project had envisioned marginalized adolescent girls from the project districts would be able to make a successful transition from key educational milestones and be empowered to leave school to either secure a sustainable livelihood or continue with education. While the project's support such as skill development training and in-kind support to initiate small scale business is expected to help the girls, their impact was yet to be seen.

Moreover, the increased regularity of the girls at school, yet another major accomplishment of the project, has led to creating a favourable environment for making progress in studies. teachers extoll this component of the project very much.

“Girls who were once irregular to school and were among the weakest students in the class had at least started coming to school regularly; even if they come with the expectation of receiving goods from the project. Girls who barely got 2 marks in the examination have started getting 32. Even though that isn’t the pass mark, she has made progress.” – Focal Teacher, Lamjung

3.1.4. Analysis of learning perception based on location

In addition to that, a significant correlation can be found between the changes in learning performance of girls at schools and the location of their residence when the value of $p=0.05$. Girls across all three regions appear to have uniformly undergone positive changes. Such consistent changes are attributable to increased parental awareness along with decreased household chores and most essentially increased learning opportunities. Here, augmented learning opportunities are a result of direct project intervention such as additional learning classes, extra literacy classes (Edge club), improved school environment including gender as well as child-friendly and learner-centered training for teachers.

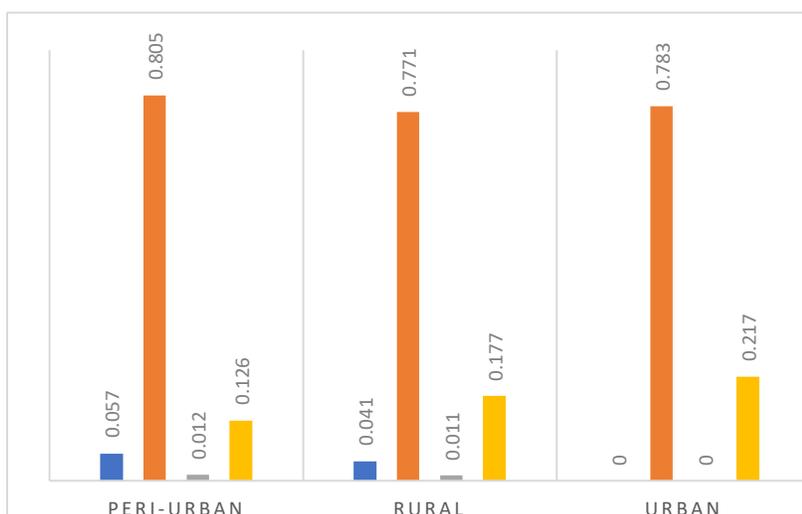


FIGURE 6: ANALYSIS OF LEARNING PERCEPTION BASED ON LOCATION

Source: Household Survey

From the qualitative consultations, it can be validated that the number of girls attending schools during menstruation has increased with the availability of sanitary pads at school. Often, girls happen to leave school anytime due to menstruation, which has been changed since school distributes pad to girls. This is common in all four districts.

3.1.5. Subgroup Analysis of the Learning Perception Outcome

As discussed in earlier sections, one of the major school-level barriers identified in the end-line is the continued practice of using physical and verbal punishment as a means of disciplining students. The impact of verbal and physical punishment along with the absence of teachers on learning perception on students are almost alike. The figures denote that even when harsh physical and verbal punishments were used, girls have experienced a positive change in the learning perception. Similar data is present in terms of teachers’ absence. Even then, there is no correlation between the means of punishment neither the absence of teachers with the changes witnessed in the learning perception of girls. This outcome is a major challenge to the customary thought and practices of teachers who still firmly believe in using physical as well as verbal punishment “for sake of the child’s bright future.”

TABLE 13: PERCEPTION OF LEARNING OF GIRLS SEGREGATED BY SCHOOL-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS AND BARRIERS

Characteristics	No	Yes	Can't say/no	Don't Know
Teacher verbally discipline or punish student if student get things wrong (n=184)	3.8%	79.3%	1.1%	15.8%
Teachers Physically discipline or punish student if student get things wrong (n=142)	4.9%	79.6%	2.1%	13.4%
Teachers are often absent (n=285)	6.0%	75.8%	0.7%	18.0%

Source: Girl's Survey

Therefore, it can be inferred that positive changes in the learning perception are simply the outcome of the dedication amplified by the number of effort girls put in along with the abundance of exposure to learning opportunities than the exertion of force and fear on the young minds. For instance, exposure to multiple sources and peer learning of the Edge class proved better than the additional paid tuition classes operated by the schools. The girls have to pay up to Rs. 3000 for tuition classes on English, Math, and Science subjects. Girls from the EDGE¹¹ class showed no reluctance to opt for PGLs over teachers, although teachers are more capacitated than PGLs in terms of knowledge. Yet, their only reason for preferring PGLs over teachers was that they do not fear PGLs and are assured that the class is free from any form of punishment.

Likewise, the teacher's irregularity in the class was a major problem in the midline, which has been overcome over time and can be considered as another project accomplishment. The project has a wide coverage of the teachers-training program as one of its interventions, where secondary-level teachers in all treatment schools have received at least one training from the project. According to the headteacher in Surkhet, for instance, the training not only imparts pedagogical skills on child-friendly approach and student-centered learning but also encourages teachers through self-motivation and a sense of self-worth. From the qualitative discussions with the headteacher in Dhading, it was known that no class is ever left without a teacher. In case of the absence of the related teacher, a proxy is conducted by another or the students are taken to the library.

Moreover, with elevated enthusiasm among girls for learning, as evident during the qualitative consultations, they make the best even out of free class. They share the knowledge acquired by being part of the learning support classes or the edge club, both of which are not accessible to all students of the class. Few girls notified that if a teacher was willing to accompany them, they often visit the library during

¹¹ English and Digital for Girl's Education (EDGE) is a project launched by the British Council Nepal designed for the adolescent girls from marginalized communities in after school, non-formal and safe spaces in their communities to develop English and Digital skills using self-access learning resources installed on the laptops/phablets. In addition, a series of flashcards and games developed grammar, functional language and vocabulary skills were taught by the trained Peer Group Leaders (PGLs) from among the girls instead of teachers.

such hours. Since the eagerness to learn is high among the girls in the present than in the past, they have a sense of progress within themselves.

Analysis of the Areas of Improvement Based on School-Level Barriers

The girls have shown a positive perspective towards learning even under the adverse conditions partly generated by teachers at school. Assessing the areas where the girls excelled the most in terms of learning in the past two years. Other than performing well in exams, girls haven't been able to master other areas of learning such as classroom participation, increased interest in learning, and lesson comprehension. Improved exam results of the girls are yet another achievement of the project since it made it possible for the girls from the marginalized groups whose future was wary. Though there are no discrete quantitative data to substantiate improved exam results of the girls, from the qualitative consultation with the focal teaches, it was known that girls who miserably failed in the exams were now at least getting minimal pass marks. The project, through its materialistic support, made it possible for the girls to continue school despite the financial hardship of the family. Also, additional support through learning support classes brought basic and conceptual clarity to girls who often lagged in class but were too scared to raise a question. Therefore, for such girls, even if they passed the exam by a margin, it is still a big accomplishment. Apart from that, the girls are still reluctant to take part in classroom discussions for the fear of being reprimanded or punished upon giving incorrect answers.

TABLE 14: ANALYSIS OF AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT AGAINST SCHOOL-LEVEL BARRIERS

Barriers /Area of Improvement	Improved learning achievement score	Increased Classroom Participation	Improved Comprehension of lessons	Increased interest to learn
<i>Teacher verbally discipline or punish student if student get things wrong</i> (n=146)	68.5%	19.2%	15.8%	20.5%
<i>Teachers Physically discipline or punish student if student get things wrong</i> (n=113)	65..5%	20.4%	15.0%	16.8
<i>Teachers are often absent</i> N=216	69.9%	17.1%	19.1%	18.5%

Source: Girl's Survey Endline N= 549

Analysis of Learning Perception Against Household Level Barriers

Household characteristics like the number of time girls spent on household chores, characteristics of household head, and the prolonged impact of the pandemic have altered the learning perception of the girls in some manner. While the girls are still positive about the changes, they have encountered in terms of learning over the last two years, they felt major setbacks due to Covid that led to temporary shut down of schools and were completely bereft of studying for a prolonged time. After some time, though the local government and the schools adopted alternative means of teaching students, it was unsuccessful in

generating the anticipated results. While many girls did not have access to the alternative modes, such as the radio, tv, smartphones, internet, at all, those girls who had at least one of such mediums took the opportunity to learn. However, they were dissatisfied with the quality of such materials, as evident through qualitative discussions.

TABLE 15: ANALYSIS OF LEARNING PERCEPTION AGAINST HOUSEHOLD LEVEL BARRIERS

Source: Household Survey

Characteristics	In the last two years, did you notice any changes in your learning performance at school?			
	No	Yes	Can't say/no response	Don't know
Female-Headed household (N=158)	6.0%	75.9%	1.3%	16.5%
Household head has not completed primary education (N=179)	5.0%	78.2%	0.6%	16.2%
Believed that Covid has affected the future aspiration (N=352)	3.1%	82.1%	0.9%	13.9%
Involved in household chores for more than 2 hours a day	4.3%	81.1%	1.6%	13.0%

A sense of fear was engraved among the general mass during the pandemic which threatened all people alike. The girls were faced with the threat of pandemics on one hand and the inability to continue learning on the other. The learning competence built before the covid diminished proportionately with prolonged lockdown and so did the level of confidence among the girls over the matter they learned. From the qualitative consultations with the girls, it was learned that while the reopening of schools became distant, the girls felt less confident about their acquired skills. They shared with the researchers that they had recently been promoted to the new grades where most of the girls did not have access to new textbooks. Even those girls who had the books could not comprehend the lessons well without any external support. Hence the girls became extremely wary of the future. This was common across all districts alike.

Similarly, girls faced an increased burden of household chores, especially since the lockdown during which mobility of the children, especially girls were restricted to the premise of their own house only. Girls who had to assist their mothers only before and after school had to engage in the household work throughout the day, physically wearing them out. During the discussions with the girls, when asked about the time of the day when they sit for study, every participant whose engagement in household chores was high stated that they studied in the evening after completing all the household chores. However, it is extremely doubtful that the girls will be able to study after such an exhausting day.

Girls who have female-headed households and whose primary carers takers which were mostly parents and grandparents in few cases had low educational competence stated going through changes in terms of

learning experiences. Girls are more empathetic towards the workload of mothers hence share their load whenever possible. Nevertheless, with the continuous effort of the project to raise parental awareness on girls' education and non-discrimination between sons and daughters, parents often do encourage girls to study despite the workload at home.

Door-to-door campaigns, street dramas, and the involvement of Big sisters in the daily life of a little sister, parents have long realized the importance of girls' education along with their role as parents in ensuring a hopeful future for girls. It is due to the change in perception of parents that girls can undergo such a learning experience too.

3.1.6. Analysis of Learning Outcome According to the Districts

In terms of the learning perception, girls in Surkhet showed the least degree of changes in terms of learning in the last two years. As evident from the table below, the ethnic composition of Surkhet comprises of just three ethnic groups is dominated by the Brahmin/Chhetri (hills) and Dalits and Janajati with an equal number of representations. The degree of girls who didn't experience any changes is significantly high for Surkhet. It may be assumed that because the culture of educating girls is already established among the Brahmin/Chhetri community, girls did not undergo remarkable changes as much as the girls from Dalit and Janajati community would go. In terms of assessing the areas of improvement, it aligns with the learning perception of the girls. There, not only have the girls done well in exams, their class participation and interest in learning are comparatively higher than girls from other districts. This is yet again attributable to the established culture of studying among the Brahmin/Chhetri society and later adopted by other community members alike.

TABLE 16: ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTION ON LEARNING OUTCOME AND THE AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT ACCORDING TO DISTRICT

District	In the last two years, did you notice any changes in your learning performance at school?				Areas of improvement				District
	No	Yes	Can't say/no response	Don't know	Exam score	Class participation	Lesson comprehension	Increased interest to learn	
Dhading n=127	2.4%	85.8%	0.8%	11.0%	79.8%	11.0%	14.7%	12.8%	<i>Dhading</i> n=109
Lamjung n=131	3.1%	87.8%	2.3%	6.9%	66.1%	16.5%	25.3%	24.2%	<i>Lamjung</i> n=115
Parsa n=77	7.8%	74.0%	1.3%	16.9%	68.4%	15.8%	21.1%	10.5%	<i>Parsa</i> n=57
Surkhet n=	6.0%	70.0%	0.5%	23.5%	61.4%	25.0%	10.0%	18.8%	<i>Surkhet</i> n=140

Source: Girl's Survey

TABLE 17: CROSSTABULATION OF ETHNICITY AGAINST THE DISTRICT

		Dhading	Lamjung	Parsa	Surkhet	Total
Ethnicity	Dalit (hill/Tarai)	32	41	12	54	139
	Hill Janajati	70	56	1	54	181
	Madhesh (middle class)	0	0	63	0	63
	Muslim	0	0	9	0	9
	Madhesh (Brahmin/Chhetri)	3	0	2	2	7
	Hill (Brahmin/Chhetri)	22	34	1	93	150
Total		127	131	88	203	549

Source: Household Survey

Girls in the Lamjung district have cultivated the utmost changes in learning across all four districts of study. Girls from Janajati (hills) and Dalit (hill/Tarai) community are the major beneficiaries of the project followed by girls from the Brahmin/Chhetri (hills) community. Also, the least number of girls in Lamjung stated that no changes were perceived. The areas of improvement are also on par with the results of Surkhet. It is remarkable to note that the degree of changes in terms of areas of improvement is uniformly high across all the categories for girls of Lamjung district. The level of awareness among parents was also found to be high from the qualitative discussion.

The girls from Parsa districts mostly represented the Madheshi community with extremely few girls from another ethnicity as seen in the table below. Parsa is also one of the two districts which hasn't witnessed much change in terms of the perception of learning besides Surkhet. Similar to Surkhet, the degree of girls who did not think of any form of change in the past two years and those who were not sure about what types of changes occurred within themselves is relatively higher than Lamjung and Dhading. In terms of the areas of improvement, similar to other districts, girls have been able to bring better exam results, but their interest in learning is the least among all four districts. This can be attributed to the customary practice among the Madheshi community which strictly discourages girls' education. With the project intervention, a limited number of girls directly benefited from the project and could continue education with ease compared to other girls who didn't have any form of support. From the qualitative discussion, it was known parents from this community aren't much exuberant about sending girls to school. Though they have been granted the liberty to attend school till the 10th grade, it is most likely that this freedom will be curtailed and the girls will be married off. The customary practice of child marriage is still intact in this community. Also from the qualitative discussion, the researchers learned that parents are reluctant to educate their daughter with the fear of increased dowry burden in the future. An educated girl would want a man of her calibre or even higher and that would cost the parents an increased amount of dowry¹².

Also, in the Muslim community, girls have the compulsion of attending madrasa, in addition to going to normal schools leading to an added burden. Lastly, in Dhading, the perceived degree of change is high along with the examination scores. Besides this, the rate of change in other areas of improvement is comparatively lower. Janajati (hills) girls which have the highest representation in Dhading have family members who are often migrant laborers. This may be a driving force to make girls ambitious to become skilled migrant labour, unlike their male guardians who only have the minimum educational qualification.

Moreover, a lower degree of in-class participation and lesson comprehension, and interest in studies can be attributed to a lower level of confidence among girls or fear of being rebuked by the teacher in case of making mistakes. When the girls fail to participate in class discussion merely out of fear couple with low

¹² Our Time to Sing and Play: Child Marriage in Nepal, *Human Rights Watch*, 2016

confidence, they are unable to raise questions for any confusion. And as the level of complexity increases, girls often lose interest in studies as it no longer makes sense to them.

4. Transition Outcome

In the midline evaluation, the project had two specific transition groups: in-school girls who enrolled in the secondary level education and out -of- school girls. And for each group, the project had outlined a pathway that they are expected to follow to be considered to have a successful transition. During the midline evaluation, the transition rate of in-school girls among the girls in grade 10 during the baseline was 100%. The target set for transition outcome of the in-school girls was 7% above the control group. The DiD estimation showed that the increment in the transition group was 1.8% less than that of the control group. Similarly, the successful transition rate among OOS girls in Parsa was 84.2%.

This following section presents the key finding on the transition outcome set by the project in the end-line. For the end-line evaluation, the project has a specific transition group only, namely the in-school girls who were enrolled in the secondary level. For the in-school girls, the project has outlined a pathway that they are expected to follow for them to be considered as a successful transition. These pathways are linked with the re-enrollment in formal or non-formal education, including vocational training or involvement in technical training, safe employment, and self-employment. And girls who have failed to associate themselves with either of these pathways are considered to have an unsuccessful transition.

TABLE 18: TRANSITION STATUS OF GIRLS¹³

SN	Transition Status	Surkhet	Lamjung	Parsa	Dhading	Total
1.	Successful transition	1374	691	2675	775	5515
2.	Unsuccessful transition	161	17	131	53	362
	Total	1535	708	2806	828	5877 ¹⁴

Source: Project Transition Data

The table above represents the transition status of all in-schools girls collected during the end-line evaluation. As evident from the table above, 94 %of the girls have a successful transition whereas 6 %of the girls could not due to various reasons as discussed in the section below. Like in every other assessment criterion, girls in Parsa had the most number of girls who successfully transitioned into another phase followed by Surkhet, Dhading, and Lamjung. Similarly, 10 %of girls in Surkhet faced unsuccessful transition, which is the highest among all four districts followed by Parsa which had five percent of unsuccessful transition, six percent in Dhading, and two percent in Lamjung. In regards to transition to secondary level, successful transition to grade 11 was 5515 (Surkhet - 1374, Lamjung – 691, Dhading – 775, and Parsa – 2675).

¹³ Transition Status of girls (March, 2021)

¹⁴ While the number direct learning beneficiaries of the project as projected is 7382. While 5877 in-schools girls have transitioned in some manner, the remaining unaccounted number of the girls are still at school. When the EE inquired with project regarding this gap, the project explained that while these unaccounted girls did not enjoy the full benefit of the project as did the girls preceding them did, they have partially benefited. Also because these girls were neither in the lower secondary grades nor in the upper secondary grades, they were not accounted for in the endline evaluation. The EE had to rely on the data provided by the project even though it did seem to have some discrepancies.

4.1. Trending Reason Behind Unsuccessful Transition

Listed below are the reasons 6% of the in-school-girls stated for having undergone an unsuccessful transition. Despite the tremendous reduction in parents-initiated marriages, child marriage is still the most cited reason behind unsuccessful transition among girls. Here, the pathway of marriage is considered as one leading to unsuccessful transit because after marriage girls are no longer allowed to continue education. From the qualitative consultations among in-school girls who knew girls of their age getting married early, it was known that after marriage either the girls no longer value education or feel shy to come back to school hence discontinue coming to school or are simply not allowed to study by the in-laws. They are restricted to the household chores by the in-laws and the girls cannot disobey. As evident in the qualitative consultations and discussion above, this is merely due to the increasing trend of self-initiated child marriage among children. In an instance, a teacher even explained this practice as an attempt of the children to escape the vicious of poverty as their parents since they are lured by the glitz and glamour of the urban societies. The young minds are too naïve to believe that they can escape the hardship of poverty simply by distancing themselves from it at a young age and take the bold decision of getting married without parental consent. Child marriage was among the most prominent cause of drop out in the midline evaluation too and continued to remain so even in the end-line evaluation. It was established in the midline and remains valid here in the end-line too that despite, the increased parental awareness, this alone is inadequate to ensure the continued successful transition, without presence of change agents who physically intervenes whenever they come across cases of dropouts and child marriage in the communities.

TABLE 19: REASONS FOR UNSUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

	Reasons	Surkhet	Lamjung	Parsa	Dhading
1.	Married	15.19 %	2.49 %	16.30 %	10.50 %
2.	Drop out due to financial condition post COVID	0.0 %	1.10 %	4.14 %	3.87 %
3.	Migration (unsure about school continuity)	0.0 %	0.83 %	2.21 %	0.0 %
4.	Not in contact with school	13.81 %	0.28 %	12.15 %	0.0 %
5.	Repeated class	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
6.	After SEE did not continue study	3.31 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
7.	Moved to India	1.66 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
8.	Death		0.0 %	0.0 %	0.28 %
9.	Family problem	10.50 %	0.0 %	1.38 %	0.0 %
	Total	44.47%	4.70%	36.18 %	14.65%

Source: Project Transition Data

The financial struggle of the families was also among the highly cited reasons for the unsuccessful transition. Due to economic hardship, girls often find it hard to continue education as they have to pay for high school education unlike till grade 10 which is free of cost for the students. In other instances, girls have to travel to the urban areas for higher studies in absence of institutions offering higher-level education in the neighbourhood. This leads to the added expense of accommodation, food along with tuition costs.

Similarly, in most instances, girls have not returned to school after the schools reopened after a prolonged closure caused by the pandemic. It may be assumed that girls either lost interest to continue

studying or were involved in an income-generating activity that seized their opportunity to continue studying.

TABLE 20: SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATION (SEE) PASS RATE OF LS TILL DECEMBER, 2020

Districts	LS SEE graduates (2018)	LS SEE graduates (2019)	LS SEE graduates (2020)	Total SEE graduates/District
Parsa (n= 320)	0.0 %	28.4 %	18.8 %	47.2 %
Lamjung (n= 295)	22.4%	20.0 %	26.4 %	68.8 %
Surkhet (n=302)	15.9%	18.9 %	28.8 %	63.6 %
Dhading (n=320)	40.0%	20.6 %	18.8 %	79.4 %
Total (n=1237)	15.4%	22.1 %	23.0 %	60.5 %

Source: Project Status Data

TABLE 21: TOTAL NUMBER OF LITTLE SISTERS TRANSITIONING INTO HIGH SCHOOL

Districts	Total number of LSs studying in grade 11 in 2020	Total number of LSs studying in grade 12 in 2020	Total number of LSs studying in Bachelor level in 2020	Total number of LS joining vocational and technical education till 2020
Parsa	3.1 %	2.5 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
Lamjung	5.5 %	4.2 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
Surkhet	7.5 %	3.8 %	0.0 %	0.2 %
Dhading	4.7 %	5.1 %	0.0 %	1.3 %
Total	20.8 %	15.6 %	0.0 %	1.5 %

Source: Project Status Data

TABLE 22: DROP-OUT RATE AMONG THE LITTLE SISTERS TILL DECEMBER 2020

Districts	Number of LSs dropped out in 2017	Number of LSs dropped out in 2018	Number of LSs dropped out in 2019	Number of LSs dropped out in 2020	Total number of LS drop-out/district
Parsa	1.6 %	10.0 %	7.8 %	1.9 %	21.3 %
Lamjung	0.3 %	5.1 %	7.8 %	0.3 %	13.6 %
Surkhet	4.3 %	6.6 %	4.3 %	4.0 %	19.2 %
Dhading	10.0 %	8.4%	5.9 %	2.8 %	27.2 %
Total (n=1237)	4.1 %	7.6 %	6.5 %	2.3 %	20.5 %

Source: Project Status Data

The table 20-22 above presents the status of all the Little Sisters (LS) since the inception of the second phase of the SfS project in 2017. During the inception period, the targeted number of beneficiaries in each district was 320, which was fulfilled only in Parsa and Dhading. It can be noted that of the total number of Little Sisters identified till the end-line evaluation, 60.5% of the girls have clear the SEE exam. Remaining 39.5% of the Little Sisters who could not clear the SEE examination was not tracked by the project. Based on the information from table 15, maximum number of Little Sisters from Dhading are seen clearing the SEE while Little Sisters from Parsa have the lowest rate of SEE clearance. It is important to note that 23% of the Little Sisters cleared SEE in the year 2020, which is the highest rate since 2017, because that year the girls were provided the scores by the school itself rather than appearing in the SEE examination, which was terminated due to the pandemic. Based on their performance at school, the girls received their grades accordingly.

Similarly, according to table 17, Dhading is also the district experiencing the greatest number of drop-out among Little Sisters even though the trend of drop-out is decreasing when analyzed since 2017. In line with the SEE pass rate, year 2020 also experienced the least rate of drop-out among the Little Sisters, probably due to the fact that the school was closed for as long as 9 months in some instances and the girls did not appear for any form of examination. From the qualitative consultation it was known that among several reasons behind drop outs, failure to clear internal examination conducted by school was one of the reasons for drop-out as cited by the teachers.

From table 16, it is notable that in the year, 20.8% of the Little Sisters had transitioned into grade 11 while 15.6% Little Sisters into grade 12. And till 2020, only 1.5% of the Little Sisters had the opportunity to indulge into technical or vocational education. Each of these low scores are indicative to the problematic transition among Little Sisters; even though the transition rate of in-schools girls was 100 % in the midline evaluation, utmost girls have been unsuccessful in transitioning into high schools, mostly due to financial reasons. The rate of transition diminishes as the level of education increases as the cost involved in it also increases.

For a successful transition of the girls, according to the project anticipation, these Little Sisters should opt for either continuation of formal education or uptake a vocational training such that there are sufficient life choices accessible and available to girls in terms of employment, vocational training, or further education at their final point of transition.

Based on the data above, it may be deduced that not all LSs have been able to transit successfully to a new level as envisioned by the project. One of the major yet unanticipated reasons behind such a low rate of transition is due to Covid-19 and the second being the inability of the project to return the girls to mainstream education or at least into vocational and technical skill development for a secure and independent future.

Assessment of Little Sisters according to Districts

The impact of COVID was felt across all districts alike, but the degree of severity on Little sisters varied from one district to another district. Schools were completely shut down for almost four months during which girls had limited mobility and access to the outside world nor any opportunity to continue learning. Families were compelled to face severe scarcity for a prolonged time. Covid-19 created a sense of uncertainty among people. There were increased incidences of child marriage during the pandemic across many parts of Nepal. Similar circumstances can be traced in the districts of project intervention too. For instance, the assumption regarding having one less mouth to feed at home in case of marrying off girls during a financial crisis can be made¹⁵. Also, it is much easier for parents to conduct marriage during the pandemic with few guests to entertain. Child marriage was still prevalent across all four project districts.

¹⁵ Our Time to Sing and Play: Child Marriage in Nepal, *Human Rights Watch*, 2016

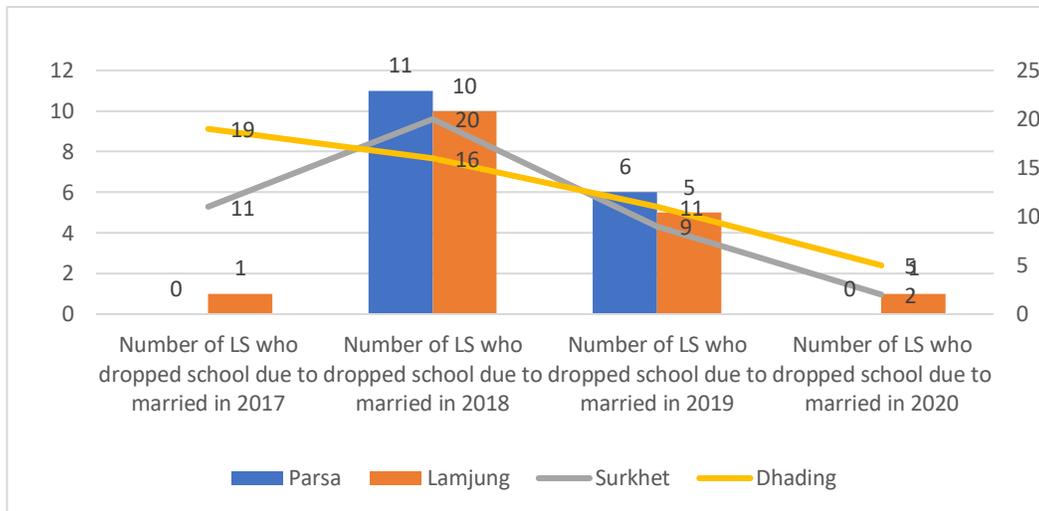


FIGURE 7: TREND OF DROP-OUT DUE TO MARRIAGE IN LS

Source: Girls' Survey

According to the quantitative information, the most cited reason for school dropout is due to marriage. From the inception of the project till the end, 10.27% of the Little Sisters dropped out of school merely due to marriage. The rate of drop-out was highest in the year 2018 which significantly decreased in the subsequent years with the lowest in 2020. In 2017, Parsa had experienced 0.0% drop out due to marriage and only in 2020 did it encounter 0.0% drop-out again. This was validated through the qualitative data also where the research team had the opportunity to discuss the trending issue of child marriage with Big Sisters, school teachers, including the headteacher, and even with parents. According to these sources, though parents initiated marriage is decreasing, self-initiated marriage by the girls is on the rise. And once married, the priority shifts to household and children that girls no longer feel the need to continue education or feel shy to return to the classroom.

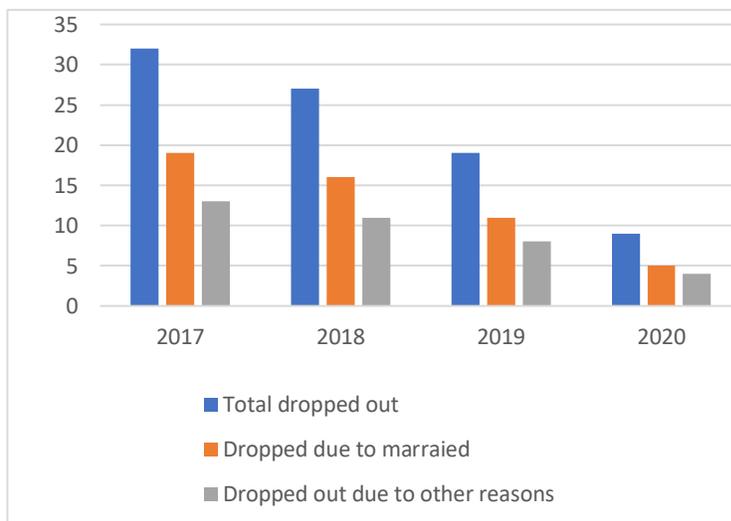


FIGURE 8: REASONS FOR DROPOUT AMONG LS IN PARSA

Maximum cases of drop-out merely due to marriage was seen in Dhading followed by Surkhet which encountered 40.2% and 33.1% of child marriages. Drop out due to marriage was substantially low in Parsa and Lamjung each of which witnessed just 13.4% of drop out due to early marriage. Parents in Surkhet even flagged up self-initiated child marriage as a major transition problem observed among the girls. Many of these children were under the age of 18 which is below the legal age of marriage. In Pagma, Surkhet, a parent informed that at least 10 instances of self-initiated child marriage take place every year.

According to the parents, after marriage, most of the girls leave school, have children and start looking after the family. However, most of the LSs in Surkhet was found to have successfully transitioned to higher education or adopted a means

of livelihood through tailoring or joined Nepal Army or Police. Few LSs were found to have been married before their age and completion of school through self-initiation.

Most of the teachers attributed this to increasing access to children to social media. However, a teacher in Pagma, Surkhet, on looking upon this problem at a more nuanced layer, found the association of self-initiated child marriage to poverty.

“physical attraction to the opposite sex is a common explanation behind self-initiated child marriage. However, if it was the only reason, children all over the country would be finding a partner to get married at an early age. At this age, children are largely interested in good food and proper clothes, especially with increasing access to social media, children get to see and develop a longing for the best of amenities they see from all over the world. However, due to the ravaging poverty of their families, they cannot find a way to fulfill their dreams. Under these circumstances, they easily imagine that a little of their life might change after they get married.” – Teacher, Surkhet

Not all girls go the same transition pathway. While many cases of self-initiated child marriages were encountered, there have been instances where girls are unable to make the decision for themselves and comply with the pathway chosen by the parents. For instance, in the case of girls of Madhesi community in Parsa where parents made it clear to the researchers that beyond grade 10, girls cannot make any decisions for themselves. Given the cultural context of the community, it can be implied that the parents were indirectly putting forth their decision to marry off their children soon after grade 10.

Besides the trending self-initiated child marriage, another major concern hindering the successful transition of girls is the inability of the project to return the dropout girls to school or ensure their involvement in any vocational or technical education. From the qualitative consultations, it was known that as girls transcend into higher classes and the difficulty level of the course increases, girls fail during the exam. After failing once, the girls give up on studying.

As the headteacher of a school in Dhading explained,

“The educational system of Nepal is faulty. Students are promoted up to grade seven without any restriction but after reaching grade eight, they have to sit for the formal examination and get through them too. If, by any chance the student fails, it is very likely that the student will drop out from school because the student is too ashamed to repeat the classes with juniors.” – Head Teacher, Dhading

Nonetheless, there have been instances where the Little sister has returned to school even after marriage under the initiation of the project team, that is, Big sisters and adult champions in support of the school. In Lamjung, for instance, even though the Big Sister had been warning Little Sisters of the negative consequences of early marriage, LS did get married in her initiation. Later, Big Sister with the help of an adult champion and headteacher was successful in bring back the girl to school.

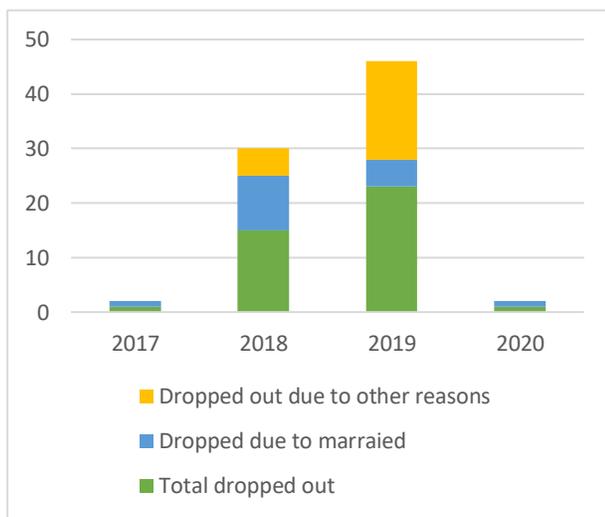


FIGURE 9: REASONS FOR DROPOUT AMONG LS IN LAMJUNG

Case story

“I will never give up on studying again”

Sabitri Pariya (name changed) is one of the Little Sisters identified by the SfS project in Dhading. Currently, she is studying in grade nine. Her father is a seamster by profession and her mother also helps him in the tailoring work besides the household chores. S

Sabitri is delighted and equally grateful to be part of the SfS program mostly because she got the opportunity to resume her studies even after losing hope of ever returning to pursue education again. A year before the lockdown started, Sabitri dropped out of school because she had failed in her terminal exam of grade nine. Feeling ashamed to face her friends and repeat the same class, she chose to drop out of school and opt for a tailoring course. She firmly believed that she would take up a tailoring course and proceed to develop it into a profession like her father. She came to Kathmandu to learn tailoring for six months and returned home to work along with her father. But professional pathway was not as easy as she had anticipated to be.

In the meantime, the Big Sister, Aunty (adult champion) and teachers all remained in contact with her, each of them motivating her to resume her studies. Eventually, after a year she decided to return to school and repeat grade 9. She attributes this realization and increased confidence to make self - decision to resume studies to the project activities which boosted her confidence and understanding of the importance of education. she is grateful to the Big sister who did not give up on her, and constantly visited her even after she dropped out from school. at the time of consultation, she showed no intention of dropping out of school again and even wanted to pursue higher education so that she can take up profession like the researchers!

5. Sustainability Outcome

This section presents the findings regarding the sustainability outcome. These inferences are based on observations and information which are relevant to indicators gathered from focus group discussion and KII. Due to unforeseen challenges of covid, an agreement between the external evaluators and the project was reached about adopting an overarching approach in the end-line that assesses the capacity and capability of the schools and the local government in terms of continuing, replicating the project activities along with scaling it up.

The sustainability indicators were scored on a scale of 0-4 which marks the sustainability of the project at school and the local government. Based on the inferences from qualitative consultation with school-level stakeholders and the local level government, and the analysis of the external evaluators, scores were presented in terms of the ability of these institutes to transfer ownership to local government and replicate the major focus of the project. It is important to note that since the jurisdiction of schools falls under the local level government, the sustainability and replicability of the project activities will be successful only if the local government takes the ownership

TABLE 23: SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS

	GOVERNMENT	SCHOOL
Continuity	3	2
Replicability	1	1
Scalability	1	1

5.1. Government

Continuity

A sustainability score of 3 has been given to the commitments showed by the government to continue some of the major outcomes of the project. The local level government appeared enthusiastic about the project outcome, especially the outcome from the Big Sister-Little Sister mentorship that most of them were willing to give continuity. According to the government officials, the modality of this program had an immense amount of positive impact in ensuring education for all. The instance, the Vice-chair of Tripurasundari Rural Municipality, Salyantar, Dhading explicitly expressed the local government's willingness to coordinate with the project in terms of sharing 50 % of the budget to implement the project while maintaining partial ownership of the project.

Also, the Chairperson of Siddilekh Rural Municipality, Dhading earnestly invited the researchers to join the monthly Head Teacher's meeting held at the municipality office to share the project's impact and facilitate them in prioritizing the gender's responsible education plan and developing girl's education curricula in schools with local government partners and sharing the budget accordingly too. also, the Deputy Mayor of Nilkantha Municipality was the opinion that the municipality should take ownership of the program after it phases out. For this, he proposed a collaboration between the ward level officials with the Municipal officials as a means of ensuring continuity of the program. He stressed the need of prolonging the program even for the sake of the non-little sisters, who were more in number than the little sisters.

“To ensure the ownership of local government, the project should have channeled its intervention and budget through the window of local government. Although the local government is aware of the project's effectiveness, the project has not sought our active engagement in the implementation process, which limits our ownership. We may carry forward some of the extraordinary activities from Sfs E-II the local government is not prepared to own up every activity of the project and scale it up in other non-intervention areas as well. Things in this regard could have been different, if the project was implemented through local government, instead of a local Ngo.” – Education Officer

Also, one of the major targeted areas of intervention of the project was the improvement of the SIPs. The education officer, though was unable to differentiate between the little sisters and non-little sisters of the

project, he did point out the difference between treatment and control schools, especially concerning the learning achievements and outcome of students overall. Moreover, he also appreciated the efforts of treatment schools in formulating inclusive SIP and action plans:

“Schools generally tend to take SIP as a formality document and very little effort is made by most of the schools in the formulation of SIP. However, as a result of project interventions at the school level, treatment schools are taking SIP very seriously and ensuring inclusive requirements of the school in their SIP. The same is not the case among control schools.”

In terms of sustainability, the officer stated that efforts of the project at school levels are likely to be sustainable in the longer run, especially as the treatment schools have been incorporating these achievements and the need to continue these efforts.

Meanwhile, in other parts of Parsa, a rural municipality was found to have a good relationship with the schools. Even more, ward no. 4 was allocating a budget for social mobilizer this year. The municipality is ensuring quality education through investment in infrastructures, learning achievement, improving attendance, and banning mobile phones in schools. Also, the municipality has made it compulsory for the schools to have SIP and MIS data from each school. It has stated that salaries were not released until schools submitted these documents.

In terms of sustainability in Parsa, the project left a positive impression on the municipality. The government thinks that the project is instrumental in facilitating regular school attendance of students from marginalized groups and that it contributed to a quality education because of teachers' training and learning support classes for students. Nonetheless, they suggest that the project works closely with the municipality during the planning process which helps to instill a sense of ownership among the municipal officials.

Replicability

In terms of the local level government's readiness to replicate the project activities, a score of 1 was given by the EE. Though the government was vigilant about the impact the project had created among the marginalized girls within their jurisdiction, the government showed least commitments to the researchers about replicating the same modality of mentorship activity, which was highly praised across all project districts, in their initiation, besides allocating budget for girls' education. Nevertheless, the local level government was willing to implement such a program in partnership with non-government organizations under the terms and conditions set by the local government.

Concerning the capacity and willingness to replicate, the municipalities in Parsa appreciate the mentoring approach and anticipates replicating the model itself such that few municipalities have even allocated a budget for this purpose. It was brought to the researcher's attention that while the municipalities showed interest in taking on board some of the project activities, a verbal commitment made by the officials is considered wary since Municipality is viewed as one of the most corrupt institutions in Parsa. While municipalities appreciated the SfS E-II approach, they are still suspicious about investing in education as the possibility of corruption is very high. The headteachers and other teachers alike deplored the fact that schools were put under the jurisdiction of the Municipality and state that as a major mistake. They disclosed that they even have difficulty getting regular salaries from the municipality.

Scalability

In terms of the local level government's plans to incorporate successful project modalities into the forthcoming education plans, the external evaluators presented a score of 1. Issues about project implementation at a micro-scale within a selected number of beneficiaries were brought up by all government officials alike, and the need to scale it up at a macro scale in a more inclusive manner was also

discussed with the researchers. However, the researchers did not receive any form of assurance that would ensure that the project activities would be replicated in more schools among more school-going children.

All in all, while the government across all project districts appears extremely optimistic in terms of giving continuity to project activities, most specifically the little sister- big sister mentorship program, the government finds it somewhat challenging in terms of replicating it. Given the limited budget, a large number of students across many schools under each municipality and ward the government finds it challenging to replicate it. However, from the qualitative information, it can be deduced that even with their limited budget and debilitated education planning, they do hope to scale up the program even if they are to continue the same program under government or simply replicate it to increase the number of direct beneficiaries. Across all districts, the government stressed the need to be inclusive for boys too hence they do realize the need to scale up as well as make it inclusive.

5.2. School

Three indicators were set to measure the sustainability of the project at the school management/ governance level. These indicators were set to directly correspond to the activities conducted by the project to improve school management and governance. The three indicators are as follows:

- i. Percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above in CRM sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain CRMs)
- ii. Percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above in teacher training assessment (ability to train incoming teachers in learner-centered classroom practices)
- iii. Percentage of schools who score acceptable or above in SIP sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain SIPs)

The assessment is done completely in terms of qualitative information. However, the same quantitative data from the midline will be used in the end-line too with the assumption that drastic changes have not occurred in the schools under the same management system which was further disrupted by the covid-19. For a school to be considered for the assessment against the sustainability indicator of complaint and response mechanism, the school must have made acceptable progress or above in the functional assessment of CRM (IO 5.2). Similarly, for the school to be considered for the sustainability of the school improvement plan, the school must have made acceptable progress or above in the assessment of SIP progress (IO 5.1).

Only 6.81% of the schools were found to be making acceptable progress towards ensuring a functional CRM (IO 5.2). Among the 6.81%, only 2.27% of the treatment schools were found to be “making acceptable progress” in CRM sustainability assessment. The lack of reporting of the activities, achievement, progress, or challenges of CRM, i.e., proper documentation, was the only reason why other eligible schools did not meet the threshold of acceptable progress in the sustainability assessment. These schools did not maintain a report or did not share it with anyone besides school staff. The situation was observed even during the endline where the situation was worsened. The teachers mostly cited the reason school closure due to Covid for the CRM being non-functional. Also, during the qualitative consultations it was known that, at present, because of the amiable environment of the school, students directly approach teachers with complaints rather than opting to go through the CRM. Students entrust their teachers to address the issue immediately than waiting to be addressed through a longer procedure.

In regards to the third indicator, the percentage of schools that score acceptable or above in the SIP sustainability assessment, 4.54%, were found to be making acceptable progress towards sustainability. This

is in stark contrast to 42.72% of schools that were making acceptable progress in SIP functionality assessment. Most of the eligible schools were found to only have a SIP with a five-year plan, but could not produce evidence of mostly, yearly action plans, and financial report of the past year. Moreover, a school in Parsa was found to have no SIP plan for the last 15 years!

Based on the midline evaluation, for a school to be making acceptable progress, at least three of the following four components should have been included in the SIP:

- i. Components of Child Protection
- ii. Gender and Social Inclusion
- iii. Disaster Risk Reduction
- iv. Adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health right

During the data collection, it was found that, although the schools claimed to have all the documents, most were unable to provide evidence. In some cases, even repeated visits did not yield evidence. This includes the latest SEE results, which the researchers have specifically requested for. When asked for the SEE results of the last two years, schools in Dhading, Lamjung, and Surkhet failed to produce a proper record.

To sum up, the infrastructural support received by the schools from the project can be deemed sustainable, as schools demonstrated ownership of that support and readiness to maintain and sustain them in the longer run. Similarly, achievements in teaching practice made through training for teachers as well as headteachers, are likely to be sustainable as there were several pieces of evidence where we observed teachers applying the teaching techniques in their regular classrooms. Apart from these, key mentorship support rolled out through big sisters is likely to face sustainability challenges, as schools are unable to sustain this with their resources. Additionally, the schools have not received any firm commitment from the local governments in this regard. Therefore, a score of 2 was given based on the capacity of the school to continue the major project activities apart from transmitting the learnings from teacher's training, nothing substantial was observed by the research team nor any information during the qualitative consultations that showed the prospects of continuity of the project activities. Similarly, a score of 1 each in the absence of sufficient resources the schools are least likely to replicate it nor scale it up even though they want to. But because the Big sisters showed a willingness to continue even after the project ceased out, there is a bleak hope of continuity of the mentorship.

Teachers are now using more respectable language towards students; this can be acclaimed as another breakthrough of the project since teachers have become sensitive towards the dignity of the student and attempt to uphold that too.

6. Key Intermediate Outcome Findings

6.1. Increased Attendance

The Intermediate Outcome of assessing the attendance rate has been rendered unusable by the project since the schools were shut down for a prolonged period due to Covid-19. Nevertheless, during the midline evaluation, an assessment on percentage increase in average attendance rate of girls was assessed for two subgroups, that is, in-school girls and Little sisters. Two data sources: spot checks and review of school attendance records were referred for calculation of the attendance rate of in-school girls, while the attendance of little sisters was calculated using the records maintained by the big sisters.

During the midline evaluation, attendance rates increased by over 10% as compared to the baseline data (from 74% to 84.8% in ML). Also, from the qualitative consultations, the midline study found that an increased sense of realization amongst parents about the importance of regularity to school. Big sisters and headteacher reiterated the fact that parents were increasingly helping girls to attend school more frequently as parents felt they were not ‘capable enough’ to support girls with learning, sending girls to the school was the least they could do to help daughter’s education.

6.2. Increased Self-Esteem and Empowerment of Girls

Intermediate outcome 2: Increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls: measured in terms of increase in the percentage of girls reporting taking all key decisions on their own.

To assess the self-esteem as well the decision-making freedom that the girls had, a set of seven decision areas related to the education and life of the girls were presented to the girls. They were then asked who was responsible for making decisions in those matters. The options included - the girls themselves, jointly with family and entirely by the family. The value for the indicator was derived from the percentage of girls who stated that they took all the seven decisions on their own. As compared to the midline where a score of 53% was observed, the endline score was only 54.2%. The figures were not significant.

Boosting the self-esteem of the girls is a major component of the project theory of change and is also associated with the success of the girls to successfully transit from one phase to another along with doing well at school. The ability of girls to interact with teachers and peers, to influence decision-making in the family, and to make life choices on their own is important for a girl to complete her education and engage in income-generating activities. Therefore, the end-line evaluation assessed the involvement of girls in decision-making as an indicator of her self-esteem and empowerment.

TABLE 24: AREAS OF DECISION MAKING AMONG GIRLS

Decision areas	Decision-making freedom (n=535)			
	Midline n=530		Endline N=535	
	All decisions were taken by a girl or jointly with family	Family Decides	All decisions were taken by a girl or jointly with family	Family Decides
Whether or not you will go to school	84.9%	15.1%	85.4%	14.6%
Whether or not you will continue in school past this year	82.7%	17.3%	85.0%	15.0%
When/ at what age you will get married	67.2%	32.8%	71.0%	29.0%
If you will work after you finish your studies	82.9%	17.1%	89.7%	10.3%
What type of work you will do after you finish your studies	80.0%	20.0%	87.5%	12.5%

How you spend your free time	88.1%	11.9%	89.7%	10.3%
How often you spend time with your friends	85.7%	14.3%	82.2%	17.8%

Source: Girls' Survey

The quantitative findings till the endline show that the decision-making ability of the girls or joint decision of the family has improved uniformly across all the categories since the midline. This finding was non-significant. Moreover, when the data were discretely assessed for significance, it was found that data on questions related to whether or not the girls would continue school in the subsequent year, the age the girls chose to get married at, the decision whether to work or not and the nature of work the girls would opt for after the completion of their studies were significant. The remaining three questions on whether to go or not to go to school, how they spend their free time, and frequency of time spent with friends were statistically insignificant.

TABLE 25: SEGREGATED DATA ON DECISION MAKING

Decision areas	Decision-making freedom					
	Midline n=530			End line N=535		
	On their own	Jointly with Family	Family Decides	On their own	Jointly with Family	Family Decides
Whether or not you will go to school	61.9%	23.0%	15.1%	51.0%	34.4%	14.6%
Whether or not you will continue in school past this year	60.3%	22.4%	17.3%	47.1%	37.9%	15.0%
When/ at what age you will get married	29.8%	37.4%	32.8%	29.0%	42.1%	29.0%
If you will work after you finish your studies	53.1%	29.8%	17.1%	57.9%	31.8%	10.3%
What type of work you will do after you finish your studies	49.8%	30.2%	20.0%	51.0%	36.4%	12.5%
How you spend your free time	67.0%	21.1%	11.9%	66.5%	23.2%	10.3%
How often you spend time with your friends	62.8%	22.8%	14.3%	49.3%	32.9%	17.8%

Source: Girls' Survey

As stated above, not many changes are witnessed in the aggregated data, but while observing discretely, changes can be noted when it comes to major life decisions like marriage or life after completion of school-level education. The girls alone have a major say in deciding whether they want to go to school for

education than a combined or parental decision. However, there is a reduction in the rate of girls taking a solo decision in the endline when compared to the midline, but an increment in the joint decision making with family. This was validated during the qualitative consultation too where the mothers participating in the group consultation were stated that they discussed with their children before taking any form of decision-related to them.

Interacting with the parents during the qualitative consultations, we realized that decision-making consisted of two different layers. First, when it comes to making minor decisions of daily life, such as what types of clothes to wear, what to eat, how to spend free time, girls are free to make their own decisions. When asked if they allow their daughters to take their own decisions, most of the parents referred to these minor decision-making areas and said they never curtail the decision-making freedom of their daughters.

Second, on a rather nuanced level, the key life decisions, such as higher studies, choice of subjects/streams to take up after SEE, breaking the stereotype at the socio-cultural front, among others, are mostly dependent on the parents and their economic conditions. For instance, girls' decisions about their further studies and choice of subjects are determined by the financial status of the family. Even in families with good economic status, parents themselves decided on what subjects their daughters should pursue after SEE. This is particularly reflected in the second criteria of the quantitative data as shown in the table above, where the number of girls relying on the joint decision has substantially increased since the midline evaluation. Even though the girls and parents each have their aspirations for the girls' future, it is the financial status of the family that eventually decides on the path taken over the long run. A parent in Parsa cited to the researchers,

[“I have bought a piece of land. If there arises a financial crisis and I am unable to provide enough money for my daughter’s studies, I will sell the land and provide money for her education.”](#)

Likewise, the level of girls taking decisions regarding the types of options after the 10th grade and the nature of work was also up to the girls to an extent. But in both cases, parental share in the decision was also seen increases jointly. There has been a huge reduction in the rate of parents making sole decisions on the nature of work the girls were likely to opt for after the completion of their education. From the qualitative consultations, it was known that, at present, the transition route for the girls after the completion of the 10th grade is taking a short-term computer class with a future job prospect or uptake a vocational training of tailoring, knitting, or embroidery. For instance, the little sisters who had graduated from the schools were found learning computer in Lamjung before grade 11 simply because they felt that computer skills would increase chances of getting a job. A Little sister was found involved in her family business of bakery too. Parents are no longer rigid in their decision that curb's the girl's freedom as long as they maintain the family decorum.

This is also reflected in how the girls chose to spend their free time. With the access to social media and smartphones, the trending way of spending time has shifted from mere chit-chat to online explorations through social media sites like Facebook and tick-tock as evident in the qualitative discussion. Though utmost girls participating in the discussion don't have access to radio, tv, smartphone, and internet, those who have are likely to spend time around these devices mostly. And, for those who do not have access, chatting with friends, visiting friends is the best way to spend their time as validated in the qualitative discussions.

Similarly, on a positive note, the number of girls taking own marital decisions has slightly increased, the degree of parent involving the girls in making decisions related to this matter has appreciably decreased. Due to multitudinal project intervention at micro and macro levels alike, likely, the level of awareness on girls' education and child marriage among parents has sufficiently increased. Consequently, parents have started delaying girl's marriage or at least respecting their decisions about delaying their marriage to an

extent as evident from the qualitative consultations. Except, for the parents of the Madhesi community in Parsa, parents across all districts unanimously stated that they have given the liberty to their daughters to pursue higher education and will not tie them down with the burden of marriage any sooner.

It is important to note that despite the increased level of self-esteem among girls and the ability to make a solo decision, parents have been wary about the company girls spend their time with. In terms of spending time with friends, girls' freedom to make choices has reduced considerably since the midline evaluation, while a solo parental decision is on the rise in the endline. The practice of reaching a common consent among the girls and the family on the number of time girls spend with friends has also remarkably changed. While the degree of girls making their own decision has drastically reduced since the midline, making a combined decision has increased and so has the number of parents limiting their mobility and choices of spending more time with friends.

Based on the qualitative consultations, such changes can be attributed to the rise of self-initiated child marriage among the girls as well the threat of the pandemic that compelled parents from limiting the mobility of their children. Across all districts, it was notable that while parents-led child marriage had reduced to a large extent, self-initiated child marriages are on the rise. Under such circumstances, parents are compelled to curb the liberty of initiating companionship with anyone or spending longer time outside of the home. Parents fear humiliation caused by self-initiated marriage hence monitor who the girls spend their time with, where they go and how long they stay outside.

Also, the pandemic spread a sense of alarm and distress among the mass for a prolonged amount of time. Parents restricted the movement of children merely out of fear of contracting the virus. During a discussion with girls in Dhading, a little sister shared with the researchers that she had remained at home only during the lockdown. She recalled that her parents refrained from going out of the house to meet friends primarily because of the pandemic, but also because she was a girl. While her brother had the liberty to go play with his friends after a while, she was not granted the same level of freedom as her brother, she added.

Increase the level of self-esteem among the girls can be deemed as an accomplishment of the project. Not only has the level of decision-making ability increased among girls (though reduced when compared to the midline at the individual level), parental awareness on the girls' education has also improved as reflected by their increased involvement in joint decision making with the girls.

Sub Group Analysis

Analyzing the location and decision-making ability of the girls, it can be stated that there was no significant correlation between location and decision-making practice during the midline, however, a significant relationship can be seen in the endline. It can be assumed that parents in the peri-urban are more informed than their counterparts in the rural area. With access to information and knowledge, parents bear significantly more decisive power, as reflected in the data above. Informed parents are likely better at making a reasoned decision and able to influence their daughters, which is absent in terms of ignorant parents. Competent parents play a supportive role to the daughters in making their decision. Though the rate of making a joint decision has remarkably reduced in the endline, family taking lead decisions has increased in the peri-urban area.

TABLE 26: ANALYSIS OF DECISION-MAKING ABILITY OF GIRLS

Location	<i>Taking all key decision on their own or with family</i>			
	Midline (p=0.112)		Endline (p=0.000)	
	The decision was taken by the girl or jointly with family	Family Decides	The decision was taken by the girl or jointly with family	Family Decides
Peri-Urban N=246	60.6%	39.4%	45.5%	54.5%
Rural N=266	53.6%	46.4%	62.4%	45.5%

Source: Household Survey and Girls' Survey

In contrast to the above situation, it can be stated girls are still taking lead in making joint decisions in the rural areas rather than parents. It will not be erroneous to state that the girls often lead parents into the issue where parents are ignorant and unaware of the situation. Parents in the rural areas have very low educational competence (chapter 2) hence unable to make an informed decision regarding their children's education.

Analysis of decision-making ability according to districts

It is quite remarkable to note that positive changes are persistent across all criteria of assessment in Parsa. Even when the Sfs E project intervention is the same across all districts, profound changes are noted in Parsa only. There is no conclusive evidence, but the changes in Parsa may be attributed to the *Beti Bachau Beti Padhau*¹⁶ (save daughters, educate daughters) campaign in Province no.2 coupled with Sfs interventions and other widespread project interventions rampant in that province. The widespread campaign also promotes education for girls like the Sfs project.

TABLE 27: ANALYSIS OF DECISION-MAKING ABILITY ACCORDING TO DISTRICTS

	<i>Taking all key decision on their own or with family</i>			
	Midline P=0.000		Endline	
	The decision was taken by the girl or jointly with family	Family Decides	The decision was taken by the girl or jointly with family	Family Decides

¹⁶ Beti Bachau-Beti Padhau' campaign is an insurance scheme to encourage girl education, started in Province 2, Nepal on 15 January, 2019. According to the scheme, every new born girl will be insured in the Province's eight districts, and the girl will receive the insurance amount in lump sum after they get their citizenship certificate. Retrieved from <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/01/16/state-2-kicks-off-beti-bachau-beti-padhau-campaign#:~:text=Janakpur-,Province%20%20government%20started%20the%20implementation%20of%20the%20'Beti%20Bachau,Province's%20eight%20di stricts%20from%20Tuesday.>

Dhading n=127	63.8%	36.2%	74.0%	26.0%
Lamjung n=131	85.5%	14.5%	54.2%	45.8%
Parsa n=80	30.0%	70.0%	54.5%	45.5%
Surkhet n=192	38.5%	61.5%	41.5%	58.5%

On the contrary, the rate of decisions taken by girls or jointly with the family has drastically reduced since the midline in endline but skyrocketed in terms of family decision makings. Rigorous project intervention at the community level through various activities such as street dramas, door-to-door campaigns have had an immense impact on enhancing the level of awareness among parents. increase in the level of parental decisions is not always indicative of taking negative decisions. Rather, parents are making more informed decisions. For instance, a mother in Lamjung shared with the research team that watching the street drama on child marriage which even cover issues of reproductive health she acknowledged and internalized the message the project wanted to disseminate.

“The drama we watched carried a message with it. Not only did we enjoy watching the drama, but also understood the meaning of it. It was not just for enjoyment, but for us to learn and practice. I have thought about things we should or should not do as parents.” – mother, Lamjung

Analysis of key Decision-Making Ability Across Ethnicity

Progressiveness is noted across all ethnicities alike, but particular changes are noted in the Madhesi community more than in other ethnicities. The Madhesi community which appeared the weakest during the midline evaluation seems to have made progress in leaps and bounds till the endline evaluation. The self-esteem of the girls was elevated along with the participation of parents in deciding with the girls. Moreover, making the comparison between both points of evaluation and across all ethnicities, it can be noted that the rate of the decision taken by girls or families jointly has decreased uniformly in the endline while the rate of family-based decisions has increased, except for the Madhesi (middle class). Such changes can be attributed to enhanced awareness among parents who are making the informed decision along with the children rather than each party making independent decisions. As evident across the qualitative consultations with school teachers and government officials alike, the attitude of parents towards girl’s education has remarkably changed over the past couple of years. Parents who once sent boy child to boarding school and girls to public school are no longer making such discriminations and sending both children to the same school. they spare time for the girls to study at home even reducing their engagement in household chores. Teachers across all project districts have also testified that parental engagement in girl’s education has also changed; even though they fail to visit to make constant inquiries about their girl’s progress, they make inquires informally too and take updates on the activities occurring at school.

TABLE 28: KEY DECISION TAKING ABILITY AGAINST ETHNICITY

	<i>Taking all key decision on their own or with family</i>			
	Midline		Endline	
Ethnicity	The decision was taken by the girl or jointly with family	Family Decides	The decision was taken by the girl or jointly with family	Family Decides
Dalit (hill/Tarai) N=138	62.1%	37.9%	55.8%	44.2%
Hill Janajati N=179	63.1%	36.9%	59.8%	40.2%
Madesh (middle class) n=54	29.8%	70.2%	55.6%	44.4%
Hill (brahmin/Chhetri) N=149	51.4%	48.6%	44.3%	55.7%

During the discussion with parents in Parsa, the researchers learned that parents have realized the fact that because of their limited education, their well-being was affected. Therefore, they are placing greater value on the education of their children, which has led to a positive parental attitude towards girl's education. also, since parents have noticed a considerable increase in confidence and capacity among the girls who attend the school, it has motivated them to continually send their children to school. it was quite surprising to learn that there was a kind of competition among the parents in the community to educate their daughters, which was unseen during the midline evaluation.

Analysis of taking key decisions on their own or jointly with family members according to household characteristics

From the table below, it is evident that girls in a male-headed household are more likely to decide on their own or jointly with family than in female-headed households during the endline, which was quite the opposite during the midline. However, assessing the endline status with midline, more girls took decisions themselves or jointly with families during the midline than in the endline and that rate even surpassed the current rate under male-led household. Decisions taken solely by the family were seen highest in the male-headed household during the midline. There has been a significant change in this section too with more instances of the family making a sole decision in female-headed households in the endline evaluation. The current number of families making decisions for girls is the highest since the midline in the evaluation of female-headed households and male-headed households in the endline.

TABLE 29: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS AGAINST THE DECISION-MAKING ABILITY OF GIRLS

Characteristics	<i>Taking all key decision on their own or with family (n=428)</i>				
		Midline		Endline	
		Family Decides	The decision was taken by the girl or jointly with family	Family Decides	The decision was taken by the girl or jointly with family
Gender of Household Head	Female	33.3%	75.9%	48.7%	51.3%
	Male	49.4%	50.6%	38.1%	61.9%
Household head education	Completed primary	45.1%	54.9%	43.8%	56.2%
	Has not completed Primary	41.0%	59.0%	39.7%	60.3%
Covid and the future aspiration (N=352)	Affected	41.4%	58.6%	44.9%	55.1%
	unaffected	50.9%	49.1%	47.5%	52.5%
Involved in household chores	More than 2 hours	45.6%	54.4%	36.8%	63.2%
	2 hours or less	44.9%	55.1%	50.6%	49.4%

The table above shows the result of the cross-tabulation between the areas of decision-making and the nature of the household head assessed during the endline evaluation. An overview of the data left an impression that girls have more liberty to decide on an individual or combined level in a male-headed household and family-led decision more in a female-headed household. But on closer speculation, it is noted that the degree of decision-making rate fluctuates according to the area of assessment. For instance, in terms of deciding on the age of marriage, girls have more decisive power in a male-headed household than in a female-headed household where the family decision was more than in the previous circumstance. It can be assumed that mothers are more concerned about grasping the opportunity to marry off their daughters whenever a proposal from a good and wealthy family comes up. Also, mothers are wary about the delayed marriage of their daughter or the challenge of finding an appropriate household for their daughters when she gets older or even when she pursues a high level of education. This is directly connected with the parental fear of having to give more dowry in marriage to a son-in-law who is of a better caliber than her daughter is.

TABLE 30: CROSS-TABULATION OF THE AREAS OF DECISION-MAKING AS PER HOUSEHOLD HEAD

Decision areas	Female-headed household		Male headed Household	
	Self or joint decision	Family decision	Self or joint decision	Family decision
Whether or not you will go to school	89.9%	10.1%	84.8%	15.2%
Whether or not you will continue in school past this year	86.7%	13.3%	86.7%	13.3%
When/ at what age you will get married	71.5%	28.5%	74.4%	25.6%
If you will work after you finish your studies	93.0%	7.0%	91.1%	8.9%
What type of work you will do after you finish your studies	91.8%	8.2%	88.5%	11.5%
How you spend your free time	89.2%	10.8%	98.0%	7%
How often you spend time with your friends	80.4%	19.6%	88.9%	11.1%

Likewise, the capacity of the girls to make decisions alone and jointly or whether the family decision was coerced on them also depended on the educational qualification of the household head. From the table above some changes are notable in the endline where the number of girls making individual or joint decision has slightly improved while family solely taking the decision has decreased where the household head has not even completed primary education. No significant changes were noted even in the households where the head of the family had at least primary education. based on the quantitative figures in the table above, it may be reasoned that the degree of liberty granted to the girls to make informed decisions or participation of the family members in taking decisions jointly depends upon the level of awareness among parents and their attitude towards girls education. even with minute changes in the number, it may be deduced that while parents appear progressive, the rate of positive changes in parents is extremely gradual.

6.3. Increased Parental Engagement in Girl's Education

Intermediate outcome 3: Increased parental engagement in girl's education: Measured in terms of percentage of parents who go to their girl's school to discuss their progress with their teacher (at least once a year) and Average time spent by girls on household chores.

Through its intervention, SfS aims to increase the parental engagement in their daughter's education, decrease the average amount of time spent by girls on household chores while also increasing the frequency of the parent's visit to their daughter's school and discuss their progress with their teachers. The IO 3 explores the time that the girls spend on household chores along with the involvement of parents with the school regarding the education of their daughters. In all the four project intervention districts: Dhading, Lamjung, Surkhet, and Parsa, attitudes, and behaviours are principally based on gender-based, cultural norms and practice. Consequently, this intermediate outcome will shape the outcomes stated in

the log frame. The findings to measure this intermediate outcome were extracted from the girl's survey, household surveys, and group consultations with the girls, parents, and community members.

TABLE 31: AMOUNT OF TIME GIRLS SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD CHORES

(taking all key decision on their own or with family) Endline n=535	Before Covid: 101.97.85 minutes After Covid: 138.48 minutes
(taking all key decision on their own or with family) Midline n= 530	117.25 minutes

The table above shows the difference in the number of time girls spent on household chores between midline and endline. The girls reported that on average they spent 36.51 minutes more on household chores compared to the amount of time spent before Covid which caused a temporary shut down of all schools. The data shows that the difference in time girls was involved in household chores before and after the covid was significant (p=0.000) too.

Both qualitative and qualitative data from chapter 2 can validate the high level of engagement of girls in household chores during the lockdown. Since the schools were temporarily shut for a duration of almost 4 to 8 months, which varied according to the districts, most girls had to should the entire responsibility of the household which was shared by the mothers during school days. Besides school closure, mobility of the girls was also restricted from the fear of covid hence girls were compelled to engage in household chores more than they normally did during school time.

The table below shows the amount of time the girls spent in the household chores before Covid which has slightly decreased by 14.76 minutes compared to the time they reported spending during the midline. This difference is statistically significant too.

TABLE 32: ANALYSIS OF TIME SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD CHORES ACCORDING TO DISTRICT

	Midline	Endline Before Covid	Endline After Covid	Time difference ML – EL (before covid)	Time difference ML- EL (after covid)	Time difference EL Before-After covid
Dhading n=127	123.37	99.44	147.165	23.93	23.79	47.72
Lamjung n=131	126.41	113.93	146.79	12.48	20.38	32.86
Parsa n=80	106.12	73.63	134.02	32.49	27.9	60.39
Surkhet n=192	109.60	106.65	129.25	2.95	19.65	23

During the midline, there was no significant difference in the meantime spent by girls in the household chores based on district. This has, however, changed after the midline as the average time spent in household chores before Covid by girls in Parsa was significantly lower than girls in other districts. As for the other districts, there was no significant difference.

Analysis of time spent on household chores per ethnicity

During the midline, there was no significant difference in the meantime spent by girls in household chores based on their ethnicity. However, changes were noted in the endline as the average time spent in the household chores before Covid by girls in the Madhesi community was significantly different from girls in other communities. Nonetheless, there was no significant difference between other ethnicities.

Besides, the difference in time spent in household chores between girls from different ethnic backgrounds was nullified by Covid. There is no significant difference in the meantime spent on household chores by girls from different ethnic backgrounds post-Covid.

TABLE 33: HOUSEHOLD CHORES SEGREGATED BY ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	<i>Household Chores in Minutes</i>		
	Midline	Endline Before Covid	Endline After Covid
Dalit (hill/tarai) N=138	122.84 minutes	110.22 minutes	134.35 minutes
Hill Janajati N=179	119.49 minutes	103.91 minutes	143.24 minutes
Madesh (middle class) n=54	100.52 minutes	60.00 minutes	128.89 minutes
Hill (brahmin/Chhetri) N=149	112.70 minutes	105.40 minutes	139.731 minutes

Analysis of time spent on household chores against household characteristics

From the table above, it is noted that while there was no significant difference in the average time spent by the girls from male-headed and female-headed households there was a significant difference during the midline and before Covid. Whereby, girls from the female-headed household were spending a higher amount of time in household chores compared to their peers from male-headed households. Similarly, no relation between the education of the household head and the number of time girls spent in household chores was found in any of the evaluation points or contexts.

TABLE 34: THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD CHORES AGAINST HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics		Midline	Endline Before Covid	Endline After Covid
Gender of Household Head	Female	124.71	111.65	134.81
	Male	113.21	95.28	137.07
Household head education	Completed primary	118.83	100.42	136.34
	Has not completed Primary	115.66	102.56	136.09
Covid and the future aspiration	Affected	116.17	103.63	140.34
	unaffected	120.27	99.57	135.25

6.4. Teaching Quality

Improved teacher's perception and engagement: assessment of improved self-perception before and after training and level of engagement in providing learning support to girls despite school closure. The IO in itself will not be measured as it has been rendered unusable.

The midline evaluation showed an increase in the number of teachers who displayed learner-centered classroom practices, exceeding the target set for evaluation point. The classroom observation showed that 73.73% of the teachers were implementing learner-centered classroom practices. Similarly, classroom observation showed that most of the teachers had scored more than 75% on items that are more concerned with their attitude and behaviour. Teachers scoring at least 75% on the rating scale of the 27-item checklist were considered displaying learner-centered classroom practices. It may be presumed that teachers would have scored a higher percentage by the time of end-line evaluation had the assessment been conducted as per the initial plan.

One of the major factors behind successful learning outcomes among students is the quality of teachers at school. The SfS project is also driven towards enhancing the teaching standard among teachers through various measures; the most common being training teachers on child-centered learning and gender-friendly teachings. Analysis of teacher's assessment on self-perception regarding teaching before and after taking training and their level of engagement in providing learning support to the girls during school closure will be based entirely on qualitative discussions with the teacher, in-school girls, big sisters, parents, and local government.

The SfS project has a wide coverage of teacher-training programs of intervention. The training not only imparted pedagogical skills on a children-friendly approach and student-centered learning but also encourage the teachers through self-motivation and a sense of self-worth.

“Whenever a teacher participates in any training, apart from the skills, the teacher also gets a sense of self-worth that s/he is responsible in shaping children's future”- Head Teacher, Surkhet

Despite taking training on varied subjects, when it comes to implementing pedagogical techniques in regular classes in the school, there exist some obvious barriers, such as a large number of students, limited availability of learning resources, time limitation, rigid course structure, among many others. Nevertheless, according to teachers, as a result of continued engagement in such training, the trend of using interactive learning methods and group exercises and presentations in the classroom has increased in recent years.

“It is impossible to implement all that we learn in the training. We have a rigid course structure to follow and the classroom size is too big that we cannot cater to each student on an individual level. Nevertheless, it is always helpful to engage students in group learning. Therefore, I divide students into large groups and ask them to solve mathematical problems. One of the students from each group has to present the method they applied before the whole class.” – Math Teacher, Surkhet

According to teachers across all districts appreciated the school level training on developing low-cost/ no-cost training materials organized by VSO as highly effective than training organized at the district level. Headteachers in the Parsa district expressed that school-level training organized by the SfS project which focused on all teachers was exceptional. In the past, only a few teachers got the opportunity to participate in the training and learning, seldom sharing lessons learned once the teacher returned to school. now, since the trainings are conducted at school, it helps headteachers to mobilized all teachers to initiate reform programs such as child-friendly governance and disaster management.

“the school-based training was very effective as all the teachers of the school could participate in it. Moreover, we also had the whole school facility at our disposal for practical exercises and demonstrations.” English Teacher, Surkhet

Meanwhile, when inquired about the capacity and provision of organizing teacher’s training with their capacity, headteachers stated that the trained and non-trained teachers interact with each other and share their learning and expertise during informal meetings and staff interactions. Apart from that, schools were not found to have been organizing any specific training for the teachers in their capacity. Similar circumstances were identified in districts other than Surkhet too. In Para, for instance, none of the treatment nor comparison schools were able to design and implement capacity development programs by themselves due to multiple reasons. First, schools have limited resources at their disposal hence they are unable to undertake any capacity development programs internally for the teachers, apart from training two teachers on computer applications second, all schools consulted did not have the in-house capacity to run the training program for teachers, hence relied on consultants for training programs.

Similarly, there has been a marked difference between the trained and new teachers. While the trained teachers are confident in their subject matter and are motivated to create better teaching and learning environment, non-trained teachers may lag behind in terms of motivation to do better. From the experience of monitoring teachers in Dhading and Lamjung, headteachers claim that in comparison to the untrained teacher, trained teachers were found using more resource materials while teaching and promoting a learner-centered class whenever feasible.

6.5. Gender Responsive School Management and Governance

Gender-responsive school management and governance: assessing the learning environment, gender responsiveness of the management, and child-friendly learning environment in school as well as the extension of child protection and GBV during the pandemic.

An inclusive school management plan and its implementation are conducive to a better environment for all students in school. As such, the project has set indicators regarding the school improvement plan under its intermediate outcome of Gender-responsive school management and governance. Therefore, endline evaluation identifies the extent of changes that have occurred at school in terms of gender-responsiveness of the management and sensitivity towards creating child friendly and gender-friendly learning environment

at school. Moreover, the evaluation also concerns if the school had extended its services on child protection and GBV during the pandemic. ‘

There has been significant improvement in child protection compared to the last two years in the consulted schools, mostly due to SfS interventions. Training provided to teachers on how to combat gender-based violence, the promotion of gender equality, and a focus on children’s health and hygiene. The school has provided free sanitary pads from its sources for menstruating students in the last two years, and now, even the Municipality is providing free sanitary pads to the students.

There are also functional and separate toilets for male and female students. But it is worrisome for researchers to witness that the toilet facilities were in a dire state in terms of cleanliness and sanitation in absence of a proper running facility. But hand pumps were noted in the closest proximity of the toilets in some schools in Dhading and Lamjung alike. In addition to that, it was observed that in some instances, the toilets did not have closed doors or windows. In one of the treatment schools in Dhading, girls had to go to the toilet in groups or at least in pairs since the doors lacked locks and one had to guard against outside while the other uses the toilet.

To promote good health, the school is providing free meals for students up to Grade 5. In addition to that, some teachers were specifically designated to listen to the problems of the female students and report back to the headteachers for further actions. According to the headteacher, this system has been working quite well. Physical punishment has reduced significantly in school, and there is also a decreasing trend of physical punishment by parents in the recent past.

There has been a realization of a gender-friendly environment in all consulted schools. Consequently, schools are promoting different activities to ensure a gender-friendly environment in school, including separate toilets for girls and boys, free distribution of sanitary pads, the appointment of focal and female trained teachers to listen to female students’ issues, and choosing girls to hold leadership positions in school activities. Proper disposal of the used sanitary pad is yet another matter of concern identified by the researchers.

Similarly, the mentorship between big sisters and little sisters has proved quite beneficial to the girls. From the qualitative discussions, it was observed and learned that the level of confidence of girls was increased. The little sisters have testified that they are now more confident in class and can question the teachers in case of queries. The little sisters and non -little sisters attribute such change in themselves to the support of big sisters and edge class respectively. While the big sisters continually motivating the girls, Edge classes give them the necessary skill to progress ahead.

The outcome of the mentorship program coupled with teachers’ training is quite remarkable in terms of creating a conducive learning environment for the girls at school is quite remarkable. Teachers have been trained on ample subjects, but the most effective being training on child-centered learning, child protection, making teaching materials with available resources, use of ICT, and on lesson plans as cited by the focal teachers during the qualitative discussion in Dhading and Lamjung. The trained teachers have experienced changes even at a personal level, as a teacher described in Dhading. He said, earlier he used to be very strict with the students using severe means of physical punishment during the classes. But after the training, he reflected on his obsolete method of teaching and came to the conclusion that his approach to teaching needed change. Now, he no longer uses any form of punishment on students, rather he utilizes free classes to give additional coaching to the student.

“I feel more confident in delivering my subject matter. I employ the new methods learned during training to teach math. This is a fun way of teaching and learning experience” – Math teacher, Dhading

When the teacher appears less fearful to students, they can speak up and share their grievances with the teachers too. A Headteacher in a treatment school in Dhading shared how the girls trust his judgment over problems encountered than placing complaints in the complaint box. According to the headteacher,

the girls are confident enough to walk up to him to report the problem. Similarly, teachers are no longer showing any form of discrimination between boys and girls at school. girls were more in number in all treatment schools and it was the girls who were performing better in the class too. however, learning in such a conducive environment was brought to halt due to the pandemic.

During the first couple of months of the pandemic, the reopening of the schools was uncertain. Hence, schools and local government together opted to continue the teaching through online mediums, radio, and television. During our conversation with the Chief Administrative Officer of Sundar Bazar Municipality, we were notified about the initiatives taken by the local government to assist people during the pandemic. Besides the health assistance, the municipality distributed health materials to community schools, distributed textbooks, and educational materials to students as an alternative means to regular school learning. Classes were operated in clusters in wards and toles where students had the opportunity to engage with school teachers and continue learning. However, on reaffirming with the parents and students about receiving the handbook as the municipality had claimed, the response somewhat differed. While most parents were unaware about receiving any such books, those who confirmed were parents who had children below grade seven too. The CAO claims that such novel curriculum development of giving workbook to students has provided additional learning materials to students which were activity-based educational materials with the motive of helping students over fear and stress.

An attempt to conduct classes in a cluster was done Dhading too, but the outcome was not satisfactory. During the discussion with girls, they verified the fact that classes were conducted in clusters in their locality too for a certain time, but it was merely for doing revision and entertainment than proceeding on with the prescribed course. But it did serve to reduce anxiousness caused by covid.

It was common across schools to distribute masks and sanitizers to students as a precautionary measure during the pandemic. Considering the adversity of covid, when the schools resumed, the school management used a thermal gun to monitor the body temperature of each student as they entered the gate as a safety protocol. They even arranged for a place where the students can wash their hands with soap while maintaining distancing. The Head teacher from a treatment school in Lamjung informed that since the school resumed after covid, students are asked to bring their lunch and water from home. And that the students were discouraged leaving class unnecessarily except the time they have to use the toilet. Once inside the classroom, children left the class only to go home in the afternoon.

The impact of covid -19 was felt in child-friendly teaching methods since the teachers are in rush to complete the course. The pandemic affected the schools at multiple levels. First, due to the prolonged lockdown, the course of study proposed for the academic session was significantly affected. Since the schools were closed for almost 8 months, class hours have been amplified with morning and after schools to make up for the lost time. Under such circumstances, teachers are more concerned about completing the course rather than making learning a fun activity.

“A lot of teachers appear disoriented about handling the pressure of finishing the course. We are not sure for how long we are going to be affected by it” – Head Teacher, Surkhet

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

Learning

As utmost in-school girls identified since the beginning of phase two of the project has already graduated from secondary school by the endline evaluation, and in the face of prolonged school closure due to Covid-19 pandemic, end-line data collection was modified to measure learning perception over measuring the literacy and numeracy test scores. A total of 78.7% of the girls demonstrated perceived learning

improvement since the midline evaluation- a major project achievement. Some of the common forms of learning performance improvement highlighted by the girls are 'examination score', 'increased learning interest', 'classroom participation, and 'lesson comprehension'.

Girls mainly attributed their achievements made in the learning outcome to the support received from the learning support classes and the EDGE club simultaneously, both of which have boosted their confidence. The empathetic attitude of the teachers, participatory learning in the learning support classes, and the amiable learning experience with the PGLs in the EDGE club were some of the key factors highlighted by the girls as the drivers of their successful learning experience. Besides this, parental support also played a vital role in the learning achievement of the girls since they ensured a helpful learning environment at home mainly in the form of girl's reduced engagement in the household chores and increased study time. This has given the girls the liberty to even attend the EDGE club occurring at other times besides regular school hours.

In terms of the impact of covid-19, 82.1% of the girls believed that the pandemic will affect their future aspirations since much learning time was lost during the 9-month long school closure. Also, not everyone had access to the smartphones, internet, radio, and television to continue remote learning nor could they engage in self-learning through engagement with peer/ mentors to acquire skills and knowledge required to get employed in the future.

Some of the recommendation that focused on learning outcome in terms of scalability, sustainability ad replicability:

- Coordination among the schools and the local government of the project intervention area to replicate the learning support classes and EDGE Club, with a larger capacity and being more inclusive nature
- Consultation among the schools to develop a sustainable plan to replicate the project activities/achievements
- Lobbying with the local and federal government to share project findings and to encourage the government to incorporate plans of replicating at least the mentorship program, EDGE club, and the learning support classes.

Transition

In the end-line evaluation, the project had only one cohort of girls for transition assessment: the in-school girls enrolled in the secondary level. For the in-school girls, the project has outlined a pathway that they are expected to follow for them to be considered as a successful transition. These pathways are linked with the re-enrolment in formal or non-formal education, including vocational training or involvement in technical training, safe employment, and self-employment. All in all, 94% of the girls from this cohort has a successful transition while the remaining 6 % had an unsuccessful transition. Some of the most cited reasons for these unsuccessful transitions were marriage, drop out from school due to financial condition post-Covid, and were out of contact with the school.

In the face of the pandemic, the livelihood support and training activities could not be implemented, hence a lot of girls transitioning from secondary school and out-of-school girls, who no longer wish to study or are married lost the opportunity to gain support to uptake a livelihood activity.

Some of the recommendation for the transition outcome through the stance of replicability and scale-up:

- Establish a network between the out-of-school girls with skills development institutes at the local level with the financial support from the local government

- Regular monitoring and update on the status of the in-school and out-of-school girls

Sustainability

At the endline, sustainability outcome was measured at two levels only: at schools and the local government across the institution's ability to continue, replicate and scale up the project achievements.

At the school level, the tangible support received by the school, for instance, the infrastructural support received by the schools from the project can be deemed sustainable, as schools demonstrated ownership of that support and readiness to maintain and sustain them in the longer run. Similarly, achievements in teaching practice made through training for teachers as well as headteachers, are likely to be sustainable as there were several pieces of evidence where we observed teachers applying the teaching techniques in their regular classrooms. Apart from these, key mentorship support rolled out through big sisters is likely to face sustainability challenges, as schools are unable to sustain this with their resources. Additionally, the schools have not received any firm commitment from the local governments in this regard. The prospects of continuity of project activities appeared extremely desolate among the treatment schools, mostly in absence of sufficient resources that hinder their ability to replicate or scale up the activities. Nonetheless, because of the willingness shown by the Big Sisters to continue even after the project ceased out, there is a bleak hope of continuity of the mentorship.

In terms of the local government, they have been extremely positive about the project activities and lauded the outcome, especially the mentorship program. They seem optimistic about giving continuity to the program too. However, the government finds it somewhat challenging in terms of replicating it given the limited budget, a large number of students across many schools under each municipality, and ward. Nonetheless, even with the limited budget and debilitated education planning, they do hope to scale up the program while continuing under the government banners or simply replicate to increase the number of direct beneficiaries.

Recommendation for the sustainability of the project achievements:

- Widespread dissemination and sharing of project achievement at large scale forum targeting not just the federal and provincial government, but mega business houses too to attract investment in other non-project areas

Intermediate Outcome

IO 2: increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls

The IO of increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls is measured in terms of an increase in the percentage of the girls reporting taking all key decisions on their own. Results show that girls could solely or jointly with the family members take decisions on whether to continue school in the subsequent years, age of choice to get married, the decision to work after completing studies, and the type of work to opt for after completing studying. Discreetly, these areas of assessment are statistically significant too. However, when the set of key decision-making areas are measured holistically, remarkable changes in the ability of the girls to take key decisions on their own or jointly with their family members cannot be noted. Boosting the self-esteem of the girls is a major component of the project theory of change and is associated with the success of the girls to successfully transit from one phase into another.

Following are the recommendation for sustaining SFS 's efforts in achieving the boosted self-esteem among the girls

- Share success stories of girls among others who had made persona decision and proved to benefit them in long run so that their confidence is boosted and are able to make such informed decisions.

IO3: increased parental engagement in girl's education

The IO of increasing parental engagement in the girl's education measured in terms of percentage of parents who to their girl's school to discuss their progress with their teacher (at least once a year) and average time spent by the girls on household chores. In the end-line girls had reported they spent 36.51 minutes more on household chores compared to the amount of time spent before Covid, which lead to the temporary shutdown of schools. The difference between the amount of time spent on household chores before and after the covid were also statistically significant too. similarly, it was known that the girls spent 14.76 minutes less on household chores before covid when compared to the midline data. This difference is statistically significant too.

Similarly, from the qualitative consultations it could be deduced that even though the parental attitude towards girl's education had positively changed, their engagement in making inquiries, visiting schools to inquire about the progress of the child is still rare and among those parents who were doing it, they were mostly mothers.

Recommendation for sustaining the project's effort for increasing parental engagement in the household chores are:

- Continuous engagement of the project at household and community to reduce the gender disparity in terms of work division at household level and importance of shared responsibility through the door-to-door campaign or street dramas
- Continuity of community sensitivity to ensure a change in parents' attitudes about girl's education and their role in decision making remain intact and does not relapse

IO4: improved teaching quality

The IO of improving teaching quality has in itself been rendered unusable, however, this has been substituted with the assessment regarding teacher's perception and engagement. Here, teachers were gauged in terms of their perception of self-improvement before and after the training and their level of engagement in providing learning support to girls during the school closure. The project had wide coverage of teacher-training programs of intervention. The training not only imparted pedagogical skills on a children-friendly approach and student-centered learning but also encouraged the teachers through self-motivation and a sense of self-worth. Nonetheless, there did exist some obvious barriers that limited teachers from fully implementing pedagogical techniques in regular classes, such as a large number of students, limited availability of learning resources, time limitation, and a rigid course structure.

Recommendation for sustaining Sfs's achievement in changing teacher's perceived self-improvement and increased level of engagement in providing learning support to the girls can be maintained are:

- Coordinate with schools and local governments for the replication of the best practices of sharing skills and knowledge among trained and non-trained teachers through subjects committee
- Prolonged school closure due to Covid had demotivated teachers at many levels, therefore, an engagement program dedicated to teachers motivation could be designed, which in turn would assure the sustainability of the child-friendly teaching practices in the classroom.

IO5: gender-responsive school management and governance

The IO of gender-responsive school management and governance assessed the learning environment, gender-responsiveness of the management, and child-friendly learning environment in school as well as the extension of child protection and GBV during the pandemic. There has been significant improvement in child protection mechanisms in comparison to the situation in the last two years. Complain response mechanism training was provided to teachers on ways of addressing issues related to gender-based violence, promotion of gender equality, and focus on children's health and hygiene.

There has been a realization of a gender-friendly environment in all consulted schools. Consequently, schools are promoting different activities to ensure a gender-friendly environment in schools. Consequently, schools are promoting different activities to ensure a gender-friendly environment in school, including separate toilets for girls and boys, free distribution of sanitary pads, the appointment of focal and female trained teachers to listen to female student's issues, and choosing girls to hold leadership positions in school activities.

Recommendation for sustaining the achievements of the project in terms of developing gender-responsive school management and governance are:

- To ensure optimum utilization of the CRM as an effective referral mechanism for girls against any safeguarding threats may face at school, girls need to be able to develop complete trust upon the confidentiality and anonymity regarding the use of CRM. In doing so, it will be necessary to increase the confidence of girls in the process and increase their trust in the system
- Engage in dialogue with girls to sensitize them about the use of CRM
- Engagement of boys in dialogue to increase their awareness about the traditional gendered roles, equity, and co-existence in the society
- Project activities designed to incorporate poor-performing students, rather than setting criteria

based on gender



Annex I: Project Design and Interventions

This section incorporates the details of the interventions, intermediate outcomes and outcomes of the project.

Table 1: Project design and intervention before Covid-19

Activity	What output will the intervention contribute to?	What Intermediate Outcome will the intervention contribute to and how?	How will the intervention contribute to achieving the learning, transition, and sustainability outcomes?	Start to end date of activity	Target beneficiaries (and numbers)
Big Sister–Little Sister mentoring scheme; build girls’ capacity and skills through training on civic education, and life skills, child protection	% of marginalized adolescent girls (MAGs) who received training on child protection and benefited from learning support classes to build their self-esteem	Increased attendance of marginalized girls. A combination of peer mentoring at community level, community dialogue with community mobilisers, ASRH education for girls, parents and communities, working with parents to address reasons for absenteeism from school for e.g. specific time of year or times of day and strategies to address these, together with extra learning support through schools to enable girls to progress.	The mentoring support mechanism embedded in schools and communities by big sisters and adult champions supports little sisters with their confidence and aspiration. The improved confidence and aspiration is capitalized through the after school learning support classes among the peer groups in which strong students provide academic support to the other students which is extended to the higher grades supporting the lower grades. The areas of remedial support identified by the students attending these support sessions are brought back to the regular classes where teacher support is required.	2017 to 2020 March	Little Sisters (In school girls) 1255

<p>Conduct bridge classes and learning support classes and support girls from bridge classes to enroll in school Establish non-formal girls' clubs to include English and Digital for Girls Education (EDGE) implementation, training of peer group leaders /educators, incorporation of life skills training, ASRH, career counselling for Grade 10 -12, and visits from female role models Life skill ToT for selected big sister Develop ASRH and MHM package and train Community Mobilisers, Big Sisters Brothers and Adult Champions</p>	<p>% of target MAGs who have increased knowledge of digital, English, ASRH and appropriate life skills</p>	<p>Increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls. Big sisters feel empowered through taking on the role of mentors which is successively taken up by little sisters who in turn mentor others. Increased confidence in learning at school leads to increased sense of achievement and self-esteem; parents, teachers, peers and the wider community value girls, and actively demonstrate this through enabling the girls to prioritize their education. ASRH education also support to build capacity and increased self-esteem for girls whereas, now they stop seeing themselves as only wives or mothers, recognized that they have a choice when it comes to deciding when and if to have</p>	<p>Schools has committed to continued learning support classes for girls who have poor performance, in addition to mentoring schemes and community/parental engagement to help increase raise awareness and socio-cultural barriers to girls' education. Big sisters will specifically liaise with grooms' families to help married girls return to school and increase SRH education within the community to prevent early pregnancy. These will contribute to increased community engagement in girls' education and successful transition of the girls.</p>	<p>2017 to 2020 March</p>	<p>320 Big Sisters, 360 out of schoolgirls, 1395 EDGE in schoolgirls, estimated 2900 in school marginalized girls</p>
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		children. This combined with gender sensitive practices in the classroom and in the school, child protection polices effectively implemented and increased opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge for work and employment.			
<p>Develop and broadcast public service announcement (PSA),</p> <p>Community dialogues- on different issues ASRH,</p> <p>Child protection, civic education, etc., Street Drama performed by LS, BS, AC,</p> <p>Orientation on Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) for teachers, head teachers, SMC & PTA, child club and,</p> <p>Train VCPC to establish mechanisms for reporting abuse and harassment</p> <p>Interaction meeting of SMC and</p>	% of target marginalize girls' parents who actively support their child's completion of secondary education.	Increased community engagement in girls' education. The awareness sessions targeted at parents and girls on child protection policy through well-designed community outreach activities that include community dialogues, street dramas, IEC material developed in local language and public service announcements (PSA). Child protection and life skills to develop girls' and families' self-esteem and confidence levels to voice	A combination of community engagement interventions to raise awareness and initiate dialogue as well as school-community mechanisms such as SMCs, PTAs, monitoring of education policy implementation at school level including child protection policies, and building capacity of Gender Focal points within the education support unit in the Palikas level. Adult Champions, big sisters and community mobilisers working with parents to support their daughters' learning in and outside school, setting up 'learning corners' at home and liaising	2017 to 2020 March	Parents (3000) 980 SMC and PTA members, 720 teachers

<p>Municipality on education plans</p>		<p>any form of abuse or violence they might face. Communities and parents will also witness positive changes in their daughters, as their confidence, skills, self-esteem and ability to support family decision-making at home increased, which will feed back into communities valuing educated girls.</p>	<p>with families at times when girls are at risk of dropping out (to get married for example) or non-attendance (during menstruation) to come up with strategies to support girls to remain/return to school.</p>		
<p>Train and mentor subject teachers to improve quality of teaching (i.e., Math, Nepali, Science, ASRH)</p> <p>Ongoing Mentoring and Coaching for teachers by National and Intl volunteers Influence government system to recognize work of schools and community</p> <p>Identify subject specific teachers and take assessment and trained all teachers</p>	<p>% of teachers in target schools with increased capacity to teach their subject in a learner-centered way</p>	<p>Improved teaching quality. After the training, coaching and capacity building, Teachers will have the skills, attitude and content knowledge to effectively teach Nepali, Math, and ASRH as well as strategies of assessment for learning and assessment of learning, use gender-responsive teaching methodologies and have</p>	<p>Enhancing the capacity of teachers through IVEs train and coach teachers on child-friendly, inclusive and gender sensitive methodologies to improve the participation of girls in learning, combined with direct school support to teacher professional development and subject specific capacity building in literacy and numeracy. Teachers are supported to act as peer mentors and set up communities of practice within their schools.</p>	<p>2017 to 2020 March</p>	<p>196 subject matters teachers and 490 other teachers</p>

		improved perception of girls as learners			
Train HT, EDUC, SMC, PTA on child protection and safeguarding, implementing mechanism for reporting abuse,	% of target schools with improved child protection policies and practice	Through building the capacity on-the-job of individual education officials within the EDC Unit including, gender Focal Point and head teachers as well as developing child-friendly inclusive school improvement plans that are responsive of the needs of girls, and include clear mechanisms for child protection issues to be reported and dealt with effectively. Additionally, support to schools and local education units (including HTs) provide ongoing professional development to teachers and mechanisms for addressing teacher absenteeism and teacher performance issues.	Child protection mechanisms will be established in schools and within the community through the PTA and Village Child Protection Committee. Creation of Children’s clubs/Girls’ Education Network will provide girls and boys exercise their leadership skills through involvement in developing the SIPs and “mentoring” younger students. The Girls’ Education Network will provide a safe space for girls to discuss their issues and identify solutions. It will also develop strategies to create a reading (and learning) culture for other children with the use of materials from the reading corners, Gender-sensitive SIPs will be developed by the SMC and PTA so that girls feel safe in school and confident to participate in activities, learning support classes will be provided to poor performing girls so that they are able to	2017 to 2020 March	980 SMC/PTA members including 49 HTs

			improve their performance and transition to the next level.		
Accompanied support visit to Surkhet to support initial set up of Girls Transition Fund – including negotiations with SACCOS, Training of trainers in district in financial literacy and business skills-linked to economic empowerment, conduct economic empowerment training for OOS BS (1 districts), Train SAACO for micro-grant for economic empowerment, Set up GTF - Low-interest Loan	% of trained marginalized out of school girls with increased capacity to establish an enterprise	Gaining skills and means to set up their own business will give girls the option of continuing their own education and/or provide economic support to their families, giving them increased status and decision-making power within the family unit.	Economic empowerment through financial literacy and business literacy to enable them to be economically independent whether they choose to continue their education to grade 12 or seek employment	2019	130 OOS girls

Table 2: Project design and Intervention after Covid-19 (Mid Term Response Plan)

English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) learning content broadcast through radio FM	Marginalized girls can continue to access to alternative learning options during and after the COVID-19 crisis,	Connection to and continuation of teaching and learning. EDGE learning activity has been adapted from EDGE course materials and broadcast from radio FM and distributed via SD cards and made	As the Government of Nepal has initiated radio lessons for each class where radio is one of the highest access during this pandemic situation. Marginalized girls have access to radio for distance learning to fulfill the learning	April to Dec 2020	EDGE members 1395
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		available to access online.	gaps. Master Trainers and the project team conducted one-to-one follow up support via telephone to ensure that girls engage with the radio content and can complete the tasks. A record of learning has been maintained for every club member		
Re-printing of learning materials and distribution among the marginalized girls and boys	Marginalized girls can continue to access to alternative learning options during and after the COVID-19 crisis,	Adaptation of the existing EDGE content created into self-study materials/reading packs in print and audio content on SD cards to promote home-based learning and engagement of parents in supporting their children's learning as well as safeguarding	Primary actors who don't have access on internet provided self-study learning packs with simple tasks which help them to enhance the reading skills, communication, and creativity. Simple tasks which was performed and followed by Master trainers and the project team contributed to their learning outcomes.	April to Dec 2020	EDGE members 1395 and 9784 marginalized boys and girls
Competitions on creativity through distance mode. Supporting/ encouraging schools to keep connected with their students during lockdown	Marginalized girls can continue to access to alternative learning options during and after the COVID-19 crisis,	Creative activities from distance mode helps children to engaged at home in learning process during the COVID-19 crisis and ensured connections are maintained between schools and children. It strengthened the message that learning must continue, children belief that schools will reopen, and children were	Interested and children who have access on internet got opportunity, learnt and engaged in activities such as, essay writing, drawing and poetry writing on major components and need-based topics which contributed on Learning and transition.	April to Dec 2020	Girls (170)

		expected to return which contributed on Connection and Continuation of Teaching and Learning.			
Radio communication campaign	Marginalized girls can continue to access to alternative learning options during and after the COVID-19 crisis,	Success stories of girls from EDGE was widely communicated to amplify and contextualize the message including short videos of role models of society in the part of awareness raising activity (Preventing Child Marriage and Menstruation Hygiene Management) The activity also contributed to the wider agenda around girls' education connection continuity and learning.	By sharing inspirational stories, project evident that the girls had motivated to continue studying from Radio communication campaign activities that contributed to increase self-esteem of girls in the community and empower to continue their learning. ..	April to Dec 2020	NA
Support to learning continuity	Marginalized girls were supported additionally to fulfil their learning gaps due to COVID-19 crisis.	Distribution of Back-to-School kits promoting hygiene and health promotion practice in schools, including messages of physical distancing and supported schools to establish handwashing stations, distribution of colorful stories books in COVID-19 context for students, how to	Alignment with government school reopening guidelines and COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, most marginalized boys and girls were supported to those who don't have access to learning materials. This helps learners to continue learning in school which help students to connect with classroom activity and act as a diversional therapy) contributed to	April to Dec 2020	Marginalized girls 3049

		cope with new normal situation to continue education contributed to return to school	learning and transition.		
Support Local government on education planning process in line with emergency response.	Marginalized girls were supported additionally to fulfil their learning gaps due to COVID-19 crisis.	Through coordination meetings, reviewing the existing plan, providing feedback and collaborating with municipality/Palikas Education plan process alignment with the emergency response in the context of COVID-19 by which local government and schools had taken lead for finding students who do not return to schools and actions to take that enabled boys and girls return to school.	This activity contributed to established systems, guidelines, policy and plans as per the government school reopening guidelines support to GEC's Learning and Sustainability outcomes.	April to Dec 2020	17 Palikas
Psycho-social first aid support and messaging	Teachers, community volunteers and parents understand psychosocial first aid support and are able to apply skills/knowledge to support themselves and children during COVID-19 pandemic and after.	Capacity building through expert on Psychological first aid support from distance to teachers, community volunteers help to increase skills and knowledge. Trained community staff then cascaded the message and support parents' children were needed	Awareness and understanding the importance of psychosocial first aid support helps teachers, community volunteers, girls and their parents in this difficult situation which directly contributed to the GEC learning and transition outcomes.	April to Dec 2020	Teachers (547) and 63 community volunteers

		contributed Wellbeing and resilience.			
Mentoring through SBS/ AC	Teachers, community volunteers and parents understand psychosocial first aid support and are able to apply skills/knowledge to support themselves and children during COVID-19 pandemic and after.	Mobilization of Big Sisters/adult champion, community health worker to communicate message on ASRH, child protection, life skills, preventing from COVID-19 transmission– conducted through telephone calls and door to door visit where possible contributed wellbeing and resilience.	Big Sisters/Adult Champion interacted with the parents of vulnerable children and girls encourage parental support in the context of COVID-19, Mobilization community health workers door to door visit helps to prevent from COVID-19 transmission contributed to GEC learning and transition outcomes.	April to Dec 2020	700 Little Sisters
On-air Radio Program (Short drama) on Psychosocial Support, early marriage and violence against women in the context of COVID-19	Teachers, community volunteers and parents understand psychosocial first aid support and are able to apply skills/knowledge to support themselves and children during COVID-19 pandemic and after.	Radio has been known as one of the effective means of communication in this pandemic situation so broadcasting short radio drama messaging about shock and stress to parents contributed to wellbeing and resilience.	Information broadcasting on early marriage, Sexual reproductive Health message, violence against women and girls in the context of COVID-19 and where to report if any kinds of harassment, violence happen in the home and community contributed to the GEC learning and transition outcome.	April to Dec 2020	6072 marginalized girls
Training on COVID 19 outreach and selfcare to project team (distance mode)	Teachers, community volunteers and parents understand psychosocial first aid support and are able to apply skills/knowledge to support themselves and	Equipped with the skills and knowledge on protective measures and guidance in COVID-19 through capacity building training with the support of expert on outreach and self-	Alignment with VSO Duty of care, WHO and Nepal government guidelines helps marginalized girls through outreach activities and contributed to GEC, transition, learning outcomes in the long run.	April to Dec 2020	63 Community volunteers and staffs

	children during COVID-19 pandemic and after.	care requirements to the community frontline staff who engaged directly in the community helps and contributed to the marginalized girl's wellbeing and resilience. .			
Training on safeguarding, GBV and referral system to community volunteers, teachers (through online portal)	Marginalized girls were supported by community volunteers and teachers on safeguarding and GBV needs in this COVID-19 pandemic	The orientation from distance to community volunteers and teachers on how to operate online portal who have access to internet helps to increase knowledge on safeguarding, GBV contributed to social protection and safety of marginalized girls in the pandemic situation.	This activity has been linked with the government priorities in the COVID-19 crisis to build the capacity of community volunteers and teachers contributed to GEC learning and sustainability outcomes.	April to Dec 2020	63 Community volunteers and staffs
Information dissemination	Marginalized girls were supported by community volunteers and teachers on safeguarding and GBV needs in this COVID-19 pandemic	Broadcasted PSA, radio jingle, bulk SMS to parents about the safeguarding/child Protection risks, Child marriages, GBV, Protection, Menstrual Hygiene. and distribution of pocketbook including service providers' information to the primary factors contributed to social protection and safety of the marginalized girls	Informed and communication about the services available in their community helps parents to support their children and contributed to GEC learning and transition outcomes.	April to Dec 2020	Estimated 370000 boys and girls
Safety Materials support to Community Volunteers (CV)	Marginalized girls were supported by	Access on safety materials to follow the safety	Community volunteers are the only frontline	April to	63 community volunteers

	community volunteers and teachers on safeguarding and GBV needs in this COVID-19 pandemic	measures in the context of COVID-19 helps community volunteers to work directly in the community, schools and with the parents of marginalized girls and provide mentoring as well as communicate COVID-19 safety messages contributed to social protection and safety of the marginalized girls.	worker in this crisis context where, they provide mentoring support activities in the community. So the safety materials has encouraged and build confidence and motivated to conduct home visit, deliver messages to girls and the families definitely contributed to the girls learning and transition outcomes.	Dec 2020	
CRM Follow up meeting in schools (after schools reopen)	Marginalized girls were supported and protected from traditional harmful practices.	Follow-up support to CRM committees in schools which have been inactive while schools were closed. After school reopens follow up meeting has been conducted in schools to address complaints and responses received in schools through complaint boxes where girls and boys can drop their issues in the boxes contributed to Influencing society and institutions - combatting exclusionary norms.	This follow up activities ensured the existing mechanism is in place and functional, running effectively and actively as per the government policy. This norms and systems have been identified as one of the strong evidences to protect gender-based violence in the schools. Government has recently circulated to all the schools to establish this CRM as a mandatory requirement in this crisis situation which contributed to learning and sustainability of the GEC outcomes.	April to Dec 2020	49 schools

<p>Community Level Campaign- Back to school, COVID-19 awareness, Preventing Child Marriage</p>	<p>Marginalized girls were supported and protected from traditional harmful practices.</p>	<p>Under “Back to school” community level campaign messages on preventing child marriage displayed through digital flex board, and distribution of IEC materials in the community in coordination with schools and Palikas contributed to make awareness and influencing society and institutions combating exclusionary norms in the community.</p>	<p>Cases of child marriage has been increased and reported during this COVID-19 context, so the Community level campaign able to disseminate messages in the COVID crisis about school enrolment after school reopening, awareness on preventing child marriage and dowry system led to contribute to learning and sustainability of the GEC outcomes.</p>	<p>April to Dec 2020</p>	<p>24 Palikas</p>
<p>Technical support for local government to formulate and implement CP Policy and Mechanism</p>	<p>Marginalized girls were supported and protected from traditional harmful practices</p>	<p>Out of 24 Palikas where SfSE-II worked only 7 Palikas has been formed the CP Policy before COVID-19. Project provides technical support to the local government to formulate and implement CP policy and Mechanism in the context of pandemic through series of meetings, workshops contributed to influencing society and institutions combating exclusionary norms in the community.</p>	<p>Project has provided technical support through mobilizing local technical expert to formulation the CP policy and Mechanism which contributed to the sustainability outcomes and able to embed project learning in the policy and wider dissemination.</p>	<p>April to Dec 2020</p>	<p>24 Palikas</p>

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Annex 2: Endline Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The following section outlines the approach the approach and methodology of the midline evaluation for Sister for Sister Education Project- II. The quantitative data was remotely collected in December (6 to 18), 2020 while the qualitative data collection commenced on the last week of January 2021 and completed on the first week of February 2021. This section also discusses the outcomes and intermediate outcomes level measurements, tools and methods of data collection, the rationale of the tools used and frequency of data collection. Where applicable, this section also discusses changes in approach, methodology, and tools compared to the midline.

I. Outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes

Table 1 Changes in the Midline Outcome/Intermediate Outcomes

MIDLINE		
Outcome/IOs	Indicators	Reason behind change in the Outcome/IOs during the end-line
Outcome 1: Learning		
Literacy indicator	Average SeGRA score	The mean SeGRA score of the intervention group increased by 7.18% from the baseline, which has met the target set by the project. Also, it would be challenging to administer school-based learning assessment as girls from grade 10 have graduated since the midline.
Numeracy indicator	Average SeGMA score	The mean SeGMA score of the intervention group increased by 18.15% from the baseline, exceeding the target set by the project. Also, it would be challenging to administer school-based numeracy skill assessment among girls from grade 10 since they have graduate since the baseline.
Digital Literacy	Number of girls with competent level in digital literacy)	The standard tool to test the digital literacy was rendered unusable in the end-line because of the prolonged closure of the EDGE club due to Covid-19.
English Proficiency	Number of girls with A2 level in English)	The standard tool to test the English literacy was also rendered unusable in the end-line due to prolonged closure of EDGE club due to Covid-19.
Outcome 2: Transition	Number of girls who successfully transition	Transition among the OOS girls in Parsa not tracked in the end-line while Little Sisters are traced for their transition
Outcome 3: Sustainability	Average % of income invested in each of their girl's education	Analysis of income omitted in the end-line with the assumption that no drastic changes would occur in the economic status of the family within a year's time.
	Community members demonstrating positive attitude towards girl's education	NA
	Number of schools scoring acceptable or above in CRM sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain CRMs)	This outcome was deemed unusable in the end-line since the schools were closed for a long duration.
	Number of schools scoring acceptable or above in teachers training assessment (ability to train incoming teachers in learner-centered classroom practices)	Pre-test and Post-test of teachers participating in the teacher's training not conducted, hence not used in the end-line either.

	Number of schools who score acceptable or above in SIP sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain SIPs)	Due to prolonged school closure, assessment based on the score cards developed in the midline rendered unusable in the end-line.
	Number of monitoring, coordination, advocacy and learning sharing meeting conducted by VSO's SfS project which was attended by officials	The indicator developed for the midline, not deemed usable in the end-line.
	Number of requests for technical support received by VSO from authorities	The indicator developed for the midline, not deemed usable in the end-line.
	Number of MoU signed by district/local/national education representatives in support of VSO SfS project	the indicator developed for the midline, not deemed usable in the end-line.
IO 1: Increased attendance	Attendance rates (on spot checks)	Prolonged school closure due to Covid-19 made it impossible for spot check, hence omitted in the end-line.
	Attendance rate (school records)	Prolonged school closure due to Covid-19 made it impossible for spot check, hence omitted in the end-line.
	Attendance rates (Big Sister record)	Prolonged school closure due to Covid-19 made it impossible for spot check, hence omitted in the end-line.
IO 2: Increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls	Number of girls taking key decisions on their own	NA
IO 3: Increased parental engagement in girls' education	Number of parents who go to their daughter's school to discuss their progress with their teacher (at least once a year)	NA
	Average time spent by girls on household chores	NA
IO4: improved teaching quality	Number of trained teachers displaying centered classroom practices	Pretraining and post training assessment of the teachers replaced with qualitative consultations to determine the teacher's level of engagement in providing learning support to the girls in-spite of the school closure.
IO5: Gender-responsive school management and governance	Number of schools scores acceptable or above SIP progress assessment	% of schools scoring acceptable score in SIP progress assessment has been removed in the end-line. However, qualitative consultation was conducted to assess the learning environment, gender responsiveness of the management and child friendly learning environment in school. moreover, evaluation of the school extending its service of child protection and GBV to community during pandemic was also conducted.
	Number of schools scoring acceptable or above in Complaint Responsive Mechanism functionality assessment	

Table 2: Endline Outcome / IO and Indicators

Outcome	Level at which measurement will take place, e.g.	Tool and mode of data collection (please specify both the quantitative and	Rationale, i.e. why is this the most appropriate	Frequency of data collection, i.e. per evaluation	Who collected the data?	Discuss any changes from ML (including whether this indicator is new)
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	<i>household, school, study club, etc.</i>	<i>qualitative tool used)</i>	<i>approach for this outcome</i>	<i>point, annually, per term</i>		
Outcome 1: Learning						
Perception on learning	Household and school	Qualitative tools FGD and KII with IS girls, parents, teachers and head teachers	Qualitative tools are apt in terms of generating information on perceptions towards learning practices from household and in school girls.	Per evaluation point	External evaluator	Indicators measuring SeGRA and SeGMA scores substituted with qualitative consultations that assess the perception towards learning practices from the household and school girls during the pandemic.
Digital and Literacy competence of girls	In school girls (EDGE club)	Qualitative tools: FGD and KII with girls from EDGE club and teachers	Since the % of girls with improved rated of Digital and English competency could not be assessed due to the prolonged closure of the EDGE club, indicators were modified to gauge the impact on overall learning and sustainability.	Per evaluation point	External evaluator	Standardized test conducted by the British Council were substituted with assessment of their changes in their learning perception that affects the overall learning and sustainability of the project activities.
Outcome 2: Transition						
Transition indicator of % of girls who successfully transitioned	Household and Little Sisters	Quantitative tool: Project Monitoring Report Qualitative tools: FGD, KII with IS girls, Big Sisters and teachers	No indicator to collect data in the Endline, instead project monitoring report will be used. Qualitative data will focus on assessing impact of Covid and intention among the girls to re-enroll to school.	Per evaluation point for qual data	Project External evaluator	Assessment of % of girls who transitioned successfully in to a pathway replaced with qualitative inquiry that focused on assessing impact of Covid in the transition phase and the intention of girls to re-enroll in school after the schools opened after the lockdown.
Outcome 3; Sustainability						
Community members demonstrating positive attitude towards girl's education	Community	Qualitative tool: FGD and KII with parents and Big Sisters	This is deemed suitable since it assesses the type of support and involvement of parents and	Per evaluation point	External evaluation	NA

			community members in assuring girls' education.			
Schools exhibiting improvement and maintenance of CRM	Schools	Qualitative tools: FGD and KII with parents, teachers and head teachers	In order to gauge the schools in terms of its ability to continue or replicate and sustain accomplished results.	Per evaluation point	External evaluator	NA
Local Level Government exhibiting additional interest and willingness to take up ownership of the project activities	Municipality office	Qualitative tool: KII with education officer or chairperson of the municipality	Assess government interest, additional investment plans, policy changes and transfer of the project achievements and activities.	Per evaluation point	External evaluator	the endline evaluation will focus on ownership and scale-up of project activities by school and system-level stakeholders. Also, midline was too early to capture sustainability but could only look at the direction the project moved towards sustainability. Since the project has invested and worked heavily on sustainability post midline and the project is towards its end, it is the right time to focus on this. Furthermore, what model worked/ did not work for the project can be used to either share with the government and wider stakeholders for possibilities of scale up, or generate learnings to inform future interventions - replication or scale-up.
IO 2: Increased Self-Esteem and Empowerment of girls	Households and Schools	Quantitative tools: Girls' survey Qualitative tools: FGS and KII with parents, teachers and head teachers	The indicators will be used to assess the changes seen in the % of girls taking key decisions on their own or jointly with family	Per evaluation point	External Evaluator	N/A
IO3: Increased Parental Engagement in girl's education	Household	Quantitative tool: Household survey Qualitative tool: FGD and KII IS girls, Big Sisters and parents	It will aid to look I to the support girls are receiving at home to continue their education during the Pandemic and how proactive has the community been in ensuring the continuation of girl's education.	Per evaluation point	External evaluation	

Average time spent by girls on household chores	School	Quantitative tool: Household survey Qualitative tool: FGD with in school girls	it will disclose the amount of time girls spent on household chores, especially during the lockdown	per evaluation point	External evaluation	NA
IO4: Improved teaching quality	School	Quantitative tool: project data on pre training and post training data on teachers' perception on self-improvement Qualitative tool: KII and FGD with IS girls, Big Sisters, parents, head teachers, teachers and local government	This information will be used to assess the engagement of teachers in providing learning support to the girls during the pandemic and the changes brought forth in the teaching technique and quality.	Per evaluation point	External evaluation	Pre training and post training assessment of teacher on were not conducted. Instead, qualitative consultations were conducted to determine the teacher's level of engagement in providing learning support to the girls in-spite of the school closure.
IO5: Gender responsive school management and governance	School	Qualitative tools: KII and FGD with IS girls, Big Sisters, parents, school level stakeholders and local government	This information will be deemed useful to measure the learning environment, gender responsiveness of the management and child friendly in school. also, to look into if and how the schools have been able to extend its services of child protection and GBV to the community during pandemic.	Per evaluation point	External Evaluation	% of schools scoring acceptable score in SIP progress assessment has been removed. However, qualitative consultation was conducted to assess the learning environment, gender responsiveness of the management and child friendly learning environment in school. moreover, evaluation of the school extending its service of child protection and GBV to community during pandemic was also conducted.

2. Evaluation Questions

The end-line evaluation is a longitudinal study which adopted sequential mixed method as the research design. Under this design, quantitative data were collected in the primary phase followed by qualitative data collection in the latter phase. The preliminary findings from the quantitative data guided the development of qualitative tools which allowed for the use of qualitative data to verify, interpret and understand the patterns emerging in the quantitative data. The use of sequential mixed method was stimulated since the midline evaluation, where the changes in the evaluation design was decided jointly by VSO Nepal, Fund Manager, External Evaluator Sequential design was used as it facilitated the identification of emerging issues from the quantitative findings which then could be explored in more depth using qualitative techniques. Apart from that, sequential designs also helped the research team to avoid any redundancies in data collection by quantitative and qualitative approach separately. Since an unforeseen challenge of Covid was encountered during the end-line evaluation, a number of changes were made against the indicators set in the project log frame since the midline. These changes were then used to structure the qualitative exercises which was designed for identifying the casual factors to the quantitative findings.

During the end-line, only In-school girls were studied unlike the previous two evaluations which comprised of two cohorts of girls, namely, the In-school girls and Out of school girls. In the end-line evaluation, both learning and transition outcomes were measured for the in-school girls. Girls from grade 7 to 10 were identified during the end-line evaluation. The out-of-school girls from Parsa were not tracked in the end-line evaluation as the rate of attrition of out-of-school girls was above 60% during the midline. As the girls were out of the invention for almost two years, the girls could not be traced in the end-line evaluation. In addition to this, the pandemic added further affected the invention program too.

In terms of assessing the outcome level among girls, the quantitative study of midterm evaluation was based on Quasi Experiment designed guided by the difference in difference (DID) approach. This, however, has been omitted in the endline due to the circumstantial challenges of Covid such as the prolonged lockdown which resulted in school closure, social distancing that restricted meeting in larger groups due to the fear of contamination. Once the restrictions were lifted and social anxiety reduced, the indicators were modified as to gauge learning perception among the girls in the last two years' time. The qualitative methods focused on identifying changes in relation to the outcome and intermediate outcomes brought about by the Covid. Nevertheless, it did create an opportunity to gauge into the casual factors of reported changes, understanding people's attitude towards Girl's education and identifying best practices of the project.

The project MEL framework has outlined the following four broader evaluation questions and twelve project-specific evaluation questions:

Table 3 Evaluation Question on the Outcome

Learning				
Evaluation questions	What will it explore?	Methodology		Rationale/ explanation
		Primary respondents	IS girls, parents, teachers	

How has the perception towards learning changed among girls and parents since the midline?	Girls' perception on any improvement in learning in the past two years	Type of data	Quantitative (Girls' survey and household survey) Qualitative (Key Informant Interview and focus group discussion)	Being mindful of the challenges posed by the pandemic, learning assessment tools (SeGRA and SeGMA) were substituted by the assessment of learning perception among the girls and their family members since the midline. In that light, qualitative consultations were more prominent than quantitative inquiry in the endline.
	Parent's perception towards girl's education in the last two years.	Comparison data	- No comparison data for determining perception from baseline/midline - Comparison on household level data since the midline	
Transition				
Evaluation questions	What will it explore?	Methodology		Rationale/ explanation
What are the transition pathways the girls have taken beyond the 10 th grade?	It will explore the transition pathway of the Little Sisters beyond SEE and the intention of the in-school girls to re-enroll as the schools have reopened. The transition practices of Little Sisters since the initiation of the project.	Primary respondents	In school girls, parents	The end-line evaluation will not capture the transition of IS girls as the current education system of Nepal automatically upgrades girls from secondary to the higher secondary level. In regards to the out of school girls, transition into a vocational / income generating skill will be tackled.
		Type of data	Quantitative (Girls' survey), Qualitative (Key Informant Interview and FGD)	
		Comparison data	Comparison of the midline data on Little Sisters	
Sustainability				
Evaluation questions	What will it explore?	Methodology		Rationale/ explanation
.To what extent has the project been able to leverage additional interest, investment and policy changes and transfer ownership of its achievement and activities to local and provincial government? How replicable is the project activities for adoption in another similar context?	It will explore the transfer of ownership of the project activities and achievements to the schools and the local government and their ability to replicate it too.	Primary respondents	Local Government, Head Teachers and Focal Teachers	Indicator more at output level for ML and weak data so the project will focus heavily on this for the end-line with change in indicators. Also, midline was too early to capture sustainability but could only look at the direction the project moved towards sustainability. Since the project has invested and worked heavily on sustainability post midline, it is appropriate to focus on this at the endline only. Furthermore, what model worked/ did not work for the project can be used to either share with the government and wider stakeholders for possibilities of scale up, or generate learnings to inform future interventions - replication or scale-up.
		Type of data	Qualitative (Key Informant Interview)	
		Comparison data	No comparison data from baseline/ midline	

Methodology for intermediate outcome

Increased self esteem and empowerment of girls				
Evaluation questions	What will it explore?	Methodology		Rationale/ explanation
What changes can be observed in terms of girl's involvement in the decision- making processes within the family in matters concerning them and their future?	It will analyze the increased rate of girl's involvement in decision making process over issues that directly affect the girls, such as their education and career. Also measure the changes in the decision-making practices since the implementation of the project activities.	Primary respondents	IS Girls	During the midline evaluation, numbers of girls taking the key decision on their own or jointly with the family was assessed. Similar modality was adopted in the end-line too because increased number of girls taking key decision solely or jointly with the family is deemed as accomplishment of the project.
		Type of data	Quantitative (Girls' survey), Qualitative (Key Informant Interview)	
		Comparison data	Girls' response about decision making solely and jointly with the family members will be compared to the midline data. Trend of changes in the practices since the baseline/midline data with the current figure	
Increased parental engagement in girls education/Community				
Evaluation questions	What will it explore?	Methodology		Rationale/ explanation
What changes can be observed among community members and parents in regard to their involvement in girl's education? What efforts have the teachers made to support girls in their education and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic?	It aims to explore the changes in the level of involvement of community and the parents in the girl's education. Explore the proactiveness of the teachers to support the children during the time of pandemic.	Primary respondents	IS girls, parents, teachers	The midline had revealed the need within the community and among the parents to engage more proactively in assuring girl's education hence qualitative assessment of their involvement was gauged in the end-line. Also, questions related to improved teaching quality were omitted since the activities targeting this outcome were severely hampered by the crisis of Covid-19.
		Type of data	Qualitative (Key Informant Interview)	
		Comparison data	Comparison with the midline data No comparison data from baseline/ midline on the level of support from teachers	
Gender Responsive and Child Friendly School Management				
Evaluation questions	What will it explore?	Methodology		Rationale/ explanation
What changes can be observed in the treatment schools regarding better learning environment, gender responsive management and child friendly learning environment in school?	This will gauge the learning environment, gender responsiveness of the management and child friendly learning environment in school. It will also look into if and how the school has been able to extend its services of child protection and GBV to community during pandemic	Primary respondents	IS girls, teachers, parents, Big Sisters	The quantitative measure of the outcome has been modified to measure the changes learning environment, gender responsiveness of the management and child friendly learning environment in school since activities around teacher training and school management was prioritized after the midline. Therefore, exploring the result in the end-line was deemed necessary as this also affected the sustainability of the project activity at the school level.
		Type of data	Qualitative (Key Informant Interview and FGD)	
		Comparison data	No comparison data from the baseline/midline	
Efforts of SFS E-II to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on girls' education				
Evaluation questions	What will it explore?	Methodology		Rationale/ explanation
- If and how resilient were the treatment schools to Covid-19 in the pandemic? - What adaptive measures did the project employ as a response to the pandemic and what outcome were observed as a result? -If and how has the treatment schools been able to provide services of child protection and	Impact of COVID-19 on girls in the intervention schools and control school in the same governance unit.	Primary respondents	IS girls, parents, local government	The impact of the pandemic was omnipresent and disproportionately affected all sectors alike.in this context, the end-line evaluation will therefore explore the impacts of the pandemic on program's core areas of intervention and will record any measures taken by the project to mitigate the degree of impact.
		Type of data	Qualitative (Key Informant Interview and FGD)	
		Comparison data	No comparison data	

gender-based violence to children within the community?				
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3. Transition Cohort

The transition cohort for the evaluation included in school girls from grade 6 to 10 since the baseline were split into assessed on the basis of their successful completion of grade 10 and transition to grade 11/12 and drop out girls who have transitioned to vocational transition. The transition cohort was tacked to measure the Transition Outcome based upon the successful transition pathways the girls adopted as demonstrated in the following tables.

Table 4 Transition Status of In-School Girls, March 2021

Transition Status/District	Surkhet		Lamjung		Parsa		Dhading		Grand total
Successful	1374	90%	691	98%	2675	95%	775	94%	5515
Unsuccessful	161	10%	17	2%	1315	5%	53	6%	362
	1535	100%	708	100%	2806	100%	828	100%	5877 ¹

¹ This number is indicative of those girls who have underwent transition in some manner though the total number of learning beneficiaries of the project is 7382. As the remaining number of girls are still at school and not eligible for transition assessment, their presence is not portrayed in the transition data of table 4.

Districts	LS enrolled (2017)	Percent
Parsa	320	25.9 %
Lamjung	295	23.8%
Surkhet	302	24.4 %
Dhading	320	25.9 %
Total	1237	100.0 %

Table 5 Total number of Little Sisters till December 2020

Table 5 shows the total number of Little Sisters tracked during the end-line evaluation till the end of December 2020². The subsequent tables in the section below portrays the educational transition of the recorded Little Sisters during the end-line evaluation.

Table 6 Secondary Education Examination (SEE) Pass Rate of LS till December, 2020

Districts	LS SEE graduates (2018)	LS SEE graduates (2019)	LS SEE graduates (2020)	Total SEE graduates/District
Parsa	0.0 %	28.4 %	18.8 %	47.2 %
Lamjung	22.4%	20.0 %	26.4 %	68.8 %
Surkhet	15.9%	18.9 %	28.8 %	63.6 %
Dhading	40.0%	20.6 %	18.8 %	79.4 %
Total (n=1237)	15.4%	22.1 %	23.0 %	60.5 %

² Tracking Status of Little Sisters, VSO, December 2020

Table 7 Total number of Little Sisters transitioning into high school

Districts	% LS in grade 8 (2020)	% LS in grade 9 (2020)	% LS in grade 10 (2020)	% LS in grade 11 (2020)	% LS in grade 12 (2020)	% LS in vocational/ technical education till 2020
Parsa	0.16%	1.69%	6.30%	3.07%	2.50%	0.0%
Lamjung	0.40%	1.61%	2.18%	5.49%	4.20%	0.0%
Surkhet	0.16%	0.64%	3.39%	7.51%	3.79%	0.16%
Dhading	0.08%	0.64%	1.77%	4.68%	5.09%	1.29%

N= 1237

Districts	Total number of LSs studying in grade 11 in 2020	Total number of LSs studying in grade 12 in 2020	Total number of LSs studying in Bachelor level in 2020
Parsa	38	31	0
Lamjung	68	52	0
Surkhet	93	47	0
Dhading	58	63	0
Total	257	193	0

Table 8 Drop-out rate among the Little Sisters till December 2020

Districts	Number of LSs dropped out in 2017	Number of LSs dropped out in 2018	Number of LSs dropped out in 2019	Number of LSs dropped out in 2020	Total number of LS drop-out/district
Parsa	1.6	10.0	7.8	1.9	21.3
Lamjung	0.3	5.1	7.8	0.3	13.6
Surkhet	4.3	6.6	4.3	4.0	19.2
Dhading	10.0	8.4	5.9	2.8	27.2
Total (n=1237)	4.1	7.6	6.5	2.3	20.5

Table 9 Transition of Little Sisters Across Secondary Level Education

4. Cohort Tracking

As mentioned earlier, for both the learning and transition cohort, the sample girls were tracked during the end-line. FDM used the consolidated sample list provided by VSO, which included school's name. The rate of attrition in the endline was 31.37%. according to the MEL framework, the required sample size was 521 and the total number of girls reached in the endline is 549.

5. Establishing the relationship between IO and Outcomes

The project has set the intermediate outcome indicators with an assumption that these factors contribute to improved learning outcomes and transition outcomes. The intermediate outcomes, therefore, focused on measuring targets based upon the project's intervention to improve school and community environment/perception that can have an effect on the learning outcome achievement and transition of the girls.

Nonetheless, the outcomes targeting learning outcome designed to improve the literacy score among girls were rendered unusable during the end-line. Instead, the quantitative inquiry was designed to assess the perception towards learning practices from household and in school girls in the aftermaths of pandemic.

The IO surrounding improved teaching quality and gender responsive school management were assumed to directly help improve the learning outcome of the girls and support transition, while IOs concerning self-esteem of the girls and the parental engagement was assumed to directly contribute to the improved transition and also positively contribute to the learning outcome. These assumptions are based on the midline and the learning process of the project.

The outcome level measurement and IO level measurement of IO 2 and 3 was done using the data gathered from the girl's survey and household survey of the learning cohort. The midline values for the indicators were established from a pre-decided set of questions.

6. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Standards

FDM placed utmost priority towards ensuring the incorporation of GESI standards in evaluation designs, tools, approach, data collection, analysis and reporting. FDM also provided appropriate trainings on maintaining GESI minimum standard especially while seeking respondents for the qualitative consultations.

The end-line evaluation adhered to the cohort tracking approach meaning that the selection of respondents was done during the baseline and midline alike, the end-line evaluation ensure that the data segregation and reporting is done considering the GESI aspect. In qualitative consultations, evaluation team placed importance to criteria like ethnicity and age while selecting the respondents. The evaluation team also ensured that the GESI minimum standards outline in the GESI Addendum were incorporated in the end-line evaluation.

Culture and Capacity: as all the quantitative sample were girls, the data collectors in the evaluation team comprised significantly of female. Considering that cultural and linguistic difference might be an issue, priority was given to enumerators with knowledge in local language and culture. The qualitative team two districts comprised of a male and a female researcher while in the remaining two districts it was a female led research work keeping in consideration the gender sensitivity during interaction.

Analysis: previous study reports on gender and social inclusion conducted by the government of Nepal and other stakeholders were used to examine the context of GESI.

Data: Disaggregated data on ethnicity, sex, age and disability were collected during the end-line. Priority was also given in presenting the results and findings with relevant disaggregation. All the qualitative data were also analysed with a GESI lens.

Indicators: the project log frame and the indicators were designed with priority given to GESI aspect led by the project, with the involvement of the fund manager and suggestion from the external evaluators.

Do no harm: gender and social Gender and social inclusion were taken into consideration while adhering by the principle of do no harm during research design, data collection, data analysis and presentation. For instance, in order avoid potential harms and conflict, respondents' identity has been protected throughout the research process, sensitive questions around physical abuse, sexual harassment were avoided in the tools used for endline evaluation. Apart from that, in order to maintain high child safeguarding standards, enumerators and researchers were provided a detailed orientation by the project team prior to data collection. Similarly, a separate orientation around disability sensitivity was also provided to the enumerators prior to data collection. The orientation included techniques for administering Washington Group Questions on child sensitivity, use of sensitive terminologies, among others.

7. CHILD PROTECTION

FDM puts high importance in protecting and safeguarding children throughout evaluation activities including data collection, data analysis, reporting, and dissemination. In addition, given that the VSO has its own child safeguarding policy which it expects to be followed in all its activities, FDM as a service provider adhered to the Child Safeguarding policy of VSO. Moreover, a training on child safe guarding was even delivered to the FDM by the project team.

The project coordinator from the FDM served as the focal point to address issues of child safeguarding arising at field. When a case of safe guarding was encountered by the researchers, it was reported back to the project coordinator at FDM and following the project coordinator it was validated

by the project field staff. As the issue was reported to the project coordinator, it was further discussed among the senior staff at FDM who concluded that since it was a contextual occurrence, it need not be mentioned in the main report. In the evaluation process strictly followed the safeguarding policy. These measures included signed commitments to uphold child safeguards and a clause in the contracts that allowed termination of contract along with the right to report any misconducts to concerned authority if found to be breaking the national child protection policy or the child safeguarding policy of VSO/FDM.

In addition, FDM also adhered to safe recruitment practices for all members of the research team. The entire research team were oriented by VSO and its local partners on a comprehensive code of conduct that outlined how to safeguard children and their rights. The research design team also ensured that child safeguarding features were incorporated in different evaluation aspects including developing tools and research methods. Furthermore, FDM provided orientation to all the research team members engaged in data collection (both qualitative and quantitative) on the following subjects:

- i. **Informed consent:** Written consent was taken by enumerators and researchers before beginning surveys. Verbal consent was taken prior to qualitative consultations. Respondents were thoroughly explained about the research objectives, and confidentiality. No audio-visual recording or photography were performed without the consent of respondents.
- ii. **Anonymity:** Identities of all the respondents have been kept anonymous in the report. Identity here does not just mean name of the respondents. Rather, any indicative details and personal information about the respondents including full address, parents'/ relatives' name, appearance, physical traits/ characteristics, have remained fully anonymous.
- iii. **Referral pathways:** When encountering an issue related to child safeguarding, enumerators and researchers were briefed to report the incident to the project coordinator at FDM. And, the project coordinator would further report the incident to the project team.
- iv. **Respondents' right to reject:** Researchers have respected the respondents' right to reject or refrain from answering certain questions or talking about issues that they are not comfortable with. For instance, some of the respondents from the control sample may be reluctant to talk to enumerators during the survey. In case of such reluctance, the enumerators were told not to force the respondents to take part in the survey or interview.
- v. **Inclusion:** Respondents constituted a vulnerable population, i.e. extremely marginalized girls. This required high level of gender sensitivity not only in terms of research and tool design, but also in team composition of researchers. This was considered a priority during endline evaluation, as explained in detail in GESI section above.
- vi. **Enumerators/ researchers' safety:** The safety of enumerators and researchers was the responsibility of FDM. Therefore, everyone involved in the research team was insured by FDM. Apart from that, in order to ensure safety during data collection, enumerators were mobilized in groups and clusters and were kept in continuous communication loop with the research coordinator.

- vii. Data protection: The data collected for the assignment was stored safely in FDM's office. The soft data was only accessible to the core evaluation team including the team leader, research coordinator and research assistant.
- viii. Sensitivity: While surveying disabled respondents, the external evaluators will have to adhere to the disability survey guideline prescribed by GEC as well as conduct its survey in line with the Washington Group of Survey. In the context of COVID-19, all precaution measures were undertaken. Physical distance was be maintained during all interviews, both quantitative as well as qualitative. Any form of physical contact with the respondents was also avoided. FDM also provided all the respondents with masks and sanitizers before interviews.
- ix. Data protection

In addition, FDM also ensured following as part of ethical protocol for child safeguarding:

- I. Not engaging in sensitive topics with children, by team members who do not have expertise for such discussion
- II. Enumerators are recruited with the correct skill set and appropriate safety checks.
- III. Limiting data collection on sensitive topics like ASRHR only to what the program needs and avoid overburdening children.
- IV. Questions are framed sensitively and are age-appropriate to minimize distress to children

8. Ethical Considerations

FDM ensures that every assignment undertaken meets the highest level of ethical standards. To further strengthen this commitment, for the proposed study FDM adhered to the ethical benchmark set in General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as the conceptual framework of ethical standards for the evaluation. For this study, VSO and its fund manager were the data controller while FDM was a data processor.

The following seven principles of general data protection regime, set out in article in Article 5 (1) of GDPR were strictly adhered to.

- I. Lawfulness, fairness, and transparency
- II. Purpose limitation
- III. Data minimization
- IV. Accuracy
- V. Storage limitation

VI. Integrity and confidentiality (security)

VII. Accountability

The following section illustrates the FDMs approach towards ethical control strategies.

[Informed Consent](#)

Before any interview, consent was sought from the respondent as it is the lawful basis for processing. The enumerators were trained on specifying why the data was being collected and what will it be used for, in a clear, plain, and simple language. The respondents were also provided with the name and address of both, the controller and the processor. Only the consent that is explicitly expressed in words of opt-in was considered a valid consent to take part in the evaluation.

The respondents were also given the option of withdrawing their consent anytime during the interview. As the primary respondents for the evaluations were girls below the age of 18, consent was sought from school administration or the parents of the girls. A written consent from the schools was sought, and where applicable a written consent from households to interview girls were also sought. Where written consent from households could not receive, a verbal consent of permission was sought. At households, only individuals above 18+ were interviewed for the study.

Furthermore, a record outlining when and how the consent was received were maintained. A pre-assigned script from VSO was used to seek both written or verbal consent.

[Data privacy and protection](#)

FDM's policy ensures that the human resource employed by FDM have a good level of understanding and awareness of data privacy and protection. In addition, FDM adopted the "data protection by design and default" approach.

A written confidentiality agreement was secured from all the individuals employed by FDM for the study. Special attention was given towards safeguarding the respondent's identity and ensure that their name, picture or any other form of identity is not revealed through any means to anyone besides the EE, FM, and the VSO. All respondents' names and other sensitive data were assigned a unique code.

Only the three members of the team; Team leader, Statistician and the research coordinator have access to the data, in FDM. Furthermore, FDM is only authorized to transfer the raw data set (not containing the names of the girls) to following members of data controller team.

- i. Monitoring and Evaluation officer from VSO.
- ii. Assigned Liaison from fund manager
- iii. Quantitative reviewer assigned by the fund manager.

The data set containing all the collected information is kept within FDM. For referrals, the unique code can be accessed through the data archived by FDM in its server which is not connected to the internet. In the server, three password-protected folders are created for each authorized individual from FDM. Each of these folders contains the raw data, cleaned data, and data that has been approved by the quantitative reviewer. This allows for cross-validation of data within FDM which also ensures that change has not been made to responses provided by the respondents.

During the end-line evaluation, no major ethical challenges were reported. However, the evaluation team did encounter situations where the girls had long forgotten many lessons from the Edge classes due to the prolonged closure of schools due to covid where they could not practice the lessons. Also, meeting the parents for KII or FGD was a challenge due to the nature of their work.

9. Quality Assurance

Quality assurance particularly for this assignment, FDM assures the following:

- I. All required conversion and or other unit necessary will be uniform.
- II. Enumerators were given in-depth training and orientation.
- III. Experienced field supervisors were employed.
- IV. All data contained a unique code.
- V. FDM will submit an SPSS codebook along with data set which will contain variable name, variable labels, response codes and value labels
- VI. Researchers were in regular communication loop with team leaders and relevant representatives from VSO and partner organizations.
- VII. For unforeseen events, contingency arrangement was in place if its use was needed. Plans were in place for contingency situations including political unrest and natural disaster.
- VIII. All the enumerators and researchers were covered by insurance

Likewise, as required by the project, FDM also ensure that it followed ten principles for research and evaluation outlined by FCDO's (DFID)³ to be followed by all the projects funded by FCDO.

³ Department for International Development (DFID), (2011). *DFID ethics principles for research and evaluation*. Retrieved from website: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67483/dfid-ethics-prcpls-rsrch-eval.pdf

10. Endline Data Collection Process

Pre-Data Collection

The pre data collection process of the end-line commenced with the inception meeting between external evaluators and VSO Nepal. In the later phase of discussions, a common agreement was reached between the EE, VSO Nepal and the fund manager to revise the project log-frame indicators and tools as per the challenges raised by Covid-19.

QUALITATIVE SAMPLING

I. Power Calculation and Sample Size

The quantitative components of the evaluation were based upon the longitudinal studies. For this, only treatment schools were selected from among 48 schools.

During the endline, the required sample detect standard deviation of 0.25 was calculated using G^* power under the following parameters:

- T-test Means: Difference between two independent means (two groups)
- Effect size of 0.25 SD
- $\alpha = 0.05$
- power = 95%

Therefore, under this parameter, the sample size for treatment school were derived.

QUALITATIVE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the qualitative sampling. The respondents for the KII and FGDs included in-school girls, community members and parents, headteachers, focal teachers, local government officials and focal teachers. Following table illustrates the anticipated number of qualitative consultations during the end-line, prior to data collection:

Table 10 Qualitative Data Collection Tools

Activity	Treatment school		Control School	
	Respondents	Number Per District	Respondents	Number per District
KII	Local Educational Office	3	Head Teachers (Comparison School)	3
	Head Teachers	3		
	Teachers trained by project	3		
	Big Sisters	3		
FGD	Little Sisters	3	School Girls (comparison School)	3
	Non-Little Sisters	3	Parents (comparison School)	3
	Edge Club	3		
	Parents	3		
Total		24		9

The aforementioned groups of stakeholders were decided upon based on their involvement in the intervention delivery and benefit sharing. The project's logical framework and indicators also guided the identification of stakeholders.

The sample size of 3 per district for each group of stakeholders were selected in order to ensure the representation of stakeholders from rural, semi-rural and urban intervention areas. As the school served as the primary sampling unit for the qualitative study, Headteachers were consulted to identify individual respondents from among the groups of stakeholders. Even though qualitative consultation were planned with local educational officers from each municipality under which the schools were governed, there was a case of overlap in Lamjung where two schools came under the jurisdiction of the same municipality and in case of Parsa and Surkhet, only two officers were available for the consultation. Further breakdown of the number of KIIs and FGD is done in table 12 below

The sample size of the maximum of three from each group of stakeholders was also paramount in mitigating data saturation. Given that the governance, social and economic context varied in each district, the data saturation was further mitigated. However, data saturation was observed among the little sisters, primarily because most of them had graduated from grade 10 and second, those who were remaining had expectation of continued support till grade 12. Among other groups, saturation was noted among the local government officials which has recently witnessed new appointment coupled by the restructuring of the government system. Moreover, the local government appeared positive

towards their commitment towards sustaining project achievements. For each interaction and data, additional evidence under a theme, or anecdotes were drawn to add the available qualitative information.

11. TOOLS

Quantitative Tools

1. Girls' survey

The girl's survey was administered to girls from learning cohort. The girl's survey was similar to the one used during the previous phases of evaluation with changes made as per the GEC-T end-line survey template. Upon consultations with the VSO and FM, questions were rather modified to assess the learning perception of the girls, which was limited in number during the midline evaluation. This was done in order to make up for the time lost during covid where the girls were unable to continue school nor the project activities.

The girl's survey included the study environment at home, parent's and community's' perception towards girl's education, future aspiration of the girls, self-esteem (assessed through their involvement in decision making), transition pathways (general trend/practices) and challenge among others. The girl's survey also delved into identify enablers and barriers to the girl's education and transition from the girl's perspective.

2. Household Survey

Household survey was carried out with the household head/parents/primary caregiver of the girls from among the girls of learning cohort who were administered in Girl's survey in order to gauge their attitude and perception towards girl's education and its relations with the girls' ability to transit successfully. The household survey explored basic demographic and the time girls spent on household chores, among others, that will later help the study to correlate education and parent's perception towards' girl's education.

Qualitative Tools

Two primary tools for qualitative data collection was used during the end-line evaluation: Focus Group Discussion (FG) and Key Informant Interview (KII) coupled with observation under both approaches. The external evaluators developed different checklists to guide the FGDs and KIIs. These checklists were developed based on the findings of the quantitative data and differed from each stakeholder interviewed. Moreover, the qualitative inquiry used during the end-line evaluation was focused in identifying the changes that had occurred in the past two years' time span and the causes behind those changes.

The qualitative tools were administered to treatment groups, control groups, project beneficiaries and stakeholders who formed the intervention areas of the project.

1. FGD

Focus group discussion were conducted among in-school girls of treatment and control school and parents. The checklist was developed with reference to the midline but changes were made as per the trends and preliminary findings from quantitative data and changes in the logical framework of the project.

Each focus group discussion except for little sisters, comprised between 5-8 participants and the information was used for triangulation, validation and identifying of casual relations with the findings from quantitative data. In addition, FGDs also provided an in-depth perception of girls regarding opportunities and barriers for their education and the perception of their families and communities towards girl's education.

As stated above, a separate checklist was developed for each group of stakeholders to guide the discussions.

2. KII

KII were conducted among stakeholders who were primarily in decision making level within the schools, and or the community. For instance, the Big sisters, the headteachers, the focal teachers and the chairperson of local government or education officers. Like the FGDs, KIIs were also essential for validating, triangulating and identifying casual relation. Furthermore, KIIs also gauged into exploring the contextual factors, especially those that could impact the sustainability of the project. A separate checklist was developed to guide each key informant interview too.

12. Operation Plan

Enumerator selection and orientation for quantitative data collection

During the end-line evaluation, 11 enumerators (2- M, 11-F) were mobilized by enumerators were mobilized by FDM for data collection. Individuals with prior experience in mobile based data collection were given priority in order to conduct remote survey. In addition, Female enumerators with prior experiences were prioritized in hiring enumerators. A three-day rigorous training was given to the enumerators. The table below provides an overview of the orientation:

Table 11 Training Schedule

Day 1	Introduction to the project Objectives of the endline Comprehensive overview of the girls' survey Administration of Washington Group of Question
Day 2	Comprehensive overview of the household survey Training on how to administer the surveys using the tablet
Day 3	Code of conduct and Child Protection Policy Mock data collection Feedback Final question and answer

In addition, two supervisors with more than five years of experience in quantitative data collection and field-level data collection were also hired to coordinate the remote data collection in each district.

Qualitative data Collection

A total of three team of two members each conducted qualitative data collection in the four project district with one team collecting data in two districts. Each team was led by qualitative researchers who had at least five years of experience of undertaking qualitative researchers which included evaluation report writing, qualitative research on girl's education and coordination of qualitative evaluation. The team leader of the evaluation was also involved in field-level qualitative data collection. The second team member in each team were also selected based on their experience in administrating qualitative data collection tools. Each of them had any experience of at least two years in field level qualitative data collection, administration of qualitative tools. The lead members were also engaged in post data collection analysis to some extent.

The qualitative researchers were provided two days of orientation on details of project, objectives of the end-line evaluation , the relationship of quantitative and qualitative components of the evaluation, GESI requirements, child protection policy and the checklists.

All the focused group discussions were conducted by female researchers and where possible consultations with female stakeholders were also led by female researchers.

13.Data collection Procedure

The data collection for the end-line evaluation took place in two stages, as expected in a sequential mixed method research design. In the preliminary phase, the girl's survey and household survey were conducted. The survey was conducted between 6-18th December 2020. The data collection in all four project districts commenced in the same data.

During the end-line evaluation, the quantitative data was recoded using two different techniques. The girl's survey and household survey were recorded using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technique. More specifically, Open Data Kit (ODK) programming was sued to digitize the questionnaire and tablets were used for recording information collected via phone interviews.

During the quantitative data collection, supervisors were responsible for the overall planning. in each district, the team was led by a supervisor. The supervisors were responsible for overall planning, communication and quality assurance of the survey in a district. After the end of each session, supervisors and the enumerators conducted sharing and feedback too.

Due to the looming threat of the pandemic, remote data collection had to be done. Even when the researchers were on the field for qualitative consultation, all safety measures had to be taken cautiously.

Quality Assurance

As stated, supervisors were responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the data collection process. The supervisors also conducted a daily meeting with all the enumerators to take stock of the data collection process. The data collected were checked for quality every evening by the supervisor and uploaded to the server.

The research coordinator and statistician were responsible for checking the quality of the data the next day. Based on the data the research coordinator provided supervisors with suggestions. For instance, if one question was constantly being refused to answer, the researcher coordinator discussed with the team leaders and asked the supervisor to make changes to probing techniques.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative data collection took place after the preliminary analysis of the quantitative data was complete providing an overview of trends and patterns. The field level qualitative data collection commenced in the last week of January 2021 in all the districts alike.

For the qualitative data collection, treatment schools were the primary sampling points. In each district, three treatment schools and a control schools were selected where a set of qualitative consultations were held. In order to select schools, certain criteria were set as stated below:

- One school each from Urban, Semi-Urban and Rural area
- Schools whose catchment areas housed communities that were more vulnerable and marginalized compared to other communities in the same districts (as informed by the district project team).
- Control school identified by the district project team

Based upon these criteria, the qualitative research team and the district program team identified three treatment schools and a control school and coordinated accordingly.

Within the school, the participants of each qualitative consultations were identified either by snowballing or by referral in terms of identifying the girls for discussion. Nonetheless, most of the Little Sisters had already graduated from the school and the researchers could not meet as many Little Sisters at school as anticipated. Those available at schools were only one to four in numbers at the most. The project was unable to trace the graduated the Little Sisters for focus groups discussions and the researchers had to settle with the little number. There was only one focal teacher appointed from each school, who also took part in most of the trainings conducted by the project, hence it was convenient to interview the focal teacher. Head teachers from all the schools were forth coming towards participating in the qualitative discussions. The researchers did face challenges when meeting the municipal education officers or any senior officials from the Municipality who could discuss project. In couple of project districts, new officials were appointed in the Municipality who were not aware of the project activities and in other districts the officials denied meeting with the researchers. Hence, the targeted number of qualitative discussions could not be reached with the municipality.

14. Quality Assurance

The qualitative research team comprised of experienced researchers with years of qualitative data collection between them. Each qualitative research team shared their impression of each day with the research coordinator. The research coordinator, then shared those information with

the team leader and upon discussion, teams were given ideas and suggestions on how they should continue further. This ensured that the emerging patterns in qualitative data were validated across all the districts.

Furthermore, qualitative consultations were digitally recorded with permission from the participants. This prevented any loss of information. During the end-line study, besides a couple of instances where the government official and a school headteacher refused for recording, all respondents permitted audio recording of the sessions.

Once all the qualitative data were compiled, the data was transcribed; a summarized transcription of the recordings were created for each district. The document was further thematized as per the checklist designed for conducting KII and FGDs. Hence, analysis was conducted based on the thematic clusters.

For every qualitative consultation, the researchers also prepared a reflection note based on the researcher’s observation and conversation. At the end of the note, the researcher also presented a “compare and contrast” on the information provided by the respondent in question, and other stakeholders from the same sampling unit, as well as the same stakeholders from other sampling units. These reflections were further discussed and shared during joint debriefing sessions conducted after the qualitative data collection process was completed in all the districts.

With the data collection approach, strategy and tools, following sample sizes were attained during the Midline evaluation for each tool:

Table 12 Sample Size and Tool Details

Tool (used for which outcome and IO indicator)	Beneficiary group	Sample size agreed in EL framework for treatment and (control group) - if appropriate	Actual sample size treatment and (control group) - if appropriate	Remarks: 1) Attrition rate from midline to end line 2) Re-contacted sample vs replaced sample 3) Major changes to tools or differences between anticipated and actual sample sizes
Girls Survey	In-school girls (grades 9-10 during the baseline)	Treatment- 535	Treatment- 549 received	31.37 midline The midline sample size was bloated with anticipation of 30% attrition per year. As such the required sample size for detecting the effect size of 0.25 was 521. In addition, as the control group was not a part of the quantitative data collection, and because the intervention was expected to have a one-sided effect, a one tail sample test is generated the required sample size to be 408. The alpha, minimal detectable effect and the power have been assigned as per the GEC-T evaluation guideline part two. Hence, the end-line sample size is statistically significant, as anticipated by the MEL framework and calculation done based on changed approach.

Household Survey	Household head/Parents/Caregivers of In-school girls (grades 6-10 during the baseline)	Treatment-	Treatment- 429	HH survey conducted with 78.14%of recontacted girls in treatment schools .
KII	Head Teacher	48	12	
	Teachers Trained by the project		12	
	Big Sisters		12	
	Municipal Education Officer		9	
	Head Teacher (Comparison School)		4	
FGD	Little Sister	56	12	
	Non-Little Sisters		12	
	Edge Club		12	
	Parents/Community		12	
	Parents (comparison School)		4	
	In school girls (comparison school)		4	

15. POST DATA COLLECTION

The field-level data collection was followed by extensive data verification and cleaning process. On top of the data cleaning and verification by the field supervisor, the quantitative data was checked by consistency in reference to sampling point, unique codes and girls name at daily basis by research coordinator. Especial consideration was given to open-ended questions to check for errors. The raw data from the mobile platform was exported into IBM-SPSS for further cleaning and analysis.

Once the data collection was completed in each district, the field supervisors conducted a debriefing session with all the enumerators to identify any issues that might have arisen during field and which could possibly influence the data such as challenges and reasons behind inability to recontact the targeted groups. I

After the field level data collection was complete, a one-day debriefing session was held in Kathmandu for both quantitative and qualitative data collectors respectively. The debriefing session focused on identifying data collection strategies, challenges and overall reflection from the field regarding the tools. The session also was essential in identifying reasons for attrition and failure to recontact.

Similarly, for the qualitative researchers, the debriefing focused on discussing overall findings of the field, challenges and summative reflection on the overall experiences from the field. Furthermore, as stated in the section above, all the qualitative consultations were recorded (with permission from the participants). The record were then labelled with the tool type (FGD/KII), initials of the schools and date of consultation. the recordings were then transcribed directly into English and later used for the analysis.

While the quantitative data was analysed using IBM-SPSS and relevant descriptive and inferential statistic techniques, qualitative data was analysed manually using a thematic analysis approach.

16.Synthesizing the Report

After all the data collection activities in the field were complete, FDM undertook an extensive data analysis to generate findings and evidences to be synthesized into a report. This section discusses in the detail the processes for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

As stated earlier, the quantitative data analysis was conducted using IBM-SPSS software. Once the data cleaning was complete, normality test using box plot and bell curve was conducted for the continuous variables. This allowed for the identification of outliers and also check for skewness. Based on this evaluation, the team decided on the use of parametric or non-parametric tests for variables.

For continuous variables with normal distribution tests following inferential statistics tests were run to access the significance of difference in means:

- i. Paired sample test

ii. One-way Anova

Linear regression model and chi-square tests were also conducted. Besides the above-mentioned statistic techniques, descriptive statistics techniques including frequency measurement, central tendency measurements and measurement of dispersion or variation were conducted.

For the study, a p-value less than 0.05 was considered as an acceptable level for determining the statistical significance of the data, as suggested by the project M&E team.

All these allowed for a comparative analysis of the endline findings with that of the midline evaluation.

Qualitative Analysis

After the compilation of qualitative data from all four districts in the form of audio records⁴

, these records were primarily transcribed. Edited transcription was opted instead of verbatim since the researchers had already shared their observations and impression from the field during the debriefing session on returning to the office. The following steps were undertaken for qualitative data analysis post transcribing:

Step 1: the process of analysing qualitative data predominantly involves coding or categorizing the data. Therefore, the transcribed documents were coded based on the significant patterns of response. The document was coded based on the checklist designed for the qualitative consultations. For instance, consultations with parents were coded based on learning, parental engagement, household chores, decision making, school management and governance, project activities, transition, Covid-19 context. When analysing the information from teachers, it was based on project-related activities, school environment, community and parent's attitude, project impact, and sustainability. And with the municipal officers, about the coordination and sustainability matters. Hence, a summarised document of the transcription was generated for each district after the process of coding which aided in drawing meaning from data and subsequently building a logical chain of evidence.

Step 2: once the summarized document was generated for each district, then patterns of the information received were traced. Using the checklist themes as a guide, the response from each category of respondents was looked upon for the possible patterns as well as for any missing information, repetition, and probable quotes. For instance, the response from the parents was studied to seek a common trend for the identified theme, for example, in terms of parental engagement.

An inter-rater agreement of 80% or above was sought for validation.

Step 3: the findings were then interpreted and presented in the report along with using it as a supplement to the quantitative data. This step also included the presentation of opposing views, the use of quotes and sought to establish inter thematic validation and relation of data.

⁴ Consent form was signed with each participant of the qualitative consultations to record the conversation

The quantitative and qualitative data analysed using the above- mentioned method was then consolidated into a report which included inter method validation, explanation and inferences. This also included segregation of findings based upon different subgroups.

During the baseline, midline and end-line evaluation had identified various sub groups based on which the data were to be analysed for more nuanced information on casual factors of educational marginalization. The subgroups were identified based on the ethnicity, location, educational competence of the primary care giver, gender of household head along with whether the girls get family support to study, amount of time spent on household chores, type of disciplining used at school, gender and child friendliness at school, regularity of teacher and presence of any form of discrimination from teachers.

The findings on the outcomes and the intermediate outcomes are segregated based upon these groups as well as other relevant subgroups. The subgroup analysis also allowed for the identification of the relationship between different characteristics, and relevant variables associated with outcomes and intermediate outcomes. Furthermore, the qualitative information provides. Furthermore, the qualitative information provides additional analysis of casual factors on the difference that might exists between subgroups.

In addition, within the sample girls, girls from subgroups mentioned below were of further interest to the project, as girls from these groups were considered to be more vulnerable and at-risk of education marginalization. The subgroups are

- i. Girls living in a female headed household
- ii. Girls from household who's primary care taker has lower educational competencies
- iii. Girls spending more than two hours on household chores
- iv. Girls who believed that Covid has affected their future aspiration

Challenges in the end-line data collection and Limitation of the evaluation design

The challenges and limitations of the end-line evaluation differed in context and implication. Most of the limitation and their implication in the report could be successfully mitigated owing to the design of the evaluation, sampling design as outlined in the MEL framework and the contingency plan adopted by the research team. The detailed discussion on the challenge and limitation of the midline evaluation is presented in the table below:

S.N.	Challenge	Type of Challenge	Mitigation strategy
Pre-data collection			
I	Difficulty in school-based data collection due to COVID-19	Methodology/ Evaluation design	In account of the ongoing closure of schools due to COVID-19 pandemic, and also aligning with the findings of previous evaluation points, the endline evaluation does not include any form of learning tests. For this reason, the girls and their households will be tracked at the

	closure		community-level, using the contact list from previous evaluation points remotely Only qualitative consultations were organized with school-based stakeholders like teachers, head-teachers and parents, Big Sisters who can also be tracked at community level, if it is not possible to meet them at school.
3	Researcher bias in data collection	Methodology	<p>FDM realizes that evaluation studies are prone to researcher bias. The risk of researcher bias was high in this project because all the enumerators belonged to the project district and posed the risk of recording impartial information. Abiding by its strict policy of minimizing any form of researcher bias, the enumerators were well-oriented during the three-day orientation on what kind of actions were referred to as being 'impartial' and how it could affect the study findings.</p> <p>All the enumerators had some form of research experience before, hence they were aware about the risks of researcher bias in evaluation studies. To ensure that the questionnaires were not wrongly interpreted into local language (while administering the surveys), all the enumerators were properly explained during the orientation the purpose of each question to avoid misinterpretation.. For qualitative data, trained FDM researchers with extensive experience in evaluation studies were deployed from the head office in Kathmandu. Team leader himself was involved in data collection.</p>
4	Self-reported bias	Data collection	<p>A challenge encountered in terms of self-reported bias is that participants including parents, girls, teachers, head-teachers, etc. may not have been fully truthful while responding on any critical questions about themselves or the bodies they represented. In order to mitigate this challenge, data obtained from school-stakeholders like teachers, head teachers and SMC was triangulated with girls and parents and observations conducted by the EE. Likewise, responses of girls and households were also triangulated against each other. This should be considered a caveat in the main report.</p> <p>Only girls and household</p>
During data collection			
5	Challenge for male enumerators to ask sensitive questions around girls' safety, mensuration, etc.	Contextual (Socio-cultural)	<p>Special care was taken to appoint female enumerators and researchers. During the quant data collection, major of the enumerators were female.</p> <p>During the qual, it was mostly the female researchers who conducted the FGDs with in-school girls whereas the male researchers opted for talking to the teachers or municipal officers.</p>

1	Closure of schools due to COVID-19 during quantitative data collection	Attrition (Sampling)	<p>Envisioning this challenge in the pre-data collection phase, the endline evaluation was designed in a different manner, where girls were reached remotely via telephone calls</p> <p>The quantitative data were focused on the perception towards learning practices from household and in school girls especially during the period of pandemic.</p>
Post-data collection			
1	Challenges during data cleaning due to irregular spellings, errors for string-entry responses	Data analysis	<p>A number of questions in the survey forms, including unique ID, name of the village, municipality, school, among others, required string entry. This left a room for error as enumerators would not be typing uniform spellings for the name of the village, municipality, duplication of unique IDs, etc. During data cleaning process, FDM researchers made a conscious effort to identify these errors and correct them. As this challenge was prior foreseen, at least a week of time for data cleaning was stipulated in the research timeline.</p>
3	Limited cross-evaluation comparison between baseline-midline-endline	Data analysis	<p>All of the outcomes- learning, transition and sustainability have undergone some level of changes. for instance, quantitative inquires under the learning outcome were replaced with qualitative inquiries on perception towards learning practices from household and among in school girls in order to measure the effect on overall learning and sustainability. Similarly, transition outcome was also more focused on assessing impact of Covid and the intention among girls to re-enroll in school instead of percentage of successful transition among girls. Sustainability outcome was assessed only among the schools and local government to evaluate how and if these institutions have been able to transfer ownership of the project achievements and activities, making further investment and changes in policies. These measures do not have any previous comparison points as these changes were deemed as a mitigation measure to the challenges brought about by the Covid. Similarly, for the intermediate outcomes- increased attendance, increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls, increased parental engagement in girls' education, improved teaching quality and gender responsive school management and governance, changes were brought about too. moreover, a comparison of treatment and control groups has been presented in the report. The intention behind all these changes is to make sure the end-line evaluation would not be reiterating the known findings from previous evaluation points; and also, to make sure the data collection process was smooth given the context of pandemic. Nevertheless, as comparative data across evaluation points is missing for most of the outcomes and intermediate outcomes, this should be considered as a caveat in the main report.</p>

17. Representation of The Learning and Transition Sample, Attrition and Matching of Intervention and Control Groups

Sample Size during the End-line

As stated earlier, the end-line evaluation tracked the same learning cohort of girls as in the midline evaluation. As anticipated in the MEL framework, attrition was witnessed in the end-line evaluation too. Similarly, the end-line data collection took place in four project intervention districts like in the previous phases: Dhading, Lamjung, Parsa and Surkhet. Among the four districts, Surkhet had the highest proportion of sample followed by Lamjung while Parsa had the lowest proportion.

Table 13 Evaluation Sample Breakdown of the In-School Girls as per District

Sample breakdown (Girls)		
District	Frequency	Percentage
Dhading	127	23.1%
Lamjung	131	23.9%
Parsa	88	16.0%
Surkhet	203	37.0%
Girls (sample size)	549	100.0%

The proportion of the girls varied from the midline, especially in case of Parsa, whose representative number decreased from 33.8% in the midline to 16.0% in the end-line evaluation. In other districts, the sample size has rather increased. For instance, the sample size of Dhading escalated from 20.0% to 23.1%, in Lamjung it moved from 16.63% to 23.9% and in Surkhet it increased to 37.0% from 29.5%. During the midline evaluation, girls from Parsa had the highest representation in the sample size where as in the end-line girls from Surkhet mark the maximum representation.

Table 14 Evaluation sample breakdown (by grade during end-line)

Sample breakdown (Girls)		
Grade	Frequency	Percentage
Grade 7	53	9.7%
Grade 8	227	41.3%

Grade 9	191	34.8%
Grade 10	77	14.0%
Grade 11	1	0.2%
Girls (sample size)	549	100%

During the end-line evaluation, the highest proportion of girls was seen in grade 8 with the least in grade 11, indicating unsuccessful transition among graduating girls.

Table 15 Evaluation sample breakdown (by age)

Sample breakdown (Girls)		
Age group	Frequency	Percentage
Age 12-13 years	78	14.2%
Age 14-15 years	280	51.0%
Age 16-17 years	166	30.2%
Age 18-19 years	23	4.2%
More than 20 years	2	0.4%
Girls (sample size)	549	100%

The age-wise segregation of sample proportion also shows that the sample distribution trend is highest among the age group of 14-15 years, similar to the midline evaluation indicating presence of utmost girls in grade 9 or 10 while the least number in the oldest age groups, still in line with the midline results.

On the contrary, the sample size from age group 12-13 years has drastically reduced from 40.63% to just 14.2% in the endline where as slight increase is seen in the age group of 14-15 years which increased by 9.87% from the midline representation of 42.13%. 15% increment was noted in the age group of 16-17 years since the midline evaluation too.

Sample Breakdown by functional limitation

Table 16 presents the breakdown of the girls based on functional limitations and based on the domain of difficulty. The information was derived from data acquired through the administration of the long set of Washington Group child functioning questions. The data segregated by domain may contain repetitions.

Table 16 Evaluation sample breakdown by level of functioning difficulty

Types of disabilities	No difficulty	Some difficulty	A lot of difficulty	Cannot do at all	Don't know
Do you have difficulty seeing, even if you are wearing glasses?	92.5%	6.2%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Do you have difficulty hearing, even if you are using a hearing aid?	95.1%	4.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?	98.3%	1.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Do you have difficulty remembering things or concentrating?	82.6%	16.4%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Do you have difficulty with self-care such as washing all over or dressing?	99.8%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating: for example, understanding or being understood?	97.6%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
N=535					

Table 17 Evaluation sample breakdown by level of functioning difficulty among in-school girls of treatment school

Types of disability	End- line Percent	Midline Percent
Difficulty seeing	1.3%	0.7%
Difficulty hearing	0.6%	0.4%

Difficulty walking/ climbing steps	0.2%	2.0%
Difficulty remembering things or concentrating	0.9%	0.7%
Difficulty with self-care	0.2%	0.4%
Difficulty communicating	0.0%	0.4%

18. Contamination and Compliance

There was no major evidence of contamination of samples, either from the project's own interventions having spill-over effects, or through external involvement in control groups having a significant impact on their learning outcomes. FDM explored qualitatively whether the treatment group had been receiving any other form of support from other organizations but found no data or evidences to suggest so except in Parsa where schools had been receiving support through the *Beti Padhao Beti Bachao* campaign run by the provincial government.

In non-intervention schools, upon qualitative consultations, it was found that the project had helped some of the control schools with infrastructure support such as toilets. However, most of such support was given with the objective of gaining the trust of the schools so that they would continue becoming a part of the project but none of these supports was directly linked to increasing learning performance or influencing it. Moreover, the project's community-based activities such as radio programs cannot be deliberately limited to only the treatment school girls and parents/girls from some non-intervention schools might have had access to it. According to a project official, some of the community-based activities such as street drama were attended by people from different places and backgrounds but this cannot be termed as a significant contamination. Such community-based activities may also have had some spillover effect changes perceived across parents and community alike, although any striking evidence of that was not observed throughout the course of this study.

In regards to compliance, in line with the project design, there were 'Little Sisters' who had been receiving mentoring support from 'Big Sisters'. In addition, the OOS girls in Parsa had been receiving specialized support but this significantly different from what the other IS and ISG girls had been receiving. Thus, there was no major issue in regards to compliance at endline.

Annex 3: Learning Outcome Data Tables

Learning Outcome Indicators: This section presents the percentage of girls who demonstrated positive changes in their perception towards learning since the midline till the endline.

Table 1: Perception of learning improvement among girls

Status	Percentage (n= 535)
Witnessed improvement	78.7%
Not witnessed any improvement	4.7%
Don't know	15.5%
No Response	1.1%

Table 2: Beneficiaries according to grade

Grades	Perception of learning improvement in the last two years				
	No	Yes	Don't know	No response	
7	3.8%	83.0%	9.4%	3.8%	
8	3.7%	73.7%	21.2%	1.4%	
9	6.3%	80.4%	13.2%	0.0%	
10	3.9%	85.5%	9.2%	1.3%	
Total (n=535)	4.7%	78.7%	15.5%	1.1%	100%

Table 3 Beneficiary according to age

Age	Perception of learning improvement in the last two years			
	No	Yes	Don't know	No response
12-13 years	4.1%	82.2%	12.3%	1.4%
14-15 years	4.4%	79.6%	15.3%	0.7%
16-17 years	6.1%	74.4%	17.7%	1.8%
18-19 years	0.0%	86.4%	13.6%	0.0%
20 years and above	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Total (n=535)	4.7%	78.7%	15.5%	1.1%
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Table 4 Types of learning performance improvement

Areas of Improvement	Valid Percentage (n= 421)
Examination Score	86.4%
Classroom Participation	17.8%
Comprehension of Lesson	16.9%
Increased Interest to Learn	18.8%
N=421	

Based on these areas of improvement, the degree of improvement was also gauged among the girls:

Table 4: Degree of improvement as perceived by girls

Degree of Improvement	Valid Percentage (n=421)
Slight improvement	67.5%
Good Improvement	30.4%
High Improvement	1.2%
Don't know	0.7%
No Response	0.2%

In addition to the degree of perceived improvement, the girls were able to cite the reason behind the alleged changes as demonstrated in the table 5.

Table 5 Reason behind seemed learning improvement

Reasons	Valid Percentage (n=133)
Extra classes available at school	81.2%
Increased support from family	39.1%
Improvement in school environment	13.5%
Change in pedagogy	4.5%
Teacher provide more individual support	0.0%

Annex 4: Characteristic and Barriers

This section incorporates the changes in the key characteristics and barriers of the in-school girls across different evaluation points. The barriers and characteristics discussed were identified during the midline/end-line on the basis of project's theory of change.

Characteristics of IS girls				
Ethnicity	Midline	Endline	Source	
Dalit (Hill/Tarai)	21.7%	25.3%	Girl's Survey	
Hill Janajati	31.5%	33.0%		
Madhesh (Middle Class)	17.4%	11.5%		
Muslim	2.1%	1.60%		
Madhesh (Brahmin/Chhetri)	1.8%	1.30%		
Hill (Brahmin/Chhetri)	25.2%	27.3%		
Ethnicity wise difference in the in- school girls between midline and end-line is not statistically significant.				
Location				
Rural	42.9 %	49.4%	Girl's Survey	
Peri-Urban	51.5%	46.3 %		
Urban	5.6%	4.4 %		
Ethnicity wise difference in the in- school girls between midline and end-line is not statistically significant.				
Household characteristics			Statistical Significance	
Girls living without both parents	7.1%	4.4%	Household Survey	Statistically significant
Girls living with mothers only	16.3%	19.1%		
Girls living with fathers only	2.1%	0.9%		
Married	0.6%	0.9%		Not significant
Mothers (%) -under 18 years	0.0%	0.0%		Not significant

-under 16 years				
Primary caregiver/head of household has not completed primary education	47.7%	42.0%		Not significant
Language difficulties: language of instruction different from mother tongue	15.5%	15.6%		Not significant

Barriers (IS girls)				
	Midline	Endline	Source	
Household-level Barriers (n=534)				Statistical Significance
Doesn't get support from family to study or perform well	3.6%	1.3%	Household Survey	Statistically significant
Spend more than two hours in household chores	25.1%	23.3%		Not significant
School-level Barrier (n=534)				
Teacher discipline or punish students if student get things wrong	84.6% Physical-26.0% Verbal- 58.6%	60.9% Physical-26.5% Verbal-34.4%	Girl's Survey	Statistically significant
Girls who feel teachers did not treat them with respect	15.7%	4.3%		Statistically significant
Girls who feel teachers treated boys and girls differently	13.5%	1.2%		Statistically significant
Teachers are often absent	10.8%	4.1%		Statistically significant

Girls who do not feel safe at school	3.6%	2.8%		Not statistically significant
COVID-19				
Believes that COVID-19 has affected their future aspirations	NA	82.1%	Girl's Survey	

As presented in the table above, distribution of sample across various ethnicities has varied slightly across between the two the points of evaluation because while some girls have graduated off the schools. As per the sample size, girls from Hills Janajati had the highest representation across both points of evaluation followed by Hills (Brahmin/Chhetri), Dalit (Hill/Tarai) and Madhesh (Middle class). In terms of location, distribution of the sample is mostly concentrated in the rural and urban areas in the end-line while peri-urban has a minimal representation.

In terms of the household characteristics considered are 'girls living without both parents', 'girls living with mothers', 'girls living with fathers', 'married girls', 'girls who conceived before 16 years and 18 years of age', 'household head not completing primary education' and 'language of instruction other than mother tongue'. It is evident from the table that other than the number of girls living with single mothers and a slight increase in the language difficulties faced by girl because of it differing from their mother tongue, all other characteristics mentioned above has undergone reduction in terms of representation. That is, girls living without both parents, girls living with fathers only, married girls, young mothers, household head with incomplete primary education has slightly decreased since the midline.

Meanwhile, from analyzing the household level barrier, it can be deduced that the number girls have received increasing support from the family in their education. the number of girls not receiving support from the family has reduced to 1.3% only with a reduction of 2.3% since the midline evaluation. Moreover, girls engaging in household chores more than two hours a day has seen some reduction, but apparently high because of the lockdown during which the schools were shut down and the girls' mobility was restricted.

As for the school-level barriers, rate of teachers discipling the students for getting things wrong has remarkably reduced by 23.7%. Similarly, other characteristics considered such as 'girls who feel teachers did not treat them with respect', 'girls who feel teachers treated boys and girls differently', 'teacher's being absent often' and 'girls who do not feel safe at school' has also witnessed decline with the most prominent one being where the girls felt teachers did not treat them with respect and discriminatory behavior of teachers towards boys and girls. These categories of school level barrier declined by 11.4% and 12.3% respectively.

Impact of Covid-19 on learning emerged as a significant barrier to girl's education in the endline where 64.1% of the girls felt their future aspiration were obstructed due to the pandemic and its subsequent impacts.

4.1. Appropriateness of the Project Activities to the Key characteristics and barriers

This section presents the appropriateness of the project activities to address the key characteristics and barriers. Low support from parents in promoting girls' education and the increased number of hours girls spent on household chores appeared as barriers to girls' education in both midline and end-line evaluations alike though degree of changes can be noted in the end-line. The project's multitudinous efforts in raising awareness among parents on importance of girls' education has brought astounding changes till the end-line evaluation. The number of girls not receiving parents' support in education has dramatically reduced to just 1.3% and the number of hours girls spent on household chores also 23.2% which hiked slightly during the covid when the girls were home while the schools shut down. This was validated through the qualitative consultations where parents were seen being excessively supportive of their daughter's education by shouldering the work load and creating a conducive learning environment at home ultimately reducing the girl's share of household chores.

At school level, means of disciplining used by teacher appeared as one of the major challenges at school along discriminatory behavior of teachers between boys and girls as well as treating girls with less respect. Myriad of trainings for teachers focusing on developing a learner centric classroom along with creation of a positive learning environment, respectfully addressing the students and on inclusive teaching methods, techniques and strategies to create a model classroom have contributed to minimizing the barriers identified at school level.

An unforeseen key barrier that emerged during the end-line evaluation was the Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent impacts. 64.1 % of girls stated that their future aspiration been affected due to the prolonged pandemic. Since this was an unprecedented challenge and beyond the project's control, there was little the project could do to support girls' education and transition amidst the pandemic during which lockdown was widely prevalent. Despite that, during the end-line evaluation it was learnt that the project had supported the girls in their education during the lockdown by distributing learning materials, Covid-19 safety kits like mask, sanitizers, and remote training for teachers on psychosocial first aid in order to provide psychosocial and emotion support to the students during and after Covid-19 crisis.

4.2. Intersection Between Barriers and Characteristics

This section presents an intersection between key characteristics and barriers of IS girls. as identified in the section above, the key characteristic of IS girls to look for are ethnicity, location, educational competence of household head and the gender of household head. Likewise, the barriers identified for IS girls are those who ' doesn't get support from family to study at home,' 'spend more than two hours in household chores after Covid' and those who 'believe Covid-19 has affected/will affect their future aspiration regarding education.'

Across all the ethnic groups, Hill (brahmin/chhetri) girls received the least support from parents to study at home. 2.7% girls stated that they were bereft of parental support and this situation was peculiar mostly in rural area and those girls whose household head was a female and that the educational competence of the household head was below primary education. similarly, girls from Hill Janajati community spent the more than two hours in household chores after the covid. This was noted high in the rural areas which had the highest prevalence among three different locations. Stillmore, the impact of Covid-19 strongly resonated among all the girls equally. Yet, ff the 386 girls who stated that covid affected their future educational aspiration, 73.3% of the girls were from Hill Janajati community. The cross tabulated value of these characteristics is high where the educational competence of household hold head is low and common in the female headed household too.

Table 1 : Intersection between the key Characteristics and Barriers

Barriers	Characteristics			
	Ethnicity	Location	Primary caregiver not completed primary education	Female-headed household
Spend more than two hours in household chores After CoVID	Dalit (hill/tarai) n=139 – 34.5% Hill Janajati n=181- 36.4% Madesh (middle class) n=63- 25.5% Muslim n=9- 55.6% Madhesh(Brahmin/Chhetri)n=7- 42.9% Hill (brahmin/Chhetri) n=150 – 31.4%	Rural (n=271): 38.8% Peri-Urban (254): 28.7% Urban n=24: 29.2%	(n = 180) 36.67%	(n=158) 32.3%
Believes COVID-19 has affected/ will affect future aspirations regarding education	Dalit (hill/tarai) n=138 – 66.7% Hill Janajati n=179- 73.2% Madesh (middle class) n=54- 48.1% Muslim n=8- 37.5% Madhesh(Brahmin/Chhetri)n=7- 42.9% Hill (brahmin/Chhetri) n=149 – 65.1%	Rural (n=266): 69.2% Peri-Urban (246): 63.8% Urban n=23: 47.8%	(n=179) 67.60%	(n=158) 66.5%
Teacher discipline or punish student (verbally or physically) if a student	Dalit (hill/tarai) n=138 – 59.4% Hill Janajati n=179- 57.5% Madesh (middle class) n=54- 87.0%	Rural (n=266): 62.4%	(n=179) 62.6%	(n=158) 55.7%

gets things wrong.	Muslim n=8- 75.0% Madhesh(Brahmin/Chhetri)n=7- 42.9% Hill (brahmin/Chhetri) n=149 – 57.0%	Peri-Urban (246): 56.9% Urban n=23: 87.2%		
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In addition, the HH survey also included questions related to the girl’s disability. While the household were asked child functioning questions, the girls were administered through the Washington Group questions on disability. At the end-line evaluation, the disability prevalence was recorded at below 1 % for all criteria except for seeing (1.3%), hence report on disability has been omitted in this section.

All of the key characteristics and barriers presented in this section has further been analyzed across the outcomes and intermediate outcomes in the main end-line report.

Key subgroups by learning scores:

The EE should also present learning data cut by key subgroups at the aggregate score level and zero scores for these groups. The subgroups do not need to include all groups in table 5.1 and 5.2 but should include those groups the project has highlighted as their key subgroups of interest/with targeted interventions e.g. young mothers, bursaries targeted at girls from poor households or higher risk at dropping out, etc