

Case study

Aarambha

People in Need
NEPAL

MAY 2021



Girls'
Education
Challenge



Project summary (pre and during Covid-19)

People in Needs' Aarambha project in Nepal supports 8,500 married and out-of-school adolescent girls in Nepal in developing literacy, numeracy and life skills. The girls come from one of the most disadvantaged ethnic communities of Nepal and are marginalised in a number of ways (33% Muslims, 19% Dalit). The distance teaching and learning (DTL) approach supports 1,709 un-married girls (under 14 years of age) through 83 learning Community Learning Centres (CLCs). After CLCs were suspended, DTL was implemented through phone-based and small group learning.

Domain 1: Local context and educational system

1: Local context

People in Need's approach

Mapping the local context, infrastructure and market (i.e. if using SMS, has the telecommunications market been assessed and is it able to support the DTL approach?)

The project assessed the needs of the girls which indicated that mobile phones were the only feasible low-tech DTL approach that could be used due to low/no internet penetration in the community. The mapping also revealed mobile access issues with 60 percent of girls being reached through their family members' phone, most of whom were owned by husbands. Seven percent of girls were reached through their neighbour's phone and 35 percent of girls were reached by a phone they owned themselves.

Engages with the parents, caregivers and families

Consent was secured from partners, parents and caregivers prior to beginning DTL, as the sessions involved directly contacting girls for learning support through mobile phones. Brief orientations were conducted over the phone and the DTL schedule discussed and agreed with the girl and her guardian. This helped ensure her regular household chores were not interrupted. Initial findings showed that some parents became interested in what the girls were learning and this in turn created increased trust between girls and their family members.

Domain 2: Distance teaching and learning modality

2: Modality

People in Need's approach

Multiple channels available for learners to access learning content

The project found that learning through mobile phones was not effective or possible for a minority of girls. Some had experienced network issues, low or irregular access to electricity and some girls found learning difficult but did not find guidance or support from others at home. For these girls, small group, face-to-face sessions were started. This modality gradually expanded as restrictions were eased and learning spaces reopened.

Risks and challenges of DTL modalities available to learners

One of the main risks with this approach was ensuring that girls had access to mobile phones and that families allowed girls access to these devices. There is the issue of girls' 'real' access to mobile phones even if they were allowed by the families to use the phone. Some key challenges with the approach was ensuring that remote monitoring mechanisms, safeguarding and protection measures and skills gaps of facilitators was addressed during the pilot. These challenges were addressed by developing a thorough capacity building plan most appropriate to the staff, for instance using applications like Skype and messenger for online training, orientation and refresher training.

Approach considers scale / sustainability and aligns with government initiatives

The project has shared progress and learning through the Education Cluster at national and provincial level. The project drew upon guidance disseminated by the Education Cluster including guidelines on needs assessment, designing the DTL approach, curriculum development and development of information education and communications material.

Domain 3: Content and curriculum

3: Content and curriculum People in Need's approach

The content is related to – or aligned with – the national curriculum

While the curriculum was based on and aligned with the government non-formal education (NFE) curriculum and also the seasonal calendar, the project produced a 'micro lesson plan' which helped teachers with planning but also facilitated a flexible approach to teaching and learning. As the curriculum was in Nepali, facilitators considered the local language when creating/adapting the content so that it was more effective and could be easily understood.

The pace and frequency of the delivery is sufficient to generate the intended learning outcomes

The duration of each sessions varied, depending on participants availability and session objectives for the day, from a minimum of two minutes to 20 minutes. On average, the participant spent 29 minutes per week on the DTL. This time duration does not include additional time the participant may have spent for home assignments. The purpose of the calls were to provide instructions and guidance in how to complete exercises described in the workbook (and completed in the notebook or worksheet provided). However, this was also an opportunity to check on the wellbeing and any issues or challenges the girls were experiencing with their learning.

Gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) incorporated into the curriculum

The project used the Government curriculum as well as a curriculum created specifically for life skills. In the life skills sessions GESI was an integral part of the curriculum covering topics such as health, leadership, social and negotiation skills, safety and financial literacy.

Domain 4: Pedagogy and assessment

4: Pedagogy and assessment People in Need's approach

Learning progress is tracked and measured

Weekly assessments were completed over the phone to monitor girls' engagement, learning and homework exercises which helped determine girls' learning progress and needs. Over the months the small group learning sessions were introduced for groups of three to six girls. Based on micro-session plans, the facilitators provide 'monthly learning progress assessments' as per the lesson objectives. The facilitators also compared and contrasted each girl during "normal" classes at CLC and the phone calls to see if there was a difference.

The assessment tools are made accessible, are recognised and used by stakeholders

Designed for facilitators, monthly assessment was key in tracking girls' learning progress and wellbeing. Clear guidelines were drawn up outlining the purpose and the process of conducting assessments. Each facilitator was trained in how to use the tool. Technology such as Skype was used to conduct virtual sessions with facilitators, and text messages/Skype messaging was used for formative and summative assessments to help build facilitators capacity.

Assessments used to inform adaptations to pedagogy

Based on the learning assessments, the girls who performed lower than their counterparts were given additional support to accommodate their learning needs. These girls were also prioritised and supported to participate in small, face-to-face learning groups. However, due to the remote nature of DTL, facilitators found it challenging to adapt pedagogies remotely and Education Officers provided further support and supervision to the facilitators for effective learning delivery.

Domain 5: Monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaptation and impact

5: Monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaptation

People in Need's approach

There is a learning and adaptation system in place that enables operational / delivery changes and feedback loops are being used

The project team meets each week to discuss monitoring findings and possible areas for improvement. The project initially conducted a pilot of the DTL approach, before scaling it up. This provided insights into what could possibly be an added value but also identified the challenges going forward.

Using human resources to foster success

One key take away from the DTL implementation is understanding the capacity of local facilitators. Since Aarambha is implemented in the most marginalised communities, it is challenging to find very qualified facilitators. Training them remotely is difficult due to technological issues. These aspects were considered in the DTL approach at the very beginning and support was put in place with local educators as well as delivering training through Skype.

Learning is disseminated in the wider landscape (e.g. national/ government forums and data sharing)

The project engaged with the Education cluster and sub-cluster meetings (where the local government is active) to share lessons from the pilot. The rapid evaluation proved useful in helping governments and other stakeholders think about key considerations to reach some of the most marginalised populations. Additionally, learning also contributed to international evidence base on Covid-19 educational interventions. For example, a DTL case story was presented by INEE (Technical Note on Measurement for Education during the Covid-19 Pandemic) and USAID (global review report – “A Roadmap for Measuring Distance Learning: A Review of Evidence and Emerging Best Practices”).



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Find out more: www.girlseducationchallenge.org | uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com
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