



COUNTRY BRIEFING: NEPAL



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

The GEC has five projects in Nepal. Two GEC-T projects which are focusing on transitioning girls between basic and secondary education. Three Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) projects are supporting the most marginalised and vulnerable out-of-school girls to gain functional literacy and numeracy, as well as to increase agency and empowerment, to support positive transitions into formal schooling, safe livelihoods and safer and healthier households.

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



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PROJECT	NUMBER OF GIRLS TARGETED	NUMBER OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES SUPPORTED	NUMBER OF CHILDREN REACHED (INDIRECT)	GIRLS TRANSITIONED TO SCHOOL OR LIVELIHOOD PROG.
STEM (Mercy Corps)	4,768	13	14,590	3,761
Sisters for Sisters (VSO)	7,380	-	11,655	5,515
Marginalised no More (MnM) (Street Child)	7,872	13	-	1,729 (1,140 to school; 589 to livelihoods)
Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education (VSO)	2,340	205	10,820	1,987 (1,064 to school; 923 to livelihoods)
Aarambha (PIN)	8,500	80	-	3,057 (1,460 to school; 1,597 to livelihoods)
Total	33,138	311	37,065	12,288

Highlights

Mercy Corps and VSO (SfS) dissemination event: Both GEC-T projects held an event in March 2021 at the British High Commission to share lessons on how to provide quality education to marginalised girls. The event was officiated by then British Ambassador Nicola Pollitt and discussed the evidence of recently conducted evaluations to assess learning outcomes, livelihood opportunities and education standards of girls from marginalised communities. A press release providing more information about the event can be found [here](#).

Self-Defence training for students: VSO (SfS) organised self-defence training for over 2,400 students to help to build their confidence to protect themselves from abuse and harassment. Both girls and boys were trained to recognise and analyse risks as well as challenge tricky situations using both mental and physical defence strategies. To learn more about the training see video [here](#).

Girls' clubs are making a difference for both in- and out-of-school girls: The Mercy Corps STEM project introduced [in-school girls' clubs](#) as a way of targeting marginalised girls who may be at risk of dropping out. The clubs were held outside of normal school hours to supplement regular classes on core subjects. In the final evaluation, the girls' clubs were found to be one of the most effective interventions in retaining girls in school and increasing their learning outcomes. Similarly, the project also created [out-of school clubs](#) to enhance knowledge on youth financial literacy, business skill development and sexual and reproductive health.

Meeting the needs of Children with Disabilities during the pandemic: While the pandemic brought significant challenges for all, children with disabilities (CWDs) were particularly affected and required targeted interventions. ENGAGE (VSO), who work with a wide range of CWDs including those with hearing impairments, created several sign language videos to raise awareness on staying safe during [COVID-19](#) and preventing [early marriage](#).

Big sister's mentoring journey: The Big Sister-Little Sister mentoring scheme is at the heart of both VSO projects. The innovative mentoring approach involved 'Little Sisters' (younger, direct beneficiaries) supported and mentored by Big Sisters (older young women – could be beneficiaries who have been through several years of programming, or female community volunteers) in their academics to boost their self-efficacy and deal with everyday challenges. The model is now being scaled and replicated in other projects as part of the 'Girls Inclusive Education Network.' A glimpse of what it's like to be a Big Sister can be found [here](#).

Formation of the Girls Inclusive Education Network (GIEN): As one of the key sustainability activities under the SfS project, VSO formed the [GIEN](#) as a way of continuing the work done to train and support the Big Sisters. The aim of the network, now expanded to include all other GEC projects and organisations outside of the GEC, is to raise the voices of marginalised girls, lobby local authorities, influence policies, promote girls' rights to education and protection, and raise awareness on climate change. The GIEN was officially [launched](#) earlier this year during an online event which was attended by the British Ambassador Nicola Pollitt.

Three GEC projects have published robust evidence to demonstrate their impact

PROJECT	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
STEM-II Endline	86% of girls perceived an improvement in their learning performance at endline, citing increased interest in learning and understanding of lessons in the classroom. Collecting learning data during the pandemic proved difficult and instead perceptions of improvement were collected. At midline, students learning scores increased by 8 percentage points in literacy and 22 percentage points in numeracy.
SfS Endline	79% of girls had improved learning outcomes. Mentoring by Big Sisters and learning support classes were the main factors, along with increased confidence to ask teachers questions, increased parental support and improvements to the school environment and teaching practices.
PIN Cohort 1 Endline	On average girls improved literacy scores by 60 percentage points and numeracy by 26 percentage points. Increases were also found in decision making, family planning knowledge and practices, and self-efficacy.

A focus on Distance teaching and learning (DTL): Due to the C-19 pandemic, projects had to quickly pivot their teaching and learning interventions to distance modalities. This required a thorough assessment of the needs of girls to determine the best mode of delivery. Projects considered whether girls and their families had access to technology such as phones, radio or the internet, and whether delivering through these mediums would be effective. Given girls' limited access to technology, projects deployed a range of delivery modes including radio, telephone calls, self-learning packs and small group learning. [Street Child](#) and [PIN](#) conducted rapid assessments to measure the effectiveness of their approaches and made adaptations. Additionally, three projects ([VSO](#), [Street Child](#) and [PIN](#)) assisted in the creation of a [Distance Teaching and Learning guide](#), which captured key lessons from the pandemic and offered other organisations suggestions on what to consider when implementing a DTL approach.

Smart Buys – determining the most cost effective and impactful interventions: The Fund Manager conducted two VfM analyses for both [VSO \(SfS\)](#) and [PIN](#). The analysis found that VSO offered good value for money delivering three months of education per \$100 spent for all girls supported. For PIN, the radio programmes responding to COVID-19 appeared to be a good buy. They have been highly economical (£3 per girl) and relevant, and created some good shifts in attitudes around social norms.

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



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