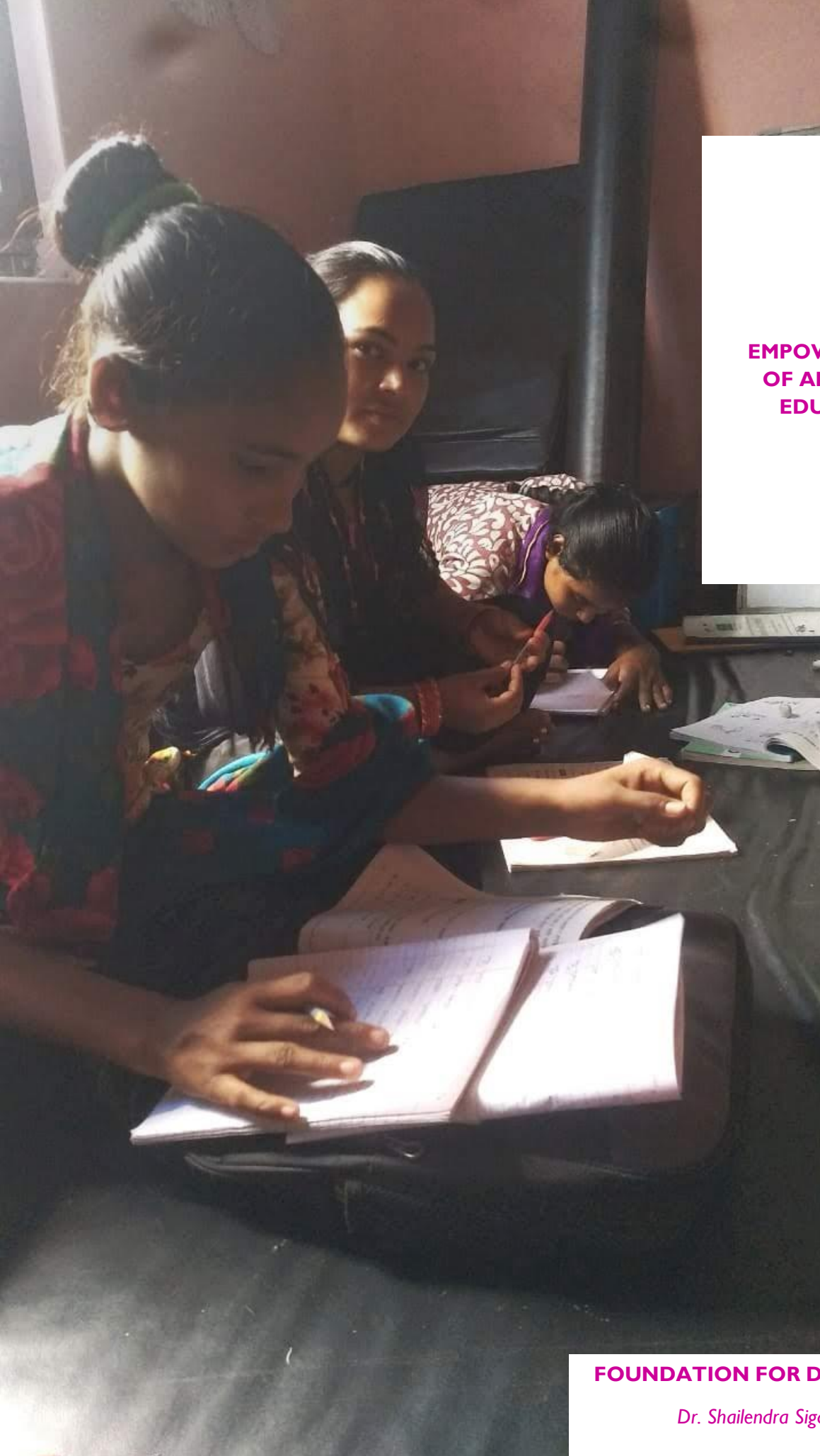


# Project Evaluation Report

<b>Report title:</b>	Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls Through Education in Nepal (ENGAGE)
<b>Evaluator:</b>	Foundation for Development Management
<b>GEC Project:</b>	Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education (ENGAGE)
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<b>Evaluation point:</b>	Baseline
<b>Report date:</b>	March 2020

## Notes:

Some annexes listed in the contents page of this document have not been included because of challenges with capturing them as an A4 PDF document or because they are documents intended for programme purposes only. If you would like access to any of these annexes, please enquire about their availability by emailing [uk\\_girls\\_education\\_challenge@pwc.com](mailto:uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com).



# BASELINE EVALUATION

**EMPOWERING A NEW GENERATION  
OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS THROUGH  
EDUCATION IN NEPAL (ENGAGE)**

*Final Report*  
*March 13, 2020*

**FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

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## I. Executive summary

Government of Nepal is currently implementing School Sector Development Plan (2016-2023) which aims to improve the quality of education, management efficiency and examination reform by developing capacities of teachers and providing easy access to education to all the children of school going age. In a bid to support the interventions of the government of inclusive education, with a special focus on children with disabilities, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) has begun the implementation of a project titled Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls through Education in Nepal (ENGAGE) in seven municipalities of Banke, Parsa and Sarlahi in consortium with Humanity and Inclusion, with the funding from Girls' Education challenge, the flagship programme of DFID from 2018-2022. The central aim of the project is to empower OOS marginalized girls and OOS girls with disabilities through education to make informed life choices, contribute to family decisions, and confidently pursue own economic opportunities. To achieve this, the project will create an enabling environment for girls at homes, schools and communities by engaging with girls, parents, teachers, school management committees, community members and the local government officials.

The project aims to reach 2423 OOS marginalized and those with functional limitation enrolled in bridge class within the age group 10-19 through the interventions on learning and transition who will receive the interventions in single cohort.

- Girls within age group 10-14 will transition in the formal school, girls within the age group 15-19 will be able to follow either learning or employment track of intervention.
- The project has identified 94 girls and boys with severe disability who will be supported with the Personalized Social Support (PSS), some minimum interventions to help them perform the self-care task independently and assistive devices, where applicable. Towards the end of the project, they are expected to perform the self-care task independently, depending on their abilities.
- 60 girls within the age group 15-19, after PSS, will receive financial literacy and business skill training. The interested ones will also receive micro grant for small scale business start-up. Towards the end of the project, they will be engaged in the form of employment or business.
- 40 OOS girls and boys with hearing and visual impairment within the age group 10-19 will also receive an additional preparatory class to help them with basic skills- Braille and sign language- required for enrollment in schools or general communication. At the end of the project, they will be either in formal school or in any forms of employment.

The baseline evaluation is aimed at exploring the context of the project and mapping the situation of the project beneficiaries in the initial stages of the project. Furthermore, it was intended to generate the baseline values for the indicators in informing the target setting for the project and allowing comparisons in the subsequent evaluation points. In addition, the study tested the assertions made by the project in its theory of change through evidences while also identified and assessed the barriers faced by the adolescent girls for learning and transition.

The evaluation adopted longitudinal mixed method approach administering both quantitative and qualitative tools. Learning tests were administered to girls to assess their learning levels at baseline while girls survey was also administered to assess the transition questions and further also covered the characteristics and barriers. Furthermore, primary caregivers were also administered the household survey. The capacities of learning spaces to address inclusive education was further assessed through SIP

assessment checklist, disability friendly infrastructure assessment checklist and classroom observation checklist. Qualitative consultations were carried out with diverse stakeholders comprising of girls, families, teachers, school management committees, community leaders and government officials to further explore on the aforementioned evaluation questions.

The overall evaluation of the project focuses on an approach that enables it to measure and see changes that can be rigorously attributed to the project interventions. In order to do so, the project had adopted the pre-post design allowing the project measure changes in the outcomes as a result of the project interventions. Joint sampling approach has been employed for data collection as the same girl will be sampled for learning were also assessed for transition.

The study identified that there were 42.2% household who were unable to pay for the household needs without charity. There were 33.72% of the households which were covered with the roof of mud and thatch. 37.57% household did not own any land. In relativity, there do not seem to be many families who are suffering from food scarcity despite not being able to meet other basic needs. There were 3.47% household who have reported to have slept hungry for many days in past year. Wage labour is the prime source of income for that households, as 43.2% rely on it. There were 32% household whose prime source is agriculture and 10.98% household rely on the remittance from family members who have gone to foreign employment. The qualitative inquiry showed that it was the male member of the family who was abroad to work leaving women as the head of the household. 52.5% households were headed by female. There were 92.87% households whose mother tongue is not Nepali and there are 70.33% girls who cannot speak in Nepali language. 74.6% household had a female member as the primary caregiver for girls.

The baseline study identified poverty, social norms that poses high chore burden over girls and curtails girls' right to education despite the household possessing good knowledge on the rights of girls to education and employment, inaccessible infrastructure and local capacity of teachers to support who need special attention and care as the most prominent barriers for out-of-school girls to engage in education and employment. In addition, inadequate infrastructure and lack of skills in teachers to support children with specific needs were cited as major barriers to education of girls with disabilities despite the willingness of parents to send them to school. Furthermore, the lack of implementation of inclusive policies have also been a barrier for creating an enabling environment to send the girls with disabilities to schools.

The baseline assessed the learning of 496 marginalized girls- their aggregate EGMA score was 24.37 and the aggregate EGRA score was 18.65. The highest proportion of girls were in the category of non-learner and emergent learner for both literacy and numeracy. The score for EGRA being relatively lower than EGMA can be attributed to the language factor. However, the language was not found to be a significant factor in the difference of scores in Nepali and non-Nepali speaking household. Interestingly, although the girls in higher proportion from the Muslim communities had never attended school, they still performed better in the learning tests compared to other groups. This can be attributed to the Madarsa, the religious school which they had been attending.

Although girls were currently attending bridge class, the qualitative discussions indicated towards their irregularity in classroom. The scores pertinent to parental engagement and life skills was found to be relatively high in the quantitative side. However, qualitative discussions reported the real practice to be otherwise. For instance, although parents believed that the girls have right to education and should send daughters to school, their daughters were still out of school. Girls were engulfed in the household chores

and parents explained that learning household chores would be more valuable than education as school education cannot guarantee job but pleasing the in-laws by doing household chores will ensure peace and happiness. Similarly, for life skills, although the score for a component self-efficacy is high, more than 80% girls cannot choose to stay in or leave school. These findings point out towards the tendency that although the knowledge of parents and girls is high, it has not been translated to practice.

The project aims to improve the learning environment and teaching quality at schools. The baseline found the need of several interventions to improve the accessibility in schools and enhancing the capacity of teachers. Although the classroom observations indicated towards the adoption of learner friendly teaching practices, qualitative discussions still pointed out the need to capacitate teachers to support the children with disabilities in classrooms. School Improvement Plan was just formulated for acquiring funds rather than meaningfully directing the school programs. Therefore, the sustainability of the project sought through the inclusion of inclusive components in the SIP might require the SIP to be made sincerely and as a guiding document for the school development programs.



## 2. Background to the project

### 2.1 Project context

The Government of Nepal has currently been implementing School Sector Development Plan (2016-2023) which aims to improve the quality of education, management efficiency and examination reform by developing capacities of teachers and providing easy access to education to all the children of school going age. The current enrolment rate is 96.4 percent which implies that there are about 4 percent of school age children are out of school system (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Nepal). The out-of-school children are primarily from the marginalized<sup>1</sup> communities and mainly are the girls, children with disabilities and the most disadvantaged groups. Reaching the most marginalized community and bringing the school age children into the school system is the major challenge that the government is facing and prioritizing to assure the constitutional provision of free and compulsory education for all. With funding from Girls' Education Challenge, the flagship programme of DFID's commitment to education, VSO has begun the implementation of a new project, ENGAGE, in three districts of Nepal (Banke, Parsa and Sarlahi). This project primarily focuses on supporting out of school (OOS) girls with disabilities and marginalized girls from 10-19 years of age with major interventions including non-formal education (preparatory and bridge classes), formal education support through various interventions, employability skills development and enhancing girls with disabilities' economic opportunities through linking them into the small-scale labor market. Additionally, the project supports resource classes and municipality to provide better educational opportunities to the girls with disabilities. Reflecting VSO's along with consortium partner Humanity and Inclusion (HI), it has been realized that many barriers to girls' education in Nepal stem from low levels of engagement from stakeholders in the system. Given the country's strong and progressive education policies, change is only possible if parents, teachers, school managers, and policy makers know their roles and are inspired to act. ENGAGE addresses critical factors of marginalization identified during participatory stakeholder consultations, including:

- socio-cultural norms that place a low priority on girls' education;
- lack of awareness and support services for girls with disabilities or functional limitation;
- poorly equipped teachers/educators and educational institutions to support the needs of OOSM girls and girls with disabilities; and
- poor implementation of inclusive policies by local service providers and duty-bearers

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution of Nepal, 2015, Part 34 has defined marginalized communities as communities that are made politically, economically and socially backward, are unable to enjoy services and facilities because of discrimination and oppression, communities that are geographically remote and whose populations fall below the human development standards mentioned in Federal law.

For Example: Highly Marginalized Group (Chamar, Dhobi, Majhi, Siyar, Lhomi (shinsaba), Thudam, Dhanuk, Chepang, Santhal, Jhagad, Thami, Bote, Danuwar, Baramu)

Marginalized Group (Sunuwar, Tharu, Tamang, Bhujel, Kumal, Rajbangshi, Gangaai, Dhimal, Bhotte, Darai, Tajpuriya, Pahari, Topkegola, Dolpo, Fri, Mugal, Larke, Lohpa, Dura, Walung)

ENGAGE focuses on strengthening stakeholder engagement in inclusive education at household, school and system levels. Each girl benefits directly from ENGAGE’s innovations in:

- personalized social support for girls and families
- Identification and assessment of disabilities of girls
- peer-based mentoring of younger girls by older girls to encourage participation and help girls address barriers.
- 9-month “bridge classes” to help acclimate girls to education and accelerate their re-entry into formal systems
- coordination with local government authorities and support services
- Training, coaching and mentoring hands-on practical experience in inclusive, student-centred pedagogy and practice for 100 educators and 90 BE/d and ME/d student teachers.
- Optional livelihood training for girls.

## 2.2 Project Beneficiaries

The project has been targeted to the out of school marginalized girls and girls with disabilities of age group 10-19 years. In terms of interventions, the project will cater to three major subgroups- (i) girls within ages 10-14 who will only be focused on learning interventions; (ii) girls within ages 15-19 who can select between learning interventions or interventions directed to their employment or businesses or both; and (iii) girls with severe disabilities who will be provided with the support for performing their daily activities independently. The girls aged 14 years and below will only be directed to learning interventions in line with the government policies. Following will be the direct project beneficiaries with major intervention program under ENGAGE project:

*Table 1: Direct project beneficiaries by intervention*

	Age	Number of beneficiaries	Major Intervention
OOS marginalized girls and girls with functional limitation	Age within 10-14 years Age within 15-19 years	2331	Bridge class PSS Transition into formal school or life skills In case of formal school: Remedial support for struggling students in formal school If case of life skill/vocational training: Financial literacy and business skills training Micro grant for small scale business start-up
OOS girls and boys with severe disability	Age within 10-19 years	94	PSS Assistive devices Minimum Intervention (details in activities)
OOS functional limitation girls and drop out above grade 5	Age 15-19 years	60	PSS Financial literacy and business skills training Micro grant for small scale business start-up Vocational training

OOS girls and boys with hearing and visual impairments	Age within 10-19 years	40	Preparatory class Bridge class PSS Transition into formal or life skills Assistive devices If transition in formal school: Remedial support for struggling students in formal education If transition is life skills: Financial literacy and business skills training (if they are eligible and interested in life skills) Vocational training Micro grant
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In total, 2543 girls with functional limitation and marginalized girls are direct beneficiaries of ENGAGE project. Following table shows the summary of direct and indirect beneficiaries of ENGAGE project.

*Table 2: Summary of direct beneficiaries*

Direct beneficiary numbers	Total figures
Total number of girls reached in cohort I	2525 (OOS Marginalized and girls with functional limitation)
Total number of girls expected to reach by end of project	2525 (Being single cohort project, the cohort will be same at the end)
Education level	Proportion of total direct beneficiaries (%)
Never been to school	57
Been to school but dropped out.	43
Age banding	Proportion of total direct beneficiaries (%)
10 - 14	52
15 - 19	48

*Table 3: Proposed intervention pathways*

Intervention pathway	Which girls follow this pathway?	How many girls follow this pathway for cohort I?	How long will the intervention last?	How many cohorts are there?	What literacy and numeracy levels are the girls starting at?	What does success look like for learning?	What does success look like for Transition?
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Formal school	Age between 10-14 years and 15-19 years	1681	Till the project end	Single	N/A	Improve literacy and numeracy	Transition to formal school after bridge class
Entrepreneurs hip	Age between 15-19 years (After PSS approach)	750	Till the project end	Single	N/A	Increase the financial, self-efficacy and life skills level	After bridge class, they will transit into entrepreneurs hip or life skills
Minimum Intervention	Age between 10-19 years	94 (Children with Severe disability)	Till the project end	Single	N/A	Improve daily life activities	They will be intervene through minimum intervention support

*Table 4: Indirect beneficiary groups*

Group	Interventions received	Total number
Boys with functional limitation	Remedial Support class, Community Awareness activities, assistive devices, PSS	240
Total big sisters	Approx. 33% in each three districts, PSS, Mentoring and Coaching, GBV training	400
BEd./Med. students teacher	18 months each	6
Community Mobilizers	6 in each 3 districts	18
Teachers/ Educators	Training on inclusive pedagogy and orientation on appropriate mediums of instruction	309
Parents/care givers	Parents/careers of enrolled girls will receive support through linkages with livelihoods programmers' provision of training/assistive devices if their child is disabled, and support to understand the rights of Children with disabilities.	2543
Community members	Awareness Raising activities	1500
Duty Bearers	Duty bearers, including newly elected municipal and district education and livelihood officers, and women and children officers, will be directly involved in consultations	150

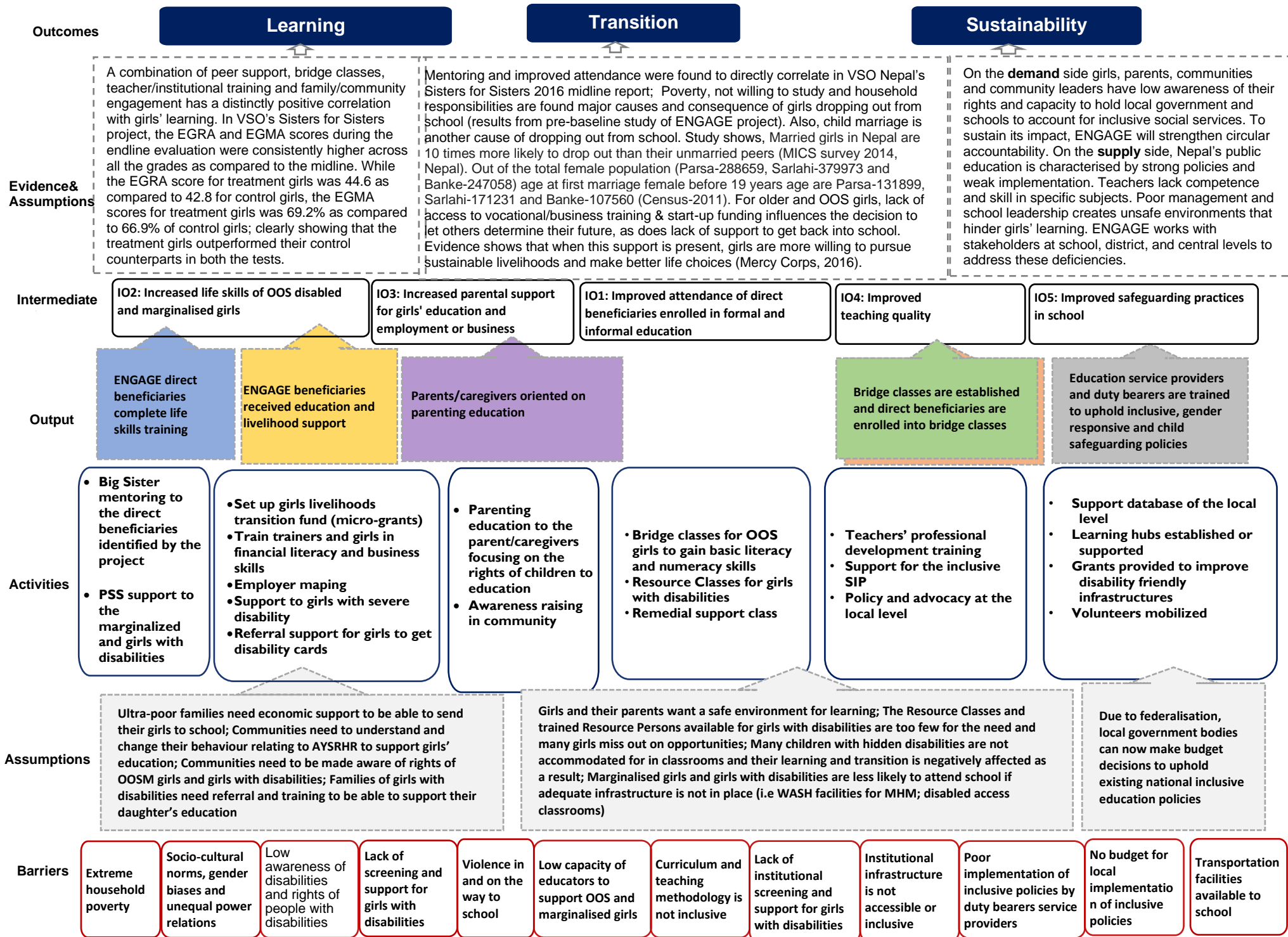
Service Providers	Service Providers, including transport, health and social welfare workers, TVET and other livelihood services and district	143
Other in-school girls	in 30 targeted schools (Remedial support class)	8040
Other in-school boys	in 30 targeted schools (Remedial Support class)	7320

## 2.3 Theory of Change

The ENGAGE project has set its theory of change aiming to achieve the learning, transition, and sustainability for OOS girls with disability and marginalized girls in Banke, Parsa and Sarlahi. They will have opportunities either to enroll into the formal education in grade 1-5 and transit into the upper grades and levels or will enter into the self or job market along with small scale entrepreneurial skills through livelihood training. The reason why they will be enrolling between grades 1-5 is because the government curriculum adopted by ENGAGE for bridge class aimed at attaining the literacy and numeracy similar to that of the student of Grade 4. Depending on their ability, they will therefore be enrolled between these grades.

They will also have opportunities of having knowledge and skills on adolescence, sex, and reproductive health so that they will be in a position of using their health and reproductive rights in their lives. The project will also engage with parents, teachers, community members and government, local and central. The main objectives for ENGAGE are as follows:

- Empower the out of school marginalized and girls with disabilities through formal/non-formal education or employment by providing them opportunity to select the suitable transition pathways.
- Improve parental attitude and support towards marginalized girls with and without disabilities by parenting education focusing more on right to education, child protection and safeguarding, gender-based violence and AYSRH.
- Improve attendance of girls with disabilities and marginalized girls in formal/non-formal education by mobilizing community volunteers mentoring approach, developing teacher capacity and parenting education.
- Improve teaching quality by enhancing learner-centered pedagogical practices, which includes inclusive education, gender responsive pedagogy and child safeguarding practice)
- Promote inclusiveness in learning facilities by working with SMCs and PTAs to make schools more inclusive and improve safeguarding policies)



### 3. Baseline evaluation approach and methodology

#### 3.1 Evaluation Purpose(s) and evaluation questions

The theory of change of ENGAGE has made assertions that the empowerment of the marginalized out of school girls and the girls with disabilities within the age group 10-19 in the three districts – Banke, Parsa and Sarlahi for safe, happy and successful transition can be done through formal education and/or secure livelihood. To achieve this result, the project works with the marginalized girls, their parents, the teacher, community members and the local government. The evaluation study is aimed at testing the assertions made by the project. The specific purposes of the baseline evaluation are outlined below.

- i. Explore and analyze the context of the areas in which project operates and map the situation of project beneficiaries in the initial stages of the project
- ii. Generate the baseline values for the indicators to inform target setting for the project and allow comparisons in the subsequent evaluation points
- iii. Identify and assess the barriers faced by the marginalized out-of-school (OOS) girls and girls with functional limitation for learning and transition
- iv. Test the assertions made by the Theory of Change of the project and generate necessary evidences to inform the improvements in project design

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

*Table 5: Evaluation questions and summary of quantitative and qualitative data/analysis required to answer question*

<b>Evaluation Question</b>	<b>Qualitative data/analysis required to answer question</b>	<b>Quantitative data/analysis required to answer question</b>
What is the situation of learning (literacy and numeracy) of girls at the baseline?	N/A	Score from EGRA test established the baseline for literacy
What is the learning (literacy and numeracy) for girls with disabilities?		Score from EGMA test established the baseline for numeracy
What is the transition figure of girls at the baseline?	N/A	Proportion of girls engaged in different activities in the past year and in the present (Household survey)
What is the transition figure of girls with disabilities at the baseline?		
What are the barriers to learning and transition for the marginalized OOS girls? What	FGDs with all the stakeholders- girls, parents, teachers, community members, local	Proportion of girls by the reasons they are out of school (Girls'/HH survey)

are the specific barriers for girls with disabilities?	governments and the project officials at the district.  FGD with parents to assess their attitude towards the learning and transition of girls	Proportion of parents who are not supportive towards learning and transition of girls (household)
What is the capacity of the local institutions- government, community and school to sustain the results of the project?	KII with the teachers, community members, local governments and the project officials	Average income of the household derived from household survey, Sustainability score from the school level checklist

### 3.2 Overall Evaluation Design

The overall evaluation of the project focuses on an approach that enables it to measure and see changes that can be rigorously attributed to the project interventions. In order to do so, the project had adopted the pre-post design allowing the project measure changes in the outcomes as a result of the project interventions. Since the project is working with the highly marginalized group particularly out of school girls representing the marginalized groups and those with having disabilities, it was deemed unethical to compare them with other such group. For this reason, the comparison was omitted and it was mutually decided with the project and fund manager to not include the control and treatment groups for the survey.

The evaluation for ENGAGE is guided by the longitudinal mixed method approach, which will be employed across three evaluation points- baseline, midline and endline across four years of implementation of the project. As the project is working with the girls in a single cohort, the same set of girls will be tracked in the subsequent evaluation points. Joint sampling approach has been employed for data collection as the same girl sampled for learning were also assessed for transition. This implied that the same girl was sampled at school or resource class to home. In regards to household survey, the sample girls' household were reached out.

FDM has used both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather the data and evidences for the baseline evaluation. While quantitative tools provided a numerical measurement of the assessments during the initial phase of the project and qualitative tools focused on the thick description of experiences and the context. Sequencing approach was carried out for the data collection, whereby the quantitative data was collected and the preliminary analysis of the data trends was done to inform the areas of inquiry for the qualitative data collection. This allowed for the comprehensive contextual analysis of the factors that affected the trends as shown by the quantitative data.

#### 3.2.1 Establishing relationship between IOs and outcomes

The project in its theory of change has outlined the assumptions linking overall outcome to the intermediate project outcomes. Based on the findings from the Sisters for Sisters project carried out by VSO, which revealed that the girls from the treatment group had outperformed the girls from control group in literacy and numeracy outcomes, it was assumed that the combination of peer support, bridge



classes, teacher/institutional training and family/community engagement has a distinctly positive correlation with girls' learning. Based on the relevance for the project at the baseline, the evaluation will assess the significance of the relationship between learning outcomes and parental engagement. As the girls are not currently in the school, it would not be relevant to assess the impact of teacher/institutional training over the girls' learning. This relationship will be explored in the subsequent evaluation points.

MEL framework of ENGAGE also discusses on the factors that directly influences transition outcomes. Poverty, lack of willingness to study and household chores were found to be the major causes of girls being out of school. There are also evidences at the national level which indicates that the married girls are eleven times more likely to drop out than their unmarried peers and early marriage has also been cited as a second most common option for school dropout (SSDP, 2016). Mercy Corps in its study with the adolescent girls in 2016 found that lack of access to vocational/business training and start-up funding influences the decision of older adolescent and OOS girls to let others determine their future. Also, lack of support from parents in the community leads to the girls not going to school. The study asserted that the presence of support will help girls to pursue sustainable livelihoods and make better life choices. In the baseline evaluation, current level of parental engagement has been assessed. However, as all the girls are currently out of school, the relationship between parental engagement and the tendency of girls going to school will not be relevant to assess. Nevertheless, the qualitative findings have assessed the attitude of parents towards education and employment of girls. In the next evaluation points, the relationship of the transition outcomes with the factors like poverty, household chores, willingness to study, marriage and other forms of support extended to girls will be relevant to assess.

The project assumes that the increased awareness of girls, parents and communities on their rights and capacity to hold the government and schools accountable will help in incorporating the inclusive provisions. As the interventions are yet to roll out, rather than the relationship, existing situation of the inclusiveness in government has been explored through the qualitative inquiry.

### **3.2.2 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) standards**

The data collection tools were reviewed by the Gender and Social Inclusion expert of VSO which ensured that the tools adequately covered the questions pertinent to GESI while also ensuring that the language of the tools were gender and culturally sensitive. The EGRA and EGMA tests were specifically designed for the girls with disabilities by the project by VSO and HI and separately piloted. HI has jointly worked with government, Education Review Office (ERO) for the needful adaptation of EGRA tools and EGRA was adapted by HI separately. The tools are yet to be rolled out for data collection and is expected to inform the learning levels in the midline<sup>2</sup>.

Evaluation team has provided attention to ensure representativeness in terms of ethnicity and age while selecting the sample. As the sample was calculated to be representative of the actual target population, girls across different age groups were represented in the sample.

In terms of data collection, local enumerators were recruited to ensure that the respondents understand the language of communication. As the girls' survey comprised of questions on sensitive topics, for

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<sup>2</sup> The tools have been rolled out in December 2019.

instance, AYSRH, which the girls would not have been able to open up with male enumerators, female enumerators only conducted the interviews with girls. Also, for qualitative data collection, female researchers were assigned the responsibility of conducting interaction with girls. For analysis, the data has been disaggregated by ethnicity wherever required to ensure that the differences in the social background are reflected to inform the project adjustments.

In terms of assessment of functional limitations in girls, the project employed the extended set of Washington Group Module on Child Functioning consisting of 24 questions in household. An official translation for Nepali language was provided by the project team to the external evaluation team. The project team had carried out the detailed orientation on the long set of questions to EE team. Furthermore, they had also trained enumerators for identification of girls with functional limitations during pre-baseline study. The trained external evaluators carried out the orientation for enumerators in the baseline study. Many enumerators were also selected from the pre-baseline study who had previously administered the WGQCF.

WGQCF was included in the household survey to which primary caregiver of the intervention girls responded. The extended set of 24 questions assessed child functioning across these domains- visual, hearing, mobility, cognition, affect (anxiety and depression), pain, fatigue, communication and upper body functioning. The test further addresses functioning with and without the use of devices/aids, where applicable. As per the WGQCF guideline, the girls with disabilities followed the criteria of “cannot do at all” or “a lot of difficulty”. For the girls with functional limitation, in addition to this, the criteria of “some difficulty” were also considered. Hence, girls with functional limitation entails the girls who have checked in either “cannot do at all”, “a lot of difficulty” and “some difficulty”. No special provision was made to administer the study with girls with functional limitations.

The project had supported the girls with visual and hearing impairment with the preparatory class where they were assisted to learn the Braille script and sign language. For this group, the project internally administered the learning tests, which were prepared and pilot tested by the project team. This learning test was approved from ERO. Comparing to the learning tests administered to other marginalized girls, these tools had fewer questions in the equal number of subtask and provided extended time for carrying out the same test. The project team carried out orientation to the district team on EGRA and EGMA and also the other tool developed for intellectual and severe disability. Prior to administering the test, the content for EGRA and EGMA were verified with the facilitator taking preparatory class. Adaptations on the tools suited to the local context were made accordingly. While the project team carried out tests, the answers were inserted at the top for the convenience of the project team. Special provisions were also made to administer the study with this sample. For girls with hearing impairment, sign language expert and interpreter were assigned to administer the tests. They were familiarized with the questions on learning test prior to administering the test. The girls with minor disabilities were already attending bridge classes and acquainted with literacy and numeracy, due to which the trained enumerators could easily administer the learning tests.

### **3.2.3 Evaluation adherence to logframe and MEL framework**

The baseline evaluation has been guided by the logframe and MEL framework. There are only some minor changes in the sample size and the stakeholders met. Apart from the difference in the anticipated sample

size and the actual sample size in quantitative data collection discussed later in section 3.4.8 and anticipated stakeholders and actual stakeholders met during the qualitative data collection discussed in section 3.5.2, other factors were as discussed in the logframe and MEL framework.

### 3.3 Evaluation Ethics

Ethical standards were in place starting from planning and data collection, data analysis, storage and report writing, and dissemination to ensure that it adhered to international standards. The evaluation team has followed strict research ethics, ensuring that it operated using agreed standards, and upholding principles of fairness and respect. The key ethical principles of fairness, transparency and confidentiality were adhered to in the process.

In doing so, FDM assured technical and professional inputs from VSO and the fund manager to maintain the quality of research standards. Review and approval from the fund manager were assured in quantitative and qualitative checklists as well as the data collection plan. FDM was committed to taking great care when involving vulnerable individuals, especially from the marginalized communities and girls with disabilities, in the research activities. This followed a manner that was consistent with ethical principles that are widely accepted and practice in the education and research sector. FDM followed the policy of child protection and safeguarding to protect participants from exploitation and abuse during research and assessment activities. FDM's field team were well trained on ethical considerations and made accountable and responsible while initiating the field work for baseline in the intervention areas. Following were the core concepts followed by the evaluation team.

- **Free and informed consent:** All members participating in the study provided informed consent. The consent was sought not only from parents, but also from children who participated in the surveys. The views of the children with regard to their consent to participate in a group interview or individual interaction were paramount. As consent implied reduction in the number of potential respondents, researchers faced some difficulty in meeting sample sizes, the number of which was covered by replacing them with other girls who closely met their characteristics. Irrespective of the sample size, enumerators were oriented to prioritize consent as an integral part of data collection. Researchers and enumerators were well aware that the respondents particularly children could withdraw their consent at any time if they feel so at any point without giving any justification. Field researchers and enumerators were well oriented on the best interest of a child.
- **Confidentiality:** The evaluation team ensured that all data was collected securely and kept confidential. Enumerators were oriented and made aware of the importance of confidentiality and ethical standards during the process of data collection. Furthermore, while sharing the dataset with the fund manager, it was fully anonymized.
- **Transparency:** The evaluation team was cautious to maintain transparency and accountability during the study. The purpose of the evaluation was clearly explained to the researchers and enumerators, who then explained the purpose of evaluation to the research participants, prior to obtaining their consent for participation in the study. The evaluation team kept the track of data coming in through the online server. After the completion of data collection and cleaning, the data was anonymized and the dataset was shared to the fund manager.

- **Child protection and safeguarding policy:** The evaluation team adhered to the child protection and safeguarding policies prescribed by VSO while implementing the field plan. Evaluation team mobilized in the field were provided three days training which had a dedicated session on CPSP while also discussing the measures of child protection and safeguarding throughout the training. Ensuring that the environment for data collection is safe, that the data collection is carried out in the time best suited to them and parents are kept informed about the data collection were some of the fundamentals that the evaluation team followed. FDM ensured that survey participants did not feel any kind of abuse, exploitation, and harassment following child protection and safeguarding policies.
- **Valuing the cultural norms and practices:** The evaluation team was well aware of the context of the locations in which the evaluation was conducted. It was made a point that the enumerators were hired locally who knew the local context and language well. As it would have created an awkward situation for girls to discuss the reproductive and sexual health issues with a male member, it was made a point that the interviews with girls were only carried out by the female researchers and enumerators.
- **Justice and Fairness:** The evaluation team ensured that all the team members of evaluation including researchers and enumerators treated everyone fairly and equally. Biases and injustice in the name of language, ethnicity, disability, gender and caste were avoided during the process of research study.
- **Privacy:** The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were strictly maintained. The evaluation team paid special attention on safeguarding the respondents' identity and ensured that their name, picture or any other form of identity were not revealed through any means. The views and ideas of the individual participants were only used for the research and were not disseminated to a larger population. FDM respected privacy concerns of the respondents and that researchers and enumerators were made the respondents aware on their rights to decline to talk about certain issues or to answer specific questions.
- **Do no harm:** Researchers and enumerators followed the principle of do no harm during the data collection duration. None of the respondents faced any risk. FDM oriented field enumerators and researchers to make them aware regarding do not harm policy and not expose people to any unnecessary and/or potential risks.

As the abovementioned ethical principles were followed, there were no issues of the ethical or safeguarding issues that arose during the evaluation. It adequately addressed the issues of child safeguarding.

### 3.4 Quantitative Evaluation Methodology

#### 3.4.1 Quantitative Evaluation Tools

Table 6: Quantitative evaluation tools

Tool Name	Relevant indicator(s)	Who developed the tool?	Was tool piloted?	How were piloting findings acted upon (if applicable)	Was tool shared with the FM?	Was FM feedback provided?
EGRA	Outcome I: Learning - Literacy	FDM; based on the GEC guideline and taking the Education Review Office test as reference.	Yes	The findings from the pilot study informed changes in the EGRA tool. As five different versions of tests were piloted, a version was selected suitable to assess the learning of OOS girls. Minor changes were made in the questions to make it suitable to the context, for instance, the names of the characters in the comprehension passage was changed.	Yes	Yes

EGMA	Outcome 1: Learning - Numeracy	FDM; based on the GEC guideline and taking the Education Review Office test as reference.	Yes	The findings from the pilot study informed changes in the EGMA tool. Some questions were revised and the number of questions for addition and subtraction was reduced by half to avoid long duration for taking numeracy test.	Yes	Yes
Girls survey	- Outcome 2: Transition - IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls	FDM	Yes	Some minor changes were made in the questions to ensure smooth flow of the questions, primarily on the skip logic in tablet. Few questions needed changes in the options.	Yes	Yes
Household survey	- Outcome 2: Transition and - IO3: Increased parental support to girls education and employment or business	FDM	Yes	As in the girls' survey, some minor changes were made in the questions to ensure smooth flow of the questions, on the skip logic in mobile device. Few questions needed changes in the options.	Yes	Yes

School Observation	- IO4: Improved teaching quality (Teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes	Yes
SIP Assessment	- IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes	Yes
Disability Friendly Infrastructure Assessment	- IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes	Yes

### 3.4.2 Enumerators

The number of enumerators in each district was planned strategically to cover 1 ward each by 2 enumerators. So, 10 enumerators in Parsa and 16 enumerators each in Sarlahi and Banke were selected. Local enumerators were selected in consultation with the partner NGOs in all the three districts. The criteria for enumerator selection was shared with the local partners to facilitate the process of enumerator selection. The same enumerators who were mobilized during the pre-baseline were mobilized in the baseline study since they had the prior knowledge and idea about the project, the locations of the households and the survey questions, specifically related to functional limitation. The enumerators selected had prior knowledge and experience in administering quantitative tools in various districts of the country under different projects. While doing so, as the girls' surveys could be done only by female enumerators, more female enumerators than male were hired.

FDM had recruited one field monitor for each district based on their past experience of data management and coordination in the field. These field monitors were assigned with the primary responsibility of ensuring the quality of data collected by the enumerators as well as to ensure that the enumerators follow the research ethics. Field monitors were available at the field throughout the data collection and managed all the planning and implementation of the data collection plan.

After the selection of enumerators, FDM organized a three-day training event in each district to share the purpose of the baseline study and its importance for the project. The event provided an in-depth knowledge about the questions, particularly on the WGQCF and also familiarized them with the use of mobile platform for collecting data. The enumerators were also oriented on quantitative tools – learning tests (EGRA and EGMA), Household Survey, Girls Survey, Classroom observation, SIP assessment and disability friendly infrastructure assessment. The training event additionally acquainted the enumerators with child safeguarding policies and the basic etiquettes to be maintained during the data collection. In the last day of the training, the evaluation team identified a community representing the similar characteristics as the project location to conduct the mock surveys. This exercise helped the participants to become familiar with the questions and identify the field level challenges. These challenges were discussed in the debriefing session and suitable strategies were discussed to mitigate these challenges. Furthermore, their feedback on the questions were noted and the minor changes related to skip logics were made for the tablet.

After the completion of three-day training including the trial survey, the enumerators were mobilized to the field. It was ensured that the girls' surveys were carried out only by the female enumerators while the household surveys were carried out by the male enumerators. The learning tests for beneficiary girls were carried out by the female enumerators while both the enumerators carried out the learning tests for benchmarking girls. The school observations were primarily carried out by male enumerators.

The training covered the following areas:

Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction of the project</li><li>• Introduction of the implementing partners</li><li>• Introduction of the external evaluator</li><li>• Objectives of the baseline study</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive overview of the baseline questionnaires</li> <li>• Administering girls survey</li> <li>• Administering classroom observation, SIP assessment and disability friendly infrastructure</li> </ul>
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines on disability sensitivity – Washington Group of Questions</li> <li>• Administering household survey</li> <li>• Administering EGRA and EGMA tests</li> </ul>
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines on Child Protection/Sensitivity</li> <li>• FDM's enumerators guidelines</li> <li>• Trial Survey</li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Team formation and field planning</li> <li>• Wrap up and final instructions</li> </ul>

### 3.4.3 Quantitative Data Collection

#### *Timing and duration of the quantitative data collection*

All the quantitative data collection was done simultaneously in two districts- Parsa and Sarlahi and the data collection was started in Banke after a week. In all the locations, while the female enumerators focused on the girls' survey, learning tests of those girls and household surveys, male enumerators filled out the school related forms, including the learning tests for the benchmarking as well as carried out household surveys. The data collection in all the locations were completed over a month in July. However, as the schools were closed in Banke due to the heavy downpour resulting in the floods, classroom observation and learning test for benchmarking in Banke were carried out during the qualitative data collection in September. Nevertheless, as 4 schools also had exams ongoing in the school in Banke then followed by vacation during the qualitative data collection, the schools had to be excluded from the survey.

#### *Quality assurance of quantitative data*

There were several measures in place to ensure the data quality. Firstly, the three-day training to the enumerators were helpful to lay down the specifics of the requirement on the quality of data. Secondly, the data for girls' survey and household survey were collected digitally. Field monitors present in the field were hands-on to support the enumerators and provide feedback while in field. The data collected by the enumerators were primarily monitored by the monitors, who also kept the research coordinator informed about the data collection activities. Based on the field-based monitoring and data monitoring, field monitor ensured that the enumerators followed the field work protocols and data verification was also done respectively including back-checking. When the data checked for the codes and other aspects were uploaded by the field monitors, the data was again checked by the research coordinator on a regular basis and the relevant feedbacks and suggestions were forwarded whenever deemed necessary.

### 3.4.4 Quantitative data cleaning and storage

The baseline data for girls and household was carried out on the digital platform. All these data were verified and uploaded on the server first hand by the field monitors. A unique code had been assigned during data collection to the girls which was used for the girls' survey as well as learning test, and also allocated to their household. The process of data cleaning commenced when all the data were exported to excel. The data cleaning broadly involved following steps:

**Step 1:** Conducting frequency analysis in each of the variable to check whether any data is missing in any of the variables

**Step 2:** Appending missing data wherever possible by re-contacting the enumerators

**Step 3:** Standardizing data wherever there is inconsistency. This also included checking the response in 'others' section.

**Step 4:** Arranging each of the variable in a standard order (ascending/descending) to purge any duplicated information or any other outlier. Since all the girls/parents had a Unique ID, duplication of information could be easily spotted.

**Step 5:** Checking for coding errors while data is arranged in ascending/descending order.

**Step 6:** Checking the variable description and ensuring that the 'measure' is correct (nominal, ordinal or scale)

**Step 7:** Conducting frequency analysis one more time to see if all inconsistencies and missing data has been filled.

While cleaning, it was also ensured that spelling errors and typos were checked and edited for uniformity. The data entered in Nepali were translated in English. Duplicate data and/or data redundancy were eliminated and the data was also diagnosed for missing data. Likewise, vague responses such as 'most of the times' were given numeric values and handled during data entry and editing stage.

Learning test was carried out in paper format and the data entry was carried out in the FDM office. The code was matched with the girls' survey. The EGRA/EGMA answer sheets were preserved and checked for any unnatural responses that appears on the data entry file. The invalid data were eliminated. Similar procedure was adopted for the school related data.

Also, double entry mechanism was maintained to establish a backup database if the working file or sheet gets deleted or data is lost. In order to mitigate the risks of data loss, a master database was maintained in more than two computers and external storage devices.

### 3.4.5 Quantitative data analysis

Following the data cleaning after the quantitative data collection, preliminary analysis was carried out through SPSS to identify the trend of findings. This analysis helped to identify the areas which needed to be further explained and explored through the qualitative consultations. The findings of the preliminary analysis were very helpful in adapting the qualitative checklist based on the outcomes and the intermediate outcomes accordingly.

Furthermore, the research coordinator had carried out the field-based debriefing session with the field monitors after the completion of field level data collection. This session was useful to make sense of the contextual aspects and the situation of girls and households. For instance, it was learnt through their reflection that the adolescence is the phase in the project intervention areas in which both boys and girls have high mobility. While boys drop out from school to earn money, girls are either married off making their choices in life uncertain or they are engaged so much in their household chores to support the family that they cannot study or work outside home. Their reflection of their field level engagement helped in the design of the qualitative tools.

For the purpose of the report, descriptive statistics techniques including frequency measurement, central tendency measurements and measurement of dispersion or variability was carried out. For the factors that needed to see the relationship, normality test using box plot and bell curve was conducted for the continuous variables initially. This allowed for the identification of outliers and check for skewness. This helped in determining the suitable tests for the variables.

The findings were also segregated by the intervention subgroup and characteristic subgroup wherever applicable. The project had identified age- 10-14 and 15-19 as the major intervention subgroup. Within the sample girls, girls from sub groups mentioned below were of further interest to the project, as girls from these groups were considered to be more vulnerable and at risk to educational marginalization. The sub groups include:

- Girls living without both parents
- Girls living in household headed by female
- Girls from poor household
- Girls whose mother tongue is different from the language of instruction at schools
- Girls from household whose head have never been to school

### **3.4.6 Learning Tests**

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematical Assessment (EGMA) were used to measure learning outcome of the project. EGRA is a custom-built literacy assessment framework containing sub-tasks which evaluates the literacy skills of students in various aspects. Likewise, EGMA is a custom-built numeracy assessment framework containing sub-tasks which evaluate the numeracy skills of students. Both the comprehensive learning assessment tools have different levels of difficulty of the subtasks with the difficulty level increasing following each subtask. For the evaluation of ENGAGE, five different versions of the tools were prepared as prescribed by the GEC learning test guidance and referred to the Education Review Office approved tools. It was ensured that the tests aligned to the content and style of teaching in bridge class and in schools. The tests were developed in Nepali since the language of instruction in the schools in the project intervention areas is Nepali.

The five versions were then piloted for testing and calibration to finalize the learning assessment tools which have questions that are age specific and appropriate. The tools were checked for the potential ceiling and floor effects. After finalization, the learning tests were administered to the beneficiary girls who were currently attending bridge classes in all three intervention districts. The learning assessment tool for children with disabilities was prepared by Humanity and Inclusion, and is slated to be administered by the project.

Following table discussed on five subtasks for learning tests and the factors included in the test.

Table 7: Subtasks of learning tests

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)	SUBTASK	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)
<b>Comprehension:</b> This section has a comprehension passage to be read out aloud by the enumerators. Girls taking tests are required to listen to the passage and answer five simple questions based on the test.	1	<b>Number identification:</b> The section had random 20 numbers up to 2 digits to be identified by girls in a minute. The girls were scored for this subtask based on the correct numbers they identified in a minute.
<b>Letter identification:</b> There are hundred random Nepali letters which the girls are expected to identify. The score is provided on the basis of alphabets that they are able to identify correctly in a minute.	2	<b>Larger number identification:</b> This subtask had ten questions in which the girls were required to find out the larger number among the two numbers in each question. They were scored by the number of correct answers that they gave.
<b>Symbol identification:</b> There are hundred Nepali alphabets associated with symbols that gives a different sound in the letters in the subtask. The score is provided similar to the Subtask 2.	3	<b>Missing number identification:</b> There were ten questions in this section. In each question, there were three numbers and the girls were required to fill in the missing fourth number which were spanned by equal intervals.
<b>Word identification:</b> There are 50 simple words commonly used in the project intervention areas. The girls are expected to read the words correctly. The score is provided on the basis of words that they are able to correctly read in a minute.	4	<b>Addition and subtraction:</b> There were ten addition and ten subtraction questions in the section from the logic of simple to complex within one and two digits. The girls were scored by number of correct answers provided.
<b>Reading and comprehension:</b> This is the most complex subtask out of all in the EGRA test. The girls are expected to read the passage and further answer questions based on the text that they have read. The test measures the word read out correctly in a minute and the number of correct answers they are able to provide among the five questions based on the passage.	5	<b>Word problem:</b> There were six word problems in the section which required girls to perform simple mathematical calculations including addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The girls were scored based on the correct answers that they provide in the section.

For EGRA, girls who took the test were allowed to stop a subtask and move to the next task if they were not able to read out any of the letters/words correctly from the first row of a subtask. While in EGMA, girls were allowed to stop the subtask if they were not able to answer similar nature of questions in a

subtask. For example, if a girl was not able to perform addition, they were asked to try the subtraction questions. If she was not able to perform any of the two then she was asked to go for the next subtask. These instructions were clearly outlined to the enumerators.

For scoring, all the individual marks obtained by each girl in each subtask was converted into percentage in both tests. These scores were added and divided by the number of subtasks in each subtask. For EGMA, the sum of score obtained by a girl in each subtask was divided by 5 to get the average EGMA score. For EGRA however, although the number of subtasks appear to be five, there are two tasks within the subtask 5 which involves them to read out the passage based on which the word per minute is assessed while also answering the questions based on the comprehension passage read out. This implied that the sum of the individual score of each subtask was divided by six.

### **Learning assessments for children with disabilities**

Apart from these learning tests, the project team had separately administered learning test for 17 children with visual impairment and 22 children with hearing impairment in the project intervention areas. A tool was separately designed consisting of same number of subtasks but fewer questions and extended time. Similarly, project carried out test for 51 children with intellectual disability and 80 children with severe disability. Before conducting the assessment for baseline, HI and VSO team oriented the district project team including sign language interpreter and sign language expert on the EGRA and EGMA tools adapted from disability aspect to test it in the field and conduct baseline survey of children enrolled in the preparatory classes and resource classes for hearing and visual impairment.

For children with visual impairments, all the tools are translated into braille language before data collection and printed letter are written above each sentence so that enumerators could understand the braille language. Before administering the test to girls with visual impairments, it was verified with the facilitators of preparatory class for its suitability to the local context. Community mobilizers collected the data from home visit and preparatory class. For children with hearing impairments, the project hired external consultants (interpreter and sign language expert) to collect learning achievement. The learning scores for children with hearing and visual impairments were carried out as for other project beneficiary girls as per the guidance of GEC-LNGB baseline report template. The learners were divided into non-learner, emergent learner, established learner and proficient learner.

For children with intellectual disability, the project team developed a separate tool consisting more of pictorial elements. The field level staffs had administered learning tests to children with intellectual disability. For the learning scores for children with intellectual disability, score was categorized into the intervals of 20, i.e. 0-20, 21-40, 41-60, 61-80 and 81-100, 0-20 being the lowest score and 81-100 being the highest. The category has been increased for children with intellectual disability than other girls to ensure that their small achievement in learning are reflected in the score bandings.

For children with severe and profound disability, the project team and external consultant collected data on daily life skills from parents during the parents and caregivers skills training. The training was intended to cover aspects like parents coping skill, daily living skills, basic counselling skills, their personal wellbeing and sensitization on different specialized service providers and social-protection services for children with severe and profound disabilities. Data was gathered from parents across- self-performance skills, physical development, art, sport and entertainment, social development, general knowledge and language

development in all three districts. As small changes in daily life activities play vital role for project, data are disaggregated with the difference of 10.

### 3.4.7 Quantitative sample selection

The primary sampling unit for the quantitative study was bridge classes from where the girls were sampled. The sampling framework had listed 52 bridge classes across seven project municipalities that had come into operation prior to the baseline study. In a separate sheet, a list of girls was created which had their names by bridge class. The order of the list was maintained in a way that the bridge class which was established later made up on the top of the list followed by the older ones. As the project had broadly been working with two intervention subgroups based on age, the beneficiary list of girls attending bridge class were divided into two age groups of 10-14 and 15-19. Another list of beneficiary girls was created based on the pre-baseline study database of girls within 15-19 age group with functional limitation who were expected to follow the life skill track of intervention without attending the bridge classes.

The sample size followed the GEC recommended criteria of 95% confidence level, 80% power and 30% attrition buffer to obtain the sample size of 397 girls. However, as the project focuses only on learning track of intervention for the age group of 10-14, to make the sample statistically representative, 69 girls needed to be added to the sample, considering that 60% of the girls within the age group of 10-14 will achieve functional level of literacy. Therefore, the total sample of girls was 466 including the figures for attrition. It was assumed that 259 girls will follow the life skill interventions which represented 11% of the total beneficiaries. Considering that 466 girls account for 89% of the girls, sample for non-learning intervention was 58.

The evaluation team disaggregated the list into three intervention beneficiary subgroups. All the girls were assigned random numbers and the girls were drawn on the random basis. Except for the girls following non-learning set of interventions who were assessed for transition, all the other girls were assessed for learning and transition. Learning tests and girls survey were administered to the girls while household survey was administered to the household of sampled girls.

Apart from the girls and household, schools were also assessed during the quantitative data collection. Schools were assessed for the teaching quality as well as the safeguarding practices and its sustainability. School Improvement Plan checklist, Disability friendly infrastructure assessment checklist and classroom observation were administered in schools for the purpose.

### 3.4.8 Quantitative sample sizes

*Table 8: Quantitative sample sizes*

Tool name	Sample size agreed in MEL framework	Actual sample size	Remarks on why anticipated and actual sample sizes are different

Learning tests (EGRA and EGMA)	468	496	It was assumed that there will be significant number of girls who would directly go into life skill classes without attending bridge class. It was agreed in the MEL framework that for the girls who do not attend bridge class, learning tests will not be administered. However, as there were more number of girls attending bridge class than anticipated, more girls were administered learning tests to meet the total sample size.
Girls survey	528	530	Not applicable
Household survey	528	519	The number of household survey is lesser than that of girls survey because there were eleven Muslim households in Banke who did not consent to participating in the survey.
SIP assessment	30	30	Not applicable
Disability infrastructure assessment	30	30	Not applicable
Classroom observation tool	30	26	In Banke, the classroom observation could not be administered during the quantitative data collection as the schools were shut down following the heavy downpour and floods. Later, during the qualitative data collection, data of four schools could not be collected due to then ongoing terminal examination.

It was agreed in the MEL framework that the girls who do not follow the learning track of intervention will not be assessed for learning. However, girls’ survey and household survey were also administered to all the girls irrespective of their intervention track. This explained the changes in sample size for girls’ survey and learning tests. Moreover, there was also difference in the number of household survey as eleven household in Banke did not consent to participating in the survey.

**3.4.9 Representativeness of the sample**

The evaluation team made a conscious attempt to ensure the representativeness of the sample which is reflected in the following tables.

By intervention pathways, the project intervenes in the two broad age groups of 10-14 and 15-19. The girls within age group 10-14 will be enrolled into formal education after bridge class. Girls within age group 15-19 will either enroll into formal education or participate in the skill development training and then get into employment. Table 9 discusses the sample breakdown by intervention pathways. By districts, the project intervenes in three districts in Terai- Sarlahi, Parsa and Banke. In terms of sample, Banke has slightly higher proportion followed by Parsa and Sarlahi which is discussed in Table 10.

Table 11 discusses the sample of girls by age. Table 12 discusses the proportion of girls having difficulty in different domains of disability as informed by Washington Group of Child Functioning Module. The girls who had the two levels of difficulty- “a lot of difficulty” and “cannot do at all” were disaggregated by the domains of difficulty. Overall, there were 7.13% girls who were stated to have at least “a lot of difficulty” in either of the difficulty domains outlined in table 12.

*Table 9: Sample breakdown by intervention pathways*

<b>Intervention pathway</b>	<b>Sample proportion of intervention group</b>
Girls within age group (10-14) who will enroll into formal education after bridge class	51.2
Girls within age group (15-19) who will either enroll into formal education or skill development training and employment	48.8
<i>Source: Girls survey</i>	
N=530	

*Table 10: Sample breakdown by regions*

<b>District</b>	<b>Sample proportion of intervention group</b>
Sarlahi	31.1
Parsa	33.4
Banke	35.5
<i>Source: Girls survey</i>	
N= 530	

*Table 11: Sample breakdown by age*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Sample proportion of intervention group</b>
Aged <10	0
Aged 10	6.98
Aged 11	6.23
Aged 12	12.45
Aged 13	13.58
Aged 14	11.89
Aged 15	17.92
Aged 16	12.45
Aged 17	8.11
Aged 18	5.85
Aged 19	4.34
Aged 20+	0
Unknown	0.19
<i>Source: Girls survey</i>	
N= 530	



Table 12: Sample breakdown by disability (Girls who have at least a lot of difficulty)

Domain of difficulty	Sample proportion of the intervention group
Seeing	0.75
Hearing	0.94
Walking	0.75
Self-care	0.00
Communication	0.75
Learning	0.94
Remembering	1.89
Concentrating	2.26
Accepting change	0.94
Controlling behaviour	1.70
Making friends	0.94
Anxiety	1.32
Depression	0.75
<i>Source: Household survey</i>	
N= 519	

### 3.4.10 Challenges in baseline data collection and limitations of the evaluation design

It was assumed that the girls who are from 15-19 group would rather opt for life skill interventions than bridge classes. However, in contrary to this, project fared well in bringing them to the bridge class for improving literacy and numeracy. This implied that there were fewer girls who could be met in this category.

As the Terai region in Nepal is prone to floods during monsoon, the data collection was hindered by the heavy downpour. As the bridge classes had to be shut down due to rainfall, the enumerators had to track the girls in their household rather than adhering to the initial plan of following them from the bridge class. This issue primarily emerged in Banke, which had extended the data collection plan by two days. Also, as the schools were closed due to the floods, classroom observations could not be carried out during the scheduled quantitative data collection duration. It was carried out later during qualitative data collection. However, then too, four schools were inaccessible for classroom observation due to the ongoing exams.

### 3.4.11 Cohort tracking and next evaluation point

As the project is adopting a single cohort approach, the project evaluation will track the same sample of girls reached out at the baseline throughout the subsequent evaluation points. Additionally, the same girls are being assessed for the learning and transition outcomes. There are few additional girls for the transition, as there are some girls who have not been enrolled currently in bridge class but will be enrolled into life skill interventions later. This implies that all the girls in learning are also assessed for transition. A

master database has been maintained with all the relevant contact details through which external evaluator will be able to track the girls throughout the project duration.

The next evaluation is envisioned to take place immediately after the end of bridge classes to primarily assess their learning and transition. For the evaluation of the learning outcome, the girl should have attended at least 80% of the total hours of bridge class. The girls who have not been to school and/or have attended less than 80% of the bridge classes then, they will not be considered for any learning assessment at the subsequent evaluation points. However, as a part of cohort study, girls will be tracked for their transition. For the purpose of evaluation, attrition rate considered during the baseline will cover for the girls who drop out of the interventions. Further, the evaluators will replace her as per the replacement strategy mentioned in the MEL framework.

### 3.5 Qualitative evaluation methodology

#### 3.5.1 Qualitative data collection tools

Table 13: Qualitative evaluation tools

Tool name	Relevant indicator(s)	Who developed the tool?	Was tool piloted?	How were findings acted upon (if applicable)	Was FM feedback provided?
Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with girls aged 10-14 and 15-19	Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy Outcome 2: Transition  IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls  IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes
FGD with parents	Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy Outcome 2: Transition  IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls  IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes

	and employment or business				
FGD with big sisters	<p>Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy</p> <p>Outcome 2: Transition</p> <p>IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls</p> <p>IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business</p>	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes
KII with teachers	<p>Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy</p> <p>Outcome 2: Transition</p> <p>IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)</p> <p>IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school</p>	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes
KII with head teachers	<p>Outcome 2: Transition</p> <p>IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)</p> <p>IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school</p> <p>Sustainability: Schools scoring acceptable or above in disability</p>	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes

	<p>infrastructure sustainability assessment</p> <p>Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in teacher training sustainability assessment</p> <p>Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment</p>				
KII with community leaders (School Management Committee)	<p>Outcome 2: Transition</p> <p>IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)</p> <p>IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school</p> <p>Sustainability: Schools scoring acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment</p> <p>Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in teacher training sustainability assessment</p> <p>Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment</p>	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes
KII with Municipal	<p>Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy</p> <p>Outcome 2: Transition</p>	FDM	No	Not applicable	Yes

<p>Education Official</p>	<p>IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)</p> <p>IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school</p> <p>Sustainability: Schools scoring acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment</p> <p>Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in teacher training sustainability assessment</p> <p>Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment</p> <p>Municipality having functional database system with disability and marginalized girls' and can evidence using it for girls' education planning</p>				
<p>KII with disability-based network</p>	<p>Outcome 2: Transition</p> <p>IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school</p>	<p>FDM</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>KII with bridge class facilitators</p>	<p>Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy</p> <p>Outcome 2: Transition</p>	<p>FDM</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p>Yes</p>

	IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business				
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### 3.5.2 Qualitative sample selection and sample sizes

After analyzing the preliminary trends of findings from the quantitative approach, the areas that needed further exploration was identified by the evaluation team. Based on the questions that emerged, the evaluation team mapped suitable stakeholders. The MEL framework, which had outlined the qualitative sample was taken into consideration while mapping the stakeholders and the number of consultations. Therefore, the qualitative sample groups correspond with the subgroups and key indirect beneficiaries highlighted in the theory of change. However, as the quantitative findings did not suggest any areas to be inquired with boys, they were removed from the qualitative sample. There might be the possibility of adding them again in the subsequent evaluation points. Informal interactions were however carried out with boys, in locations possible, to understand the general situation of school and the community.

In the execution of qualitative data collection, bridge class was considered to be the primary sampling unit. Two bridge classes were selected from each project intervention district. The girls aged 10-14 and 15-19 were consulted in two different groups from these bridge classes. Parents from the same locality were interviewed. Furthermore, the potential schools from the same locality in which the girls were more likely to enroll into were mapped and visited. Teachers, head teachers and SMC members from these schools were met.

Purposive sampling method was adopted to identify research participants in the communities in order to yield rich information on girls' education and the underlying context in the project intervention areas. Purposive sampling was also useful to ensure the representativeness in the qualitative discussions. Primarily, sex, age and ethnicity were the factors that determined the participation of the stakeholders in the qualitative discussions.

The sample size and composition were based mostly as agreed in the MEL framework.

*Table 14: Qualitative sample size and composition*

Tool (used for which outcome and IO indicator)	Beneficiary group	Sample size agreed in MEL framework	Actual sample size	Remarks on why there are major differences between anticipated and actual sample sizes (if applicable)
FGD • Outcome I: Learning -	Little Sisters	Little Sisters = 12 [4 per district]	Little Sisters = 9 [3 per district]	The quantitative data collection and the initial qualitative data

<p>Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome 1: Learning - Numeracy</li> <li>• Outcome 2: Transition</li> <li>• IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls</li> <li>• IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business</li> <li>• IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)</li> </ul>	<p>Big Sisters</p> <p>Parents/Primary Caregivers</p> <p>Boys</p>	<p>Big Sisters = 6 [2 per district]</p> <p>Parents/Primary caregivers = 6 [2 per district]</p> <p>Boys = 3 [1 per district]</p>	<p>Big Sisters = 6 [2 per district]</p> <p>Parents/Primary caregivers = 6 [2 per district]</p>	<p>collection showed that the girls within age group 10-14 were hesitant to talk. Although in order to ensure the representativeness, one FGD was still carried out with this age group in a district, the other group discussion was dropped.</p> <p>The findings by the quantitative study which informed the qualitative approach did not have any areas which needed to be inquired with the boys. Therefore, the FGD with boys was dropped.</p>
<p>KII</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy</li> <li>• Outcome 1: Learning - Numeracy</li> <li>• Outcome 2: Transition</li> <li>• IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls</li> </ul>	<p>Municipal Education Officers</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Head Teachers</p>	<p>Municipal Education Officers = 6 [2 per district]</p> <p>Teachers = 12 [4 per district]</p> <p>Head Teachers = 6 [2 per district]</p>	<p>Municipal Education Officers = 7 [2 each from Parsa and Sarlahi and 3 from Banke]</p> <p>Teachers = 6 [2 per district]</p> <p>Head Teachers = 6 [2 per district]</p>	<p>As the interventions in schools have not begun yet, the number of interactions with teachers were dropped to avoid data saturation.</p> <p>The interaction with bridge class facilitators were added to get an overview of the challenges and the</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)</li> <li>• IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school</li> </ul>	<p>SMC representatives</p> <p>Disability Based Network</p> <p>Bridge Class Facilitators</p>	<p>SMC representative = 6 [2 per district]</p> <p>Disability based networks = 3 [1 per district]</p>	<p>SMC representative = 6 [2 per district]</p> <p>Disability based networks = 3 [1 per district]</p> <p>Bridge Class Facilitators = 6 [2 per district]</p>	<p>attendance scenario of girls as the project was in the initial stage.</p>
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**3.5.3 Qualitative field researchers**

The qualitative researchers were deployed from within FDM team for the data collection. Gender balance was ensured while selecting the team members for study to ensure the comfortable sharing environment for the research participants as the previous experiences of FDM shows that the girls are more comfortable to talk to female rather than male researchers, especially when there are questions related to reproductive and sexual health.

The researchers selected from within the team had extensive experience in conducting the qualitative consultations with adolescents as well as adult stakeholders including the government. Moreover, at least a member in each team had been previously engaged in qualitative study for GEC projects. With their experience, they were well versed with the field etiquettes and had skills to ensure the active participation and engagement of the research participants.

Prior to the field mobilization of the researchers, the research coordinator provided a day orientation on the qualitative checklist along with the discussion on the project objectives, logframe and the quantitative finding which informed the areas of inquiry outlined in the qualitative checklist. It was ensured that the researchers internalize sense of questions and rationale for asking the particular questions to get rich information from the field.

**3.5.4 Qualitative data collection**

The baseline study adopted a sequential mixed method, hence, the qualitative checklists were informed by the quantitative findings. Qualitative researchers were well acquainted with the quantitative findings and the specific areas to be explored through the qualitative inquiry. Qualitative exercise took place after five weeks of the quantitative data collection concluded. A preliminary analysis was carried out of the quantitative findings and the qualitative checklists were informed accordingly. Both FGDs and KIIs were carried out with the relevant stakeholders in all the three districts simultaneously.



Sequencing was adopted where the preliminary findings and analysis of the quantitative data brought about necessary adaptations in the qualitative checklists. After review and finalization of the qualitative checklists by the FM, field level qualitative exercise was rolled out and inquiries were also drawn from the initial findings. All the interviews and discussions were electronically recorded by the researchers with the consent from the respondents. Every qualitative consultation was initiated with general talks and rapport building and only then research questions were asked when the stakeholders felt comfortable sharing their opinions. Also, by the end of the day the researchers informed the research coordinator regarding their experience and the type and trend of information they got from different stakeholders and the areas that need to be prioritized and probed when deemed necessary. Researchers' reflections during the qualitative consultations were also recorded. After the qualitative exercises concluded in all the three districts, an extensive debriefing session was held among all the field researchers who shared and discussed their experience, findings and observations during the qualitative exercise.

### 3.5.5 Qualitative data handling and analysis

All the interviews and group discussions were recorded electronically with respondents' consent which were later transcribed and translated. Additionally, the qualitative field researchers also prepared field notes with their reflections based on the recording and their observation. A one-day extensive debriefing session was held among all the field researchers where all the questions were discussed comprehensively and the findings, observations and researchers' reflections were recorded. The research coordinator had noted the analysis of the researchers based on their reflections shared during the debriefing session.

For the qualitative analysis, the research coordinator had referred to the transcripts, analysis note from the debriefing session and the field notes prepared by the field researchers. The names of the participants were removed from the transcripts and field notes and stored in an external storage device along with the computer of the research coordinator.

The qualitative data analysis adopted the following steps.

*STEP 1 – Data coding:* The coding of the qualitative data was done by thorough scanning of the transcripts. The key terms were identified and the responses were grouped. The study used descriptive coding to enable research team to efficiently pull out and refer back to the qualitative data while the report writing was underway.

The study had explored the descriptive aspect focusing on the causal factors and explanations in relation to the quantitative findings as the study had undergone the sequential mixed method approach. Although concept-driven coding was used, the analysis kept the avenue open for any emerging information that adds value to the study by allowing openness in coding.

The preliminary coding was done by a team of three researchers including team leader, two of whom were also involved in field-level data collection at field.

*STEP 2 –Theme generation/Final coding:* In this step, the data with preliminary coding were further grouped into themes through the process of “focused coding”- combining smaller, related coded data into one category, subdividing more common coded data into subcategories or eliminate themes/categories that became outliers. The thematic coding was done during a two days' workshop at FDM among the three

research team members. Matrices were used for grouping of the coded data into themes which were identified based upon the log-frame indicator, evaluation questions, midline report template, and preliminary findings from quantitative data.

The process enabled the systematic organization of information from qualitative consultations and in determining trends among groups and contexts. An inter-rater agreement of 80% or above was sought for validation.

*STEP 3 – Data Interpretation:* This step involved analysis of the data which were coded and categorized into themes and drawing conclusions. The interpretation i.e. analysis and conclusion of the data focused on explaining trends and findings casual interference 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.

The quantitative and qualitative data analyzed 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. The MEL framework had suggested the sub-groups to be the age group 10-14 and 15-19. Further a separate intervention subgroup of girls with at least some degree of functional limitation was also incorporated.

### **3.5.6 Challenges in baseline qualitative data collection, handling and analysis and limitations of the qualitative aspects of the evaluation design**

During the quantitative data collection with the girls aged 10-14, the field supervisors had shared that the girls in this age group were hesitant to talk to, compared to the older age group. This challenge was also faced in the qualitative discussion carried out by the experienced FDM researchers. As the girls spoke very little, for the subgroup analysis, one FGD was conducted with the girls of this age group in each municipality to ensure representatives but the number of interviews was dropped. Few relevant questions were only asked to them.

The next challenge was on the language barrier. Although the girls completed learning tests, as they were not adept with the Nepali language, they preferred to speak in the local language in Parsa and Sarlahi. To ensure that girls were not intimidated by language and to ensure that they can freely express their experiences and perceptions, local was hired for the translation. Prior to the interview, the local translator was oriented about the program, questions and the intent so that they translate the interviews as it is.

In one of the FGD carried out with the girls aged 15-19 in Parsa in a bridge class, mothers of the girls also entered as the girls spoke which affected interview for a while. Only general question was asked then about the classroom. Later, another researcher from the evaluation team took the mothers outside and had a separate interaction with them to allow girls to speak without inhibition. Unavoidable circumstances like this can hamper the quality of information generated. However, as the enumerators took prompt action, this risk was avoided.

## 4. Key characteristic subgroups and barriers of baseline samples

The project in its theory of change had outlined major barriers to learning and transition for the adolescent marginalized girls and girls with disabilities. The project through its past experience of working with the adolescent girls outlined extreme household poverty, socio-cultural norms, gender biases and unequal power relations, low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities as barriers. Furthermore, the lack of capacity of institutions for instance, educators to support OOS marginalized girls and girls with disabilities, non-inclusive teaching methodologies in classrooms, lack of institutional screening and support for girls with disabilities were believed to be the barriers for girl to enroll into schools. Despite having the policies in place, weak implementation of inclusive policies at the local level was also stated to be the barriers for girls.

### 4.1 Educational marginalization

The project has been working with the marginalized group in three districts of Terai. Even among the marginalized groups, owing to the socio-cultural factors, there are certain caste/ethnic groups who face more barriers than others. The barriers will be discussed in the section below. Following table highlights the characteristic group with the proportion of sample.

*Table 15: Characteristic group in educational marginalization*

Characteristic	N	Proportion of sample with these characteristics
Single orphans	530	5.85
Double orphans	530	0.38
Living without both parents	530	2.89
Married	530	4.50
Mother under 18	530	1.30
Mother under 16	530	0.20
Difficult to afford for girl to go to school	519	50.87
Material of the roof (Mud and thatch)	519	33.71
Poor household (Unable to meet household needs without charity)	519	42.2
Gone to sleep hungry for many days in past year	519	3.47
Non-Nepali speaking household	519	92.87
Girl doesn't speak language of instruction (Lol)	519	70.33
Head of household (HoH) has no education	519	19.46
Primary caregiver has no education	519	76.11
Muslim household	519	35.8
Terai Janajati	519	25
Terai Dalit	519	22.7

Girls with functional limitation (at least some difficulty in functional limitation)	519	37.96
Girls with disability (at least a lot of difficulty in functional limitation)	519	7.13

The study found that there was a huge proportion of girls who were living with both their parents. There were only 2.89% of the girls who were living without both parents. There were 0.38% girls who had lost both their parents while 5.85% had lost either mother or father. Although the law of Nepal states 20 and above to be marriageable age, 4.5% of the girls were found to be married within the sample. 1.30% of the sampled girls had become mother before 18 years old while 0.20% girls had given birth to a child even before 16 years of age.

In the living situation and poverty situation of the girls, there are some household which are living in poor condition. 42.2% household have reported to be unable to meet the household needs without charity. There were 33.72% of the households which were covered with the roof of mud and thatch. 37.57% household did not own any land. In relativity, there do not seem to be many families who are suffering from food scarcity despite not being able to meet other basic needs. There were 3.47% household who have reported to have slept hungry for many days in past year. Wage labour is the prime source of income for that households, as 43.2% rely on it. There were 32% household whose prime source is agriculture and 10.98% household rely on the remittance from family members who have gone to foreign employment. The qualitative inquiry showed that it was the male member of the family who was abroad to work leaving women as the head of the household. 52.5% households were headed by female.

Nepali is the official language of instruction in schools across Nepal. There are 92.87% households whose mother tongue is not Nepali. Stemming from their background, there are 70.33% girls who cannot speak in Nepali language.

Women have been found to be the primary member who were responsible for looking after the girls as 74.6% of the household have stated the primary caregiver to be a female. Moreover, 66.09% of all the primary caregivers were mothers. Out of the female primary caregivers, 67.4% are also head of the household. 78.54% of them have never been to school. For the primary caregivers who are also the head of household (including male household head), 73.41% HoH have been reported to have never been to school. Considering the huge proportion of female as the primary caregivers and also household head, the cursory glance at the figures might indicate towards the women-focused interventions if the project expects to bring changes in the parental attitude. In the contrary, qualitative finding showed that male members of the family held more decision-making power than that of female in the household. In a qualitative discussion in Sarlahi, it emerged that girls were not going to school because of the decision of the male household member. Even when in foreign employment, men were found to be deciding if the girls should be attending school or not. A mother in Parsa shared, *“My husband is abroad for work. Before making all decisions here, I consult with him. He has strictly instructed me to not allow our girls to go to school. Before sending to this class (bridge class operated by the project) too, I had talked to him. As it was inside the community and only girls attended, he agreed to it.”*

Washington Group Questionnaire Child Functioning Module were administered in the household to examine the situation of functional limitation of the girls. It identified 37.96% of the girls to have at least

some form of functional limitation. 7.13% girls were stated to have ‘a lot of difficulty’ and ‘cannot do at all’ which has been stated as having disability. For the girls with disabilities, sample breakdown for types of disabilities has been discussed in table 12. The project has selected the project locations informed by the pre-baseline survey based on the higher number of marginalized OOS, specifically those with functional limitations. This explains the high incidence of girls with disabilities and those with functional limitation in the sample selection.

The project has identified three major intervention subgroups- 10-14, 15-19 and girls with severe disabilities. As the project intends to support the girls with disabilities, EE suggest inclusion of a new subgroup of girls with disabilities. They compose 7.13% of the total sampled household. Girls with disabilities specifically include the girls who have been stated to have “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” level of difficulties in different domains suggested by the Washington Group of Questions. The evidences discussed in the barrier section below discusses that there are some specific barriers to children with disabilities, which makes it crucial to discuss the findings as a separate subgroup. Therefore, the analysis henceforth will be done based on this.

Apart from these subgroups, the study looked at other different aspects to examine if there are any relevant characteristics that can make up other subgroups to inform project interventions. In this regard, the EE explored disaggregating subgroups by ethnic marginalization. By ethnicity, no stark differences in the learning scores were observed between different groups, which implied there need not be a separate subgroup for them.

## Barriers

*Following are the barriers identified by the project in their Theory of Change.*

- *Extreme household poverty*
- *Socio-cultural norms, gender biases and unequal power relations*
- *Low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities*
- *Lack of screening and support for girls with disabilities*
- *Violence in and on the way to school*
- *Low capacity of educators to support OOS and marginalized girls*
- *Curriculum and teaching methodology are not inclusive*
- *Lack of institutional screening and support for girls with disabilities*
- *Institutional infrastructure is not accessible or inclusive*
- *Poor implementation of inclusive policies by duty bearers/service providers*
- *No budget for local implementation of inclusive policies*
- *Transportation facilities available to school*

Table 16 below presents the prevalence of these barriers. However, some of the barriers outlined above have not been measured quantitatively, hence have not been reported.

Table 16: Barriers, Frequency and Percentage

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Extreme household poverty</b>	
Gone to sleep at night feeling hungry many days (n=519)	3.47%
Gone without enough clean water for home use (n=519)	9.06%
Gone without medicines or medical treatment (n=519)	7.51%
Gone with cash income (n=519)	13.10%
Unable to meet basic needs without charity (n=519)	42.20%
Parents reported difficulty to afford for girls to go to school (n=519)	
<b>Low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities</b>	
HHs that think children with disability do not have right to education even though they are not in school (n=519)	0.77%
HHs that think children with disability do not have right to employment (n=519)	6.17%
<b>Violence in and on the way to school</b>	
Parents who think journey to and from school is unsafe because there might be harassment by other children (n=51)	7.84%
Parents who think journey to and from school is unsafe because there might be harassment by adults (n=51)	3.92%
Girls who have never attended school stating it is unsafe to travel to and from school (n=244)	1.23%
Girls who have never attended school stating it is unsafe to be in school (n=244)	2.05%
Girls who have never attended school stating teachers mistreat at school (n=244)	1.23%
School drop-out girls stating it is unsafe to travel to and from school (n=286)	2.10%
School drop-out girls stating it is unsafe to be in school (n=286)	3.15%
School drop-out girls stating it teachers mistreat at school (n=286)	1.40%
Parents who think that their children may be physically harmed or teased at school or on the way to/ from school (n=519)	22.54%
<b>Low capacity of educators to support OOS and marginalized girls</b>	

Parents who stated that the girl is not enrolled in education because teachers do not know how to teach a child like her (n=519)	2.10%
Girls who have never attended school stating teachers do not know how to teach (n=244)	1.20%
School drop-out girls stating teachers do not know how to teach (n=286)	2.80%
<b>Curriculum and teaching methodology are not inclusive</b>	
Parents who think school does not meet the physical or learning needs of the child (n=519)	24.90%
Parents who said the girl is currently out of school because she needs special services or assistances such as speech therapy (n=519)	1%
Parents who said the girl is currently out of school because she needs assistive device/ technology such as braille textbook (n=519)	0.40%
Parents who said the girl is currently out of school because the school does not have a program that meets her learning needs (n=519)	1.20%
School drop-out girls stating special services or assistances such as speech therapy are not available at school (n=286)	0.30%
School drop-out girls stating that assistive device/ technology such as braille textbook are not available at school (n=286)	0%
School drop-out girls stating that school does not have a program that meets their learning needs (n=286)	0.70%
Girls who have never attended school stating special services or assistances such as speech therapy are not available at school (n=244)	2.90%
Girls who have never attended school stating that assistive device/ technology such as braille textbook are not available at school (n=244)	0%
Girls who have never attended school stating that school does not have a program that meets their learning needs (n=244)	0.40%
<b>Lack of institutional screening and support for girls with disabilities</b>	
Parents who said the girl is not enrolled in school because she was refused entry into the school (n=519)	0.20%
School drop-out girls stating she was refused entry into the school (n=286)	0%
Girls who have never attended school stating they were refused entry into the school (n=244)	0.40%
<b>Institutional infrastructure is not accessible or inclusive</b>	

Parents who said the girl is not enrolled in education because she cannot move around the school or classroom (n=519)	1%
Parents who said the girl is not enrolled in education because she cannot use the toilet at school (n=519)	0%
Girls who said they dropped out of school because they could not move around the school or classroom (n=286)	0.30%
Girls who said they dropped out of school because they could not use toilet at school (n=286)	0%
Girls who have never attended school stating they cannot move around the school or classroom (n=244)	0%
Girls who have never attended school stating they cannot use the toilet at school (n=244)	0%
<b>Transportation facilities available to school</b>	
Parents who said girls are not enrolled in education because transportation facilities to/ from school are inadequate (n=519)	1.20%
Girls who said they dropped out of school because transport services are inadequate (n=286)	3.50%
Girls who have never attended school stating transport services are inadequate (n=244)	2%

### Poverty

The baseline evaluation study has identified the barriers existing for the learning and transition of girls. Poverty has emerged as the most prominent barrier which leads to girls being out of school and puts them at the risk of being out of school. 50.87% households have reported difficulty to afford for girls to go to school. 42.2% have further been identified as the household who were struggling to meet the basic needs without external support. It emerged during the qualitative inquiry that due to poverty, girls are required to take over the household responsibilities to allow their other adult household members to earn for the family. More boys than girls had to drop out of schools for working outside home. A father in Sarlahi asserted, “A child can earn up to Rs. 200-500 per day but if he goes to school, he earns nothing. There is also no guarantee that boys and even girls will get good jobs after completing school. If they get educated up to primary level, they will be able to read and write. Further investment on education is not worthy.” This was echoed by a head teacher in Parsa when speaking of the barrier to girls’ education, “Parents do not see the prospect of educating their girls. They hold the perception that eventually if the girls have to get married and take care of the household responsibilities, why should they need education!” This implies that parents are skeptic about the usefulness of education for getting access to employment opportunities in future limiting their access to education at the present.



## Socio-cultural norms, gender biases and unequal power relations

### High chore burden

The other prominent barrier faced by the girls in the intervention areas is the household chores. Adolescent girls have been found to be heavily engaged in the household chores, dedicated quarter or more part of the day performing their duties inside home. The quantitative finding depicts that there are 93.3% households in which the beneficiary girls face high chore burden. Among the adolescent girls too, quantitative finding indicates that all the girls living without both parent and those married were engaged in household chore for most part of the day. 18.3% households have attributed household chores as the sole reason behind girls being out of school while 41.04% household have stated that it is partially the reason.

Qualitative inquiry upon this confirmed the quantitative findings. It was found that the girls were required to do the household chores including cooking, cleaning, taking care of younger siblings or an ill adult family member. Interaction with the girls confirmed that it was usually the young female who were required to take up the responsibility of household chores. A 16-year-old girl in Dhobini shared, *“In my household, it is me who works in the household. Usually, daughters and daughter-in-law are the ones who take care of all the household duties in our culture. When I was younger, my mother used to do the household work. Now, I cook, clean, look after my young brother while my mother works outside in the field. Even when she is not working outside, I still have to do the household work.”* When inquired with big sisters if the engagement in household differed by the communities or education level, a big sister in Jagarnathpur stated, *“In Terai, irrespective of caste group, class or education, girls are primarily responsible for the household chores. Take my example, I am currently pursuing Bachelor’s degree, my family is economically sound and fairly educated. Still I finish all the household chores before I go out for work and come back to more household chores.”* This implies that although the girl might be enrolled into formal education by the project, there still stands a risk of girls not getting enough time to study as household chores is primarily their responsibility than any other member in the household and eventually be overburdened with household chores and course work at school. There are only 29.86% household which have reported boys supporting in the household chores. The qualitative interactions with girls, household and big sisters has corroborated with the low engagement of boys in the household chores. A big sister in Parsa confirmed, *“In our society, it is only women who take care of the household work. Our brothers helping us in household chores is extremely rare.”*

### Perception of parents towards education

The quantitative finding reflects the positive perception of the household towards girls’ education. 86.7% household have agreed to the statement that it is worthy to invest in girls’ education even when the funds are limited. 91.14% household held the perception that girls were likely to use their education as a boy. Similarly, for employment of girls, 86.5% household have agreed that it is worth investing in employment of girls- be it in business skill training or technical skill training. 90.75% household believed that girls are also likely to use skills for business or employment as a boy. In the contrary, the qualitative inquiry showed the restrictive attitude of parents as some of them were not sending their girls to school because they feared that they might talk to boys, which they perceived was not safe for girls. For parents, adolescence was the phase when girls should be married. A mother in Parsa shared, *“My daughter is 17 years old already. Other girls of her age are married and are waiting for their gauna. People in my community are already questioning why she is not getting married and I am sure they are speculating that my daughter has some flaws. If I stay*

*adamant that I will not marry her off until I wait to finish her school, I doubt if she will ever get married.”* Furthermore, when discussing the social norms that shapes the parental attitude towards girls’ education, a Municipal Education Officer in Sarlahi also expressed similar to former quote. He asserted, *“The access of girls to education is defined largely by marriage and dowry. When the girls continue their education till higher grade, their marriage will be delayed. Parents will have to look for a more educated groom. More educated groom implies bigger dowry amount means additional burden on parents. Sooner the marriage takes place, lesser competent will be the boy meaning lesser dowry. However, there are also few cases emerging in which the highly educated boys like doctors and engineers look for an educated bride, which is the reason behind sending girls to school.”* While the fear of bigger dowry amount with delayed marriage led them to curtailing the girls’ access to education while the demand of a more educated bride increased their access to education. This indicates towards the social norms which affects the girls’ access to education.

#### *Lack of decision-making power of girls*

Going by the social norms in the project locations, it was found that girls had to be heavily reliant on their parents for making decisions about their life. 80.19% girls have agreed that they cannot choose to stay in or out of education. This finding was further triangulated through qualitative aspect. There were several instances which emerged in qualitative exploration -- a girl in Sarlahi could not go to school because her migrant worker father from the foreign land would instruct his wife to not send the daughter to school, a girl in Parsa could not attend school because her father did not allow as he could not use his education for securing job, a mother in Parsa did not want to send her daughter to school because she was of marriageable age and it would be best if she would learn the household work. Furthermore, girls could not seek jobs outside their community because their parents would not send them away from home. Additionally, parents were reluctant to send their girls to school also because of co-education because they feared that girls would choose their partner on their own and elope. Instances like these point towards the need of engaging with parents to listen to the voices of girls.

#### *Safety concern: Violence in and on the way to school and transportation facilities*

As discussed in the section above, the skeptic attitude towards letting the girls continue school stems from their concern about safety and potential risk posed to girls. 9.6% households have asserted that the way to the school is not safe for girls to travel. The reasons for this being unsafe has been attributed to long distance to school, poor roads and weather conditions rather than other social factors. Only 0.8% of the total household have cited violence in and on the way to school as a barrier in sending girls to school. During the focus group discussion with parents in Jaggarnathpur, Parsa, they revealed the long distance to school behind the prime reason for not sending girls to school after grade five. They asserted, *“We have a primary school in our village. After Grade five, children are required to travel 7 km away to get to the secondary school. It is very far and no transportation facilities are available. Our village is very close to border, and the way to school doesn’t have settlements, rather only fields. We are not confident sending our girls to school alone. We cannot ensure their safety to school.”* The parents further mentioned that they will send their girls to school if transportation services were available. 1.16% of the households have cited lack of transportation facilities as a major factor behind girls being out of school. In this context, the parents lauded the effort of the local governments to provide cycles to the girls in secondary level. Although some parents asserted that they would send to girls if they could have cycles while some were still skeptic about the safety of girls on the way. Other stakeholders pointed out solutions like provisions of school bus, cycle distribution to promote the social norms of sending girls to school.

### *Low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities*

The quantitative figures point towards the high level of awareness of the households with regard to people with disabilities. 96.53% of the households have agreed that children with disabilities have right to education while slightly lower 90.37% households have agreed that children with disabilities have right to employment. Qualitative explorations indicate that parents of children with disabilities are keener on sending them to schools because it would save them some time for carrying their other personal works while their children are being taken care of. Despite the willingness of parents to send the children with disabilities to school, poor infrastructures have proved to be a barrier in their actual access. A mother in Banke lamented, *“My daughter has intellectual disability. I had taken her to admit in the community school nearby. But the head teacher did not admit her into school. He cited that they would not be able to pay her special attention that she deserves. I hope the class like this (bridge class) continues in our community.”*

### *Institutional infrastructure is not accessible or inclusive*

Only one school out of 30 schools assessed was found to have secured acceptable score in disability infrastructure assessment. 70% of the schools discuss about the need of disability friendly infrastructures in schools. However, only 23.33% of the schools have resource at hand to invest on the same. The head teacher of the school in Sarlahi expressed, *“Government only allocates limited resources each year based on which we have to plan. We had to construct a new building due to the lack of classrooms in our school so we invested our resources there. Last year, we had installed frames for door. Hopefully, next year, we will ensure safety measures by putting on railings and other construction activities.”* This school had constructed a two storied building with classrooms also on the first floor. However, no special arrangements for the children unable to walk was made in the building. This points towards the lack of consideration for children with physical disabilities. This was the same school which did not have railings, doors and windows in the old building even on the first floor citing the resource crunch. This puts only children with disabilities but all other children at risk. The quantitative finding further paints only a bleak picture for inclusion of children with disabilities. 70% of the schools do not have accessible classroom due to the lack of ramps, classrooms being on the second floor or due to the difficult ways to the classrooms. Minimum basic infrastructures like classrooms and toilets are not disability friendly. 50% of the schools did not have ramps while 80% did not have disability friendly toilets. These barriers, at minimum, have to be mitigated if the project envisions inclusive education.

### *Low capacity of educators to support OOS and marginalized girls*

Although the principle of inclusiveness suggests all types of children reading together in the mainstream schools, the teachers currently teaching in schools possess very limited skill to address the special needs of children in this regard. When explained about the modality of ENGAGE project and asked if the teachers are able to extend the essential support to the OOS marginalized and disabled children to integrate into the classroom, a teacher in Parsa replied, *“I feel confident that teachers will be able to support girls without disabilities who have never been to school or attended few years of school. However, we do not have necessary skills to support children who need special attention like those with intellectual disability, hearing and visual impairment.”*

The resource school for the children with disabilities offers residential facilities including food and other care facilities with education. The disability network personnel in Parsa, also a teacher in the residential resource school expressed the constraints of schools to support children with disabilities. He stated, *“The*

resource class that I am teaching in has about 10 boys with intellectual disability. In terms of human resource, it is me who teach and there is a caretaker who looks after the boys. There are no other personnel who supports. There are very limited initiatives to capacitate resource teachers. Local government has not initiated a single training in this regard. In fact, I can recall of only one trainer who is a disability expert for education in Nepal. The new practices and knowledge from the global diaspora are rarely shared to us.” He also pointed out on the need to engage parents in the learning of girls with disabilities. He lamented, “Parents drop their disabled child in the resource class and just forget that they are here. They hardly call. We have to call them during holidays to take them home. Let alone their concern in child’s education, they do not even come to pick them up when they are sick.”

#### Poor implementation/No budget for implementation of inclusive policies

The municipal government has been constrained by the lack of resources and heaps of responsibilities, so much that they have not been able to prioritize education. The government has given only limited attention to the issues of children with disabilities. Although people had high hopes from the federal structure as the local government would be powerful than ever, local government has hardly taken any steps for the children with disabilities. The disability network chair in Parsa reflected, “The newly formed local government has many functions to carry out but are faced with severe human resource crunch. Although the popular belief was that after federalism, local government will be more powerful and responsive as per their context but they are not as expected. They prioritize the programs which are visible and useful to gather votes. From the perspective of disability, I feel the previous structure was better for the programs on disability as Woman Development Office in districts used to look after the programs concerning disability. They were better oriented on these affairs. The local structure does not have the capacity.” It has been mentioned earlier in the report that municipality only allocated limited funds to each school which constrains their ability to establish disability friendly infrastructures when the basic infrastructures like toilets still have to be in place. When questioned about the resource allocation for schools, Municipal Education Officer in Sarlahi lamented, “There are many schools in the municipality. We are short of resources in the municipality itself. We are left with very little to allocate to all the schools after salary.”

#### Language barrier

Language barrier was not mentioned in the ToC designed by the project. The preliminary data analysis prior to the qualitative study showed that the EGMA score was higher than EGRA score for girls. When explored on the reason, it emerged that language barrier was primarily the factor behind weak performance of girls in EGRA. 70.33% household have reported that the girls are not able to speak the language of instruction. The ability of girls to comprehend Nepali has been reflected in their EGRA scores. The aggregate EGRA score for the girls who can speak very well Nepali is 30.79, while the mean EGRA score for the girls who are not able to speak Nepali too well is 22.05. Although the girls cannot speak Nepali at all, they could read in Nepali and score 16.60 at aggregate. However, when running the significance test, the relationship between the ability of girls to speak in Nepali language and EGRA score was not found to be significant. This implies that language is not a huge barrier for learning and the project can employ similar interventions to all the girls to improve their learning outcomes.

Barriers	N	Proportion of sample with these characteristics
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Household who are unable to meet basic needs	519	42.2
High chore burden (Girls have to spend more than quarter of the day doing the household chores)	519	93.3
Schools which have not scored the acceptable level in disability friendly infrastructure	30	96.67
Language barrier (Girls do not speak Lol)	519	70.33

## 4.2 Intersection between key characteristics subgroups and barriers

Drawing from the findings elaborated above, poverty, social norms that poses high chore burden over girls and curtails the girls right to education despite the household possessing good knowledge on the rights of girls to education and employment, inaccessible infrastructure and low capacity of educators to support children who need special attention and care are the most prominent barriers for the out-of-school girls to engage in education and employment. In addition to the intervention subgroup of 10-14 and 15-19 as designed by the project, the external evaluator further suggests the addition of the characteristic group of girls with disability as there are some specific barriers pertinent only to the children with disabilities. Following table discusses the barriers among the girls with disabilities.

Characteristics	Barrier
Girls with disability	54.5% belong to the poor household
	81.08% have high chore burden
	8.11% household do not agree that children with disability have right to employment

There were more than half proportion of the girls with disability came from the household who were unable to pay for their basic needs. Despite the disability, there were 81.08% of girls who were posed with high chore burden. Although all the primary caregivers agree that children with disabilities have right to education, there were 8.11% household who did not agree that children with disability have right to employment.

Despite the awareness of right of children with disabilities to education and employment, the parents are still not able to enroll them to schools or employment because the school is not able to strengthen the disability friendly infrastructure. As discussed in the section above, only one out of thirty schools assessed scored acceptable level in disability friendly infrastructure. As the classrooms assessed did not have children with disabilities, it was difficult to observe their practices to being disability friendly in their teaching pedagogies. However, it was explored from the qualitative inquiry that teachers lack specific skills needed to children with disabilities. In the light of large classroom size, it is evidently difficult for teachers to direct more attention towards supporting children with special needs. Similarly, the teacher in Banke shared, *“We can still manage to help the girls who are enrolled in school after bridge class although they have never been to school. Difficult would be to provide support to the children with disabilities. We do not have necessary skills to help them.”*

### 4.3 Appropriateness of project activities to the characteristics subgroups and barriers identified

#### Comments on characteristic sub groups identified by the project

As intervention subgroups, the project has largely focused on girls within ages 10-14, 15-19 and those with functional limitation. The baseline study found that the barriers to learning and transition was primarily due to the social norms that persists in the communities in Terai which is a common phenomenon for all the beneficiaries in the project intervention areas irrespective of their diverse caste and class. Although Muslims were spelled out to be restrictive for girls' education, the quantitative data showed that in Terai Dalits and Terai Janajati too, there were girls in similar proportion not attending school. Therefore, the possibility of the educational marginalization based on the caste group was ruled out. Although not huge in number, the married girls in specific were relatively found to be engaged more in the household chores. Hence, more dedicated efforts with the husband and in-laws might be essential for the married OOS girls. However, as there are some of the barriers which are prevalent only for the girls with disabilities and also reaching out to the most marginalized is essence of the project, girls with disabilities have been established as a separate characteristic sub-group. This group differs from the extremely marginalized as the forms of barriers they will be exposed to are different. Given their barriers, they might also need some tailored interventions.

#### Comments on barriers identified by the project

Drawing from the findings elaborated above, poverty, social norms that poses high chore burden over girls and curtails the girls right to education despite the household possessing good knowledge on the rights of girls to education and employment, inaccessible infrastructure and low capacity of educators to support children who need special attention and care are the most prominent barriers for the out-of-school girls to engage in education and employment.

Barrier in section 4.1 has elaborated on the evidences with regard to each barrier as outlined in the Theory of Change by the project. Poverty was highlighted as a major barrier as 42.2% households were unable to meet their basic needs limiting the possibility of households to spend on education of children. Furthermore, the social norms which places girls in the household domain, by delegating the household chore responsibilities to girls has also been a deterrent in their access to educational opportunities. In the project intervention areas, sampled girls in 93.3% household devote more than quarter of their day to the household chores. 18.3% households have attributed this as the sole reason behind girls being out of school while 41.04% household have stated that it is partially the reason. Even for girls with disabilities, 81.08% are facing high chore burden. Therefore, poverty and social norms have been retained as a barrier as outlined by the project.

Apart from poverty and high chore burden, there are some specific barriers prominent to the girls with disabilities as well. Quantitative finding revealed good knowledge of parents on the rights of children with disabilities as 96.53% and 90.37% household have agreed that children with disabilities have rights to education and employment respectively. The qualitative finding also indicated willingness to send their children to school. However, the major barrier here was the inaccessible infrastructure in school and the lack of skills in teachers to support children with special needs. It should be noted here that all the teachers in the government schools receive the professional development trainings which deals with the

aforementioned issues. The teacher trainings are usually rolled out keeping the ideal classroom size in mind, which is why teachers fail to implement their learnings in the existing classrooms in reality. After the restructuring of the governance system in Nepal, the local level has been engaged in other priorities sidelining the issue of capacity building and professional development of teachers. So, there are very limited opportunities for educators to enhance their capacity. With this backdrop, the barriers related to school infrastructures, low capacity of educators and lack of implementation of inclusive policies has been retained. As the quantitative aspect depicted high awareness of parents on the right of children with disabilities to education and the qualitative findings also showed willingness to send them to school, this barrier as outlined by the project for educational marginalization has been ruled out.

The project has outlined the violence in and on the way to school and lack of transportation facilities to school barriers to education. However, quantitative findings stated this to be in only small magnitude. Only 0.8% of the total household have cited violence in and on the way to school as a barrier in sending girls to school and 1.16% of the households have cited lack of transportation facilities as a major factor behind girls being out of school. Qualitative explorations detailed out that parents felt protective of their girls and were scared to send girls to school alone which was shaped by their social norms, rather than any incident of violence in the past. Considering only low magnitude, the external evaluators suggest this barrier be removed from the Theory of Change.

## Comments on project interventions

Major changes required	Minor changes required	No changes required

*Table 17: Comments on the project interventions*

Barrier	Intervention(s) to overcome barrier	Appropriateness of intervention for barrier	Considerations for intervention for sub-group
Poverty	<p>The girls following learning track of intervention will receive financial support to buy materials to support education.</p> <p>Business skill trainings and income generation grant to the adolescent girls within ages 15-19 who do not get into the formal school</p>	<p>As an initial push to the households to support them to enroll girls into school, financial support to buy educational materials or uniforms seem relevant. There are 42.2% households who are unable to meet the basic needs. Along with the initial support to enroll girls into school, the project should further advance to support the income generation of the poor household to ensure that girls are not out of school because of the financial crunch.</p> <p>The support of the project to provide skill development training and also grant to establish their business is relevant to contribute to their transition. The ineffectiveness of business skill training is a pressing issue in the project intervention areas as emerged in qualitative discussions. Therefore, the project should properly map the market demand and produce the human resources accordingly. Furthermore,</p>	<p>Among the girls with disabilities, there are 54.5% who belong to the poor household. Children with disabilities might require additional equipment or other forms of support demanding financial resources. It would be valuable if the project can contribute to the livelihood of these parents to ensure the retention of these children in school.</p> <p>Girls with severe disability or those under 15 years of age will not fall under the radar of business skill training and income generation grant so alternatively, livelihood opportunities for parents ultimately contributing to education and empowerment of girls has to be considered.</p>



		<p>there is a challenge of household not letting girls to move away from home for work or gaining advanced level trainings along. For effectiveness and sustainability of livelihood interventions for the adolescent girls, the project needs to engage with the household members. As far as possible, attempts to engage the male member of the household should be done as they are the key decision makers in the family.</p>	
<p>Socio-cultural norms, gender biases and unequal power relations</p>	<p>Parenting education through community meetings and awareness raising activities in the community</p>	<p>Evidences indicate parental attitude has posed a barrier to girls from attaining formal education. Social norms which shapes the attitude of parents makes them extra sensitive about the safety of girls, pushes them to marry daughters early to save higher dowry amount, indulges the girls in household chores to allow the other adults to work outside home. So, parenting education efforts is relevant. These deep-rooted social norms will need to be addressed by the project for smooth transition and sustainable result. The project envisions on engaging parents through community meetings. As social norms are huge part of shaping the parental attitude, the community meetings and awareness raising mechanisms can be useful to raise awareness to certain level but changing their attitude and behavior is a challenge. The meetings and one-off awareness activities might not be as effective as planned by the project as the turnout of parents in the school meeting without any incentive as shared by the school related stakeholders was</p>	

		<p>very low. A head teacher in Baijanath, Banke shared, “We invite parents in meetings and for other discussions related to school. However, they never come. They will make it a point to come only when there are some allowance provision or lunch. They will come in a cultural event instead but never in the serious discussions. Same parents, if they send their son or daughter to a private school, they will go. I don’t understand this difference in attitude.”</p> <p>Behavior change will only be possible through the intensive one-on-one intervention with the families of beneficiary girls.</p>	
<p>Safety concerns: Violence in and on the way to school and transportation facilities to school</p>	<p>[Not a pressing barrier]</p>	<p>The fear of parents in sending their daughters alone to school is related with the social norms which can be addressed in the parenting education sessions. Again, this would require parents to change their deep-rooted concern for safety of girls which would not be possible through community meetings. One-on-one extensive counseling interventions will be required.</p>	

<p>Low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities</p>	<p>Learning hubs</p>	<p>The project aims to establish learning hubs in schools and communities. In the schools that external evaluators visited, they were already facing constraints by limited rooms. In this context, establishing learning hubs in school can be difficult. The project needs to engage with the local government- primarily ward officials to discuss on the suitable location. Prior to this, the group responsible to manage and sustain learning hub should be consulted.</p>	
	<p>Referral support to obtain disability ID cards</p>	<p>Apart from referral support for girls to get disability cards, there are also some girls who have not been able to go to school because they did not have birth registration certificate. Local advocacy efforts to obtain this certificate would enable girls to attend school. This is missing in the current intervention.</p>	
	<p>Personalized Support</p>	<p>Social The project intends to map the needs of children with disabilities and their transition pathway through personalized social support. It was still underway when the baseline evaluation was conducted.</p>	
	<p>Support for children with severe disability</p>	<p>The project will extend the equipment support and basic support to help the children with severe disability those who need assistance to perform self-care tasks independently which is a relevant support.</p>	



	<p>Bridge class support for marginalized girls and those with disability</p> <p>Remedial class support</p> <p>Big sister mentoring to girls</p>	<p>strategies adopted by the project in this regard. The group learning observed in one bridge class was not seen in others. Therefore, the project can form at least two groups by assessing their learning to guide all the learners based on their levels of learning.</p> <p>Irregularity had emerged as a major problem in bridge class. Big sisters were able to ensure the girls regularity to some extent. In absence of mentoring approach, the turnout at bridge class could be very less. Therefore, the project should also focus on the behavioral changing activities by helping the parents and communities in general understand the importance of education.</p> <p>This activity has been designed to support the learning of girls with poor academic performance in the class. Remedial class along with the formal school would imply lesser hours in household chores. This phenomenon could invite resistance from the household members who would be required to do more household chores. Therefore, engagement with parents will be essential to yield positive results from the remedial class.</p> <p>As until baseline evaluation study, the contribution of big sisters has been huge to promote the regularity of girls into classroom. However, the continued support and follow up is</p>	<p>with visual and hearing impairment to prepare them for formal education.</p> <p>As big sisters mentoring also involves supporting in their education, they should be provided</p>
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		required as the project aims at ensuring behavioral change of parents to send their children to school, which might also require them to go against the prevailing social norms. Therefore, the role of big sisters is extremely crucial in bringing about change at the local level. The project should aim to build the capacities of big sisters.	with necessary skills to support their learning.
Poor implementation/No budget for implementation of local policies	Support database at the local level	The project intends to provide the equipment support and training to manage the database in the municipality. However, the officers at municipalities are frequently transferred. For instance, there have been about five Education Officers in a municipality in Parsa in the past three years. So, project should devise strategies to ensure that the knowledge is remained intact within the municipality and is not washed away when one or two personnel are transferred. Also, a mechanism has to be set up so that municipality allocates resources for updating the database.	
	Policy and advocacy at the local level	The project officials will engage with the local government officials to bring about inclusive policies and its implementation.	It has been seen that the major barriers for education of children with disabilities are inaccessible infrastructures and low capacity of the teachers to support students. Therefore, the project should strongly highlight these issues in the policy advocacy with the local government as the federal

			government is currently abided by the notion of Leave No one behind.	
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## 5. Outcome findings

### 5.1 Learning outcomes

The project has focused its interventions on OOS girls who have never been to school or have dropped out from school in the primary level before grade five. The nine-month bridge course is expected to enroll the OOS girls – all girls from the age group 10-14 and the interested ones from age group 15-19, into formal school in April 2020 session from grade 1-5. The placement of these girls into a specific class will be decided by the school management based on the placement test that the schools carry out. The girls who are enrolled in schools are expected to go two grades higher at the end of the project. The project will provide remedial classes through school teachers, as required by beneficiary girls.

The girls who do not follow the learning track of intervention after the bridge class even after mentoring from big sisters will also be reached out by other project staffs to motivate parents to send their girls to schools. For the girls who are eligible for acquiring business skills- girls above 14 years of age will be linked with the business skills support. The project will collaborate and harmonize with the local government and link them with the vocational opportunities available to manage additional resources for supporting them.

Besides, project envisions to support children with disabilities (visual and hearing impairment), a preparatory class prior to the bridge class was keenly felt by the project for children with hearing and visual impairment which would improve their communication skills in braille and sign language as well as their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Considering this, a three-day long training was organized for the preparatory class facilitators and two months preparatory classes were conducted for children with both visual and hearing impairment based on the eight-week packages developed by the project team. This was followed by the nine-month bridge course or directly enrolls in the resource class. The placement of these children into a specific class will be decided by the school management based on the placement test that the schools carry out.

Learning level of the students in school were assessed to inform the benchmark for the project beneficiary girls. As the project aims to enroll girls into grades 1-5 and envisions that the girls will be promoted by two grades at the final evaluation of the project i.e. the girls who have been enrolled into grade 5 will be at grade 7 by the end of the project, benchmarking was done from grade 1-7.

External evaluators had conducted learning tests with 496 girls for deriving the baseline learning levels. Following is the breakdown of the girls by their characteristic sub-groups.

*Table 18: Breakdown of girls taking learning tests by characteristic subgroup*

Categories	Proportion of girls taking tests (N=496)
<b>Age group</b>	
10-14	54.84
15-19	45.16
<b>Caste group</b>	



Muslim	37.30
Terai Dalit	22.38
Terai Janajati	24.40
Poor household	40.73
Girls with disabilities	7.26
Girls with functional limitation	38.10
Non-Nepali speaking household	94.15

## Headline results

### Numeracy

The average numeracy score for the project beneficiary girls was 24.37. The subtask wise breakdown for the EGMA scores has been discussed in table 19. It can be seen from the table that largest proportion of the girls have achieved the ‘emergent learner’ status in all the subtasks followed by the girls who have fallen into ‘non-learner’ category.

Table 19: Foundational numeracy skills for beneficiary girls

Categories	Subtask 1: Number identification	Subtask 2: Quantity discrimination	Subtask 3: Missing numbers	Subtask 4: Addition/ Subtraction	Subtask 5: Word problems
Non learner (0%)	22.0	28.0	27.8	34.7	34.1
Emergent learner (1%-40%)	50.4	55.8	58.9	49.0	38.5
Established learner (41%-80%)	18.8	11.1	11.3	16.1	22.6
Proficient learner (81%-100%)	8.9	5.0	2.0	0.2	4.8
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: EGMA test (N=496)

The average EGMA score of 24.37 for the baseline girls is higher compared to the aggregate EGMA scores of their in-school counterparts from grade 1 and 2. The EGMA scores was higher as the grades progressed.

Table 20: Benchmarking EGMA score

	Aggregate EGMA Score
Grade 1	12.65
Grade 2	16.85
Grade 3	34.71
Grade 4	40.35
Grade 5	51.67
Grade 6	57.86
Grade 7	55.73

## Literacy

The average literacy score for the project beneficiary girls was 18.65. Similar to the numeracy, the literacy level for EGRA was also mostly concentrated in the non-learner/reader and emergent learner/reader category. However, interestingly the number of girls were in larger proportion in the non-learner category except for subtask 1 and 2 where the girls were higher in the emergent learner group. This can be attributed to the nature of the subtask because subtask 1 required comprehending and answering skills rather than reading on their own and subtask 2 had basic letter identification which is the most basic form of reading in Nepali.

Table 21: Functional literacy skills for beneficiary skills

Categories	Subtask 1: Listening comprehension	Subtask 2: Letter identification	Subtask 3: Symbols identification	Subtask 4: Familiar word identification	Subtask 5a: Reading and comprehension	Subtask 5b: Word per minute
Non learner/ reader (0%)	30.0	41.1	59.5	55.8	65.9	64.5
Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	35.5	44.0	32.3	32.9	26.2	24.6
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	28.8	11.3	6.5	9.1	5.8	6.0
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	5.6	3.6	1.8	2.2	2.0	4.8
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: EGRA test (N=496)

Interestingly, catching up with the similar trend in EGMA, the average EGRA score of 18.65 for the baseline girls was found to be higher compared to the aggregate EGMA scores of students in school from grade 1 and 2. The EGRA scores, like EGMA, was higher as the grades progressed.

Table 22: Benchmarking EGRA score

	Aggregate EGRA score
Grade 1	7.69
Grade 2	16.52
Grade 3	31.64
Grade 4	33.83
Grade 5	42.65
Grade 6	50.01
Grade 7	55.43

Comparing the EGRA and EGMA scores for both project intervention girls and benchmarking, the EGMA score is higher for both groups than EGRA. This can be attributed to the language that the girls communicate in. Among the girls who took the learning tests, 94.15% girls do not speak Nepali language on a regular basis which makes it relatively more difficult to comprehend Nepali. When inquired about the literacy and numeracy scenario with the Municipal Education Officer in Sarlahi, he explained, “Nepali is not the primary language of communication in the households in Terai. When girls are not in school, they get very limited opportunity to converse in Nepali so they are not confident about speaking in Nepali at all. Girls are good in Mathematics because they do normal calculations like addition and subtraction, which is a basic skill, let’s say when they go for shopping.” Big sisters in Parsa also confirmed, “Most of the girls speak in Bhojpuri language. Although they understand Nepali, they are not confident enough to speak in Nepali fluently.”

## 5.2 Characteristic subgroup analysis of the learning outcome

The following table discussed the finding of 496 girls who have appeared the learning tests. 39 girls with visual and hearing impairment were assessed by the project.

Table 23: Learning scores by key characteristic subgroups and barriers

Characteristic subgroup	Proportion of the total girls taking learning tests	Average numeracy score (aggregate)	Average literacy score (aggregate)
<b>Age group</b>			
10-14	54.84	22.91	17.55
15-19	45.16	26.06	19.94
<b>Caste group</b>			
Muslim	37.30	28.05	24.53
Terai Dalit	22.38	20.44	13.83
Terai Janajati	24.40	20.02	14.34
<b>Poor household</b>			
Poor household	40.73	23.30	18.21
<b>Girls with disabilities</b>			
Girls with disabilities	7.26	26.23	19.55
<b>Disability subgroups<sup>3</sup></b>			
Seeing	(17 girls) *	10	15.6
Hearing	(22 girls) *	7	10.1
Walking	0.75	30.42	25.36
Self-care	0	N/A	N/A
Communication	0.75	18.58	20.91
Learning, remembering and concentrating	5.09	17.91	7.12

<sup>3</sup> Please note that sample sizes for sub-types of disability are too small to be statistically significant.

Accepting change, controlling behavior and making friends	3.58	11.99	3.3
Mental health (Anxiety and depression)	2.07	32.51	17.24
Girls with functional limitation	38.10	22.70	18.09
Non-Nepali speaking household	94.15	23.88	18.31
Never been to school	36.61	17.71	13.06
Been to school but dropped out	63.39	28.01	21.92
<i>Dropout grade</i>			
Grade 1 and below	7.32	16.07	12.38
Grade 2	10.98	22.01	18.79
Grade 3	12.91	30.11	20.72
Grade 4	10.98	31.64	27.10
Grade 5 and above	21.19	32.67	24.85

\* Administered to all the girls attending preparatory class by the project

In terms of age group, the scores for numeracy was higher than literacy for the age group 15-19. This can be explained by the transition data as a lower proportion from the age group 15-19 have never been to school than age group 10-14. While 28.74% of the girls from 15-19 have never to school, 44.15% of the girls from 10-14 have never been to school.

Numerous stakeholders in qualitative discussions have stated Muslim groups to be conservative and reluctant to send girls to school. In fact, there was a higher proportion of Muslim girls 44.09% who have never been to school compared to the overall 36.61% which was also higher compared to Terai Dalit and Terai Janajati. Considering this, it could be expected that Muslims girls will perform lower than other caste groups. However, their aggregate numeracy and literacy scores revealed otherwise. The average aggregate score for both numeracy and literacy are higher for Muslim girls. The learning tests showed better result for Muslims than in the overall. Muslim girls scored 15.1% more than the overall aggregate numeracy score and 31.53% more than the aggregate literacy score.

Overall, there were 7.26% of the girls who have checked in at least “a lot of difficulty” in different domains of difficulty. The average numeracy score was found to be 26.23 and the average literacy score was found to be 19.55. The average numeracy and literacy score for girls with disabilities have also been disaggregated by the types of disabilities. The learning tests for the girls with visual and hearing impairment has been administered by the project. In contrary to the general finding in which girls were doing better in numeracy than literacy, girls with visual and hearing impairments had performed better in EGRA than in EGMA. In comparison to other girls with disabilities, girls with disability related to learning, remembering and

concentrating and accepting change, controlling behavior and making friends have performed much lower in literacy tests compared to other groups as they have scored only 7.12 and 3.3 on aggregate respectively.

The scores for the non-Nepali speaking household was slightly lower. The score for numeracy was only 2.01% lower compared to overall while only 1.82% lower for literacy. The significance test of the scores for both EGRA and EGMA by the language that they speak at home found the relationship to be insignificant.

Comparing the number of years beneficiary girls have spent in schools, it can be seen that both the EGMA and EGRA scores are on the increasing trend as the girls drop out at higher grades. This indicates towards the role of schools in improving the literacy and numeracy skills of children.

## Assessment of learning of children with disability

### Numeracy

Under numeracy, it was found that average EGMA score for children with hearing impairment was 7 while the average EGMA score for children with visual impairment was 10.1. More number of children were able to complete simpler subtask like number identification than the following sub-tasks. There were also few learners with hearing impairments who could read above 80% of the questions. However, the majority of children for both hearing and visual impairment had difficulty in performing mathematical operations and were still non-learners.

Table 24: Foundational numeracy skill for children with hearing impairments

Categories	Subtask 1: Number identification	Subtask 2: Quantity discrimination	Subtask 3: Missing numbers	Subtask 4: Addition/ Subtraction	Subtask 5: Word problems
Non learner (0%)	50.0	95.5	86.4	81.8	100.0
Emergent learner (1%-40%)	22.7	4.5	9.1	18.2	0.0
Established learner (41%-80%)	9.1	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0
Proficient learner (81%-100%)	18.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: EGMA test (N=22)

Table 25: Foundational numeracy for children with visual impairments

Categories	Subtask 1: Number identification	Subtask 2: Quantity discrimination	Subtask 3: Missing numbers	Subtask 4: Addition/ Subtraction	Subtask 5: Word problems
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Non learner (0%)	70.6	82.4	88.2	94.1	94.1
Emergent learner (1%-40%)	23.5	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Established learner (41%-80%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Proficient learner (81%-100%)	5.9	11.8	11.8	5.9	5.9
	100	100	100	100	100
Source: EGMA test (N=17)					

### Literacy

Under literacy, it was found that average EGRA score for children with hearing impairment was 10.1 while the average EGRA score for children with visual impairment was 15.6. More than half of the children with visual impairments appearing in the test were able to answer most number of questions based on the story narrated by the project team while they could not perform well in the sections following after that as there was a higher proportion of children not able to read at all. Children with hearing impairment found it difficult to understand the story narrated by the sign language expert and there were higher number of children who were not able to answer at all. Letter identification was relatively easier for them than other subtasks.

Table 26: Foundational literacy skill for children with hearing impairments

Categories	Subtask 1: Story narration-comprehension	Subtask 2: Letter identification	Subtask 3: Symbols identification	Subtask 4: Familiar word identification	Subtask 5a: Word per minute	Subtask 5b: Reading and comprehension
Non learner/reader (0%)	86.4	40.9	63.6	72.7	100.0	100.0
Emergent learner/reader (1%-40%)	9.1	13.6	27.3	22.7	0.0	0.0
Established learner/reader (41%-80%)	0.0	31.8	4.5	4.5	0.0	0.0
Proficient learner/reader (81%-100%)	4.5	13.6	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Source: EGRA test (N=22)						

Table 27: Foundational literacy skill of children with visual impairments

Categories	Subtask 1: Listening comprehension	Subtask 2: Letter identification	Subtask 3: Symbols identification	Subtask 4: Familiar word identification	Subtask 5a: Word per minute	Subtask 5b: Reading and comprehension
Non learner/reader (0%)	29.4	70.6	76.5	88.2	88.2	100.0

Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	0.0	29.4	11.8	5.9	5.9	0.0
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	17.6	0.0	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	52.9	0.0	5.9	5.9	5.9	0.0
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: EGRA test (N=17)

### Daily Living Skills (DLS) and Basic Literacy Skills test for Children with Intellectual Disability

Children with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities have been enrolled in the bridge classes that are running in all seven municipalities of the three districts. 51 children with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities were tested using a tool on daily living skills and basic literacy and numeracy skills developed by Project team. The content of the test comprised sub tasks of matching the sense organs which sought to analyze if they could relate the functions of sensory organs and also to assess how much they are aware about sense organs and using them to interact in the environment, assess their basic Nepali literacy and basic numeracy and different shape and size. For children with disabilities who have scored low in the test, regular follow up with teachers and facilitators regarding their progress and individual assessment will be carried out and further placement tests will be administered after the bridge class is completed. In addition, pathways will be set for them i.e. either integrate them into mainstream schools or provide them vocational training for livelihood opportunities, depending on their ability and willingness.

Table 28: Daily Living Skill (DLS) and Basic Literacy Skill test for children with intellectual disability

Categories	Subtask 1: Match the following (Sense Organ %)	Subtask 2: Match the following (basic Nepali literacy %)	Subtask 3: Match the following (Shape %)	Subtask 4: Match the following (Size %)
Non learner/ reader (0%)	37	59	51	29
1-20	14	0	0	20
21-40	4	16	10	14
41-60	25	8	16	12
61-80	0	0	0	12
81-100 (Proficient Learners)	20	18	24	14

Source: Intellectual Disability Tools (N= 51)

### *Performance Daily living skills of children with severe disability*

The main objective of this assessment is to measure the deviation of functional activities in five major areas such as self-reliance skills test, physical development, social development, general knowledge and language development as presented in the tables below, which identify the current situation or the level of functional activities and restriction in participation of direct beneficiaries in their daily living activities.

ENGAGE has also been catering to the needs of children with severe disability with an objective to improve their existing condition. Based on the training package developed for parents and caregivers, the support skill training to the parents and caregivers of children with severe and profound disabilities was conducted in all three districts which aimed to enhance their capacity as the training extensively covered parent coping skills, daily living skills for their children, basic counseling skills, their personal wellbeing and sensitization on different specialized service providers and social-protection services for children with severe and profound disabilities.

During these trainings, assessments of 80 children with severe disability was conducted using self-reliance skills test, physical development, social development, general knowledge and language development. All the participants developed six months individual action plan for their children and committed for its implementation which will rigorously be followed up by the Community Mobilizers (CMs) and Big Sisters. The action plan outlined by the parents along with the consultant focuses on addressing the needs of children with severe disabilities i.e. improving their daily living skills, provision of rehabilitation services, home modification, assistive device use and maintenance etc. depending on their requirements.

*Table 29: Self Reliance Skills test*

	<b>Personal Hygiene(%)</b>	<b>Able to Drink Water (%)</b>	<b>Able to Wear Clothes (%)</b>	<b>Need help from Others (%)</b>
0	45	15	37.5	38.75
0.1-10	8.75	0	0	0
10-20	2.5	18.75	0	0
20-30	6.25	0	22.5	0
30-40	1.25	8.75	0	0
40-50	3.75	0	0	0
50-60	6.25	12.5	11.25	0
60-70	2.5	6.25	0	0
70-80	1.25	0	6.25	0
80-90	5	12.5	0	0
90-100	7.5	0	0	0



100	10	26.25	22.5	61.25
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*Table 30: Physical development*

	<b>Fine Motor Skills (%)</b>	<b>Muscular nervous system (%)</b>
0	38.75	48.75
0.1-10	0	0
10-20	10	10
20-30	7.5	7.5
30-40	3.75	3.75
40-50	5	11.25
50-60	3.75	2.5
60-70	3.75	0
70-80	3.75	3.75
80-90	1.25	2.5
90-100	6.25	0
100	16.25	10

Table 31: Arts & Sports and entertainment

	Art (%)	Sports and Entertainment (%)
0	51.25	16.25
0.1-10	0	0
10-20	16.25	0
20-30	11.25	23.75
30-40	1.25	0
40-50	2.5	0
50-60	0	38.75
60-70	1.25	0
70-80	6.25	12.5
80-90	2.5	0
90-100	0	0
100	7.5	8.75

Table 32: Social development

	Social relation (%)	Manners (%)	Realization (%)	Care of materials/goods (%)	Civic sense (%)
0	23.75	35	11.25	33.75	66.25
0.1-10	0	0	0	0	0
10-20	5	0	0	0	0
20-30	23.75	12.5	12.5	13.75	13.75
30-40	0	0	0	0	0
40-50	5	0	0	0	0

50-60	12.5	17.5	13.75	27.5	6.25
60-70	0	0	0	0	0
70-80	13.75	3.75	11.25	10	8.75
80-90	7.5	0	0	0	0
90-100	0	0	0	0	0
100	8.75	31.25	51.25	15	5

Table 33: General knowledge

	Identify goods (%)	Identify shape, size, color and test of familiar things (%)	Realization of things using sense organs (%)	Identify time and money (%)
0	33.75	56.25	22.5	47.5
0.1-10	0	0	0	0
10-20	13.75	0	0	0
20-30	2.5	6.25	0	23.75
30-40	7.5	0	21.25	0
40-50	0	1.25	0	10
50-60	6.25	0	0	0
60-70	5	8.75	11.25	8.75
70-80	5	0	0	0
80-90	5	5	0	2.5
90-100	0	0	0	0
100	21.25	22.5	45	7.5

Table 34: Language development

	Listening skills (%)	Speaking/Oral Skill (%)	Reading SKills (%)	Writing Skills (%)
0	43.75	53.75	80	80
0.1-10	0	0	0	0
10-20	0	0	0	0
20-30	0	15	0	0
30-40	22.5	0	11.25	0
40-50	0	0	0	0
50-60	0	0	0	7.5
60-70	20	17.5	6.25	0
70-80	0	0	0	0
80-90	0	3.75	0	0
90-100	0	0	0	0
100	13.75	10	2.5	12.5

### Reflection on the learning

Under learning, the project has been carrying out bridge class for the marginalized OOS girls. The project expects all the girls within age group 10-14 and some from the age group 15-19 will be enrolled into the schools. In a bid to help girls with their learning while in school, the project will conduct remedial classes.

Reflecting on the EGRA and EGMA scores, this group is diverse in terms of their present learning. Except for one location in which the bridge class facilitator had herself carried out group learning for diverse learners, there were no interventions in other locations to distinctly address learners with different capacities. Furthermore, there is a pressing issue of irregularity in classrooms which affects their learning. As the project envisions to send them to school, the regularity might still be an issue there, affecting their learning in schools. When the girls are not able to learn at par with the other students in classroom, they might eventually drop out as poor academic performance is also one of the reasons for girls dropping out. In the light of poor regularity, the effectiveness of remedial classes is also questionable.

It has been found that Muslim girls have outperformed their peers from other ethnic groups in terms of their literacy and numeracy. Their education in Madarsa can be attributed for the better EGRA and EGMA

performance. In the social context where Muslim parents feel safer to send girls to Madarsa than formal schools and as the government policies too are in favor of embedding the national curriculum to the Madarsa education, it would be a value added support if the project can also engage with Madarsa, specifically for the education of Muslim girls.

The children with hearing and visual impairments have been reported to have poor learning. They have been able to learn the basics of sign language and braille in the preparatory class. This intervention has been relevant for them. However, learning test for them was carried out almost after six months since they had started preparatory and bridge class and they were still struggling with the basics of learning. This indicates towards the needs of concentrated efforts.

Until the next evaluation point, the bridge class would have been completed and the girls would be enrolled into formal school. In terms of target setting for all the beneficiary girls, including the girls with visual and hearing impairment, the realistic target for the next evaluation point would be get them into the higher level of learning. For instance, the non-learners are expected to perform as emergent learner while emergent learner are expected to perform as established learner and established learner are expected to perform as proficient learner while proficient learner are expected to perform consistently.

The project has been working with children with severe disabilities who have difficulty with performing the basic life skill activities as the highest proportion of these girls have scored zero in the assessment. In the next evaluation points, it is expected that they will be able to do more tasks independently. The learning tests and other assessments for children with disabilities will be administered by the internal monitoring team by VSO and HI.

### 5.3 Transition outcome

#### Transition pathways

Table 35: Transition pathways

Intervention pathway tracked for transition	Please describe the possible transition pathways for this group	Aim for girls transition for next evaluation point	Aim for girls transition level by the time project stops working with cohort
Girls within age group 10-14 years age (Enrol into Bridge Classes)	The girl will transition into the formal school after completion of 9 months bridge classes. Upon the school management decision (based on the placement test) they will enrol into the recommender grade. For that time being, if required, project will	Enrol into formal school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation to be in school and progressing through the relevant grades</li> </ul>

	provide remedial support (learning support) through school teachers.		
Girls within age group 15-19 years age (Enrol in bridge classes)	The girls will enrol into formal school after completion of bridge classes. However, they can either transition into business skills based on the PSS approach. So, there are two possibilities of transition for this group i.e transition into formal school (project focuses more on it) and transition into business skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enroll into formal school</li> <li>• If not interested in formal school, possibility of business skills based on PSS</li> <li>• If fails in placement test of school, still working with project on business skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation to be in school and progression through the relevant grades (for those who are transition into formal school)</li> <li>• Start small scale business or enter into the locally available labor market (for those who choose business skills pathways)</li> </ul>
Girls within age group 15-19 years age (not following the track of learning intervention)	These are the girls with some level of functional limitation and drop out grade 6 and above. So, they will transition into business skills without learning intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enroll into business skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placement in local market or start small scale business (for those who choose business skills pathways)</li> </ul>

\*Business skill includes small scale livelihood development skills such as tailoring, beauty parlour, grocery shop, etc.

**Pathway analysis**

As the girls under 14 years of age cannot be engaged in any form of employment, all of them have been envisioned to be enrolled in school. Furthermore, also the girls within 15-19 who have expressed their interest to continue education will also be enrolled in school. It should be discussed here that 16.76% of girls have dropped out 5 years ago and even more than that. The school takes admission to different class based on the placement test. For the girls who have been out of school for many years, there stands a risk that they will be placed in the lower grades against their age. It has been stated by teachers and SMC members that when children from higher age are enrolled in the same grades as the younger ones, there stands a risk of them dropping out. As a head teacher in a school in Parsa exclaimed, “A project working with the OOS children had enrolled few children in our school in the past years. When the project ended, all the girls were dropped out. When we followed up with the children, they cited that they could not study in the same class along with much younger children.”

The other factor as cited by the head teachers for girls dropping out was the low academic performance. In this regard, the project has plans to support the girls at the risk of drop out from schools after enrollment with the remedial class. The class is expected to help girls keep up with the learning level.

However, remedial class would imply longer hours away from home and lower engagement in the household chores. As this challenge the social norm of young girls being in-charge of the household chores, this might invite some resistance from the household members.

Furthermore, the other reason for girls currently not going to school was stated to be the distance of school from their homes, particularly in the areas close to border between India and Nepal, perceived as the regions vulnerable to crimes. It is particularly challenging for the project to enroll them into the schools. Project needs to come up with the alternative innovative solution to deal with this issue.

During qualitative discussion, it was identified that there were many girls who were willing to participate in the vocational skill development training. However, the only option that they, both girls and parents, could ask for, was tailoring training, which was predominantly a female domain. It is a challenge for the project to diversify the demand for training and challenge the traditional roles. Furthermore, PNGO in Parsa have pointed out towards the ineffectiveness of skill development trainings rolled out in the past. A project official acknowledged the challenge for the project, “Government has organized several skill development trainings in the past. However, the effectiveness of such training is zero as no visible outputs have been seen.” This points towards the need of mapping the interest of girls in relation to the prospect of the training and demand of the market and in turn, motivating girls towards acquiring skills that has market demand. Furthermore, parents have expressed that girls should stay at home, if possible, also work from home despite learning the business skill. It would be difficult for the project to challenge this social norm.

## Headline analysis

Exploring the status of girls at baseline, it was found that higher proportion of girls have at least attended few years of school. 63.39% of girls have attended school and dropped out. It can be observed from the table that there are a greater number of girls who have dropped out in grade 5 and above. Rather than the recent dropout, more girls have dropped out 5 years ago or more. There are also 36.61% girls who have never been to school.

Table 36: Status at baseline

Status		Intervention (%)
A	Never been to school	36.61
B	Been to school but dropped out	63.39
	<i>Dropout grade</i>	
	Grade 1 and below	7.32
	Grade 2	10.98
	Grade 3	12.91
	Grade 4	10.98
	Grade 5 and above	21.19
	<i>Number of years of dropout</i>	
	This year	3.85
	Past year	7.32
	2 years ago	13.29
	3 years ago	11.56

	4 years ago	10.60
	5 years ago, or more	16.76
C	Currently enrolled in formal school	0.00
D	Currently employed	1.93
<i>Source: Household survey (N=519)</i>		

### Characteristics subgroups and barrier analysis

As stated in the section above, there are 36.61% girls who have never been to school. Following table discusses the proportion of the girls who have never been to school from the different characteristic groups.

*Table 37: Data disaggregation for school-going status*

Categories	Intervention (%) Never been to school	Intervention (%) Drop out
<b>Age group</b>		
10-14	44.15	55.85
15-19	28.74	71.26
<b>Caste group</b>		
Muslim	44.09	55.91
Terai Dalit	38.14	61.86
Terai Janajati	35.38	64.62
Poor household	33.79	66.21
Girls with disabilities	24.32	75.68
Girls with functional limitation	37.56	62.44
Non-Nepali speaking household	38.8	61.2

In terms of age group, there are more students in 10-14 age group who have never been to school than 15-19. Considering ethnicity, the girls from Muslim communities are in the highest proportion for never attending school. However, it should be noted here that Muslim girls attend Madarsa even though they are out of school. Terai Dalit and Terai Janajati also comprised 38.14% and 35.38% respectively.

The project specifically deals with the highly marginalized group. Even among them, 42.2% girls belong to the poor household which is unable to meet the basic needs without charity. From these household, there are 33.79% who have never been to school. For the girls with disabilities, 24.32% girls have never been to school. In terms of the household who do not speak Nepali, 38.8% have never been to school.

As the social context of the Terai household is similar, girls are posed with similar barriers (Barriers to transition have been discussed in greater detail in 'Characteristics and barrier section'). The social norms existing in Terai implies girls taking greater share of responsibility of household chores. The quantitative



finding shows that there are 93.3% households in which the beneficiary girl spend more than quarter of her day doing the household chores. 18.3% households have attributed household chores as the sole reason behind girls being out of school while 41.04% household have stated that it is partially the reason. Considering the magnitude of impact of household chores in their daily lives, it is likely to affect their future transition. Until the household duties are shared among household members, it would be difficult for girls to dedicate longer hours for education or employment opportunities.

Like for the household chores, parents were also affected by the existing perception towards education. Although positive in the quantitative findings, the qualitative aspect revealed the suspicion towards the usefulness of education. Firstly, parents were less supportive towards girls' education because they felt that girls will have to ultimately get married and perform the household chores rather than jobs outside home. Secondly, parents saw very limited opportunities for job opportunities within the community. A father in Sarlahi mentioned, *"Job opportunities are scarce in villages. We cannot risk sending our daughters to unknown city or anywhere away from home."* While this is hindering the girls' access to education, it is also likely to impact transition as parents are reluctant to send their daughters for education and employment which are too far from home. The parents have highlighted their concern for potential safety threats to the girls if they have to travel far. The concern for location, although in all the communities, was specifically more evident in the village bordering to India in Parsa. A parent in Jagarnathpur, Parsa cited, *"We have a primary school in our village. After Grade five, children are required to travel 7 km away to get to the secondary school. It is very far and no transportation facilities are available. Our village is very close to border, and the way to school doesn't have settlements, rather only fields. We are not confident sending our girls to school alone. We cannot ensure their safety to school."* This indicates that without the innovative strategy, it would be difficult to ensure that the girls are enrolled in school and that they do not drop out.

Multiple stakeholders have cited religion to have played a predominant role in shaping this attitude as Muslim households are stated to be more conservative than other groups. Although there are higher proportion of girls from Muslim household who have never been to school, they have still attended Madarsa, which was not the case for other ethnic groups.

### **Reflection on the transition pathway**

Reflecting on the possible transition pathway proposed by the project, the external evaluators foresee lots of challenges in sustainably supporting transition of girls. The beneficiary girls who have been envisioned to go to school are currently irregular in the bridge class, to which they have to devote only 3-4 hours of their day. Big sisters had to initially go to every household to remind parents to send their girls to bridge class. Parents too had given in only because the bridge class was only within their community and there were only girls in the class. The schools, that the girls are likely to go in post-project intervention, are as far as 7 km away from their community. The barrier section in the report elaborately dealt with the social norms around sending girls to school which involved factors like parents being skeptic to send daughters to school because it was far and they feared violence, household chores being a young female domain, parents not convinced on the importance of education due to the absence of employability among many others. In this context, the project would require to continuously engage with parents to ensure that girls are sent to school. The project might have to arrange or lobby with the local government

to arrange transportation facilities to school to assure parents of the safety of girls. The transition of girls to schools seem unlikely without change in the parental attitude.

Furthermore, as the girls have been out of school for some time, they might need time and attention to get used to school and classes. Also, based on their learning, they might be placed in the classrooms with much younger students which might also in turn diminish their desire to continue school. As the tendency of girls to stay in school is not just associated with their willingness, the project also needs to continuously engage with girls, parents and teachers to ensure that girls stay motivated to go to school, parents are convinced to let the girls continue school and teachers are willing to support these girls to stay in school.

All the aforementioned challenges being intact, the girls with disability are additionally posed with the barriers of inaccessible schools and lack of skills in educators. As our current infrastructures are not in place to ensure inclusiveness, ensuring the retention of girls with disabilities in schools would require disability friendly infrastructures in place coupled with the support from skilled educators.

With regard to the business skill and employment, the girls have only expressed interest in tailoring. All of the beneficiary girls taking tailoring training would imply more “supply” than “demand” in the market which is already small in size. Parents are reluctant to send the girls too far from home to acquire skills or jobs. As the skill development trainings in past has not been effective, it is essential that the project maps the local market and the interest of girls, considering the girls with disabilities, well while providing training to ensure that the training is effective and adds value to the livelihood of girls.

The project is currently working with the adolescent group of girls, the age in which girls are likely to get married. Marriage implies moving away from their parents’ house to their in-laws. Supposedly, if the beneficiary girl gets married during the project intervention, it might need her to discontinue school that she has been going in, drop out from the skill development training, discontinue her job or give up her business that she has established. Although the project attempts to discuss early marriage in their parenting education sessions, it might be difficult to completely wash off the deep-rooted practice of early marriage. Hence, the project needs to take this into consideration while designing the interventions for sustainable transition.

#### **5.4 Sustainability outcome**

The project envisioned its sustainability across system, community and learning space. Indicators were defined in the logframe. Indicators for sustainability outcome under community were number of functional learning hubs with the engagement of community mechanisms for its continued operation (girls’ network, child clubs, and mothers’ groups) and the average % of income invested in each of their disabled and marginalized girls’ education. This information was acquired through qualitative exercises conducted with project officials and the local PNGOs.

Sustainability outcome indicators for learning space were fundamentally based on the quantitative data collected from teacher training sustainability assessment, implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment and disability infrastructure sustainability assessment. The data on these indicators were based on the quantitative surveys and school observations which were further validated via qualitative consultations with head teachers, teachers, SMC representatives, and local government officials.

Sustainability outcome indicator for system was number of municipality/rural municipality having functional database system with data on disabled and marginalized girls and can evidence using it in girls' education planning. This data was fundamentally based on the qualitative consultations with the education officials from all the intervention municipalities and/or rural municipalities validated through the consultation with other stakeholders at schools and disability network.

Table 38: Sustainability indicators

	System	Community	Learning space
Indicator 1: # of functional learning hubs with the engagement of community mechanisms for its continued operation (girls' network, child club, mothers' group)		The learning hubs are yet to come into operation and the groups are yet to be defined who will be responsible for management and sustainability. Therefore, at baseline, the status is 0.	
Indicator 2: Average % of income invested in each of their disabled and marginalized girls education (Quantitative)		The project beneficiary girls are out of school. Therefore, currently, there is no monetary investment of parents on the education of disabled and marginalized girls. Therefore, at baseline, the status is 0.	
Indicator 3: % of schools demonstrating acceptable or above on teacher training sustainability assessment			56.67% of the schools have scored acceptable or above in teachers training sustainability.
Indicator 4: % of schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment			10% schools have scored acceptable or above in the implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability.

Indicator 5: % of schools scoring acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment			3.33% schools have scored acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment.
Indicator 6: # of municipality having functional database system with disability and marginalized girls and can evidence using it for girls' education planning	None of the municipalities had database system with disability and marginalized girls.		
Baseline sustainability score (0-4)	0	0	1
Overall sustainability score (0-4, average of the three level scores)	0.33		

**5.4.1 System**

The qualitative discussions with the municipal officials revealed that none of the municipalities have data on the marginalized girls and girls with disabilities. However, they have acknowledged the need of proper data system for planning. A Municipal Education Official from Sarlahi mentioned, *“We have been weak in data management so far. Children who are not in government school will be counted as out-of-school as we have not been able to take data from private schools. It would be useful for us to make plans if data is available.”*

Another Municipal Education Officer from Banke highlighted on their plan to conduct data collection for out-of-school children before next academic session. He shared, *“We have been formulating the Municipal education plan. It would be nice if we can inform it with data. After data collection, we will maintain proper database and use it to plan our activities for enrolling out-of-school children into formal schools. We are also planning to establish community learning centers.”* This indicates that the local government is positive towards managing database and using the data for informing their plans for out-of-school children.

*Reflections of EE on system level sustainability*

The Free and Compulsory Education Act 2018 has mandated the local government to ensure that all the children in the age group 5-12 should be enrolled in school. As the government is committed to leaving no one behind from education opportunities, it is also a priority of the local government to ensure this national agenda at the local level. In this context, the findings from qualitative consultations have shown some willingness of the local government towards data keeping of the children who are out of school and creating conducive environment for them in schools; the areas in which the project seeks to support in. However, it is a challenging task as the local government is posed with the human resource crunch, low

resources and low capacity to support schools and teachers at the local level to ensure inclusiveness of children with disabilities, specifically.

In terms of indicator for mapping the sustainability of system level indicator “*number of municipalities having functional database system with disability and marginalized girls and can evidence using it for girl’s education planning*”, it is attainable but very challenging, considering the limitations of the local government. It is relatively easy to establish the database, but the real challenge is to update and functionalize it. Since the local government is also posed with the frequent transfer of the officials, it is difficult to ensure the knowledge transfer from the outgoing staff to the joining staff. This calls for institutionalizing the database management system with proper guidelines and reinforcements in place. This would require the intensive regular follow up from the implementing partner.

### 5.4.2 Community

The project has envisioned to establish learning hubs with the intention of putting up important reading materials on disability and other child protection related aspects, accessible to project beneficiary girls and their community members. To ensure that these learning hubs are sustainable, the project intends to hand over the management responsibility to one of the active community groups- mothers group, youth group, girls club or any other group. When the baseline evaluation was being carried out, the project was exploring the locations suitable for establishing the learning hubs. School or any other community buildings were being considered in the project intervention areas.

Some of the learning hubs are slated to be established in the schools. It should be noted here that schools are themselves posed by the constraints in terms of infrastructures. So, acquiring space from schools could be a challenge and moreover, the schools might reclaim the space if they are posed with classroom crunch in the future. Therefore, all viable options in the communities should be assessed well to ensure sustainability.

#### *Reflections of EE on community level sustainability*

The project has two community level indicators- “*number of functional learning hubs with the engagement of community mechanisms for its continued operation (girls’ network, child club, mothers’ group)*” and “*average percentage on income invested in each of their disabled and marginalized girls’ education*”. The indicator related to the functional learning hub is attainable and sustainable if the project can engage community level groups well. It has been often seen with the development interventions that when the project is phased out and there is no project representative to follow up with the groups, their engagement in the interventions decrease. It is therefore crucial that the project identifies the active community groups well and imbibe sense of ownership in them. Deep engagement with these community groups will be essential to ensure functional and well-maintained learning hubs.

Average percentage of income in each of disabled and marginalized girls’ education might not be a suitable measure for measuring the community level sustainability. The Constitution of Nepal has ensured that the free basic education for all children. The Free and Compulsory Education Act 2018 has made the provisions for textbooks and educational materials through the local government. Considering these

provisions, parents might not require to spend money for sending their girls to school at all. Therefore, the percentage of income dedicated to disabled and marginalized girls' education might not be a reliable measure for sustainability.

### 5.4.3 Learning space

The schools have scored relatively higher for teacher training sustainability assessment. The government schools currently have teachers trained on child friendly teaching. 63.33% of the schools have been reported to have SIP which has provisions of training teachers on teaching pedagogies. Teachers from 80% schools have been participating in the trainings targeted for capacity building by different organizations and 73.33% schools have practice of sharing the learning of teachers' training among teachers. Qualitative discussion with teachers revealed that the sharing was more of an informal type rather than formal. As the issue of large classroom size and overburden to teachers persists (discussed in detail in Key intermediate outcome section), effectiveness of such teachers training is still questionable for inclusive teaching pedagogy. Furthermore, it should also be noted here that the volumes of these trainings have drastically reduced after the restructuring. A teacher in Sarlahi shared, *"There used to be Teachers professional development (TPD) training for all the teachers. After restructuring, such trainings have not been rolled out in our location by the government so far."* A resource teacher in Parsa also discussed on the diminishing trend of trainings for updates and development for teaching students with disabilities. He opined, *"When there was an office for women and children in the district, there used to be dedicated programs for children with disabilities as well. Now that the responsibility has been shifted to local government, they have not been able to carry out such training. They have only few staff and do not hold that expertise."*

The schools have revealed low results with regard to the SIP sustainability assessment and disability friendly infrastructure assessment. The SIP assessment carried out for the IO reveals the low effectiveness of the SIP for guiding the schools' plan. Most of the SIPs are not formulated in participatory manner and qualitative discussions have also pointed out towards the malpractice of simply copying the plan template and inserting names and other details of the schools. The resource constraint has been hitting the schools hard even when they have well maintained SIP for its implementation. A head teacher from Banke further highlighted the challenges, *"We have well maintained SIP but we are lacking in implementing the plans. Mostly teachers, SMC and ward have a greater role in deciding agendas for SIP but parents are not as much involved so ownership of plan is less in them. It will be nice if we could incorporate parents, students, and community members in planning and implementation of SIP."*

In the context of disability infrastructure, only one school scored acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment. According to the stakeholders at the school level, they have not yet felt the necessity to make their school infrastructures disability friendly since the schools do not have students with disability. This issue is barely discussed in the annual meetings. But since the project is aiming to enroll students with disability into formal schooling, they have started pondering upon the need to make the infrastructure disability friendly for which they are looking for external support from the government and other organizations. SMC representative from BP Memorial School in Baijanath said, *"We are seeking support from the local government and other organizations to invest in making the school infrastructures disability friendly and also capacitate our teachers in disability friendly teaching learning mechanism"*

*through trainings and workshops. Our school needs to be prepared to accommodate and adapt students with disability prior to the next enrollment session.”*

#### *Reflections of EE on learning space level sustainability*

As the project intends to enroll the girls currently attending bridge class into schools, the project has activities to support the schools to ensure that they are inclusive for marginalized girls, specially those with disabilities. Teachers training, support for inclusive SIP, engagement with the school level stakeholders to prioritize disability friendly infrastructures and financial support for making the infrastructures disability friendly are some of the activities that directly concerns with the learning space level indicators- “percentage of schools demonstrating acceptable or above on teacher training sustainability assessment”, “percentage of schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment” and “percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment.”

Local governments are responsible for the development of teachers and schools at the local level. They hold the resources and can make decisions for development of these institutions. However, they are constrained by the limited resources and poor resource crunch. The decreasing volume of teachers training post governance restructuring reflects the low priority of the local government in this sector. Ensuring sustainable results from learning institutions would require the strengthened local government and their willingness to prioritize and dedicate resources in this sector. The project can contribute in this regard through continuous lobby and engagement with the local government.

In terms of indicator relation to inclusive SIP sustainability, it might not reflect the actual sustainability. It has been found during the qualitative discussions that SIP is designed mostly by schools for meeting the formalities for budget allocation only and it is not the guiding document when it comes to school level program design in practice. Sometimes it is just a mere copy with few changes in names and other school specific details. In this backdrop, the indicator on disability friendly infrastructure sustainability assessment which also measures sustainability based on the inclusion of disability friendly infrastructure components in SIP also cannot suitably measure sustainability. So, project needs to dedicate its efforts in ensuring that the SIP is made sincerely and with the inclusion of the components on child protection. The implementation of the SIP should be ensured by the local government in order to obtain sustainable results.

Table 39: Changes needed for sustainability

Questions to answer	System	Community	Learning space	Family/ household	Girl
<p><b>Change:</b> What change should happen by the end of the implementation period</p>	<p>Municipalities have functional database system with disability and marginalized girls' and can evidence using it for girls' education planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local government starts to plan and implement the program interventions following the inclusive education standards</li> <li>Local government has updated database related to girls with disabilities and marginalized children</li> </ul>	<p>Functional learning hubs with the engagement of community mechanisms for its continued operation (girls' network, child club, mothers' group).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least one learning hub in the community will be functionally activated where all will have opportunity for more knowledge and information.</li> </ul>	<p>Schools score acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment</p> <p>Schools score acceptable or above on teacher training sustainability assessment</p> <p>% of schools score acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aligning with the goals of the SDGs and the SSDP, creating minimum enabling environment for the education of OOS girls and GWD.</li> <li>The school will institutionalize the</li> </ul>	<p>Increased investment of income in each of their disabled and marginalized girls' education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GWD and marginalized girls are receiving parental support both at school and household for their education</li> <li>Big Sisters remain/return to their own communities and support the community to create an enabling environment for GWD education through mobilizing local networks.</li> <li>Parents reduce household chores and other work for girls to enable them to study</li> </ul>	<p>To support out of school (OOS) girls with disabilities and marginalized girls, their parents, school teachers, teacher education through transition to formal education and its continuation). The project intends to accomplish this through formal, non-formal, vocational and life skills generation activity, supporting career initiation into the labour market as well as self-employment generating small micro finance</p>



			<p>learning of the project by updating and integrating doable activities into their School Improvement Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School authority will motivate and create a culture of professional development opportunities for teachers and monitor teaching quality on a regular basis to support children with disabilities' learning.</li> <li>• Schools utilizing available local networks related to disability and promoting disabled-friendly teaching learning activities in schools.</li> </ul>		<p>related activities. All activities aim to support the sustainable and self-directed livelihood of project direct beneficiaries.</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<p>Train District / municipality based educational personnel's/ facilitator on inclusive and gender-sensitive education (full fledge)- basic</p> <p>Host and support meetings of the Gender Education</p>	<p>Networking support (Exchange Visit) for Big Sisters (visits with Little Sisters to different institutions)</p> <p>Awareness activities on community</p>	<p>Bridge class establishment in the community for OOS girls</p>	<p>Parenting education</p> <p>Awareness activities on community</p>	<p>Bridge Classes</p> <p>Preparatory Classes</p> <p>Remedial Support Classes</p> <p>Life Skills</p>

	<p>Network with focus on education, disability, and social inclusion</p> <p>Support to develop minimum standards for inclusive schools and inclusive education masters plan in collaboration with MoE, CEHRD</p> <p>Support schools to develop need-based school improvement plan (SIP)</p> <p>Grant for the disability friendly infrastructure in the school</p>	<p>Learning hubs establishment/support for existing learning hubs</p>	<p>Preparatory class for visual and hearing impairment</p> <p>Remedial support class for struggling students.</p> <p>Developed minimum standards/ inclusive education masters plan for inclusive education</p> <p>Initiation planning for updating and developing school improvement Plan and an integration of doable activities related to education and learning of GWD</p> <p>Development of minimum standards for minimum disability friendly infrastructure.</p>		<p>Business skills</p> <p>Microenterprise-based skill training</p> <p>AYSRH, GBV, CP and child safeguarding orientation</p> <p>Minimum intervention to severe disability</p> <p>Personalized social support system to the girls with disabilities</p>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Education, science and Technology</li> <li>Center for Education and Human resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DEC, DYC, Prerana</li> <li>Disable person's organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District education development and Coordination unit or Palika education unit (as per federal structure)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents of girl and boy beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls with disability and Marginalized girls</li> <li>Siblings boys</li> </ul>

	<p>Development (CEHRD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal level government</li> </ul>	<p>(DPOs) and local disability groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based savings &amp; loan co-ops (SACCOs)</li> <li>• National and International volunteer experts (IVEs)</li> <li>• Community learning centre</li> </ul> <p>Community and religious leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Teachers</li> </ul> <p>SMC and PTA members</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big sisters</li> </ul> <p>CMs</p>
<b>Factors</b>	<p>Poor implementation of inclusive policies by duty bearers service providers</p> <p>Distance to learning space (school, bridge/preparatory classes)</p> <p>Inadequate budget for local implementation of inclusive policies</p>	<p>Traditional perception of religious leaders especially Muslims community</p> <p>Community learning space</p> <p>Low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities</p> <p>Socio-cultural norms, gender biases and unequal power relations</p>	<p>Disability friendly infrastructure at school</p> <p>Trained teachers on inclusive education</p> <p>Curriculum and teaching methodology is not inclusive</p> <p>Access to road and public transport</p>	<p>Family attitude to support girls' education</p> <p>Poverty</p> <p>Low level of awareness on importance of girls education</p>	<p>Support from Big sisters, Community mobilizers and project staffs</p> <p>Household chores</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Risk of safeguarding on the way to school</p>

## 6. Key intermediate outcome findings

### 6.1 Key intermediate outcome findings

#### 6.1.1 Attendance

The project had enrolled the out-of-school girls into bridge classes. When the baseline evaluation was carried out, classes had just begun. It was therefore agreed among the project, external evaluator and the fund manager that the data for the baseline would be considered to be zero and this aspect will not be assessed in the baseline. In the further evaluation points, the attendance data will be gathered by the project which will be provided to the external evaluators while external evaluator will carry out the spot checks for verification. However, in the baseline, external evaluators have gathered qualitative information on attendance to get a sense of attendance at the present and inform project about the current and potential challenges with regard to attendance. As the project aimed to ensure 80% attendance of the girls, the information on attendance scenario is deemed to be helpful to inform the bridge class interventions.

For improving the attendance, project will mobilize the big sisters to mentor and motivate the girls to attend schools. The project will also engage with parents to convince them to regularly send their girls to school while intervention with teachers will ensure that the teaching methodologies are learner centered and the girls are willing to attend the learner-friendly classroom.

#### *Summary of findings*

IO	IO Indicator	Sampling and measuring Technique used	Who collected the data	Baseline level	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point?
Attendance	Attendance rate of direct beneficiaries	Interaction with girls, bridge class facilitators and big sisters	External evaluator	0	80%	Yes

#### **Main qualitative findings**

Qualitative discussions with stakeholders highlighted that initially irregularity was rampant in all the bridge classes. It has also been discussed in the barrier section that education is not given as much priority in the present and girls are required to contribute in the household chores. The monitoring and home visits of big sisters was key to ensuring that the girls attend classes. This led to the improvement in the attendance of girls. Regularity of girls was particularly challenging after long breaks. Even for girls in school, based on the present scenario, attendance is likely to be impacted by the household chores and festivals.

### Main finding

Qualitative discussions with the girls, bridge class facilitators and big sisters with regard to attendance indicated towards that irregularity of girls in the bridge classes. While the girls have stated that they enjoy attending bridge classes, the need to contribute to the household chores sometimes poses a barrier for them to attend classes. A 15-year-old girl from Banke asserted, *“I normally attend classes except for the days when I am sick or when someone from my family is sick. If someone is sick, I stay at home and take care of them. I also cannot attend classes when there is festival or during agricultural season when there are additional household chores to be taken care of.”* When informally interacting with the teachers, these were also the factors outlined by the teachers when discussing about the irregularity of girls to school. Furthermore, in Sarlahi, in informal interaction with the boys in school, they shared the tendency of students to miss class after lunch break. A boy from Class 10 said, *“Generally, we go to our houses during lunch break to eat lunch. After lunch break, only some return so the class is half empty.”*

The bridge class facilitators have shared on the trend of attendance in the classes that they conduct in the communities. In all the locations, girls were highly irregular initially which later improved after the regular monitoring and check by the big sisters. When asked about their challenges in ensuring the regularity of girls to the bridge class, a big sister in Sarlahi shared, *“Initially, girls did not go to class at all. They would just stay at home. We had to go every day to their houses and talk to them and their families to send the girls to classes. Later the situation has improved. But I am not sure if they will continue coming to classes if we do not go to their homes once in a while.”* A bridge class facilitator in Parsa echoed the same and further added, *“Irregularity is seen less when the classes are regular. The attendance becomes particularly low after festivals or long holidays.”*

### Reflection

The irregularity of the girls in bridge classes and also in school indicates towards the low priority on education. Also, in the barrier section, it has been seen that the parents are skeptic about the usefulness of education and they have been cited placing higher importance on the potential for current income rather than any future benefits. This raises an important question on the tendency of girls to attend classes when they are enrolled in formal school. The approach of big sisters visiting the household has worked to a certain extent to ensure the attendance of girls in bridge classes. This implies that the project needs to tailor the interventions which changes the attitude of community towards education and the social norms concerning household responsibilities to ensure sustainability of the project results. Until this is done, the girls will continue to be prone to irregularity or even drop out in absence of the monitoring mechanism.

### Target

As the project intends to ensure 80% attendance to evaluate the girls for midline, the target for the attendance in bridge classes will be at least 80%.

## 6.1.2 Environment for learning

The environment for learning was assessed through two major tools- School Improvement Plan (SIP) assessment checklist and the disability friendly infrastructure checklist. SIP assessment checklist assessed

the participatory process of designing SIP, implementation, inclusion aspects, complaint response mechanism, capacity of school to maintain child protection mechanism and teachers' capacity building. There were 22 questions in the SIP based on which the schools were scored and assessed. 66 was the highest attainable score for any school. All 30 schools were covered in the assessment.

Disability infrastructure assessment checklist assessed schools based on the infrastructures' availability and accessibility to the children with disability. Different forms of disabilities were considered as the accessibility of children with visual impairment, hearing impairment and physical impairments were addressed. There was a set of 57 questions and additional 5 questions for sustainability to assess the schools. All 30 schools selected by the project for intervention were covered in the assessment.

Under this IO, the project will engage with the school management and head teachers to facilitate the inclusive SIP formulation addressing the needs of marginalized and disabled children. Furthermore, financial grant will be provided to schools to initiate the process of making the infrastructures disability friendly.

### Summary of findings

IO	IO Indicator	Sampling and measuring Technique used	Who collected the data	Baseline level	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Midline)
IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school	Percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above in inclusive SIP progress assessment	30 schools Quantitative-SIP assessment Quantitative-KIIs	External evaluator	10%	-	No
	Percentage of schools scoring acceptance or above in disability infrastructure assessment	30 schools Quantitative-Disability friendly infrastructure assessment Qualitative-KIIs	External evaluator	3.33%	-	No
<b>Main qualitative findings</b>						
The qualitative consultations with head teachers, teachers, School Management Committees and Municipal Education Officer indicates that the School Implementation Plan (SIP) has not been effective						

in directing the activities in school. SIPs are often formulated only as a formality as it is a major criterion for funds. In many cases, it was found that only head teachers were involved in SIP formulation in contrary to the requirement of community and students' participation in the SIP design. Even when the SIPs are formulated with participation of other stakeholders from school, the issues of child protection, improving teaching quality among many others issues have only been vaguely touched upon with no concrete actions. In terms of implementation, school level stakeholders have cited that the SIP implementation is particularly hindered by low availability of funds.

The qualitative discussions with the school related stakeholders have confirmed that the schools are lagging behind in making their infrastructures disability friendly. This has been pointed out as a major constraint in admission of the children with disabilities in school. Stakeholders at schools have pointed out that as there were no students with disability in school, they did not feel the need to work on the infrastructures. However, the school which had resource classes also did not have disability friendly infrastructures in place.

### *Main finding*

The quantitative findings revealed the positive aspect in terms of participation of different stakeholders-teachers, parents, SMC and students – in SIP formulation. Although 19 schools had organized meeting for SIP formulation, only 7 of them had abided by the SIP guideline and discussed it for at least three days. 86.67% schools have been reported to have the involvement of teachers, 70% schools have involvement of parents, 66.67% schools have involvement of SMCs and 73.33% schools have involvement of students. However, the qualitative findings explain it otherwise. It revealed that mostly only head teachers are involved in the SIP formulation and there is only limited engagement of other stakeholders. In the IO section on parental engagement, it has been discussed that parents hardly participate in the meetings called out by school which indicates towards their level of engagement.

In terms of priorities set out in the SIP, infrastructure development and additional teacher recruitment were on top of the list. Other priorities in SIP include improving teaching quality in schools, improving the regularity of students in school and child protection. Despite setting priorities, the school has been faced with resource constraint limiting their ability to translate plan into action. Only 23.33% of schools have the resources to allocate for the disability friendly infrastructures. A head teacher in Banke lamented, *“We have infrastructure development as a priority in the SIP. However, we do not have any resources allocated by the government in this regard. Making infrastructures disability friendly is quite a challenge for us.”* Municipality Education Officers have also raised concern about the authenticity in priority of girls. In Sarlahi, MEO highlighted the malpractice of SIP formulation in the district and shared, *“Sometimes it is more of the computer operator who knows about SIP than other concerned stakeholders. Rather than genuinely formulating it, schools generate mere copies of SIPs with factual changes like names, locations and dates.”*

Overall, only one school has scored an acceptable score of 60% on the criteria set out for assessing disability friendly infrastructure. Drawing from the observations of school during visits during field level data collection, the schools lag behind in making their infrastructures disability friendly. Quantitative findings reveal that there is only one school in Banke which has secured the acceptable score in disability friendly infrastructure. Some schools even lack the basic infrastructures putting a huge question mark on the disability friendly infrastructure. For instance, a school in Parsa did not have toilet and another school in Sarlahi did not have windows or railings on the first floor of the school. This is a risk to all the children

and also adults irrespective of whether they have disability or not. The head teacher of the school in Sarlahi expressed, “Government only allocates limited resources each year based on which we have to plan. We had to construct a new building due to the lack of classrooms in our school so we invested our resources there. Last year, we had installed frames for door. Hopefully, next year, we will ensure safety measures by putting on railings and other construction activities.” When questioned about the resource allocation for schools, Municipal Education Officer in Sarlahi lamented, “There are many schools in the municipality. We are short of resources in the municipality itself. We are left with very little to allocate to all the schools after salary.”

### Reflection

The schools are not aware about the importance of SIP for guiding the development of their school as the practice of not making the SIP sincerely was rampant in school. As the students and communities are not involved in the SIP formulation, there is limited ownership from them. Even though the SIP has components to promote the child safeguarding practices, it has not been reflected in practice. In one of the schools, even SMC who is mandated to be an integral structure in SIP formulation is not aware of the SIP in their school. This further indicates the ineffectiveness of SMCs for the school related decisions. This strengthens the need for capacitating and functionalizing SMCs, who if functional, is likely to take ownership and sustain the project outcomes in school.

It is likely that the SIP does not reflect the actual development need of schools as it is based on the template specified by the government and is formulated by individual rather than a team. In this regard, it would be challenging for the project to change this practice and hold the school accountable. As the project envisions to incorporate the issues of child safeguarding into SIP for ownership of the issue and sustainability, it has to be strategized well by the project to ensure that SIP in the first place is formulated in the participatory manner and owned by the concerned stakeholders.

The schools are constrained with the limited funds to manage the existing infrastructures. There are schools in the communities with inadequate and incomplete infrastructures. As there are only few or no children with disabilities in school currently, adequate attention has not been provided to minimize risks for children with disabilities. As the project envisions to enroll children with disabilities into school, project has allocated Rs. 50,000/- per each school for the support to disability friendly infrastructure which is inadequate. Therefore, project needs to collaborate with the local government for resource allocation in these areas.

### Target

The project intends to carry out the interventions in school after the girls are enrolled into school. As the girls will be enrolled into classes only during midline, the interventions in schools would not have started yet. Therefore, the schools can be assessed for changes only in the final evaluation.

## 6.1.3 Teaching quality

The teaching quality in classrooms was assessed based on the classroom observation checklist. The checklist consisted of 52 questions which had questions based on the observation of the environment within the classroom including physical aspects and the teaching and learning practices. 16 questions relevant to the aspects which considers girls, children with disabilities and children from marginalized



background were pulled out to measure the learner-centered classroom practices. Each question weighed three points which summed up the total score to 48. The schools which achieved at least 60% of the total score were considered to be adopting the learner centered practices. Although the initial plan was to reach all 30 intervention schools, 4 schools had to be missed out due to holidays and examination in the two times that the external evaluators visited. When the EE carried out field work for the baseline study, the project was yet to roll out the trainings to the teachers and yet to select specific teachers for the training. Since the teachers were not ascertained, one classroom each in the primary level in 26 schools were assessed.

At the qualitative front, EE conducted interviews with teachers, head teachers and SMCs about the quality of teaching learning in classroom and the challenges for effective teaching and learning. Further, Municipal Education Officers also commented on the teaching learning in classroom based on the overall municipality scenario. As girls were out of school during the baseline study, girls and household were not inquired on the teaching quality, the possibility of which will be explored in the future evaluation points for validation.

Under the IO, the project will conduct the training on professional development of teachers. The training will be related to making the classrooms inclusive through learner-centered teaching pedagogies.

*Summary of findings*

IO	IO Indicator	Sampling and measuring Technique used	Who collected the data	Baseline level	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Midline)
IO4: Improved teaching quality	Teacher/educators displaying learner-centered classroom practices	26 schools Quantitative - Classroom observation Qualitative - KIs with teachers, head teachers, SMC representative	External evaluator	38.46%	-	No

**Main qualitative findings**

The qualitative consultations with different stakeholders have confirmed that teachers have received trainings on effective teaching and learning at different levels. Teachers were found to be generally aware on the learner centered practices. However, the major barrier for the effective teaching and learning process was stated to be the large classroom size and limited number of teachers. This has also raised skepticism in the teachers themselves to accommodate the children who need special attention following the already existing large classroom size.

### Main finding

External evaluator had observed 26 classes at the primary level, in which 21 classes had higher number of girls than boys. There were no children with disabilities in these classes. Teachers were found largely to be displaying positive practices with regard to their dealing with students in the classroom. 65.38% teachers were found to be encouraging both girls and children from marginalized communities in the classroom. Consequently, 57.69% of classrooms had boys and girls who expressed their ideas in the class without any hesitation. 73.08% of teachers were also using the gender sensitive languages by avoiding the statements that indicates domination or discrimination towards girls in any form.

At the qualitative front, teachers and head teachers revealed that there is a provision of teachers' development training for teachers by the government. These trainings have contributed to the engaging and participatory classroom to some degree. However, teachers have cited issues like large classroom size and overburden of work to manage more classes than what is mandated for each teacher, on the grounds of resource constraints. When asked about the constraints to learner centered practices, a teacher in Parsa revealed, *"We have received training on child friendly teaching and learning. It is a challenge for us when we have to implement the learnings from training. There are so many students in the classroom. It is impossible to provide adequate attention to all of them in every class."*

Another teacher in Banke placed the need for a different kind of training. He opined, *"I'm sure all the teachers in our district have heard of child friendly teaching and learning. Now, we are looking for subject-specific trainings – the trainings which help us learn about the updates and new teaching pedagogies with what we teach in the classroom."*

### Reflection

The indicator is focused on assessing classrooms for learner centered practices rather than on the competency in teaching. It was found that the teachers demanded more on the capacity building for the subject specific aspects rather than the learner centered practices. Teachers were generally aware about the learner centered practices as they have received trainings from the government and different development agencies in the past, but the implementation part was absent. This was because the trainings were not tailored to meet the specific contextual needs of the intervention areas. Huge classroom size and the limited number of teachers who needed to manage more classrooms than designated were the primary factors hindering the effective implementation. The existing high ratio of students to teachers also raises concern on the attention project beneficiary girls will receive in classroom as the project is enrolling girls who have not been in school for some time and might need additional support for learning. The remedial class run by the project could be helpful to some extent. However, the continuous support might be required to bring them at par with the students who have regularly been to school.

Direct intervention in the classroom size and teacher recruitment is beyond the scope and capacity of the project. This indicates towards the need of the project to work with the local government at the policy level to overcome these challenges. However, local government too are constrained by the availability of limited resources. In this regard, as a temporary measure the project should tailor their training interventions keeping these challenges in mind. Regular refresher training and constant monitoring by education experts followed by their feedback can still make a difference. Furthermore, organizations like VSO can also contribute in organizing the events that promotes sharing of good practices among teachers

within school and from different schools will help them learn from their peers on effective teaching pedagogies and classroom management.

### Target

As also discussed in the IO in previous section for safeguarding practice in schools, the project intends to carry out the interventions in school after the girls are enrolled into school. As the girls will be enrolled into classes only during midline, the interventions in schools would not have started yet. Therefore, the schools can be assessed for changes only in the final evaluation.

## 6.1.4 Economic empowerment and household support

External evaluators gauged the parental attitude towards the girls' education and employment through the parental engagement score index. The index was derived from the household survey. Fourteen questions dealing with the parental knowledge, attitude and practice informed the index. The questions encompassed time spent by girls doing household chores, the support primary caregivers are willing to extend towards the opportunities to girls, attitude towards marriage of their girls and the vision for girls for the next five years. Highest score attainable was 40 and the score obtained by each household was transformed into percentage.

The project envisions to conduct community meetings and awareness activities to raise awareness about the roles of parents for the girls' education and employment. These meetings will discuss on the roles of parents to address/mitigate the barriers for education and employment.

IO	IO Indicator	Sampling and measuring Technique used	Who collected the data	Baseline level	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Midline)
IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business	Parental engagement score index (%)	519 household  Quantitative- Household survey  Qualitative- FGD with girls, parents	External evaluator	72.22%	75%	Yes [ <i>Subject to feedback from the project because the quantitative finding discussed only on knowledge aspect</i> ]

### Main qualitative findings

The parental attitude has been largely shaped by the social norms. It has been a social practice that female member, especially the younger ones are involved in the household chores. Heavy engagement

of girls in household chores implied lesser time for education. The girls were expected to finish the same amount of household chores even when adjusting for bridge classes.

Although parents stated that girls and boys have right to education, they laid down several barriers which was preventing them from sending the girls to school. Long distance to school, need to support the household chores, opportunity for interaction among boys and girls in school, adolescence being the marriageable age in the community, skepticism on the use of education for girls for their employability were cited as few concerns which defined access to girls to education.

Teachers and other education related stakeholders have commented on the less interest of parents in the education of their children as they hardly visit schools to keep track of the academic progress or attendance of children. Furthermore, parents of children with disabilities are inclined to the fatalistic attitude as they are stated by the SMCs as thinking that their children cannot achieve anything in life. In the contrary, parents who enroll their children in private schools were in touch with schools to learn about the academic performance of their children. Therefore, stakeholders have asserted the need to work with parents to improve the education and employment scenario in the project intervention areas.

### *Main finding*

The parental engagement score index for the household was found to be 72.22%. More than three-fourth of the primary caregivers have reported that they will be supportive for the formal education, non-formal classes, vocational training and business. 97.69% respondents will support the non-formal learning, 87.48% will support vocational training, 84.97% will support the formal education and 75.53% will support business. In terms of their support, highest proportion of the household have stated to support girls by looking for available services pertinent to education and employment. 72.44% respondents will look for the available services while 57.61% respondents have stated to provide money for accessing those services. 86.70% of the household have been reported to be positive about investing in girls' education and 86.51% of the household are positive about investing on girls' skill development.

Despite the potential support that the household has stated to provide for education and employment of girls, their current support seems questionable as girls are currently out of school and primarily because they need to work at home. 93.26% girls have been facing the high chore burden as they have been reported to spend more than quarter of the day doing household chores. When inquired on how they will support the girls, 50.48% household have stated to take care of the household chores to allow time for girls to manage their education and employment. As the household domain is assigned to female, the beneficiary girls in FGD were found to be visibly startled when the researchers questioned them about the involvement of boys in the household chores. Parents feel that it is natural for girls to work at home considering their future. Another parent in Sarlahi shared, *"She will have a good life in her husband's family only if she keeps the in-laws happy by efficiently executing household chores assigned."*

In terms of the vision of the household for the girls in the next five years, 35.65% respondents have asserted girls to be engaged by the vocational training, 24.28% respondents want their girls to rejoin school while 13.1% want the girls to be married and stay at home doing the household chores.

The parental engagement score is found to be high from the quantitative finding indicating that parents are supportive and positive towards girls' education and employment by creating conducive environment

at home. Although the high proportion of family members seemed to be positive in supporting girls and for their future aspirations, the qualitative findings reflected otherwise.

The qualitative findings do not show the encouraging results in terms of the positive engagement of parents in education and employment of children. Despite stating that education is important for both girls and boys, the parents expressed skepticism on the safety of girls to send them to school. The safety, however, was not concerned to fear of violence in school by teachers or other students. The school was far in some locations and as they feared risks on the way. Parents in Jagarnathpur, Parsa shared, *“We have a primary school in our village. After Grade five, children are required to travel 7 km away to get to the secondary school. It is very far and no transportation facilities are available. Our village is very close to border, and the way to school doesn’t have settlements, rather only fields. We are not confident sending our girls to school alone. We cannot ensure their safety to school.”* Another participant in the same discussion added, *“I am comfortable sending my daughter to bridge class because it is within the community. The school is far though, I don’t think I can send her to school alone though.”*

Location was also a determinant for girls’ access to skill development and employment opportunities. A mother in Banke shared, *“I cannot put my daughter at risk by sending her away all alone. I am open to giving her skills that could help her in the future but it has to be within the community. I would prefer my daughter starting a tailoring shop at home rather than in the market far from home.”* Parents from the Madhesi community were against the idea of girl’s migration by herself for the purpose of education and employment.

The parents seemed to be restricting girls from education because they feared that co-education in school provided ample opportunity for girls to interact with boys. As it was the age of marriage for girls in Terai, parents were concerned that girls might elope or might be in relationship with someone not suitable for the family. In this context, Muslim households found it safer to send girls to Madarsa instead. A mother in Sarlahi said, *“Madarsa is safe because there are only girls. When they go to school, they will interact with boys. Who knows she might elope with the boy! I don’t feel such schools are safe for girls. I would send her to school if only girls were going.”* Furthermore, enrolling daughters in higher education would imply better educated groom, who would ask for more dowry. The parents, therefore, feared double burden- firstly, investing on education and having to pay more for dowry. The municipal education officer in Sarlahi shared on the attitude of parents which was shaped by the dowry practice, *“The access of girls to education is defined largely by marriage and dowry. When the girls continue their education till higher grade, their marriage will be delayed. Parents will have to look for a more educated groom. More educated groom implies bigger dowry amount means additional burden on parents. Sooner the marriage takes place, lesser competent will be the boy meaning lesser dowry. However, there are also few cases emerging in which the highly educated boys like doctors and engineers look for an educated bride, which is the reason behind sending girls to school.”*

The bleak future of the girls even after their access to education was highlighted by parents as other barrier. The unemployment situation inside the community coupled with the reluctance of the household to let the girls seek employment outside their community emerged as a primary reason that shaped the perception of households on education. A father in Malangwa, Sarlahi shared, *“Let us assume that I educate my daughter till 10 or even more than that. There is definitely an issue that I will have to pay more for her dowry as she ages. Keeping that aside, job opportunities are extremely scarce here. There is no guarantee that she will get a job. I think it is enough if she can read and write well.”* Furthermore, a girl when asked why she had

never been to school, she pointed out as her father's decision. She shared, *"My father has B.Ed. degree. However, he never got any job. He tells that education is no good because it does not guarantee job in any way."*

Even for parents who are sending their children to school, head teachers and teachers mentioned the low turnout of parents in the parent-teacher meeting or in any other occasions to understand the progress of their children. A teacher in Banke shared, *"Parents come to schools only if there is a provision of some incentive like allowance or lunch. They do not come to school when we invite them for sharing the academic progress of their children. The parents in private school though visit school when invited. It seems like they are concerned about child's education only when they are paying for it."*

Rather than other marginalized girls, parents of girls with disabilities were extremely appreciative of the bridge classes. They were delighted that bridge class during the day allowed the caregiver to focus on other works rather than being solely immersed in taking care of the disabled girl. A mother in Banke opined, *"The bridge class has come as a respite for me as I can drop off my daughter for 3-4 hours and focus solely on other works. I wish this class was from 10-5. Still thanks to the project that they have setup bridge class close to my house. I don't know what to do after the class is over."* Although parents were happy with the current state of affairs in which their daughters were getting some time to engage outside home, they were stated to possess the fatalistic attitude as they did not believe the girls with disabilities can achieve something significant in life. A SMC member in Sarlahi opined, *"Children with single form of disability might be able to make their living through shops, handicraft making or other skill-oriented jobs. The real problem is with children with severe disability. They will have to be forever reliant on siblings and parents. So, parents feel that fate will decide whatever will happen to them."*

It was found that girls were enrolled in higher number in government schools. Multiple school related stakeholders have cited the attitude of parents to enroll girls in government schools while boys in private school when they have resources. This was also confirmed during informal interaction with boys in Sarlahi. They shared, *"Our class has very few boys. Mostly boys in our community go to private school. Only boys whose family cannot pay for education and girls are in government school."* As stated earlier, as parents are more concerned about children's education in private schools, it can be understood that they pay only limited attention to the girls' education. In the difficult conditions, parents were more likely to let the girls drop out than boys.

### *Reflection*

The quantitative figures reflect positivity on the attitude of parents as higher proportion of caregivers are seen supportive towards girls' education and skill development for employment. Their positive response indicated their good knowledge regarding the support. However, the qualitative aspect which delved more into attitude and practice revealed the challenges side for the access of girls to education and employment. This raises question on the reliability of the quantitative findings measuring the parental engagement in real sense. Although the parents are aware that girls should be enrolled in schools and that they should make efforts for improving the access of girls to schools, it has not been translated into practice as explored in the qualitative study. This indicates towards the little value of the quantitative finding in this regard. Therefore, EE suggests that parental engagement can be better measured solely by in-depth qualitative study.

It can be deduced that social norms prevalent in Terai is found to be deeply rooted in the mentality of the parents which shapes their attitude towards girls' education and employment. Parents are concerned

about the safety of girls much higher than the future prospects that could have followed their education or employment. This attitude is shaped by the limited possibility of local markets to absorb capable human resource through job or business opportunities. It is therefore, extremely important for the project to assess the market before designing their skill development interventions. Furthermore, the opportunities for employment could be better in the market areas or in another city. The safety concern is likely to pose a barrier in smooth transition for girls as the schools will still be far and the employment opportunities could be better in other cities. It is extremely important that these fears are well addressed in the parenting education interventions planned by the project.

The social norm has also conditioned girls in a way that they do not see any way except for their involvement in the household sphere- marriage and work. The age group, project has been working with, is an age where girls are prone to getting married. Despite the project interventions, there still stands a risk of girls getting married during the project duration owing to the social norms. In this context, not only parents, the project might need to adapt programs to intervene with the in-laws.

The household chores have been solely a domain of girls- daughters and daughter-in-law. Envisioning girls in education or employment would imply deduction in the working hours at home. Until the household chores are shared by the other household members, it would be challenging for the girls to get out of the household boundaries. The project should also focus on the changing the social norms with regard to the boys being involved in the household chores.

As the project requires to work in challenging the discriminatory social norms and supporting girls which has deprived girls of their right to education and employment, the project could invite some resistance from the communities. It would be useful if the parents can engage with the influential community member to run the project interventions smoothly.

### *Target*

Until the next evaluation point, all the parents will have received at least some orientation on parenting education. However, the activities would not be in the full swing. The activity till then is likely to raise the knowledge level of parents which might result in the slight increase in the parental engagement score index which seems to be already high now. The target for 75% seems realistic considering the timeline for the next evaluation point. However, as suggested in the section above, the knowledge level increase do not necessary imply in translation into practice. Therefore, rather than quantitatively, the qualitative exploration would be a more reliable measure for assessing the parental engagement. The behavior change would require a more continuous and sustained intervention as it is concerned with the social norm existing in the community rather than just parents. The intervention with parents needs to be coupled with the widespread community interventions.

## **6.2 Life skills**

As agreed in the MEL framework, external evaluators assessed three areas- financial literacy, self-efficacy and Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH). The quantitative data for all three aspects on life skill were collected through the girls' survey. 530 girls had participated in the girls' survey. Focused group discussions with girls and their household members were also carried out in the project intervention areas to get deeper insights on life skills. The girls' survey was piloted and tested to ensure

that it was age specific and suited for the context. The following section will discuss these three areas in detail.

Under life skills, the project is carrying out several activities. With a bid to improve awareness on financial management, the project will deliver financial literacy training to the girls to the girls who receive the business skill trainings. The project will also deliver training on AYSRH to all the adolescent girls. The self-efficacy of girls is expected to increase through these interventions and through mentoring by big sisters.

## 6.2.1 Financial literacy

Financial literacy was assessed through 9 scale questions adapted to the context of the project intervention girls. The set of self-reported questions embedded in the girls' survey reflected their understanding on financial planning, decisions and awareness of financial institutions. The girls were scored from 0-5 based on their level of agreement with the statement. The girls who "completely agreed" were provided 5 points while the girls who "completely disagreed" were provided only 1 point. The girls who responded "don't know" were provided 0.

The financial literacy of the girls who had been earning or held some cash in their hand was only assessed. 34 girls responded to the questions. It has been agreed among the evaluator, project and fund manager that a more comprehensive tool will be designed by the project monitoring team which will assess the financial literacy tailored specifically to the project interventions. The project will collect the data based on this tool and inform the evaluation reports in the next evaluation point.

Based on the data collected by external evaluator, the average financial literacy score was found to be 67.78%. As the sample is already too low, the finding has not been disaggregated for girls with disabilities.

### Knowledge

Out of the girls who have cash in hand, only 47.06% were aware about the financial institution existing in their community. In the qualitative discussion with other girls, it was found that most of the girls were not aware of any financial institution around. Despite the presence of the financial institutions, lack of knowledge on the existence of such institutions also defines the access of girls to such services. Even for the girls who were aware of the financial institutions, only parents went to seek services and not girls. A 16-year-old girl in Banke disclosed, *"I know about the cooperative in our neighbourhood. My father goes there sometimes. However, I have never been there."*

### Skills

Quantitative findings point towards the positive direction on girls demonstrating the good financial behaviours. 64.71% girls have agreed to make good decisions on how to spend money. 58.82% kept track of their monthly expenses. 76.47% of girls who had hold of cash also planned on where to spend their money every month. 38.23% girls reported to set long terms financial goals while 64.71% girls wisely spent their money only on the things that they could afford. Furthermore, 76.47% girls also could make good decisions about how the money should be spent at home. Although the quantitative findings point towards the encouraging findings among the girls, it should be noted here that these findings apply only for the girls who currently have the hold of money. In the contrary, qualitative findings point out towards the limited



awareness of girls regarding saving and cooperatives. The above 'knowledge' section sheds light on the awareness aspect which is instrumental in the shaping skills for financial behaviours.

#### *Attitudes*

There were also parents who did not feel the need of financial services at all. When asked about the knowledge of financial institutions, a male participant in the FGD with parents sarcastically exclaimed, “We are poor people. We do not have money. Why do we need to save? Who would give us loan? Who cares about us at all?”

#### *Findings*

The attitude and skills pertinent to the financial literacy is shaped by the knowledge of the girls on the financial behaviours and financial services available in the community. Although the quantitative data shows encouraging findings on financial literacy, it should be noted here that the findings are only for few girls and it could also have been the limitation of the tool to capture the real scenario because the questions were self-reported. The project monitoring team has also designed a tool to assess financial literacy to be administered to a larger number of beneficiaries as they participate in the business skill training. The data collected by the monitoring team will be fed into the evaluation reports in the next evaluation points.

### **6.2.2 Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy was measured through the Schwarzer's and Jerusalem's General Self-Efficacy (GSE) which assessed the optimistic self-beliefs to cope with difficult situations in life. The scale contained 10 questions concerned with the personal agency of girls. This scale was administered to all the girls participating in the girls' survey. Adhering to the data collected by EE on self-efficacy, the average self-efficacy was found to be 60.62%. For the girls with disability, the score was comparatively lower as the average self-efficacy was found to be 47.09%.

#### *Attitudes*

Quantitative data reflected positive findings on self-efficacy. 66.04% girls have agreed that they can set and accomplish their goals. 66.23% girls reportedly agree that even when they face oppositions, they can achieve what they desire. Even when posed with unforeseen situations, 51.7% girls feel confident that they can deal with it. 52.64% are sure that they can handle whatever comes their way. 59.25% can think of a solution when in trouble.

For girls with disabilities, 48.65% have agreed to set and also accomplish their goals. There are 37.84% girls with disabilities who are confident to handle unforeseen situations. 43.24% have reported that they can think of a solution when in trouble.

#### *Findings*

Although the self-efficacy data shows high scores of girls with regards to the decision making. However, these findings are contradicted by another statement. 80.19% girls have agreed that they cannot choose to stay in or out of education. Qualitative finding shows that girls heavily rely on the household members

for the decision regarding education, employment, marriage or any other decisions concerning them. For instance, a girl in Banke could attend the bridge class because her in-laws allowed her to, a girl in Parsa could not attend school because her father did not allow as he could not use his education for securing job, a girl with intellectual disability in Banke could attend in class because it provided time for her mother to work in the household chores. Furthermore, girls could not seek jobs outside their community because their parents would not send them away from home. Additionally, parents were reluctant to send their girls to school also because of co-education because they feared that girls would choose their partner on their own and elope. The situations like these reflected in different sections of the report demonstrate the constraints that girls have to face because of the existing social norms to make and follow their decisions. This puts the self-efficacy of girls at questions despite the positive score.

### 6.2.3 Adolescent and Youth Reproductive and Sexual Health

Adolescent and Youth Reproductive and Sexual Health (AYSRH) was measured through 10 questions designed specifically for the project in line with the interventions. All the girls were assessed for AYSRH knowledge, attitude and practice focusing around the areas of menstrual hygiene and family planning. The average AYSRH knowledge and practice score was aggregated to be 53.28% based on the quantitative data collected by EE. For girls with disability, the score was 54.03%.

#### *Knowledge*

55.09% of the girls assessed have heard about safe menstrual practices, primarily on how they should be maintaining hygiene during their periods. 79.11% girls learnt about it from their mothers while 42.12% girls learnt from their female friends and 38.7% girls heard about it from their sisters.

Only 26.04% have heard about the family planning devices. Among them, 63.77% of girls had heard it from their mothers, 42.75% heard it from sisters and 40.58% who discussed it with their mothers, 42.75% discussed it with their sisters while 40.58% girls discussed it with their female friends.

Taking the reference of marriageable age as specified by law i.e. at least 20 years of age, 76.60% girls stated that girls should get married at 20 or after that and 92.64% girls stated that boys should get married after 20. In terms of the suitable age at marriage as viewed by girls, the highest proportion said it to be 20 for girls and 25 for boys. 69.43% girls state that the girls should be married at 20 years of age. For boys, girls are split between 20 and 25. 31.89% girls state that boys should get married at 25 while 24.15% state that boys should get married at 20. In terms of age for first pregnancy, 72.08% of girls assert the suitable age to be from 20 to 22.

37.84% of the girls with disabilities have heard about the safe menstrual practice, out of which 85.71% have heard from their mothers and 57.14% from their sisters. Only 18.92% have heard about the family planning devices. Among them, 57.14% have heard about it from their mothers. 78.38% girls stated that girls should get married at 20 or after that.

#### *Skills*

Regarding the safe menstrual hygiene practice, 88.89% girls were found to be using clothes during their periods. The girls with disabilities were also found to be doing the same in exactly same proportion. They

demonstrated safe practice in managing it. 77.27% girls were found to be washing them with soap and water and drying it in the direct sunlight.

Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV) in the community are knowledgeable women in the society who can orient girls on the matter of the sexual and reproductive health including the services and facilities available in the community. However, the reach of girls to them was found to be quite low. Only 6.85% girls had learnt about the safe menstrual practice and only 4.72% girls had learnt about family planning from them. Furthermore, only 6.42% girls would approach FCHV if they have to discuss on the matters of SRH.

### *Attitudes*

Girls were found to be discussing about the AYSRH issues with the close female member. They were comfortable discussing their reproductive and sexual health matters with their mothers, sisters, and other female relatives in the family, close friends and few also discussed with Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs). When asked whom they would approach if they have to discuss SRH issues, the highest proportion of girls mentioned mothers, followed by both female friends and sisters. 54.72% would approach their mothers, while 22.45% each would approach their female friends and sisters. However, a large proportion of 30% girls would not approach anyone at all.

Even among girls with disabilities, more than half proportion did not discuss the reproductive and sexual health issues at all while some discussed with their mothers. 56.76% of girls were reported to approach no one in case they have queries related to reproductive and sexual health. 29.73% of girls would actually approach their mothers to discuss in this regard.

### *Findings*

It has been found that girls find it comfortable to discuss the AYSRH problems and issues with the female member, either mother, sister, other female relative like grandmother, sister-in-law or FCHVs. Discussing the AYSRH issues in the bridge class by the project is a good approach to ensure that they are aware about the SRH issues. This is likely to promote a good health scenario of adolescent girls in the community which will have a lasting impact on their health.

It can be seen that large proportion of girls hold the view that girls and boys should get married only when they are 20, which is also the legally defined marriageable age. However, their knowledge for marriage does not necessarily reflect on the actual marriage scenario. It had been discussed in the earlier sections about the lack of decision-making authority of girls regarding their lives – parents making decisions on when and who to marry. Therefore, the project should enable girls to voice their opinions while also challenge social norms to ensure that their opinions on their marriage and other affairs are heard.

## **Appropriateness of the proposed interventions**

As the project intends to improve the attitudes and practices around financial literacy and behaviours around AYSRH, there is a need to have a yardstick to properly measure the usefulness of the project interventions for bringing about positive change for life skills. However, the project has not envisioned

special activities targeted to improve the confidence of girls. They envision that girls will have their self-efficacy improved as they participate in different project interventions. Owing to the absence of dedicated activities to improve self-efficacy and self-reported questions and answers to measure self-efficacy, the evaluators suggest that measuring self-efficacy might not be required in the subsequent evaluation points.

The sub-group of girls with disabilities is only in a small proportion for comparisons. The quantitative findings do not indicate a stark difference in the trend of findings in general and for girls with disabilities.

### **Life skill in improving the gender equitable attitudes, norms and relations**

The interventions under the life skill outcome are intended to empower beneficiary girls through their enhanced knowledge, attitude and skills on financial literacy and issues of sexual and reproductive health. The training on business skill, vocational skill and financial literacy empowers girls to engage in the income generation activities while also managing the income that they generate from employing their skills. This means they will be economically empowered. Simultaneously, girls will get an opportunity to learn about different issues on sexual and reproductive health which will enable to preserve their health. The project envisions that the self-efficacy of the girl i.e. the ability to decide for themselves and managing problems will improve as they participate in these interventions. On these grounds, by the design of project, girls are likely to gain more agency but till the knowledge level.

However, intervening with the girls alone might not adequately provide the opportunities for them to exercise their learning in the real life. It will be necessary that the project also address the social norms existing in the community as the project is set in the context where the social norms perpetuates the discrimination against girls. Envisioning changes for girls in the real situation would not be sufficient by empowering girls. It needs to be complemented by the enabling environment whereby other related stakeholders are willing to accept the empowered girls. The project, therefore needs to work with other male stakeholders and household to ensure that the decisions made by girls are respected. For instance, using family planning devices is a joint decision between female and male partner. When only girls are made aware and not boys, it might lead to a conflict situation. There is a risk that, adhering to the discriminatory social norms, girls might succumb to the decision of boys. Therefore, when discussing AYSRH issues, it is also essential to incorporate boys in the discussions, preferably the husbands of married adolescent girls.

## 7. Conclusions

### 7.1 Outcome findings

External evaluators administered the learning tests on 496 girls. When administering EGRA and EGMA tests to the girls, the average numeracy score was found to be 24.37. The average literacy score was found to be 18.65. It emerged in the qualitative consultations that girls were more adept to speak in the mother tongue which made it difficult for them to communicate in Nepal. Although the non-Nepali speaking household had slightly lower score for both numeracy and literacy, the significance test showed no relationship of EGRA and EGMA performance by the language they speak at home.

152 in-school girls were assessed for their learning to set the benchmark for the project beneficiary girls across grades 1-7. The benchmarking scores were reported by grades which went higher as the grade level progressed. The minimum aggregate EGMA score attained by the girls in grade 1 was 12.65 while the maximum aggregate EGMA score was attained by girls in grade 6 which was 57.86. For literacy, the scores were relatively lower than numeracy. The minimum aggregate EGRA score attained by girls in grade 1 was 7.69 while the maximum aggregate EGRA score attained by girls in grade 7 was 55.43.

The project team further assessed learning for 39 children with hearing and visual impairment. The average EGMA score for children with hearing impairment was 7 while score for visual impairment was 10.1. For literacy, the average EGRA score for children with hearing impairment was 10.1 while score for visual impairment was 15.6.

In terms of transition, there were 36.61% girls who have never been to school. 63.39% girls have attended school and dropped out. Muslim communities are in the highest proportion for never attending school. However, they were still attending Madarsa in the communities. The qualitative consultations with diverse stakeholders pointed out several factors which are likely to challenge sustainable transition of project beneficiary girls into the pathway that the project envisions. For girls who are likely to transition to formal schools, older girls being enrolled in the class consisting of much younger peers, low academic performance, low willingness of parents to send them to school because of the schools being far or lack of jobs post school or girls having to prioritize household chores over education or marriage are some of the challenges explored in the baseline. Furthermore, for vocational trainings, the low willingness of parents to allow the mobility of girls beyond community, same nature of training desired by all and ineffectiveness of trainings in the past can pose a barrier for effectively transitioning girls to employment or business.

The sustainability for the project was assessed at three levels- community, school and system. At community, learning hubs were to be established and owned by an active community group. Parents were also expected to invest in their daughters' education after exposure to the parenting education interventions. However, in the light of the deep-rooted social norms discussed in the barrier section, behavior change of parents seems to be highly challenging. At schools, the project envisions that SIP will be in place adhering to the principles of inclusive education taking disability friendly infrastructure as sustainability indicators. In the context where SIPs are merely being prepared for fulfilling the formality for acquiring budget for the school, including the 'inclusive' component in SIP might not sustainably ensure implementation in this regard. Even when formulating the SIP sincerely, the resource crunch has hit the implementation hard. The school level indicator also encompasses the sustainability of teachers training.

Implementation of the learning from teachers training is also particularly challenging in the large sized classrooms. At the system level, project envisions to ensure sustainability of the interventions through establishing a functional database of marginalized girls and those with disabilities, which informs the planning at the local level. This is also challenged by the human resource crunch, low resources and frequent transfer of officials and the absence of knowledge transfer mechanism currently at the local level.

## 7.2 Intermediate outcome findings

There were five intermediate outcomes for the projects in the areas covering attendance, environment for learning, teaching quality, economic empowerment and household support and life skills. Among these, external evaluation did not explore the attendance quantitatively as some of the bridge classes had just come into operation when evaluation was underway. However, exploring qualitatively, regularity was found to be a challenge for the project, especially after holidays. Even for the in-school girls, they are not regular in attending schools, household chores and festivals were hampering their class attendance.

With regard to the environment for learning, SIP which should have facilitated the accessible and learner friendly environment at school was not directing the school programs in real sense. SIPs were being merely formulated for the sake of acquiring funds for school while even when prepared sincerely, the lack of funds was hindering its effective implementation. The priority of schools as cited in SIP includes infrastructure development and additional teacher recruitment. Disability friendly infrastructure was yet to become a priority because the schools were also lacking the basic infrastructures like doors, windows in classrooms and toilets. Only one school had attained the acceptable score for disability friendly infrastructure among the assessed 30 schools.

Teachers were observed to be displaying the positive practices in dealing with students in the classroom as 65.38% were encouraging girls and children from marginalized communities in the classroom. As a result, children expressed ideas in classroom without any hesitation. There were no children with disabilities in the classroom observed. However, qualitative discussion pointed out towards the lack of capacity of teachers to support children with special needs. Furthermore, the large classroom size and overburden of work over teachers to manage classroom is also affecting the implementation of learning of teachers from different trainings.

The other bloc of ensuring the girls' education and employment are parents. The project envisions to improve the parental engagement through community meetings and mass awareness events. The analysis of household survey showed the parental engagement score to be 72.22%. The majority of parents stated that girls, boys and children with disabilities- all have right to education and employment. Although the knowledge of parents as high going by the quantitative findings, the qualitative study stated otherwise in attitude and practice. Girls were heavily engaged in household chores. Parent laid down several barriers which were preventing girls from going to school. It was the decision of parents to send the girls to school which was affected by factors like long distance to school, need to support in household chores, opportunity for interaction among boys and girls in school, adolescence being marriageable age in the community, skepticism on the use of education for girls for their employability. Parents were stated to have less interest in the education of children as they were hardly visiting schools as stated by the school level stakeholders. This indicated towards the perception of parents in the education of their children in project locations.

Under life skills, the project intends to work on three areas- financial literacy, self-efficacy and adolescent and youth reproductive and sexual health. The financial literacy was assessed only for 37 girls who were currently not in bridge class. Their average financial literacy score was 67.78%. However, the quantitative tool dealt only with the knowledge aspect. The project monitoring team has been designing the comprehensive tool on financial literacy, the finding of which will be fed into the evaluation reports in the next evaluation points.

The self-efficacy tool administered in all the girls resulted the average self-efficacy tool to be 60.62% while the score for girls with disability was 47.09%. Although the tool indicates high score, there were 80.19% girls who have agreed that they cannot choose to stay in or out of education. Girls rely heavily on the household members for the decision regarding education, employment, marriage or any other decisions.

The AYSRH score reflected the knowledge and practice among the adolescent girls. The average AYSRH score was found to be 53.28% for the marginalized girls while 54.03% for the girls with disabilities. Although there were over the half proportion of girls who have heard about the safe menstrual practices, there were only close to one-fourth proportion of girls who have heard about the family planning devices. Women, especially mothers, sisters and female friends were major source of information for girls on the issue of AYSRH. There were 88.89% of the girls who have had the onset of the menstrual cycle were using cloth during their periods and 77.27% were taking the good practice of washing them with soap and water and drying it in the direct sunlight. 76.60% girls stated that girls should be married at 20 or after that while 72.08% girls assert the suitable age for first pregnancy to be from 20 to 22.

### **7.3 Key characteristic subgroups and barriers faced and Theory of change**

The theory of change of ENGAGE has made assertions that the empowerment of marginalized out of school girls and the girls with disabilities within the age group 10-19 in the three districts – Banke, Parsa and Sarlahi for safe, happy and successful transition can be done through formal education and/or secure livelihood. To achieve this result, the project works with the marginalized girls, their parents, the teacher, community members and the local government.

The project had identified the intervention subgroup by age group 10-14 and 15-19. As the project is specifically interested in the girls with disabilities, the findings for this group was analyzed separately. Girls with disabilities are defined as those girls who have checked in ‘a lot of difficulty’ or ‘cannot do at all’ in different domains in the Washington Group of Questions for Child Functioning module.

Poverty, social norms which perpetuates high chore burden in girls, negative perception of parents to usefulness of education, low decision-making power of girls and safety concern of parents were some of the barriers pertinent to all the project beneficiary girls. More prominent to the girls with disabilities were barriers like low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities, inaccessible and non-inclusive institutional infrastructure, and lack of teachers to support girls with special needs. Poor implementation or no budget for implementation of inclusive policies were also hindering the participation of girls to schools.

Some of the barriers outlined in the Theory of change related to the transportation facilities and violence in and on the way to school were not found to have a significant effect for attaining the project objectives.

Furthermore, the language barrier which was perceived to be affecting the learning score was also stated to be insignificant in the EGRA performance of girls.

## 7.4 Gender equality

Project has interventions aimed at improving gender equitable attitudes, norms and relations. The project intends to work with girls to transition to education or employment while also improve their knowledge on financial literacy and AYSRH. These interventions are expected to boost the confidence in girls. Simultaneously, the project will also work with parents to ensure that they are able to facilitate girls' access to education and employment.

The current context in the project location is heavily influenced by the social norms which perpetuates discrimination against girls. Working with an individual girl and her parents would not be adequate to bring about change. As the discriminatory trends are deep-rooted, the project needs to engage with the community members and mass awareness raising events might not be adequate to bring about behavior change. For instance, household chore is only a female domain and adolescent girls are heavily engaged in it and there were community members who seemed shocked to hear about the possibility of engaging boys into the household chore. Therefore, envisioning change in this scenario would require to work with the household members involving those who can potentially support in the household chores. The project needs to devise strategies that invokes progressive thinking in parents and other household members and bring about change. The possibility of engaging men/boys working for girls' education and employment needs to be explored.

Girls and women do not hold the position for deciding for themselves. Working in this context, when discussing about the AYSRH issues, the project should also engage boys in the discussions to ensure that they will respect the decisions of girls with regard to reproductive and sexual health.

## 7.5 Risks

The external evaluation for baseline could not find any evidences for the existing risks of the project approach to gender and social inclusion. However, there has been some explorations about the potential risks. Although the external evaluators have not taken the actual attendance record as some of the bridge classes were only recently established when the study took place, there were some indications of the poor attendance and how big sisters had to struggle to ensure that girls attended the bridge class regularly. As the project beneficiary girls have been out of school for some time and are responsible primarily for the household chores, the interventions of sending them to school and further remedial classes which covers most of the day, might invite some resistance from the family members. It could be difficult to convince parents in this regard because sharing the burden of household chores among the male members in the family would be against the deep-rooted social traditions. It would also be difficult to convince parents because they do not see value of education due to the lack of employment opportunities. Furthermore, as the girls have been out of school for some time, they might not be at par in their academic performance with their in-school peers, they might be enrolled into a class with much younger peers, or lose motivation to attend school as the teachers who are already burdened with the large classroom size



might not be able to give adequate attention. These factors are likely to put girls at the risk of dropping out.

## 8. Recommendations

	Major changes required (Must address)		Minor changes required		No changes required (Good to address)
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S.N.	Recommendations	Rationale	RAG rating
<b>Monitoring, evaluation and learning of the project</b>			
1	Measure learning levels in more categories than just ‘non-learner, emergent learner, established learner and proficient learner’ in order to ensure the precision	In terms of learning, the GEC guideline boxes the learners into four broad categories- non-learner, emergent learner, established learner and proficient learner. The primary beneficiaries of the project include girls who have never been to school and girls who have disabilities.	
2	Explore self-efficacy qualitatively during next evaluation point	The scores for financial literacy and self-efficacy are found to be high but as suggested by the qualitative findings above, practice does not necessarily follow the high knowledge level. The quantitative tools for life skill, specifically for financial literacy and self-efficacy measures till knowledge level. In contrary to the assumption that knowledge informs practice, it was not reflected in case of the project intervention areas. The project has been devising a financial literacy tool aimed at assessing the financial literacy practice and knowledge of all girls. As the project aims at building self-efficacy in girls, not just limited to knowledge, exploring through qualitative approach would add more value to the project.	
3	It is advisable to either assess the life skill qualitatively only or to revise tool to encompass attitude and practice towards elements in life skill.	Scores from the current quantitative tool does not clearly assess the life skill situation. Rather qualitative aspect brought out valuable information than numbers which reflected good knowledge but not the weak practice.	

4	<p>Revise parental engagement tool to adequately capture attitude and practice, rather than focusing only on knowledge aspect</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Explore parental engagement only in qualitative terms to avoid self-reported bias</p>	<p>Similar to the life skill, for parental engagement also, the high score is completely contrasting with the ongoing practice in project intervention areas. While parents have agreed that girls have right to education or they will support girls' education and employment in the future, the factors which informed the score, the qualitative findings showed the contrasting ongoing situation in which the parents are deciding for their girls to be out of school, restricting their mobility, engaging them more in the household chores, among many other practices.</p>	
5	<p>Qualitative data collection with in-school students and other school related stakeholders</p>	<p>During midline, the project will have just started the intervention in schools which implies that there will not be adequate changes from the baseline situation and even if there is, it is too soon to be attributed to the project. Also, the quantitative figures for baseline has already been generated during the study.</p>	
6	<p>Until the project can adequately make an impact to sincerely formulate SIP while also ensuring its implementation, measuring school-level sustainability based on SIP-related information is not practical. This needs to be revised.</p>	<p>In terms of the school-level sustainability, the indicators are mainly based on the inclusion of the components like teacher training, disability friendly infrastructure or other aspects of inclusion and child safeguarding into the SIP. However, findings from the assessment of SIP with the qualitative information on those factors have indicated that inclusion of different aspects in SIP does not ensure its implementation.</p>	
7	<p>The percentage of income that the parents spend in education of girls at all locations cannot explain their conviction towards education. This needs to be revised.</p>	<p>The government of Nepal provides free basic education. However, it has not been fully implemented and there are other associated costs which has to be borne by parents. Although, there are costs involved, it is not the same across all the project locations. In some locations, parents might not have to spend money at all.</p>	
<b>Design</b>			

8	Dividing the children in bridge classes by those who have attended the school in past and those who have not attended school	In the bridge class, there are diverse learners- some have never been to school while some have dropped out only around grade five. The researchers observed one classroom being carried out by a bridge class facilitator by forming two groups and teaching both the groups as per their past learning. This practice of group learning can be replicated in other classes to ensure meaningful learning for all the learners.	
9	Ensure that a girl, after transitioning from bridge classes to formal schooling gets a respectful position in the class whereby, she will feel like a responsible one among her younger peers	The study found that the attendance for girls is low in the bridge classes. This could lead to the similar tendencies even after enrolling in schools. The project can avert the low attendance scenario by linking girls to the government scheme of providing monetary incentives for girls attending school till grade seven. In addition, the project will transition OOS girls below 15 years of age to formal school. However, there are also girls who have never been to school. A thirteen-year-old OOS girl can be enrolled into grade I. Her classmates would be roughly aged around 7-8 years of age. This might lead to the girl dropping out because of the mismatch of age. The project should consider this factor into their design and incorporate suitable interventions.	
10	Activities aimed at strengthening Madrasas	The study found that larger proportion of Muslim girls have never been to school than any other ethnic groups. However, their learning score was better than other groups. When exploring qualitatively, it was found that they had been attending Madarsa. In the recent policies, the government has also recognized Madarsa as a learning institution and directed Madarsa to include the national curriculum.	
11	Livelihood interventions like fishing, vegetable farming, among others, directed to parents of marginalized girls under intervention	The study found skepticism in parents about the security of girls if they have to go alone away from home. Furthermore, the training demanded by girls is mostly tailoring training. Large number of girls taking the same training and establishing similar	

		shops would decrease their competitiveness. Bearing these factors in mind, the project is recommended to take a step ahead and contribute to the livelihood of household including parents. This would imply lesser resistance from the parents as they would be involved along with the girls.	
12	Project should conduct capacity building trainings to SMCs on revenue generation. Further the project can also support to lobby for the resource support for implementing the inclusive policies with the local government.	There are interventions aimed at including inclusive provisions in the SIP. Unless SIP becomes a planning document, formulated in a participatory manner and the document which drives the school programs in true sense, it is difficult to ensure the sustainability. Also, when the SIP is designed sincerely, financial constraints obstructs its implementation.	
13	Project should expose parents to the girls in the communities who have been educated and doing well for themselves.	As the parents are posing barrier to the girls' education and employment, it is advised that the project exposes parents to the girls in the communities who have been educated and doing well for themselves. This demonstration activity is expected to sensitize parents on the importance of education.	
14	Project should incorporate fight back and confidence building trainings.	The project aims to increase the self-efficacy of girls but there are no dedicated activities as such which boosts their confidence. On one hand, delivering fight back and confidence building trainings are expected to boost confidence in girls while also in their parents who have been constraining girls from education because of safety concern.	
15	Project should work on and implement the concept of big brothers, who will engage with the boys to encourage sharing burden of household chores along with their female siblings.	The baseline evaluation painted a bleak picture in the involvement of boys in the household chores.	
<b>Sustainability</b>			
16	Formation of a committee including both elected representatives and staffs led by the former to provide an oversight of the database management system	At the system level, sustainability is primarily challenged by frequent staff transfer which implies the loss of knowledge for the database management. It is recommended that the project lobbies for institutionalizing the database management system	

		at the municipality level with proper guidelines and reinforcement in place. Intensive follow up by the project personnel at the ground is advisable in this regard. Furthermore, the project needs to ensure that the municipal officials are sensitized to update the database and also use it for evidence-based planning for attaining the national goal of leaving no one behind in education.	
17	Adopt the strategy of establishing learning hubs around ward office and link it with the local government resources to ensure their ownership	At the community level, the project is yet to identify the community group responsible for the maintenance of learning hubs. As the community groups have been found to be inactive after the phasing out of project, it is advisable that project deeply engage with these groups to ensure that they take ownership and the responsibility of functionalizing and maintaining learning hubs.	
18	Working with the community leaders and influencers in the community- the idea of adult champions, initially proposed by the project.	The sustainability in the part of parents would require extensive intervention in the community as the parents are heavily influenced by the existing social norms.	
19	At the school level specifically, the project needs to ensure that the SIP is made sincerely through the proper orientation followed by extensive follow up. As the implementation of SIP is challenged by the lack of resources, it is recommended that the project provides training to the SMC regarding the fund-raising strategies for school.	Ensuring sustainable results from learning institutions would require the strengthened local government and their willingness to prioritize and dedicate resources in this sector. The project can contribute through continuous lobby and engagement with the local government.	
<b>Evaluation questions</b>			
20	The current evaluation point aimed at establishing baseline values for the next evaluation points. The questions, were therefore framed in the similar manner. For the next evaluation point, the evaluation questions will be similar to the MEL framework. Broadly, the subsequent evaluation points will aim to answer the following questions.		

1. Was the ENGAGE successfully designed and implemented?
2. What impact did the ENGAGE funding have on the transition of marginalized OOS girls and those with disabilities through educational interventions and their learning?
3. What works to facilitate transition of marginalized OOS girls and those with disabilities through educational interventions and increase their learning?
4. What works to facilitate the transition of marginalized OOS girls and those with disabilities through skill development interventions and increase their employability?
5. How sustainable were the activities implemented by the ENGAGE and was the program successful in leveraging additional interest and investment?
6. What were the unintended outcomes of the project, if any?

## 9. Annexes

### Annex 2: Beneficiaries table (sample data)

Table 40: Characteristic subgroups and barriers of sample for portfolio level aggregation and analysis

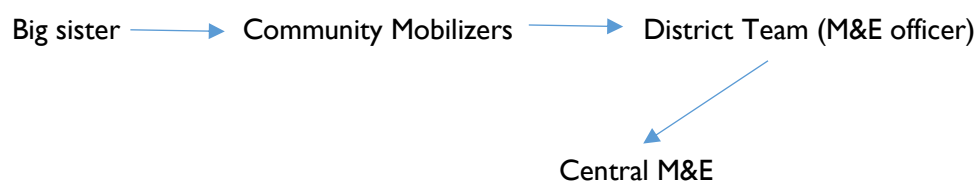
Characteristic	Proportion of baseline sample (%)	Source
Single orphans	5.85	Girls survey
Double orphans	0.38	Girls survey
Living without both parents	2.90	HH survey
Living in female headed household	52.41	HH survey
Married	4.50	Girls survey
Mother under 18	1.30	Girls survey
Mother under 16	0.20	Girls survey
Difficult to afford for girl to go to school	50.50	HH survey
Household doesn't own land for themselves	15.40	HH survey
Material of the roof (material as defined by evaluator)		
<i>Mud</i>	<i>16.2</i>	<i>HH survey</i>
<i>Thatch</i>	<i>17.1</i>	<i>HH survey</i>
<i>Wood</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>HH survey</i>
<i>Tin/Iron sheets</i>	<i>23.9</i>	<i>HH survey</i>
<i>Cement/concrete</i>	<i>18.5</i>	<i>HH survey</i>
<i>Roofing tiles</i>	<i>17.7</i>	<i>HH survey</i>
Household unable to meet basic needs	42.20	HH survey
Gone to sleep hungry for many days in past year	3.50	HH survey
Lol different from mother tongue	92.30	HH survey
Girl doesn't speak Lol	69.90	HH survey
HoH has no education	19.50	HH survey
Primary caregiver has no education	75.50	HH survey
Didn't get support to stay in education and do well (%)	55.50	HH survey
Sufficient time to study: High chore burden (evaluator to specify threshold, %)	93.30	HH survey



## Annex 5: Beneficiaries table (Project mapping data)

Out of 2525 direct beneficiaries, majority of beneficiaries are in the age range from 12-16 years of age. As mentioned in the baseline report, project is primarily working on 10-19 years of age. So, there are not any direct beneficiaries age below 10 and above 19 years. All the OOS marginalized girls and children with disability follow the educational marginalized as they are never been to school or drop out from school. Moreover, all the girls are from ethnic minority and hard to reach community.

**Methodology of data collection:** Project prepares database of each bridge classes, preparatory classes and Children with disability by recording the attendance of bridge classes, preparatory classes and head count of OOS children with disability. District team were oriented on database to collect the data of direct beneficiaries and collected by verifying from the attendance register. Added to this, OOS girls were verified by connecting with the local government and school. Validation and reliability of data were measured by cross verifying with birth certificate of direct beneficiaries and parents' citizenship. This brings the reliable data based on age group and OOS. Reporting system of collected data in ENGAGE project are as:



Though in the initial proposal the total number of direct beneficiaries was proposed 2343, after pre-baseline survey and following right based approach of disability, the number got increased to 2525.

### Direct beneficiaries by age

Age	Proportion of cohort   direct beneficiaries (%)	Data source – Project monitoring data, data from sample used in external evaluation or assumption?
Aged <10	N/A	
Aged 10	7.2	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 11	6.1	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 12	12.4	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 13	12.8	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 14	13.5	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 15	16.2	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 16	13.5	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 17	8.8	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 18	6.0	Project Monitoring Data
Aged 19	3.7	Project Monitoring Data

Aged 20 +	N/A	
Unknown		
N = 2525		

ENGAGE project is working on out of school children so there are not any children who are enrolled in formal school. However, after bridge classes, they will either transit in formal school/resource classes or livelihood. Among the total beneficiaries, 56.8% are never been to school and 43.2 % are drop out from school.

### Target groups - by out of school status

Status	Proportion of cohort   direct beneficiaries (%)	Data source – Project monitoring data, data from sample used in external evaluation or assumption?
Never been to formal school	56.8	Project Monitoring Data
Been to formal school, but dropped out	43.2	Project Monitoring Data
Enrolled in formal school	N/A	
N = 2525		

Among the drop out children, 11.3% dropped out from grade 3 while 1.2 % are dropped out from grade 5 above. Those who are dropped out above grade 5 will be transit to livelihood after bridge classes.

### Direct beneficiaries by drop out grade

Level of schooling before dropping out (adapt wording as required)	Proportion of cohort   direct beneficiaries (%)	Data source – Project monitoring data, data from sample used in external evaluation or assumption?
Never been to school	56.8	Project Monitoring Data
Grade 1	4.8	Project Monitoring Data
Grade 2	8.9	Project Monitoring Data
Grade 3	11.3	Project Monitoring Data

Grade 4	7.4	Project Monitoring Data
Grade 5	9.5	Project Monitoring Data
>5	1.2	Project Monitoring Data
N = 2525		

After pre-baseline survey, project conducted technical verification camp with the expert of visual, hearing, physical and learning to verify the data of children with functional limitation. In the verification camp, data were disaggregated based on the types of disability and other functional limitation. Among 2525 direct beneficiaries, 3.73 % are children with severe disability, 2% are children with intellectual disability and 1.58% are children with hearing and visual impairments.

### Other selection criteria

Selection criteria	Proportion of cohort   direct beneficiaries (%)	Data source – Project monitoring data, data from sample used in external evaluation or assumption?
married	2.6	Project monitoring data
Children with Severe Disability	3.73	Project monitoring data
Children with Intellectual	2.01	Project monitoring data
Children with hearing and visual impairments	1.58	Project monitoring data
N = 2525		

Project is continuously coordinating with local government, relevant stakeholders, and religious leaders to smoothly run the project activities. There are indirect beneficiaries who will contribute to enhance success of the project. As a community volunteers and direct contact of direct beneficiaries, 400 big sisters are working in the project. Also, 240 siblings and boys with functional limitation are getting support through preparatory classes, bridge classes, and awareness activities. After bridge classes, project will also work with the in school boys and girls and provide remedial support classes for the struggling students.

### Other beneficiaries

Beneficiary type	Total project number for cohort I	Total number by the end of the project.	Comments (Intervention Received)	Data source – Project monitoring data, data from sample used in
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				external evaluation or assumption?
Boys with functional limitation	240	240	Remedial Support class, Community Awareness activities, assistive devices, PSS	Project Monitoring Data
Total big sisters	400	400	Approx. 33% in each three districts, PSS, Mentoring and Coaching, GBV training	Project Monitoring Data
BEd./Med. students teacher	6	6	18 months each	Project Monitoring Data
Community Mobilizers	18	18	6 in each 3 districts	Project Monitoring Data
Teachers/Educators	309	309	Training on inclusive pedagogy and orientation on appropriate mediums of instruction	Project Monitoring Data
Parents/care givers	2525	2525	Parents/carers of enrolled girls will receive support through linkages with livelihoods programmers' provision of training/assistive devices if their child is disabled, and support to understand the rights of Children with disabilities.	Project Monitoring Data
Community members	1500	1500	Awareness Raising activities	Project Monitoring Data

Duty Bearers	150	150	Duty bearers, including newly elected municipal and district education and livelihood officers, and women and children officers, will be directly involved in consultations	Project Monitoring Data
Service Providers	143	143	Service Providers, including transport, health and social welfare workers, TVET and other livelihood services and district	Project Monitoring Data
Other in-school girls	8040	8040	in 34 targeted schools (Remedial support class)	Project Monitoring Data
Other in-school boys	7320	7320	in 34 targeted schools (Remedial Support class)	Project Monitoring Data

### Comments by external evaluator

Prior to the beneficiary selection, the project had commissioned a pre-baseline study for the mapping of OOS adolescent girls from marginalized communities aged between 10 and 19. The list of girls from the pre-baseline study were verified by the project through the mechanisms of birth certificates or in coordination with the local schools. Although the accuracy of age for the girls who do not have birth certificates can be questioned, there are no other mechanisms to verify age apart from relying on parents and verifying with the schools nearby or other locals which the project has adhered to. Technical verification camps carried out by the project helped in accurately figuring out the girls with disabilities from the list of girls having functional limitation. The project has maintained the database of beneficiary girls by the girls who attended bridge class, preparatory class and the girls who would be attending the vocational skill training. The project is also keeping track of these girls through locally hired big sisters. The beneficiary count relies on project monitoring data rather than assumptions or any other government data as listed in their data source in the sections above. These approaches adopted by the project.