Project Evaluation Report

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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.

Girls' Education Challenge

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Dr. Shailendra Sigdel, Rabina Dhakal and Sajal Mani Dhital

Acknowledgments

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Dr. Shailendra Sigdel

Professional Lead/ Team Leader (External Evaluation of ENGAGE Project) Foundation for Development Management (FDM)

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Abbreviations

AYSRH	Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health
BL	Baseline
CPSP	Child Safe Guarding and Safeguarding Policy
DLS	Daily Living Skills
DTL	Distance Teaching and Learning
EE	External Evaluator
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ENGAGE	Empowering A New Generation of Adolescent Girls through Education in Nepal
ERO	Education Review Office
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FCHVs	Female Community Health Volunteer
FDM	Foundation for Development Management
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FM	Fund Manager
GEC	Girls Education Challenge
GESI	Gender Equity and Social Inclusion
GIEN	Girls and Inclusive Education Network
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IO	Intermediate Outcome
IT	Information Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
LNGB	Leave No Girls Behind
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
ML	Midline
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OOS	Out-of-school
PSS	Personalized Social Support
PTA	Parents-Teachers Association
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VSO	Volunteer Service Organization
WGQCF	Washington Group Questions on Child Functioning
EE	External Evaluator
ENGAGE	Empowering A New Generation of Adolescent Girls through Education in Nepal
ERO	Education Review Office

FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEC	Girls Education Challenge
GIEN	Girls and Inclusive Education Network
KII	Key Informant Interview
LNGB	Leave No Girls Behind
OOS	Out-of-school
PSS	Personalized Social Support
SIP	School Improvement Plan
VSO	Volunteer Service Organization

1. Executive summary

Background

In line with the government policies and priorities, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) has been implementing Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls through Education in Nepal (ENGAGE) project in three districts, seven municipalities and 34 schools of Banke, Parsa and Sarlahi to support marginalized girls and children with disabilities through various interventions such as formal and non-formal education, small scale livelihood skills, teacher capacity development, parental empowerment, developing capacity of local governments in policy planning, data based management and establishment/operationalization of Girls and Inclusive Education Network.   Humanity and Inclusion, is one of the consortium partners leading to support in implementing disability and inclusion related interventions. The project is funded by FCDO from 2018-2022. The general objective of the project is to empower Out of School (OOS) marginalized girls and OOS children with disability to transit from out of school to the formal school/resource class, out of school to the business skills through developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Project intervention

The project primarily aims to improve the basic literacy and numeracy skills of the identified single cohort of 2525 girls over the course of 5 years. Various activities, as outlined below, are being implemented by the project to achieve the expected outcomes.

- Provide basic literacy and numeracy skills to girls through the provision of bridge classes and preparatory classes at the community level. The bridge and preparatory classes also provided skills related to the pre-identified enablers of learning empowerment: training on Financial Literacy, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH), and Self Efficacy. These classes contributed to address the marginalized and disabled children's barriers to education and access and mobility.
- Provide vocational training to girls to transition to safe employment/entrepreneurship. The project also provides in-kind support to the primary actors based on their approved business plan required to initiate their approved business.
- Project has further supported parents through interactive programs and workshops focused on increasing parental support in girls' learning by addressing the barriers related to girls' excessive engagement in household chores.
- Train the formal school teachers in gender-responsive pedagogical approaches.
- Train school head teachers and members from school management committee on effective school improvement plan (SIP) formulation
- Support schools for disability friendly infrastructure. The project also supports resource schools for children with disability to create a disabiledisabilityfriendly school environment e.g. ramp, disability friendly toilet, support IEC materials, Braille provision of learning materials on sign language etc
- Mobilize big sisters for raising awareness among parents and community members and motivate parents for sending girls to schools and entrepreneurship.

- In response to the pandemic, the project had run distance teaching learning (DTL comprising of peer-to-peer education, group discussion and one-to-one coaching through household visit, radio schooling program, video dissemination), and psychosocial support.
- Mentoring and coaching support: Big sisters mentoring to primary actors, and international volunteers' mentoring supports to the schoolteachers to increase the learning skills and entrepreneurship of primary actors.
- Moreover, for the low performance girls, project provided remedial support classes and learning hubs.
- Psychosocial support: Personalized Social Support (PSS) Life skill/livelihood support to the girls
- Parental empowerment: Parenting education, parental engagement, Parents/caregiver support training (Children with disability)

Methodology

VSO contracted Foundation for Development Management for the midline evaluation of the project. The midline evaluation followed a panel approach where the same girls sampled in the baseline evaluation of ENGAGE project were followed up in the midline evaluation. A mixed approach of data collection, comprising quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was used for the evaluation. The midline evaluation comprises of two levels of data collection. External Evaluators (EE) were responsible for the data collection of the same sample of 530 girls was carried over from baseline to the midline. Girl's survey was administered to all 530 girls, likewise, household survey along with Washington Group Question were administered to the primary care givers/household head to 530 household. Learning test was administered to 496[1] girls. In addition to the sample that EE reached, project collected the data for girls with severe and profound disabilities. Since the evaluation could not track all of the girls from the baseline because some of the marginalized girls (especially Muslims girls) had dropped out of the project and some were not available during the data collection period, there was an attrition rate of 21.1%. Out of 2525 direct beneficiaries, 1064 transition to formal schooling, 816 transition to entrepreneurship, 34 girls had chosen vocational training directly, 94 are children with severe and profound disability whose aim is to improve the daily living skills (18 % percent drop out from the project). Major reasons for drop out were Migration, Household chores, Marriage and not willing to study further. To compensate for the attrition, the evaluation team undertook a one-to-one replacement approach which resulted in an additional 112 girls top up the total sample. Apart from quantitative data, qualitative data collection comprised of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII) with various stakeholders in the intervention group. School observation was conducted in 22 schools of Parsa and Sarlahi. Due to the closure of schools in Banke at the time of data collection, the school observation could not be done there, all the other types of data collection were completed in Banke.

Characteristics and Barriers

The midline evaluation measured those barriers which were identified in the baseline. Most of the characteristics of the girls have unchanged from the baseline. Slight variation in the demographic

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[1] *Out of 530 girls surveyed in the baseline, 34 girls had chosen vocational training directly and did not attend the bridge class, hence only 496 girls were assessed for the learning outcome.*

characteristics was observed due to replacement sample, however, the change is not significant. Variation was observed in the household poverty which increased from 42% in the baseline to 53% in the midline. Household poverty, high burden of household chore and language barrier were the major barriers which are pertinent in the midline too.

Learning outcome

The midline evaluation noted a significant improvement in the learning outcome of the girls as compared to the learning level of the girls at the baseline. For instance, the average score in literacy increased from 41.98 at baseline to 83.51 at the midline. Likewise, the numeracy score has increased from 16.22 at baseline to 19.97 at the midline. The relatively lower improvement in numeracy score was because the girls found difficult addition and subtraction sub task as they did not get time to practice the sums at home. The change noted in both literacy and numeracy from baseline to midline was found to be significant at a p-value of less than 0.01 when tested statistically. The findings illustrated that still almost half of the girls (48.4%) scored 0 in the comprehension task and a little less than one third of the girls scored 20% in the same sub-task at the midline. The change appeared small in itself, however, the significance test performed by EE showed that the changes across baseline to midline was statistically significant with a p-values of less than 0.01.

Similarly, from the data collected by the project, it was evident that the girls with disabilities have experienced improvement in their learning. The average EGRA score for children with hearing impairment increased from 10.1 in baseline to 34.08 in midline. Likewise, the average EGRA score for children with visual impairment changed from 15.6 in the baseline to 51 in the midline. In the same manner, the average EGMA score for children with hearing impairment raised from 7 in the baseline to 36.14 in the midline. Furthermore, the average EGMA score for children with visual impairment elevated from 10 in the baseline to 55 in the midline. As for the children with intellectual disability, the basic literacy and numeracy was twice as much as in the baseline. In the same way, for the children with severe and profound disability, almost 50% improvement has been observed in most of functional activities and 36% improvement in intellectual development.

The change in learning outcome was similar across different sub groups. The improvement in the learning scores is contributed by the bridge classes and DTL activities run by the project during the pandemic. The bridge classes and DTL activities have been found highly effective in improving the learning level of the beneficiary girls. However, despite improved learning of girls, they still lacked certain skills like reading small passages in EGRA while subtraction in EGMA. Girls could easily master the lower sub tasks which were relatively easy while they were weak at performing when the sub tasks progressed to higher level of difficulty.

Transition outcome

The project had defined two pathways (either nonformal education to formal schooling; or non-formal education to small scale business) to choose for girls and children with disability depending on their age group and their desire to pursue their dreams. The younger girls (10-14 years of age) were expected to choose learning pathway, meaning, enrolment back to school while the older girls (15-19 years age group) had option of either continue learning or up taking small scale business in their own community. Children with severe and profound disability improved their daily living skills and children with hearing and visual impairment either continued learning and up taking small scale business. EE measured the transition considering the aforementioned transition pathways. The

evaluation showed that overall, 90.4% of the girls were on a successful transition pathway at the time of data collection (i.e. enrolled in school or vocational training). The younger age group had higher rate of transition as compared to the higher age group. Muslim girls had slightly lower transition rate as compared to other ethnicity. Some barriers like restriction in travel among Muslim girls has contributed to the lower transition rate of Muslim girls in transition. The progress in terms of enrolling girls back to school is dueto different parental engagement activities run by the project and mobilization of big sisters as motivators. Despite the encouraging improvement, the girls and their parents have perceived some barriers to successful transition like high burden of household chore, economic condition of parents, employment opportunity and skills found nearby and market access to the products.

Sustainability outcome

In terms of sustainability, the sustainability score achieved by the project increased from 12% at baseline to 45.83% in the midline. The community level sustainability indicators comprising parental attitude had increased from baseline. Learning hub had just been started, and a few of them were functional. Girls and Inclusive Education Network had been formed recently with limited intervention from the project side. For the learning space, all of the three indicators surrounding disability friendly infrastructure, inclusive School Improvement Plan (SIP) and teachers training sustainability were measured through school observation, classroom observation and consultations with teachers and head teachers. It was noted that there has been slight improvement in the disability friendly infrastructure in schools. The project had supported some schools during pandemic for hygiene and sanitation improvement and help make accessible for children with disability through development of RAMP, modification of toilets, capacity building of school teachers and community volunteers on disability friendly environment, development and distribution of different materials (braille and sign languages). SIP had been formulated in 12 schools of Banke and there was an improvement in the inclusiveness, however, the implementation part was poor. Regarding system level sustainability, the database systems were established however not all of them were functional. However, project has a provision to support local government and school in planning process which will further provide a ground for evidence-based planning and programming. Project has been continuously lobbying with the federal government to mainstream the central Education Management Information System (EMIS) ensuring the collection of data base regarding disability and inclusion and their effective use. All the changes observed at community, learning space and system is due to the support the project had provided. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project had been unable to complete the planned activities which affected the sustainability outcome.

Intermediate outcomes

There were five intermediate outcomes (IOs) defined in the log frame which acted as enabling factor for improving the key outcomes. The first IO was improved attendance of the girls. During the baseline, attendance had not been measured as the bridge classes had just begun. In the midline, the attendance rate reached 71%. The second IO was environment for learning which comprised of two main domains. The first one was disability friendly infrastructure which was slightly improved. Another was inclusive SIP sustainability assessment. The SIP formulated in the schools were found to be somewhat inclusive. However, there was minimal representation of parents during designing of SIP. Due to the resource constraint, the effective implementation of SIP had not been possible in the project area under the government leadership and contribution. Another IO was improved teaching

quality. It was measured through learner centered classroom. From the baseline, there was minimal improvement in the indicator. The trained teacher had not been able to follow the learners centered pedagogical approaches due to constraints like large classroom size and higher number of students in the class.

Regarding economic empowerment and household support, the fourth IO, there had been an impressive improvement in the attitude of parents and the level of support provided by them for learning and transition. The parental engagement score had increased from baseline and the qualitative data also suggested that parents are ready to provide support for the learning and transition of girls however, challenges pertaining to restriction to travel still persists the project areas. The final IO, life skills was measured through three domains. Financial Literacy, Girls Self-Efficacy scale and Adolescent and Youth Reproductive and Sexual health were three areas measured under life skills. It was found that the knowledge attitude and skills regarding financial literacy had improved since baseline. However, girls had not yet used their skills as most of them did not have cash in hand. The girls' Self-Efficacy had improved as shown by the quantitative data, however, girls were found to have minimal exercise of the capacity they had. Regarding the adolescent and youth reproductive and sexual health, there had been an impressive improvement in knowledge attitude and practice. The sanitary pad making training had been found useful in transformation of their knowledge base and skill.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Overall, the project has been able to improve learning outcomes of girls through its focused interventions. Even though there were challenges due to COVID-19, project managed to support girls through the mobilization of big sisters and national volunteers. While some of the support activities at system and learning space level were impacted due to the pandemic, other activities were successfully completed and has brought positive impact in the lives of these girls. Girls are still facing the barriers pertaining to high household chore burden and household poverty. Based on the evidence, the midline evaluation has come up with a few recommendations for the project to consider for upcoming intervention. In light of the findings of this evaluation, it has been suggested that the project should focus on coaching classes to girls for further improvement of their learning. Since many girls have also chosen to start their safe profession but are unsure about the market access, it has been advised to bridge the gap between the market and the community for sustaining the profession girls have uptake. In addition to these, considering the barriers that the girls are facing, especially the household chores, project is advised to intensify its parental engagement activities to support girls in household chores and provide more time for their learning. Apart from this, EE has advised the project to capacitate the Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN) and use this network for sustainability of the community level intervention like implementation and operation of the learning hubs.

2. Background to the project

Project context

Nepal's education sector caters for a very diverse group of stakeholders in terms of culture, context and needs. The main implication of this diversity for the education sector is the many different first languages of students. RTI studies suggest that a substantial proportion of students that enroll in grade 1 have a first language other than Nepali and consequently have lower proficiency in Nepali (RTI 2014). These cultural differences are also visible in the operation of a number of traditional schools within the school education sector. The purpose of providing education through traditional schools is to blend people's cultural needs and social values with core school curricula subjects in an integrated way. Also, related to cultural diversity are the different levels of educational attainment among different ethnic groups and castes, and the gender-based disparities in access to and participation in education within these groups. The country's large geographical diversity explains the great variation in the number of children living in school catchment areas ranging from only a few in the high mountains to hundreds in the Terai plains. In terms of the composition of the school going population, about 22% of 4-year-old children are out of pre-school/primary school in Nepal, with no significant difference between girls and boys. Nepal has 6.13 million children (boys 51.1%, girls 48.9%) of age 5 to 12 enrolled in the basic level (grade 1-8), and 1.39 million children (boys 49.2%, girls 50.8%) aged 13 to 16 enrolled in secondary level (grade 9-12) (DoE 2016).

The previous education sector plan, the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) was implemented from 2009 to mid-July 2016. Under this plan there was a five-year School Sector Reform Programme (2009–2014), which was followed by a two-year extension (2014– 2016). The Government of Nepal had developed the follow-on School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) for the seven-year period of mid-July 2016 to mid-July 2023 (BS 2073–2080) in line with Nepal's vision to graduate from the status of a Least Developed Country (LDC) by the year 2022 and to reach the status of the middle-income country's level by 2030. The SSDP continues the government's efforts to ensure access to quality education for all through the Education for All (EFA, 2004-2007) programme, the Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP, 2003-2008), the Community School Support Project (CSSP, 2003-2008), the Teacher Education Project (TEP, 2002-2007) and the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP, 2009-2016). The SSDP aligns with Nepal's international commitment towards the SDGs which were adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, and with the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and the Post-Disaster Recovery Framework. Building upon the lessons learned and the gains made in the sector under the above programmes, the SSDP was designed to enable the school education sector to complete unfinished agenda items and achieve the SDG 4 target of "Ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all". SSDP has been addressing the educational reform and developmental needs of Nepal in the changing context. Education sector reform was necessitated by the changeover to a federal system of governance. This required changes to rules and regulatory frameworks. In addition, development works were needed to improve the quality of education, efficiency and service delivery and to ensure equitable access and participation by reaching out to children and youth from communities and groups with limited access to the education system. This required revisiting development programmes and building the capacity of delivery units and agencies. Thus, in broad terms, the SSDP focuses on the reform and development of the education sector in line with the new constitutional mandate.

In line with the government policy and priorities of ensuring quality free and compulsory basic education to all, VSO Nepal has been working under its Inclusive Education Signature Program and already implemented different projects to support the marginalized girls' education, their learning and transition. In a bid to support the interventions of the government of inclusive education, with a special focus on children with disabilities, VSO has been implementing a project titled Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls through Education in Nepal (ENGAGE) in seven municipalities of Banke, Parsa and Sarlahi, with the funding from Girls' Education Challenge, the flagship programme of DFID (now FCDO) 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 has created 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 primary focus of ENGAGE is to support out of school (OOS) girls with disabilities and marginalized girls from 10-19 years of age with major interventions including 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, considering the need, the project has also been supporting male siblings of the girls within the same age group through other interventions. In addition, the project supports resource classes and assessment centers run by the government to provide better educational opportunities to the girls with disabilities.

The past studies carried out by ENGAGE have identified various barriers to education for marginalized children and children with disabilities. Some of the major barriers were found out to be extreme household poverty, socio-cultural norms, gender biases, low level of awareness regarding rights of people with disabilities, low capacity of education to support OOS children and marginalized girls, non-inclusive pedagogies, non-accessible institutional infrastructure especially to children with disabilities, poor implementation of inclusive education policies and low budget for local implementation of inclusive policies, amongst others. ENGAGE's interventions were primarily based to address the aforementioned barriers to education identified. Despite many gains under the SSDP interventions, some of the areas need to be prioritized more, most notably on quality, learning outcomes of the children, child, gender and disability friendly institutional infrastructures and equal and equitable access to education for all. Whilst significant strides have been made in ensuring access many marginalized groups still lack access to quality education. Large achievements have been made in securing access to education, and it is now necessary to focus more on the quality and efficiency of education provision. It is necessary to address the aforementioned challenges related to inclusive education and the achievement of learning competencies without leaving those behind who have been unable to access education. ENGAGE, therefore, has been supporting in the three districts to balance the limited available resources available as well as completing the agenda and set objectives of the project while promoting inclusive education for all along with livelihood support by identifying suitable track of interventions.

Project Beneficiaries

The primary focus of the project is out of school marginalized girls and girls with disabilities who fall under the age group of 10-19 years. The pre-baseline study identified 2525 girls as the total beneficiary number who represent the out of school marginalized population of girls with and without functional

limitation within the age group 10-19 years. The baseline study provided statistics on the number of beneficiaries segregated under various domains. Among the total girls identified 52% were within age group 10-14 and 48% were within the age group 15-19. In addition, among the total beneficiaries, 57% had never been to school whereas 43% had been to school but dropped out during the baseline evaluation point. With respect to ENGAGE's interventions, the project catered to three major subgroups;

i) girls within ages 10-14 who were only focused on learning interventions
ii) girls within ages 15-19 who could select between learning interventions or interventions directed to their employment or businesses or both
iii) girls with severe disabilities who were provided with the support for performing their daily activities independently.

The girls aged 14 years and below were only directed to learning interventions in line with the government policies. For girls above 14 years of age, Personalized Social support (PSS) approach was adopted which aided in the identification of suitable track of interventions; (a) bridge class to formal schooling, (b) bridge class to choosing livelihood options – business/employment and (c) directly to livelihood options. In addition to the aforementioned intervention subgroups, project has also categorized the beneficiaries under sub-groups like OOS male siblings of the girls within the age group of 10-19 years of age who received learning interventions and other boys with disabilities who fall under the same age category. Moreover, teachers also received professional development training hoping that they would use those skills through child-friendly, gender friendly and inclusive pedagogical practices. This activity was carried out with an aim to envision positive impact among students in the classroom Likewise, teachers have also received capacity development trainings on disability accessibility and disability friendly working environment in the intervention schools. Teachers and bridge class facilitators were also trained on reading and numeracy skills and extracurricular activities to be incorporated in their teaching learning mechanism. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the interventions of the project was on distance teaching learning methods. Apart from these, the project also carried out big sister mentoring and coaching sessions with a focus on education, employment and life skills. Moreover, parents also received parenting education which particularly focused on girls' education, gender-based violence, child protection, AYSRH and employment to the children with disability. National and international volunteers also supported teachers on quality education delivery and ensured inclusiveness in policy.

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	2525	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

	Age	Number of beneficiaries	Major Intervention
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 (23 Hearing Impairment, 17 Visual Impairment)	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

In total, 2525 children 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 1	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	47
15 - 19	53

Table 3: Proposed intervention pathways

Intervention pathway	Which girls follow this pathway?	How many girls follow this pathway for cohort 1?	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?
Formal school	Age between 10-14 years and 15-19 years	1064	Till the project end	Single	N/A	Improves literacy and numeracy	Transition to formal school after bridge class
Entrepreneurship	Age between 15-19 years (After PSS approach)	854	Till the project end	Single	N/A	Increase the financial, self-efficacy and life skills level	After bridge class, they will transit into entrepreneurship 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 receive 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
National Volunteers	Training on Mentoring/coaching, AYSRH, literacy and numeracy training, Gender responsive training	9 (5 Male, 4 Female)
Community Mobilizers	Training on Mentoring/coaching, AYSRH, literacy and numeracy, Gender responsive training, PSS	18 (6 Male, 12 Female)

Group	Interventions received	Total number
Teachers/ Educators	Training on inclusive pedagogy and orientation on appropriate mediums of instruction	309(185 Male, 124 Female)
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, parenting education training.	4120 (2060 Female, 2060 Male)
Community members	Awareness Raising activities	1310
Duty Bearers	Duty bearers, including elected municipal and district education and livelihood officers, and women and children officers, will be directly involved in consultations	314
Service Providers	Service Providers, including transport, health and social welfare workers, TVET and other livelihood services and district	143
Other in-school girls	in 34 targeted schools (Remedial support class)	13365
Other in-school boys	in 34 targeted schools (Remedial Support class)	12816

Theory of Change

The ENGAGE project has set its theory of change aiming to achieve the learning, transition, and sustainability for OOS children with disability and marginalized girls in Banke, Parsa and Sarlahi. They have either transitioned into the formal education and have been enrolled between grades 1-7 and/or have transitioned to the upper grades or have entered into the self or job market along with small scale entrepreneurial skills through livelihood training. Depending on their ability and placement test conducted by the schools, girls have enrolled into different grades. In addition, the project has also envisioned that those girls will also be having relevant knowledge and required skills on AYSRH and use their health and reproductive rights accordingly. The project has also been engaging parents, teachers, community members and government (both local and central) to improve the girls learning, their successful transition and sustainability of the project activities in the intervention areas. 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.

With respect to the aforementioned objectives, ENGAGE's Theory of Change has been designed with an aim to assess the level of impact under three domains; learning, transition and sustainability. Backed up by significant evidences and assumptions, the project outcomes have been broadly categorized under five headings namely; (i) Improved attendance of direct beneficiaries enrolled in formal and informal education, (ii) Increased entrepreneurship/livelihood and life skills of direct beneficiaries, (iii) Improved teaching quality, (iv) Improved inclusive learning environment and (v) Well functionalized systems and structures. Based on these outcomes various interventions have been planned, designed and implemented accordingly in all the three intervention districts; Parsa, Sarlahi and Banke.

ENGAGE's Theory of Change incorporated essentially comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change was expected to happen considering a particular context. It explained how the activities undertaken by an intervention contributed to a chain of results that lead to the intended or observed impacts. It undoubtedly aided in developing better key evaluation questions, identifying key indicators for monitoring, identifying gaps and prioritizing necessary data collection, and providing a structure for data analysis and reporting. The outcomes framework provided the basis for what type of activity or intervention lead to the outcomes identified as preconditions for achieving the ultimate goal. Likewise, with the help of the ToC, the precise link between activities and the achievement of the long-term goals were fully understood which lead to better planning of the activities linked to a detailed understanding of how change actually took place. Moreover, it also lead to better evaluation, as it was possible to measure progress towards the achievement of longer-term goals that might have been beyond the identification of program outputs. ENGAGE's ToC that follows, discusses in detail the outcomes, outputs, key interventions, evidence and assumptions and the barriers identified.

Impact

Learning	Transition	Sustainability

Evidence & Assumptions

A combination of peer support, bridge classes, teacher/institutional training and family/community engagement has a distinctly positive correlation with girls' learning. In VSO's Sisters for Sisters project, the EGRA and EGMA scores during the endline evaluation were consistently higher across all the grades as compared to the midline.

Mentoring and improved attendance were found to directly correlate in VSO Nepal's Sisters for Sisters 2016 midline report; Poverty, not willing to study and household responsibilities are found major causes and consequence of girls dropping out from school (results from pre-baseline study of ENGAGE project). Also, child marriage is another cause of dropping out from school. Study shows, Married girls in Nepal are 10 times more likely to drop out than their unmarried peers (MICS survey 2014, Nepal). Out of the total female population (Parsa-288659, Sarlahi-379973 and Banke-247058) age at first marriage female before 19 years age are Parsa-131899, Sarlahi-171231 and Banke-107560 (Census-2011).

Background to the project

On the **demand** side girls, parents, communities and community leaders have low awareness of their rights and capacity to hold local government and schools to account for inclusive social services. To sustain its impact, ENGAGE will strengthen circular accountability. On the **supply** side, Nepal's public education is characterised by strong policies and weak implementation.

Outcome

- Improved attendance of direct beneficiaries enrolled in formal and informal education
- Increased entrepreneurship/livelihood and life skills of direct beneficiaries
- Improved teaching quality
- Improved inclusive learning environment
- Well functionalized systems and Structures

Output

- Transition to formal school and sustainable livelihood
- Quality Learning
- Inclusive Learning Environment
- System Strengthening, Policy Advocacy and Sustainability

Key Intervention

- Set up girls livelihoods transition fund (micro-grants)
- Preparatory class to children with hearing and visual impairment
- Awareness Raising Activities
- Preparatory and Bridge classes
- Collaboration with local government to implement the school reopening guideline
- Printing of IEC Materials in CP, GBV, AYSRH, Disability Inclusion
- Sanitary Pad making Training Audio Visual Documentation

- Remedial support classes
- Reading and Numeracy Skills and Extracurricular activities to teachers and facilitators
- Capacity development training on disability accessibility and disabled friendly working environment
- Distance Teaching Learning Methods
- Big Sisters Mentoring and Coaching

- Assistive Devices / mobility aids to Children with Disability
- CRM orientation to the teachers and students
- Gender-Child-Disability responsive Pedagogy Training
- Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) Training to teachers
- Orientation to Partners on Child Protection, Safeguarding and GESI
- Parenting Education and Learning Sharing
- Homes Modification and Physical Rehabilitation Therapy (PRT)

- Capacity Building of Girls and inclusive Education Network (GIEN)
- Province and Federal level policy dialogue for GIEN
- Training on Climate Change and Women Empowerment at Municipality Level
- Formation of Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN) at Provincial Level
- WGQs screening at schools
- Support SIP implementation and update of GESI, disability friendly school environment
- Support municipalities offices on education planning and policies

Assumptions

Ultra-poor families need economic support to be able to retain their girls in school; Communities need to understand and change their behaviour relating to AYSRHR to support girls' education; Communities need to be made aware of rights of OOSM girls and girls with disabilities; Families of girls with disabilities need referral and training to be able to support their daughter's education
School will be open after the COVID pandemic and girls will regular access to school.

Girls and their parents want a safe environment for learning; The Resource Classes and trained Resource Persons available for girls with disabilities are too few for the need and many girls miss out on opportunities; Many children with hidden disabilities are not accommodated for in classrooms and their learning and transition is negatively affected as a result; Marginalised girls and girls with disabilities are less likely to attend school if adequate infrastructure is not in place (i.e WASH facilities for MHM; disabled access classrooms)

Due to federalisation, local government bodies can now make budget decisions to uphold existing national inclusive education policies

Barriers

- 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
- Low capacity of educators to support OOS and marginalised girls
- Curriculum and teaching methodology is 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
- Inadequate budget for local implementation of inclusive policies
- Transportation facilities available to school

3. Midline evaluation approach and methodology

Evaluation Purpose(s) and evaluation questions

The theory of change of ENGAGE has made assertions that the empowerment of the marginalized out of schoolgirls and the children 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 midline evaluation are outlined below.

i.   Explore and analyze the impact of GEC funding on transition of highly marginalized girls of the areas in which project operates and map the situation of project beneficiaries during the midline stage of the project

ii.   Generate the midline values for the indicators to inform target setting for the project and allow comparisons between baseline and midline 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

In the light of the COVID-19 and disruption of predesigned project activities, following questions were added in the evaluation questions.

i.   Was ENGAGE successfully designed and implemented? How flexible was ENGAGE to respond to the COVID-19? How did the project adapt according to the pandemic context (midterm response plan, adaptions strategies, DTL and its implication) and how effective is the adaptions?

ii.   What changes did the ENGAGE funding have on the transition of marginalized OOS girls and those with disabilities through educational interventions and their learning since baseline? What new challenges to learning and transition of girls have emerged due to the COVID-19?

iii.   What changes did the ENGAGE funding have on the transition of marginalized OOS girls and those with disabilities in small scale business and livelihood?

iv.   How sustainable were the activities implemented by the ENGAGE and was the program successful in leveraging additional interest and investment? In the 'new normal (COVID and Post COVID)' context, how the project engaged stakeholders in ownership and sustaining the project activities implemented by ENGAGE project?

v.   What were the unintended outcomes of the project, if any?

vi.   What works to facilitate the transition of marginalized OOS girls and those with disabilities through skill development interventions and increase their employability?

vii.   What impact did the ENGAGE project has in implementing the designed activities during COVID and Post COVID period?

viii.   What changes in the activities (if any) are required for the remaining period of program implementation?

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 contributed by 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.

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 midline evaluation. While quantitative tools provided a numerical measurement of the assessments during the midterm 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.

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. MEL framework of ENGAGE 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 midline evaluation, current level of parental engagement has been assessed. Although, girls have been enrolled in the school's post bridge class, COVID-19 has affected the regular physical schooling in all the project intervention areas. The relationship between parental engagement and the tendency of girls going to school was assessed based on the willingness and actions taken by parents with respect to investment in their children's education, knowledge, attitude and perception towards girls education, leveraging girls from household chores and sending them to bridge classes, amongst others. The qualitative findings have assessed the attitude of parents towards education and employment of girls. 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 were also found relevant to assess in the midline evaluation.

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 children with disabilities by the project by VSO and HI and separately piloted during the baseline. The same tools with revised subtasks with similar rigor were used in the midline evaluation. EGRA and EGMA tools verified by the Education Review Office (ERO) informed the learning levels in the midline for girls who have attended the bridge class. Also, EGRA and EGMA were specifically designed and adapted to be administered with the children with disabilities.

Evaluation team had provided attention to ensure representativeness in terms of ethnicity and age while selecting the sample during the baseline. As the sample was calculated to be representative of the actual target population, girls across different age groups were represented in the sample. The same cohort of girls were tracked during the midline evaluation and were administered with Girls' Survey and EGRA and EGMA. The parents of those girls were administered with the household survey questionnaire.

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 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 same set of Washington Group Module on Child Functioning consisting of 24 questions in household during the baseline evaluation. The same module was employed during the midline evaluation. The project team had already carried out the detailed orientation on the long set of questions to EE team during the baseline evaluation. The EE was well equipped in administering the WGQCF. The trained external evaluators carried out the training for enumerators in the midline study. Most of the enumerators were selected from the 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 addressed 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 entailed the girls who have checked in either "cannot do at all", "a lot of difficulty" and "some difficulty".

The project had supported the children 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 tested by the project team. This learning test (EGRA) 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 enumerators on EGRA and EGMA and also the other tool developed for intellectual and severe disability. Adaptations on the tools suited to the local context were made accordingly.

Evaluation adherence to log frame and MEL framework

The midline evaluation has been guided by the logframe and MEL framework. There were no changes in the sample size since the same cohort of girls were tracked during the midline evaluation. However, attrition and replacement were the factors in consideration while tracing the same cohort of girls in the project intervention areas.

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 midline 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 (CPSP):** 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 those 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.

- **Safety protocols:** Prior to the data collection, the evaluation team, in close coordination with the project team first ensured that the girls and household to be contacted were not showing up any symptoms of COVID-19 to prevent further transmission of the disease. The evaluation team used mask and sanitizer at all times and maintained proper distancing while interacting with the beneficiary girls and the primary care givers.

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

Quantitative Evaluation Methodology

Quantitative Evaluation Tools

Tool Name	Relevant indicator(s)
EGRA	Outcome 1: Learning Literacy
EGMA	Outcome 1: Learning Numeracy
Girls survey	Outcome 2: Transition IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls
Household survey	Outcome 2: Transition IO3: Increased parental support to girls education and employment or business
School Observation	IO4: Improved teaching quality (Teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)
SIP Assessment	IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school
Disability Friendly Infrastructure Assessment	IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school

Enumerators

Local enumerators were selected in consultation with the partner NGOs in all the three districts, Parsa, Sarlahi and Banke. The criteria for enumerator selection was finalized by FDM. The enumerators were selected from FDM's pool/roster of local enumerators on field. Some of the enumerators who were mobilized during the baseline were mobilized in the midline 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 midline study and its importance for the project. The event provided an in-depth knowledge about the questions, including 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 primarily carried out by female enumerators while school observations were carried out by male enumerators.

The training covered the following areas:

Day 1	• Introduction of the project
	• Introduction of the implementing partners
	• Introduction of the external evaluator
	• Objectives of the midline study
	• Comprehensive overview of the midline questionnaires
	• Administering girls survey
	• Administering classroom observation, SIP assessment and disability friendly infrastructure
Day 2	• Guidelines on disability sensitivity – Washington Group of Questions
	• Administering household survey
	• Administering EGRA and EGMA tests
Day 3	• Guidelines on Child Protection/Sensitivity
	• FDM's enumerators guidelines
	• Trial Survey
	• Feedback
	• Team formation and field planning
	• Wrap up and final instructions

Quantitative Data Collection

Timing and duration of the quantitative data collection

All the quantitative data collection was done simultaneously in all the three districts- Parsa, Sarlahi and Banke. However, due to travel restrictions and lockdown in Banke because of rise in COVID-19 cases, the data collection halted then. The data collection was started in Banke once the lockdown was lifted and the travel restrictions were eased.

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.

Quantitative data cleaning and storage

The midline data for girls and household surveys were collected 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 3: 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 4: Checking for coding errors while data is arranged in ascending/descending order.

Step 5: Checking the variable description and ensuring that the 'measure' is correct (nominal, ordinal or scale)

Step 6: 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.

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 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 aged 10-14
- Girls aged 15-19
- Girls with different ethnic background
- Girls from poor household
- Girls whose mother tongue is different from the language of instruction at schools
- Children with severe and profound disabilities
- Children with intellectual disabilities
- Children with visual impairment
- Children with hearing impairment
- Girls with functional limitation

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 learning assessment tools were used during the baseline evaluation as well. Both the comprehensive learning assessment tools have different levels of difficulty of the subtasks with the difficulty level increasing following each subtask. During the

baseline evaluation, 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. The tools were also piloted and revised accordingly. 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. Three different sets were designed for three evaluation points; baseline, midline and endline. The EGRA and EGMA tools designed for midline were administered to the sample girls in the project intervention areas. The learning assessment tool for children with disabilities were administered by the project itself.

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

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)	SUBTASK	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)
Comprehension: 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	Number identification: 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.
Letter identification: 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	Larger number identification: 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.
Symbol identification: 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	Missing number identification: 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.
Word identification: 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	Addition and subtraction: 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.
Reading and comprehension: 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	Word problem: 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 83 children with severe disability. Before conducting the assessment for baseline, HI and VSO team oriented the enumerators project team including sign language interpreter and braille 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. Before administering the test to girls with visual impairments, it was verified with the national volunteer class for its suitability to the local context. Enumerators collected the data from home visit and resource class. For children with hearing impairments, the project hired external enumerators 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 midline 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 staff 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.

Quantitative sample selection

Out of the total beneficiary population 2524 identified by the project, FDM retained the same sample size as achieved during the baseline. The baseline sample size retained during the midline, as presented below, followed the GEC recommended criteria of 95% confidence level, 80% power and 30% attrition buffer. 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.

Tool name	Sample achieved in Baseline	Midline evaluation sample (Based on sample achieved during baseline)	Remarks on why the sample achieved in midline is different than baseline
Learning tests (EGRA and EGMA)	496	496 (10-14) – 254 (15-19) – 242 Children with disability (some difficulty as well as lot of difficulty in at least one of the domains in WG questions within both age-groups) – 225	NA
Girls survey	530	530	NA
Household survey	529	530	NA
SIP assessment	30	22	No school observation could be done in Banke district due to closure of schools
Disability infrastructure assessment	30	22	No school observation could be done in Banke district due to closure of schools
Classroom observation tool	26	22	No school observation could be done in Banke district due to closure of schools

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. The following tables discuss 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. Table 5 discusses the sample of girls by age and 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 5.5% girls who were stated to have at least "a lot of difficulty" in either of the difficulty domains outlined.

Table 5: Sample breakdown by intervention pathways

Intervention pathway	Sample proportion of intervention group
Girls within age group (10-14) who will enroll into formal education after bridge class	~~31.7~~30
Girls within age group (15-19) who will either enroll into formal education or skill development training and employment	~~68.3~~70
Source: Girls survey	
N=530	

Table 6: Sample breakdown by regions

District	Sample proportion of intervention group
Sarlahi	31.1
Parsa	33.4
Banke	35.5
Source: Girls survey	
N= 530	

The mean age of sample girl in midline sample was 15 years with most of the girls being 17 years of age (19.6%) as shown by Table 7. The major difference in the sample composition by age is caused by girls' age growth from baseline to midline and due to the attrition of the sample. While one-to-one replacement strategy was used, the two-age group 10-14 and 15-19 was tried to match rather than the exact age of the girls. Similarly, some differences have also been noted in the sample representation of girls with disability which might also have happened due to the top up sample.

Table 7 Sample breakdown by age

Age	Sample proportion of intervention group BL	Sample proportion of intervention group ML
Aged <10	0	0

Age	Sample proportion of intervention group BL	Sample proportion of intervention group ML
Aged 10	6.98	0.6
Aged 11	6.23	0.8
Aged 12	12.45	6.6
Aged 13	13.58	8.9
Aged 14	11.89	13.2
Aged 15	17.92	16.2
Aged 16	12.45	14.3
Aged 17	8.11	19.6
Aged 18	5.85	7.4
Aged 19	4.34	7.2
Aged 20+	0	5.3
Unknown	0.19	-
Source: Girls survey		
N= 530		

Table 8 : Sample breakdown by disability (Girls who have at least a lot of difficulty)

Domain of difficulty	Sample proportion BL	Sample proportion ML
Seeing	0.75	0.00
Hearing	0.94	0.2
Walking	0.75	1.9
Self-care	0.00	0.6
Communication	0.75	1.3
Learning	0.94	2.6
Remembering	1.89	2.8
Concentrating	2.26	2.1
Accepting change	0.94	1.3
Controlling behavior	1.70	1.7
Making friends	0.94	1.5
Anxiety	1.32	1.3
Depression	0.75	1.5
Source: Household survey		
N= 519		

Challenges in midline data collection and limitations of the evaluation design

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions imposed by the government affected the quantitative data collection in Banke district. Quantitative data collection had to be halted when the government imposed strict travel restrictions in the district due to rise in the COVID-19 cases. Only after the government lifted lockdown and travel restrictions, quantitative data collection resumed. While some of the marginalized girls especially muslims had dropped out of the project, there was an attrition rate of 21%. A one-to-one replacement strategy was applied to compensate the lost sample. Hence, a total of 112 girls were added as a top up sample to the original sample.

Cohort group	Baseline sample (n)	Midline sample (total) (n)	Midline (recontacted) (n)	Midline attrition (%)
[Cohort 2]	530	530	418	21.13%

Qualitative evaluation methodology

Qualitative data collection tools

Table 9: Qualitative tools

Tool name	Relevant indicator(s)
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
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 and employment or business
FGD with big sisters	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
FGD with in school girls	Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy Outcome 2: Transition

Tool name	Relevant indicator(s)
	IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business
KII with teachers	Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy Outcome 2: Transition IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy) IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school
KII with head teachers	Outcome 2: Transition IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy) IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school Sustainability: Schools scoring acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in teacher training sustainability assessment Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment

KII with GIEN representative	Outcome 1: Learning
	
	   Literacy and Numeracy
	
	Outcome 2: Transition
	
	IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business
	
	IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school
	
	Sustainability:
	
	   Sustainability of project interventions

KII with Municipal Education Official	Outcome 1: Learning Literacy and numeracy Outcome 2: Transition IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy) IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school Sustainability: Schools scoring acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in teacher training sustainability assessment Schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment

Tool name	Relevant indicator(s)
	Municipality having functional database system with disability and marginalized girls' and can evidence using it for girls' education planning
KII with bridge class facilitators	Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy and numeracy Outcome 2: Transition IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business

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.

The girls aged 10-14 and 15-19 were consulted in two different groups from the project intervention areas. Parents from the same locality were interviewed. Bridge class facilitators were also interviewed accordingly. Furthermore, the potential schools from the same locality in which the girls were enrolled into were mapped and visited. Teachers and head teachers 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 10 Qualitative sample size and composition

Tool (used for which outcome and IO indicator)	Beneficiary group	Sample size
FGD Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy Outcome 1: Learning - Numeracy Outcome 2: Transition IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls	Girls who have transitioned to school Girls who have transitioned vocational training Big Sisters	Girls(10-14) = 7 [1 per municipality] Girls (15-19) = 7 [1 per municipality] Big Sisters = 7 [1 per municipality] Parents/Primary caregivers = 7 [1 per municipality]

Tool (used for which outcome and IO indicator)	Beneficiary group	Sample size
IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy)	Parents/Primary Caregivers In school girls	In school girls = 7[1 per municipality]
KII Outcome 1: Learning - Literacy Outcome 1: Learning - Numeracy Outcome 2: Transition IO2: Increased life skills of OOS disabled and marginalized girls IO4: Improved teaching quality (teachers adopt child safeguarding practice and gender responsive pedagogy) IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school	Girls and Inclusive Education Network	Municipal Education Officers = 7 [2 each from Parsa and Sarlahi and 3 from Banke] Teachers = 14 [2 per municipality] Head Teachers = 7 [1 per municipality] Bridge Class Facilitators = 7 [1 per municipality] Girls and inclusive education network= 7 [1 per municipality]

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.

Qualitative data collection

The midline 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 consultations were 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.

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 two-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.

Challenges in midline 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. 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, FGDs were carried out by researchers from the locality who spoke and understood the local language.

4. Key characteristic subgroups and barriers analysis

The project had defined major barriers to learning in its ToC. On the basis of the ToC, EE had measured the characteristics and barriers in the baseline. The characteristics that were defined during baseline were taken as reference for analysis and comparison in the midline too. The changes in the characteristics defined in the baseline has been presented in Table 11

Characteristics

Table 11: Characteristic group in educational marginalization

Characteristic	Baseline sample proportion	Midline sample proportion	Variable Name and Source
Single orphans (not having either one of the parents)	5.09	6.03	Girls Survey, Intro_6
Double orphans (not having both the parents)	0.37	0.37	Girls Survey, Intro_6
Living without both parents	2.89	3.58	Girls Survey, Intro_6
Married	4.50	5.5	Girls Survey, Intro_5
Mother under 18	1.30	1.9	Girls Survey, Intro_5b
Mother under 16	0.20	0.56	Girls Survey, Intro_5b
Difficult to afford for girl to go to school	50.87	84.48	
Material of the roof (Mud and thatch)	33.71	23.20	HH Survey, HE_3
Poor household (Unable to meet household needs without charity)	42.2	53.2	HH Survey, HE_10
Gone to sleep hungry for many days in past year	3.47	6.6	HH Survey, HE_11a
Non-Nepali speaking household	92.87	91.7	HH Survey, GB_6
Girl doesn't speak language of instruction (LoI)	70.33	59.8	HH Survey, GB_5
Head of household (HoH) has no education	19.46	25.5	HH Survey, HH_21
Primary caregiver has no education	76.11	62.8	HH Survey, HH_20
Muslim household	35.8	38.1	HH Survey, HH_6
Terai Janajati (caste)	25	26.8	HH Survey, HH_5

Characteristic	Baseline sample proportion	Midline sample proportion	Variable Name and Source
Terai Dalit (caste)	22.7	20	HH Survey, HH_5
Girls with functional limitation (at least some difficulty in functional limitation)	37.96	19.2	HH Survey, WG_CF1 to WG_CF24
Children with disability (at least a lot of difficulty in functional limitation)	7.13	5.5	HH Survey, WG_CF1 to WG_CF24

The characteristics of the girls has not much changed from baseline to midline. For instance, most of the girls were still living with their parents. There were 5.09% of girls who were single orphan in the baseline. In the midline, there are 6.03% single orphan girls. The proportion of double orphan girls has unchanged from the baseline. The proportion of girls not living with both the parents has changed from 2.89% in the baseline to 3.58% in the midline. There has been an increase by 1 point percentage in the girls who got married from baseline to midline (4.5% to 5.5%). The girls who reported being mother under the age of 18 has changed from 1.30% in the baseline to 1.90 in the midline and under the age of 16 has changed from 0.20% to 0.56%. The proportion of household stating that it is difficult to afford for girls to go to school has increased from 50.87% to 84.48%. This might have happened because of the increment in the proportion of household wo are poor. The proportion of household reporting poor increased from 42.2% in the baseline to 53.2% in the midline. There were 74.9% of the household who reported that their ability to earn household income has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Among those, 70.9% reported that there was a decrease in their income. This fact is in itself explanatory for the increment in the poverty of the girls' household.

Even though Nepali is national language, most of the household in the Terai region do not seem to speak Nepali. The study showed that there was no change in the Nepali speaking household as there were 92.8% in the baseline and 91.7% in the midline who did not speak Nepali at all. A decrease by 10% was noted in the proportion of girls who do not speak language of instruction in the sample. There were 70.33% of such girls in the baseline while 59.8% in the midline. While the actual reason of how girls' language ability changed was not exactly measured in the evaluation, it can be assumed that the literacy curriculum was in Nepali and the significant improvement in literacy score (discussed below in the key outcome section) might have helped in improving their speaking ability in Nepali.

Some changes in the education of household head and primary care giver have been noted which might be because of the change in the sample proportion. There was slight variation in the representation of different ethnic background of the respondent. For example, girls from Muslim community were 35.8% in the baseline whereas 38.1% in the midline, from Terai Janajati there were 25% and 26.8% of the girls from baseline and midline respectively. The representation from Terai Dalit decreased from 22.7% in the baseline to 20% in the midline. The slight variation in the ethnic representation were due to the replacement sample caused by attrition of girls.

As in the baseline, most of the primary care givers were women (78.5%) and among the primary care givers, 67.7% were mothers. The primary source of household income was Agriculture (41%) followed by wage labor (38.7%) in the midline.

Washington Group of Questions (WGQ) were administered to the primary caregivers to understand the functional limitation of the girls. The household reporting that the girls have at least some difficulties in functional limitation decreased from 37.96% in the baseline to 19.2% in the midline. While the exact reason behind change in the functional limitation was not explored during the data collection, it can be argued that project intervention might have helped girls improve in some of the domains like making friends, remembering, experiencing anxiety/depression, learning and so on. Also, the parents' perception towards girls' limitation in the domain of learning, remembering, making friends, accepting change might have changed after the girls enrolled in the bridge class. Likewise, the household reporting a lot of difficulty in functional limitation in girls was 7.13% in the baseline and 5.5% in the midline.

Barriers

The barriers identified by the project in ToC were measured in the baseline and based on the findings of baseline, the barriers to education were updated in the ToC. As per the updated ToC, the following barriers were measured at midline.

- *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*
- *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*
- *Inadequate budget for local implementation of inclusive policies*
- *Transportation facilities available to school*

Among the aforementioned barriers, some of them have been measured quantitatively while other have been measured qualitatively. Table 12 below presents the barriers that were measured quantitatively. The changes in the barriers have been presented through baseline to midline.

Table 12: Barriers

Barriers	Percentage		
Extreme household poverty	**BL**	**ML**	
Gone to sleep at night feeling hungry many days	3.47%(n=519)	6.7% (n=530)	HH Survey, HE_10
Gone without enough clean water for home use	9.06%(n=519)	10.3%(n=530)	
Gone without medicines or medical treatment	7.51%(n=519)	13.4%(n=530)	
Gone without cash income	13.10%(n=519)	29.8%(n=530)	

Barriers	Percentage		
Unable to meet basic needs without charity	42.20%(n=519)	53.2%(n=530)	
Parents reported difficulty to afford for girls to go to school	50.87(n=519)	84.48%(n=530)	
Low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities	**BL**	**ML**	
HHs that think children with disability do not have right to education even though they are not in school	0.77%(n=519)	0.6%(n=530)	HH Survey, PA_3
HHs that think children with disability do not have right to employment	6.17%(n=519)	2.1%(n=530)	HH Survey, PA_6
Violence in and on the way to school	**BL**	**ML**	
Parents who think journey to and from school is unsafe because there might be harassment by other children	7.84% (n=51)	8.7% (n=57)	HH Survey, EQ_6c.7
Parents who think journey to and from school is unsafe because there might be harassment by adults	3.92% (n=51)	3.5% (n=57)	HH Survey, EQ_6c.8
Girls who have never attended school stating it is unsafe to travel to and from school	1.23% (n=244)	2.58% (n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.3
Girls who have never attended school stating it is unsafe to be in school	2.05% (n=244)	1.7% (n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.4
Girls who have never attended school stating teachers mistreat at school	1.23%(n=244)	0.86% (n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.11
School drop-out girls stating it is unsafe to travel to and from school	2.10%(n=286)	3.17% (n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.3
School drop-out girls stating it is unsafe to be in school	3.15%(n=286)	3.96% (n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.4
School drop-out girls stating it teachers mistreat at school	1.40%(n=286)	1.58% (n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.11
Parents who think that their children may be physically harmed or teased at school or on the way to/ from school	22.54% (n=519)	15.8% (n=530)	HH_Survey, PA_14a
Low capacity of educators to support OOS and marginalized girls	**BL**	**ML**	
Parents who stated that the girl is not enrolled in education because teachers do not know how to teach a child like her	2.10%(n=519)	Not measured in midline	
Girls who have never attended school stating teachers do not know how to teach	1.20%(n=244)	0.86% (n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.10

Barriers	Percentage		
School drop-out girls stating teachers do not know how to teach	2.80%(n=286)	0.79% (n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.10
Curriculum and teaching methodology are not inclusive	**BL**	**ML**	
Parents who think school does not meet the physical or learning needs of the child	24.90%(n=519)	Not measured in midline	
Parents who said the girl is currently out of school because she needs special services or assistances such as speech therapy	1%(n=519)	Not measured in midline	
Parents who said the girl is currently out of school because she needs assistive device/ technology such as braille textbook	0.40%(n=519)	Not measured in midline	
Parents who said the girl is currently out of school because the school does not have a program that meets her learning needs	1.20%(n=519)	Not measured in midline	
School drop-out girls stating special services or assistances such as speech therapy are not available at school	0.30%(n=286)	2%(n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.8
School drop-out girls stating that assistive device/ technology such as braille textbook are not available at school	0%(n=286)	0%(n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.9
School drop-out girls stating that school does not have a program that meets their learning needs	0.70%(n=286)	2%(n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.15
Girls who have never attended school stating special services or assistances such as speech therapy are not available at school	2.90%(n=244)	3%(n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.8
Girls who have never attended school stating that assistive device/ technology such as braille textbook are not available at school	0%(n=244)	1%(n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.9
Girls who have never attended school stating that school does not have a program that meets their learning needs	0.40%(n=244)	0%(n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.15
Lack of institutional screening and support for girls with disabilities	**BL**	**ML**	
Parents who said the girl is not enrolled in school because she was refused entry into the school	0.20%(n=519)	Not measured in midline	
School drop-out girls stating she was refused entry into the school	0%(n=286)	1%(n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.12
Girls who have never attended school stating they were refused entry into the school	0.40%(n=244)	0%(n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.12
Institutional infrastructure is not accessible or inclusive	**BL**	**ML**	

Barriers	Percentage		
Parents who said the girl is not enrolled in education because she cannot move around the school or classroom	1%(n=519)	Not measured in midline	
Parents who said the girl is not enrolled in education because she cannot use the toilet at school	0%(n=519)	Not measured in midline	
Girls who said they dropped out of school because they could not move around the school or classroom	0.30%(n=286)	1 (n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.13
Girls who said they dropped out of school because they could not use toilet at school	0%(n=286)	0(n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.14
Girls who have never attended school stating they cannot move around the school or classroom	0%(n=244)	0(n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.13
Girls who have never attended school stating they cannot use the toilet at school	0%(n=244)	0(n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.14
Transportation facilities available to school	**BL**	**ML**	
Parents who said girls are not enrolled in education because transportation facilities to/ from school are inadequate	1.20% (n=519)	Not measured in midline	
Girls who said they dropped out of school because transport services are inadequate	3.50%(n=286)	5%(n=126)	Girls Survey, GH_1c.7
Girls who have never attended school stating transport services are inadequate	2%(n=244)	6%(n=116)	Girls Survey, GH_1d.7

Poverty

In the baseline, poverty had emerged as the most prominent barrier to learning and transition of girl which puts the girls at the risk of dropping out of school and also discontinue the profession, they are involved in. It has been pertinent in the midline too. While 50.87% households had reported difficulty to afford for girls to go to school in the baseline, 84.48% of the household reported difficulty to afford for girls to go to school in the midline. Likewise, the household who were identified as the household who were struggling to meet the basic needs without external support has increased by 11% from baseline. Similarly, there was an increase in the proportion of household who reported spending days without cash income from baseline to midline. One of the many reasons in the increased poverty indicators was the financial instability caused by the pandemic where 70.09% of the household were affected negatively in their income. Due to the pandemic, there was a decline in the source of income generated from foreign employment (from 11.0% at baseline to 5.1% in the midline). Likewise, wage labor decreased from 43.2% in the baseline to 3.7% in the midline. The decrease in the income of migrant workers could be due to the fact that the workers had to return from foreign land after the advent of pandemic. This indicated that the 5% of the former migrant workers who lost their jobs possibly didn't contribute on the household income. Likewise, the wage laborers had difficulty in finding daily work that could have helped in gathering some income in the time of crisis. During the qualitative consultation, it was unveiled that due to poverty, girls and boys are forced to drop out early from school. It was also revealed that due to poverty, girls and boys are married early which causes

them to drop out from school. Moreover, the perception of parents is that there is no need of educating boys and girls to higher grade. Primary level is enough for boys and they do not see opportunity of getting better jobs even after completing higher education. For girls, they had the pre-existing norms that eventually they will get married and will take care of the household chores of their in-laws' family, hence there is no need to educate them to higher level of education.

> *We are poor and can't afford to send our boys and girls to school.*
> *As soon as our son complete primary level of schooling, we ask*
> *them to leave school and start earning for the family. We ask girls*
> *to take care of the household chores so that we can go to work.*
> *-a parent from Parsa*

Socio-cultural norms, gender biases and unequal power relations

High chore burden

Engagement of girls in the household chore was identified as one of the other remarkable barriers for girls in the project areas. In the midline too, household chore has emerged as an important barrier to learning and transition of the girls. It was reported by the girls that 88.5% of them were engaged in performing their household responsibilities for more than 4 hours a day. Even though the figure has decreased from the baseline value of 93.3%, the proportion of girls being engaged in household chores is still high. The engagement in household was unchanged during the pandemic/lockdown where 88.1% of the girls were engaged for quarter or more part of their day doing household chores. Interestingly, parents have not perceived household chores as barrier to learning. As compared to baseline value of 18.3% households attributing household chores as the sole reason behind girls being out of school, only 2.9% have attributed it as a reason in the midline. Similarly, 41.04% household had stated that it is partially the reason in the baseline while 21.2% of the household stated that household chore is the partial reason for girls being drop out of school in the midline. This shows that the parents' perception regarding household chore being one of the reasons for girls being out of school has changed over time. The fact that girls were able to manage the time for school even after completing their household chores might have influenced their decision. Even though they haven't perceived household chore as a burden and barrier for girls for learning and transition, the findings strongly suggests that their learning score has been affected by the unavailability of time to practice at home due to the works the girls have to perform at home.

The qualitative consultation with different stakeholders validated the fact that household chores still remain as one of the important barriers for girls. The girls have admitted that they have to perform number of household activities so that they could let their parents go out to work in the field. They were found being involved in cooking, cleaning, and looking after younger children at home.

> *I have to look after my younger brother when my mother goes out*
> *for work. This happens most of the days. While looking after him, I*
> *have to do other works like cleaning, cooking and feeding him.*
> *When mother is around, I don't look after him, but I need to cook*
> *and clean. Cooking and cleaning is my regular duty.*
> *- a girl from Sarlahi*

Nevertheless, the engagement of girls in doing household chore is taken as social norm and is not a problem for them at all. The parents along with the girl themselves have taken it normally and accepted this as a core value. The parents specially think that their learning is unaffected by the girls' involvement in household chore.

> *My daughter is good at multi-tasking. She manages to finish her work at home and then go to school. Her engagement at household chore has not affected her studies. -a parent from Banke*

It can be inferred from this socially accepted norm that even if the girls have enrolled back to school, they have to either finish household chore and go to school or come back home to complete the task. This norm exists all over the project areas irrespective of the caste or class. This fact has also been well acknowledged by the teachers, big sisters and bridge class facilitators.

> *Girls usually came late in the class. When I asked why they are late the answer always used to be associated with their engagement in household chore. Some of the girls even skipped classes due to the chores sometimes. -a bridge class facilitator from Sarlahi*

Perception of parents towards education

Parents' attitude towards education of girls as measured quantitatively was found to be high in the baseline. In the midline, the attitude of parents has further improved as revealed by the household survey. From the baseline value of 86.7% for the household who agreed to the statement that it is worthy to invest in girls' education even when the funds are limited, it has increased to 93.8%. While there were 91.14% household who held the perception that girls were likely to use their education as a boy in the baseline, the same indicator went up to 96.4%. Similarly, for employment of girls, 86.5% household had agreed that it is worth investing in employment of girls- be it in business skill training or technical skill training in the baseline while 94.5% have agreed in the midline. Likewise, the households who believed that girls are also likely to use skills for business or employment as a boy changed from 90.75% in the baseline to 97.2% in the midline.

The qualitative discussion in the midline showed that there has certainly some improvement in the parental attitude towards education but not as much as it has been portrayed by the quantitative data. The discussion with parents themselves showed that even though they have started valuing education, they feel reluctant sending girls to school because of their fear that girls might elope on the way to school or that they might get teased by boys on the way to school. It was found that the parents had enrolled their girls to nearby school and did not show positive view if they required to travel long for higher studies.

> *I will send my daughter to the nearby school. When she graduates from that school, we don't have nearby school for her higher studies. I will not let her go alone to another village just for completing her education at this age. A better marry her off. If she is allowed to enrol back to school by her in-laws, then it's okay. -a parent from Parsa*

Apart from the fear of parents, there was another social norm which prevented girls from enrolling to school. The social norms that exist in society is deeply rooted which shapes their practice. The big sisters from the project areas discussed that the parents also feel reluctant to educate their girls to a higher degree because there is a norm that if the higher the education level the groom holds, higher will be the amount of dowry they will have to present to the grooms' family. This means that if girl is educated to higher degree, they will have to find more educated groom which means that they will have to arrange more dowry. This norm limits parents from letting girls get higher education.

Low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities

Even though low awareness of disabilities and rights of people with disabilities had been stated as one of the barriers in the baseline, it does not hold true while coming to the midline. The household survey done with primary care givers/household head revealed that the awareness of parents and attitude towards children with disability was high. While 96.53% of the households had agreed that children with disabilities have right to education in the baseline, all of them agreed to the statement in the midline. Likewise, the household who agreed that children with disabilities have right to employment increased from 90.37% in the baseline to 98.3% in the midline. The qualitative findings have also supported this fact. The parents of the children with different disabilities hoped that their children will have better future if they get educated or are engaged in some sort of profession. Hence, this barrier does not hold true in the midline. EE therefore suggests to remove this barrier from the ToC. However, in the end-line evaluation, it will be good to capture the practice of parental knowledge gain from parenting education to support the children with disability on education and entrepreneurship.

Barriers	Proportion of sample with these characteristics BL	Proportion of sample with these characteristics ML
Household who are unable to meet basic needs	42.2	53.2
High chore burden (Girls have to spend more than quarter of the day doing the household chores)	93.3	88.5
Schools which have not scored the acceptable level in disability friendly infrastructure	96.67	80.1
Language barrier (Girls do not speak LoI)	70.33	59.8

Intersection between key characteristics subgroups and barriers

Characteristics	Barrier
Children with disability	53.2% belong to the poor household
	89.9% have high chore burden
	3.6% household do not agree that children with disability have right to employment

Project's contribution

One of the barriers, parental knowledge on children with disability and entrepreneurship skills was not found significant during the midline evaluation. This barrier will not be analysis during the end-line survey. However, parental practice skills for children with disability on education and entrepreneurship will be analyzed. Secondly, project planned "literacy for all" and "numeracy for all" training to the big sisters and teachers to support the direct beneficiaries on comprehensive reading and numeracy skills.

5. Outcome findings

Learning outcomes

The primary outcome of the project, as defined in its log frame, is to improve the learning of the OOS girls. To achieve this target, the project enrolled the marginalized OOS girls, and children with disability to the bridge class. The bridge classes were conducted for the enrolled girls for about 9 months. In response to the pandemic, when the schools were shut down, project conducted small group DTL, peer-peer education and support and mentoring by big sisters for continuing their learning process. The learning curriculum were designed to meet the basic functional literacy and numeracy level of the project beneficiary girls.

Following the longitudinal design, the girls contacted for measuring the learning during baseline were recontacted during midline to assess the changes in the learning they have acquired so far. EGRA test was used to measure the literacy while EGMA test assessed the numeracy of the sampled girls. A total of 496 girls were assessed for both the literacy and numeracy levels. Table 13 below presents the breakdown of characteristics subgroup of girls taking the learning tests.

Table 13: Breakdown of girls taking learning tests by characteristic subgroup

Categories	Proportion of girls taking tests (N=496)	Proportion of girls taking tests (N=496)	Remarks
	Baseline	Midline	
Age group			
10-14	54.84	31.7	The girls who were 13-14 years old had reached 15-16 age
15-19	45.16	68.3	
Caste group			
Muslim	37.30	38.1	Change in ethnicity caused by the replacement sample
Terai Dalit	22.38	20.0	
Terai Janajati	24.40	26.8	
Poor household	40.73	53.2	
Girls with disabilities (at least 'a lot of difficulty' in one of the domains)	7.26	5.5	
Girls with functional limitation (at least 'some difficulty' in one of the domains)	38.10	19.2	
Non-Nepali speaking household	94.15	91.7	

Literacy

Overall finding

The mean score achieved by girls is presented in Table 14 below. The table shows that the mean score obtained by the girls in the midline is twice as much as the score achieved by girls in the baseline. The changes observed in literacy score from baseline to midline was tested using paired t-test. The result showed that the difference in the score achieved was statistically significant with a p-value of less than 0.01.

Table 14: Literacy overall finding

Learning domain	Baseline	Midline	Difference from baseline to midline	Significance
Mean EGRA score	41.98	83.51	41.52	<0.01

The improvement in learning is contributed by the bridge classes that the project had conducted for the OOS girls. The bridge classes have been found to be highly effective in terms of improving the literacy of the project beneficiary girls. VSO with its partner NGO in the project area mobilized big sisters for motivating the girls and persuade their parents to send the girls to the bridge classes. The bridge classes were conducted in the community where the adolescent girls lived. The establishment of the bridge classes within the community addressed the barrier related to travel to school which was identified during baseline, and hence, the girls were able to overcome this barrier and learn through the bridge classes in a regular basis. Moreover, since the bridge classes were conducted within their own locality, the parents could also monitor the girls by themselves and control any restrictive activities that the parents perceive girls would do when they are sent far away to attend formal school. For instance, the parents think that there was no chance of girls eloping when they are sent to nearby bridge class where there are no boys. This encouraged parents to send girls to the bridge class and regularly attend the classes. Therefore, in the quantitative survey, 98.9% of the parents acknowledged that girls' learning has improved as compare to her learning status before joining the bridge class.

> *The bridge class has taught us many things. Form basic letter recognizing to be able to read story, all credit goes to the bridge class. -a girl from Sarlahi*

Also, during the lockdown period, when the classes in bridge class had stopped, the peer-peer support provided by big sisters allowed their learning progressing, and this was well acknowledged by girls and parents.

> *"Big sister calls us and asked us to come to her house and she then revised the course that we had in bridge class and also taught new things. This has helped in continuation of the classes which was affected by the pandemic."-a girl from Parsa*

Skills gap analysis

Following the LNGB MEL guidance, EE has divided the learning skills into four different categories. The categories have been divided based on the average percentage score that girls achieved in sub-task.

The first category consists of the proportion of those girls who did not get any score at all and thus have been defined as non-learner. The second category is emergent learners' category which comprised of the proportion of girls scoring 1%-40%. The girls who scored 41%-80% were placed at the third category of established learners and finally, those scoring above 81% were grouped as proficient learners. Since the EGRA tool was designed such that the difficulty level of sub-task increases as the sub-task progresses towards higher level, the skills gap of girl increases as the sub-task progresses to the higher level.

The overall analysis as shown by Table 15 depicted that most of the girls fall into the emergent learner category followed by established learner category for all the sub tasks except for sub task five (reading comprehension) where most of the girls are in non-learner's category followed by emergent category. A separate analysis for this category has been done in the preceding section below. It can be inferred from the results that there has been a significant improvement in terms of skills gaps from baseline to the midline where most of the girls in non-learners' category at baseline have jumped to emergent learners' category at the midline. Nevertheless, there are not many girls who have been able to reach the proficient level as only 3.3% of the girls reached proficiency level overall. Recognizing this fact, EE recommends project to focus on the reading comprehension. Consideration might be needed on providing extra support to the girl who have attended schools such as after school tuition or support from big-sister during weekends. However, the constraints like higher household chore burden may not allow the girls to dedicate extra time for them to come to the tuition/coaching class. Hence, project might need to work on providing support during the school time, when the girls are in school.

Table 15: Functional literacy skills for beneficiary girls

Categories	Subtask 1: Listening comprehension		Subtask 2: Letter identification		Subtask 3: Symbols identification		Subtask 4: Familiar word identification		Subtask 5a: Reading and comprehension	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Non learner/ reader (0%)	30	11.7	11.7	12.1	59.5	19.3	55.8	20.1	65.9	48.5
Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	35.5	22.9	55.3	53.7	32.3	52.9	32.9	46.5	26.2	38.4
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	28.8	57.9	20.0	16.5	6.5	20.1	9.1	21.9	5.8	8.7
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	5.6	7.6	13.0	17.7	1.8	7.8	2.2	11.5	2	4.4
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Oral reading fluency and comprehension analysis

Based on the recommendation from FM, the analysis of oral reading comprehension and fluency was done with 80% benchmark criteria. The findings illustrated that still almost half of the girls (48.4%) scored 0 in the comprehension task and a little less than one third of the girls scored 20% in the same sub-task at the midline. Form the qualitative discussion, it was comprehended that the reason for girls achieving less in reading comprehension was due to the language barrier. The girls expressed that

they can identify the words and read the individual words but when it comes to reading a whole sentence, it becomes fairly difficult for them. The result from the reading comprehension can be related to the fact that girls do not get to practice much in Nepali as 91.7 percentage of girls' household and 70.33 percentage of themselves do not speak Nepali. For the reading comprehension, project provided literacy and numeracy skills training to the teachers and big sisters to support the girls on reading comprehensive and higher sub task of numeracy. Also, these sections are focusing on remedial support classes and peer to peer education as the preliminary findings from midline.

Table 16: EGRA Sub-task 5 percentage of girls with total correct answers

Group	Intervention	
Percentage scored	Baseline (%) (n=496)	Midline (%) (n=496)
0	65.7	48.4
20%	17.1	27.8
40%	9.3	10.7
60%	3.6	2.0
80%	2.2	6.7
100%	2.0	4.4

Table 17 below shows the oral reading fluency analysis of the girls taking test, derived by analyzing the word per minute count of the sub-task 5. It is unveiled that there was an increase of almost 4% of girls achieving the >40wpm from baseline to midline among the girls in the project area. The results also showed that 20% of the girls have lifted from 0wpm category. However, considering the encouraging increment in the mean percentage in literacy score, as compared to almost 85% of girls not reaching the benchmark, the reading fluency part needs to be emphasized more in future for these girls.

Table 17: EGRA Sub-task 5 word per minute analysis

Group	Intervention	
Word per minute	Baseline (%) (n=496)	Midline (%) (n=496)
0 WPM	61.9	41.1
1-20 WPM	17.1	27.0
21-40 WPM	8.7	15.3
>40WPM	12.3	16.5

Numeracy

Overall finding

Table 18 below presents the overall achievement in the numeracy score achieved by girls in the project area. Looking at the mean score itself, there was an increase in the mean score from 16.22 at baseline to 19.97 at the mid line. The change appeared small in itself, however, the significance test performed by EE showed that the changes across baseline to midline was statistically significant with a p-values of less than 0.01. Referring back to the baseline, it was concluded in the baseline that girls had achieved higher in EGMA even though they were the OOS girls. In the midline, it was observed that the girls found the sums to be difficult considering the fact that they barely get time for practicing at home whatever they have learned at school. This is one of the reasons for improving only by a little in numeracy skills.

Table 18: Numeracy overall finding

Learning domain	Baseline	Midline	Difference from baseline to midline	significance
Mean EGMA score	16.22	19.97	3.74	<0.01

As discussed above in literacy section, the changes seen in numeracy is also explained by the girls' involvement in bridge class. In addition to the bridge class itself, the mobilization of big sisters by project for supporting girls' learning was found to be highly effective. The effort that big sisters have put on persuading parents for sending girls to the bridge class, motivating girls to learn, supporting them outside of the informal classes and support during the pandemic period have been appreciated by both the girls and the parents. It can also be triangulated from the quantitative survey which showed that 76.4% of the parents perceived that the peer-to-peer classes run by big sisters were useful.

I could not recognize the numbers before I enrolled in the bridge class, but now I have been able to recognize numbers and use my skills in taking the measurement of clothes for tailoring.
-a girl from Banke

Skills gap analysis

Just like for literacy, skills gap analysis was done for numeracy as well. The category for numeracy was identical to the category of literacy, i.e, non-learners, emergent learners, established learners and proficient learner.

Table 19 presents the skills gap analysis of the beneficiary girls in Numeracy as measured by the EGMA tool. Most of the girls who took part in the test were in emergent learner category followed by established learner category. The result hold true for all of the sub-tasks of EGMA test. There are few girls (5.32%) who reached the proficient learners category overall. As discussed earlier, the limited practice that the girls could do at home caused them unable to solve harder numerical problems, since the EGMA test had different numerical sums to be solved in a given time.

I really love to do sums in class. Unfortunately, I don't get enough time to practice at homes. Hence, I am weak in addition and subtraction.
-a girls from Banke

Reflecting at the results from numeracy test, project needs to focus on numeracy skills of girls coupled with more parental engagement activities to create supportive environment at home for their improved learning.

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	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Non learner (0%)	22.0	7.2	28.0	8.0	27.8	8.7	34.7	10.1	34.1	10.9
Emergent learner (1%-40%)	50.4	48.1	55.8	45.1	58.9	71.6	49.0	76.7	38.5	54.8
Established learner (41%-80%)	18.8	36.8	11.1	40.6	11.3	16.1	16.1	10.9	22.6	27.8
Proficient learner (81%-100%)	8.9	8.0	5.00	6.4	2.0	3.6	0.2	2.2	4.80	6.4
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Almost all of the girls consulted during the qualitative discussion admitted that they find the numeracy classes difficult as it needs more practice. The bridge class facilitator added that girls find it difficult when they are asked to do addition and subtraction. Also, for the word problem, if they are asked the same question in their local language, they can answer it, but if they are asked the question in Nepali, they get puzzled and cannot answer the question quickly, it takes time for them to comprehend to the question. However, one of the bridge class facilitators denied the fact of girls being poor in Math. He shared that in his class, girls were better at Math if it is compared with Nepali. However, the girls from the same locality did not confirm this.

Characteristic subgroup analysis of the learning outcome

Average percentage score attained by girls of different sub groups is discussed in the following table. For the girls with visual and hearing impairment, the project had assessed the literacy and numeracy skills of 40 girls using the modified version of EGRA/EGMA tools.

Table 20: 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)	
		BL	ML	BL	ML
Age group					
10-14	54.84	22.91	27.03	17.55	34.71
15-19	45.16	26.06	32.01	19.94	35.09
Caste group					
Muslim	37.30	28.05	31.66	24.53	35.41
Terai Dalit	22.38	20.44	25.48	13.83	32.10
Terai Janajati	24.40	20.02	32.26	14.34	37.98
Poor household	40.73	23.30	30.11	18.21	33.78
Girls with disabilities	7.26	26.23	21.82	19.55	29.53
Disability subgroups²					
Seeing	(17 girls) *	10	55	15.6	51
Hearing	(23 girls) *	7	36.14	10.1	34.08
Walking	1.9	30.42	22.13	25.36	25.18
Self-care	0.6	N/A	7.11	N/A	9.13
Communication	1.3	18.58	9.10	20.91	16.11
Learning, remembering and concentrating	2.8	17.91	11.76	7.12	18.69
Accepting change, controlling behavior and making friends	2.3	11.99	11.47	3.3	18.42
Mental health (Anxiety and depression)	1.7	32.51	27.26	17.24	38.53
Girls with functional limitation	19.2	22.70	27.57	18.09	33.29
Non-Nepali speaking household	91.7	23.88	30.12	18.31	34.28

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

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² Please note that sample sizes for sub-types of disability are too small to be statistically significant.

The sub-group analysis uncovered that there has been improvement in both the literacy and numeracy average scores irrespective of the different characteristics they have with few exceptions. For both the age groups, literacy score and numeracy score increased from baseline to midline in a similar trend. Muslim girls achieved 35.41% in literacy which slightly higher score as compared to girls representing other ethnicities (34.70%). The explanation behind this, as explored from the qualitative consultations is that the girls from Muslim community attended Madrassa in addition to the bridge classes which further supported their learning from the bridge class. This was not the case for other girls. Girls from poor household had improved their learning in numeracy while decreased literacy. Likewise, for girls with disabilities, the improvement was observed in literacy but not in numeracy. Girls with functional limitation had achieved higher score in midline as compared to baseline in both the numeracy and literacy tests.

Assessment of learning of children with disability

Literacy

Under literacy, it was found that average EGRA score for children with hearing impairment was 34.08 (BL-10.1) while the average EGRA score for children with visual impairment was 51 (BL-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, letter identification and symbol identification while they could not perform well in the sections following after that. Children with hearing impairment found it difficult to explain the subtask 5 (reading passage) and multiplication and division. Children with visual impairments highly improved on all the sub task of literacy. Letter identification was relatively easier for them than other subtasks.

Table 21: 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	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Non learner/ reader (0%)	86.4	14.3	40.9	0.0	63.6	4.8	72.7	14.3	100.0	23.8	100.0	42.9
Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	9.1	28.6	13.6	66.7	27.3	42.9	22.7	71.4	0.0	71.4	0.0	42.9
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	0.0	14.3	31.8	14.3	4.5	23.8	4.5	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.5
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	4.5	42.9	13.6	19.0	4.5	28.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.8	0.0	4.8
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Source: EGRA test conducted by the project (N=22)												

Below table shows the an improvement in the functional literacy for children with hearing impairments. Project is doing one to one coaching and peer to peer support for the non-learner to make them emergent learners at the end of the project.

Table 22: Foundational literacy skills (overall) of children with hearing impairments

Categories (n=22)	Total Average Score	
	BL	ML
Non learner/ reader (0%)	77.3	16.7
Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	12.1	54.0
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	6.8	12.7
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	3.8	16.7
Total	100	100
Source: EGRA test conducted by the project (N=22)		

Table 23: 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	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Non learner/ reader (0%)	29.4	8.3	70.6	8.3	76.5	16.7	88.2	25.0	88.2	58.3	100.0	58.3
Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	0.0	8.3	29.4	41.7	11.8	41.7	5.9	33.3	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	17.6	33.3	0.0	8.3	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	52.9	50.0	0.0	41.7	5.9	41.7	5.9	41.7	5.9	41.7	0.0	33.3
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Source: EGRA test conducted by the project (N=17)												

For the children with visual impairment, though there is animprovement in the proficient learner from baseline to midline, project need to more focus on numeracy skills by providing more IEC materials, peer to peer support and one to one coaching by national volunteers and big sisters.

Table 24: Foundational literacy skills (overall) for children with visual impairment

Categories (n=17)	Total Average Score	
	BL	ML
Non learner/ reader (0%)	75.5	29.2
Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	8.8	20.8
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	3.9	8.3
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	11.8	41.7
Total	100	100
Source: EGRA test conducted by the project (N=17)		

Numeracy

Under numeracy, it was found that average EGMA score for children with hearing impairment was 36.14 (BL- 7), while the average EGMA score for children with visual impairment was 55 (BL -10). More number of children were able to complete subtask 1, 2, 3 and 4. There were also few learners with hearing impairments who could read above 80% of the questions. Peer to Peer education, preparatory classes, bridge classes, one to one coaching and big sister mentoring approach helps to achieve the numeracy and literacy skills of children with hearing and visual impairment. However, project need to focus on sub task 5 in both literacy and numeracy i.e reading passage and multiplication/Division.

Table 25: 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	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Non learner (0%)	50.0	9.5	95.5	9.5	86.4	14.3	81.8	14.3	100.0	61.9
Emergent learner (1%-40%)	22.7	38.1	4.5	47.6	9.1	33.3	18.2	61.9	0.0	23.8
Established learner (41%-80%)	9.1	38.1	0.0	23.8	4.5	42.9	0.0	23.8	0.0	14.3
Proficient learner (81%-100%)	18.2	14.3	0.0	19.0	0.0	9.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Source: EGMA test conducted by the project (N=22)										

Table 26: Foundational numeracy (overall) for children with visual impairment

Source: EGRA test conducted by the project (N=17)

Table 27: 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	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Non learner (0%)	70.6	8.3	82.4	8.3	88.2	25.0	94.1	16.7	94.1	33.3
Emergent learner (1%-40%)	23.5	41.7	5.9	25.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	25.0	0.0	25.0
Established learner (41%-80%)	0.0	8.3	0.0	8.3	0.0	25.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	16.7
Proficient learner (81%-100%)	5.9	41.7	11.8	58.3	11.8	33.3	5.9	41.7	5.9	25.0
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Source: EGMA test conducted by the project (N=17)										

Categories (n=17)	Total Average Score	
	BL	ML
Non learner/ reader (0%)	85.9	18.3
Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	5.9	26.7
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	0.0	15.0
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	8.3	40.0
Total	100	100
Source:		

Table 28: Foundational numeracy skills (overall) for children with hearing impairment

Categories (n=22)	Total Average Score	
	BL	ML
Non learner/ reader (0%)	82.7	21.9
Emergent learner/ reader (1%-40%)	10.9	40.9
Established learner/ reader (41%-80%)	2.7	28.6
Proficient learner/ reader (81%-100%)	3.6	8.6
Total	100	100

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

Table 29: 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 %)	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Non learner/ reader (0%)	37	6	59	7	51	16	29	7
1-20	14	7	0	0	0	10	20	10
21-40	4	18	16	16	10	0	14	27
41-60	25	23	8	23	16	19	12	22
61-80	0	13	0	8	0	10	12	13
81-100 (Proficient Learners)	20	47	18	46	24	46	14	22
Source: Intellectual Disability Tools conducted by the project (N= 51)								

Children with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities had been enrolled in the bridge classes that are running in all seven municipalities of the three districts. 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. Children with intellectual disability have score basic literacy and numeracy skills 64.33 on ML which is double the achievement of BL.

Daily Living Skills

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. Almost 50% improvement is seen in most of functional activities of children with severe and profound disability. The highest improvement was found in Physical development (61%) while 36% improved was found in Intellectual development. Project need to continue the follow up meeting with the parents and children on action plan.

Table 30: Daily Living Skills of Children with Severe and Profound Disability

	Self Help Skills		Physical Development		Art, Sports and Entertainment		Social Development		Intellectual Development		Language Development	
Evaluation	BL Score	ML Score	BL Score	ML Score	BL Score	ML Score	BL Score	ML Score	BL Score	ML Score	BL Score	ML Score
Score	450	674	375	605	225	330	450	665	530	720	374	572
Percentage Change	50		61		47		48		36		53	
N = 81												

Source: Daily Living Skills Tools (N=80)

Transition outcome

Project had envisioned the girls to transition to two major pathways at the time of project development phase. For the younger girls aged 10-14 and who attended bridge class, the transition pathway was enrollment into formal school. Similarly, for the older girls aged 15-19 attending bridge classes, the transition pathways were either enrollment to formal school or if any girls failed to do so, transition to business skills. While for the older girls not enrolled into bridge class, the transition pathway was enrolling into business skills. In this regard, most of the transition pathways taken into consideration at midline are the same ones that were used to measure transition outcomes at baseline. A detailed transition pathway is presented in the table below.

Transition pathways

Table 31: Transition pathways

Group tracked for transition	Successful transition	Unsuccessful transition
Girls within age group 10-14 years age (Enrol into Bridge Classes)	• Enroll into formal school • Continuation to be in school and progressing through the relevant grades • Stay in the same class (due to failure) • Remain enrolled in the school even after marriage • Move to different school • Dropped out of school and moved to vocational training or/ and employment (applicable for girls who will pass the age of 14 during the project's lifetime)	• Dropout and stays at home • Completes bridge class but does not enroll back to school • Unsafe employment • Dropout due to different conditions (marriage, lack of interest in education, negative social norms or other barriers specific to children with disabilities)
Girls within age group 15-19 years age (Enrol in bridge classes)	• Enroll into formal school • Stayed in the same class (due to failure) • If fails in placement test of school, still working with project on business skills • Remain enrolled in the school even after marriage • Move to different school • Dropped out of school and moved to vocational training or/ and employment • If not interested in formal school, possibility of business skills based on Personalized Social Support (PSS) • Continuation to be in school and progression through the relevant grades (for those who are transition into formal school) • Start small scale business or enter into the locally available labor market (for those who choose business skills pathways)	• Dropout and stays at home • Engaged in unsafe employment • Engaged in unpaid domestic work only • Unemployed • Early marriage/child birth under 20 years

Group tracked for transition	Successful transition	Unsuccessful transition
	• Engage in vocational training and seek for employment/ income generation	
Girls within age group 15-19 years age (not following the track of learning intervention)	• Enroll into business skills[3][4] • Placement in local market or start small scale business (for those who choose business skills pathways)	• Stays at home* • Engaged in unsafe employment • Engaged in unpaid domestic work only • Unemployed • Early marriage/child birth under 20 years

* *Girls who have been staying idle at their households, not engaged in any form of vocational training or income-generating activities*

The learning transition included enrolment to formal school for the girls enrolled in the bridge class, while transition to resource centers for the children with disability.

The business skills included small scale livelihood development skills such as tailoring, beauty parlor, setting up their own grocery shop, improved goat farming, soft toys and cushion making, vegetable and fruit shop, boutique, bangles bead making, poultry/duck farming, mobile restaurant (panipuri, chatpate), restaurant, embroidery, handicrafts (Bamboo product). After getting training and necessary material support, the girls are expected to initiate their own small-scale business pertaining to the skills and materials they received.

Table 32: Transition rates girls across baseline-midline

Transition cohorts	Baseline transition rate	Midline transition rate	Target	% of target achieved
Girls within age group 10-14 years age (Enroll into Bridge Classes)	0%	85.5%	NA	NA
Girls within age group 15-19 years age (Enroll in bridge classes)	0%	85.8%	NA	NA
Girls within age group 15-19 years age (not following the track of learning intervention)	0%	100%	NA	NA

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[3] Project collected and analyzed the data for children with disability (Visual, Hearing, Intellectual and Severe/profound).

[4] *Business skill includes small scale livelihood development skills such as tailoring, beauty parlour, grocery shop, soft toys making, goat farming, etc.*

Transition rate at midline

Table 33: Transition rate observed at midline

Transition status	Transition pathways	10-14 (n=159)	15-19 learning cohort (n=337)	15-19 (VT cohort) (n=34)
Successful transition	Enrolled in formal school	85.5%	41.5%	0%
	Non-formal education	11.9%	14.2%	0%
	Engaged in vocational training	0%	24%	100%
Unsuccessful transition	Is doing nothing	2.6%	14.2%	0%

Transition rate for the sub-group fundamentally defined for transition outcome was measured at midline through the quantitative data. It was discovered that most of the girls had successfully transitioned through the transition pathways as envisioned by the project. Of those girls who were in the learning cohort, 97.4% had successfully transitioned into either formal school or non-formal education. A fairly lower percentage of girls reported to have been involved in household chores and doing nothing at the moment. Similarly, for the older girls who were also in the learning cohort, 85.8% had successfully transitioned to either learning or vocational training. Large proportion (41.5%) of those having successful transition had been to formal education followed by vocational training (24%). 16.8% of the girls stated that they were engaged in household chores and are doing nothing currently meaning they had been unsuccessful in transitioning through the transition pathways. This finding however does not necessarily conclude that they have unsuccessful transition. When the data collection was being done by the EE, there were still some clusters where vocational training had not been started. This implies that the girls would later uptake the vocational training. Lastly, all of the girls from the group in the sample who were in transition cohort from the very beginning had successfully transitioned to the vocational training.

It was comprehended from the qualitative discussion that despite many challenges at the baseline for the girls to be enrolled into formal education, the project has been successful in addressing the barriers to education through continuous parental engagement. The attitude of parents towards investing in girls' education and skill development has been fairly changed as compared to baseline. Almost a half (47.4%) of the respondent of the household interview said that they took care of the household chores to support girls in their learning. However, EE, when analyzed the data, discovered that the support provided by parents has not decreased the significant effect on girls' learning due to their engagement in HH chores. The parental engagement activities carried out by the has caused the change in their attitude towards investing in girls' education and skill development. Moreover, the engagement of big sisters has played vital role in influencing parents' attitude toward investment in girls' skill development. However, some of the parents asserted that household chores had not been barriers in learning. Either they would support the girls in household chores or the girl would herself complete all household chores before or after school. Moreover, the girls have not taken household chores as a burden or barrier to their learning or be engaged in any form of skills development training. However, the household chore has definitely had an impact on further possibility of their improved learning or improved income generation. The low improvement in numeracy had to do with girls'

inability to manage time for adequately practicing the sums of the numeracy that they learned in the bridge class.

> *Most of the times, I support my daughter in the household chores when she has to do her homework. Sometimes, she completes her assigned duty at home and goes to the school, other times, she would do her chores after coming back to school. Either way, her learning has not been impacted. -a mother from Banke*

Likewise, for some of the girls and parents, the distance to school was taken was one of the apprehensions in continuing their education or vocation. Parents were not ready to send their girls to school at distant places as they feared of girls being teased or girls patching with someone and eloping. In addition to this an interesting finding emerged during qualitative consultation. Due to the closure of schools, the parents who had re-enrolled their girls to school contemplated on changing the transition pathways they have preferred. Since their girls were not learning at school due to closure of the schools, they felt that as compared to the girls who were taking vocational training, their girls had not gotten maximal benefit from the project. Some of the parent, those of even the younger girls, wanted to change the pathway so that their girls could chose some vocation and benefit from the project. While the obvious reason mentioned for this was because the parents wanted their girls to be engaged in some forms of project activities, it was also uncovered by EE that some of the families' poverty had increased and they wanted their daughter to start business and support in family income. In the light of all these facts, project needs to further enhance their parental engagement activities.

> *"Since there is a lockdown and school has not been opened yet. My daughter could not study and go to school. Other girls in the community are learning through training such as tailoring, beauty parlor, boutique, etc. They are at least learning something. I wished that my daughter would get a chance to participate in this training as well."- a parent from Parsa.*

Apart from the parental engagement, the continuous support and motivation provided by big sisters have played an important role in transitioning the girls into formal school. In the quantitative survey, 12.1% of the girls shared that they were motivated by big sisters to enroll back to school. Besides, both the parents and girls have well acknowledged the support provided by the big sisters in motivating them to transition to schools.

> *Big sisters have been continuously sharing with us, about the importance of education. She always says to me that if I gain a certain level of education, I will be independent, will get a good job. This motivated me to decide in joining the formal school. -a girl from Banke*

> *When we see big sisters, we feel that our daughter will one day be like her and will lead a group of girls of her age in future. This has made us realize how important educating a girl would be. Therefore, we now want our girls to complete higher education. -parents from Sarlahi*

In terms of business skills, most of the girls opined on starting utilizing their skills they have got through vocational training. They shared that they have also received support from parents in starting their business, both morally and financially too. Nevertheless, the sustainability of the possible entrepreneurship is questionable, as, even though majority of the girls have readily started vocational training and have got support in kind from project for starting their business. For, most of the girls revealed that the skills they have got, for example tailoring, boutique and beauty parlor are merely for their personal use. They shared that they would start tailoring in their own home and serve her family and if possible, neighbors. They had no intention to start business and start generating income from the skills. Furthermore, if they are to start business, they have to go outside of the village which is not allowed by their parents.

I want to start beauty parlor at my own. As per my understanding, the market for parlor is not seemingly adequate in my village. For this, I have to open my shop in relatively urban area which is far from here. I am not sure if my parent will allow me to go away for this purpose. -a girl from Banke

To overcome this barrier, EE suggests on introducing an idea of starting business collectively by the group of girls who are trained. For instance, 2-3 girls who have got the tailoring training could start tailoring business in shared basis so that the parents would allow to travel the girls in group.

Characteristics subgroups and barrier analysis

In the above section, it is clearly depicted that majority of the girls have had a successful transition at midline. The following table further elaborates on the distribution of the transition rate across different sub-groups.

Majority (97.5%) of the girls from the age group 10-14 had successfully transitioned to the set transition pathways. Similar trend can be observed for the age-group 15-19 where 87.1% of the girls have transitioned to their respective pathways. Looking at different ethnic groups, it does not hold clear discrepancy in terms of transition since 85.1% of the girls from Muslim community have successfully transitioned at midline. The somewhat low transition rate shown for Muslim girls is because of slightly more restriction in travel by parents that Muslim girls have to face. The ethnic distribution of the transition outcome also does not show perceived disparity among the respondents as 95.3% of the Terai Dalit and 90.8% of Terai Janajati had successful transition. The less variation should however be considered in the light that the findings was skewed towards successful transition which made it difficult to statistically measure the difference between successful and unsuccessful transition.

Table 34: Data disaggregation for school-going status

Categories	Successful Transition (n=478)	Unsuccessful Transition (52)
Age group		
10-14	97.5%	2.5%
15-19	87.1%	12.9%

Categories	Successful Transition (n=478)	Unsuccessful Transition (52)
Caste group		
Muslim	85.1%	14.9%
Terai Dalit	95.3%	4.7%
Terai Janajati	90.8%	9.2%
Poor household	87.9%	12.1%
Girls with disabilities	89.7%	10.3%
Girls with functional limitation	92.2%	7.8%
Non-Nepali speaking household	90.7%	9.3%

From among the 53.2% of the poor household, 87.9% of the girls have successfully transitioned. One of the reasons for such a higher rate of transition is that the parents do not have to pay for the education of the girls enrolling back to school and for the girls choosing business skills as their pathways, project had provided support for training and materials to start their profession, hence addressing the barrier related to poverty of the beneficiaries' household. Similarly, for the girls with disabilities and girls with functional limitation, 89.7% and 92.2% of them respectively have successful transition rate. For the girls belonging from the household who do not speak Nepali, 90.7% of them have successfully transitioned to different pathways. Unlike learning, difference in the transition rate was observed according to ethnicity. Muslim girls had higher unsuccessful transition rate, almost 5% above the average unsuccessful transition rate. This implies that there are some barriers which are specific to Muslim girls such as restriction in travel.

> *Muslim girls are sent to Madrassa, which are usually within their community. But, since the schools are far, they still have restrictions to travel to school, hence, the parents still hesitate to send them far either for school or for taking training. –*
> *a big sister from Sarlahi*

EE has uncovered few challenges during the midline evaluation that may hinder the transition outcome. During the qualitative consultations it was found that in some of the project areas, support provided by the project for transition cohort that, were in kind, were of sub-standard. The girls complained that they had not received quality good from the project. For instance, the goat provided in Parsa became sick. Upon further verification with project team, the project team also admitted that they were made aware about this issue through their regular monitoring system. The project team further discussed that they had done root cause analysis of this issue and they confirmed that the goat distributed were not sick at the time of distribution but fell sick later on due to the change in the environment they were living. Moreover, before distributing of goat to the direct beneficiaries, it was monitored by the veterinary technical person and each of the goat were insured thereby having no extra burden for the families for treatment or replacing the goats. Shortly after this, the project team had resolved the issue, treated the goats and replaced wherever required. In addition to this, girls also reported being frequently poked by the trainers of tailoring for not receiving their payment on time and talking rudely to the girls. The project team however explained that few trainers had this

problem which had already been resolved. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, the parents of the girls following learning cohort, consistently across all the districts, expressed that they felt as if they are not being supported by the project since their daughters are neither going to school nor getting any trainings. Though the project had supported those girls who transited to the schooling through distance teaching methods they wanted to change their transition pathways. In this regard, there exists the challenge of sustainability of transition to school.

Similarly, even though parents have claimed that they will support their daughters in starting their own business and their attitude towards girls' education/employment has improved since baseline, they are still reluctant to send their daughters far from their village/home. As discussed above, the case is even higher for Muslim girls. In the light of this finding, it is advisable to invest more in parental engagement activities for sustaining the transition outcome. Also, if possible, the project could advocate on providing bicycle to girls through local government on the need basis. Similarly, motivating parents to send the girls in group to the school or accompanying one of the parents every day to monitor the group of girls which encourages parent's confidence in sending girls to the school could be another strategy to overcome the barrier.

Likewise, as discussed in the barrier section above, household chore has come up as a strong barrier in the midline as well. It was revealed from the quantitative survey that there are 90.6% households in which the beneficiary girl spends more than quarter of her day doing the household chores. This barrier had been one reasons for not enrolling girls into formal education during the baseline. Nevertheless, the quantitative data had showed that 2.9% and 21.2% of the household stated that household chore is the sole reason and partial reason respectively for not enrolling girls to education in the midline. Even though there was decrease in the negative perception towards the household chore as a barrier, the practice was otherwise. Girls and parents have unanimously admitted that they do engage in household chores and manage time for other activities. However, neither the girls nor the family members have admitted household chores as a barrier for learning and transition despite agreeing that boys usually do not share the household chores. They take it as a normal daily routine they perform and manage time for other work they do. This may have significant impact when they enroll back to school as they have to spend double the time, they spent in bridge classes. Like for starting different businesses as well, they might need to allocate specific time for providing goods or services, for instance, if they start their own beauty parlor, they might have to dedicate more than quarter a day in the profession to be able to make money. Taking into account of this barrier, the project again needs to work on engagement of family members for sharing their responsibility.

In addition to this, during qualitative discussion it was also noted that the access to market could be one of the challenges for the continuation of the profession the girls have chosen. For instance, the girls who were taking training of making soft toys were not sure if they could sell their product.

Apart from the above-mentioned challenges, girls were also concerned of the impact of COVID-19 that might hamper their business. They are unable to start their business as soon as they complete the training because of the restrictions happening time and again. They had a fear that they may forget the skills gained through training if they do not get enough time to practice. Moreover, they were also concerned if they will get proper market for the sale of goods or services, they provide in future using their acquired skills.

> *Due to corona virus, our training has not been completed on time. I wonder if I will be able to start my tailoring shop any time soon. -a girl from Banke*

Sustainability outcome

Through the community, learning space and system level interventions, the project aims to embed sustainability of all the outcomes it anticipated. The indicators determined in the log frame came under community, learning space and system level.

Community level indicators for sustainability 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*. The data for community level indicators were fed from the quantitative HH survey and by discussion with the project staff including those from the local partners and the learning hub committee.

Even though the pandemic had laid a challenge to the project for its school level intervention, considering the initiation of some level of support during lockdown and immediately after lockdown, EE measured the sustainability outcome indicators for learning space. Its three of the indicators; *i) % of schools scoring acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment, ii) % of schools demonstrating acceptable or above on teacher training sustainability assessment*, and *iii) % of schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment* were measured using the quantitative tools like teacher training sustainability assessment, implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment and disability infrastructure sustainability assessment. Along with the quantitative data, qualitative consultations with teachers, head teachers and municipality officials was done to triangulate and validate the findings.

The system level indicator as set in the project log frame 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*. The measurement of this indicator was done through qualitative consultation with the project staff and also with the education officials from all the intervention areas and was further validated through the consultation with other stakeholders at schools.

As per the LNGB guidelines, the score for the sustainability outcome was provided in Table 36 based on the scorecard as shown in the Table 35.

Table 35: Scorecard for sustainability

Score	Rating
0	Negligible
1	Latent
2	Emerging
3	Becoming established
4	Established

Table 36: Sustainability indicators

	System	Community	Learning space
Indicator 1: Average % of income invested in each of their disabled and marginalized girls' education		4.68% of their income was invested each of their disabled and marginalized girls' education. EE provides a score of 2 at midline for this indicator	
Indicator 2: # of functional learning hubs with the engagement of community mechanisms for its continued operation (girls' network, child club, mothers' group)		Project has established 27 learning hubs in the project area and has reported that they are functional. The qualitative data showed that the Girls and Inclusive Network ' education network has just formed and are yet to be functional. KII with the learning hub committee informed that they have just started working but are not fully functional as it has not been long its formed. EE provides a score of 2 at midline for this indicator	
Overall maximum score for community level sustainability: 8 Project's score at ML for community level sustainability: 4			
Indicator 3: % of schools scoring acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment			31.81%schools have scored acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment. EE provides a score of 2 at midline for this indicator
Indicator 4: % of schools demonstrating acceptable or above on			36.36% of the schools have scored acceptable

	System	Community	Learning space
teacher training sustainability assessment			or above in teachers training sustainability. EE provides a score of 2 at midline for this indicator
Indicator 5: % of schools demonstrating acceptable or above in implementation of inclusive SIP sustainability assessment			All of the schools observed were found to have the same SIP as in baseline as it was 5-year plan. No new SIP was formed. From the data provided by the project, EE noted that 12 schools in Banke had formulated new SIP which address the inclusive SIP as envisioned by the project. EE provides a score of 1 at midline for this indicator
Overall maximum score for learning space sustainability: 12 Project's score at ML for learning space sustainability: 5			
Indicator 6: # of municipality having functional database system with disability and marginalized girls and can evidence using it for girls' education planning	All the palikas have received equipment for the database and some have received IT training for the operation of the database. Project is regularly coordination with local government to functionalize the data base management system. Additionally, project supported database of assistive devices, pre-baseline survey, WGQCF to Palika. However yet to be fully functional. EE provides a score of 2 at midline for this indicator		
Overall maximum score for system level sustainability: 4 Project's score at ML for system level sustainability: 2			

	System	Community	Learning space
Baseline sustainability score (0-4)	0.33		
Overall sustainability score at midline (0-4, average of the three level scores)	1.6		

The summary of the score achieved by the project in its sustainability outcome is shown in Table 37 below. Out of total 24 score, project achieved 11 (45.83%) in the mid-line. In the baseline, the score achieved by the project in sustainability outcome was 3 out of 24 (12.5%). Considering the score itself, the project has shown encouraging improvement in the sustainability outcome. Nevertheless, there are areas of improvement in the sustainability outcome. Project needs to engage the community people for sustainably operating and managing the learning hubs established. Project needs to think on how the resources needed for the functioning of the hubs will be managed in the future when the project phases out. For the SIP, since the implementation of the SIP is what is lacking currently, project needs to capacitate the local government for supporting schools in effective implementation of the SIP.

Table 37: Summary of sustainability indicators' scoring

	System	Community	Learning Space
Indicator 1	2	2	2
Indicator 2	-	2	2
Indicator 3	-	-	1
Midline score (Total)	2	4	5
Overall sustainability score (0-4, average of the two-level scores)	2	2	1.6

Community

Findings from the quantitative survey showed that 41.5% of the parents had responded that their daughters are now enrolled in schools, of those, 78.2% revealed that they have invested in her learning. Among those who invested in their daughters' learning, on an average, 4.68% of their income was invested in their daughters' learning. Despite the fact that none of the parents had invested in girls' education in the baseline, as all of the beneficiaries were OOS girls, their attitude regarding investing in girls' education was still high, of about 86% in the baseline. The attitude has gone up in the midline by 7%-point difference from baseline. Considering these quantitative findings, it can be concluded that there has been an improvement in the indicator. However, from the qualitative perspective, when the parents were asked if they would like to invest in girls' education even when funds are limited, they were yet in dilemma. Some asserted the fact that there will be a double burden if they educate their girls; one that they have to invest in her education and second that they have to present hefty dowry when she gets married. Moreover, they unveiled that they would not want to invest for higher education of girls', instead, they want the girls to be somehow literate and then be

able to earn some money for fulfilling their needs and the of the family too. Hence, they are okay for educating girls until the secondary level since its free.

> *"No matter how much we teach our daughters, at the end, we have to give them lots of dowry when we marry them off. We have double burden in that sense. It is better if they earn some money and support us"*
> *-a father from Parsa*

Reflecting on the finding, there are still areas of improvement in making the parents understand the true importance of educating girls. On the programmatic end, since the basic education is free for all as provisioned by the constitution, this indicator seems irrelevant for the project to measure and thus EE recommends on removing the indicator for next evaluation point.

Pertaining to the vision of making learning on issues of disability and other child protection related aspects accessible to the project beneficiaries and other community members, project had established learning hubs in all of its project areas. Learning hub committee were formed for its operation and functionality. Some of the learning hubs were established in schools and some others were formed at community building. The learning hubs which were established outside schools actually became helpful for the girls during the time of lockdown, taking into account that the girls could go to those hubs and learn with big sisters when they could not go to school. On the contrary, some other girls were completely unaware of the learning hubs. Upon assessing the reason for it, it was found that in some places the learning hubs were still being established by the project at the time of data collection. Until midline, none of the learning hub had been handed over to the community groups such as mothers' group or youth groups of disability network. Considering the sustainability aspect of the hubs, EE recommends on engaging newly formed SEN to take the responsibility of the operation and management of the learning hubs. The project can consider mobilizing big sisters as one of the members of SEN and providing them the responsibility of operating/managing the learning hubs. By doing this, Big sisters will be engaged in the project and help in coaching and mentoring girls in their learning too. Also, since SEN in itself is a new concept and the members are still unaware of their roles and responsibility, the project needs to capacitate the network for being able to functionalize the learning hubs after the project phases out.

Learning space

Of the total 22 school assessed for the disability friendly infrastructure, the study team found that 5 schools (31.81%) had scored acceptable or above in disability infrastructure sustainability assessment. This is considerable increase from the baseline value of 3.33%. The project had supported schools during the pandemic, especially in the services related to water, hygiene and sanitation, thereby increasing the disability friendly infrastructure status. Since the project is working with the marginalized girls, more specifically, children with disability and many of them have now enrolled into the formal school, the schools in the project area have started realizing the need of upgrading their infrastructure to make it more disability friendly. At the same time, some of the teachers at the study area also questioned on the need of the disability friendly infrastructure given the circumstances where none of their students are disabled. They added that the children with special needs have to be accommodated in special schools designated for disabled children so that the resources needed can be shared and the operation of the school would also be easy.

> *We don't have any students with special needs like physically impaired or visually impaired who needs special attention and special resources. There are special school for such students in the district. We do not need infrastructure for disabled children.*
> *-a teacher from Parsa*

As per the response from the stakeholders, schools currently do not have the capacity to admit students with functional limitations and adapt them in the school environment. The physical infrastructures in the schools are not disability friendly and the school staff and management committee are also not trained and equipped with disability friendly teaching learning mechanism. Schools can accommodate children with some form of difficulty in mobility but if the children with other forms of functional limitations are to be enrolled, the school infrastructure needs to be upgraded and the teaching staffs need to know disability friendly teaching learning mechanism.

Head teachers, and teachers feel that the idea of safeguarding and disability friendly infrastructure have emerged now and that they did not feel the need to make the school infrastructure disability friendly as the number of students with disability enrolled in schools are minimal. But since the project is working for students with disabilities as well and aims to enroll these students into formal schooling, the school administration has felt the need to update their school infrastructure and make it child, gender and disability friendly, they will be incorporating and prioritizing these plans in the next SIP.

With regards to the teachers training sustainability assessment, the score was already higher during the baseline which has gotten even better during the midline. Most of the government schools currently have teachers trained on child friendly teaching. 90.91% of the schools have been reported to have SIP which has provisions of training teachers on teaching pedagogies. Teachers from 95.45% of schools have been participating in the trainings targeted for capacity building by different organizations and 81.82% 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, 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 over time. One of the teachers in Banke discussed on the diminishing trend of trainings for updates and development for teaching students with disabilities. He opined, "*ENGAGE Project has provided trainings and knowledge on gender-sensitive and disability friendly teaching-learning practices. We are all aware regarding supporting the learning and making the learning environment more gender and disability friendly. However, there aren't many students with disabilities so the need to incorporate disability friendly teaching learning pedagogy is not felt yet.*"

While the score in SIP sustainability assessment was low in the baseline, it could not be measured in the midline since no new SIP was formed in Parsa and Sarlahi. Even though new SIP was formulated in Banke EE could not collect complete information to calculate the score. Head teachers from Banke mentioned that they received training from ENGAGE on how to effectively make plans under SIP and have included appropriate plans to address the needs of the girls with different needs. Specially, with regards to the fact that they were expecting some of OOS girls supported by the project would be enrolled to their school, they formulated the plans to accommodate their needs. The findings from the discussion suggested that the SIP has become more and more inclusive and contextual which in

the past used to be mere copying the content from other schools for fulfilling the formality for getting budget. Most of the schools have been found to be serious about the SIP formulation but lag behind in the implementation aspect primarily due to resource crunch. SIP implementation is fundamentally hindered by financial constraints and low internal capacity of the schools, both technical and financial. Furthermore, due to the pandemic, they have not been able to execute the plans they have made. Most of the schools follow the SIP guidelines and template provided by the government but do not prioritize their immediate and future plans. Plans to make the school and classroom child, gender and disability friendly, implement child safeguarding and gender responsive pedagogies are not given much priority in the SIPs rather the focus have always been towards infrastructural development, amongst others.

> *We got the training on preparing SIP in inclusive and effective way,*
> *however, due to resource constraint, it's still in process and we*
> *have not been able to implement whatever we have planned in SIP*
> *- a Head Teacher from Parsa*

System

The municipality officials approached for the qualitative consultation were all positive about the importance of the database management with regards to the keeping records of marginalized population, OOS girls and boys, and children with disability. Some of the municipality officials interviewed asserted that they have got training/orientation from the project on the database management. Others also mentioned about getting the necessary equipment for establishing the database management system in the municipality pertaining to marginalized girls, girls' education and disability records.

> *We had realized the need of keeping records of marginalized*
> *children, disabled children in our system and we had been*
> *advocating for this since few years. Now with the support from*
> *ENGAGE and our internal budget management, we have been able*
> *to start one. I can provide you details of the OOS girls if you want*
> *-a municipal officer from Parsa.*

However, the progress is not extending equally in all Municipalities. According to the municipality officer in Banke, they have got equipment for the database management system however, it's not fully functional yet. There are unequipped with the skills to fully operate the system and update the data of their Municipality. While they had planned to conduct data collection on the OOS children's status, they were not able to follow their plan due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The municipal officials also mentioned that they also lack specific skills as to how to use the data for planning purposes. The project also had to postpone their support to the municipality in this regard due to the budget cut down because of the pandemic itself. Moreover, in the municipality where they have started using the database, they mentioned that there has been gap in the screening of children with disability in the community.

> *The database system looks great; however, we haven't been able*
> *to completely use it for the planning purposes.*
> *-a municipal official from Parsa*

Even though the database system has been established in all the municipalities, there are challenges in operating the system. Skill transfer for updating and operating the database is required to be insured by the project for its sustainability.

Project Response

Table 38: Changes needed for sustainability

Questions to answer	System	Community	Learning space	Family/ household	Girl
Change: What change should happen by the end of the implementation period	Establishment of Girls and Inclusive Education Network and it's operationalized by the local government.	GIEN should take responsible of Learning hubs established at the community level	Bridge/Preparatory and remedial support classes need to be continued for the out of schools and need to replicated in the other municipality	Increased the parental engagement to support the girl's education	Girls' retention in school is needed or continued entrepreneurship Self-Efficacy and behavior of girls towards AYSRHR need to be change
Activities	Establishment of GIEN Capacity Building of GIEN	Support IEC materials, Capacity building of GIEN	Non formal education classes, Remedial support classes	Parental Training	Orientation for girls on AYSRH, GBV, CP, enrolled in bridge and remedial support classes
Stakeholders	GIEN Members	Community Members	Out of schools children	Parents	Out of schools girls
Factors	Ownership from local government i.e budget allocation	Space available at the community and budget allocation	Awareness level of the parents and community people	Societal factors – Attitude and practice of parents to support girls education	Societal factors – child marriage, dowry system, availability of business placement

6. Key intermediate outcome findings

Attendance

Attendance is one of the key enablers identified by the project for beneficiary girls' improved learning and transition. It was agreed with the project and the FM, during the finalization of MEL framework, that the attendance rate will be calculated by using the monitoring data provided by the project. Hence EE used the data provided by the project to measure the attendance rate in bridge classes. Since the project had recorded attendance of the peer-to-peer sessions conducted by big sisters and

also the attendance of those girls attending schools, EE used all the attendance data to calculate the overall attendance rate. However, it should be considered that the attendance presented here is for the overall girls attending bridge class, and not only for the girls in the sample.

The project had mobilized the big sisters to mentor and motivate the girls to attend bridge classes so that the girl's attendance is improved in the bridge classes. In addition to this, the project also engaged parents through different parental engagement activities to convince them to send their girls to the bridge classes in a regular basis. Apart from that, the project also ensured that the teachers followed appropriate pedagogical methods to ensure that the classroom and materials are learner-friendly so that girls are encouraged to attend the classes regularly thereby increasing the attendance rate.

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Y/N)
Attendance	Attendance rate of direct beneficiaries	0	80%	71%	N	75%	Y
Main qualitative findings							
The qualitative discussion highlighted that most of the girls enrolled in the bridge class were irregular in the class in the beginning, when the bridge classes had just started. Parents were reluctant to send their girls to the bridge class. When big sisters started home-to-home visit, they persuaded parents to send their girls to the school. Their monitoring helped increase the attendance of the girls. It was revealed through consultation with different stakeholders that big sisters played vital role in increasing the attendance of the girls. Even though there were some months when girls were busy in household chores due to festival season, their overall attendance is encouraging given that some of the girls had never attended school before enrolling into the bridge class. Later on, when the pandemic caused closure of schools, the project mobilized big sisters for peer-to-peer education through home visit. The engagement of the girls in such activity was also recorded as attendance. Most of the girls and parents have admitted they regularly attended the peer-to-peer support classes.							

As mentioned earlier, EE used the monitoring data provided by the project for deriving the attendance rate of the girls. The attendance was recorded from the beginning of the bridge class, during home visits and after the girls enrolled to the school. From the attendance record, it was observed that the overall attendance rate for the girls was 71%. The disaggregation of the attendance by different place of intervention revealed that the highest attendance rate was during home visit where girls attended 74% of the classes. The attendance of girls in both the bridge class and the schools was 71%. While the attendance rate during baseline had not been measured quantitatively, the qualitative consultations had laid many challenges for girls to attend the classes regularly. Coming to the midline, the attendance rate, as shown by quantitative analysis, is encouraging. The increase in attendance in the bridge classes is due to the efforts of big sisters in motivating parents to send the girls regularly to the classes. In addition to that, parental engagement activities also contributed in motivating parents to send their girls to the school.

There was fluctuation in attendance during festival season, other than that, the girls regularly attended the bridge classes. Parents had valued the learning of girls in bridge classes. I wish they continue to send their girls to school as well.
-a bridge class facilitator from Parsa

The target set at baseline for attendance rate was 80%. The data failed to showcase the achievement of the target for attendance rate. The further analysis of quantitative data showed that the attendance in school was as high as 78% as soon as the girls enrolled the school which declined to around 60% just before the lockdown. Also, it was found that during October and November (the season of festival), the girls were frequently missing the classes which affected their attendance rate. During qualitative discussion, teachers admitted that the overall attendance rate in the school has been inconsistent though out the year. The main reason was stated to be because of the COVID-19 pandemic which caused many students to skip school. In this regard the target set at the baseline can be considered ambitious since most of the girls had never been to school. The girls enrolled in the schools currently may find difficulty in adjusting to the new environment, specially for those who had never been to school. Unless learner centered practices are improved in the classroom, it will be difficult for the school to provide suitable environment for girls to adopt to the new environment. In the light of this situation, the target for next evaluation should considered around the national figure and therefore, EE suggests to maintain the attendance that project has achieved at this point.

The relationship of attendance to learning and transition could not be presented by EE in this section because the data provided by the project for attendance was for all the beneficiary girls and the sample girls could not be segregated from the data. However, it can be inferred from the findings that regular attendance in classes served as an enabling factor for improved learning since the long-term exposure to the intervention corresponds to the improved learning.

Environment for learning

The associated intermediate outcome for measuring the learning environment in the schools is IO5; improved safeguarding practices in schools. The indicators for this intermediate outcome are percentage of schools scoring acceptable score or above in inclusive SIP progress assessment and disability infrastructure improvement assessment. Separate tools were designed and administered in order to capture the information on the relevant intermediate outcome indicators. SIP assessment was carried out based on the 22 questions and the respective score attained by each of the schools on those questions. The highest attainable score in each question was 3 making the maximum attainable score for each school to be 66. A total of 22 schools from Parsa and Sarlahi were covered in the assessment. Schools from Banke were not covered because of schools shut down, lockdown and travel restrictions due to unprecedented rise in the COVID-19 cases in Banke.

Disability infrastructure assessment checklist was another tool used to assess the intervention schools in terms of available disability friendly infrastructure and whether or not the school infrastructures are accessible to children with disability. Disability infrastructure assessment checklist consisted of 49 questions to be filled out via enumerators' observation, 8 questions to be administered to head teachers in the schools, 5 questions related to the sustainability aspect and 5 questions concerning the COVID-19 pandemic health and safety measures at place in the schools visited.

Inclusive SIP progress assessment

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Y/N)
IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school	Percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above in inclusive SIP progress assessment	10%	-	Not calculated as no new SIP had been formed		60%	NA
Main qualitative findings							
The qualitative consultations with teachers and head teachers revealed that mostly the SIPs were formulated before COVID-19. They had improved in planning process of SIP at that time. However, after the closure of schools due to COVID-19, they were not able to effectively formulate SIP. They mentioned that there was minimal representation of parents in designing of the SIPs. Also, no matter how effectively they were able to design the SIPs and have plans for improvement of school, they were constrained by the lack of resources and capacity to implement the plans that has been stated in SIPs. Moreover, the municipal education officers highlighted that the priorities for schools have never been on customized planning of their school. The schools simply follow the template and infrastructure development have been the mostly demanded area in SIPs. Some schools have inclusive planning process but not all of the schools have been able to do so.							

As discussed earlier, all of the schools where SIP assessment was carried out, had not formulated new SIP during midline. The same SIP which was formulated at baseline had been renewed every year to meet the requirement of formal local governments' budget releasing process. This happened basically due to the pandemic. Upon inquiry, the project also confirmed that the project had supported in SIP formulation in Banke only. The qualitative consultations with the head teachers and teachers in the intervention schools portrayed that they have realized the need of formulating inclusive SIP and have an effective implementation of the plans that have been formulated. They were made aware by the project and local government (municipal officers) for making the SIP more pragmatic and follow the bottom-up approach for its formulation addressing the actual need of the school. Head teachers and teachers generally had a view that the engagement of parents and community members were minimal during designing, maintaining and improving SIP. Only few of the head teachers from schools in Banke stressed that they have the practice of involving all relevant stakeholders during the designing and planning of the SIP.

The qualitative exercises with the relevant stakeholders from the schools also found out that a majority of schools have formulated the SIP as per the government SIP guideline/template but they do not have the internal resources to implement the plans mentioned in the SIP. Schools rely on the funds disbursed by the local government for the implementation of the SIP but the funds allocated by the local level to the schools are mostly used up in salary and the scholarship to the students. Almost

all the schools in the intervention districts rely on the budget allocated by the local government to carry out the plans mentioned in their SIPs, hence, lack of finance has hindered the implementation of the SIP to a great extent. SIPs do have plans related to child protection and safeguarding, disability friendly infrastructures, gender and social inclusion but are more focused on their immediate needs such as fencing the school premises, increasing number of teachers.

However, consultations with the municipal education officials from Banke revealed that schools do not have clear priorities and detailed planning and budget breakdown while formulating the SIP. Most of the schools follow the SIP guidelines and template provided by the government but do not prioritize their immediate and future plans. Plans to make the school and classroom child, gender and disability friendly, implement child safeguarding and gender responsive pedagogies are not given much priority in the SIPs rather issues of fencing the school compound, increasing number of teachers are in the schools immediate and/or priority plans in the SIP. These too are not being achieved because of lack of capacity of the schools and lack of funds from the government. Moreover, education officials from local government in Parsa highlighted that that SIP in some of the schools remained just as a mere document which is necessary for budget disbursement. Some of the schools hardly implement the plans and agendas set in the SIPs.

> *"Secondary schools have initiated designing and formulating SIP, but basic/primary schools are still lagging behind far behind this aspect, hence, effective implementation of SIP has been one of the major issues. There is a need for proper guidance and training to schools regarding SIP designing, formulation and implementation."*
> *- an education officer from Parsa*

Municipality Education Officers have also raised concern about the designing and planning of the SIP. In Banke, the municipality education officer highlighted that the schools sometimes come up with impractical and unattainable plans while formulating the SIP and there were instances were concerned authority had to discard some of the agendas set in the SIP. As per the local government official from the education sector, the schools should realize the resource and funding capacity of the local government while designing the SIP. Also, the priorities about the plans should be thoroughly discussed among the relevant stakeholders and they should be agreed upon by the majority.

> *"A proper implementation policy with clear guidelines and directives needs to be prepared for effective implementation of SIP. SIP does have plans but there is no clear implementation policy. Our central level policies are also incomplete and unclear. It's not that only schools do not have clear policies, even the policies at the central level are not clear. Clear implementation work plan is a necessity."* *-an education officer from Banke*

Regarding effective SIP formulation and implementation, MEO from Parsa said that about 90% of the schools had prepared SIP in the year2019. Due to COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of schools during 2077/78 BS, a majority of the schools have not prepared their SIPs. Some of the schools who had prepared their SIPs are lagging behind in the implementation aspect because of the human resource crunch due to the pandemic. Head teachers from schools in Parsa stated that ENGAGE

project has provided the support in capacity enhancement of teachers. They have provided training on preparing SIP. According to the suggestion, the schools have included the plans for children with disabilities, however, due to the COVID situation this years' SIP is still in process.

Considering the impact of COVID-19 in the project intervention areas, lockdown and travel restrictions have heavily impacted the education sector. The closure of educational institutions have indeed had a greater impact in children's education and transition. Although some of the schools have initiated online classes, they were not found to be helpful since a majority of the students did not have access to mobile phones, laptops and were deprived of internet connectivity. This has also created a digital divide among the students. Only a few families could afford a mobile phone and had access to internet, hence, the online classes were not found to be helpful in all the three districts.

The schools are aware about the importance of SIP for guiding the development of their school and they used to have a practice of making the SIP sincerely. But because of the COVID-19 and the closure of schools, SIPs in most of the schools have been formulated but not implemented. Teachers and head teachers mostly stressed on the fact that parents are not much engaged on the planning and development of the school. The schools do ask parents to come attend meetings and discussions in the schools but hardly 15-20% turn up. Hence, according to the head teachers, involvement of parents in plan and design of SIP is minimum despite several efforts from the school to make it a more inclusive practice. 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. This strengthens the need for capacitating and functionalizing parents and teachers' associations, who if functional, is likely to take ownership and sustain the project outcomes in school. SIP has these themes but the schools are lacking in implementation aspect. In order to carry out the plan or initiate the action plan, schools will be relying on budget and other resources available. There often exists a discrepancy when it comes to budget. Most of the schools have prioritized their working areas but due to lack of necessary budget and funding sources, implementation gets hindered and delayed.

SIP designing and formulation should be inclusive especially focusing on the voices of the marginalized communities and the prioritization of the plans and agendas needs to be discussed thoroughly among the relevant stakeholders before finalization. The schools also should come up with new and innovative ways to involve parents and community members in the overall development of the schools. Since, some of the schools do have children with disabilities, the school authority does not feel the need to promote disability friendly infrastructure. They are in the view that once they enroll children with disability, they will automatically feel the need to focus on the constructing and maintaining disability friendly learning space in the school, hence, will incorporate them in their annual plans and SIPs.

Disability friendly Infrastructure

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation

							point? (Y/N)
IO5: Improved safeguarding practices in school	schools scoring acceptance or above in disability infrastructure improvement assessment	3.33%	-	9.09%	NA	60%	Y
Main qualitative findings							
Consultation with teachers and head teachers revealed that they have understood that schools need to have infrastructure that are disability friendly. However, when asked about the need in their school, most of the schools have not felt the need of the disability friendly infrastructure as they do not possess student with special needs in their schools.							

With respect to the disability friendly infrastructure assessment, only two of the schools were able to score an acceptable score of 60% as per the criteria of the assessment. As per the response from the stakeholders from the school, schools currently do not have the capacity to admit students with functional limitations and adapt them in the school environment. The physical infrastructures in the schools are not disability friendly and the school staff and management committee are also not trained and equipped with disability friendly teaching learning mechanism. Schools can accommodate children with some form of difficulty in mobility but if the children with other forms of functional limitations are to be enrolled, the school infrastructure needs to be upgraded and the teaching staffs need to know disability friendly teaching learning mechanism. Nonetheless, one of the schools in Parsa has enrolled visually impaired students from the project. According to the head teacher of that school, the school administration had managed resource classes for those students for which teacher from project's partner organization and national volunteer of VSO have been supporting in their learning.

"We have provided a hostel where they could live and study. Local partner organization had provided a resource teacher for them to learn Braille and other orientation and mobility (OM) lessons. So far, we are managing for the accommodation and learning of those students but we would need support in disability- friendly infrastructure and Braille learning materials." -a head teacher from Parsa

Head teachers from the two of the schools in Banke have stressed on the fact that they have well maintained SIP but are struggling on the implementation aspects. SIP has helped in planning and setting up agendas for the development and improvement of the school. Mostly, the teachers, SMC and the ward level have a greater role in deciding on the agendas and plans for SIP.

"We conduct several meetings and discuss on the issues and challenges in the school and the possible solution to them. Also 5 years plan is also made prioritizing the agendas. Parents are not much involved as they are not aware and interested regarding the SIP and its relevance and effectiveness. It will be good if we can incorporate parents, students and the community members in the planning and designing of SIP." -a head teacher from Sarlahi

Head teachers from Parsa also had optimistic views regarding the importance of SIP. They stated the necessities of SIP for the improvement of the school. They expressed that while formulating SIP, they used to have a meeting and discussion with teachers, School Management Committee, students, parents, representatives of child club in school. Only after that, they used to start preparing SIP based on the suggestions and recommendations provided by them. They also added that with the involvement of all these above members, they could prepare an inclusive SIP since their views and opinions were be valued. It is quite evident that participation of parents and other community members would definitely add value but the schools are not able to ensure meaningful participation. Teachers highlighted that the schools do call parents and community members for meetings and discussions but very few turn up. Most of the parents cannot attend events at the school at the cost of their daily works. They either seek for compensation or look for incentives to attend such meetings. The school in coordination with the local government need to come up with awareness raising campaigns in the communities so that they are well aware regarding the significance of SIP and other relevant documents related to the education of their children.

Moreover, findings from the qualitative consultations with regards to improved safeguarding practices found out that the almost all the schools currently do not have the internal capacity to cater to the needs of the children with functional limitations, if they are to be admitted to those schools. Schools can accommodate students who have some problems with mobility but if students with other forms of functional limitation are to be enrolled, the schools do not have the capacity to accommodate and adapt them in terms of infrastructure, learning materials, disability friendly teaching mechanisms. For instance, new building of some schools had been designed as disability friendly, while the old ones were not.

> *"Plans related to disability friendly infrastructure has always been in the SIP. Since the new buildings are built maintaining the government standard, they are already disability friendly. But old buildings are not. We have not yet prioritized this since we do not have disabled children in our school. But if the project aims to enroll children with disabilities in our school, we need to think on that too." head teacher from one of the schools in Banke opined*

Teaching quality

In order to assess the teaching and leraning environment of the schools, classroom observations were carried out in 22 schools from Parsa and Sarlahi. A classroom observation checklist was prepared which consisted of 55 questions which were to be answered observing the classes in the intervention schools. Additional 3 questions were included in the classroom observation concerning the COVID-19 context and the health and safety protocols adopted in the classrooms. Classroom observation checklists were primarily based on the overall teaching learning mechanism with respect to gender, child and disability friendly pedagogies, classroom infrastructure and seating arrangements, accessibility to children with functional limitations, availability of reading and supplementary materials, teachers and children motivation, use of extracurricular activities, teachers attitude towards girls, children from marginalized communities and children with disabilities and the general techniques and methods used for the overall functioning of the classes.

Teaching quality was specifically assessed by 16 specific questions within the classroom observation checklist with respect to girls, children from marginalized communities and children with disabilities. These 16 questions and their analysis gave an understanding on the learner-centered classroom practices. The weightage of each of the 16 questions was 3 points resulting in the maximum attainable score to be 48. According to the set criteria, schools achieving at least 60% or above were considered to have espoused learner centered classroom practices.

Teaching quality in the schools was also assessed qualitatively by consulting with the relevant stakeholders from the schools; teachers and head teachers. Qualitative checklist mainly adhered to the aspects concerning teaching learning mechanism in the schools and issues and challenges faced by the schools or teachers in effecting teaching and learning. Education Officials from the local government were also consulted regarding the overall teaching quality and the teaching learning mechanism in place, as a part of the qualitative exercise.

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Y/N)
IO4: Improved teaching quality	Teacher/ educators displaying learner-centered classroom practices	38.46%	42.30%	40.91%	N	60%	Y
Main qualitative findings							
The qualitative consultations with teachers, head teachers and municipality officers marked that positive learning environment is created through proper learner centered classroom management and organization. They also stressed on the system level improvement rather than just focusing on classroom pedagogy improvement. The overall improvement in learning is achieved by quality of teaching coupled with the availability of the resources required for learner centered classroom practices. It was noted that the teaching quality is also dependent on the distribution of students in schools/classes. The teachers highlighted that with a larger number of students in a class, it is impossible to provide attention to individual students and thus the need of special students is overshadowed.							

Among the 22 classes that External evaluator had observed primary level, 9 schools (40.91%) attained the acceptable score in the improved teaching quality assessment. The score marks an improvement from the baseline value. However, the project has been unable to meet the target set at baseline. This was due to the fact that the pandemic had caused all the schools to shut, therefore, the project was unable to deliver the training in intended time.

Among the total schools assessed, 13 classes had higher number of girls than boys. A total of 5 children with disabilities were in the classes observed. Teachers were found largely to be displaying positive practices with regard to their dealing with students in the classroom. 63.64% of teachers were found to be encouraging girls in the classroom to express their ideas and opinions. 54.55% of the teachers

were found to be encouraging children from marginalized communities to participate in the classroom activities. Consequently, 77.27% of classrooms had boys and girls who appeared to talk easily with the teachers; do not appear fearful of making a mistake or annoying the teacher in some way. 81.82% of teachers were also using the gender sensitive languages by avoiding the statements that indicates domination or discrimination towards girls in any form.

The quantitative data are further validated by the qualitative consultations with the teachers, head teachers and education officers from the local level. The qualitative exercises found out that the teachers have the idea on child safeguarding and the gender responsive pedagogy but they lag behind in effectively following those mechanism in the classrooms. There is also an issue of resources constraint in the schools which is hindering the implementation of child safeguarding and gender responsive teaching pedagogies. Also, majority of the schools are facing an issue of lower number of teachers. This is also one of the reasons why teachers are not able to follow and practice child safeguarding and gender responsive pedagogy in real sense.

The need and importance of learner centered classroom practices were further explored qualitatively with head teachers, teachers and the education officials from the local level. The stakeholders had a common understanding that learner centered classroom management and organization are essential in creating a positive learning environment where a sense of belonging is established. Learner-centered classroom practices includes wide variety of skills and techniques that are used by teachers to keep students organized, focused, attentive, interested and on task. It requires an adoption of teaching learning mechanism amongst wide range of students in terms of age, gender, marginalization and disability. When learner-centered classroom management skills are executed effectively, the teacher has minimized the behaviors that impede learning for other individuals and has maximized behaviors that enhance learning. They fully agree that a well-organized and managed classroom appears to diminish student confusion, frustration and disruptive behavior, while increasing their ability to navigate the classroom independently, and promotes academically productive social interaction among students.

Furthermore, education officials from one of the municipalities in Banke had a view that spread of schools as well as the students in them are not uniformly distributed in terms of number of students in a school or class. In such cases, it is very difficult to access the teaching quality and the overall teaching learning mechanism in the schools. Hence, a proper monitoring and evaluation mechanism is deemed necessary in order to access the teaching quality and learner centered classroom practices in the schools.

> *"There is a very uneven distribution of schools and the students in regards to the geography and the population concentration. And it is impossible to look for quality in such situations. If a school is taken as an exemplary school, then the idea of quality control and quality assurance should abide. There are teachers who do not have much to do because the number of students are very less in some of the schools where as in other schools, teachers are having a very hard time managing the classroom due to high number of students." -a teacher from Banke*

One of the education officials from local government in Banke had a view that in order for student learning to be enhanced, the focus of quality teaching initiatives should not always be on the teacher. Rather it should encompass the whole institution and the learning environment. Quality teaching initiatives are very diverse both in nature and in function. Some of these initiatives are undertaken at teachers' level, others at departmental, institutional or country level. Some quality initiatives aim to improve pedagogical methods while others address the overall environment of student learning. Some are top-down process, other induce grass-root changes. He discussed, "*In order to evaluate which mechanism really improves the teaching quality, one must assess the level of teaching before the launching of the enhancement initiative. Once the programme is well started the teaching quality must again be meaningful. And for such an initiative to be truly effective the level of teaching must continue to be assessed very regularly.*"

When asked about the practice of sharing the learnings from those trainings achieved, one of the head teachers in Parsa stated that they had been organizing sharing events via meeting and discussions every week. Meetings were held every week where the trained teachers used to share their learning amongst other peers. Teachers do have informal discussions and conversations where they share about their learnings from various trainings they have attended and how has it helped them in the classroom. However, it is necessary to establish a proper learning sharing mechanism in the schools since informal conversations and meetings alone will not be sufficient to transfer knowledge and skills to new teachers who come as replacements to the old/experienced ones. Head teacher from a school in Sarlahi opined, *"The teachers also need to figure out ways for applicable learning, which actually helps the students in real world because theoretical learning will help them in gaining marks, but practical learning will help them in life."* Also, teachers were found to be discussing about their students' progress and brainstorming about new and innovative ideas to get the students involved and engaging in the subject matter with the help of different classroom and extra-curricular activities.

Teachers are aware regarding the gender sensitive pedagogies while they do not have much idea on disability sensitive teaching learning practices since there are not many students with disability in the schools. Some of the schools do have children with disabilities but the number in minimal. In those schools, students with physical disabilities are well adjusted with other students and are learning well. Hence, there is no need to apply different teaching learning practice for children with disability as it is not needed. But if the students with other forms of disabilities such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, autism, etc. are to get enrolled into formal schooling, then then the teachers should be well trained prior to the enrolment of the students and the schools' infrastructures also should be made disability friendly. Also, adequate and equipped human resources need to be in place who are well aware of disability friendly teaching learning mechanism before enrolling those students in the schools. Likewise, the overall infrastructure of the schools needs to be adapted as per the need and requirement of the children with disabilities. And for all these to take shape, schools in coordination with the local governments need to come up with plans and policies with proper budget implications. Moreover, external support from projects with children with disabilities as their primary beneficiaries should come into play.

Positive teacher–student relationship is one of the most reliable drivers of high student achievement for all students. The quality of teacher–student relationships affects students' social development, academic motivation and their engagement and willingness to learn. Positive and supportive teacher–student relationships generate positive learning environments and social outcomes among students.

When a positive teacher–student relationship is created, students thrive to meet the high expectations of the teacher, ultimately improving the students' academic performance and overall success. They allow the teacher to understand each student's learning needs, helping teachers to tailor the learning to individual student needs.

The qualitative consultations also found out that all the teachers in the government schools are trained teachers and these trainings were found to be helpful. What the teachers are looking for now is subject specific trainings following a different modality from the traditional trainings. Also, some of the teachers are looking for trainings on disability friendly teaching learning mechanisms. Teachers and head teachers agree that the trainings have been useful as it has improved teaching learning environment in the school since the students in the classroom have become more engaging and participating. Teacher learning or training is a continuous never-ending process which promotes teacher's teaching skills, master knowledge, develop better or newer proficiency, which in return assists in improving student's learning. They highlighted that when teachers are good at class management, students show much more interest in the classes and have better education outcomes comparatively to the situation when the teacher is not so good at classroom management.

The training of teachers must go on from time to time in between their jobs, to initiate them in newer technologies so that they can model that out for the students. Education officials from the local government do agree with the fact that teachers do not demand trainings and vocational support from the government, rather, the demand is more in infrastructural development in the schools. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, no trainings have been carried out from the local government, but once the pandemic subsides, the local government will plan relevant refresher trainings on child, gender and disability responsive pedagogies. However, local government too are constrained by the availability of limited resources. Sometimes, using the same teaching strategy for so long might make a pattern which does not really interest the students and might make the lessons boring. Training sessions are needed to help the teachers learn or create new teaching strategies which will bring back the interest of their students in the classrooms and encourage learning.

Economic empowerment and household support

Parental engagement was defined as one of the enabling factors for improved learning and transition of the beneficiary girls. The engagement of parents in girls learning is measured through the support they provide to the girls so that the favorable environment is created for girls to learn or to start safe profession. The project has envisioned engaging the parents through community meetings and awareness raising activities. As defined in MEAL framework, parental engagement was measured through the parental attitude towards the girls' education and employment by deriving the parental engagement score index. Variables from household survey which explored parental knowledge, attitude and practice for the support they provide (or should/will provide) were aggregated together to obtain the index. The variables comprised of support provided by parents in girls doing household chores, support in their education by providing money or looking for services or accompany them to access the services, support in formal and non-formal schools, vocational training and business, attitude towards marriage of their girls, attitude towards investing in girls education and employment, their 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 average of the percentage attained by all households was reported as parental engagement index.

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Y/N)
IO3: Increased parental support for girls' education and employment or business	Parental engagement score index (%)	72.22%	75%	83.19%	Y	85%	N
Main qualitative findings							
Parents have asserted during the discussion that their engagement in different community mobilization and awareness raising activities have enhanced their knowledge and attitude on importance of education to girls. They are positive towards girls' education and are willing to support for girls' future plan whether it be further education or starting own business. They also mentioned that they will provide support by providing money or goods required for fulfilling their plan. However, looking at the practice, it was found that there was lesser involvement of themselves of boys of the household in household chores. The girls themselves did not consider household chore as a barrier as they would finish their assigned duty before they go to school for learning or go to work. It has stemmed from the social norms in the project location where doing household chore is taken as normal duty that the girls have to perform. Furthermore, education of girls in the project area has been contemplated just as a means to be able to be informed of whatever information is provided through communication medias, to be able write their names or fill the forms as and when required rather than an opportunity to get employment and earn through the employment they get engaged in. The girls are therefore not allowed to finish their higher education and are at a verge of drop out of school. This has been asserted by most of the stakeholders consulted including teachers and municipality officers.							

The quantitative findings suggested that the parental engagement index has increased from 72.22% in the baseline to 83.19% in the midline where the target was 75%. The target has been overachieved by more than 8%-point difference. As discussed above, parental engagement activities have been noted to have contributed to the change in this index. When asked to the primary givers if they will support girls in their education or employment, 94% of them stated that they will support the girls in their formal education, 99.2% will support in non-formal learning, 99.6% will support in vocational training, and 98.1% will support in business. While exploring further on what kinds of support they are ready to provide to the girls in their learning and employment, the survey indicated that 71.5% of the respondents will provide money for accessing available services, 40.4% will support by looking for available services pertinent to education and employment, 44.9% will accompany them to access the services and 47.4% will take care of the household chores.

Despite of the encouraging parental attitude about supporting girls in their education and employment, the fact that there has not been an improvement in the proportion of household stating taking care of household chores has laid a question on the execution of their potential support to the girls in their plans. Most of the consulted stakeholder including girls themselves have acknowledged

that they are engaged most of the times in household chores. As discussed in the learning section, one of the reasons for low improvement in Math was due to the chores that they are not able to practice the sums at home. This also validates the argument about how the girls would be able to fulfill their dreams of attaining higher education or engaging in employment given the barrier. Still 89.9% of the girls have stated that they are involved in household chores for more than quarter the time of their day. Moreover, the fact that 76.4% of the household have stated that boys do not get engaged in any of the household chores sheds light on the social norms that is still in practice where the household chores are taken solely as a responsibility of female member of the house. Hence, it is less likely that the girls will be able to allocate time for themselves for learning or being engaged in the vocational activities.

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. Even though they stated that they will support girls in every possible way they can, they were reluctant in sending girls away from home for learning or starting vocation as stated earlier in the transition section.

> *I can not send my daughter all alone for higher education. I am afraid if she gets teased by boys in the way to school.*
> *-a parent from Sarlahi*

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 carried out several activities. With a bid to improve awareness on financial management, the project delivered financial literacy training to the girls who received the business skill trainings. The project also delivered training on AYSRH to all the adolescent girls including sanitary pad making training.

Financial literacy

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Y/N)

Increased entrepreneurship/livelihood and life skills of direct beneficiaries	Financial literacy score	67.78%	74.55%	71.11%	N	75%	Y
Main qualitative findings							
The girls unanimously shared that their knowledge regarding the financial matters have increased after they attended different financial literacy sessions. They could say where they can save money if they earn any in the future and that they can take loans if required to grow their business. They have also known the importance of saving family income and how the income could be wisely utilized for family well-being. However, the increase in knowledge level does not correspond to the practices. None of the girls consulted have approached banks or any financial institutions for any financial transactions.							

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. 21 girls responded to the questions and hence the finding presented in this section represents the views of those girls only which means that the findings from quantitative survey cannot be generalized to all the girls. As the sample is already too low, the finding has not been disaggregated for girls with disabilities.

Based on the data collected by external evaluator, the average financial literacy score was found to be 71.11% which is almost 4%-point increase from the baseline value of 67.78%.

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 baseline. Coming to the midline, this value has increased to 66.7%. The qualitative consultations done with the girls has supported this finding as most of the girls affirmed that they are aware of the financial institution existing in their community. They were made aware of the financial institutions and the importance of saving, financial planning like where to spend money, and keeping track of the expenses through bridge class. Some of the girls were able to share their knowledge among family members too. Most of the girls shared that there are cooperatives and micro enterprises in their community.

> *When I leaned about the financial matters, I shared the knowledge I gained with my parents. I also asked them if they have saved money in cooperative/bank. -a girl from Parsa*

Skills

Stemmed from the knowledge base that the girls had in financial literacy, their behavior reflects that they have improved in developing skills on financial matters. Girls have demonstrated increased skills in almost all aspects in comparison with the baseline. For instance, 64.71% girls had agreed to make

good decisions on how to spend money in the baseline while 81% of the girls have agreed in the midline. The girls keeping track of their monthly expenses increased from 58.82% in the baseline to 71.4% in the midline. 38.23% girls reported to set long terms financial goals in the baseline which increased to 71.4% in the midline. 64.71% girls wisely spent their money only on the things that they could afford in the baseline while 76.2% of the girls did so in the midline. The girls who could make good decisions about how the money should be spent at home increased from 76.47% in the baseline to 81% in the midline. Despite the promising quantitative findings, it was unveiled through the qualitative discussion that they barely have put on the skills into practice. Nevertheless, when asked what plans they have for future regarding these skills, most of them agreed that they will do whatever they have been taught. However, that does not mean that their plan will turn into action in future.

> *I have never saved money in the bank. Even though I had some money in my hand, I managed to save it at home. But if I start earning more money from my business, I will seek for cooperatives to save the earned money. -a girl from Sarlahi*

Attitude

The attitude toward financial literacy has been fairly increased from baseline to midline. There were 76.47% of girls who had planned on where to spend their money every month in the baseline, 85.7% of those did so in the midline.

In the light of the findings that girls have ample knowledge on financial matters, and that many girls have now chosen safe profession as their transition, the project now needs to build a mechanism where girls can start saving the money they earn through their profession. Group formation and saving and credit through groups could be done in the project areas so that the girls can have financial transactions in their own community.

Self-efficacy

The Schwarzer's and Jerusalem's General Self-Efficacy (GSE) tool was used to measure the self-efficacy of girls. The tool contained 10 questions concerned with the personal agency of girls which assessed the optimistic self-beliefs to cope with difficult situations in life. This scale was administered to all the girls participating in the girls' survey.

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	Target for next evaluation point	Will IO indicator be used for next evaluation point? (Y/N)
Married out of school (M-OOS) adolescent girls' improved attendance	Self-Efficacy score (%)	60.62	66.68%	64.25%	No	70%	Y

Main qualitative findings		
The girls have an increased perception of their self-confidence. They are able to set their plans and have their say about their future. The older girls foresee themselves starting their own business and make money from it. While the younger girls had plans of continuing their education. Girls from both the age groups admitted that they want to accomplish their goals too. The parents also highlighted that their daughters are now able to say what is right for themselves and sometimes suggest them in making decisions. However, their say remains in small household decisions only. For instance, girls express their opinion about house for sending them to school however the final decision of enrolling to schools is taken by parents. Likewise, when it comes to the decision on marriage, girls are never asked for their opinion.		

The quantitative data collected on self-efficacy showed that the average self-efficacy of girls has been slightly increased from 60.62% at the baseline to 64.25% at the midline. The score for girls with disability was 64%. While the quantitative data failed to demonstrate that the project has been able to improve the self-efficacy for overall girls, it has made a significant improvement for the girls with disability as the score for girls with disability at the baseline was 47.09%. Since the score in baseline itself was reported to be high, given that the beneficiary girls are marginalized girls, the comparatively lower improvement should be taken as a caveat.

Girls have become able to set their goals as only 1.1% of the girls did not know or could not say what they would like to do in future (in next five years). Of the total 530 girls interviewed, one third (33.2%) of them visualized themselves being engaged in formal employment, 27.9% engaged in some sort of vocational training and 20.6% continue their education. This data was further validated during the FGDs with the girls, where it was uncovered that they have not only set plans but also look forward to accomplish them. This was not the case in the baseline.

During qualitative discussion, it was also noticed that the girls who could barely speak in the baseline were more confidently putting their thoughts and sharing their experience in the midline. EE evaluators could thus easily interpret that the confidence of girls have risen up as compared to the baseline. Likewise, most of the girls during discussion expressed that they suggest their parents while making household decisions. They raise their voice when some decision about her life is being made, for instance, they are able to share to their parents that they want to go to school and complete higher education. Nevertheless, when major decision has to be made, their share of decision is pretty low. For example, girls are hardly asked if she wants to get married. Its upon parents' decision. Hence, despite the fact that girls' perception on their self-confidence has increased, practically, they are unable to exercise what they believe they are capable of. Hence, along with increasing the level of awareness and confidence, the project needs to focus on how the girls could actually exercise their power and make major decision concerning their life too.

Adolescent and Youth Reproductive and Sexual Health

Adolescent and Youth Reproductive and Sexual Health (AYSRH) was measured through 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.

Knowledge

Table 39 below reflects that there has been an increase in all of the knowledge related variables from baseline to midline. In the baseline 55.09% of girls had heard about safe menstrual practices while

88.7% of them have heard in the midline. The percentage of girls who have heard of family planning is more than twice as much as in the baseline. Of those girls who heard of safe menstrual practices, 33.4% heard from mother, 15.1% from sister, 24% female friends, and 29.2% NGOs. Almost one third of the girls admitted that the project activities have made them aware of the safe menstrual practices. 94.2% received sanitary pad making training of whom 97.2% reported being able to make it by themselves now and 85.8% reported the training to be a lot of useful, 98% reported that they are able to practice safe MHM practices and 74.5% shared that they were able to share the knowledge and skills with their friends/sisters/relatives.

Table 39: Knowledge on AYSRH

Indicators measured	Baseline	Midline
Heard of safe menstrual practices	55.09%	88.7%
Heard of Family Planning concept	26.04%	57.4%
Knowledge on legal age of marriage for girls	76.60%	96.2%
Knowledge on legal age of marriage for boys	92.64%	99.6%

Likewise of the girls who have heard about family planning, 36.8% heard from Mothers, 33.6% from sister, 19.4% from other female relatives, 30.4% from female friends, 5.1% from NGOs, 6.4% from government health workers. 66% of the girls reported that the AYSRH sessions were a lot of useful. It can be inferred from the quantitative findings that the project has been able to impart knowledge on ASYRH among the beneficiary girls.

The qualitative findings have also validated the quantitative findings. Girls shared that they found the ASYRH sessions conducted in the bridge class to be useful for them in terms of getting acquainted with the knowledge on sexual and reproductive health. They were specially fascinated by the sanitary pad making training and the contents of menstrual hygiene. They admitted that they did not know about the effect of malpractices concerning menstrual hygiene.

> *I did not know that the pad we use during menstruation needs to be changed many times in a day even if less bleeding is happening. Now I am very concerned of this and have shared this knowledge with my sisters and friends too -a girl from Parsa*

Skills

In the baseline, mostly girls (88.9%) stated of using cloth during their period. While in the midline, 52% of the girls stated that they use cloth and 83.7% stated using sanitary pad. Of those using pad, 59.1% change pad 3 times a day, 20% change more than 4 times a day. While only 77.27% of the girls were found to be washing the cloth with soap and water and dry in the direct sunlight in the baseline, all of the girl's using cloth wash them with soap and water and dry in the direct sunlight in the midline.

> *I usually use sanitary pad made of clothes which I am able to make it by myself after getting training from Prerana. I don't hesitate to dry them in the direct sunlight after washing them. -a girl from Sarlahi*

My daughter one day came to me and asked me not to let the cloths used during menstruation dry inside the house. Drying the cloth in sunlight helps to kill the microorganisms that may cause problems while re-using the clothes. – a mother from Banke

Attitudes

As discussed in the above section, the increment in knowledge has shaped positive attitude of girls concerning their sexual and reproductive health. They have become open about discussion any issues related to their sexual and reproductive health. When asked whom would they approach in future for any queries they have about sexual and reproductive health, 74% of them will ask their mothers, 49.2% with sister, 19.4% with other female relative, 42.6% with friends, 10% with FCHVs. There were 7.7% of the girls who shared that they will not approach anyone for the queries. Big sisters have observed that lately, the girls have started discussing the issues related to AYSRH among their friends and FCHVs. Initially they did not feel comfortable talking the matter other than with mothers. Now they approach FCHVs and other female members who they think might help them with. This has happened after they took the training on sanitary pad making and sexual health.

> **Project Checks on Intermediate Outcomes**
>
> Yes. All the IO has been analysis and it reflect the links from IOs to the impact level. Also, data has been sub grouped as per the logical framework. Both the quantitative and qualitative information has been analyzed in terms of IOs and sustainability.

7. Conclusions

The midline evaluation followed a panel approach where the same girls sampled in the baseline evaluation of ENGAGE project were followed up in the midline evaluation. Since there was an attrition rate of 21.1% an additional 112 girls and household were included in the survey to make up for the attrition so that the girls tracked at midline could be followed up in the end-line and the sample is comparable. The findings were presented for total sample including the top up sample.

Learning

The midline evaluation noted a significant improvement in the learning outcome of the girls as compared to the learning level of the girls at the baseline. For instance, the average score in literacy increased from 41.98 at baseline to 83.51 at the midline. Likewise, the numeracy score has increased from 16.22 at baseline to 19.97 at the midline. The change noted in both literacy and numeracy from baseline to midline was found to be significant with a p-value less than 0.01 in both the tests. The change in learning outcome was similar across different sub groups. Even though the learning of girls had improved, they still lacked certain skills like reading small passages in EGRA while subtraction in EGMA. Girls could easily master the lower sub tasks which were relatively easy while they were weak at performing when the sub tasks progressed to higher level of difficulty. It was evident from the findings that still almost half of the girls (48.4%) scored 0 in the comprehension task and a little less than one third of the girls scored 20% in the same sub-task at the midline.

Similarly, the learning scores for children with disabilities has also increased from baseline to midline. For instance, the average EGRA score for children with hearing impairment increased from 10.1 at baseline to 34.08 at midline, while the average EGRA score for children with visual impairment increased from 15.6 in BL to 51 in ML. Likewise, it was found that average EGMA score for children with hearing impairment increased from 7 in BL to 36.14 in ML, while the average EGMA score for children with visual impairment increased from 10 in BL to 55 in ML. Children with intellectual disability scored twice as much as the score in BL in basic literacy and numeracy skills. The midline evaluation witnessed about 50% improvement in most of functional activities of children with severe and profound disability.

Transition

The project had defined different pathways for girls to choose depending on the girls' age group and girls' desire to pursue her dreams. The younger girls were expected to choose learning pathway, meaning, enrolment back to school while the older girls had option of either continue learning or up taking safe profession. EE measured the transition considering the aforementioned transition pathways. The evaluation showed that overall, 90.4% of the girls had successful transition. The younger age group had higher rate of transition as compared to the higher age group. Muslim girls had slightly lower transition rate as compared to other ethnicity. The girls and their parents have perceived some barriers to successful transition like high burden of household chore, restriction of parents to travel and market access to the products.

Sustainability

In terms of sustainability, the sustainability score achieved by the project was twice as much as in the baseline. The community level sustainability indicators comprising parental attitude had increased from baseline. Learning hub had just been started, and a few of them were functional. Girls and

Inclusive Education Network had been formed recently without any further work within the network. For the learning space, all of the three indicators surrounding disability friendly infrastructure, inclusive SIP and teachers training sustainability were measured through classroom observation and consultations with teachers and head teachers. It was noted that there has not much improvement in the disability friendly infrastructure as not many schools were open due to the pandemic. SIP had been formulated and there was an improvement in the inclusiveness, however, the implementation part was poor. Regarding system level sustainability, the database systems were established however not all of them were functional.

Intermediate outcomes

There were five intermediate outcomes defined in the log frame which acted as enabling factor for improving the key outcomes. The first IO was improved attendance of the girls. During the baseline, attendance had not been measured as the bridge classes had just begun. In the midline, the attendance rate reached 71%. The second IO was environment for learning which comprised of two main domains. The first one was disability friendly infrastructure which was slightly improved. Another was inclusive SIP sustainability assessment. The SIP formulated in the schools were found to be somehow inclusive. However, there was minimal representation of parents during designing of SIP. Due to the resource constraint, the effective implementation of SIP had not been possible in the project area. Another IO was improved teaching quality. It was measured through learner centered classroom. From the baseline, there was minimal improvement in the indicator. The trained teacher had not been able to follow the learners centered pedagogical approaches due to constraints like large classroom size and higher number of students in the class.

Regarding economic empowerment and household support, the fourth IO, there had been an impressive improvement in the attitude of parents and the level of support provided by them for learning and transition. The parental engagement score had increased from baseline and the qualitative data also suggested that parents are ready to provide support for the learning and transition of girls however, challenges pertaining to restriction to travel still persists the project areas. The final IO, life skills was measured through three domains. Financial Literacy, Girls Self-Efficacy scale and Adolescent and Youth Reproductive and Sexual health were three areas measured under life skills. It was found that the knowledge attitude and skills regarding financial literacy had improved since baseline. However, girls had not yet used their skills as most of them did not have cash in hand. The girls' Self-Efficacy had improved as shown by the quantitative data, however, girls were found to have minimal exercise of the capacity they had. Regarding the adolescent and youth reproductive and sexual health, there had been an impressive improvement in knowledge attitude and practice. The sanitary pad making training had been found useful in transformation of their knowledge base and skill.

8. Recommendation

Learning

- Even though there was a significant improvement in girls' literacy and numeracy skills, girls were still found to be facing a lot of difficulties in reading words (sub-task 4) and reading passages (sub-task 5) in EGRA and addition and subtraction in EGMA. Since most of the girls have now enrolled into the school, support classes in school for improving further learning of these girls is advisable. While doing so, project might need to consider the level of girls and provide support classes based on their learning level.

- Low improvement in Math was noted even though the improvement was significant. Lack of practice was found to be the main reason for this. Hence, if support could be provided through one-to-one coaching like home tuition or intense peer-to-peer classes might be helpful for those girls. Also, project needs to focus on supporting Girls with Disabilities as their score was lower as compared to other girls.

- For the girls who have not yet enrolled into the school, the project needs to provide support through alternative of bridge classes. Since the peer-to-peer learning was found effective, mobilization of big sisters could be done to support those girls

- Since transportation was found to be one of the major barriers for learning, the project could advocate with local level for providing transportation facilities like cycle or pick up/drop for the most marginalized group of girls.

Transition

- Since at the time of midline data collection, many girls were not certain if they would actually up take the small business, project needs to show pathways on how small business can actually help generate income for their livelihood and should motivate the girls to use the skills they have acquired through vocational training.

- One of the challenges identified for continuing the profession was market access to goods produced or services delivered. In this light, the project could bridge the gap by linking the market to the community. Project can coordinate with public and private sectors to link the small scale business with available markets.

- Since restriction to travel emerged as another barrier for girls such that they can't travel alone for either taking training, or accessing services. To overcome this barrier, project should initiate the discussion with local government to explore the further possibilities to support in their transportation.

Sustainability

- Even though parents' attitude was found high through quantitative data, the practice was inconsistent with the findings, hence, the project needs to continue to engage parents through different activities specially to work on the barrier related to travel restriction.

- On the program design end, since the basic education is free for all as provisioned by the constitution, the indicator "Average % of income invested in each of their disabled and marginalized girls' education" seems irrelevant for the project to measure and thus EE recommends on removing the indicator for next evaluation point.

- The learning hubs had been started and only few of them were functional at the time of midline data collection. Since project envisions providing the ownership of the hubs to the local community, EE recommends on engaging newly formed GIEN to take the responsibility of the operation and management of the learning hubs for sustainability of the hubs.
- It was comprehended that the database in the municipality is not yet functional. There is no mechanism to screen for children with disability in the community and bring them in the central system. EE hence recommends on establishing a system so that the database is updated in a regular basis and capacitate the human resource for this. Alternatively, project should also coordinate with the federal government (Center for Education and Human Resource Development) to mainstream regular collection of data and their use from EMIS system.
- It was found that there is also the gap in skill transfer (in case of transfer of the trained personnel). Hence, project needs to strengthen the system of learning sharing and community of practice to transfer the skills from the trained staff to other staff..

Intermediate outcomes

- The attendance rate of bridge class was found to be satisfactory, meeting the national average. Now the girls have enrolled to the school. The time that the girls need to allocate for school will be higher than the time allotted for bridge class. Given that the girls have higher household chore burden, chances are there that they might skip classes. Considering this, EE recommends on having a strong tracking mechanism for regular attendance of the girls. Mobilization of big sister could be done for this.
- Many schools mentioned that they don't currently have students with special needs in their school. Therefore, they don't feel the need of disability friendly infrastructure in their school. However, they are also mindful of the policy provision of inclusive education and have acknowledged the need for upgrading the school infrastructure. Considering this, the project needs to complete the infrastructure support (development of ram and renovation of toilets for the remaining school as soon as possible.
- It was found from the study that the SIP progress has been more or less inclusive. However, the major gap is in terms of implementation. EE recommends on developing the capacity of schools on effective implementation of the SIP.
- There has been a problem of teachers' transfer all across the project areas. Due to this, the new teacher has gap in the training due to improper knowledge transfer mechanism. Hence the project needs to either ensure proper skill transfer mechanism or provide orientation/training to the new teacher.
- Project should orient schools about unique approaches to ensure parents visit their children's school regularly. Schools can also conduct recreational activities like cultural events at regular intervals where parents are invited. Since participation in such programs are usually high, they can be utilized to hold parents-teachers' meetings.
- The project needs to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation by the local government on the implementation status of plans and programs included in the SIP. Further the project can also support to lobby for the resource support for implementing the inclusive policies with the local government.

- Even though the parents' attitude has heavily increased, the support in the household chores was not evident in from the study. Since household chores was one of the major barriers, parental engagement activities need to be intensified so that they support girls such that the girls get time to get involved in revise the learning they had in the school

9. Annexes

Annex 1: Project Design and Intervention

The detailed description of Theory of Change (ToC) is presented on page 7 of this report which is followed by ToC diagram on page 8. Along with the description of the ToC, EE has commented on the barriers identified by the project in its ToC. This has been presented on pages 33 to 36.

Annex 2: Midline evaluation approach and methodology

The midline evaluation approach and methodology has been presented in the body of this report on pages 9-28.

Annex 3: Characteristics and Barriers

The details characteristics and barriers have been presented in the body of this report on pages 29-36.

Annex 4: Learning outcome data tables

The tables from Annexes are included in the main body. Please refer to the following tables corresponding to the tables in annexes.

Table number in Annex	Table number in main body
4.1	Table 14
4.2	Table 40
4.3	Table 15
4.4	Table 18
4.5	Table 41
4.6	Table 19
4.7	NA
4.8	Table 20

Literacy

It is noted from the table below that the midline has marked improvement in the mean scores achieved by girls from baseline to midline in all the subtasks of literacy as tested by EGRA Test. The difference in the mean score across baseline to midline has been significant as tested by the t-test with p values less than 0.01 in all subtasks.

Table 40: Literacy score averages (by subtask) across baseline and midline

	Score (average)		p-value	Statistically significant difference (Y/N)
	Baseline (N= 496)	Midline/endline (N= 496)		
Subtask 1: Listening comprehension	1.8387	2.9758	<0.01	Y
Subtask 2: Letter identification	19.3730	34.0806	<0.01	Y
Subtask 3: Symbols identification	12.5242	27.9335	<0.01	Y
Subtask 4: Familiar word identification	7.5968	16.2581	<0.01	Y
Subtask 5a: Reading comprehension	.6552	1.0403	<0.01	Y

Numeracy

The midline evaluation has also provided the evidence that the numeracy skills of girls, as tested by EGMA has been improved since baseline across all the subtasks. While testing statistically, it was revealed from the table below that the difference in the mean observed was statistically significant for all the subtasks except for subtask 4. The mean difference observed for subtask 4 was 0.32 which was not statistically significant when tested by a t-test.

Table 41: Numeracy score averages (by subtask) across baseline and midline

	Score (average)		p-value	Statistically significant difference (Y/N)
	Baseline (N= 496)	**Midline/endline (N= 496)**		
Subtask 1: Number identification	5.8810	6.8972	.002	Y
Subtask 2: Quantity discrimination	2.1835	3.4819	<0.01	Y
Subtask 3: Missing numbers	2.2540	2.6996	.001	Y
Subtask 4: Addition/ Subtraction	4.3185	4.6371	.151	N
Subtask 5: Word problems	1.5887	1.9577	<0.01	Y

Annex 5: Log frame and Medium-Term Response Plan Output Monitoring Framework

Attached Separately

Annex 6: Beneficiaries Tables

Table 6.1: Direct beneficiaries

	Learners			HT/Teachers/other "educators"			MoE/District/ Govn't staff			Parents/ caregivers			Community members		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
[Cohort 1]	5637	2340	7977	105	269	374	132	351	483	5251	2011	7262	1114	1059	2173

Table 6.2: Indirect beneficiaries

	Learners			HT/Teachers/other "educators"			MoE/District/ Govn't staff			Parents/ caregivers			Community members		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
[Cohort 1]	5325	5496	10821	0	0	0	0	0	0	98	12	110	80	77	157

Table 6.3: Direct beneficiaries by intervention/activity

	Intervention/activity						Total
	Preparatory Classes	*Bridge Classes*	*Big Sisters Mentoring*	*Peer to Peer Education*	*Distance Teachingand Learning*	*CP/GBV and AYSRH Orientation*	
[Marginalized Girls]	0	2340	2340				2340(including drop out)
[Children with Hearing and Visual Impairments]	40	0	40	1064	1064	2525	40 (Surveyed 39)
[Children with Severe and profound Disability]	0	0	94				94 (Surveyed 81)
[Children with Intellectual Disability]	0	51	51				51 (Surveyed 51)

Comments by External Evaluator

Initially, FDM had conducted a pre-baseline survey to identify the marginalized OOS adolescent girls aged 10-19 as the direct beneficiaries for the project. Further verification was done by the project by the project to verify the beneficiaries from the list provided by FDM. Technical verification was also carried out by the project to confirm the beneficiary girls and boys with disability from the list provided with girls having functional limitation.

After the intervention in bridge class started, the project has been continuously collecting data on the number of beneficiaries by mobilizing their field staff. The social mobilizers (field staff) have been updating the number of beneficiaries through one-to-one approach and have been updating the number in their database system. EE, in midline evaluation has experienced attrition of 21% in its sample. The sample girls visited in the midline were the same sample of girls who were contacted in the baseline. Since the enrolled girls were OOS girls, EE had anticipated this previously and therefore, had added a 30% attrition rate. Since it was impossible for EE to track the girls who had dropped out of the project, EE had to rely on the list provided by the project for reaching the sampled girls. Hence the approach adopted by project on updating the beneficiaries' number is reliable and EE authenticates the accuracy of the data provided by the project.Annex 7: External Evaluators Inception Report

The inception report has been attached separately.

Annex 8: Quantitative and qualitative data collection tools used for midline

The list of tools used for midline evaluation are:

1. HH Survey questionnaire
2. Girls Survey questionnaire
3. Learning Tools (EGRA/EGMA test)
4. Focus Group Discussion guidelines
5. Key Informant Interview guidelines
6. School Improvement Plan assessment checklist
7. Disability Friendly Infrastructure assessment checklist
8. Classroom observation checklist

The tools have been attached separately.

Annex 9: Qualitative transcripts

The transcripts have been uploaded to the UK Data Archive

Annex 10: Quantitative datasets, codebooks and programs

The quantitative datasets along with codebook has been uploaded to the UK data archive.

Annex 11: Quantitative sampling framework

The sampling framework used in baseline was used for midline as well. This has been separately attached.

Annex 12: External Evaluator declaration

Attached separately

Annex 13: Project Management Response

This annex should be completed by the project.

This annex gives the project the chance to prepare a short and concise management response to the evaluation report before the report is published.

What is the project's response to the key findings in the report? Make sure to refer to main conclusions

There is an improvement in the overall literacy and numeracy of primary actors including children with hearing and visual impairments. However, project need to focus on comprehensive reading and numeracy for the remaining period. Due to COVID 19 pandemic, school related intervention couldn't happen as per the plan. However, project is focusing on the school intervention during this year i.e school improvement plans, disability friendly school environment and pedagogical training to the schools teachers. During the data collection period, training and orientation to the municipal officials on database management was not conducted. Thus the functionality score of database management of municipality was very low. Project completed training and orientation on database management system. Also, project will regularly follow up on this for the remaining period. One of the challenges project is facing is high number of drop out due to early marriage, household chores, migration, death of the direct beneficiaries and unwillingness to study.

What is the project's response to the conclusions and recommendations in the report?

Project responses to the conclusions and recommendation described the given table:

Recommendation/Comments	Responses
Girls were still found to be facing a lot of difficulties in reading words (sub-task 4) and reading passages (sub-task 5) in EGRA and addition and subtraction in EGMA	Plan Literacy and numeracy for all activities to all the primary actors to improve their sub-task 4 and 5 in both literacy and numeracy. Project will continue and mobilize big sisters and national volunteers further coaching and mentoring on higher sub task. They will also support in assessing their learning and providing continuous feedback to them. Similarly, project will coordinate with the school teachers and initiate remedial support class with specific focus on sub task 4 and 5.
Low improvement in Math was noted even though the improvement was significant. Lack of practice was found to be the main reason for this. Hence, if support could be provided through one-to-one coaching like home tuition or intense peer-to-peer classes might be helpful for those girls.	- Plan Literacy and numeracy for all activities to all the primary actors to improve their sub-task 4 and 5. - Project will mobilize big sisters and national volunteers to do additional efforts of mentoring on higher sub task. - Similarly, project will coordinate with school teachers to design and implement remedial support class to address these problems. - Project continuously provide counseling and support to the parents to minimize their children's household chores through door-to-door approach.
For the girls who have not yet enrolled into the school, the project needs to provide support through alternative of bridge classes. Since the peer-to-peer learning was found effective, mobilization of big sisters could be done to support those girls	- Besides remedial support classes to the schools going girls, Project will continuously provide peer to peer support to those girls who are not enrolled in bridge classes. Likewise, project will continue parental counseling to convince them to continue their education.

Since transportation was found to be one of the major barriers for learning, the project could advocate with local level for providing transportation facilities like cycle or pick up/drop for the most marginalized group of girls.	- Project has already started discussion with the local government to explore the possibilities of offering support on transportation to the Primary actors. Project has also planned to discuss this issue with the provincial level government to link with their *beti padahau beti bachau* movement to support the most marginalized girls. (Project will not implement this recommendation following do no harm principle)
One of the challenges identified for continuing the profession was market access to goods produced or services delivered. In this light, the project could bridge the gap by linking the market to the community. Coordinate with public and private	- Yes. Project is coordinating with existing entrepreneurs for the linkage of goods produced by primary actors. Likewise, project has also discussed and linked with the trainers to establish linkage of the primary actors with the possible/potential markets. - Project has been coordinating with local government, schools, SMC and PTA to tailored the uniform of in-schools boys and girls by our primary actors.
Even though parents' attitude was found high through quantitative data, the practice was inconsistent with the findings, hence, the project needs to continue to engage parents through different activities specially to work on the barrier related to travel restriction.	- Yes. Project will continue parenting education and onsite coaching and mentoring support through big sisters, CMs and volunteers to convince parents to support their girls including mobilizing the religious leaders (New activity) to convince the parents, which was found one of the best ways to encourage parental engagement in development activities.
On the program design end, since the basic education is free for all as provisioned by the constitution, the indicator "Average % of income invested in each of their disabled and marginalized girls' education" seems irrelevant for the project to measure and thus EE recommends on removing the indicator for next evaluation point.	- From the midline study, it was found the investment in the education was increased compared to baseline. Also, many indirect cost of primary actors in education will be tracked through this indicator. Thus, Project needs to keep this indicator in the next evaluation point.
The learning hubs had been started and only few of them were functional at the time of midline data collection. Since project envisions providing the ownership of the hubs to the local community, EE recommends on engaging newly formed GIEN to take the responsibility of the operation and management of the learning hubs for sustainability of the hubs.	- Yes. Agree with the recommendation and project will capacitate GIEN to support for better management of learning hubs. Similarly, project purchased learning materials to support primary actors learning and motivating community members to use the community learning hubs in the quarter 13.
It was comprehended that the database in the municipality is not yet functional. There is no mechanism to screen for children with disability in the community and bring them in the central system. EE hence recommends on establishing a system so that the database is updated in a regular basis. Alternatively, annual data collection could be done to mainstream those girls in the system.	- Yes. During the midline evaluation data collection, training on database management was not completed. However, during the quarter 13, database management training to the municipal officials has been completed. - Project has a provision to support local government and school in planning process which will further provide a ground for evidence-based planning and programming. - Project has continuously lobbied with the federal government to mainstream the central EMIS ensuring the collection of data base regarding disability and inclusion and their effective use.
EE recommends on having a strong tracking mechanism for regular attendance of the girls. Mobilization of big sister could be done for this.	- Project develop online system to track the girls and regular monthly attendance tracking system has been developed.

	- Project is mobilizing the big sisters and national volunteers to those primary actors whose attendance is less then 70%. - Monthly attendance has been analyzed by the project team to track the attendance. - Project will also mobilize the big sisters to convince the parents by using the attendance record through door-to-door approach.
Project needs to complete the infrastructure support for the school as soon as possible.	- The project has been sensitizing teachers and head teachers with the importance of inclusive education/disability friendly environment through various training such as IE training, pedagogical training etc. and that they might have to cater to the needs of students with disabilities anytime even if they don't have children with special needs at the present. - The concept of accessibility has already been embedded in the SIP and the schools are also trying to complete the school modification/create inclusive environment at school in Q14 which will eventually contribute to disability friendly infrastructure. - The project has already supported to school to construct ram and renovate the toilets to make them more disable friendly to support children's access to them.
EE recommends on developing the capacity of schools on effective implementation of the SIP.	- The teachers and head teachers have already been given training on inclusive SIP formulation and the SIPs have also been formulated. However, due to long closure of schools as a result of the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation part is lacking. - The district team and CMs will closely monitor and rigorously follow up in part of implementation of SIP.
Project needs to either ensure proper skill transfer mechanism or provide orientation/training to the new teacher.	- This is a genuine issue that needs to be considered by the project. The project team will encourage proper knowledge transfer mechanism to the new teachers. - Project will also start the practice of learning sharing among the teachers to learn each other.
Important for VSO to think about this otherwise trainings are pointless if girls cannot earn a livelihood from them	- Community has the cultural practices of restricted mobility of their adolescent girls and during the COVID-19 pandemic, they were more serious about their girl's mobility. - Project has initiated door- to door- visit, counseling to the parents and some cases, big sisters themselves have supported to attend in the training events. As a result, all the primary actors have taken part in the training and now started their business as well. - Still there are few parents who are more conservative and where project has further plan to convince them so that the PA will have free mobility as per the need of the project.
In addition to this, girls also reported being frequently poked by the trainers of tailoring for not receiving their payment on time and talking rudely to the girls- This raises serious SG concerns and i am wondering why this wasn't reported on SHE.	- Project has developed the system of supply of facilitators by the respective technical organizations and deal with directly with the organization. Organization supplies the facilitators and project team has ensured the technical delivery of the facilitators. In this particular case, both of the parties (facilitator sending organization and facilitators) reported this issue to the project team.

	- Project has also developed a system of weekly discussion and tracking the progress and issues and concerns, and plan to resolve any implementation issues immediately. - Once this issue has came to the noticed to the project team, this issue was immediately resolved through discussion with the organization and facilitators. - There is a trend of pay back to the consultant on a monthly basis after the completion of facilitation. - Few days delay in payment, is not a serious issue which need to be reported in SHE. - Project has also made the provision of hot line safeguarding number and also oriented all PA and Facilitators as well to report directly if they experienced some sort of protection and safeguarding issues.
The goat provided in Parsa became sick - This raises concerns as to whether the girls environments were assessed for goat rearing and whether the training provided was adequate enough to enable girls to look after the goats. Some quality issues here on the type of training provided.	- The project has developed the system of delivery of goats after the technical check by the veterinary doctors, which has minimized the risk of delivery of sick goats. - Moreover, before distributing of goat to the direct beneficiaries, it was further monitored by the veterinary technical person and each of the goat were insured thereby having no extra burden for the families for treatment or replacing the goats.
Project should orient schools about unique approaches to ensure parents visit their children's school regularly. Schools can also conduct recreational activities like cultural events at regular intervals where parents are invited. Since participation in such programs are usually high, they can be utilized to hold parents-teachers' meetings.	- Project will continue door-door visit and parental education and counseling to encourage their engagement in schooling and children's' learning initiatives - Project will discuss with the school authority and support them to initiate patents teachers' association meeting to encourage parental engagement - Project will also coordinate with the schools and support to increase parental engagement in SIP process, Student enrollment camp, and other learning initiatives under the leadership of the schools
The project needs to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation by the local government on the implementation status of plans and programs included in the SIP. Further the project can also support to lobby for the resource support for implementing the inclusive policies with the local government.	- The IE policy has already been endorsed by Kohalpur Municipality. The project team is regularly coordinating for the implementation plan and budget allocation. - Project has a plan to support all palikas to develop and implement inclusive education policies - Project has also plan to effectively mobilize GIEN to lobby with the local government to effectively implement the IE policies.
Even though the parents' attitude has heavily increased, the support in the household chores was not evident in from the study. Since household chores was one of the major barriers, parental engagement activities need to be intensified so that they support girls such that the girls get time to get involved in revise the learning they had in the school	- The project has always put parents/parental engagement at the core considering the socio cultural setting of the project area. The project will continue to make parents aware of the importance of girl's education, adverse effects of child marriage etc. through parental awareness sessions and counseling even in the coming quarters. - The project will also mobilize GIEN to provide counseling to the parents to convince them to reduce the household chore and increase the learning time of the girls.

What changes to the logframe will be proposed to DFID and the Fund Manager?

All the logframe has been changed during the ABB period. Not any changes proposed after the midline evaluation.