Project Evaluation Report

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Notes:

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Girls' Education Challenge

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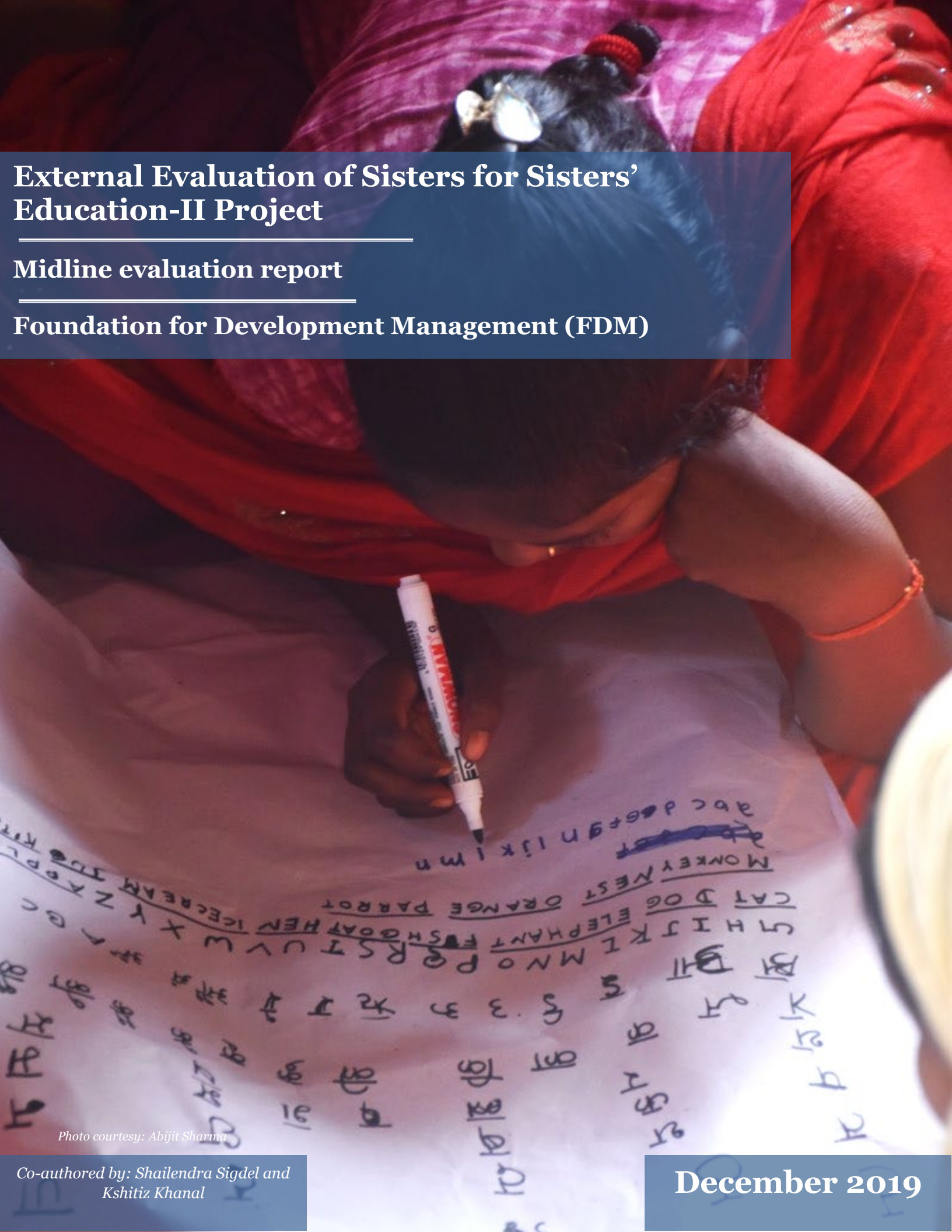
External Evaluation of Sisters for Sisters' Education-II Project

Midline evaluation report

Foundation for Development Management (FDM)



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Most importantly, I wish to express my gratitude to all the respondents who agreed to be a part of the study and share their opinions and experiences with the research team. I hope that the information presented in this report can be used to address the key issues and concerns they highlighted.

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List of Abbreviation

ASRHR	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
CRM	Complaint Response Mechanism
DID	Difference in Difference
GEC – T	Girls Education Challenge - Transition
GoN	Government of Nepal
IO	Intermediate Outcome
LSC	Learning Support Classes
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
PTA	Parents Teacher Association
SeGMA	Secondary Grade Mathematical Assessment
SeGRA	Secondary Grade Reading Assessment
SfS II	Sisters for Sisters II
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
VfM	Value for Money

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Executive Summary

The Sisters for Sisters – II (SfS II) education project is being implemented in four districts of Nepal – Dhading, Lamjung, Surkhet, and Parsa and builds upon the success of the first phase of the project. While SfS I was focused on creating an enabling study environment for girls studying in primary level (who later transitioned to secondary level by the end of the project), the second phase of the project, which is being funded under the DFID's Girls Education Challenge – Transition (GEC -T) window, is more focused on supporting the girls' transition from school with the power of choice to either find small scale livelihood related employment or continue their education. The SfS II project was introduced in the same community as in the first phase since the endline study of the first phase found that continued intervention was necessary to enable girls to transition into higher education and economic sector successfully. Further, the learnings from the first phase also indicated that as the girls progressed into the secondary level, further assistance to help them improve their learning skills was needed.

In this context, the SfSE-II project primarily works with two groups of girls. First, all in-school girls enrolled in grade 6 to grade 10 in 48 treatment schools across the four districts encompassing a total of 7,382 marginalized girls in grades 6-10, including 1,208 extremely marginalized girls. Second, girls aged 6-9 years in one of the project districts (Parsa), who have dropped out of school or have never been to schools to facilitate their transition into formal or non-formal education. The project's Theory of Change (ToC) is based upon the assumption that when empowered - marginalized girls will be able to improve their learning outcome and life options. It further envisions that marginalized adolescent girls from the project districts will be equipped with skills, bolstered by strong learning outcomes that improve employability, enhanced confidence and self-esteem to act as leaders in the community and enable them to influence and control their own sexual and reproductive health rights.

At the heart of the project is the innovative 'Big Sisters mentoring scheme,' which involves establishing peer networks that provide academic support and mentoring of 'Little Sisters' (marginalized younger female beneficiaries) by 'Big Sisters' (senior female students). Other major project interventions include:

- conducting Learning Support Classes (LSCs) for in-school girls to improve their studies by putting stress on specific subjects in which the girls are weak.
- identifying 'Adult Champions' in the community who facilitate negotiations with parents adding credibility to the scheme through their ability to communicate in the community
- providing a nine-month 'Bridge Course' (preparatory classes and school enrolment support) to children who have never been to school or who dropped out
- supporting schools as well as teachers to improve the quality of education by establishing a safe and inclusive learning environment and improving their teaching skills, respectively and;
- working directly with the district government, Head Teachers, and other stakeholders to enable them to carry out responsibilities under the SSDP while also conducting community awareness activities.

Under its log frame, the project has three outcomes and five intermediate outcomes. In terms of the first outcome of the project - learning, FDM's midline study saw an improvement in the numeracy skill of the girls, which was a result of the Learning Support Classes (LSC) held by the project to support the learning of the girls. While there was an increase in the literacy score of the girls, the need to focus on their analytical skills still persisted. This needs warrants the requirement

of a dedicated intervention targeted towards literacy. Furthermore, when a comparison was made between the learning scores of the Little Sisters and other beneficiaries of the project, FDM's evaluation showed that Little Sisters had better scores thanks to the additional support they received from their Big Sisters.

In regards to the second outcome – transition, the evaluation showed that efforts of Big Sister, Adult Champions, and teachers had contributed to decreasing drop-out in schools and, subsequently, improving transition. Home visits and direct intervention with families by these change agents had been widely successful. Across all the districts, the involvement of Big Sisters with family members of Little Sister was found to have had a significant spill-over effect, among others, leading to increased community awareness regarding gender, child marriage, and the importance of education. In addition, 'Bridge courses' were also effective at enabling younger out of school girls in Parsa to re-enter education.

The better learning scores of the girls was a subsequent result of improvement in multiple Intermediate Outcomes (IOs). One of them was attendance (IO1). The midline study found an increased sense of realization amongst parents about the importance of regularly attending schools resulting in a better attendance rate for the girls. Stakeholders reported that parents were increasingly helping girls to attend school more regularly. FDM found that the project's awareness activities, along with Big Sisters' campaigning, had a big role in bringing about the community's change in attitude. However, the trend of absenteeism at certain periods, especially following a long vacation, was still prevalent.

One of the most visible impacts of the project was the confidence of the girls (IO2). When asked about the changes they had noticed in the girls post the project intervention, increased level of confidence was the response of 8 out of the 12 headteachers. The quantitative survey also reflected this fact as the percentage of girls reporting that they took all the key decisions on their own had increased by almost 8% in the midline study as compared to the baseline. The increased decision-making freedom of the girls was attributed to the project's collective interventions of increasing the girls' confidence, parental awareness, and the spill-over effect of the mentoring program.

The success of the project's awareness activities and the subsequent increase in parental awareness was reflected not just in terms of increased attendance, but also in terms of increased parental engagement in their daughters' education (IO3). FDM's evaluation found that the majority of the girls now spent less than 2 hours on household chores, meaning that most of the girls now had the option to dedicate their time to studies. In addition, since the project's Learning Support Classes require the girls to stay at school for a longer period, they were spending lesser time at home to perform household chores. However, a major persistent problem was the low involvement of parents in their daughters' education. Almost all school authorities complained about parents' limited visits to the school to inquire about their daughters' education.

The project's activities in regards to its engagement with schools and teachers bore mixed results (IO4). To begin with, there had been an improvement in the teachers' attitude and behavior. There was an increase in the number of teachers who displayed learner-centered classroom practices, exceeding the target set for the evaluation point. The teachers, however, complained that they could not fully adopt child-friendly teaching techniques due to logistical challenges like huge classroom size. Moreover, most of them complained about the frequency of the training, which ended up being simply a 'one-off event.' Much of the changes in teachers' attitudes and behavior were attributed to interventions like promoting child protection and engagement of project staff rather than the teachers' training.

Similarly, activities targeted to improve target schools' School Improvement Plan (SIP) also suffered since it was a 'one-off' event (IO5). Although local government authorities did feel that

the target schools had better SIPs as compared to other schools in their areas, most of the SIPs still lacked components of child protection, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) or Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) in the SIPs. The project's activities to support the Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) functionality assessment also did not generate any positive results. Only three out of the 44 schools met all the criteria for the Complaint Response Mechanism functionality assessment.

While the project's positive impact on learning and most of the IOs are definitely commendable, the evaluation also found areas of improvement for the project. To begin with, FDM's evaluation found an immediate need for an intervention targeting the literacy skills of the girls. Since the LSC classes laid stress only on Mathematics, the girls saw only a limited improvement in their literacy skills. Furthermore, the project's digital learning support through the 'EDGE intervention' also requires a major redesigning as the learning from one of the project districts (Surkhet) shows limited learning and high turnover in the EDGE clubs. Most importantly, FDM has felt the need for the project to give high priority to support the institutional capacity of schools. Instead of supporting SIP development through 'one-off training,' it is essential for the project to take it forward as a long-term intervention. Moreover, FDM has also found a need for increased interventions with teachers especially around the use of physical forms of punishment and management of classes. In addition, given that there was minimal evidence that community members were taking a proactive role in promoting girl's education, building parental and community support for resource mobilization and accountable application may need to be undertaken in tandem with wider adoption or scaling of these interventions.

In regards to sustainability, as successful as the mentoring support intervention has been, FDM feels that in its future programming, the project needs to put a greater focus on other beneficiaries (apart from the Little Sisters) as the Little Sisters will have graduated from grade 10 by the end of this year. Although the project envisions other students to be beneficiaries as well, the evaluation showed that the project's impact had been mostly limited to the Little Sisters. Moreover, given the success of the Learning Support Classes, FDM feels it would be of more benefit if it is run throughout the year rather than just for 3 months.

The midline evaluation also showed that project interventions have been contributing to the government's policy initiatives. The Government of Nepal (GoN) has committed to the Education 2030 Framework of Action, where gender equity is a top priority. Furthermore, the current School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) and its Equity Strategy place high importance on equity, even if gender-responsive budgeting and planning have been disrupted by the federal transitions and disbanding of district education offices. In this regard, the project's intervention to ensure equity from an institutional level is not just contributing to the government's policy but also actively promoting it.

The project's highly successful mentoring approach has scope for wider adoption/scaling given the positive impact it has had on the girls and its relatively low cost and replicability locally. Increased confidence and literacy/numeracy skills of the Little Sisters, as well as improved attitude of the parents, were partly attributable to engagement by the Big Sisters'. The federal and provincial governments, as well as other development partners, should review with SfS-II project support how sustainable systems of peer mentoring could be scaled, with intrinsic, tertiary education and career development opportunities for youth and young adult female mentors. The project's positive impact, thus, can be replicated in other districts as well and not just in the project areas if it is scaled out in other areas.

1. Background to project

1.1. Project Theory of Change and beneficiaries

The Sisters for Sister's Education- II (SfS II) project is based upon the assumption that when they are empowered, marginalized girls will be able to improve their learning outcome and life options. The Theory of Change (ToC) also incorporates the importance of parents and communities valuing educated girls and being able to address the challenges arising from Nepal's socio-cultural practices in regards to girl's education, schools providing safe, conducive environments for learning and teachers having sufficient skills and knowledge to support learners as integral to girls' development and learning. It also lays stress on providing adequate opportunities to girls who wish to leave school for work in order to become economically empowered to secure a safe, sustainable livelihood. The ToC has been presented in Appendix I.

The project envisions that marginalized adolescent girls from the project districts will transition from basic to secondary school education with the power of choice to either find small scale livelihood related employment or continue their education. They will be equipped with skills, bolstered by strong learning outcomes that improve employability, enhanced confidence and self-esteem to act as leaders in the community, and enable them to influence and control their own sexual and reproductive health rights. Building on the SfS I under Girls Education Challenge (GEC) – I, the SfSE-II project, primarily works with two groups of girls. First, all in-school girls enrolled in grade 6 to grade 10 in 48 treatment schools across four districts; Dhading, Lamjung, Surkhet, and Parsa. This encompasses a total of 7,382 marginalized girls in treatment schools in grades 6-10, including 1,208 extremely marginalized girls.

Second, in Parsa district, the project also works with girls aged 6-9 years who dropped out of school or have never been to schools to facilitate their transition into formal or non-formal education. This intervention is a continuation from phase one as even after the completion of phase one; there were still girls in the community for whom this intervention was deemed necessary.

SfS - I and its relation to SfS - II

The ToC of the first phase of the project asserted the fact that marginalized and extremely marginalized girls lacked the capacity or confidence to overcome barriers or even to recognize the injustice in their everyday lives. Enabling these girls to control and expand their choices required additional capacity and support at various levels, i.e., individual, community and school. Furthermore, improving the learning outcomes of these girls required a tailored approach led by those with a local understanding of their circumstances and context, to identify with and share their challenges. Girls also needed a conducive learning environment that responds to address girls' barriers both at home and at schools. A need for strengthening school management to prioritize their activities to create enabling conditions to accomplish the quality of learning in a more inclusive, safe and secure learning environment.

The context and status of women and girls in Nepal clearly indicated that women were excluded from the social, political, educational, economic processes throughout history at all levels, i.e., household, community, and national women are discriminated against due to patriarchal mindsets. Socio-cultural, economic, gender, class, cast, and structural discriminations were and are the major barriers to women and girls in achieving the rights to education. VSO from the experiences of different projects implementation, for instance, Teaching to Learn, SfS-I and various other national documents such as Nepal Population Census (2011), National Living Standard Survey (2010/2011), Population Situation Analysis (2011) have also mentioned that subsistence poverty, early marriage, dowry, *Chhaupadi* (isolation of females from their family, during menstruation), gender-based violence, disabilities, and language differences are some of

the barriers that Nepalese women and adolescent girls are facing, and these subjugate women and girls. The secondary resources have suggested the development and implementation of additional interventions focusing more to ensure health education, welfare services to support the vulnerable groups. As in SfSE-I, these are some of the basis that the SfS-II project has taken into considerations in designing ToC and project interventions.

Furthermore, the learnings from implementation of SfS-I showcased that the girls still lacked the capacity or confidence to overcome barriers or even to recognize the injustice of their situation on the one hand and, the barriers themselves are the major obstacle to have right to education, health and live which are essential for successful and meaningful transition of girls into higher education and in economic sector. Based on these experiences and learning, phase two of the SfS was introduced in the same community as in the first phase, as even with improved learning in phase one, a continued intervention was deemed necessary to enable girls to transition into higher education and economic sector successfully. Further, the learnings from the SfS-I also indicated that as the girls progressed into secondary level, further assistance to help them improve their learning skills at the secondary level was needed.

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

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

Key barriers in girl's education that the project aims to address

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

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

Demand-side barriers

- **Child marriage -** It is estimated that about 37% of the girls in Nepal get married by the age of 18 years, and almost 10% get married before the age of 15 years.[1]
- **Gender norms (household chores) -** Adolescent girls are expected to contribute more than boys to household chores, caring for the elderly and siblings or assist families in agriculture/business.
- **Poverty –** 28.6% of Nepal's population is still multidimensionally poor[2]. The cost of education and the need for finance lead either to children not enrolling in an education or to drop out.
- **Low decision-making power -** Most of the decisions regarding a girl's life are taken by their families with limited involvement of the girl, creating dependency and limiting the ability of the girls to make life choices that could have long term impact.

Supply-side barriers

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

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

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

[2]Nepal Multidimensional Poverty index: Analysis Towards Action, *National Planning Commission, 2018*

Key project activities to address the barriers

To address the above barriers, VSO conducts activities with schools and communities, as shown in the table below:

Community activities	School activities
• Community awareness events such as Community Dialogue, Community Campaign against child marriage, gender-based violence, school enrolment, national and international days celebrations • Interactive Theatre by primary actors, including community stakeholders such as big sisters, adult champions. Community Mobilizers • Parenting education • Interaction among parents of little sisters (primary actors) • Bridge classes for girls who are out of schools or have never been to schools and boys only in Parsa where drop out and never been school rate are high compared to the other three districts. • Training on Business development and financial literacy skills to Out of School Girls • Support local government to develop local-level education policy and strategy.	• School events (extra-curricular activities) • Mentoring support to selected marginalized girls known as little sisters helping boost their self-esteem and learning skills • AYSRH training to teachers • AYSRH orientation to girls and boys • Support on Menstruation Hygiene Management. • Child-centered teachers training • School Management Committee (SMC)/ Parents Teachers Association (PTA) orientation on their roles and responsibilities • English and digital learning club • Capacity Building on Complaint Response Mechanism on child safeguarding • Support to revise SIP in terms of gender-sensitive and child-friendly related activities. • Orientation on DRR and develop a school safety plan • Learning support classes • Learning sharing visit

1.2. Project context

In 2015, to ensure sustainable growth of societies and economy, the United Nations set out 17 Goals to be achieved by 2030. Collectively known as sustainability goals, these goals covered issues form equality, education, economy, environment, and other relevant areas. Two of these 17 Goals were: “Quality Education” and “Gender Equality.” This is evident in the fact that the global development paradigm, to a large extent, has been shaped by a common understanding of the need for quality and equitable education as a means to sustainable development. As a commitment towards meeting this global goal and also to strengthen its internal system, the Government of Nepal (GoN) introduced the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) in 2015 to “ensure equitable access to quality for all.” At present, the education sector in Nepal is guided by this SSDP.

The SSDP is a guidance framework for the educational program to reduce disparities in access, participation, and learning outcome, ensuring equity among all gender, disability, poverty, marginalization, and geographical limitation. Since its inception, the SSDP complimented by other plans and policies has resulted in several achievements towards making education more accessible, affordable and attainable.

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

Compared to the situation in the past, this standing in the gender gap index and girls' education attainment is a huge improvement. The gender gap index report also states Nepal is the second most improved country in terms of girls' education attainment and has been able to close the education gender gap by 18% to 19% in the last decade. While these improvements are encouraging there, remain a huge gap that Nepal needs to bridge in terms of equality/equity in education. The new social and political scenario that has emerged after the promulgation of a new constitution in 2015 is considered an opportunity for bridging this gap.

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

Furthermore, the Constitution of Nepal, 2015, guarantees universal and free school education for all children in Nepal with the provision of specific support and priorities for girls and children from disadvantaged groups. The constitution has declared basic education (up to grade 8) as free and compulsory for all children in Nepal. The government of Nepal has also set its own targets towards sustainable development goals to be achieved by 2030. In regards to improving quality of education and gender equality in education, the government has set target of: almost 100% enrolment and completion of primary education, 95% successful transition from grade 1 to 8, attendance rate to be maintained at 90% or above among all children and elimination of disparity in school and in tertiary education.

To support the initiative of the government towards meeting its commitments and targets, GEC - T, funded by DFID and in collaboration with VSO Nepal is implementing SfS – II, in Nepal. The project envisions that the marginalized adolescent girls from four districts in rural Nepal will successfully transition from secondary education and are enabled to make their own choices to either find employment or continue their education. The project is planned for four years starting from 1 April 2017 and lasting until 31 March 2021 and is being implemented in four districts from four different provinces: Dhading (Province 3), Lamjung (Province 4), Parsa (Province 2) and Surkhet (Province 6). (A factsheet of the project districts is provided in Appendix II.)

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that investing in girls' education will bring the highest return to individuals, families, and the entire community. It is important to support girls' education and raise awareness concerning the importance of girls' education. Some of the cultural beliefs, the school environment, lack of awareness, affordability, geographical terrain, plus a lack of motivation to promote girls' education have been some of the major hindrances in girls' education in Nepal. There has been a gradual progression towards realizing the goal of complete literacy

among the female population of Nepal. GoN's SSDP for the period 2016-23 is also aiming at improving the efficiency, management, and governance of the country's basic and secondary education for over seven million students. It is imperative to provide the poor, marginalized girls and women with the right access to opportunities and resources through the medium of education.

1.3. Key evaluation questions & role of the midline

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

For the outcome level measurement among school girls, the quantitative study of the mid-term evaluation was based on a quasi-experimental design guided by the Difference in Difference (DID) approach. This approach allowed for the attainment of counterfactual to estimate causal effect making the use of longitudinal data from the intervention and control group. It also allowed the measurement of the effect of the project intervention by comparing changes in outcomes over time between the intervention and control group.

The findings against the indicators set in the project log frame for different outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) were analyzed from the quantitative data, and changes between baseline and midline were identified. These findings were then used to structure the qualitative exercises which were designed for identifying the causal factors of the quantitative findings.

The first round of data collection, i.e., quantitative data collection, was done between March 4, 2019, to March 21, 2019. The data collection in all four-project district commenced on the same date while the completion date varied. The qualitative data collection was conducted in the first week of May. The midline evaluation sought to generate answers for the evaluation questions outlined in the project's Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework. The project's MEL framework has outlined the following four broader evaluation questions and twelve project-specific evaluation questions:

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

The project-level evaluation questions were as follows:

Process

- Has the project been able to address the community needs in the girl's education sector? How?
- Is the approach of the project suitable for reaching the extremely marginalized girls where we are operating?
- Has there been a change in gender norms (girls and boys) that the project was able to influence? What influenced the change?
- What are the factors that helped overcome attitudinal/ institutional barriers?

Impact

- What was the size of the impact observed in learning, retention, and attendance of marginalized girls across the interventions of the project?
- What was the size of impact observed in the transition of marginalized girls across the interventions of the project?

Effectiveness

- Which aspects of the Big Sisters approach were effective in delivering the final outcomes? How were they effective?
- Which aspects of the other components of the project were effective in delivering the final outcomes? How were they effective?

Sustainability

- Whether the community is willing to own the project and continue it after the project fund ends?
- Whether three years are enough to ensure the sustainability of the project, and how?

In addition, it is also expected that the midline evaluation will contribute to a Value for Money (VfM) analysis on equity and effectiveness around outcomes and impact, and provide guidance for more efficient implementation of the project. However, the midline evaluation does not seek to provide analysis linked with financial factors or specific VfM analysis.

1. Context, educational marginalization, and Intersection between barriers and characteristics

The table below presents the prevalence of barriers and characteristics in the treatment and the control groups that have been linked to the girls' education by project ToC and the baseline report. While data has not been provided on baseline characteristics, changes have been discussed based on available information.

Barriers		
	Midline Value *(HH=717)* *(IS=794)*	**Control Value** *(HH=448)* *(IS=495)*
Head of the household has low education (has not completed primary level Education)	45.9% *(Illiterate=16.0%)*	44.0% (*Illiterate=15.4%)*
Language of instruction is different than primary language at home	29.4%	31.3%
Poor Household	42.3%	41.5%
Difficult to afford for girls to go to school	9.3%	5.4%
The household doesn't own land for themselves	24.7%	22.8%
Material of the roof (Bamboo, thatch/hay, Tarpaulin/plastic, carboard)	12.6%	10.0%
Gone to sleep hungry for many (10) days in the past year	0.6%	0.4%
Household unable to meet basic needs	8.9%	10.3%
Characteristics		
Girls living without both parents	19.3%	19.4%
Living in a female-headed household	42.1%	47.8%
Married	1.1%	0.0%
Girls with difficulty in seeing	0.1%	0.4%
Girls with difficulty in hearing	0.0%%	0.0%
Girls with difficulty in walking or climbing stairs	0.3%	0.4%
Girls with difficulty in remembering or concentrating	0.5%	0.4%

Girls with difficulty in self-care	0.1%	0.0%
Girls with difficulty in communication	4.5%	0.8%
Doesn't get support to stay in school and do well (%)	2.7%	1.2%
Cannot choose whether to attend or stay in school and just accepts what happens	59.7%	64.2%
Girls who engage in household chore for more than 2 hours of the day	96.5%	61.0%
School-level barrier		
Drinking water facilities are not available at school	7.2%	10.8%
Girls who do not use toilets in schools	6.9%	1.6%
Spaces are not available for socializing and playing in the school	2.9%	5.7%
Girls who do not feel safe at school	1.6%	0.8%
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	11.1%	13.9%
Teachers treat boys and Girl's differently	35.4%	36.8%
Have witnessed physical punishment in school	29.7%	37.0%
Teachers are often absent	47.1%	49.0%
Does not agree that teachers use different language to help them understand something (never/rarely	11.1%	14.0%

Household-level barriers and characteristics of girls

The midline evaluation found that in both treatment and control groups, a significant number of household heads had not completed the primary level of schooling. This should be studied carefully as stakeholders during the qualitative data collection said that parental education was an influential factor in the learning and transition of children. Teachers and headteachers alike opined that the children from households whose parents were educated received additional support for their studies and future aspirations and were encouraged to prioritize school learning.

While parental awareness was found to be improving, many parents still failed to effectively engage in their daughters' studies, which were reported as another barrier. Furthermore, the difference between the language of instruction in school and the primary language at home also affected the girls' educational performance. As evident by the data presented in the findings section on literacy outcomes, the difference in the language of instruction and the language is spoken in household acted as a barrier for girls to perform well in schools; consequently, leading to increased educational marginalization. During the midline, about 30% of the treatment girls had the language of instruction different from the primary language spoken at home. The proportion

was higher among girls in Parsa. On the other hand, in Lamjung, Surkhet, and Dhading, many of the families had started using Nepali as the primary language of communication in recent years, making it easier for students to understand the lessons at school.

Another barrier to education was poverty, which had a multi-dimensional impact on the attainment of education. First, families who were poor were not able to afford materials or fees associated with education. Although tuition fees in public schools are free, families did have to make some financial investments (like buying uniforms and stationery), which was difficult for poor families. Secondly, poor families were more likely to encourage their school-going children to engage in income-generating activities to support the family, thus affecting their school attendance and even leading to drop-out at times.

Although students can perform calculations manually, a calculator would save them a lot of time and increase the chances of performing better in the exam. Resources like calculators require spending.

– Math teacher, Dhading

In regards to the characteristics, the qualitative information showed that there had been an increase in the number of girls who did not live either with their parents in the past one year. Among the midline sample of both treatment and control groups, around 19% were found to be living without both of their parents. One of the most prominent reason for this was that girls, especially who were in grade 8 or higher (in Lamjung, Surkhet, and Dhading), were found to be living away from their home in local hostels or collectively renting rooms near the proximity of the school because it was not feasible for them to travel daily to and from school.

The midline data also showed that 42.1% of the treatment girls were living in a household headed by females, whereas among the control group, the proportion was higher (47.8%). While it is usually assumed that female-headed households might be at a disadvantage (given the gender inequality in Nepali society), the qualitative discussion showed that it was not necessarily true among all such households. Since household heads were generally determined by seniority, they commanded respect in the family as well as the community; hence, the assumption that members in female-headed families are more vulnerable did not hold true.

Almost 60% of the in-school girls in treatment schools and above 64% in control schools reported that they could not make decisions or choose whether to attend/continue school or not. This is in line with the qualitative information from the in-school girls. Many of the girls during the qualitative interaction reported that their family, especially parents, usually decided whether the girls could attend the school any given day or not. The girls also reported that parents would often ask them to stay home during farming seasons, festivities and wedding seasons. However, on a positive note, only 2.7% of the girls stated that they did not receive support to stay in school.

Had the decision on whether to continue education or to attend school been left to only children, 80% of the students would have dropped out by grade 10. Thus, parents' involvement in this matter is crucial

-Teacher, Dhading

While teachers felt that parents' involvement in this matter could not really be classified as a 'barrier' , the analysis of attendance record found that girls' whose parents took the decision for them to go to school had significantly lower attendance rates than the others.

In addition, stakeholders stated that girls who had to spend long hours in household chores were often performing poorly in school. However, on a positive note, girls were now spending lesser time in household chores (for which much of the credit goes to the project), meaning that they had better opportunities to improve their learning. Almost 96% of the girls in the treatment groups were dedicating less than two hours a day to household chores.

As with the baseline, the number of girls with functional limitations was very low in both treatment and control groups. Since schools lacked the infrastructure and human resources to cater to the need of children with functional limitations or disabilities, they were not enrolled in formal education. The parents also stated that schools did not actively encourage the enrolment of children with functional limitations or disabilities in their school. As the number of children with functional limitations was low in the total beneficiary group itself, their representation in the sample was also very low.

School-level barriers

The midline study showed that most of the supply-side barriers were directly associated with the attitude and practices of teachers. Lack of adequate teachers and lack of proper rewards were two of the most reported problems faced by the school management. In-spite of various degrees of intervention and activities by the project, there is little or no difference between the treatment and control school in regards to the prevalence of school-level barriers. However, a positive trend was seen in regards to the use of physical punishment at school. The study showed that girls who reported to have witnessed the use of physical punishment in school were lower in the treatment schools.

Almost 30% of the girls in treatment school reported that they had witnessed the use of physical punishment as a method of disciplining in their school. The proportion of girls who reported such cases was higher in Parsa and Dhading districts, where almost 44% of the girls (in both the districts) reported that physical punishment was used in the school. The proportion is lower in Lamjung and Surkhet, with 9% percent in Lamjung and 16% in Surkhet.

Girls during the qualitative interaction reported that they had observed positive changes in attitudes and behaviors of teachers. However, these changes were reported mostly among Maths, English, and Science teachers. Furthermore, stakeholders also stated that compared to the past, the students were more confident in discussing teachers and school management. Traditionally, students refrained or hesitated form commenting on teachers, but in the past year, more students were reported to be open about such discussions. In treatment schools, the reported prevalence of physical punishment could, therefore, be a result of increased confidence among girls to report rather than the increment in such instances itself.

Interactions between barriers and characteristics

To further understand the relationship between the above-mentioned characteristics and barriers, the following table presents the interaction between most prevalent characteristics and barriers based on midline data.

Characteristic			
Barriers:	*Head of the household has not completed the primary level of education (n=325)*	*LOI different than primary language at home (n=209)*	*Household is poor (n=299)*
Parental/caregiver support:			
Cannot choose whether to attend or stay in school and just accepts what happens	39.1%	12.0%	45.3%
Girls who engage in household chore for more than 2 hours of the day	15.1%	7.2%	11.7%
School environment			
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	9.2%	1.9%	12.4%
Teachers treat boys and Girl's differently	59.1%	34.4%	51.8%
Have witnessed physical punishment in school	28.3%	41.1%	28.8%
Teachers are often absent	46.5%	52.2%	54.2%
Does not agree that teachers use different language to help them understand something (never/rarely	12.9%	15.8%	12.1%

Appropriateness of activities in relation to key barriers and characteristics

To mitigate the effect of the aforementioned barriers and characteristics on the education of the girls and their ability for a successful transition, the SfSE-II project has been carrying out several activities at the community and school level. Here we will discuss these activities and their relevance to the identified barriers.

One of the most prominent barriers found at the community level was lack of awareness among parents regarding girls' education. Almost half of the household heads were found to have low education level, i.e., have not completed primary level schooling. The stakeholders were of the opinion that low education of household heads was the cause for low awareness among families regarding girls' education.

During the midline, the stakeholders reported positive changes in the attitude of the parents in regard to their perception of girls' education in the past one year. To a large extent, stakeholders,

especially community members and school staff, attributed these changes to the engagement of change agents of the project, i.e., big-sister, adult champions, and teacher champions with community members through community dialogues. In addition, project activities like interactive theatres and awareness campaigns against child marriage and gender-based violence were also found to be effective in reaching out to the community and increase their understanding of such issues.

To limit the impact of the community-level barriers, the project also identified around 1200 extremely marginalized girls from within its project schools. These girls, designated as “little sister,” received additional intervention, including mentorship from big sister and also received in-kind support such as stationaries. The change agents of the project also regularly engaged with their parents through periodic programs and regular visits to the home.

Both qualitative and quantitative data showed that there had been a decline in the instances of community/household level barriers compared to a year ago. The in-school girls during the FGD also stated that they had been receiving more support from the household to attend and perform in school compared to the past. The IO findings also suggest that there has been an improvement in the past one year in regard to community support for girl’s education and transition.

This evidence suggests that the project activities at the community level were indeed relevant and have had a positive impact. The activities had helped make the community become aware of the need to support girls' education. However, there is still scope for the project to engage more with the community to empower them as promoters of girls' education and not just supporters.

Besides the community level, the project also carried out several activities at the school level to promote gender-responsive management and teaching, to ensure effective child protection and to capacitate teachers to adopt learner-centered teaching. In addition, the project also ran school level activities that directly supported the learning outcome of the girls. One of the most appreciated intervention out of the school level activity of the project was the LSC.

The LSC that the project ran in the intervention schools were considered as one of the most effective interventions that had helped girls to improve their learning outcome. It especially provided girls with additional time to devote to studies, and also, since it increased the engagement of girls in school, it helped decrease the burden of household chores. In addition, since this was provided by the project free of cost, parents were also willing to share the burden of household chores and support their daughters in regularly attending schools. This has directly impacted the reduction of barriers including household chore and willingness of parents to support girls to perform well. In addition to these, the LSC has also been successful in limiting the impact of poverty on girls' education, especially since the poor households would not have been able to support such classes on their own.

Likewise, the teacher training workshop had also been appreciated by stakeholders, especially in regards to the improved attitude and behaviors of the teachers who received such training.

However, the midline evaluation found that most of the activities that the project conducted at school level besides the LSCs were “one-off” activities rather than a continuous intervention. Hence, their impact had not been as anticipated by the project. This was evident by the fact that there were still barriers at schools which had not been addressed, and during the midline, the reported instance of the prevalence of those barrier has also increased.

Furthermore, there had also been an increase in reporting of physical punishments witnessed in the school. Such instance is against the norms of child protection and jeopardizes the effort for the creation of a child-friendly school environment. The teachers and headteachers shared that even within household physical punishment were used as a means for “disciplining” children. In

this context, a more focused intervention to promote positive disciplining techniques is deemed necessary, besides awareness.

The midline found little evidence of an intervention to check the effect of the difference in primary language spoken at home to that of primary language of instruction on the learning skills of girls. It is advisable that the project looks into designing an intervention focused on girls with "difference in language," helping them in their Nepali skills. This will not only limit the effect on learning form differences in the language of instruction and primary language at home but also the literacy outcome of girls.

The activities that are undertaken by the project at intervention schools and communities indeed addressed the supply-side and demand-side barriers, though with varying degrees of effectiveness. The project, however, seemed to have little or no activities that addressed the assumptions and stated barriers in ToC concerning lack of financial/business literacy of girls, which is essential to a successful transition into employment.

The stakeholders during the qualitative consultations expressed that the employability of girls was very low in the project areas. Given this girl who could not continue education had little scope for engagement in the economic sector. In addition, even after completing SEE, girls who were unable to join higher education had limited life choices and most often got married within a year or two of completing SEE. This issue had been identified by the project in the ToC, especially focusing on lack of financial/business literacy for girls. While the project lists running training on business development and financial literacy skills to out of school girls as an activity, these activities primarily focus on big sister. This activity does not reach out to the primary beneficiaries, i.e., in-school girls at the secondary level. FDM feels that the project needs to consider either change to the ToC or revision of its activity.

Likewise, there is also a need to scale up coordination and enter into a strategic partnership with the local government to ensure replicability, scalability, and sustainability of project activities and achievements. This is further discussed in the sustainability section.

Changes in contextual factors or barriers/characteristics that may impact IOs and outcomes

During the midline, no evidence of changes in contextual factors that might have affected the IOs and Outcomes were found.

2. Key Outcome Findings

3.1. Learning outcome of in-school girls

This section presents the key midline findings on the learning outcomes, including the comparison between treatment and control as well as baseline and midline. The comparison between the midline and the baseline is made using only the data of the in-school girls who participated in learning assessment at both the evaluation point. The data of the sample who could not be contacted has not been presented.

2.1.1 Literacy score: SeGRA

Overall results against targets

The literacy target to be achieved by the midline, as set by the project, was an average score among girls from intervention school to be 4.84% above control and attributable to the project intervention. The midline data showed that girls in the intervention schools scored 4.76% above control. Given that the sample size (in the midline) of girls in grade 10 was very small, their scores were removed when calculating the outcome estimation.

The DID estimator showed an increase in overall mean literacy score intervention schools, as seen in table 1. This finding reflects that the project intervention has contributed to the increase in the literacy outcome of girls and has almost achieved its target against literacy outcome.

Table 1: DiD results of SeGRA score

Result	Details	Comments
Literacy Baseline – Midline *(Tn= 689)* *(Cn=389)*	**Beta = 0.949 (4.76%)** **p-value = 0.001** **Target = 4.84% above control** **Performance against target = 98.43%**	The learning scores used for the DiD estimation does not include the scores of girls who were in Grade 10 during the baseline. Hence, this estimation differs from DiD estimations which include scores of those girls, in subsequent sub-sections

There is a minimal difference in the mean Secondary Grade Reading Assessment (SeGRA) score obtained from the intervention group and the control group during the midline, though not statistically significant. The average SeGRA score of the intervention group was 8.14 (40.71%), including scores of girls from grade 10 during midline, which is similar to the average SeGRA score of the control group, which was 8.12 (40.63%).

However, this is an improvement considering the statistically significant difference in the SeGRA score between the intervention and control group during the baseline. The average SeGRA score of the intervention group during the baseline was lower by 0.949 (4.76%) than that of the control group. Therefore, all the information on the comparison between intervention and control group should also be referred to, keeping in mind the difference between these groups during the baseline.

Grade level analysis of literacy outcome

For this report, "Grade" stated will be the grade of sample girls that they were in during the baseline. Given the small sample size of grade 10 girls 13 in treatment and 11 in control, the score of these girls have not been presented below. (This explains the different DID scores in Table 1 and Table 2. The DiD in table 1 considered grade 10 scores as well).

Table 2: Average SeGRA Score by Grade (control and treatment)

Grade	Intervention Group Mean	Control Group Mean	Standard Deviation in the intervention group
Grade 6 *(Tn=277 Cn=166)*	34.1%	32.6%	3.19
Grade 7 *(Tn=208 Cn=92)*	41.4%	42.8%	3.41
Grade 8 *(Tn=117 Cn=94)*	49.8%	48.2%	4.18
Grade 9 *(Tn=87 Cn= 37)*	47.9%	53.0%	5.16
Overall *(Tn=702 Cn=400)*	**40.71%**	**40.64%**	**3.92**

As seen in table 2, the aggregate SeGRA score of Grade 6,7 and 8 of the intervention group was higher than their counterpart in the control group, while girls in Grade 9 of the control group scored higher.

*Table 3: Baseline-Midline Comparison of SeGRA score, disaggregated by grade. *p<0.05*

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

Table 3 shows that the DID results were positive towards the intervention group. The overall difference, however, was small. The mean SeGRA score of the intervention group saw an overall increase of 7.18% from the baseline, while the increase in overall SeGRA score from baseline to midline for the control group was 2.27%.

Overall, the intervention group saw better growth across all the grades, as evident by the difference in the SeGRA score between midline and baseline. Grade 8 of the intervention group had the highest growth with a net increase in the SeGRA score of +2.248 (11.24%) in the mean score. Furthermore, the difference in mean from baseline to the midline in all the grades was statistically significant in the intervention group. The same for the control group was only true for grade 8.

The qualitative discussions with the in-school treatment girls also indicated that the girls were aware of the increase in their literacy ability. They attributed this growth to their increased confidence in interacting with teachers and peers.

We feel more confident in interacting with teachers. Last month I even went to a Nepali teacher's home because I did not understand a poem.

-In school Girl, Grade 9, Lamjung

Subtask analysis of literacy outcome

The SeGRA test is divided into three subtasks. The three subtasks of SeGRA comprised of:

Subtask I: This subtask contained a comprehension passage with 5 analytical questions, the girls were expected to answer based upon their understanding of the contains of the passage. The total marks of the subtask are 7.

Subtask II: This subtask comprised of comprehension passage followed by six inferential questions. A girl could obtain a maximum of 8 marks in subtask II.

Subtask III: Subtask three required a girl to construct an essay on a given topic. The score of a girl was determined by the content, language, and sentence structure. The full marks for Subtask three are 5.

The subtask wise segregation of the scores (Table 4) obtained in SeGRA by the in-school girls showed that the average score in subtask two and three had increased for both intervention and control group compared to the baseline. The growth that was seen in the intervention group in subtask two and subtask three were statistically significant while the decrease in the average score in subtask one was not. These findings are indicative of the fact that the intervention group, which scored lower compared to the control group during the baseline, is making progress that has led them to perform equal to or better than the control group in one year of intervention.

*Table 4: Intervention-Control, SeGRA score comparison based on subtasks. *p<0.05*

Subtask	Intervention Group Mean *(Tn=702)*			Control Group Mean *(Cn=400)*		
	Baseline	Midline	Change	Baseline	Midline	Change
Sub task 1 *(total score= 7)*	4.024 (57.49%)	3.890 (55.58%)	-0.134	4.257 (60.82%)	4.132 (59.04%)	-0.125
Sub task 2 *(total score= 8)*	2.078 (25.98)	3.451 (43.14%)	1.373*	2.575 (32.19%)	3.087* (38.59%)	0.512
Sub task 3 *(total score= 5)*	0.633 (12.66%)	0.8006 (16.01)	0.1676*	0.843 (16.85%)	0.907 (18.15%)	0.064

During the discussion with in-school girls, they revealed that they found creative and analytical writing to be most difficult. The common response by girls on the question asking, "what do they find most difficult in *NepalisSubject?"* was writing summaries of a lesson followed by critical analysis of a subject matter. The teachers interviewed also stated that the secondary level students had difficulty in writing especially when it required individual analysis and thinking. Headteacher and teachers also admitted that as completing a course was much prioritized; they could not give enough time in the development of the writing skills of students. In some schools, a high number of students in a class were also pointed out as a reason why teachers could not focus on developing writing skills as most of the time required individual feedback.

Checking and providing feedback to the students on their writing on a regular basis is really difficult. Between classes 7 and 9, there are more than 300 students that I teach.

-A Nepali teacher in Surkhet (Headteacher)

Qualitative information pointed towards the fact that the students in secondary grade do not get much practice in writing. Two major factors were attributed to this by teachers. Firstly, the lack of adequate time to review the work of every student and provide feedback for improvement, and secondly, the decreasing trend of assigning homework. On the other hand, the students expressed that they did not get enough feedback from teachers. Both qualitative and quantitative data were indicative of the fact the secondary level girls were not able to perform a learning task that required them to articulate their thoughts and analysis in a written form with coherent sentence forming. Several studies have also shown that this is an issue across most of the community schools in Nepal, including for students in primary grades.

The grade-wise segregation of the SeGRA score (table 5) obtained from the intervention and control group during the midline, indicated that all the grades in the control group scored better in subtask three compared to the intervention group. Grade 6 and 8 from the intervention group scored higher in subtask two compared to the control group, while Grade 7 and 8 of the intervention group scored higher in subtask one.

Table 5:Segregation of scores of SeGRA subtasks, based on grades

	Subtask I		Subtask II		Subtask III	
Grade	**Intervention**	**Control**	**Intervention**	**Control**	**Intervention**	**Control**
Grade 6 (Tn=277) (Cn=166)	3.408 (48.68%)	4.054 (57.92%)	2.874 (35.92%)	1.861 (23.27%)	0.531 (10.61%)	0.602 (12.05%)
Grade 7 (Tn=208) (Cn=92)	4.048 (57.83%)	3.880 (55.43%)	3.505 (43.81%)	3.793 (47.42%)	0.721 (14.42%)	0.891 (17.83%)
Grade 8 (Tn=117) (Cn=94)	4.342 (62.03%)	4.266 (60.94%)	4.590 (57.37%)	4.298 (53.72%)	1.026 (20.51%)	1.085 (21.70%)
Grade 9 (Tn=87) (Cn=37)	4.425 (63.22%)	4.919 (70.27%)	3.690 (46.12)	4.027 (50.34%)	1.471 (29.43%)	1.649 (32.97%)

Skill gap analysis of literacy outcome

The analysis of the "foundational skills gap" showed that there had been an improvement in the intervention group to a higher degree than that of the control. As seen in Table 6, the percentage of girls who were established-learners in literacy had increased by almost 16% in the intervention group, while at the same time the number of non-learners and emergent learners had decreased by 15.7% between themselves. The total change in the percentage of girls at different foundational literacy skills from baseline to midline had all led to an increase in the number of established learners for both groups. No increase had been observed during the midline in the number of proficient learners in both groups. This was mainly because of the low scores of girls in subtask three.

Table 6: Baseline-midline comparison of foundation skill of SeGRA

	Intervention Group Mean *(Tn=702)*			**Control Group Mean** *(Cn=400)*		
	Baseline	Midline	Change	Baseline	Midline	Change
Non-learner 0%	5.0%	2.0%	-3.00%	2.8%	1.8%	-1.00%
Emergent learner 1%-40%	64.7%	52.0%	-12.70%	57.8%	50.5%	-7.30%
Established learner 41%-80%	29.6%	45.4%	15.80%	36.0%	45.5%	9.50%
Proficient learner 81%-100%	0.7%	0.6%	-0.10%	3.5%	2.3%	-1.30%

The pre-post comparison of foundational skills (Table 7) of the intervention group segregated by subsets, showed a decrease in the percentage of non-learners across all three subsets of the SeGRA test. At the same time, the percentage of established learners had also increased across all three subsets. The data showed that there had been a decrease of 5.8% among the proficient learners in subset one compared to the baseline in the treatment group; this decrease was also observed among the control group (table 7). In subtask two and three, however, the number of

proficient learners had increased. The number of proficient learners in subtask two had more than doubled, whereas the increase of the same group of learners in subtask three was marginal. The disaggregation of learner types based on the three subtasks is presented in table 7.

Table 7: Baseline-midline comparison of foundation skill of SeGRA segregated by subtask (Intervention group)

Intervention Group *(Tn=702)*									
Categories	**Subtask 1 Inferential**			**Subtask 2 Analytical**			**Subtask 3 Essay**		
	BL	**ML**	**Change**	**BL**	**ML**	**Change**	**BL**	**ML**	**Change**
Non-learner 0%	5.7%	3.8%	***-1.90%***	28.6%	13.2%	***-15.40%***	60.2%	56.1%	**-4.10%**
Emergent learner 1%-40%	18.5%	19.2%	***0.70%***	47.7%	36.6%	***-11.10%***	34.3%	33.8%	**-0.50%**
Established learner 41%-80%	51.2%	58.1%	***6.90%***	20.6%	42.6%	***22.00%***	5.5%	9.4%	**3.90%**
Proficient learner 81%-100%	24.6%	18.8%	***-5.80%***	3.1%	7.5%	***4.40%***	0%	0.7%	**0.70%**

The decrease in the number of non-learners in all the subtasks was greater in the intervention group. More percentage of girls in the intervention had progressed from non-learners than in the control group. However, the data showed that the control group had seen more growth in terms of progression to established learners except in subtask two. For subtask one, the increase in the number of established learners in the control group to a large extent is a result of the decrease in the number of proficient learners. The changes in the control group are presented in table 8.

Table 8 Baseline-midline comparison of foundation skill of SeGRA segregated by subtask (Treatment Group)

Control group *(Cn=400)*									
Categories	**Subtask 1 Inferential**			**Subtask 2 Analytical**			**Subtask 3 Essay**		
	BL	**ML**	**Change**	**BL**	**ML**	**Change**	**BL**	**ML**	**Change**
Non-learner 0%	3.8%	3.0%	***-0.80%***	21.8%	18.0%	***-3.80%***	52.0%	51.5%	***-0.50%***
Emergent learner 1%-40%	20.0 %	15.3%	***-4.70%***	47.5%	39.0%	***-8.50%***	39.3%	36.0%	***-3.30%***
Established learner 41%-80%	46.3 %	62.5%	***16.20%***	23.8%	36.3%	***12.50%***	8.8%	12.3%	***3.50%***
Proficient learner 81%-100%	30.0 %	19.3	***-10.70%***	7.0%	6.8%	***-0.20%***	0%	0.3%	***0.30%***

Data showed that the percentage of non-learners among grades 6,7, and 8 of intervention groups had decreased compared to the baseline. The rate of decrement in the proportion of non-learners in Grade 6,7 and 8 is also higher compared to the control group, as seen in table 9.

Table 9: Foundational skill gap of girls in SeGRA segregated by grades.

Grade (Baseline)	Category Group	Non-learner 0%		Emergent learner 1%-40%		Established learner 41%-80%		Proficient learner 81%-100%	
		BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
6	Treatment N=277	8.3%	2.5%	72.3%	67.1%	19.1%	30.3%	0.4%	0.0%
	Control N=166	3.0%	3.0%	71.1%	71.7%	24.7%	24.7%	1.2%	0.6%
7	Treatment N=208	4.3%	0.5%	70.8%	48.1%	24.9%	51.4%	0.0%	0.0%
	Control N=92	4.3%	1.1%	52.2%	42.4%	37.0%	54.3%	6.5%	2.2%
8	Treatment N=117	2.6%	1.7%	49.6%	35.0%	46.2%	60.7%	1.7%	2.6%
	Control N=94	2.1%	1.1%	45.7%	29.8%	51.1%	67.0%	1.1%	2.1%
9	Treatment N=86	0%	3.5%	48.3%	37.2%	49.4%	58.1%	2.3%	1.2%
	Control N=37	0.0%	0.0%	40.5%	27.0%	48.6%	64.9%	10.8%	8.1%

Across all the grades in the intervention group, the percentage of established learners had increased compared to the baseline. There had been minimal or no increase in the number of proficient learners during the midline, especially since only 0.7% of girls in intervention and 0.3% in control girls had scored higher than 81% in subtask three of SeGRA. The reasons for the poor performance in subtask three had already been discussed in sections above. Based on the mapping of the content of the SeGRA tools in relation to the national curriculum standard, the criteria presented in Table 10 were set to determine the literacy “grade level” of the girls.

Table 10:Expected skill in literacy for each secondary grade

	Proficiency level in SeGRA
Grade 8	Foundational skills in analytical answering Foundational skills in inferential answering Foundational skills in essay drafting
Grade 9	Established skills in analytical answering Established skills in inferential answering Established skills in essay drafting
Grade 10	Proficient skills in analytical answering Proficient skills in inferential answering Proficient skills in essay drafting

Table 11 shows the comparison of "grade levels achieved" and their actual grade at the midline. The data shows that none of the girls in both the group had achieved a literacy grade level that of 10 during the baseline. In addition, most of the girls had also not achieved literacy grade level in par with their actual grade.

Table 11: Cross-tabulation of the actual grade of girls and Grade level achieved during Midline

Midline Grade (Baseline Grade)	Level Group	Grade 10 level achieved	Grade 9 level achieved	Grade 8 level achieved	Below Grade 8
7 (6)	**Treatment** N=277	0%	3.6%	28.9%	67.5%
	Control N=166	0%	9.6%	34.3%	56.0%
8 (7)	**Treatment** N=208	0%	6.7%	35.1%	58.2%
	Control N=92	0%	9.8%	41.3%	48.9%
9 (8)	**Treatment** N=117	0%	11.1%	41.0%	47.9%
	Control N=94	0%	10.6%	34.0%	55.3%
10 (9)	**Treatment** N=86	0%	23.0%	41.4%	35.6%
	Control N=37	0%	16.2%	56.8%	27.0%
Overall	**Treatment**	0%	8.4%	34.6%	57.0%
	Control	0%	10.0%%	37.3%	52.5%

The midline finding showed a negative trend regarding grade level achieved compared to the baseline. During the baseline, almost 3% of the girls from the control group had achieved grade level 10. Similarly, during the baseline majority of girls in both control and treatment had been able to achieve literacy grade level 8. However, the data showed that during the midline, there was a decline in the literacy grade level achieved.

Table 12: Cross-tabulation of the actual grade of girls and Grade level achieved during Baseline

Grade Baseline	Level / Group	Grade 10 level achieved	Grade 9 level achieved	Grade 8 level achieved	Below Grade 8
6	**Treatment** N=277	0%	5.4%	58.5%	36.1%
	Control N=166	9.1%	17.5%	51.8%	30.1%
7	**Treatment** N=208	0%	11.0%	59.3%	29.7%
	Control N=92	6.5%	23.9%	45.7%	23.9%
8	**Treatment** N=117	0%	21.4%	58.1%	20.5%
	Control N=94	1.1%	33.0%	53.2%	12.8%
9	**Treatment** N=86	0%	34.5%	46.0%	19.5%
	Control N=37	8.1%	43.2%	35.1%	13.5%
Overall	**Treatment**	0%	13.5%	57.2%	29.3%
	Control	3.0%	25.3%	49.3%	22.5%

While their improvement is not that visible when looking at the grade level achieved, the midline data has shown that there has been an improvement in the overall literacy score of the girls. The school staff interviewed attributed the improvement in literacy outcomes of girls to the improved school management, and improved attendance of girls, which they expressed was an outcome of the activities carried out by the SfS project. In Lamjung and Surkhet, in some of the schools, the improvement was also attributed to the Little sisters. The in-school girls stated that the little sisters are increasingly involved in practicing peer learnings, and have also been able to instill confidence in other in school girls to interact with teachers and participate in classroom activities.

2.1.2 Numeracy score: Secondary Grade Mathematical Assessment (SeGMA)

Overall results against target

As stated in Annex 3, there were changes made to the SeGMA tool due to the floor effect during the midline. Due to the difference in the set of questions, the total attainable score also changed. Therefore, tables presenting findings from only comparable score between midline and baseline the score is identified as SeGMA (B) whose maximum attainable score is 20 and the tables that present scores from the SeGMA set used in the midline is identified as SeGMA (M) whose

maximum attainable score is 25. Furthermore, as in SeGRA, the score of girls in grade 10 during the midline has been removed for learning estimation.

The numeracy target set by the project to be achieved by the midline was an average score among treatment in school girls to be 5.24% above control and attributable to the project intervention. The midline data showed that the girls in intervention school had scored 11.56% above control exceeding the target by 6.32%

The DID estimator shows an additional positive increase in mean SeGMA score among the intervention group in the past one year, compared to the control group.

Table 13: DiD results of SeGMA (B) test

Result	Details	Comments
Numeracy Baseline – Midline *(Tn=683)* *(Cn=388)*	**Beta = 2.312 (11.56%)** **p-value = 0.000** **Target = 5.24% above control** **Performance against target = 220.49%**	The numeracy scores used for the DiD estimation does not include the scores of girls who were in Grade 10 during the baseline. Hence, this estimation differs from DiD estimations which include scores of those girls, in subsequent subsections

The mean SeGMA score of the intervention group had increased by 18.15% from baseline. The difference in mean SeGMA score between control and treatment group was statistically significant. This is an achievement considering that during the baseline, the mean SeGMA score of the control group was significantly higher than the intervention group.

Grade level analysis of numeracy outcome

For this report, “Grade” stated will be the grade of sample girls that they were in during the baseline. Given the small sample size (13 in treatment and 11 in control), the score of girls who were in grade 10 during the baseline has been presented, although it has been calculated in the overall scores presented in tables below. Hence, there is a difference in the overall DiD score presented in Table 13 and the tables below.

Table 14: Average SeGMA (B) score of intervention and control group segregated by grade

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

The improvement in the numeracy skills of the intervention group is not only evident from the comparison with the baseline but also from the comparisons between the intervention and control group during the midline. The girls from the control group in all the grades had scored better than the intervention group during the baseline. However, during the midline, the girls from the intervention group in all the grades have scored higher than the control group.

Table 15: Numeracy SeGMA (M) disaggregated by grades

Grade	Intervention Group Mean *(n=696)*	Control Group Mean *(n=399)*	Standard Deviation in the intervention group
Grade 6 *(Tn=273)* *(Cn=166)*	9.04 (36.18%)	8.96 (35.85%)	6.33
Grade 7 *(Tn=206)* *(Cn=92)*	11.54 (46.17%)	11.23 (44.95%)	6.61
Grade 8 *(Tn=117)* *(Cn=93)*	12.49 (49.98%)	12.36 (49.46%)	6.08
Grade 9 *(Tn=87)* *(Cn=37)*	13.66 (54.66%)	13.48 (53.94%)	4.61
Overall *(Tn=696)* *(Cn=399)*	11.03 (44.15%)	10.79 (43.18%)	6.39

Overcoming the statistically significant difference in the SeGRA score from their control counterparts, the intervention group has been able not just to bridge that difference but, albeit with a small margin, have performed better by the time of the midline.

The improvement in the numeracy skill of the intervention group was acknowledged by parents, school staffs and girls alike across all the districts. The qualitative information suggested the involvement of girls, especially those from grades 9 and 10, in the LSC as the major reason for this improvement. In-school girls also mentioned that they had noticed changes in the teacher's attitude and approach in classroom management, girls reported finding teachers more patient in their dealings with students, and willing to put in extra effort to make sure that the students understand a lesson. This was reflective of all the groups.

Subtask analysis of numeracy outcome

The SeGMA tool used for baseline-midline comparison was segregated into two subtasks:

Subtask I: Subtask I is comprised of a set of 10 questions of various arithmetic problems like multiplication, division, fractions, percentage, geometry, and measurement. The maximum attainable score in this subtask was 10.

Subtask II: This subtask in SeGMA comprised of six algebraic questions with a total maximum score of 10.

The SeGMA tool used in the midline (SeGMA) comprised of 15 questions in sub-task 1 with a maximum attainable score of 15, while the subtask two was the same.

The subtask wise segregation of midline score shows that the average score of the control group in subtask one is higher than that of the intervention group. However, this difference is not statistically significant. The growth in the average score in subtask two among the intervention group has more than tripled, and this increase is highly significant statistically.

Table 16: Baseline-Midline SeGMA (B) score segregated by subtask

Subtask	**Intervention Group Mean** *(Tn=696)*		**Control Group Mean** *(Cn=399)*	
	Baseline	Midline	Baseline	Midline
Sub task 1 *(total score= 10)*	3.77 (37.71%)	5.25 (52.45%)	4.78 (47.78%)	5.38 (53.81%)
Sub task 2 *(total score= 10)*	0.99 (9.99%)	3.24 (32.37%)	1.69 (16.88%)	2.33 (23.31%)

Table 17: Segregation of scores of SeGMA (M) subtasks, based on grades

	Subtask I (out of 15)			**Subtask II (out of 10)**	
Grade (Midline)	**Intervention**	**Control**		**Intervention**	**Control**
Grade 7 *(Tn=273)* *(Cn=166)*	7.04 (46.93%)	7.48 (49.84%)		2.01 (20.07%)	1.49 (14.88%)
Grade 8 *(Tn=206)* *(Cn=92)*	7.92 (52.82%)	8.93 (59.57%)		3.62 (36.21%)	2.30 (23.04%)
Grade 9 *(Tn=117)* *(Cn=93)*	8.39 (55.95%)	9.09 (60.57%)		4.10 (41.03%)	3.28 (32.80%)
Grade 10 *(Tn=87)* *(Cn=37)*	8.92 (59.46%)	9.68 (64.50%)		4.75 (47.47%)	3.81 (38.11%)
Overall *(Tn=696)* *(Cn=399)*	7.80 (52.01%)	8.47 (56.44%)		3.24 (52.01%)	2.33 (23.31%)

The segregation based on the grades of average score obtained by the two cohorts showed that the girls in the control group had scored higher in subtask one across all the grades. This difference was not statistically significant in any of the grades. Whereas in subtask two, the intervention group had scored better than the control group across all the grades, this difference was statistically significant in all the grades except grade 9.

Skill gap analysis of numeracy outcome

The foundational skills of the intervention group had also seen improvement during the midline compared to both - the baseline of the intervention and the midline of the control group. Around 22% of additional girls compared to baseline in the intervention group were established, learners or proficient learners. Similarly, the proportion of girls who were established or proficient learners in numeracy was 6.7% higher than the control group.

Table 18:Baseline-midline comparison of foundation skill of SeGMA (B)

	Intervention Group Mean *(Tn=696)*			Control Group Mean *(Cn=399)*		
	Baseline	**Midline**	**Change**	**Baseline**	**Midline**	**Change**
Non-learner 0%	0.0%	0.3%	*0.30%*	7.8%	8.3%	*0.50%*
Emergent learner 1%-40%	79.8%	57.4%	*-22.40%*	62.0%	46.1%	*-15.90%*
Established learner 41%-80%	18.8%	31.9%	*13.10%*	26.3%	40.6%	*14.30%*
Proficient learner 81%-100%	1.4%	10.5%	*9.10%*	4.0%	5.0%	*1.00%*

The grade-wise disaggregation also showed an increase in the number of established learners and proficient learners in the intervention group; this proportion was higher than the control. The girls in grade 9 during the baseline (grade 10 during midline) had seen the most progress within their respective cohort. Among them, grade 9 of the intervention group showed more progress. The number of non-learners and emergent learners in this sub-group had decreased while there had been an increase in the number of established learners and proficient learners. This growth could be attributed to the LSC as girls in Grade 10 during the midline were the priority target of the LSCs.

Table 19:Baseline-midline comparison of foundation skill of SeGMA (B) segregated by grades

Grade (Base line)	**Category Group**	**Non-learner 0%**		**Emergent learner 1%-40%**		**Established learner 41%-80%**		**Proficient learner 81%-100%**	
		BL	**ML**	**BL**	**ML**	**BL**	**ML**	**BL**	**ML**
6	**Treatment** *(Tn=273)*	0.0%	0.4%	88.8%	77.0%	11.2%	15.7%	0.0%	6.9%
	Control *(Cn=166)*	9.60%	8.4%	68.1%	58.4%	19.9%	32.5%	2.4%	0.6%
7	**Treatment** *(Tn=206)*	0%	0.5%	83.3%	56.8%	16.7%	29.1%	0%	13.6%

	Control *(Cn=92)*	14.1%	8.7%	58.7%	42.4%	27.2%	43.5%	0%	5.4%
8	**Treatment** *(Tn=117)*	0.0%	0.0%	65.8%	43.6%	29.1%	44.4%	5.1%	12.0%
	Control *(Cn=93)*	2.1%	10.8%	57.4%	32.3%	34.0%	44.1%	6.4%	12.9%
9	**Treatment** *(Tn=87)*	0.0%	0%	60.9%	23.0%	34.5%	64.4%	4.6%	12.6%
	Control *(Cn=37)*	0.00%	2.7%	54.1%	37.8%	32.4%	56.8%	13.5%	2.7%

The categorization of the fundamental numeracy skill based on the subtasks also showed that the intervention group had seen more progression of girls in higher numeracy skill standards than the control group. In subtask one, the largest change was observed among the girls in the intervention group who were non-learners at baseline. There are almost zero non-learners among the intervention group during midline, in subtask 1.

Table 20:Baseline-midline comparison of foundation skill of SeGMA segregated, subtask I

Subtask 1						
Categories	**Intervention Group** *(Tn=696)*			**Control Group** *(Cn=399)*		
	Baseline	**Midline**	**Change**	**Baseline**	**Midline**	**Change**
Non-learner 0%	17.8%	0.6%	-17.20%	8.5%	8.5%	0.00%
Emergent learner 1%-40%	43.0%	45.2%	2.20%	39.3%	25.6%	-13.70%
Established learner 41%-80%	31.9%	37.6%	5.70%	39.0%	52.6%	13.60%
Proficient learner 81%-100%	7.3%	16.6%	9.30%	13.3%	13.3%	0.00%

The trend is similar in subtask 2. The degree of changes in the intervention group is higher and also demonstrated positive progression compared to that of the control group. However, the number of non-learners was still at 20.7% in the intervention group.

Table 21:Baseline-midline comparison of foundation skill of SeGMA segregated, subtask 2

Subtask 2						
Categories	**Intervention Group** *(Tn=696)*			**Control Group** *(Cn=399)*		
	Baseline	**Midline**	**Change**	**Baseline**	**Midline**	**Change**
Non-learner 0%	53.6%	20.7%	-32.90%	45.0%	42.9%	-2.10%

Emergent learner 1%-40%	41.5%	44.2%	2.70%	43.0%	34.8%	-8.20%
Established learner 41%-80%	4.8%	29.3%	24.50%	9.0%	17.8%	8.80%
Proficient learner 81%-100%	0.1%	5.9%	5.80%	3.0%	4.5%	1.50%

Based on the mapping of the content of the SeGMA tools in relation to the national curriculum standard, the criteria presented in Table 22 was set to determine the numeracy "grade level" of the girls.

Table 22: Expected skill in numeracy for each secondary grade

	Proficiency level in SeGMA
Grade 8	Foundational skills in arithmetic questions Foundational skills in algebra questions
Grade 9	Established skills in arithmetic questions Established skills in algebra questions
Grade 10	Proficient skills in arithmetic questions Proficient skills in algebra questions

Table 23 shows the findings regarding the grade level achieved by girls in midline cross-tabulated with their actual grade level. The data shows that a significant majority of the girls in the intervention group had achieved grade level 8 or above. Across grades 8, 9, and 10, the proportion of girls in the intervention group who were still below grade level 8 in numeracy was much lower than the proportion of the girls in the control group. Though marginal, the number of girls who have achieved grade level 10 is also higher in the intervention group. This depicts improvement from the baseline.

Table 23: Grade level achieved by secondary level girls based on midline score of SeGMA (B)

Grade midline (Baseline Grade)	**Level** **Group**	**Grade 10 level achieved**	**Grade 9 level achieved**	**Grade 8 level achieved**	**Below Grade 8**
7 (6)	**Treatment** *(Tn=273)*	4.4%	13.1%	36.5%	46.0%
	Control *(Cn=166)*	0%	10.8%	37.3%	51.8%
8 (7)	**Treatment** *(Tn=206)*	2.9%	35.9%	54.9%	6.3%
	Control *(Cn=92)*	2.2%	20.7%	31.5%	45.7%
9 (8)	**Treatment** *(Tn=117)*	2.6%	45.3%	46.2%	6.0%
	Control	5.4%	28.0%	30.1%	36.6%

	(Cn=93)				
10 (9)	**Treatment** *(Tn=87)*	3.4%	43.7%	52.9%	0.0%
	Control *(Cn=37)*	0.0%	37.8%	40.5%	21.6%
Overall	**Treatment** *(Tn=696)*	3.4%	30.1%	45.5%	20.9%
	Control *(Cn=399)*	1.8%	19.5%	35.3%	43.4%

During the baseline, the proportion of girls from the intervention group who had achieved grade level below 8 was lower than that of the control. In addition, the rate of decline in the girls who had a numeracy skill level of “below Grade 8” was also higher among girls in the intervention group. Overall, the proportion of girls below grade level 8 in the treatment group had decreased by 33.5% while the same for the control group is only 2.4%. This is in line with other findings which has provided evidence of intervention group making much better progress in the past one year compared to their control counterpart.

Table 24: Grade level achieved by secondary level girls based on baseline score of SeGMA (B)

Grade Baseline	Level Group	Grade 10 level achieved	Grade 9 level achieved	Grade 8 level achieved	Below Grade 8
6	**Treatment** *(Tn=273)*	0.0%	2.9%	33.7%	63.4%
	Control *(Cn=166)*	1.2%	6.0%	39.2%	53.6%
7	**Treatment** *(Tn=206)*	0.0%	0.0%	42.1%	57.9%
	Control *(Cn=92)*	0.0%	4.3%	47.8%	47.8%
8	**Treatment** *(Tn=117)*	0.9%	12.8%	43.6%	42.7%
	Control *(Cn=93)*	3.2%	17.0%	44.7%	35.1%
9	**Treatment** *(Tn=87)*	0.0%	12.6%	48.3%	39.1%
	Control *(Cn=37)*	13.5%	10.8%	40.5%	35.1%
Overall	**Treatment** *(Tn=696)*	0.1%	4.8%	40.6%	54.4%
	Control *(Cn=399)*	2.5%	9.3%	42.5%	45.8%

During the qualitative exercises, the in-school girls in the intervention group did mention that they had noticed an improvement in their literacy and numeracy skills. The teachers in the schools also stated that there had been an improvement in the learning outcome of the girls. However, the teachers mentioned that the improvement was mainly seen in mathematics and science, whereas the improvement in literacy was only marginal.

LSC was a project activity that was expected to directly intervene among all secondary level school girls enrolled in intervention school. The classes were designed to provided learning support to girls who needed additional guidance and attention to improve their learning outcomes in classes. However, the midline evaluation found that the LSC did not provide support to the girls on improving their performance in Nepali (literacy for the project). This lack of direct intervention has limited the achievement of the project. The need for such intervention is also evident by the low score in sub-task three of SeGRA.

On the other hand, the numeracy score saw remarkable growth among the intervention group. Despite this growth, in-school girls across all four districts stated that mathematics was one of the subjects that they find most difficult. The teachers also stated that students find mathematics difficult. However, they also stated that the situation had improved. A teacher in Surkhet stated, “Mathematics instigated fears in students, in the past student would rather run away from school than to take the mathematics class. Now things are improving; I think the new techniques we have learned in teaching have made it easier for us to approach students with more comprehensible content.”

For grades 9 and 10, there still remains a challenge in performing better in mathematics; teachers in Lamjung and Surkhet mentioned that the girls in these grades lacked minimum materials that are required for them to solve mathematic problems. “Many of my students in class 10 do not even have a compass or a calculator. When they don’t have these basic materials, their interests fade, and they also cannot practice enough. No wonder they do not perform well.”

The midline evaluation showed that the project had indeed had a positive impact in regards to improving the literacy and numeracy skills of the in-school girls. The findings also showed that on a subject that the project had a direct intervention on, numeracy, the improvement rate is much higher.

2.1.3 English and Digital literacy: EDGE

As a third learning outcome, the sister for sister’s education project – II had introduced the English and Digital for Girl’s Education (EDGE) program, in collaboration with the British Council Nepal. The program was first piloted in Surkhet District with a scope to expand it to other districts in the third year. During the baseline, the assessment of the digital and literacy skills of the girls had been carried out in Surkhet.

By the midline, the girls in the EDGE clubs were expected to complete a 90 hours “Foundation” course covering various components of English, digital, and social skills. The objective of the “Foundation” course was to increase the English-speaking confidence of the participants, enhance their understanding of basic English structures, enhancing their understanding of basic social skills, and increase their knowledge of operating simple IT devices.

English proficiency

The English proficiency of a girl was assessed by rating them in the following categories: A0, PreA1, PreA1+, A1, A1+, and A2. The comparison of the English proficiency is made among the 62 little sisters who participated during the baseline assessment and are still in the EDGE club.

The midline data showed that 61.30% of the girls were able to progress one level or higher than their English proficiency level at baseline. Likewise, the midline also saw a decline in the percentage of girls who scored A0 in English. However, during the midline, there were no girls with an A2 level in English proficiency. Although the midline target was to increase the proficiency level of at least 20% of the girls to A2 level, the foundation course that the girls were expected to complete by the midline was not designed to achieve this. Furthermore, many of the girls had not completed the 90 hours of courses as intended. Hence, as expected, based on the course design, the target has not been met, and because many girls had not completed the required hours of the foundation course, some girls have not performed as expected.

Table 25:Proportion of girls at different English proficiency level at Baseline and Midline

	Baseline	Midline
Proficiency Level (Score)		
A0 (0)	56.5%	19.4%
PreA1 (1)	11.3%	50.0%
PreA1+ (2)	22.6%	17.7%
A1 (3)	9.6%	12.9%

As intended by the “Foundation” course, it was found that the ability of the girls to comprehend questions in English had improved. However, they lacked the skill for responding in English or sentence formation.

Digital Skills

The target set by the project for the midline was to enable the progress of at least 50% of the EDGE girls to digital literacy, demonstrating the same level as those who are categorized as “Competent” or higher. For a girl to be in this category, she should score 7 or higher out of 13. During the midline, none of the girls achieved this level. The average digital literacy score was 1.91 with only one girl scoring 6. The baseline-midline comparison of digital literacy is made among 56 little sisters.

Table 26 Proportion of girls at different Digital proficiency level at Baseline and Midline

Rating and total Score Range	Baseline	Midline
Non-user 0	92.9%	30.6%
Novice (1-3)	7.1%	56.5%
Beginner (4-6)	0%	12.9%
Competent (7-9)	0%	0%
Proficient (10-12)	0%	0%

Expert 13	0%	0%

The midline data shows that the proportion of non-users in IT had significantly decreased. As intended by the course, the number of novices, i.e., girls who demonstrate some degree of familiarity with computer and communication medium, has significantly increased.

Reflection

The midline found that there was a high turnover rate in the EDGE club. The records of the British Council showed that 47.95% of the 196 girls who were surveyed during the baseline had discontinued the club. Conversation with district project staff and informal conversation with community-level staff, big sisters, and adult champion indicate three factors for high attrition.

During the initial phases of the EDGE club, time management emerged as a problem for girls as the club was being run on weekdays. Managing time for school, the club, and household chores were difficult for in-school girls. To tackle this issue, the clubs were scheduled to run on weekends and holidays. Second, many of the girls who were enrolled in the club were in grade 10 and were preparing for SEE. Many of these girls dropped out of the club to focus on preparation for SLC.

The third and most challenging issue, according to the community mobilizers and big sisters was, after three to four months of classes, girls were found to be losing their interests in the club. Partly because they felt demotivated as they could not do as well as their peers and also because many had signed up to the club with expectations of getting opportunities to use computers, access audio-visual materials and “tablets” regularly, however, due to limited resources these expectations were not met and many girls lost interest leading to more turnover.

Two teachers and a headteacher also stated that they were skeptical of the skills of the peer group leaders, especially their skills, as to function as instructors.

As the EDGE club are not part of the formal education, the headteachers or teachers could not comment on how effective they felt the club was. An English teacher shared that he has found girls who are members of the EDGE club to be more confident and more active in the English class. The monitoring reports from Surkhet provided by the project team and international volunteers have also given examples of girls in EDGE clubs who have

Sharing their skepticism on the modality of peer learning, a headteacher and two teachers stated that the peer group leaders themselves might not be skilled enough to undertake the responsibility as instructors. Likewise, two big sisters who were facilitating the bridge classes also opined that they needed further opportunity to enhance their skills in English and “Computer” to be more effective and efficient in transferring the knowledge. They lamented, while they had received training on how to facilitate classes, the opportunity to further improve their own knowledge and skills on the subject matter was limited.

As stated in the baseline, effectively improving the digital and English literacy of the girls could prove to be a challenge for the project. This assertion was found to be true during the midline, especially as there remain many challenges in ensuring that the girls enrolled in the EDGE club complete the entire course over a period of three years.

3.2. Subgroup analysis of the Learning Outcome

The literacy and numeracy scores vis-à-vis the learning outcomes of a girl can be dependent upon various other factors. This section discusses the learning outcomes based on different subgroups and barriers.

	Average midline Literacy Score	Change in average literacy score since baseline	Average midline numeracy score (SeGMA B)	Change in average numeracy score since baseline
Average score of All in-school girls in treatment school *(SeGRA n=702)* *(SeGMA (B) n = 696)*	40.71%	7.17%	42.42%	18.15%
Household-level barriers				
Household head has low education *(Tn=318)*	40.28%	7.84%	40.14%	16.66%
Language of instruction is different than primary language at home *(Tn=183)*	31.31%*	5.00%	38.33%*	18.47%
Girls from poor household *(Tn=262)*	37.46%*	8.14%	39.15%*	18.64%
Girls living without both parents *(Tn=137)*	45.82%*	8.89%	44.46%	14.16%
Characteristics				
Girls living in female headed household *(Tn=267)*	39.70%	7.58%	42.32%	17.31%
Cannot choose whether to attend or stay in school and just accepts what happens *(Tn=426)*	36.97%	6.50%	41.02%	19.33%
Girls who engage in household chore for more than 2 hours of the day *(Tn=95)*	41.26%	4.47%	43.87%	20.91%
Girls who say that all key decisions are taken by their family *(Tn=34)*	21.76%*	-7.64%	30.75%*	14.84%

School-level barriers				
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome *(Tn=69)*	42.68%	8.84%	41.66%	17.75%
Teachers treat boys and girls differently *(Tn=253)*	34.59%*	6.46%	38.43%*	18.49%
Have witnessed physical punishment in school *(Tn=210)*	37.00%*	6.59%	38.65%*	17.54%
Teachers are often absent *(Tn=327)*	40.33%	7.94%	43.80%	17.54%
Teachers do not use different language to help understand subject *(Tn=77)*	38.44%	3.05%	39.74%	17.40%
*=statistically significant difference with alternative				

As discussed in earlier sections, the difference in the language of instruction in school and primary language at home came up as a barrier. Girls who had a difference in language have some of the lowest scores in the sample size. The difference in both literacy and numeracy scores of these groups of girls to those who use the same language at home as in school was also statistically significant. Hence, there is a need for additional intervention to cater to girls who have a difference in language at home and at school.

Likewise, the girls who come from poor households scored lower than the girls from households who were not poor, in both literacy and numeracy tests. The difference in mean score between girls who are from poor households and girls who are from households that are not poor was statistically significant.

The stakeholders stated that poverty was a major reason behind low learning outcomes among secondary level girls. They felt that a girl from a poor household had an additional burden of household chores and are also more prone to be absent. The quantitative data also showed a significant association between the poverty status of a household, and the number of hours girls spent in household chores as well as the rate of absenteeism. The data showed that 12.1% of the girls from poor households had missed school half the time or more compared to just 5.1% of girls from households who are not poor. Likewise, 20.3% of girls from poor households spend more than 2 hours daily in household chores, which is 5.1% higher than girls from the household who are not poor. The impact of household chores is further discussed in IO section 4.2

There was also a trend of seasonal migration across all districts, especially among poverty-stricken households. Many of the parents from the poor families usually went to India to work for a certain time of the year, leaving behind children to take care of themselves. In Surkhet and Lamjung, the local government authorities and school staffs reported that most of the time, when the parents migrated for work, girls were responsible for taking care of the entire household. Since boys (usually above the age of 13) also accompanied the parents, it was the girls who bore the burden of household chores as well as taking care of younger ones and the elderly.

While assumptions regarding poverty and language of instruction have held true, the assumption that girls "living without both parents" face additional barriers might not be contextual in the project districts. As stated earlier, girls were found to be living away from families so that access to schools become easier. The girls living away from parents scored significantly higher in literacy tests (45.82%) than girls who live with both the parents (39.42%).

The midline data showed that the girls who reported all key decisions in their lives are taken by the family had the lowest score and is the only group whose score (literacy) has gone down from baseline. This was mainly because of the fact that these girls have to prioritize family's decisions and wish over education. This indicates that the project has rightly identified involvement in decision making as a requisite for improved learning, hence, its inclusion in IO. Further discussion surrounding this is presented in the IO section.

Apart from the above-discussed household characteristics, several factors concerning the school environment and teaching qualities also affected the literacy and numeracy scores of the girls. The data shows that the teachers' attitude and behavior have an impact on the numeracy and literacy scores of the girls.

Girls who reported that their teachers used physical punishment and who felt that the teachers treated boys and girls differently scored lower in both literacy and numeracy. On the other hand, the girls who reported their teacher encouraged classroom participation and suggested ways to continue reading outside of school performed better in both literacy and numeracy compared to the girls who reported the opposite. Therefore, the project needs to further work with school management and staff to promote child-friendly school and teaching environments.

Analysis of learning outcome based on districts

Among the four project districts, girls in Parsa district scored lower in both literacy and numeracy tests. This was observed for both control and intervention groups. As seen in table 27, the girls in the intervention group in Lamjung scored higher than girls in any other cohort or district which is consistent with the trend seen during baseline.

Table 27: District wise comparison of SeGRA score of in-school girls

District	SeGRA Treatment	SeGRA Control
Dhading (Tn=148) (Cn=102)	9.76 (48.79%)	10.19 (50.93%)
Lamjung (Tn=115) (Cn=68)	10.38 (51.91%)	10.25 (51.25%)
Parsa* (Tn=239) (Cn=115)	5.63 (28.16%)	4.82 (24.09%)
Surkhet (Tn=200) (Cn=115)	8.66 (43.30%)	8.36 (41.78%)

The low performance of both treatment and control girls in Parsa can be attributed to the language barrier that the students face. Almost 75% of the girls in Parsa were found to have a difference in the language of instruction and the primary language spoken at home.

Table 28: District wise comparison of SeGMA (M) score of in-school girls

District	SeGMA Treatment	SeGMA Control
Dhading* *(Tn=147)* *(Cn=102)*	12.69 (50.78%)	15.29 (61.18%)
Lamjung *(Tn=115)* *(Cn=67)*	14.54 (58.16%)	14.37 (57.49%)
Parsa* *(Tn=236)* *(Cn=115)*	9.18 (36.73%)	6.70 (26.78%)
Surkhet *(Tn=199)* *(Cn=115)*	9.99 (39.98%)	8.83 (35.30%)

The district-wise segregation of the SeGMA also showed a similar trend as in SeGRA Scores. In both numeracy and literacy skills, the control group in Dhading has scored higher than the treatment group in that district. Whereas in the other three districts, the intervention group has scored higher than their control counterpart. The mean SeGMA score for intervention and control is significantly different only in Dhading and Parsa.

In comparison with the baseline, the average literacy and numeracy score of the intervention group saw improvement across all the districts. The improvement in numeracy skills was even better than the improvement in literacy skills.

Table 29: Baseline-Midline comparison of literacy and numeracy score segregated by district: intervention group

District	SeGRA Baseline	SeGRA Midline		SeGMA (B) Baseline	SeGMA (B) Midline
Dhading	43.28%	48.79%		27.93%	47.86%
Lamjung	37.04%	51.91%		38.52%	58.70%
Parsa	24.02%	28.16%		18.19%	34.85%
Surkhet	36.23%	43.30%		20.58%	37.89%

The average SeGMA score in Parsa and Surkhet districts had almost doubled since the midline. The increment in the numeracy and literacy score across all four districts was statistically significant. There was a significant average difference between baseline SeGRA and SeGMA score and midline SeGRA and SeGMA score in all four districts.

Analysis of learning outcome based on age

The age-wise segregation of the SeGRA score shows the girls between the age of 14-15 have a higher average SeGRA score. Among them, the average SeGRA score of girls aged 16-17 is the highest. The association between the age and the SeGRA score is also statistically significant.

Table 30:Age wise segregation of literacy and numeracy score: intervention group

Age	Mean SeGRA	MeanSeGMA (M)
Aged 12-13 years (n-280)	37.20%	40.87%
Aged 14-15 years (n=300)	43.10%	45.65%
Aged 16-17 years (n=106)	43.49%	47.70%
Aged 18-19 years (n=16)	39.06%	49.50%

The association between the age of girls and their SeGMA score, however, is not statistically significant.

Analysis of learning outcome based on ethnicity

The midline data also showed that the girls from the ethnic communities from Madhesh/Terai region had the lowest SeGRA and SeGMA scores.

Table 31: Baseline-midline, segregation of literacy numeracy score by ethnicity/caste: intervention group

	SeGRA			SeGMA (B)		
Ethnicity	**Midline**	**Baseline**	**Change**	**Midline**	**Baseline**	**Change**
Dalit hill/tarai (n=141)	8.48 (42.38%)	6.33 (31.67%)	***2.14**** ***(10.71%)***	8.81 (44.07%)	4.87 (24.33%)	***3.95**** ***(19.75%)***
Hill janjati (n=193)	9.49 (47.44%)	7.95 (39.74%)	***1.54**** ***(7.69%)***	9.39 (46.96%)	5.79 (28.96%)	***3.60**** ***(18.01%)***
Madesh(Middle class) (n=182)	5.65 (28.27%)	5.04 (25.19%)	***0.62*** ***(3.08%)***	7.27 (36.33%)	3.64 (18.20%)	***3.63**** ***(18.14%)***
Muslim[3] (n=16)	5.00 (25.00%)	3.25 (16.25%)	***1.75**** ***(8.75%)***	4.69 (23.44%)	2.31 (11.56%)	***2.38**** ***(11.88%)***
Madesh (Brahmin/Chhetri) (n=16)	5.81 (29.06%)	6.50 (32.50%)	***-0.69*** ***(-3.44%)***	8.38 (41.88%)	5.50 (27.50%)	***2.88**** ***(14.38%)***
Hill Brahmin/Chettri (n=154)	9.66 (48.31%)	7.99 (39.94%)	***1.68**** ***(8.38%)***	8.86 (44.32%)	5.29 (26.43%)	***3.58**** ***(17.89%)***
*=statistically significant average difference in baseline score and midline score						

[3] Th sample population of Muslims and Madesh (Brahmin/Chhetri) are very low for generalization.

The girls from the intervention group who belonged to the Dalit households (one of the barriers identified by the project) were able to score higher than the average overall SeGRA Score. However, the girls belonging to Brahmin and Chhetri households had higher SeGRA scores than girls from other ethnicities. In SeGMA, the average score was highest among Hill Janjati.

The girls from the Madeshi middle class were found to have more difficulty in literacy and numeracy compared to any other groups, as evident by the midline score. The SeGRA and SeGMA scores were statistically significant in relation to ethnicity.

The midline data shows that among all the case/ethnic groups of the girls, there has been an improvement in both SeGRA and SeGMA score, except for the SeGRA score of the Madhesi (Brahmin/Chhetri). In both, SeGRA and SeGMA the girls belonging to Dalit household has seen the highest increment. The SeGMA score of the girls belonging to the Dalit household has almost doubled during the midline.

The pre-post change in numeracy score across all the caste/ethnic groups is statistically significant, whereas the change in literacy score is only significant for four castes/ethnic groups except Mahesh middle class, as seen in table 31.

Analysis of the learning outcome of Little sisters

To assess how the project's peer mentoring approach had worked, FDM assessed the SeGRA/SeGMA scores of Little Sisters. Little Sisters are a group of in-school girls within a treatment school that the project selected for specific and more concentrated intervention. Little sisters were also the direct beneficiaries of the "Big Sister's" mentoring. Little sisters also directly benefitted from project activities such as the distribution of learning materials, confidence building, and life skill enhancement activities, among others. As a special group within the wider beneficiaries, a separate analysis of their learning outcome is done in the midline. No pre-post comparison or control-intervention analysis is done for this group. This group also includes in-school girls in Surkhet who took part in the EDGE assessment. *Literacy score of Little Sister*

The average literacy score (SeGRA) of the little sister was 9.385, which was 6.37% higher than that of others in school girls. Within the little sisters, the little sisters in Surkhet scored the highest, whereas little sisters in Parsa scored the lowest.

Table 32: Comparison of SeGRA Score of little sister with other in school girls

	Little Sisters	Other in school girls
Overall	9.385 (46.93%)	8.131 (40.66%)
Dhading	9.535 (47.68%)	9.758 (48.79%)
Lamjung	10.096 (50.48%)	10.383 (51.92%)
Parsa	6.333 (31.67%)	5.636 (28.18%)
Surkhet	10.399 (52.00%)	8.660 (43.30%)

The regression analysis showed that the involvement of little sisters in the EDGE club in Surkhet had no significant impact on the SeGRA score of the little sister. The association between the district and the SeGRA score of little sisters, however, was statistically significant.

Table 33: SeGRA score of little sisters segregated by district and subtask

Subtask	Subtask 1 (total score= 7)	Sub task 2 (total score= 8)	Sub task 3 (total score= 5)
Dhading *(n=99)*	4.283 (61.19%)	3.879 (48.49%)	1.374 (27.48%)
Lamjung *(n=104)*	4.221 (60.30%)	3.981 (49.76%)	1.894 (37.88%)
Parsa *(n=75)*	3.387 (48.39%)	2.520 (31.50%)	0.426 (8.52%)
Surkhet *(n=138)*	4.171 (59.59%)	4.399 (54.99%)	1.826 (36.52)
Overall *(n=416)*	4.070 (58.14%)	3.832 (47.90%)	1.483 (29.66%)

In all four districts, the score of little sisters in Subtask one was the highest. As with other in-school girls, the little sisters also scored lowest in the subtask three. While the average overall score of little sisters in subtask one and two is above 45%. The average overall score in subtask three is below 30%.

The qualitative interactions with stakeholders reflected that the mentoring approach (Little Sister-Big sister) was the most effective as well as appreciated intervention the project. The stakeholders across the board stated that little sisters were among the most confident, interactive, and attentive students in the school. The mentorship opportunity that the little sisters received has helped them in better growth than others in school girls. Their mentors (Big Sisters) are tasked with directly engaging with the parents to facilitate the creation of a learning environment at home and regularly monitor the performance of little sisters in the school. In addition, the mentors were also found to be engaged in providing direct support in the learning of the little sisters which had led to little sisters performing better than their peers in school.

However, the literacy score suggests that even little sisters are struggling to perform well in tasks that involved creative and analytical sentence formation like their other in-school peers.

Table 34: Literacy foundational skill gap of little sisters

	Non-learner 0%	*Emergent learner 1%-40%*	*Established learner 41%-80%*	*Proficient learner 81%-100%*
Dhading *(n=99)*	0%	38.4%	60.6%	1%
Lamjung *(n=104)*	0%	35.6%	63.5%	1%
Parsa *(n=75)*	0%	74.7%	25.3%	0%
Surkhet *(n=138)*	0%	34.1%	58.0%	8%
Overall *(n=416)*	0%	42.8%	54.1%	3.1%

The analysis of fundamental skills in the literacy of little sisters shows that except in Parsa district majority of the little sisters demonstrated the skill level of established learners. In Parsa, almost three fourth of the little sisters demonstrated the skill level of an emergent learner. Out of 416 little sisters, none were within the group of non-learners in subtask one; only one was in the non-learner category in subtask two, while 165 (39.7%) were non-learners in subtask three.

Among the little sisters, only a few have achieved literacy grade level 10. Except in Parsa majority of the little sisters demonstrated literacy skills of Grade level 8 and 9. In Parsa, over 70% of the little sisters are below grade level 8.

Table 35:Cross tabulation of literacy Grade level achieved by little sister

	Grade level 10	Grade level 9	Grade level 8	Below grade level 8
Dhading *(n=99)*	1%	16.2%	45.4%	37.4%
Lamjung *(n=104)*	0%	30.8%	41.3%	27.9%
Parsa *(n=75)*	0%	1.3%	26.7%	72.0%
Surkhet *(n=138)*	1.4%	31.2%	34.8%	32.6%
Overall *(n=416)*	0.7%	22.1%	37.5%	39.7%

Numeracy Score of Little Sisters

Except in Surkhet, the average numeracy score of the little sister was higher compared to the other in-school girls. The average SeGMA score of little sisters in Dhading and Lamjung was around 60% of the total score, while the scores of Surkhet and Parsa are below 50%. Moving

away from the general trend, the little sisters in Parsa have scored higher in SeGMA than the little sisters in Surkhet.

Table 36:Comparison of SeGMA (M) Score of little sisters with other in school girls

	Little Sisters	Other in school girls
Overall	12.153 (48.61%)	11.026 (44.10%)
Dhading	14.907 (59.63%)	12.757 (51.03%)
Lamjung	15.204 (60.82%)	14.539 (58.16%)
Parsa	9.770 (39.08%)	9.129 (36.52%)
Surkhet	9.217 (36.87%)	9.995 (39.98%)

The involvement of little sisters in the EDGE club in Surkhet did not lead to any difference in the average numeracy score of the little sisters. The district the little sisters were from, however, made a statistically significant difference in the average numeracy score of the little sisters.

Table 37 SeGMA (M) score of little sisters segregated by district and subtask

Subtask	Subtask 1 (total score= 15)	Sub task 2 (total score= 10)
Dhading *(n=99)*	9.546 (63.64%)	5.361 (53.61%)
Lamjung *(n=104)*	9.437 (62.91%)	5.767 (57.67%)
Parsa *(n=75)*	6.324 (42.16%)	3.446 (34.46)
Surkhet *(n=138)*	6.123 (40.82%)	3.094 (30.94%)
Overall *(n=416)*	7.794 (51.96%)	4.359 (43.59%)

Across all the districts, the little sisters scored higher in subset one. The average score of the little sisters in subset one was 51.96% compared to 43.59% in subset two. As in SeGRA, the higher confidence level of the little sisters and additional support they received from the project along with the mentorship program has been attributed as the primary reasons for the better performance of the little sisters.

Based on average SeGMA Score, there were no known learners among little sisters in numeracy. In Dhading and Lamjung, the majority of the little sisters were established-learners with more than 17% (in both the districts) are proficient learners. Across all subgroups and learning assessments, this is the highest proportion of proficient learners. In both, the subset Lamjung had the highest proportion of little sisters who are proficient learners. In Surkhet and Parsa majority of the little sisters are emergent learners. The percentage of proficient learners was also lowest in these

districts. There were no non-learners among the 412 little sisters who participated in the numeracy test.

Table 38: Numeracy skill gap of little sisters

	Non-learner 0%	Emergent learner 1%-40%	Established learner 41%-80%	Proficient learner 81%-100%
Dhading *(n=99)*	0	16.5%	66.0%	17.5%
Lamjung *(n=104)*	0	19.4%	61.2%	19.4%
Parsa *(n=75)*	0	59.5%	35.1%	5.4%
Surkhet *(n=138)*	0	63.%	34.8%	2.2%
Overall *(n=416)*	0	40.5%	48.8%	10.7%

Table 39:Cross tabulation of the actual grade of girls and Grade level achieved by little sister base on SeGMA (M) score

	Grade level 10	Grade level 9	Grade level 8	Below grade level 8
Dhading *(n=99)*	5.2%	59.8%	35.1%	0%
Lamjung *(n=104)*	3.9%	67.0%	28.2%	1.0%
Parsa *(n=75)*	1.4%	28.4%	68.9%	1.4%
Surkhet *(n=138)*	0%	19.6%	80.4%	0%
Overall *(n=416)*	42.5%	54.6%	0.5%	2.4%

The number of girls who are in a grade level below 8 of numeracy is negligible among little sisters. In Dhading and Lamjung majority of the little sisters have achieved grade level 9 with few achieving grade level 10. In Parsa and Surkhet, however, most of the little sisters have achieved grade level 8. Less than one-third of the little sister in these two districts have achieved grade level 9.

Like other in-school girls, little sisters were also able to perform better in numeracy assessment rather than literacy. As discussed earlier this could be due to the fact that while the project runs a dedicated intervention to improve numeracy skills in school girls, there is no direct intervention targeting literacy. In a stark difference from the trend seen among other groups, the little sisters in Surkhet have performed better in literacy compared to the numeracy. The little sisters in Surkhet, during the interview, mentioned that they have experienced improvement in themselves in both literacy and numeracy, they gave no indication that they felt the literacy skills had seen better improvement than the numeracy skills.

3. Transition Outcome

This section presents the key findings on the transition outcome set by the project. The project has two specific transition groups; in school, girls who are enrolled in the secondary level education and out of school girls in Parsa. For each of the groups, the project has outlined a pathway that they are expected to follow for them to be considered to have a successful transition. These pathways are linked with the re-enrolment in formal or non-formal education, involved in technical or vocational training, safe employment, and self-employment. Table 41 shows the transition pathways.

Table 40: Transition pathway

	Baseline point	Successful Transition	Unsuccessful Transition
Out of school girls (young)	Enrolled in bridge course	Re-enrolled in school (previously out of school) Out of school but involved in non-formal education or vocational training	Repeats grade Dropped out of school or bridge course
Lower secondary (basic education)	Enrolled in Grade 6, 7, 8,9	In-school progression Re-enrolled in school (previously out of school) Dropped but involved in NFE	Repeats grade Dropped out of school
Secondary school	Enrolled in Grade 10	SEE graduation Dropped out but involved in TEVT Dropped out but employed with minimum wage Dropped out but have started a business on own	Repeats grade Drops out of school but remains unemployed

The MEL framework envisioned that the transition status of all the sample should be recorded in each evaluation point, even if they have attrited from the learning sample or girls survey. The assumption was that the required data would be gathered from households even if contact could not be established with the sample girls. For this, the MEL framework envisaged recording contact information of the households, including location and phone numbers during the baseline, which will be used in subsequent evaluation points. However, this approach was not adequate to ensure that transition data is secured from all the samples during the baseline.

The midline evaluators found that not all the household information recorded during the baseline, so as to facilitate re-contacting, was reliable. Due to this issue, the evaluation team had to rely highly on the information available at school, community-level project staff, and snowballing to identify the sample vis-à-vis household. There were cases where many of the girls in the sample list could not be identified at all. For instance, neither the midline EE nor the Project staff could identify 29 girls who were all reported to be in one of the communities in Parsa and who were apparently enrolled in the bridge classes. The enrolment list of the bridge classes, the project maintains, did not have these names at all. In many sample lists of in-school girls, such discrepancies existed. In Dhading, 9 girls who were listed to be in one treatment school were

found in another treatment school. This was only possible because community mob in that particular case could identify the girls and help contact them.

As discussed in the sections below, the schools were found to be lacking proper documentation and records. Similarly, the project's staff were also updated on only the status of little sister and at a very limited scope the status of other in school girls. This severely limited the ability of the external evaluators to identify the sample and contact their household. Furthermore, the time constraint for fieldwork also prevented further probing to identify the household of the girls.

The information on girls who had left the school was even harder to come by. As project staffs did not keep records on them, and neither did the schools, there were no reliable means of verifying their transition status. In Dhading and Surkhet, the project staff, community mobilizers, and school authorities, during informal conversations, stated that there is a trend among children to move to urban areas when they reach grades 9 or 10. Most of the time this movement happens so that the children can enroll in “better” schools in the urban location as they are concerned about their performance in SEE. In some cases, children also move to these urban areas for work.

The quantitative supervisor in Surkhet reported that when inquiring about the girls who were lost, *“We have heard that they have moved to Birendranagar” was* one of the most repeated answers.

A further caveat should be considered while reviewing the performance of the in school girls against the target set for the transition outcome. The midline data on the transition that has been presented in this section is of the girls who were recontacted during the midline (Treatment =800 and Control = 494) along with the girls who were in class 10 during the baseline but not recontacted for girls survey (Treatment = 86 and Control = 59). Whereas, the target and the baseline value used for the calculation of performance against the target was derived from the entire sample size of the baseline.

Findings on Transition outcome

As seen in table 41, the transition rate for the in-school girls had increased for both treatment and the control group.

During the midline, the transition rate of in-school girls among both the intervention and control group had seen improvement and is the same. The successful transition rate among out of school girls in Parsa was also remarkable. Among the OOS girls who participated in the bridge classes run by the sister for sister’s project, the successful transition rate was 84.2%. Table 41 presents the transition rate of in-school girls and out of school girls.

Table 41: Transition rate of beneficiary girls by age

Group name (e.g., In school girls, etc. – refer to OSS)	Intervention transition rate (Baseline)	Control transition rate (Baseline)	Intervention transition rate (Midline)	Control transition rate (Midline)	Target	% of target achieved
In school Girls						
Re-contacted in school girls (Tn=800 Cn=494)	93.90%	92.10%	99.4%	99.4%	7% above control	-1.80%
In school girls Grade 10 during baseline (Tn=86			100%	100%		

Cn= 59)						
Out of school girls in Parsa aged 6-9 (n= 140)	N/A	N/A	84.3%	N/A	10% pre/post	

The target set for the transition outcome of the in-school girls was 7% above control. The DID estimation shows that the increment in the transition of the intervention group is 1.8 percentage point less than that of the control. Similarly, the transition rate of the girls who were in grade 10 during the baseline was 100% in both the groups

Besides the difference in baseline-midline sample size used for comparison, this was also the result of the ceiling effect due to which the transition rate of the intervention group could not grow further than what it is. The midline data showed that the transition outcome had a ceiling effect. Moreover, the target was only achievable if the transition rate of the control had declined. Even if the transition rate of the treatment girls had been 100% and the control group's rate had remained the same as the baseline, the target would not have been met. There was no evidence from the field and stakeholders to suggest the assumption that the transition rate of the control school would go down held true. Contrary to the assumption, during the midline, both the control and the treatment saw increment in the transition rate, especially owing to the success in school progression.

The letter grading system in schools entails that no students fail or are compulsorily required to repeat grades. The only instances where these might occur is if a student has not appeared examination or if there is consent from the parents, students, and school to allow a student to repeat a grade if her/his grade is not satisfactory. For these reasons, the instances of repeat grade were nil during the midline in both control and treatment school. The qualitative consultations and review of some of the records by the qualitative researchers corroborate these findings. Across all districts, the headteachers reported that there are a handful of cases of repeat grades in school. Even in such a case, it is usually because a student was unable to appear in the final examination.

"I think 1 or 2 percent of the students repeated grade last year. No parent would want their child to repeat a class. It is also a matter of prestige for them."

-A headteacher in Lamjung

Table 42 below shows the transition Pathway taken by the in-school girls.

Table 42:Transition Pathways of in-school girls (treatment and control)

Transition Pathways of IS-Girls							
Group	Transition pathway						Successful transition rate per age (%)
	Successful Transition			Unsuccessful Transition			
	In school progression	Dropped but involved in NFE	SEE Completed	Repeats grade	Dropped out of school for marriage	Dropped out of school but remains unemployed	
Re-contacted In-School Girls grade 6-9 during baseline Treatment (n=800)	97.5%	0.1%	1.8%	0%	0.3%	0.4%	99.4%
Re-contacted In-School Girls grade 6-9 during baseline Control (n=494)	96.2	0%	3.0%	0	0.4%	0.4%	99.4%
In school girls Grade 6 to 9 during baseline Treatment (n=86)	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
In school girls Grade 10 during baseline Control (n= 59)	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Most of the girls during the midline had continued schooling or have completed SEE, i.e., secondary level schooling. The transition rate of girls who were in grade 10 during the baseline was 100%, as all of them have completed SEE. As the successful completion of SEE was one of the transition pathways for the in-school girls, the data was collected on the SEE status of those girls. This also meant that data was not collected on what the girls were engaged in post SEE.

As evident by the data, the dropout rate among girls was minimal. In the treatment communities, stakeholders reported that the rate of drop out among girls has significantly decreased compared to the trends in the past. Many of the intervention schools reported zero dropouts in the last year. The stakeholders have credited the effort of change agents of the project like Big Sister, Adult Champions, and Teacher's champions as one of the reasons for the decline in the rate of drop out. The house visits and direct intervention with families in known cases of drop out by these change agents have been widely successful. Across all the districts, the involvement of the Big Sisters with the families of the little sisters was found to have a significant spillover effect among

other community members, leading to increased community awareness regarding child marriage and the importance of education.

In addition, the project intervention targeting the reduction of child marriage in the communities were reported to be highly successful. As child marriage was the most prominent contributing factor to the drop out among girls, the reduction of child marriage led to a reduction of drop out.

While a high rate of successful transition has been achieved during the midline, there was a need for continuous intervention in communities. As indicated earlier, the continued engagement of change agents of the project is one of the major factors in preventing dropouts or its cause. The interactions, however, suggested that most of the cases of prevention were only successful due to physical presence of such change agents. Despite, the increase in parental awareness, this alone is not adequate to ensure the continued successful transition, without presence of change agents who physically intervene whenever they come across cases of dropouts and child marriage in the communities.

Furthermore, as discussed in section “appropriateness of activities to barriers,” after completing SEE, the girls had limited life choices. Stakeholders reported that girls who had completed SEE often face a challenge to attain and successfully complete higher education or get employed. In this context, the project should also design intervention that aims at strengthening the ability of girls to continue higher education or engage in economic sectors. In addition, opportunities for educational and career counseling would also be useful.

The transition of Out of school Girls in Parsa

The target set during the baseline for the transition of out of school girls in Parsa had been met. 75.7% of the OOS girls who were enrolled in the bridge classes have enrolled in formal education, 6.4% are enrolled in non-formal education, and 2.1% are enrolled in vocational training.

Following Table Shows, the Transition Pathway of OOS girls disaggregated by age.

Table 43:Transition pathway of OOS girls in Parsa

Transition Pathways of OSS girls in Parsa						
Age (At baseline)	Transition pathway					
	Successful Transition				**Unsuccessful Transition**	**Successful transition rate per age (%)**
	Enrolled in School		***Enrolled in Non-Formal education***	***Enrolled in Vocational training***		
	Grade 5	**Grade 6**				
6 – 8 years *(n= 54)*	72.2%	9.3%	5.6%	3.7%	9.3%	90.80%
9 -11 years *(n=86)*	59.3%	12.8%	7.0%	1.2%	19.8%	80.30%
Total	64.3%	11.4%	6.4%	2.1%	15.7%	84.20%

The data show that among the OSS girls, the proportion of enrolment into formal schooling is higher among girls who were between the age of 6-8 years during the baseline. They have led to this group having a better transition rate.

During qualitative interviews, headteachers and government officials in Parsa reported that children who have never been to school seldom could be admitted to grade 5 or higher; most of the time, their skill levels are that of children in grades two to four. This means that in most of the instances, OOS children who wish to enroll in formal education will have to be in the same class with children younger than them. This demotivates the OOS children to enroll or continue schooling. A municipal officer stated that the mismatch between the age and the grade level of children had been a major hindrance in ensuring enrolment and schooling.

Even for OOS girls who have enrolled in school, there might be a challenge in ensuring that they remain in schools. The school staff reported that OOS girls who, for the first time, enrolled in formal education at the age of 9 or above, were seen facing challenges in socializing with other peers and also in learning. The OOS girls (who have enrolled in formal education) themselves, however, did not feel that they were facing difficulties. The qualitative interaction with the out of school girls was limited in scope, given the low age of the OOS girls and also because only the OOS girls who were enrolled in schools could be effectively contacted for the study.

In this context, the project should look into ways of how they can further assist the OOS girls who have successfully transitioned to give continuity to the formal/informal education and training. The successful transition rate of the OOS girls is commendable, if the project could also look for avenues to continue engaging with the girls who have not transitioned successfully and provide further assistance, there could be an additional impact in the education and lives of the girls.

FDM, therefore, recommends that the project continues the engagement with the OOS girls even if they have enrolled in school so as to ensure that they do not drop out and especially with girls who did not transition successfully.

4. Target setting for the transition outcome

The transition target set for the in-school girls has attained the ceiling effect by the midline. The qualitative data also suggest that the transition rate (based on the existing pathway) is very high among the intervention community and school, especially in-school progression. Even during the baseline, the transition rate in both treatment and control groups was already high.

Due to the ceiling effect, the EE is of the opinion that the transition pathway needs to be re-defined. However, in doing so, there is a possibility that the baseline or the midline data for the new pathway may not be available, which in turn will make comparison difficult.

At present, robust measurement of the target would not be feasible, especially since the qualitative data shows that any assumption that the transition rate at the control schools will go down does not stand.

One of the ways the evaluation team recommends is to measure transition with association with learning for example, “number of girls who make in-school progress with grades B or higher.” However, if this approach is taken, setting targets based on comparison with control or pre/post will not be feasible, as the data on these is not available.

Therefore, the target setting for the transition will require a rigorous exercise including, FM, Project team, and, if feasible, EE for the endline.

5. Sustainability Outcome

This section presents the findings of the midline regarding the sustainability of the intermediate outcome. These indicators were set as evidence of the ability of the positive changes that the project intervention has resulted in, can continue after the project phases out. The sustainability score has been awarded based on the findings from the Household survey, School Improvement Plan checklist, School observation, and information on relevant indicators gathered from focused group discussion and KII.

Table 44: Sustainability indicators

	Community	***School***	***System***
Indicator 1:	"Average % of income invested in each of their girl's education (Quantitative) Baseline Status: N/A	% of schools scoring acceptable or above in CRM sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain CRMs) Baseline Status: N/A	# of monitoring, coordination, advocacy, and learning sharing meetings conducted by VSO's SfS project which was attended by officials Baseline Status: N/A
Indicator 2:	Community members demonstrating a positive attitude towards girl's education Baseline Status: N/A	% of schools scoring acceptable or above in teacher training assessment (ability to train incoming teachers in learner-centered classroom practices) Baseline Status: N/A	# of request for technical support received by VSO from authorities Baseline Status: N/A
Indicator 3:	N/A	% of schools who score acceptable or above in SIP sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain SIPs) Baseline Status: N/A	Number of MoU signed by district/local/national education representatives in support of VSO SfS project Baseline Status: N/A
Baseline Sustainability Score (0-4)	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Overall Sustainability Score (0-4, an average of the three-level scores)	**N/A**		
Midline sustainability Target (0-4)			
Midline score (0-4)	**2**	**1**	**1**
Overall sustainability Score (0-4, an average of the three-level scores)	**1.33**		

Community

An overall sustainability score of 2 has been given to community-level sustainability. There were two indicators set for community-level sustainability:

i. Average % of income invested in each of their girl's education

ii. Community members demonstrating a positive attitude towards girls' education

To assess the first indicator, both quantitative and qualitative data are available; however, only qualitative data is available for the second indicator.

The midline data showed that, on average, 18% of the monthly household expenditure was on the education of female family members. This was not much different than the average expenditure on the education of male family members, which was found to be 18.73%. There was also virtually no difference among household members who felt that it was worth sending boys or girls to school even when the fund was low. The qualitative findings also painted a similar picture.

The parents did not feel that educating their daughter was of a lesser priority than educating their sons. In Surkhet and Dhading, where seasonal migration was high, parents were found to be more inclined to invest in the education of daughters. This was mainly because boys were expected to join the migrating workforce in their early teens, which has given rise to a belief that boys do not need the education to earn a livelihood as much as girls do. The consultations with school staff and local government also reflected there is not much difference in preference or priority among parents when it comes to educating their children.

The qualitative interactions left an impression upon the evaluation team that rather than a gender-based difference in education, the low level of educational attainment or learning outcome is more associated with economic factors. Interactions with headteachers and teachers also showed that the educational status of boys has been much worse than that of the girls in these communities for more than five years.

The overall sustainability score of 2 is given to this indicator mainly because parents were found reluctant to pay for educational materials if they were not compulsorily needed for their children. The interactions with parents also did not reflect that they had adopted practices like savings or planned for future expenses, which they were aware they would have to incur in the course of educating their children. While the parents had high aspirations for the education of their daughters, they were vocal that they would seek assistance from other agencies. This shows that the investment that the parents are making are a bare minimum, while they might be constrained by the limited income they have, they were not found to be planning even for the resources they have.

"A father would rather eat meat for three meals than buy a calculator that their daughter needs in school."

- A math teacher in Dhading

The evaluation did find that the perception of the community towards girl's education has improved. The community members were found to be aware of the importance of education. The community was also reported to be more engaged in school management. However, this improvement is more concerned with not creating new barriers or directly discouraging the education of girls. Stakeholders were of the view that, while the community has let go of traditional

concepts and beliefs that negatively impacted the enrolment of children, especially girls into education, the overall awareness on the role of community and family in promoting the environment conducive to the better learning practices have not been seen.

There was minimal evidence within the community that the community members were taking a proactive role in promoting girl's education and helping them overcome barriers. For instance, the cases of child marriage arranged by parents have been reported to be minimal or non-existent in most of the communities, while the instance where the children took the decision to get married has drastically increased. However, there was little or no sign the communities were discouraging that. Furthermore, the community constantly associated with promoting education by enabling enrolment.

The midline study showed that communities were positive about providing opportunities for girls to be enrolled in school and continue attaining classes. However, they lacked awareness of how they can actively support learning and growth that is essential for the successful attainment of education. The community has delegated the responsibility of supporting the education of girls mostly, if not entirely, to the school, and the sisters for sister's education project.

The receptive attitude towards change, and opportunities created by the community enabling the engagement of external actors like the SfSE project with the girls and with them, warranted the sustainability score of 2 for the community. On the other hand, lack of awareness regarding the need for a proactive and wider role in the education of children among community members was the reason why a higher score was not assigned to this indicator.

There is a need in the community whereby community members and parents need to take up additional roles in the education of girls. There needs to be a constructive involvement of parents in the education of girls. For the achievement of the project in terms of learning and transition to be sustainable, the community should be to take ownership of the achievement and the process of achieving it. The study found that while parents attributed the improvement of learning outcome and growth in confidence of their daughter to the intervention of the project, especially to learning support classes, and to mentorship program (for little sisters), none could describe the role they played in that achievement. The parents could not associate the positive changes in their daughters to anything that they had done within a family or household, during the focused group discussions. The parents and the community were increasingly seen dependent on the project and its agents when it came to aspects of their daughter's education. A mother's response to queries on changes in schools and in their daughter could be an apt example of how there is a risk of creating dependency among parents. "You should ask the big sister; she is the one who knows everything about my daughter's education. I have completely handed over the responsibility to her." To a follow-up question on whether she had any other daughter and who was responsible for her (other daughters), she quipped, "I will find another big sister for her." While the views of other parents in other districts were not so extreme, the notion was similar. The parents felt their responsibility ends when they allow their daughters to attend school on time regularly.

Therefore, the project should work towards increasing the involvement of parents in the education of their daughter. It should work towards enabling the parents to take up more responsibility in regards to their daughter's education. Projects should also look into avenues of building the capacity of parents, albeit selective, to take up the role of big sisters and adult champions and other change agents within a community.

At the community level, there is a similar need for capacitating members to be enablers of growth in the learning of girls. Chairperson of a rural municipality in Surkhet has rightly put into words what the study team found to be the case in the community. He said*: "At present, the community is not a barrier, but that is not to say they are active enablers."* Like with parents, the community

had confined its role to not preventing the education of girls, but in no community the study team visited, the community was proactively working to help improve the girls' education. In this case, the project should look to engage the community in a way that they are capacitated as actors who are actively engaged in promoting, planning, and engaging among themselves on how they can approach girls' education in their communities.

School

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

i. Percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above in CRM sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain CRMs)

ii. Percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above in teacher training assessment (ability to train incoming teachers in learner-centered classroom practices)

iii. Percentage of schools who score acceptable or above in SIP sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain SIPs)

Out of the three indicators, only two indicators were measured during the midline. As per the project's recommendation, the assessment of the sustainability of the teacher training was not conducted during the midline as the project was yet to roll out interventions regarding this. The indicator is, however, included in the log frame as teacher training is one of the major components that the project plans to work on to ensure sustainability.

For the two indicators around CRM and SIP, a separate tool, which included information gathering from school management and objective verification from the data collectors, was used to assess the sustainability of the indicator one and three. The overall sustainability score of these two indicators is One. The sustainability score for the second indicator is not assigned as there is yet to be an intervention targeting this indicator. A separate SIP checklist scorecard (Annex 12) was developed to determine if the school scored "acceptable or above" in the assessment. No baseline data for any of the indicators are available.

For a school to be considered for the assessment against the sustainability indicator of complaint and response mechanism, the school must have made acceptable progress or above in the functional assessment of CRM (IO 5.2). Similarly, for the school to be considered for the sustainability of the school improvement plan, the school must have made acceptable progress or above in the assessment of SIP progress (IO 5.1). The sustainability score is assigned based on the following threshold:

Table 45: Threshold for sustainability score at the school level

Sustainability Score	Threshold
0	No school is making acceptable progress
1	1-25 percentage of school are making acceptable progress
2	26-50 percentage of schools are making acceptable progress
3	51-75 percentage of schools are making acceptable progress
4	More than 75% of the schools are making acceptable progress

Only 6.81% of the schools were found to be making acceptable progress towards ensuring a functional CRM (IO 5.2). Among the 6.81%, only 2.27% of the treatment schools were found to be “making acceptable progress” in CRM sustainability assessment. The lack of reporting of the activities, achievement, progress, or challenges of CRM, i.e., proper documentation, was the only reason why other eligible schools did not meet the threshold of acceptable progress in the sustainability assessment. These schools did not maintain a report or did not share it with anyone besides school staff. The discussion of the functionality of the CRM is in section…. Of IO findings.

In regards to the third indicator, the percentage of schools that score acceptable or above in SIP sustainability assessment, 4.54%, were found to be making acceptable progress towards sustainability. This is in stark contrast to 42.72% of schools that were making acceptable progress in SIP functionality assessment. Most of the eligible schools were found to only have a SIP with a five-year plan, but could not produce evidence of mostly, yearly action plan, and financial report of the past year.

During the data collection, it was found that, although the schools claimed to have all the documents, most were unable to provide evidence. In some cases, even repeated visits did not yield evidence.

As the percentage of school making, acceptable progress in the sustainability of school-level intervention was above 1% but below 25%. The overall sustainability score of one was assigned to both indicators.

The study found a huge gap that the project needs to bridge if it were to make any school governance/management level intervention sustainable. The evaluation team is of the view that the project needs to give more priority in strengthening the ability of the school to institutionalize the positive gain that the project has made. One of the key areas that the project can support the school is proper documentation and information management. The information and documents are the guiding factors of school-level planning and implementation. A strong information management system within a school is also important to ensure that institutional knowledge is transferred and easily shared.

In addition, working in information management within the school can also help ensure the sustainability of the project activities. For instance, the school level activities that the project conducts, like SIP formulation orientation, teacher’s training, and other specific issues related training can be documented into manuals and handed over to the schools. With a robust documentation and information management system, the school can continue these practices, possibly without external support in the future.

System

At the system level, three indicators were set to measure the sustainability of the project. Those indicators are:

I. # of monitoring, coordination, advocacy and learning sharing meetings conducted by VSO's SfS project which was attended by officials

II. # of request for technical support received by VSO from authorities

III. Number of MoU signed by district/local/national education representatives in support of VSO SfS project

In the one year since its inception, the SfSE-II project has been successful in communicating information regarding its activities to the various stakeholders. The project regularly invites local authorities to its intervention schools for visits as part of ongoing monitoring. Furthermore, the local authorities are also regularly invited to various programs undertaken by the projects, including learning sharing meetings. In the past one year, 40 monitoring, coordination, advocacy,

and learning sharing meetings have been conducted by the project, which was attended by the officials. The qualitative interaction with the officials and government leaders also suggests that the project has been able to communicate information about its activities with the authorities.

However, a major limitation of these meetings is that they are focused mostly on disseminating project information and not incorporating feedback and suggestions. This limits any meaningful impact that such meetings and visits have on the overall effectiveness of delivery and sustainability of the project.

The project has received 9 requests from across four districts, seeking technical support for activities such as facilitation of local education policy planning, formulation of child-friendly local governance, formulation of ward child protection committee, and to orient process to establish CRM in non-intervention school. In most cases, VSO has been able to accommodate such requests and provide support. While these requests give a positive picture, it should be noted that most of these requests do not directly correspond to the project activities or their sustainability.

During the visits to local authorities, all of them were appreciative of the activities that the projects had been undertaking and also its impact on girl's education. However, they were skeptical about their ability to replicate such activities on their own. Most of them were of the opinion that the local institutions lacked the technical expertise to run such activities on their own. When asked about seeking technical expertise form the project to replicate such activities, many of the local authorities expressed that they were unaware that the project was willing to provide such support. In one Rural Municipality in Surkhet, the chairperson lamented that even though he had sent a formal request letter for technical support to replicate the Big sister mentoring approach in other schools of his rural municipality, he has not even received an acknowledgment of receipt of the letter.

Although requests for technical support by authorities and providing it is considered as an indicator of sustainability by the project, there seems to be a gap in communicating to the authorities of such provisions and opportunity.

The midline evaluation also found that the project has been unable to establish a strategic partnership with the local authority in order to ensure the scalability and sustainability of project activities and achievement. At school and community level, there is limited evidence that stakeholders have taken ownership of the project activities and achievements. Even the activities such as the mentorship are not owned by schools or authorities. Although the Big Sisters were expected to function as part of the school system, most of the headteachers felt that they had limited or no authority over the plans and activities of Big Sister. This lack of establishment of a strategic partnership is also evident by the fact that all the 24 MoU signed by the project at the national and local levels are concerned with seeking approval to run project activities rather than of partnership in planning, designing, or implementation of the project.

The overall score of 1 for the system-level sustainability outcome is given as the project has not been able to build upon the goodwill and relationships established with and among various government, institutional and community level stakeholders, to successfully transfer knowledge, technical expertise and ownership regarding successful project intervention which can be crucial in ensuring the sustainability of the project achievement. At present state, there is a high chance that the achievement of the project will scale down significantly, if not roll back after the project phases out.

Changes needed for sustainability

Table 46: Changes needed for sustainability

	Community	School	System
Change: what change should happen by the end of the implementation period?	Parents divide the proportionate amount of household chores to boys and girls to provide a positive learning environment/atmosphere within their homes. Reduce household chores and other work for girls to enable them to study. Parents and community members engaged in school events activities that promote girls' education and address any issues that hinder girls from getting an education. Parental and community members' engagement to support OOS and marginalized girls' transition to higher studies or livelihood.	The school management committee (SMC) and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members are equipped with knowledge and skills to update their School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and incorporate promising practices of the project Students report protection issues Complaint response mechanism and The CRM committee addressed them in a planned manner. Parents actively visit the school to monitor their children's learning environment/ status.	Local education authorities utilize information generated by the project to design and implement educational programs incorporating CP/CRM and social accountability activities. School authority regularly updates their SIP and ensures the activity of CP/CRM and gender and social inclusion activity to promote girls' participation in schools. Establishment of GTF to support OOS and marginalized girl's transition to livelihood through supporting to establish small business or entrepreneurship.
Activities: What activities are aimed at this change?	active participation in community dialogues with local stakeholders and decision-makers to develop a change in attitude towards girl's education strengthened furthermore through parenting education including interactive theater and role plays Community and parental awareness of the economic empowerment of marginalized young girls.	Orientation, Training and regular follow-up of SMC and PTA and other school staff on Child Protection and Child Safeguarding including fully operationalizing a complaint response mechanism (CRM) in school Onsite school support to teachers through mentoring and coaching by International Volunteer Experts based upon their needs, collated by Barefoot Assessment Tool	Advocacy Learning sharing events with local stakeholders and representatives (municipal) Participatory joint monitoring visit at the local level Support local government in the program planning process to ensure the best learning of the projects is integrated. GTF fund establishment and mobilization. Capacity development of OOS and marginalized young girls on economic empowerment (financial literacy and business skill development).
Stakeholders: Who are the relevant stakeholders?	Parents and key community members	Headteacher, SMC and PTA members, teachers, Gender Focal Person	Rural and Municipal mayors, ward chairperson and local education officers
Factors: what factors are hindering or helping achieve changes? Think of people, systems, social norms, etc.	Parents' belief that girls will eventually get married and do not need education		The federal structure is new, and the project can influence plans and policies The priority of new local officials is different from the project. Partnership and discussion with local government could help to achieve project goals through joint planning.

As seen in the table above, the project team has discussed and identified the activities to be more focused on the remaining of the project period. These activities are as follows:

The project continues support to strengthen the implantation of child protection policies and functioning of CRM in particular with regard to the CRM committee appropriate handling and reporting of complaints, and work with schools to raise awareness with the wider community as well as ensure students, teachers, and community receive adequate training. This will establish a functional CRM in the majority of the treatment schools ensuring sustainability after the end of the project.

Also, the project continues to support schools for strengthening SIP developmental and capacity of SMC/PTA to advocate for SIP funding and with local government. This project will monitor the SIP review process and revised SIPs to increase understanding of capacity at school level for developing comprehensive SIPs and more targeted support to address gaps.

To enable parents more responsible and provide a positive learning environment/atmosphere within their homes project will engage more parents through orientation and capacity building for their active engagement in promoting planning and engaging on how they can approach girl's education in their communities.

In regard to school level sustainability project has reviewed existing teachers training approach and decided upon request by the school as a school-based teacher training and ongoing coaching and mentoring in schools with a focus on application of differentiated learning strategies, inclusion of children with disabilities, and strengthening monitoring and mentoring including within schools. For this Project international teachers training volunteers along with teachers, training coordinators has been design the content to delivery in the training where other districts teacher training coordinators also join the training and applying the same methodology and approaches for teachers training, which is now appreciated by the teachers.

The project is working closely with the local government on how existing community resources could be utilized more effectively to support project-level monitoring of teaching and learning and build an evidence base to inform training design and ongoing coaching and mentoring.

6. Key Intermediate Outcome Findings

7.1. Intermediate Outcome 1: Increased Attendance

Methodology

IO1 - Increased attendance: measured in percentage of increase in average attendance rate of girls, was assessed for two subgroups, i.e., In school Girls and Littler sisters. Two data sources; Spot checks and review of school attendance records were referred for calculation of the attendance rate of in-school girls, while the attendance of little sisters was calculated using the records maintained by the big sisters.

Since some of the schools were closed during midline data collection, spot checks could be conducted only in 25 treatment schools as opposed to the baseline study where the data was collected from 29 treatment schools. However, this difference will not have any impact on the reliability of data as the number of schools from where the spot check data has been collected is more than 50% of the total schools.

Moreover, attendance data (from school records) was collected from 43 treatment schools during the midline study as opposed to 9 treatment schools in the baseline. Thus, it has not been possible to present a direct baseline-midline comparison. However, FDM has computed the midline attendance score of the 9 schools (from where the baseline attendance data had been collected) separately to present a brief baseline-midline comparison, the result of which has been present later in this section. It should be noted that this comparison is only for illustration purposes and should not be generalized.

Attendance was considered “the single most factor that determines the learning achievement, and also a true indicator for access to school education.”[4] As the project aimed to improve access to school, and the learning achievement, attendance was chosen as one of the intermediate outcomes.

Summary findings

Table 47 below presents the summary findings for the three attendance indicators.

[4] Baseline report

Table 47: Summary of IO 1 findings

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	The target for the next evaluation point	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point? (Y/N)
Increased attendance	Attendance rates (In school girls Spot Checks)	74%	81%	84.8 %	Yes	90%	Yes
	Attendance rates (In school girls school records)	87%	92%	84.28 %	No	90%	Yes
	Attendance rates (Little sisters)	N/A	N/A	78%	N/A	It is advised that the indicator be removed	No
Main qualitative findings							
• KII with Big Sisters, and teachers confirmed the quantitative finding that girls from poor households had lower attendance. • KIIs with headteachers showed reported increased attendance of girls in the past one year. However, there is a trend among students to remain absent in the classes immediately after vacations or extended holidays.							

Interpretation of summary findings

Attendance data collected from spot checks showed that the attendance rate has increased by over 10% as compared to the baseline and successfully met the target. For attendance data collected from school records, FDM computed the midline attendance data in the 9 schools from where the baseline data had been collected to assess whether the target had been met or not. The figure showed that the attendance data for these 9 schools was 89.9%. - which appeared slightly below the set target for the midline. However, when FDM verified the baseline attendance data (from the data sets), it could not replicate the findings, thus suggesting that the figure, as well as its corresponding target, had been incorrectly reported.

The midline study found an increased sense of realization amongst parents about the importance of regularly attending schools. The headteachers and Big sisters said that parents were increasingly helping girls to attend school more frequently. Since the parents felt that they themselves were not 'capable enough' to support the girls in their learning, they felt that sending their daughters to school was the least that they could do to help their daughters' education. The change in realization of parents was a result of the project's engagement with them as a part of IO 3. As will be seen in detail in later part of this report, parents were found to be giving more time for their daughters to study by taking over responsibilities of household chores while encouraging them to attend school and not miss out on classes.

However, one of the trends that still persisted amongst students was the practice of remaining absent for the first few after school reopened, especially after a long vacation. This was observed

usually during the beginning of the new education sessions in *Baisakh* (April) and when the school reopened after the *Dashain* and *Tihar* (October/November) festival vacations. To curb high absenteeism during plantation/harvest season and during local festivals, school authorities said that they provided holidays during these times.

Moreover, while attendance had increased, there were instances of students leaving school halfway through the school day, a trend that had been noticed even during the baseline. The trend was more pronounced in Dhading and Surkhet. When asked whether they left school for any specific purpose, teachers and headteachers said that it was not so; rather, they left school mostly for recreational purposes.

We have not yet found a solution to the problem of students leaving the school halfway through the day. When we tell the parents, they expect us to solve the problem saying that once the student reaches school, they are our responsibility. But how can we solve the problem without the parents' cooperation?

A headteacher in Parsa,

Relationship with outcomes

Quantitative analysis showed a statistically significant linear relationship between the attendance rate of the sample girls and their literacy and numeracy scores. As stated in earlier sections, teachers mentioned that the increase in attendance was one of the major reasons for the improvement of learning outcomes among girls. When FDM interacted with the girls, they expressed the realization that regularity in school was one of the key requisites if they were to perform well.

Table 48: Attendance of girls and Average SeGRA and SEGMA score (n=612)

Attendance rate	Average Score	
	SeGRA`	**SeGMA**
60% or below *(n=64)*	5.403	6.354
61%-70% *(n=38)*	6.211	7.789
71%-80% *(n=34)*	7.147	8.588
81%-90% *(n=240)*	9.120	9.344
More than 90% *(n=237)*	9.283	9.085

Subgroup analysis

In terms of district-wise disaggregation, the in-school girls of Parsa had the lowest attendance rate amongst the four project districts. As has discussed in other parts of this report, the main

reason for this was the cultural barriers that exist in most parts of the Terai region (and of which Parsa is a part). However, despite its relatively poorer figures, FGD and KII respondents stated that the current attendance rate was actually an increase as compared to earlier.

Table 49: District wise attendance rate of treatment schools

District	Attendance rate
Dhading	90.80
Lamjung	91.24
parsa	66.40
Surkhet	89.00
Overall attendance rate	**84.28%**

Similarly, a grade-wise disaggregation of the attendance data showed that grade 10 had the highest attendance rate, whereas the lowest attendance rate was observed in grade 6.

Table 50: Attendance rate segregated by grade

Grade	Mean attendance rate (from spot checks)
6	80.67%
7	82.21%
8	82.76%
9	78.37%
10	90.7%

When teachers and headteachers were asked to comparatively assess the attendance trend of girls and boys, they unanimously agreed that girls at the secondary level were more regular to a school than their male counterparts. This was also reflected in the spot check data where the attendance rate of girls between grades 6 to 10 was 84.8% as compared to 77.5% of the boys. When asked about their increased attendance, most of the girls attributed this to the relatively lesser load of household chores as compared to earlier. The girls stated that their mothers had started taking the responsibility of the household chores for which they were earlier responsible. When FDM assessed the correlation between the two (the time girls spend in household chores and her attendance), a negative correlation was found, providing validation to the argument that lesser responsibility of household chores meant better attendance.

Table 51: Attendance rate of girls disaggregated by ethnicity/caste (n=698)

Caste/Ethnicity	Attendance rate		60% or below	61%-70%	71%-80%	81%-90%	More than 90%
Dalit (hill/Tarai) *(n=152)*	87.46%		4.6%	5.2%	2.0%	45.1%	43.1%
Hill Janjati *(n=220)*	89.88%		1.4%	1.4%	1.8%	42.5%	53.0%
Madesh Middle class *(n=122)*	66.25%		40.2%	22.1%	21.3%	13.1%	3.3%
Muslim *(n=15)*	66.29%		37.5%	31.3%	6.3%	25.0%	0.0%
Madesh (Brahmin/Chhetri) *(n=13)*	74.76		28.6%	7.1%	21.4%	28.6%	14.3%
Hill (Brahmin/Chhetri) *(n=176)*	89.75%		1.1%	.6%	2.3%	47.4%	48.6%

The disaggregation of attendance data in terms of ethnicity showed a relatively lower attendance rate amongst girls from Madhesi middle-class families (66.25%) from Parsa.

Table 52: Cross-tabulation of barriers/characteristics with the attendance rate

Barriers		
	Treatment	**Control**
Head of the household has low education *(has not completed primary level Education)* *(Tn=280) (Cn=181)*	85.01%	83.52%
Language of instruction is different than primary language at home *(Tn=144) (Cn=92)*	72.03%*	70.81%*
Girls from Poor Household *(Tn=243) (Cn=146)*	81.02%*	78.64%*
Characteristics		
Girls living without both parents *(Tn=134) (Cn=79)*	88.30%	90.09%
Living in a female-headed household *(Tn=260) (Cn=183)*	84.89%	82.69%*
Cannot choose whether to attend or stay in school and just accepts what happens *(Tn=389) (Cn=256)*	80.38%*	81.59%*
School-level barrier		
Does not agree that teachers use different language to help them understand something *(Tn=83) (Cn=60)*	84.43%	84.66%
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome *(Tn=85) (Cn=63)*	87.43%*	90.30%*
Agrees that teachers treat boys and Girl's differently *(Tn=201) (Cn=151)*	78.13%*	77.36%*
Have witnessed physical punishment in school *(Tn=209) (Cn=154)*	80.07%*	81.93%*
Agrees that teachers are often absent *(Tn=320) (Cn=208)*	83.19%*	81.38%*
**Statistically significant difference form the alternative*		

When the attendance data was assessed against the barriers, it was found that one of the first barriers that affected attendance was the poverty level. The midline study found that girls from poor households had a relatively lower attendance rate (81.02%) as compared to the attendance rate of girls who came from non-poor households (86.41%). Teachers, Big Sisters, and headteachers across all districts stated that the economic condition of a family could indeed affect

the attendance of a girl. They explained that adults in poorer households were usually found to be engaged in short term temporary jobs, which were unpredictable in terms of working hours. When parents took jobs that demanded long working hours, they usually expected their daughters to stay back home to undertake household responsibilities. As a result, these girls missed more school days.

Another barrier that appeared to affect the attendance of girls was the difference in the language of instruction at school and the primary language spoken at home. Girls who had different primary language and language of instruction at school had a comparatively lower attendance (72.03%) as compared to girls who had the same language of instruction at school and the primary language used at home (88.06%). It was found that girls from Parsa, who have recorded the lowest attendance in terms of district wise disaggregation, were the ones who had a different language of instruction at home and a different primary language spoken at home. As has been explained earlier, since girls in Parsa have lower attendance due to cultural barriers, the reasons for their lower attendance is more related to the cultural barrier than with the language.

Another barrier that appeared to affect the attendance of the girls was their involvement in decision-making. Girls who said that they had the freedom to choose whether to stay in school or not had a relatively better attendance rate (89.57%) as compared to those who said they did not have the freedom. Qualitative data revealed that many, at times, the girls were asked to stay at home to undertake household chores when there was a higher burden of such chores. For girls who did not have much freedom in deciding whether they could go to school or not, there would be a compulsion in such instances to stay back at home and help their family out, consequently resulting in lower attendance for them.

The midline study showed that school-level barriers also played a role in deciding a girls' attendance at school. Three such school-level barriers were teachers' behavior of treating boys and girls differently, the prevalence of physical punishments, and the absenteeism of teachers. Girls who said that their teachers treated girls differently than boys had a relatively lower attendance (78.13%) as compared to girls who said the treatment was equal (87.38%). Similarly, girls who said that they witnessed physical punishment had a relatively lower attendance rate (80.07%) as compared to those who said they had not witnessed such punishments (86.73%). Finally, girls who agreed that teachers remained absent in the class had a lower attendance (83.19%) as compared to those girls whose teachers were not frequently absent (86.37%).

The impact of school-level barriers on attendance was corroborated by qualitative data. Girls who reported to have been treated differently than that of boys and those who said that they witnessed punishment in school said that they felt somewhat discouraged to attend school at times and said that they would skip their classes during instances when they had missed their homework out of the fear of being subjected to punishment. In addition, girls also complained that following a long vacation, many teachers would not be regular to the classes. Since classes were not held regularly in the absence of teachers, the girls would decide to skip school.

"There is a cycle that runs, leading to absenteeism after holidays. The teachers feel that students will not be present immediately after the holidays, so they stay on leave longer. On the other hand, students feel that, since teachers will not be present to take classes, they will not miss classes, so they too remain absent."

A headteacher in Parsa

A somewhat surprising trend was seen in the relation between teachers making the girls feel welcome in class and the girls' attendance. Contrary to what would be generally assumed, girls who said that their teachers made them feel welcome in the classroom had a relatively lower attendance (84.02%) than those who said that felt unwelcomed (87.43%). Qualitative data did not generate any findings to support this finding. This can be further explored in the endline study.

Reflections and targets

FDM's midline evaluation shows that the first two indicators of the IO are still fit for purpose and can be measured during the endline. Although the attendance data is high, a ceiling effect has not been observed, and there is still room for the project to work on. For instance, the project can still work on improving the attendance of girls from Parsa district. Similarly, the project can also work on improving the trend of students leaving school half-way through. In addition, the project should work on maintaining the existing attendance trend itself, which could require continuity to some of the attendance related interventions.

However, the third indicator concerning the attendance of Little Sisters might not be relevant for the endline. Although the attendance rate of Little Sisters was collected during the midline study (78%), a detailed analysis has not been provided as there are no references from the baseline study. Moreover, since the Little Sisters will cease to exist or will be in a very small number at the next evaluation point, this report does not include any inference/analysis into their attendance trend.

The proposed target for the first two indicators of the IO is a 90% attendance rate among school girls by the endline. This target is indeed lower than that that set for the midline. However, given the context and the intervention scope of the project, aiming to achieve attendance rate beyond this might not be realistic. There are several cultural and traditional factors that might affect the attendance rate of a student. These factors vary between settlement, ethnicity, and even the difference in age between children from the same households. These factors cannot be addressed by the project. Therefore an attendance rate of 90% among the girls is more realistic and achievable.

Based on the midline study, FDM does not suggest adding any new indicator. In regards to the target, FDM feels that the project should initiate more dedicated interventions targeting the attendance for the girls so that the endline targets are achieved. As mentioned time and again in above, the project will need to effectively tackle the problem of relatively lower attendance in Parsa to ensure that the endline targets are met. Moreover, the project also needs to work on addressing all the barriers that have been affecting the attendance rate of the girls.

7.2. Intermediate Outcome 2: Increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls

Methodology

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

To assess the self-esteem as well the decision-making freedom that the girls had, a set of seven decision areas related to the education and life of the girls were presented to the girls. They were then asked who was responsible for making decisions in those matters. The options included - the girls themselves, jointly with family and entirely by the family. The value for the indicator was derived from the percentage of girls who stated that they took all the seven decisions on their own.

The project theory of change associated with the self-esteem of girls directly with their ability to transition and perform well in school. The ability of girls to interact with teachers and peers, to influence decision making in family, and to make life choices on their own is important for a girl to successfully complete her education and engage in income-generating activities. As such, the midline evaluation assessed the involvement of girls in decision making as an indicator of her self-esteem and empowerment.

Summary findings

Table 53: Summary of IO 2 findings

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	The target for the next evaluation point	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point? (Y/N)
Self-esteem	% of girls taking all key decisions on their own	4.8%	40%[5]	12.3%	N	A revised version is proposed	N
Main qualitative findings							
• Girls, parents, and teachers all reported that the confidence level of girls has increased in the past one year. • Girls and teachers also reported that families increasingly involve girls in decision making.							

Interpretation of summary findings

The percentage of girls reporting they took all the key decisions on their own had increased by almost 8% in the midline study (12.3%) as compared to the baseline (4.8%). In addition, the midline saw a decrease in the percentage of girls who reported all the key decisions were taken by their family members(from 9.4% in baseline to 4.8% at midline). Among teachers and headteachers, the increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls were seen as the most prominent impact of the project. When asked about the changes they had noticed in girls in the past one year, the increased level of confidence was the response of 8 out of the 12 headteachers.

[5] This target was set only after the data collection for the midline evaluation had been completed.

Table 54: Seven decision areas and the response of girls

Decision areas	Decision-making freedom *(n=794)*					
	Baseline			Midline		
	On their own	Family decides	Jointly with Family	On their own	Family decides	Jointly with Family
Whether or not you will go to school	42.6%	28.5%	28.90%	59.1%	18.6%	22.30%
Whether or not you will continue in school past this year	38.3%	29.3%	32.40%	52.8%	23.1%	24.10%
When/ at what age you will get married	18.9%	51.3%	29.80%	26.6%	40.4%	33.00%
If you will work after you finish your studies	33.6%	36.2%	30.20%	46.6%	25.6%	27.80%
What type of work you will do after you finish your studies	33.0%	35.0%	32.00%	44.6%	26.0%	29.40%
How you spend your free time	51.1%	26.7%	22.20%	62.1%	17.8%	20.10%
How often you spend time with your friends	57.0%	25.6	17.40%	59.0%%	19.6%	21.40%

The midline findings showed that girls' decision-making freedom was higher when it came to matters like attending school (59.1%), continuing school in the following year (52.8%), how to spend their free time (62.1%) and spending time with friends (59%). The parents themselves validated this finding by stating that decisions regarding education were largely left to the girls themselves. Only when the decisions involved monetary support or any other form of financial implication, the parents participate in the decision-making process.

However, when it came to bigger life decisions, for example, marriage, the decision was either taken by family or jointly. FGDs with parents revealed that parents indeed thought that it was their duty to give suggestions to their daughters or in some cases, decide themselves. They further explained that since these decisions had social or cultural implications, it was necessary for them to be involved in such matters. In fact, they laid out explicitly that they would intervene in the daughter's decision if it violated the social or cultural norm. When girls were asked about the practice in their community, they agreed that bigger decisions like marriage or going to the city for study or work was indeed taken in joint consultation between the girls and their family. However, some of the Little Sisters (expect in Parsa) expressed confidence to even reject decisions made by family members if they felt such decisions were not good.

The increased decision-making freedom of the girls can be attributed to the project's collective interventions of increasing the girls' confidence, parental awareness, and the spill-over effect of the mentoring program. However, the most concerning finding in terms of decision making was from Parsa, where most of the girls reported to have limited decision-making freedom and where

parents' role was more influential in deciding the girls' future. The midline study finds that this is one area where the project can focus on in its future programming.

I respect my parents and their decision. But sometimes the decisions of parents or other senior family members can also be wrong. As daughters, I think it is our duty to point that out to parents, and I feel confident doing that

Little sister, Lamjung

Relationship with outcomes

As discussed in the key findings of the learning outcome, the average SeGRA and SeGMA score of girls who stated that they took all the key decisions was higher than the girls who stated their family took those decisions. The association between the score and who took the decision was significant.

Decision Making	SeGRA *(n= 702)*	SeGMA *(n=696)*
Girls who take all key decision	9.646*	9.732*
Girls who report all key decisions are taken by family	4.353	6.152

Sub-group analysis

District wise analysis shows that Dhading had the highest proportion of girls who took all the key decisions on their own, whereas Parsa was the only district that had a significant number of girls stating that their family took all the decisions. The midline data shows that in Dhading, Lamjung, and Surkhet, there is an encouraging involvement of girls in decision making. Big sisters in Surkhet mentioned that since the past year, parents have started involving their daughter in decision making. The Little Sisters also admitted this saying that their families would now often ask for their opinion while making key decisions.

Table 55: District wise segregation on who the key decisions for girls

District	All key decision was taken on their own		All decisions are taken by family	
	Baseline	Midline	Baseline	Midline
Dhading (n=159)	3.4%	26.3%	6.1%	0.0%
Lamjung (n=133)	12.5%	15.0%	3.9%	0.0%
Parsa (n=266)	2.0%	5.2%	22.3%	12.9%
Surkhet (n=236)	4.8%	9.3%	9.4%	1.3%

In terms of ethnic disaggregation, girls from ethnic communities of Parsa had the lowest percentage of girls who took key decisions on their own. 14.9% of the Madeshi middle class and 10.5% of Madeshi Brahmin/Chettri girls said that all their decisions were taken by family, and they had no say in it whatsoever. When Little Sisters were asked about this in the FGDs, they said that there was little they could do apart from obeying when their families took a decision for them. Headteachers also stated that although girls displayed increased confidence in the classroom, in matters related to decision making at home, many girls would not dare to speak up. The involvement of girls in decision making at home entirely depended upon other family members, especially male members.

"If a father tells a girl that she cannot go to school from the following day, I doubt she will be able to utter the words "no' let alone go against the decision."

Ward chair, Parsa

Table 56: Ethnicity/Caste wise segregation on who take key decisions for them

Caste/Ethnicity	All key decision was taken on their own		All decisions are taken by family	
	Baseline	Midline	Baseline	Midline
Dalit (hill/tarai) (n=156)	3.9%	14.1%	7.9%	0.6%
Hill Janjati (n=225)	9.0%	18.2%	4.3%	0.4%
Madesh Middle class (n=200)	2.1%	6.5%	22.0%	15.0%
Muslim (n=19)	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	10.5%
Madesh (Brahmin/chhetri) (n=18)	5.9%	0.0%	11.8%	11.1%
Hill (Brahmin/chhetri) (n=176)	4.2%	12.5%	1.8%	1.1%

Table 57 shows that the percentage of girls who take all the key decisions on their own increased as the age progressed. The highest percentage of girls who take on their own are from between the age group of 16-17. There was a significant association between age and decision making freedom.

Table 57: Age-wise segregation on who take key decisions for them

Age Group	All key decision was taken on their own		All decisions are taken by family	
	Baseline	Midline	Baseline	Midline
12-13 years (n=321)	2.9%	10.6%	9.5%	3.8%
14-15 years (n=336)	7.1%	11.3%	9.0%	5.7%
16-17 years (n=118)	4.5%	19.5%	10.7%	5.1%

In terms of characteristics and barriers, the midline study showed that only a higher percentage of girls (16.9%) who were reported to be 'not poor' made key decisions on their own as compared to girls who were reported to be poor (7.4%). The association between household poverty and decision-making freedom is significant. In addition, as would be naturally expected, a relatively

larger number of girls living without both parents said that they took all key decisions on their own (19.7%) as compared to those who did not (11.3%).

There was no statistically significant association between the education level of a household head and decision-making freedom.

Table 58: Interaction between barriers and girls' involvement in decision making

Household Barriers	All key decision was taken on their own	All decisions are taken by family
Poor Household* (n=299)	7.4%	5.7%
Household head has not completed primary level (n= 325)	13.0%	5.9%
Characteristics		
Girls living without both parents* (n=137)	19.7%	1.5%
Girls living in female-headed household (n=301)	13.0%	3.3%

Since other characteristics and barriers identified earlier in the report were not relevant to self-esteem/decision-making freedom, and the cross-tabulation did not generate any meaningful inference, they have not been presented here.

In addition to the sampled girls, FDM also assessed the confidence level of the Little Sisters as confidence building of the Little Sisters was one of the objectives of the report. 21.8% of the Little Sisters said that they took all key decisions themselves, whereas only 1.5% of the Little Sisters said that their families took decisions for them.

Table 59: Response from little sister on "Who takes key decisions."

Little Sisters *(n=416)*	
Little Sisters Who take all Key decisions themselves	21.8%
Little Sisters whose family take all the decision for them	1.5%

The big sisters, teachers, and headteachers stated that the highest degree of change had been observed among little sisters. Little sisters had been taking proactive steps in involvement in school activities and classrooms. Little sisters' involvement in outreach activities like street drama

and awareness programs, along with the mentorship program was the primary reason reported for the higher self-esteem and confidence, and feeling of empowerment among little sisters compared to other in school girls. This resulted in better decision-making skills and also more freedom from their parents to make their own decisions.

FDM's own interaction with the Little Sisters validated this finding. As compared to their other friends, the Little Sisters were more confident and forthcoming in their responses. In addition to this, stakeholders, including teachers and headteachers, said that the Little Sisters were more assertive in overcoming challenges like teasing and bullying. The SfS project should, therefore, look into how it can replicate the impact on little sister in terms of self-esteem and empowerment, among other in school girls.

Reflections and targets

The midline data shows that the target for this indicator has not been met. This, however, is mainly due to the fact that the indicator did not entirely encompass the implication of the contextual factors. Hence, a change in the indicator has been proposed and discussed below.

The midline study shows that the indicator for IO 2 requires slight change. The midline study found that some of the decision areas (that were administered to the girls) are best decided if they are jointly discussed between the parents and the girls. For instance, in the Nepali context, it cannot be expected for the girls to make the decision on marriage by themselves, as is the practice in western societies. This requires consultation and agreement between the girl and her family. Moreover, since there has been an increase in self-instigated child marriages, authorities have, in fact, called for joint decision making in matters regarding marriage. Keeping these facts in mind, FDM suggests revising the indicator and replacing it with a more culturally appropriate and feasible indicator.

7.3. Intermediate Outcome 3: Increased parental engagement in girl's education

Methodology

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

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

Summary findings

Table 60: Summary of IO3 findings

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	The target for the next evaluation point	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point? (Y/N)
Increased parental engagement in girl's education[6]	Average time spent by girls on household chores	N/A	90 minutes	91.83 minutes	N	Change recommended	N
	% of parents who go to their girl's school to discuss their progress with their teacher (at least once a year)	N/A	70%	72.2%	N	Change recommended	N
Main qualitative findings							
• The average time spent by girls in household chores has decreased, owing mainly to mothers taking over responsibility. • Headteachers and teachers do not think that the parents engage with them in meaningful discussions regarding the education of their daughter.							

Interpretation of summary findings

According to the girl's surveys, 86.8% of the girls reported that they spent 2 hours or less on household chores on a normal school going day which was also corroborated by the findings from household surveys where 77% of the parents/caregivers stated that the girls were committing 2 hours or less every day on household chores. The qualitative consultations with the girls and parents through the FGDs also suggest similar findings.

As per the traditional practice in Nepal, girls are expected to perform more household chores as compared to the other members of the family. This consequently acts as a hindrance for girls to study, as also seen in the baseline study. The midline finding, however, showed a slightly different trend. Instead of girls doing the household chores, it was the mothers who took the responsibility of household chores, which the daughters used to perform earlier. Parents had realized the importance of the girls attending schools rather than spend time on household chores. This was echoed in the FGD conducted with the parents, as well. This finding was common across all four

[6] The midline target for both the indicators under this IO was assigned only after the completion of midline data collection.

districts. Much of this progress has been attributed to the project's intervention especially the direct involvement of Big Sister's at household levels. In addition, since the project's Learning Support Classes require the girls to stay at school for a longer period, they were spending lesser time at home to perform household chores. Since these classes were free, the parents were supportive of it.

"When I visit a home of a little sister, the parents of girls from surrounding households also come to discuss with me. They listen to what I have to say and also ask about what they can do to improve their daughter's performance in school."

A big sister in Surkhet

In regards to the second indicator of the IO, the quantitative and qualitative findings presented different pictures. 72.2% of the parents said that the parents visited their daughter's school to discuss their daughter's progress in education. Out of this number, 40.1% reported they had visited schools four times or more within the past 12 months at the time of the interview. However, the teachers and headteachers disagreed. They complained that parents seldom visited their daughter's schools and stated that parents came to school only when invited. This trend was observed by the researchers in all four project districts.

"Parents visit schools only when they are invited to functions like parent's day or Saraswati puja." Other than that, they do not come to school just to inquire about their daughter's performance. "

-Teacher from Surkhet

Relationship with outcomes

The learning outcome of girls who spent less than two hours in household chores was higher as compared to girls who spent more than two hours. This was true for both SeGRA and SeGMA learning scores.

Characteristics	SeGRA	SeGMA
Less than two hours	8.38*	8.703
More than two Hours	7.65	7.838

Sub-group analysis

The quantitative data showed that on average, girls were spending 91.83 minutes in household chores on normal school going days. The district-wise analysis shows that there was no significant difference in the average time spent by girls in household chores.

Table 61: Average time spent in household chores, reported by in school girls.

	Average time spent in household chores in minutes		Less than one hour	Between 1-2 hours	Between 2-4 hours	Between 4-8 hours
Dhading *(n=158)*	103.04 minutes		12%	69%	18.4%	0.6%
Lamjung *(n=131)*	83.39 minutes		15.8%	76.3%	6.9%	0.8%
Parsa *(n=263)*	76.08 minutes		18.0%	76.0%	4.9%	1.1%
Surkhet *(n=229)*	107.29 minutes		7.0%	74.2%	16.6%	2.2%
Overall (n=781)	91.83 minutes		13.2%	74.1%	11.3%	1.3%

There was also not much difference in the average amount of time girls spent on household chores when segregated by barriers and other characteristics, as seen in table 60. None of the differences are statistically significant.

Table 62: Average time spent by girls in household chores disaggregated based on barriers.

Barriers	Average time spent on household chores.
Poor household *(n=243)*	86.14 minutes
Household head has not completed primary education *(n=280)*	93.94 minutes
Girls Living without both parents *(n=134)*	90.00 minutes
Living in a female-headed household *(n=260)*	90.8 minutes

Likewise, the difference in time spent by girls in household chores is also very minimal between girls from difference caste/ethnic background or age group.

This relatively decreased involvement of the girls in household chores might be attributed to two factors. First, as secondary level students, girls were spending a longer number of hours in schools. This was also due to the Learning Support Classes that girls were participating in as a part of the project. The qualitative information suggested that to attend learning support classes; girls were required to spend an additional three to four hours before or after regular schools. Different community and school-level stakeholders across all four districts agreed that the girls at the secondary level might have decreased responsibility regarding household chores as they are normally spending over six hours per day in schools. This shows that parents are willing to reduce the household chores of the girls if they are spending time in activities at the school level.

The second factor was that even in the second phase of the intervention, SfSE-II had given continuity to similar interventions targeted towards the community in regards to promoting girls' education and parental engagement. Together SfSE phase I and phase II have provided continued intervention in the same community and mostly to same household/parents for over six years. The fact that the SfSE-I end-line evaluation found deceased involvement of girls in household chores supports this assumption.

For the second component of the IO, the majority of parents stated that they had visited their daughter's school more than once in order to discuss their progress with the teachers. The proportion was low in Parsa, where 43.3% stated they had not visited their daughters' school.

Table 63; Reported number of visits by parents, to their daughter's school

	Never	Once	Twice	Thrice	Four times	More than four-time
Dhading *(n=147)*	15.0%	4.1%	19.7%	15.6%	8.2%	37.4%
Lamjung *(n=115)*	15.7%	13.9%	34.8%	12.2%	7.8%	15.7%
Parsa *(n=248)*	41.5%	18.1%	14.1%	7.3%	6.5%	12.5%
Surkhet *(n=202)*	27.2%	9.4%	16.3%	14.9%	12.4%	19.8%
Overall *(n=712)*	27.8%	12.2%	19.2%	11.9%	8.7%	20.2%

During the qualitative consultation, parents reflected that they visited schools a lot more now than they used to in the past. The parents felt that they have become aware and conscious of the education of their daughters. At present, the awareness level has increased. They make sure that the girls go to school inquire about their progress. But mostly these inquiries are made through the big sisters.

The quantitative data also found the parents from the household who were not poor, reported a higher number of visits compared to the parents of a household that were poor. There was also a statistically significant association between the poverty status of a household and the number of reported visits.

Table 64: Reported number of visits disaggregated by barriers

Characteristics	The parent who reported visiting their daughter's school at least once in the past 12 months
Poor household*	**79.9%**
Household head has not completed primary education*	**68.0%**
Female-Headed Household*	**71.8%**

While the data shows, the reported number of visits is higher among parents from a household whose head has completed primary level education or higher, compared to the household whose head has a low education level, the association is not statistically significant.

Qualitative exercise with all the stakeholders beside parents points to the fact that the practice of teacher-parent discussion on the daughter's performance in school still remains absent. Teachers agree that the parents visit schools but only if there is some form of entertaining activity scheduled.

"I think the only reason parents come during the parent's days is because they get to watch students sing and dance. In my four years of teaching in this school, hardly three parents have come and discussed with me about their children."

Teacher in Surkhet

Given the information, it can be said that the participation of parents in school activities has improved. However, it is not at the level as reported by parents. The meaningful participation of parents is still lagging.

Reflection and targets

The target for the first indicator has almost been achieved and only falling behind by 1.83 minutes of average time spent on household chores. Given the context, the midline study indicates that the first indicator has almost hit ceiling effect. Therefore FDM suggests a revision to the indicator. The fact that girls spend an average of 91.83 minutes' time in household chores is a positive finding as it is normal for girls to support their families in household chores for that duration.

The target against the second indicator has been achieved. However, FDM suggests a review of the second indicator, as the midline evaluation found the findings against the indicator is skewed by self-reported bias. The discussion with the project team suggests a possibility of inclusion of activities whereby parents are encouraged to visit the school at least for collection results of their children and discuss with the teacher about the progress. If this activity is to be incorporated, FDM suggests that the project also works with the school to maintain a record of parents who visited the school to collect the results of their children. If this is done, "Number of Girls whose parents visited schools to collect results at least twice in the last year" can replace the existing indicator.

7.4. Intermediate Outcome 4: Improved. Teaching quality

Methodology

Improved Teaching quality: Measured in the percentage of trained teachers displaying learner cantered classroom practices, determined by the findings from classroom observations.

A learning outcome of a student is highly dependent on the quality of teaching in a school. This was the main idea behind setting the teaching quality as an intermediate outcome of the project. The measurement of quality of teaching was conducted using the same approach as the baseline. The information on the teaching quality was gathered based upon the perception of students and teachers towards the teacher's performance and score obtained by a teacher from the classroom observation.

Classrooms of 99 teachers who were trained by the project in the 47 intervention schools across the four districts were observed during the midline. The same observation checklist used during the baseline was used for the midline as well. 27 items that required rating and ranking by the classroom observers were used to determine the teachers who displayed learner-centered classroom practices.[7]

Summary findings

Table 65: Summary of IO4 findings

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	The target for the next evaluation point	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point? (Y/N)
Improved teaching quality	% of trained teachers displaying learner-centered classroom practices	27%	50%	73.73%	Y	Change in the indicator is proposed	N
Main qualitative findings							

[7] Teacher scoring at least 75% in the rating scale of the 27-item checklist were considered displaying learner centered classroom practices.

- SDGs with little sisters confirmed that there had been a positive change in the attitude of teachers and also a change in teaching techniques.
- The parents, however, were unaware of any such changes. The teachers complained that parents paid little attention to their daughters' education, including how teachers were teaching in class.
- KII with teachers reflected that the teacher training was conducted as a one-off activity, and not as a continuous intervention of the project.

Interpretation of summary findings

The midline saw an increase in the number of teachers who displayed learner-centered classroom practices, exceeding the target set for the evaluation point. The students, big sisters, and headteachers also reported that the teachers had changed their approach of teaching. The classroom observation showed that 73.73% of the teachers were implementing learner-centered classroom practices. Table 66 provides the number or percentage of teachers who scored 75% or above in some of the key items of the classroom observation.

Table 66: Scores obtained by teachers in key items of an observation checklist

Key items	Percentage of teachers score 75% or above
Teachers come on time to the lesson and stay until the end	81.81%
Teacher motivates the children to draw their attention to the lesson	81.81%
Teacher's directions are clear	97.97%
The teacher has prepared a lesson plan	84.84%
The teacher encourages students to express their ideas	92.2%
The teacher checks often that children are understanding the lesson and gives more explanations if they seem confused	95.95%
The teacher uses. Games, songs, stories exercise, etc. to encourage active learning.	41.41%
The teacher engages the students in different activities relevant to the lesson	40.40 %

The classroom observations showed that most of the teachers had scored more than 75% on items that are more concerned with their attitude and behavior. On the other hand, less than half have scored 75% on items that require the active participation of the students. The KII with the trained teachers also concurs with this finding. The teachers explained that it was difficult for them to engage children in group activities or outdoor activities, owing mostly to a large number of students, and limited class time. They complained that they could not finish the course on time if they started engaging in group activities. However, the headteachers and big sisters also reported that there had been a change in the attitude of teachers in regards to interactions with

students. Girls confirmed this, as they felt that the teachers were more open to questions and willing to put in extra effort if students do not understand a subject matter.

When parents were asked about this, they said they were unaware of any such changes in the school. During the household survey, 47.95% responded that they were aware of the changes to teaching practices, but during the FGDs, parents referred to these changes only to a reduction in physical punishment and decrease in "Homework" (school assignment). No parents knew about any changes in how the teacher ran a class or engaged students. The teachers also complained that the parents were not enthusiastic about involvement in the education of their daughters. Furthermore, they also lamented that the parents criticized them for not punishing children.

> *"Every time I meet a parent, in school or outside, the first thing they tell me to do is slap their child at least once a week."*
>
> *- A teacher, Surkhet*

The findings from the household survey echoed the feelings of the parents. Only 55.9% of the parents thought that the quality of teaching that their daughter (in school girl from the household) was receiving in school was good or very good. During the FGDs, they complained that the teachers were not able to ensure discipline among students. They felt that the teachers were not taking up the responsibility of students as much as they should.

The girls, however, had positively inclined opinion towards their teachers. Table 67 presents the information on the teaching quality from the girl's survey. The data shows that the majority of girls felt that the teachers treated boys and girls equally in the classroom.

Table 67: Girls perception towards the attitude of their teacher

Statements	Percentage of girls
Agrees that Teachers asks questions equally to boys and girls	*93.7%*
Agrees that the Teacher asks harder questions equally to boys and girls	*91.3%*
Teachers encourage students to participate during lessons, for example by answering questions	*48.4% (often)* *43.6% (sometimes)*
Agrees that teacher(s) suggest ways you can continue to study after school/at home	*96.7%*
Agrees that teachers discipline or punish students who get things wrong in a lesson	*84.0%*
Agrees that teachers physically punish students	*35.3%*

While teachers, headteachers, and Big sisters in all the schools visited during qualitative exercise reported that the schools no longer punished students, 35.3% of the girls still stated that the teachers used physical punishment. The proportion was high in Parsa and Dhading, where 51.8% and 49.3% of girls, respectively, reported that teachers used physical punishments. The girls did,

however, state that the teachers treated them with more respect than in the past. The Little Sisters felt that young teachers (below the age of 35), had a better attitude towards students. They also felt these groups of teachers were more able to connect with students, and put in more effort towards making students understand lessons.

Sub-group analysis

Since the subgroup analysis was not relevant in regards to analyzing teachers' teaching quality, it has not been presented.

Relationship with outcome

As seen in the table below, the girls who reported they had witnessed physical punishment in school and who felt that the teachers treat the boys and the girls differently have significantly lower scores in both numeracy and literacy than their peers. This finding further highlights that teaching practices do have an impact on the learning of students. Therefore, to further strengthen the learning skills and abilities of girls, it is imperative that the teaching practices are more gender-responsive/inclusive and pivots from the traditional disciplining methods like physical punishments.

Barriers	SeGRA		SeGMA (M)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Have witnessed Physical punishment	37.00%	42.29%*	40.84%*	45.56%*
Agrees that teachers treat boys and girls differently	34.50%*	44.97%*	39.66%*	47.54%*

The analysis of learning scores from each treatment school cross-tabulated with the score of teachers from the same school derived from classroom observation did not show any patterns of association.

Reflections and target

The past year has seen an improvement in the teaching quality, especially in regards to the teacher's attitude and behavior. However, there is still a lot that can be done to improve the teaching skills among teachers. The improvement in the attitudes of the teachers was attributed more to the intervention of the project in promoting child protection and to the engagement of community mobilizers, project staffs, and big sisters with the teachers. Very few of the changes were attributed to teacher training.

The teacher training was carried out as a one-off activity by the project. Teachers reported that the content of the training was the same as those they are required to take to receive a teaching license. The only difference that they felt was: while there was no monitoring by the government on how teachers ran their classes, the project had made few visits. Furthermore, the few new activities that they had learned as part of the training had now become redundant, and students were no longer interested in participating.

The effectiveness of visits that the teachers felt differentiated the project's activity form other training they had was found to be highly depended upon the International Volunteers of VSO in the district. The evaluation also found that the teachers were not engaged in self-learning. Out of

the twelve trained teachers interviewed, only one in Surkhet mentioned that he was engaged in self-learning on new activities, techniques, and approaches.

Having said that, during the midline study, some of the district project teams were already engaging in redesigning their approach towards improving teaching quality. This shows that the project teams have themselves realized the need to revisit the approach towards improving teaching quality. It is suggested that the new design includes a component that capacitates the teachers to engage in self-learning in the future, decreasing their dependency on external agencies. Since the project aims to conduct activities targeted towards teachers before the midline, FDM suggests keeping this indicator and measuring it at the endline.

Since the project is on the verge of redesigning the activities focusing on capacity building of the teachers, a change in the indicator might be required. The specific change can only be recommended once the new design has been formulated or implemented.

7.5. Intermediate Outcome 5: Gender-responsive school management and governance

Methodology

Gender-responsive school management and governance: Measured in the percentage of school scoring acceptable or above on SIP progress assessment (IO 5.1) and percentage of school scoring acceptable or above in complain and response mechanism (CRM) functionality assessment.

An inclusive school improvement plan and its implementation are conducive to a better learning environment for all the students in the school. As such, the project also set and indicator regarding the school improvement plan under its intermediate outcome of Gender-responsive school management and governance.

The midline evaluation identified the percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above on SIP progress assessment using the SIP checklist to collect data and by tallying the collected data to a scorecard. For a school to be making acceptable progress, at least three of the following four components should have been included in the SIP:

i. Components of Child Protection

ii. Gender and Social Inclusion

iii. Disaster Risk Reduction

iv. Adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health right

In addition, they were also required to be making good progress towards achieving at least three targets set around any of these four issues, which were verified by the enumerators. The data on the SIP checklist were collected form forty-four treatment schools from across four districts.

In addition, complain, and response mechanism is essential in a school in order to effectively and efficiently manage the issues students and other stakeholders might have concerning school, its management and governance. Setting up an effectively functional Complaint and response mechanism is one of the indicators that demonstrates the improvement in gender-responsive school management and governance.

The measurement of achievement of this indicator was done using the data on CRM form the school improvement plan checklist. The information gathered was then tallied with a scorecard to determine whether a school scored acceptably or above in CRM functionality assessment. Three criteria were set for a school to be placed in the category of “scoring acceptable or above in CRM functionality assessment.” The three criteria which were to be objectively verifiable by the data collectors are as follows.

i. The complaint box in a school is accessible and identifiable by students and is in an easy to use location.

ii. Complain boxes are opened at least twice a month

iii. Logbooks to document and register to complain are updated after every opening of the complaint box.

Table 68: Summary of IO5 findings

IO	IO indicator	BL	ML Target	ML	Target achieved? (Y/N)	The target for the next evaluation point	Will the IO indicator be used for the next evaluation point? (Y/N)
Gender-responsive school management and governance[8]	% of schools scoring acceptable or above on SIP progress assessment	N/A	50%	47.73%	Y	80%	Y
	% of schools scoring acceptable or above in Complaint Response Mechanism functionality assessment.	N/A	50%	6.82%	Y	80%	Y

Main qualitative findings

- In school, girls were aware of the complaint boxes and how and why it is to be used; however, they expressed reluctance in using the CRM.
- While CRM had been established in all the schools in most of the cases, it has been unable to function following proper procedures like maintaining anonymity.
- The intervention towards improving SIP of schools need redesigning.

Interpretation of summary findings

47.73% of the schools were found to be making acceptable progress in the SIP assessment, which is just shy of the midline target of 50%. Out of the 44 schools visited, 6 could not clearly point out any part of the SIP that included any of the above-mentioned components. While another 12 had only 2 of the four required components in the SIP. Out of the 26 schools which had at least three or more of the four components, only 21 were making good progress towards achieving targets set against these components.

The local government authorities felt that compared to other schools in their areas, the schools where the Sister for Sister's education project had intervened had better school improvement plans. The most prominent difference was the uniqueness of these SIPs compared to SIPs of other schools, which submitted the same document by simply replacing the school name. The local government officials also admitted that at the present level of human resources, they are unable to check the quality of each and every school improvement plan that is submitted to them. In many of the local government offices, there is no human resource in the education department.

[8] The target for both the indicator under this IO was proposed after the midline data collection was concluded

"There are 60 schools in this rural municipality, and I am the only person appointed in the education department. If I were to check for the quality of each SIP submitted to the department, it would take me at least 150 to 200 days."

Education officer, Surkhet

The percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above on SIP assessment was less than half. Even within these groups, the priority target on these four issues was, most of the time, focused around one-off activities like "One-hour Disaster Drill" or "Orientation on AYSRH to girls." While these activities are important, there needs to be a more structured and longitudinal approach within schools to effectively address and manage the issues. In most of the schools, the activities planned were very similar to the activities that the project partners stated they had carried out in the schools. This increased the chances of duplication.

As with the teacher's training, the activities that focused on improving the quality of the school improvement plan were also found to be one-off activities. The headteachers and the local government official (where contacted), stated that the project had helped in logistical arrangement during the SIP formulation workshop and oriented the participants on the four topics mentioned above. No evidence was found of the project intervening at the school level to ensure that the school was able to design and implement activities that directly relate to the four issues. The activities that were being run in schools were designed and implemented by the project as part of the project output rather than a part of a school plans that the schools designed themselves. The school-level stakeholders and local government officials did not mention any other activity by the project targeting SIP.

Pragmatic planning, i.e., planning that was done by giving considerable thoughts to available resources and skills vis-à-vis ability of the school, was a challenge among all the schools. Including over-ambitious plans was the major problem that the SIPs of a school had. In most of the schools, priority was given to physical infrastructures. In this scenario, the project should help build the institutional capacity of the school to develop a robust and pragmatic SIP, with balanced priority to physical infrastructure and other issues.

For the second indicator of the IO, the midline evaluation found that only three out of the 44 schools meet all the criteria for the functionality assessment, and therefore the midline target has not been achieved. While all the schools had the complaint box, only 20 schools had a complaint box that was placed at the height of 3.5 ft-4 ft, were not in or near staff rooms, and were easily accessible to students when they wanted to use them. The visits to the school during qualitative data collection also confirmed that many schools had the complaint box but were not always accessible to students. In some schools, the boxes were found to be placed inside staff rooms, which meant that the students were required to drop complains in view of faculty members.

"We tried placing the complaint box outside in the playground, but within two months, we had to replace three boxes to damages and theft. Therefore, now, we have placed it right outside the staff room."

A CRM focal person

Table 69: Proportion of schools that meet each criterion of functional CRM

Criteria	The proportion of School which meets the criteria as verified by data collectors.
The complaint box in a school is accessible and identifiable by students and is in an easy to use location.	45.45%
Complain boxes are opened at least twice a month	34.09%
Logbooks to document and register complaints are updated after every opening of the complaint box.	9.09%
Schools that meet all three Criteria	6.82%

The study also found that only 15 schools opened the complaint boxes at least twice a month. The CRM focal person reported that though the boxes were opened regularly in the initial few months of the formation of CRM, the frequency has dropped. Two major reasons were pointed out for this; firstly, low volume of complaints, and secondly difficulty in scheduling time of the CRM members, especially chairs, as their presence is mandatory while opening the boxes, the interaction these two factors have led to further decrease in frequency.

The low volume of the complaints discouraged the CRM to meet on a regular basis to open the boxes. A CRM focal person stated, “After all the arrangements, we would sit together to open the boxes, and when we did, there were hardly five complaints, and even among those five few were actually complaints. On two occasions, the boxes were empty.” In many schools, it was found that the complaint boxes were opened only after the CRM had “Peeked” into the box and was certain there were enough complaints for a meeting to be called; Usually, they were 10 or more complains.

Another factor that has hindered the regular meeting of the CRM was difficulty in scheduling the time of all the stakeholders who needed to be mandatorily present in the opening of the boxes. CRM focal person reported that arranging time of the CRM chair was the most daunting task for them. It became more challenging to convince stakeholders when there were very little complains.

“The SMC chair of the school is a very busy person. She also holds the position in two mother groups, a saving and credit group, and also runs a shop. We have to arrange the meeting of the CRM to coincide with the meeting of SMC.”

CRM focal person, Surkhet

The major lagging aspect in the schools was found to be the documentation. Only 4 out of 44 schools had maintained a CRM logbook in which they recorded whether or not complaints were received, what type of complains, what was the action taken, and what was the result. The CRM focal persons were found to be recording the complaints in an ad hoc manner and most of the time in personal diaries. Even within those diaries, only the documentation of the name of the

person who complained and the nature of the complaint was recorded. There were no records of follow up on the complaints. This poses a risk of loss of valuable information that can be useful to that effective steps are taken in addressing the complaints. The qualitative information also indicated that many schools did not adhere to the idea of ensuring the anonymity of the user while addressing the complaints.

Though CRM had been set up in all treatment schools, its effectiveness and functionality had been limited. It was also found that the children were not fully confident in sharing their problems with CRM. Because of this, CRM had not been extensively used by the students to lodge complaints. The nature of complaints lodged were minor ones that were normally dealt with by the school. There was still a reluctance to share sensitive information in CRM, such as poor performance of teachers, teacher's unlawful behavior, rude behavior by friends, etc. This shows that students still do not have full faith in CRM. In contrary to these, the study found that girls are more comfortable in sharing their personal problems education-related or other problems) with big sisters and social mobilizers.

The CRM focal person also had some challenges to ensure functioning CRM in their school. Since CRM focal person has other responsibilities in school, they were unable to devote significant time for managing the CRM.

The evaluation team is of the view that many schools evaluated their CRM based on the number of complaints they receive. They felt that having a few complaints does not warrant the amount of time that they need to devote to address that. This is an issue that needs to be addressed, as there is a risk that after the project completion, many of the CRM will be defunct.

Sub-group analysis

Since the subgroup analysis was not relevant in regards to analyzing gender-responsive school management and governance, it has not been presented.

Reflections and targets

Considering the fact that interventions regarding CRMs and SIPs need an extensive level of redesigning, FDM feels that the project needs to do this before the endline. While it is commendable that the project is helping facilitate the operation of CRM, which has been established in line with the government, there are clear signals from the project that a lot still needs to be done. In this context, FDM feels the indicator needs to be kept and measured during the endline.

The proposed target for the endline is at least 80% of the intervention school to have a functional SIP and a functional CRM. This target has been set based upon the fact that the project has a highly prioritized gender-responsive school environment and has dedicated considerable resources, both human and financial, towards achieving this goal. In addition, discussion with the project team suggests that more rigorous activities will be undertaken focusing on the gender-responsive school environment. Given this, the EE is of the opinion that the target of 80% for the endline is feasible and is also necessary to ensure sustainability post-intervention. However, criteria for a school to be sustainable could change based on the design of the intervention.

7. Conclusion

Learning Outcome

The target of both literacy and numeracy outcomes has been met and even exceeded by the midline. Quantitative data shows that the IO 1 and IO 2 have effects on the learning outcomes of the girls.

The improvement is more prominent in numeracy skills. The improvement in the numeracy skills can mainly be attributed to the learning support classes run by the project, while the increased confidence and changing behavior of teachers have been attributed to the improvement in overall learning of the girls.

The data also showed that household poverty and difference in the language of instruction and primary language at home also hand the impact on the learning. Girls from poor households and who reported a difference in language scored lower than other girls, and the difference was statistically significant. The qualitative data suggest that the girls from poor household have added responsibility at home which affect their education.

Likewise, the girls from the Parsa district had lower learning outcomes compared to girls in other districts. The girls in Parsa districts were found to be lacking behind their counterparts in all the districts in both SeGRA and SeGMA. The difference in the language spoken at home and the language of instruction was found to be the primary reason for the in-school girls in Parsa scoring lower than other in-School girls.

While the achievements are definitely commendable, the evaluation found that more targeted intervention to support the literacy outcome of the girls is necessary. Especially focusing on the analytical and writing skills of the girls. While the learning support class assist girls directly in improving their numeracy skills, no specific activities are targeted towards improving literacy skills. The need for interventions targeting literacy is even more important in Parsa, where the majority of the girls have different primary languages at home than the language of instruction.

Overall, the little sisters were found to be performing better than their peers (in-school) girls in both literacy and numeracy.

The project had also set a third learning outcome, English and digital learning, which was expected to further enable girls to transition into higher education or increase their employability. The external evaluators are of the opinion that the effectiveness of the EDGE Club is not as expected. Firstly, retention has been a challenge for the club. The majority of the girls who were involved in the Club have discontinued even before completing the 90 hours foundational skill course. Secondly, additional in-school girls were enrolled in the club at different times of the year which means that there are chances that they have missed out on different components of the course.

In addition to that, even among girls who have completed the 90 hours course, about 20% of them have English proficiency levels of A0, and 30% are non-user in digital literacy. As the course progress into the next level, it might be difficult for these group of girls to effectively grasp the increased complexity of the courses.

Transition

The successful transition among in-school girls was found to be over 99%. The transition rate is similar in both the control and treatment groups. The change in the grading system in schools means that the students do not have to repeat grades regardless of marks obtained, which have significantly decreased the grade repetition across all schools. Though small in number, the cases of unsuccessful transitions were found during the midline.

Given that the instances of repeat grades and the dropouts are very low in both treatment and control, it is highly advisable that the transition pathway of girls be reviewed so as to enable robust measurement of transition outcome against the target.

Among the out of school girls in Parsa, the successful transition rate is 84.42%. As with the in-school girls, this attrition rate among OOS girls was also high. This rate of successful transition demonstrates the effectiveness of the bridge classes and this effectiveness can be highlighted to local government. The learning from bridge classes can further be used to inform local-level governments in designing policies targeting enrollment of girls into formal education.

Furthermore, qualitative data suggests that there is a need for continued engagement with the OOS girls who have successfully transitioned, especially girls who have enrolled in formal education to ensure they do not drop out. In addition, the project should also look into avenues of how it can create opportunities for girls who have not transitioned successfully.

Sustainability

Out of the total sustainability score of 4, the score attained by the project is only 1.33. The sustainability of the project was measured in three levels: Community, School, and System. The highest sustainability score (2) was received by the community level intervention while the system level and school level intervention received 1 each.

Sustainability at the community level

There has been evidence in the community whereby its members are increasingly aware of the need to provide equal opportunity for education to the girls as to boys. In most of the communities, members no longer abide by the cultural and social norms that might pose as a barrier to girls' education. However, the community has also not been able to independently act as enablers towards girl's education. The families and communities at large demonstrate feeling that their role end when they agree to send daughters to school or allow agencies like VSO to engage with their daughters regarding their education. Furthermore, there is a feeling among parents that school administration and "big sisters" are responsible for anything concerning their daughter's education.

Therefore, there is a need for engaged and sustained engagement with the parents. Especially, focusing on enabling and capacitating the parents to take up similar roles as change agents like big-sisters and adult champions. In addition, this is also necessary to make parents aware of their roles in the education of their children.

Sustainability at the school level

At the school level, the project had set the sustainability of CRM as an indicator of school level sustainability of the activities. The midline finding shows that very few (2.27%) schools have been able to ensure that the sustainability of the CRM. The major reason for this is, schools have not been able to ensure the effective and systematic functioning of CRM. Documentation and reporting mechanisms were found to be lacking in most of the schools. Hence, an intervention that helps schools strengthen their data/information management system could go a long way to ensure the sustainability of CRM.

There is also a need for further work with school management and students so that the roles, responsibilities, and proper use of CRM are understood by all the stakeholders.

Sustainability at the system level

At the system level, the project was found to have established a working relationship with the local governments and stakeholders. The evaluation team found that the project ensured that the local authorities are informed and updated about various projects. However, there is little evidence that the project has been able to convert these relationships into strategic partnerships whereby the stakeholders take more ownership of project activities, which eventually will pave ways for them to assume full responsibility after the phasing out of the project ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes. Given that the local government has begun actively fulfilling its role, including to those concerning education, the SfS-II has a good opportunity to influence policies and plans at the local level to ensure sustainability and replication of its activities.

Hence, with additional continuous interventions, there is a scope for the project to attain sustainability and also be a replicable example of successful intervention towards promoting girls' education and transition.

Intermediate Outcome 1: Attendance

Spot Checks and school records show the attendance rate of girls at around 85%. The individual attendance record of sample girls also shows a similar trend in the attendance rate. The instance of absenteeism was reported to be highest around the time of the year when the new education session begins and weeks before and after long vacations. However, there persists a practice among secondary level students, primarily boys and also girls, to skip classes or not staying in school for as long as they are expected to.

The attendance rate is lowest among girls in Parsa, which is almost 25% lower than the attendance rate in Surkhet which has the second-lowest attendance rate. Hence, the overall attendance rate of girls has been skewed by the in-school girls in Parsa.

While the little sisters were found to be performing better in numeracy and literacy compared to other in-school girls, the attendance rate of the litter sister is lower than the average attendance rate of other in-school girls.

Improvement in the attendance rate has been reported by the stakeholders across all districts. However, the trend of absenteeism at certain times of the year is still prevalent, which might require specific intervention. Furthermore, the trend of skipping classes should also be checked for any meaningful impact on the learning outcomes of girls to be attained via improved attendance.

In regards to its linkage with the outcome, FDM found a statistically significant linear relationship between the attendance rate of the sample girls and their literacy and numeracy scores. Stakeholders mentioned that attendance was indeed linked directly to the learning outcomes as higher attendance ensured better understanding and, consequently, better learning. The girls themselves expressed the realization that attending the school on a regular basis was crucial in increasing their scores.

Intermediate Outcome 2: Increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls

The indicator for this IO was the percentage of girls taking all key decisions (a list of 7 decisions) on their own. During the midline, the number of girls reporting they take all the key decisions on their own has almost tripled. The teachers and parents also reported that girls are more involved in decision making than in the past.

Although a small number of girls reported that they take all the key decision on their own, it should be noted that in Dhading and Lamjung girls reporting that all the decision is taken by the family is zero while the proportion is only 1.3% in Surkhet. This shows that in these three districts, girls are indeed involved in the decision-making process, allowing them to put forward their opinion and views in matters that concern them.

The awareness among family members regarding the need to involve children in decision making and increased confidence among girls, especially due to the motivation they get from the attitude and behaviors of little sisters, have been attributed to the increment.

On the other hand, in Parsa district, the girls reporting that they take all the decisions is very low (5.2%), while at the same time, 12.9% reported their family took all the decisions for them. Compared to other districts, the many girls in Parsa district are still deprived of being involved in the decision-making process in the family. The main reason for this lies in the rigid social and cultural norms that exist in most of the Terai districts in Nepal that are negatively inclined towards girls/women.

While other districts have shown encouraging improvement, the improvement in Parsa regarding self-esteem and decision-making practice is marginal. This is indicative of the fact that the same

intervention across all the districts will not yield similar outcome. Hence, the interventions in Parsa districts might require a different approach and techniques than interventions in other districts, along with more intervention targeted towards the community. For instance, it might also warrant entirely different interventions.

When looked at in relationship with the learning outcomes, the learning scores of girls who stated that they took all the key decision was higher than the girls who stated their family took those decisions. The association between the score and who took the decision was significant. Qualitative findings found that girls who took all decisions themselves were often found to be more confident than the others. With this higher level of confidence, they tended to perform better in terms of their learning.

Intermediate Outcome 3: Increased parental engagement in girl's education

This IO is measured by two indicators, Average time spent by girls in household chores and the percentage of parents who go their girl's school to discuss their progress with the teacher at least once a year. The midline data give a positive outlook on both these indicators.

The average time the girls spent on household chores on a normal school going day was found to be about 93 minutes. The midline evaluation found that mothers were increasingly taking over the responsibility of household chores from the in-school girls reducing the burden form the girls. The engagement of Big sisters with community members and families of girls has been attributed as the primary reason for families willing to reduce the number of household chores of the girls. In addition, the girls were also found to be spending most of their daily hours in schools, limiting the time available time for engaging in household chores.

The majority (72.2%) of the parents reported that they had visited their daughter's school in order to discuss their progress with the teacher in the past 12 months. However, there is a contradiction between what parents reported in both qualitative survey and FGDs, to what the school level stakeholders reported during qualitative consultations. The teachers and Head-teachers across all the district stated that the involvement of the parents in the education of their children is not very enthusiastic.

The evaluation team is of the opinion that while there have been positive gains towards engaging parents in the education of their children, it is not at the level as reported by the parents. While the project and the teachers sought the participation of parents in discussions regarding the education of their children, most of the parents are mistaking presence as participation. As discussed in the sustainability section, there remains a gap in the understanding among parents regarding their role in the education of their children.

In terms of IO3's relationship with the learning outcomes, the learning outcome of girls who spent less than two hours in household chores was higher as compared to girls who spent more than two hours. When girls were spending lesser time in household chores, they were getting more time to study at home and, subsequently, attained better learning scores.

Intermediate Outcome 4: Improved teaching quality

The midline has seen an increase in the number of teachers who displayed learner-centered classroom practices, exceeding the target set (50%) for the evaluation point, with 73.73% out of the 99 teachers demonstrating learner-centered classroom practice.

The classroom observation shows that the teachers scored higher on factors that are associated with their behaviors and attitude towards classroom management and interaction with students. While few were found to be using techniques that require physical items or involvements/movements of students. Teachers also reported that engaging children in group

activities or using diverse teaching materials is not feasible given the constraint of time and resources in proportion to the number of students.

The improved behaviors and attitudes of teachers have also been reported by in-school girls, headteachers, and big sisters. This improvement in attitude and behavior was also stated to be a major reason for the improvement in learning outcomes by the little sister and in-school girls. On the other hand, the improved attitude and behavior of teachers have been credited to the project activities promoting child protection and safety rather than the Teacher's training activities.

The teacher's training was carried out as a one-off activity and did not necessarily include new methods or techniques. This has severely limited the effectiveness of such training, which the project team has identified as an area to be improved and are in the process of revising the approach. The evaluation team feels that post-training support to the teachers could go a long way in improving the skills and making the intervention more effective.

Intermediate Outcome 5: Gender-responsive school management and governance

47.73% of schools scored "acceptable" or above in SIP assessment, which was one of the two indicators set to measure this outcome. The local education authorities reported that the SIP formulated by the intervention schools of SfSE-II is most of the time better than those provided by other schools. However, many schools still lacked components such as child protection, GESI, DRR or AYSRH which were advocated and prioritized by the project to be included in the SIP. Among the schools that did have three or more of these components, they did not have activities, addressing these issues, which were successfully conducted.

The evaluation also found that the project lacks a rigorous and robust intervention that can actually improve the school to plan and implement meaningful and sustainable programs or activities that will ensure continued gender-responsive school management and governance. The schools were lacked resource-based planning of its programs/activities: instead of formulating SIPs in a manner that is reflective of available budget, the plans were most of the time ambitious beyond the ability of the schools to achieve those. In this regard, the project should work towards strengthening the institutional capacity of schools for formulating resource-based pragmatic plans for holistic improvement of the schools.

The second indicator for IO% was the percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above in the Complaint Response Mechanism functionality assessment. Out of the 44 schools where the functionality assessment was conducted, only three met all the criteria of functional CRM. Though all the schools had CRM in their schools, more than 50% of the schools did not have a complaint box in an accessible location; only 34% opened it regularly while only 9.09% had a proper documentation procedure. Likewise, there is also an atmosphere whereby students are not confident enough to share issues or problems that are sensitive in nature in the CRM.

While the CRM has been established in schools, the project needs to work extensively to ensure its functionality, especially in terms of increasing awareness and confidence among students to use it and also ensuring that the schools do not stop the following proper procedures needed to ensure functional CRM for any reasons.

SfSE-II and GESI

The SfSE-II project aims at assisting the educationally marginalized girls at the secondary level in improving their learning outcomes and ensuring a successful transition to higher education or income generation activity. Given the geographical remoteness and limited access to services, to a large extent, all the households in the intervention communities are marginalized. Hence, the project works with all the girls enrolled in the secondary level at intervention schools, ensuring that no one is left behind. Furthermore, the project provides additional support to girls from among

these groups who are more vulnerable and at risk of dropping out or discontinuing their education. Designated as little sisters, this subgroup of beneficiaries receive mentorship opportunity, educational material and are prioritized in other interventions like the EDGE club.

At the same time, other in-school girls (besides little sister) and boys within the schools benefit from project activities such as teacher training, child safeguarding, and learning support classes, ensuring that the boys are not left behind in terms of benefiting from project intervention.

While the project directly works with the school going girls and help them overcome barriers towards education, the project has had limited evidence of being gender-transformative to an extent where it has been able to tackle the root causes of gender inequality or reform social structures that creates the power gap between different gender. This is especially true in the context of Parsa.

The project has made a commendable gain in helping the schools it works in to become more gender-friendly and also promote the girls' education within the community. It can also be said that the project has helped enable girls to take more decision-making roles. Furthermore, it has also promoted the involvement of women in decision making and resource control in the implementation of its activities. These approaches by the project, if further strengthened, can indeed create an opportunity for the project to be more gender transformative in a sustainable manner.

In regards to inclusion, the project design has constrained it from reaching out to children with disabilities. The project is designed by considering the school as the primary unit of intervention; however, in the communities where the project operates, most of the children with disabilities are not enrolled in formal education. As the project does not count in its beneficiaries, the girls in the community who are not enrolled in the intervention schools there are instances where girls with disabilities have been left behind. Having said that, the project does give priority to the inclusion of girls with disabilities who are enrolled in the intervention school in the delivery of the intervention. The number of girls with disabilities in the intervention school is so small that generating findings and evidence against it might warrant a specific study to present a more robust picture of the inclusion of children of disabilities in the project activities and benefit-sharing.

8. Recommendations

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning of the project

i. The EE recommends that the English and Digital learning outcome of girls in Surkhet is not measured as a performance indicator for the endline. Based on the learning from Surkhet, the project should give special focus on how it can revisit its intervention approach to ensure that the high rate of turnover observed in Surkhet is not observed in other districts.

ii. Based on the midline findings, one of the changes recommended in the MEL framework is regarding the measurement of transition outcome. The MEL framework currently suggests the data collection for the measurement of the transition outcome to be only per evaluation point. However, it is highly recommended that the district project monitoring unit keep an updated record of all the beneficiaries counted as they do with the little sisters, to track their transition which should include information on if they have left the particular school, if yes what is the reason e.g. Passed highest grade in that school, dropout (if drop out reasons for this), or if they have transferred to another education institution. This will provide more accurate and robust information on the transition. In addition, the transition pathway might also need revision to ensure that the measurement of performance is robust.

iii. It is recommended that the first community-level sustainability indicator, Average % of income invested in each of their girl's education be changed as at present the proportion is an acceptable amount considering the context of the community. The new indicator could be "Percentage of parents who report that they have savings intended for the education of their daughter." A further discussion around this might be required.

iv. The measurement of the target in IO2, i.e., percentage of girls taking all key decisions on their own, requires changes. This can be changed to "% of girls who take all key decisions on their own or jointly with family."

v. The first indicator of IO 3, i.e., Average time spent by girls on household, has attained ceiling effect. If possible, it is advisable that the target for the midline should be concerned with not increasing the average time form that of midline and not necessarily seek a reduction.

vi. Change is recommended in IO3.2, i.e., the percentage of parents who go to their girl's school to discuss their progress with their teacher (at least once a year) as the self-reported bias negatively impacts the reliability. Based on the plans communicated by the project, this indicator could be replaced by "Number of Girls whose parents visited schools to collect results at least twice in the last year."

vii. The EE is of the opinion that if the project does not roll out a revised intervention targeting teaching quality, the indicators concerning teaching quality might not be fit to measure the performance of the project.

viii. In IO 5.1, i.e., percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above on SIP progress assessment, it is recommended if the project does not have any scope or plan to expand the intervention, this indicator should be removed. Given the current level of

investment and involvement of the project in improving the SIP of the school, keeping this as an IO is not recommended.

ix. One of the major learning form the midline evaluation has been that there is still a need for increased parental engagement in the education of girls. The midline evaluation shows that while parents are aware of the need to educate their daughters, they lack the understanding of their roles to promote the learning and performance of girls. Therefore, there is a need throughout all the intervention communities to make parents aware of their roles as active enablers in promoting the education and performance of their daughter and in ways they can fulfill their role.

Project Design

i. The project should focus on developing an intervention that addresses the need of the beneficiaries to improve their literacy skills. At present, there is no intervention that is directed primarily to boost the literacy skills of the girls.

ii. The EDGE intervention requires a massive redesign as the learning from Surkhet shows that there are several challenges for it to be effective. Likewise, the sustainability of the intervention is also not attainable, and replicability might also be difficult as the EDGE intervention has been operating outside of the formal system and independently.

iii. The project should now plan to move away from the primary focus it puts on the little sisters. With on provision of replacement of little sisters, within the next one year, all the little sisters will have transitioned from school. This new plan should also involve the reorientation of all the project staff, partners, and stakeholders as SfSE-II are highly associated with little sisters. In many instances, even the partners were found to be confusing little sisters as the only primary beneficiary, and other in-school girls as indirect beneficiaries.

Furthermore, as the project is closing to the end and needs to move towards sustainability, it should put more focus on how it can work with local stakeholders including local government to capacitate them to undertake similar activity to assist extremely marginalized and vulnerable girls, as the learning from the project shows that such intervention has positive effect.

iv. The project needs to scale up the interventions targeting teaching quality and child-friendly school environment as the midline data shows that the prevalence of school level barrier is still significant. Furthermore, the scaling up is also essential if it is still something the project want to showcase or measure performance indicator or sustainability indicator.

v. For the remaining two years of the project activities project should also give high priority to help support the improvement of the institutional capacity of schools. Considering the fact that the schools are still far behind when it comes to designing even documents like their very own SIPs, the project needs to capacitate school authorities to ensure that they are better able to undertake their school's planning. Some of the areas the project can work in are school leadership development, assistance in data generation and management, knowledge, and skills for data-based planning.

In addition, since it has been found that the CRMs have not been as effective as envisaged, the project needs to rethink its approach in improving the CRMs. Since

there was still reluctance to share sensitive information in CRM such as poor performance of teachers, teacher's unlawful behavior, rude behavior by friends, etc. highlighting that students still did not have full faith on CRM, the project needs to work on building trust regarding CRM amongst students and along with it, improve the school's capacity to follow up on the complaints.

vi. The Learning Support Classes should be run throughout the year rather than just for three months prior to the final examination. These classes should also provide opportunities to students for extracurricular knowledge. It can also create opportunities for the girls to practice creative writing and improve their analytical thinking and comprehension skills: which the girls were found to lack.

vii. The midline evaluation found that various activities that the project has undertaken to promote parental awareness towards girls' education have been successful. Now, it should focus on exploring avenues of development parents as the champions of girls' education. As the project has reduced the number of Big Sisters, now a group of parents could be mobilized to more actively engage in promoting girls' education within the community while the senior big sisters engage with girls. The adult champions in the community can provide a supportive role to both the parents and to the big sisters.

Capitating Parents-teachers association (PTA) for this could be a feasible approach. The project could look into how it can capacitate PTA as a body that takes the lead in engagement with community and parents and in the promotion of meaningful parental engagement in the education of children. While the SMC works as the management body, the project could strengthen the role of PTA as a means of outreach. This can also set an example for other schools for replication and at the same time, institutionalize parental awareness and engagement.

Scalability and sustainability

i. In the remaining two years of the project, it is highly recommended the project prioritize partnership with local government by creating opportunities for resource sharing and ownership transformation. Furthermore, the project should also develop a strategic partnership with the local government whereby the project provides technical expertise to the local government to replicate project activities in other schools or to give continuity to the activates in the same schools. An example of this could be the project collaborating with local government to introduce the concept of mentoring (Big Sister – Little Sister) in intervention as well as other schools after project completion of the program.

ii. The evaluation shows the need for an achievement dissemination strategy whereby central, provincial, and local government representatives, as well as policymakers and other stakeholders, are made aware of the various successful interventions of the project, which can aid in its replicability.

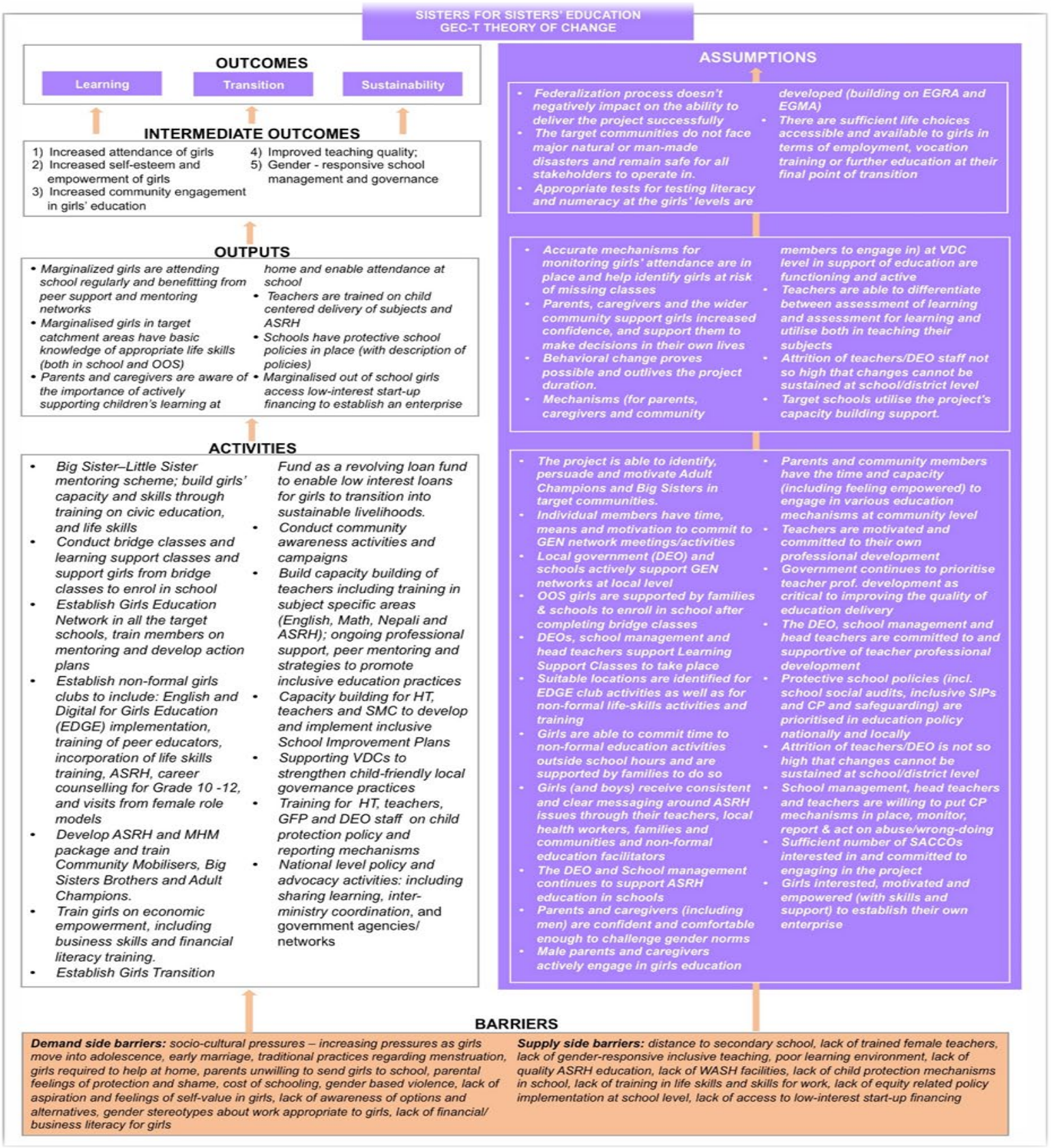
iii. The project should work towards building institutional knowledge within the intervention schools so that the changes project has been able to make in the school management and governance can be transferred and given continuity to.

iv. While the project has been extensively working/collaborating in addressing the supply side barriers towards girls' education and marginalization, additional interventions or collaboration with other relevant agencies to address demand-side barriers are

required to mitigate the challenges that exist at the community level (for instance, poverty).

v. The project should also look into a further engagement of parents, especially to ensure that the parents are capacitated and prepared to cater to the educational need of the girls post-schooling. One method could be promoting practices of saving and interventions to improve the financial management of parents.

Appendix I: Pr0ject Theory of Change



Appendix II: Project Districts' Factsheet

The information provided in this section is derived from Flash Report – (2017-2018), department of education and National Population and Housing Census 2011

Dhading

Topography	Mid-Hilly region	
Population	Total	3,78,016
	Female (%)	53%
	Male (%)	47%
Household whose primary language is Nepali	71%	
Most populous caste or ethnic group besides "others."	Tamang (22%)	
Disability	2.3%	
Poverty rate	18.8%	

Literacy rate	Female	56%
	Male	71%
Completed Grade 10	Female	7%
	Male	8%
Population between 5-25 enrolled in education	Female	68%
	Male	75%

Lamjung

Topography	Hilly as well as Mountainous	
Population	Total	1,67,724
	Female (%)	55%
	Male (%)	45%
Household whose primary language is Nepali	59%	
Most populous caste or ethnic group besides "others."	Gurung (31%)	
Disability	2.8%	
Poverty rate	16.8%	

Literacy rate	Female	63%
	Male	81%
Completed Grade 10	Female	9%
	Male	10%
Population between 5-25 enrolled in education	Female	70%
	Male	81%

Parsa

Topography	Terai Plains, bordering India	
Population	Total	6,01,017
	Female (%)	48%
	Male (%)	52%

Household whose primary language is Nepali	6%	
Most populous caste or ethnic group besides "others."	Muslim (15%)	
Disability	1%	
Poverty rate	29.2%	

Literacy rate	Female	44%
	Male	67%
Completed Grade 10	Female	7%
	Male	8%
Population between 5-25 enrolled in education	Female	50%
	Male	58%

Surkhet

Topography	Inner-Terai (Valley)	
Population	Total	3,50,804
	Female (%)	52%
	Male (%)	48%

Household whose primary language is Nepali	90%
Most populous caste or ethnic group besides "others."	Magar (19%)
Disability	2.9%
Poverty rate	30.5%

Literacy rate	Female	65%
	Male	82%
Completed Grade 10	Female	7%
	Male	9%
Population between 5-25 enrolled in education	Female	67%
	Male	74%

Appendix 3: Barriers and Characteristics of intervention sample segregated by district

Barriers	*Districts*			
	Dhading *(HH=148)* *(ISG = 159)*	**Lamjung** *(HH=115)* *(ISG = 133)*	**Parsa** *(HH=252)* *(ISG = 266)*	**Surkhet** *(HH=202)* *(ISG = 236)*
Head of the household has low education *(has not completed primary level Education)*	54.7%	51.3%	44.4%	38.1%
Language of instruction is different than primary language at home	10.1%%	5.2%	75.4%	1.5%
Poor Household	16.2%	23.5%	61.9%	47.5%
Difficult to afford for girls to go to school	8.8%	4.3%	13.3%	7.9%
The household doesn't own land for themselves	4.7%	17.4%	34.5%	31.2%
Material of the roof (Bamboo, thatch/hay, Tarpaulin/plastic, carboard)	0.7%	2.6%	22.6%	14.4%
Gone to sleep hungry for many (10) days in the past year	0.7%	0.9%	0.4%	0.5%
Household unable to meet basic needs	2.7%	0.9%	21.8%	2.0%
Characteristics				
Girls living without both parents	27.7%	28.3%	5.2%	20.3%
Living in female headed household	27.0%	59.1%	43.3%	42.6%
Doesn't get support to stay in school and do well (%)	0.6%	1.5%	3.0%	4.7%
Cannot choose whether to attend or stay in school and just accepts what happens	45.3%	36.1%	92.5%	45.8%

Girls who engage in household chore for more than 2 hours of the day	19.0%	9.1%	5.6%	20.9%
School-level barrier				
Drinking water facilities are not available at school	10.7%	19.5%	0.4%	5.5%
Girls who do not use toilets in schools	5.7%	19.5%	7.5%	0.0%
Spaces are not available for socializing and playing in school	6.9%	0.0%	1.1%	3.8%
Girls who do not feel safe at school	1.3%	0.0%	1.1%	3.4%
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	0.6%	17.3%	3.8%	22.9%
Teachers treat boys and Girl's differently	5.7%	24.1%	67.3%	25.8%
Have witnessed physical punishment in school	44.7%	9.0%	43.9%	16.5%
Teachers are often absent	40.3%	48.1%	56.4%	40.7%
Does not agree that teachers use different language to help them understand something (never/rarely	22.6%	0.0%	11.8%	9.3%

Annex 2: Intervention roll-out dates

Please provide a timeline of roll-out of your interventions in the table below.

Table 16: Intervention roll-out dates

Intervention	Start	End
Mentoring	April 2017	March 2020
Learning support class	Oct 2017	Dec 2020
SIP review and development	Oct 2017	Dec 2020
EDGE	Sep 2017	Dec 2020
Leadership management of SMC and PTA	Oct 2017	Dec 2020
Bridge class	Oct 2017	Dec 2020
Life skills	Jan 2018	Dec 2020
Child Protection and CRM	July 2017	Dec 2020
Community Dialogue	Oct 2017	Dec 2020
Teacher training	Oct 2017	Dec 2020
ASRH	Oct 2017	Dec 2020
Business skill and financial literacy	April 2019	Dec 2020

Annex 3: Midline evaluation approach and methodology

The following section outlines the approach and methodology of the Midline evaluation of Sister for Sisters Education Project-II. This section also discusses the outcomes and intermediate outcomes level measurements, tools and methods of data collection, the rationale of the tools used and frequency of data collection. Where applicable this section also discusses changes in approach, methodology, and tools compared to the baseline.

Outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes

Table 17: Outcomes for measurement

Outcome	**Level at which measurement will take place, *e.g. household, school, study club, etc.***	**Tool and mode of data collection (please specify both the quantitative and qualitative tool used)**	**Rationale, *i.e. why is this the most appropriate approach for this outcome***	**Frequency of data collection, *i.e. per evaluation point, annually, per term***	**Who collected the data?**	**Discuss any changes from BL (including whether this indicator is new)**
Outcome 1: learning						
Literacy indicator (*Average SeGRA score*)	*Schools*	***Quant:*** *SEGRA* ***Qual:*** *KIIs teachers, Headteachers* *FGD with Girls* *FGD with Parents*	SeGRA is predetermined by the FM as the recommended tool for literacy assessment	Per Evaluation Point	External evaluator	Minor changes in wording were made in the SeGRA tool, specifically in Subtask three
Numeracy indicator (*Average SeGMA score*)	*Schools*	***Quant:*** *SEGMA* ***Qual:*** *KIIs teachers, Headteachers* *FGD with Girls* *FGD with Parents*	SeGMA is predetermined by the FM as the recommended tool for numeracy assessment	Per Evaluation Point	External evaluator	During the baseline the SeGMA tool contained three subtasks, however, the subtask three was removed for

						midline due to the floor effect. The five questions were replaced by 5 questions with less difficulty level, which were added to Subtask one.
Digital Literacy **(% of girls with competent level in digital literacy)**	*EDGE Club*	*Quant: English Proficiency Test*	This test is predetermined by the British Council as a standard tool to test the English proficiency of girls who are part of EDGE Club	Per Evaluation point	External Evaluator	The scoring for Digital literacy is done by British Council, using Master Trainers, to ensure a standardized scoring.
English Proficiency (% of girls with A2 level in English)	*EDGE Club*	*Quant: Digital Test*	This test is predetermined by the British Council as a standard tool to test the English proficiency of girls who are part of EDGE Club	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	N/A
Outcome 2: Transition						
Transition indicator % of girls who successfully transition	Household (OOS Parsa) School (In school Girls)	***Quant:*** *Girls' Survey* ***Qual:*** *FGD with OOS Girls*	As per GECT midline template	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	

Outcome 3: Sustainability system level						
# of monitoring, coordination, advocacy, and learning sharing meetings conducted by VSO's SfS project which was attended by officials	Project Office	Project Records	As project partners and staffs would have such evidences	Per Evaluation Point	Project	The indicator was added for the midline
# of request for technical support received by VSO from authorities	Project Office	Project records	As project partners and staffs would have such evidences	Per Evaluation Point	Project	The indicator was added for the midline
Number of MoU signed by district/local/national education representatives in support of VSO SfS project	Project Office	Project records	As project partners and staffs would have such evidences	Per Evaluation Point	Project	The indicator was added for the midline
Outcome 3: Sustainability community level						
Average % of income invested in each of their girl's education	Household	***Quant:*** *Household Survey* ***Qual:*** *FGD with Girls* *FGD with Parents*	Since household survey was administered to someone with knowledge with functioning of household it was	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	The indicator was added for the midline. A new set of question on Household income and expenditure was added to the household survey

		FGD with little sisters	deemed one of the most effective tools			
Community members demonstrating a positive attitude towards girl's education	Community	**Qual:** FGD with parents and Big sisters KII with local government official, Headteachers, and teachers,	Demonstration of attitude is subjective. In the past, both EE and the Project has experienced ceiling effect while administering quantitative tools for such subjective matter. Hence only qualitative tool was chosen	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	The indicator was added for the midline
Outcome 3: Sustainability school level						
% of schools scoring acceptable or above in CRM sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain CRMs)	Schools	***Quant:*** SIP checklist ***Qual:*** *KIIs teachers, Headteachers, CRM focal person, Local government*	The SIP checklist provided a robust measurement opportunity to gauze the functionality of system in place in school and sustainability of the functional system	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	The indicator was added for the midline. A new tool was developed for the measurement which is discussed in the following sections, A scorecard was also developed to rate the schools based upon the data from the checklist
% of schools scoring acceptable or above in teacher training assessment (ability to train	Schools	***Quant:*** SIP checklist ***Qual:*** *KIIs teachers, Headteachers, CRM*	The SIP checklist provided a robust measurement opportunity to gauze the functionality of system in place in school and	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	The indicator was added for the midline. A new tool was developed for the measurement which is

incoming teachers in learner-centered classroom practices)		*focal person, Local government*	sustainability of the functional system			discussed in the following sections, A scorecard was also developed to rate the schools based upon the data from the checklist
% of schools who score acceptable or above in SIP sustainability assessment (ability to improve and maintain SIPs)	Schools	***Quant:*** SIP checklist ***Qual:*** *KIIs teachers, Headteacher, CRM focal person, Local government*	The SIP checklist provided a robust measurement opportunity to gauze the functionality of system in place in school and sustainability of the functional system	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	The indicator was added for the midline. A new tool was developed for the measurement which is discussed in the following sections, A scorecard was also developed to rate the schools based upon the data from the checklist
Intermediate outcome 1: attendance						
Attendance rates	School	**Quant:** Spot Check	This provided an unbiased opportunity to conduct a random check of attendance rate, and also provide opportunity for validation	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	
Attendance rates	School	**Quant:** School records	As this is the only document that contained the yearly attendance record of the girls	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	

Attendance rates	Project Office	**Quant:** Big Sisters record	Big Sisters kept separate records of little sister.	Per Evaluation Point	Big Sisters/District project team	Attendance record of the little sister was added for the midline as an indicator
Intermediate outcome 2: Increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls						
% of girls taking all key decisions on their own	School	***Quant:*** *Girls' Survey* ***Qual*** *FGD with Girls, Big Sisters, Parents,*	Girls' survey provides accurate information on whether or not the girls' felt that they were involved in decision making at home	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	This is a new indicator set during the midline. The data to measure this indicator is also available for the baseline and no additional questions were required.
Intermediate outcome 3: Increased parental engagement in girls' education						
% of parents who go to their girl's school to discuss their progress with their teacher (at least once a year)	Household	***Quant:*** *Household Survey* ***Qual*** *FGD, Big Sisters, Parents,* *KII with, Teachers and Head Teachers*	Household survey is the primary tool that collected first-hand information form the household which allowed to gather information on parental visits. The qualitative consultations allowed for validation of the responses by the parents	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	This indicator was added during the midline. A set of questions were added to the Household survey.
Average time spent by girls on household chores	Household	***Quant:*** *Girls' Survey* ***Qual*** *FGD with Girls, Big Sisters, Parents,*	Girls' survey provided a comprehensive overview of the involvement of the girls in household chores.	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	This indicator was added during the midline. A set of questions were added to the Girls' survey.

Intermediate outcome 4: Improved teaching quality						
% of trained teachers displaying learner-centered classroom practices	School	**Quant:** Classroom Observation	Classroom observation allowed for first-hand verification of whether or not a teacher was participating in the learner-centered classroom teaching practices. The tool is also a standard tool developed and recommended by the Government of Nepal	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	N/A
Intermediate outcome 5: Gender-responsive school management and governance						
% of schools scoring acceptable or above on SIP progress assessment	School	**Quant:** SIP Checklist	The SIP checklist provided a robust measurement opportunity to gauze the functionality of system in place in school and sustainability of the functional system	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	The indicator was added for the midline. A new tool was developed for the measurement which is discussed in the following sections, A scorecard was also developed to rate the schools based upon the data from the checklist
% of schools scoring acceptable or above in Complaint Response Mechanism	School	**Quant:** SIP Checklist	The SIP checklist provided a robust measurement opportunity to gauze the functionality of system in place in school and	Per Evaluation Point	External Evaluator	The indicator was added for the midline. A new tool was developed for the measurement which is

functionality assessment.			sustainability of the functional system			discussed in the following sections, A scorecard was also developed to rate the schools based upon the data from the checklist

Evaluation methodology

The midline evaluation adopted a mixed-method research design; more specifically sequential mixed method designed was used. Under this design, quantitative data was collected first, followed by qualitative data collection. The preliminary findings from the quantitative data guided the development of qualitative tools which allowed for the use of qualitative data to verify, interpret and understand the patterns emerging in the quantitative data.

The use of sequential mixed method design was different from what was stipulated in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework i.e. parallel mixed-method design. The change in evaluation design during the midline was decided jointly by VSO Nepal, Fund Manager, External Evaluator, and GEC-T. Sequential Design was used as it facilitated the identification of emerging issues from the quantitative findings which then could be explored in more depth using qualitative techniques. Apart from that, sequential design also helped the research team to avoid any redundancies in data collected by quantitative and qualitative approach separately.

The findings against the indicators set in the project log frame for a different outcome and intermediate outcome were analyzed from the quantitative data and changes between baseline and midline were identified. These findings were then used to structure the qualitative exercises which was designed for identifying the causal factors of the quantitative findings. The mixed-method design was changed during the midline in comparison to the baseline. Parallel mixed method design was used during the baseline.

The study comprised of two cohorts of sample girls, as in baseline- In school Girls and Out of Schoolgirls. While both learning and transition outcomes were measured for the in schoolgirls, only transition outcome was measured for the out of school girls. The in-school girls comprised of girls who were between grade 6 to 10 during the baseline. The out of school's girls was only sampled from one district, parsa, from among who were aged 6-10 years during the baseline, who had never attended schools or were dropouts, and were enrolled in the Bridge Classes run by the project.

For the outcome level measurement among school girls, the quantitative study of mid-term evaluation was based on Quasi-Experimental design guided by the difference in difference (DID) approach. This approach allowed for attainment of counterfactual to estimate causal effect making the use of longitudinal data from intervention and control group. It also allowed the measurement of the effect of the project intervention by comparing changes in outcomes over time between the intervention and control group. In addition, DID relies on a less strict exchangeability assumption, i.e. in absence of treatment, the unobserved differences between treatment and control groups are the same overtime. Hence, Difference-in-difference is a useful technique to use when randomization on the individual level is not possible.

The pre-intervention data required for DID was drawn from the baseline evaluation whereas cohort tracking of the sample (both control and treatment) from the baseline was used to gather new data during the midline evaluation. For the outcome measurement among out of school girls, pre-post design was used. Here too, the same sample girls from the baseline were surveyed during the midline.

The qualitative method focused on identifying changes in relation to the outcome and intermediate outcome, since the implementation of the project activities in the last year. This also allowed for gauzing into the casual factors of reported changes, understanding people's attitudes towards Girls' education and identifying best practices of the project. These findings were useful in making recommendations for the project that it can adapt in its two remaining operation years.

Furthermore, both the evaluation methodology sought to generate answers for the evaluation questions outlined in the project monitoring MEL Framework. The project MEL framework has outlined the following four broader evaluation questions and sixteen project-specific evaluation questions:

1. Was the GEC successfully designed and implemented? Was the GEC good Value for Money?
2. What impact did the GEC Funding have on the transition of marginalized girls through education stages and their learning?
3. What works to facilitate the transition of marginalized girls through education stages and increase their learning?
4. How sustainable were the activities funded by the GEC and was the program successful in leveraging additional interest and investment?

The project-level evaluation questions were as follows:

Process

1. Has the project been able to address the community needs in the girl's education sector? How?
2. Is the approach of the project suitable for reaching the extremely marginalized girls where we are operating?
3. Has there been a change in gender norms (girls and boys) that the project was able to influence? What influenced the change?
4. What are the factors that helped overcome attitudinal/ institutional barriers?

Impact

5. What was the size of the impact observed in learning, retention, and attendance of marginalized girls across the interventions of the project?
6. What was the size of impact observed in the transition of marginalized girls across the interventions of the project?

Value for money

7. Whether the investment is enough to attain the project objectives?
8. Do the benefits of the project outweigh the costs of intervention?
9. Which components of the project are most effective in terms of value for money and what are the factors that help realize good value for money?
10. Whether the Big Sisters approach represented good value for money, compared to other interventions in the project?

Effectiveness

11. Which aspects of the Big Sisters approach were effective in delivering the final outcomes? How were they effective?
12. Which aspects of the other components of the project were effective in delivering the final outcomes? How were they effective?

Sustainability

13. Whether the community is willing to own the project and continue it after the project fund ends?
14. Whether three years are enough to ensure the sustainability of the project and how?
15. Whether the provision of the micro-grant ensures sustainability?
16. Whether the project will ensure additional external funding during its project implementation period?

Learning Cohort

As stated earlier the learning cohort comprised of girls who were in grade 6-10 at baseline in treatment and control schools. As stated in the project MEL framework, the project targets were the girls from grade 5 to 10 in treatment school. However, due to the difference in curriculum girls from grade 5 were not sampled. Therefore, the evaluation sampled and tracked girls from grade 6 to 10 at baseline. These were the girls who received interventions targeting learning outcomes. A comparison group of girls were also selected for the learning cohort. The selection ratio was one control sample for every two treatment samples.

As stated in the project MEL framework cohort tracking was conducted for midline data collection. The tracking was conducted at school level for learning cohort. The SeGRA and SeGMA tests were carried out among the learning cohort followed by a girl's survey and household survey.

In addition to this, a separate group of learning cohort which received intervention regarding English and digital literacy in Surkhet districts were also sampled. These girls were part of the EDGE club and were sampled to measure the third and fourth learning outcome i.e. English proficiency and Digital literacy. EDGE group did not have a separate comparison group, therefore, pre-post analysis was conducted to gauze the outcome level achievement.

Transition Cohort.

The transition cohort for the evaluation included out of school girls aged 6-10 during baseline who were the split samples, and the entire learning cohort as a joint sample. The transition cohort was tracked to measure the Transition outcome based upon the transition pathways the girls adopt or were able to attain the transition pathways are as follows.

	Baseline point	Successful Transition	Unsuccessful Transition
Out of school girls (young)	Enrolled in bridge course	Re-enrolled in school (previously out of school) Out of school but involved in non-formal education or vocational training	Repeats grade Dropped out of school or bridge course
Lower secondary (basic education)	Enrolled in Grade 6, 7, 8,9	In-school progression Re-enrolled in school (previously out of school) Dropped but involved in NFE	Repeats grade Dropped out of school
Secondary school	Enrolled in Grade 10	SEE graduation Dropped out but involved in TEVT Dropped out but employed with minimum wage	Repeats grade Drops out of school but remains unemployed

		Dropped out but have started business on own	

The cohort tracking for the out of school girls aged 6-10 was carried out at the household level.

Cohort Tracking

As stated earlier, for both the learning and transition cohort, the same sample girls were tracked during the midline. FDM used the consolidated sample list provide by VSO, which included schools' name, name of the respondent, respondent's grade, and name of her parents, to re-contact the in school girls. As the sample size for all cohorts were bloated considering 30% attrition per year no replacement was sought.

Establishing the relation between IO and outcomes

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

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

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

The analysis of the midline also sought to establish a relationship between these two IO, and outcomes using the quantitative data. Inferential statistics tests like, regression, correlation, and chi-square test were used. Where the relationship has been determined to be statistically significant, it has been reported.

Furthermore, a qualitative method was also used to establish relationships, specifically regarding the relationship between intermediate outcomes 4 and 5, and its influence on other intermediate outcomes and outcomes.

GESI

Utmost priority was given by the evaluation towards ensuring the incorporation of GESI standard in evaluation designs, tools, approach, data collection, analysis, and reporting. FDM also provided appropriate training on maintaining GESI minimum standard especially while seeking respondents for the qualitative consultations.

While the midline evaluation adhered to the cohort tracking approach meaning that the selection of respondents was done during the baseline, the midline evaluation ensured that the data segregation and reporting is done considering the GESI aspect. In qualitative exercises, evaluation team gave importance to criteria like ethnicity and age while selecting the respondent.

The evaluation team also ensured that the GESI minimum standards outlined in the GESI Addendum – Midline Report Template – were incorporated in the midline evaluation.

Culture and capacity: As all the quantitative sample were girls, the data collectors in the evaluation team comprised significantly of female. Considering that cultural and linguistic difference might be an issue, priority was given to enumerators with knowledge in local language and culture. The Qualitative team in each district comprised of a male and a female researcher, seeking gender balance and gender sensitivity when interacting.

Analysis: Previous study reports on gender and social inclusion conducted by the government of Nepal and other stakeholders were used to examine the context of GESI. The analysis of context has been presented in the background section of the main report.

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

Indicators: The project log frame and the indicators were designed with priority given to GESI aspect led by the project, with the involvement of the FM and suggestions from the EE.

Child protection

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

Measures were put in place by the external evaluators to ensure that all the individuals involved in the evaluation process strictly followed the safeguarding policy. These measures included signed commitments to uphold child safeguards and a clause in the contracts that allowed termination of contract along with the right to report any misconducts to concerned authority if found to be breaking the national child protection policy or the child safeguarding policy of VSO/FDM.

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

i. Informed consent
ii. Code of conduct
iii. Incident reporting mechanisms
iv. Data protection

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

I. Not engaging in sensitive topics with children, by team members who do not have expertise for such discussion

II. Enumerators are recruited with the correct skillset and appropriate safety checks.

III. Limiting data collection on sensitive topics like ASRHR only to what the program needs and avoid overburdening children.

IV. Questions are framed sensitively and are age-appropriate to minimize distress to children.

V. Only female enumerators and researchers conducted data collection form Girls.

Ethical Considerations

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

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

I. Lawfulness, fairness, and transparency

II. Purpose limitation

III. Data minimization

IV. Accuracy

V. Storage limitation

VI. Integrity and confidentiality (security)

VII. Accountability

The following section illustrates FDMs approach towards ethical control strategies.

Informed Consent

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

The respondents were also given the option of withdrawing their consent anytime during the interview. As the primary respondents for the evaluations were girls below the age of 18, consent was sought from school administration or the parents of the girls. A written consent from the schools was sought, and where applicable a written consent from households to interview girls

were also sought. Where written consent from households could not receive, a verbal consent of permission was sought. At households, only individuals above 18+ were interviewed for the study.

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

The midline evaluation was also conducted among households who had provided consent for re contact during baseline data collection.

Data privacy and protection

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

A written confidentiality agreement was secured from all the individuals employed by FDM for the study. Documentation of every data transfer and handovers were maintained including for receiving filled SeGRA and SeGMA tests form enumerators by supervisor and handover by supervisors to research coordinator and statistician.

Only the four supervisors or the research coordinators were allowed to transport the tests. i.e. their presence was required for transportation. During transportation, the boxes containing the tests were sealed and opened only in the presence of the supervisor who transported the questionnaire, and either one of- team leader or the coordinator.

Special attention was given towards safeguarding the respondent's identity and ensure that their name, picture or any other form of identity is not revealed through any means to anyone besides the EE, FM, and the VSO. All respondents' names and other sensitive data were assigned a unique code.

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

i. Monitoring and Evaluation officer from VSO.

ii. Assigned Liaison from fund manager

iii. Quantitative reviewer assigned by the fund manager.

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

In addition to these, the raw recordings of the English proficiency test were provided to the members of the British Council for marking. This was done only through mediation by the

monitoring and evaluation officer from VSO i.e. the data processor transferred the raw recording to the monitoring and evaluation office from VSO, who then transferred them to the British Council.

During the midline evaluation, no major ethical issues were reported. However, the evaluation team did encounter situations whereby in many schools, the exam was underway during data collection. To mitigate the impact of data collection on the examination of the girls, the evaluation team undertook extensive discussion with school management and implementing partners to identify a date and time which would have the least impact. In many such schools, girls survey and learning tests were administered on Friday after examination as they would not have examinations on the following day i.e. Saturday, this also led to extension in the data collection period. In locations where this was not possible, the evaluation team further discussed with the sample girls, and in clear language stated that the evaluators were aware about the required time and possible impact on examination, and also reinforced to them that they had no obligation what so ever to participate.

Quality Assurance

FDM has a set of uniform quality assurance standards that it follows in all its projects. In terms of quality assurance particularly for this assignment, FDM assures the following:

I. All required conversion and or other unit necessary will be uniform.

II. Enumerators were given in-depth training and orientation.

III. Experienced field supervisors were employed.

IV. All data contained a unique code.

V. FDM will submit an SPSS codebook along with data set which will contain variable name, variable labels, response codes and value labels

VI. Researchers were in regular communication loop with team leaders and relevant representatives from VSO and partner organizations.

VII. For unforeseen events, contingency arrangement was in place if its use was needed. Plans were in place for contingency situations including political unrest and natural disaster.

VIII. All the enumerators and researchers were covered by insurance

Likewise, as required by the project, FDM also ensured that it followed the ten principles for research and evaluation outlined by DIFID[1] to be followed by all the projects funded by it.

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

Midline data collection process

Pre data collection

The pre-data collection process of the midline commenced with the inception meeting between external evaluators and VSO Nepal. The meeting was followed by the handover of baseline data and all other relevant documents to EE by VSO Nepal. FDM then reviewed these documents and the raw data. The review of these data and documents was followed by rigorous discussions between EE, VSO Nepal, and the fund manager to revise the project log-frame indicators and tools.

Quantitative Sampling

Power Calculation and Sample size

The quantitative component of the evaluation was based upon the quasi-experimental design and difference in difference approach. For this, two groups; Treatment and Control group of girls for the learning cohort were selected. The treatment groups were selected from the 48 intervention schools and the controls girls were selected from the 17 control schools.

During the baseline the required learning sample to detect standard deviation of 0.25 was calculated using G* power under the following parameters:

- T-test: Means: Difference between two independent means (two groups)
- Effect size of 0.25 SD
- $\alpha = 0.05$
- power = 95%
- Treatment/Control ratio: 2:1

Under this parameter, the sample size of 521 for treatment and 261 for the control was derived.

The same size of the learning cohort was then weighted based upon the expected time of exposure of the girls to project intervention. Therefore, the lowest intervention grade (grade 6) was given the highest weight while girls in Grade 10 were given the lowest weight. Furthermore, considering that the secondary level girls leave schools after completion of grade 10, an attrition buffer of 30% per evaluation point was allocated. With the attrition buffer, the required sample size was determined to be 1145 for treatment and 573 for control.

For transition cohort i.e. out of school girls in Parsa, 50% of the total population (girls enrolled in bridge classes at the time of baseline) was considered as sample size which numbered to 160. Again, attrition buffer of 30% per evaluation point was allocated whereby the required baseline sample was 240.

The baseline was also conducted among 198 in-school girls in Surkhet who were expected to enroll in the EDGE club.

The following table illustrates the anticipated sample size during baseline and the attained sample size.

Cohort	Category	Treatment		Control	
		Anticipated	Attained	Anticipated	Attained
Learning	In-school Girls (Also measured for transition)	1145	1105	573	631
	Girls enrolled in EDGE club in Surkhet	198	198	N/A	N/A
Transition	Out of School Girls in Parsa	240	242	N/A	N/A

As the design of the evaluation entailed a longitudinal cohort tracking approach, the midline evaluation aimed at re-contacting the same girls who were surveyed during the baseline using the same sample frame, which included 47 treatment schools and 17 control schools was used for the midline. The detailed breakdown of the sampling framework is provided in Annex 15. This meant that the targeted number of midline sample was the same number of girls and their households who were surveyed during the baseline.

In addition to these, it was decided between the EE, VSO Nepal and FM that a new group of in school girls, the little sisters (direct beneficiaries of the mentorship program under the project) would also be sampled for the midline. A total of 417 additional girls, and their household; from across four project districts were added during the midline.

Qualitative Sampling

Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the qualitative sampling. The respondents for the KII and FGDs included in-school girls, community members and parents, teachers, headteachers, local government officials, district project team, big sisters, gender focal persons in school, and CRM focal person. Following table illustrates the anticipated qualitative consultations during the midline, prior to data collection:

Activity	Respondents	Number Per District
	Local Educational Office	3
	Head Teachers	3

KII	Teachers trained by project in learner-centered classroom technique	3
	CRM Focal Person	3
	Representative of Local Implementation Partner	1
FGD	Little Sisters	3
	Big Sister	2
	Out of School Girls (Only in Parsa)	1
	Parents/Community	3

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

The sample size of 3 per district for each group of stakeholders was selected in order to ensure the representation of stakeholders from rural, semi-urban and urban intervention areas. As the school served as the primary sampling unit for the qualitative study, Headteachers were consulted to identify individual respondents from among the groups of stakeholders.

The sample size of the maximum of three from each group of stakeholders was also paramount in mitigating data saturation. Given that the governance, social and economic context varied in each district, the data saturation was further mitigated. However, in Dhading and Parsa, data saturation was observed among the little sister even with the small sample size. Among the three groups of little sisters in each district, the difference in the data was minimal. Among other groups, data saturation was minimal limited to few themes. From each interaction and data, additional evidence under a theme, or anecdotes were drawn to add to the available qualitative information.

Tools

Quantitative Tools

The midline data collection gave priority to the use of the same quantitative tool as used during the baseline. Where deemed necessary additional tools were developed, and some changes were

made to tools from the baseline. The quantitative tools that were used during the midline along with changes are discussed in this section.

SeGRA and SeGMA Test

SeGRA and SeGMA tests were administered to the learning cohort. A set of three tools for both SeGRA and SeGMA was developed and tested during the baseline. While these three tools had similarities in difficulty some of the contents were different than that of the baseline. The tools were developed jointly by VSO Nepal and Mercy Corp Nepal with expertise form consultants form the Education Review Office of Government of Nepal. It was ensured during the baseline that the three sets of tools, though having some differences in words and content, did not differ from each other in terms of comprehension, marking and answering. This ensured that the scores obtained by the girls are comparable across all evaluation points. The tools were developed to ensure that the contents were in line with the national curriculum of the secondary level.

SeGRA

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

The three subtasks for SeGRA comprised of:

Subtask I: This subtask contained a comprehension passage with 5 analytical questions the girls were expected to answer based upon their understanding of the contains of the passage. The five questions carried either 1 or 2 marks depending upon types of answer the question required. The total marks of the subtask are 7.

Subtask II: This subtask comprised of comprehension passage followed by six inferential questions. Each question carried a mark of either 1 or 2 depending upon types of answer the question sought. A girl could obtain a maximum of 8 marks in subtask II.

Subtask III: This subtask was different form the subtask one and two. While the subtasks 1 and 2 required answers from a girl based upon their comprehension of provided passage the subtask three required a girl to construct an essay on a given topic. The score of a girl was determined by the content, language and sentence structure. Simplistic content and simple sentence construction were awarded a minimum 1 mark with marks increasing as the level of content and sentence construction went up. The full marks for Subtask three are 5.

The SeGRA test did not have any changes, besides wording compared to the baseline. Three consultants were hired for marking the SeGRA score. Each consultant was responsible for marking one subtask for all the girls. This ensured the uniformity of the marking.

SeGMA

SeGMA is a test of numeracy for second-grade students. It primarily tests the ability of the secondary grade students in solving mathematical problems based around arithmetic, algebra, and word problem. A SeGMA test usually consists of three subsets and a maximum score of 25. However, due to the floor effect reached in the subtask three during the baseline, this subtask consisting of three questions was removed during the midline in consultation with VSO Nepal, FM and Mercy Corp Nepal who is another agency using this tool.

The SeGMA tool used during the midline comprised of two subtasks:

Subtask I: Subtask I is comprised of a set of 15 questions of various arithmetic problems like multiplication, division, fractions, percentage, geometry, and measurement. Each question in this subtask carried one score which was awarded to girls who calculated the right answer using the right process. Girls who answered incorrectly or whose answer was correct but the process was not aligned to the answer derived was not awarded any marks.

Subtask II: This subtask in SeGMA comprised of six algebraic questions with a total maximum score of 10. The score of each question tanged form one-three depending on the question.

As stated earlier, a subtask in SeGMA was dropped after the midline. To compensate for this additional five questions were added to the subtask I which meant that the total maximum score of subtasks I during the midline was 15. However, only 10 questions in the subtask I was comparable to the baseline. Therefore, comparison between baseline and midline done against the 10 comparable questions from subtask one (with a total maximum score of 10) and 6 questions form subtask II form the test administered during the midline.

Two consultants were responsible for marking the SeGMA score. Like in SeGRA each consultant was responsible for checking the SeGMA test of one subtask for each girl.

EDGE Test

An English proficiency and digital learning test designed by the British Council was administered to measure the English learning of the in school girls in the EDGE club in Surkhet. This test is a standard tool used by the British council and no changes were made to the tool for midline. The scoring of the English and Digital test was also done by trained consultants from the British council.

Girls' Survey

The Girl's survey was administered to girls from both, learning (joint sample) and transition(Split) cohort. The girl's survey was similar to the one used during the baseline with changes made as per the GEC-T midline girl's survey template. One section i.e. Youth engagement and leadership was removed during the midline as recommended by VSO Nepal and in consultation with the FM. This was done as the information from the section did not contribute to gathering information for any project indicators and was also not useful to VSO Nepal as it had other means of assessment in place.

The Girls' survey included the study environment at home and their perception towards education and livelihood, future aspirations of the girls, self-esteem (assessed through their involvement in decision making), transition pathways, challenges among others. The girl's survey also delved into identifying enablers and barriers to girl's education and transition, from the girl's perspective.

Household Survey

Household survey was carried out with the Household head/Parents/primary caregivers of girls form both transition and learning cohort who were administered Girl's survey. group in order to gauge their attitude and perception towards girl's education and its relations with the girl's ability to transition. The household survey was also developed in line with the baseline questionnaire and GEC-T template. Household surveys explored basic demographic and economic details of

the household, which will later help the study to correlate education and parents' perception with various economic factors.

Two distinct changes were made to the household survey compared to the baseline. First, a section on household income and expenditure was added to gather information for the community level sustainability indicator (Average % of income invested in each of their girls' education). Second, a 24 question's set of Washington group module was administered during the midline compared to the 6 question's set. This change in the Washington group module is in line with changes recommended by GEC-T across all evaluation.

Spot Check

Spot checks were carried out in the treatment schools and control schools as in baseline. The spot checks were unannounced and gathered record of attendance by headcount of students in class 6 and above on the day of the visit by the quantitative data collection team.

Classroom Observation

Classroom observation was mainly focused on assessing the overall classroom environment, teaching methods of the teachers, students' participation in learning and interactive pedagogy. This tool was administered in a classroom run by the subject teachers trained by the project in treatment schools. The midline evaluation used the same tool for classroom observation which was used during the baseline.

SIP Checklist

A SIP checklist was used during the midline to assess the school amenities and environment as well as 'gender-responsive' approach, school improvement plans and guidelines policies; adopted by the schools for day to day functioning. In addition, this checklist also assessed the functionality of the Complaint and Response Mechanism in a school.

This checklist provided information to gauze the sustainability of achievements made towards school management. An index (Scorecard) was developed to assess the status of the school and categorize the schools based upon the data collected from the SIP checklist.

The checklist was developed by external evaluator involving team leader research coordinator and education expert. Inputs were sought form the FM, GEC-T, and VSO Nepal. The tool was finalized after incorporating inputs from these stakeholders.

School Information form

School information form was filled by the external evaluators which provided information regarding enrolment, attendance, and transition of all the students in control and treatment schools. The same form used during the baseline was also used for the midline.

Qualitative Tools

Two primary tools for qualitative data collection was used during the midline- Focused Group discussions and Key informant Interview. The external evaluators developed different checklists to guide the FGDs and the KIIs. These checklists were developed based upon the findings of the quantitative data and differed for each type of stakeholders interviewed. In addition, the qualitative tools used during the midlines gave utmost focus in identifying if changes where they had occurred in the past one year since the project implementation and the causes for those changes.

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

FGD

Focused group discussions were conducted among in-school girls, out of school girls in Parsa, Big sisters and parents/community members. The checklist was developed with reference to the baseline but changes were made as per the trends and preliminary findings for quantitative data, and change in the logical framework of the project.

Each focused group discussion except for big sisters, comprised between 6-8 participants and the information was used for triangulation, validation and identifying of causal relations with findings from quantitative data. In addition, FGDs also provided an in-depth perception of girls regarding opportunities and barriers for their education and the perception of families and communities towards girl's education.

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

KII

KIIs were conducted with stakeholders, who were primarily in decision-making level within the schools, and, or the community. These included headteachers, chairpersons of local government, local government and education officials. In addition, KIIs were also conducted among school staff who were trained by the project or were directly involved in project intervention. This included teachers trained in learner-centered classroom technique, CRM focal person and project staff.

Like FGD, KII were also essential invalidating, triangulating and identifying causal relation. Furthermore, KIIs also gauzed into exploring the contextual factors, especially those that could impact the sustainability of the project. A separate checklist was developed to guide each Key informant interview.

Operation Plan

Enumerator selection and orientation for quantitative data collection

A total of 54 enumerators were mobilized by FDM. Individuals with prior experience in mobile-based data collection were given priority. In addition, female enumerators with prior experience of administering learning tests were prioritized in hiring enumerators. A three-day rigorous training was provided to the enumerators. The table below provides an overview of the orientation:

Day 1	Introduction to the project Objectives of the midline Comprehensive overview of the household and girls survey Orientation of research design (Control and Treatment)

Day 2	Introduction to SeGRA/SeGMA tests and how to administer them Training on how to administer the surveys using the tablet Code of conduct and Child Protection Policy
Day 3	Administration of Washington Group of Question Mock data collection Feedback Final question and answer

In addition, four supervisors with more than 5 years of experience in quantitative data collection and field-level data collection were also hired to coordinate the filed level data collection in each district.

Qualitative data collection

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

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

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

During data collection

Quantitative Data Collection

The data collection for the midline evaluation took place in two stages, as expected in a sequential mixed method research design. In the first round, the girls' survey, household survey, and spot check were conducted. The first round of data collection was done between March 4, 2019, to March 21, 2019. The data collection in all four-project district commenced on the same date while the completion date varied. It was ensured that the time gap between baseline and midline did not exceed 12 months, therefore, the midline was conducted during the same month of the year as the baseline.

During the midline evaluation, the quantitative data was recorded using two different techniques. The girls' survey and household survey were recorded using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technique. More specifically, Open Data Kit (ODK) programming was used to digitize the questionnaire and tablets were used for recording information. For the administration of learning tests and recording of school-level information, the Pen-and-Paper Personal Interview (PAPI) technique was used. The data recorded using PAPI was then manually entered in an excel file which allowed the data to be operated digitally, using relevant software.

During the quantitative data collection, each team in the district was led by a Supervisor. The supervisors were responsible for overall planning, communication and quality assurance of the survey in a district. Only female enumerators administered SeGRA/SeGMA and girl's survey. Furthermore, supervisors and the enumerators conducted sharing and feedback session every day.

The same cohort of respondents surveyed in the baseline was used for the midline. The same sampling points (schools) were visited where respondents were identified using the name, age, and address collected during the baseline. School administration, project's community mobilizers, and Big sisters were consulted for tracking the girls. Given that the sample during the baseline had been bloated accounting for 30% attrition, replacement was not sought.

Due to the unforeseen number of holidays during the data collection, not all girls could be met in schools. Learning tests of the girls who were not present in school were conducted at the household individually, and in few cases in groups but within the community in a service center.

The supervisors also collected school-level information, administered the SIP checklist and conducted classroom observation after the girls' survey and the household survey had been concluded in each district. For the EDGE assessment in Surkhet two enumerators trained and recommended by the British council were mobilized.

The midline line data collection also ensured that the beneficiaries can be tracked for the next evaluation point by collecting information on names, location and contact number along with the name of schools which serves as the primary sampling point. In addition, the unique ID given to each respondent will also allow for data matching during the end line. As part of the household survey, a verbal confirmation was sought form households on whether or not they were willing to participate in the study in the next evaluation point.

Quality Assurance

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

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

Qualitative Data Collection

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

For the qualitative data collection, treatment schools were the primary sampling points. In each district, three schools were chosen where a set of qualitative consultations would be held. Following criteria was set for choosing schools in each district:

- One school each from Urban, Semi-Urban, and Rural Areas
- Only one school form one local government unit
- Schools whose catchment areas housed communities that were more vulnerable and marginalized compared to other communities in the same district. (as informed by the district project team)

In addition, the SeGRA and SeGMA scores were also considered a factor. Schools, whose sample girls had scored better compared to other schools in the districts, and the schools whose sample girls had scored lower compared to other schools in the districts were given priority in selection.

Based upon these criteria, the qualitative research team and the district program team identified three schools in each district and coordinated accordingly.

Within the school, the participants of each qualitative consultations were identified either by snowballing or by referral.

Quality Assurance

The qualitative research team comprised of experienced researchers with years of qualitative data collection between them. Each qualitative research team shared their impression of each day with the research coordinator. The research coordinator shared the impressions with the team leaders and upon discussion, teams were given pointers on what should they focus on probing on the next day of data collection. This ensured that emerging patterns in qualitative data were validated across all the districts.

Furthermore, qualitative consultations were digitally recorded with permission from the participants. This prevented any loss of information. During the midline study permission for recording was given by all the respondents and there were no instances of “refusal to record”.

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

In addition, all the individuals involved in the field level data collection were provided a detailed orientation on child protection and ethical standards of the evaluation.

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

Table 18: Sample Size and Tool details

Tool (used for which outcome and IO indicator)	Beneficiary group	Sample size agreed in MEL framework for treatment and (control group) - if appropriate	Actual sample size treatment and (control group) - if appropriate	Remarks: 1) Attrition rate from baseline to midline 2) Re-contacted sample vs replaced sample 3) Major changes to tools or differences between anticipated and actual sample sizes
SeGRA Used for literacy (learning) outcome	In-school girls (grades 6-10 during the baseline)	Treatment- 1 Control – 569	Treatment- 702 Control - 400	SeGRA test conducted among 87.75% of the 800 re-contacted girls in treatment and 80.8% of 495 re-contacted girls in control
SeGMA Used for numeracy (learning) outcome	In-school girls (grades 6-10 during the baseline)	Treatment-999 Control - 550	Treatment-697 Control - 399	SeGMA test conducted among 87.12% of the 800 re-contacted girls in treatment and 80.6% of 495 re-contacted girls in control Taking into account the floor effect achieved in subtask 3 of SeGMA at baseline, subtask 3 was removed from the tool at midline, while five additional questions were added to subtask 1.
EDGE Used for English and digital (learning) outcome	Little Sisters in Surkhet District who were members of EDGE Club	Treatment- 198	Treatment- 62	68.69% attrition since baseline.
Girls Survey	In-school girls (grades 6-10 during the baseline)	Treatment- 1105	Treatment- 800	27.6% attrition in treatment since baseline

		Control – 631	Control – 494	21.71% attrition in control since baseline The baseline sample size was bloated with anticipation of 30% attrition per year
	Out of School Girls in Pars	Treatment- 240	Treatment- 140	40.42% attrition
	EDGE Club Members in Surkhet	Treatment - 198	Treatment- 62	68.69% attrition since baseline.
Household Survey	Household head/Parents/Caregivers of In-school girls (grades 6-10 during the baseline)	Treatment-1105 Control – 631	Treatment-717 Control – 448	Household survey conducted with 89.63 % of re-contacted girls in treatment and 90.69% of girls in control
	Household head/Parents/Caregivers of Out of School Girls in Pars	Treatment- 175	Treatment- 114	Household survey conducted with 78.63 % of re-contacted out of school girls in parsa
	Household head/Parents/Caregivers of EDGE Club Members in Surkhet		Treatment- 61	Household survey conducted with 98.39 % of re-contacted little sisters from EDGE club
Spot Check	Grade 6 to 10	Treatment- 36 Control – 15	Treatment- 42 Control – 16	
School Information Form (for Attendance)	Schools	Treatment- 9 Control – 4	Treatment- 42 Control – 16	

Classroom Observation	Trained Teachers	Treatment- 94 Control – 30	Treatment - 99	
SIP Checklist	School		Treatment- 44 Control – 15	
KII	Head Teacher	36	12	
	Teachers Trained by the project		12	
	CRM focal person		12	
	Local Education Officer		10	
	District Project team		4	
FGD	Little Sister	24	12	
	Big Sisters		8	
	Parents/Community		12	
	Out of Schoolgirls in parsa		1	

Post data collection

The field-level data collection was followed by extensive data verification and cleaning process. On top of the data cleaning and verification by the field supervisor, the quantitative data was checked by consistency in reference to sampling point, unique codes and girls name at daily basis by research coordinator, and at random interval of time GPS coordinates were also used to verify locations. Especial consideration was given to open-ended questions to check for errors. The field supervisors also conducted random checks of every one in four SeGRA and SeGMA test each day. The raw data from the mobile platform was exported into IBM-SPSS for further cleaning and analysis.

Once the data collection was completed in each district, the field supervisors conducted a debriefing session with all the enumerators to identify any issues that might have influenced the data, and especially to identify the reasons for failure to recontact. The supervisors also sealed the SeGRA and SeGMA test for transportation to Kathmandu.

After the field level data collection was complete, a one-day debriefing session was held in Kathmandu in two phases. The first phase of debriefing was done with supervisors of Dhading and Lamjung districts along with some of the enumerators, and the second phase was done with the supervisors from Surkhet and Parsa districts. The debriefing session focused on identifying data collection strategies, challenges and overall reflection from the field regarding the tools. The session also was essential in identifying reasons for attrition and failure to recontact. At the end of the debriefing sessions, the SeGRA and SeGMA tests were unsealed and counted in the presence of the supervisor, research coordinator, and the consultants responsible for marking.

The SeGRA and SeGMA marking were entered manually in an excel format which was later exported to the SPSS file.

Following standard FDM protocols were used for data cleaning after the collection concluded.

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.

Step 3: Arranging each of the variables in a standard order (ascending/descending) to purge any duplicated information or any other outlier.

Step 4: Checking for coding errors while data is arranged in an 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.

Once this was complete, the data from SeGRA and SEGMA, girls’ survey and household survey were merged into a single IBM-SPSS file using the unique ID given to the girls.

A preliminary analysis of the quantitative data was conducted which guided the development of the qualitative checklist.

As stated earlier, all the qualitative consultations were recorded (with permission from the participants). The records were than Labeled with the tool type (FGD/KII), Initials of the schools and date of consultation. The qualitative researchers also used a record sheet where the name of the file was written and details of the recording including type of stakeholder, name of stakeholder, setting of interviews (Office, School ground, Halls, etc.) and length of recording was provided. The recordings were then transcribed word for word in FDM office and translated into English which was used for the analysis.

The quantitative data was analyzed using IMB-SPPP and relevant descriptive and inferential statistic technique. The analysis was extensively guided by GECT-MEL guidance and recommendations.

The qualitative data was analyzed manually using a thematic analysis approach.

Synthesizing the Report

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

Quantitative Analysis

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

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

i. Paired sample t-test

ii. Independent/two-sample t-test

iii. One-Way Anova

For variables that did not have normal distribution, the Mann-Whitney U test (non-parametric) was used.

To check for association and correlation of variables and the significance level of association. Linear regression model and chi-square tests were conducted.

Besides the above-mentioned inferential statistic techniques, descriptive statistics techniques including frequency measurement, central tendency measurements and measurement of dispersion or variation were conducted.

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

As the study was designed to allow for difference in difference (DiD) analysis, a linear regression model with dummy variables was used to determine the DiD value of literacy and numeracy scores.

All these allowed for comparative analysis of the midline findings with that of the baseline.

Qualitative Analysis

The following steps were undertaken for qualitative data analysis post transcribing.

STEP 1 – Data coding: Form the transcripts of the qualitative discussion coding of the qualitative data was conduction. The coding involved identification of key terms and grouping the responses. Descriptive coding was used for the study. This was especially important as it was pivotal in enabling the research team to efficiently pull out and refer back to data throughout report preparation.

As the qualitative research was conducted under the sequential mixed method design and was primarily intended to provide casual inference and explanation to finding from quantitative data "concept-driven coding" was used. However, the process allowed for adaptation of the coding schemes i.e. some degree of openness in coding was allowed based on emerging information.

This 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. Furthermore, aids flow charts and mind maps were also used to facilitate the workshop.

This process also 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 baseline evaluation and the midline evaluation had identified various sub-groups based on which the data were to be analyzed for more nuanced information on casual factors of educational marginalization. The subgroups were identified based on demographics, and socio-economic

characteristics of girls. In addition, analysis was also done based upon the school grades of the girls. Following are the characteristics on which the subgroups are based:

i. Districts

ii. Grade

iii. Ethnicity

iv. Age

v. Economic condition of household

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

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

i. Girls living without both parents

ii. Girls living in a household headed by female

iii. Girls from “Poor” household

iv. Girls whose mother tongue was different from the language of instruction at schools

v. Girls from households whose head had low education i.e. had not completed primary education.

vi. Girls who reported that all key decisions regarding their education and future were taken by family members and not by them.

vii. Girls who were from marginalized ethnic groups like Dalit and Madheshi ethnicity.

Challenges in midline data collection and limitations of the evaluation design

The challenges and limitations of the midline evaluation differed in context and implication. Most of the limitations and their implication in the robustness of the report could be successfully overcome owing to the design of the evaluation, sampling design outlined in the MEL framework and also the contingency plans adopted by the midline evaluation team. However, the challenges posed by self-report bias, lack of comparable data from baseline and difficulty in administering certain standard tools warrants consideration of caveats in the report. The detailed discussion on the challenges and limitations of the midline evaluation is presented in the table below.

Challenges/Limitation	Mitigation and implications on report

Unforeseen number of holidays extended the data collection period The quantitative data collection period in all the district was marred by numerous holidays. These were results of a political situation (General Strick), local events, and national holidays. This led to closure of schools, in surkhet and parsa for more than 5 consecutive days. As school was the primary contact point difficulties were faced by data collectors in contacting girls and household.	EE mitigated the impact by establishing a channel of teachers, Big Sisters and community mobilizers to identify the households of the sample Girls and conducting learning tests in community centers where possible or at household levels, along with girls' survey and household survey
Challenges in conduction Learning tests due to examinations. The midline data collection coincided with the final examination dates and was very close to the national level examinations of Grade 8 and Grade 10. As learning test required at least 2 hours of time, some of the Girls and Schools were reluctant to allow participation.	In cases where schools were reluctant, the field supervisor coordinated with the school authority to plan a date and time that would have the least impact on the classes (regular and extra) of the girls. In cases where girls were reluctant, the enumerators identified a time when the girl felt comfortable and conducted the test individually. In some cases, where girls declined participation on SeGRA and SeGMA test, only girls survey and household survey were administered.
Challenges of contacting household of In-School girls in Grade 8, 9 and 10 in Surkhet, Dhading, and Lamjung In Surkhet, Dhading, and Lamjung there was a trend among the students in Grade 8 and above, especially Grade 9 and 10 to stay away from home, in a group, renting out rooms near schools due to the distance between home and school. Some households were as far as 7 hours from the school. In such cases, the girls were living on their own, without any caregiver's present.	In such cases, contacting the household were very difficult. In cases where more than 4 households were located in one community, the enumerators visited those communities. In many cases, the household were unable to respond to question regarding girl's education, school environment or teaching quality. If a household consistently replied to questions as don't know and were vocal about their lack of information, the survey was terminated to ensure that the data collected were not affected by assumptive responses.
The midline saw a high degree of attrition in school girls from baseline.	This challenge was anticipated during the baseline therefore, the sample size during the baseline was bloated to account for 30% of attrition per year. Ensuring that the number of girls will remain statistically significant in spite of attrition.
Difficulty in Matching Baseline data. Due to unknown reasons, the EE during the midline was not able to receive a codebook for the baseline data.	The EE recorded the baseline data based upon the GECT template for variables that required robust baseline midline comparison. For variable which demanded only descriptive references, narrative baseline report was referred.

High Attrition of out of school Girls in Parsa Re-contacting OOS girls in Parsa was very challenging as the means of recontact was limited and in cases inadequate. Especially among OOS girls who had not enrolled in formal education The EE during the baseline relied on the information on the names of girls, caregivers, and community to recontact the girls. In addition, it was also decided that the data from the local implementation partner will be used to recontact. However, in many cases, all this information proved to be obsolete preventing any recontact. The midline also found that few of the OOS girls have migrated.	The supervisors worked extensively with the community mobilizers and project team to identify how the girls could be re-contacted by identifying the last known location or schools of OOS girls who had enrolled in formal education. The OOS girls who were re-contacted were then asked if they were still in contact or knew where their peers from the bridge classes were. This information also assisted in rec-contacting OOS girls. Given that the baseline data was collected for all the OOS girls who were enrolled in bridge class, and just sample girls. The midline data is still comparable.
High Attrition of girls in EDGE club in Surkhet. The midline found that there is a high turnover rate among girls who were expected to take English and Digital literacy classes. The standard EDGE requires for a Girl to have completed a set of courses to be comparable/eligible for midline classes only the girls who had participated in the Club during the baseline and were still participating at the time of midline were to be administered the test. Given the criteria, the attrition for the Girls in EDGE club was very high.	During the baseline, The EDGE test for the girls in Surkhet was administered to all the girls who were expected to participate in the EDGE club and not just sample girls. Therefore, the number of girls who were eligible for the test during the midline is still significant given the small population size of the girls.
Using long set (24 questions) Washington group questions on functioning. Administering a long set of Washington group's functionality questions in a manner that ensured uniformity of understanding across all participants form four districts and different socio-cultural contexts was challenging. The challenge was especially observed on questions regarding domains of effect (anxiety & depression) and communication.	In this context, the evaluation team is of the opinion that reliability/consistency may have suffered in some instances. For instance, the test-retest of the same sample in midline-endline may not yield the same response.

Self-Report Bias on IO 3.1 Post data collection analysis of quantitative and qualitative data shows a prevalence of self-reporting bias in the household survey regarding question to "number of visits made to school to discuss progress of daughter".	To limit the impact on the findings extensive use of qualitative information from other stakeholders has been used to report on this indicator. However, the quantitative data on this IO is with a caveat that limits the reliability of the information if presented without references to the qualitative data.
Confirmation Bias of the research team Like in many studies there were indeed the chance of the confirmation bias among the research team. Specially, the research team had identified the effectiveness of "mentorship approach" as a potential theme that might be impacted by the confirmation bias, whereby there persisted a chance that the research team assigned undue weight to evidence confirming the effectiveness of the approach.	The first step towards, mitigating confirmation bias was the involvement of multiple members in the analysis team. Furthermore, the experience of the team also limited the impact.
Lack of baseline attendance data for comparison During the baseline, the data on attendance was only collected form 9 treatment schools based on which the targets were set for the midline. However, during the midline, the data was collected from the 44-treatment school. The evaluation team is of the view that though the baseline data helps in illustration, comparison or generalization is not feasible.	This caveat should be considered when discussing this IO which significantly limits any reliable generalization; thus, the comparison should only be considered for illustration purpose.
Lack of codebooks for the baseline data limited the comparability of data based on characteristics and barriers	The EE was unable to replicate/recreate the baseline dataset allowing for identification of sample characteristics and the barriers for each sample independently. Hence any comparison between the baseline-midline barriers/characteristics is done against the data from midline and the reported value from baseline report rather than specific baseline data of re-contacted sample.
Midline data was referred for the variables that controlled for robustness checks.	When conducting robustness checks in longitudinal designs, it is highly preferred that the variables that are controlled are derived from baseline data. However, for the midline evaluation of SfS-II these characteristics could

	not be derived using baseline dataset for reasons already discussed above. This also limited the number of variable that could be used to increase the robustness, especially variables (characteristics) which might have been affected by the project interventions like household chores. This caveat should be considered when analysing the learning estimation of the midline report.

Representativeness of the learning and transition samples, attrition and matching of intervention and control groups

Sample Size during the midline

As mentioned in the earlier section the midline evaluation tracked the same cohort samples that were surveyed during the baseline. However, as anticipated in the MEL framework the midline evaluation witnessed attrition. The following table illustrates the expected sample size during the midline versus the attained sample size with the attrition rate.

Cohort	Category	Treatment			Control		
		Anticipated	Attained	Attrition	Anticipated	Attained	Attrition
Learning	SeGRA	1009	702	30.43%	569	400	29.70%
	SeGMA	999	697	30.23 %	550	399	27.45%
	Girls enrolled in EDGE club	198	62	68.69%	N/A	N/A	
Transition	In school Girls	1105	886	19.81%	631	553	12.36%
	Out of School Girls in Parsa	240	143	40.42%	N/A	N/A	

Given that the required sample size to detect 0.25 standard deviation in learning was 521 for treatment and 261 for control, the attained sample size during the midline will allow for the same and is statistically significant. Furthermore, the attrition rate during the midline is still around the

anticipated attrition of 30% per evaluation point. Hence, the attrition is in line with the expectation set during the baseline. The midline also did not saw the prevalence of any attrition bias. The attrition rate for the transition was lower than that of the learning.

In regards to the Girls enrolled in the edge club; the attrition is very high this is mainly because the program itself has a high turnover rate. The girls were found to be discontinuing their engagement in the EDGE club.

For the split cohort i.e. OOS girls in Parsa, the MEL framework envisioned that the 160 girls will be tracked for the midline. However, during the midline, only 143 OOS girls could be tracked. During the midline, the evaluation team found that many of the OOS girls could not be re-contacted in the expected sampling points i.e. community and schools. Given the lack of information on their current status and location, re-contacting was not feasible leading to the above-stated attrition rate. Though the sample size is less than anticipated by the MEL framework, given the population the sample can be used to generalize findings.

During the midline, a group of OOS girls who were part of the baseline evaluation also dropped. However, this group i.e. Big sisters were population groups that entirely differed from the population group from where the sample was drawn for the midline. No data from this population was used for any comparison between baseline and midline. In addition, the sample size of this group of the population was also very small (25). Hence removal of this group did not affect the outcome calculation.

The midline data collection took place in four project intervention districts: Dhading, Lamjung, Parsa, and Surkhet. Among the four districts, Parsa had the highest proportion of sample followed by surkhet while Lamjung had the lowest proportion. This is in line with the population distribution across the districts, from where the samples were drawn.

Matching of treatment and control groups is very important in a robust and unbiased quasi-experimental design. Matching involves the selection of a control group whose social, educational, economic and demographic characteristics are comparable to those from the experimental sample. The first step towards ensuring that the sample from both the groups had similar characteristics was ensured during the baseline by giving equal weight to a sample sub-group out of total sample size; from both treatment and control. Below is the discussion around the matching of treatment and control groups, post attrition during midline based on different characteristics.

Table 20: Evaluation sample breakdown of in-school girls (by District)

	Intervention (recontacted)	Control (recontacted)
Sample breakdown (Girls)		
Dhading	160 (20.00%)	106 (21.41%)
Lamjung	133 (16.63%)	79 (15.96%)
Parsa	271 (33.88%)	168 (33.94%)
Surkhet	236 (29.50%)	142 (28.69)
Girls (sample size)	800	495

The proportion of girls from respective groups in both treatment and control in each district is similar with the highest difference in proportion seen in Dhading with a difference of 1.41%. This shows that the district-wise distribution of intervention and control groups are similar.

Table 21: Evaluation sample breakdown (by grade during midline)

	Intervention (recontacted)	Control (recontacted)
Sample breakdown (Girls)		
Grade 7	318 (39.76%)	203 (41.01%)
Grade 8	234 (29.25%)	110 (22.22%)
Grade 9	128 (16.00%)	116 (23.43%)
Grade 10	100 (12.50%)	49 (9.90%)
Grade 11	14 (1.75%)	14 (2.83%)
Not Enrolled	6 (0.75%)	3 (0.61%)
Girls (sample size)	800	495

During the midline in both control and treatment groups, the highest proportion of girls was in grade 7 and saw a gradual decrease in proportion as the grade increased (except in grade 9 of control). This can be attributed to the fact that higher weight was given to samples from lower grades during the baseline, in order to minimize attrition. The highest difference in proportion of sample distribution is highest in girls in grade 9 where the proportion of control girls is higher by 7.43%. However, the total number of girls from each group of sample girls entails that they are comparable to generate findings.

Table 22: Evaluation sample breakdown (by age)

	Intervention (recontacted)	Control (recontacted)
Sample breakdown (Girls)		
Aged 12-13 (% aged 12-13)	325 (40.63%)	174 (35.15%)
Aged 14-15 (% aged 14-15)	337 (42.13%)	217 (43.84%)
Aged 16-17 (%aged 16-17)	118 (14.75%)	90 (18.18%)
Aged 18-19 (%aged 18-19)	20 (2.50%)	14 (2.83%)
Girls (sample size)	800	495

The age-wise segregation of sample proportion also shows that the sample distribution trend is similar across different age groups.

The three table above shows that both treatment and control samples have been distributed with similar proportions across the district, grade, and age which means that the characteristics of both the treatment and control sample groups are similar.

Likewise, the segregation of girls based on social and economic characteristics which the project has highlighted as barriers to girl's education (table in Annex 4) also shows that the distribution of both treatment and control group of the midline sample is similar.

These distribution shows; overall, the treatment and control sample are matching in terms of location, education, demographic, social and economic characteristics. This degree of similarity can be considered adequate for comparison purposes as one matching was not sought by the MEL framework.

Sample Breakdown by functional limitation

Table 23 presents the breakdown of the re-contacted sample size (treatment:800 and Control:495) based on functional limitations and based on the domain of difficulty. The information was derived from data acquired through the administration of the long set of Washington Group child functioning questions. The data segregated by domain may contain repetitions.

Table 23: Evaluation sample breakdown (by functional limitation)

Sample breakdown (Girls)	Intervention (recontacted)	Control (recontacted)	Household Survey and Girls School survey – Washington Group and child functioning questions
Girls with disability (% overall)	**12.7%**	**9.8%**	
Provide data per domain of difficulty			
Difficulty seeing	**0.7%**	**0.9%**	This data is derived from 24 set questions in the household surveys. If a household responds that the girls have a lot of difficulty or cannot do at all in any domain, the girl has been considered to have difficulty in that domain.
Difficulty hearing	**0.4%**	**0%**	
Difficulty walking or climbing steps	**2%**	**0.9%**	
Difficulty remembering or concentrating	**0.7%**	**0.7%**	
Difficulty with self-care	**0.4%**	**0%**	
Difficulty communicating	**0.4%**	**0.9%**	
Difficulty in controlling own's behavior	**0.9%**	**0.2%**	
Difficulty in Making Friends	**0.3%**	**0.%**	
Gets anxious, worried and nervous frequently	**7.5%**	**5.8%**	
Gets sad and depressed frequently	**8.5%**	**6.9%**	

Contamination and compliance

While the debriefing sessions with the field supervisors did provide an overview of the contamination of the control group. A detail information for this is lagging as only the girls' survey and household survey were carried out in the control groups. During the midline, based on the information from the supervisors, a very limited contamination was witnessed among the control group. In a very limited scope, the in-school treatment girls were found to have transferred to control schools, but no evidence of spillover was located. The difference in communities and geography of project intervention schools and control schools was also detrimental in controlling spillover effect.

Among the in-school treatment sample, the project intervention was similar. For the group who received special focus i.e., Little sister, a separate sample group was created for the midline. The intervention that the OOS girls in Parsa (transition cohort) received was significantly different than other in-school girls or the little sisters. During the midline, each sample group had received homogenous interventions among themselves.

Learning outcomes estimation

Although the midline saw a high degree of attrition, this was within the expectation. The MEL framework had envisaged that from baseline to midline there might be an attrition of 30%. The sample calculation was carried with due consideration to this possibility. The attrition rate of around 27% in treatment and around 21% in control is within the expected range. Hence, no adjustments were required for learning outcome calculation for any form of attrition biases.

The balance between treatment and control sample size is also within acceptable statistical threshold. During the midline in no subgroups was the difference in sample size between treatment and control significant. The data presented in Annex 4 and tables above also shows that the treatment and the control groups both have similar characteristics.

The proportion of sample size among subgroups is also similar in both treatment and control. The difference in the proportion can be observed in grade as can be seen in table 21 above. This is, however, by design which entailed that the proportion of girls in grade 7 and 8 (during the midline) is higher compared to girls in other grades so as to increase the probability of re-contacting the girls during the end line which is to take place towards the end of four years of project intervention. The higher weightage in sample proportion given to the girls in grade 7 and 8 also led to the difference in the proportion of girls when segregated by age. The proportion of girls between the age group of 12-15 is the highest as seen in table 22.

For the learning estimations during the midline – presented in table 1 (literacy) and table 2 (numeracy) below- the learning score of girls who were in grade 10 during the baseline was removed considering the small sample size and also due to the fact that it is highly likely that this sample cannot be re-contacted for learning test during the end-line. Hence, to increase the robustness and comparability of the estimation during the end-line, the learning samples of the girls from grade 10 were removed.

Table 1:SeGRA DiD Results (Vertical Merged)

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.640	.203		37.680	.000
	TorC	-.958	.254	-.114	-3.777	.000
	BorM	.506	.287	.063	1.766	.078
	Int	.949	.359	.109	2.647	.008

Table 2:SeGMA DiD Results (Vertical Merged)

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.374	.249		25.601	.000
	TorC	-1.567	.312	-.147	-5.026	.000
	BorM	1.302	.352	.127	3.697	.000

Int	2.312	.441	.210	5.244	.000

As replacement was not done during the midline and learning test was not conducted with girls who had dropped out or were not in formal education, the outcome estimation did not require controlling for any of these factors. In addition, the midline study also did not find any evidence of contamination that could be taken into account and hence used for controlling.

The numeracy scores, however, did require recalculation and adjustment. This was necessary because one subtask in SeGMA test used during the baseline was dropped due to floor effect witnessed during the

baseline. Likewise, for comparison to be possible, the midline numeracy score did not include scores from five-question added in the subtask one of the SeGMA tests during the midline.

The numeracy outcome estimation was carried out using scores of only the comparable question. The maximum attainable score from these comparable questions was 20.

To check the robustness of the estimation, regression analysis was done by controlling some of the midline variable where difference in proportion was observed between treatment and the control group. The result from the checks are provided in table 3 for SeGRA and table 4 for SeGMA. The regression models show that none of the characteristics had significant impact on the learning estimation.

The transition outcome is measured in Binary (Successful and Unsuccessful), hence no estimation is presented.

Table 3:SeGRA Robustness Check (Horizontal Merged)

Variable	Including baseline grade 10 girls for the analysis		Excluding baseline grade 10 girls for the analysis		Including baseline grade 10 girls for the analysis - Robustness models									
	Model 0		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value
Treatment or Control	0.982	0.000	0.949	0.001	1.102	0.000	1.102	0.000	1.105	0.000	1.103	0.000	1.117	0.000
Living without both parents					0.450	0.186	0.452	0.186	0.413	0.238	0.403	0.251	0.402	0.253
Poor household: difficult to afford for girl to go to school							-0.230	0.965	-0.470	0.929	-0.039	0.941	-0.037	0.944
Language difficulties: Language of Instruction different from mother tongue									-0.164	0.600	-0.146	0.649	-0.292	0.406
Ethnicity Janajati											0.091	0.284	-0.060	0.864
Ethnicity Brahmin/Chhetrii													-0.397	0.310
Constant	0.444	0.042	0.506	0.210	0.267	0.268	0.268	0.269	0.323	0.222	0.296	0.293	0.456	0.158
R-squared	1.20%		1.10%		1.60%		1.60%		1.60%		1.70%		1.80%	
Number of Obervations	1108		1078		996		996		996		996		996	

Table 4:SeGMA Robustness Check (Horizontal Merged)

Variable	Including baseline grade 10 girls for the analysis		Excluding baseline grade 10 girls for the analysis		Including baseline grade 10 girls for the analysis - Robustness models									
	Model 0		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value	Coefficients	P-Value
Treatment or Control	2.389	0.000	2.312	0.000	2.336	0.000	2.310	0.000	2.316	0.000	2.323	0.000	2.307	0.000
Living without both parents					-0.369	0.392	-0.384	0.373	-0.483	0.273	-0.457	0.302	-0.455	0.304
Poor household: difficult to afford for girl to go to school							0.953	0.149	0.892	0.173	0.870	0.190	0.868	0.191
Language difficulties: Language of Instruction different from mother tongue									-0.419	0.290	-0.417	0.244	-0.297	0.502
Ethnicity Janajati											-0.258	0.523	-0.078	0.861
Ethnicity Brahmin/Chhetrii													0.472	0.337
Constant	1.282	0.000	1.302	0.000	1.315	0.000	1.263	0.000	1.404	0.000	1.481	0.000	1.290	0.002
R-squared	4.10%		3.90%		4.10%		4.30%		4.40%		4.00%		4.60%	
Number of Obervations	1101		1071		900		990		990		990		990	

Annex 4: Characteristics and Barriers

Table 24 below contains the proportion of girls in the sample with each of the characteristics listed in the table. This information required were collected from household and girls school survey.

Table 24: Girls' characteristics

	Intervention (midline)	Control (midline)
Sample breakdown (Girls)		
Living without both parents (%)	19.3%	19.4%
Living in female headed household (%)	42.1%	46%
Married (%)	1.1%	0%
Mothers (%) - Under 18 - Under 16	0%	0%
Poor households (%)		
Difficult to afford for girl to go to school	9.3% (n=717)	5.4% (n=445)
Household doesn't own land for themselves	24.7%(n=717)	22.8% (n=448)
Material of the roof (Bamboo, Hay, Tarpulin)	12.6% (n=717)	10% (n=448)
Gone to sleep hungry for many days in past year	0.6% (n=717)	0.4% (n=448)
Household unable to meet basic needs	8.9% (n=717)	10.3% (n=448)
Language difficulties: - LoI different from mother tongue (%)	29.9%	31%
Parental education - HoH has not completed primary level of education (%)	45.3%	43.5%

Barriers

Table 25 below lists potential barriers to learning and transition. The table has been populated with the proportion of girls in the sample who face each of the barriers.

This table allows projects and evaluators to see the prevalence of barriers across treatment and control schools/communities, and at subsequent evaluation points, explore how these change over time.

Table 25: Potential barriers to learning and transition

	Intervention (Midline)	Control (Midline)
Sample breakdown (Girls)		
Home – community		
Safety:		
Fairly or very unsafe travel to schools in the area (%)	**9.2%**	**6%**
Doesn't feel safe travelling to/from school (%)	**3.5**	**3%**
Sufficient time to study: High chore burden (more than 2 hours, %)	**12.6%**	**0%**
Doesn't get support to stay in school and do well (%)	**2.7%**	**1.2%**
School level		

Attendance:		
Attends school half the time (%)	**8.6%**	**3.8%**
Attends school less than half time (%)	**0.8%**	**0.5%**
Doesn't feel safe at school (%)	**1.6%**	**0.8%**
School facilities:		
No seats for all students (%)	**2.8%**	**1.6%**
Difficult to move around school (%)	**4.2%**	**8.5%**
Doesn't use drinking water facilities	**7.2%**	**10.8%**
Doesn't use toilet at school	**6.9%**	**1.6%**
Doesn't use areas where children play/ socialise	**2.9%**	**5.7%**
Teachers:		
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	**11.1%**	**14.1%**
Agrees teachers treat boys and girls differently in the classroom	**35.3%**	**36%**
Agrees teachers often absent from class	**47.1%**	**47.8%**

Annex 7: Project design and intervention

Project to complete

Complete the following table.

Table 26: Project design and intervention

Intervention types	What is the intervention?	What output will the intervention contribute to?	What Intermediate Outcome will the intervention will contribute to and how?	How will the intervention contribute to achieving the learning, transition and sustainability outcomes?
List main types of project interventions in this column by type in this column e.g. access, capacity-building, governance, material support, safe-spaces, teaching inputs, female voice, community initiatives, learning support				
Marginalized girls are attending school regularly and benefitting from peer support and mentoring networks	Big Sister–Little Sister mentoring scheme; build girls' capacity and skills through training on civic education, and life skills, child protection	% of marginalised adolescent girls (MAGs) who received training on child protection and benefited from learning support classes to build their self-esteem	Increased attendance for girls. A combination of peer mentoring at community level, community dialogue with community mobilisers, ASRH education for girls, parents and communities, working with parents to address reasons for absenteeism from school for e.g. specific time of year or times of day and strategies to address these, together with extra learning support through schools to enable girls to progress.	The mentoring support mechanism embedded in schools and communities by big sisters and adult champions supports little sisters with their confidence and aspiration. The improved confidence and aspiration is capitalized through the after school learning support classes among the peer groups in which strong students provide academic support to the other students which is extended to the higher grades supporting the lower grades. The areas of remedial support identified by the students attending these support sessions are brought back to the regular classes where

				teacher support is required.
Marginalised girls in target catchment areas have basic knowledge of appropriate life skills (both in school and OOS)	Conduct bridge classes and learning support classes and support girls from bridge classes to enrol in school Establish non-formal girls clubs to include: English and Digital for Girls Education (EDGE) implementation, training of peer educators, incorporation of life skills training, ASRH, career counselling for Grade 10 -12, and visits from female role models Life skill ToT for selected big sister Develop ASRH and MHM package and train Community Mobilisers, Big Sisters Brothers and Adult Champions	% of target MAGs who have increased knowledge of digital, English, ASRH and appropriate life skills	Increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls. Big sisters feel empowered through taking on the role of mentors which is successively taken up by little sisters who in turn mentor others. Increased confidence in learning at school leads to increased sense of achievement and self-esteem; parents, teachers, peers and the wider community value girls, and actively demonstrate this through enabling the girls to prioritise their education. ASRH education will also increase self-esteem for girls - they will stop seeing themselves as only wives or mothers, recognise that they have a choice when it comes to deciding when and if to have children. This combined with gender sensitive practices in the classroom and in the school, child protection polies effectively implemented and increased opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge for work and employment.	The project focus and will continue to support "bridge courses" and learning support classes for girls who have never been to school or dropped out, in addition to mentoring schemes and community/parental engagement to help increase raise awareness and socio-cultural barriers to girls' education. Big sisters will specifically liaise with grooms' families to help married girls return to school and increase SRH education within the community to prevent early pregnancy. These will contribute to increased community engagement in girls' education.
Parents and caregivers are aware of the	Develop and broadcast public service	% of target MAGs' parents who actively	Increased community engagement in girls'	A combination of community engagement

importance of actively supporting children's learning at home and enable attendance at school	announcement (PSA) & Develop and publish press release, Community dialogues- on different issues ASRH, Child protection, civic education, etc., Street Drama performed by LS, BS, AC, Orientation on Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) for teachers, head teachers, SMC & PTA, child club and, Train VCPC to establish mechanisms for reporting abuse and harassment Interaction meeting of SMC and Municipality on education plans	support their child's completion of secondary education.	education .The project addresses community awareness on child protection policy through well-designed community outreach activities that include community dialogues, street dramas, IEC material developed in local language and public service announcements (PSA). Awareness sessions will be held to increase the knowledge of child rights, child protection and life skills to develop girls' (and families') self-esteem and confidence levels to voice any form of abuse or violence they might face. The awareness sessions will be targeted at parents and girls Communities and parents will also witness positive changes in their daughters, as their confidence, skills, self-esteem and ability to support family decision-making at home increase, which will feed back into communities valuing educated girls.	interventions to raise awareness and initiate dialogue through village structures VDCs as well as school-community mechanisms such as SMCs, PTAs, monitoring of education policy implementation at school level including child protection policies, and building capacity of Gender Focal points within the DEO. Adult Champions, big sisters and community mobilisers working with parents to support their daughters' learning in and outside school, setting up 'learning corners' at home and liaising with families at times when girls are at risk of dropping out (to get married for example) or non-attendance (during menstruation) to come up with strategies to support girls to remain/return to school.
Teachers are trained on child centred delivery of subjects and ASRH	Train and mentor subject teachers to improve quality of teaching (i.e. Math, Nepali, Science, ASRH) Ongoing Mentoring and	% of teachers in target schools with increased capacity to teach their subject in a	Improved teaching quality. After the training, coaching and capacity building, Teachers will have the skills, attitude and content knowledge to	Enhancing the capacity of teachers through IVEs train and coach teachers on child-friendly, inclusive and gender sensitive methodologies to improve the

	Coaching for teachers by National and Intl volunteers Influence government system to recognize work of schools and community of project Identify subject specific teachers and take assessment bi-annually on the quality of teaching	learner-centred way	effectively teach Nepali, Maths, and ASRH as well as strategies of assessment for learning and assessment of learning, use gender-responsive teaching methodologies and have improved perception of girls as learners	participation of girls in learning, combined with direct school support to teacher professional development and subject specific capacity building in literacy and numeracy. Teachers are supported to act as peer mentors and set up communities of practice within their schools.
Schools have protective school policies in place (with description of policies)	Train HT, EDUC, SMC, PTA on child protection and safe guarding, implementing mechanism for reporting abuse,	% of target schools with improved child protection policies and practice	Through building the capacity on-the-job of individual education officials within the EDC Unit including, gender Focal Point and head teachers as well as developing child-friendly inclusive school improvement plans that are responsive of the needs of girls, and include clear mechanisms for child protection issues to be reported and dealt with effectively. Additionally, support to schools and local education units (including HTs) provide ongoing professional development to teachers and mechanisms for addressing teacher absenteeism and teacher performance issues.	Child protection mechanisms will be established in schools and within the community through the PTA and Village Child Protection Committee. Creation of Children's clubs/Girls' Education Network will provide girls and boys exercise their leadership skills through involvement in developing the SIPs and "mentoring" younger students. The Girls' Education Network will provide a safe space for girls to discuss their issues and identify solutions. It will also develop strategies to create a reading (and learning) culture for other children with the use of materials from the reading corners, Gender-sensitive SIPs will be developed by the SMC and PTA so that girls feel safe in school and confident to participate in activities, Learning support classes will be provided to poor performing girls

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

Annex 8: Key findings on Output Indicators

This annex should be completed by the project.

The Evaluator should hand over any output-related data to the project to enable the project to populate the following tables.

Fill in the table below with every Output Indicator, means of verification/sources, and the frequency of data collection. Please include output indicators for which data collection has not yet taken place and state when data collection for these will take place.

Table 1: Output indicators

Logframe Output Indicator	Means of verification/sources	Collection frequency
Number and Indicator wording	List all sources used.	E.g. monthly, quarterly, annually. NB: For indicators without data collection to date, please indicate when data collection will take place.
Output 1: % of marginalised adolescent girls (MAGs) who received training on child protection and benefited from learning support classes to build their self-esteem		
Output 1.1: # of little sisters and big sisters trained on child protection	Training attendance, quarterly report of partners Qualitative: FGD with BS and LS to measure the effectiveness of the training	After completion of the activity and Quarterly
Output 1.2: # of boys and Girls including Little Sisters benefited from learning support classes.	Registration data, attendance data collection of learning support classes, FGD with participants of learning support classes, KII with teachers Review the progress report of the students who participate in the learning support classes	Twice during LSC, once after completion of LSC once in a year
Output 1.3: # of girls attended in the bridge classes.	Quantitative: registration data of bridge classes; registration data of school where girls are enrolled Qualitative: KIIs with facilitators;	Annually
Output 2: % of target MAGs who have increased knowledge of digital, English, ASRH and appropriate life skills		

Output 2.1: # of girls(Little Sisters and Big Sisters) who trained on digital and English skills	Quantitative: Registration data and attendance of EDGE classes Qualitative: observation; FGDs with EDGE members and FGD with girls	Quarterly and Midline evaluation
Output 2.2: # of girls (Little Sisters) who trained on Life skills by Big Sisters	Training attendance, quarterly report, Post-test and pre-test, FGD with girls	Quarterly
Output 2.3: # of target adolescents (girls and boys) trained on ASRH	Self-esteem assessment, Life skills questionnaire (including knowledge on ASRH) Qualitative: observation, FGDs with teachers and parents	Quarterly
Output 3: % of target MAGs' parents who actively support their child's completion of secondary education		
Output 3.1: # of parents/carers who attend meetings of CBOs, community networks, and advocacy activities	Quantitative: Meeting minute and attendance Qualitative: FGDs and KIIs with, teachers, parents,	Quarterly
Output 4: % of teachers in target schools with increased capacity to teach their subject in a learner-centred way		
Output 4.1: # of trained teachers in target schools with learner's centres teaching methodology.	Quantitative: Barefoot Assessment tool, Qualitative: FGDs with teachers, and students KII with HT	Quarterly
Output 4.2: # of teachers trained to enhance their	Training records and attendance, Qualitative: FGDs with teachers	Quarterly

skills and knowledge on specific subjects (English, Mathematics, Science) including adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH)	and students KII with HT Separate FGDs for boys and girls	
Output 5 % of target schools with improved child protection policies and practice		
Output 5.1: # of HTs, teachers, SMC and PTA trained to develop an inclusive SIP	Training attendance, pre and post-test, quarterly report	Quarterly
Output 5.2: # of child protection issue related cases reported from student and respond from school (CRC)	Quantitative: checklist to determine CPCS mechanisms established in schools., Qualitative: KII with HTs; document review of CP policies/mechanism including minutes of meetings and reported cases, observation;	Monthly
Output 5.3: # of HTs, SMC chairperson CRM focal person have been trained on child protection	Quantitative: pre/post-test of teachers/staff Qualitative: FGDs with SMC and PTA; KII with HTs; document review - participant list;	Quarterly
Output 6: % of trained marginalised out of school girls with increased capacity to establish an enterprise		
Output 6.1: # of marginalised out-of-school girls trained in financial literacy and business skills	Not implemented this Y2	

Output 6.2: # of SACCO trained to provide low-interest start-up financing to establish an enterprise	Not implemented this Y2	
Output 6.3: # of target marginalised out of school girls (BS) who access low-interest start-up financing to establish and enterprise	Not implemented this Y2	

Report on the midline values/midline status of each Output Indicator in the table below. Reflect on the relevancy of the Output Indicator for your Intermediate Outcomes and Outcomes and the wider Theory of Change based on the data collected so far. Are the indicators measuring the right things? What do the midline values/midline status mean for the implementation of your activities?

Table 28: Midline status of output indicators

Logframe Output Indicator	Midline status/midline values Relevance of the indicator for the project ToC	Midline status/midline values
Number and Indicator wording	What is the contribution of this indicator for the project ToC, IOs, and Outcomes? What does the midline value/status mean for your activities? Is the indicator measuring the right things? Should a revision be considered? Provide short narrative.	What is the midline value/status of this indicator? Provide short narrative.
Output 1: % of marginalised adolescent girls (MAGs) who received training on child protection and benefited from learning support classes to build their self-esteem		
Output 1.1: # of little sisters and big sisters trained on child protection	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** Increasing socio-cultural pressures as girls move into adolescence was one of the major barriers identified in the ToC which is directly linked with child protection issues as girls are at risk of abuse and violence in many ways. Lack of power, gender inequalities and poor protection systems, traditional socio-cultural practices such as child marriage resulted irregular in the schools which impacted their poor learning outcomes. To increase self-esteem and empowerment (IO 2) children are made aware of their right to be safe from	**Midline value: 1208 Little Sisters and 300 Big Sisters** 1208 Little Sisters and 300 Big Sisters (102 promoted as senior big sisters from Big Sisters) and 108 adult champion have trained on child protection through different training approaches such as cascading by trained Big sisters. **Disaggregation as per logframe:** Brhamin/Chhetri=169 (14%)

	exploitation and abuse so this indicator contributes to increasing attendance (IO 1) and increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls which affects learning and transition (Outcome 1 and 2) directly. So the relevance of the indicator is high and directly measure the changes in the relationship, built trust and understanding which are key to catalysing and sustaining change through the big sister-little sister mentoring. One of the major challenges of girls as they transition to secondary education is being equipped with child protection awareness. Child protection initiatives by the government has been strengthened and implemented at home, school and community levels are the major focus under this output. Likewise, younger girls are emotionally and academically supported for their schooling while older girls learn to be positive role models and advocates for girls' education. To achieve this objective project has done various types of activities related to child protection orientation, interaction meeting among big sisters and little sisters, one to one mentoring support, community dialogue with parents and school events. An informed community is a progressive one – hence through community outreach activities, such as dialogue and event celebration advocacy has been done to strengthen systems to support girls' protection, such as establishing reporting mechanisms of harassment, abuse or bullying within schools. **Midline value and activities:** A total of 1208 Little Sisters, 300 Big Sisters and 108 adult champion have trained on child protection through cascading approach.	Dalit=306 (25%) Janjati=461 (38%) Muslims=38 (3%) Others including Madeshi=234 (19%)
Output 1.2: # of boys and Girls including Little Sisters benefited from learning support classes.	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** Most of the barriers identified in ToC were observed and also reported during baseline and midline is; due to traditional practices regarding menstruation and girls required to help at home, parents unwilling to send their girls to school direly linked to attendance (IO 1) and this indicator measuring their attendance both in learning support classes as well as in the school. This indicator is high relevance and measuring the right thing	**Midline value: 1952** 333 LSs Other Girls =1026 Other Boys=593 **Disaggregation as per logframe:** Brhamin/Chhetri =495 Janajati=791 Dalit=373 Madhesi=271 Religious minority=22

	as this is one of the crucial barrier for the girls education. The improved confidence and aspiration is capitalized through the after school learning support classes among the peer groups in which strong students provide academic support to the other students which is extended to the higher grades supporting the lower grades. The areas of remedial support identified by the students attending these support sessions are brought back to the regular classes where teacher support is required. Learning Support Classes were to enable the girls to develop better understanding of the lessons which they found difficult in their regular classes and also for the lessons which they missed due to absenteeism. **Midline value and activities** A total of 1952 girls and boys in which 333 were LSs known as extremely marginalized girls has been enrolled in LSCs and enable to develop better understanding of the lessons. The target for the midline for girls has been achieved, however boy's participation was found low in the LSCs. From the internal attendance monitoring data all the 48 schools have attendance=>80% in an average except 1 school with 79% which is also not bad. Overall LS attendance is 89% in an average for this year. To support learning of the poor performing girls and boys, the project ensures that the girls are attending in the Learning support classes in a regular basis. For internal monitoring, the project conducts spot checks in Learning Support classes, pre-post-test to gauge learning in the LSCs, as well as to measure the effectiveness of the LSCs the project conducted FGDs with the girls and KIIs with the teachers and collects exam scores and promotion rates. And also project collect the pre-post test score of the students. To reflect whether the project is in track or not below is the evidence of the improving of the learning support classes; 1. An average pre-test score in Math is 18 point out of 40 marks, increased by 9 points in post-test.	A total of 48 LSC facilitators as subject specific teachers were trained on child-friendly and gender sensitive approaches to teaching. LSC classes were held daily 1 hour before or after class hours in all the intervention schools. VSO international volunteer's experts along with TTC, Social Mobilizer spots check the attendance of the girls and boys. Pre and post-test of the girls and boys who attend learning classes has been done and analysis in regular basis to measure the progress and understanding. Exam scores were also gathered from examinations in school for girls attending Learning Support Classes to validate improvements in learning. As of now 94% of Little Sisters has been passed one grade up before midline.

	2. An average pre-test score in English is 14 point out of 40 marks, increased by 6 points in post-test 3. An average pre-test score in Science is 16 point out of 40 marks, increased by 10 points in post-test	
Output 1.3: # of girls attended in the bridge classes.	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** OOS girls are supported by families and schools to enrol in school after completing bridge classes was one of the major assumption that the project has made in ToC. Girls who are out of school or never been to school or dropped out have less opportunity to enroll in the mainstream education is one of the barrier link to transition (Outcome 2) and IO 2. Girl's self-esteem is particularly important to enable them to transition well in school. If the girls develop self-esteem that can lead to their enhanced influence particularly in the family, and also establish their confidence in the school which can contribute to better in-school progression. So the indicator are high relevance and clearly measure the right things. Provide opportunities for out of school or absent girls to catch up on learning and therefore build capacity and active participation in the regular instructional activities. Project continue to support "bridge courses" for girls who have never been to school or dropped out. Bridge classes were aimed to accelerate the transition of girls who had never been to school or who dropped out of school to mainstream education. Children were identified through the enrollment campaign, home visit and community consultations. Parents were consulted by the community mobilisers at selection and oriented on the Bridge Class and its importance, its curriculum, the expectations of both children and parents, its anticipated outcomes. **Midline value and activities** The project has successfully completed bridge course facilitators training where 12 female facilitators have been trained. Due to the less number of out of school children only 7 classes has been conducted however 12 classes was planned before midline evaluation. In total the project able to successfully enrolled 365 girls and 17 boys in the school after the bridge course. However 6	**Midline value**: 382 out of school children **Disaggregation as per logframe:** (Boys 17 and Girls 365) Attendance from Bridge classes were collected by facilitators and analyzed by the district teams. Data on school enrolment was also recorded by the implementing partners. Regular follow-up was conducted to ensure that the girls remained in school over the course of project implementation. Monthly wise Learning performance was measured using exam results from Bridge Classes. However the target for midline was 480, due to the unavailability of out of school girls and boys the target could not reached.

	boys were not enrolled because of migration of their parents in search of work. To measure the progress and effectiveness of the bridge course project conduct pre and post-test evaluation for every child who enrolled in bridge course. Based on the monitoring data revealed that the children score below 2 marks in an average for 5 subject in pre-test and 33 marks out of 100 in 5 subject during post-test. The major progress was found in Nepali and social studies subject during the bridge course classes.	
Output 2: % of target MAGs who have increased knowledge of digital, English, ASRH and appropriate life skills		
Output 2.1: # of girls(Little Sisters and Big Sisters) who trained on digital and English skills	**Contribution to ToC and, OIs and Outcomes:** Lack of aspiration and feelings of self-value in girls, lack of training on life skills and skills for work were the major barriers identified in ToC linked to this output to increase knowledge, skills on English and digital literacy contributed to IO 2 and IO 5. As a result of skills development and raised awareness in these areas, girls will be better able to make more informed and independent life choices, as is their right, in order to contribute more fully to the family, the economy and society. So the indicator is high relevance to measure the girl's leadership skills and awareness of social issues. The EDGE programme aims to improve the life prospects of adolescent girls in socio-economically marginalised communities. The programme focuses on enhancing participants' English proficiency, digital skills and social / life skills; all key skills which have been identified as lacking in the labour market in South Asia. EDGE also focuses on improving girls' awareness of social issues. In addition, EDGE aims to improve the leadership skills of a smaller group of peer leaders drawn from the same communities of adolescent girls. **Midline value and activity:** SfSE-II providing adolescent girls with opportunities and resources to develop their English proficiency, digital skills, social / life skills and awareness of social issues in peer-led after-school clubs	**Midline value**: 288 Girls (231 little sisters, 60 big sisters and 57 others marginalized girls) **Disaggregation as per logframe:** Brhamin/Chhetri =107, Janjati=102 and Dalit 79 As a result of soft skills development and raised awareness, now the EDGE girls demonstrated more informed and empowerment, speak up their voice independently. In addition, EDGE support girls to improve the leadership skills of a smaller group of peer leaders drawn from the same communities of adolescent girls.

	Developing a cadre of 60 Peer Group Leaders (PGLs) and building their leadership skills and confidence to facilitate English, digital and social / life skills training in these clubs. 24 EDGE clubs established in the communities where 231 Little Sisters, 57 others girls and 60 Big Sisters as Peer Group Leader joined as a club members in Surkhet District as a pilot programme. Developing age, context and level-appropriate materials for the development of the target skills, and suitable materials for the training and support of the peer leaders and their trainers for the foundation phase was also completed before midline evaluation.	
Output 2.2: # of girls (Little Sisters) who trained on Life skills by Big Sisters	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** One of the key barriers to girl's education is the discrimination girls face during the menstruation. The gender analysis also explored and elaborated the gender related barriers that are making it difficult for girls to achieve learning outcomes of certain level, and also to ensure successful transition linked to Outcome 1 and 2. It indicates that the activities set for the project and assumptions included in its theory of change to boost life skills among girls for their improved transition were relevant to IO 2. It appeared that many girls were affected by low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in the classroom which appeared to affect their ability to participate and learn. So the indicator is high relevance to measure the right things under the output. When marginalised girls have an enabling environment to complete their choice of transition, they will have increased chances of obtaining higher education, access to economic opportunities and improved life chances. The project has leverage confidence in girls gained through the mentoring and peer support interventions, making the girls feel safe in their schools and homes. **Midline value and activity:** 10 days Life Skills Training of Trainers completed in Parsa, Lamjung and Surkhet) with the latter two districts receiving in-kind donations of life skill resource materials from	**Midline value**: 858 little sisters and 235 big sisters was cascading by other Big Sisters who have gone through the life skill ToT. **Disaggregation as per logframe** All the life skill beneficiaries are from little sisters and big sisters so no disaggregate has been done so far. Girls demonstrated during KIIs and interaction with girls in the EDGE clubs as well as in the schools found increased their self-agency and decision making, contributing to delayed child marriage, and life chances when they have been provided an enabling environment.

	UNICEF. The ToT was focused on standard WHO Life Skills components: Self Awareness, Effective Communication, Empathy, Interpersonal Relationship, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Coping with Emotion, Coping with stress, Decision making and Problem Solving. This training was further cascaded to remaining BS and LS. **Revision**: As this indicator seems no more relevant after midline so need to rethink this indicator.	
Output 2.3: # of target adolescents (girls and boys) trained on ASRH	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** Increasing socio-cultural pressures as girls move into adolescence was one of the major barriers identified in the ToC which is directly linked with knowledge on Adolescents sexual reproductive health rights (ASRHR) directly linked with IO 2. The indicator seems medium relevance and measure the right things of the girls' self-esteem how they see, their choices for their mind, body and future. Increased confidence in learning at school leads to increased sense of achievement and self-esteem; parents, teachers, peers and the wider community value girls, and actively demonstrate this through enabling the girls to prioritise their education. ASRH education will also increase self-esteem for girls - they will stop seeing themselves as only wives or mothers, recognise that they have a choice when it comes to deciding when and if to have children. This combined with gender sensitive practices in the classroom and in the school. **Midline value and activity:** In total 121 (male 9 and female 112) from Big Sisters, Community Mobilizers, Community Engagement and Learning Coordinators and Gender Focal Persons from the school were trained on ToT with specialised focus on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in the project. The training emphasised on developing understanding of menstruation, family planning, use of contraceptive devices and interlinkage of sexual reproductive health along with other dimensions as conversion disorder. This was followed by cascade training by trained CMs and BS to other LS, BS and other boys and girls through the learnt participatory	**Midline value**: In total 1593 (1564 girls and 29 boys including 644 little sisters benefited from the cascading approach by trained big sisters, community mobilizers in the schools and community level. **Disaggregation as per logframe** **Girls** Brahmin/Chhetri=313 Dalit=391 Janjati=563 Madeshi=297 **Boys:** Brahmin=8 Janajati=12 Dalit=5 Madeshi=4

	approaches in schools to total 1593 boys and girls. The boys seems less reached before midline, however to focus more on others boys and girls from the schools, activity on ASRH are now plan to implement through the government health person to conduct the school session in the secondary level to reach more in school boys and girls in Y3 and Y4.	
Output 3: % of target MAGs' parents who actively support their child's completion of secondary education		
Output 3.1: # of parents/carers who attend meetings of CBOs, community networks, and advocacy activities	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** Parents unwilling to send their girls to school, parental feelings of protection and shame, girls required to help at home are the barriers identified and link to ToC which are directly associated not only with parents also the attitude of communities prevail which preventing girls from going to school resulted poor attendance and learning outcomes (Outcome 1 and IO 1). Gender based violence, child marriage and other harmful traditional practices also linked with IO 3 where girls need proper guidance and support from the parents and community as well. This indicator found medium relevance as the project have very limited activities under this output. The project is targeting Girls' parents and community to develop positive attitude towards education of their girls and actively support them to attend school and make their own life choices. A combination of community engagement interventions to raise awareness and initiated dialogue through Adult Champions, big sisters and community mobilisers working with parents to support their daughters' learning in and outside school, and liaising with families at times when girls are at risk of dropping out (to get married for example) or non-attendance (during menstruation) to support girls to remain/return to school was the major intervention focusing to the parents before midline evaluation. **Midline value and Activities:** A total 2774 parents (male 558 and Female 2216) participated in the activities focusing the events targeted to girl education. Activities targeting parents to engage them through community dialogue, street drama, bi-annual parents interaction, community campaign,	**Midline value**: 2774 parents **Disaggregation as per logframe: Male =558** and **Female=2216** Brahmin/Chhetri=945 Dalit=590 Janjati=1150 Madeshi=57 Religious minority=5 Others=27

	different days celebration such as school enrolment campaign, MHM day and others regular interaction was the major successful intervention carried out to develop positive attitudes and behaviour of parents towards of their daughters education as well as to build their confidence, self-esteem and ability to support family decision-making at home as well as valuing educated girls were the major interventions carried out from the project activities However project targeted to include both parents in the events but most of the male parents have gone abroad as a migration workers so the huge number of female parents has been reached through the intervention. **Revision**: No need to revision	
Output 4: % of teachers in target schools with increased capacity to teach their subject in a learner-centred way		
Output 4.1: # of trained teachers in target schools with learner's centres teaching methodology.	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** Barriers related to teaching and learning process to improve the quality of the teaching are mostly link with ToC whereas; lack of gender-responsive inclusive teaching, poor learning environment, lack of quality ASRH education, poor perception by teachers of girls as learners directly linked with IO 4 and Outcome 1. So the project activities has a direct correlation between improved quality of teaching and imported learning outcomes through different interventions. So the relevance of the indicator is high and this measure the right things. As well trained, qualified and accountable teachers are fundamental for girl's to have higher chances of successfully completing their education. The project addresses teacher capacity development by working closely with teachers and teacher support mechanism to enable them to transcend their learning through their teaching in classrooms. Teachers, under the VSO teacher trainer volunteers has been placed at school clusters to deliver group-based teacher training followed by on-going one-to-one mentoring support to trained teachers through rotational quality check visits to measure improvement. **Midline value and activity:**	**Midline value**: 218 teachers (Male 174 and Female 44) **Disaggregation as per logframe:** Brahmin/Chhetri=122 Dalit=12 Janjati=45 Madeshi=39 The project successfully trained 218 teachers from various 48 intervention schools on learner's centres and gender sensitive teaching methodology. The main objectives of the training was to conduct teacher training on questioning strategies, integrating high order thinking, and behaviour management (depending on local need) and coach, co-plan and co-teach to implement intervention.

<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A total of 218 teachers participated in the various teachers training activities. The project successfully completed such as building teacher capacity for the learning support classes, and the bridge classes. Project mobilised Internal Volunteers Experts to train and coach teachers on child-friendly, inclusive and gender sensitive methodologies, no cost low cost teaching methodology, ASRH and child protection training to improve the participation of girls in learning, combined with direct school support to teacher professional development and subject specific capacity building in literacy and numeracy. As an example; pre and post barefoot assessment is presented below as an evidence of teacher training progress is in the right track.
<table>
<tr><th>Barefoot Assessment Scores</th><th>Average Scores Before</th><th>Average Scores After</th></tr>
<tr><td>Planning</td><td>2</td><td>5.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>STR</td><td>2.5</td><td>4.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>QoLE</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td>TLAB</td><td>2</td><td>4.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>SLAB</td><td>2</td><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Inclusion</td><td>2.5</td><td>4.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>AYSRH</td><td>NA</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Average</td><td>2.33</td><td>4.38</td></tr>
</table>
NB. STR: Student Teacher Relationships; QoLE: Quality of the Learning Environment; TLAB: Teacher Learning Activities and Behaviours; SLAB: Student Learning Activities and Behaviours; AYSRH: Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health

Note: Unlike the pre training session, these observations were done based on invitation. Therefore, teachers were more prepared than in the first round of observations.</td>
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<td>Output 4.2 # of teachers trained to enhance their skills and knowledge on specific subjects (English, Mathematics, Science)</td>
<td>Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:
As same as above; in addition to that Expertise from the IVEs is vital for addressing (missing) teaching needs and requirements for teaching methodologies specifically for children struggling with learning performance. So the project has been supported teacher’s skills development in areas of subject specific knowledge (Math, English, Nepali and Science), use of technology, bridge-class teaching material and life skills.</td>
<td>Midline Value:
201 teachers (Male 159 and Female 42)

Disaggregation as per logframe:
English=46
Math=51
Science=41
Nepali=30
ASRH=17
No cost low cost =23</td>
</tr>
</table>

including adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH)	**Midline value and activity:** A total of 201 teachers (Male 159 And female 42) has been participated in the various training events particularly focusing the subject matters training including adolescents sexual reproductive health (ASRH). During the interaction with Little Sisters, Big Sisters and parents as apart of regular project monitoring revealed that there were relatively lesser cases of teachers retorting to corporal punishment now, the midline evaluation also generated little evidence to suggest that learners centred and gender sensitive teaching was followed in the schools. As the teachers expressed that the trainings for Gender Focal Teachers had been quite successful as evidenced by their active engagement with Adult Champions and Big Sisters. During the review and reflection meeting in the schools suggested that the trainings for other teachers had not been successful as envisaged for which multiple reasons were responsible. One of the HTs said the major barrier was the attitude of the teachers. So the HTs and others teachers strongly recommended to implement teacher's capacity building events in the school level targeting all the existing teachers to develop their skills and knowledge in the learners centred approach. **Revision:** This indicator will no more relevant after the midline so recommended to delete. The major focus for the project remaining period will be follow up activities, review and reflection, observation of the teachers teaching skills, onsite coaching and mentoring from international volunteers.	Note: some of the teachers has been repeated more than one subject so the total numbers is cumulative numbers. The project successfully completed various subject matters including ASRH training to the teachers from the 48 intervention schools before midline.
Output 5 % of target schools with improved child protection policies and practice		
Output 5.1: # of HTs, teachers, SMC and PTA trained to develop an inclusive SIP	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** Lack of equity related policy implementation at school level is one of the supply side barriers identified in ToC are directly linked to the assumptions of the project; protective school policies and school social audit, inclusive SIPs and CP and safeguarding are prioritized in the education policy in the school level. This assumption in ToC linked to IO5 (Gender responsive school management and governance). Thus, the project has implemented activities related to revision of	**Midline Value:** 482 stakeholders **Disaggregation as per logframe:** Male=292 and female 190 HTs= 43 SMC=237 PTA=202 The project has successfully trained 482 different HTs, teachers, and SMC and PTA members in three

	policy and plan need to be incorporated in SIP to make more inclusive so this indicator is highly relevance to measure which directly contributed to the sustainability of the project. Through building the capacity of individual education stakeholder such as SMC/PTA within the schools including Gender Focal Point and head teachers as well as developing child-friendly inclusive school improvement plans that are responsive of the needs of girls, and include clear mechanisms for child protection issues to be reported and dealt with effectively. This indicator directly contribute to the ToC so the project has been training current HTs, SMC and PTA members on the roles and responsibilities of SMC and PTA, designing the SIPs in accordance to their school priority and building their leadership skills so that they can effectively lead the and improve child protection policies and practices. **Midline value and activity:** A total of 482 comprise of HTs, SMC and PTA members were trained on their role and responsibility, review and revise SIP to include plan and activities on gender friendly inclusive school, child protection related activities as well as school management leadership skills was the main intervention carried out under this output.	districts. In Parsa due to the political reasons PTA formation was not done so the target for the midline was not achieved. The project will ensure and work in the remaining project period to achieve the target in the endline.
Output 5.2: # of child protection issue related cases reported from student and respond from school (CRC)	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** Lack of child protection mechanism in the school was another important barriers identified in ToC which is directly linked to IO 5 and the assumption made that the school management, head teachers and teachers are willing to put child protection mechanism in place, monitor, report and act on abuse/wrong doing. This indicator is highly relevance and promoting the government mandatory policy as well. Whereas child protection polies effectively implemented and increased opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge for work and employment in the future. According to the policy of Nepal government each and every schools should have complaint mechanism as a mandatory obligation to all the public schools. In fact it is	**Midline value: NA** **Disaggregation as per logframe:** Total 179 different issues were received from the intervention schools, whereas 148 has been responded by CRC of the schools. *Note: the remaining cases related to school infrastructure are referred to SMCs and under progress. Most of the complaints receiving and responding were related to corporal punishment, sexual harassment, emotional torture, bullying, discrimination, teachers' absenteeism or irregularities, and infrastructure.*

	not implemented in most of the government schools. Therefore, SFSE- II has been working with its project schools to instil values of accountability, transparency and educational excellence through the implementation of complaint box. Since baseline till now project has been working with students to increase their confidence on the functionality of the complaint box with head teachers continuously promoting the use of this box, and also with the school management, namely head teacher by setting up a committee (head teacher, student representative and teacher representative) responsible for handling complaints in a timely manner. Anonymous complaint boxes has been available at schools, which is regularly monitored by social mobilizer and accessed by the Gender Focal Person (GFP) to take relevant action. The complaint boxes are using by children to report instances of violence or abuse or any school related complaint in terms of teacher's behaviour, relationship with friends they have faced. **Midline value and activity:** The project successfully completed orientation and training on how to strengthen the complaint and response mechanism on safeguarding issues in the schools by engaging collaboratively to safe the girl's child in the schools level as well as in the community level. All 48 schools (100%) now have formulated CRM with complaint box in the schools whereas 62% of schools (28) were during baseline. However during the internal monitoring some gaps were identified are as follows: • Mostly schools were formulating child protection policies. It was clear that students were familiar with the codes of conduct but were not fully orientated on child protection. • In all schools CRM was found to be present and working, schools had functioning CRM boxes, committees and a regular process of opening box to monitor the complaints. • There were some good examples in schools of complaints that had been made that lead to satisfactory outcomes	

	according to the schools teachers in terms of teacher's behaviour, teachers not coming timely in classrooms etc. Midline evaluation data also revealed that around 7% of the schools met the threshold of having sustainable CRM, others schools not met the threshold was because of lack of reporting, recording of the activities, achievement, regular meeting, progress or challenges of CRM. These schools did not maintain a report or did not shared it with anyone beside school staffs.	
Output 5.3: # of HTs, SMC chairperson CRM focal person have been trained on child protection	**Contribution to ToC, IOs and Outcome:** Lack of trained female teachers, gender responsive teaching and poor learning environment are the barriers in ToC linked to the intermediate outcome 5. A gender focal person (GFP) is available at all schools and project trained them and made responsible for being the point of contact for all children that are abused, bullied or harassed. This indicator is highly relevance and from the sustainability point of view which led to safeguarding vulnerable children especially marginalized girls in the school level. Do No Harm (DNH) principles are central to the SfSE-II Education project design, where the project interventions are designed by engaging with the community (both genders), to provide protection and security to vulnerable people especially girls, children, female teachers, and children with disabilities. Learning from best practices, the project is not creating a parallel system but is complimenting the government's ongoing initiatives (such as Code of Conduct (CoC) and Complaint Response Mechanisms) by engaging collaboratively to safeguard vulnerable children especially marginalized girls in the school level. **Midline value and Activity:** A total of 329 different stakeholders including 49 CRM focal person also known as gender focal person was trained on CRM policy and operational procedure, roles and responsibilities in the school level. To established Psycho-social support systems in the schools gender focal person has been	**Midline value:** Total 329 **Disaggregation as per logframe:** Male179 and female 150 (43 HTs, 72 SMC members, 165 PTA members and 49 CRM focal person) As the midline target for PTA members was not met because in Parsa district PTA has not been formed till midline.

	trained at schools and to secure effective referral mechanism is operationalized for reporting cases of harm or abuse. The project also conducted various community awareness event on child protection policy through well-designed community outreach activities that include community dialogues, street dramas, and public service announcements (PSA). During the interaction with parents and KII with teachers expressed that such kind of awareness sessions has been effective and led to increase the knowledge of child rights, child protection and life skills to develop girls' (and families') self-esteem and confidence levels to voice any form of abuse or violence they might face both in school as well as in the communities.	
Output 6: % of trained marginalised out of school girls with increased capacity to establish an enterprise		
Output 6.1: # of marginalised out-of-school girls trained in financial literacy and business skills	Not implemented till midline evaluation, targeted to implement on Y3 and Y4	
Output 6.2: # of SACCO trained to provide low-interest start-up financing to establish an enterprise	Not implemented till midline evaluation, targeted to implement on Y3 and Y4	
Output 6.3: # of target marginalised out of school girls (BS) who access low-interest start-up financing to establish and enterprise	Not implemented till midline evaluation, targeted to implement on Y3 and Y4	

List all issues with the means of verification/sources or the frequency of data collection which require changes or additions.

Table 3: Output indicator issues

Logframe Output Indicator	Issues with the means of verification/sources and the collection frequency, or the indicator in general?	Changes/additions
Number and Indicator wording	E.g. inappropriate wording, irrelevant sources, or wrong assumptions etc. Was data collection too frequent or too far between? Or no issues?	E.g. change wording, add or remove sources, increase/decrease frequency of data collection; or leave as is.
Output 1: % of marginalised adolescent girls (MAGs) who received training on child protection and benefited from learning support classes to build their self-esteem		
Output 1.1: # of little sisters and big sisters trained on child protection	Before midline evaluation the project focus on child protection related activities but for the remaining project period activities on child protection are not planned. However Senior Big Sisters will discuss about the child protection issues in their regular mentoring activities. The activity self-defence and child protection planned under this output targeting in schools girls in the year 3 will be report under this indicator as the activities directly contribute to child protection measures.	This will be changed into # of in school girls including Little Sisters attended self-defence session on child protection.
Output 1.2: # of boys and Girls including Little Sisters benefited from learning support classes.	# of boys and girls including little sisters enrolled into learning support classes	Only changes in wording enrolled instead of benefited.
Output 1.3: # of girls attended in the bridge classes.	# of girls enrolled in the bridge classes. No issues for frequency and means of verification.	Wording changed into “enrolled” instead of attended.
Output 2. % of target MAGs who have increased knowledge of digital, English, ASRH and appropriate life skills		
Output 2.1: # of girls(Little Sisters and Big Sisters) who trained on digital and English skills	No changes leave as is.	No changes
Output 2.2: # of girls (Little Sisters) who trained on Life	Life skill target has been achieved through cascading model (trained big sisters impart knowledge and skills through organizing small group	So this indicator will no more measure and reported in the remaining project period.

skills by Big Sisters	interaction and conducted session with little sisters) so no more cascading activities on life skill are planned for rest of the project period. However, big sisters will discuss with little sisters during their mentoring session when required.	
Output 2.3: # of target adolescents (girls and boys) trained on ASRH	No changes	No changes
Output 3. % of target MAGs' parents who actively support their child's completion of secondary education.		
Output 3.1 # of parents/carers who attend meetings of CBOs, community networks, and advocacy activities	No changes	No changes
Output 3.2: New indicator proposed.	This indicator particularly measure the person engaged in local level education policy formation and development where parents and other officials involvement directly contributed/support to the marginalized girls education. Data will analysis quarterly, however attendance will recorded during the workshop/events completion.	# of local government officials' authority attended local education policy development process and drafted the policy.
Output 4: % of teachers in target schools with increased capacity to teach their subject in a learner-centred way		
Output 4.1: # of trained teachers in target schools with learner's centres teaching methodology.	No changes in the indicator, only end line target for teachers will increase.	No changes
Output 4.2: # of teachers trained to enhance their skills and knowledge on specific subjects	The project has achieved endline output target so this indicator will not measure and no more target set for endline under this indicator. This can be merged with indicator 4.1.	Subject specific teachers training are no more focused activities for Y3 and Y4 as the teachers training modality has been changed and shifted to onsite coaching and mentoring in the school level.

(English, Mathematics, Science) including adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH)		
Output 5: % of target schools with improved child protection policies and practice		
Output 5.1: # of HTs, teachers, SMC and PTA trained to develop an inclusive SIP	No changes	No changes
Output 5.2: # of child protection issue related cases reported from student and respond from school (CRC)	No changes	No changes
Output 5.3: # of HTs, SMC chairperson CRM focal person have been trained on child protection	There is no issues in terms of data collection frequency and assumption but need to change in wording.	# of HTs, SMC chairperson, CRM focal person including government representative and community stakeholders trained on child protection. *(Included government representative and community stakeholders along with school level stakeholders targeting Y3 and Y4 planned activities)*
Output 6: % of trained marginalised out of school girls with increased capacity to establish an enterprise		
Output 6.1: # of marginalised out-of-school girls trained in financial literacy and business skills	No changes	No changes
Output 6.2: # of SACCO trained to provide low-interest start-up financing to establish an enterprise	No changes	No changes

Output 6.3; # of target marginalised out of school girls (BS) who access low-interest start-up financing to establish and enterprise	No changes	No changes

Annex 9: Beneficiaries table

Primary target group

The table below outlines the primary target groups in terms age range, grades, country/region, characteristics, and expected exposure to interventions over the course of the project.

Group name	Age range	Grades	Region	Main characteristics	Expected exposure	Total number	Evaluated for Learning	Evaluated for Transition
Little sisters	10 to 18	6-10	Four districts each from (Province 2, 3,4, and 6)	The little sisters have following characteristics: has disability, Dalit girls whose mother tongue is not Nepali and whose family income is only adequate for six months of food security, possible risk of drop out due to poor performance at schools,	Mentoring support from Big Sisters, educational materials support, EDGE and life skill, ASRH, child protection, learning support classes school events, teachers training, CRM and safe guarding related activities, ASRH, SIP and gender friendly related activities.	1,208	Y	Y
Other In school girls (non-little sisters)	10-18	6-10	Four districts each from (Province 2, 3,4, and 6)	Enrolled in the 48 treatment schools from grade 6-10. The 48 schools were the same schools which received intervention in GEC-1. The SfSE-II was	School events, teachers training, CRM and safe guarding related activities, learning support	6,174	Y	Y

				also implemented in the same schools as suggested by GEC-T	classes, ASRH, SIP and gender friendly related activities. EDGE and life skill, child protection, school events, teachers training			
Out of schools girls (Bridge course)	6-9	NA	Parsa district Province 2	Marginalised girls out-of-school, never enrolled (OOS) girls	Bridge classes learning support activities.	382 reached (Project target number is 776)	N	Y
Out of schools Girls (Big Sisters)	18-25	NA	Four districts each from (Province 2, 3,4, and 6)	Marginalised girls who are from the same community and not employed or earning income (Big Sister or dropped out Littles Sisters from school)	Will receive financial and business literacy training. GTF loan services after the training.	320	N	N

Target number of girls

	Number reached to date	Target by endline
Learning beneficiaries	7382	7382
Transition beneficiaries	7764	8158

The table above provides the target number of girls' beneficiaries (direct learning and transition beneficiaries) Based on the project monitoring data there were 10600 in schools girls enrolled in the 48 intervention schools from grade 1 to 10 in the 2018/2019 academic year out of whom the project works with the all 7382 in schools girls from grade 6 to 10 marginalized girls as direct learning beneficiaries- same cohort as GEC-1.

The school's enrolment registration was the primary data source to identify the number of eligible girls in an intervention school. To select the primary beneficiary from among the girl head count method was used. Following this method, the 7382 girls were selected as the primary beneficiary of the project. This cohort of in-school girls are expected to receive both learning and transition intervention.
In regards to the out of school girls in Parsa: The same location as in GEC-1 was selected for the intervention. Registration method was used to identify the number of out of school girls aged 6-9. A total of

382 number of girls have been identified to date. All these girls have been selected as primary beneficiaries. Dropped out/never been to school criteria was used for the selection of the primary beneficiary from among the eligible population.

A total of 7382 marginalised girls in target school in grades 6-10 including 1,208 extremely marginalised girls; and 382 out of school or drop out girls till midline who attended bridge classes and enrolled in the schools are the transition beneficiaries (total reached transition beneficiaries 7764 till midline). All the data collection is based on actual number of target girls in grades 6-10 in 48 targets school and enrolment data from bridge classes.

How we define education marginalization

The SFSE-II project was designed to provide continuous support to the marginalized girls who were also the direct beneficiaries of the SFSE-I project under the GEC-1. While the SFSE-I supported marginalized girls in improving their learning outcome in the basic/primary level, the SFSE-II is designed to provide additional support to the same beneficiary group in improving their secondary level learning and then to successfully transition into higher education or economic sector.

The beneficiaries were selected from 48 schools across four districts in Nepal: Dhading, Lamjung, Parsa and Surkhet. As stated, the beneficiaries for the SfSE-Ii project were the same beneficiary from SfS-I where they were selected on the basis of the educational marginalization.

The SfSE-I had defined education marginalization as a state where a girls faces challenges in performing well in schools limiting their learning outcomes due to various social economic context of community or school. In addition, the project also identified extremely marginalized girls from among marginalized based upon the risk of discontinuity to school among the girls.

The project identified barriers such as, economic condition of family, difference in language of instruction and language spoken at home along with prevalence of Child marriage as casual factors of educational marginalization of girls. Furthermore, girls from traditionally marginalized communities like Dalits and Janjati, girls with disability, girls with single parents or orphaned girls, and girls who were mothers were also defined as educationally marginalized girls as these situations of the girls acted as a barrier in their education. In addition, the intervention schools/communities that the project works in are themselves marginalized compared to other parts of the same district. Due to the geographical locations and limited economic sector functioning in those areas, these communities as a whole are in a disadvantageous situation. Therefore, an assumption can be made that all girls who live and study in these communities/schools are marginalized compared to girls from other areas of the districts or the country.

These barriers that were used to characterize the girls who were educationally marginalize was based upon the GEC guideline.

The project is being implementing in 4 districts (Dhading, Lamjung, Parsa, and Surkhet). The project is working with the 48 target schools within the identified school catchment areas during GEC1. A school catchment area is defined as the geographical area (defined by the School Management Committee) where children living within are ranked as priority to attend that school. By identifying the school, the catchment area surrounding it becomes the community where the target beneficiaries comes from.

Since the implementation of the project in 2017, the project has not changed the definition of educational marginalization or barriers. This is mainly because most of the characteristics used for the definition remains the same for the girls especially can only focus on the improvement in the learning outcome and ability to transition of the girls despite the barriers and limiting the impact of the barriers rather than aiming to change the characteristics.

Boys and overall interventions

Boys are not included as direct learning beneficiaries as the project duly focused on the issues and challenges in girls' education in the context we are working in and also our focus is on retaining the current cohorts through GEC-T window rather than introducing additional learning beneficiaries. However, we are very mindful of the DO NO HARM principle and have embedded this in the project design to ensure that any interventions do not create further inequality in the context we are working. In course of the project implementation, the project is continually conducting gender analysis of the context and impact of interventions to ensure Do No Harm policy. So boys are considered as indirect project beneficiaries wherever they have been benefitting from our interventions even though they are not the primary target of our interventions. We are however, including out of school boys in the Bridge Classes in Parsa where there are numbers of out of school children (boys and girls) in the community. Though the project focuses on girls, 7326 boys from grade 6 to 10 in the target schools are also benefited indirectly from other interventions i.e. improved teacher knowledge and skills, and development of inclusive School Improvement Plans (SIPs) including establishment of child protection and safeguarding mechanisms in school. School events conducted by big sisters encouraged boys' participation. Since the boys are of the same age as the target girls, they also be undergoing physiological changes as the girls. Sexual reproductive health (SRH) trainings also targeted both girls and boys as its participants.

The table below provides a summary of how our various interventions impact different groups

Table 30: Direct beneficiaries

Beneficiary type	Total project number	Total number of girls targeted for learning outcomes that the project has reached by Midline	Comments
Direct learning beneficiaries (girls) – girls in the intervention group who are specifically expected to achieve learning outcomes in line with targets. If relevant, please disaggregate girls with disabilities in this overall number.	7382 in school girls including little sisters	7382	Total number of girls targeted for learning outcomes are girls' in-school in grades 6 – 10 and will be the only ones tracked for learning outcomes, due to the dropped out now the in school girls enrolled is less than initial target.

Table 31: Other beneficiaries

Beneficiary type	Number	Comments
Learning beneficiaries (boys) – as above, but specifically counting boys who will get the same exposure and therefore be expected to also achieve learning gains, if applicable.	7326	The boys are in the same class as the cohort girls (Grades 6 – 10) according to the school registration data.
Broader student beneficiaries (boys) – boys who will benefit from the interventions in a less direct way, and therefore may	3,582	The boys are in the same school as the cohort girls and will benefit from improved SIPs

benefit from aspects such as attitudinal change, etc. but not necessarily achieve improvements in learning outcomes.		
Broader student beneficiaries (girls) – girls who will benefit from the interventions in a less direct way, and therefore may benefit from aspects such as attitudinal change, etc. but not necessarily achieve improvements in learning outcomes.	4,170	The girls are in the same school as the cohort girls below basic education and will benefit from improved SIPs
Teacher beneficiaries – number of teachers who benefit from training or related interventions. If possible /applicable, please disaggregate by gender and type of training, with the comments box used to describe the type of training provided.	425	15 teachers from in each of the 48 schools who will be the main target beneficiaries of teacher training, number of teachers added after the onsite teachers training approach has been adopted after midline.
Broader community beneficiaries (adults) – adults who benefit from broader interventions, such as community messaging /dialogues, community advocacy, economic empowerment interventions, etc.	2000	At least 2000 parents will be engaged through community dialogues and parental education

Table 1: Target groups - by school

School Age	Project definition of target group (Tick where appropriate)	Number targeted through project interventions	Sample size of target group at midline
Lower primary			
Upper primary	✓	4,419	556 (59%)
Lower secondary	✓	2,788	244 (25.9%)
Upper secondary			
Out of School Girls in Parsa	✓	776	143 (15.2%)
Total:		8158	943

Table 2: Target groups - by age

Age Groups	Project definition of target group (Tick where appropriate)	Number targeted through project interventions	Sample size of target group at Midline
Aged 6-8 (% aged 6-8)	✓		54 (OOS Girls) (5.7%)
Aged 9-11 (% aged 9-11)	✓		89 (OOS Girls) (9.4%)
Aged 12-13 (% aged 12-13)	✓	No age wise data collected for in schools girls	325 (34.5%)
Aged 14-15 (% aged 14-15)	✓	No age wise data collected for in schools girls	337 (35.7%)

Aged 16-17 (%aged 16-17)	✓	No age wise data collected for in schools girls	118 (12.5%)
Aged 18-19 (%aged 18-19)	✓	No age wise data collected for in schools girls	20 (2.1)
Aged 20+ (% aged 20 and over)			0
Total:			943

Table 3: Target groups - by sub group

Social Groups		**Project definition of target group** (Tick where appropriate)	**Number targeted through project interventions**	**Sample size of target group at Baseline**
Girls with functional limitation			No data collected from project	**92 (9.8%)**
Orphaned girls			No data collected from project	**0 (0%)**
Pastoralist girls			No data collected from project	**0 (0%)**
Child labourers			No data collected from project	**4 (0.4%)**
Poor girls		✓	8158	**394 (48%)**
Other beneficiaries not in any of the above category				**453**
Total:			8158	943

Table 4: Target groups - by school status

Educational sub-groups	**Project definition of target group** (Tick where appropriate)	**Number targeted through project interventions**	**Sample size of target group at Midline**
Out-of-school girls: have never attended school	✓	720	143 (15.16%)
Out-of-school girls: have attended school, but dropped out	✓	56	N/A
Girls in-school	✓	7382	800 (84.84%)
Total:		**8158**	943

Comments by External Evaluators

The project states that the beneficiaries of the SfSE-II project are the same girls who were also the beneficiaries of the SfSE-I project; the evidences from the midline evaluation concurs with this. The project is intervening in schools that are in areas which are more remote compared to other communities in the same district. Given the geographical remoteness and limited access to services, to a large extent all the households in the intervention communities are marginalized. The education officials and the municipal leaders consulted also agreed that the community SfSE-II is intervening are in their respective unit is one of the most marginalized even within the local municipal unit. In this context, a blanket assumption holds true that all the girls in the intervention schools are educationally marginalized.

To update the beneficiary number the project referred to the school registration data of all the in-school girls from grade 6 to 10 to identify the target beneficiary for SfSE-II project. To a large extent this provided a reliable data. However, the midline evaluation found that some of the schools did not have an updated registration system and some of the head teachers in intervention schools also stated that there is a trend where by girls enrol into the schools around September and October especially in schools in Surkhet and Dhading. Since the project commenced in the Month of April, which is usually the month where a new education session begins, there persists a chance whereby some of the girls might have been missed during beneficiary identification process, though exact figure cannot be drawn.

It is therefore advisable that project conduct a beneficiary re-count towards the end of the year using the head count method. This will provide a more accurate data on the number of beneficiaries. Furthermore, since the project has different change agents like big sisters, community mobilizer, brother champion, aunty champion, teacher champion and other adult champions, in any given treatment community; They should be mobilized to identify the beneficiaries and keep a record. This mitigates the need of using a secondary data. The project should consider giving priority to this approach.

Validating beneficiary number form midline data

The midline evaluation collected the enrolment data of girls from Grade 7-10 form 43 out of 48 treatment schools. The data showed that there were 5563 girls still enrolled in those grades in the 43 schools. The grade wise segregation of the data collected data is presented in table below Considering that the girls in grade 10 during the baseline have already graduated and, the enrolment number form 6 interventions are missing from the total, it can be said that the number of beneficiaries identified by the project using the school registration provide accurate number. Therefore, since the project used the school enrolment data for proposing their beneficiary number is reliable.

Grade	Total number of Girls based on data collected during the midline

Grade 7	1482
Grade 8	1405
Grade 9	1549
Grade 10	1127

As the total number of beneficiaries has not been segregated, and only the total number of beneficiaries is available, matching the number of beneficiaries segregated by different characteristics could not be done. Likewise, the number of beneficiaries is proposed based upon the enrolment data therefore, only the enrolment data is used for matching.

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Annex 16: External Evaluator declaration

Name of Project: Sisters for Sisters' Education-II

Name of External Evaluator: Foundation for Development Management (FDM)

Contact Information for External Evaluator: info@fdm.com.np

Names of all members of the evaluation team:

- **Dr. Shailendra Sigdel (Team Leader/Report writer)**
- **Dipendra .B. Thapa (Education Expert)**
- **Chandra K.C (Statistician)**
- **Kshitiz Khanal (Evaluation Coordinator/Report writer)**

Dr. Shailendra Sigdel, the evaluation team leader and the Managing Director of FDM certify that the independent evaluation has been conducted in line with the Terms of Reference and other requirements received.

Specifically:

- All of the quantitative data was collected independently (Initials: ***SS***)
- All data analysis was conducted independently and provides a fair and consistent representation of progress (Initials: ***SS***)
- Data quality assurance and verification mechanisms agreed in the terms of reference with the project have been soundly followed (Initials: ***SS***)
- The recipient has not fundamentally altered or misrepresented the nature of the analysis originally provided by FDM (Initials: ***SS***)
- All child protection protocols and guidance have been followed (Initials: ***SS***)
- Data has been anonymised, treated confidentially and stored safely, in line with the GEC data protection and ethics protocols (Initials: ***SS***)

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Dr. Shailendra Sigdel

Managing Director

Foundation for Development Management

12th December 2019

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 (Section 6)

- This is an opportunity to describe where the project feels the evaluation findings have confirmed or challenged existing understanding and/or added nuance to what was already known. Have findings shed new light on relationships between outputs, intermediate outcomes, and outcomes and the significance of barriers for certain groups of children – and how these can be overcome?

- This should include critical analysis and reflection on the project theory of change and the assumptions that underpin it.

Response to main findings

The midline evaluation report has confirmed that the girls are facing various challenges in education at all levels, starting from individual level, community and school level, including central level. The findings also shed light on how and where the project should focus to adapt interventions and activities. It was similar understanding with the project team that learning support class assisted girls directly in improving their numeracy skill however no specific activities are targeted towards improving literacy skills. Mainly in Parsa district, the midline assessment has pinpointed through SeGRA and SeGMA that in comparison to other districts, girls are lagging behind on literacy skills i.e. analytical and writing skills. The project team has similar learning on this and has similar agreement that project need to improve literacy skills through additional efforts on literacy. It is where learning support class will prioritize its attention. Obviously, because of the linguistic barriers girls of Parsa need extra support on literacy. For this project team will further discuss with school authority and respective teachers to design and implement remedial support class on improving literacy skills.

The project has been set English and Digital skills as a third learning outcome of the project with the objective is to enable girls to transition into higher education and/or increase employability. Whereas the EE has been highlighted hat the edge club member are not attaining the expected learning outcomes as per agreed indicators for various reasons. For instance, incompletion of foundational course at the time of evaluation, transition of club member into other schools, and districts due to enrolment in grade 11 (successful transition to secondary education) and migration due to marriage. The project has tried to address these issues in scaled up districts and also improved the school authorities' engagement and commitment for its effective delivery and sustainability. Meanwhile, there are several individual cases those demonstrated that the EDGE club members are doing well in supporting peers, taking leadership in learning sharing and being more active in English teaching learning activities in the classrooms. These qualitative behaviour changes through the EDGE interventions have positive impact on promoting literacy and numeracy skills among the in-school girls.

Reflections on the ToC

The mid-line assessment provides ample rationale for the bulk of the inventions already designed into this phase of the project. Most of the assumptions and barriers still hold true, as has been articulated by the evaluation findings. Nonetheless, changes in the context of the project have also impacted some of the barriers to girls' education. We also see that more attention may be needed in some areas of the project – for example, efforts to increase parental awareness remain inadequate to sufficiently support and promote girls education and learning. We also see that girls are still facing community and school level barriers where project interventions need to be continued.

Among relevant findings:

- The data shows a declining trend in community/household level barriers compared to a year ago. Essentially, in-school girls have been receiving more support from their families to attend school regularly and perform in learning achievement in school compared to the past. This area of the TOC may need attention.

- Results related to the intermediate outcome (community support for girls education and their transitions) are still in-line with the ToC, which also reflects qualitative findings from the project team's own internal monitoring, reflection and learning.

- Some items that are clearly relevant and now being acted (e.g. child marriage) are not highlighted sufficiently in the ToC, while others (e.g. continual coaching of teachers) have proven to be unfeasible due to the prevailing lack of availability of sufficiently trained staff.

Overall, however, we see that causal linkages are intact for the most part throughout the results chain – ie, between project barriers, activities, intermediate outcomes and outcomes. For instance, through support from big sisters (activities), parental support to girls' education (a barrier) has to some extent improved and little sisters have continued their education up to grade 10 (intermediate outcome), successfully completing national examination and transitioning to upper secondary school. Reflecting the strength of these linkages, to date 1,283 girls have already successfully transitioned from grade 10.

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

- The management response should respond to the each of the External Evaluator's recommendations that are relevant to the grantee organisation (see Section 6). The response should make clear what changes and adaptations to implementation will be proposed as a result of the recommendations and which ones are not considered appropriate, providing a clear explanation why.

The table below shows the main recommendations proposed by the EE related to our MEL design.

Recommendation	Will recommendation be actioned? (Yes/No)	Summary of proposed action/ rationale why action not being carried forward
Recommends that the English and Digital learning outcome of girls in Surkhet is not measured as a performance indicator for the endline	**Yes**	Midline evaluation and endline evaluation are not aligned with EDGE implementation so light touch mixed methods evaluation will conduct which will focus on the three districts to demonstrate outcomes and impact. So EDGE component will not include during the endline external evaluation. As per the recommendation, the project team is planning to conduct **rapid assessment** of the Surkhet end phase 2 to review the impact of adaptions made
Changes recommend in the MEL framework regarding the measurement of transition outcome	Yes	In school girls who complete secondary school education examination (SEE) enrol into other schools instead of project school because of their interest, not availability of education stream they would like to study. By realizing these reality, the project has already decided and will only track the transitioned girls do not continue mentoring support as per regular design which is impossible. Likewise, it isn't possible to track all information of in-school girls by the project staffs. The project only track where little sisters enrolled (the name, grade and faculty), the grade 11 examination attendance (i.e. how many girls have attended the exam) and the exam result i.e. how many girls pass the grade 11. For this project will prepare a tracker that will provide only the data. The project will **keep an updated record** of in-school girls counted as they do with the little sisters, to track their transition. There is high possibility of transition of all little sisters to other schools and locations and thus, might be difficulties to include them in end-line evaluation because of successful transition to secondary education. So the project seek to do more **quantitative and qualitative tracer study** work on grade 11 and 12 little sisters.

Revision of the indicators target related to EDGE in the log frame	**Yes**	Target for the midline evaluation were unrealistically set as proposing for an increase of 20% of the girls achieving an A2 level by mid-line was unattainable and should have actually been the target for the end-line. It was known at the start of the project that by the time the mid-line would be planned, the girls would have completed only the Foundation Phase and considering the objectives of this phase, the girls would have 1) increased their confidence in speaking in English, 2) an increased awareness of social issues, 3) moved from being a non-user to a basic user in Digital skills. It is therefore the indicators set are revised and the "20% girls at A2 level" and "50% girls at competent level in Digital literacy" are moved to being targets for end of the project. This will be done **separately impact evaluation** and will not include in the endline evaluation point 3.
Change in sustainability indicator: Average % of income invested in each of their girl's education:	**Yes**	Agreed to change this indicator at present the proportion is an acceptable amount considering the context of the community. The proposed new indicator "**Percentage of parents who report that they have savings intended for the education of their daughter."** will updated in the logframe. If further discussion is required project will discuss with FM and will change in the logframe accordingly.
Change recommended in Intermediate Outcomes Indicators 2.1: "Percentage of girls taking all key decision on their own"	**Yes**	The project team has agreed and change this indicator into **"% of girls who take all key decisions on their own or jointly with family"** as per the recommended by EE.

Change recommended in Indicators 3.2: percentage of parents who go to their girl's school to discuss their progress with their teacher (at least once a year):	**Yes**	This recommendation has its validity and relevant to check and support their girls learning and also will support for the sustainability of the project interventions. However, more often, in general, the parental visit, discussion with the school authorities, and teachers are not recorded well. One of the school has this practice and which is very difficult and not practical to keep record of all parents visit as well. Project is planning to discuss with the school authority how they can maintain record, what would be the possible options to justify that parents are visiting the schools, do school can maintain any record or any evidences to prove that parents are visiting schools regularly will be discussed with the school authority and decide to develop the evidences of parental visit. From the project interventions part, we can easily produce the attendance sheet that we have initiated with the parents and community regarding girl's education. So the project agree to change into "**Number of Girls whose parents visited schools to collect results at least twice in the last year".**
Indicators 5.1: "Percentage of schools scoring acceptable or above on SIP progress assessment" should be removed:	**No**	Regarding SIP, one indictor should be the continuously measured and assessed. As per sustainability goals, project will be continuously supporting the schools in the process of SIP in the remaining period of the project so the project will keep this indicator to measure in the endline. **The project has initiated to support local government to develop education plan which is depend on SIP of entire schools of Palikas**.
Still a need for increased parental engagement in the education of girls.	**Yes**	The project has agreed with this recommendation; that there is a need of making parents more responsible to play their active roles in promoting girl's education and support to improve their daughter learning behaviour both in home and schools. To accomplish such objective, the project will **increase number of events related to parental engagement such as interactive theatre,**

		community dialogue, parental education session, bi-annual parent meeting and interaction events in the community level.
No intervention to boot the literacy skills of the girls:	**Yes**	The project has been conducting learning support classes as an extra remedial classes focusing Maths, English and Science in the past years. Now the project has been under consultation to include **Nepali subject in learning support classes (demand based).** For this, school level discussion with school heads, subject teachers will be carried out and need based learning support lessons will be developed and implemented to improve girls learning achievement in Literacy. In addition to this, **school based teacher training through mobile clinic (onsite support by subject expert)** for the child friendly learning environment to increase literacy skills of the in-school students.
EDGE need redesign to address the turnover issue	**Yes**	Based on this findings of piloting in Surkhet and recommendation, project has already developed and implemented the scale up strategy in other three districts where **school authorities were directly involved in decision** of venue selection, selection of EDGE club members, taking care of physical assets i.e. laptops and phablets, monitoring, and assuring that PGL are initiating club activities in a more effective and regularly. Moreover, in terms of selection of the EDGE clubs members, project has also use the strategy of **selecting in-school girls including little sisters** those who will at least complete the 90 hours foundation course. Now most of **the EDGE clubs are running within the school premises** under the supervision of school authority. Likewise, online tab based monitoring-KOBO, the **increase of monitoring visit from Master Trainers**, BC and VSO project team will also be in place for maximize the positive impact of EDGE. And EDGE component will tighter integration in evaluation work with **rapid assessment Surkhet phase 2,** and **staggered endline** (including EDGE

		specific element, also more work on demand/supply of PGLs and streamlined cost implementation) *Addressing the issue of low digital skills:* The project has also realized that the laptops and phablets weren't fully utilized during the club sessions. We have now **revised the content of the refresher training for PGL's** which provide them with various differentiation strategies to distribute and use the existing resources among club members so that all the girls get enough time to practice their digital skills. It will re-assessing through monitoring in Jan –Feb as rapid an assessment.
More focus on how it can work with local stakeholders including local government:	**Yes**	The project team has giving high priority in year 3 and year 4 with local stakeholders including provincial and local government. We have already started to develop the local government capacity as per their need in line with the project interventions and learning. Thus the project has been already planned to provide technical support on developing capacity on education policy, planning and programming, safeguarding and child protection policy. Likewise, project has also planned to use its strategic partner i.e. NCE Nepal to accelerate the policy debate and dialogue with the provincial, and local government to make them aware about the importance of inclusive education, rights to education, updating on the national policy provisions, and sharing the project's best learning experiences aiming to mainstream them into the local government planning process. As a result, extremely marginalized and vulnerable girls can have access to quality education and opportunity for employability. In addition to this, the project has already initiated joint planning events, sharing/interactions, meetings, monitoring etc in coordination with the local government. In line with above mentioned approach, **provincial learning sharing and policy dialogue events** in the leadership of Min SD has planned to conduct in each provinces (4 events) **including other non- project districts**. Similarly project has planned to conduct learning sharing and **local level policy dialogue**

		including non- project Palikas in each districts (4 events).
Scale up the interventions targeting teaching quality and child friendly school environment:	**Yes**	In the past modality of teacher training external facilitators were employed to conduct teacher training with a small number of subject teachers at a district level. This limited the opportunity for the majority of staff to gain input in gender inclusive pedagogy. Furthermore project will **strengthen the new modality of school based teacher training** as and collaborative professional practice to sustain continued professional development within school teams. The project will work on to **develop locally appropriate behaviour policy for the school to address Behavioural positive discipline to minimize Corporal punishment.**
Focus to support the improvement of the institutional capacity of schools:	**Yes**	For the remaining period, project will support to capacitate school authorities to ensure that they are better able to undertake their school's planning. School leadership development, assistance in data generation and management, knowledge and skills for data-based planning will be the additional focused interventions. For this Project has plan to **mobilize external experts to support Palikas and schools for developing education plan and implementation**. We recognise that CRM is a national initiative with significant implementation issues. We have identified this area as something project can contribute to improving education in non-project schools within SfSE-II working Palikas. For this project has **initiated capacity development and support to formulate municipal CP CRM policy and mechanism in close participation and leadership of project schools.**
Learning support classes should	**Yes**	This recommendation is well noted and discussed during the annual planning scheduled in the following

run throughout the year.		month. The fund manager will be notified when a decision has been made. The project notes that the reliability of data informing this recommendation must be investigated. The teachers who are self-reporting the success of the initiative are themselves receiving incentives and therefore have a conflict of interest. Field observations are that LSCs are replacing final examination tuition classes and as such are not necessarily reaching the desired beneficiaries (i.e. they are not being targeted to the most marginalised students). The project has planned to conduct learning support classes **based on the needs and demand of the project schools targeting most marginalized girls and boys** as recommended by the findings. However due the duration of the project it is not possible to run LSC throughout the academic year.
Exploring avenues of development parents as the champions of girls' education:	**Yes**	This recommendation is well noted and the project has planned to explore how the parents could be mobilized to more actively engage in promoting girl's education within the community. So the project has initiated to mobilize adult champion to make aware the parents through **parental interaction and awareness raising activities**. As the project has already working to strengthen the role of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) as a body to takes the lead in engagement with community and parents and in promotion of meaningful parental engagement in education of children. This will be continued and more **follow up activity** has planned to mobilize PTA in the community as an **outreach activities** through the capacity building events. Furthermore, **the parental engagement will promote in coordination with existing CBOs, mothers group and other community members.**
Partnership with local government by creating opportunities for resource sharing	**Yes**	Project has already develop a memorandum of understanding with the local government. This has provide VSO with an opportunity to support Palikas and Municipality education committee to develop education related plans, policies, provisions, and entitlements that are in favour of girl's education.

and ownership transformation.		Project has started and continues to monitor changes and plans in the new federal system. Now the local government has clarity in the new federal system particularly in the education system so the project has been providing capacity building and technical support to the Palika level. In line with this, the project has initiated policy, planning and advocacy related joint intervention at Palika level with budget provision in close coordination with Palikas. Additionally, the project has decided to work with its strategic partner i.e. **NCE Nepal for policy advocacy and lobby with local and provincial government.** NCE in close collaboration with VSO project team has initiated series of interactions and discussion with local and provincial government to increase their roles in the sustaining the project learning. This collaboration will further **continue in year four for increasing more engagement and partnership with the local government for the sustainability**.
Achievement dissemination in central, provincial and local government representatives:	**Yes**	The project has dissemination plan in place with the federal government, provincial and local government representatives to share the good practices and learning. They will made aware about the various successful interventions of the project which can aid in its replicability with the minimal cost in the local level. In the **central level project has successfully organized and shared the preliminary findings** with the federal representative from various Ministry, representatives from provincial, development partners representative along with the interaction and participation of primary stakeholders in close cooperation and support from GEC/DFID and GEC-T partners. The project has also continue and increase the **level of interactions, discussion and dialogue with the central, provincial and local government through utilizing strategic partners**.
Building institutional	**Yes**	Project team has planned **to work with school leadership and local government** to ensure that

knowledge within the intervention schools so that the changes project has been able to make in the school management and governance can be transferred and given continuity.		the good practices identified within the project schools are built into clear and coherent school policy. **Knowledge sharing, led by school leaders from project schools**, would make this knowledge sharing more effective as local advocates (i.e. head teachers, SMC/PTA members, gender/CRM focal persons) will have more credibility communicating and transferring ideas at the local level.
Need to address demand side barriers are required to mitigate the challenges that exist at the community level (for instance, poverty).	**Yes**	Guidance for the use of **emergency funds** has been discussed within district teams and funds are more increasingly mobilised in relevant situations. In the longer-term **livelihood and vocational training has planned to provide opportunities** to economic enrichment at the community level. The project team has planned to work with national and provincial level networks to map the opportunities that will assist girls to transition beyond locally available education opportunities. However, in the short term the scope of the project does not allow us to mitigate the full extent of the economic barriers experienced by all the targeted families. The project has planned **to link the primary actors and their parents with the existing institutions and government** who have the livelihood development scheme so that they can have easy access to increase their livelihood opportunities.
Ensure that the parents are capacitated and prepared to cater to the educational need of the girls post-schooling	**Yes**	We are aware that opportunities exist for financial support at the national and provincial levels, but local governments are not necessarily aware of these due to some poor communication during the federalisation process. As a project team we are in a position to use our networks to map out these opportunities and disseminate them to local government level. This will help to mobilise resources and commit funds to ensure increased transition to higher education opportunities. This

		issues **has planned to discuss with the local government during the interaction to raise awareness of opportunities and funds** that are available to girls beyond completion of grade 10.

The table below shows the other actions we aim to do based on our contextual understanding and interpretation of the report.

Action	Description of action
Revise our ToC	As mentioned, the project team agrees an update to the TOC is warranted and timely for ensuring appropriate programme adaptation and positioning for a strong close-out during the final quarters of the project. Given that some of the mid-line findings require more conversation to address, the team will convene in January for a detailed review of the ToC with the aim to share 1) Reflection Notes, 2) Revised ToC Narrative, and 3) Revised ToC Graphic with the Fund Manager in the second half of the month – i.e., in time for the endline evaluation preparation. This analysis will be supported by VSO's Programme Quality team in Nepal as well as global inclusive education advisors. Will make barriers specific to different groups and remove the ones no longer prevalent. We will also remove activities no longer being carried forward etc.
Address Girls in Parsa, from poor households and certain ethnic groups	To address those girls from Parsa, poor households and certain ethnic group whose mother tongue is different in school will **be enrolled in the group mentoring session and provide them to tailored support** as Little Sisters were receiving in the past years.
Girls leaving school half way through the day (attendance)	The project right now can't do anything to address those girls, however this issues will be discuss with the head teachers and explore the possibilities of intervention that can be doable in the school events.
Girls leave intervention schools (transition)	The project will track the in school girls who leave the project schools to make sure they are progressing in their higher studies or sustained livelihood. Project has planned **to work with Palikas to replicate the project learnings in other schools as well.**

Does the external evaluator's conclusion of the projects' approach to gender correspond to the projects' gender ambitions and objectives?

VSO conducted its own Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment and the conclusions provided by the external evaluator confirms its findings. The interventions identified by the project addresses these inequalities to make education more inclusive.

As the midline evaluation findings suggest that the project has made a commendable gain helping the schools it works in to become more gender friendly and also promote the girl's education within the community. Project intervention also helped enable girls to make decision making roles, promoted the involvement of girls' in every activities implementation in the school as well as in the community level. However, the evaluators suggest if further strengthened this approach, can indeed create opportunity for the project to be more gender transformative in a sustainable manner.

In regards to inclusion, the project design has constrained it from reaching out to the children with disabilities. The project is designed by considering school as the primary unit of intervention however, in the communities where the project operates most of the children with disabilities are not enrolled into formal education. Having said that, the project does give priority to the inclusion of girls with disabilities who are enrolled in the intervention school in delivery of intervention. The number of girls with disabilities in the intervention school is so small that generating findings and evidences against it might warrant a specific study to present a more robust picture of the inclusion of children of disabilities in the project activities and benefit sharing.

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

- The management response should outline any changes that the project is proposing to do following any emergent findings from the baseline evaluation. This exercise is not limited to outcomes and intermediate outcomes but extends also to outputs (following completion of Annex 3 on the output indicators).

Logframe changes has been mentioned in the above MEL design section. Please refer to the change Logframe Annex 5.