

AARAMBHA: LEAVE NO GIRL BEHIND

Empowering Girls: Navigating the Journey to Education and TVET for a Broadened Life Horizon

Learning Brief

Feb 2024

INTRODUCTION

Since 2018, PIN Nepal has been implementing the Aarambha-Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB)¹ project in the Bara and Rautahat districts of Madhesh province, under the FCDO UK aid's Girls Education Challenge (GEC) programme². The project operates in 21 palikas of Bara and Rautahat, reaching 9497 girls through collaboration with Aasaman Nepal (ASN) and the Social Organization Development Coordination Committee (SODCC). Aarambha-Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) specifically targets out-of-school (OOS) adolescent girls aged 10-19 in remote palikas across the Madhesh province, which has the highest illiteracy rate in Nepal.

Aarambha aims to enhance the life chances of targeted marginalized girls by providing basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills sessions in non-formal education (NFE) settings specifically through accessible community learning centers (CLCs). Under the project, 462 CLCs were conducted in 21 palikas of Bara and Rautahat, and upon successful completion of accelerated learning courses at these centers, graduates were either able to transition into formal schooling in grades 1 to 9 or get upskilled through market-needed technical/vocational skills with the necessary equipment. Both learning and employability interventions have been successful in addressing early marriage and breaking down harmful social norms. Project cycle data shows that 9,497 OOS girls have been educated on literacy and numeracy skills under the project, with 4,896 successfully transitioning to school and 2,347 to technical and vocational education and training (TEVT). The project has also consistently tracked the learning progress of girls through assessments in both formal education and TVET pathways to ensure positive returns.

WHAT IS TRANSITION IN AARAMBA-LNGB?

In the Aarambha-LNGB project, the term "transition" refers to "the state of being involved in any stage/phase after graduating from the Community Learning Center (CLC)," where the girls pursue either school enrollment or vocational training. CLC-graduated girls have the flexibility to transition either to school or vocational skills based on their interests.

HOW DO THE OOS GIRLS SELECT THEIR TRANSITION PATH?

After completing a 9-month CLC Literacy and Numeracy and Life Skills course, girls acquire fundamental reading, writing, and life skills. The girls formulate a life plan during the life skills sessions after CLC classes. This life plan empowers them to strategize their future steps post-CLC graduation. The life plan involves individual participation from the girls' families and considers each girl's unique situation, including her interests, goals, age, abilities, constraints, and family circumstances. For girls in the 10-14 age group, the option of school admissions is available, while those in the 15-19 age group can choose between TVET or school when creating their life plan. Notably, there is no age limit for school admission.

¹ <https://nepal.peopleinneed.net/en/our-work/civil-society-inclusive-governance>

² Girls Education Challenge (GEC) is UK FCDO's largest girls education programme focused on provision of education to marginalised girls across the world. <https://girlseducationchallenge.org/>



9497

Girls enrolled in CLC



8122

girls completed CLC classes



7761

girls developed life plan



7220

girls received cash grants to pursue life plans



4986

girls transitioned to school



2347

girls received TVET training



70.2%

girls continuing their education

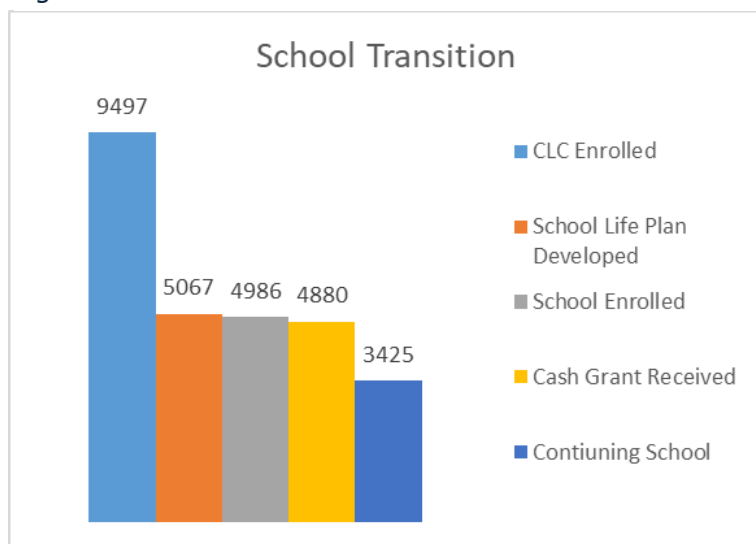


68.7%

girls started their own business

Girls transition to school

Figure 1



As seen in Figure 1, 9,497 girls enrolled in the CLC, 5,067 girls formulated a life plan to transit to school, and 4,986 of them were enrolled in school. Of these enrolled girls, 4,880 continued to go to school and received 10,000 in cash support to facilitate the continuation of their education (for the purchase of educational materials, school uniforms, bicycles, etc.). The recent longitudinal assessment showed that 70.2% (3,425) of these girls are continuing their education in school. This number is considering all Cohorts on average.

When looking at the cohorts individually however, 50% of girls from

Cohort 1, 60.6% from Cohort 2, 67.6% from Cohort 3, and 79% from Cohort 4 are attending school.

When considering their grades, the data shows that most of the girls are in the 6th Grade (29.9%). The others are in the following grades – 5th Grade (18.8%), 7th Grade (16.3%), 4th Grade (13.8) and 3rd Grade (10.6%). When the girls were asked about their learning performance, 67.8% of them rated themselves as good at learning, 28.8% as satisfactory, and 3.3% as weak. Almost all the girls are happy with their school education, except a few.

The girls are specifically happy because they get the chance to go to school, enjoy reading, and learn vivid subjects. They also adore being with friends and the good behavior of teachers.

The project's effort to create an enabling environment in school

After enrolling in school, the project implemented 4 months of **bridge courses** for all girls transitioning from CLC to ensure regular attendance. During this period, teachers from the same schools facilitated the courses. This fostered a close relationship between the girls and their educators.

The project has established the **Girls' Inclusive Education Network (GIEN)** within the same schools where the girls were enrolled. GIEN conducted training sessions for teachers in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Gender Transformative Work (GTW), and other relevant topics to address and eliminate discrimination and abuse within the school environment. Furthermore, a Gender Transformative Workshop was provided for 28 days (about 4 weeks) to students from 6th to 8th Grade, within the same school. This encouraged peer-to-peer support in schools. Regular monitoring of these initiatives took place with local government authorities.

Designated **gender-focused teachers** supported the girls to raise their voices and participate in extracurricular activities in 50 schools. **Gender-transformative sessions** enabled girls to challenge harmful norms. 50 schools have been set up with **Complaint response mechanisms**. 81% of them are operating

well. Mobilizing the **GIEN, change champions, and community members** contributed to a safer environment. **Health check-ups** were also provided for children with disabilities, which prevented complications. Safety was also bolstered in various settings using posters, toll-free lines, and information on complaint resolutions. Community projects were also set up at 50 schools, which improved sanitation, hygiene, water access, and menstrual hygiene. Disaster readiness training and local government support further nurtured safety.

The project conducted a 10-day **parental education workshop**, which was broken down to a day per week. It was intended for the parents of girls attending CLCs, to encourage them to support their girls to pursue their life plans. A perception survey report reveals a 78% shift in attitudes among parents and community members towards girls' education. Parents are consistently sending their daughters and daughters-in-law to school and actively supporting them in household chores and childcare.

Similarly, a thematic assessment report highlights that 92% of parents are actively encouraging their daughters and daughters-in-law to pursue higher education, breaking barriers, and promoting a culture of education within families. Additionally, 68% of parents have shown improved knowledge and attitudes in safeguarding their daughters from harmful practices, contributing to a safer and more equitable environment.

Skill training eventually leads to independence and helps the girls earn money. I am ready to help my daughter with skill-based training. (Parent in KII, Rajpur)

I have supported my daughter to run the business after skill-based training and I have also helped her to run the business by investing seed money. (Parent in KII, Madhav Narayan)

Girls transition to TVET

The girls who chose Technical and Vocational and Educational training (TVET) after graduating from CLC, are enrolled in different types of TVET, per their life plan. The types can be seen in Figure 2. For the training, the partner organisation had agreements with third-party entities, namely, Action for Development for Cohort-1, Cohort-2, *Sana Byabasaya Tatha Gharelu Pvt. Ltd.* - Cohort-3, and Action for Skill

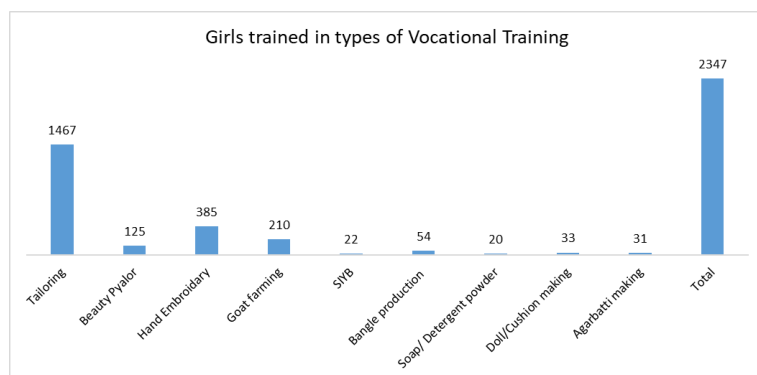
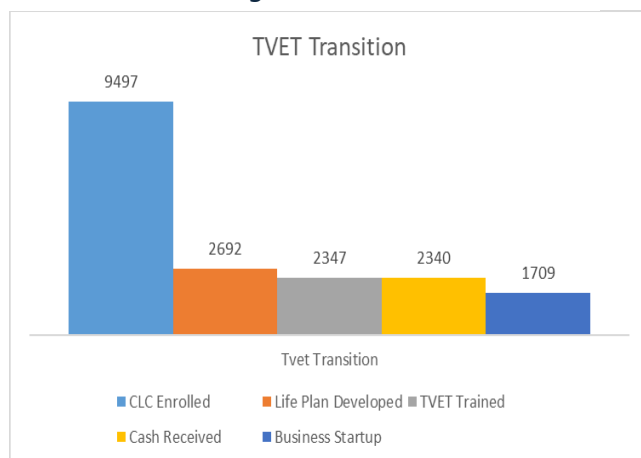


Figure 2

Development Consultancy Nepal Pvt. Ltd. for Cohort-4. These third parties conducted trainings for girls by establishing a training centre in the nearest location in close coordination with the project. 2,347 girls received training. 1,081 of them were from Cohort 1 and had completed 180 hours. The remaining 1,266 girls completed 390 hours (Level 1) of training.

Figure 3

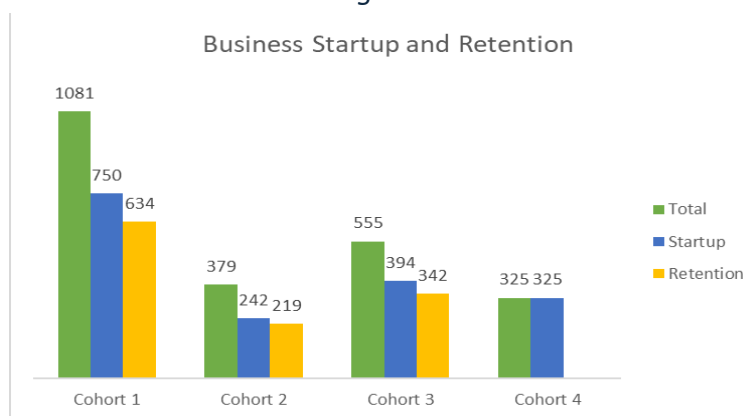


Out of the total 2,340 girls from Cohorts 1 to 4 as shown in Figure 3. Girls from Cohorts 1 to 4 received cash grant support for their business startup. In Cohort 1 to 3, 2,015 girls received support of Rs.13,000. In Cohort 4, 325 girls received Rs. 15000.

As seen in Figure 4, 1,081 girls from Cohort 1 started the following activities. 750 girls-initiated startups and 634 retained in business. Cohort 2 consists of 379 girls. 242 of them have started businesses, and 219 retained in business. Cohort 3 consists of 555 girls, of whom 394 initiated startups and 341 retained businesses.

The recent longitudinal assessment shows, that the average monthly income of the girls is Rs. 2,924 with the maximum earning NRS. 20,000 and minimum NRS. 1,000 per month. When asked about business challenges, 48.85% of the girls highlighted a lack of investment as a major obstacle in selling and promoting their businesses. Moreover, 29.56% of all cohort girls reported not making a profit from their business, which obstructed the promotion and sales of their products. However, parents are actively contributing to the success of these businesses by assisting with childcare, purchasing materials from the market, and participating in the sale of the products.

Figure 4



Note. Business Startup includes 325 C-4 girls

MAJOR IMPACTS OF TRANSITION

Challenging harmful social norms: The perception survey report indicates that 85% of girls recognise their pivotal role in preventing child marriage in society. Additionally, 89% of the girls feel confident in reporting any form of violence to the relevant authorities in their homes or communities. Since joining the CLC, 97% of girls have increased their knowledge about the impacts of child marriage and harmful social norms. Furthermore, 88% of girls are equipped and mentally prepared to manage puberty-related changes. 89% of girls view menstruation as a natural process, openly discussing it with others as a normal part of life.

Girls executing their life plan seriously: After the completion of CLC, 52.5% of girls transitioned to formal education and 24.7% transitioned to vocational Training. Among them, 70.2% of the girls transitioned to school and are continuing their education. 68.7% of the girls transitioned to TVET and have been running their businesses. Regarding school attendance from the Cohort perspective, 50% of girls are attending school from Cohort 1, 60.6% from Cohort 2, 67.6% from Cohort 3, and 79% from Cohort 4.

Improved regularity in school: In total 60% of the girls have an attendance rate exceeding 50% over a three-month average.

Pursuing Higher Education: Sixteen girls have attempted the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) of 2,023, and two girls from previous SEE years are currently studying in the 12th Grade. When asked about their learning performance, 66% of the girls rated themselves as good learners, 29% as satisfactory, and 5% as weak.

Girls improved their livelihood: According to the longitudinal assessment, 68.7% of the girls, who transited to TVET have started their own business, earning within a range from 1,000 to 20,000 NRS.

Involving the religious organisation and leaders is instrumental: Broadcasting a public service announcement (PSA) regarding the importance of girls' education and harmful social norms against girls leaves a bigger impact on the parents, and they support their daughters as a result. These PSAs are broadcasted in religious places like mosques, temples, etc. A similar impact was seen when advocating with the religious leaders, community leaders, and change champions on these issues.



With a youngest three-year-old son to take care of, I joined grade 9 and continued my studies. I couldn't attend regular daytime school, but I received home tuition supported by the project.
(Radha Ram, Bara)

I started learning at Community Learning Center and got support from project to start business. I earn Rs. 15,000-20,000 monthly. Now, I'm a secondary-level student and a successful entrepreneur. (Nuri Khatun, Rautahat)

