



WORLD EDUCATION

# Sang Sangai—Learning Together

*Engaging Mothers and Energizing Communities to Support Girls' Education in Nepal's Terai*

The Sang Sangai – “Learning Together: Engaging Mothers and Energizing Communities to Support Girls' Education in Nepal's Terai” project supported education for 23,164 girls in Nepal's most disadvantaged Terai region. The project was implemented in 4 core districts: Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi and Rautahat. This project gave girls an opportunity to gain basic literacy and numeracy skills, valuable health knowledge, and support to join the formal education system. The impact of these interventions on girls' lives were accelerated by engaging their mothers through intergenerational activities, non-formal education, and Mithila arts. The mothers supported their daughters' learning at home, enabled their daughters to join and persist in formal schooling, and motivated other members of the community to support girls' learning. Sang Sangai – Learning Together worked with 300 schools to help them better meet the needs of girls entering the formal education system. With this vision, Sang Sangai partner NGOs worked with parents, communities, local government and line agencies of the Ministry of Education to implement the project which enabled thousands of out-of-school girls to achieve basic learning outcomes through nonformal education and transition to school to gain access to formal education. Local governments and school communities have made commitments to support these girls as they continue to learn. These technical briefs share key strategies, results, and lessons learned from this girls' education project that can contribute to the evidence base, inform policy and help enable girls from the most disadvantaged communities to achieve their full potential through education.



The Sang Sangai project sought to address the social and economic disparities faced by girls and women through increasing girls and mothers' literacy and numeracy and supporting their transition to formal schools or vocational programming and economic empowerment. Adolescent girls in the densely populated Terai districts of Province 2 are most likely to be out-of-school and reach adulthood lacking literacy and numeracy skills, and have the poorest socio-economic and health status in adult life. The project districts have the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the country and child marriage is still common. Of the estimated 1.2 million out-of-school children, one quarter live in these four economically deprived districts (CBS 2011). For each year a girl is educated, her health and income generating prospects improve, as do those of her future children. There are more girls out-of-school than boys, and even when girls are enrolled, they are less likely to complete high school or have the opportunity to continue to higher education. The most marginalized girls are from Dalit, Muslim and Madeshi communities that have been historically oppressed or neglected, making them the least likely to finish school and pass the Secondary Education Examination. Historical disadvantage has been compounded by a lack of investment in education. Despite a keen interest in educating daughters, families are forced to make difficult decisions and girls' education often takes second place. The Terai tropical plains region bordering India is culturally distinct and was once at the center of the ancient Mithilia Kingdom. The strength and richness of Mithila art and culture is a source of pride and motivation that can be mobilized to address challenging issues like girl's education and ensure these communities receive resources proportionate to their populations. The Sang Sangai – Learning Together project has shown that adolescent girls can access and succeed in education in large scale numbers, ensuring better futures for these girls and their families.

## Goal and Objectives

To achieve the overall goal of improving the education of disadvantaged adolescent girls in the Terai and ultimately improving their quality of life and opportunities, the project aimed to ensure that:

- Disadvantaged girls in the Terai gained valuable literacy and numeracy skills and health knowledge
- Mothers of out-of-school girls were empowered to support their daughters' educations and improve their own health and economic status
- Increased numbers of disadvantaged girls joined and persisted in formal schooling or vocational programs
- Schools and communities had greater capacity to support the formal education of disadvantaged children, especially girls
- Women were engaged in producing traditional cultural arts to promote girls and women's education to bring about shifts in societal thinking



## Achievements

### *Literacy and numeracy skills and health knowledge for adolescent girls*

- 15,519 out-of-school girls gained literacy and numeracy skills and health knowledge through the 9-month Girls Access To Education – GATE non-formal education program
- 7,645 school drop-outs participated in Bridging Classes to support transition back to formal school

### *Mothers supported daughters' education and improved their own health and economic status*

- 4,742 mothers participated in a 9-month NFE programming to gain basic literacy and numeracy skills and increase knowledge of health and economic participation
- 1,785 went on to advanced health and financial literacy and participated in microfinance groups

### *Disadvantaged girls joined and persisted in formal schooling and vocational training*

- 17,306 girls graduated from NFE, enrolled and attended formal school
- 1,656 older NFE graduates accessed vocational training for self-employment
- 29 Learning Centers were established in the most disadvantaged communities to provide supplementary academic support to NFE graduates transitioning to school

### *Schools and communities supported formal education*

- 300 schools mobilized teachers and parents to support access to education and school improvements for better learning outcomes of disadvantaged children, especially girls
- 14 schools promoted peer education using information and communications technology (ICT) to accelerate learning for GATE graduates



### *Women produced traditional cultural arts promoting girls and women's education*

- Maithili women artists engaged mothers to produce traditional arts depicting women and girls' education

## Project Partners

World Education, committed player in education and development in Nepal since 1976, works with local partners and the government to achieve equity in education for disadvantaged groups, improve learning outcomes in the public school system, provide high-quality nonformal education programs for children and adults, combat poverty through livelihoods development, and prevent human trafficking and exploitative child labor. Four local NGO partners implemented the activities at the community level: Rural Development Centre – Rautahat; Child Protection Organization – Sarlahi; Social Development Centre – Mohattari; and Child and Family Welfare Association – Dhanusha and Mohattari. Throughout the project the local NGO partners motivated the communities to mobilize and support these out of school adolescent girls and inspired them to pursue their educational dreams. The successful implementation of the activities was achieved by the partners working with the close coordination and support of school governance bodies and teachers, District line agencies and Municipalities.

### SANG SANGAI—THE LEARNING TOGETHER PROJECT TECHNICAL BRIEF SERIES

1. Girls Access to Education
2. Bridging Classes
3. Empowering Mothers

4. Mobilizing Community Support
5. Transition to School
6. Transition to Adult Life



# 1. Girls Access to Education



To address the educational needs of illiterate adolescent girls who are out-of-school, Sang Sangai-The Learning Together Project has implemented the GATE (Girls Access to Education) program. GATE is a 9-month non-formal education (NFE) program covering basic literacy, numeracy, and health education for girls ages 10-14. The objective of this program is to let girls achieve basic literacy and numeracy skills to a 3rd Grade level or higher. For ethnic minority students, this program supports them to gain proficiency in Nepali language and introductory English to join more age appropriate school grades. A major outcome of this program is to support more girls to transition to school or if too old for school, join vocational programs. The program focuses both on girls never enrolled and drop out students.

The program's main focus is to develop reading, writing, and math skills in participants who are illiterate, innumerate and out of school, while also developing their knowledge on reproductive health, nutrition, family planning, girl trafficking, sanitation and hygiene, prevention of HIV and AIDS and other life skill issues and ensuring participants literacy skills are adequate for enrollment into formal school. GATE classes run for nine months and have two phases each for 4.5 months. The curriculum has been designed bearing in mind the needs of adolescent girls and uses a series of books and other learning materials. At program conclusion, World Education and our partners support girls to re-enroll in formal schooling at the appropriate grade level. The classes prioritize girls from highly marginalized or disadvantaged Dalit and Muslim communities.

## Key Achievements

Two cohorts of GATE classes conducted over three years reached 15,519 out of school girls in Dhanusha, Sarlahi, Mohattari and Rautahat. Of the 15,519 initially enrolled in two cycles of GATE classes, 13,993 completed NFE classes comprising 50.66% Muslim, 37.3% Dalits, 0.66% Janajatis and 11.38% Disadvantaged terai castes. In the 2016 cycle, 76.99% enrolled in formal schooling and In the 2017 cycle, 81.95% of completers enrolled in school. Even though poor economic conditions, early marriage, parents disinterest and resistance to school are still prevalent in disadvantaged and marginalized communities of project areas, these achievements are significant. 38.78% girls from Dalit communities and 48.95% girls from Muslim communities transitioned to formal school which shows the positive change and impacts of the program. Graduates on average showed gains of 50% increase in scores between pre-test and post-test and 84% achieved more than 40% pass marks.

### GATE Class—Completion and Transition to School by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Enrolled in GATE	Number of Completers	% of Girls Completing	Transitioned to School	% of Completers Transitioning
Dalits	5,814	5,220	90%	4,358	83%
Muslim	7,890	7,089	90%	5,501	78%
Janajati	111	92	83%	76	83%
Others	1,704	1,592	93%	1,302	82%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,519</b>	<b>13,993</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>11,237</b>	<b>80%</b>



15,519 beneficiaries participated and gained basic literacy and numeracy skills



90.16% of girls who began GATE classes in 2016 and 2017 completed them

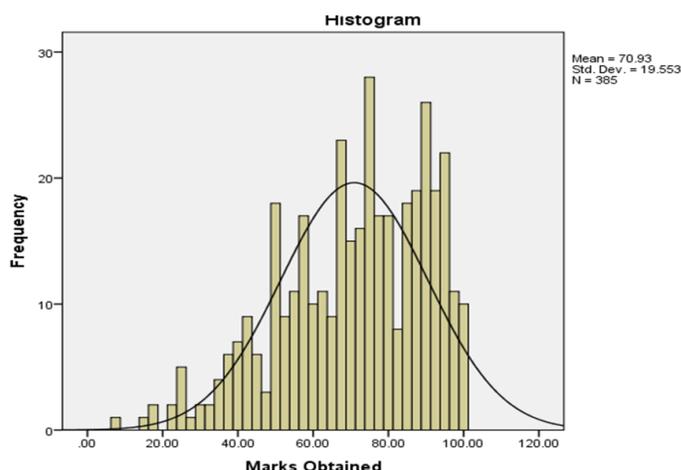


11,237 GATE graduates enrolled in formal schooling

## Key Learnings

To determine progress towards the learning outcomes of GATE girls on their literacy and numeracy skills learning, the World Education Learning Assessment (WELA) was adapted to assess basic literacy and numeracy outcomes. This test uses standard Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA) measures and has been approved by the Government to assess basic reading and numeracy skills. Out of 5,331 girls in 1st cycle of GATE, a sample of 385 girls (7.22%) were chosen at random. The sample was distributed among 4 districts (each 25%); 50% Dalit and 50% Muslim; 60% of girls had never been to school and 40% dropped out of school. Girls were assessed at the mid-point of the GATE class (at ~4.5 months through the 9-month course). Thus, the results from this assessment should be understood as a snapshot of girls' progress towards literacy and numeracy, rather than an indication of program outcome.

Of the 385 sampled GATE participants the average score was 70.93 marks for literacy (reading and writing skills) and 70.86 marks for numeracy out of 100. Muslim girls have slightly higher numeracy scores whereas Dalit girls have slightly higher literacy scores. School dropout girls have higher numeracy scores while never-schooled girls have higher literacy scores. In both literacy and numeracy assessments, the distribution of scores fall more towards the higher side of the scale with very few low scores. Half way through the course, GATE participants showed they had developed competency to identify letters (consonants and vowels), words and read and write simple words. However, they only moderately understand and read and write complex words that include vowel signs and conjunct consonants. They also developed the



### 2016 GATE Cohort— Marks Distribution in EGRA

385 participants took a test to assess basic literacy and numeracy outcomes. In all, 11 questions (100 full marks) were developed to assess these core learning outcomes. Scores above 70 are considered to fully meet expected learning outcomes; 40 to 70 are good, and below 40 are poor and unsatisfactory.

competency to count objects, add them and write the added value, do tally and counting, orally count 1 to 100, identify and read written numbers, do simple addition, write multiplication tables 2 and 3, and do simple problem solving. To increase their learning more on numeracy, they need to focus more on multiplication, subtraction, understanding place value, and reading numbers in word form and corresponding digits.

## Empowerment: An Eye on Learning

Rihana Khatun is among the smallest in stature and loudest in voice in her GATE class, readily sharing her opinion with her peers and adults in the room. She has ambitious goals to be in nursing profession.

Before beginning GATE classes in the fall, Rihana's routine looked similar to those of many adolescent girls in Bagahi Tole, a Muslim community in Rautahat District. 14-year-old Rihana supported older women in maintaining the household by washing dishes and clothes, cooking and cleaning the house. When she wasn't at the house, she was cutting grass, grazing the family goats, or collecting firewood.

Rihana said that she was enjoying life, but was feeling empty. Rihana's parents weren't supportive of her enrolling in formal schooling because they thought it was impractical, and like many parents in

the community, learning Urdu was the priority. "What will you do after school?" they would ask. But what Rihana wishes the most for is to attend school on a long-term basis.

That day finally happened nine months ago through World Education Nepal's Girls Access to Education (GATE) classes and the classes gave her the motivation she needed. The past nine months have provided her with skills in financial literacy, food safety, reading, and greater awareness of emergency services. Currently, She is now enrolled in nearby formal school at Bagahi, Rautahat in grade 7. She attends her class every day. As she is committed to study, she wholeheartedly engaged herself in the education that she had been longing for. She believes that the future will be different by the present that you make today. And



for that, sometimes, you need to muster courage to change yourself and learn.

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# 2. Bridging Classes



The Sang Sangai project's Bridging Classes prepared girls between the ages of 10 and 16 who previously dropped out of formal schooling to catch up and re-enroll. The primary objective of Bridging Classes is to encourage out-of-school girls to re-enroll by developing their confidence and by refreshing and building subject-specific knowledge. Class developed participants' reading and writing skills, increased their awareness of basic sanitation and hygiene and equipped them to share health seeking practices with their families and broader communities.

Bridging Classes were for 3 hours per day, 6 days per week over a three month period. During the classes, trained facilitators delivered lessons from the Government of Nepal's non-formal Flexible Schooling Package for school preparation - a multi-grade, multi-level program that incorporates the government's flexible schooling curriculum. At the programs conclusion, World Education and NGO partners supported girls to re-enroll in formal schooling at the appropriate grade level. The classes prioritized girls from highly marginalized or disadvantaged Dalit and Muslim communities. Among these girls, Dalits were more likely than Muslims to have had prior schooling experience. As a result, the demographics of Bridging Classes (which are best suited for dropouts) differ from the demographics of GATE classes.

## Key Achievements

Over three years, Bridging classes reached 7,645 girls in Dhanusha, Sarlahi, Mohattari and Rautahat. This far exceeded the activity's target of reaching 6,000 girls throughout the project duration as demand was higher than anticipated. Of girls that completed Bridging Classes, in the 2016 cycle, 91.8% re-enrolled in formal schooling, and one year later, 82% were continuing to attend regularly. In the 2017 and 2018 cycles, 73.4% and 80.12% of completers re-enrolled in school, respectively. This reach and impact is an enormous success in project areas, where domestic obligations, early marriage and lack of parental support frequently inhibit girls' ability to attend formal schools.

### Bridging Cohorts —Completion and Transition to School by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Enrolled in Bridging	Number of Completers	% of Girls Completing	Number Transitioned to School	% of Completers Transitioning
<b>Dalits</b>	3,329	3,207	96%	2609	81%
<b>Muslim</b>	2261	2,196	97%	1753	80%
<b>Janajati</b>	179	165	92%	153	93%
<b>Others</b>	1876	1,847	98%	1554	84%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,645</b>	<b>7,415</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>6,069</b>	<b>82%</b>



7,645 girls participated in Bridging classes (approximately 2,500 girls per year)



97% of girls who began Bridging classes in three cohorts, completed them



6,069 girls who participated in Bridging classes enrolled in formal schooling the following spring

## Key Learnings

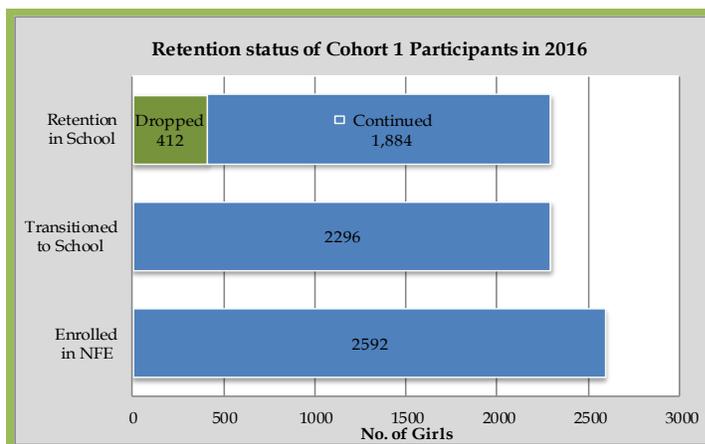
Over three years, 7,645 out of school girls participated in Bridging Classes. On surveying their previous education level, 57.78% of girls had dropped out of school in grade 2 and 3, 19.4% in grade 1 and rest above grade 3.

The reasons behind them leaving formal schooling reflect the poor economic conditions of the family as the major factor. Other reasons include girls being needed to help their mothers with household chores, babysit their younger brothers and sisters and look after older family members due to their deteriorating health condition.

Parents from Muslim and Dalit villages seem equally likely to resist to their daughters' continued education. In Muslim communities, some parents prioritize Madrassas that have not been mainstreamed over government schooling because they consider Urdu an important skill to learn. Muslim and Dalit girls who dropped out from formal school mentioned that parental anxieties about safety and purity, or insistence that they participate in household obligations during the day, were keeping them from school.

Moving forward, it is imperative to prioritize activities that engage and encourage parents around the importance of educating their daughters. This is to ensure that parents themselves are supportive of their daughters going to school and so that parents actively encourage their daughters to attend classes and study at home. Intergenerational activities—another component of the Sang Sangai project—have been effective in promoting dialogue between parents and their daughters and must be continued if not expanded.

97 % of girls who began Bridging Classes completed the course and 82% of completers reenrolled in school. Of the 7,415 girls who completed



### 2016 Bridging Cohort— Retention of girls in School

The SS-LTP team followed up on the progress of girls from 2016 bridging classes. 82% of the 2,296 girls who enrolled in 2016 are continuing their studies in their respective 83 schools. This is an impressive result given the level of marginalization of the girls and the family/cultural context which often makes it very difficult for girls to continue in school given domestic responsibilities, pressure to marry, and parents' precarious economic situations learning (especially as higher grades are more expensive).

Bridging classes, 1,346 did not enroll in formal schooling. 52.7% of these girls are between the ages of 12 and 15—the older end of Bridging Classes' age range. Many older girls opt to participate in the Self Employment and Economic Education Program because of the perception that they are a practical alternative to returning to formal schooling. It is important to create realistic alternative education options for older girls who do not feel that formal education will be useful to them or who consider that at their age they are unlikely to be able to complete schooling.

## Bridging classes provide new hope for Polio-stricken Sahima in Sarlahi

Sahima Khatun of Laxmipur-7, Sarlahi was a healthy and able child at birth, but at age four, Sahima came down with symptoms of Polio. Initially, her parents tried their best for her treatment. Later, her family, relatives and neighbors started thinking of her as a burden and some even wished for her death.

When the Sang Sangai project reached Sahima's village, Sahima was standing on her rough knee with her stiff leg bent backwards. Upon being asked for her name, she hurriedly answered, "I am Sahima, Sahima Khatun and I want to study. I heard that you are here for teaching girls, I have come from nearby house, so please take me as your student." She was overjoyed to join a bridging class.

Sahima successfully completed three months of Bridging classes, and in 2016 she was

admitted to Grade 3 in Shree Sarbajanik Lower Secondary School. With the knowledge and practices shared in class, she learnt to keep herself clean and healthy, improved her educational skills, develop her courage and her longing to be a government officer in the future.

Now, Sahima's parents realize that while she is disabled, she has many abilities and that she could bring a real change in their family through her education. Sahima said, "The Learning Together Program appeared as hope in my life. It has contributed a lot in making my ways easier. My parents now think I am not a burden; I am differently abled though I could do something significant. I want to study, study a lot and set an example for those who thought that death would be better for me."



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# 3. Empowering Mothers



The Sang Sangai Project’s Mother Literacy program aims to empower mothers of out-of-school girls so they can support and participate in their daughters’ learning, gain valuable literacy and numeracy skills of their own, and improve their own health and economic status. The home environment shapes the learning level of the child. Most of the Sang-Sangai participants are from low income households in which parents spend little time on educational activities with their children and allocate few resources to education. The project emphasizes the value of education as an asset for the household. This helps create a better home learning environment and encourages parents to let their daughters join formal school and gain further education.

Mothers participated in a 9-month non-formal education program that has two phases. There is an initial 5 month basic literacy, numeracy and health focused program. This is followed by a 4-month post-literacy, economic education phase which focuses on financial literacy and livelihoods development. Mothers attend class 2 hours per day, 6 days a week for 9 months. The Sang-Sangai- Learning Together program has implemented these adult literacy classes for mothers in Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi and Rautahat. Intergenerational meetings were held regularly to bring together girls and their mothers in non-formal education and provided opportunities to share and discuss learning and issues they face in life and helped girls to plan and get support for ongoing learning.

## Key Achievements

Over two years, 250 mother’s literacy classes were conducted and 4,742 mothers of out-of-school girls in Dhanusha, Sarlahi, Mahottari and Rautahat were incorporated in the program. The poor economic household conditions and urgent need to sustain their lives by undertaking daily labor and seasonal agricultural work during harvesting seasons limited their participation. In these marginalized Dalit and Muslim communities, women prioritized household works, income generating opportunities and child rearing. 35.43% mothers from Dalit community and 54.2% mothers from Muslim community benefited from the program and enthusiastically shared their learning achievements.

### Mothers Participation in Adult Literacy Program by Ethnicity

Districts	Dalits	Muslim	Janajatis	Others	Total
Dhanusha	212	328	5	14	559
Mahottari	244	739	9	19	1011
Sarlahi	570	748	4	161	1483
Rautahat	654	755	2	278	1689
<b>Total</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>2570</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>4742</b>
	35.43%	54.20%	0.42%	9.95%	



Child marriage substantially reduced



More disadvantaged women participating in Saving and credit groups



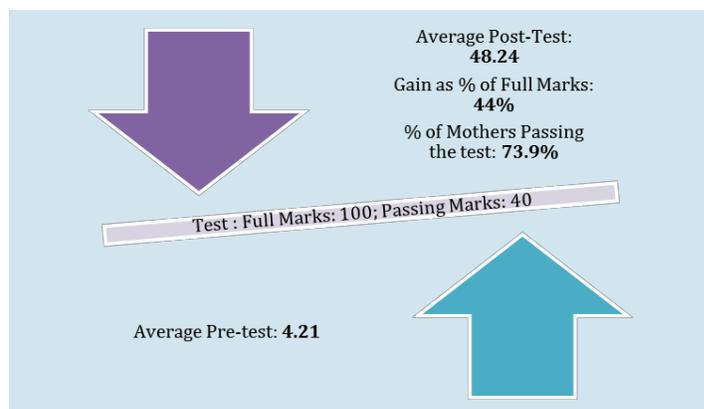
Improved Health, hygiene and sanitation

## Key Learnings

From the Adult literacy program for mothers, mothers increased their literacy, numeracy and behavioral skills. These were tested through pre and post tests. They have learnt basic reading and writing skills. They can count numbers from 1 to 100, identify numbers in their mobile phones and do simple mathematical calculations. Moreover, the substantial increase in their learning is in behavioral skills as they know the importance of cleanliness, clean water and use of toilets, healthy and nutritious food resulting improved sanitation and good health. They also learn regarding addressing discrimination, savings and most importantly the essence of education to them and to their child.

To encourage mothers to be engaged in intergenerational learning, World Education and partners initiated an art program for the mothers. 4,742 mothers engaged in art workshops. The objective of the art program was to bring the women into art programs and engage the mothers in producing traditional cultural arts to promote girls' and women's education to bring about shifts in societal thinking. This program increased their interest in their learning process and motivated them to learn more and improved their regularity in classes and commitment to girls education.

The intergenerational meetings strengthened the relationships and engagement of mothers with their daughters and their learning activities. In these meetings, mothers and daughters come together and shared what they had learnt and the challenges they have faced in learning. Besides sharing their experiences, discussions were also held with the mothers on how the classes have influenced their thinking and changed their behavior and topics that affect their daily lives and their communities such as child marriage, dowry and health issues. These meetings have strengthened mother-daughter relationships, and inspired and motivated mothers and daughters to attend classes regularly.



### 2016 Mother Cohort-Average Learning Achievement

All participants took a pre-test to evaluate their knowledge levels prior to the commencement of Mother Literacy classes. The 100 mark pre-test questionnaire encompasses 64 marks for Nepali, 33 marks for Math and 3 marks for topic analysis. Above 40 marks in overall is considered satisfactory. The same questionnaire was used to conduct a post-test after 9 months of classes in order to evaluate mother's learning.

## Opportunities for Mother-Daughter Pair Grow from Non-Formal Education Offerings

Sabium rarely has a free moment. She's a caring mother, able head of household, and, now, a student determined to see her children succeed. Through World Education's Non-Formal Education (NFE) classes for mothers, 30-year-old Sabium learned the basic literacy and numeracy skills that enable her to sign for the remittances her husband sends back from his migrant labor job in Qatar and to manage finances.

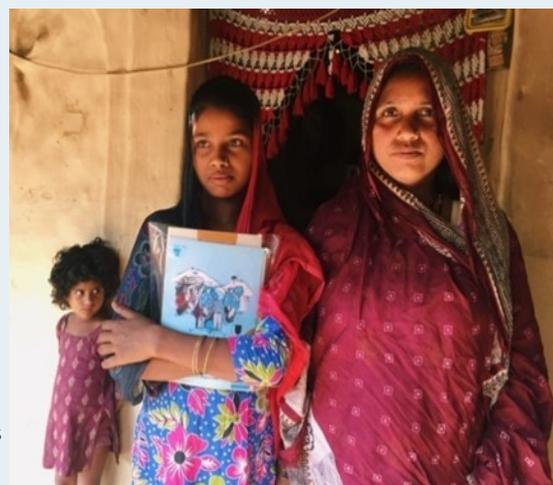
Sabium's parents married her as a child, and as a result, she never participated in formal schooling. Her experience in Dhanusha District is far too common among women living in the area along Nepal's densely populated Indian border, which hosts the country's highest numbers of people living below the poverty line.

Sabium is hopeful that her 12-year-old daughter Khusabu will have a better future than what was available to her — she

recently graduated from World Education's Girls Access to Education (GATE) and joined Class 4 at a local higher secondary school. But before participating in a GATE class which convened at a nearby mosque, Khusabu's path looked like it would mirror her mother's.

When Khusabu was younger, Sabium didn't understand how formal education would be of practical use to Khusabu in their village. Using information she learned in GATE classes, Khusabu explained the benefits of delaying marriage in favor of schooling, and Sabium now offers her full support for her daughter's continued study.

World Education is committed to ensuring that Khusabu and all girls like her can claim their right to education without interference



from social and financial barriers like child labor and early marriage. Our activities directly target out-of-school girls through NFE classes and build allies among adult community members like Sabium who will advocate for their schooling.

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# 4. Mobilizing Community Support



Community participation is a proven approach to address social issues and has been long utilized in literacy programs. Without local participation programs are less likely to be successful. Marginalized communities like Dalits and Muslims face many barriers and find it difficult to participate and are more skeptical of the value and impact of education on their children’s lives. Community participation can be effective if culturally and situationally appropriate. Communities have different needs, problems, beliefs, and practices, related to literacy and formal school education. Getting communities involved in education programs and the implementation process helps ensure that strategies are appropriate for and acceptable to the community and its youth. Participation can also empower the target group within the community. The Sang Sangai project made numerous efforts to engage communities with a special focus on ensuring schools were ready and welcoming of girls graduating from nonformal and joining their school.

To ensure the program was able to build a strong relationship with local communities the NGOs implementing the project recruited staff from the target communities that spoke the local languages and had the capacity to work within these communities. To ensure that girls were supported to attend nonformal education and later transition to school and vocational programs a number of efforts were undertaken. Mothers were a major focus with adult literacy and the arts program which constantly built support for the education of all their children. Other activities are discussed below.

### Creating a Supportive Community Environment

Prior to starting the program meetings were held with local stakeholders including District Education Officers, School Management Committee members, teachers and religious leaders. District government agencies such as the District Education Office, District Development Committee and Women and Children Office were engaged to identify communities with large concentrations of out-of-school girls and prioritize the working Village Development Committees and Municipalities for the program. These agencies then participated in District Project Advisory Committee Meetings (DPAC) and meet with project partners, monitored project activities and facilitated access for graduates to school.

**Village Orientation Programs** were effective to engage communities and parents of out-of-school girls to understand the program design. Through 855 Village Orientation the interest of the communities was assessed and communities identified the adolescent girls within the villages not in school that could participate in the nonformal education. They also selected the facilitators for the classes and venues and for formed “tole” (neighborhood) Child Protection Committees to support the girls participating in the classes. The **Child Protection Committees** assisted the course facilitators and local supervisors to run and monitor the classes and ensure the program ran smoothly. Child Protection Committee members were responsible for strengthening local coordination, raising awareness about education, monitoring the management of classes. They also intervened when girls were prevented from attending classes for work or other reasons and address any interference in classes. Child Protection Committees included a teacher, 6 or 7 parents or family members, Female Community Health Volunteers as members and meetings were conducted monthly along with nonformal education class visits.



*Enhanced and Improved Coordination, Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration and Conscience for education*



*Intergenerational Meetings encouraged mothers to be more involved in their Child’s education*



*29 learning centers installed in disadvantaged communities provided supplementary academic support to NFE graduates transitioning to school*

## Bringing Together Mothers and Daughters

It is assumed that mothers and daughters will discuss education and be united. In reality in extended families mothers and daughters have many responsibilities and little privacy to discuss sensitive issues. The non-formal curriculum includes sensitive health topics and often girls are too embarrassed to discuss these topics with their mothers. Girls also need the support of mothers to be able to attend nonformal education classes regularly and later for transition to schools. To build the dialogue between mothers and daughters on these education and health topics a series of Intergenerational Meetings were held.

At least two meetings were held during the course of the GATE classes to provide a platform for interaction between the generations. The project aimed to create awareness about girls' education among the mothers of disadvantaged communities, share knowledge between daughters and mothers about the social problems and increase readiness for transition of the girls to school. In these sessions girls and mothers discussed their experiences of learning, the health and other topics they learnt about, challenges faced and their future educational aspirations. Discussions were also held with the

mothers on how the classes have influenced their thinking; changed their behavior and topics that affect their daily lives and their communities such as child marriage, trafficking and health issues.

These intergenerational sessions strengthened the relationships and engagement of parents with their daughters. These meetings inspired and motivated mothers and daughters to attend classes regularly. Mothers have also been encouraged to secure birth certificates for those children that lack them to facilitate enrollment and attendance in national examinations. Child marriage was also regularly discussed in the meetings and mothers and daughters have been encouraged to resist this harmful practice as a result of what they have learnt about the negative impacts of early marriage and early pregnancy. Other health topics such as menstruation were commonly discussed when these topics are of such great concern to adolescent girls but often avoided within the



home.

Mothers of the out-of-school girls were so inspired and motivated by the program that thousands of mothers expressed their commitment to send their daughters to the school and not to disturb their school education from their part. With these commitments made in front of other members of the community mothers have been following through and enrolling and supporting their daughters in school.

- » 1,111 inter-generational meetings
- » 8,227 mothers and 11,750 GATE girls

## Learning Centers

After the completion of GATE and Bridging classes, the girls that transition to school often experience challenges in English and maths. They also bear a heavier work burden within the home than their brothers reducing the time they have to study. Often being behind their peers these nonformal education graduates need help to not only keep up but catch up to students of a similar age. The Sang Sangai project worked with communities to create 27 learning Centers in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods to provide extra support to girls to smoothen their transition and retention in school. The students in need of extra support attend the centers in the hours before or after school to access academic coaching and psychosocial support.

These learning centers help girls get opportunities for reading on the topics that interest them such as health and social issues, gender based violence, the world and the

environment as well as stories and fictional books. This helps to improve reading skills and address knowledge gaps, enables them to access help from the volunteer and their peers to tackle difficult topics or skills they are struggling with in school. This is proving to be a huge help to students and motivates them to persist in school even when faced with challenges.

For the establishment of the learning centers, urban and rural municipalities, schools and communities pledged support in the form of space for the learning center, provided furniture as well as other resources. The



project provided orientations for the volunteers that run these centers and a basic library. This positive response from communities and schools ensures that these centers will be able to cater to the needs of these girls in school and provide a support system even when the project ends.

### SANG SANGAI—THE LEARNING TOGETHER PROJECT TECHNICAL BRIEF SERIES

1. Girls Access to Education
2. Bridging Classes
3. Empowering Mothers

4. Mobilizing Community Support
5. Transition to School
6. Transition to Adult Life

# 5. Transition to School



Over three years 23,164 out-of-school girls benefited from the Learning Together project through the 9 month GATE program and 3 month Bridging program. These girls gained valuable literacy and numeracy skills and an understanding of health issues. 21,408 participants (92.42%) completed their course and 17,306 girls (80.83% of the completers) transitioned to over 200 formal schools. These girls face many challenges at home and at school that undermine their commitment to stay in school once enrolled. These include the costs of schooling, competing demands for their labor at home, concerns over the safety of adolescent girls in school, pressure to leave school and marry, being overage in the grades they are admitted to, sexual harassment, overcrowded classrooms and generally low levels of learning achievement across this region.

Government health and socio-economic data shows every additional year of schooling improves their adult lives. The project has engaged with schools and communities to improve retention of these girls and other at-risk students. Schools need to offer students a good learning environment that is appealing and keeps them motivated to attend the classes daily. Many factors contribute to this and in these under-resourced schools Learning Together project efforts focused on helping schools address how school management can create a favorable learning environment and ensure learning outcomes for all students. The role of parents and the community is also vital for ensuring all students are welcome and supported and in particular that Dalit and Muslim students are fully included and parents were engaged in these efforts.

To improve access and inclusion of disadvantaged girls transitioning to school and enabling them to achieve learning outcomes the project activities were focused on:

- Building the capacity of the members of the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and School Management Committees (SMC) to understand the formation process for the SMC and PTA and the tenure of members, their roles and responsibilities, school management, planning and budgeting, core education issues and how they can be addressed.
- Enhancing the quality of education in community schools and ensuring that the schools are child-friendly.
- Ensuring the engagement and commitment of the stakeholders for the improvement and overall development of the schools by developing and implementing School Improvement Plans.

**“We have gone from having to say “auu” (come) to get students to come to school to saying “jauu” (go) to get students to go home” as students want to continue working on the computers past school hours! “**

**- Ram Krishna Mandal,  
Principal  
Bherukhi Secondary School, Loharpatti, Mahottari**



*300 schools are supported to mobilize teachers and parents to support access to education and school improvement for better learning outcomes of disadvantaged children, especially girls*



*14,293 GATE and Bridge Graduates received scholarships (in-kind) to support to transition to school*



*14 Schools of Dhanusha, Mahottari, Rautahat and Sarlahi district received ICT labs to accelerate learning for GATE and Bridge graduates*

**Improved School Governance and Management:** Schools in Nepal have a School Management Committee (SMC) that supports day-to-day school management and a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) that engages all parents and teachers to support the schools development, elect the SMC, engage parents in school activities and ensure accountability. Leaders of school governance bodies were provided with two days of intensive training followed by in-school support from Community Mobilizers to help them develop plans and activities to support disadvantaged girls entering formal schooling. Additional follow up events were held with members of school governance bodies. These schools continue to develop, revise and implement School Improvement Plans with a major emphasis on enhancing student's Opportunity to Learn. Schools priorities include addressing access to education, teacher and student attendance, gender discrimination, class size, access to learning materials, time on task in classrooms, and learning to read.

Training for SMCs/PTAs was conducted in 300 schools where project beneficiaries were enrolled. SMC/PTA members developed their understanding of education policies and strategies, children's rights, roles and responsibilities of head teachers, teachers and parents. They were encouraged and supported to work for the improvement of their schools by developing and implementing School Improvement Plans based on their priorities and resources. They have also identified the areas in which they need support from stakeholders. SMC/PTA

members are now actively involved in monitoring the regularity of the teachers and classes. They have developed yearly plans of action and many have developed and implemented codes of conduct for

students, teachers and the SMC. The attendance and regularity of teachers has substantially increased. The SMC/PTA members have developed a vision for each of these schools including no discrimination between girls and boys, equal opportunity to learn, no gender-based violence, proper utilization of local resources and child-friendly environment. Continuous follow up events have been held with SMC/PTA members to discuss the girls' learning outcomes and their retention in school.



**Addressing Economic Barrier :** Girls' transitioning from GATE classes to school required a uniform, supplies, stationery and learning materials which are often beyond the resources of their parents. For the first year of formal school, the project provided this in-kind support. In subsequent years, the girls are eligible for a modest government scholarship, which parents must supplement with their own contributions. Additional stationary and materials were provided to the most needy students to enable them to continue in school.

14,293 GATE and Bridge Graduates (5,389 girls in 2017 and 8,904 girls in 2018) received scholarships in-kind as a support to transition them to formal school. The scholarships provided school uniforms, school bags, supplies and stationeries. Having these provided helped motivate these girls to join school and continue their studies. As the Sang Sangai—Learning Together project endeavored to increase enrollment and retention of girls in school girls in the program were surveyed to identify barriers and the support needed. In 2017 97 GATE girls that had been previously enrolled in school but had dropped out were asked what support they would need to stay in school were they to rejoin. Their responses on the potential motivational effects of different physical materials were that a school uniform is almost universally desired (97%), pencil kits/stationery and bags 79%, while bicycles at 65% were also desired. The emotional/social and educational support such as support from teachers, parents and friends all figure very prominently (93-95%) of girls rated these important and having role models and extra coaching were also substantial, at 60% and 71%, respectively. These responses were taken in to account in designing activities and determining the support to be given.



**ICT for Accelerated Learning:** Girls transitioned to school are often older than their classmates. To catch up with their peers they need additional opportunities for self-study and peer-study. To support this, the project is piloting an ICT for Learning program in fourteen schools with large numbers of GATE graduates in Dhanusha, Mahottari, Rautahat and Sarlahi. Schools of lower secondary, secondary and higher secondary were identified based on high enrollment of NFE graduates and out-of-school children, availability of rooms, internet and electricity required for the ICT project as well as the resources to continue to support and use an ICT lab. Schools were provided with Open Source content, including the e-digital library with more than 8,000 books, on 20 workstation computers so that all students, and especially girl graduates of NFE, are able to access content beyond their current grade level in order to sit for exams and move to the next grade more rapidly. World Education collaborated with OLE Nepal for content and training of teachers for these ICT lab schools. While accessing schools by interacting with School Management Committees, teachers, head masters to discuss on various aspects of school management, their interest and capacity to support ICT use in the school. It was observed that all the schools have high number of students and there is a great need for these schools to provide more learning opportunities. Even in the schools that have a few computers, they are unable to cater to the large number of students. These labs



are proving very popular and are providing an impetus for students to advance their knowledge and learning. The schools say "we have gone from having to say "auu" (come) to get students to come to school to saying "jauu" (go) to get students to go home" as students want to continue working on the computers past school hours!

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# 6. Transition to Adult Life



The Self-Employment and Economic Education Program (SEEP) helped young people develop entrepreneurial skills. The Sang-Sangai project used this for the adolescent girls aged 14 to 18 who did not enroll in government schools even after completing GATE and Bridging classes, due to poverty, over-aged and other reasons. Through SEEP classes, girls gained self-employment and entrepreneurship skills, enabling their ability to start small businesses and forming saving and credit groups in their own communities.

During the 6 months of SEEP classes, girls gained opportunities to learn about employment, entrepreneurship, micro-finance, and saving and credit groups. The trained facilitators taught different topics, which required 2 hours per day, 6 days per week over a six-month period. As they progressed through the course, the participants conducted a feasibility test, made account books for their experiential business, and made marketing and business plans.

Besides group formation, saving and experiential business learning, the participants also learned about the importance of establishing relationship with various stakeholders for support and guidance. Participants internalized the importance of developing a business plan and record keeping. Likewise, they learned the importance of financial literacy and steps to access the bank and loans for their business. Not only did SEEP classes teach business related knowledge, but also taught girls to resist child marriage, which was common among their communities.

## Key Achievements

1,568 GATE and Bridging program participants, who did not re-enroll in formal school, and 88 girls from the community, attended the SEEP classes. The participation of Muslim girls (64%) in the program was high in comparison to the Dalit girls (27%) and others (9%). Of the 1,568 participants, 1,492 girls completed the program, and 1,163 girls were involved in formation of business groups and participated in savings and credit groups.

The participants kept a portfolio of work, which included a feasibility study, business accounts, marketing plan, business plan, and SWOT analysis. The girls could choose one experiential business or subgroups could choose a variety of activities. Participants gained knowledge on working in groups and how to finance their businesses through saving and credit groups. The SEEP participants formed 94 savings and credit groups, while others joined existing microfinance schemes within their community. By learning viable ways to save money and sustain a business through their groups, 1,163 girls in 82 groups staff were able to follow up with accumulated a total of Rs. 432,559, averaging Rs. 5,335 (~ US \$48) in savings per group. Additionally, the project provided a start-up grant of Rs. 20,000 for each group to purchase equipment and materials to start their experiential business.

After gaining some knowledge and building upon their soft skills and entrepreneurial skills, 47% of the girls set up their business in tailoring services/shops, 22% in beauty products retail, 9% in poultry farming, 8% in grocery retail shops, 4% in goat farming, and the remaining girls in other businesses such as fruit retailing, meat shops, art and paintings etc.



*1,568 girls participated in SEEP classes and 82 saving groups were formed among themselves*



*1,163 girls did an average of Rs. 5,335 savings in groups over a 6 months period*



*Imparted knowledge and soft skills of self employment and empowerment through small business or enterprises*

## Key Learnings

From 2016-2018, 23,164 out of school girls who either left school due to various circumstances or had never been to school got benefited from our project through 9 month GATE program and 3 month Bridging program. 21,408 participants (92.42%) completed the course and 17,306 girls (80.83% of the completers) transitioned to formal school.

5,858 girls out of our total beneficiaries either didn't complete the course and/or weren't mainstreamed to formal schooling. On reflecting why girls didn't enroll in school, 20.63% were more interested in joining vocational classes than formal school and 4.19% due to older age with regard to their grade level.

The project team found many over aged girls, with respect to their enrolled grade level, preferred vocational classes to formal education. Guardians also shared the same sentiment, preferring skill-based learning for their daughters to earn money and gain skills to maintain throughout their married life. Therefore, older girls preferred SEEP classes with hope they would gain entrepreneurship skills and produce more income to uplift their livelihood. SEEP class also gave an opportunity for higher age girls to continue their education and resist child marriage as in marginalized communities, older age girls are more likely to get married and get greater household responsibilities.

Furthermore, the growth in confidence and knowledge of these girls motivated other girls in the community to learn and develop their skills. SEEP classes has provided the forum for further 88 school drop outs who weren't in our cohorts to engage in entrepreneurship development skills. SEEP classes facilitated the pathway for continued learning for the girls who could not go to school primarily due to family objections.

### SEEP Classes: A new avenue

Being the middle child isn't easy for Sihanisani, 15. Her two younger sisters and one younger brother are too young to help with the household chores, and her eldest brother, who went to Malaysia for earning money, never returned back to support the family. Her father Rangilal Mandal, 45 is a wage laborer and her mother also works as a laborer cutting grass to make ends meet, but the income is rarely enough. Sihanisani has not started working yet but she is expected to work in the fields just like her parents soon.

She used to study in local governmental school till grade 2 but then left as she has to babysit her small sisters and a brother in her early age. Her dream of going to school got completely shattered and since then she has been supporting her family in household activities so that her parents can do some earning.

Despite her struggles, Sihanisani smiles in this photo for a different reason. Last fall, she

joined World Education's Girls Access to Education course for out of school girls near her home in Kabilasi, Sarlahi District. Together with her, her one younger sister also studied in GATE program and her mother also joined World Education's Mother literacy program. Both sisters developed literacy and numeracy skills. Her younger sister enrolled in school and is a regular student and has ambition for further studies. She rather opts to enroll in World Education's SEEP program than formal schooling because of her higher age.

Like the 1,568 SEEP participants this year, Sihanisani hopes to learn about self-employment and entrepreneurship skills that will help her initiate her own enterprise own day. Though it took a time to find her path, Sihanisani is looking forward to serving her family and community using the knowledge she learnt in SEEP. She feels non-formal classes like GATE, Mother and SEEP have provided a hope and motivation for them to move their life a head in positive



direction. She is happy that her sister is currently studying in school and much excited to start her own business.



#### 2018 SEEP Cohort— Girls by Experiential Business

47% of the girls did experiential business in Tailoring, 22% were involved in Beauty products business, 9% in Poultry farming, 8% in Retail shops, 4% in Goat farming and remaining in Beauty parlor, Bangle shop, Meat shop, Fruit retailing and Art/Paintings enterprises.

Following the completion of this program, the project team recommends to provide further support in specific vocational trainings, and partnership between local NGOs with government trainings to help girls further develop skills in their chosen business.