

# Life Skill and Gender Transformative Workshops to create an enabling environment for the girls to pursue their life plan

AARAMBHA: LEAVE NO GIRL BEHIND

Learning Brief | Feb 2024

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## INTRODUCTION

The Madhesh Province has been falling behind in terms of education when compared to the other six provinces of Nepal. While the literacy rate in Nepal is 57.4%, the women's literacy rate is 38.88% in Madhesh Province. This indicates a significant gap between female and male literacy. About 3.6% of students drop out of school nationally, which is 2.91% in Madhesh Province, and child marriage remains one of the most dominant reasons for school dropout<sup>1</sup>.

The Aarambha project was implemented in Madhesh province in Rautahat and Bara districts to improve the life chances of out-of-school (OOS) adolescent girls (age 10–19). Of the 9,497 girls enrolled in the CLCs, 8,122 have successfully graduated and made life plans<sup>2</sup> to reach their goals and embrace change. Among the enrolled girls, 4,986 transitioned to school to continue their studies, and 2,347 chose technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to start their businesses.

The project conducted a life skills session along with the CLC courses to support and prompt these girls to pursue their life plans in their respective CLCs. A gender transformative workshop (GTW) was organised in schools as well as in communities where the CLC graduates started their businesses or continued their learning in schools. Both approaches are aimed to empower the girls to pursue their life plans. The GTW has focused on mitigating gender-based violence (GBV), socially harmful practices such as child marriage, the dowry system, and other restrictive social barriers to a girl's education. Its premise is to create a more inclusive and gender-sensitive school environment with effective management, that results in a continuation of girls in school learning.

## WHAT ARE LIFE SKILL SESSIONS AND GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE WORKSHOPS?

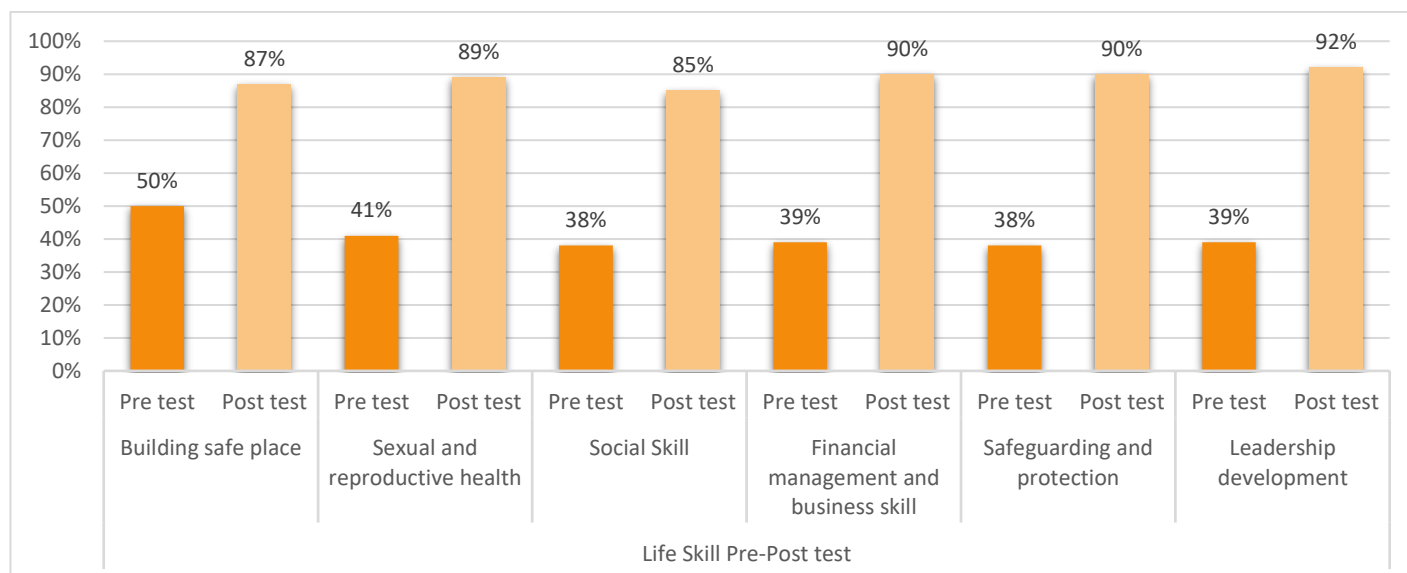
**Life skill sessions** encompass a wide range of abilities that enable individuals to cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life, both personally and professionally. Accordingly, life skill training focuses on teaching practical skills that can enhance various aspects of an individual's life. The Aarambha project conducted life-skills coaching sessions (142 hours) for all 9,497 enrolled girls in their respective CLCs over six months. The sessions enhanced the girls' knowledge in diverse areas like health, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), social skills, safety, financial

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<sup>1</sup> Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC): Nepal Human Rights Year Book 2023

<sup>2</sup> Life plans include different ways and procedures to help girls identify how and where they will transition – either to school through re-enrolment or vocational training.

management, business planning, and leadership, in addition to numeracy and literacy training. Before the sessions, a life skills pre-test was conducted with 8,646 CLC graduates and later a post-test with 8,044 CLC graduates.



Supplementary activities such as exposure visits, guest lectures, menstruation hygiene management, and local pad-making training were also facilitated. These efforts bolstered girls' confidence in expressing themselves, which is also reflected in the internal assessments and pre-post-tests.

**The Gender Transformative Workshop** was designed for school-going girls and out-of-school adolescent girls to ensure their leadership and development in education, and to ensure that gender and social inclusion and protection-based approaches are applied in their daily lives addressing key challenges of gender-based violence (GBV), socially harmful practices such as child marriage, dowry system, and other social barriers to girl's education. The workshop was conducted in the following format:

<b>WEEK 1</b> Health	Basic health, hygiene, nutrition, puberty, menstruation (myths and facts), sexual and reproductive health and rights
<b>WEEK 2</b> Safety and security	How to stay safe, the concept of bullying, sexual abuse and its various forms, domestic violence, human trafficking, child marriage and its negative impacts, risk mapping, referral, and reporting mechanism, etc.
<b>WEEK 3</b> Equality, Social and gender norms	Different terminologies on gender, equality, social inclusion, and exclusion, gender roles, and addressing harmful social norms including child marriages all contextualised and made relevant for Nepal.
<b>WEEK 4</b> Social and financial skills	Communication skills, financial management, decision-making skills, leadership, negotiation and problem-solving skills
<b>WEEK 5</b> The Boy's Effect and Girls' Power	Identifying goals and dreams, following dreams, being a role model, and the importance of education and developing an action plan

## WHY LIFE-SKILL AND GTW IN AARAMBHA-LNGB?

The Aarambha project has specifically targeted marginalised girls who are either out-of-school children or dropped out of school several years ago. They feel reluctant to go to school as they are not used to the school environment. Similarly, the girls who transit to TVET are attempting to start their businesses. These girls might face different social norms and barriers that are prevalent in their area. Therefore, to empower them, life skill training and GTW were provided with the following main objectives:

1. To empower girls to pursue their life plan
2. To create a safe and school-enabling environment for girls' education
3. To mitigate gender-based violence, social harmful practices such as child marriage, dowry system, and other social barriers to promote girl's education.

TARGET GROUP	
GTW	School-going adolescent boys and girls with an age criterion of 10-19 years from 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , and 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade.
Life skill	All CLC enrolled girls

## HOW ARE LIFE-SKILLS AND GTW CONDUCTED IN AARAMBHA?

Life-skill sessions were carried out in the respective CLCs instantaneously after the CLC courses on literacy and numeracy on same day. It was carried out for 6 months for 1-2 hours a day. All 9 497 CLC girls participated in the life-skill sessions.

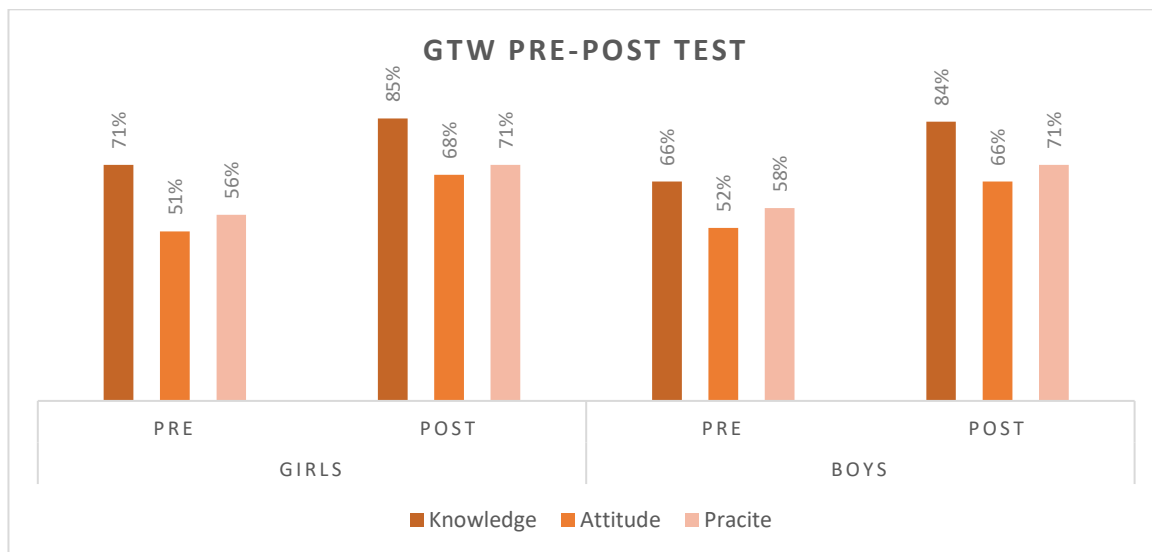
Whereas GTW was conducted in schools and the community. The GTW curriculum was designed by the project in the context of Madhesh Province. Different types of participatory tools and methodologies were used, such as group discussion, role-play, story sharing, Gameplay, Ask-Pare-Share, ask vs Tell, Think-Pare-share, Lecture, and Interviews. Which is defined as follows:

### 1. GTW in Community schools:

GTW was carried out in schools by 296 trained mentors. The workshops were conducted daily for five weeks. On the last day, they directed and performed a community ceremony during which they presented their newly acquired public speaking skills to their parents, teachers, and other community members. These events served as advocacy platforms for the students to talk about issues they find important, such as early marriage, trafficking, domestic violence, and others. The project intervened GTW in 48 schools in 10 rural/ municipalities from Rautahat and 12 rural/ municipalities from Bara, reaching a total of 4,465 school girls, 4,286 school boys, and 439 school teachers.

### ❖ Impact of GTW in school

The pre-tests and post-tests of the GTW participants (girls and boys) show positive changes in the knowledge, attitude, and practice on gender-based violence (GBV) issues, socially harmful practices such as child marriage, dowry system, and other social barriers to girl's education practices, such as child marriage, dowry system, and other social barriers for girl's education.



### ❖ Cascading of GTW and its impact

After the completion of the 28-day workshop in schools, peer leaders are selected among the students who participated in the workshop in all 48 schools. They are tasked with preparing sessions, with the guidance and support of the gender-focal person on various topics they learned during the workshops. Subsequently, they disseminate this knowledge to their peers during extracurricular activities classes on Fridays.

The impact survey was conducted with the peer leaders of 20 municipalities from 47 schools of Bara and Rautahat districts who have done cascading. Following are the findings from it:

- 83% of peer leaders have conducted cascading under the topic of health.
- 91% of peer leaders have realised their skill improvement in communication and conversation and 80% on teaching and learning after conducting cascading.
- 99% of peers have found improved leadership skills with decision-making whereas facilitation skills by 76%.
- 82% of peer leaders have found improved knowledge of gender equality and social norms and values.
- 60% of peer leaders have found a lack of interest and cooperation by participants in the cascading event as a major challenge.
- 91% of peer leaders have observed behavioural changes regarding the proper behaviour among the peers with the participants of cascading.
- 41% of the peer leaders have highlighted additional resources and material support for the sustainability of cascading in the events.

## 2. GTW at Local and Community Level

The project provided a 2.5-day capacity-building training for various stakeholders, including the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, political leaders, youths, Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV), social mobilizers, women groups, and religious leaders from different rural/municipalities. The training covered topics such as the importance of girls' education, the impacts of child marriage and dowry, and government policies on girls' education, protection, and Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI). Over 400 individuals were trained, and 290 change champions (volunteers) were identified in 22 local levels of Rautahat and Bara districts. Following the workshop, key persons such as community leaders, religious leaders, health workers, local police, activists, and teachers were selected and trained as Change Champions. These champions were mobilised to promote a gender-transformative environment, encourage

girls' enrolment and continuation in school, and act against harmful social norms and practices like child marriage and gender-based discrimination. They developed a 10-month work plan based on the training and have reached over 9,500 community members through various awareness activities.

## KEY LEARNINGS

**GTW & life skill sessions empower OOS girls with decision-making, communication, leadership, and negotiation skills.** A perception survey notes 83% reporting increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, confidence, and a sense of empowerment through project intervention, demonstrating their strong commitments and remarkable knowledge of agency against child marriage, harmful social norms, disaster and preparedness, and their confidence in decision-making, participation, exercising rights and responsibilities.

**GTW and life skill sessions empower girls to pursue their life plans.** As a result, 70% of the school-transitioned girls are continuing their formal education, whereas 69% of the girls who transitioned to the TVET are continuing their business.

**The addition of life skills sessions, in conjunction with literacy and numeracy sessions, enhanced the girls' self-confidence.** The life skills curriculum taught in CLCs significantly improved essential life skills, including communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. The internal thematic assessment of the effectiveness of People in Need's life skills and gender transformation curriculum indicated nearly 90% of participants reported enhanced abilities in handling conflicts, making informed decisions, and solving daily challenges, highlighting the curriculum's effectiveness in practical skill development.

**Collaboration with local stakeholders strengthens impact:** Engaging local stakeholders, such as community leaders, teachers, and parents, in the curriculum implementation proved advantageous. Their support and involvement not only enhanced the credibility of the program but also contributed to its long-term success. The collaboration ensured that the curriculum aligned with community needs and was perceived as a valuable resource. Over 90% of respondents acknowledged the positive influence of community leaders and teachers in promoting the curriculum's acceptance and effectiveness.

**Gender transformation curriculum empowered girls to challenge harmful social norms:** Gender transformation curriculums of CLCs have proven effective in challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality. The girls demonstrated an increased awareness of gender issues and a willingness to challenge harmful stereotypes and practices. Over 85% of respondents from the thematic assessment on gender transformative curriculum expressed a more positive attitude towards gender equality, with many indicating a shift in their perceptions of traditional gender roles. This finding highlights the curriculum's potential to foster positive attitudinal changes toward gender roles and empower individuals to advocate for gender equality.

**Leveraging GIEN member engagement for sustainable adaptation:** The engagement of GIEN members in GTW was helpful for the sustainability of gender transformative approach adaptation at schools, for example; schools are regularly carrying out GTW cascading (learning dissemination) as extra curriculum activities.



## Empowering Girls and Boys through Gender Transformative Workshop



Fourteen-year-old, Hiramoti Chaurasiya resident of Paroha municipality lives with a family of 10 members. Despite discussions about her marriage, Hiramoti is determined to pursue her education. The Aarambha project's Gender Transformative Workshop (GTW) played a crucial role in shaping her perspective. In the workshop, she learned about various topics, including health, sanitation, safety, violence, and discrimination.

While her family considered marriage, Hiramoti, aware of the consequences and her legal rights, bravely opposed the idea. Through her determination, she successfully convinced her parents to postpone any thoughts of marriage until she turns 20. Now, she serves as a peer leader in her school, sharing the knowledge gained during GTW sessions with other students. Hiramoti stands as a role model and leader, inspiring others to pursue their dreams and fight for their dignity. Her story exemplifies the transformative power of education in changing lives and societies.

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*I believe every girl deserves a chance to learn and grow. Through Gender Transformative Workshop, I'm proud to stand up for inclusive education and address the issues that matter to us all. Together, we can make a difference and ensure every student's voice is heard.*

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