

Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN)

AARAMBHA: LEAVE NO GIRL BEHIND

Learning Brief | Feb 2024

INTRODUCTION

Girls and Inclusive Education network (GIEN) is a platform comprising of a group or a system of interconnected people collectively advocating for the special needs of women, girls, children with disabilities and marginalised groups, to ensure they have access to equitable learning opportunities. It seeks to promote multi-stakeholder partnerships, which emphasise governmental linkages and the private sector. GIEN consists of girls, youth, and adult members as representatives from various stakeholders at the school, municipality, provincial, and federal levels.

GIEN was formed under the technical leadership of the FCDO/UK aid's Girls Education Challenge (GEC) programme¹. It is implemented by three strategic partners – People in Need (PIN) Nepal, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), and Street Child, in consultation with the Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD). All three partners have implemented GIEN activities under their GEC projects and continue integrating activities under their work portfolio. The Aarambha-Leave no Girl Behind project carried out the forming of Girls and the Inclusive Education Network (GIEN) in working schools and at local levels of Bara and Rautahat districts of the Madhesh Province with support to CEHRD in policy planning and documentation at the federal and provincial levels.

The network is closely aligned with the policies and priorities of the Government of Nepal (GoN), under the 10-year School Education Sector Plan (2021–2030). It was developed to create gender networks, which guarantee the Government of Nepal's ownership in continuing these initiatives and seeking to coordinate governmental and non-governmental organisations' efforts to lower educational barriers for girls and maintain inclusive learning over time. This network will support school governance, reduce sexual and gender-based violence (SRGBV), and create a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for girls to transition to and remain in secondary education by strengthening the complaint response mechanism (CRM) at the school/community level. In addition to guaranteeing girls' access to education, GIEN will also make sure that gender stereotypes are eliminated from instructional materials, that girls feel safe in the classroom, that they receive enough help with their coursework, and that they are free to choose the careers they want to follow.

¹ Girls Education Challenge (GEC) is the UK FCDO's largest girls' education programme focused on provision of education to marginalised girls across the world. <https://girlseducationchallenge.org/>



The major objectives of the GIEN include:

- ❖ Supporting communities to reduce harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and assisting local governments and schools to re-enroll children in education.
- ❖ Capacitating the local education leaders to provide peer-to-peer guidance and mentoring to the most marginalised girls & children with disabilities to address their well-being concern.
- ❖ Strengthening the commitment and capacity of schools to promote gender-responsive and inclusive education.
- ❖ Influencing and supporting the government to ensure that the voices of marginalised children are prioritised in policy decisions and reflected in governmental action plans.

HOW EXACTLY DOES THE GIEN ALIGN WITH THE SCHOOL EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN (SESP)²?

- ❖ GIEN has been included as a separate theme in Section 5.3 of the SESP and is considered to be a cross-cutting agenda in every section of the plan.
- ❖ The network has been highlighted for its value and its expansion and strengthening in the program implementation manual of the Nepal Government - Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) 2022/2023. This is expected to be continued in days to come in line with the SESP.

Achievements of GIEN in Aarambha:

- ❖ CEHRD is developing a seven-year GIEN Strategic Plan for the fiscal year 2080/81. Karnali, Bagmati & Gandaki Province are in the progress of developing and endorsing the GIEN guidelines.
- ❖ A federal network and a provincial network have been established in Madhesh, Lumbini, Gandaki, Koshi, and Sudurpaschim provinces. GIEN supporting agencies are also actively engaged in 129 municipalities.
- ❖ GIEN has been formed and capacitated with a 2-day orientation at the central and all provincial levels.
- ❖ Planning, preparation, and interaction are ongoing to put forward GIEN intervention for the upcoming years in each province.
- ❖ GIEN networks have been formed and completed at the local levels in 82 municipalities. 73 municipalities have endorsed GIEN procedures.
- ❖ All provinces and some local governments have committed to allocating a budget for GIEN execution, whereas 61 municipalities have incorporated budget allocations for GIEN activities in their annual plans totalling NPR 1,76,68,000. Additionally, 8 municipalities officially recorded these allocations in Red Book³.
- ❖ Three local governments—Bodhbarsain, Surunga, and Baragadhi—have declared themselves literate Palikas with support from GIEN member
- ❖ More than 50 school-level CRM/GIEN committees have been formed and preliminary training and orientations have been completed.

² <https://bit.ly/3UP0ZWK>

³ Local Government's detailed budget for the fiscal year 2080–81 (2023–24)

- ❖ CRM procedure training has been conducted for 302 Head Teachers & Gender Focal Persons lasting 2 to 3 training days.

WHAT ABOUT GIEN ACTIVITIES IN THE MADHESH PROVINCE?

- ❖ The provincial level GIEN was formed in Madhesh Pradesh, with the leadership of the Provincial Government and CEHRD, in which PIN is represented as an invitee technical member. Moreover, the name was finalised as Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN) by the initiative from CEHRD at the provincial level. The project is replicating similar schools/communities at the local level.
- ❖ The project formed 50 GIEN in schools in Bara and Rautahat districts. The members of the GIEN were oriented on girl's education, and CRM at school and capacitated for effective mobilization. Gender transformative workshops were completed in 50 schools under the leadership of GIEN.

STUDY FINDINGS ON END-OF-PROJECT EVALUATION

The end-of-project evaluation was conducted to assess whether the project has achieved its intended outcomes, as well as to analyse its effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and lessons learned, including GIEN. According to the evaluation survey, it was found that people are becoming more aware of GIEN's existence and their work. By participating in it, they have improved their public speaking skills and have become better decision-makers. The initiation of GIEN's promotion of a complaint response mechanism and Gender Transformative Workshop (GTW) at the school level were considered pivotal and effective.

"The project's impact extends beyond formal education, fostering girls' decision-making autonomy and emphasizing the importance of ongoing training and awareness campaigns."

-Change champion, Subarna RM

Meanwhile, the Mayor of Karaiyamai also mentioned that the GIEN's awareness can positively boost inclusiveness in the community. The lack of data regarding OOS girls before GIEN's concept has been improved in the local areas. In Katariya municipality, the GIEN at the Palika level was also found to be active. The municipal education officer was a member himself.

"The initial understanding of the people was that boys and girls are extremely different. But due to GIEN, people have started to become more inclusive."

-Mayor, Karaiyamai RM

The representative from CEHRD mentioned that a total budget of NRs 15 lakhs had been allocated by local levels. Investment-wise, the GIEN intervention had begun in Subarna Municipality, with NRs 2 lakhs. The implementation of GIEN was not possible in some of the schools due to internal conflict in the school management.

On the downside, the GIEN meetings were not regular although the rule was to have meetings once every 4 months. Furthermore, the Palikas itself did not have any plans regarding sustaining the project activities and relied mostly on the expansion of GIEN based on its progress in the current year in many municipalities.

“Even though we have tried, the Palika and GIEN level interventions still have not aligned.”

-Municipal Education Officer, Katariya M.

CHALLENGES

During the initial stages of implementation, CEHRD encountered significant challenges in coordinating and engaging with different Provincial and Local-level GIEN committees. Consequently, there was a pressing need to establish and maintain linkages among CEHRD and these various committees, reflecting a Consistent concern.

- ❖ Stakeholders in the local government felt that the GIEN implementation was an added burden to their already existing responsibilities. The schools and the local levels are deterred from the responsibility of GIEN thinking and there is a need to have wide awareness and a sense of accountability and ownership.
- ❖ The functionality of GIEN at the local levels faced delays due to the pending approval of the operational guidelines. Implementation has slowed down and frustration at the local level has increased, due to a lack of human resources. Nonetheless, the implementing partners remain positive that once the approval comes in, it would fast-track the process to systemise GIEN and render it more efficiently.

SUSTAINABILITY OF GIEN

The sustainability approach of GIEN has been divided into two approaches: first that of CEHRD and second that of PIN as an implementing partner from the field.

CEHRD approach:

- ❖ Finalise a seven-year strategic plan for integration and mobilisation of scattered resources to achieve equity and inclusion in education
- ❖ Development of Terms of References (ToRs) of the federal, provincial, local, and school-level GIEN which will include each level's rights, duties, and responsibilities for promoting inclusive education and contributing to the institutionalization and expansion of GIEN.
- ❖ Expansion and development of GIEN capacity at all levels of the government (lobbying, advocating, support)
- ❖ Formulation of model GIEN procedures from CEHRD that can be adopted at the local level (maintaining consistency in formulation & execution)
- ❖ Capacity building and training of local actors for disability screening & materials support
- ❖ Development of model directives for GIEN management
- ❖ Expansion and capacity building of GIEN in the province and remaining local governments
- ❖ Development of materials for training and awareness of student abuse and bullying

- ❖ Model material development on multi-language education
- ❖ Embedding of equity index in Integrated Educational Management Information System (IEMIS) & Disability module development and strengthening in IEMIS

PIN's approach:

- ❖ PIN is planning to scale up GIEN initiatives to other districts and provinces of Nepal, with the formation, operationalisation, and capacity strengthening of network volunteers.

GIRLS' EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE TO HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES.



In Nepal's Madhesh Province, Shree Secondary School Naya Gamhariya is a beacon of hope, breaking norms with the help of the Girls and Inclusive Education Network (GIEN). Sofiya Shiekh, an eighth-grader and GIEN member, determined to make her school inclusive. With courage and compassion, Sofiya tackles issues like broken locks and water scarcity, ensuring challenges don't go unnoticed.

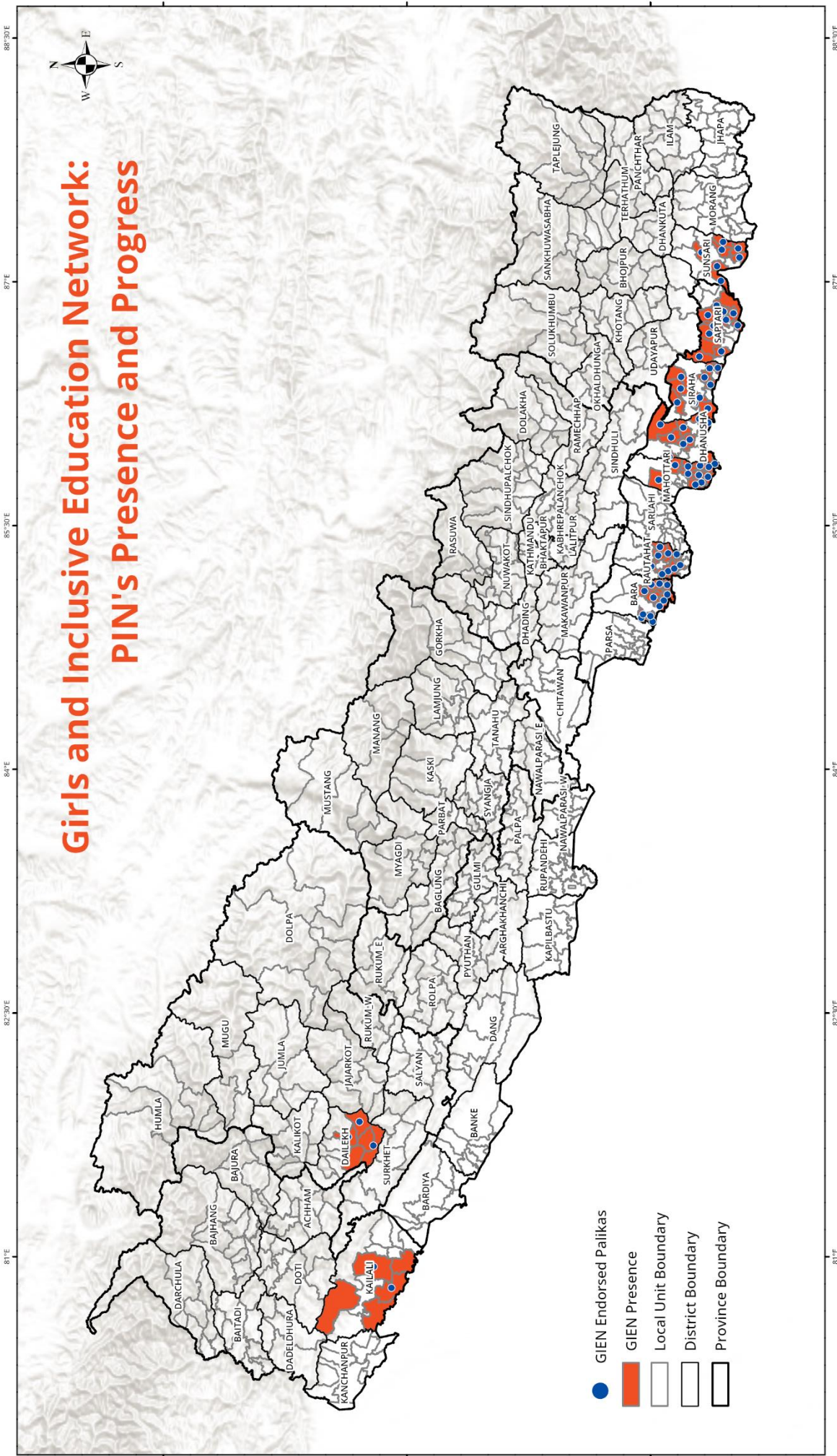
“Girls and Inclusive Education Network helps girls like us to make sure all kids can go to school and learn together.”- Sofiya

Pappu Kumar Das, a ninth-grader, transformed from a shy bystander to a confident leader through GIEN. He addresses school issues and engages with local officials. Together, Sofiya, Pappu, and their peers are rewriting their school's story, supported by Principal Ram Adar Paswan. GIEN's impact is visible – improved facilities, increased enrollment, and empowered students.

Despite challenges, the school remains committed to inclusivity and empowerment. Guided by GIEN, they're creating a brighter future for every child. In Shree Secondary School Naya Gamhariya, heroes like Sofiya, Pappu, and Principal Paswan lead the way to progress, supported by GIEN on the journey to a more equitable and inclusive society.



Girls and Inclusive Education Network: PIN's Presence and Progress



- GIEN Endorsed Paikas
- GIEN Presence
- Local Unit Boundary
- District Boundary
- Province Boundary

82	Technical Support to Local Levels		80	GIEN Formed in Local Levels	
18	Local Levels Published GIEN Operation Guideline in Gazette		73	Local Levels Endorsed GIEN Operational Guideline	
09	Local Levels in Progress to Endorse GIEN		09	Local Levels in Progress to Endorse GIEN	
NPR 1,76,68,000	Total Budget Allocation for GIEN by 61 Local Levels				