SYSTEM STRENGTHENING THROUGH GIEN AND GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

People in Need (PIN) is a Czech-founded, non-governmental and non-profit international organisation established in 1992. PIN began working in Nepal as part of the humanitarian response to the April 25, 2015 earthquake. Since then, PIN Nepal has worked to develop and facilitate systemic solutions that respond to the needs of vulnerable and marginalised populations, including people living in geographically remote areas and groups experiencing exclusion based on ethnicity, age, gender, or other social and structural barriers. Its work in Nepal currently spans three strategic pillars: emergency response and recovery, climate resilience, and civil society and inclusive governance. Across these areas, PIN Nepal works through partnerships with civil society organisations, the Government of Nepal, academia, the private sector, and other stakeholders. This partnership-based approach supports locally led solutions that strengthen inclusion, resilience, and access to opportunities and services.

The Security and Justice Programme (SJP) is a multi-year programme funded by UK International Development and implemented across Madhesh, Lumbini, and Karnali Provinces. At the broader programme level, SJP aims to increase public safety and trust in public institutions by strengthening communities as agents of change and supporting coordinated action to improve the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV). SJP works at multiple levels, bringing together community members, CBOs and CSOs, local governments, service providers, and other local and provincial actors. The programme combines community-level approaches to social norms change with efforts to strengthen institutional capacity, coordination, and GBV prevention and response systems.

MAJOR FOCUS

- Focuses on SJP's investment in community agency, Gender Transformative Social Norms (GTSN), and strengthening Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) in Madhesh Province.

- Explores how communities are supported to challenge harmful gender norms, prevent GBV, and connect individuals with relevant services.

- The SJP is implemented across Dhanusha, Sarlahi, Bara, and Mahottari districts, with learning and evidence in this document drawn primarily from Janakpurdham, Barahathawa, and Simraungadh, alongside a wider presence in Loharpatti and Jaleshwar. The programme is implemented in partnership with Divya Development Resource Centre (DDRC).

THE CONTEXT: WHY DOES THIS MATTER IN MADHESH?

In Madhesh, harmful gender norms, unequal power relations, stigma, and barriers to information and services can affect how GBV is understood, discussed, reported, and addressed. These challenges can be particularly significant for women and girls and for groups facing additional barriers to participation and access to services, including Dalit communities, persons with disabilities, and other socially marginalised groups.

Addressing these challenges requires more than strengthening formal services and institutions. It also requires trusted local actors who understand their communities, can create spaces for difficult conversations, connect people with available support, and work with local institutions to address community priorities.

SJP therefore placed community agency and local leadership at the centre of its Madhesh approach. Through GTSN, community members were supported to reflect on gender, power, masculinity, and GBV. CBOs were then provided with opportunities and resources to take these conversations into wider community settings, strengthen their own organisations, and engage more actively with local government.

This learning document explores what happened when grassroots organisations were given that opportunity and what the experience tells us about investing in local leadership as a pathway towards more sustainable change.

WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO DIFFERENTLY?

GIEN evolved beyond being a school-focused activity. It provided a practical platform through which different actors could identify problems, raise concerns and connect them with action.

At the school level, GIEN was linked to **Complaint Response Mechanisms (CRM), safeguarding, School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) prevention, and student engagement.** Concerns raised through GIEN helped identify additional capacity needs.

For example, GIEN members identified the need to sensitise teachers and school staff on GBV, harmful social norms, and child safeguarding. This resulted in targeted training for 171 teachers and school staff across seven schools. At the local-government level, the approach moved from coordination to institutionalisation.

Municipalities were supported to strengthen referral pathways, develop procedures, establish committees and integrate GBV priorities into local plans and budgets.

> **“Our school strengthened the complaint response mechanism to create a safe and enabling environment in school. Now, girls reach out to me if they have any problems.”**
>
> GIEN Focal Person,
> Barahathwa Rural Municiplaity

WHAT CHANGED?

1 GIEN became a coordination mechanism, not just a project activity

Outcome Mapping and Rubric evidence shows that GIEN platforms became functional at both municipal and school levels, with clearer roles, regular engagement and increasing government ownership. Multi-stakeholder platforms were increasingly used for joint planning and implementation.

The endline also provides a useful community perspective. **46% of respondents identified multi-stakeholder collaboration through GIEN as an activity that should continue after the project ends.** This was similar among community members and GTSN participants, suggesting that GIEN was seen as relevant beyond direct project participants. This is important because sustainability is not only about whether an activity continues; it is also about whether stakeholders see value in the coordination function that the activity provides.

2 GIEN helped connect school-level concerns to wider systems

The CRM–GIEN linkage provided a practical pathway for schools to identify and respond to GBV and safeguarding concerns. CRMs, suggestion boxes and Codes of Conduct were established and used in schools, while students, teachers and school management became more involved in creating safer learning environments. This suggests that school-based mechanisms work better when they are connected to wider referral and accountability systems rather than remaining internal school processes. The project also strengthened the capacity of 269 students on digital safety and technology-facilitated GBV and supported teachers and school staff to better understand GBV, harmful practices and child safeguarding.

3 Government ownership started to move from participation to action

One of the clearest system-level changes was the shift from government participation in project activities towards government-led processes and formal structures. Review and reflection workshops on GBV referral pathways resulted in a **9-member committee in Jaleshwar and a 7-member task committee in Barahathawa to work on municipal referral procedures.** Stakeholders also identified the need for a GBV Service Referral Mechanism Manual. In Jaleshwar and Loharpatti, municipalities also endorsed important policy instruments, including the GIEN Procedure, GEDSI Policy and GBV Elimination Fund-related guidelines/procedures. **This is a stronger form of sustainability than simply having government officials attend training.** It indicates that project-supported approaches were beginning to become part of municipal procedures, planning and institutional responsibilitie

4 Coordination across sectors matters

A major lesson is that GBV prevention cannot be sustained by one institution alone. The project brought together local government, schools, police, judicial committees, WCSC units, CSOs/CBOs and other service providers under a GIEN structure to enhance coordination and collective actions for GBV prevention and response. Through this platform, stakeholders were able to build relationships, develop shared understanding of GBV issues, clarify roles and responsibilities, align goals and improve coordination resulting in effective and collaborative support for survivors as well as enhance efforts to prevent GBV. Exposure visits involving judicial committees, GIEN and WCSC representatives helped actors understand practical systems for complaint management, mediation and GBV fund mobilisation.

At local level, this contributed to stronger links between prevention, reporting, referral and response. The endline findings also point in this direction. Respondents reported improvements in municipal GBV-related services: 73.7% reported some improvement and 19.9% reported significant improvement. Among GTSN participants, the corresponding figures were 62.9% and 32.4%. At the same time, the findings show that the system is not yet fully mature. Only 43.5% of respondents were aware of a municipal GBV Elimination Fund or similar support mechanism, with awareness substantially higher among GTSN participants than community members. **Institutional structures can be established relatively quickly, but awareness, access and consistent use of those structures require continued communication and follow-up.**

5 Evidence was most useful when it was linked to decisions

The use of Participatory GIS (PGIS), service mapping and other assessment findings demonstrated an important MEL lesson: data is more valuable when it is presented in a form that local decision-makers can use. The PGIS process helped communities and municipalities identify GBV risks, hotspots and service gaps. The resulting dashboard was used as an input into local GBV action planning. Municipal stakeholders also requested additional functionality so that the tool could eventually be integrated more closely with planning and budgeting processes.

This represents a useful progression:
Data collection → analysis → discussion → planning → resource allocation.
The project therefore moved beyond using data mainly for donor reporting and began demonstrating its value for **local decision-making.**

WHAT DOES THE ENDLINE TELL US ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY?

The endline findings provide encouraging but also realistic evidence on sustainability. Around 86.6% of respondents were either very or somewhat confident that GBV prevention activities would continue after project funding ends. When asked what should continue, respondents identified:

- Multi-stakeholder collaboration through GIEN – 46.0%
- Advocacy for budget – 44.0%
- GTSN – 53.5%

Interestingly, respondents did not see local government alone as the main institution responsible for sustaining GBV prevention.

Women's groups and youth groups were identified more frequently, followed by local government, schools and CBOs.
This reinforces an important lesson:

Sustainability is strongest when responsibility is shared across government, schools and community actors, rather than transferred entirely to one institution.

FOOTPRINTS OF SJP

Embed rather than create parallel systems: GIEN worked because it was connected to existing school and municipal structures. The approach created space for coordination without requiring a completely new institutional system.

Let coordination respond to real problems: The GIEN platform helped identify practical gaps, such as the need for teacher training, stronger CRM processes and technical support for GBV action plan prioritisation and implementation. This made the platform useful rather than purely administrative.

Connect schools to wider referral systems: CRM and GIEN became more meaningful when linked with local government, police, WCSC and other service providers.

Move from engagement to institutional action: Government engagement was strongest where it resulted in committees, procedures, policies, action plans and budget allocations.

Use evidence to support government decisions: PGIS, service mapping, assessments and MEL findings provided a basis for discussion and planning rather than simply documenting project performance.

Build sustainability through multiple actors: Women's groups, youth groups, schools, CBOs and local government all have a role. This reduces dependence on the project or on a single institution.



One-Day Orientation on School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) in a Secondary Schools (Grades 7–10) of Barahathawa Municipality

WHAT NEEDS ATTENTION STILL?

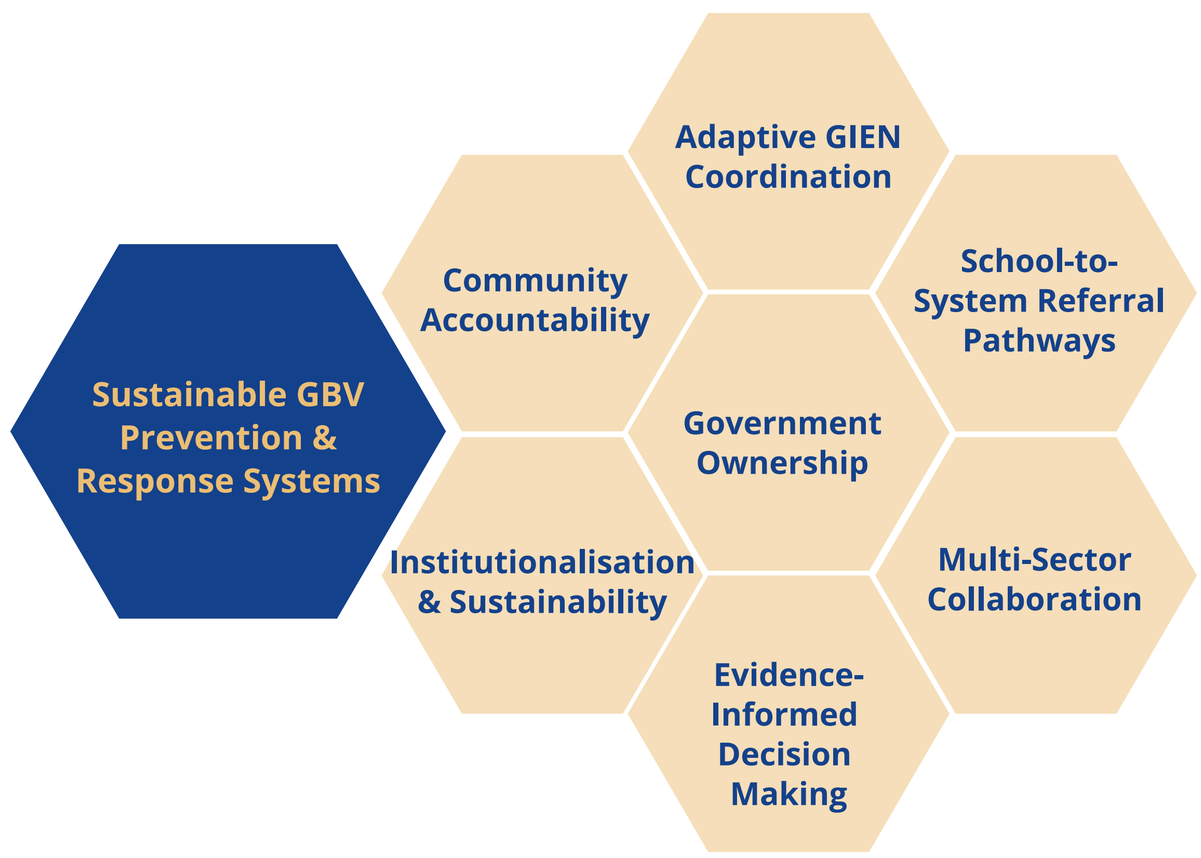
Institutionalisation is not the same as endorsement. Policies and procedures have been endorsed in several municipalities, but their implementation, regular financing and use need to be tracked.

Awareness of government mechanisms remains uneven. More than half of endline respondents were not aware of the municipal GBV fund or similar support mechanism.

Referral systems need continued operational support. Establishing a committee or pathway is only the first step. The next level is ensuring that referrals are confidential, timely, survivor-centred and consistently followed through.

Community ownership should remain central. Government institutionalisation should not replace the role of women, youth, CBOs and community change agents. The two need to reinforce each other.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY



Key learning for future programming

The strongest opportunity for the next phase is to position GIEN not simply as a project-supported network, but as a locally owned coordination mechanism for gender-responsive and safer education and GBV prevention. Where municipalities have already endorsed GIEN procedures, GEDSI policies and GBV-related mechanisms, the next step should be to support implementation and routine use rather than creating additional structures. Potential alignment with LG PASS indicators could provide an additional entry point for institutionalisation, but the specific indicators and relevance should be verified before this is presented as an established linkage.

The longer-term measure of success should therefore be: Are local institutions continuing to coordinate, use evidence, allocate resources and respond to GBV concerns without relying on project structures or funding? That is the shift from project activity to a functioning local system.

UK International Development
Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

Delivered on behalf of UK Government by
People in Need